

Case Study Charlie – The Platform War

The setting:

The situation at Mendoza Middle School is getting out of control. Mendoza is a middle school of 650 6-8th graders. The new principal, Dr. Juan Migel, is the principal of this middle class school that is the largest school in Lake Diamond Elementary District. The four other schools are all small K-5 buildings. Dr. Migel wants to migrate away from the Macintosh computers being used throughout the district and move to Windows based computers at the middle school. You are the district technology coordinator. You have over 600 computers in the district: 100 Macs at each elementary school, 200 Macs at the middle school and about 25 or so administrative Windows machines in the district.

The district is site-based and each principal has a tremendous amount of control over his or her own building. The superintendent, Dr. Laura Kim, is stepping in only because the teachers at Mendoza have written a number of petitions to maintain their Macintoshes and have flooded her office with complaints. Dr. Kim has asked you to get involved in making a recommendation to her as to what path Mendoza should follow. Likewise, you have gotten a number of calls and e-mails demanding your support for the Macintosh at Mendoza. Your district has been using technology successfully for many years and most teachers have a wide range of lesson plans and materials available for student use on the computers.

Dr. Migel's arguments:

- ✓ The Macintosh is more expensive than the PC, so he will be able to purchase more computers for students with the same amount of budgeted funds.
- ✓ The high school uses all PCs, so students using PCs will be better prepared for high school. Likewise, most homes and the public libraries have PCs not Macintoshes.
- ✓ More educational software is available for PCs than for Macintoshes.

The teachers' arguments:

- ✓ The Macintosh is a better computer and it is the only choice for education.

- ✓ More than 75% of teachers have been involved in technology staff development efforts and that training will go to waste if they need to move to PCs.
- ✓ The teachers would need months of release time to replicate all of their Macintosh files for PCs.
- ✓ More educational software is available for Macintoshes than for PCs.
- ✓ The more militant members of the teachers' union have also threatened to grieve the move to PCs as a change in working conditions that will have to be negotiated.

Your next steps:

Write a memo to the superintendent that outlines your suggestions for resolving this issue. Include an enumeration of all of the issues that should be considered in the determination of which platform to purchase.