

Raphael Gisstand

Case Study

5150:614

Introduction

In this paper, I will summarize and make recommendations regarding the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) current technology plan. CMSD is a large urban school district located in northeast Ohio. It is the second largest school district in Ohio. In recent years, funding has been tight causing staff to experience pay cuts and lay-offs. There has been an enormous decline in enrollment, and classrooms have very limited resources. CMSD strongly promotes educational equality and digital equity. This revised technology plan will guide and prepare the district in the 21st century, by showing how technology alongside teaching can help narrow the achievement gap and improve student learning.

Strengths, Weaknesses, and Recommendations

Planning Team

CMSD technology planning committee consist of: Assistant Technology/Special Needs Coordinator, Business Manager, Community/Business Leader, Curriculum Coordinator, Instructional Integrationalist, Library/Media Specialist, Principal, Superintendent, Teacher, Technology Coordinator, Technology Support, and Treasurer. The committees goal is to design

and monitor interventions that meet the student's needs and produce positive, measurable learning outcomes. The committee must also put in place strategies for improvement for each of its performing schools. These strategies focus on ensuring that, high-performing schools continue to perform at a high level, and on filling all available seats. Mid-performing schools are guided from "good to great" through increasing student engagement and motivation, differentiated instruction based on student needs and using time, talent and resources more creatively. Low-performing schools are being monitored very closely and are the topic of debate.

Some of the strengths of the CMSD planning committee is its efforts to centralize and organize the network and access to online applications. Another strength is that the committee includes supporting at-risk students and attempting to resolve difficulties within the educational setting using team problem-solving.

One of the weaknesses of the CMSD planning committee is that they do not upload or share the minutes from their meeting. This should be a priority, that way, parents and the public can learn about what's going on in the CMSD.

The first recommendations that I suggest is that the CMSD planning committee include Principals, teachers, and specific subject area curriculum managers from every grade level from every school in the district to weigh in on the discussion. I think the planning committee should also communicate and network with neighboring school districts planning officials and discuss the future educational and technological plans for each district. I think there should be a collective effort to implement the Common Core State Standards which "seek to establish consistent educational standards across the states and guaranteeing that all high school graduates are prepared for college and to enter the workforce." The planning committee should collaborate

with one another to find ways to receive more funding for better educational tools and resources for teachers and students.

Curriculum Alignment & Instructional Integration

CMSD now integrates the ISTE standards and performance indicators for students and teachers into the district's curriculum for all subjects. CMSD teachers are now blending classroom instruction with knowledge of technological resources to help students develop critical thinking skills. CMSD began incorporating web 2.0 tools with the latest state of the art technology to prepare students for this competitive ever-changing world of technological advancement. CMSD is also holding professional development seminars for teachers on the use of interactive whiteboards (smart boards), website creation (wikis), podcasting, and student response systems. Clickers or student response systems are now being used in classrooms to promote active learning. It states that, "clickers provide a mechanism for students to participate anonymously. Clickers also integrate a game approach that may engage students more than traditional class discussion." I think it's very effective to "provide pre-service teacher preparation programs and in-service educators with professional learning experiences powered by technology to increase their digital literacy to achieve learning outcomes."

Some of the strengths in this area include the fact that CMSD's high school rose to 64% in 2012-13, an increase of eight percentage points since 2010-11. Also, the percentage of CMSD students meeting the college-ready bookmark Act score of 21 increased to 14% in 2013-14 from 12% in 2011-12. After a decade of unsatisfactory on value-added measures for students in grades 4 through 8, CMSD met progress indicators for the last two years.

There are also some weaknesses in this area that we must discuss. If we look at the Department of Education report card for the CMSD, we will see that there is a drastic need for improvement. Most of these schools are failing or barely passing in many areas and subjects. This is unacceptable and needs immediate attention. There are 44 failing schools in the CMSD consisting of 18,032 students. There are 69 low-performing schools in the CMSD comprised of 22,382 students.

Here are a few recommendations that will help improve curriculum instruction. CMSD should deepen its implementation of the new teacher development and evaluation system to develop its teacher talent, reward excellent teachers and dismiss poorly performing teachers. CMSD teachers should create lessons that will be more student-centered that consist of web-based and problem-based learning. A successful online learner takes personal responsibility for their own learning. In the 21st century, it's no longer just about lecturing and (teacher-centered) instruction, it's about letting the students have more control over their learning (student-centered). Online learning is all about establishing a learning community, whereby students communicate and develop relationships that enhances their own learning. By using computer assisted instruction, web based technology, and electronic resources, student learning can be improved.

Technology Policy, Leadership and Administration

CMSD believe that cross-functional collaboration and change management are necessary for the planning, implementation, and management of technology systems.

One of the strengths in this area include CMSD creating the Cleveland Transformation Alliance, a public-private partnership charged with ensuring the growth of a portfolio of high-performing district and charter schools in Cleveland. The composition of the Alliance will include representatives from the district, the charter sector and the community (business, foundation, civic and neighborhood, among others). The majority of the Alliance membership will come from outside the district to ensure external support for and participation in the plan. It will be supported through a combination of private and public funds. The Alliance will not replace the existing authority of the Cleveland Board of Education or the boards of independent charter schools, but rather assume the following unique roles: ensure fidelity to the citywide education plan, assess the quality of all Cleveland schools, and communicate to parents about quality school choices.

Some of the weaknesses in this area include the lack of support from local city and state leaders and policymakers. These high officials along with the planning committees from every school need to come together and plan for the future (21st century) educational endeavors of our nation schools.

I Recommend that there be thoroughly communication locally, state-wide, and nationally concerning education reform and on how to use technology to improve learning. There should be no such thing as a digital divide.

Technology Infrastructure Management and Support

CMSD will expand its investments in academic technologies, including software, hardware and the staff training to make it successful. CMSD will continue to update its information technology systems to ensure improved communication and data sharing between systems, schools and the district office so schools can better use resources and make more timely decisions.

Some of the strengths in this area include, CMSD willingness to provide critical upgrades to the District's network, server, and data structure. They have a reliable, consistent and equitable computer replacement program. There are wireless networks in every school.

One of the weaknesses in this area, CMSD IT specialist was not thoroughly taught the ISTE Standards for Coaches. If so, they would have been able to transform their school into a digital-age learning environment.

One recommendation for the CMSD is to somehow find a way to eliminate the digital divide that exist between students with access to internet at school and at home and those who do not. Students need access to the latest state of the art technology so that they can be competitive in this fast and ever-changing world of technological advancement. CMSD should also ensure that our computers are installed with the latest up to date security measures (firewalls), to prevent any illegal activities or access to obscene material that could be harmful to students.

Budget and Planning

District schools now have autonomy over staff and budgets in exchange for high accountability for performance. It faces a \$64.9 million budget deficit in 2012–13: more than ten of the current fiscal year's operating budget. The budget deficit in 2013–14 is projected to be an

additional \$40 million. This situation persists despite cost reductions of over \$100 million over the past two years, including 23 school closings, layoffs of hundreds of employees, compensation and benefit reductions and the sale of district buildings. This deteriorating financial position reflects structural issues that have developed over the past 40 years: automatic step/scale increases in salaries, rising health care costs, declining enrollment, diminishing tax collections and the lack of a new operating levy since 1996. Community driven priorities such as: preschool, transportation, arts, music and sports are at risk.

Some of the strengths in this area as of 2014-15, is the fact that 48% of the district's operating budget was controlled at the school level, compared to only 0.05% in 2011-12. Another strength include CMSD commitment to shifting to a weighted per-pupil funding system for all schools. This entails analyzing cost per-graduate versus cost-per-student when determining investments and transferring a majority of spending control to schools based on the number and needs of the students they enroll. District Transformation Schools will largely be able to spend the funds they receive as they see fit to advance student learning and manage and operate a successful school. This will include spending authorization for staff, classroom instruction, student enrichment, supplies and other resources.

One of the weaknesses of the budget plan is that there is no data showing how much funding each district receives, and records showing what the money was used for. If one school gives their students laptops, iPads or a MacBook and other school districts does not, this is a disadvantage for the deprived students in those schools. This is another budget and planning weakness. CMSD needs to fight harder for educational equality, digital equity and students having accessibility to the same educational resources.

Recommendations that I suggest is that there should be regulations put in place concerning the amount of funding for every school district. It shouldn't come down to how well the students performed on tests. I think the planning committees from each school district need to get together and come up with a solution or a proposal ensuring that all students have equal access to resources.