

Preparing School Administrators to be Technology Leaders

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Abstract: This paper discusses the connection between leadership for technology in schools as documented in the Technology Standards for School Administrators, and accepted wisdom for leading systemic educational change. The information is of particular interest to programs designed to prepare school and district administrators.

Using technology well across a school system is, in itself, significant systemic reform. When technology is appropriately integrated system-wide, work is different and who does what work changes. With the infusion of technology, tools change, learning resources are different, and learning environments are transformed dramatically. Supported by modern information technologies, communication changes, and decisions are made very differently. Educators and school leaders who understand technology and its roles in schooling and in society establish new priorities, and they highly value new learnings.

The single most important element for success and sustainability of systemic change in education is effective leadership. Evidence gathered from study of organizational change in general, and change within schools specifically, is consistent and very clear on this fact. Effective leadership of school change is the essential condition to successful change.

It is a tiny leap of logic and faith, then, to conclude that effective leadership for technology in schools is critical to success and sustainability. In fact, direct evidence arising from major systemic technology initiatives serves to confirm the important role of leadership. And it is precisely this observation that attests to the incredible importance of the administrator standards projects of the Collaborative for Technology Standards for School Administrators and of the ISTE National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) Team.

Within a framework of effective change characterized by:

- a shared vision and clear expectations,
- support strategies and essential conditions,
- ongoing, broad-based assessment and evaluation, and
- meaningful and substantial response to assessment and evaluation findings,

ISTE National Educational Technology Standards for Administrators, or NETS*A, present a rich package of guidance and support well positioned to return optimal educational benefits on our technology investments.

Effective technology leaders understand the roles technology plays in schools and in society. They establish a shared vision among all stakeholders that succinctly captures the expectations of the school community for a focus of technology use in the enterprise of schooling. Through an emphasis on standards and benchmarks, the administrator clearly and frequently reminds all involved of the expectations of them related to technology.

System conditions related to access and connectivity, supportive policy, modern infrastructure and technical support, expectations of continuous improvement, standards-based curriculum, student-centered learning activities, and community support are priority concerns of the administrator committed to providing necessary system support to achievement of technology expectations.

Using a wide array of sources, strategies, and measures to assess and evaluate achievement of the shared vision for technology within a system of schools, the technology leading administrator keeps both self and colleagues-in-leadership in touch with an authentic picture of progress. The administrator leads staff and stakeholders in collaborative review and interpretation of data and information pertaining to technology use and school effectiveness.

Finally, in the fourth critical phase of this cyclic formula for leadership of educational change, the effective technology leading administrator guides an inclusive process of establishing and executing responses to assessment and evaluation findings.

So, the bottom line? The picture for leading effective integration of technology is coming into sharp focus, and our best guide is knowledge we already have in our grasps about successful and sustained systemic change in education.