

# Introduction

*It is a terrible thing to see and have no vision.*

– HELEN KELLER

(attributed by D. Kenny; CEO, National Institute for the Blind of Ireland; 2006)

The quotation above encapsulates the dilemma educators face today when it comes to the role of technology in schools. The dilemma is that since the 1980s, we’ve seen rapid advances in technology development that have significantly impacted nearly every facet of Australian life *except* life in the classroom. Desktop computers appeared in K–12 classrooms approximately 25 years ago, and early adopters of instructional technology were certain that computers would redefine education practice in Australia. We now know that this belief was optimistic. Why? The necessary vision has been missing.

Try to imagine everyday life outside of school without a laptop, mobile phone, personal digital assistant, digital camera, DVD player, MP3 player, or any one of a number of other technologies that were rare or nonexistent 25 years ago. Imagine not being able to access the Internet using a high-speed connection. Now think about your classroom. How many of these technologies are readily available to you and your students? If your situation is like that of many educators, you can relate to the student who said, “When I get to school, I feel like I have to power down before I go inside.”

A primary reason for this situation is the fact that technology integration requires a coherent vision for systemic reform, a vision that must be supported by the entire educational community. In fact, systemic reform is so critical that the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has identified 10 elements, or “Essential Conditions”, that must be in place, stating that in the absence of these Essential Conditions teachers cannot be expected to incorporate technology use as an integral part of the teaching and learning process. These Essential Conditions are shown in table 0.1.

Unfortunately, the reality is that many teachers and administrators don’t have the necessary background in either system change or technology integration to implement and sustain reform. The purpose of the National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers (NETS•T) is to provide guidelines to assist in addressing the Essential Conditions as you work to implement effective use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning.

## Maintaining Technology Literacy through Ongoing Professional Development

### Performance Indicator I.B.

Demonstrate continual growth in technology knowledge and skills to stay abreast of current and emerging technologies.

Effective technology integrators never stop learning about new, promising technologies. However, rapid changes in current and emerging technologies keep even the most enthusiastic users on their toes. Many education organisations offer free or low-cost professional development designed to assist your continual growth in technology knowledge and skills. Convenience and customisation to local needs are just two reasons it's worth checking to see what local training is available. An added bonus is the fact that those of you who attend these events may be able to earn continuing education credits.

Participation in classes, seminars and workshops is one way to stay abreast of current and emerging technologies; however, you can use additional, less labour-intensive strategies to keep up-to-date in this rapidly changing field. For example, you can learn a great deal by

- becoming a member of a professional organisation,
- reading print and online professional journals,
- subscribing to online news resources,
- participating in an online community, and
- posting to and reading education technology blogs.

One professional organisation to consider joining is ISTE. Its mission is to advance the effective use of technology in education by providing leadership and services to its members. This organisation offers an annual international conference, professional development opportunities, and an extensive list of publications that includes both books and journals. Members may join Special Interest Groups (SIGs) that target specific areas of interest. In addition, there's a network of affiliate organisations across Australia, many of which offer regional conferences and other member benefits. Joining this kind of group provides you with up-to-date information and an international professional network.

Professional magazines and journals are also good resources for technology news. ISTE publishes *Journal of Research on Technology in Education* and *Learning & Leading with Technology*. Other well-known publications include *Technology & Learning*, *T.H.E. Journal*, and *Edutopia*. Each of these magazines also offers at least some, if not all, of its print content in an online format. See the resources section at the end of this chapter for links to these publications.

Want to stay on top of things, but don't have a lot of time? Identify a few online resources to skim regularly for updates on emerging technologies. Two very helpful online news briefs are eSchool News' eSN This Week ([www.eschoolnews.com](http://www.eschoolnews.com)) and SmartBrief ([www.smartbrief.com](http://www.smartbrief.com)).

smartbrief.com/ascd/), published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). These free publications are emailed to readers in a digest format on a weekly or daily basis. Read the headlines and descriptors to get a general idea of the topic and click on the links provided to read more in-depth information.

You can also subscribe to a free aggregator such as Bloglines ([www.bloglines.com](http://www.bloglines.com)). Aggregators allow subscribers to search for sites of interest and add them to a list. Then, when a selected site is updated, the aggregator notifies the subscriber. This makes it easy to track several news sources without having to check individual sites on a regular basis. In addition to education-related materials, you can learn a lot about trends in technology by reading the business section of any newspaper, or technology-related magazines such as *Wired* (<http://wired.com>). Again, much of this information is available online and can be subscribed to using an aggregator.

Use the questions in the following table to consider steps you might take to demonstrate continual growth in technology knowledge and skills to stay abreast of current and emerging technologies.

**TABLE 2.5 ■ Performance Indicator II.C.**

Identify and locate technology resources and evaluate them for accuracy and suitability.

**Directions:** Give a Yes or No answer to questions 1 and 2. Use the short-answer areas to elaborate on your answers.

1. Does the school have policies for software, hardware and online resource reviews?	Yes	No
If your answer is Yes, describe your school's policies for software, hardware and online resource reviews:		
Do these policies help or hinder teachers? Explain:		
2. Does the school provide forms for evaluating software, hardware and online resources?	Yes	No
If your answer is Yes, describe how these forms are used:		
What kind of support do teachers need to effectively evaluate new technology resources? Explain:		

## Action Plan

Now that you’ve read about each performance indicator for Standard II and have had the opportunity to think about your level of implementation for each indicator, it’s time to develop an action plan to improve or expand your professional practice in this area.

First, review your responses to the statements and questions in each performance indicator table. It’s not possible to master every performance indicator at once, so choose one at a time. Build your plan by using the steps you identified you might take for the chosen performance indicator and complete your action plan by using the table below. Performance Indicator II.A. has been used as a sample.

**TABLE 2.8 ■ Teachers plan and design effective learning environments and experiences supported by technology**

Performance Indicator	Next Steps	I need to work on this step with the following people...	I will know this step has been achieved when...	Timeline
<i>II.A. Design developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that apply technology-enhanced instructional strategies to support the diverse needs of learners.</i>	<i>Use table 2.2 in this chapter to modify an existing instructional unit to include adaptation-stage technology use.</i>	<i>School technology instructional specialist, site library/media specialist, other teachers at my year level.</i>	<i>The modified instructional unit is ready for use with students.</i>	<i>2 weeks</i>
	1.			
	2.			
	3.			