NSBA 2015 Conference Report and Notes- Sarah Ricks

I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to attend the national conference. I came away feeling very proud of what our district is already doing well and feeling very hopeful for our future. I enjoyed seeing our team from Dickinson High School participate in the DLR innovation challenge. I was impressed with their ideas and how they conducted themselves as representatives of our school district. Many of the sessions I attended presented great ideas that the district may be interested in implementing.

Pre-Conference Workshop Friday March 20th **Developing a Culture of Innovation in Your District**
Innovation is not contingent on demographics or resources but it is contingent on leadership.
This workshop was given by Eric Schneider, an assistant superintendent for Minnetonka Public Schools. http://www.minnetonka.k12.mn.us/Pages/default.aspx
While their district serves about three times as many students as ours does, the ideas put forth for encouraging innovation should work for a district of any size.
While we all want innovation, there are barriers. Lack of "buy in" from employees, employees lack the time to develop new ideas, employees lack permission to try new things, employees don't have a platform to engage in idea sharing and development, fear of failure and limited resources are the primary problems when trying to foster innovation.
Providing a space to challenge others' ideas while being protected from the slings and arrows of hurtful language breeds innovation.
There is no shortage of ideas. The challenge is in the execution and designing a system or structure to support and grow the very best ideas.
A model that was helpful in the development of innovation in Minnetonka was the Stanford Design Model. https://dschool.stanford.edu/groups/k12/wiki/17cff/Steps_in_a_Design_Thinking_Process.html
In essence, at Minnetonka, the process of innovation became their strategic plan because it pushed their district forward in all areas where growth was needed.
In order to start this process a committee was formed that read a lot of books. I have a list of 15, but here are four recommended to get things rolling:
How Stella Saved the Farm by Vijay Govindarajan
Our Iceberg is Melting by John P Kotter and Holger Rathgeber
The Lean Startup by Eric Ries
Where Good Ideas Come From by Steven Johnson
The next big step was to purchase software which provided a platform for the sharing and development of ideas. The software they chose is called SpigitEngage http://www.mindjet.com/spigitengage/
This software answers many of the innovation dilemmas. It provides a platform for grassroots, employee driven change but the platform is still a safe place to express those ideas because it is only accessible to those within the school district. It develops a climate of trust between employees and administration which eliminates the "buy-in" probllem. Software provides quick and easy access convenient for teacher from school or home. It doesn't take a lot of time and participation in the platform is completely voluntary.
Side Note: the question was asked, "How can we test anything in our schools when the children are the 'guinea pigs'?" He answered, "Frankly, there are some students who will be successful no matter what we do, and there are children we are not reaching at all, so anything that a teacher is impassioned about would be better for those students than what we are doing now even though one way is 'blessed' and the other 'experimental'."
In order to generate the best ideas, Minnetonka has annual event "Big Hunt for Ideas". District employees can submit ideas at the Elementary, Middle School and High School levels. There is a rubric which must be met in order to submit the idea in order to avoid ideas that are not feasible with district resources. There are three different levels of ideas, Small- ideas that would cost less than $1,000 to

implement, Medium- ideas that cost between $1,000 and $5,000 to implement and Big- ideas that would cost more than $5,000 to implement.

The ideas are submitted and then voted on within the district. A certain number make it to round two where a panel narrows the field based on the needs of the district. In round three a final vote is taken and the winners ideas get implemented, first on a small scale and then, if successful and applicable, district wide.

Examples of programs developed through the Hunt for Bid Ideas include:

The VANTAGE program, a partnership with local businesses that provide students with experiences in professional settings and project based learning.
http://www.minnetonka.k12.mn.us/Schools/MinnetonkaHighSchool/Vantage/Pages/default.aspx

Tonka ONLINE, a platform for students to complete core courses online during the summer to allow them greater flexibility and diversity in their high school schedule. http://tonkaonline.org/

Tonka <codes> a K-5 computer programming curriculum
http://www.minnetonka.k12.mn.us/academics/eled/Pages/Tonka-Codes.aspx

Also from the big hunt, a new District App, 1:1 iPad use in lower grades, Innovation Coaches, international and global partnerships, a video modeling program, and flipped classroom instruction.

The innovation coaches mentioned above are key to success. Each site has at least one innovation coach. The position is a voluntary one which comes with the following incentives: An annual stipend, paid attendance at a national conference, an iPhone for creating 3-tap videos to share on the district website and a subscription to Fast Company magazine. The coaches are evaluated on the #of ideas generated at their site, #of ideas that move forward, #of successful idea tests, #of successful off-site validity tests, quality of partnership with the principal, quality and quantity of site presentations and events.

Principals are also evaluated on how innovative their site is.

Minnetonka estimates that the Return on their Investment (ROI) in innovation has been 1000%.

Top Ten Lessons Learned
- build a team and train them
- use the website AND coaches
- grow ideas, do alpha and beta tests
- get tech support, outsource if you need to
- get a diverse set of ideas, the big ones might be most important to the school board, the small ideas are often the most meaningful to our teachers
- get some early wins in to earn credibility
- find your "super users" they are out there, people with a passion and wealth of ideas
- network to gain confidence with other industries
- celebrate! Events build culture, give happy surprises, make let-downs gentle
- Tell the story over and over in local media

TAKE AWAY

Grassroots innovation can help push our district forward. We already have a built in provider of funds in the Dickinson Public Schools Foundation. Creating a big idea hunt would be taking the grant writing and awards process to the next level and would allow for better collaboration between sites and a greater possibility of district wide implementation. A focus on innovation could help consolidate the goals and committees mandated by our strategic plan.

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

Create an innovation team.

Investigate the price point of innovation software.

Recruit and train innovation coaches.

http://www.minnetonka.k12.mn.us/administration/teachingandlearning/staffdev/Pages/SummerInstitute

Saturday, March 21st **Students Helping Students and Their Neighborhoods: School Food Recovery and Land Fill Reduction**

This was a presentation by Syd Mandelbaum of Rock and Wrap It Up http://rockandwrapitup.org/

Two different ideas were presented to help schools conserve food. The first was reducing what actually went in the trashcan after lunch. Instead of throwing away prepackaged foods such as unopened milk, bags of chips, fruit cups, etc. students were instead allowed to take these items back to their classrooms and put them in a classroom snack bin. These snacks could be used by anyone at snack time or sent home with students as an extension of the backpack program.

The second way to conserve food was to donate the leftovers on the line that were not served to local foodbanks or other charitable organizations. A partnership could be established so that the foodbank could come pick up the still-hot food from the line and properly store it and serve it at their own facilities. In addition, before weekends or holiday breaks any perishable food items that may not be good when school comes back in session such as milk and yogurt could also be donated to local foodbanks.

Rock and Wrap It Up provide free classroom lesson plans and activities for grades 7-12 as well as a Whole Earth Calculator App which can tally the school's positive impact on the environment through food conservation and landfill reduction. The lesson plans are in the areas of Science and Social Studies, they are Common Core compliant. At one school, students were involved in this process by weighing the snack bins each day to see how much food was saved from being thrown away that day. Project-based learning opportunities are also available. Some students become very involved with charitable work through this program and some students have even earned scholarships through the EPA and USDA. The Rock and Wrap It Up organization will write letters of recommendation for any student who participates in food recovery.

Schools are protected from liability when donating food by the 1996 Good Samaritan Act and the 2008 Food Recovery Act as long as your community partner has a valid health certificate.

This program costs the school district zero dollars and schools have seen less excess food as a result of the awareness of exactly how much extra food is prepared each day.

TAKE AWAY

Our schools could have a positive impact in our community by donating food. Students would be given the opportunity to provide meaningful service. It would cost our district nothing.

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

Present the information to see if there are any interested parties at any of our school sites.

Find a community partner with a health certificate who can pick up and use the food.

Teaching at the Speed of Learning

Unfortunately, this was a very disorganized presentation. The main idea was that we need to individualize learning so that students can progress at their own pace. Technology is an asset in this process and helps eliminate boredom. Some suggested sites and tools were:

Khan Academy https://www.khanacademy.org/

-gives instant feedback, allows teachers to view performance in real time, next teacher receives performance levels from previous teacher so time isn't wasted re-teaching, frees up time to do more motivating things like projects

Green Screening Apps http://appcrawlr.com/ios-apps/best-apps-green-screen-effect

-make reports more fun, create videos, tour a student's diorama

Wattpad for student authors https://www.wattpad.com/signup

Minecraft for creating worlds which demonstrate learning, i.e. a report about the rain-forest.

Www.learnsmarter..org for more ideas to integrate technology into teaching

Flipping the Resilience Switch
The presenter for this session was Christian Moore a social worker and founder of Why Try?
Www.whytry.org
WhyTry? Is a multi-sensory program which teaches students resiliency. It is research based with positive results in schools who use it. Christian was interested in talking with me because he has already been speaking with the governor of North Dakota about bringing this program into the oil-patch with the high influx of diverse students we are seeing. He would be very interested in bringing this program to our schools. The program costs $499 the first year and $99 every year after. Resiliency is the best determiner of personal success. Resiliency training teaches students that regardless of their individual circumstances or disadvantages, hard work and perseverance can help them to realize their goals.

Sunday, March 22nd **Top Ten Questions Every School Board Member Should Ask Before Implementing a One to One Program**
1. Why are we moving to a 1:1 model?
2. What is the mission of the district and how does 1:1 align?
3. What are the instructional goals?
4. How will ALL parties be involved? (administration, teacher, parents community AND local media)
5. What device will best meet the goals?
6. How will 1:1 be financed and sustained?
7. What IT systems need to be in place?
8. How will the board lead and communicate the vision?
9. What professional development needs to take place?
10. What evaluation system is in place? Who will do it? (Outsource to local college?)

Other notes on implenting 1:1 technology in a school system.
-Before going to 1:1 make sure that teacher evaluations and classroom walkthroughs reflect student use of technology. Student use of technology is more important to educational outcomes than teacher use of technology. This will help ensure that teachers are already using the available tech in their classrooms.
-Choose the right tool. Don't get taken in by the glitz. Extra features you won't actually use are meaningless.
-Teachers need to see other teachers using technology through video and real life observations. Building principals should take the lead to ensure this happens.
-1:1 should not be implemented overnight. Start with a few teacher leaders who can then mentor and collaborate with other teachers.
-Failure is a part of learning, we must take risks. That being said, you may want to hire a teacher technology specialist to reduce the number of failures.
-Teacher roles are changing. They are no longer the deliverers of content but the designers of learning experiences.
-Students are no longer the passive receivers of content but active and empowered participants.
-After you have selected the right tool for the right reasons, TEACH PEOPLE HOW TO USE IT. Training, training and more training.
-Future ready schools http://futurereadyschools.org/futureready has free resources, free regional summits and free network of assistance for districts trying to integrate technology into their classrooms, if the superintendent is willing to sign a pledge. The pledge looks a lot like items from our strategic plan.
-There are seven gears which must be considered for a successful 1:1 program. 1. Technology and hardware, 2. Budget and resources, 3. Use of time, 4. Curriculum, instruction and assessment, 5. Professional learning and development, 6. Data & Privacy, 7. Community partnership

How to move forward?
1. Start with the "why", what are the instructional goals?
2. Start small, but think BIG
3. Start with the teachers first- teachers should get the devices 6-12 months BEFORE students get them
4. Start the conversation across ALL departments
5. **Go for it**

TAKEAWAY
There are a lot of moving parts to work out before implementing 1:1. Teachers and principals will need a lot of training and support. We will need a strong technology support system.

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS
-ensure that our technology plan answers all of the necessary questions
-consider, if we haven't already, taking the pledge to gain access to additional resources and training
-research, research, research

Social Media in Education
If we aren't using social media we are missing a huge opportunity. It gives us a chance to tell OUR story- people will talk anyway. You can't control it 100%, but it is meant to be a conversation, not a monologue. Abusers can be dealt with individually, don't ban a whole platform because of the fear of abuse. We have a website, why do we need social media? Because our stakeholders are already there.
For effective use of social media:
-Establish goals and objectives
-Find out what constituents want from social media
-Carefully consider policy. Think about responsibilities (who will maintain, monitor?), privacy and safety, copyright protection, rules for community participation.
-Be proactive in establishing rules BEFORE the blowup happens. Does ND have a social media policy?What tools should we use? Consider the following:
-Facebook
-Instagram
-Twitter
-Youtube
-Pinterest
Once you build a community, MAINTAIN it.
Special considerations for school board members:
-Educate board members about open meeting laws in relation to social media
-Ask for community input, but don't let social media dictate your vote
-Check the code of ethics

Monday, March 23rd **Energy Efficiency: The Untapped Fuel that Can Fund Your School District**
Energy efficiency, doesn't require new technology, saves money, can be implemented today. The fundamental challenge is that you need an energy manager. Why? An energy manager has no other priorities, you will see a significant return on investment, the manager is knowledgable and often has connections to utility companies, can evaluate and present energy-saving options. A district energy manager is the boots on the ground guy who implements change, collects data, contracts with an oversight group, does testing and gets advice from engineers and other experts.
Best practices include collecting regular data, performing regular building audits, having an energy management plan, installing building automation systems that save energy, carefully consider lighting, evaluate the building's envelope integrity. Partners should include plant managers, manufacturers associations, and state energy/environment cabinets.

Student involvement is a part of the process. NEED (National Energy Education Development)
http://www.need.org/
provides free, common core compliant curriculum for K-12 which is updated annually.
Student energy teams can be formed to collect and analyze data and get "behind the scenes" looks at boiler rooms, hvac systems and new construction sites.
NEED also provides free teacher workshops, with grant moneys available to cover the costs of substitutes.
In Kentucky, creating more energy-efficient schools has saved an estimated $48,296,579 over four years.
Quickest money saving fixes:
-LED lights usually pay for themselves in 12-18 months
-Building automation systems (i.e. lights that turn off automatically)
-Control systems (i.e. HVAC systems that can be programmed to lower temp at the end of school day)
-TRAIN PEOPLE to use control systems already in place that aren't being utilized
-Consider more energy-efficient appliances, and possibly negotiate performance contracts with minimum guaranteed savings
-Contact utility companies, they will often give rebates to organizations who improve their energy efficiency
TAKE AWAY
Energy-efficiency is better for the environment and our budget in the long term.
POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS
-consider cooperating with neighboring school districts to hire an energy manager, one manager usually handles 20-25 buildings
-review systems in current buildings to see if any of the "quick fixes" apply
-review energy management plan
-ensure that our new constructions are using best-practices for energy conservations

Eliminate Adult Summer Slide: Utilizing a Summer Academy to Foster a Culture of Continual Growth
Presenter was from a district in North Kansas City, MO. Their district is much larger than ours, about 19,000 students and obviously far more teachers, but I think many of the ideas could still be relevant. This district decided to start a summer academy offering professional development for employees in their schools, specifically teachers. This academy was created because there were more professional development needs than could be met in the allotted two professional development days per year. It helped employees keep their skill sets fresh during the summer, was a good kickstart to a new school year and provided motivation and a culture of continual growth. The week-long academy was held in July with a couple of individual classes being offered in June.
Here is how this program was developed over a 5 year period.
Year 1- Conference was on best practices. 50% participation, completely voluntary. Selected teachers presented 1 hour sessions on best practices in their classrooms.
Year 2- Teacher leaders presented, with some sessions still taught by other (vetted) teachers. Classes could be counted for credit at local university. SWAG bags and prizes donated by local businesses were given out to participants.
Year 3- Invited neighboring districts and private schools to attend for a $50 per-head fee. Created a vendor space which businesses could rent a table for $150. Money earned was used to pay teachers for attendance. Teachers could choose to be payed $20 per hour, receive college credit, or get professional growth credits which helped them move up the salary schedule.
Year 4- At the end of the academy we presented commitment letters which asked, "What action can you take in the immediate future based on what you learned?" Principals and teacher-leaders followed

up with participants to help them meet their goals.

Year 5- Academy was mandated for new teachers, voluntary for everyone else. Specific tracks were designed for new hires, principals, teacher leaders, teaching and learning coaches, etc. Some classes were proscribed based on your tract, other sessions were elective. The commitment letters and history of attendance reflected positively on teacher evaluations. The teacher created a parent academy held in early September. By year 5, participation was at 65% and there was whole district involvement in preparing and carrying out the academy.

Results

-Teachers who attended workshops on literacy had 41% more students reading on grade level than teachers who did not attend.

-Teachers who attended math workshops saw a 32% increase in student math skills.

-In post-academy evaluations, 96% of participants found their experiences to have a positive impact on their teaching.

TAKE AWAY

The idea of a voluntary but incentivized summer academy could be an answer to difficulties in providing all of the training that our teachers are asking for but that we cannot fit into the professional development days scheduled during the year.

POSSIBLE NEXT STEPS

Survey district employees to see if there is any interest in this professional development model.

Other free resources that were new to me, but may be already utilized in our district:

http://nesteducators.org/curriculum-summaries/curriculum-comparison-chart/

List of curricula, mostly free, that deal with human trafficking and other child-safety issues.

http://www.iste.org/resources/free-resources

Free webinars on using various technologies in the classroom.

http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/

Research reviews to help make evidence-based educational decisions.

http://tomorrow.org/speakup/index.html

Largest collection of data from stakeholders about what works in education- our district can become a contributor to the data pool, or just learn from the research, findings and webinars offered. If we choose to contribute, free data analysis of our district specific data is available.

http://www.one-to-oneinstitute.org/

Free network for supporting schools transitioning to 1:1 technology models

http://www.projectred.org/

Largest research study on the impact of technology on education. Now has forums that are free to join to share ideas and successes on technology use in the classroom.

http://www.edleader21.com/index.php?pg=2

PLC that offers free membership

http://www.p21.org/members-states/how-to-get-involved

Offers free educational resources for schools in member states. South Dakota is a member but so far North Dakota is not. Worth looking into?

http://www.digitallearningday.org/site/default.aspx?PageID=11

Free webinars on digital learning.

http://bie.org/resources