Chapter 5
Thinking like a School Technology Leader

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ABSTRACT
School technology leaders can be school principals and assistant principals, teachers, technology specialists, professional development coordinators, central office administrators, curriculum directors, and a variety of others (or a composite of people) within a school. This chapter presents important issues for emerging school technology leaders to consider in understanding the technological culture and conditions in educational settings. The concepts and critical questions listed in this chapter are utilized to enhance readers’ abilities to begin thinking like a school technology leader and to successfully implement, manage, change, and lead technology in schools. These points are derived from over six decades of the authors’ collective experiences in leadership and educational technology. The “take-aways” for readers are practical, experience-based knowledge and critical, guiding questions. The propositions in this chapter are based on the concept of “leadership through inquiry” as school technology leaders attempt to better understand both “where they are” as well as “where they want to go” with technology in schools by learning how to ask the right questions and understand the technological status of a school.

INTRODUCTION
How do you begin to consider all of the issues concerning technology in a modern, 21st Century school? If you are not naturally someone who is interested and well informed about technology, this can be a daunting task. In order to be a technology leader, a school leader must have an active role in analyzing and understanding technological culture and conditions. Technology leadership is crucial to the growth, acceptance and use of technology by all stakeholders in an educational setting. The role of the principal to the successful
integration of technology across an entire school is pivotal in a myriad of ways; leader, manager, role model and informed decision maker—just to name a few. Because information technology is so pervasive in society, school technology leaders must escalate technology-related issues from a luxury to a necessity so that schools resemble the modern world and not a step into the past. In order to do this, the school technology leader must be able to see the “big picture” and communicate technology needs to all stakeholders in clear and meaningful terms.

School technology leaders face many issues related to the use of information technology and e-learning in 21st Century schools. This includes budgetary management, online safety and security, technology enhanced face to face learning, online learning, establishing and maintaining a school web presence, and the supervision of technology personnel and infrastructure just to name a few. School technology leaders also need to have a general working knowledge of information technology as well as specific personal technology skills to successfully perform their jobs and to make effective technology-based decisions in their schools and districts. Technology, not unlike other areas, requires an awareness of the issues as well as a tool set of personal technology skills to identify problems and develop rational approaches to solve these problems. Technology issues in today’s schools require rational problem solving, risk-taking, innovation and communication. School technology leaders must also remember that they are technology role models for their stakeholders—students, teachers, staff, and the local community. Being a technology role model includes personal use, advocacy, encouragement and responsible stewardship.

How does an educational leader acquire the mind-set of a technology leader? This chapter addresses this central issue and others by presenting a brief literature review followed by experienced-based knowledge and insight concerning technology in schools. Questions are presented for readers to consider in their own educational contexts. These questions are there to encourage readers to try and think about the issues they have faced or may face in their schools or districts. The authors suggest that the readers take time to answer and discuss these issues with their peers, mentors and colleagues, as this process will yield the most meaning and relevance. The intended audience or “ideal readers” of this chapter are people who are either preparing for or currently hold school leadership positions, but the content may also benefit teachers, parents and other stakeholders in educational organizations.

**BRIEF LITERATURE**

Technology leadership has been identified as one of the most critical factors in promoting systemic school reform efforts to improve student achievement and to ensure high quality student achievement. Sandholtz and Reilly (2004) suggested that it is important to focus on curriculum development with technology. This approach provides more learning opportunities for students and ensures that teachers are utilizing technology in instruction. Technical skills are also usually highly individualized and will change over time. It is vital that all technology users commit themselves to developing a “lifelong learner” mentality and focus on how they learn best as they approach the development of their own skills. Additionally, there are so many resources for skill building (video tutorials, websites, “how-to” books, and blogs/chat rooms/online forums), that individual technology skill development has become highly individualized and self-paced as well as self-guided to many technology users today.

The US Department of Education (2010) has a National Education Technology Plan that considers technology to be the core of every aspect of our daily lives and work, and that school leaders must leverage it to provide engaging and powerful learning experiences and content, as well as
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