

Name: Louis McDonald
Organization: Fauquier County Public Schools
Title: Director of Technology

Briefly describe your professional background and experience in education technology

I have been the Director of Technology at Fauquier County Public Schools (Virginia) since 2012. During that time my team has provided wireless access in all our classrooms, built out our broadband capacity, moved to a new LMS and SIS working with our partners in Instruction and Student Services, and moved to a 1:1 Chromebook for students. I have an educational technology leader reporting to me who works with our schools in supporting the use of technology by teachers.

We have been able to achieve all this success, like many of my peers, with no growth in my staff. Coming from public/private sector, I am always amazed by what K12 technology staffs are able to achieve when so limited in resources.

Prior to this position, I was the CIO for Virginia's Center for Innovated Technology responsible for technology-based economic development strategies to accelerate innovation, imagination and the next generation of technology companies. I was on a team working with the Virginia DOE to design and develop the Virginia Longitudinal Data System in support of K12, higher-ed, and workforce. This included a data governance model supporting the VLDS.

It was during this effort that I was enlightened by the amount of data provided by education in support of state and federal initiatives. The demands of reporting were problematic with deliver and consumption of information from the various SIS products used by K12, and by VDOE. I believe interoperability standardization is a crucial area that would facilitate enterprise efficiencies.

What are the two most important priorities for CoSN to focus on in the next three years?

During my time being a member of CoSN, I have had the privilege to work with a number of K12 technology leaders. The priorities that I have gravitated towards are data privacy and interoperability standards. However, during the pandemic, it was clear that equity in education was a challenge. This has become a concern of mine as well.

Privacy will continue to be a challenge as it relates to protecting student, staff and parent data. Cloud-based resources make it difficult to provide enforcement by divisions. We continue to struggle with the ambiguous nature of terms and privacy policies by vendors. You need a law degree to interpret what is published on a vendor's site. EdTech vendors should strive to develop a policy that makes it easy to determine the support of FERPA compliance for divisions.

Each student needs to be viewed at the granular level to provide an equitable level of education. The division can provide a framework and support network, but the instructional staff can recognize the needs of each student and deliver a process that allows for their success. Technology is just one tool in the toolkit for equity in education. It is not about support all students, but "each" student in their needs. Technology can help assess the needs, as well as fulfill some of the needs.

Please explain how your diverse background, personal and professional, will help impact the CoSN Board.

My background as a computer scientist has given me the opportunity for exposure to a wide variety of technologies. I was using the Internet before it was the internet and saw the value of collaboration in solving difficult problems with geographically dispersed team members. My work as a software engineer and later as a system architect allowed me appreciate the complexity of developing and supporting software products. My exposure to Windows, Macs, Unix, NextStep, Linux, and mainframe platforms allowed me to appreciate the complexity of hardware and OS variety, as well as limitations of each platform (or value).

Even though I am not an educator, my education in computer science has taught me how to adapt and learn what I need to for the job in front of me. I have worked in the defense community, intelligence community, the technology investment community, and now the education community. My role has always been in leadership and a leader works with his/her staff to rely on the strengths of the team to achieve the desired outcome. I work with my educational technology leader as a liaison with instruction. Together we work to provide the best services and solutions to our division to support our learning growth.

This vast variety affords me the opportunity to provide CoSN perspectives based on my 40 years of working in the technology field, seeing the growth of the internet and its potential to all disciplines including K12 education.

Describe your relevant experience in providing leadership to nonprofit organizations (e.g. service on boards, events, fundraising), with particular emphasis on any experience working with state or national education and/or ed tech associations.

During my time with the Center for Innovative Technology, I was project leader for the Commonwealth of Virginia's Information Technology Symposium (COVITS) that was organized by the Secretary of Technology. In my capacity, I

worked with the event coordinator to solicit sponsors, and work our arrangements for speakers, and in the case of sponsors, organize their speaking arrangements. These events were attended by over 1,000 Commonwealth technology employees.

I recently was the co-founder of TEDxWarrenton in partnership with a non-profit (Leadership Fauquier). This event required finding sponsors to support the event, development of the program, working with speakers, content/website development and ticket management. My primary role was project manager, but it did require rolling up my sleeves and "getting dirty".

CoSN has identified diversity as a priority for both the CTO profession and the CoSN organization. As a CoSN Board nominee, how would you help to broaden diversity and/or what experience have you had in evaluating or managing organizational diversity?

In our school division we continue to review how our instructional staff diversity mirrors our student population. We continue to evolve our hiring and advancement strategy to work with the school leadership to encourage and work towards an instructional population that reflects our student population.

Within my own organization we strive to incorporate diversity in our team. With low turnover, it is a challenge to facilitate this objective. We average about one opening (replacement not new) every 2-3 years with usually about 2 applicants for the position. Our current split is about 50% male and 50% female.

I would hope CoSN would continue to look towards a diversity best practices that have been used by organizations to address the shortages in key areas. The CTO/CIO is a profession that has, in my opinion, seen a wide breadth of diversity but could do better. The key is how to engage that diversity into an division implementation strategy

Describe your past involvement in CoSN and/or our state chapters

I have been a board member of the Virginia CoSN chapter since its inception. I have also participated in the CoSN workgroups; Emerging Technologies, Privacy, and Digital Equity. I have found the camaraderie with my peers in these workgroups valuable. I was recently recognized as the CoSN 2022 Volunteer of the Year at the conference in Nashville.