Introduction

Through the Eyes of the Five-Year-Old

I thought it was funny when my daughter called me the night that my grandson started kindergarten. She woke up at 6:30 that morning, went down the hall to his bedroom, and he was gone. She looked through the house. She found him all dressed in his little kindergarten outfit, his backpack beside the chair, and he was at the computer doing stuff. And I'm thinking, this is five—this is a five-year-old for Pete's sake. So it's just different. And so the idea of kids sitting there quietly, listening to somebody lecture them, is not going to work. They need that instant feedback, and I don't think that we can give it to them. The technology is going to have to help us provide that. These are the kids who are coming to school.

For those who have been slow, or reluctant, to embrace technology or become proficient in its use and application in schools, the time is now—now is the time to meet the students where they are.

Technology has been available in school settings for 30 years. In many places, the available technology has not been used or implemented in the instructional life of the school. Often the reason for this has been a lack of interest, motivation, and leadership. However, when the students come to school more proficient with technology than the school leaders, it is time for a transformation in school practices.

A BOOK FOR BUSY PRINCIPALS

The chapters in the book are derived from the literature on leadership; technology; the roles of principals, teachers, technology specialists, and the technology leadership team; professional development; cybersafety; and assessment.

The book features strategies principals can use to enhance their work as leaders of technology in schools. A number of resources are provided to extend the usefulness of the book. Websites and blogs are listed with the advice to the principal: Spend 15 minutes a day in exploration. The websites provide easily accessible professional development for the busy principal.

The book is not a technology book; it is a leadership book. It is written from an understanding of the many roles principals must assume and the time constraints they experience in their work. The focus is on what principals can accomplish on a daily and weekly basis to facilitate the use of technology in the school. Technology is viewed as a tool that can enhance instruction. The book is written with an understanding that changes in technology are constant.

My experiences as a principal, university administrator, and professor inform my approach to the topic of leadership and technology. My earliest experiences with integrating computers into instruction occurred at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, on Plato (Programmed Logic for Automated Teaching Operations). At that time, I was a coordinator of instructional development.

SPECIAL FEATURES

Voices of School Leaders

The voices of school leaders are a special feature of the book. Interviews were conducted with principals, assistant principals, associate superintendents, curriculum leaders, technology coordinators, teachers, librarians, and media specialists. These individuals' voices are reflected in the chapters. The voices are represented by a microphone icon throughout the text. The book provides school leaders with a mirror in the form of the voices of school leaders who offer their stories and suggestions. These vignettes reflect the real world of the school.

Resources

Extensive resources support the text. Website addresses provide busy school leaders with resources at their fingertips. Checklists and surveys provide self-assessment and school-assessment tools that support the work of school leaders.

Principal's Exploration Agenda

The book is written from the perspective that principals are very busy. With this in mind, the book offers a "Principal's Exploration Agenda" that encourages principals to take 15 minutes a day to build capacity by exploring the vast resources related to technology.

Action Agenda

Chapters 1 through 6 conclude with an action agenda to guide follow-up activities. The emphasis is on moving beyond the text to actions that will enhance the principal's leadership of technology in the school. Practical strategies are emphasized.

ORGANIZATION

The book has three parts. Part I focuses on human capital: the principal, the teachers, the technology specialists, and the technology leadership team. These individuals are essential to implementation of technology in the school. Part II focuses on three core tasks: professional development, cybersafety, and assessment. These tasks are critical for principals who are leaders of technology. Part III includes questions and reflections.

21ST CENTURY LEARNING

Students' lives are linked to the media and technology tools available to them. Students in schools are digital learners. Cell phones, MP3 players, handheld gaming devices, PDAs, and laptops are part of their daily lives. Social networking through Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace is common. Even toddlers use gaming devices such as Leapster and websites such as www.PBSkids.org and www.nick.com (What Is 21st Century Education? 2004).

Classroom activities that support acquisition of these skills include active learning, integrated and interdisciplinary curriculum, and project-based and problem-based learning. Many forms of media and technology support these learning activities.

Throughout the book, the comments of school leaders reinforce the link between 21st Century skills and the use of technology. Information, media, and technology skills are essential components of "21st Century Student Outcomes and Support Systems" (in Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009, para.1).

Principal leadership in the 21st Century school demands leadership in technology. The principal must meet the five-year-old at the schoolhouse door.