



FROM THE HEART

Powerful Stories from Passionate Educators

Queenie Hall, Rock Hill Schools (SC)

Queenie Hall tried not to go into education. Sure, her mom was a teacher for more than 40 years and her sister was an educator. But Queenie wanted a different path.

She majored in communications, did a lot of internships, and got a sales job right out of school. But it wasn't too long before Queenie realized that she was called to education. So, 20 years ago, she joined the family business—and it was one of the best decisions she ever made.

Queenie spent five years teaching and, for the last 15 years, has served as an instructional specialist for the Rock Hill Schools in South Carolina (about an hour from Gaffney, where her sister is superintendent of schools). Her job is to inspire and support the social studies and English language arts teachers who serve Rock Hill's 17,000 students.

Queenie loves the new teacher orientation sessions she leads each year. She sees the passion that new educators have and how excited they are to share what they know with their students. It's Queenie's job to make sure these educators are as excited about learning as they are about teaching. But that's not an easy task these days.

"It's a lot harder to be a teacher than it was when I started teaching," Queenie said. "They have so much on their plate, so many demands, that it's hard to find time for them to do anything extra in professional development."



But she knows professional development is more important than ever—especially since Rock Hill started rolling out its technology initiative five years ago. Rock Hill is trying to bridge the digital divide in its schools where nearly half of the students are living below or near the poverty line. The “iRock” initiative is not just providing mobile learning devices to students, but also employing digital resources and textbooks, like Social Studies Techbook. It’s an exciting opportunity for innovation in education, but only if teachers know how to best use the devices and resources to engage students.

“Teachers need support for how to use digital content effectively and how to be facilitators in the classroom,” Queenie said. However, it is important to roll out the technology—and the professional development that goes with it—slowly and methodically.

One idea that worked in Rock Hill was to start with a small cadre of teachers who were willing to embrace the technology first and use those volunteers to help develop the planning and professional development. Queenie also believes it’s important to support professional learning communities—teachers want the opportunity to plan together, and share ideas and best practices.

“We have to be savvy with how we work with today’s teachers and respect the demands on their time,” Queenie said. “That’s why they need reliable digital resources to support learning. If they have that, they won’t spend hours searching the Internet and they will be more comfortable with the technology.”

Queenie says she thrives on learning new things and tries to bring that passion when she is working with teachers. “It’s not just a job, it’s a calling.”

So she doesn’t regret following in the footsteps of her mother for a minute.

What Queenie loves most about Techbook is how it strengthens literacy skills and helps students read and write like historians.

Do you have a story to tell? Share what you love most about Techbook on Twitter @DiscoveryEd using #LoveTechbook.