Shared Vision for Technology at Dalton Middle School

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Vision Statement

We envision a learning environment where students are engaged in rigorous activities that are authentic, meaningful, and require higher-order thinking skills. We believe that technology is a tool to enhance and aide in more effective and efficient collaboration, communication, learning, and teaching.

We believe that technology will:

- Dissolve the walls of the classroom.

- Provide a 24/7 learning atmosphere.

- Provide immediate access to the Internet to all students at all times.

- Allow and promote collaboration and communication between students, teachers, and parents.

- Provide a launching point for student-directed inquiry.

- Promote creativity in the visualization and creation of digital products used to show learning.

- Promote continuous learning for all involved (students, teachers, administrators, parents, community members).

Rationale

Dalton Middle School is a school that is continually encouraging the staff and students to embrace new technologies and innovations that not only support our vision and mission as a school, but also challenge us to think outside of the box with which we are most comfortable to find what is truly best for our stakeholders. The vision statement

above is one that was crafted as a possible future vision statement that combines the

school's current vision statement with that of the technology department for the district.

       The vision for Dalton Middle is one that takes the school beyond the idea that

technology is a magical tool that can increase student achievement by merely being

present, but that it must be used in a manner that supports student-centered learning at a

higher level (Creighton, 2003; International Society for Technology Education, 2008).

As determined by the results of a school survey that was presented to the staff of Dalton

Middle School, 78% of teachers are requiring students to utilize technology in their

classrooms two or more times a week. When asked what the students are doing during

that time, the most popular answers were research and assessments (27% for each

answer). The data from this survey points to a conclusion that teachers are in need of

training for effective methods to use technology in the classroom. An example of an

effective method is offered in an article on Edutopia (2008) that suggests Project-Based

Learning is a strong research-based strategy to integrate technology in a meaningful way

and have students using higher-order thinking skills to solve real-world problems.

Training and implementation in Project-Based Learning would ensure that teachers are

aware of how to effectively use technology to have students show higher-order thinking

skills when completing assignments (Edutopia, 2008).

       When given the chance to share their voice, many teachers commented in the

survey as well as in person that they would like to be given stronger support and training

to utilize the technology that is available to them, such as the learning management

system (LMS), Canvas, that our district uses. In our school and district the walls of the

classroom are beginning to soften as more and more teachers are becoming comfortable

using the LMS with their students. Eventually this will lead to students being able to work through the curriculum at their own pace with teachers there to guide and facilitate their work as they are involved in engaged learning tasks (Creighton, 2003). This would mean that a student may be sitting in a seventh grade room, but working on eighth grade curriculum if they have mastered the seventh grade curriculum.

Through the use of the LMS and a 1:1 initiative, students will be able to have constant access to their "classroom" and will be able to communicate and collaborate with both their teachers as well as peers. This also opens the door for parents and teachers to have a more open-line of communication as the parents are able to see everything the student is working on and turning in for the class. In my experience using Canvas, the students have benefited from the ability to communicate with the teacher outside of the regular school hours as they explore and complete assignments. In addition to these positives, Lemke, Coughlin, & Reifsneider (2009) concluded that the strongest benefit of students having constant access to 1:1 devices is the improvement in student writing skills due to the ongoing writing that takes place and the network of resources and publication options that the Internet provides.

Another common theme from the survey results was for training to take a current lesson plan and enhance it with technology. The survey showed that our teachers are not afraid to try technology in their classrooms, but they lack the training to know how to use it in their everyday lessons and feel successful. Boser (2013) conveys the idea that technology can be one of the greatest tools in differentiation if the teacher feels comfortable in personalizing the lesson using technology to meet the needs of the student and content.

Diversity Considerations

Our school and district are working to complete a 1:1 initiative. Currently all high school students have the option to "rent" a netbook, five teams within the middle school have 1:1 devices, and several grade levels at the elementary level also have 1:1 devices. Each of our schools are classified as Title I schools and therefore are able to use some of these funds to help provide the technology needed to help our students and teachers be successful. As new devices are distributed, the school is working to ensure that all students have equal access including ELL, ESS, gifted, and regular education students. By providing devices for our students the socio-economic lines of the school are blurred and each child has equitable access regardless of their background.

Stakeholder Roles

Each person or stakeholder in Dalton Middle School plays an important role in seeing this vision come to fruition. The administrators are responsible for overseeing the technology implementation and improvement plan as directed by Creighton (2003). It is also the role of the administrators to identify qualified personnel to lead staff development and serve as instructional technology coaches within the school. This is a position that does not currently exist in our school, but is needed to ensure the success implementation of current and future technologies. The technology coach will investigate new technologies and help facilitate teachers in effectively utilizing them in their classroom so that student achievement is increased and high expectations are held.

Teachers will collaborate with each other and the technology coach to discover new technologies that will benefit their content and classroom. They will be open to new ideas and possibilities to ensure students are working at their maximum potential utilizing

higher-order thinking skills to solve real-world problems. Teachers will use technology on a regular basis in their classroom to enrich the lessons and encourage student creation of digital products to showcase their learning.

The students will be actively engaged in the learning process and encouraged to explore beyond the material presented by the teacher to create their own knowledge outside of school. Students will communicate with their peers and the teacher to clarify questions and discuss the content further. They will also be utilizing a variety of Web 2.0 tools and devices to create digital products.

The parents will play an active role in the education of their children. They will join on as a parent observer on Canvas to see what their child is experiencing in their classes and have conversations with their child and the teacher about assignments, content, or assessments. Parents and other community members will feel comfortable in providing suggestions for future improvement in the effective technology usage at Dalton Middle School to prepare students for their futures.

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