

Case Study Two

Modeling Effective Technology Use — A Principal's Day

Authored by Russell Clukey

Edited by Suzie Boss

For school leaders, technology offers a variety of tools to use throughout the school day. This case study follows an elementary school principal through a typical day, tracking technology use along the way.

As you read about Principal Ferguson, look for strategies that model and support effective technology integration. These include:

- *Using technology to improve productivity, communication, and school management goals*
- *Accessing evaluation data that tracks and measures teacher and student progress*
- *Encouraging students and teachers to use online educational resources*

Getting Started: Utilizing Technology to Improve Productivity and Communication

Upon arriving at his elementary school in Naples, Florida, Principal Tim Ferguson scans his identification badge into the door security pad and heads to his office to begin the day. The first order of business is to check his e-mail. After logging on, he reads and responds to a number of messages, reviews his daily calendar in the web-based management

Leadership Role: Principal

District Profile:

School Board of Collier County

Naples, Florida

Type - Suburban

of Schools - 40

of Teachers - 2,700

of Students - 40,000

% Free and Reduced Lunch - 44.4%

ISTE NETS-A Standards and Behaviors Addressed:

IA, IIA, IIC, IID, IIE, IIIA, IIIB, IIIE, IIIF, IVB, VB, VC, and VIC

system¹ on the district portal site, checks his online daily calendar, and then retrieves a presentation² from the school server.

Before the morning staff meeting, Ferguson wants to revise his presentation to insert some short video clips he took yesterday at school with the school's new digital camcorder. He also wants to add some new graphs that use data from the state department, central office, and building-level surveys. Both the videos and graphs will help to highlight current work toward the goal of Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) that is part of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. Last year, the school barely missed achieving AYP, and the principal and his staff do not want that to happen again.

Before heading to the 7:30 a.m. staff meeting, Ferguson pulls out his handheld computer to verify his 11:30 a.m. luncheon appointment with the student council members and their adviser. During the staff meeting, Ferguson encourages teachers to post comments on two topics through the school Web site. The District Strategic Planning Team for Technology is requesting feedback on the draft of the new District Technology Strategic Plan, and the school's Technology Planning Team has requested comments on and a prioritization of strategies for implementing the district vision for technology use into the school's Technology Plan. Ferguson uses a wireless projection device (mounted from the ceiling) to outline these two issues. He also reminds the staff that all items from the staff meeting will be posted on the school's intranet site.

After the meeting, Ferguson returns to his office and his e-mail. One message from the superintendent asks for data on state assessment test scores. Ferguson forwards this message to the counseling department and asks that they send, to the superintendent, an updated spreadsheet containing state assessment test information from the last five years. Ferguson suggests sending the information to the superintendent as a presentation, utilizing the graph feature during the explanation to show student achievement growth in the past five years.

Expanding Possibilities through Appropriate Technology Use

Later that morning, Rhett Langston, the school's Webmaster, comes into the principal's office and closes the door behind him. He presents the principal with a report of Internet usage he downloaded from the filtering software used by the district. Ferguson sees that someone has attempted to access a number of inappropriate Web sites. Ferguson then asks Langston to see if he can tell him which computer was used to attempt access, and the exact time. Once he receives verification of the computer that was used and the time it was used, Ferguson calls in the fourth-grade student who admits trying to access an inappropriate site. Ferguson schedules a conference with the student and parents, using the new Internet-based telephone system recently installed by the district, to inform the parents of their student's actions. He also outlines the consequences spelled out in school policies.

At the luncheon meeting with the student council, students ask Ferguson numerous questions. Students are curious about the new wireless wide-area network (WAN) the district is installing and the impact it will have on the school. Ferguson explains that the school will have increased wide-area connectivity going from the current 1.54 Mbs provided by the T-1 cable to 54 Mbs. This will allow students and teachers faster access to the Internet, as well as many of the centrally based district programs, including language and reading software³. Before he leaves the luncheon, the principal tells the students to e-mail him if they have further questions.

Measuring Results: The Efficiency of Technology Tools

After lunch, Ferguson grabs his wireless tablet and goes to John Garcia's room to do a classroom observation. Using the district's new wireless local area network (LAN) and WAN network, Ferguson downloads Garcia's lesson plan from the district file server and settles in to observe the class. Ferguson is excited to see that Garcia is using the lesson prepared as part of his Intel® Teach Essentials course⁴ in effective technology integration. Using a projection device (mounted to the ceiling) and a

document camera (integrated to the projection device through his computer), Garcia explains the objectives for today's class. Garcia's students are sharing their presentation projects with the entire class. Ferguson writes a rough draft of his evaluation, thanks and commends Garcia for his efforts, and heads back to his office to finish the observation report. After the final draft is complete, Ferguson uploads the report to the evaluation folder on the district file server and e-mails Garcia. He compliments the teacher for his effective lesson design and use of technology, and suggests a time for his follow-up conference.

The next stop on Ferguson's agenda: Special Services conference room. A Pupil Evaluation Team is meeting to develop an Individual Education Program (IEP) for a special needs student. One of the special needs inclusion teachers is running the meeting, and is using a tablet connected to a projection unit mounted on the ceiling. The inclusion teacher has accessed the student's records using the district's special education software⁵. All participants can view the draft IEP as it is projected on the wall. At the conclusion of the meeting, all participants sign off on the final plan, using the tablet and special software that allows people to sign their names on the screen. The IEP is then printed to a networked printer in the room, and the meeting is official and complete. Ferguson recognizes the value of this efficiency—the student will receive needed services as early as the next day. Instead of having to wait a month for the paperwork to be finalized, it is completed as soon as the meeting is finished.

As part of Ferguson's afternoon walk around the school, he checks in on the computer lab where second-grade students are working on math using special software⁶. Ferguson checks with Lisa Jones, the second-grade teacher whose students are in the lab. Ferguson asks her to prepare a report showing the progress of each student. The elementary school is currently involved in the budget process for next year and is looking to add more mathematics software licenses at the school. As Ferguson puts it, "This will only happen if the program is making a difference with our students." While the principal is walking around observing

students interact with the program, the teacher accesses the management piece of the software and prints a report. She has it ready for Ferguson before he leaves. She also tells him that she has sent him an electronic copy via the district portal site.

Meeting Goals All in a Day's Work

Ferguson checks his e-mail one more time in his office, responds to a request from the superintendent regarding a curriculum issue, shuts down his "work" technology, and heads home. After dinner, he logs onto his laptop, which he shares between office and home, through his broadband cable connection (that he has set up wirelessly in his home), checks his work e-mail, and then his personal e-mail. After responding to half a dozen e-mails, he does an Internet search, looking for information showing a positive correlation between the use of technology in early elementary school and student achievement. After sifting through many pieces of research, Ferguson finds a white paper written by the National Association for the Education of Young Children⁷ (NAEYC) entitled NAEYC Position Statement: Technology and Young Children—Ages 3 through 8. This information will be helpful for the principal's upcoming presentation to the school board. One of the board members has mentioned at the last two budget work sessions that the use of technology at the early elementary level (grades K-2) is not necessary and that the district could save some money in this area. Ferguson is planning to disagree at the next budget session and wants to be prepared.

As he prepares for bed, he sets his digital alarm clock and thinks to himself that this will be the last piece of technology he uses—until tomorrow.

Summary

Use of technology by principals in suburban areas is having a significant impact on both their management goals and the goals of improving teacher effectiveness and student achievement. It is helping to increase productivity and communication by allowing data to be accessed and

shared quickly. It is providing students with more information and learning resources, but also maintaining the ability to monitor and keep students safe. It is enabling principals to develop better management practices through efficient teacher and student assessments and the ability to produce immediate evaluation results. It also allows the administrator to plan ahead and be more prepared for the next day, month, and year. Effective use of technology starts by folding it into the work principals do every day; modeling its use, promoting it with teachers and students, and supporting its growth in the school.

About the Leader



Tim Ferguson (fergusti@collier.k12.fl.us) is the principal at Shadowlawn Elementary School in Naples, Florida. Before making his move to this Collier County school district, Ferguson was a teacher in Lee County where he received the prestigious Golden Apple Teacher award in 1992 for displaying teaching skills that transcend the norm. Ferguson's success as an instructional leader is the result of a clear and focused vision combined with a hands-on approach to leadership. As a leader, he models what he expects from teachers, staff, and students—high quality teaching and learning in an environment that celebrates the uniqueness of every individual.

Resources

¹ Novell GroupWise* software (www.novell.com/products/groupwise/)

² Microsoft PowerPoint* software (www.microsoft.com)

³ Read 180* software (<http://teacher.scholastic.com/read180/>), Earobics Literacy Launch* software (www.earobics.com), and Rosetta Stone* language software (www.rosettastone.com/home)

⁴ Intel Teach Program (www.intel.com/education/teach)

⁵ Excent* software (www.aacps.org/AACPS/BOE/INSTR/SPCED/excent.htm)

⁶ Riverdeep* software (www.riverdeep.net)

⁷ National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Position Statement: Technology and Young Children—Ages 3 through 8 (www.naeyc.org/resources/position_statements/pstech98.htm)