Purchasing Technology

As a technology facilitator, you will be asked to make decisions about technology purchases. Which device do you think will benefit the students and teachers? Once you have determined this, which vendor or brand will you choose? In this unit we will explore the steps a facilitator goes through when purchasing new technology. We will have you narrow your search down to two potential vendors and products and complete a product comparison.

# Planning for Technology

Before making product comparisons, you will need to decide what your school’s learning goals are. What technology products might help improve student learning? To do this, the logical first step is for your school to complete a **needs assessment**. Where is your school currently and where do they need to be? Once your needs assessment is complete, you should have a better picture of what technology will work best with your school to improve student learning.

## Helpful Questions to ask when determining which technology you should choose

* How well does this tech support my curriculum?
* Is it engaging and easy to use?
* Does its longevity match the cost?
* Does the tool fit into my school’s tech strategy?
* Will the tool work with my school’s network and wireless infrastructure?
* How imaginative is the tool? Is it simply another way for students to write papers or create static presentations?

## CHOOSE A PRODUCT

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| E-Reader: Amazon Kindle Voyage and NOOK Glowlight |

## RESEARCH

In many instances, you can gain perspective and knowledge from other educators that have gone down the path you are about to travel. Research the pros and cons of your technology product as it relates to education. Link at least 3 articles below. Include one tip you learned from the research.

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| [Link # 1](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational_leadership/jun12/vol69/num09/E-Readers@_Powering_Up_for_Engagement.aspx) | E-readers are a great way for teachers to privately provide appropriate texts to struggling students. |
| [Link # 2](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/266346.php) | E-readers can help struggling students with visual attention deficits |
| [Link #3](http://www.computershopper.com/back-to-school/2014-guide-the-best-e-readers-for-school) | Digital books, including some textbooks, are many times cheaper that traditional paper books. Some classic texts may be free. |

## PRODUCT COMPARISION

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Amazon Kindle Voyage | | NOOK Glowlight | |
| [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00IOY8XWQ?tag=googhydr-20&hvadid=44059986290&hvpos=1t1&hvexid=&hvnetw=g&hvrand=8879887239685091156&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=b&hvdev=c&ref=pd_sl_8q2jbxu4by_b) | | [Barnes and Noble](http://www.barnesandnoble.com/p/nook-glowlight-barnes-noble/1114959612) | |
| FEATURES (specs) | | FEATURES (specs) | |
| 6.3 oz | | 6.2 oz | |
| 2GB of storage | | 4 GB of storage | |
| Battery lasts up to 6 weeks | | Battery lasts up to 8 weeks | |
| WiFi and optional 3G | | Wifi | |
| Touchscreen | | Touchscreen | |
|  | |  | |
|  | |  | |
| PROS | CONS | PROS | CONS |
| Whispercast allows for quick e-reader management by teachers and administrators | One of the most expensive e-readers on the market. The base price ($199) includes ads. | The product does not allow for users to browse the web or download games. This is a great feature for students who are easily distracted or have trouble focusing on an assigned text. This also makes classroom management easier. | The product does not support audio or video files that could be beneficial when studying a particular text. |
| Parental/teacher controls that can limit access to material | Because the product is so new there are very few testimonials of this particular Kindle being used in the classroom. | Purchases are password protected. | Does not support Microsoft Office files, making sharing documents with students a bit more difficult. |
| Vocabulary builder: allows readers to create flashcards of words they look up |  | Standard e-books purchased for other NOOK products can be transferred to this product. | Magazines, enhanced books, and other materials that may have been purchased for other NOOK products or apps are not compatible with this product. |
| X-ray: allows readers to look up information about characters, events, and other topics within the text. |  | Once books have been purchased using an online account, they can be archived for future use. | No memory card drive, which can make transferring books from some devices difficult. |
| Word Wise: provides definitions for challenging words. |  |  |  |

## RATE YOUR DEVICES

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| PRODUCT A | RATING (1-10) | PRODUCT B | RATING (1-10) |
| PRICE | 7 | PRICE | 8 |
| FUNCTIONALITY | 10 | FUNCTIONALITY | 7 |
| USABILITY | 10 | USABILITY | 5 |
| TOTAL | 27 | TOTAL | 20 |

## Evaluate the Vendors

Before choosing a vendor, you need to evaluate their company to be sure that they are a good fit for your school. Will the vendors maintain a relationship with you after they have made the sale? Will they be willing to help support the device or software? Do they offer demonstrations, pilots, or trial periods? What are past customers saying about these vendors?

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| [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com/dp/B00IOY8XWQ?tag=googhydr-20&hvadid=44059986290&hvpos=1t1&hvexid=&hvnetw=g&hvrand=8879887239685091156&hvpone=&hvptwo=&hvqmt=b&hvdev=c&ref=pd_sl_8q2jbxu4by_b) | [Barnes and Noble](http://www.barnesandnoble.com/p/nook-glowlight-barnes-noble/1114959612) |
| **Website**-  The website is very user-friendly. Because Amazon is one of the largest and well-known online stores, contacting the vendor and getting in touch with customer support is easy. Each product offered, including the Voyage, has video tutorials, testimonials, and comparisons to other products. In addition to the reviews, there are also discussion boards where users can share ideas and information. | **Website**  There is a tremendous amount of information on the website complete with FAQs, video tutorials, and product comparisons. Teacher testimonials and videos of the product being used in classroom are included in the website, however none of the testimonials mention specific products such as NOOK Glowlight, rather just NOOK devices. Gathering information about one device versus another is a bit difficult and confusing. |
| **Support**  Every Kindle comes with a 1-year limited warranty and customers have the option of purchasing a 2 year extended warranty. The website has a help forum, FAQs, and a link to contact customer service. | **Support**  Free in store support at all Barnes and Noble stores. There is a Support & Care telephone for customer service. Each NOOK comes with a 1 year limited warranty and there is an optional Barnes and Nobel Protection Plan. |
| **Company Reputation**  Amazon.com is one of the more reputable online marketplaces around. A quick good search reveals that one can find plenty of negative reviews, but overall customers are satisfied with their service. | **Company Reputation**  Barnes and Noble is known for both their online store as well as their many bookstores across the country. NOOK customers in particular seem to appreciate the in-store assistance. Overall, it is a well-known and respected company. |
| **Product Reputation –**  The Kindle Voyage is a new product so there aren’t many reviews of this specific edition being used in the classroom, but there are plenty of positive review of older Kindles being used in a meaningful way. Other reviewers however have had nothing but positive feedback regarding the Voyage. Some go so far as to say that it is the “best e-reader” on the market. | **Product Reputation**  The Barnes and Noble NOOK Glowlight has mixed reviews. NOOK is known for quality in regards to the display and the ease of reading. However, review after reviewer commented on how disappointed they were that the Glowlight lacked user friendly qualities of other NOOKs and other e-readers such as wireless sharing and buttons. In short, customers were disappointed with how one dimensional the product is. In my opinion, one dimensional products don’t translate well to the 21st century classroom. |

## Which Product is the winner?

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| Explain:  Upon completing the needs assessment for W520, one thing that was quite obvious to me: my school needs to do a better job providing resources to students with learning differences; providing accommodating technology. The truth is, that as a private school we are able to be selective when admitting students and despite the fact that we trying to provide more resources for students with disabilities beginning at the elementary level, we’ve got a long way to go before we can open our doors to all students. It was this fact that drove me toward examining e-readers. After a little research I found that e-readers can be quite beneficial to students with dyslexia. They seem to be more beneficial than a tablet like an iPad, because they are designed for reading and not much more. Ipads and other interactive tablets offer a tremendous amount of educational options. However, they are not designed specifically for reading and can offer many distractions to all students, including those that are more easily distracted. I see our students struggle with this on a daily basis because our school has one-to-one iPads. How could I find a product that could help improve student reading comprehension and love of reading, without introducing distraction? It was with this consideration that I chose to research true e-readers instead of the more broadly defined tablet.  After reviewing the top products that I, admittedly have very little experience with, the clear winner was the Kindle Voyage. This may not be surprising considering that it is a newer product and has more to offer, but before I would recommend that a school spend a considerable amount of money on an e-reader, I wanted to make sure that newer did, in fact, mean better.  It was difficult to find examples of teachers using the specific products in the classroom, but not difficult to find testimonials of various styles of Kindles and NOOKs being used for educational purposes. In either case, teachers had positive things to say about the two products in general. It was after examining the specifics of both that realized the Kindle Voyage is a better tool for our students that struggle with reading.  While the display of both products received positive reviews in terms of clarity and detail, the biggest difference is the software. Kindles offers vocabulary builder, x-ray, and word wise all of which would be beneficial to any reader, especially one who struggles. The NOOK was very limited in what it could do. It offered all the benefits of a true e-reader, but lacked the software that would make it work well for struggling students and easy for classroom and school management. The only parent/teacher control on the NOOK was password protected downloading, nothing in terms of content management. As a teacher, I could assign students a wider variety of texts with the Kindle, this would not be possible with the NOOK. The NOOK is simply another way for students to read books. In terms of the SAMR model it is in the substitution or augmentation range. I could have chosen a NOOK product that would have given me many more options, but those products were too an iPad/tablet for my needs.  My biggest concern is that because the product is so new there aren’t many testimonials of this Kindle edition being used in the classroom. However, based upon the teacher reviews of other Amazon products and its overall superiority to the NOOK, I would recommend that my school purchase a class set Kindle Voyages to be used at the discretion of our Academic Support team in conjunction with our English teachers. |