

Course Based Field Experience

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Technology Committee

The Technology Committee at Taft School District 90 in Lockport, Illinois is an important facet in getting the school where it needs to be in accordance to the needs of students. As of June, 2013, Taft School District is lacking when it comes to technology. The computer lab is from the year 2000, and each classroom is equipped with three computers, along with an overhead projector. Any other technology to be used in the classroom is to be either shared or purchased by the teacher. A multimillion dollar research program conducted by the DMR Group, Inc. Technology Committee, studied more than 4,500 organizations in North America, Europe, and the Far East to investigate the nature and impact of changes in technology. The synthesis and analysis of this information indicate that information technology is going through its first paradigm shift (Tapscott & Caston, 1993). School districts are seeing this shift as well. As a result of a survey given by administration to the staff of Taft, teachers shared that they were in desperate need and want for updated technology in their classroom. However, before the district distributes the money for this new technology and it is implemented into the schools, teachers and administrators need to be properly trained to use the technology effectively for student learning achievement. In fact, Whitehead, Jensen, & Boschee (2003) state that the technology committee should set aside about 30% of the technology budget for professional development.

Technology Plan and Evidence

According to Dr. Skogsberg (personal communication, June 19, 2013) the Taft Technology Plan submitted to the ISBE on May 15, 2013. Taft School District 90 stated that in the fiscal year of 2014 they would be increasing their level of students' reading achievement by

4% as determined by the Illinois State Achievement Test and/or Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers as measured through student growth indicators between two points in time. In order to accomplish this goal, Taft states in their technology plan that they will expand technology resources in the areas of literacy and numeracy for formative assessment, use web-based software at least monthly, and assess students 3 times per year to measure growth.

According to *Preventing School Failure*:

If technology is going to be used successfully in the future, we must learn from what we have done in the past. First, we must get powerful tools directly into the hands of teachers. Second, we must provide ongoing training for teachers with regard to how this application can be used effectively. Third, much more research must be conducted with respect to understanding the relationship between human learning and technology, which results in better instruction. (Hasselbring, 1991, pp. 33-37)

Taft's administration and board members were given a survey on the district's technology. One of the questions was specifically related to how important it is to update the technology plan annually. The results proved that 100% of those that completed the survey said that updating the technology plan annually was very important (see Appendix A). Taft's technology plan also indicates that it will expand its bandwidth, upgrade servers, switch to VOIP, run CAT6 cable throughout the building & install wireless hubs, change to the TeacherEase online grading system, replace 1/3 of students' computers in labs, and provide certified staff with a laptop for professional use. With these changes and additions, Taft students and teachers will be able to enjoy a broader range of learning and relaying information. This is demonstrated by Kitchakarn (2012). Thirty-three first-year students at Bangkok University incorporated blogging into their curriculum to improve their writing abilities. The research

finding indicates that blogs are powerful tools that contribute to the improvement of students' summary writing abilities. From comparing the result of the pretest and posttest, it revealed that the students' summary writing abilities significantly improved.

Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

According to Taft School District's superintendent Dr. DJ Skogsberg, Taft School District 90's Policy 6:235 governs the acceptable use policy (AUP) and was last updated on January 16, 2008. The AUP states that:

All use of the District's electronic networks must be: (1) in support of education and/or research, and be in furtherance of the goals stated herein, or (2) for a legitimate school business purpose. Use is a privilege, not a right. Students and staff members have no expectation of privacy in any material that is stored, transmitted, or received via the District's electronic networks or District computers. General rules for behavior and communications apply when using electronic networks. The District's *Authorization for Electronic Network Access* contains the appropriate uses, ethics, and protocol. Electronic communications and downloaded material, including files deleted from a user's account but not erased, may be monitored or read by school officials. (D. Skogsberg, personal communication, June 19, 2013)

When Taft administrators and board members were surveyed on the AUP and asked if it should be updated more regularly, 100% of those who participated in the survey strongly agreed that it should (see Appendix B). Now that schools are implementing more and more technology into the building and classrooms, it is extremely important that all parties involved are very familiar with the district acceptable use policy in regards to electronic networks. In 2000, Beverly Flowers and Glenda Rakes created a study that conducted analyses of acceptable use

policies in 100 selected K-12 schools in the United States. The review of literature, survey data, and AUP content analysis all indicated educators' concern about students accessing inappropriate materials available on the Internet. The survey findings and AUP content analysis revealed that educators are developing policies designed to discourage users from accessing inappropriate materials by describing what material is considered inappropriate and the negative consequences of accessing such material (Flowers & Rakes, 2000). This study demonstrates the importance of having a concrete acceptable use policy with technology in every school district across the nation.

Technology Budget

The technology budget for Taft School District 90 for the 2012-2013 school year was broken into five categories. The first is software; more specifically AimsWeb and MAP testing, and general licenses. Taft spends \$4,500 on AimsWeb and Measures of Academic Progress testing, and \$5,000 on general licenses. Technology support requires \$20,000 and Taft does not have an in-house technology director. The \$20,000 is mostly going toward outsourcing technology support. The webmaster costs \$1,600, and \$2,238 is spent on PowerSchool, or Taft's student management system. The total technology budget allotment for Taft School District 90 for the 2012-2013 school year was \$38,338. An article written by Michael Petrilli (2012) from the Thomas B. Fordham Institute suggested there are three good ways a district can stretch their budget to allow for luxuries like technology. The first idea is to aim for a leaner, more productive, better paid workforce. Redefining the roles of classroom teachers and other staff members provides great opportunities for increased productivity. Districts should consider: asking classroom teachers to take on additional responsibility in return for greater pay; eliminating some ancillary positions; and redesigning its approach to special education. The

second idea is to pay for productivity. Ask fewer people to do more work in order to get better results—but compensate them fairly for it. A redesigned compensation system would have the following elements: a more aggressive salary schedule; more pay for more work and better results; and prioritization of salary over benefits. Finally the last idea to stretch a school district's budget is to integrate any previous technology thoughtfully. Online and "blended" school models are coming to K-12 education. These can be catalysts for greater pupil engagement, individualization, and achievement. If organized right, they can also be opportunities for cost-cutting.

Replacement Plan

A district technology replacement plan explains how often technology gets replaced or updated, and what exactly gets the update. Taft District does not have a formal replacement plan set in place because of the lack of technology that is in the building presently. However, the most current Technology Plan approved by the Illinois Board of Education (ISBE) states that "in reviewing our current hardware, our plan is to establish a cycle of technology replacement (specifically in the way of student and staff work stations)." In the 'Action Plan' section, there are two strategies that pertain to student learning increase directly correlated to technology. First, "continue cycle of computer replacement/procurement and expand collection of technology through purchase and training on interactive learning tools," and "replace 1/3 of student computer stations in computer labs" (Skogsberg, 2013, pp. 22, 31). Replacement plans are an essential part of evolving a school's technology. The findings of the dissertation done at Nova Southeastern University suggested that multimedia technologies applied to the teacher-centered model of education will achieve only marginal gains in effectiveness and efficiency; the focus of the new educational paradigm is on learning, not teaching. Among other things, a plan for

multimedia integration must: allow for regular human resource development programs and secure necessary funds; focus on the knowledge-database, communications, and learning management capabilities of the institution as well as the development of alternative methods of teaching, student assessment, and scheduling of services; explore distance delivery methods; promote regular use of electronic communications; institute a faculty resource center for training; and counter technological obsolescence with a plan for regular equipment amortization and replacement (Overlock, 1995). Fullerton School District's technology replacement plan in Orange County Florida bases their technology updates around the warranties that have been purchased for computers, routers, and network devices (Fullerton County School District, 2011). When Taft School District acquires the level of technology that Fullerton County School District has, it would be beneficial to implement a technology replacement plan very similar to theirs.

Conclusion

Although school districts are making great strides in incorporating technology and accompanying committees into their schools, there is always room for improvement. School administrators are the leaders of these committees and need to set the tone and example of being an active learner with any new technology that comes into their building. When administrators show this leadership to their teachers, teachers can then pass this habit down to their students. Taft School District 90 has a long way to go in terms of gaining a better technology budget, but they are up-to-date with the technology plan and the acceptable use policy. Each student and teacher in the district needs to sign an acceptable use policy form to ensure they will treat the electronics within the building properly. A brand new 3-year technology plan was successfully submitted to ISBE on May 17, 2013 by a newly formed technology committee, making sure Taft is on its way to improving the types of technology that are planted into the school. However,

once these technologies are planted, there must be an efficient replacement plan set in order to stay up-to-date. The end results will hopefully and most likely lead to student learning improvement and achievement.

References

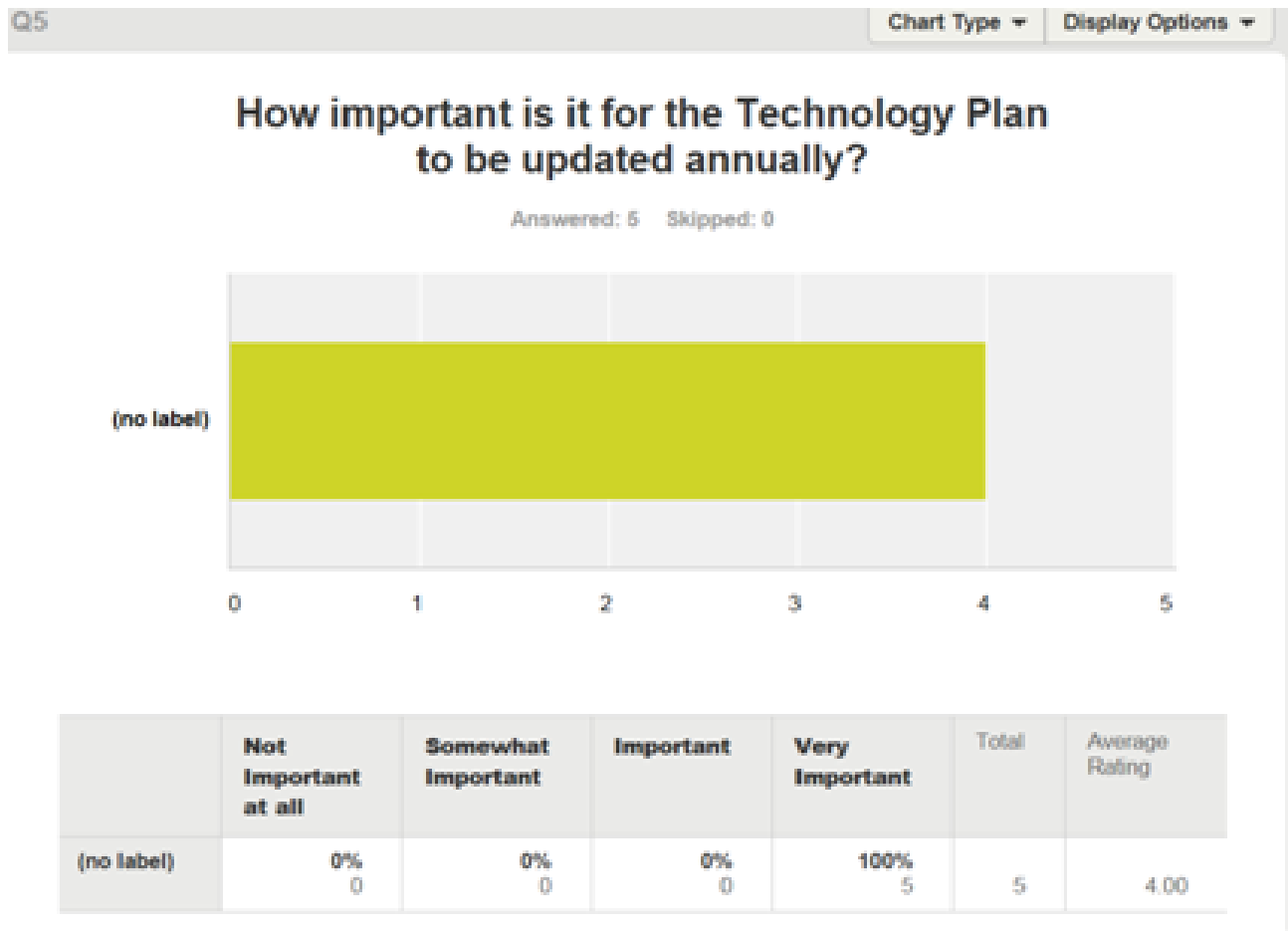
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Appendix A

www.SurveyMonkey.com Survey

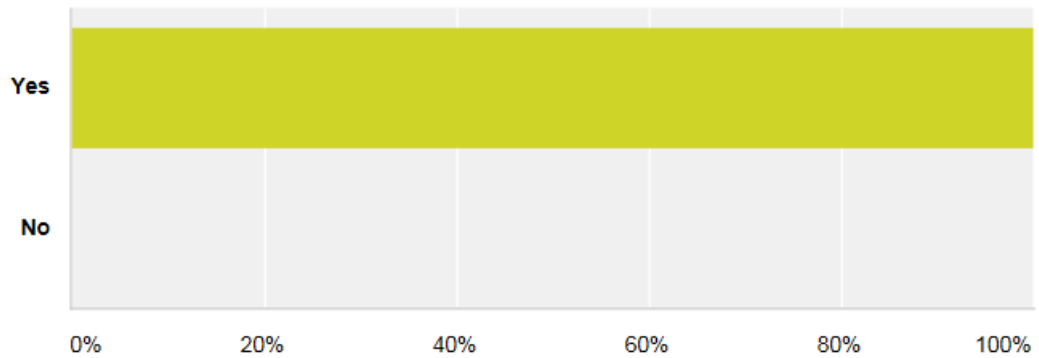


Appendix B

www.SurveyMonkey.com Survey

The AUP (Acceptable Use Policy) was last updated in 2008. Do you think it is time for a revision?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	100% 5
No	0% 0
Total Respondents: 5	