

Computers or booklets: Testing at a crossroads

A summary news lead ¶.

Most students prefer booklets to computers when taking state and district mandated tests, according to a recent survey.

Attribution.

Booklets have fewer glitches, are easier to work with and the content is easier to read, student survey respondents said. Still, those students who indicated a preference for computer-based testing indicated that working with word processing software made it easier to write effective essay responses. Another advantage to computer testing was that students liked getting their results faster than the turn-around time needed to score booklets.

Most important info.

Students aren't the only ones who are divided on this issue, however. "Online testing makes a lot of sense," Principal Greg Schwab said. "I think that the hardest part will be teaching the adults how to use the electronic testing methods because you guys (students) already know this stuff."

Ethos. Quote from principal.

Most students are already plugged into technology and receive information electronically every day through phones, computers, television and other hand-held devices. "You can't walk through the halls without seeing kids on their phone or iPod," Schwab said.

Still, there are those who are concerned that computer testing isn't quite ready for primetime. Freshmen English and journalism teacher Vincent DeMiero said he is concerned about maintaining a fair testing environment when using computers. "When a test is given using computers, students can be on very uneven ground. One might have a mouse that doesn't work, or one key might not work, or one computer could be slower than another," he said. "There are so many things that could go wrong. I would hate for technology to disadvantage somebody in such a high stakes testing world."

Quote from another viewpoint.

DeMiero has also been working with the Hawkeye student newspaper for more than 25 years, so he has seen a lot of writing composed on computers. "Most of the time, students who work with a paper and pencil at some point in their process, tend to have fewer spelling errors, punctuation errors, and overall better stories than those students who rely fully on technology."

Also, compare length of ¶s. In the news story, there's a new ¶ every time there's a new voice or new idea. In terms of word count, this news story is almost 200 words shorter than the essay on the same topic.

Last ¶ is the least newsworthy ¶, but still IS newsworthy. NO CONCLUSIONS. When you're out of newsworthy info, STOP WRITING.