



Promising Directions for Staff Development

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What are the promising practices for staff development around technology integration and emerging technologies? I see three promising directions.

Develop a Community of Learners

Help district and/or building educators form a community centered around their professional practice. Take advantage of technology to develop this community with online collaborative tools. With a community of learners, you can make staff development a continuous process rather than isolated trainings. If you have online professional development available, you can approach 24/7 help. In any case, your professional development will be personal and focused.

Getting everyone up to speed on the latest learning theory can start the process and allow more recent graduates of teacher preparation programs to shine. (Much of the current research on the brain and learning has been in the past decade.) Next, engage in the process of curriculum mapping and developing essential questions. These processes cannot be done in isolation and can help forge school and/or district community. Discussions and debates about appropriate and ethical use, equity of access and opportunity, and advocacy should also involve all stakeholders. At some point, smaller communities focused on grade levels or subject areas need to branch off to engage in action research projects, analyze available data, share information and how-to's on tools and resources, and develop projects.

Embed Technology

Ensure that technology is part of all the staff development you offer as you examine current

theory on how students learn. Look at how technology can support inquiry-based curriculum around essential questions. Include how technology supports research-backed instructional strategies, inquiry and project-based learning, teachers getting to know their students, student metacognition, and content learning. Educator groups can investigate each of these for their subject areas and grade levels along with promising technologies for their particular subject areas. "Identifying Key Research Issues" on p. 18 highlights promising technologies for four subject areas.

Employ Mentors

Mentors can foster not only technology integration, but also inquiry-based learning and other effective instructional strategies. This allows technology coordinators to spread expertise faster than they can do by themselves. Evan Glazer and Kathy Page discuss the ins and outs of collaborative apprenticeships on p. 10.

Wide-scale introduction of new technology-based systems, such as new computers, new student information systems, or new electronic whiteboards might call for specific technology-focused trainings. But in general new applications should be introduced in relation to specific curriculum goals. This type of staff development requires a collaborative effort among administrators, curriculum specialists, and technology coordinators, including those focused on infrastructure and instructional computing. It is certainly a collaboration that benefits students and teachers, takes advantage of technology as an accelerator for change, and moves forward school reform efforts.

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