

Plugged in or plugged  
out?



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The technological age has dawned upon us. 80 percent of Americans own a computer; they're constantly sucked into their iPods, iPhones, Blackberries, TVs, computers - you name it - from the time they awaken to the time they fall asleep. American teenagers, born into this world of technology as soon as it began to take off in the 1990s, find themselves completely at ease with computers, a trait that is, so far, unique to their generation. Schools have slowly started to implement new technologies into the classroom - the latest computers, tablets, projectors, smart boards - however schools must be weary of introducing too much new technology, because as instructive as they can be, they can also be disruptive and dangerous. When the right balance is found, the public school system - and the students - will surely prosper.

The Internet, bursting into the homes of Americans in the 1990s, revolutionized American life. Entire businesses can be created and destroyed with the click of a mouse; doctors and nurses rely on it to store medical records and ensure the health of their patients. Newspapers, once so imperative to American life, and in shaping the history of our nation, have been completely replaced with online news websites, and businesses have learned to adapt to advertise and sell in the online world, when they had previously been limited only to print, television and radio. Countless numbers of student help websites have opened; the college application process simplified.

Yes, the Internet is an incredible place, bursting with knowledge, but it is also a breeding ground for cheating and plagiarism. To accompany the honest educational websites, there are sites with prewritten essays - pay a small

fee, copy and paste, and you're done. Students abuse websites such as Sparknotes and Cliffsnotes instead of reading the book that they're assigned, and they rely on search engines such as Google to do their homework for them. The lewd content, displayed so boldly and proudly, splashed across the pages of millions of websites, is also a problem for schools - one wrong click on a search engine and you could be viewing something you never wanted to see. It's a free-for-all in cyberspace, and there is certainly no quality control, as the Supreme Court ruled it a violation of privacy to regulate free speech on the web. Although technology to conquer these problems is in wide use - Turnitin, a plagiarism detector, and various Internet blocking systems are just a few - they are never 100 percent successful in their quest to make the Internet a less vile place. However, by taking proper safety precautions, schools can protect their students and still ensure they have access to the educational tools the internet provides.

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Technology has impacted our daily routine so much that rarely do we ever find ourselves using the " old-fashioned" pen and paper. Why would we need to? We have cell phones to store phone numbers in and word processors to write papers in. Even keeping a journal seems like a thing of the past when our lives are documented so well by Facebook, Twitter, and various blogging sites. Pens and pencil have been exchanged for a keyboard, paper exchanged for a word processor. However, this is not necessarily a bad thing; with less paper consumption comes a healthier Earth. This is what e-books such as the Kindle attempt to accomplish. They read just like a book, store upwards of 10, 000 books, are extremely lightweight and portable, and, <https://assignbuster.com/plugged-in-or-plugged-out/>

of course, use no paper. Textbooks are available for purchase through these e-books for half the cost of traditional textbooks, and implementing them in schools could not only save the environment- they could also save money.

The world is at the fingertips of students using the Internet - literally. One can take a tour of Paris, London or Rome, and even walk on the surface of the Moon or Mars using Google Maps. Google Art Project gives students the chance to explore art museums around the world, viewing old and new masterpieces with the click of a button. They can easily have a casual conversation via webcam in the foreign language of their choice with someone who lives halfway across the world. They can communicate with their teachers instantaneously outside of school and learn like never before.

So what's stopping schools from investing in this new wealth of technology for the betterment of their student body? With sufficient Internet protection in place, students can learn better, and more quickly and effectively, than ever before. If the next generation is properly equipped with the right technology, the sky will no longer be the limit; they can reach for the stars and beyond.