

Elements: Leadership Forum Personas

Dennis Stanton—Elementary Principal

Dennis Stanton is the principal of Pineview Elementary, a K-8 school in the Midwest. ~~Around~~ 25 teachers work with approximately 300 students from several small towns and outlying areas in a largely rural county. The school serves a high-poverty population, with 62% of students receiving free or reduced lunch. ~~There are u~~Usually, there are 2 classes per grade level in grades K-5 although that number changes based on student enrollment. In grades 6-8, students are somewhat departmentalized as different teachers take responsibility for the core subjects of language arts, math, and science.

Stanton has worked in the Pineview District for his entire career, first as a 3rd and 5th grade teacher, and, then, as a principal at Pineview Elementary for the past ten years. The great majority of Pineview's faculty have been teaching 20 or more years and have extensive ties with the community. The district has had difficulty recruiting younger teachers, and those who are hired usually leave after one or two years.

Stanton and his staff have struggled with No Child Left Behind requirements for student achievement. The school failed to make "Adequate Yearly Progress" for 4 of the past 6 years, particularly with their special needs students, and have experienced serious consequences which have demoralized the staff and frightened the parents.

The Pineview School District recently hired a new superintendent with the charge to improve student achievement. In his first year in the position, the superintendent worked on several initiatives, including an effort to increase the use of technology to support student-centered instruction. He has acquired funding for computers and professional development and has asked Dennis to take a major role in developing an implementation plan.

Alex appreciates the importance of the district's technology initiative, but he is insecure about his own technology expertise. He's comfortable with mainstream tasks such as e-mail, Web searches, and word processing, but he does not enjoy exploring new devices or applications and is unfamiliar with other types of educational technology.

One of the new superintendent's first accomplishments was the bringing of broadband connection to all the schools. Pineview has a computer lab with a variety of mismatched computers, but in the coming year 12 new computers will be added to update the lab and 2 computers will be installed in each classroom. Dennis also has been given some funds to purchase other technology, such as science probes and digital cameras.

Stanton approaches the Leadership course with mixed feelings. He understands that the effective use of technology could have a positive impact on his students' achievement, but he is apprehensive about how to engage his teachers in the process of integrating technology into their instruction. He anticipates challenges to working with teachers to incorporate technology through student-centered teaching methods. He has heard of schools where expensive technology gathers dust and doesn't want that to happen with his teachers. Alex hopes that the course will give him resources to make professional development with his teachers effective. He also would like to learn about some new tools and programs that will get his teachers, and himself, excited about using technology.

Nikki Morales—High School Assistant Principal

Nikki Morales is the Assistant Principal of Instruction at Hawthorne High School, a comprehensive high school of about 2000 students and 150 teachers located in a large urban area. Hawthorne is highly regarded throughout the city as an academically oriented high school and attracts many students from lower-performing schools.

Morales is in her third year as assistant principal after teaching chemistry for five years at a nearby suburban high school. Her education in curriculum and instruction has given her the background she needs to work with teachers to improve student learning. Her goal, and the goal of the school administration team, is to help teachers move toward a more student-centered type of instruction. A plan to integrate technology into instruction was developed to contribute to this approach to learning.

As part of Hawthorne's Technology Plan, funding was secured to purchase some new equipment. The school now has two state-of-the-art computer labs and five mobile labs of 25 laptops. About half the classrooms have 2-3 computers, and the plan is to equip all classrooms in the next two years.

Most of the new teachers and a few of the experienced teachers have eagerly embraced the change, but there are a significant number of holdouts. Unfortunately, some of these individuals are highly respected and have felt successful using traditional teaching methods. April Jones, the powerful head of the English Department and Sam Murphy, a beloved government teacher are the two most prominent teachers who see little reason to change their teaching styles. Their resistance is influencing teachers who might otherwise be willing to experiment with technology in more student-centered teaching.

Nikki volunteered to take the responsibility for moving the technology integration plan to the next level. She has a natural enthusiasm for

technology and likes to play around with gadgets and new applications. In fact, she loves technology so much that she has a difficult time understanding other people's reluctance to try out new equipment and software. She feels that the time has come to set some hard goals with the teachers who are not taking advantage of the technology the school has provided. She feels that the only way to get them to move forward is to force them to participate in in-service activities where they plan appropriate uses of technology and then supervise them closely to make sure they have followed through with their plans. She also believes that the teachers who fail to make adequate progress should experience some serious consequences. Her hard-line approach has caused many teachers to rebel against the idea of technology integration on general principle.

Nikki's principal heard about the Leadership Forum at the ISTE conference and arranged a half-day facilitated course with a follow-up meeting and suggested that Nikki participate. Although Nikki appreciates the value of professional development, she feels she is too busy to attend a half-day meeting. She also feels that she has adequate expertise on technology integration and is not sure she will benefit from further professional development. Nevertheless, she has agreed to take part in the course and hopes she gets something worthwhile from it.

Marcus Courtney—District Technology Coordinator

Marcus Doty is a 37-year-old former U. S. history teacher who has worked for 3 years as the technology coordinator for Shadow Lake, a suburban school district in the southeastern United States. The district has two regular high schools of over 2000 students and a smaller charter high school, Eight traditional elementary schools of 300-600 students and two charter schools feed into five middle schools, each with around 900 students.

Eight years ago, the community approved a bond issue to provide broadband connection and computers to all schools. The high schools and middle schools have computer labs, and each elementary classroom has two computers available for students. Recently, however, the district has had serious financial problems, and, consequently no new equipment has been bought and existing technology has not been upgraded for several years.

Marcus realizes that the technology situation in Shadow Lake isn't the best, but he is convinced that more could be done with the resources that they have. He visits the schools frequently and often finds computer labs empty and classroom computers gathering dust.

Like any large group of educators, the teachers in Shadow Lake have different levels of expertise and interest in technology. Marcus has

conducted both required and optional workshops to help teachers integrate technology with varying degrees of success. One of the middle schools has a core of teachers who are very interested in technology and student-centered learning, and the principal has used this group strategically to make an impact on the rest of the faculty. Most of the other schools have at least one teacher who is interested in learning more about technology and instruction. Marcus has also had several conversations with new teachers who are digital natives and are eager to do more with technology.

Even though the district can provide little in the way of financial support for technology integration, Marcus has been encouraged by the administration to do as much as he can within time and budgetary constraints. He feels that with some planning and organization, he can take advantage of the progress that has already been made to help teachers use technology to engage students and enhance their achievement. He hopes the Leadership course will get him on the right path.