MSBSD School Board moves technology forward

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As we near the end of 2016, without question we can all look back and say it has been a memorable year. From where I sit as a new superintendent and as a community member, it is my observation that there is a resounding theme of change. A number of components are driving the theme of change:

Politically – The country has elected a new President; new leadership will always provide change.

Fiscally – Our State faces one of its most difficult financial challenges in the State's history; our fiscal reality in Alaska has changed.

Locally – We are the most dynamic Borough in terms of continued rapid growth; this growth forces constant change.

Educationally – 21st Century Learning is requiring educators to approach, prepare and teach in ways that are very different from how education has traditionally been delivered.

MSBSD 5-Year Technology Roadmap

The Mat-Su School Board members remain quite intentional in how they wish to continue the progressive education movement of the Mat-Su Borough School District. In moving this District to provide a relevant 21st century education for students, our Board tasked administration with the design of a five-year technology road map. The map is comprised of objectives that are as follows:

- Assess current devices and staff/student access to create baseline data
- Identify and define common language/messaging on the District's technology plan
- Explore technologies to increase student access
- Develop a roadmap/plan which provides for enhanced access at middle and high schools over the next 5-10 years
- Develop standards and the funding mechanism that provides for sustaining an "enhanced access" program
- Develop a strategy to elicit private enterprise funding to support "enriched access" build-out
- Develop a plan to improve coverage of wireless network access across the District
- Develop a scheme for the centralized management of district mobile devices

The basis for the technology roadmap lies in the National Education Technology Plan (NETP), which states:

> "When carefully designed and thoughtfully applied, technology can accelerate, amplify, and expand the impact of effective teaching practices. However, to be transformative, educators need to have the knowledge and skills to take full advantage of technology-rich learning environments."

A technology plan requires much more than simply putting devices in the hands of teachers and students.

Ultimately, MSBSD hopes to achieve what is often referred to within the 21st Century Learning context as a Personalized Student Learning environment. Personalized student learning is what truly prepares students to be competent, aware, and prepared for the future. Whether they head to college or into a career post high school, all students must be empowered to direct their own use of technology as they continue to learn everywhere and all the time.

In our early District Opening Professional Development day we were fortunate to have Google Executive Jaime Casap speak to all of our teachers. He resonated with teachers when he shared, "Don't ask kids what they want to be when the grow up but what problems do they want to solve." This changes the conversation from "Who do I want to work for?", to "What do I need to learn to be able to do that?"

MSBSD Rural to the Core—A Second Piece of the 5-Year Technology Roadmap

The MSBSD 5-year Technology Roadmap is a dynamic document that is going to change. Evidence of this came recently when an additional $400,000 was made available through Federal Title I education dollars. Within the District's theme of being Responsive, Resourceful and Relevant, I worked closely with the administrative executive team to develop a second piece to the 5-year plan, which we reference as Rural to the Core, demonstrating equity and efficiency for the MSBSD.

Equality is not Equity. Whether a student is at Susitna Valley Jr/Sr High School, Glacier View School, or a special mission school, like Mat-Su Career & Technical High School, in the Core Area, it is important that each student has maximum learning opportunities. Rural to the Core is slated for a January 2017 rollout-just in time for second semester and will be an important part of addressing equity in terms of enhanced access for our rural schools.

People in our community may ask why are we spending so much on technology? The better question is, how do we better spend money on technology so that we can meet the identified outcomes from properly implemented technology plans. Those outcomes show that properly implemented technology plans save money. Schools employing key implementation factors outperform other schools.

MSBSD Technology Leadership

A school principal's ability to lead change is critical. Technology-transformed intervention improves learning. Online collaboration increases learning productivity and student engagement. Daily use of technology delivers the best return on investment. All of these outcomes consistently support our guiding principles of being a Responsive, Resourceful, and Relevant school district.

There was a time when utilities which are always a large part of business costs were referenced as water, electricity, and fuel. Our executive director of IT and Maintenance and Operations, Mike Brown would quickly point out that technology is today's fourth utility. Without question, as technology plays an ever more important role in education and education changes, the Mat-Su Borough School District will operate with the fourth utility concept so that our changes respond to meet the needs of all students.

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