

Ten Steps to Effective Technology Staff Development: Getting Teachers on Board

by Barbara Bray

How do you develop a plan for technology use if teachers don't know what they don't know? A staff development plan that embraces a variety of learning opportunities based on individual learning plans is the most effective design for teachers to use if they are expected to transfer the use of technology to their classrooms. Design a plan where all stakeholders provide input. If teachers feel they have been heard, they will accept more ownership of the plan and feel pride in implementing it.

We need to consider the different learning styles of adults as well as students. Adults bring a highly developed set of beliefs about what is and what is not appropriate in a given situation. Any technology use has to be relevant to what the teachers are doing or plan to do with their students.

The following list includes ten strategies for making professional development at your school inclusive, meaningful, and specific to the needs of your particular teachers and students.

1. **Develop a staff development subcommittee** as part of the school technology committee with representatives from all departments, grade levels, the district office, and administration, and include outside experts, technicians, and students.
2. **Demonstrate some examples of how technology can be used** in the classroom. Then ask your staff for input. Use a form that asks them their needs, frustrations, fears, hopes on what they want to learn, and dreams and goals for their students as they relate to technology and their classroom. Brainstorm in small groups where they are now and where they want to be in the future, record results on flip chart paper, and post these results so everyone can refer to them.
3. **Use a needs assessment instrument** that follows the Teacher Technology Standards (ISTE) and that identifies comfort level and attitude about technology, basic technology use, and level of integration. Use this instrument to determine each teacher's present level of technology use. Have them choose three to five areas where they would like to see improvement by the end of the school year. As part of the needs assessment, you can also ask teachers to include a narrative on their technology use: where they are now, where they want to be, and what they need to learn to get there. Many times teachers do not know what they need to learn, so this step may need to be repeated during the year.
4. **Design individual learning plans (ILP)** compiled from the data collected from each staff member. As an example, if teachers list themselves as comfortable with technology but new at graphic design, have them create a project or template that can be used in their classroom as part of a workshop on importing graphics. The ILP can be a database with examples of suggested learning opportunities. Each teacher can access the database, add to it, keep a reflection log or journal, and post any projects they may want to share.

5. Identify the leaders at your site who can provide expertise. Offer stipends for planning time and any workshops they provide after school hours. Provide resources such as technology for research and development of workshops they design. Realize that for every hour of a workshop, it takes over two hours of planning. Do not forget to offer advanced workshops for their professional growth. You may even identify some students or business partners to be part of your leadership team. You may never know the areas of expertise available from teachers and students unless you ask.

6. Create a list of on-site learning opportunities with goals, objectives and outcomes. Provide collaborative time at least once a week where the trainers offer workshops and coaching. Also, build in release time for staff development such as peer-coaching, modeling lessons, team teaching, participating in a study group, shadowing other teachers, developing curriculum, "just-in-time" sessions, and previewing curriculum resources.

7. Share a list of off-site learning opportunities. Cover the expenses of conferences and workshops and provide substitutes for off-site school visits. Other opportunities include grant writing and reading, research projects, university classes, subscriptions to journals, access to the Internet and e-mail, distance learning and video conferences, zero-interest loans for computers, and videos, software, and laptop computers for check-out.

8. Build in time for grade-level or department meetings to plan and correlate standards with technology, develop activities, projects and lessons that include technology, classroom management strategies, and assessment instruments that evaluate student achievement and understanding. Include time for brainstorming, sharing, and developing materials. Add paid time in the summer for teams of teachers to collaborate and develop curriculum projects.

9. At staff meetings, share successes as well as expectations not met. Celebrate projects in school newsletters, press releases to local newspapers, faxes to parents, on the school Web site, at parent and board meetings, in a video that can be checked out at the local video store, and even on the local cable station.

10. Continue with ongoing planning and re-evaluating where you are and where you want to be. After you start using technology, needs change. Review and update the ILPs on a regular basis. Have teachers create a portfolio of their work and include examples of student work for dissemination. Ask students what they felt about using technology and how it affected their learning.

This approach takes money and time, but if you design and use these strategies as a team, it will create a feeling of "We can do it!" over and over again.

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