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INTRODUCTION

“I can’t teach today, my projector is dead.”

It’s amazing to think how quickly we’ve gone from techno-phobia to techno-dependence. When I was teaching at the turn of the century, integrating technology meant having a few desktop computers in the back of the room that kids could work on. The only mobile devices we had were those greenish-looking word processors called AlphaSmart.

There was one projector in the building, and it was the size of a small aircraft carrier. When I brought it into my class to use it, I had to make sure kids weren’t sitting next to it because it put out as much heat as a 1000-degree pizza oven. Most of the time, teachers’ technology use was limited to the tried-and-true overhead projector (I used to hate coming home with “purple marker bruise” on the side of my hand).

That was only about 12 years ago, which makes the opening quote (actually said to me by a teacher in the last year) so impactful and remarkable. Much of this is a direct reflection of society and the rapid influx of mobile devices into our world. What we see as “needs” has changed almost overnight. In fact, I’ve seen several different versions of the “New Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs” making the rounds on the internet. Those 21st-century needs now include stellar Wi-Fi and long battery life before even considering food and shelter (see Figure 0.1).

To a person whose job it is to support this influx of technology and devices in schools, the task may seem daunting. So many more moving parts means many more new systems to monitor, support, and learn.

Before we embarked on our mobile learning journey, I was working in the technology services department as a virtualization coordinator. Although my background was in education, it was great to learn how systems, servers, and networks all work together. Anyone who works in a technology department knows that when the phone rings, it’s usually not someone calling to tell you how great the Wi-Fi is running. Putting out fires is a 24/7 job even without

handing every student a device—so how do you not only support a mobile learning initiative, but also help make it thrive?

Having a shared vision is a big part of that. This book series is designed to give all stakeholders a voice and common vocabulary when it comes to leading a mobile device initiative. Because technology changes rapidly, this book won't focus on a particular hardware or software solution but instead tackle the issues that arise whenever you're putting learning in the hands of kids in the form of a device.

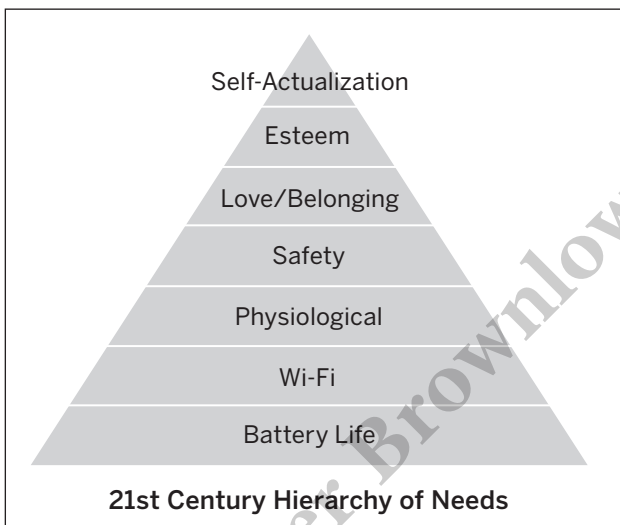


Figure 0.1 21st Century Hierarchy of Needs.

How to Use This Book

This book is broken down into various chapters that serve as both a guide and a resource for technology departments, depending on the state of your mobile learning initiative. The structure of the chapters in this book mirrors the structure of the other books in the series, though the content differs. Although the intended audience is technology directors or Chief Technology Officers in a mobile device initiative, teachers, parents, and administrators can also gain

some insights into the role that IT plays during this process. No single department can support a mobile learning initiative alone—it takes the entire team.

The first five books really tackle both the “why” and “how” of mobile learning. Getting leadership on board with encouraging a learning culture and having professional learning that supports the teacher is key. This book is all about the “what” when it comes to supporting a mobile learning initiative from the IT side.

In the first chapter we’ll really tackle getting the right mindset around a mobile device initiative and “agreeing to the why.” Part of this is realizing that schools are not truly enterprise systems, as many would assume. Individualizing learning means individualizing the technology needs of each student. The role of IT is to figure out how to effectively support that individualization without creating too many roadblocks.

In Chapter 2, as is my custom with every book in the series, I’ll tackle the top 10 things *not* to do in a mobile device initiative from the IT side. From *not* working in isolation to *not* rolling out everything all at once, many of these are common mistakes that we can still fall prey to from time to time.

Chapter 3 is an interview with an industry expert. As I explain in my introduction to CIO Leo Brehm, he is the rare person who, when you talk with him, within five minutes you’ll have some new, creative idea on how to improve learning with technology. In his interview we talk about the ever-changing role of the IT leader and why education is bad when it comes to creating data silos.

Chapters 4 and 5 really focus on the communication and “marriage” of IT with curriculum and instruction. Both of these chapters provide examples of techniques we’ve used in our district to improve the relationship between departments, and also how to create a transparent communication path between IT and teaching staff when systems are changing.

Because technology is always changing, I spend quite a bit of time in Chapters 6 and 7 talking about some general structures and policies to have in place to support a mobile device initiative. I list some examples of companies we use for our Mobile Device Management (MDM) and also repairs, but know that

these can change based on your device choice, district location, and size of implementation.

Chapter 8 is really all about finding out what is the best “Return on Learning” (R.O.L.) for the systems and digital resources you have in place. Districts have dived into the mobile device world with a focus on the hardware, when in reality there are thousands of dollars spent on software and applications that largely go unchecked. This chapter really talks about how to best process all these data points and turn that information into action to improve systems and learning.

In our final two chapters, I tie together the other components of this book series and how the IT department interacts with all those other components when successfully supporting a mobile learning initiative. Having open communication—from campus administrator to teacher to parent—can help avoid any surprises or frustrated stakeholders along the way. Taking time to gather feedback and reflect can go a long way in making your department an unstoppable force in the support of learning with technology.

“Easter Eggs”

According to Wikipedia (mrhook.it/easter), an Easter egg is “an inside joke, hidden message, or feature in an interactive work such as a computer program, video game or DVD menu screen.” Why can't we also have these in books? In this book, I've hidden several Easter eggs that you'll have to uncover and discover. Some are buried in words, others in images. How do you reveal them? If you are reading this book in its paper form, you'll need to download the Aurasma app (www.aurasma.com/#/whats-your-aura) and find the trigger images to unlock the Easter eggs. Find and follow the “MLM Vision” channel to make it all work. Instructions can be found here: mrhook.it/eggs. Happy hunting!