

1-to-1 Litmus Test

The AALF Litmus Test is based on student engagement and learning, teacher 1-to-1 pedagogy, and the initial vision of laptops as students' tools that provide students with a powerful device for thinking, learning, and doing.

[Dr. Seymour Papert](#), who served as an advisor to [Angus King](#), the former governor of Maine who initiated the state-wide 1-to-1 program in secondary schools, has been a pioneer for many years in helping us understand the opportunities and possibilities our contemporary students deserve in their learning experiences when he stated that, **‘Computers and laptops are prime instruments of our day for exciting intellectual work.’**

Two related questions to this quote are aimed at helping teachers evolve their understanding, 1-to-1 pedagogy, and practices are:

1. *What intellectual tasks, activities, and opportunities do I provide for my students?*
2. *How do my students learn and how can I support their learning styles? What is my theory about how we learn?*

The first question provokes teachers to consider the **types of intellectual work opportunities** they are providing for their students. The second question goes hand-in-hand with the first in that both provoke teachers to examine their **theories about how their students learn** while asking themselves if those learning tasks and tools they are providing for students will result in powerful outcomes. The tools students have available for learning and the tasks teachers expect students to perform with those tools predict the level of engagement they bring to their learning as well as the depth of critical thinking and learning that takes place.

Traditionally, the term ‘litmus tests’ is applied to chemistry. It uses litmus paper to determine if a substance is alkaline or acidic. However, figuratively, a litmus test includes the recognition of key factors that enable the user (you) to conclude or determine the value of something. When used in the context of Dr. Papert’s quote and the two questions above, a 1-to-1 litmus test requires us to determine the value of a learning task or instructional task. This value concludes that students are using laptops and technology resources to participate in learning opportunities that were previously possible. This is represented in Figure 1 on the next page.

Figure 1

1:1 Litmus Test

- **The laptops and technology resources are used as *prime instruments of our day for exciting intellectual work* that promotes critical thinking and development, and that...**
- **The laptops and technology resources empower students and their teachers to do things that have previously not been possible at levels that were previously not achievable.**

This *1-to-1 Litmus Test* can also be turned into two essential questions:

1. Are my students being given the opportunity to use laptops as prime instruments of our day for exciting intellectual work that enables them to develop their critical thinking skills?
2. Are my students and I engaged in learning and teaching opportunities that were previously not possible at levels that previously not achievable?