Technology Integration Scenario Sample

Stories help to make complex ideas concrete—and will keep you focused on the core beliefs of your learning community when making decisions about digital behaviors, tools and projects to pursue. While every school should write their own collection of technology integration samples that detail the decisions of fictional teachers and teams that are effectively translating their mission, vision and core priorities in action, this piece is designed to serve as an example of the kinds of stories that can help to guide actions.

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For the parents and teachers at Central Middle School, 'ensuring student success and meeting the unique needs of every learner'—the cornerstones of their mission statement—mean a lot of things. In the broadest sense, 'ensuring student success' means preparing students to be productive contributors to the world community. Social responsibility matters to the Salem community, and understanding that individuals can make a difference in the lives of others plays a role in many of the choices and opportunities offered to students at every grade level.

But 'ensuring student success' also means preparing students to be academically successful. Students at Salem are expected to perform at the highest levels on district reading and math tests. They are also expected to learn about persuasive writing and to become skilled at taking and defending positions. And 'meeting the unique needs of every learner' means doing more than designing lessons that target the average kid. For teachers at Salem, finding ways to meet students—those who are struggling *and* those who are excelling—where they are has always been a priority.

Technology is integral to 'ensuring student success' and 'meeting the unique needs of every learner' in Jan Smith's classroom.

A master teacher who understands that good teaching means pairing students with new individuals, ideas and opportunities, Smith has embraced digital discussions—carried out on electronic message boards enabled by Voicethread—as a tool for extending classroom conversations. In both places, students explore content together. With Smith's help, they learn to ask and answer provocative questions about global poverty and the role that the developed world should play in supporting developing nations. They grow comfortable with collaborative dialogue, enjoying the chance to have their thinking challenged and to challenge the thinking of others.

Smith's students are also learning about persuasion in digital conversations. They craft blog entries—taking positions on topics like the hate shown towards minorities throughout history or the consequences of ignoring genocides that happen in other countries—that are shared publicly on the Internet. Blogging provides students with a chance to practice being influential. Forcing students to carefully articulate ideas in ways that are designed to change the minds of readers, Smith's blogging projects address several curricular objectives while simultaneously giving students an authentic audience for work that is often kept private in other classrooms.

Persuasion isn't limited to written products in Smith's classroom, though. Students are learning about the role that images and video are playing in changing people's minds. They're looking at how businesses are designing messages built around pictures. They're examining store-dedicated YouTube channels, looking for the best examples of messages that are memorable. Then, they're creating their own influential pictures and videos on the topics that they care the most about. In these projects, they're studying Creative Commons licenses and are talking about the changing nature of copyright in a digital world.

While all of these projects are exciting for her students—they are centered around opportunities to be social, after all, and middle schoolers are some of the most social creatures on earth—what Smith likes the best about her work with technology is that digital tools make it possible for students to receive far more feedback on their thinking than she could ever provide alone. Parents and classmates who are regularly following the digital conversations that Smith's students are involved in are regularly challenging misconceptions. This means that every child—regardless of what they thought they knew about a topic—is being forced to polish their core beliefs in a very public way. Even better, the feedback that they're receiving is immediate, which researchers like Robert Marzano spotlight as a characteristic of the most effective learning environments.

*Participant Note: If you struggle to describe what **good technology integration** would like in action, begin by describing what **good teaching** would look like in action. Focus on describing the kind of teaching that supports your school's mission, vision statements and core principles. The point is to paint a picture of the learning environments that you hope to create. Once that is defined, digital solutions to make the work of students more effective and efficient can be quickly identified.*