Mobile Learning: Avoiding Common Pitfalls

WHAT TO DO

1. **PLANNING**

   - **Common Mistake:** Putting technology ahead of pedagogy
     - It's easy as a district to fall short in building a real vision of how learning will change with technology and what the expected benefits are. Such failure puts the district at risk of not meeting unspoken stakeholder expectations and suffering the resulting public backlash.

   - **What's it going to be?**
     - Pull together a substantive vision
     - Get clear on the specific benefits of the transition to mobile learning
     - Bring old policies into the digital age
     - Figure out how to keep it funded (ideally without
       depending only on vendors)
     - Design your approach for technology infrastructure, professional development, and continual maintenance and improvement
     - Be mindful of human fairness - plan how to mitigate inequity today and eliminate it in the future

   - **What is mobile learning?**

2. **IMPLEMENTING**

   - **Common Mistake:** No project plan or project coordinator
     - It happens. Districts are sometimes blindsided by predictable and avoidable problems such as when students have trouble connecting to the Internet; or they circumvent Internet filtering; or digital resources turn out to be insufficient; or parents are uncomfortable with student use of technology. Thorough planning, transparency, and a project coordinator help mitigate the risk.

   - **WHAT TO DO**
     - Implementation by committee (someone has to pull it all together)
     - Implementation by top-down mandate
     - Going to scale with an untested approach (faster but messier)
     - Too much focus on others’ best practices instead of on a culture of innovation
     - Policies not updated to reflect digital realities
     - Incomplete communication with parents and students
     - Flaky technology: insufficient bandwidth, slow devices
     - Unnecessary purchasing practices
     - Failure to communicate expectations

3. **CONTINUALLY IMPROVING**

   - **Common Mistake:** Inability to Take Risk
     - With mobile learning, often the biggest risk to improvement is to do nothing. A culture of innovation means continually trying new things, learning from them, keeping what works, and discarding what doesn’t. But this can be too risky in some command-and-control environments.

   - **WHAT TO DO**
     - Share widely your progress toward the vision
     - Track outcomes and monitor cost
     - More and better hypotheses - micro scale to macro
     - Build on the success of others - digital in their hands
     - Inadequate communication with parents and students
     - Inefficient technology: insufficient bandwidth, slow devices
     - Inconsistent purchasing policies
     - Failure to learn and innovate from outcomes

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