One-to-One Program History

Sunnyside Unified School District in Tucson, Arizona, is home to over 17,000 students that attend 21 elementary, middle, and high schools, in addition to an early childhood education center and an alternative school. 95% of the students are minorities, 88% Hispanic, and 85% are of low socio-economic status. Sunnyside’s one-to-one program was implemented to address issues common to many large school districts, such as unsatisfactory test scores, disappointing graduation rates, and student disengagement.

Sunnyside began its one-to-one program by providing laptops to 9th graders at two high schools who met criteria for grades and attendance, a initiative designed to increase the graduation rate. In 2010 more than 1400 netbooks were issued to fifth graders in 13 elementary schools, and in the 2011-2012 seventh and eighth graders received the mobile devices.

Technology Vision

The school district’s one-to-one program was designed around a vision to prepare “students for a diverse, changing, democratic society through engaging students with a 21st Century learning experience and improving academic achievement by transforming learning from teacher-centered to student-centered” (One-to-One Computing, 2012). The plan specifies six program goals:

- Improve student achievement by enhancing engagement, increasing test scores, and empowering students to learn anytime and anywhere.
- Continue to increase promotion and graduation, decrease the dropout rate, and better prepare students for college.
- Improve student 21st century skills and access to technology.
- Transform how teachers integrate technology into student-centered instruction that focuses on projects, as well as in their professional lives to collaborate with colleagues and manage resources.
- Decrease the community’s digital divide with increased Internet access and improved school-parent-community communication.
Sunnyside appears to be on track with these goals. Since the implementation of the program in 2009, school officials have noted an increase in student attendance, student engagement, and achievement. One result that was generally not expected was a noticeable increase in community engagement with the schools. This outcome was attributed to the Internet-accessible laptops that students bring home which allowed parents to use the district’s online tools for checking assignments and grades and communicating with teachers.

**Program Funding**

Naturally, such an ambitious program, no matter how well-intentioned and planned, is expensive. Finding money to buy laptops for so many students requires hundreds of thousands of dollars, not only to buy hardware, but also for maintenance, repair, and infrastructure to support student learning with technology. Professional development for teachers is also a significant part of the expense of a one-to-one program.

Initially, the one-to-one program for high school freshmen cost more than $1 million and was supported with $400,000 donated by a collection of local businesses and foundations. In addition, the Sunnyside Unified School District Foundation supports technology along with other programs designed to “support work which enriches the education, development, and well-being of all Sunnyside... students” (Sunnyside USD Foundation, 2012). In November, 2011, an $88 million bond passed which will contribute to making the one-to-one program sustainable for ten years.

**Technology Plan**

The Sunnyside USD’s technology plan, which was submitted to the State of Arizona Department of Education, identifies the progress that has been made in the use of technology and specifies next steps (Sunnyside USD Technology Plan, 2011).

**Professional Development**

One-to-one programs only enhance student learning when teachers integrate technology effectively into their instruction. The district’s Governing Board “authorized the addition of 4.0 FTE in the capacity of Instructional TechnologyCoach, 3.0 FTE in the capacity of Technology Trainer, and 20.5 FTE in the capacity of Teacher Technology Facilitator.”

Professional development is designed to transform students’ educational experiences by implementing strategies that encourage:

- Students to take charge of his/her own learning through experiential and virtual project and problem-based, multidisciplinary activities in “just in time” formats.
- Parents/caregivers to communicate with their children’s teachers and view daily classroom work, homework and student achievement to help ensure progress and academic growth.
- Each teacher to interact one-on-one with students and parents/caregivers, to keep apprised of each student’s progress through online assessment tools, to integrate online content and learning resources with curriculum and instruction, and to expand learning beyond the walls of the classroom.
- Each teacher to determine the best classroom management and configuration for optimal teaching and learning for all students (One-to-One@Sunnyside).
Parental Involvement

Multiple strategies have been implemented to ensure that parents be involved in the effective use of technology to enhance student learning:

- Parent-Council meetings to include parents in the decision-making process related to the adoption of technology.
- Regular mailings to notify parents of technology implementation and promote the use of District online tools to stay informed about their children’s attendance and progress and school events.
- Comprehensive training for over 150 families and loaner laptops to support their children’s education.
- Orientation meetings on laptop maintenance and care, as well as Internet safety.

Leadership

Recognizing the important role that school leaders play in the successful execution of a technology plan, administrators are expected to ensure sufficient time for teachers to collaborate and receive quality professional development in the area of technology integration. School leaders are also expected to model the effective use of technology in their interactions with staff, community members, and students.

Infrastructure

Sunnyside Unified School District is on track with implementing the infrastructure recommendations of the The Arizona Long-Range Strategic Educational Technology Plan. These strategies include:

- A one-to-one computing environment for students.
- A wide-area network that connects schools, staff, and students.
- Year-round access to school district information for parents and community members.

- Surveillance and warning systems to protect people and property.
- Access to online standard-based assessment tools for teachers, students, and parents.
- Facilitation of anytime, anywhere access to digital learning resources.
- Released time for support staff to meet and share ideas about best practices for technology use.

Student Use of Computers

Sunnyside espouses the view that “the valuable information and collaboration available on this worldwide network far outweighs the possibility that users may procure material that is not consistent with the educational goals of the District” (One-to-One User Handbook, 2011). This perspective guides a “responsible use” approach to technology policy.

A one-to-one program such as Sunnyside’s where students can take laptops home, introduces challenges that must be met through regulations and specific policies. Within the school setting, student treatment of computers can be controlled, but districts must rely on other methods to maintain equipment and the safety of students when they leave the direct supervision within the school.

Students, for example, are instructed to always carry the computers in the district-provided case, not to eat or drink around the laptops, and not to “swing, bang, throw or drop the case against anything or anyone.” The usual prohibitions apply regarding the access of inappropriate content, transmission of computer viruses, sharing personal information, and hacking into district records.

Responsible Use

At Sunnyside, the Use of Electronic Resources is encouraged to promote learning. To promote their effective use, the district controls several aspects of their use, such as access to inappropriate content, unauthorized online access, and inappropriate sharing of personal information. In addition, student technology users are
required to follow safe and ethical online behavior, such as observing copyright laws, refraining from antisocial behaviors like cyberbullying, and disrupting the district’s network. Violations of any rules related to the use of student laptops will result in disciplinary action which may involve restriction or revocation of access, criminal prosecution, or even restitution if appropriate.

Students who are contacted by strangers through the Internet or who unintentionally encounter inappropriate content are told to immediately tell a parent or teacher. Resources are provided to help parents keep students safe on the Internet at home.

Student Support

Problems with technology, even for the most tech-savvy user, are inevitable. Without adequate support, the best technology initiatives can soon fade into oblivion. Sunnyside provides a help desk that can be contacted by phone during business hours, and students are also encouraged to contact school-based support staff if they have problems.

Conclusion

The scope of the Sunnyside one-to-one initiative presents both challenges and opportunities to district technology leaders. The promise of improved student learning and engagement seems to be coming true in Sunnyside, and with a smart, comprehensive approach to technology policy, more progress is on the horizon.

References and Resources


