How Administrators Are Using Technology for More Effective School Operations
The above quote was referenced in a Connections magazine article by David E. Whale titled “The New Technology Standards for School Administrators: Findings from the First Large-Scale Survey of High School Principals.”

The article explores in depth how school administrators are using technology for more effective school operations. The conclusions are based on standards established by the Technology Standards for School Administrators (TSSA) Collaborative, an organization of school administrators that includes the American Association of School Administrators, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the National School Boards Association.

The title of the TSSA Collaborative’s report is “Technology Standards for School Administrators.”

The TSSA report and the Connections magazine article that studied how the TSSA report has been implemented both emphasize that administrators are making a mistake if they delegate how technology is implemented to middle-level administrators and teachers. The report and the article emphasize that the ultimate objective of effective school operations is to maximize the performance of students. Consequently, they emphasize that school administrators should be very involved in how technology is used.

“The effective 21st Century administrator is a hands-on user of technology,” the TSSA report says. “Much of the benefit of technology is lost for administrators who rely on intermediaries to do their e-mail, manipulate critical data, or handle other technology tasks for them.”
School administrators should not only be knowledgeable about technology, but they should also be very hands on in making decisions about what technology their schools should use, according to the two reports. Many schools have technology directors, but they should be advisers and not decision-makers.

The TSSA report concludes that principals who “effectively lead integration of technology” should also decide the budget of their schools’ technology resources and make sure that technology support services are “adequate, timely, and high-quality.”

When school leaders make it clear that technology is important, their subordinates are far more apt to pay attention to how technology can improve school operations and make recommendations about how technology can be used effectively. That includes teachers who can use technology to help students learn.

"Principals play a big role in setting the climate of a building." Cathy Chamberlain, a technology consultant in the Oswego (New York) City School District, told Education World magazine in an article titled “The Administrator’s Role in Technology Integration.” “Teachers who are on the fence -- or think they don't have time to get involved with technology -- think twice when they sense a positive attitude on the part of the administration.”

**Surveys Show What Is Being Implemented**

The Connections article reports that the Southern Regional Education Board, which is one of the organizations in the TSSA Collaborative, finds that school administrators can improve the operation of their school if they use technology to, among other things:

- Communicate with parents and others who are stakeholders in the outcome of a school’s education process.
- Analyze and collect data to improve what educational resources and teaching methods improve student academic performance.
Improve their schools’ long-term planning. This means that technology should help determine future school building projects as well as staff development. A new technology lab, for example, could spur the school to redesign the building so some offices and classrooms are expanded, while others are eliminated. A new setup could result in administrators and teachers using space more effectively and performing better.

The TSSA report outlines how superintendents, district program directors, and principals can use technology to improve operations in six fields -- leadership and vision; learning and teaching; productivity and professional practice; support, management, and operations; assessment and evaluation; and social, legal and ethical issues.

The TSSA report also shows how a specific superintendent, curriculum director, and principal use technology in their day-to-day work to improve their job performance and the efficiency of the school. Throughout its report though, the TSSA emphasizes the importance of principals. So does the Connections article, which quotes an education expert as saying that a principal’s leadership is “analogous to a conductor with an orchestra.”

“The building principal remains the crucial linchpin to adoption and use of technology,” the report says. “When principals do these tasks well, higher student achievement can result.”

The TSSA surveyed 346 high school principals in Michigan to find out how often its 16 standards in the six fields were being implemented. The data shows that:

- **Principals were most likely to “advocate for adequate, timely and high-quality technology support services.”** Ninety-eight percent of respondents said they were doing this.

- **Ranking second on the list at 97 percent was adhering to and enforcing policies and procedures related to security, copyright, and technology use.** Ninety-seven percent of respondents said they were doing this.
Roughly 90 percent of the principals said they adhere to two of the other 16 standards. One of them is using “current” technology to access and maintain personnel and student records. The other is promoting “highly effective” technology practices among their employees, including their teachers.

Ranking fifth at 82 percent was using technology to communicate with peers, experts, and the public. Sixth at 81 percent was allocating technology resources so teachers can help students learn. Seventh at 78 percent was promoting the use of technology to analyze data so student performance will improve. Eighth at 77 percent was using technology for professional development.

Ranking ninth at 73 percent was “I participate in an inclusive district process through which stakeholders formulate a shared vision that clearly defines expectations for technology use.” Ranking 10th at 72 percent was "I participate in the development of faculty plans that support and focus on health and environmentally safe practices related to the use of technology."

Four standards were implemented by between 61 and 66 percent of the surveyed principals. They dealt with developing a technology plan that was aligned with the school district’s strategic plan (like the technology lab for a bigger building scenario outlined earlier), allocating funds to improve the technology plan, helping teachers analyze how technology helped their students, and helping the staff’s performance improve by “sharing work and resources across commonly used formats and platforms.”
What Educational Leaders Can Accomplish

Finding tips on how teachers can use technology is easy. Check out these “Six tips for classroom technology success.”

Finding tips on how administrators can use technology is far more difficult. That’s partly because “most superintendents do not see technology as their job,” according to Keith Krueger, the CEO of the Consortium for School Networking in Washington, D.C., in “Why Superintendents Need a Vision for Technology” – a summary of results from superintendent interviews and surveys.

Chris Kimball, who was promoted to superintendent in Lake Washington, WA after being the school district’s technology officer, told Krueger that educational leaders can accomplish quite a bit via technology. He said he used technology in budgeting, implementing programs systematically and efficiently, and improving learning and teaching.

The school district published a book called “Every Student Future Ready: Prepared for the Global Workplace, Prepared for Personal Success” that emphasized how technology can help students learn.

Education World has a 40-person Tech Team that “discusses how they think principals and other administrators can optimize technology use in their schools.” One of their credos is that administrators should “model, model, model” for teachers and other employees. Basically, they believe that administrators who show that they know how to use technology for administrative and curriculum functions create an environment that encourages others to use technology. This optimizes the efficiency of school operations.

“The technology specialist for Richards Elementary School in Whitefish Bay, WI suggested using e-mail rather than printouts for memos on important issues"

Mary Kreul, a member of the Tech Team, gave Education World a list of ways that administrators can use technology to improve school operations. The technology specialist for Richards Elementary School in Whitefish Bay, WI suggested using e-mail rather than printouts for memos on important issues, using the school’s Web page more regularly and effectively, and using technology for grading and attendance records.
Tech Team member Caroline Salerno, an Internet trainer at Bretton Woods Elementary School in Hauppauge, N.Y., told Education World that all teachers should create a class web page, all lesson plans should be submitted via e-mail or disk, and teachers and administrators should attend technology conferences to increase their knowledge of what technology can do for students and schools.

Tech Team member Patrick Greene, a Florida Gulf Coast University education professor, suggested weekly training sessions for all teachers that would culminate with each participant writing a comprehensive plan on how to implement technology in the classroom. Kreul agreed that learning the educational benefits of technology is crucial to staff development and suggested that each school have a “technology integrator” to help teachers.

“Administrators should make budget and personnel decisions that ensure that the school’s technology is up-to-date and in good working condition,” Kreul added.

Tech Team member Jennifer Wagner, a technology coordinator at Crossroads Christian School in Corona, CA gave Education World a list of what school administrators need to know, need to do, and need to provide. Her suggestions include rewarding teachers who use technology, making sure that their schools’ computer equipment is up-to-date, and urging school boards to fund computer improvements.

Fortunately, administrators are also awarded when they use technology to improve their school operations. EdSurge awarded five administrators the 2014 Digital Innovation in Learning Awards. The winners included a woman, Barbara Nemko, who offered families of schoolchildren the opportunity to learn more about technology, and a man, S. Dallas Dance, who was pivotal in creating a 5-year strategic digital environments plan for the 173 schools in the Baltimore County Public School system.

“Being an administrator is a tough job, but administrators make all the difference when it comes to leading schools and districts towards innovation and change,” wrote Chelsea Waite and Mary Jo Madda of EdSurge. “The administrator winners of our 2014 Digital Innovation in Learning Awards are inspiring examples of change managers, showing what it means to both lead and learn at the same time.”

SOURCES:
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