Need to Renew Your School's Copier Lease?
Consider These 5 Things.

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Getting a new copy machine shouldn't require a college degree. But with all the options out there, it sure can feel like it. Last time I checked, there was no University of Copy Machines, so I've tried to point out a few features that are worth looking into when renewing your school's copier lease.

Of course, there are the obvious decisions such as monochrome or color, print speed and budget. While these are most certainly important, there are other aspects to investigate. Teachers have busy schedules, so when they have 5 minutes to print worksheets or copy student documents, the copier better work as expected, and be easy to use! To find the best copy machine for your school, make sure you've considered the following:

1. Is the copy machine secure?

I can't think of a more important point for an educational institution than security. Teachers and staff use copiers and printers daily, but without proper device security, student information can be at risk. When choosing a copier, make sure it meets the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). In addition, to ensure that printed documents sitting in the tray do not become a security risk, look for a machine that offers secure print release. I could go on and on about copier security, but we have four more items to go!

2. Is the copier available on cooperative contracts?

As an educational institution, you have access to state and national contract purchasing that can streamline the bid process to help save you time and money. National contracts such as Sourcewell, Equalis and PEPPM are available to educators and offer national volume pricing on copiers, printers, monitors and professional displays. There are also state contracts that you may be eligible to participate in. A little research goes a long way if you're able to grab a quality copier at contract pricing! I'd be remiss if I don't insert a humble brag, because Sharp has the best contract help team out there.

3. Is the user control panel easy to use?

Some machines have a user interface that lets you edit your documents as well as drag and rearrange files all with the slide of a finger. This is particularly helpful for teachers who may have tons of documents in lesson folders, but only need to print certain files at that time. Teachers are busy, so look for a panel with easy modes that provide large, clearly labeled, and simple functions for faster adoption and operation. Not only that, but if the screen is customizable for your school, you can make copying and cloud printing a breeze. Bonus points if it has a pull-out keyboard!

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4. Is the copier cost effective?

Out of all the documents printed in a school day, how many are for personal use? Who is printing the most? Look for a copier or printer that can utilize account codes, user/group profiles, passwords, or external user accounts contained in an LDAP or Active Directory server to track printing activity. These print costs can be allocated to each teacher or department to help with budgeting. If the manufacturer offers automatic toner replenishment, you can reduce machine downtime while making sure that you don't have surplus toner hanging around in storage closets. Another cost effective option is to make sure the copier can default to black and white to be sure color is being printed only when necessary.

5. Does the copier have access to third party software integrations?

If your teachers run their classrooms on Google Classroom, Microsoft Office 365, Blackboard or any other cloud software, you want them to be able to access their files from the copier screen. Make sure that the copy machine you are looking into allows for fast, flexible access to lesson plans and classroom worksheets to help teachers be their most productive. This includes connectivity with common applications that allow your school to be more efficient.

Teachers are superheroes. When choosing their next copier, make sure it is "sidekick" material. Security, ease of use and connectivity are all important, and if its available on a cooperative contract for the best pricing, you may just convince everyone that you did in fact graduate from the University of Copy Machines!