Laptop Town Hall Debate

The town of Tepville is a medium sized (population around 75,000) New England city. The town is predominantly lower middle class working families. Many people in the town have grown concerned that the schools are not adequately preparing the students to succeed. Scores on their standardized tests are low, many students leaving the high school are unemployed, and local businesses are finding that these students don't have the skills they need to work in their businesses.

Students, teachers, parents, administrators, town officials and business owners have sought ways to improve this situation. A proposal has come forward to equip students (starting in the eighth grade and moving up) with laptop computers. The school will make a tax increase and some cutbacks to fund the program. The emphasis will be on using the laptops to increase technological proficiency and encourage modern teaching methods that integrate technology.

Many people think that this idea would put the town out ahead of the curve, and they look to the small number of laptop schools that have been created and the success that they've had. While other people see this as an expensive program with little proof that it will work.

Next week (April 14) a decision will be made as to whether or not this proposal should move forward, and under what conditions. Teams will represent Parents/Students, Teachers/Administrators, and Government/Business both for and against. Each group will have 5 minutes to present their case, followed by 5 minutes of Q&A from the town representatives and audience. At the end will be an additional 10 minutes of discussion. You should come to the debate equipped with evidence and reasons for your position. Reading some of the linked articles from the syllabus page will be a good place to start.