A Plan for A Technology Plan

Harper’s Choice Middle School

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This is a plan for a long-range technology plan for Harper’s Choice Middle School. Our teachers will be receiving new laptops in the fall, and the student computer lab and mobile labs were upgraded this year. Our school needs a plan to help us become a school where technology is integrated within the classrooms, allowing students to create a variety of products that will engage them in their learning.

Stakeholders and the Process of Change

The first step towards creating a plan will be to speak with the school principal and ask for her ideas about her vision for technology in our school. Ms. Brown has only been at our school for 2 years, and firmly believes that all decisions made at our school should be in the best interests of our students. She recognizes that our equipment can be used in more engaging ways throughout the building but has not expressed specific details. An administrative perspective is beneficial when choosing which programs are chosen for school-wide use by staff, and required in the approval process. In addition, any innovations that are developed by the committee will need to be endorsed by the administration if the program is to be widely used by staff members.

At our school, there is currently no written technology plan. There was a plan in the past, but the technology committee has been non-functional for several years and the plan is unknown and outdated. Our media specialist serves in the role of overseer of technology, but when asked about a current technology plan, she only referred to obtaining the new student computers and updating the teacher computers. Our media specialist is proficient in computer use but does not train teachers in more than the basic uses, and calls the technology support for any hardware or software issues. For a variety of reasons, school staff morale has become low this year, and teachers are not interested in spending more time on the job than they already spend. Our class sizes have gotten large as our staff has decreased in size. Looking at Ely’s Conditions of Change (1999), many of our teachers are not ready to adopt any innovations; they are not dissatisfied with what they are doing nor do they have the skills to change their techniques. At my school, both the media specialist and data/technology assistant possess few advanced skills in integrating Web 2.0 applications into the classroom, and there is no one easily accessible or with extra time available to help with training other teachers. Therefore, Ely’s first 4 conditions necessary for change are unmet for much of the staff at HCMS (Ely, 2001). As identified in the adaptation stage of the ACOT model, a small group of teachers are beginning to change the way they teach as well as incorporate technology tools to help them teach (Dwyer, Ringstaff, & Sandholtz, 1990). These teachers are also willing to share what they have done with other teachers in the school and help them in their learning process. These teachers are through the first 5 of Ely’s conditions for change, and they have the commitment to use their time to strengthen their skills.

Very few teachers at Harper’s Choice use Web 2.0 tools regularly in their classroom. Our students are better with computers than many of our teachers, so by encouraging teachers to use them more often they will make better connections with students and students will learn more. A technology plan that will move our teachers forward with technology will help engage our students, which will in turn help with classroom management issues. Parents are supportive of technology in the classroom when there is an learning component to the activity. Ultimately, we plan to improve the overall attitude of our students, atmosphere of our school, and high-stakes test scores.

Creating a Technology Committee

Staff members, parents, and students will be invited to join a school technology committee. By using a variety of staff members, the committee will be able to find out what the Harper’s Choice teachers want their students to be able to do with technology, bring that information back to the committee, and help choose a focus that will be beneficial to our teachers. Our student population is diverse and I would like to include three students who are representative of all student groups and grade levels. Our students have a wide range of skills; I believe that a diverse student group will enable the committee to develop tools that will engage all levels of students. I see the parents’ role as one of advisors, fundraisers, and “cheerleaders”. We need parents who will support the committee, become liaisons between the staff and the parents as we innovate instruction, and instill responsibility in our students as creators of knowledge. Last, I would like to contact the Bright Minds Institute to see if they have a volunteer to become a community/business partner on the committee. If we could have 1-2 community representatives that are familiar with our school and school system policy, we will be able to correctly place computer technology in more student homes.

With administrative approval, I would like to offer the committee morning meetings with continental breakfast, and substitutes for hall duty and homeroom so that our meetings can last until 8:10. At these meetings, I will offer “door prizes” of small supplies (mouse pads, memory sticks, etc) that can be obtained inexpensively or donated. Last, and with approval, I would also like to offer each teacher active on the committee priority to any newly obtained equipment. This committee is a key part of creating the technology plan; they need to be rewarded for their efforts.

Writing a Technology Plan

The first task for the technology committee will be to develop a vision statement. The vision statement will outline the role of technology in our school and how technology will be used specifically in classrooms in the future (Anderson, 1996). The vision statement will also describe the level of proficiency that students will achieve in each grade level, 6,7, and 8, using the guidelines of the MD Technology Plan of 2012 (MD State Board of Education). The vision statement will include the role of the community in technology in the school as well as the future of technology in education at Harper’s Choice.

After the vision statement is finished, the committee will work on a mission statement. The mission statement will describe how we will accomplish the goals set forth in the vision statement. The mission statement will specifically describe how technology will be used to help students learn in the classroom. It will describe how learning with technology is different and how the staff at Harper’s Choice will continue to develop and implement new lessons to increase student achievement. The mission statement will also work to match the students at Harper’s Choice with appropriate instructional models (Anderson, 1996; Frazier & Bailey, 2004).

The committee will compile data on the demographics of our school population as well as the Harper’s Choice neighborhood. Since our school is significantly different from the other schools in Howard County, the committee may also choose to look at county averages for comparison (Anderson, 1996). Household income will be included, with subsets from each of the feeder elementary school neighborhoods. There is a large disparity between students who attend Clemens Crossing Elementary compared to students who attended Longfellow and Swansfield Elementary, and the committee may or may not choose to include this data in their report.

Once these statements are written, the committee will work together to collect initial data to find out what the teachers already know, and what the students know, about using technology appropriate for the classroom (Anderson, 1996; Frazier & Bailey, 2004). An open-ended survey, using Survey Monkey, is easily distributed to school staff through CLC. All staff can be asked to bring their computers to a faculty meeting so that everyone can answer on administrative time. Teachers can be asked about the programs they use, the programs they would like to learn, and about their formal training with technology (Anderson, 1996; Frazier & Bailey, 2004). Student data can be collected using an online performance-based test, which will determine student skills with basic programs such as Microsoft Office as well as collecting their opinions on what they would like to see in classrooms. Data can also be used from the MD state technology test given to seventh grade students each year. All this data can be compiled and summarized by the committee to use in the technology plan. The same tests can be repeated as often as every year as a way of monitoring progress toward our goals.

The vision, mission statement, and data will be used to list specific goals – the end result of implementation of the plan. These can be used to create write objectives that will help fulfill the goals, and create a timeline of when interventions will take place, how often data will be collected (Anderson, 1996). These objectives will be based on the objectives for Howard County and obtained through the CLC.

Addressing Critical Issues

The technology committee will be divided into subgroups in order to address several key issues related to the implementation of our technology plan- funding, equipment, and implementation. One group, including at least one parent and/or community member, will look into possible sources of funding for obtaining new equipment. This group will investigate sources of grant funds within the county as well as nationwide grant proposals. The group may or may not go ahead and write at least one of these grant proposals as well.

The equipment group will include teachers who are able to determine the equipment already at the school and equipment needs and desires of the teaching staff. This group will investigate options for purchasing equipment and determine the costs and suppliers for the equipment. At least one member will need to be in contact with the Technology Department within the county to obtain a list of approved vendors for equipment and county discounts that may be available.

The last group will create a timeline for implementation of funding proposals, equipment purchases, and professional development sessions for teachers. Attempting to do all this at once is overwhelming to all; a timeline will assist in a gradual rollout of technology for staff and students. This group will also consider incentives for staff participation as the plan is implemented; rewards such as extra planning time will improve morale and ensure success with teachers (Anderson, 1996).

Evaluating the Technology Implementation

The committee will work together to plan ways to evaluate the progress of staff, students, and the plan as a whole. The survey created during data collection can be used to monitor progress (Frazier & Bailey, 2004). The committee can also determine ways to measure student and staff attitudes, a critical factor at this time at Harper’s Choice. The plan will not be successful without creating a positive atmosphere at our school with regards to technology; the staff will be more responsive with a positive attitude. Another point to consider will be publicizing the technology improvements within the local community as a way to improve attitudes, gain recognition, and possibly obtain funding. A timeline for periodic evaluations can be developed so that evaluation is ongoing along with the implementation of the plan.

Sample Technology Plans

One example of a middle school technology plan is the Hill-Gustat Middle School Technology Plan 2007 – 2010 found at <http://tinyurl.com/3tcqedh> . This plan is detailed and specific to their school in Sebring FL. Not only is their plan well written, but also the school appears to be demographically similar to Harper’s Choice. The plan is outlined with all the sections recommended in the *Guidebook for Developing an Effective Technology Plan* (Anderson, 1996). The mission statement is clear and the vision statement is written in the form of beliefs that are specific to their school. Their list of needs is specific and attainable. The goals are specific and divided into sections for ease of reading and evaluating. The Hill-Gustat Middle school plan is very detailed when discussing current technology networking and the support given by the school district. One drawback to their plan is that the timeline for implementation and evaluation is difficult to find within the sections, and is often vague. Some of their goals are very specific, such as: “Staff and students will demonstrate an understanding of concepts underlying hardware, software and connectivity”, while others are very specific, such as “Staff and students will navigate computer systems (organize documents into folders on h: drive, move between different applications, use program help and navigation aids” (Douberley,2007). In addition, the school appears to be heavily dependent on district and federal funding, with only small mention of possibly obtaining additional funding on their own.

Another excellent plan is the Aldrete Middle School Technology Plan, 2009-2012 (Aldrete Middle School, 2009). This is a rural school with 100% lunch assistance. The plan outlines the current situation at their school in great detail, with specific examples of how different teachers currently use technology in their classrooms. The current ratio of students to computers is 0.8, yet this school is continuing to revise its plan in order to continue to grow with the technology proficiency. An excellent feature of the plan is that it presents its goals, strategies, person responsible, timeline, budget source, and evaluation method in table form, so it is easy to see the responsibility of each staff member and the timeline for each. These strategies are very specific and detailed for their school. Another resource within the plan is the appendix, with links to district-wide resources. The vision and mission statements of this plan, however, are somewhat vague and could apply to many middle schools in this country. The inventory list appears incomplete: it lists current computers, but no other equipment such as projectors, video players, etc. (Aldrete Middle School, 2009). This equipment is mentioned throughout the plan, and should be included in the current inventory list. All in all, this is an excellent layout for a plan and one to consider incorporating into the HCMS plan.

A third plan to review is the Clark Middle School technology plan (Clark, 2009). This plan appears to be a graduate school project, but its use of technology to present the plan is a good presentation tool, for presenting an overview to the school community or district representatives. In addition, it includes an itemized list of equipment purchases, with a timeline and costs. This plan also includes very specific professional development plans for staff, at both the school and district level. Allison Clark, for Clark Middle School, authors the plan with no specific location, so it appears likely that the school does not actually exist. Specific data for the school is not included with the plan. But the goals, equipment budget, and professional development plans are excellent references, as well as the presentation itself.

Conclusion

This is a plan to create a technology plan for Harper’s Choice, not a plan itself. The technology plan can be written during the 2011-2012 school year. The committee can be invited to participate during the summer months and possibly begin work with school administrative funds for teacher pay if available. Professional development opportunities and grant proposals can be ongoing and begun during the 2011-2012 year as well.

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