



The Provo Way Innovation Learning Initiative August 2014

Overall Goal

Our goal is to produce students who can thrive in a technology-rich society with skills of being able to problem-solve with high quality solutions. We will do so by:

- Using a large proportion of teaching/learning time to focus on solving problems, individually and in groups, across subject areas.
- Activating learning, so that the students are working at least as hard as the teacher.
- Utilizing Visible Learning research and proven Blended Learning pedagogy with technology to assist in research, hypotheses, problem-solving, connections with those in other locales, and in presentations.
- Learning that addresses “surface” issues (facts, recall, drills, etc.), “depth” issues (extending thinking to similar but different applications), and “context/concept” issues (theorizing, predicting, creating).
- Providing rich and relevant professional development to teachers to effectively lead their classes in this innovative environment.
- Accessing online curriculum and assessments (both formative and summative) through a rich and responsive Learning Management System.
- Inspiring curiosity and motivation to continue to study areas of interest outside of the school walls and the time boundaries of the school day.

Introduction

What do we know about our students? In what ways are they the same as or different from students in previous generations? Here are a few ideas:

- Most, if not all, are technologically more literate, comfortable, and savvy than in the past. They carry smart phones and other devices. They are used to fast-paced images flashing across a screen, engaging their minds and interests. For those who do not have access, we must fill the void. Technology and its effective use is a great equalizer in our current society.
- Students have similar academic needs as in the past, but there is a growing disconnect between how students use technology in classrooms (if at all), and how they use it outside of school. Indeed, public education has been haphazard at best in building sustainable technology plans: both the need to acquire up-to-date technology and the need to utilize it most effectively in teaching and learning.
- Students can quickly surf and search on devices and computers to get information about almost anything.

What do we know about teaching, learning, and schools? In what ways are they the same as or different from previous generations?

- As noted above, more needs to be done in providing access to technology devices in schools. While technology alone could result in non-viable teaching and learning, the devices should be a driver for the overall goal of this project, and the listed subsets of that goal. We need devices, but even more, we need to find ways of adjusting teaching/maximizing learning with the impetus of the devices.
- While countless schools nationwide hold PLCs, only a small percentage of PLCs address both teacher collaboration and the learning needs of teachers effectively. PLCs are relatively new (only several years old in Provo City School District), but the research is coming in that schools with effective PLCs most often show significant gains.
- Doug Reeves’ research on 90/90/90 schools clearly indicates that a properly aligned and committed school can accomplish high levels of teaching and learning.

- John Hattie’s research clearly shows that with decades of studies and meta-analyses, some strategies have a much greater impact on student learning than do others. For the most part, the ideas have been around for years. When are we finally going to put them into play as a public education system?

The above points are skeletal – indeed, entire dissertations could be written on each bullet point and more - but they provide the basic thinking behind this project called “The Provo Way Innovation Learning Initiative.” Some additional specific project components are listed below by theme.

Vision We are in the process of developing “The Provo Way” inspired by the book “The Toyota Way” by Jeffrey Liker (2003). Two fundamental tenets of “The Toyota Way” that we are also incorporating are a) including employees in the direction of the organization, and b) continuous improvement. Additional key tenets include (adapted for the Provo City School District):

1. Develop appropriate levels of district office support focused on helping teachers and students perform to their highest potential.
2. Support teachers in meaningful ways to constantly improve their individual and collective craft.
3. Continuous improvement and collective sharing of meaningful information.
4. Supporting innovation and allowing innovative approaches to grow and flourish.
5. Improved quality of teaching will result in improved student learning and achievement.

This initiative will allow us as an entire district to become more collaborative and committed to improvement through a culture change about what we teach and how we teach.

Teaching Model While our recent efforts have been to ensure that our teachers have a large number of instructional “arrows in their quivers,” the overall teaching model will be that of *Blended Learning*. A specific subset will be *Problem-Based Learning*. **Ultimately, our classrooms must be transformed to settings where, in addition to learning the important foundational understandings of a given subject area, they are given relevant and applicable problems to research, study and solve.** The regular usage of technology (both via devices and online research) is a large pillar upon which the Blended Learning approach is founded. However, our pedagogical foundation is John Hattie’s *Visible Learning* research, which has identified the most impactful teaching components that have the greatest effect on student learning. Employing the most effective components is an essential component of this initiative.

Culture and Teacher Buy-In The model we are proposing has a three-year phase-in period. In Year 1, approximately 32 teachers and their classrooms will take part. We can call this the pilot, but the purpose is for each school to identify 1, 2 or 3 teachers who are most likely to show success in a Blended Learning setting (what we are calling our Teaching-Learning Innovation Labs). Other teachers in the building will see their successes, and will want to be part of this project in the future. In year 2, we will increase participation by about 90 teachers, for a total of 123. In year 3, the increase will be 297 teachers totaling 420. **This is the most successful approach – to grow the interest among a small number of teachers, starting with those who will undoubtedly succeed.**

Curriculum: Content and Access In Provo, we have years of high quality curriculum (ranging from daily lesson plans to fully designed courses) to glean from teachers and to organize in meaningful ways, aligned with the state standards. We also have subject-based, teacher-rich curriculum committees that will select and vet online materials for district-wide use. We simply need the means to do so. We will do so by purchasing and implementing *BrainHoney*, perhaps the most innovative and interactive Learning Management System (LMS) available.

Additional Objectives/Benefits

1. *Cost Reduction:* Reduce curriculum costs by up to 80% by leveraging a digital library of district created and other online resources.

2. *PD Digital Library*: Provide library of online “Provo Way” PD resources to enable teachers to achieve excellence in teaching.
3. *Relevant PD Resources*: Collaborate with Agilix and an array of professional development resources to support the evolving “Provo Way” of teaching and learning.

Project Overview

1. *Teaching/Learning Innovation Labs*: Enable at least one teaching/learning innovation lab in each school where the most effective and relevant pedagogy, curriculum, technology, and assessment practices are on display with model teachers leading the way.
2. *Digital Inclusion*: Include teachers and students in all relevant classes from across the district; 10-15 secondary teachers, 20-25 elementary teachers, 1000+ students.
3. *Motivated Teacher Advocates*: Allow several teachers in each building, grade, course to “opt-in” for participation as model teachers, with recommendation/approval from the school principal.
4. *Personalized Learning PLC*: Enable teachers to form a Personalized Learning PLC to organize and regulate their plans and progress. This PLC will be facilitated by the district project manager.
5. *District Curated Digital Content and PD Library*: Train and compensate teachers to submit high-quality, standards-aligned learning assets to the shared digital library.
6. *Provide Personalized Learning Seminars*: Participating teachers will attend several training sessions in advance of launching this initiative in the classroom.

Year 1 Parameters

Year 1 will include anywhere from 1 to 3 teachers per school. To keep our focus, we will be working with classrooms grades 4-12: no SpEd, CTE, specialists, fine arts, or physical education in the first year.

Program Evaluation

As this initiative accesses resources of time and funding, data will be collected along the way to determine to what extent we have met our stated goal. Teachers and students will be called upon not just for the collection of quantitative data through tests, assignments, grades, etc., but also through qualitative measures such as surveys and preference inventories.

Caveat/Commitment

Each participating teacher must recognize that this initiative is not about simply acquiring devices. This initiative is based on the best and most relevant research regarding teaching, learning, curriculum, and assessment, all using technology as a facilitative tool. To be clear, this initiative is more about improved teaching through new and targeted professional development on best teacher practices than it is about devices. Teachers agreeing to participate in this initiative must sign a commitment statement, assuring their individual intent to implement new teaching methodologies, participate in this additional PLC, gather the necessary data to measure progress and impact, and implement the online curriculum resource as outlined.