

The Principal of Change

Stories of learning and leading

Building the Culture of an Empowered Mindset Towards Technology Innovation

I have been having an incredible year of learning in my half-time role with Parkland School Division, along with speaking and consulting for other schools/districts. I have learned a lot from both positions and I feel that it is very valuable to be able to look at school cultures within your organization, while also looking at what other schools do from an outsider's perspective.

In this work, I have realized how truly important the role of principal is in building, not only in creating a positive culture, but an innovative one. These schools continuously strive to understand the changes happening in our world to not only catch up, but to lead the way in providing amazing learning opportunities for our students. Often times, as the principal goes, so does the culture of the school. This is not to say that individual teachers can not be leading the way within the school themselves, but this goes back to the notion of "pockets of innovation" as opposed to a "culture of innovation". It is unlikely for an entire school to be "pushing the edge" if the principal or administrative team is not helping to pave the way for their community as they learn alongside of them.

Due to the observations of the past few years, I have decided to create a visual that discusses the correlation of the school *mindset* on technology innovation in learning, and the alignment it has with administrator support, professional development, and the corresponding hardware/infrastructure within the school/classroom. Although what I have created is not an exact science, you will often see the overall belief of the school community align with many of these practices.

I have colour-coded the graphic so it is not confused with a rubric", but more to show alignment between beliefs and practices. The graphic is below (first draft).

Building the Culture of an Empowered Mindset Towards Technology Innovation

Mindset towards learning with technology in schools.	Closed (Fixed)	Beginning	Embrace	Empowered (Growth)
School View/Belief on the use of technology in learning.	Optional/Not Important Technology is not an important element to good teaching. It is nice to have, but kids can learn effectively without it and I do not need it for my teaching.	Have To Technology is something our kids will need in the future and I know that we should use it in the classroom somehow. I am not really sure on how to use it, but I know I probably should.	Want To Technology is powerful in supporting classroom learning. It gives us access to some of the best resources in the world, in the form of both people and content.	Need To (Imperative) Technology is <i>transformative</i> . It gives us opportunities to learn and create in ways that we were not able to before. We do not only have access to information, but we also create it while connecting and having conversations with people both locally and globally.
Administrator involvement, support, and modelling.	"Maybe Next Year" Belief that there are too many initiatives to support in schools and that technology is something that can be focused on at a later time.	"Do This" Belief is that technology should be implemented in meaningful ways by the teacher in their classroom practice yet continues to facilitate PD using the same model and that teacher practice will change.	Learning in Isolation Administrator is open to implementing technology in powerful ways, but does not share learning openly with others. Helps to create culture by having conversations with small groups or one-to-one conversations, but still needs to share learning in a transparent manner.	"Let's Do This Together" Administrator is actively engaged in their own learning and models this openly for others. Learning with open discourse is shared in one-to-one, group settings, as well as with the local and global community. Also, a culture is created where active collaboration leads to innovation from all community members. A powerful, "flat" learning culture is created.
How professional development regarding technology is most likely delivered.	No Focus There is no focus on supporting teachers in the use of technology for learning.	Told Teachers are told of the way that technology can improve learning but no powerful examples are shown, nor do they have the opportunity to see for themselves.	Shown Teachers are shown powerful examples of how technology can improve learning experiences for our students and promote opportunities to utilize prescribed models.	Experience Teachers experience the way that technology can transform learning themselves. PD is delivered in a way where teachers are learning in new ways and understand the impact it can have on improving student learning. Teachers are supported and motivated to take risks, explore, and experiment with their learning.
What technology (hardware) looks like in the classroom	Technology is either not-visible or not-used In this classroom, there may be technology but it might not be used at all due to lack of professional development or that it is outdated. It is more of a nuisance than anything. Many sites that would be deemed as useful by others are blocked within school as they are seen as a "distraction" to learning.	Technology is an event Technology is something that students either leave to use (computer lab) or is brought to the classroom in carts or minimal amounts. There are small amounts of time with the technology and deep-learning using devices is not likely to happen because of sporadic use.	Technology is shared with learners often in the classroom, Technology is always in the room to some extent, and students are able to use it when available, and share with others. Personal devices may be used but for only specific learning with the permission of the teacher.	Technology is Ubiquitous Technology is similar to a pencil to each student. It is used when needed and to transform learning. It works, is accessible, open, and there are different options for students to choose the right device/software/website for the learning occurring at the time. This is usually characterized by a combination of 1:1 and BYOD.

If you are interested, you can get the [full graphic on Flickr](#), as well as access to [the Google Document where it was created](#) (thanks to [Jesse McLean](#) for helping to edit this!). Please feel free to share and use this within your own work or share any of your thoughts.

This entry was posted in Developing and Facilitating Leadership, Embodying Visionary Leadership, Understanding and Responding to the Larger Societal Context and tagged Alberta Education, consulting, Educational Leadership, george couros, innovative leadership, innovative teaching and learning, mindset, Parkland School Division, presentation, presentations, PSD70 on June 5, 2013 [<http://georgecouros.ca/blog/archives/3912>] by George.

9 comments



Best ▾ Community

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Jennie Snyder · 5 days ago

Thank you for your thoughtful reflection and the helpful graphic. This is really helpful to me in my role of working with principals. The graphic provides some concrete examples and shows a continuum that encourages growth. I plan to share this with my admin team. With much respect and appreciation! Jennie

^ | v Reply Share ›



Rola Tibshirani · 5 days ago

Thank you George for your reflection and realistic input that principals need to lead the way to a culture of innovations. I am lucky that my principal joins our innovative ideas and encourages the school community to experience and support innovative ideas by provides opportunities for learning, risk taking, sharing. We are also fortunate that our school board provide all the tools to embed technology for capturing students' thinking and sharing learning. Our board also provides online support, SummIT, and edcamps. Looking forward to sharing learning from my students and colleagues this coming year as well as the large community online through twitter and chats.

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Matt Renwick · 5 days ago

George, I really like this graphic and your rationale. It is specific, simple to read and understand, while broad enough to cover the essential elements of a connected school.

How have you used this rubric (?) within your own school or other schools to reflect on innovation capacities as a staff?

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Mariangel C · 24 days ago

I totally agree with you. Most pressure is on teachers to include technology in the classrooms and be up-to-date but few people recognise the responsibility of principals in encouraging, supporting and socially validating the use of technology in the teaching-learning process.

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Sonja Willier · 2 months ago

Thank you for the creative energy putting this together George. Your words always bring thoughts of growth and transformation to mind. What you've begun here can lead administrators towards creating a similar document for transformative learning, from learning environments to innovative pedagogical practices and assessments. I just read Eric Sheninger's article "An Open Letter to Principals: Five Leadership Strategies for the New Year" (Aug 2011) and he touches on a Principal's role to provide teachers with the

(Aug 2011) and he touches on a Principal's role to provide teachers with the tools to bring innovative learning to life (help teachers embrace risk-taking and flexibility, engage in collaborative and cutting edge professional learning (including PLN's on Twitter), and allow your 'passion to fuel your transformation of teaching'). George, thank you for providing such insight in bringing technology innovation forward into our classrooms.

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MLabs · 2 months ago

Not sure how I ended up here but I find the rubric useful. We do some lectures for other schools now and then and it's always difficult to know what to talk to them about. This will simplify things a lot and help us identify what kind of discussion they need to be part of.

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Amanda Timms · 2 months ago

Great post! I almost wish this graphic came with a caveat, though, reminding people that although technology IS transformative and DOES allow us to do things in the classroom that we never could before, it is also to be used purposefully. After all, using technology frequently is not the same as using technology skillfully (though they are not mutually exclusive), and indiscriminate use of technology is just as dangerous as none at all.

And, while I agree that technology should be ubiquitous and available in classrooms, I've also found that sometimes, it is crammed down our throats and made out to be the "catch all" answer to bad teaching, which is a whole other issue entirely.

:)

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Robert Schuetz · 2 months ago

Generous George strikes again! I hadn't considered the application of mindset to organizations - works for me. I agree with Isniestrath, the chart is terrific and easily understood. I could see another row being added for technology integration and using SAMR for the columns. This visual shared on Edudemic is also very informative: <http://goo.gl/aAJf1> I can see both of these pieces forming the foundation for advancing a "culture of innovation". Thank you George - hope to see you at ISTE.

^ | v Reply Share ›



Isniestrath · 2 months ago

This is a great chart! Thank you for sharing. If used when lesson planning, it will help educators to segway into the Empowered (growth) model with greater ease!

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ALSO ON THE PRINCIPAL OF CHANGE

[What's this?](#)

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6 comments • a month ago



Robert Jackson — Hello George, thanks so much for doing this. What an amazing idea. This will be extremely helpful as ...

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31 comments • a month ago



Catherine Smith — The Michael Jordan quote came to mind while I was reading the blog. I've got a slightly longer ...

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7 comments • a month ago



Michele Ford — ...and did not even invite them over. I noticed later & shared. It's on my Twitter related hashtag & ...

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14 comments • a month ago



Will Richardson — Yes. But don't forget, Technology is NOT just a tool.



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