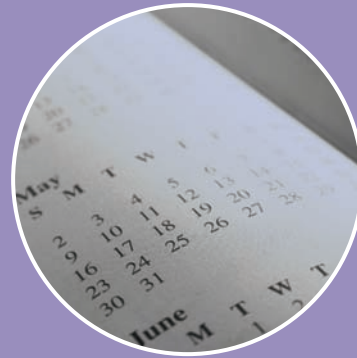


Technology Linked to Planning Educational Goals



Backgrounder Brief

We see all around us how technology is changing teaching and learning—as it is changing all facets of our lives. We have data that shows technology, depending on how it is used, efficiently and effectively supports student learning and the instructional process. Yet technology is not the end goal—it is but *one* component in an educational program. Technology use in schools must be clearly tied to educational goals. To that end, we need to focus on what we know (and do not know) about improving student achievement; what it means to have learning environments enhanced with technology for *all*; and how we will prepare students for success in the rapidly changing world of work.

Today, it is really all about measurable results, and your district's planning should certainly be focused on that. Technology makes letting students "do" easier than it has historically been. Technology can help teachers design effective learning activities that are more student-centered. In student-centered classrooms, the role of the teacher is more important than ever as a trusted resource and guide—albeit a changing one. And even for teachers who have traditionally taught using these "new strategies", technology-based tools can support teachers looking at the complete learning environment and can facilitate this kind of teaching.

At the forefront of our minds must be a continuous emphasis on ensuring that the benefits of technology are within the reach of all students and teachers. This requires thoughtful planning and policy in states and districts—and on individual campuses.

Student Achievement

A frequent question about technology in schools is, "Does technology improve student achievement?" One might counter with, "Do pencils improve student achievement?" In each case, it depends on what you do with them, how well you do it, and for what purpose you are using them. In





the complex learning environment, technology, pencils or other resources are but single components that contribute to the learning environment. Technology, as one such tool, can be an agent of change, supporting and even transforming more traditional roles of teachers and students and altering the walls of the classroom and school. Computers and telecommunications technologies enhance student performance by:

- Engaging and involving students
- Empowering students
- Fostering the development of higher-order thinking skills
- Ensuring student mastery

Educational Equity

Technology is not a rich resource in every school or for every student. We must continuously strive to develop technology-enriched learning environments for *all* students and teachers that support the achievement of our educational goals. Computers and other technologies:

- Erase the barriers of geographic distance
- Can reduce the disparities of economic status
- Can minimize limitations of individual student's abilities

Workforce Preparedness

No longer can the term "preparing students for the workplace" be just giving them a strong foundation of academic and social skills. The workplace has changed, and the responsibility of schools to prepare students has therefore changed too. In today's workplace, employers expect potential employees to:

- Have basic technology literacy skills
- Understand and use teamwork and communication skills

- Possess higher-order thinking skills such as problem-solving, synthesis, and analysis of information

Remember that it is not about technology but rather about instruction. As you work to link technology to educational goals, your continuing challenges include:

- Ensuring that teachers are mastering technology to support teaching methods and curricular goals
- Securing ongoing technical and instructional support
- Providing equitable access to technology for all students and teachers
- Developing strategies to improve student achievement with the technology you have available
- Developing evaluation plans for ongoing improvement
- Keeping pace with the rapid change of technology available on the market
- Working as teams

All of these challenges can be addressed through thoughtful planning.

Securing funding for technology comes with high stakes, too—high stakes for the decisions you make in purchasing, implementing, supporting, and maintaining your technology program. Districts have found that investing the time to evaluate the total cost of ownership of technology purchase and implementation has helped to focus their ed tech planning efforts. Technology plans should include a vision of how the application of new technologies can enhance teaching and learning in your district. They should detail steps and the accompanying budget necessary to successfully integrate these applications into the day-to-day operation of your schools. And last, but certainly not least...be ever sensitive to the fact that various stakeholders in the planning process have different "hot buttons" and that these differing perspectives must be acknowledged and considered on an ongoing basis for successful

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interactions among members of your team—this actually includes your students as well!

The vision for learning should be the driving force behind all decisions made regarding what technology to purchase and how it should then be used. Your thoughtful planning and purchasing will pay off in the years to come on that investment you are making now. And keep in mind that

effective planning for technology is a dynamic, ongoing process. Review, assess and revise as needed. Plans let you take advantage of technology innovations while minimizing negatives of unexpected challenges. The most successful technology plans are developed over time and are the result of collaborative efforts. And in the final analysis, it's not the plan...it's the process that ensures success!

This Backgrounder Brief is an executive summary of *Technology Planning Linked to Educational Goals*, a component of CoSN's Essential Leadership Skills series. CoSN, a national non-profit organization, is the premier voice in education technology leadership. CoSN's mission is to advance the K-12 education community's capacity to effectively use technology to improve teaching and learning through advocacy, policy and leadership development.

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