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Happy New (School) Year, Everyone!

We’re kicking off the academic year by honoring an innovative district and rolling out our redesigned website.

WHEN I WAS in school, August was the saddest month. It was officially part of summer, but you could feel the chill of fall in the air — and you could see it in stores, where shelves that had once overflowed with squirt guns and boogie boards now held row after row of notebooks and pencils. As the editor of an ed tech magazine, though, August is not at all sad. It is instead a month of renewal, when educators and industry colleagues are back from well-earned vacations and getting ready for the upcoming school year, perhaps armed with new gadgets, but definitely full of new ideas about how to teach with technology.

To kick off the 2014-2015 academic year in style, this issue features a profile of Richland School District Two (SC), the winner of this year’s Sylvia Charp Award for District Innovation in Technology. On page 13, you can read all about how their thoughtful planning created a learning environment where 1-to-1 and BYOD are the norm, where teachers get plenty of personalized PD, and where an innovation incubator gives grants to educators who come up with ideas to solve the problems that the district is facing. I dare you to not be inspired by their story.

As part of THE Journal’s preparation for the new school year, we have done some renovation around here. As you can see on the cover, we have refreshed our logo. We have also redesigned our website, adding responsive design so that the site will automatically optimize itself to whatever device you view it on. We also simplified and reorganized the layout to make it easier for you to find the features, news and reviews that will help ease your transition from summer into the new academic year. I think our designers deserve an A. If you have a second in between planning meetings and orientations, please do drop me a note and tell me what you think.
Student Data Protection Bill Would Set Limits on Use of School Information

By David Nagel

Legislation introduced last month in the U.S. Senate would restrict the use of students’ personal data for commercial purposes, limit the transfer of such data and require records to be kept of any entities that have access to students’ information.

The bipartisan Protecting Student Privacy Act, introduced by Sens. Edward J. Markey, D-Mass., and Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, would amend the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). The new legislation aims to slow the propagation of student information without parental consent, curb the use of student data in commercial applications and secure data held by private companies.

In a statement released to coincide with the introduction of the legislation, Sen. Markey said, “With the business of storing and sitting through records of students growing as fast as students are, Congress must act to ensure that safeguards are in place for data that is shared with outside companies. This legislation ensures the parents, not private companies, control personal information about their children and that it won’t be sold as a product on the open market. I thank Senator Hatch for his bipartisanship and attention to this issue, and I look forward to working with all of my colleagues to pass this important legislation.”

Among other things, the legislation requires companies to:

- Have policies and practices in place to secure student data;
- Keep records of other outside entities that have access to the data they store;
- Destroy personally identifiable data once it is no longer needed;
- Provide access to student data they hold when requested by a parent; and
- Provide “a process to challenge, correct, or delete any inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise inappropriate data in any education records of such student that are held by the outside party, through an opportunity for a hearing by the agency or institution providing the outside party with access.”

Read the full article.
Here & Now

**Roadtrip Nation and Hobsons to Collaborate on Career Readiness Curriculum**

Two companies that supply digital tools to help students and schools with educational resources will team up to create a curriculum intended to help at-risk students prepare for careers.

Roadtrip Nation, a nonprofit that prepares career exploration resources, and Hobsons, which creates digital tools to help schools with personalized learning, academic planning and post-secondary enrollment tracking, will launch the curriculum via a digital platform for students in grades 6-12, targeting communities with large numbers of at-risk, low-income, minority populations that have historically high dropout rates. Called the Naviance College and Career Readiness Curriculum, it is a blended learning program that is intended to help students build noncognitive skills, college knowledge and the confidence to persevere in working toward long-term academic and career goals.

The curriculum will be distributed to 50 counselors in school districts with unusually high student-to-counselor ratios. The hope is that 30,000 students will be able to participate.

“Schools often do not have sufficient resources to meet every student’s individual needs,” said Roadtrip Nation co-founder Mike Marriner. “This addresses this challenge by providing a personalized student-driven tool that covers a range of critical topics.”

Among those topics, Marriner said, are goal setting, self-confidence and planning for college. Along with a number of self-directed exercises, there will also be a series of video interviews with professionals and college students, all intended to offer real-world advice about overcoming life challenges. *Read the full article.*

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Roadtrip Nation
and Hobsons to
Collaborate on Career
Readiness Curriculum

Mike Marriner

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93% of K-12 teachers report that technology has had a positive effect on student engagement.1

9/10 teachers say that the Internet has a major impact on their ability to access important teaching materials.2

Only 28% of public schools have the broadband speed necessary to reliably access the Internet.3

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Roadtrip Nation and Hobsons to Collaborate on Career Readiness Curriculum

Mike Marriner

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Sign up for Here & Now, our bi-weekly tech news digest, at www.cdw.govnews.com. For questions or comments, call 1-800-905-6648 (USA)/1-800-982-0917 (other countries) or email us at cedinfo@cdw.gov.

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1. Pew Internet, How Teachers Are Using Technology at Home and in Their Classrooms, pewinternet.org, 2013


3. Digedu.com and Pew Internet, How Teachers Are Using Technology at Home and in Their Classrooms, pewinternet.org, 2013

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Yet, the way to turn this problem around, said the Alliance, isn’t a mystery: It requires more attention paid to teacher induction, particularly among new teachers in hard-to-staff schools. Teachers move, according to “On the Path to Equity: Improving the Effectiveness of Beginning Teachers,” because of job dissatisfaction, including inadequate administrative support, isolated working conditions, poor student discipline, lower salaries and a lack of collective teacher influence over school decisions. Read the full article.
DynaVox has added analytics tools and new materials for educators to its special education software program Boardmaker. Users can create and alter boards consisting of pictures of objects and actions to help students with speech, language and learning challenges. Read the full article.

BenQ America has introduced the MW665, a DLP projector designed for bring-your-own-device environments. Boasting WXGA resolution, 3,200 ANSI lumens of brightness and a 13,000:1 contrast ratio, the MW665 offers LAN display and control as well as wireless connectivity. Read the full article.

Odysseyware has converted its 60 most popular online courses to HTML5 to make them accessible via any mobile device. The company’s new virtual labs are also built on HTML5 and the remaining online courses will be converted in the coming months. Read the full article.

NetRef is a new Internet management tool designed to provide safety for kids at school and at home. According to the company, NetRef safeguards all Internet access points, offering umbrella protection across a school’s networks and on all imported devices. Read the full article.

Digital course provider Learning Upgrade has released a new course, Math Upgrade 8. The course uses videos and songs to help eighth-graders master every Common Core math standard. The company is offering 20 free student licenses to schools with 300 or more students. Read the full article.

Extron Electronics has released the SMP 351, an H.264 streaming media processor for lecture capture and distribution. The SMP 351 is designed for recording and delivering presentations to a larger audience. It can record and stream lectures simultaneously. Read the full article.

AV & Presentation
- New BenQ Projector Supports BYOD
- Lightspeed Updates Mobile Manager for Windows 8.1
- Mimio Rolls Out Interactive Displays, Upgrades MimioStudio and MimioMobile
- PESA Intros Compact Streaming System

Infrastructure & Facilities
- Red Hat Releases Enterprise Linux 7
- Atera Introduces New Charge/Sync Cabinet

Teaching & Learning
- Kurzweil 3000-firefly Literacy Software Adds Tools for Struggling Learners
- Filament Launches Game-Based Science Curriculum
- zSpace STEM Lab Adds Real-Time Sharing, Physics Simulations, Virtual Circuitry Lab
- KDS Unveils Cloud Teacher Professional Development Platform
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NOW AVAILABLE ON iPad
Burleson serves a dual role as both head librarian and technology guru at the K-4 school. More than two years ago, he began working closely with the school’s art and music teachers to explore technology in new ways, starting with a schoolwide project inspired by the Peter Reynolds book *The Dot*.

**THE Journal**: What was it about this book that resonated with you, and how did you end up turning the project into something bigger?

**Todd Burleson**: It’s a really beautiful story about not being afraid to be creative, focusing on a little girl who doesn’t think she can draw and her teacher who gets her to believe in herself. I found out about International Dot Day, in which schools all over the world celebrate the book, and we decided this would be a great way to kick off the school year and get kids excited.

We used no-tech, low-tech and high-tech tools to expand the ideas of creativity, compassion and empathy. We investigated dots in the form of Braille alphabets, Morse code, splatter painting by Jackson Pollock and pointillism by Seurat and Lichtenstein. We imagined musical notes as “dots” and used a variety of apps on the iPad and computer to “compose” using these dots. It all culminated on a beautiful day where students filtered through the resource center and celebrated the message of the story while using technology to be creative in new ways.

**THE Journal**: What project do you have planned next?

**Burleson**: This year I’ve paired with a children’s author who is coming to our school in November to help our fourth-graders get an understanding of how to create a picture book. The students will work on different pieces of narrative writing in their classes, and they will use that to create a 28-page book. I’m working with the art teacher to help them explore different illustration styles, and then we’re going to turn those into interactive e-books. There will be a “Read to Me” feature, in which the kids will read their own book and add sound effects, as well as other interactive elements. And for the kids who are interested, I’m going to work with the music teacher to turn the books into pieces of music.

**THE Journal**: What have you learned from these experiences about how technology can improve the learning experience of your students?

**Burleson**: One of the things I’m a big proponent of is making kids see that they are creators, not simply consumers, on their devices. They can make materials that others can absorb and explore. Particularly for children up to age 10 like the ones I work with, technology can make your work look better. If you write something by hand, people can tell you’re 10 years old from the handwriting.

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**MY TOP 3**

Burleson offers a trio of tools that help students share stories.

*See all this month’s videos.*
But if you type it and put it into an interactive book, you could be 50 years old and no one knows the difference. So it levels the playing field for children in a way that traditional media can’t do.

**THE Journal**: How do you see the success of these activities in the kids’ responses?

**Burleson**: I see them getting beyond the point of just having fun and realizing that they are creators. When I was a kid, we would have an author come to our school and tell us we could be authors if we wanted. I would think, “Well, not really.” But when a kid sits down and makes his own book, that is incredibly powerful. At the end of the last school year, our kids did the standard third-grade animal project, but then turned them into interactive books. They felt like they were on top of the world, because these books looked so great.
6 Must-Have Apps for Tech Leaders

These tablet tools will help technology directors and coordinators make the most out of their mobile devices.

A school’s technology staff is always on the go, so they need a mobile ecosystem that is as flexible as they are. Following up on last month’s article in which we asked principals for their mission-critical apps, we sought out mobile-savvy technology directors and coordinators and asked them to share the applications and mobile-friendly Web tools that they use to work with teachers, manage technology and schedule their days the smart way. Here’s what they had to say.

1) Evernote

Susan Bearden, who has worked in various technology roles throughout her career and is now the director of IT at Holy Trinity Episcopal Academy (FL), said, “I use Evernote because I can access my content wherever I am.” To Bearden, that compatibility is important, as she’s liable to switch among four different computing devices on any given day. “I can create notes on the fly and you can add other content, like audio or pictures,” she added. Bearden frequently uses the app to take notes in meetings, document the state of her school’s technology and share files with others via Dropbox. It also serves as her daily to-do list via a built-in “checkbox” feature.

2) Notability

Allen Miedema, the director of technology for Northshore School District in Bothell, WA, relies on this note-taking mainstay, which he originally picked because it scored top marks in syncing up with the file-sharing sites he uses. “I also like that Notability gives me a couple different ways that I can take notes,” he said. “If I want to type some notes, which I normally do, I can, but if I want to do some drawing and put in some audio I can do that as well, without it getting too complicated.”
3) Hapara
This tool works with desktops as well as mobile devices. Miedema’s district has come to rely on Hapara, whose name was taken from the Maori word for “daybreak.” The program acts as a layer over Google Apps for Education, letting users organize their documents by subject and move them around. Students, for example, can complete work, alert their teacher and drop it in special “completed” or “homework” folders. Teachers can check on students’ progress from an iPad through a “remote control” feature and can even control student devices if they wish. “Our classroom teachers use it all day long, whether they know they’re using it or not,” said Miedema.

Hapara also links up with other district systems to automatically enroll and drop students as they come and go. In a district like Northshore, which has a high mobility rate, this feature creates significant time savings. “Say you’re a secondary math teacher and you have 150 kids,” Miedema said. “You can create those folders, but managing those folders as kids come and go can be a huge problem. Hapara ties into our Active Directory services and our student information system. As a kid enrolls in your geometry class, it creates a folder in the right place, so the new kid has a Google Apps space before they walk into your classroom, and it all happens automatically. I know if we took it away from our secondary teachers they’d stop using Google Docs. Their class lists would just become unmanageable.”

4) Twitter
This invaluable social media platform is useful for any educator, and technology leaders are no different. Bearden said, “In terms of trying to stay abreast of ed tech trends, there’s no

5 TECH-FRIENDLY COLLABORATION APPS
Students and teachers aren’t the only ones who need to collaborate on a daily basis. Technology leaders often find themselves documenting what’s happening in a classroom, sharing with teachers and colleagues, or creating materials to present at meetings. Here’s a selection of apps to lean on when working with others.

Haiku Deck is a slideware app that lets users create presentations and then share them on the Web. According to Lucy Gray, an innovation coach and consultant based in Northbrook, IL, Haiku Deck “incorporates Creative Commons licensed images and cites it at the end of the presentation, so it makes it really easy to make something copyright-friendly.” Free.

Collaboration tool Mural.ly combines classic brainstorming elements like sticky notes and X/Y-axis charts with Pinterest-like photo and video pinning — and it works with multiple users for simultaneous collaboration. Discounted subscriptions for educators.

Edmodo is not just for the teachers, Gray said. “If you dig around, there are different groups for different people, including tech directors,” she explained. Education companies may also maintain their own groups, where tech leaders can chat directly with reps. Free.

Messaging app Remind allows tech leaders to send out texts and reminders to individuals or groups, without having to trade your cell phone number with everyone. Free.

Part note-taker, part free sketch tool, Talkboard almost resembles an interactive whiteboard in that it lets users pull in images and share them to other devices. Free.
better way to do it.” She tweets frequently using iPad apps like HootSuite and TweetList, the latter of which helps her organize her followers into lists separated by interest or topic. When the iPad was first released, she connected with other early adopters to swap tips and app ideas. Lately, she’s been following developments on Google Classroom, Google’s bare-bones LMS, and chatting with beta users before a general release.

In addition to using Twitter to manage and expand her personal learning network, Bearden moderates and participates in a number of weekly chats. For those in technology, she recommends #edtechchat, which takes place on Mondays from 8 to 9 p.m. EST and which she co-founded with other tech directors around the country. “We were very much interested in how to bridge the gap between IT operations and educators, so #edtechchat is a great way to stay abreast of education trends and connect with other tech directors,” she said. “If you’re interested in specific technologies, there’s a #BYOTchat that meets at 9 p.m. EST on Thursdays and a 1-to-1 iPad chat, #1to1ipadchat.”

**5) Simple In/Out**  
Miedema and his team frequently use this free app as a sort of digital upgrade to the cluttered, stationary whiteboard that he once used to track his team’s schedules. Through a GPS technology called “geofencing,” the app lets users plot out the boundaries of their office or school campus. As members of Miedema’s team pass in and out of the geofenced zone, they’re automatically checked in or out of the location, and their status is accessible to everybody else.

“We have a staff that moves around a lot,” Miedema said. “Especially during the summer, they’re working in four to five locations. It’s always been a hassle for us to know exactly where, say, Tim is going. Everybody says they’re going to let you know, but no one ever does.” While it may make the most sense to load the app on a smartphone, Miedema says his school’s buildings often suffer from poor signal strength, making a WiFi enabled iPad a better fit. “If you’re on our network, it can pick you up with this application. Even if we can’t call them, we can still go and track them down.”

**6) iTunes U**  
For an app most commonly associated with student courses, iTunes U actually has a lot of potential for professional development, according to Lucy Gray, an Apple Distinguished Educator and consultant who often works with tech coordinators. As Gray explained, “iTunes U is a section of the iTunes store that has completely free material.” K-12 offerings include videos and books, and educators can use their iPads to organize their collections with a tool called iTunes U Course Manager. Courses can then be shared with the general public through iTunes.

Previously, Apple required courses to be built with a Mac, but recent updates have put everything right in the iPad app. Gray said, “Internally, it is a mechanism for organizing and pushing out stuff to your faculty and your students.” She added that schools like *Lake Forest Academy* (IL) and Kansas’ *Blue Valley School District*, which share their PD with others, are often considered among the leaders in that area. “I think for tech coordinators, a big part of what they do should be researching and thinking and searching on their practice,” she said. “It’s not just about the technology, it’s also the philosophy that goes behind it.”

Stephen Noonoo is a contributing editor based in Los Angeles.
The winner of the 2014 Sylvia Charp Award for District Innovation is Richland Two, which has found the right formula for a tech transformation.

By Greg Thompson
Debra W. Hamm, the superintendent at Richland Two, was quick to spread credit for the award to a team that places a premium on training and teacher support. “If there is any secret to our success, it is that we have layer upon layer of professional development [PD],” said Hamm. “When we started rolling out our 1-to-1 idea, we put in a plan to support teachers in their classrooms, and we started a program called Tech Mentors.”

Once the district made the 1-to-1 commitment, it allotted funds that allowed them to provide a device to each and every student. That focus on access and equity is a requirement for the Charp Award, and it’s an ethos that permeates Richland Two. Since the 39-school district equipped its first 1-to-1 classroom a dozen years ago, the program has steadily expanded. Following a phased process, Richland Two now boasts 1-to-1 computing in grades 3 through 12, which includes 21,000 of its 27,000 students.

Hamm was quick to concede that 1-to-1 is nothing new, but she pointed out that the program’s incremental expansion proceeded in a logical fashion that sets the district apart. “We do the SAMR Model,” she said, “which is a progression from ‘S,’ which stands for simple substitution; ‘A,’ which stands for augmentation; ‘M,’ which stands for modification; and ‘R,’ which stands for redefinition.” For Richland Two, substitution was using computers to do the same things students used to do with paper and pencil — essentially word processing or reading a textbook on screen instead of in a book. The augmentation and modification phases incorporated more of the true enhancements of technology, while redefinition meant doing new tasks in new ways.

For example, Hamm said, “Students use applications such as FaceTime to share data electronically for a science project. Our teachers increasingly are working at those higher levels. Redefining the task is a really important facet, because that’s where authentic learning takes place. We have data that shows the kinds of changes that are taking place in our classrooms.” The program has also redefined the physical arrangement of classrooms. “Desks are in clusters and students are working collaboratively,” said Hamm.

One example of this sort of collaborative learning came when Hamm visited a classroom of first-graders. “They were learning about newspapers,” she recalled. “They learned about the index and the different sections. Then they actually worked collaboratively in groups and decided that they would develop and write stories that they word-processed and created on their own. I read Fun With Dick and Jane when I was in first grade, and these kids were reading and writing newspaper stories. It was amazing.”

**Tech for Learning**

Thomas W. Cranmer, Richland County Two’s chief technology officer, helps teachers with the technical side of classroom technology, and he makes sure that the district’s Internet backbone remains as steady as possible. “The Internet is an unlimited resource for learning,” said Cranmer, who served as the district’s director of IT for a dozen years before taking his current post. “But we have lots of other technologies...
such as document cameras. We do a lot with video editing as part of project-based learning where students use small, inexpensive video cameras to build out authentic learning experiences.” Learning activities with GPS devices and geocaching have helped build a technological culture among teachers and students throughout the district, as have the Smart Boards in every classroom.

Angela D. Hill, a science teacher at Richland Two’s Blythewood High School, arrived at the district a decade ago and soon became a Tech Mentor. Initial monthly meetings helped Hill to use her Smart Board to involve students interactively, as opposed to merely projecting information on a screen.

Hill also takes advantage of the fact that all Richland Two students in grades 3 through 12 have Chromebooks, so they can use a software package called PASCO Probeware, which, Hill said, “allows students to collect real-time data, and the data comes up on the Chromebooks. That was something I asked for when I was part of our iPAC (Personalized, Authentic and Collaborative) program, so students could collect real-time data in the laboratory at their own station — and watch that data collection through a variety of screens.” For example, if students take a temperature measurement and input the numbers on the Chromebook, the probeware will generate a graph, which, Hill explained, “gives us a good way for students to discuss data and data analysis…. It has enhanced our science program.”

With so many devices in the hands of so many students, all the moving parts don’t work if the parts can’t be found. Not all students are particularly organized, said Hill, admitting that “making sure students have their device in class” can be the most difficult part of running a 1-to-1 classroom.

Hill describes Richland Two as a “Google organization” where all stu-
Students have their own Gmail address and access to their own Google Drive account. “My students do laboratory portfolios where they do a digital display of some of their lab work,” said Hill. “They collect data using the PASCO equipment, but then they write up whole reports, sometimes using a webpage format, a Google slide format or a Google doc format. They are able to make those lab reports come to life in a way they weren’t able to do a few years ago.”

In Hill’s classroom, even the time-consuming chore of checking chemistry homework has been streamlined via a document reader. “We take a snapshot of their homework paper and they get to explain their homework,” she explained. “I have a rubric that establishes the standards for presenting and writing, so once the student gets to the board it’s actually better than the textbook key for going over homework.”

Progress Through PD
Richland’s Two’s digital transition was guided by an emphasis on PD from the beginning. Tech Mentors helped teachers at every level on a part-time basis, sometimes starting with lessons as basic as how to turn on a computer. And computers were not reserved for a separate lab; classrooms instead started with desktop machines and were eventually stocked with laptops. Superintendent Hamm described the first layer of the process as “building expertise among teachers who would then help other teachers.” The next layer was a dedicated staff member and a space that was reserved for training.

Technology integration lessons were not a one-size-fits-all endeavor, but instead consisted of a catalog of courses. “Eventually we added an Instructional Technology Specialist [ITS] to every school,” said Hamm. “It started out as a part-time position, and eventually we added more responsibilities, and installed a full-time salaried person at every one of our locations.” The job description has been updated to reflect the ISTE Standards for Coaches, and the job title is now Technology and Learning Coach.

In addition to this crucial full-time position, the district approved funding for a comprehensive wireless infrastructure in the summer of 2011. A technology committee engaged stakeholders in the planning process by bringing together administrators, teachers, school-level technology coaches, district personnel, students and parents. Subcommittees oversaw device selection, public relations, curriculum, resources, media specialists and many aspects of PD.

One of the results of this comprehensive planning, according to Hamm, was that, “In addition to implementing the 1-to-1 student computing initiative, we’ve worked closely to change policy to allow students to bring their own devices, including cell phones in high schools. Students in our district are allowed to bring devices from home to supplement technology in the classroom. We’ve developed procedures to allow students to take devices home. We’re currently testing 4G devices to provide connectivity to our students who don’t have home Internet access.”

For two days during the summer, the district holds the SC Midlands Summit, a conference on technology
integration. Even though the conference happens when school is out, the gathering still manages to attract 600 people from throughout the Southeast. "Most of them are our own teachers," enthused Hamm. "But people attend from several states. Combine this with classroom-level support, district programs and school programs, and teachers have many options to get better at using technology for teaching and learning."

Hill added, “PD in this district is constant. They don't teach us something and leave us floundering. They encourage us to be innovative. They invite folks to talk about different devices or software or means of using technology with all ages of students. What makes us so successful is the fact that our leadership is so open and so supportive.”

According to Donna Teuber, the district’s team leader for technology integration, Richland Two is “constantly looking at continuous quality improvement. We do class observations and spend a lot of time and effort working with our school-level technology and learning coaches to work with teachers and integrate the technology.”

Indeed, the next step in PD for the district was determined by a team of teachers, media specialists and technology coaches at two high schools, who have developed a personalized model. Teuber said, “Teachers got together and talked about what they didn’t like about PD, and decided they wanted to personalize it, and have some ‘gamification’ built in. They’ll be scaling that out next year.”

Incubating Innovation

For Teuber, putting devices in the hands of every student was only the beginning. “After being fully implemented with 1-to-1,” she said, “we continued to look for more ways to develop innovative practices in classrooms. In Spring 2013, Dr. Hamm was very interested in exploring the idea of an innovation incubator. We did a lot of research in the fall and set up R2 Innovates.”

In late 2013, the district launched R2 Innovates, an “innovation incubator” designed to foster experimentation in the classroom by providing teachers with opportunities to implement creative tech ideas. CTO Cranmer said, “At times, districts will find themselves hitting a plateau in their technology integration. There are great ideas that many teachers have in the district, and we wanted to bring those ideas into an environment where they could be further developed and ultimately evolve into new best practices in the schools. We looked at innovative practices that happen in places like Silicon Valley, and we personally visited some of those early startups and tried to model what we’re doing here in much the same way.”

Teuber said that the district sent out an application asking “anyone in the district who wanted to impact student learning, and who had a great idea, to apply. We identified 15 teams of teachers, or others, who had ideas to develop. We brought in Notosh, an international company with offices in the U.K., Australia and San Francisco, to help with the design process. We came out of that development process in December 2013, and then had final pitches in January 2014.” The R2 team identified nine teams that had big ideas to solve big problems in the district, then gave them the...
mentors and the funding to make their ideas into realities.

As a result of R2 Innovates, Teuber said, “We had a math team at Long-leaf Middle School implement a blended learning model for math, and they are scaling that next year.” She added that the district now has a high school where all the teachers are using blended learning for math. The district has also implemented project-based learning. She said, “We had one team at an elementary school that took recycling to the next level, showing how you can do a lot more with PBL than just have the project tacked on at the end, but rather the whole class being immersed in the project.”

**Beyond Managing Machines**

Despite the fact that most students at Richland Two have their own devices, some don’t have Internet access at home, and that is a challenge. To formulate a plan to deal with the issue of equity and access, Teuber said, the district’s director of Assessment and Accountability teamed with the planning office, “and they worked on mapping data based on different needs in our district. I have a map that shows me where students don’t have Internet access in our district. So I’m able to look at their test scores. As we put Internet access into the homes, we’re able to follow up and see if it made a difference in terms of student achievement. This past semester, we piloted a program using SmartSpots from a company called Kajeet. We started small and chose some of our neediest families.” Cranmer continued, “We have about 25 families who are now able to get Internet access for their devices at home. We are interested in creating better partnerships with some of the wireless carriers and trying to find innovative ways to get Internet access to those families who do not have Internet access.”
Technology has truly transformed teaching in Richland Two, but plenty of challenges remain. “This is my 20th year teaching, and there were certainly not computers in the classroom when I started,” said Hill with a chuckle. “My biggest challenge is just with me — just learning new ways to use these tools to make learning more effective. That may mean removing some things from my bag of tricks because they are old. As a science teacher, I use the technology to get kids to start asking their own questions, and to think like a scientist. It requires professional and personal growth.”

Teuber concurred. “Teachers will tell you that the toughest challenge is having enough time for practice, and getting feedback on what they are doing. Our technology integration team has created a course for our coaches, so that’s our next focus: to have the coaches working with groups of teachers on really seeing a project through. We can have the coach model the success, or be in the classroom with the teacher and provide some feedback and support as the teacher is implementing. That is an ongoing need: for teachers to feel like they’ve got someone there to help them as they are starting to learn.” Teuber doesn’t want technology to be “just another thing — a new thing we’ve added on to the old stuff — as opposed to a way to change how we do things in the classroom.”

Hamm concluded, “Excellence is not about managing machines. It is all about how technology helps teachers to teach and students to learn. The emphasis on professional development must focus on teaching and learning. With this in mind, the technology program can grow.”

Greg Thompson is a freelance writer based in Fort Collins, CO.

ABOUT THE AWARD

The Sylvia Charp Award, named for the founding editor of THE Journal, has two focuses: districtwide implementation, ensuring equity and appropriate technology use for all students in the district; and innovation, which helps foster progress and new ideas in education.

Selection criteria include the following:
- consistent district effectiveness;
- use of ISTE’s National Educational Technology Standards and Essential Conditions for Students or a (local or statewide) derivative of those standards;
- effective and innovative technology implementation; and
- commitment to participate in dissemination to and support of other districts.

For more information and to enter, click here.

PREVIOUS WINNERS

2013: Rowan-Salisbury School District (NC)
2012: Mooresville Graded School District (NC)
2011: Vail School District (AZ)
2010: Floydada Independent School District (TX)
8 Free (and Nearly Free) Resources for English Language Learners

These digital and online tools can help your English language learners build vocabulary and improve their reading abilities while often putting them in control of their own learning.

As schools struggle to get their heads around the proficiency expectations laid out in the Common Core and other newly revised state standards, perhaps nobody will struggle more than educators working with English language learners. After all, ELLs have to build their content knowledge and their language skills simultaneously. On top of that, as it says in a report by nonprofit education consultancy WestEd, “Often, especially if they are recent immigrants, they also have to learn about and adapt to the culture of U.S. schools.”

The National Center for Education Statistics estimated that in 2011-2012 more than 9 percent of public school students — 4.4 million — were English language learners. In eight western states, 10 percent of public school students were classified as ELLs; in California, the figure was 23 percent.

One way that teachers can optimize their time with their ELLs is through the use of technology. These eight free (and nearly free) digital and online resources encourage students to improve their English by putting them in control of their own learning.

**EnglishCentral**
This site promises to “improve your English online” by offering 8,000 videos on a multitude of timely topics. With paid premium editions, students read transcripts, and the system monitors pronunciation progress with proprietary iLlSpeech technology. The site, which adds dozens of new videos each week, also helps users build their vocabulary by giving them multiple-choice quizzes on word definitions. The program tracks scores and provides a leaderboard to exhort students to continue playing. “It’s clearly my students’ favorite site,” said teacher, book author and blogger Larry Ferlazzo, who resides online at Larry Ferlazzo’s Websites of the Day ... for Teaching ELL, ESL and EFL. “It has engaging videos that reinforce reading, listening and speaking skills. Its software does an impressive job of evaluating how well students are correctly repeating words and gives immediate feedback.”

**ESL Library**
For $55 a year, teacher subscribers gain access to li-
ELLs

BONUS RESOURCE #1: A SPANISH VERSION OF THE COMMON CORE

Sharing the contents of the Common Core standards with students’ families is hard if they don’t speak or read English. To address this gap, the Council of Chief State School Officers, the California Department of Education and the San Diego County Office of Education kicked off a translation project to put the Common Core en Español. This page provides the text for the English Language Arts standards for grades K-12, and this page covers math in grades K-8. (Math for grades 9 to 12 is “coming soon.”)

braries of lesson plans and flashcards for teenage English learners. The site promises English, Spanish and French editions of 500-plus lessons and 2,000 flashcard images that can be printed and copied to pass out in class. Lessons are categorized by general purpose (such as “discussion starters,” “mini debates,” “famous people), and a blog directs users to new additions.

Mobile Education Store

This company sells 11 low-cost apps designed to help students with special needs, but the apps are also gaining interest from ELL teachers who want to exploit the visual and audio capabilities of Apple’s iPhone and iPad. For example, Language Builder uses audio clips and a recording feature to help students improve sentence creation, formation and expression. One reviewer reported, “This is a great tool to get students talking.” Another app, StoryBuilder, is intended to help learners improve paragraph formation and integration of ideas by showing pictures and asking questions to get responses from students. Those responses are recorded and then compiled into a story that can be e-mailed to a teacher or family member.

Pearson English Language Teaching

Yes, this blog promotes Pearson products, but even more often it features advice and ideas from instructors who work with Pearson but also teach in the classroom. For example, a recent post shared five ideas for using student-generated content in digital form, such as video captured by a student’s phone. Other posts
have explored the flipped classroom, lessons for specific holidays and new ELL-related research.

**Strivney**
This website includes a thousand animated and interactive games, exercises and presentations to help young English language learners to read. Users must register in order to take advantage of the site’s personal scoring system and to access the resources. Don’t concern yourself too much with the British spellings; the site was created by a Brit living in Israel and a co-developer in France; both have decades of experience in working with children and adults who are learning English.

**U.S.A. Learns**
Developed as a joint project by the U.S. Department of Education; the California Department of Education; the Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education; and the Division of Adult Education and Literacy, this free website is intended to support immigrants who want to learn or improve their English skills. While it may draw adult learners, everything here will work for high school students too. Features for those who register include topical videos; a picture dictionary; multimedia activities with video, images and audio; vocabulary practice for 800 words; quizzes with automated scoring; and tracking of student activity. U.S.A. Learns apps are available for iOS and Android devices.

**Understanding Language**
The Stanford Graduate School of Education is developing teaching resources for English Language Arts, mathematics and science. Although the collection will grow, existing units are ready-packaged with teacher guidelines, printable student handouts, occasional videos and other insights for helping educators support their ELLs.

**WIDA Lesson Plan Share Space**
Hosted by World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA), one of two consortia developing versions of the Common Core assessments for ELLs, this site allows educators to upload and share lesson plans specifically addressing English language development and content-area standards. At the time of this writing, the site contained about 31 lesson plans; but as the WIDA assessment percolates throughout the states that are part of the consortium, that’s sure to grow. To search for a lesson plan, users can select a language standard, grade level, language domain (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and a keyword. While you’re at WIDA, check out the Download Library, which is packed with standards, research and sample assessment items.

**BONUS RESOURCE #2: AN ELL MOOC**
Supporting English Language Learners Under New Standards is an eight-week massive open online course (MOOC) designed to help teachers support ELLs in meeting Common Core standards. Although the Oregon Department of Education is promoting the course for its own K-12 teachers, it’s open to anybody for free. Oregon is a member of English Language Proficiency Assessment for the 21st Century (ELPA21), one of the consortia working on assessments for English learners that align with the Common Core. One of the MOOC instructors is Kenji Hakuta, the Stanford professor responsible for the “Understanding Languages” site. Other instructors include Karen Thompson, an assistant professor at Oregon State University, and Sara Rutherford-Quach, a Stanford lecturer. The course starts on Oct. 1, ends on Nov. 24 and is expected to take about 30 hours to finish. Participants will work in teams (which can include people you know or strangers who work in similar geographic areas or grade levels). Be forewarned: If you’re not a teacher, you may feel left out when the instructors ask you to submit student language samples and implement lessons in the classroom.

Dian Schaffhauser is a senior contributing editor based in Nevada City, CA.
For K-12 ed tech leaders, budgets are chronically tight. One way to make the most of your available funds is to let the strength in numbers work for you by joining a buying network. Districts and educational consortia around the country are doing just that by using buying cooperatives like The Cooperative Purchasing Network (TCPN), the Association of Educational Purchasing Agencies (AEPA) and Keystone Purchasing Network to buy new hardware and software for their institutions. Here, they discuss how working with a middleman can actually save them money and time.

**Competitive Pricing**

Edmonds School District in Lynnwood, WA, has certainly benefited from the services of buying cooperatives. According to Sandi Masterman, purchasing agent for the 32-school, 20,000-student district, it most recently worked with GovConnection to negotiate TCPN pricing on a contract (with the former serving as the intermediary). Through the arrangement, in 2012 the district purchased Lenovo desktops, tablets, monitors, keyboards and microphones.

“Pretty much everything that Lenovo sells — plus the remainder of GovConnection’s catalog — can be purchased off a TCPN contract,” said Masterman. “When we compared that to past contracts and the opportunity to buy direct, we found the buying group pretty advantageous in terms of the competitive price points.” To get involved, the district had to join TCPN, which offers members the opportunity to leverage any of the buying group’s current bids.

Once the items are procured, districts like Edmonds work directly with the vendor (in this case, Lenovo) to manage delivery and technical/customer support. Masterman, who has used cooperative purchasing to acquire myriad products and materials — not just technology — said that gaining access to significant buying power is the biggest benefit that the

3 Reasons to Give Cooperative Purchasing a Try

Districts can save time and money on their ed tech purchases by joining one of these buying groups.
district gains. “It also helps whittle down the competitive bid process,” said Masterman, “and gain the group’s cumulative power, which far exceeds our individual buying power.”

Chris Bailey, the manager of IT operations at Edmonds SD, said that when the district was buying Lenovo equipment directly from the manufacturer, it was paying more. “We’re saving money by going through a third party, essentially,” said Bailey. “In addition, the purchasing contracts allow us to move a little bit more quickly when we go through a formal bid process.”

**Expedited Purchasing**

Bailey’s second point is particularly significant, because the time between defining specification and actually awarding a contract can range from three to six months. “There are certain protocols we need to go through as a school, and certainly as basically a state agency, that takes time,” he said. “With a contract, however, we can submit whatever we need and reference the contract. We get the product within a week or two.”

Like Masterman and Bailey, Elizabeth Walden, network manager for the Jackson County School District in Marianna, FL, likes using purchasing cooperatives to acquire technology because it allows her to expedite the process. “We don’t have to go out for bid when a product is already on the buying consortium’s contract,” said Walden, who most recently worked with the Panhandle Area Educational Consortium (PAEC) in Chipley, FL, to purchase about 250 Acer laptops. (PAEC works with the AEPA to secure lower prices for its members.)

Currently in the process of getting that purchase approved by the school board, Walden said working with the buying group is as simple as “making the vendor aware that we wanted to use the public purchasing program.”

“Expedited Purchasing”

“The vendor then works with the co-op as far as making sure that pricing falls under its program,” said Walden, whose team also buys frequently from CDW-G, which is also on the co-op’s purchasing program. The CDW-G process involves Walden visiting the vendor’s website to shop for specific products. While there, she uses a drop-down menu to see her district’s special pricing, which is typically “a few dollars less than our [direct] prices,” said Walden.

Walden said that districts can save time by working directly with the buying groups instead of reaching out to the vendors first. “With the laptop purchase, we took the long way around and contacted the vendor first and then had to get it under the PAEC contract,” she recalled.

“In retrospect,” she added, “it probably would have been better to contact the buying group first, let it know what we are trying to do, and then let the group handle some of the work.”

That challenge aside, Walden says everything has gone smoothly for the co-op purchase. “We’re taking the laptop purchase to the board this week for approval,” she said, adding that she is prepared to “answer numerous questions about why we didn’t put this purchase out for bid and so forth.”
**Buying With Confidence**

According to Lisa Schofield, PAEC’s technology director, the group works with AEPA to secure solid pricing discounts for its members. The consortium also uses co-ops for its own technology acquisitions, including a recent purchase of cameras, switches, routers and cables that are being used to upgrade the organization’s broadband and Internet components. She says that one of the most attractive aspects of working with AEPA is the national buying power that it provides its members. “Products sold through the cooperative purchasing plan are bid on at a national level,” said Schofield, “So we’re dealing with much a larger volume than just one school, district or even consortium can claim.”

For the PAEC’s wireless overhaul, Schofield said that the equipment was ordered earlier this year and is currently being delivered and installed. Before making a final purchasing decision, she said the district looked at options offered by five different vendors under the AEPA’s contracts. She said that in most cases the district has a large selection of providers to choose from. In addition to the contract bids listed through AEPA, the consortium also maintains affiliation agreements with vendors specifically for the state of Florida.

Schofield said that leveraging buying co-ops is almost like having an additional purchasing agent on staff at PAEC. “We’re all wearing three, four or five different hats right now,” she commented. “It’s nice to be able to get access to competitive pricing and to make sure we’re spending state money in the most careful manner possible. Being able to shop around without having to worry about price is a definite plus for us.”

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**Bridget McCrea** is a business and technology writer in Clearwater, FL.
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