K-12 BLUEPRINT

A planning resource for personalizing learning

Proof of Concept Phases

Fairfax County Schools' Department of Information Technology in Fairfax, Virginia, developed a structured methodology for assessing, developing, and implementing new technologies

A Proof of Concept (POC) allows your school or district to establish a working model for your education technology initiative while testing that model to determine its appropriateness in a school environment. The project's success is evaluated and recommendations are made for system-wide implementation with documented migration strategies, configuration documentation, and required support processes.

Fairfax County Schools' Department of Information Technology in Fairfax, Virginia, developed a structured methodology for assessing, developing, and implementing new technologies and recommends its use for major initiatives[1]. The methodology specifies a multi-phase approach:

Vision and Strategy

A POC should be tied to a strong vision that acknowledges students and staff, the surrounding community, as well as state and federal requirements, and any vendors or partners. Begin by getting all potential stakeholders together. You'll be surprised at how many different viewpoints you'll collect. Assign a team to draft a strategy that answers a realistic amount of concerns. Outline how long each phase of your POC will last.

Research and Analysis: Before implementing a POC, make sure that your program's developing requirements, solutions' analysis, and processes are in order. Review literature, research, and relevant case studies, and develop pedagogical scenarios if necessary.

Architecture and Standards

A sound technology architecture and standards that support the vision of your POC must be established. Assign metrics to not only help assess results at the end of your pilot, but to help make real-time adjustments during the testing period. Analyze all phase data as it is received.

Initiate Pilot

Based on your unique programs and initiatives, this phase could actually be several phases. For instance, perhaps you are conducting a pilot involving tablets in elementary schools before phasing to laptops in middle schools, for example. Be sure that there are specific criteria in place for each phase to better gauge success.

Evaluation and Assessment

Amass final reports, surveys, feedback, and all relevant data. Share final observations with all stakeholders. Come to a consensus of whether the pilot justifies a widespread implementation and, if so, what could be improved to make an official rollout proceed more smoothly.

Enterprise Implementation

After the POC is completed and evaluated, ensure that the appropriate documentation and consulting is provided to departments responsible for widespread deployment and implementation. This installation and configuration phase may include basic readiness, logistics and operation, and professional development.

1 Fairfax County Public Schools (2014). Fairfax county public schools technology plan. Retrieved from http://www.fcps.edu/it/technology/documents/FY%202014%20Technology%20Plan_FINAL.pdf