

In an effort to promote and support the integration of technology in West Virginia schools, the West Virginia Department of Education launched the Learning Educational Administration from a Distance (LEAD) Project. Funded by a Gates Grant, and in conjunction with state officials, this project was created to train school administrators in technology integration and leadership development. The premise behind this program was to first educate superintendents and principals so they would have the foundation from which to lead technology integration efforts in their district or school. Administrators participating in the program receive a laptop computer and are required to attend two days of leadership training and complete two online courses through Classroom Connect's Connected University.



Ronald Blankenship
Superintendent of Calhoun County
Schools in West Virginia

Success Story

WEST VIRGINIA

Creating a Technology Plan that Works

Ronald Blankenship, superintendent of Calhoun County Schools in West Virginia for over 25 years, completed two, three-week courses through Connected University to meet the online learning requirements of Project LEAD. Each course specifically aligns with administrators' technology and leadership needs and helps them develop real-world projects they can implement right away. The first course Ronald completed, *Social, Legal and Ethical Issues with Technology*, gave him a better understanding of how he could best improve his district's Acceptable Use Policy for the Internet. The course provided him with samples from other school districts and then required him to review and update his own district's policy, something he was eager to accomplish.

"As a result of the CU class, I did a total rewrite of the policy which the Board of Education subsequently approved."

The second course Ronald completed reviewed successful strategies for developing and implementing a district technology plan. Guided by the leadership of this course, Superintendent Blankenship also uncovered ways to involve teachers and the community in developing an effective planning process. He deemed this course "extremely valuable when revising our county technology plan," and continued to say, "Consequently, we developed an online survey for teachers concerning their utilization of technology."

Ronald admits that his view of online learning has completely changed. He regards this experience as just the beginning and predicts he will pursue more technology endeavors in the future. He realizes the potential of teaching and learning through this medium and discloses that he is considering the possibilities of increasing online learning opportunities for

Success Story

"I have a much different opinion about online courses as a result of my Connected University experience! The quality was outstanding, and I learned more than I ever anticipated." - Ronald Blankenship

teachers and students in the Calhoun County School District. Superintendent Blankenship has all of the qualifications of an effective technology leader, and now he can support and encourage his teachers to follow suit.

Learning to Lead by Example

In Principal Nancy Pfister's case, she admits: "I was just trying to keep up with the students!" As principal of Chamberlain Elementary for 25 years, technology was not part of Nancy's formal education. This lack of technology training was beginning to burden her. In fact, she confesses: "When I needed help figuring out PowerPoint, Excel, or a simple word processing problem, I would solicit help from my students. I was following, not leading." She finally realized that as Principal of Chamberlain Elementary, she needed to catch up and encourage her faculty to do the same.

The professional development resources offered to Nancy through Project LEAD were just what she needed to get started. "It was the perfect opportunity for me to expand the few [technology] skills that I possessed." The Connected University courses helped her achieve technology proficiency and introduced her to a supportive online community of educators.

Through these connections, Nancy partnered with Julie Hedge, Principal of Montrose Elementary School, and they joined forces to complete their Connected University course projects. After a great deal of brainstorming, collaborating, and planning, they created successful Acceptable Use Policies and technology plans that they have since implemented in their respective schools.

"The online interaction with fellow students throughout the courses was my favorite feature. I enjoyed communicating with my peers from various parts of the United States and sharing their ideas." - Nancy Pfister

With the support of administrators like Julie Hedge and courses like those offered by Connected University, Nancy Pfister has built up her knowledge of technology and is prepared to lead the way for Chamberlain Elementary School. Nancy says that teachers are already approaching her interested in learning more about Connected University.

Two Different Experiences, One Common Goal

When asked about the main objective of the state of West Virginia's LEAD Project, Nancy confirms: "Our state's goal is for instructors and administrators to integrate technology across the curriculum." In order to accomplish this hefty task, Superintendent Blankenship and Principal Pfister realize that there's a lot of groundwork to be set. Fortunately for them and the other administrators in West Virginia who are participating in Project LEAD, they are well on their way to accomplishing their goal and bringing the promise of technology integration into every classroom across the state.

**For more information, contact
Classroom Connect (800) 638-1639**

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