

g her
nbers
lwrit-

veral
at the
These
miliar
ut the
lissed
o had
n, she

d one
e her
s get-
Also,
dates
Some

ie quality

the needs
arrive at

vation? If

ould you

Relations

9

Communication in an Electronic Era

Throughout the past two decades, electronic technologies have been infused into the educational culture in ways that are sometimes subtle and other times dramatic. During this time period school leaders essentially have fallen into three distinct categories. The individual abilities of these educational leaders to move out of a negative, disobliging mindset regarding technological advancements and into a welcoming mindset have made the difference between success and failure. School leaders being prepared today, like many of this book's readers, cannot imagine a world void of electronic communication. Those leaders recently retired or contemplating an impending retirement have, in many cases, weathered the past two decades and emerged as heroes, goats, or some combination of the two. Regardless, electronic communication now is an essential component of a successful school-community relations plan. Descriptions of the various forms of electronic communication, along with important uses of electronic devices for improving internal and external communication follows after a brief description of the three categories school leaders have assigned themselves to by their reactions to technological advancements throughout the past two decades.

The Resistor

The majority of educational leaders who resisted technological advancements and left their computers to gather dust in their office have either retired or have been reassigned to other duties within the school system for which they are employed. Though there are some "dinosaurs" still out there leading successfully despite their missed opportunities at electronic communications, this group largely has become extinct. The resistors are typically veteran administrators who have been in leadership roles within the same school district for many years. Administrators in this group usually believe that technological advancements are little more than shiny, polished new toys. These people ordinarily feel that the communication styles that worked for them in the past should still be applicable. They understand that face-to-face communication is generally the most effective way to communicate, followed by telephone conversations and handwritten or typed notes.

Technology, they assume, does nothing more than install a wedge between people, thereby preventing genuine communication to take place. Resistors shun any notion that computers, fiber-optic technologies, Bluetooth devices, and the myriad other technologies available can improve any part of their school community relations plans. In fact, resistors typically believe that these technologies only make communication worse and less genuine.

The Dabbler

More difficult to characterize by any demographic divisions such as age, the dabbler is the educational leader who does show interest in electronic and technological communication but simply has trouble keeping up with and effectively utilizing all that is available. Dabblers are found at all levels of administration and cross all age brackets. Some dabblers use e-mail effectively to communicate internally and with select parents and community members. Other dabblers recognize the value of wireless communications on a limited basis and may be avid users of cell phones, Wi-Fi, or other types of technologies discussed later in this chapter. The main characterization of this large group of school administrators is that they utilize some technologies to their advantage, but they do not really understand how to seamlessly incorporate the multitude of technologies available into their daily work lives. These administrators believe that technology has improved communications to an extent, but they are often skeptical of those administrators that they feel are overusing technology. For the most part, dabblers still utilize traditional means to communicate both internally and externally.

The Avant-Garde

It is virtually impossible to be known as a futurist regarding technologies and electronic communication devices at this point in the twenty-first century. This is particularly so with the limited technological resources available to public school districts in the United States. However, the avant-garde school leader does his/her best to stay on the cutting edge of technology, despite the fact that the "cutting edge" is not typically part of the education field. Consider the words from a website known as AcceleratingFuture.com. On this site while providing information about near-future technologies, the following words appear:

Very likely, you've heard of or used modern technologies such as broadband Internet, personal digital assistants, biotech, and Wi-Fi networks. However, these technologies are relatively weak in comparison to other advances the near future is likely to bring. Sophisticated nanotechnology and nanomedicine, fully immersive virtual reality, synthetic life, brain-computer interfaces, and genuine artificial intelligence could

become
consequ

Althou
begin to p
patterns w
broadband
tooth tech
technologi
integral pa
technologi
communit
internally :

Electroni

Althou
of commu
e-mail, wi
the strengt
lengthy de
still somev
more appi
all of these
and techn
to struggl
even skip
obtained e
dia, an onl

• *Blac*
fron
incl
Blac
Uni

• *Blu*
mu
Inte
net

• *Bro*
(wi
bro:
only

become technologically possible before 2050, with massive, global consequences. (<http://www.acceleratingfuture.com>; Smart, 2010)

Although the avant-garde administrators in our schools do not even begin to ponder the usage of near-future technologies in communication patterns within schools, this ever-increasing group of administrators utilizes broadband technologies, personal digital assistants, Wi-Fi networks, Bluetooth technologies, Blackberry devices, and other relatively sophisticated technologies rarely seen in our schools to communicate effectively and as integral parts of their school-community relations plans. Avant-gardes see technological advancements as instrumental to improving their school-community relations plans and meeting the needs of stakeholders, both internally and externally.

Electronic Communication Devices

Although most of this chapter is devoted to the uses of e-mail as a form of communication, there are many devices that enable mobile usage of e-mail, wireless communication, and quicker, more efficient ways to tap into the strengths of technology as a communication tool. Rather than engage in lengthy descriptions of such devices, as their usage among school leaders is still somewhat rare, a brief description of terms growing in commonality is more appropriate. The avant-garde administrators will recognize most, or all of these terms. In fact, the avant-garde is likely to use some of the devices and technologies described below. The resistor, on the other hand, is likely to struggle with understanding the usage of the devices below and may even skip this section altogether. The definitions listed for each device were obtained electronically. That is, these definitions all originated on Webopedia, an online dictionary of technology terms (<http://www.webopedia.com>).

- *Blackberry*: BlackBerry is a line of mobile e-mail devices and services from Research In Motion (RIM). BlackBerry is a complete package that includes airtime, software, and choice of BlackBerry mobile device. BlackBerry is currently available in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.
- *Bluetooth*: A short-range radio technology aimed at simplifying communications among Internet devices and between devices and the Internet. It also aims to simplify data synchronization between Internet devices and other computers.
- *Broadband*: A type of data transmission in which a single medium (wire) can carry several channels at once. Cable TV, for example, uses broadband transmission. In contrast, baseband transmission allows only one signal at a time.

- *Laptop*: A small, portable computer—small enough that it can sit on your lap. Nowadays, laptop computers are more frequently called *notebook computers*, although technically laptops are somewhat smaller in size than notebooks
- *PDA*: Short for *personal digital assistant*, a handheld device that combines computing, telephone/fax, Internet, and networking features. A typical PDA can function as a cellular phone, fax sender, Web browser, and personal organizer. Unlike portable computers, most PDAs began as pen-based, using a stylus rather than a keyboard for input. This means that they also incorporated handwriting recognition features. Some PDAs can also react to voice input by using voice recognition technologies. PDAs of today are available in either a stylus or keyboard version.
- *Router*: A device that forwards data packets along networks. A router is connected to at least two networks, commonly two LANs or WANs or a LAN and its ISP's network. Routers are located at gateways, the places where two or more networks connect.
- *Wi-Fi*: Short for *wireless fidelity* and is meant to be used generically when referring of any type of 802.11 network, whether 802.11b, 802.11a, dual-band, etc. The term is promulgated by the Wi-Fi Alliance.

There are, of course, many other technological terms describing both devices used for communication and methods with which these devices transfer information. Chapter 10 is devoted exclusively to the use of specific technologies, namely social networks, as these technologies are cutting edge and have tremendous impact on the future work of school leaders. The terms defined above, however, are those terms that school leaders are most likely to encounter. As this section represents, by no means, an exhaustive description of communication technologies, it is now wise to turn attention to the most commonly used method of communication electronically—e-mail.

Communicating via E-Mail

E-mail can be an extremely valuable tool in an educational context, encouraging the development of communication skills, and transforming the learning process by opening up possibilities that, conventionally, would be impossible to achieve. At the start of the 2009–2010 school year, it was virtually impossible to find public schools in the United States without access to e-mail being afforded to the entire staff, with a growing majority offering such access to students. Although there may still be a few schools without such access, the vast majority of schools has e-mail access and regularly uses it as a means of both internal and external communication.

SH
 Sm
 virt
 ing
 ma
 adr
 finc
 con
 tor
 anc
 des
 util
 sm
 the
 stal
 tre
 if t
 sch

The u
 world has
 last editio
 usage as a
 the follow

- Acc
 90%
- The
- A M
 Gro
 to 1
- The
 day

Additional:

- 247
 sec

SHOWCASE

New Technology

Smartphones, like those made by Blackberry, Palm devices, and virtually all cell phone manufacturers are increasingly becoming mainstays of school administrators' toolkits. Although many school districts only provide these devices to higher-level administrators, school administrators at all levels are increasingly finding these devices to be necessary components of their daily communications. In all demographic sectors school administrators are using handheld devices to send and receive e-mails, and even to access such technologies as the social network sites described in the next chapter. There is an inherent risk in the utilization of these devices, however. Along with possessing smartphones of any type, school administrators must ensure that these devices are being used to improve communications with stakeholders. Having the latest technological devices can be a tremendous asset. It can become an equally large burden, though, if the public does not see that the technologies are being used for school-community relations improvements.

The use of e-mail as the primary means of daily communication in the world has emerged rather dramatically since the publication of this book's last edition. Before discussing some of the benefits and cautions to e-mail usage as a means of communication in educational environments, consider the following facts:

- According to *Pew Internet and American Life Project* data from April 2009, 90% of U.S. Internet users have gone online and sent or read e-mail.
- The same source suggests that 57% do this as part of a typical day.
- A May 2009 report by technology market research firm The Radicati Group estimates that there are 1.4 billion e-mail users in 2009, expected to rise to 1.9 billion by 2013.
- The same source suggests that some 247 billion e-mails were sent each day in 2009.

Additionally:

- 247 billion e-mails are sent each day. That is one e-mail every 0.00000035 seconds.

- In the time it takes you to read this sentence, some 20 million e-mails entered cyberspace.
- Every second, the world's e-mail users produce messages equivalent in size to **over 16,000 copies** of the *Complete Works of Shakespeare* (assuming a 30KB average e-mail size).

With access to e-mail so widely available, school leaders have no valid excuse for not utilizing e-mail as a form of communication, whether the administrator is a resistor, a dabbler, or an avant-garde. How and when e-mail ought to be used are the questions. Whether or not it can be used has become a moot point.

Utilizing E-Mail Internally

There are many advantages to utilizing e-mail as an internal form of communication. The most obvious one is its positive budgetary implications. The use of e-mail for internal communication positively contributes to creating schools that are "paperless." Paper costs are on the rise, and the ecological pains and environmental strains caused by consuming too much paper are obvious and serve as compelling reasons for school leaders to cut down on paper usage to the maximum practical extent.

A secondary advantage to internal e-mail usage is the ability of e-mail to serve as a means for addressing an individual or a group of individuals. Utilizing listserves, or different groupings of e-mail recipients, allows the user to address any combination of staff members with the same ease as creating a message for one particular person. Exhibit 9-1 illustrates how the same message can be created for different audiences and delivered with precisely the same ease.

As is evident by the above illustrations, e-mail offers the benefit of allowing the audience to change at the snap of a finger. Furthermore, users can alternate between audiences from the lonely confines of their computer terminal without regard to the audiences' availability for receiving communications at the time. For many messages, this is the most efficient means of communicating, and it provides the greatest flexibility so that the school leader's time can be better spent on other important tasks.

Using E-Mail Externally

School administrators must remember that e-mail is an easy form of communication to use externally. Teachers benefit from being able to e-mail parents during brief planning periods, administrators enjoy the ease with which e-mail enables them to respond to parents and other external stakeholders at a convenient time, and students would rather develop e-mail partners than establish pen pals across the globe with the traditional "snail

Exhibit 9

Proper
Add To
Add Se
Add Se
Add to

From:
To:
Cc:
Subject:
Attachme

Please
contrib
thank y
comme

From:
To:
Cc:
Subject:
Attachme

Please
tribution
you in

From:
To:
Cc:
Subject:
Attachme

Please
tribution
you in

mail" metl
ing home/
teachers v
into the hc
It is p
important
In other w

Communica

Exhibit 9-1 E-Mail Messages for Different Audiences

Properties ...
Add To Contacts
Add Sender to Safe Senders List
Add Sender to Blocked Senders List
Add to Safe Recipients List

From:	DFiore@hanover.k12.va.us	Sent:	Tue 5/4/2010 10:29 AM
To:	Clopez@inbox.com		
Cc:			
Subject:	Open House		
Attachments:			
Please be reminded that this evening's Open House begins at 7:00 PM. Your unique contribution to this evening will mean a great deal to the families in attendance, and I thank you in advance for your willingness to be available. Your service to our school is commendable.			

From:	DFiore@hanover.k12.va.us	Sent:	Tue 10/4/2010 10:29 AM
To:	abowner@gbs.com		
Cc:			
Subject:	Open House		
Attachments:			
Please be reminded that this evening's Open House begins at 7:00 PM. Your unique contribution to this evening will mean a great deal to the families in attendance, and I thank you in advance for your willingness to be available.			

From:	DFiore@hanover.k12.va.us	Sent:	Tue 10/4/2010 10:29 AM
To:	CJOSEPH@hanover.k12.va.us		
Cc:			
Subject:	Open House		
Attachments:			
Please be reminded that this evening's Open House begins at 7:00 PM. Your unique contribution to this evening will mean a great deal to the families in attendance, and I thank you in advance for your willingness to be available.			

mail" methodology. Furthermore, e-mail can be used effectively for developing home/school links, and encouraging communication between home and teachers via e-mail while supporting and extending school-based learning into the home.

It is prudent for school leaders to remain cognizant that the more important the news is, the more effort that should be used in reporting it. In other words, significant pieces of information, which are most likely to

cause a reaction or the desire for an immediate response, ought to be delivered through the communication channel that requires the most effort. E-mail requires far less effort than a telephone conversation, a face-to-face visit, or even a formal letter. As such, e-mail is best utilized to communicate non-essential information and facts that are the least likely to be subject to misinterpretations.

E-mail also is an excellent communication tool to use when the primary purpose of the communication is to inform. If a good deal of two-way communication is desired, then the telephone or face-to-face communication is best, but when a school leader simply wants to share information with a person or people external to the school organization, then e-mail affords the opportunity to send the message at a convenient time with no expectation of a timely response.

Proceed Cautiously with E-Mail

Of course, e-mail is not without its problems and concerns. In fact, many forms of online communication, including more advanced tools, such as webcams and live video streaming present security problems that are difficult to solve. Since e-mail is the most widely used form of online communication tools, school districts typically focus their efforts on the security issues raised by this lower level form of online communication.

One of the biggest concerns with online communication is being able to provide students with e-mail accounts while keeping them safe from the dangers that e-mail can present. For example, every year there is a tremendous increase in the number of technology service companies offering e-mail services to schools. Many of these companies offer packages at such a substantial savings that schools are tempted to utilize the services for all of their students. Although most such companies are reputable and do provide an important service to schools at a reduced rate, there are others that have such lax security systems that students are often put at risk of having their e-mail communication read by outside sources or of "catching" a virus that, in turn, can destroy the computer infrastructure.

As a result of this problem, many schools set up their own systems for external e-mail in an effort to control the security of the e-mail themselves. However, a disturbing increase in the number and severity of computer viruses spread through e-mail and inappropriate messages (i.e., spam) being sent via e-mail have given rise to greater scrutiny and a marked increase in Internet security systems. These Internet security systems, particularly those that are the most effective, are often too costly for schools to purchase. Increasingly, many schools are discovering that they simply lack the technology personnel necessary for making e-mail a secure and safe method for communication.

Additio
security an
message er
can be told
this pheno:
forward an
computer l
number of
e-mail bef
virtually in
When t
with a high
pronounce
school boa:

- The
e-ma
cont
cost
- The
fello
for c
opp
mee
ship
- Teac
e-ma
ing
defe
the r
elec

E-mail
should be
external p
municatio
so because
convenien
communic
strued and
ing or add
school leac

Additionally, there are problems inherent in e-mail that go beyond the security and integrity of the system. One such problem arises if the e-mail message ends up in the wrong hands. It is true that any message one delivers can be told or sent to people who shouldn't have received the message, but this phenomenon is exacerbated in the case of e-mail. All that is required to forward an e-mail message to another person is one single keystroke on the computer keyboard. This relative ease of operation results in a tremendous number of forwarded e-mails. Also, it is quite simple to accidentally send an e-mail before the sender has carefully proofread it, and after doing so it is virtually impossible on most systems to retrieve the message.

When the stakes are high, as is the case when communicating via e-mail with a high-ranking school official, the inherent problems become even more pronounced. Consider the following examples of e-mail problems involving school board members:

- The San Diego school board president facetiously suggested in an e-mail to senior school district staff that the only way to deal with two contentious board members was to shoot them. The resulting uproar cost the board member her presidency.
- The president of a suburban Chicago school board sent an e-mail to fellow board members criticizing the head of the local teachers union for continuing to "behave like the piece of garbage that he is." An opposing board member accused her of violating the state's open meetings law, as well as contributing to the already volatile relationship between the board and the union.
- Teachers in Pleasanton, California, complained when they received an e-mail during election season from the school board president endorsing a candidate who was running for the board. The board member defended herself by saying she had used her own e-mail account, but the union contended that some teachers might have felt coerced by the electronic message.

E-mail can be an efficient method of communication, and it certainly should be used in our schools. Whether communicating internally or to external publics, school leaders can rely on e-mail to provide efficient communication that has the benefit of being non-intrusive to the recipient. This is so because the recipient can respond to the e-mail message at this/her own convenience. However, great care must be exercised in utilizing e-mail for communication. Recognizing that the message can sometimes be misconstrued and that the "send" button can be hit prior to accurately proofreading or addressing the message are just two of the potential pitfalls of which school leaders should remain mindful.

to be delivered with the least effort. Face-to-face communication is subject to

the primary two-way communication is often with a high ranking official affords the expectation of

fact, many such as web-based communication is difficult to raise

being able to learn from the use of a tremendous amount of e-mail such as a subscription: all of their information provide an alternative to have such their e-mail that, in turn,

systems for themselves. If computer (pam) being used increase particularly to purchase. Check the tech-method for

SHOWCASE

E-mail: Friend or Foe

July 2002: Vol. 189, No. 7 The Perils of E-Mail by Kathleen Vail

"It was the end of a difficult week. As director of personnel, I had spent much of it meeting with individual board members about staff decisions they were to vote on at the next working session.

In particular, I was going to have to release one teacher because of some apparent financial irregularities that had emerged from a background check. I wrestled with how to talk to the teacher and began composing an e-mail message with some kind but firm thoughts. I needed to meet with her at the end of the day, and I thought the e-mail might be a useful way to prepare her for the meeting.

I reviewed the note and then hit the 'send' button. All of a sudden I realized that my very important private and personal message had just been sent to all 800-plus employees in the district.

I felt the blood leave my face, and I quickly called the technology director. "There is no way to retrieve the message," he told me. "It has gone out to everyone."

The Acceptable Use Policy

An acceptable use policy (AUP) is necessary for all schools in this modern era. With the excess of materials, appropriate and vastly inappropriate, available on the Internet, school district leaders put themselves in great jeopardy if they fail to develop some rules, regulations, and standards governing the appropriate use of electronic communications and information gathering. Acceptable use policies are mandatory in virtually all school districts, and they serve to delineate expectations for technology use and responsibilities of students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders for the adherence to the policies. Acceptable use policies typically are custom-made for the needs of the individual school district, but several good templates exist that can be readily modified by school leaders. One such template follows:

Sample Ac

(Please re

Internet a
School D

We are v
believe t
students
students
resource

The Inte
all over
teachers:

1) E
wo:

2) I
to c
ins

3) .

4)
cu

5)
gr
to

6)
e:

With
avail
value
taken
on a
triot
Dist
avai
user
goal

Sample Acceptable Use Policy

<YOUR> School District Internet Acceptable Use Agreement

(Please read this document carefully before signing.)

Internet access is now available to students and teachers in the <YOUR> School District.

We are very pleased to bring this access to <YOUR> School District and believe the Internet offers vast, diverse, and unique resources to both students and teachers. Our goal in providing this service to teachers and students is to promote educational excellence in schools by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication.

The Internet is an electronic highway connecting thousands of computers all over the world and millions of individual subscribers. Students and teachers have access to:

- 1) Electronic mail (e-mail) communication with people all over the world.
- 2) Information and news from NASA as well as the opportunity to correspond with the scientists at NASA and other research institutions.
- 3) Public domain software and graphics of all types for school use.
- 4) Discussion groups on a plethora of topics ranging from Chinese culture to the environment to music to politics
- 5) Access to many University Library Catalogs, the Library of Congress, and ERIC, a large collection of relevant information to educators and students.
- 6) Graphical access to the World Wide Web, the newest and most exciting access tool on the Internet.

With access to computers and people all over the world also comes the availability of material that may not be considered to be of educational value in the context of the school setting. <YOUR> School District has taken precautions to restrict access to controversial materials. However, on a global network it is impossible to control all materials and an industrious user may discover controversial information. We (<YOUR> School District) firmly believe that the valuable information and interaction available on this worldwide network far out weighs the possibility that users may procure material that is not consistent with the educational goals of the District.

continue

Internet access is coordinated through a complex association of government agencies, and regional and state networks. In addition, the smooth operation of the network relies upon the proper conduct of the end users who must adhere to strict guidelines. These guidelines are provided here so that you are aware of the responsibilities you are about to acquire. In general this requires efficient, ethical and legal utilization of the network resources. If an <YOUR> School District user violates any of these provisions, his or her account will be terminated and future access could possibly be denied.

The signature(s) at the end of this document is (are) legally binding and indicates the party (parties) who signed has (have) read the terms and conditions carefully and understand(s) their significance.

Internet—Terms and Conditions of Use

1) **Acceptable Use**—The purpose of the backbone networks making up the Internet is to support research and education in and among academic institutions by providing access to unique resources and the opportunity for collaborative work. The use of your account must be in support of education and research and consistent with the educational objectives of the <YOUR> School District. Use of other organization's network or computing resources must comply with the rules appropriate for that network. Transmission of any material in violation of any national or state regulation is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to copyrighted material, threatening or obscene material, or material protected by trade secret

2) **Privileges**—The use of the Internet is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use will result in a cancellation of those privileges. (Each student or teacher who receives an account will be part of a discussion with a <YOUR> School District staff member pertaining to the proper use of the network.) The system administrators will deem what is inappropriate use and their decision is final. Also, the system administrators may close an account at any time as required. The administration, faculty, and staff of <YOUR> School District may request the system administrator to deny, revoke, or suspend specific user accounts.

3) **Network Etiquette**—You are expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette. These include (but are not limited to) the following:

- a) Be polite. Do not get abusive in your messages to others.
- b) Use appropriate language. Do not swear, use vulgarities or any other inappropriate language.
- c) Illegal activities are strictly forbidden.

d
st
e
p
M
re
f)
th
g
w

4) <Y
expre
Distr
inclu
ies, o
error
is at
respo
throu

5) Se
espe
iden
adm
dem
vidu
Atte:
resu
rity:
may

6) Va
Vanc
of ar
worl
but

School I

I unders
further
cal and
my acce
taken, a

- d) Do not reveal your personal address or phone numbers of students or colleagues.
- e) Note that electronic mail (e-mail) is not guaranteed to be private. People who operate the system do have access to all mail. Messages relating to or in support of illegal activities may be reported to the authorities.
- f) Do not use the network in such a way that you would disrupt the use of the network by other users.
- g) All communications and information accessible via the network should be assumed to be private properly.

4) <YOUR> School District makes no warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for the service it is providing. <YOUR> School District will not be responsible for any damages you suffer. This include loss of data resulting from delays, nondeliveries, misdeliveries, or service interruptions caused by it's own negligence or your errors or omissions. Use of any information obtained via the Internet is at your own risk. <YOUR> School District specifically denies any responsibility for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through its services.

5) **Security**—Security on any computer system is a high priority, especially when the system involves many users. If you feel you can identify a security problem on the Internet, you must notify a system administrator or your <YOUR> District Internet Coordinator. Do not demonstrate the problem to other users. Do not use another individual's account without written permission from that individual. Attempts to log on to the Internet as a system administrator will result in cancellation of user privileges. Any user identified as a security risk or having a history of problems with other computer systems may be denied access to Internet.

6) **Vandalism**—Vandalism will result in cancellation of privileges. Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm or destroy data of another user, Internet, or any of the above listed agencies or other networks that are connected to any of the Internet backbones. This includes, but not limited to, the uploading or creation of computer viruses.

School District Internet Use Agreement

I understand and will abide by the above Internet Use Agreement. I further understand that any violation of the regulations above is unethical and may constitute a criminal offense. Should I commit any violation, my access privileges may be revoked, school disciplinary action may be taken, and/or appropriate legal action.

continue

overn-
smooth
nd users
led here
ire. In
network
e
ss could

ng and
s and

making
mong
s and
unt
with the
other
with
material
This
ing or

t, and
es. (Each
iscussion
e proper
at is inap-
ministra-
istration,
system
ts.

erally
ot lim-

ers.
ies or any

User's Full Name: _____

User Signature: _____

Date: _____

PARENT OR GUARDIAN

As the parent or guardian of this student, I have read the Internet Use Agreement. I understand that this access is designed for educational purposes. <YOUR> School District has taken precautions to eliminate controversial material. However, I also recognize it is impossible for School District to restrict access to all controversial materials and I will not hold them responsible for materials acquired on the network. Further, I accept full responsibility for supervision if and when my child's use is not in a school setting. I hereby give permission to issue an account for my child and certify that the information contained on this form is correct.

Parent or Guardian's Name (please print): _____

Parent or Guardian's Signature: _____

SPONSORING TEACHER

(Must be signed if the applicant is a student)

I have read the Internet Use Agreement and agree to promote THIS agreement with the student. Because the student may use the network for individual work or in the context of another class, I cannot be held responsible for the student use of the network. As the sponsoring teacher I do agree to instruct the student on acceptable use of the network and proper network etiquette.

Teacher's Name (please print): _____

Teacher's Signature: _____

Having an Acceptable use policy, particularly if adhered to and enforced, provides a significant protection shield to users of the school district's technology services. AUPs, coupled with strong e-mail security, are essential if school leaders wish to ensure that students are safe from online threats and that computer hardware is safe from viruses and other harmful threats. However, these security measures are wasteful if not accompanied by strong, purposeful staff development for technology usage. All school stakeholders,

including th
to utilize scl
the case in
essential to

Using Technol

Rather t
gies availab
pose of ide
and a soun
dream of ac
of awarene
described ir
the descript

Distance
allows i
the roor
nologies
portion
over 1,2
includin
2005) te
technol

• In c
lear
(Ne
tea

• On
the
tea
wil
eva

The Sm
a white
new te

including those external stakeholders who may have minimal opportunities to utilize school-based technology, should receive such training. As is always the case in school-community relations ventures, the people are absolutely essential to the success of the endeavor.

Using Technology for Instructional Purposes

Rather than attempt to exhaustively describe all of the teaching technologies available to schools in contemporary times, this section serves the purpose of identifying the relationship between some of the major technologies and a sound school-community relations program. Some schools can only dream of access to the few technologies listed below, others have some level of awareness of the technologies, and still others are way beyond usage as described in this section. The purpose is to provide an overview while relating the descriptions to their uses from a school-community relations perspective.

Distance Learning: Distance learning essentially is technology that allows instructors to teach lessons to students who are not present in the room. One of the biggest providers of K-12 distance learning technologies is Blackboard, Inc. In fact, Blackboard has gained such a large portion of the market share in distance learning that it now serves over 1,200 U.S. schools in 46 states. Additionally, over 12 million users, including nine of the Top Ten High Schools in America (Newsweek, 2005) teach and learn using Blackboard. Essentially, distance-learning technologies, like Blackboard, work in the following manner:

- In order to incorporate each into a rich, multi-dimensional online learning experience, it's necessary to develop and maintain an NLE (Networked Learning Environment). An NLE enables any student or teacher to access any learning resource at any time or place to:
 - View instructional content
 - Collaborate with educators
 - Evaluate academic performance
 - Achieve their educational objectives
- Once the distance learning site is set up, then students can log on to the website and engage in the learning activities that are there. The teacher, in turn, can visit the website independently or in conjunction with students to interact, monitor instruction and communication, or evaluate progress.

The Smart Board: For some school leaders, even the concept of a whiteboard, the dry erase version of a chalkboard, represents new technology. The evolution of the whiteboard, namely the

technologically interactive version, although used in many schools, would simply blow resistors away. Interactive whiteboards are often sold as Smart Boards or Touchboards. Essentially, interactive whiteboards offer the following features:

- Interactive whiteboards help you integrate digital information into teaching, presenting, and brainstorming.
- They easily connect to tools already in most classrooms.
- Interactive whiteboard enable you to write notes, insert diagrams, link to websites, and save your work for future use.

From a school-community relations perspective, using technologies to deliver instruction gives the public confidence that the school staff is cutting edge. Additionally, utilizing technologies, such as the ones mentioned above, allows parents to access their child's schoolwork and see precisely what is being learned. Students also are able to access instruction while home sick or on vacation. This, in and of itself, improves connections between the school and the home, connections that are essential to strong school-community relations.

Chapter Summary

- Resistors are administrators who shun any notion that computers, fiber-optic technologies, Bluetooth devices, and the myriad other technologies available can improve any part of their school community relations plans.
- Dabblers are educational leaders who show interest in electronic and technological communication but also have trouble keeping up with and effectively utilizing all that is available.
- Avant-garde administrators see technological advancements as instrumental to improving their school-community relations plans and meeting the needs of stakeholders, both internally and externally.
- E-mail can be an extremely valuable tool in an educational context, encouraging the development of communication skills, and transforming the learning process by opening up possibilities, that conventionally, would be impossible to achieve.
- For many messages, e-mail is the most efficient means of communicating, and it provides the greatest flexibility so that the school leader's time can be better spent on other important tasks

- An
thrc
e-m
Inte
- Rec
"ser
ing
leac
- Acc
dar
and
- Usi
that
thei

CASE

At
some
she w.
the ph
movir
secret
just th
princi
To
realize
for the
she is
during
thoug
At
ing to
origin
secret

- An increase in the number and severity of computer viruses spread through e-mail and inappropriate messages (i.e., spam) being sent via e-mail have given rise to greater scrutiny and a marked increase in Internet security systems.
- Recognizing that e-mail can sometimes be misconstrued and that the "send" button can be hit prior to accurately proofreading or addressing the message are just two of the potential pitfalls of which school leaders should remain mindful.
- Acceptable use policies develop some rules, regulations, and standards governing the appropriate use of electronic communications and information gathering.
- Using technology to deliver instruction gives the public confidence that the school staff is cutting edge, and it allows parents to access their child's schoolwork and see precisely what is being learned.

CASE STUDY ANALYSIS

Communication is Just a Click Away

Arnetta Ritchie remembered her first few years as a principal as some of the most physically demanding years of her life. In those days, she was constantly on the go, visiting classrooms, looking at areas of the physical plant in need of improvement with her custodial staff, and moving constantly back and forth between her desk and that of her secretary. Now, almost 20 years later, Arnetta could work up a sweat just thinking about the physical exhaustion that used to characterize the principal's day.

Today, however, Arnetta Ritchie is amazed to look at her watch and realize that she has been in her office for the past 2 hours. She is thankful for the outstanding work of Ray Griffith, her assistant principal, and she is confident that he must have been handling everything skillfully during the past 2 hours. "It's amazing how many e-mails I get," she thought as she leaned back in her chair.

Arnetta Ritchie had spent the past 2 hours reading and responding to e-mail messages. Also, she wore out her fingers sending some original messages, such as the four separate requests she made of her secretary. One additional message went to her head custodian, and six

continued

others were sent to various combinations of teachers within her school building. Getting out so many messages to different people used to be impossible. Now, it was a snap.

As Arnetta started to get up and considered leaving her office to see what was going on in the school, she heard a tone coming from her computer. This familiar tone meant that somebody had responded to one of Arnetta's messages. As she turned toward her computer, ready to read the response, a strange thought occurred to Arnetta. "Will I ever work up a sweat again?"

Questions for Analysis

1. Assess Arnetta's skills at using e-mail effectively. Are there any suggestions you may have for her to consider?
2. Are there communication problems between Arnetta and her school community? If so, are they the fault of technology or of Arnetta?
3. Specifically, what changes should Arnetta make in her uses of technology? Develop a concrete plan for her.

**Folk
Soc**