

# Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District Background Technology Plan Development

## History and Methodology

The Board of Education of the Palos Verdes Peninsula Unified School District adopted a district goal to develop an integrated district-wide technology plan for 2001-02. The first step was convening an advisory committee of parents with experience and expertise in technology use in higher education and business organizations. The district developed a set of Total Cost of Ownership recommendations that addressed technology support staffing, equipment and software standards policies, equipment replacement cycles, and technology user guidelines with assistance from this committee. Many of these recommendations were approved by the Board of Education in December 2001. The next stage in the development of a comprehensive technology plan was to identify a strategy which would move the district from the current focus on acquisition of technology to a future focus on maximizing the impact of technology on student learning results.

Thanks to the generous support from the Peninsula Education Foundation the district was fortunate to engage the services of Bernajean Porter Consulting for seven full days of meetings, workshops, site visits, data assimilation and analysis, and formulating the results of these efforts. A core group of "teacher leaders" worked with the consultants to enhance their leadership and facilitation skills.

More than 150 teachers, administrators, students and parents participated in two community meetings to launch the PVPUSD's technology planning effort. The participants were energetic and enthusiastic during the various large and small group activities conducted during the January 11 Town Hall Meeting and the February 12 Insta-Audit Meeting. The purpose of both meetings was to provide a forum for hearing and sharing the voices and ideas of all stakeholders as the district's use of technology evolves to the next level.

## Town Hall Meeting

Participants at the Town Hall Meeting worked through a series of activities which were designed to move the collective thinking of listing the worst fears for the future of technology in our schools and classrooms, to the creation of a draft vision statement. This vision led to the development of a set of goals and action plans for the next school year and beyond. Once the goals and action plans are approved by the Board of Education and funding is earmarked to accomplish the goals and action plans, the real work begins. The progress in these efforts will be communicated on an ongoing basis to all stakeholders.

The sequence of activities was designed to develop a positive attitude and common mind set that systemic change was not only necessary, but also possible when all stakeholders contribute to the planning and implementation. The ideas and comments from each school group were shared with the large group throughout the process. The first step was brainstorming a list of "worst fears and best hopes" for the future of learning and technology. Each group selected the most critical items from each list. The lists (**Exhibit A**) of "worst fears and best hopes" indicate the perceived common fears and hopes of teachers, administrators, and parents. The list of best hopes was collapsed into a narrative description. (**Exhibit B**)

Each participant at the Town Hall Meeting was asked what advice they would give the district as it moves forward with developing the technology plan. **Exhibit C** summarizes these comments. Everyone was also asked what advice they would give themselves as next steps for their own growth; these are summarized in **Exhibit D**. These comments will guide the decision makers and implementers as they address the difficult decisions and tasks that lie ahead.

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Additional small group discussions were intended to sharpen and focus the thinking and ideas of each participant. **Exhibit E** lists responses from the discussions which emerged from the following questions.

- What capabilities, attributes, or skills do students need to be successful in a changing world?
- What's working about our schools today that supports students being prepared or a changing world?
- What issues need to be addressed to support students being prepared even better or a changing world?

Following a short "futures" exercise, portable keyboards were distributed to members of each group who were charged with the task of writing a brief scenario describing a typical day for a student five to seven years into the future. The scenarios were not intended to reflect "science fiction" but were derived from the best hopes of a preferred future. Each group was invited to read aloud their scenario to the entire group. Examples of several scenarios are included in **Exhibit F**.

The next step in the process focused on determining the common elements of the scenarios. These common qualities (**Exhibit G**) reflect the community's image of what is possible and the qualities form the basis for creating and reacting to a powerful vision statement. The shared technology vision ensures individual and communal commitment to bring the goals and action plans to reality.

### Site Visits and Assessments

After a two-day workshop for the "teacher leaders", more than fifty teachers, support staff, and parents conducted a site visit to each school. The site visits included interviews with the principal, several teachers representing various levels of technology use and proficiency, students, and support staff at each school. The structured interviews included a set of questions (**Exhibit J**) that were used at all schools. In addition to the interviews, the visiting team of six to eight members observed classroom practices and environments. Every visitor also ranked the schools they visited on each of 21 indicators of current levels of readiness and capacity for technology.

Each "teacher leader" then prepared a site report which included quotes from the interviews, data from the classroom observations, and assessments of each school's level on the indicators of technology readiness and capacity. The individual school reports serve as tools for site level planning and form the basis of a district-wide report (**Exhibit K**). The indicators represent aspects of four areas in assessing the district current conditions: Readiness for Change, Teaching and Learning, Technology Deployment and System Capacity.

### Action Plan Development

Based on the data derived from the Town Hall Meeting and the site visits, a set of "actions under consideration" was developed. These options (**Exhibit L**) were presented at the Insta-Audit Meeting, the second community meeting, attended by nearly 100 stakeholders on February 12, 2002. The participants ranked the 19 possibilities from which seven goals emerged. The second activity for the Insta-Audit meeting was review of preliminary data from the site visits. Participants ranked their schools on several critical indicators. The rankings from the site visit reports and from the Insta-Audit Meeting were consolidated into the overall district rankings which appear in the district report.

A survey (**Exhibit N**) was distributed to every teacher in late February in an effort to collect data about the use of technology in individual classrooms. More than 300 responses were tallied for analysis. Overall district data is summarized in **Exhibit P**. Results for individual schools were distributed to each principal. The data indicates wide variance in the uses of technology and the levels of teacher preparedness for student use of technology. **Exhibit Q** indicates the levels of satisfaction and

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frustration related to technical support services at each school and **Exhibit R** displays the distribution of computers by age at each level and at the district as a whole.

The results of the survey and other data contributed to the development of action plans for each of the seven technology plan goals. The action plans and timelines have been reviewed by the teachers, the principals and district administrators, representatives of CSEA and PVFA, and parents on the technology advisory committee. The plans include a problem statement which defines technology implementation challenges, the goals each action plan reference, detailed action plans (tasks, time frames, and staff responsible), policy issues, fiscal impact, and possible funding sources. In addition, a detailed timeline indicates when each step will occur. Information Literacy, the ability to locate and analyze information from a variety of sources was identified as the unifying element for technology at all grade levels and subject areas. In addition, the ultimate result of efforts related to the action plans is providing all students opportunities to use technology in more meaningful ways, **Exhibit S** outlines the characteristics of literacy, adapting and transforming uses of technology as defined by Bernajean Porter throughout her work with district staff. The action plans work in conjunction with the Total Cost of Ownership recommendations (**Exhibit T**) presented to the Board of Education in December 2001. A detailed timeline for the Total Cost of Ownership recommendations is defined in **Exhibit U**.

### Supporting Information

The final component of the technology plan is a set of **appendices of resources** which summarize state and national studies and resources which substantiate the details of the PVPUSD technology planning efforts and results. These resources include the four-year CEO Forum study, the National Educational Technology Standards for Students, Teachers and Administrators, and national, state and regional reports, white papers, and articles.

### Open Issues

The following issues are related to the preferred use of technology and must be considered during the implementation of staff development programs and technology policies. Teachers and support staff raised these issues during the review process of the proposed technology action plans.

1. Technology should be perceived as easing or facilitating the teaching and learning process and not as adding to the workload of teachers.
2. Demonstration multidisciplinary lessons for each grade level should be developed to serve as models during the staff development process.
3. Student activities enriched with technology should be meaningful projects that support essential learnings.
4. A balance should be defined between the amount of time and resources allocated to student acquisition of technology skills versus the amount of time and resources allocated to student use of technology tools for their own learning.
5. All district offices and schools should continue to increase the benefits of email to communicate with one another and all staff more cost-effectively and faster than traditional paper-based means.
6. Classroom management strategies and techniques for each grade level and instructional setting should be included in all staff development activities.
7. All job descriptions for technology support personnel should be reviewed and publicized to all technology users as stipulated in the Board of Education approved Total Cost of Ownership recommendations.
8. Access to utility programs and services should be expanded for all technology support personnel: suggestions include utility CD-ROM, driver files on each school server, and replacement units for equipment.
9. Demonstration and practice of beginning and advanced levels of Internet searching techniques should be included in each staff development session.