Today's Challenges for Education Leaders

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LEADERSHIP FORUM 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary has been created to provide an overview of the views, statements and opinions that resulted from the rich discussion and collaboration of attendees at the 2012 ISTE Leadership Forum.

FOUR MAJOR THEMES
Leverage social media
Employ technology
Support and motivate staff
Engage tech tools

When technology, pedagogy, and change-management knowledge come together, it is possible for schools to embrace new forms of learning. By integrating technology and education, teachers can offer classroom experiences that are exciting, engaging, easy to use, and steeped in real-life problem solving. The first step is for administrators, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders to create a vision that articulates educational goals, as well as how technology supports those objectives.

Change is an evolutionary process. Technology tools such as social media, online resources, and mobile devices can play a central role in building relationships with teachers and parents. Twitter, blogs, and Facebook facilitate dialogue and greater visibility for school activities. As teachers adopt new methods of instruction and Common Core State Standards, they need support from education leaders. When used wisely, technology is a proven way to strengthen professional development and collaboration. With technology tools, students and educators can share ideas, synthesize information, and make sense of the world.

11/19/12

Leverage Social Media for Instruction and Establish Social Media Policy

The Big Ideas

> Social media makes it possible to connect with great educators around the world.
> Online tools support powerful professional learning communities.
> Social media enables students to connect with the outside world.
> Schools must ensure that their missions include digital citizenship.
> When teaching digital citizenship, leaders should focus on Respect, Educate, and Protect.

Social media makes it possible to connect with great educators around the world.

WITH TECHNOLOGY, PEOPLE CAN BE LEARNERS FIRST AND LEADERS SECOND. Social media is all about personal learning. Tools such as Twitter and Facebook create a wider audience, offering a broader learning experience. It is now possible to reach out in amplified ways.

George Couros, division principal of Parkland School Division (Stony Plain, Alberta, Canada), created the website Connected Principals. Here, administrators share the amazing things that happen in their schools. With social media, learning is continual.

> "Schools are a people business—you need to develop relationships both on and offline."
>
> —George Couros, division principal, Parkland School Division, Stony Plain, Alberta (Canada)

Online tools support powerful professional learning communities.

THESE COMMUNITIES PROMOTE BOTH STRATEGIC CHANGE AND PERSONAL GROWTH.

Professional learning communities can be focused within a school or include educators across the world. Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach, co-founder and chief executive officer of Powerful Learning Practice, described a three-pronged approach to creating a professional learning community:

1. **Create a learning community in the building.** Use portals, virtual spaces and threaded conversations to develop a learning community within a school.
2. **Promote personal growth.** Use social media tools to develop a learning network designed in a purposeful way. For example, choose people to follow on Twitter whose views align with school improvement goals. Also seek out diverse views.
3. **Develop a bounded community.** Bounded online communities focus on a particular topic and are private. When educators develop a strategic view of school change, they need places that are focused and protected.

> "Bounded communities are important because when you have intimate conversations about school change, you want to be able to fumble with privacy and grace."
>
> —Sheryl Nussbaum-Beach, co-founder and chief executive officer, Powerful Learning Practice

Social media enables students to connect with the outside world.

WHEN KIDS HAVE AN AUDIENCE, THEY DO AMAZING THINGS. Parkland School Division started an online project called "184 Days of Learning." Students, teachers, and staff write brief blog entries that describe what they learned each day. A fourth grader, for example, wrote a brief book review. Principal Couros tweeted about it, and the book's author commented. This interaction with the outside world was exciting for the student and the entire school.

When teachers incorporate social media into the classroom, it gives students an audience in a safe way. Couros noted that when kids have an audience, they often perform beyond teacher expectations. Social media must be embedded into the school day, however. It shouldn't be a separate activity.

Schools must ensure that their missions include digital citizenship.

MANTRAS HELP GROUND CONVERSATIONS THROUGHOUT ORGANIZATIONS. Most schools already have mission statements. These must be updated to accommodate goals related to digital citizenship. The objective should be to develop foundational mission statements that empower teachers to deal with new issues as they arise. As leaders develop updated missions and supporting policies, students should also have a seat at the table.

Jason Ohler, professor of media psychology at Fielding Graduate University (Santa Barbara, California) and educational technology expert, recommends creating a "mantra" related to digital citizenship. Most people don't remember mission statements because they are too long. Mantras are brief and serve as a common talking point throughout the organization. Ohler's mantra for the past 30 years has been, "Use technology effectively, creatively, and wisely."

When teaching digital citizenship, leaders should focus on Respect, Educate, and Protect.

STUDENTS MUST UNDERSTAND DIGITAL ETIQUETTE, LITERACY, AND SECURITY.
Effective digital citizenship programs focus on three broad elements:

1. Respect. Students should be taught to respect themselves and others when engaging in online activities. Mike Ribble, district director of technology of the Manhattan-Ogden School District (Manhattan, Kansas), noted that whenever students sit down to write an email or a tweet, they should think about the person who will read it. Other topics related to respect include etiquette, access, and law.

2. Educate. Students must educate themselves and others about when and where certain technologies are appropriate. Education results in digital literacy.

3. Protect. Students should understand that both rights and responsibilities need to be protected. For every right, there is a corresponding responsibility. "Protect" includes digital security, as well as digital health and welfare.

Other Important Points

1. Twitter and professional development. At a professional development day at Burlington High School (Burlington, Massachusetts), Assistant Superintendent of Learning Patrick Larkin had teachers sign up for Twitter accounts. Then they all stayed in their classrooms and engaged in a Twitter chat online.

2. Modeling behaviors. When it comes to social media and other technologies, leaders must model the behaviors they expect from teachers. A. J. Juliani, technology staff developer at Wissahickon School District (Ambler, Pennsylvania) and co-founder of Collaborative Educational Solutions, noted, for example, that administrators need to use blogs before asking teachers to do so.

3. My Big Campus. This tool is ideal for schools that want to use Facebook but are concerned about monitoring posts. My Big Campus sits behind a firewall but looks and feels like Facebook. It offers a safer environment for social media.

4. Digital citizenship—related resources. Conference participants identified a variety of resources related to digital citizenship, including the University of Kentucky's Digital Driver's License, Common Sense Media, the Digital Dossier video on YouTube and more.

Employ Technology to Meet the Common Core

The Big Ideas

> Staff members must have the time and resources to develop an understanding of the Common Core requirements.
> In an era of budget cuts, transitioning to the Common Core State Standards is challenging.
> Technology can play a major role as schools adopt the Common Core, but infrastructure must be developed.

Staff members must have the time and resources to develop an understanding of the Common Core requirements.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, SUPPORTED WITH TECHNOLOGY TOOLS, IS ESSENTIAL.
Schools have two options when implementing the Common Core:

1. Take the plunge and use the normal curriculum adoption schedule. The normal schedule is to implement math in

grades K–12 in the 2012–2013 year and then implement English language arts in grades K–12 in 2013–2014. This approach results in a gap, since core subject areas are rolled out incrementally.

2. Use a slow and steady approach to implementation. An alternative approach is to incorporate all core subject areas in the early grades first and then add new grades each year. This avoids a gap, but the implementation time will be longer.

Regardless of which approach is used, professional development is very important. Mountain Brook Schools in Alabama, for example, is following the normal curriculum adoption schedule. To eliminate the gap, they used professional development to develop a three-year plan in which teachers teach extra standards to augment each curricular area.

Conference participants described different ways they are leveraging technology to enhance professional development:

1. E-learning platforms. Calcasieu Parish Public Schools (Lake Charles, Louisiana) is taking an incremental approach to implementing Common Core State Standards. To provide teachers with just-in-time support, the district built an extensive e-learning platform using Blackboard. They have developed content across grade levels and content areas.

2. Digital academies. Nordonia Hills City School District (Northfield, Ohio) launched a Digital Academy that provides professional development for 20 teachers each year. The core group of teachers in the academy will lead future technology integration efforts for their schools and the district.

3. Comprehensive Common Core resources. The state of Alabama implemented the Alabama Learning Exchange (ALEX). This website helps teachers work smarter by providing math and English language arts courses of study that are mapped to the Common Core. It also includes web resources, lesson plans, podcasts and more.

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"Drive-by professional development is not the way to build capacity."

—Dr. Sheryl Abshire, Calcasieu Parish Public Schools, Lake Charles, Louisiana

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In an era of budget cuts, transitioning to the Common Core State Standards is challenging.

TECHNOLOGY IS ONE WAY ADMINISTRATORS CAN DEAL WITH LIMITED RESOURCES. Many schools face staff reductions and budget cuts while they are required to adopt the Common Core State Standards. Dr. Joe Clark, superintendent of Nordonia Hills City Schools in Ohio, described how his district has dealt with this challenge:

Over a period of four years, Nordonia Hills eliminated 134 positions. Changing the curriculum to conform to the Common Core requires a significant time commitment from teachers and staff. This stretched the district's resources and made coordination among schools even more difficult.

By using technology, Nordonia Hills was able to implement math and English language arts Common Core Standards for grades K–2 and high school math. The curriculum coordinator rolled out the following tools to aid teachers:

1. YouTube videos. These videos assist teachers as they work on curriculum maps.

2. TodaysMeet. This Twitter-like tool captures online conversations on different topics related to Common Core implementation.

3. Online newsletters and resources. The Nordonia Resource Center and Livebinder provide valuable resources for teachers as they transition to Common Core State Standards.

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"Teachers are overwhelmed. We need to recognize that people have a lot on their plate. By taking Common Core to the classroom, teachers don't have to reinvent the wheel."

—Dr. David Richards, superintendent, Fraser Public Schools, Fraser, Michigan

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Technology can play a major role as schools adopt the Common Core, but infrastructure must be developed.

Systems must be implemented that meet key requirements. To support the Common Core, many school systems are integrating technology into the classroom. Conference participants discussed their initiatives and concerns in this area:

1. The first step for many districts is creating a wireless infrastructure. Fraser Public Schools in Michigan implemented full roaming WiFi in all buildings and athletic facilities. The

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district encourages parents to attend sporting events, and WiFi enables them to multitask while watching games. Another school system analyzed where students congregate so it could tailor the new wireless network to users' needs.

2. **Successful technology programs can be expanded to accommodate the Common Core.** Arkansas launched the Environmental and Spatial Technology (EAST) Program in 1995, which uses cutting-edge technology in the classroom. Karen Eoff, district administrator and director at Southeast Cooperative Pine Bluff, explained that the program is being expanded. EAST Core integrates the rigor and demand of the Common Core to math and science.

3. **Some systems may not support online assessments.** Many leaders worry that their systems will not support online assessments related to the Common Core. In some cases, the network bandwidth may be insufficient. In other instances, the devices available to students may not be compatible with assessment requirements. iPads, for example, don't support Flash.

Other Important Point

1. **eDays.** When school is cancelled because of snow or other reasons, some districts are using eDays to compensate for missed seat time. During eDays, students receive instructions and assignments via the Internet.

Support and Motivate Your Staff to Embrace New Strategies

The Big Ideas

> Technology in the classroom will be more successful when based on a holistic vision and aligned with educational goals.

> The best conversations about technology and education are based on a common vocabulary.

> Leaders must defend their schools' visions and model the skills they want teachers to learn.

> Change is a developmental process.

> As schools integrate technology in the classroom, professional development is essential to support and motivate staff.

Technology in the classroom will be more successful when based on a holistic vision and aligned with educational goals.

ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS, AND STAFF SHOULD WORK TOGETHER TO INTEGRATE TECHNOLOGY AND EDUCATION. Teams must develop a vision, align actions with goals, and consider the bigger picture.

1. **Visualize the vision.** To rally teachers and staff around a common vision, it is helpful to have people identify terms that describe what they want students to be doing in school or how the school environment should look. Each person should explain why he or she selected particular words. One approach is to input the words into a Google Form and transform it into a Wordle word cloud that highlights the most frequently used terms. This exercise is a creative and effective way to create buy-in. The output can be used in staff evaluation forms and can drive staff development.

2. **Align technology systems with broader educational goals.** To get a better understanding of a school's or district's technology environment, it is useful for teams to brainstorm and identify all the technology tools in use, possibly using an app such as Bubble.us. Then the group should analyze which initiatives were systemically planned and aligned with the vision. Finally, the group should re-examine those that are not aligned to determine whether they truly support instruction.

3. **Assess how technology affects the whole team.** When schools and districts plan technology initiatives, they often don't think about the different groups that will be affected. A good exercise is to examine how new projects will affect various grade levels, the library, physical education, guidance, administration, and other stakeholders.

The best conversations about technology and education are based on a common vocabulary.

CREATIVE EXERCISES THAT USE PROPS CAN FACILITATE PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS. Change takes relationships, relationships take conversations, and conversations take time. To facilitate conversations about instruction, teams need a common vocabulary and vision. This helps administrators and teachers develop technology, leadership, and understanding.

Dr. Kevin Silberberg, superintendent of the Standard School District (Bakersfield, California), described three exercises that can stimulate discussions about new approaches to learning:

1. **Beach balls.** A multicolored beach ball is a good object to have during team discussions. Too often, people focus only on one aspect of a project, such as infrastructure or finance. To get out of these narrow mindsets, teams must interrogate reality and have critical conversations. A beach ball reminds people that they need to embrace all the "colors" or facets of an initiative.

2. **Tinkertoys.** An interesting exercise is to have team members sit in a circle facing away from one another and ask them to build a barbell with Tinkertoys. When each person is passed the bag of Tinkertoys, he or she must either add or remove a part; talking is not permitted. Inevitably, the team fails. However, if the group is given a clear vision and can collaborate, it will succeed. The same principles transfer to setting goals, a vision, and mission for school districts. When people collaborate and everything is aligned, reaching goals is much easier.

3. **Vacation photos.** People generate ideas more easily when they have a picture as a prompt. Silberberg recommends selecting a photo and sharing with staff why it illustrates how you are feeling. Photos draw out deeper thoughts that wouldn't be expressed in a different forum.

> "Beach balls get people off their color and start fierce conversations. Tinkertoys show people the goals you want to achieve. And vacation pictures cast that visual experience."
>
> —Dr. Kevin Silberberg, superintendent, Standard School District, Bakersfield, California

Leaders must defend their schools' visions and model the skills they want teachers to learn.

THESE ACTIONS HELP STAFF FOCUS ON ACTIVITIES THAT ALIGN WITH THE SCHOOL'S MISSION. School leaders must recognize that a vision guides what actions are needed, as well as what actions should not be taken. Chris Lehmann, principal of the Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, commented that administrators must turn down money that doesn't contribute to the school's vision. This means being willing to say no and to hold fast for the faculty.

In addition, leaders should model the appropriate use of technology, along with collaboration and communication skills.

Depending on the situation, Jen Sigrist, director of teaching and learning at Van Meter Schools (Van Meter, Iowa), makes a conscious effort to choose the right technological device to meet tasks. She believes that modeling this behavior is important for her staff. Josh Raub, manager of IT services at the American School in Japan, also noted that collaboration and communication skills should be modeled for teachers. A recommended book is *Managing Humans* (Apress 2012) by Michael Lopp.

> "You have to be willing to walk away from money if it doesn't align with the vision. Barring the door when necessary is really important."
>
> —Chris Lehmann, principal, Science Leadership Academy, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Change is a developmental process.

THE SUPPORT THAT TEACHERS AND STAFF NEED DEPENDS ON WHERE THEY ARE WITH THEIR ADOPTION. Academics Gene Hall and Shirley Hord developed the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM), which describes seven stages that individuals go through when faced with a new initiative.

Stage	Indicator
0: Awareness	I am not concerned about the change.
1: Informational	I want to know more about the change.
2: Personal	I want to know how this will impact me.
3: Management	I want to know how I am going to manage this.
4: Consequence	I want to know how this will impact my students.
5: Collaboration	I want to see how my ideas relate to others.
6: Refocusing	I have some ideas that might work even better.

The stage in which teachers and staff find themselves will dictate the type of support that is needed. This is an important consideration when structuring professional development activities.

As schools integrate technology in the classroom, professional development is essential to support and motivate staff.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CAN TAKE DIFFERENT FORMS, RANGING FROM FORMAL COURSES TO IMPROMPTU LEARNING DURING THE SCHOOL DAY. High-quality professional development helps teachers integrate technology in a meaningful way, focusing on educational content first. Conference participants discussed different professional development approaches their schools have taken:

1. Professional development must be embedded in the school day. Professional development can happen any time that a teacher gets support and learns how to better integrate technology into the classroom. At Burlington High School (Burlington, Massachusetts), for example, the student help desk is a resource where teachers can learn more about technology in an informal way.

2. Collaboration is a form of professional development. At the Van Meter Schools (Van Meter, Iowa), administrators changed the school schedule so teachers would have more collaborative time. Teachers have an hour a week for Professional Learning Communities. The school system doesn't provide any tech training. Instead, collaborative teams focus on what they want kids to learn and decide whether better teaching approaches exist, which may include technology.

   Jim Erwin, instructional technology coach at the American School in Japan, commented that some of his school's best professional development has come from teachers training their peers. They have developed the TTTT Program: Teachers Teach Teachers Technology.

3. Professional development also may be based on formal courses. At the American School in Japan, many teachers are taking CoeTail (Certificate of Educational Technology and Information Literacy) courses and becoming certified in Educational Technology and Instruction. The Calcasieu Parish Public Schools (Lake Charles, Louisiana) asks teachers to participate in a book study each semester to build reflective practices.

Other Important Points

Conference participants described a wide variety of online tools they use to motivate their staff. A few are described below:

1. Top Web 2.0 Tools. The American Association of School Librarians has created a list of the top 25 Web 2.0 tools. This is a good resource for teachers as they adopt new technologies.

2. Symbaloo. The Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency 8 in Iowa created a Symbaloo, which enables teachers to bookmark their Web 2.0 tools.

3. Florida Technology Integration Matrix. This is a good framework for teachers and administrators to discuss issues related to education and technology.

4. Diigo Lists. Diigo is an online tool that enables people to collect and curate links related to a specific topic. David Wells, principal of Underhill I.D. Elementary School (Jericho, Vermont), for example, created a Diigo list focused on Leadership to Mobilize Action.

Engage Technology Tools to Assist with Parent Communication and Involvement

The Big Ideas

> Social media increases community engagement by generating a dialogue between schools and parents.

> Through greater use of technology, educators can build more transparent schools.

> Parents should have a voice during every stage of a school's technology planning.

> Even with technology that enables remote connections, face-to-face meetings about technology remain important.

Social media increases community engagement by generating a dialogue between schools and parents.

TWITTER, BLOGS, AND FACEBOOK ARE VALUABLE COMMUNICATION TOOLS. Social media helps schools create platforms for continuous discussion that are accessible 24/7. Tools such as Twitter, blogs, and Facebook enable more people to get involved in conversations about important issues.

Patrick Larkin, assistant superintendent of learning in Burlington, Massachusetts, made the distinction between community involvement and community engagement. With community

involvement, parents show up but don't have a voice. In contrast, social media promotes community engagement, as more people are drawn into the conversation.

> "If social media can change countries, it can change schools."
>
> —Patrick Larkin, assistant superintendent of learning, Burlington, Massachusetts

Conference participants described how they have leveraged technology tools to enhance parental communication:

1. Twitter. At Burlington High School, Twitter has become an important communication tool. The school has a Twitter hashtag so teachers, students, and parents can participate in online discussions.

   Dr. Kevin Silberberg, superintendent of Standard School District (Bakersfield, California), also uses Twitter to push information to parents. With his smartphone, he takes pictures of classrooms and the curriculum, writes a couple of sentences about them and posts them to Twitter. The tweets are then published to the school website.

2. Blogs. Many teachers at Burlington High School maintain blogs. Parents love these because they can see what is going on and stay in tune with the school.

3. Facebook. School Facebook pages are another way to engage parents in real time. Dr. Silberberg described how Facebook was used to communicate with parents when a gunman was on campus in Carlsbad. Both Facebook and Twitter helped get the word out to parents quickly.

Through greater use of technology, educators can build more transparent schools.

> "Parental buy-in can lead to greater input into the mission. That's a profoundly awesome thing."
>
> —Chris Lehmann, principal, Science Leadership Academy, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

When parents have greater visibility into their children's schools, they are more likely to buy in to the mission. Thanks to online tools, both teachers and students can publish information for different stakeholders to consume. This content gives parents a completely new window into their children's schools.

Chris Lehmann, principal of the Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania noted that when parents have greater visibility into schools, they are more likely to buy in to the mission. Once that happens, the nature of parental involvement changes, and parents often do even more amazing work for the schools.

Parents should have a voice during every stage of a school's technology planning.

THIS INCLUDES BRAINSTORMING, COMMITTEES, AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT. When it comes to technology in the classroom, all stakeholders, including parents, should be on the same page. Conference participants described different approaches they use to bring parents into the planning process:

1. Use technology to facilitate online brainstorming. Linoit is a tool that can open up conversations with parents. Educators have the ability to moderate and approve posts before they appear online. Tools such as this make it possible to provide all stakeholders with anywhere access to brainstorming and to inspire them to participate.

2. Engage parents in discussions about device usage. Both Patrick Larkin and Chris Lehmann commented that they have frequent conversations with parents about balancing the time that students spend online and offline. Many kids say they need to be online all the time for school, but that is not the case. Administrators want parents to know that laptops or iPads should not be a dividing factor in their families.

3. Invite parents to participate in school technology committees. Some schools have asked both parents and local businesses to participate in their technology committees. This helps educators develop a shared vision for how technology can be used most effectively in the classroom.

Even with technology that enables remote connections, face-to-face meetings about technology remain important.

THESE ENCOUNTERS GET PARENTS INTO THE SCHOOLS AND GENERATE ENTHUSIASM FOR TECHNOLOGY AND LEARNING.

While technology enables remote interaction, conversations about technology don't always have to happen online. Many

districts use regular in-person meetings as a way to increase parental involvement in technology. Ways that districts are doing this include:

1. Monthly parent nights. Burlington High School hosts a monthly parent night where teachers show parents how social media can be used as a resource.

2. iPad training. The Napa County Office of Education in California has implemented a Summer Bridge Program to prepare children for kindergarten. iPads play a central role in this program. Children can bring their iPads home, as long as parents participate in training on the device and applications. Home access to the iPad has been a compelling reason for parents to come into the school, get training, and become more involved.

3. Technology showcases. Some schools invite parents and the community to technology showcases. In these forums, they discuss program challenges and successes. The forums also provide an opportunity for kids to demonstrate technology to parents.

> "We told parents that students could only take the iPads home if they came to training. We never saw such high participation from parents, even those who don't speak English. It was a compelling reason to come in."
>
> —Dr. Barbara Nemko, superintendent, Napa County Office of Education, Napa, California

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