

**Case Study of Wadsworth City School District- Technology Planning**

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July 14, 2011

## **Introduction**

In June of 2009, Wadsworth City SD created their Education Technology Plan using the eTech Ohio online Technology Planning Tool. This case study will assess and evaluate the current plan through an extensive study of all aspects of the plan. The assessment and evaluation will highlight the strengths and weaknesses in: curriculum alignment and instructional integration, policy, leadership and integration, management and support, and budget and planning for sustainability. The case study will also make recommendations for future Wadsworth City SD technology plan presented in June of 2012. The recommendations will be well planned, purposeful and most importantly centered around student achievement.

### **Team Planning/ Technology Planning Committee**

#### *Review of Wadsworth City SD Technology Planning Committee*

The current plan expresses the need to establish a Technology Planning Committee. The following members are part of their current TPC:

- Assistive Technology/Special Needs Coordinator
- Curriculum Coordinator
- Library/Media Specialist
- Principal
- Teacher
- Technology Coordinator
- Technology Support
- Treasurer

Approvers:  
Daniel Morton (Technology Coordinator/Director)

#### *Strengths and Weaknesses of Wadsworth City SD Technology Planning Committee*

After reviewing the current Technology Committee there are a few strengths as well as weaknesses. The plan is well balanced and includes many different individuals with specific educational or technical backgrounds. One of the noticeable weaknesses is the representation of only one teacher and one principal. There also is not an instructional technologist on the committee.

*Proposed Recommendations for the Wadsworth City SD Future Technology Planning Committee*

After reviewing the current Technology Committee and highlighting the strengths and weaknesses the following is my professional recommendation for the future Technology Planning Team. There should be multiple teachers as well as principals on the committee to express current needs in curriculum and technology. They will also be able to inform other teachers within their schools and grade level to help more teachers understand the need for change. There also should be a specialist in instructional technology to connect specific content with current research based instruction in technology. Though Daneiel Morton is a technology coordinator he does not have the curriculum and instructional technology background for optimal support to the curriculum coordinator, in terms of technology.

**Curriculum Alignment & Instructional Integration**

*Review of Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan in Curriculum Alignment and Instruction*

The following table is part of the technology plan and explains the district’s efforts to embed Ohio’s Technology Standards into the content standards for each curricular area.

	Where are we now? (2009)	Where do we want to go?
English Language Arts	In Progress	2011-12

Fine Arts	In Progress	2011-12
Foreign Language	In Progress	2011-12
Mathematics	In Progress	2011-12
Science	In Progress	2011-12
Social Studies	In Progress	2011-12
Technology	In Progress	2011-12

The committee has made it clear they understand the need to implement the technology standards. Another added element to the equation is The Ohio Schools Facility Commission is helping fund a new high school and multiple elementary schools in Wadsworth City SD. The Ohio School Facility Commission has stringent requirements for technology throughout the school district to receive needed funding for the new buildings. The plan also states they will focus on professional development to the staff on how to use the new technologies in every classroom.

*Strengths and Weaknesses of Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan in Curriculum Alignment and Instruction*

One of the strengths of the plan in terms of curriculum alignment and instruction integration is the understanding and awareness of the need for change and stating plan to make these changes. The plan also states concrete ways in which they analyze change and implementation of technology. Under Language Arts the plan does a comprehensive job of data collection:

Progress toward and achievement of goals will be measured via student and staff surveys, short cycle assessments and standardized testing. The district administration in conjunction with the Director of Instruction will be responsible for evaluating the outcomes on a yearly basis. (p.7)

However, the overall data collection tools are an obvious weakness and could possibly hinder sufficient growth.

How will we know we are getting there?

The monitoring process will be an ongoing focus by our Technology Director, Director of Instruction, Building Principals and Technology Committee. It will be the charge of the above listed individuals to assure that the plan is being followed and appropriately implemented in every classroom. This will be accomplished through direct observation in all classrooms through formal and informal observations. Emphasis will be placed on observing the use of technology and providing feedback to instructional staff on their effective use of the available technology in order to improve instruction in the classroom. We will monitor and collect data on the number of lessons across the district that are incorporating the technology standards in our daily lessons. This will be gathered through a notation on the actual evaluation form. This then could be tabulated and our percentage of lessons incorporating effective use of technology according to our plan could be calculated. (p. 5)

The data collected in this format will not be comprehensive enough to make fundamental changes needed to be leaders in the field of technology. These formal and informal observations by principals and the technology director will fall short. Principals are already asked to observe many other areas of teacher performance. Again there will be a gap and the need for a specialist who can drive proper professional development in the field of instructional technology. Adding another section to the teacher evaluation form will not be enough to promote needed growth and proper curriculum alignment and instruction integration.

### *Proposed Recommendations for the Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan in Curriculum*

#### *Alignment and Instruction*

As stated above the data collection method must change to acquire successful data collection to improve curriculum alignment and instruction integration. If the technology committee is going to help with the formal and informal evaluation how will this be accomplished? The recommendation after a lengthy analysis is a teacher created short eportfolio to help educators showcase how they are using technology in their classroom. The technology committee will create a survey based on the Ohio Technology Standards which will ask teacher

specific questions aligned with the standards. The teachers can also upload examples the district can use to help highlight positive curriculum alignment and instruction integration.

### **Policy, Leadership & Integration**

#### *Review of Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan in Policy, Leadership & Integration*

The Wadsworth City SD states their technology policy, leadership and administration current status is exploration in: electronic network linking district with other stakeholders for information exchange, collaboration and distance education exploration transformation, district wide program providing data or administrative systems to schools, exploration transformation technology-related facilities design, equipment and software. New updated policies are being researched and they are working toward policies that support high performing learning environments.

In terms of technology acquisition and standards adoption exploration, research and evaluation of educational technology initiatives adoption exploration development and dissemination of educational technology devices, applications and approaches adoption exploration district funding for educational technology adoption exploration equity and access to technology the Wadsworth City SD states they have traditional policies in place but lack consistent use.

#### *Strengths and Weaknesses of Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan in Policy, Leadership & Integration*

The plan stated they will continue to look into the ways to fund an integration specialist. This is what has been lacking in the technology plan and is needed to link all of these professionals. Wadsworth is also aware of the need to “devise a more effective and efficient method of providing professional development to the staff to enhance instruction and improve student learning” (p. 23) With lack of funding in recent years it is important for school district to get creative with their professional development and using technology as a way of presentation can save on budgets. One of the weaknesses is the technology director is stating he will be less responsible for curriculum alignment and instructional integration. The idea is going from ten percent of his time to zero percent of his time. This will all be done by the curriculum instructor, but again this highlights the gap in the process because the curriculum instructor does not have a educational or instructional technology degree.

*Proposed Recommendations for the Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan in Policy, Leadership & Integration*

The recommendation is to keep the current policy but add leadership to increase the integration of technology. We also recommend improving research that will allow improvement of current technologies. There are many technologies that can be integrated at little to no extra cost to the Wadsworth City SD. An instructional technologist would be able to present ways to integrate new and current technologies. The buildings are well equipped with computers, laptops, and internet access. We recommend presenting the new integration ideas through online learning environments that would allow the teachers to see inexpensive way to integrate new technologies.

### **Technology Management & Support (including PD)**

#### *Review of Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan in Technology Management and Support*

The Wadsworth City SD Technology Management and Support has added an Operations Manager whose main responsibility is to oversee the daily work flow of the technology department and make certain that the Wadsworth students and teachers are receiving the proper support in a timely manner. Staff members and administration create Help Desk tickets when they encounter issues and need support, which are organized and answered by the technology department. Because of the new construction of schools, the district will be adding a large number of new hardware that will require the technology department to monitor even more closely.

The Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan focuses on maintaining and evaluating two main areas: systems and personnel. Systems evaluation includes regular updates for hardware and software, while managing a budget over replacing 200 plus computers annually and maintaining subscription software programs. The plan states that the “personnel are subject to an annual evaluation designed to improve competency and encourage professional growth” (p. 32). Professional development is provided via many resources and media, as well as encouragement to attend technical in-services, conferences, and classes when funding is available.

#### *Strengths and Weaknesses of Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan in Technology Management and Support*

One of the biggest gains made from the adding an Operations Manager was the significant cut down on response time. “This past year out of 3871 Help Desk postings we resolved 2175 issues the same day and 2503 issues within 24 hours” (p. 32). With this support,

staff members are able to get their issues quickly resolved and not allow it to hinder technology instruction.

One weakness of this portion of the Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan is the lack of offered Professional Development for the Technology Committee members, as well as administration and staff members, within the schools. Being a member of the Technology Committee, it was expected that members attend a conference or in-service to gain knowledgeable information regarding technology instruction and use. However, due to funding and cost, we were unable to attend. The district makes sure that they can purchase technology, as well as provide training and support for the users.

#### *Proposed Recommendations for the Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan in Technology Management and Support*

While the Operations Manager is overseeing the significant cut down on response time within the district, there are still instances when help is never received. One recommendation to avoid this from happening is instead of having support come to the building, depending on the issue, have the tech. support make a phone call or send an e-mail with directions on how the issue can be resolved. This will cut down travel time and allow more support to be offered. These tips and solutions can also be banked in a shared folder that can be access by all district employees, in hopes to avoid the creation of Help Desk posts.

Due to funding, Technology Committee members were not able to attend the technology conference. However, there are still ways to gain knowledge and support when using technology to instruct. A suggestion could be to create presentations that contain information from the conferences and in-services. These presentations can be available for all members to view at any

time and learn from. These presentations and information can also be viewed and discussed at a Technology Committee in-service day or workshop during the school day.

Technology Committee members could also participate in online learning that could be hosted by eTech leaders or Wadsworth Technology Department.

### **Budget & Planning for Sustainability**

#### *Review of Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan in Budget and Planning for Sustainability*

Wadsworth City SD has a positive approach to predicting the needs and expenses throughout the district. The district needs to establish the budget in terms of staffing, fixed costs and technology. The district then works to meet and break down as many revenue restrictions as possible while still providing a quality education to the students and being responsible to the citizens of the Wadsworth community.

As stated in the Technology Plan, Wadsworth City Schools rely on many sources and programs to aid in funding technology efforts. Along with relying on Wadsworth's general fund, parents groups, various State and Federal grants, the district also gains funds and support from the following:

- Ohio K-12 Network
- OSFC which will provide funding to support the new building initiative at approximately 36%
- The eTech Ohio Professional Development grant aids with participation in the eTech Ohio State Technology Conference.
- Erate offers a 41% discount for Internet connectivity and telecommunications.

#### *Strengths and Weaknesses of Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan in Budget and Planning for Sustainability*

When it comes to budgeting for technology, Wadsworth City SD does as much research as possible when purchasing new equipment. Instead of looking for the least expensive technology, “we try to find the ‘price point,’ the point that delivers the greatest value in terms of cost, performance and longevity” (p. 33). Even though this hinders the quantity of technology being purchased, this is an admirable thing for the district to do, avoiding the need to purchase more equipment on a regular basis.

The district claims “the development of technology has been a priority and a goal within the Wadsworth City Schools” (p. 34). However, in the Technology plan, it states that “The Wadsworth City Schools general fund will continue to be the prime source of technology funding” (p. 34). This general fund does not seem large enough to support this high goal and does not seem to make it reachable.

*Proposed Recommendations for the Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan in Budget and Planning for Sustainability*

One of the biggest recommendations that could be made for the Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan would be to continue to apply for State and Federal grants and programs to support the technology efforts. One of the most important grants to apply for is the eTech Ohio Professional Development grant in hopes to fund district participation in the eTech Ohio State Technology Conference. This will allow Technology Committee members to gain insight and spread knowledge throughout the buildings.

Another recommendation is to find companies that may offer some sort of a trade policy, taking old equipment and offering a discounted price for new equipment. This will allow the district to re-vamp the district’s technology effort and equipment.

### **Conclusion**

After reviewing the Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan, it is clear that Wadsworth strongly advocates integrating technology throughout the district, in classrooms and offices. The Technology department goes to great measures to ensure there is technical support within a timely manner, as well as proper training. The district needs to continue to work toward highly technology instruction classrooms, breaking down barriers such as funding and access to new equipment. . The plan states many achievable goals that are being worked toward by Wadsworth's technology department, administrative personnel, school staff, and even the community. One area of focus that the Technology department could add to the overall Technology Plan is an assessment and evaluation section at the conclusion of the plan. Throughout the plan, the plan lists assessments and evaluations with statements such as "How will we get there?" and "How will we know we're getting there?" This can also be carried to the end of the plan to provide an overall evaluation of the Wadsworth City SD Technology Plan.

### References

Educational Technology Plan for Wadsworth City SD – 044974. eTech Ohio Certified on June 26, 2009.