Chapter 5
Overview of Technology Plans

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ABSTRACT

The incorporation of technology into the classroom is intended to have a positive impact on teaching and learning. Technology planning is a necessary component of this process to make certain all technology benefits are realized. Technology cannot be an add-on component in education; it needs to be fully incorporated into the entire educational process. This requires the development and implementation of a comprehensive technology plan. This plan is created by a technology planning committee and supports all related vision and mission statements, including those for the school, district, and municipality. A needs assessment will be used to determine the current state of the technology and infrastructure. Budgetary considerations, including total cost of ownership, are evaluated to help verify feasibility of the plan. A technology plan is a working document that is evaluated and updated on a continual basis. The development, implementation, and revision of the technology plan help ensure the effective implementation of technology in the educational institution.

INTRODUCTION

In order for technology to be a successful educational tool, technology should be fully integrated into the entire educational process. This requires careful and deliberate planning. Schools need to create a plan for integrating technology into the school district and into the individual classrooms. A technology plan allows for this planning as it provides an understanding of where the school and/or district currently stands in terms of technology, where it should like to be in the future, and how the school and/or district anticipates getting there. Plans effectively serve as a roadmap to the creation and maintenance of a technology-rich educational environment. A technology plan serves to strengthen the existing curriculum by providing support for engaged learning for all students through the incorporation of technology. This plan also indicates how the technology will be paid for and supported in the future.

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Technology planning is a process of determining where the school district is now and envisioning its use of technology in the future. This planning process creates a path that can be followed in implementing the plan and achieving the goals. This process includes an examination of all of the elements that will allow for the most successful implementation of the technology. The addition of technology can mean very little without appropriately developing the goals and objectives, as well as any necessary training processes and evaluation plans. The planning process is done with the goal of improving overall student learning.

The technology plan is a comprehensive process for technology integration. This is a very complicated process. The final published document is the culmination of a wide-ranging planning process that focuses on using technology to improve all areas of education. Technology plans will vary in size, appearance and scope. Their primary focus however, is on the expected results of the technologies, or student learning outcomes. The questions asked should concern what the goals are for technology implementation and what the teachers want to be able to do with the technology. Only then can people determine what type of technology is available to meet those needs. The technology plan goes beyond simply enhancing the curriculum (See, 1992). The plan needs to do more than reorganize the current curriculum and buy multiple computers. Plans allow everyone to reap the benefits of technology, and this includes an increase in personal productivity. Teachers should be able to work smarter, not harder.

The technology plan itself is simply a document that formalizes the planning process. It is the physical manifestation of the planning process that focuses on incorporating technology into the educational process to improve all areas of instruction. The plan is used to show a dedication of the district, school, faculty, staff, and community to a common set of technology goals that will benefit students. A technology plan can be defined as simply a written document that formalizes the results of the planning process for successful infusion of technology into the classroom to improve teaching and learning. Technology plan implementations can be found on many state and district Websites, often with recommendations, charts, and resources for schools within specified states to follow when creating and implementing a plan of their own. An important point to remember is that one size does not fit all, and each technology plan created is done for a specific school and/or situation.

The lack of appropriate planning is a significant issue that often impedes the implementation of successful technology programs (Picciano, 2011). Although technology is widely used in schools, it often has only limited positive impact on student learning (Picciano, 2011). Many unsuccessful technology programs can, in fact, be traced back to a lack of appropriate planning where important steps or procedures are neglected, instructional strategies have been disregarded, or district political issues not taken into account (Brody, 1995). Success is based on a logical, well-organized, and well-planned process.

Technology plans are vital in that they create a path to ensure technology goals of the district can be accomplished. They can also help a school district or college with funding and grant opportunities in that the technology plan effectively demonstrates what funding is needed, why it is needed, and how the technology will be incorporated into the overall educational environment. Plans can also be used to show the school district’s goals and plans to meet these goals. Many grant agencies will require the submission of a technology plan as part of the application process. Technology plans also help save the school money by setting priorities and carefully planning all technology purchases; thus, the district can best decide how to spend their money. These mission-driven decisions help ensure that any technology purchases are aligned with the district’s strategic plans. For example, if a school receives money to create a new technology lab and the school district purchases thirty new Macintosh computers to place in the
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