Shared Vision and Rationale

Valerie Hyder

ITEC 7410 Technology Leadership and Vision in Schools

Spring 2017

Dr. Michael Ribble

*Keywords*: technology, teachers, vision

**Vision Statement**

Technology influences nearly every aspect of our lives. Our reliance on technology increases with each passing year. In schools around the world, teachers are working tirelessly to find creative new ways to engage today’s 21st century learners. For students to succeed in today’s world, all stakeholders must unite to work toward a common vision of technology usage in education. Technology should be used consistently within schools as a tool to enhance the learning experiences of all students. Technology use should focus on engaging students in challenging, creative, and thought-provoking ways. Classroom technology use should include real-world learning situations, in which students take control of their learning. Using technology consistently in these ways will help students acquire the necessary skills required to be successful through graduation and beyond.

**Rationale**

“Technology allows for an unprecedented level of personalized learning, with valuable opportunities to monitor progress and engagement, follow student thinking, and digitally assess competencies” (ISTE Essential Conditions). Adairsville Middle School’s current mission statement reads, “The mission of Adairsville Middle School is to educate all 21st century learners through providing them experiences that will allow them to understand the past, learn from the present, and flourish in the future” (AMS School Improvement Plan, 2016). Adairsville Middle School principal, Dr. Brian Knuchel, describes his vision for AMS as “teachers becoming technology facilitators and using technology for activities to encourage real-world problem solving” (B. Knuchel, personal communication, February 2017). This vision can be supported and made a reality with the proper use of a variety of digital resources. Creighton (2003) says that “…technologies have to potential for such support, and with appropriate instructional leadership by principals, technology can be an effective catalyst for educational reform” (p.46). To achieve the success possible by incorporating technology, teachers must rethink the ways in which they have done things in the past. Students must be at the center of all instruction and begin taking control of their learning by using tools that would be essential to the real world. The ideal scenario would have students using the technology, and not just the teachers. For effective change to occur, quality professional learning must be provided to teachers and administrators. Creighton (2003) states, “With careful planning of professional development programs, principals can successfully fulfill their significant and powerful role in improving teaching and learning” (p. 49).

In the fall of 2013, Adairsville Middle School opened a brand new, state of the art facility. Each classroom consists of an ActivIspire Board, projector, slate, document cameras, and high speed wireless internet access. Additionally, each teacher and student was provided with a MacBook Air laptop. While AMS is fortunate to have access to such a wide variety of technology, these resources are not being used to their fullest potential primarily because teachers have not received proper training. Some of the primary uses of technology include the use of programs such as IXL for math and language arts, Socrative and Kahoot for formative assessments, and programs such as iMovie, Prezi, and Powerpoint for students to create digital products. While most teachers want to incorporate technology effectively, but many would benefit from quality professional development that in order to use technology to promote higher order thinking skills and ensuring that students are meeting the content standards.

One of Adairsville Middle School’s goals has been to improve overall student engagement by use of technology. Dr. Knuchel states that “although AMS does not have a formal technology vision, I see technology as a way to enhance student engagement. We must use it to help our students be successful 21st century learners” (B. Knuchel, personal communication, February 2017). In order for Adairsville Middle School to achieve this vision for student engagement, a constructivist approach to learning would be beneficial. By using this approach, teachers are not constantly relaying information to students. Instead, they take on roles such as facilitator, guide, and co-learner. Within these roles, teachers provide opportunities for collaboration among students and encourage problem solving by modeling for students what the work might look like. Students then have the opportunity to connect new information with prior knowledge. According to the Edutopia team (2008), “When technology is effectively integrated into subject areas, teachers grow into roles of adviser, content expert, and coach” (p.1).

**Diversity Considerations**

It is essential for schools to consider all possibilities of a digital divide and determine ways to ensure that a divide does not exist between subgroups, whether referring to gender, race, socioeconomic status, and educational ability. Boser (2013) states that “…black students were more than 20 percentage points more likely to use computers for drill and practice than white students (p. 2). All students should be given the same opportunities to master content and show what they have learned. Dr. Knuchel’s future aspirations for Adairsville Middle School include using technology to provide equitable access to all students, including those with specials needs and those from diverse backgrounds (B. Knuchel, personal communication, February 2017). One of the ways AMS addresses this is by providing all students with a MacBook Air laptop, and eliminating the $25 fee that was previously required in order for students to take the laptop home. At AMS, all students are held to the same standard, meaning that all are capable of performing a variety of tasks in order to meet content standards, but some may need differentiation. As a technology leader and coach, it is imperative that teachers understand the importance of providing students with equal access to technology use in their classes. Whatever the learning situation may be, all students should be held to the same high standard and all should be given equal opportunities to use a variety of educational technology tools.

**Stakeholder Roles**

According to Creighton (2003), there are three tips for successful technology leadership. First, all stakeholders must be involved in the process. Second, the focus should be on how technology can impact curriculum for the better, and not just on the technology itself. Third, provide extensive teacher education, not simply a few trainings here and there (p. 65). If all teachers are aware of the school’s vision for technology use, it is easier for them to accept what is happening and give more opportunity for them to get on board.

Administrators play a vital role in ensuring that the technology vision for a school is successfully achieved. They must provide opportunities for teachers to receive professional learning that is useful, beneficial, and can be directly applied to their classes. According to Dr. Knuchel, “The best professional development happens when small groups of teachers meet and are actually participating and doing something.” He continues, “Most teachers won’t use a tool they have not tried. Delivery and practice are essential for effective professional development” (B. Knuchel, personal communication, February 2017). To achieve his vision, teachers would benefit most from hands-on training opportunities in which teachers can utilize tools and resources to create meaningful lessons that can immediately be implemented in their classrooms. Furthermore, teachers would be able to participate in ongoing training in order to continue learning new skills. It is the responsibility of administration to ensure that we are provided with up to date technology and the funds necessary to maintain equipment, tools, and resources.

Adairsville Middle School must share one technology coach with the other middle and high schools in Bartow County. In order for schools to truly attain the vision that each has for technology use, each school should have their own technology coach. Another approach would be to enlist teachers at each school that are proven technology leaders. Many teachers at AMS became frustrated when technology use became a requirement, and teachers only had the opportunity to meet with the technology coach twice per month. It is important that funding be provided for more technology coaches that can encourage, model, and help establish effective technology lessons for all teachers.

Teachers must assume the responsibility of providing a meaningful education for all students through technology use. They are responsible for teaching students how to utilize digital tools, as well as model good digital citizenship practices. Teachers must “advocate, model, and teach safe, legal and ethical uses of digital information and technologies…” (ISTE Standards for Teachers). Teachers must be open minded about trying new methods and follow more of a constructivist approach in which students are free to explore, problem solve, and collaborate. There are many ways for teachers to assess students through the use of Web 2.0 tools such as Socrative, Kahoot, and Formative. Ideally, teachers will allow students to explore topics of interest and teach students how to collaborate. For example, students can hold discussion though the discussion board feature on Schoology, Bartow County’s learning management system.

Parents and other community stakeholders can promote a positive outlook on technology use in schools by educating themselves on the possibilities technology can offer students. Adairsville Middle School incorporates several different approaches to involve parents and other community members in the activities at the school. A technology showcase is hosted annually at the school. Students have the opportunity to display what they have accomplished through technology use and the possibilities that technology has on their education and their future. Adairsville Middle School uses social media to communicate with parents via Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Remind, Schoology, and the AMS website. Parents are encouraged to attend events and subscribe to all newsfeeds, and take an active approach to their students’ education. It is the responsibility of all stakeholders to support and encourage students to become true 21st century learners.

**References**

Adairsville Middle School*: School Improvement Plan 2016-2017*. (2016). Adairsville, GA: Bartow County Schools.

Boser, U. (2013). *Are schools getting a big enough bang for their educational technology buck?.* Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED565372.pdf

Creighton, T. (2003). *The principal as technology leader.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Edutopia Team (2008). *Why integrate technology into the curriculum?: The reasons are many.* Retrieved from https://www.edutopia.org/technology-integration-introduction

ISTE Essential Conditions. (n.d.) ISTE. Retrieved from https://www.iste.org/standards/tools-resources/essential-conditions

ITSE Standards Teachers. (2008). Retrieved from https://www.iste.org/standards/standards/standards-for-teachers

**Appendix**

1. In what ways does our school assess effective technology use in regards to student learning?
2. How do you envision our school using technology in the next five years?
3. How do we continue to successfully implement new technology in our school?
4. What professional learning can be offered to teachers in order to continue successful technology integration?
5. How do we use technology to enhance student learning and engagement?
6. What can we do to more effectively address equitable access for all students at our school?
7. Ideally, what role does a technology coach play in the future of our school’s technology integration?
8. How do we effectively involve parents in our plans for technology integration?