Practice vs. Pedagogy: The Battle Over Technology in the Classroom

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Introduction

Educational technology leaders of today are faced with a growing demand to integrate increasing amounts of technology into their learning environments. The Lighthouse School District is one of those districts where technology leaders are in the strategic planning process (Bleakley & Mangin, 2013) trying to come up with a strategy for the seamless integration of technology into their district. Unfortunately, from the superintendent to the students, there is a significant amount of confusion over what the actual goals and plan should be. Furthermore, there are some individuals who don't agree with the introduction of any new technology into the classroom environment (Bleakley & Mangin, 2013). The goal of this paper will be to detail the challenges facing the Lighthouse School District, discuss a possible courses of action, and to discuss the ISTE Connected Learner Connected Learner (ISTE, 2019) conceptual framework and standards to see how those relate to my personal learning environment from a technology leadership perspective.

Part I

The Lighthouse School District is facing a number of challenges in their strategic planning sessions regarding the integration of additional technology throughout the district (Bleakley & Mangin, 2013). The first and most obvious challenge is that teacher buy-in and participation in the strategic planning phase has been less than enthusiastic. According to Cuban (1986) and Ertmer (2005), teachers are on the front lines of the struggle between practice and pedagogy and their support is critical to overall success and implementation of any solution. The second challenge is that the new superintendent, Mr. Howell, has provided a mission statement that is vague and not sufficient to provide the district administrator, Mr. Phuture, with the

required direction needed to move the process forward in a productive manner. The third challenge is an apparent lack of interest from those most likely impacted by the planned technological implementation: the students and teachers. In a district with over 10,000 students there was little student or teacher representation in the first planning meeting. In addition to a lack of participation from students and teachers in the first meeting, there was a loss of faculty engagement between strategic planning meetings. Finally, the entire planning process has been plagued by a lack of technological acumen in tracking the activities and capturing the views of the participants.

As part of an action plan going forward, I would recommend a series of steps to address the challenges faced by the Lighthouse School District. First and foremost, I would recommend a wide-reaching effort, through a series a face-to-face meetings, to talk with teachers at all levels to not only listen to their concerns regarding technology being implemented in their classrooms, but to address the question as to whether or not (or how) technology should play a role in their classrooms. Next, the superintendent, Mr. Howard, needs to provide Mr. Phuture with a more detailed vision of what his overall goals are in this endeavor. Mr. Howard has expressed serious reservations with the futuristic and high-level statements provided by Mr. Phuture (Bleakley & Mangin, 2013) and it is obvious that additional clarification is needed. Next, there needs to be more clarity around the use of personal technology by students in addition to the addition and implementation of more technology. There don't appear to be policies around the use of personal technology, and these should be tightly coupled with policies around any new technology. Administrators and teachers will need to work closely to define a set of acceptable use policies for both types of technology. Finally, I would recommend a documentation solution that includes revision control to ensure that collaboration information is not lost and, if it is, the information

could be easily recovered. Part of the success of any centralized documentation solution will be training in how to use the documentation tool. There would also be substantial value in familiarizing administrators, faculty, students, and parents with any new technological solutions that are planned for implementation well in advance of their roll out.

Part II

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has provided a set of standards for educational leaders (ISTE). The Connected Learner is one of those standards that is described as leaders who "model and promote continuous professional learning for themselves and others". In my current workplace the implementation and integration of the component parts of the Connected Learner would take on many forms.

As the lead network engineer, it is my responsibility to coordinate product updates with companies like Cisco, Palo Alto, Juniper and other vendors in order to ensure we meet the goal of remaining current on technological trends and new product rollouts. This ensures that all engineers are educated on each vendor's technological advancements. These sessions take the form of a face-to-face session or a Zoom/WebEx session with the vendors on a quarterly basis.

A popular method that I like to use within the networking team to promote collaboration, mentoring, and learning is through the use of "Brown Bag" sessions. These sessions are held online via a Zoom session because the networking team is dispersed around the country. A "Brown Bag" session is one where an engineer is allowed to choose a topic relevant to the environment and then this engineer will give an hour-long instructional session on the topic. This also leads to a question and answer session where there is an exchange of ideas and details. It also gives the presenting engineer a sense of agency and ownership.

A critical facet of any technology team is the documentation of all work that is being completed or in cases where extensive troubleshooting was undertaken to resolve an issue. We accomplish this through the use of the tool Confluence. This allows the team to reflect not only on work that has been completed, but also on troubleshooting scenarios that the team has undertaken over the years.

A major requirement in the network engineering field is that of certification. Each vendor offers several certification tracks and part of every network engineer's annual plan is to either work towards or achieve the next certification level in their specialty. This promotes a mindset of self-improvement and continues the professional and technical growth of all team members.

References

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