LA School District Discontinues it Contract with Apple: what are the lessons?

If you haven’t heard the latest news in the LAUSD iPad Saga, it’s basically turning into a modern soap opera. In a nutshell: the Los Angeles Unified School District “suspended future use of a contract with Apple on Monday that was to provide iPads to all students in the nation's second-largest school system amid mounting scrutiny of the $1-billion-plus effort” ([Los Angeles Times](http://www.cfmediaview.com/lp1.aspx?v=6_1491993045_66342_11)). While it’s easy to play Monday Morning Quarterback on this one, there are tremendous opportunities to learn from this event. No matter what the device or district size, there are common reasons for why a mobile device initiative works and why it doesn’t. As [Peter Drucker](http://www.cfmediaview.com/lp1.aspx?v=6_1491993045_66342_12) once said, “culture eats strategy for breakfast.” Without a strong network of communication, discussion, staff buy-in, community support, and, most importantly, a strong instructional purpose, you can forget about getting any initiative off the ground. You could be giving out gold-plated Tootsie rolls and, without those key ingredients, people will just discard them like used tissues. As Simon Sinek shares in this classic [TED talk](http://www.cfmediaview.com/lp1.aspx?v=6_1491993045_66342_13) , you have to make your mission about the “why” not the “what.” Tying the mission to one device or one curriculum only creates the perception that the mission is only about the “what.” In the case of LA, it’s alleged that Pearson played a big role in the deployment strategies of this one billion dollar rollout. If you give students powerful, creative devices, why shackle them to a single curriculum solution? If one or two vendors are leading your “why,” it might cause the community to say, “what?"