Being a student at South Pointe High School allows us Stallions to go through four years of learning at a high level with knowledgeable teachers and a caring staff.

One of the ways the district enhances our scholastic experience is by issuing each of us a laptop to use throughout the year. However, the unreliability of the district’s Wifi and use of filters, which block necessary sites such as Google, has become a nuisance for learners and educators. Students also complain bitterly about the “laptop shop” service.

A number of students would rather switch to old fashioned “pencil and paper.” And although many of them did not want to go on the record due to fear of getting in trouble, teachers also express frustration, especially because of South Pointe’s new STEAM initiative. Where is the T in STEAM when the Technology doesn’t work and isn’t maintained?

English teacher Joe Koon has had difficulties with district filters preventing him and his students, all of whom hope to earn not only high school but also college credit in these advanced classes, from using their district-issued laptops on home WiFi.

On the night before the district-mandated due date for first quarter grades, the state-prescribed database PowerSchool Gradebook could not be accessed. “The server cannot be reached,” read the error messages on three separate school computers at his house.”

He then could not help his wife, Cindy Koon, do a passback procedure, one teachers at South Pointe are required to complete. This is because Canvas, where teachers are required to enter grades, is not compatible with the state-mandated program called Powerschool. Koon could not finalize his own until the next school day, which disrupted instructional and planning time.

Earlier in the quarter, an entire class’s first major project could not be submitted by anyone on the night it was due. This was because no school computer would connect to any WiFi outside of the school building.

Sophomore Jai Russell felt the seniors’ pain. She was also desperate to submit assignments for both her Journalism 1 class and a core class. Her mother sent teachers an email saying she had spent hours trying to troubleshoot their home WiFi, including calling their provider, only to learn the problem was with the school computer.

“What good is one-to-one technology, much less training and encouragement of a flipped classroom, if the connection is so unreliable -- even away from school?” said Koon.

he newspaper staff was afraid we wouldn’t be able to print a December issue because the filters interfere with Google.

This became a problem because the new Google Drive managment system, put in place to expand the Convergence Media program, was not able to be accessed many days.

The new computers that the Journalism program has received struggled to connect to the internet and caused problems with saving and transferring photographs. We also received refurbished Macbooks that belonged to teachers last year. However, the Macs were not connected to the school’s internet and didn’t have InDesign and Photoshop programmed onto them, making it difficult to work on packages outside of school.

Despite emails from new executive technology director, John James, on how a certain filter caused that one night’s turn-in  fiasco and how to correct the problem, the issues are ongoing all over the district. After complaints are registered with school officials the problem seems to be addressed, but after a few days, the exact same problems occur again.

One day in late November, Advanced Placement student Zoe Mullins wrestled with the connectivity as she tried to complete college applications.

“Sometimes the laptops don’t connect to my wifi at home, and it’s super frustrating because I am currently trying to turn in college applications and FAFSA, and I don’t have time to do them at school,” Mullins said.

English teacher Jeremy Linnick also shared his experience with the laptops. Linnick says that it’s very time consuming when he has to constantly extend deadlines for his students because their laptops won’t connect to the WiFi. He puts hard work into making his lessons; sometimes lessons have to be cancelled due to laptop issues.

“How are we supposed to turn in work, if the only website we use is blocked or doesn’t even work?” asked junior Kevinon Burris.

The filters are not the only thing blocking the technology integration into education. The district provided “laptop shop” is intended to provide support for problems such as the laptops being kicked off the network or necessary programs shutting down in the middle of instructional time.  Students at South Pointe say that the shop is “useless.”  Stallions describe their visit as unproductive and the workers as uncooperative.

“It’s like they’re not mad that we have issues, but mad that we walked in. It’s always a weird feeling. Everybody always has an attitude or something smart to say,” one student complained. We heard the exact same thing repeatedly.

Teachers repeatedly see students turn in laptops, only to get them back with the exact same problem.

Students often enter the laptop shop seeking help but are turned around and left hopeless.  Students should be able to go to the shop and be helped.

Although the laptop shop has seen improvements with organization, there are still many problems that students face regarding the expectations of the laptop shop.

“The expectations are that students receive a loaner laptop while their original device is being repaired and that the students are notified when their device is ready to be picked up,” said James in an email with a list of our questions.

We can say that this process has been improved due to the increase of personnel in the laptop shop, but there are still issues with how quickly students receive their laptops and how properly the original laptop has been fixed.

Ayden Tauzel, a junior taking Advanced Placement classes, uses his personal laptop instead of the school issued laptop. He also takes an online AP class during second block due to scheduling conflicts. However, due to the new internet filters and lack of connection with the guest WiFi, he is unable to connect to the website needed to complete his work for his AP Biology class.

Tauzel even said that his father contacted the district about this problem. He was told it would be a main priority for the district. Almost three weeks later and he is still unable to connect to the online schooling forum.

On Nov. 29, James emailed, “This WiFi issue has become my #1 priority; I’m working with Meraki to look into our issues.”

Cisco-Meraki is the network provider for the secondary schools.  A meeting with them was scheduled at the district office for Dec. 6, according to instructional technology assistant Danny Chapman. This school’s IT assistants have spent all day everyday running to try to help teachers and students as they struggle; as they try to solve one problem, their walkie talkies go off with another.

As Chapman was assisting this magazine’s editor-in-chief because she was unable to place football state championship photos into the spreads after the team won Dec. 2, his radio called him to another emergency.

This morning as IB Math Studies teacher Jennifer Stevenson tried to leave for a meeting, the video she had prepared to instruct the class while a sub was in the room would not play using a link in Canvas. She was late to the meeting because she had to stay to teach the lesson so the IB math students could do their work, according to class members.

“It has started affecting my grades and stress levels. I juggle Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs so struggling to complete my work due to connection problems is something inexcusable,” said Tauzel.