學校棄教科書 改用平板電腦
Amplify Tablet Hopes To Rule Schools

駐紐約臺北經濟文化辦事處文化組（EDU/TW/NY/）

由平板電腦取代傳統的紙張和油墨教科書，已漸成風氣，各地學校正日益仰賴手持的平板電腦，以維持學生的學習興趣、獎勵他們的成就，甚至降低對每個學生的平均花費，學生的書包重量也減輕很多。

由媒體大亨梅鐸(Rupert Murdoch)的「新聞公司」，6 日也加入這個行列，推出 Amplify 平板電腦。這種訂價 299 元的 10 吋電腦，利用學校的無線網路系統操作，附有軟體讓老師觀察每一個學生的活動，能做即時意見調查，並提供匿名小考以衡量學生的理解程度。

未來幾年這種趨勢可望繼續成長。紐約市每年花費 1 億元為學生購買傳統教科書，而市議會議長柯魁英建議全市公校學生都改用平板電腦，取代教科書。洛杉磯上個月撥出 5000 萬元，開始為每個學生購置平板電腦，整個計畫預計花費 5 億元。

紐約市私立的「世界學校」發給各年級學生一個 iPad 平板電腦，中學生會另外獲得一具 MacBook Air 手提電腦。學校根本不買傳統教科書，老師經常透過學校的無線網路，把閱讀書單和家庭作業傳送給學生。

發現頻道關係企業「發現教育公司」，是美國最大的學校數位內容供應商。「珊迪」襲美數周內，它就將其納入六年級到高中的科學課程，學生可以利用數位地圖追蹤其前進路線，比較氣壓與風速，並為清理災區提供建議。

這是改用數位教科書的一大利益。電腦教科書也附有語言功能，例如英語不好的家長，能改用西班牙語指導孩子做功課。數位課本成本也較低廉。發現公司為各種電腦提供的「Techbook」，為每個學生訂購六年的費用為 38 至 55 元，而傳統教科書平均要 70 元。

資料來源：(1) 2013 年 3 月 7 日 世界日報 (The World Journal)
(2) 2013 年 3 月 6 日 InformationWeek Education

Amplify Tablet Hopes To Rule Schools

School systems looking to incorporate tablets in the classroom don't need a standard consumer device -- they need "a tablet designed specifically for the education space," Amplify CEO Joel Klein proclaimed at SXSWEdu Wednesday.

Better known as the former chancellor of New York city schools under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, Klein was there to herald the introduction of the Amplify Tablet, an Android device manufactured by Asus that comes preloaded with an assortment of educational content and software, as well as a user interface customized for the needs of teachers and students.

The tablet's home screen includes a sidebar of "notebooks" in which students can track their work, assignments and deadlines for their courses. The teacher version has controls for pushing content to the students, directing them to a specific page of an electronic textbook, and selectively locking down student tablets so they can access only certain apps or reference materials while taking a quiz, for example.

The Wi-Fi version of the tablet starts at $299, plus $99 per year for a content and services subscription. A version bundled with access to AT&T's 4G LTE data service is $349, plus a $179 annual subscription fee. In both cases, Amplify is looking for a two-year contract. Amplify Access president Stephen Smyth said the LTE model could be justified as a choice for schools wanting to address "digital divide" issues of students who don't have broadband and Wi-Fi available at home.

Amplify says the devices are for sale now and targeted for classroom use in the fall. A video featuring happy students, teachers and a principal from a school pilot testing the devices was shown as part of the SXSWEdu launch event, but they were identified only by first name. None of those pilot project users were on hand to vouch for the device, and a spokesman declined to name the pilot schools. He said that in this pilot phase, Amplify wanted to let those educators focus on education, rather than press relations.

Some of the early reviews questioned whether the device would be affordable for purchase by many school districts. Other news reports emphasized the political drama surrounding News Corp. and Klein, with his history of setting

an aggressive educational reform agenda with an emphasis on the use of technology.

Still, the tablet launch got people talking. Jeff Livingston, a senior VP of McGraw-Hill Education was participating in a panel discussion on the future of textbook publishers when he was asked which educational technology startups he was impressed by. "I wouldn't necessarily have said so before today, but … Amplify. They changed the game this morning, and I'm glad they have," he said. "Tablet, content management and software all for one price -- that's new."

Mary Cullinane, a Houghton Mifflin Harcourt executive participating on the same panel, was more skeptical, saying she was wary of putting "too much focus on the device … I don't think our instructional problems are going to be solved by a device."

The Amplify Tablet is preloaded with basic reference content and tools including Encyclopaedia Britannica, MerriamWebster Dictionary, Google Apps for Education, Desmos graphing calculator, EverFi's digital literacy curriculum, Project Noah science tools, Khan Academy videos and education-specific tools that allow teachers and students to take advantage of multimedia resources aligned to the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

"Because all content is preloaded at the factory, you don't have to download gigabytes of material," said Laurence Holt, Amplify's chief product officer. Amplify also will install dedicated servers at the school level so that content updates can be cached, rather than downloaded from the Internet to each device. If a school uses Google Apps for Education, authentication is synchronized so users need only remember one password for both the device and that service, he said.

Klein called the failure of schools to keep pace with the technologies used by consumers and businesses "inexplicable, inexcusable and unacceptable" and portrayed the new tablet as a way of getting education in gear. "We have a unique opportunity," he said. "The question is, will we seize it?"