

Teach Me High School Technology Evaluation Summary

Demographics:

Teach Me High School is located in an urban environment. The population is roughly 25% African American, 25% Caucasian, 25% Asian, and 25% Latino. The predominant language spoken on campus is English, however more Hispanic families are immigrating into the school. Teach Me is a charter school and by district policy, its demographic statistics mirror that of the city. By state or charter school policies, students are chosen randomly through a lottery, however to be in the lottery parents need to know the school exists and they need to formally apply. The school has roughly 425 students, about 100 students per class. About 98% of graduating seniors indicate they are going to continue at a community or four year college after graduation.

Administrative:

Administratively the school falls in the integrated realm because each department gets to have a say in the technology available to that department. Ultimately, though, all decisions are approved by the principal. Even though there is an Instructional Technologist on staff full time, he still has his purchases approved by the principal before they can be executed. The school moved to the Google platform, much like what Boise State does. They use Google docs to collaborate and communicate, however what happens at in-person meetings is not documented well for those who are unable to attend. The online access to all information is also somewhat convoluted and it can be difficult to find all of the documents or to remember all of the documents and databases that need to be monitored.

Curricular:

Attendance is taken online every block. Grades are managed by PowerSchool so students and parents have access to student grades 24/7. Teachers are given deadlines by which they need to update grades so parents and students have a somewhat continuous idea of how well the students are progressing. The school has chosen to not use a Scantron type of system which also means they have chosen to not use a computer database to automatically track multiple choice assessments. Grading is still done by hand and some teachers utilize students to grade multiple choice tests. Since grades are managed by PowerSchool, teachers are forced to adapt to a percentage-based grading system.

When teachers have long-term assignments, they will take students to the computer lab daily so students can do research. Seniors have to do a project that requires online research and also requires they make a website, however I am not aware of any formal training the teachers or the students go through to learn how to make the websites. Many teachers incorporate having students figure out things for themselves as a deliberate way of having the students be engaged with the technology. Not all teachers choose to use the computer lab. Many teachers will show PowerPoint presentations via a LCD projector. In 2010, the last year I worked at the school, no classroom had an interactive whiteboard or a clicker system to do any formative assessments.

More teachers are having students make websites, however their construction still follows a predominantly linear organization. The dynamic properties of the web do not seem to be integrated into these electronic assignments yet. Given that much of what is done for classroom use or assignments is determined by more than one person, the school is beyond the emergent stage. Since the cycle of feedback is usually limited to a few adults, the school still behaves as islands of expertise.

Support:

For support the school falls mainly in the integrated stage, however some features fall in the intelligent zone whereas others fall in the emergent phase. Since the school has one designated full time adult who knows technology on staff, much of the support the school needs is there. There are times when he is budgeted a support person who will assist with machine and software needs. Whenever something changes globally with the school's systems, the staff goes through training during a professional

development time. It is normal to have updates at every faculty meeting to help new teachers understand the policies or to let the entire staff know when changes are being done and the consequences of those changes. Some teachers are able to get training because they become affiliated with a grant that is based on using technology. Other teachers pursue learning about technology on “their own time.”

Connectivity:

The school falls between integrated and intelligent for the connectivity. The entire school has wireless access to the Internet and email. Staff that need to bypass the filter are given a password so if they want to use a YouTube video in class they can. Specific sites are restricted due to state law or school policies. Being a charter school, there is very little communication with the district. The school has zero dependence on the district for its technology hardware or software so there is very little need to be actively involved with a district WAN.

Innovation:

Innovation happens between islands that are somewhat integrated. No staff member deliberately shuns technology, however not everybody chooses to embrace new technology. For example, I wanted to do asynchronous discussions with my students so our IT person made our Moodle shell accessible to my class. He had not been trained on how to use Moodle yet but he did not let that stop him from letting staff members who wanted to figure it out to try it. Sure the Moodle set-up was messy, but we were able to do an asynchronous discussion. If a teacher wants to use technology that is available, they are more than welcome to use it. The bulk of the staff, however, is still in the frame of mind where using the overhead projector counts as technology and using the LCD projector makes it easier to show PowerPoint presentations.

Overall rating:

The school falls mainly in the integrated realm with a few spikes into intelligent. Compared to other schools I have either worked at or been involved with, they are much further along with embracing technology.