Chapter 77
Implementing the Professional Development Program

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ABSTRACT

As education is transformed through technology, teachers must be armed with knowledge and the capability of using technological tools to strengthen and enhance learning environments. Technology is the vehicle that assists in delivering meaningful and deeper educational experiences in today's classrooms. However, not all teachers are comfortable or competent in successfully integrating technology into their curricula and classrooms. School's technology plans now have an obligation to include professional development as an integral component that ensures technology integration training for faculty, staff, and administrators at all educational levels. Implementation of effective professional development requires technology leaders to formulate plans employing various methods and incentives to motivate teachers to learn the importance of technology integration while giving them the necessary equipment and support to effectively utilize technology in their content areas.

INTRODUCTION

Through quality professional development programs, educational institutions at all levels improve the effectiveness of teachers by equipping them with up-to-date technologies, methodologies, and knowledge. Through this knowledge and skills, teachers are prepared to enhance and strengthen the learning experiences of students. As technology continues to improve and becomes more readily available at all schools and in most homes, today's students are tech savvy and want their educational experiences to have the technology integrated into their classrooms. Technology is now an integral part of our daily lives. Routine tasks such as shopping, banking, paying bills, etc., are accomplished by using a computer and the Internet. Technology should also be an integral part of classrooms as well. Presenting a PowerPoint presentation during a lecture is not enough to transform a teacher-centered classroom to a student-centered learning environment. Technology is not intended to

replace effective classroom teaching strategies. Technology should be integrated into content to motivate and engage the multiple learning styles of students (Keengwe & Onchwari, 2009).

Students are no longer satisfied with the passive role they take when the teacher lectures. Students now want an active role where they are the center of the classroom with their teachers as facilitators, guiding and supporting them through learning experiences. Acting as facilitators, teachers integrate mediation, modeling, and guidance while enriching their learning environments and experiences for shared communication and team building. Research supports using technology as tools to aid in deeper learning for students (Keengwe & Onchwari, 2009).

This chapter discusses methods of implementing effective professional development programs regarding technology integration. Technology leaders must ensure support of the administration, faculty, and staff at all levels to develop and implement meaningful and motivational professional development. Professional development plans represent the heartbeat of a quality technology plan. Access to the proper equipment is necessary, but teachers are the ones who must actually integrate technology into their classrooms. Administrators and technology leaders must develop professional development opportunities that entice and encourage teachers to learn and use technology that pertain to their content areas.

METHODS OF IMPLEMENTING THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Professional development related to technology integration in classrooms is currently experiencing needed changes. Technology skills are no longer just for those who teach computer programming or application skills and are necessary for all teachers at all levels (Plair, 2008). Over the last few years, standards have been created at local, state, and national levels that mandate technology integration in the classrooms. The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has called for technology integration and has issued National Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS-S) as well as National Technology Standards for Teachers (NETS-T) (International Society for Technology in Education, 2008). Major reforms are needed to successfully integrate technology in classrooms. Professional development training is playing an important role in reforming education by offering training for teachers who are technologically challenged. Designing and implementing quality professional development programs that better prepare teachers to integrate technology into their classroom can be a daunting task for those involved in the process. Educators must not lose sight of professional development's primary goal to improve students' learning (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, & Shapley, 2007). Professional development programs must provide the technological and pedagogical components that prepare teachers for tech savvy students. According to Keengwe and Onchwari (2009), "Integrating technology tools into instruction refers to the process in which technology is used as a tool to actively support the tasks of teaching and learning" (p. 210). For professional development programs to be effective, key elements must come together. Teachers' motivation, administrative support, proper equipment, and technical support are among those key elements. Technology leaders must ensure that administrators and teachers who use technology effectively should take advantage of all opportunities to model that technology use. As more and more teachers and administrators adopt technology and share the benefits, others are more apt to follow.

Importance of Modeling Effective Technology Integration

As teachers become more comfortable with integrating technology into their classrooms, they

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