

technology integration

More than any single teacher in a school, district and site administrators have the power to make deep, long-lasting strides toward full technology integration. But it's definitely not easy. Below are a few small steps that can lead to larger, school-wide integration.

trainer of trainers

Equipment: None
Staff: additional duties for one staff member (stipend recommended)

If a school is going to successfully integrate technology site-wide, teachers will need support, just like with any new curriculum. The best way to do this is to find an on-site teacher who is capable and willing to take on the role of ed tech specialist. Teachers are more likely to respect a trainer who is successfully integrating technology into their own classroom. And having someone on-staff, who teachers can access regularly for one-on-one coaching, is a must.

Create guidelines for this position – the staffer will offer a certain number of required and/or optional inservices throughout the year; the staffer will be given his/her own professional development opportunities; the staffer will be included in any technology purchasing decisions – and take applications. Of course, with these added responsibilities, the ed tech specialist should be given a small, additional stipend of maybe \$1,000 per year.

social network

Equipment: Computers, Internet connections
Staff: 0

Social networks provide a great home for students to post their ideas and discuss what they're learning. And education-focused social networks like Edmodo offer excellent organization tools that allow students to keep track of relevant files, websites, and videos. Plus, teachers can post, collect, and grade assignments all within Edmodo.

School-based social networks also help teachers and students extend the school day. Students can discuss assignments online, can share relevant websites and videos they've discovered, and can ask clarifying questions whenever necessary. Shy students are given an outlet to express themselves in front of their peers and teachers. If students are using web-based tools to create school projects, they can share the links with their school community in one safe, secure place.

tinkering class/club

Equipment: Old, donated technology hardware; a classroom
Staff: additional class or duties for one staff member

In our standards-based education system, students often expect there to always be a single right answer to every problem. Which is why some students get frustrated in real-world environments – they want the right answer right away, although the real learning happens in the process of figuring something out. Offering a tinkering class (or club) to students will help them understand that curiosity and experimentation are some of the best ways to learn. To create a tinkering elective (or club), gather old electronics – broken computers, printers, games, phones – along with some tools and house them in one room. With guidance, allow students to simply play with these electronics, with a final goal of their own design in mind. Perhaps they want to build a computer or a Rube Goldberg machine. The main goal should be to keep kids creatively thinking and problem-solving, individually and within groups. That will truly prepare them for the 21st century.