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Introduction

AN EVOLVING LEADERSHIP POSITION

The technology coordinator position, while relatively new to K–12 schools, has become a standard part of the district leadership over the past 35 years. The position first appeared in the 1980s when schools began to use computers in day-to-day instruction and was first described in detail by Moursund in *The Technology Coordinator* (1992). This text was the first to examine the need for the position, along with the general and technical qualifications it required.

As the number of computers in schools rapidly increased, it became obvious to administrators that there was a real need for additional resources to manage this newly available **educational technology.** Funding a technology coordinator position was one of the first steps districts took toward creating the specialized support staff now required by schools and districts. Those working in this role serve to assist with the effective implementation of learning technologies in classrooms and administrative technology in school offices.

The number of technology coordinator positions in school districts increased dramatically during the 1990s in concert with the dramatic growth of computer technology in K–12 curricula. The National Center for Education Statistics reported that 86% of teachers had access to a technology coordinator at the district level (U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics, 2000). During this time, as the number of computing devices and technology resources increased and computer networking became more complex, even small districts found it necessary to hire technology coordinators. These early coordinators were expected to provide technical and instructional assistance to teachers and students, plan for long-range integration and implementation of technology,

supply professional development programs, prepare budgets, write grants, and even maintain the schools' equipment (Moursund, 1992). Today it is likely that almost every school organization has someone working in a technology leadership position, even if they are not called a technology coordinator.

Despite the fact that the number of technology coordinators has increased dramatically, there is often little consistency in titles and responsibilities among the positions. Lesisko (2005) surveyed 87 district technology coordinators in 24 Pennsylvania counties. He found 45 different position titles that represented a wide variety of professional preparations, educational backgrounds, and position expectations. These inconsistencies in preparations and expectations often lead to considerable differences in the way technology coordinators approach their everyday work, set goals for the organization, and make decisions. There is a need for a clearly defined and commonly shared definition and description of this important leadership position. A better and more consistent understanding of the position by the board of education, administration, and staff will help technology coordinators make better policy and budgetary decisions and lead technology initiatives that are more reliable.

Although many school districts have added technology coordinator positions in recent years, the role of the technology coordinator sometimes lacks clear definition in the district decision-making hierarchy. Some technology coordinators are hired as staff and work on an hourly basis, others work under an extended teacher's contract, and still others are clearly hired as part of the administration and organizational chart. Although the technology coordinator is expected to regularly guide technology implementation, additional technology staff, principals, and district-level administrators also often contribute to the decision-making process and influence choices.

Schools have invested billions of dollars in the past 35 years to purchase, install, implement, and upgrade educational technology. The recession of 2008 forced school districts across the country to make budget cuts resulting in a significant impact on technology investment as well as leadership and support positions. Districts were

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forced to delay purchases, reduce support staff size, and, in some cases, eliminate technology leadership positions. While these decisions were necessary to meet the near-term budget requirements, the elimination of technology leadership and support positions, as well as the increasing difficulty in making regular investment in equipment replacement and upgrades, has made effective planning and support more difficult in the long term.

The recovery following the recession has been uneven across the country and there have been continued cutbacks and ongoing budgetary challenges for many school districts. Combined with the ever-accelerating complexity of technology, these conditions have placed increasing demands on technology coordinators. Even so, only a limited number of teacher training or educational leadership programs around the country focus specifically on preparing candidates to become school or district technology leaders. Currently, only a few states—examples exist in Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Illinois, New York, and North Carolina—have established clear licensing requirements for the training of technology coordinators and certification programs for those who aspire to work in this position. Some of these states are only now in the process of training and certifying technology coordinators who plan to work at the district level. Most other states have yet to develop and implement programs to certify those who aspire to serve in this increasingly important district leadership position.

ISTE has been instrumental in helping to establish standards at the national level for students, teachers, school administrators, and technology coaches. The ISTE Standards for Administrators were originally released in 2002 and were updated and refreshed in 2009, while the standards for technology coaches were released in 2011. These standards are important guides for those who aspire to work as technology leaders and facilitators both at the school and at the district level. ISTE has made a commitment to regularly refresh these standards. The most recent update to the student standards were released in 2016, and the work to update the teacher standards is currently taking place, with the updated teacher standards set for release in 2017. More information about the standards documents for various audiences along with

useful tools and resources can be found in the Standards section of the ISTE website (iste.org/standards).

This handbook was developed specifically to address the lack of resources to inform and guide the work of technology leaders and to assist those interested in serving as a school or district technology coordinator. With the help of this handbook, all stakeholders can more clearly understand the differing roles, requirements, and unique demands of the technology coordinator position. Specifically, technology coordinators can use this handbook to be better prepared and have a more complete understanding of their position. In doing so, they can be more effective learners and leaders, capable of assisting students, teachers, staff, and administration in the use of these powerful devices and resources. Education leaders can also use this handbook to effect the institutional changes needed in order to make full use of the technology now available to K–12 schools.

Wearing Many Hats

To provide the necessary leadership in technology for a school or district, a technology coordinator will need to be comfortable wearing many hats. First and foremost, a technology coordinator must be able to establish and articulate a vision for the use of technology in a school or district and to develop a plan for successfully carrying out that vision. This vision must encompass (1) development and implementation of appropriate technology policies; (2) acquisition, monitoring, and maintenance of technology; (3) planning and conducting an effective professional development program; and (4) providing technical support for all end users.

The technology coordinator will need to employ a variety of skills to implement this vision. These skills include the ability to communicate effectively with various constituent groups, the ability to work with diverse groups and interests to effectively solve different types of problems, and the ability to deal with changing technical issues related to devices and other hardware.

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