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DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT MATTERS

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Control vs Creativity

K-12 schools, colleges and universities on a global stature are investing dollars and human resources to capture the creativity of their students and the limitless access to digital information that comes with digital engagement. As schools invest in digital engagement and in technology infrastructures, new issues have emerged.

One of those issues centers around restrictions that institutions place on access to digital content. There certainly needs to be structure and control in place to filter content, manage devices, and monitor appropriate use. When schools deploy digital devices (i.e. iPads), controlling and restricting those devices gains momentum, especially after an inappropriate use incident occurs.

I believe there is a cautionary note that should come to the forefront when we overly control digital engagement. Schools need to balance restricting access with restricting our students' creativity, imagination and innovative spirit. Let's focus on education and best practices when using digital devices and allow creativity to flourish.

Expanded Opportunities in Elementary Schools

During this past year, most of our investment in digital engagement has been focused on our middle and high school students. The greatest part of that investment has been in our iPad deployment for students in grades 7-9. That investment was strategically placed in grades 7-9 to help engage students in digital environments in which they thrive natively and to improve academic achievement in our middle school. We learned plenty about deploying individual devices and even more about the need to use a learning management system for delivering digital material. We also learned about the need to utilize a device management system to manage individual devices and accounts on our network. As a result, we have positioned our schools to be on track for greater use of digital material and curriculum resources for next year.

In addition to adding 10th grade to our iPad deployment, our administrative team has recommended moving more opportunities for digital engagement into our elementary schools. Next year we will be placing digital interactive Smart Tables in all of our kindergarten classes. Our principals and a number of teachers have also requested creating iPad stations in some of our elementary classrooms.

All of these changes requires a shift in how we use our financial and human resources. Adopting digital learning environment requires repurposing funding streams that were once used for traditional classroom material. This means that teachers and principals need to develop a vision for learning which prepares students for the future. A future which requires students to develop skills in: critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity. This is an exciting time in education and I am proud to be part of creating enhanced learning environments for our students.

For more information on Smart Tables use the following link <http://www.tierneybrothers.com/products/29566/Table442icollaborativelearningcenter.aspx> and view the "video" link.

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