

From 1:1 to 1 to Won



During the past year, the ubiquitous computing or 1:1 movement has taken some heavy hits in the media, and I say it is about time. Oh no, here he goes again! Good, now that I have your attention, let's talk about what I really mean.

For at least the past 15 years, educators have been looking for the technology silver bullet that will ultimately transform the classroom and education experience for students. Along comes the 1:1 computing train. Innovative states and districts hop on board yet another model, saying it is the answer. However, they quickly find it does not deliver on the elusive promise any more than its less expensive predecessors. Puzzled and frustrated administrators, legislators, and parents rub their heads. Yet others enthusiastically proclaim "we just need to install more and wait for a longer period to see the results."

Doesn't this all sound frighteningly familiar? It should. We have seen this pattern repeated numerous times, and the reason is very simple. We are not changing the behaviors that create it. The issue of why 1:1 computing is not working has nothing to do with the technology, but rather the educational processes and culture around it.

For any technology initiative to truly be successful, you must address the culture, curriculum, and chores. Culture is the beliefs and values that drive the behaviors of an organization and community. Some are well known and quite visible while others are much more subtle. If you try to implement any change without addressing the effect on the culture, you will not be successful. You must understand and nurture the change the technology will have on the culture. It answers questions such as, "What is new and what isn't? Why must this change occur? How will life be different or better? What will change for me?"

Curriculum in its broadest context is the intellectual capital of the organization. It is the

written knowledge of what is to be taught. It also encompasses what is actually taught in the classrooms, which often is not what is captured in the written documents of the organization. It also embodies what is valued and learned by the students, which represents yet a third type of curriculum in many school districts.

Chores (borrowing from my Kentucky heritage) are the work to be done. These are the tasks and processes required for the work of "schooling" to actually occur. They encompass how information, including documents and communication, flows within the organization. They also look at aspects of workflow management for the various stakeholders, including rights and security access.

These segments are just the tip of the iceberg, but they are critical starting elements for implementing any major change successfully.

Do I really dislike 1:1 programs? No, I believe they have tremendous potential when implemented properly. This year, we launched our first 1:1 "proof of concept" program in the district. It is part of a two-year study where we will be examining the effects of the program on a variety of factors within the learning environment. The early results have been energizing and positively received by the community. Clearly the primary reason for these outcomes has not been the technology, the infrastructure, or the building design. It is because last year we began working with the team of teachers who would be there this fall, and said we were going to build a very different type of school. Together we created a vision where the culture, curriculum, and chores were designed to meet the needs of our digital age students in terms of rigor and relevance.

AS I SEE "IT"

By Don Hall

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