High Quality Professional Development

a presentation by John Hendron
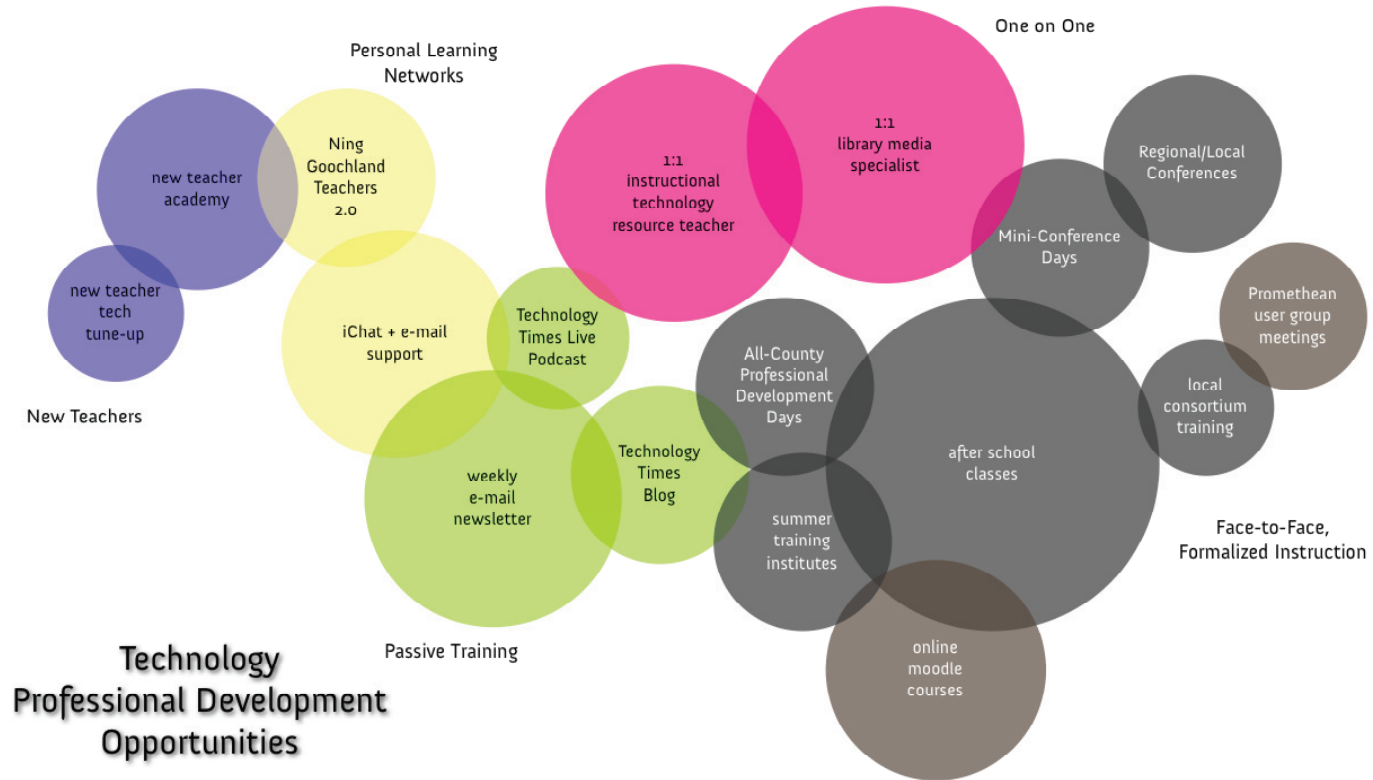
WHAT MAKES IT GREAT?

How do you measure the quality of your training for teachers and staff in technology, or anything else? **I've always felt a quality learning experience for educators targets their needs, their schedules, the constraints of access and also affordability.** I first shared many of the ideas you will learn about in a session at the 2008 National Educational Computing Conference (NECC) in San Antonio. There I heard from many trainers and staff developers from districts our size, and larger. Our answer for meeting the needs of educators today with new, emerging tools can be summarized in these four areas:

- Multiple opportunities,

- Multiple modes of engagement,

- Tailored goals, and

- Vision looking ahead.

Goochland County Public Schools is a small, rural school division in Virginia where five schools offer 220 teachers and 2500 students an environment to learn with technology. Each teacher is provided with a take-home laptop and in the schools, we use desktop and laptop computers to offer a 2:1 student to computer ratio. **This presentation details what we do in Goochland to provide high quality professional development with instructional technology through a variety of means.**

TYPES OF OPPORTUNITIES

We offer opportunities in five areas: specialized training for new teachers, personal learning networks, passive training, one-on-one, and face-to-face, formalized instruction.

Personal Learning Networks

One on One

new teacher academy

Ning Goochland Teachers 2.0

1:1 library media specialist

Regional/Local Conferences

1:1 instructional technology resource teacher

Mini-Conference Days

new teacher tech tune-up

iChat + e-mail support

Technology Times Live Podcast

Promethean user group meetings

New Teachers

All-County Professional Development Days

after school classes

local consortium training

weekly e-mail newsletter

Technology Times Blog

summer training institutes

Face-to-Face, Formalized Instruction

Technology Professional Development Opportunities

Passive Training

online moodle courses

10 TIPS FOR SUCCESS

1. **Provide access.** Ensure the experience can be implemented right away. Make sure the product is already available, the software is loaded, and everyone has access to what they need to be successful from the time of training, forward.

2. **Provide a context, and a theme.** Let folks know why the training is taking place and how it will serve their articulated or unperceived needs. Fit the details into the context of a big picture.

3. **Provide opportunities for anytime, anywhere.** Not everyone thrives in a classroom environment. We provide "passive" opportunities in the way of podcasts and newsletters, but we also offer online classes that can provide needed help "just in time."

4. **Model innovation.** Trying to change pedagogy with new technology is... tough! Model the best ways of learning and connecting to learners through your own professional development efforts.

5. **Foster collaboration.** One instructor won't have all the answers. Encourage collaboration in the types of activities you design.

6. **Maintain a conversation.** Learning is a continuous process. Provide the avenue for conversation and continuation of learning beyond the formalized opportunity. Online spaces can make this really easy and effective.

7. **Make teachers accountable.** Is what teachers are learning being used? Include their administrators in the grand plan of your professional development efforts.

8. **Provide incentives.** Beyond establishing a culture in the school where teachers want to grow and improve, consider incentives that encourage the use of new tools and techniques. These might include payment, access to new tools, or recognition.

9. **Use a Gestalt approach, addressing technology as a system.** Don't teach individual software applications or individual pieces of hardware. Show how the bigger-picture traits of what you're doing with technology relate to the improvement of instruction. The same goes for the computer itself: don't teach individual processes but instead teach the system. In both cases the details shouldn't matter. We're after empowering our teachers to use technology, not "do" technology.

10. **Look at the results.** Evalute your efforts, evaluate your goals and outcomes. Be willing to change. Be willing to adjust and solicit feedback. Remember that many professional development efforts don't always fit neatly into "1 year" cycles. Consistency can pay-off 2 or 3 years after you have implemented your initial training.
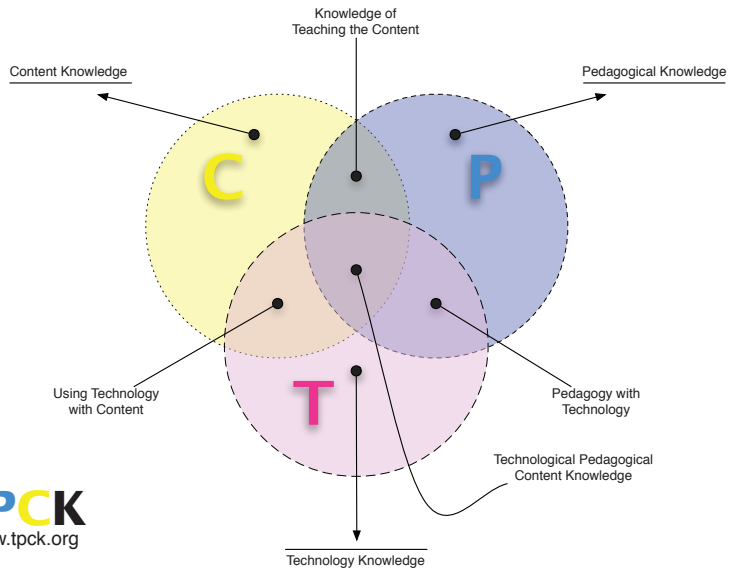
NEW TEACHER TRAINING

We spend a considerable amount of time training our new hires each August. Why? The prevailing thought is that teachers come to us today pretty well-versed in how to use a computer and the Internet. Yet, we find that many do not have the experience of using the latest Web 2.0 technologies as instructors. In other words, they can use a word processor and e-mail just fine. But many haven't had to use the technologies we provide, from blogs and wikis, to podcasting and Promethean boards, in the instructional setting.

If you are familiar with the TPACK model, incoming teachers lack the synergy between content, pedagogy, and technology knowledge. By providing 12+ hours of professional development at the start of their time with us, we aim to approach technology as a system and to build technology knowledge. With basics out of the way, future development opportunities can focus alone on combining the three areas of content knowledge into practice.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- http://etpd.wm.edu/
- http://fcit.usf.edu/matrix/
- http://www.iste.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Publications/LL/L_L.htm
- http://www.glnd.k12.va.us/
- http://www.glnd.k12.va.us/technology/times.php

Knowledge of
Teaching the Content

Content Knowledge

Pedagogical Knowledge

C

P

Using Technology
with Content

T

Pedagogy with
Technology

Technological Pedagogical
Content Knowledge

TPCK
www.tpck.org

Technology Knowledge

The TPACK model is an emerging way to think about professional development efforts.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Hendron has been a presenter at the TechFest/EdTech conference since 2000, held each year at Randolph Macon College in Ashland, Virginia. John serves on the **Greater Richmond Area Educational Technology Council** (GRAETC). He currently is employed as supervisor of instructional technology for **Goochland County Public Schools** (Virginia). Among his accomplishments in Goochland, John implemented the *Teacher Blogging Initiative* in 2005 and the *G21 Projects* in 2008.

John was recognized in 2006 by the **Virginia Department of Education** as Virginia's state technology leader at their **Educational Technology Leadership Conference**. He is a member and director for the **Virginia Society for Technology in Education** (VSTE).

John writes regularly for four weblogs, including *Hendron's Digest*, a blog dedicated to education and technology, available online for free at *http://www.johnhendron.net/digest/*.