

ISTE NETS-A-Standard 2 Investigation: Digital Age Learning Culture

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What comes to mind when one says, “Digital Age”? One can think of the “Digital Age” as the shift or transition from traditional industry to more information technology. The 21st century is encompassed with technology and our educational system must keep up. The second standard from ISTE NETS-A is a “Digital Age Learning Culture”. This standard is characterized as having educational administrators create, promote, and sustain a dynamic, digital-age learning culture that provides a rigorous, relevant and engaging education for all students. A successful digital age learning culture can be formed easily by following the five indicators of the digital age learning culture. I have researched to see how well my base school is complying with standard 2. My findings are based from two personal interviews with both instructional coaches at my school, Whittemore Park, assistant principal, my personal experience, and readings from Principal Connections. With this I will determine if the conditions of the standard are being met at my school.

According to ISTE NETS-A the first indicator of standard 2 maintains educational administrators ensure instructional innovation focused on continuous improvement of digital-age learning. If we want the educational administrators to utilize this standard, they must have clear instructional SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realist, and Time bound objectives) goals. Howard (2019), instructional coach at Whittemore, states the administrators focus all teaching and learning professional development, implementation, and technology innovation on these goals. These goals are constantly monitored, and instructional adjustments are made based on data. At Whittemore, there are acceptable use plans in place and much of our classroom technology use aligns with our district’s PDL (personalized digital learning) initiative plan. The PDL initiative plan implements instructional SMART goals. Individual teachers may have their own plans based on the course content and needs of the students. Plans are not on display in

classrooms, but they are on the district's website, state department website, and school website for view. These goals have been set by the school district. Constant monitoring and instructional adjustments are made at my school based on the goals data. It is vital to accurately select, use, and evaluate the numerous instructional technologies being used. An educational leader must take a systematic approach when doing this. In Horry county school district, Howard (2019) exclaims all stakeholders including district team members, administrators, teachers, students, and parents participate in this process. Some say it takes a village to raise a child, just as it takes a team to establish effective instructional technologies to be used. The type and quality of instructional technology utilized will affect everyone, hence why all stakeholders participate. Even though all stakeholders are involved Junkins (2019) states everyone must be provided with research and norms for deciding based on specific criteria and instructional goals. At my school I have seen my administrators participate in the decision-making process, work with coaches to plan PD, observe and give feedback to teachers, and analyze data to evaluate instructional technologies. In terms of the procedures for evaluating and modification of implementation, the administrators at my school heavily use data. According to Williams (2019), an administrator at Whittemore, the data used at Whittemore includes achievement data, observation data, and teacher/student feedback data. All modifications are made towards meeting the instructional goals. The procedures may vary based on instructional technology. From my research I can firmly say that my base school is following the requirements of indicator 2 of standard 2 of the ISTE NETS-A, therefore I have no level of concern.

The conditions of indicator 2 states, "how does educational administrators' model and promote the frequent and effective use of technology". I honestly believe technology has just become part of our daily lives. Leaders must model the role of technology by showings how it

allows us to be more productively and efficiently do our job. One of the most transformative parts of technology is the ability to provide immediate feedback states Junkins (2019). Just as students want feedback from teachers, the leaders, must find ways to do that for the teachers as well. The learning environment at my school does foster collaboration, innovation, and technology use. Howard (2019) asserts, “all curriculum maps including specific instructional goals are aligned to these areas”. Every school in the Horry county district has one or two instructional coaches. These coaches help teachers with collaboration, innovation, and tech use. Principal Connections states, “the digital principal facilitates and reinforces the teacher’s important work in creating a technology-rich learning environment that invites, exploration, collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, and participation in tasks connected to real-world contexts. To accomplish this at my school, the administrative team, instructional coach, district integration specialist, and district learning specialist work with teachers to support these areas. This plan includes planning and hosting PD sessions, collaborating planning, and district trainings. To support collaboration even further, Horry county school district works with Kagan (cooperative learning strategies) to support collaboration with and without technology. The administrative team at Whittemore does model the importance of supporting collaboration/innovation in their own behaviors. Junkins (2019) declares even teacher interview questions look for individuals who utilize collaboration, innovation, and technology use in their classroom. Choosing new staff members who already exhibit these qualities would keep the digital cage culture afloat at my school. I can attest to how the importance of collaboration and innovation is modeled by leaders, it is visible through structures in meetings, supporting teachers instructionally in classrooms, and planning events for students/teachers to meet these goals. Howard (2019) states the 1:1 PDL Initiative has a specific timeline for implementation and

refreshing of devices...because of the amount of technology integration/digital content each area has a different action plan and timeline. All integration is evaluated and monitored at the school and district level. If any issues arise then the school contacts the IT department at the district for resolution. The leadership team at Whittemore does model and promote the frequent and effective use of technology.

Moving into indicator number 3 which states educational administrators provide learner centered environments equipped with technology and learning resources and meet the individual, diverse needs of all learners. Access to resources are not a problem at our school. Sometimes there may be too much technology and resources available. The plan of the district's PDL plan was to put students in the drivers' seat of their own learning. Over the years Horry county has experimented with different models. With this it known that one size does not fit all. At Whittemore we have monthly faculty meetings and weekly collaboration meetings with administrators. These meetings are a way for the administration team to meet with and discuss how technology is currently used to meet individual's student needs and assist in creating a student-centered environment. In terms of including students and parents when soliciting feedback, Howard (2019) explains we host regular student led conferences with students that include data conferences, goal setting, and students' feedback. It is crucial to have feedback from all stakeholders. I believe my school needs to do a better job and seeking parental feedback. Administration is constantly having classroom walkthroughs that gives the chance to look at the entire learning environment. The observation tool that administrators utilize is the S.C.T.S (South Carolina Teaching Standards) lead teacher evaluation rubric which host categories on student centered learning. Being able to read data and see when certain subgroups may be falling behind or need extra support is a detailed/essential task. All subgroups at

Whittemore are closely monitored using a data wall. There is a wall in the instructional coach's office that has every student and their data points. Color illuminates the walls signifying above, below, proficient, advanced, percentile, etc based on data from each evaluation cycle. Howard (2019) states the data is constantly updated after each cycle...this data provides teachers with the responsibility of creating action plans, providing intervention and enrichment, and monitoring progress. To communicate students' educational goals there are after school events for students and parents giving them explanation. The guidance department at my school also communicates individual educational goals/options for all middle school students in an IGP meeting. During these meetings all options are provided to parents. All staff is trained and understands all educational options.

Our fourth indicator of Standard 2 from the ISTE NETS-A proclaims educational administrators ensure effective practice in the study of technology and its infusion across the curriculum. During planning day at my school, each grade level and subject area plans with one instructional coach and one administrator. For examples, Mondays are for Mathematics and Science, Tuesdays are for English and Social Studies, and Wednesdays may be planning for special area classes. During our planning time it is regular practice to infuse technology across the curriculum. This is explicitly seen in our lesson plans and in our classroom instruction. In a case that technology is not being infused into the curriculum Junkins (2019) states if there is a classroom teacher struggling, rarely is more technology going to be the answer. Junkins is adamant about laying the foundation items that will lead to success to said teacher and the technology will fit in where it's appropriate. Along with this there are coaches and district integration specialist that are available for any one on sessions. All technology standards are included in all pacing guides for all courses. As teachers, we must attend curriculum overview

sessions that include planning for technology integration. Regarding students being exposed to the same technology each school year, Junkins (2019) reveals, “our students have been having access to many of the same programs from grades 3-12”. In many cases they are burn out. He continues to say “we” as a school do not have the ability (permission) to purchase programs or resources on our own. These are district made decisions. We can only hope the teachers will use more technology resources to break up monotony. Indicator four brought some concern regarding certain technologies becoming redundant with students. This is the only concern I have with this standard since all other conditions are met.

The last indicator, five, stems around promoting and participating in learning communities that stimulate innovation. To stay abreast of technology innovations and the digital age culture the district does offer national conference vouchers that teachers may take part of for free. The district does a great job at advertising PD, attending events, and participating in collaboration as well. We have various speakers and consultants who come and work with us to see different perspectives and possibilities for improving student learning. No concerns with this indicator.

My research consisted of two interviews with instructional coaches at Whittemore, an assistant principal, and Principal Connects. Through my findings I would say I have a low concern about the digital age culture at Whittemore. I would love to see more parental feedback on meeting needs of students. Also, students should not be using the same technologies from third through twelfth grade, redundancy leads to disengagement. Through my investigation I can say that my school adheres closely to standard 2 from ISTE NETS-A. Whittemore is doing a good job as promoting a digital age learning culture even though there are two small areas that can be improved.

References

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