Demonstration of Responsibility #5: Manages complex projects and resources in support of learning (e.g., project report on leadership role in a situation which resulted in individual or organizational learning.)

Artifact 5: Mill Levy/Tech Plan

THE PROBLEM

Denver Public Schools Technology Administration wanted to increase the use of technology by teaching staff. The district needed a vision and specific plan to guide the use of Mill Levy funds.

BACKGROUND

During the November 1998 elections, voters approved a $3 million Mill Levy for technology development in DPS. This money is an ongoing, yearly infusion of funds. Schools receive approximately $41 per student. For George Washington this amounts to approximately $80,000/yr. In order to receive these funds each school was required to develop a five-year technology plan outlining how these funds would be spent to best impact student learning.

Though the computer industry has allowed businesses and schools to be as technically savvy as ever, there are relatively few teachers accustomed to and comfortable with technology. Too little time and too much to plan further inhibit their learning. GWHS is fortunate to have a staff that is well above the average in technological sophistication. Over the last few years I have been involved with the technology committee and other technology implementation efforts. I was asked to lead the Mill Levy proposal process and to design the technology change plan for GWHS.

The district devoted considerable resources in the development of a process for creating school technology plans. (For more information on the DPS Mill Levy Process, please see: http://edtech.denver.k12.co.us/planner/res/guid_proc.htm) We held several technology committee meetings trying to build consensus for the basic technology vision of the school. Consensus was achieved by determining vital technology skills for students and teachers, strategizing ways to integrate technology into academic classes in support of the learning process, and surveying students and teachers to establish baseline information regarding access and use of technology.

Finally six primary technology focus areas were identified for the school:

1. A teacher SASI computer in every room (two year timeline),
2. an east wing school-wide lab (one year),
3. a west wing school- wide lab (three years),
4. library computers (one/two years),
5. a TV in every room (one/three years), and
6. teacher technology training (one/five).

Equipped with baseline data about our building technology use and our team goals, two of us from the committee drafted the actual implementation plan. (For more information on the Tech Plan Process see: http://edtech.denver.k12.co.us/planner/write/writeplan.htm.)

RATIONALE

Effecting systemic change by committee can be an inefficient and frustrating experience. Despite this, it is a necessary process to ensure genuine and sustainable change. We motivate one another using a combination of shared vision and cheerleading. Combining committee work to promote input and buy-in with individual work to actually accomplish tasks we were able to execute a very exhaustive technology plan in a short amount of time.

RESULTS

At the end of the 1999 spring semester, DPS organized a district based review team to assess each technology plan. Each plan was evaluated on many factors including the use of technology in support of academic standards over a five-year plan, budgets, matching funds, and training. George Washington High School was one of only two high schools to be approved for Phase 1 implementation. We now have a technology plan for administrators, technology coordinators, and teachers to follow. Administrators, teachers, and students felt included in the process and were excited when the actual implementation began.

REFLECTIONS

This process worked quite well for the first year (99 – 00). The purchasing and implementation process was uncomplicated. All I had to do was consult the plan, make orders, install computers, and organize training. The 00 - 01 year has been a little more difficult. The core GWHS technology team has experienced a shift in priorities and is now experiencing some friction as some individual goals conflict with the original plan.

We have experienced numerous stumbling blocks and critical teacher buy-in has suffered. Instead of focusing on teacher communication (email) that is desperately needed and integration of technology in every class, the focus has shifted to roaming profiles, on-line grades, and odd technical problems. Communication between the core technology team and the staff has deteriorated. This situation only reinforces the importance of communication – "techies" to each other, to teachers, and to administrators.