

Regular Board Meeting – February 21, 2012

SUBJECT: TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

OVERVIEW

The technology team is responsible for providing reliable and easy-to-use technology access for all District 68 students, teachers, parents, and staff. To this end, the team of five people manages the network infrastructure, student data, professional development, and classroom equipment that serve the district.

The team has grown to meet the demands of a school system that is increasingly dependent on technology. In the 1990's, District 68 relied on a patchwork of employees and consultants for technology support. In 2001, a full-time Network Administrator was brought on to support all of the servers, network equipment, and computers. At the time, there was one computer in each classroom (130 computers). In 2006, the district transitioned to the student information system *Power School* and realized the need for a full-time Student Database Manager to ensure the integrity of the data and handle all data reporting and data transfer between systems. Data requirements have increased to the point where we currently have student data in 10 systems and 17 reports going to the State each year. In 2008, the district added a full-time technical support specialist for the SMART Board roll-out and increased user demands.

Currently, the district has over 1,000 pieces of equipment to maintain including computers, printers, interactive whiteboards, document cameras, and servers. In 2010, as more equipment entered classrooms, the district needed to provide professional development on integrating technology in the curriculum as well as using SMART technology. A full-time Instructional Technology Manager was added to meet these needs and thoughtfully choose the right tools to support curriculum programs, interventions, data analysis, and collaborative work. In 2011, a part-time Director of Technology was hired and the technology team was formed to include all of these roles. Protocols such as weekly team meetings, shared projects, and shared knowledge were put in place to make the group of skilled individuals into an effective team. This summer an Instructional Technology Specialist will join the team to provide STEM instruction at OOJH and support teachers across the district.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMPUTING

District 68 uses an online ticketing system for users to log technical issues. A team member, most often the technical support specialist, will then respond and address the issue. This is the primary way in which teachers interface with the technology team. The technology staff uses the ticket system to identify problem patterns, schedule work, and improve support. In 2011-12, initiatives focused on improvements in the following areas: responsiveness, availability, and preventative maintenance. For example, we have staggered technology staff hours so that we are available at 7:30 a.m. before school starts until after school hours at 5:00 p.m. We also work to automate and streamline processes. For example, our technical support specialist wrote a script to automatically turn on and log in all computer lab machines with one click. This is especially useful for MAP testing.

Behind-the-scenes work goes into all of the applications used in District 68. The database manager maintains *Power School*, the on-line registration and parent access functions, state reporting, conference scheduling, testing roster setup for MAP and ISAT, and all other data requirements. In 2011-12 we will be upgrading *Power School* to a new version that improves customization and reporting abilities.

Also behind the scenes, the network administrator maintains the phone system, servers, network equipment (12 network equipment closets connecting all computing equipment in the district), and security infrastructure (firewall, content blocking for students, spam/virus filtering). In 2011, the network administrator installed a new backup system and e-mail archiving system that provide assurances for all district data. Also in 2011, all major school servers were replaced and configured so that our users have over 99% uptime.

Finally, the behind-the-scenes work of the technology director involves much of the planning for initiatives outlined in the 2011 Revere audit. The Revere audit set in motion a plan to outfit all schools with robust wireless connectivity in preparation for a teacher laptop rollout in August, 2012, and student use of mobile technology in the near future. By 2015, we expect to have a one-to-one computing environment for grades 4-8.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

District-wide initiatives guide professional development for all teachers. In 2011-12, teachers attended three sessions of job-embedded, technology-related professional development. The training sessions focused on skills to support curriculum initiatives (such as the K-5 new math series *Math in Focus*) and district goals (such as improved collaboration and productivity with the Google Apps rollout). For example, a district goal to foster global collaboration became training on the use of Skype to connect with classrooms abroad.

Student learning in technology is provided primarily through our Library Media Centers. In 2011-12, the instructional technology manager and LMC directors revised the technology curriculum scope and sequence for grades K-8. This will serve as an additional guide for professional development of teachers in 2012-13.

CONCLUSION

Technology is moving at an accelerated pace in District 68 as we strive to create the infrastructure and organizational readiness to meet the needs of the 21st century learning environment. The Technology Department has expanded as it supports the ongoing demands of an increasingly complex and interdependent public school district.