



April 1, 2011

Dear Parents of current 5th grade students,

As we head into the final months of this school year, I would like to take a time out to welcome your child into the Middle School next year as an incoming 6th grader. Middle School is the next step in your son or daughter's educational journey and we are excited about having them join us and hope you are, too.

There are a few notable and mandatory components of the MS program (that differ from the Elementary Program) of which I want you to be aware. They are:

1. The 6th grade Week Without Walls trip in late September/Early October (more details at a later time.)
2. The 1:1 Netbook Project for 6th thru 8th graders. This is a new program for our Middle School students next year and the subject of the remainder of this letter to you.

As you may know, this year SSIS implemented a 1:1 laptop program in the high school to allow our high school students to integrate the necessary technology skills into their learning. This is a common model at an increasingly large number of international schools. Also increasingly common and relevant is providing the same support in **using** technology and **learning** for our middle school students. SSIS is committed to developing our students' 21st Century Skills.

As the research suggests, students need to develop and acquire skills that include being creative, working well with others and being able to use technology as an effective communication tool. **Towards this end SSIS will begin the 1:1 Netbook Project in the Middle School in August 2011, as part of our movement towards a 1:1 ratio of students to wireless-enabled computers.**

SSIS will assess a technology fee for Middle School students of \$250.00 per year. This fee covers the additional cost associated with the middle school program; hardware, backup facility, software licensing and support cost. The yearly technology fee will enable each middle school student to have the use of a netbook computer.

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Portable computers called “netbooks” weigh just over 1kg and fit easily into a school bag. Loaded with software that students need, and backed up with in-school technical support, the netbooks will give our middle school students the tools to learn in a digital age.

Netbook technology will transform teaching and learning, and complement the existing school curriculum, by providing digital learning tools that link with planned classroom activities. Increased access to computing in the middle school will change and improve teaching and learning both inside and outside of the classroom. Research shows students are more motivated and engaged in learning when they have their own computer. Computer use has also been linked to better organizational skills, improved literacy and numeracy, better collaboration and analytical thinking.

Netbooks promote better learning in and out of school by encouraging:

- ▲ Anywhere, anytime access to learning.
- ▲ Independent, self-initiated learning.
- ▲ Collaboration between students.

The netbook will be seen as your child’s responsibility, not yours and not the school’s. It will come with a case, which will provide some protection. However, the way it is treated is the most important factor. Students will be trained in looking after their netbooks, but then need to do so.

More details will be provided in the weeks and months to come. If you have questions about this new initiative for our middle school students, please direct them to Mr. David Perkin, Technology Director.

Kind Regards,

Paul Johnson
MS/HS Principal
PJohnson@ssis.edu.vn