

Creating the Vision for Technology

As an educational community, we recognize that the role of technology has changed in our lives and therefore believe its role in the classroom should evolve as well. The District's leadership is committed to identifying innovative practices that will enrich learning experiences while preparing our students for life in a world that is ever changing. Our goal and expectation is for the integration of technology to become as ubiquitous as pencil and paper in our classrooms. The Irvington Board of Education has adopted a goal that strives to advance technology in our schools: Assess the use of technology in instruction and develop a coherent K-12 technology curriculum action plan and begin implementation where possible. As with any instructional goal, the strategies, practices and approaches have already begun to emerge; it is how we build our foundation and models.

The early assessment by school leaders is that we must begin to consider how the perception of the educational environment must shift as a result of the influence of technology on society. We believe that by maintaining a focus on student learning and instructional design, we can have the most significant impact on student experiences. Through the implementation of pilot programs in technology-rich instruction and the exploration of new technologies, we will be able to more effectively assess the needs that are present in our schools while being able to identify impactful opportunities.

How the Think Tank Informed Our Thinking

In the spring of 2013, District administration facilitated a Technology Think Tank to begin to engage the school community in meaningful dialogue about the prospect for teaching and learning in the 21st Century. Among the topics discussed were *Infrastructure, Access and Equity, Instruction, and Professional Development*. This forum motivated us to consider how we should begin to explore the benefits that can be had from the implementation of innovative instructional practices. One goal of the Think Tank session was to identify areas in our District where educational technology pilot programs would provide opportunities for both innovation as well as impact on instruction and learning. Based on discussions and recommendations from the initial Think Tank meeting, we have initiated work on several pilots:

- Flipped Classroom - A cadre of teachers (6-12) are participating in an immersive professional development cohort designed for developing lessons and delivering instruction using the "flipped classroom" model. Based on the success of the first cohort, a second cohort has been planned for the spring.
- Google Apps - We are preparing a rollout of our Google Apps For Education (GAFE) domain. Students and teachers will be given Google accounts under our own private Irvingtonschools.org domain. The GAFE suite of tools (including Docs, Spreadsheets, and Sites) will encourage collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving.
- BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) - Infrastructure upgrades have already been put in place to support the introduction of BYOD through the creation of a wireless network at the Campus. This greater level of access to technology in our classrooms can provide our students with learning opportunities that were previously not possible.

- Chromebooks - Chromebooks provide an easily manageable and cost-effective option for extending and maximizing the potential for collaboration that GAFE provides. We are exploring pilots of Chromebooks in a variety of learning environments and models (one-to-one) to determine their optimal usage.
- Tablets (iPads) - Initiatives involving iPads have already been kicked off at the elementary and secondary levels. Additional possibilities are being identified and developed for pilots that are perfectly suited to leverage the advantages of tablet technology.
- 3D Printing - A Makerbot printer was purchased for our STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) program. This initiative is a first step towards providing students with opportunities to connect with the "Maker Ed" movement where students focus on creative solutions to STEM-related concepts.
- Quad Village Technology PD - In partnership with the other three districts in the Quad Villages and the Edith Winthrop Teacher Center, we are participating in a locally-developed technology professional development initiative. This program will provide our teachers with the opportunity to gain hands-on experience with content-specific educational technologies and to share best practices with their peers.

Next Steps

Based on the success of the initial Technology Think Tank, the group will be reconvened on February 6th to continue to develop the ideas and work that started with the initial kickoff meeting. The goal of our work will be to develop a framework for a District Technology Action Plan that will identify specific goals and span a three-year period.