

TO: Board of Education
Dr. Philip Bender

FROM: Terri Bresnahan, Director of Technology

DATE: October 24, 2011

RE: Technology Coach Pilot Update

BACKGROUND

In 2009, the original Technology Action Team introduced the concept of coaching as a method for professional development as part of the early planning for the District's Strategic Plan – Strategy I “Accelerating the Use of Advanced Technology.” This spring, the Strategy I Technology Implementation Committee further developed the idea, and a recommendation for technology coaches was presented to the Board of Education as part of the overall Strategic Plan implementation plan and budget for 2011-12. The Board approved those plans in May 2011; three technology coaches were approved for hire in August of 2011.

The concept of this instructional coaching model is to provide quality professional development in the area of technology integration that is job-embedded and sustained over time. One-time workshops with little or no follow-up were proving to be less effective with creating change at the instructional level for teachers. Research has shown that coaching is the most effective method for increasing teachers' knowledge, skills, and transformation of teaching practices.

DISTRICT 64's TECHNOLOGY COACH MODEL

The three technology coaches were employed based on their strong instructional knowledge, interpersonal skills, and expertise in the area of technology integration. They are building-based and provide professional development for their building staff. The three buildings participating in the pilot are: Franklin Elementary School (small elementary); Lincoln Middle School (middle school); and Roosevelt Elementary School (large elementary).

Technology coaches work closely with the building principals to coordinate their efforts. Each building has a variety of technology support needs and the technology coaches provide an array of services in order to address them. Faculty meetings, grade level team meetings, department meetings, and one-on-one interactions have been utilized as venues for professional development for staff. Coaches have met with teachers before school, during plan times, and lunchtimes. They have also focused on co-teaching and modeling as methods for increasing the skills and comfort levels of teachers in the area of technology.

In addition to direct contact with teachers, the technology coaches participate in monthly technology department meetings, weekly meetings with their building principals, Technology Implementation Committee meetings, and attend to their own professional development. They have also provided professional development for new SmartBoard users throughout the District, assisted in the development and implementation of the new iPad program, collaborated with curriculum specialists on technology integration, and assisted in the development of the District's Technology Usage Survey for teachers. The technology coaches are maintaining daily logs of their work with teachers, collecting data on the use of technology in their buildings, and increasing awareness of technology resources available to staff.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS

The information collected from the preliminary Technology Usage Survey of teachers indicated that professional development is needed in the area of technology integration. Having access to equipment, however, must be accompanied with support in order to increase a teacher's ability to integrate technology within the curriculum. As the coaching pilot continues, we anticipate seeing an increase in technology usage and an increase in the level at which teachers are utilizing the technology with students.

In a short period of time, the technology coaches already have worked with many staff within the three buildings. 78% of teachers from the pilot schools have reported working with a technology coach either one-on-one or in a group setting. The goal is to reach 100% of teachers by the end of the pilot.

Thus far, the feedback from staff, administrators, and the technology coaches has been overwhelmingly positive. Teachers are appreciative of this valuable resource within their building and the individual support they receive from the technology coaches. Having a building-based coach has proven to be a key factor in the early success of this pilot. The technology coaches have gone above and beyond their building responsibilities to support the District in its Strategic Plan strategy of accelerating the use of advanced technology. They have become critical members of the technology department and the Strategic Plan Technology Committee.

FUTURE STEPS

We will continue to collect data to assess growth over time in the area of technology usage in the pilot buildings and in comparison with the non-pilot buildings. This data will also be helpful in understanding the level of use of our technology resources to assist in decisions related to purchases.

A recommendation for the future of instructional coaching in District 64 will be made to the Board in the near future based on the results from the technology coach pilot.

The technology coaches and I will present a comprehensive update of the pilot that will include specific examples of coaches at work during the Board presentation on October 24.