

## **Thoughts on Leading a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning School**

In recent years, there has been increased recognition that if schools are to meet the challenges of the knowledge-based society, then there must be an increased focus on the development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills (Fadel and Trilling, 2009; Pellegrino and Hilton, 2012). An important component in the movement towards 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning has been the role that ICT-supported learning can play. ICT-supported learning refers to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to facilitate learning in personal, classroom and network situations based on current pedagogical and learning strategies.

Since my involvement in the research that led to the CEFRIO Report entitled: [\*IT-supported learning and networking in the Anglophone educational community of Québec\*](#) (Wall, Breuleux & Tanguay, 2006), I have been interested in ways to promote the use of ICT-supported learning in school settings.

Over the next four weeks, based on my involvement in the Building Community Through Telecollaboration (BCT) Network from 2006 to 2013, I will be sharing my thoughts on the following four key aspects of leading a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning School:

1. April 3 - Developing a Shared Vision for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning School
2. April 10 - Teacher Expertise and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning
3. April 17 - Facilitating Teacher Learning and Sharing
4. April 24 – Administrative Support for ICT-supported Learning

### **1. Developing a Shared Vision for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning School**

Developing a meaningful shared vision has proven to be an essential aspect of effective educational leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 2002; Leithwood, 2006; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008). Hence, an important step towards leading a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning School is the establishment of a process to create or revise a relevant shared school vision. The ideas and strategies in this document are designed to help facilitate that process.

## **Before Starting the Vision Building Process**

Before embarking on a vision building process, it is important to consider whether a school community is ready to do so. Some of the documents on the change process that were posted last month might be of help in establishing the readiness of a school community to begin such a process. These documents can be accessed by clicking on the following highlighted titles:

- a. [The Achievable Project Test](#)- Based on the acronym PLANS, key questions related to the achievability of a proposed project will be considered.
- b. [Action Project Planning](#) - The acronym ACTION will form the basis for a set of steps related to planning, monitoring and evaluating action plans.
- c. [Change Guidelines](#) – Questions related to the facilitation of the change process will be presented.
- d. [GAMEplan](#) – An acronym-based process for monitoring and evaluating progress of change projects.

## **Benefits of ICT-supported Student Learning**

Given the central role that student learning and development plays in the life of any school, perhaps the best place to start the vision building process is to consider the benefits that students would gain if ICT-supported learning were to become a key part of the shared vision.

There are a number of ways that one could start the process; however, a rather efficient way might be to circulate the following ideas on the benefits of ICT-supported student learning that were endorsed by the teachers and administrators who were involved in the BCT Network. Taking the time to facilitate open discussions of these ideas seems to be an appropriate place from which to create or revise a shared vision for a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning School.

## **Benefits of ICT-supported Learning for Students**

When used wisely, ICT-supported learning allows students to:

- access and assess information and knowledge from a variety of sources,
- share in the creation of meaningful, knowledge-based, multi-media, projects,
- present their creations to authentic audiences, such as, parents, teachers and friends,
- become more aware of the benefits and challenges of safely using ICT tools, and
- practice using ICT tools in ethical, sensible and learning-oriented ways

When considering the above ideas on the value of ICT-supported learning, it might also be helpful to consider the following guiding principles related to student learning that were developed by the teachers in the BCT Network. See Wall, Breuleux, Heo, Bilodeau, Rye, Bennett, Foreman, Lemay, & Verreault, 2012 - [Promoting ICT-supported learning: Lessons from the BCT Network](#).

### **Guiding Principles Related to ICT-supported Student Learning**

**1. Selection of QEP- based learning activities:** Student learning activities should be based on the Quebec Education Program or other approved curriculum. The activities should be developmentally appropriate and focus on the enhancement of key learning skills and strategies. ICT-supported learning should be focused on relevant, curriculum-based, objectives and should not be viewed as an “add-on”.

**2. Designing ICT-supported learning activities:** The initial focus should be on the selection of appropriate learning objectives followed by the identification of relevant ICT tools. In selecting these tools, it is important to consider the capacity of the students to use them and the degree to which the tools are readily available.

**3. Student use of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills:** When students are involved in ICT-supported learning activities, they should be encouraged to communicate and collaborate effectively, carefully access and evaluate relevant information, and create well-designed media products.

**4. Access and assess knowledge from the Internet:** Students should learn to efficiently search the Internet and cautiously evaluate and carefully credit the source of the information they retrieve.

**5. Emphasize student collaboration:** Students should create collaborative learning projects within the classroom and online, which may require the ongoing learning or enhancement of group participation skills in both face-to-face and digital settings.

**6. Sharing with authentic audiences:** Students should share the projects that they create with other students, friends, and family.

**7. Using the Internet ethically and safely:** Students should be encouraged and expected to follow clear guidelines regarding the ethical and safe use of the Internet.

### **Process Suggestions:**

Using some of the following methods might enhance these vision building discussions:

- [Partner Discussions](#)
- [Small Group Discussions](#)
- [Circle Discussions](#)

### **References**

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. (2002). What do you call people with visions? The role of vision, mission, and goals in school leadership and improvement. In K. Leithwood & P. Hallinger (Eds.), *Second international handbook of educational leadership and administration* (pp. 9-40). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer.

Leithwood, K. (2006). The 2005 Willower Family Lecture: Leadership according to the evidence. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 5, 177-202.

Leithwood, K. and D. Jantzi (2008). Linking leadership to student learning: The contribution of leader efficacy, *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44, 4, 496-528.

Leithwood, Kenneth, Harris, Alma and David Hopkins (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership, *School Leadership & Management*, 28: 1, 27- 42.

Pellegrino, J. W. & M. L. Hilton (2012) Education for Life and Work: Developing Transferable Knowledge and Skills in the 21st Century, Committee on Defining Deeper Learning and 21st Century Skills; Center for Education; Division on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education; Washington, D.C., The National Academies Press.

Trilling, B. and C. Fadel (2009). *21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills: Learning for Life in Our Times*, San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Wall, A. E., Breuleux, A. and V. Tanguay (2006). *IT Supported Learning and Networking in the Anglophone Educational Community*. Quebec: Cefrio.

Wall, A. E., Breuleux, A., Heo, G., Bilodeau, P., Rye, K., Bennett, N., Foreman, T., Lemay, V., & . M. Verreault (2012). *Promoting ICT-supported Learning: Lessons from the BCT Network*: Quebec: Cefrio.