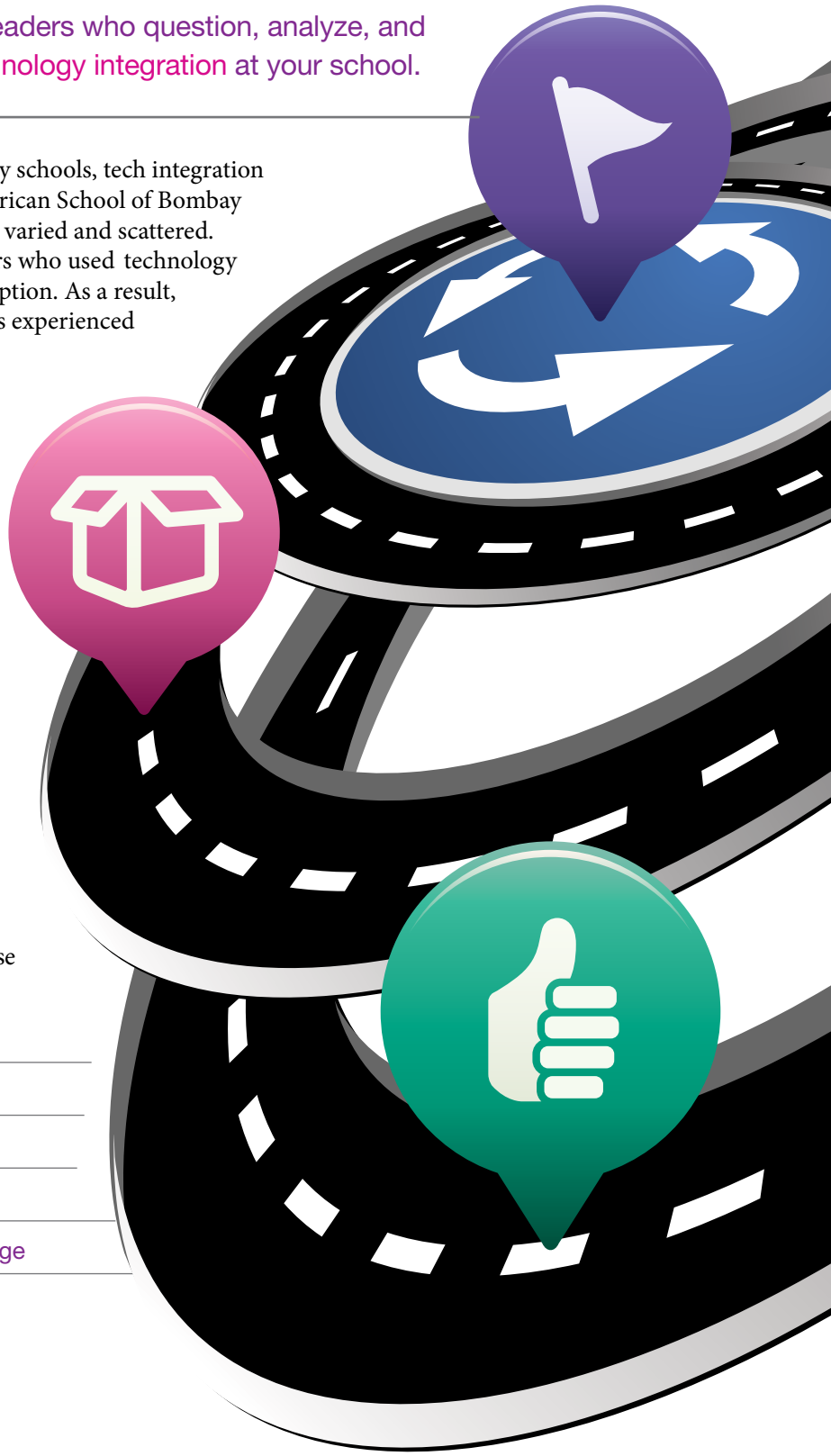
By Shabbi Luthra and Paul Fochtman

The Road to Lasting Tech Leadership

Create an empowered team of tech leaders who question, analyze, and help pave the way to a culture of technology integration at your school.



As with many schools, tech integration at the American School of Bombay (ASB) was varied and scattered. We had enthusiastic teachers who used technology in class, but they were the exception. As a result, just a small percentage of students experienced new ways of learning.

We wanted to turn the occasional use of technology into a widespread and sustained commitment to new forms of learning and teaching. We believed that stakeholder input would be the key to any initiative that improved learning, and that stakeholders must be involved in and take ownership of technology planning. We also knew that leadership would be critical to the success of our tech integration.

Even with a clear vision, it would take at least a couple of years to engage the staff and get them working collectively. And with the transient nature of an international school's students and staff, lasting school change would be even more of a challenge for us. Our tech leaders would have to deal with new systems and practices, new guidelines and plans, and conditions for change.

To build ownership of tech integration at the school, we adopted a distributed leadership approach with these essential elements:

- Technology leadership team
- Technology planning
- Commitment to fostering change
- Test-bed culture
- Commitment to sustaining change

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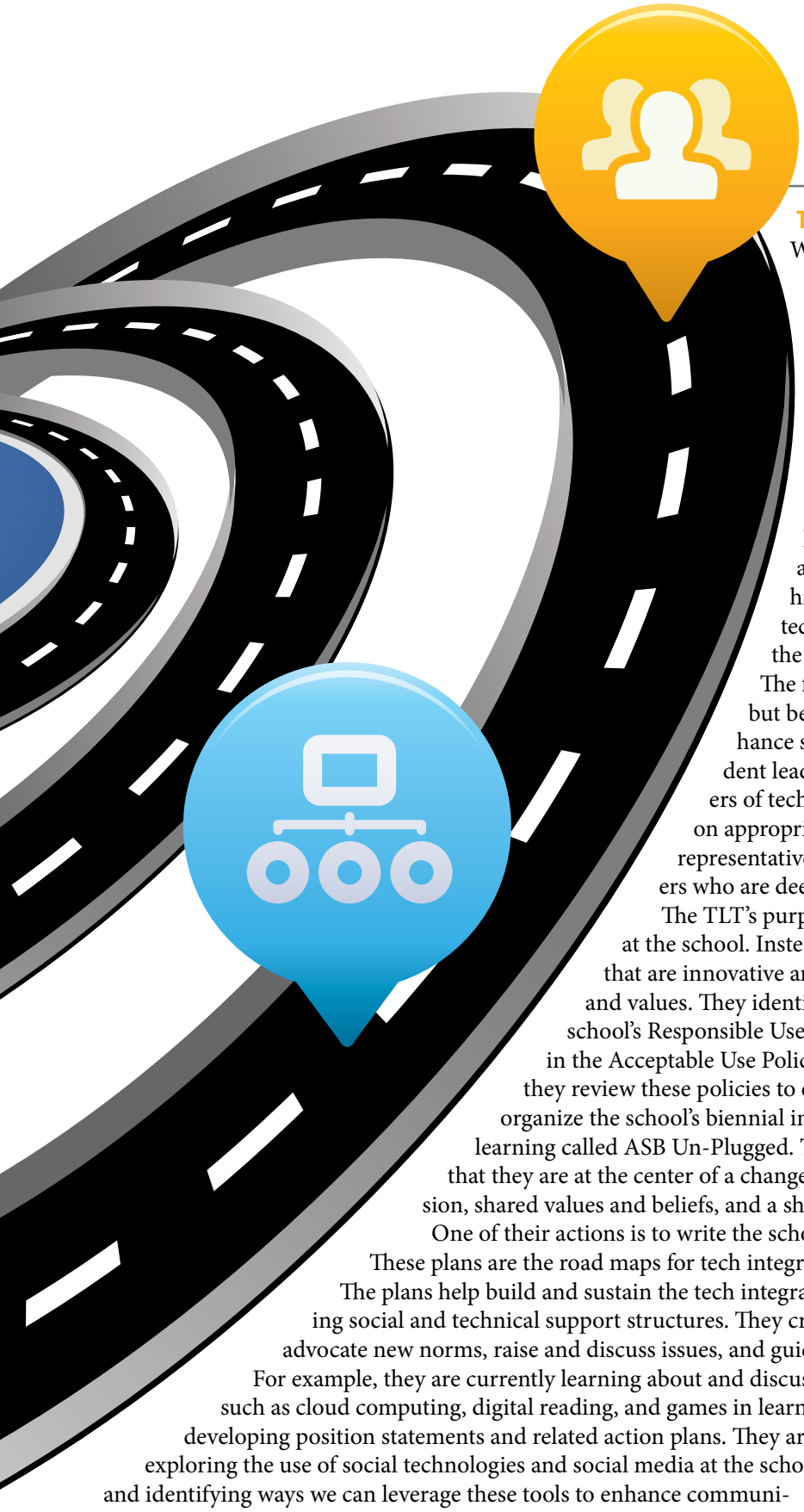

Technology Leadership Team

We formed a Technology Leadership Team to lead technology use at our school. Our vision was to engage stakeholders as proactive participants in the school's tech integration culture. As partners, we were interested in building an empowered team of tech leaders who could be challenged to question, analyze, and help create a digital age school.

The TLT consists of faculty from different grade levels in the elementary school and different subject areas in the middle and high schools. It also includes high school students, staff representatives from the technology and curriculum departments, members of the school's leadership team, and parent representatives. The faculty representatives are not necessarily tech wizards but believe in harnessing the power of technology to enhance student learning. The student representatives are student leaders and the team's digital natives. As critical consumers of technology tools, they freely articulate their thinking on appropriate uses of technology in their classes. The parent representatives provide an important perspective as stakeholders who are deeply interested in their children's learning.

The TLT's purpose is to strategize and facilitate technology use at the school. Instead of theorizing, team members seek solutions that are innovative and practical. They influence cultural norms and values. They identify and write the guidelines that form the school's Responsible Use Policies. (We replaced the word *acceptable* in the Acceptable Use Policies with *responsible*.) Each school year they review these policies to ensure they are current. They plan and organize the school's biennial international conference on one-to-one learning called ASB Un-Plugged. The members of the TLT are aware that they are at the center of a change process. They build a shared vision, shared values and beliefs, and a shared culture of tech integration. One of their actions is to write the school's tech integration plans. These plans are the road maps for tech integration work at the school. The plans help build and sustain the tech integration culture by providing social and technical support structures. They create new knowledge, advocate new norms, raise and discuss issues, and guide other teachers. For example, they are currently learning about and discussing subjects, such as cloud computing, digital reading, and games in learning, and developing position statements and related action plans. They are also exploring the use of social technologies and social media at the school and identifying ways we can leverage these tools to enhance communication and classroom learning experiences.

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Solomon Senrick, a middle school social studies teacher, has also served as an ASB tech integration presenter.

TLT meetings provide an opportunity for students, faculty, and parents to engage in collaborative group discussions about technology.

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Tech Planning and Fostering Change

Typically, a tech department or a tech director writes a school's technology plan. Sometimes school boards never formally approve the plans, and they become neither an official nor an unofficial vision of a school's technology program. The community support and ownership is lacking, the plans are never truly adopted, and implementation is, at best, a slow and half-hearted effort.

The TLT and its members have taken on a formal leadership role as the school's technology planners. They develop ASB's integration plans (www.asbindia.info/tp) and influence the culture by articulating a vision that the school's stakeholders can believe and act on. The plans the TLT writes help create and sustain a culture of tech integration and an environment that encourages risk-taking and experimentation. They actively participate in the plan's execution and oversee the continuous and ongoing evaluation/assessment of the implementation.

Through a process of empowerment, the TLT members serve as mentors and coaches for others and create an atmosphere that promotes growth. An example is how the TLT guides technology professional development for a division. The TLT has identified one of ISTE's teacher technology standards as a staff development goal for each division. The middle school tech PD goal is Standard 5: Engage in Professional Growth and Leadership. The TLT members for this division are at the center of an effort to facilitate learning and leadership among their

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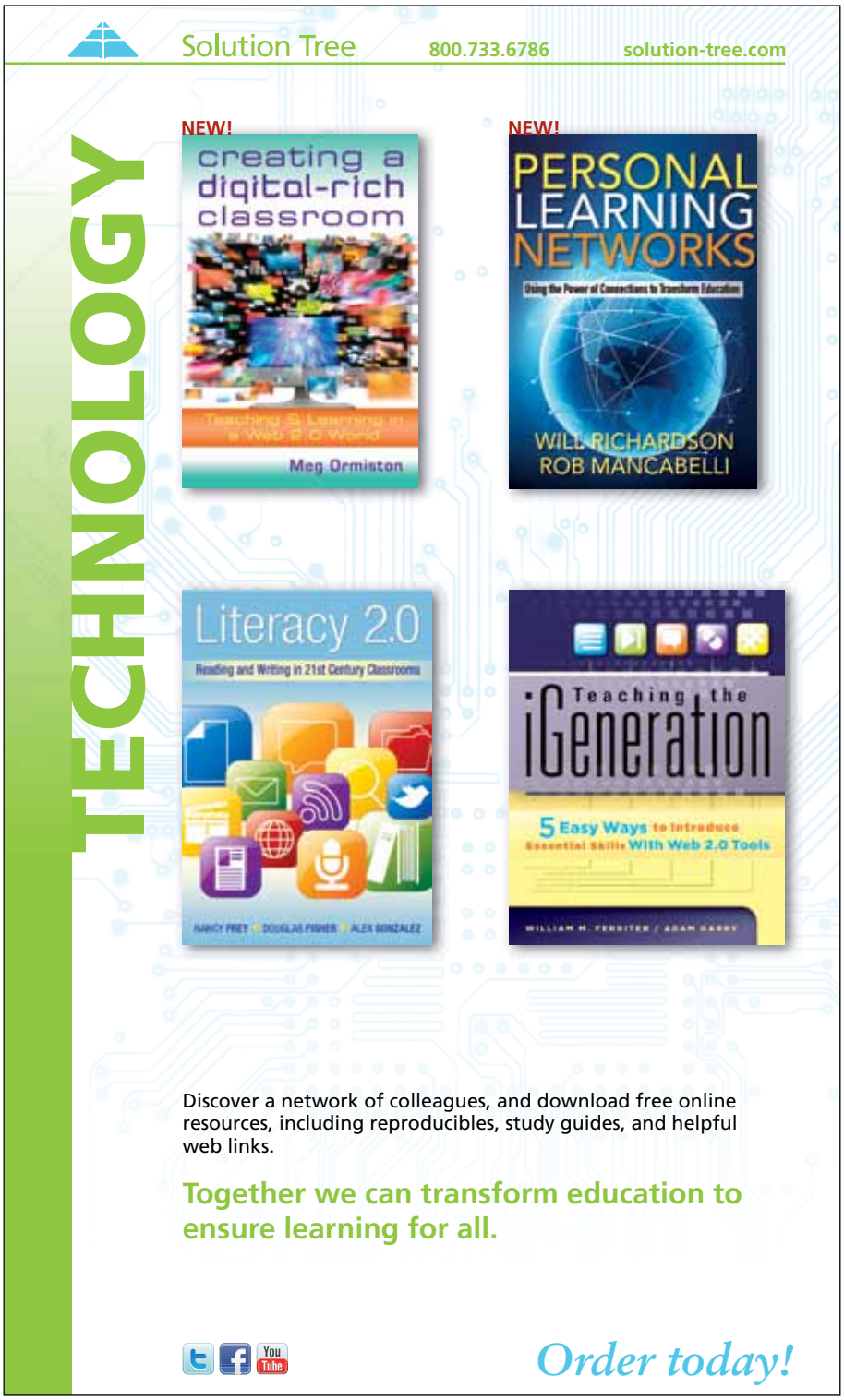
colleagues. They identified several measures to achieve the goal. One of these was to set up a weekly Tech Matters Café, a meeting place for teachers to share tools they are either exploring or using in their classroom, and instructional and assessment strategies that support the use of the tool. This has become a popular PD venue that supports the culture of innovation and exploration.

The collaborative nature of the TLT's interactions has developed new learning partnerships between students and teachers, between students and parents, and between students and administrators. Role reversal between the adults and students is leading to a redefinition of teaching and learning, the transformation of the learning culture of the classroom, and the creation of a culture of innovation. One example is the use of DyKnow in combination with Skype for delivering synchronous math instruction at a distance with the teacher in the United States and the students in Mumbai. Teachers used the tool in ways that even DyKnow hadn't envisioned! This is the outcome of ongoing explorations with students, who are actively participating in these new partnerships, acquiring skills to learn and work with adults, and developing a respect for learning. This new relationship between adults and students translates into new roles for students as technology leaders. The student members of the TLT are role models for their peers. Using the school's mission of enhancing the lives of others as their guide, some students are engaged in leading the school's One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) project.

TLT parents are another important stakeholder group engaged in defining ways to raise their digital children. Parents are involved in all aspects of the team's work, from actively participating in drafting the Responsible Use Policies to writing the tech integration plan to learning more about ISTE's tech standards and the classroom processes that support them. They have launched the Parent Tech Tutors program to offer workshops to small groups of other parents on topics such as blogging, using Facebook, and working with Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, Google Docs, and Twitter. They help develop parents' technology literacy skills.



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Test-Bed Culture

A couple of years ago, two members of the TLT recommended creating a segment called Tools and Toys during the TLT meeting time. They believed that if stakeholders were encouraged to share with others what they are trying in the classroom, the momentum for change would grow. During this 30-minute time, TLT members share their explorations with tech tools and the connections between the tools and learning and teaching. At one meeting, a high school math teacher and student shared their explorations with using Google Wave as a communication and teaching tool for an international baccalaureate math class. We have noticed that as technology tools rapidly evolve and teachers continue to experiment with them and develop new and creative ways of using them to enhance student learning, the momentum for the integration of technology increases, and teachers become leaders for the adoption of an innovation. We've witnessed this with the exploration of electronic portfolios by a grade-level team. Their explorations and reflections on the use of the tool are slowly building a momentum for change in how students use e-portfolios. The success of the Tools and Toys segment has highlighted the idea that tech integration requires a test-bed culture to support continuous innovation.

Sustaining Change

ASB is developing a flexible, risk-taking environment that encourages experimentation. Continuing stakeholder ownership of this process is important to sustain and embed the changes that have taken

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ASB integrates technology into every subject. For example, high school students use laptops loaded with music software to practice scales and other elements of music.

ASB's robotics class gives students a place to use technology and practice solving problems together after school.

We believe that no one individual has the full range of knowledge and experience necessary to create a learning environment that meets the needs of a diverse community.

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innovation is

"Anything that deviates from traditional industrial school models. It's enlightened improvement combining human caring and understanding with situational experiences that are intrinsically rewarding for a student. Innovation is part synthesis, part invention, and, when done right, it changes things forever."

—Terry Smith
University of St. Francis
Illinois

Collaboration and tech integration is now part of the daily routine at ASB. These ASB students use a tablet computer as a tool for collaboration to solve a math problem.

Two elementary students work together to complete a unit of study that is part of the school's International Baccalaureate program.

place. As teachers, students, and parents acquire new skills and witness and participate in learning environments that improve student learning, their ownership of tech integration increases.

During the last few years, we have taken many steps to sustain the culture and embed tech use so that it becomes internalized and habitual. This required deeper changes in the structures and culture of the school, but we believe that this will contribute to lasting change. To ensure this change, the TLT will continue to evolve. It will identify and develop new strategies and action plans and work with the administration to set timelines for implementation.

In addition, the TLT now functions as a monitoring group, because evaluation is a key component of any change. It is a powerful strategy for revision and provides a reality check and a chance for change if needed. For example, the TLT designed a Digital Citizenship Program (http://digitalcitizenship.asb-wiki.wikispaces.net) for the school. This included defining the philosophy, identifying the elements of digital citizenship, defining each element and its importance, identifying issues associated with each element, and identifying appropriate and inappropriate instances. The

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tech coordinators are responsible for implementing the program in collaboration with the counseling department. The coordinators keep the wiki updated with lessons they are implementing across all grade levels. Each year the coordinators share their progress with the TLT and seek feedback and input for any modifications as the program evolves and grows. As the TLT is made up of a diverse group of students, faculty, and parents, this feedback is essential to ensure that the program's implementation is having a positive effect on everyone. Ongoing evaluation of tech integration practices helps create new and improved staff development opportunities.

There is a myth about leadership that a visionary leader gives directions to followers who execute the plan. We believe that no one individual has the full range of knowledge and experience necessary to create a learning environment that meets the needs of a diverse community. It is important that leaders encourage use of their vision as a foundation for better insights.

Harnessing the power of technology with students who are growing up digital is critical. Schools can achieve genuine and lasting tech integration when each stakeholder accepts responsibility for engaging the future today.

Shabbi Luthra has worked for more than two decades in various teaching and leadership roles in international schools in the field of educational technology. She is currently the director of technology at the American School of Bombay in Mumbai, India.

Paul Fochtman was superintendent at the American School of Bombay from 2004 to 2010. He is now head of school at Frankfurt International School/International School of Wiesbaden. He has served as an international school administrator for more than 12 years.

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