

# Education: Access, Quality, and Relevance

OLPC Briefing Note - January 2011

One Laptop per Child's global mission of accessible, quality, and relevant education grows as we work with our partners and their communities to provide continuous and connected learning opportunities for all children. OLPC is not a laptop project; we seek to create transformative learning through technology, and local priorities, development, and content are an integral component of this mission. Universal access to quality education is the foundation for gender equality, life-saving improvements in health, economic development, and poverty alleviation.

Access refers to creating open and equitable learning communities, materials, and spaces for all children. While the Millennium Development Goal for Universal Primary Education by 2015 has encouraged extensive progress, 70 million children in the world today do not have access to schooling of any kind. One Laptop per Child seeks to effectively and efficiently bridge this gap by providing children with a learning tool, which facilitates education even in the circumstances where school buildings cannot be built, teachers are scarce, and classrooms lack resources; giving each child a laptop enhances the curriculum and motivates students to get engaged in their education. The XO laptop provides access to learning in any scenario, both in the home and in the school. Further, the laptop adapts to any complex environment by shifting to fit the needs of a community. In camps for refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, learning centers can be made with groups of children and laptops, in conflict communities, where it can be too dangerous for children to walk to schools or where girls must stay home, children can learn with their XOs and connect to each other and their learning content remotely. And in scenarios where teachers are unable or resources are beyond reach, the laptops can fill this void with quality learning materials.

A one laptop per child program empowers a community to design and plan for their children's futures in a way that impacts them today. When each home has at least one XO, electricity and connectivity are possible and take on a new urgency. Access to information, and a new means of communicating and learning means that laptops create more than learning opportunities. Families stay connected, access critical information and make new choices. With an increasing number of countries and people recognizing Internet access as a human right, making it available to our youngest citizens helps end the scourge of isolation.

Beyond simply providing access to learning, it is essential to ensure the quality of education is worthy of our world's children. While enrollment rates across the world have increased upwards of 30% since the onset of the MDGs in 1999, many reports indicate that quality has not increased at this pace, and in many ways it has actually diminished as a result of higher enrollments and fewer resources. Additionally, where enrollments have increased it has not necessarily had any affect on retention where dropout rates continue to be exceedingly high in many fragile communities. OLPC is committed to providing access to high-quality education through technology by providing children with a tool to engage them in their own learning. Textbooks are digitized and easily updatable and a library of books is instantly brought to the fingertips of children. Learning games are included on the laptop, which appeal to the different interests and needs of children, sparking curiosity and fueling motivation. Locally designed software and content in the local language make it simpler for children to work with resources that are accessible to them and inspire their learning.

For a child to be engaged in learning and for learning to make a difference the educational tools must be relevant to their needs, their communities, and their culture. This is why one of principles of One Laptop per Child is free, opensource software so that the laptop can grow to adapt to its local environment. Learning material should be relevant to a community development and health and educational goals. Content should be culturally appropriate and in the child's native language. XO laptops are multilingual and with activities like Speak, which reads typed words and sentences aloud to children, helping them practice language and communication skills. Every child learns differently and laptops have the capacity to appeal to each individual child's needs while engaging with them to ensure that learning is specific to their needs, their futures, and their success. Localization is achieved through our strong partnerships on the ground with teachers, community leaders, and active local NGOs; collaboration on our shared goals differentiates OLPC and ensures that projects are owned and sustained by the communities that adopt the program.