**Leadership Action Plan**

**By Deborah Owens**

 **Effective Leadership:**

Different types of leadership skills will be needed to continue promoting technology integration in my school. First there needs to be a visionary leader and communicator who can see the “big” picture and determine the steps and professional development opportunities needed to reach the vision. Second, there must be a curriculum specialist, such as the Ed. Techs, to keep abreast of changing technology tools. To help reach the faculty on a more daily basis, there needs to be additional instructional specialists (teachers with Ed. Tech. endorsements) within the school to help facilitate and implement technology tools in their own classrooms. These instructional specialists should also be technology advocates who become a catalyst for change. Other leadership needs include a resource provider who can help the school obtain the hardware and software necessary to implement the integration plans.

When I think of leader, I tend to think of the visionary who can see the “big” picture, is able to communicate effectively, and rally the people around the vision. This is not my strength. Once I understand the “big” picture, have a good understanding to why the change is needed, and how this can be achieved, then I am ready to show-off my leadership strengths. I am very strong at being a learner. I am willing to take risk and implement new ideas. I have a tendency to get very excited about tools that will increase student learning and engagement. I share this excitement with my co-workers, which will ideally become a catalyst for change. I am willing to write grants to get the resources needed to utilize technology more often in my classroom. I also support teachers who come to me with computer questions and problems. With this said, I do not necessarily go out of my to find teachers who need extra assistance, nor have I gone a step further to write school grants to help the school get more equipment. I am willing to work within a school committee to help identify needs, plan professional development, and share my ideas, but I am not good at being the person leading the committee.

There are several challenges facing schools and teachers as we move into the 21st Century model. First, there is always resistance to change. The 21st Century model challenges teachers to move out of comfort zones, change teaching paradigms, and keep up with ever changing technological tools. This brings up the second challenge—time. There needs to be time for teachers to learn what technology is available, how to use this technology in the classroom, and why using technology in the classroom is important. The third challenge is for all stakeholders in the educational world to critically look at what is being taught and determine what items can be taken off the plate of “must-dos.” The Common Core has addressed some of this, but there are still many pet projects still expected to be taught. Fourth, adequate funding of hardware and software is vital. With limited resources, teachers will have to compete amongst themselves to get access to the technology. The fifth concern is adequate, in-house technical support when problems arise using the technology. Teachers need to know there is immediate help when issues arise. If teachers perceive that technology is adding to their workload and/or adding more frustration to their lives, then schools will be facing an up-hill challenge getting teachers on-board using technology in the classroom.

 There are many stakeholders that must be involved. Starting at the state level, state and national legislators need to provide financial support for public schools to get the tools and resources needed in the classrooms. Legislators also need to be informed of effective teaching practices and current research, so laws can be changed, created, adjusted so teachers are not pressured to teach to a standardized test, which happens to use computers.

At the district level, there has to be a commitment to support schools with financial and technical support. In addition, district administration must see technology use as more than taking tests to gather data. Data is very necessary to make informed decisions; however, the technology in schools needs to be used to engage students in meaningful ways, not just test them.

At the school level, the school administration needs to promote a learning and collaborative environment for teachers to integrate technology in the classroom. In addition, the administration needs to work with the School Community Council, PTA, and local businesses to find ways to generate more funding and gain insights on how the community wants students to use the technology in the classroom.

Teachers are vital stakeholders. Teachers need to be willing to take the risk to change their teaching practices. They need to share, collaborate, and help one another as they travel down this path. Teachers also need to provide opportunities for the ultimate stakeholders—the students. Students have grown up with technology. They want this in their lives, so teachers need to create educational ways to capitalize on their skills and enthusiasm.

Information is needed to understand the school and district culture. All stakeholders need to understand the technology vision of both the district and school. The district and school also needs to collect data, possibly through online survey tools, to determine the needs of the teachers, parents, and students. Using this data the district and school committee can begin developing a plan of action. In addition, district and school personnel need to continue modeling different applications in day-to-day correspondences and training. This is already being implemented with the use of Google Docs, Wikispaces, Twitter, Facebook, and Dropbox. Teachers at my school are beginning to see the possibilities by using these new tools in their professional lives, which is a positive step in the right direction. For example, my team is now using Google Docs to make grouping decisions for small-group instruction. This information is readily shared with our aides, who quickly have access to which students they will be teaching and what material needs to be covered. In addition, several teachers within the district are sharing resources using Dropbox.