

Greg Gilmore
Molly Escue
Lisa Hoffmann
Marguerite Hussey
Allison England
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Article Review

Larson, Lotta, Teresa Miller, and Mike Ribble. "Five Considerations for Digital Age Leaders: What Principals and District Administrators Need to Know about Tech Integration Today." *Learning and Leading with Technology* 37.4 (2009): 12-15. Web. 9 Sep 2010

Summary of the Article

In the article "Five Considerations for Digital Age Leaders: What Principals and District Administrators Need to Know about Tech Integration Today," the authors provide five suggestions, or considerations, for all technology stakeholders within a district to consider for more successful technology integration. The five considerations are visionary leadership, digital age learning culture, systemic improvement, excellence in professional practice, and digital citizenship.

Successful technology implementation and integration cannot be solely the responsibility of the technology support staff; all levels of administration and faculty need to have a major influence on how technology can best be integrated into the curriculum. Any sound plan for technology improvements must represent multiple levels of experience and usage; everyone involved must feel invested in the entire process, not just the final stages of implementation after all the decisions have been made.

Long-term professional development must be a part of this shared vision. In every school, there are staff members who are familiar with today's technology, and others that are scared to death of it. Some staff will progress through training quickly, while others will need some extra time to reach a level of comfort with the new technology. Support and training for each level of technology expertise should be provided in consistent and ongoing professional development; this training should be direct, yet flexible enough to adapt to the needs of individual teachers of buildings.

Effective planning starts with a needs assessment; if technology inclusion is a priority, administrators must assess the level of student access to technology. It is also important to keep track of how students and teachers are currently using technology that is already available and what gaps presently exist. The purpose of integrating technology is to engage and motivate today's students in this new digital age; our purpose is to teach, the technology is supposed to support our efforts and make it easier. This can only be done by intentional planning and high quality professional development. The article states that "Teachers are no longer the sole

providers of knowledge because information is easily accessible on the Internet." Technology is not just a gadget, but has the potential to change the way we approach every aspect of our teaching.

Communication is a critical part in all stages of implementation. Teachers, instructional technology staff, and administrators need to communicate with each other. Teachers should convey their needs to administrators and instructional technology staff who should find ways to provide support for the teacher in their classroom. When all lines of communication are open, ideas for effective professional development, shared visionary goals, and more engaging classroom learning are created.

The article ends by pointing out that districts require students and staff to sign AUPs, but rarely give them examples of what is and is not appropriate. Comprehensive technology education should teach our technology users the appropriate use of technology and include digital citizenship issues in technology plans.

Summary of our Discussion

Our discussion gravitated toward the importance of a shared vision between all levels of administration and staff, and the necessity of ongoing professional development to reach the goals of this shared vision. The main benefit of a shared vision is the feeling of investment and inclusion by everyone involved; different angles of the same problem or challenge would be considered, and no one would feel as if the plan was being dictated with little or no consideration of the needs present in individual buildings or classrooms. An important prerequisite for this type of all-inclusive planning is an atmosphere of trust that promotes open and honest communication. If any one party feels that they can not freely participate in the dialogue, the resulting plan will not be a shared vision with all participants not buying into it.

We all agreed on the necessity of ongoing professional development to implement technology into the classroom. We shared the shortcomings of one-time trainings, along with frustrations based on the fact that building technology leaders are not used often enough to help train their colleagues. We felt that many teachers are willing to try new technologies in their classrooms, but lack the training and support that would foster enough confidence to try something new.

We found the article interesting and a few of us indicated that they would be showing this to their administrators in the near future. The article places the responsibility of planning for technology inclusion on the shoulders of everyone and devotes time to explain why this is important and necessary.