



## Professional Development Tips

Our goal is to empower schools with the necessary tools and skills to be proficient with technology for teaching and learning. Futurekids' Ten Tips for Professional Development will help give a head start on an effective professional development plan:

### **1. Start with Assessment**

To be successful when starting a technology professional development program for teachers, it is important to implement a private, customized on-line, detailed and standard-based authentic assessment of each teacher's current technology skill set. The fact is, technology learning is a journey, and everyone is on different points of the path. Having this assessment prior to prescribing a professional development plan is a huge advantage and assures that existing skill sets aren't overlooked. Everyone learns and integrates technology differently. A successful professional development program respects that and customizes additional content and learning based on where a person is right now.

### **2. Make Professional Development Programs in Technology Education-based on Technology tool/platforms**

A strong technology professional development program should be customized for the education market should be focused on the desired academic instruction. Rather than teaching a wide variety of skills specific to certain programs such as Microsoft Word®, content should be applicable across a variety of platforms and uses. Additionally, professional development programs for educators should focus on actual classrooms results so that the investment in technology benefits both the individual teacher and their students.

### **3. Build Champions and Mentors**

Having a technology and professional development mentor can help immensely when the program gets stalled or put on the back burner. As with everything, it's imperative to have a "champion" who can inspire, encourage and assist. It is also important to have someone who can offer this support in a completely non-judgmental way.

### **4. Build Communities of Interest**

Professional development programs are most successful when there are "communities of interest" where teachers can exchange information, converse and inspire each other. This can be accomplished through blogs, wiki's, podcasts and the like. After all, we are learning 21st Century technology skills. These different elements, which may have seemed tertiary to many of us just a few years ago, are definitely mainstream today-especially to our younger students.

### **5. Use Dynamic, Up-to-date Content**

The attributes of any relevant professional development program should contain the latest, most dynamic content. It is no longer okay to just pull a PD program for technology off the shelf and expect it to have that dynamic content. An appropriate program will have the desired outcome over time with PD content that is ever changing, updated and migrated to the new platforms. This new instructional style is imperative to the successful implementation of a professional development program. Think about how much technology has changed in the past five years. The web, new research and expanded content are changing every day. For example, how many planets are there this year vs. last year?

**[continued]**

#### **6. Leverage Other Online Collaborative Locations**

We all know our own teachers and schools really well. But there's a much broader educational environment now available to us with the web, the sharing and inclusion of communities in lesson plans, new ideas, and best practice techniques that are readily available. Any new technology professional development program should contain active and dynamic links to sites outside of the school district for sharing and optimizing learning concepts.

#### **7. Align Your Professional Development Program With Standards**

School, district, and state standards should all be integrated into your customized professional development program for technology. If not, you run the risk of not having improved test scores—one of the most important challenges for a school in the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) environment.

#### **8. Integrate ISTE Standards**

There's another world of standards beyond your school district or state. It's the international set of standards developed in cooperation with leading educators, technology companies and leaders. Your professional development program should include not only local standards, but also integrate the best techniques and standards from other organizations, a who's who of education,

#### **9. Employ A Constructivist Approach to Build Critical Thinking Skills**

Your technology professional development program should use a constructivist approach, rather than passive memorization and passive learning. After all, the investment in P.D. will be applied directly in the classroom and will affect not only your knowledge of technology, but more important, how technology can integrate into your core curriculum and the critical thinking skills of your students.

#### **10. Ideal Professional Development will include all relevant new technology peripherals and software applications integrated around the academic goals**

What's 21st Century Professional Development without the technology? Call Futurekids today to get started on your Professional Development plan or visit <http://21centuryconnections.com> website for updates on the latest research tools, blogs and tips.

PD Tips also found at: <http://21centuryconnections.com>