Contestant: **E-7**

When walking into a classroom, it is common to find teachers using a projector to display a powerpoint presentation, students researching on computers and groups collaborating on a project on Google Docs. Recently, the utilization of technology as an educational tool has skyrocketed in schools. In some school districts, tablets have even replaced textbooks-- spurring debate about the use of these devices in classrooms. Heavy books, however, are not tools that will benefit students in today’s society. Instead, tablets benefit students’ health, are sustainable and provide an efficient tool for learning.

Tablets are significantly lighter for students and therefore reduce back strain. According to a study by “Archives of Disease of Childhood” tablets weigh 0.75 pounds to two pounds on average. This is extremely light for a device that can store multiple textbooks and other tools at once. However, textbooks can weigh up to three to five pounds for grades K-12, according to the Association of American Publishers. If students have to carry multiple textbooks for different subjects, the weight of these books will cause physical harm to their backs. In fact, the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission reported 23,000 youth ages six to 18 treated in emergency rooms suffering from backpack related injuries. Because of injuries, students are unable to learn and are physically suffering. These multi-hundred paper bound books are detrimental to the physical well-being of students.

In addition, tablets are sustainable devices in the classroom. Although critics may argue that tablets are expensive, investing in them for the classroom would actually save money. Because textbooks are easily outdated, schools need to repurchase new versions, costing about $65 per book, according to the American Association of Publishers. Tablets, however, can be digitally updated, costing about $263 per device, according to a report from the student public interest group. These gadgets last longer, and there is no need to physically repurchase and update content in the books. Although textbooks are cheaper per unit, the investment in tablets prove to be beneficial in the long run.

Using electronic devices like tablets also fosters efficiency. Not only do tablets store textbooks, they can also provide students with other resources online, according to National Education Association STEM policy analyst Mike Kaspar. For example, Google developed an online collaboration system called Google Drive. This platform allows students to share documents, powerpoints and spreadsheets with each other and work on them at the same time. If students have tablets in the classroom, they are able to collaborate and save their work digitally rather than writing everything down on paper. Teachers may also post class documents and files online, according to Kaspar; Because of this class materials are stored in one place and are easily found. For instance, if a student missed class, teachers can upload presentations for them to review the next day in class. Tablets are an educational device that allows students to balance efficient learners and collaborate.

It is evident that tablets prove to be a better educational resource than textbooks. While textbooks are detrimental to students’ health and are outdated, tablets are a lightweight, efficient alternative. It is imperative that schools switch from print textbooks to digital textbooks. All of the information that students will need is stored inside a portable electronic device- accessed at just the swipe of a finger.