TOP 10 THINGS

SUPERINTENDENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ED TECH

1 INSTRUCTION DRIVES PURCHASING

Your district's mission statement, technology plan, and instructional goals should drive technology purchasing and implementation decisions.

Involving a team in purchasing decisions (superintendent, school board, curriculum director, tech director, teachers, students, etc) can help to ensure that technologies being considered support district goals.

A process of gathering curricular desires also helps to communicate technical realities. Technical difficulties in the IT department should never drive device decisions.

2 SHAPING VERSUS BLOCKING

Network management means making value decisions that maximize the amount bandwidth you have.

Bandwidth usage over a school network can be "reshaped" throughout the day to meet instructional requirements.

Some school districts have been using distance delivery with dramatically less bandwidth than recommended (down to around 200 Kbps vs recommended 4 Mbps up/down).

3 BEWARE OF THE CLOUD

Technology solutions that promise to run "in the cloud" or run on "old architecture" should be well researched before purchasing, particularly if being considered for use in a rural school with low bandwidth.

4 GET A ROAD MAP

Your network documentation is most likely out of date and inaccurate.

Creating a road map of a school's network and its components (servers, computers, tablets, wireless access points, building wiring, etc) will help to provide an overview of how the system functions and establish a refresh schedule.

Any technology director should be able to provide this.

5 BANDWIDTH SUPPORTS INSTRUCTION

How your Network Administrator manages and prioritizes traffic on the school network determines what options teachers have to use in their classrooms.

For example, if there are two-way interactive classes during periods 3 and 4, a large portion of available bandwidth may be diverted to that use during those times.

The trade off to this approach is that it would remove bandwidth opportunities from other classrooms, so daily instructional planning must be carefully considered.

6 HAVE EXPECTATIONS

Minimum expectations for technology leadership should include:

A well communicated written set of processes and procedures for technology use available to staff and students.

A well communicated and accountable system of providing support service in a timely manner (i.e. problem resolution within XX minutes, 100% of the time, time when problem will be addressed to end users, etc).

A communicated system for up-to-date network documentation and provider contacts.

A method to self-assess the technology department's performance.

A documented district refresh schedule for end users and network.

A plan to move forward that is realistic, active and based on district goals.

A system for updating the information on your communication systems (website, email, phone system, broadcast systems, etc.)

7 DON'T DEDICATE, CONSOLIDATE

Instructional software and other educational content that is stored on dedicated servers can often be consolidated onto a single server,

This simplifies management and saves the energy costs of running multiple servers 24/7.

8 RELIABLE SOLUTIONS ARE BETTER THAN MACGYVER-ISMS

When addressing technical barriers, there is, most probably, a work-around for every issue.

But when teachers need workarounds for their instruction, it most likely is a sign that faculty do not have the classroom focused support of the technology staff.

Technology should support instruction, vs restricting and dictating curriculum.

9 DON'T WATCH WATER BOIL

The effort needed to "monitor the network" by school personnel is minimal.

Once certain parameters are set, network monitoring is an automated task that notifies support when there is an issue.

10 THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Your technology department should be a source of innovation. Fear should not be a driving force in technology decisions.

Therefore, a standard position to difficult problems they pose could be:

- "How can we innovate to get to our goal?"
- "Your position is one way we could go. What other options have you explored?"
- "What is another way to do this that costs less and gets us the same or better result?"

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The Consortium for Digital Learning has the knowledge, experience, and network of partners to provide services that can assist and advance your district's educational goals.

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