Registration is NOW OPEN

Empowering you to design your future.

Don’t miss content that’s been crowdsourced by tech leaders, solutions to serve your entire independent school community, and ample opportunity to network with professionals who can help make your life easier. ATLIS is your professional home.

We look forward to seeing you in Chicago!

Visit theATLIS.org for more information and to register.
CONTENTS

5 THE (R)EVOLUTION OF TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP WITHIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS
Vinnie Vrotny

8 BUILDING KEY RELATIONSHIPS
Barry Kallmeyer and Fran Bisselle, Ed.D.

12 DON’T GET LOST IN TRANSLATION: SUCCESSFUL AND STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGY PLANNING
Jamie Feild Baker and Gabriel Lucas

17 FACILITATIVE COACHING TO INCREASE TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION
Mike Speer

20 RETHINKING THE HUMAN FACTOR OF LEADERSHIP
Shelley Roy

25 BUILDING PROGRAM SUCCESS THROUGH PARENT PARTNERSHIPS
Eileen Ford and Daniel C. McGee

29 LEADING CHANGE: LIBRARY SERVICES + TECHNOLOGY TEAM = AWESOME
Erikka Adams and Sarah Rolle

34 LEADING TECHIES: AN EVOLVING AND LIVING CASE STUDY
Stacia McFadden

In Every Issue:

4 EDITOR’S NOTE

37 BOOK REVIEWS
A LEADERSHIP OMNIBUS
Lisa Lamont

40 END NOTES
ON THE TOPIC OF LEADERSHIP
Christina Lewellen, CAE

COVER & ILLUSTRATIONS by Don Orth
Don Orth works on the Education team at Apple and started drawing on iPad after they launched the Everyone Can Create program in 2018. He was surprised to find joy in drawing — as his creative outlet had always been writing. Now drawing is a daily practice for him, and he shares his work with colleges, friends, and family to make them laugh, to convey insights, or to celebrate their accomplishments. Before Don joined Apple, he worked in independent schools in California, in Massachusetts, and in Europe. The most important professional development he had as a tech director was the Bay Area school technology group, some of whom were the founders of ATLIS.
FROM THE EDITORS

The Association of Technology Leaders in Independent Schools (ATLIS) was founded five years ago in 2014. Since then ATLIS has grown to over 170 member schools serving individuals throughout the United States, Canada, and elsewhere.

Access Points developed out of a vision that came from the leaders of ATLIS, who saw the need for a journal dedicated to advancing the field of technology leadership in independent schools. The rapid growth of the ATLIS community highlights the need for an outlet where authors can thoughtfully explore questions of technology leadership that will benefit all our member schools. In the three issues published since 2017, this journal has made impressive progress in terms of depth and breadth of published materials, thanks to all the technology leaders in the field who have graciously contributed articles and to the many thought leaders who have fueled our discussions of the important topics included in the journal’s pages.

This third issue of Access Points focuses on the theme of Leadership Literacies for technologists in independent schools. As we navigate the constantly evolving field of technology in education, it is difficult to not get pulled into the “weeds” of daily management. As technology leaders, we must keep the three pillars of strategy, innovation, and leadership at the forefront. With change as a constant in our daily roles, our success is measured by how we keep pace with new technologies, while continually innovating to ensure our communities are digitally safe and that technology is used to support learning.

With this in mind, we worked to develop this issue of Access Points to support our roles as technology leaders. This issue contains articles ranging from strategic planning to relationship building, including our first Head of School contributor, as we as a community help to bring into focus the blurriness that often defines our positions at independent schools.

As you read through each article, we invite you to reflect on your own practices. Please look for opportunities to share articles with your administration, teachers, and staff who make these topics relevant for your school. We hope you enjoy this issue of Access Points.

Best Regards,

Jeff Morrison, Ph.D., and Renee Ramig, Ph.D. | Access Points Editors

Access Points is an open forum for exchanging information, envisioning the future of education, and debating best practices about how technology leaders can best serve independent schools and their students. Access Points is published yearly by the Association for Technology Leaders in Independent Schools © 2019 by ATLIS.

ATLIS Mission: ATLIS believes technology leaders make the best decisions when they are reflective, informed, and connected. ATLIS empowers its members to develop strategies, build relationships, and share best practices in technology and innovation for independent schools.

Submission of manuscripts: We welcome well-written articles on topics relevant to our readers. Manuscripts may be submitted digitally to sdavis@theatlis.org.
THE (R)EVOLUTION OF TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP WITHIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

VINNIE VROTNY | The Kinkaid School, Houston, Texas

Back when I was first drawn to my career in educational technology, in the late 1980s, my thinking and passions were shaped by many thinkers who were pioneers in describing the shift from the industrial to the knowledge-based world. In particular, Seymour Papert’s *Mindstorms*, Marvin Minsky’s *Society of the Mind*, Lee Sproull’s *Connections: New Ways of Working in the Networked World*, and the writings and visions of Alan Kay fueled and forged my thoughts and actions as I considered how technology should amplify and transform learning to prepare our students – and us all – for these upcoming shifts in society.

HOW WE GOT TO TODAY

As I reflect back on my career, inspired by the work of Tim Fish and the NAIS Innovation Kitchen, I have identified four distinct epochs, each eight years long, which have defined the work, efforts, and focus areas of the technology leader within an independent school.

During the first two epochs, a major role of a technology leader was to evangelize the introduction of personal computers and then networks into both teaching and learning, along with the operational aspects of the school via electronic databases for record keeping and retrieval. The next epoch focused on institutionalizing these new processes and procedures.

It was during the third epoch that the knowledge-based environment was cemented with the shift to cloud-based, collaborative tools that facilitated connections in exciting new ways. This period was also an era when many analog operational systems were beginning to be replaced by digitally connected systems, further enculturating and making the work of the school’s technology leader more crucial to fulfilling the mission of the school.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SENIOR TECHNOLOGY LEADER?

The technology leader serves in one of those unique positions within a school that now reaches into and touches every department, division, and constituent group. Today, whether a school is building a new parking garage or installing a new network-connected kiln in an art room, there is a 99% chance that there is some technology-based component that has to be dealt with and managed. Today, due to the nature of the position and our emphasis on examining systems and building connections outside of the school, the technology leader is often one of the most outward and forward-looking professionals within the school.

**Eras of Technology Focus in Independent Schools**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of PCs into Schools</td>
<td>Pull the Wire, Connect to the Internet</td>
<td>Command and Control</td>
<td>It’s Not About the Stuff, Shiny New Objects</td>
<td>Privacy, AI, Machine Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add, Explore, Evangelize</td>
<td>Buy, Train, Install</td>
<td>Integrate, Design, Teach</td>
<td>Lead, Collaborate, Unleash</td>
<td>Agency, Entrepreneurism, Algorithms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Senior technology leaders are now asked to live within multiple dimensions. They are asked to balance between day-to-day operations and strategic planning – from both the lens of operations and the academic and educational mission of the school. Senior technology leaders need to be able to nimbly shift from domain to domain, depending on the project or discussion at hand.

While it may be optimal for senior technology leaders to sit on the school’s top-level administrative team, it is more important that those leaders within a school cultivate more relationships and build bridges to connect the various areas within the school in order to best leverage technology that is aligned with the school’s core mission, purpose, and community. Their role is not always about forwarding technology’s agenda for its own sake, but rather for providing the knowledge and expertise to forward the school’s agenda, mission, and vision. Senior technology leaders should also bring awareness to new issues and concerns, such as cybersecurity and data privacy, that may be on the horizon, so that other school leaders can proactively prepare to address these future challenges. The Director of Technology (DoT) / Chief Technology Officer (CTO) / Chief Information Officer (CIO) needs to be placed within the organizational structure to maximize communication and decision-making processes within the culture of each individual school.

The placement of the senior technology leader will be different for each school. Placement on the organizational chart, lines of formal and informal communication, and assignment of decision-making responsibilities will vary depending on the skills and responsibilities of the Head of School, the skills of other school leaders, the size of the school, and the size of the technology department. This will further be defined by the operational responsibilities of the technology department within the school, the strategic imperatives of the school, and drivers of the school’s innovative practices within each school’s community and culture.

**PREPARING FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF SENIOR TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP**

During a pre-conference bootcamp at the 2017 ATLIS Annual Conference, Tim Fish, Chief Innovation Officer at NAIS, asked, “What will drive the next epoch of technology integration within schools?” I struggled with my response. Within the academic realm, I expect to focus on building student agency and entrepreneurism. Due to the systems and tools at our disposal, we will be able to achieve the promises first envisioned 40-50 years ago, the promises that have been the impetus for my life’s work. In the societal and operational realms, I believe we are leaving the knowledge-based world and entering into an algorithmically based one. I expect that over the next 10-20 years, we will experience exponential, compared to linear, amplification and transformation in our processes and practices as we implement new “smart” tools and systems into our organizations.

Additionally, it should be noted that many newly hired technology leaders should and may end up having different reporting structures from their predecessors – as the role and responsibilities of the director need to shift away from the pioneer and evangelist responsible to justify the increased use of networks and someone who guides the transition from paper to digital forms of record keeping to someone who introduces the incorporation of technology in learning to create rich, meaningful, and transformative environments. We are experiencing the beginning of the turnover where newly hired technology leaders are not inheriting the legacy of complex systems and are having to rethink and recreate the practices, policies, and procedures that are focused on the capabilities today and in the future, rather than what was employed in the past. These include the shifts to mobile systems, which, for the most part, provide unlimited and ubiquitous ability to be always connected.

Technology leaders moving forward will need to help their schools manage increasingly complex topics such as the safety, security, and privacy of people and data within their communities; risk management, the increased use of data analytics, and the management of automated systems; artificial intelligence; and machine learning within their
organizations. All this comes into play even before we layer in the primary mission and purpose of our schools, which is to educate our students so that they can succeed and thrive in this increasingly complex and digital world.

Because most schools have limited resources (even the upper 1% of schools), they need to be flexible and responsive in order to leverage an individual technology leader’s unique skills, insights, and connections within the context of the leadership team. Each of our schools’ hierarchies, communications, and assignment of decision-making responsibilities will need to be dynamic and adaptable to the changes and the transition of leadership within due to departures and new hire, not to mention outside forces that are reshaping what it means to be a school.

WHO DRIVES INNOVATION WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION?
Underlying this discussion remains the unspoken question of who is responsible for leading innovation within each organization, and where is this position located? Is this a major role of the technology leader? Or is this the purview of the Head of School or some other senior leader within the organization?

The person who drives the innovation will also define the organizational hierarchy, establishing the lines of communication and allocation of responsibilities and resources within your organization. If this falls under the purview of one of the senior technology leaders, this will drastically change the shape of the organization, and adjustments should be made to the organization’s structures as well.

DO OPERATIONAL TECHNOLOGY AND ACADEMIC TECHNOLOGY NEED SEPARATE LEADERS OR ONE INDIVIDUAL LEADER?
For some schools, it may be advantageous to divide the leadership between operational technology management and academic technology leadership. In this model, one leader would be responsible for the operational aspects of technology — risk, electronic records, and compliance management. A second leader would oversee the innovative and academic transformations. Within other schools, this additional technology leader often addresses both innovation and academic technology. Especially moving forward in schools where access to technology and the ability to connect to our networks is now ubiquitous, these aspects of technology leadership may indeed fall to individuals without the word technology in their title. This evolution should bring us to a point where identifying learning and the application of technology within learning are no longer considered separately.

NOTES
This summary was shaped by conversations held on the Independent School Educator (ISED) listserv, which is hosted by ATLIS. You can find more information about the listserv by going to https://www.theatlis.org/listserv, where you can find the following threads where this discussion has been discussed: “Director of Technology - Midland, TX” and “Who Should the Director of IT/CIO Report to? (Was Director of Technology - Midland TX)”

RESOURCE

VINNIE VROTNY has been working to leverage technology in meaningful and authentic ways in schools and for learners for over 30 years. He is currently beginning his sixth year serving as the Director of Technology at The Kinkaid School in Houston, Texas. He has also served in similar positions at the North Shore Country Day School (IL) and Quest Academy (IL). He has been honored as an NAIS Teacher of the Future and with the ATLIS Pillar Award. Vinnie will be a conversation leader for the ATLIS Reads Book Seminar on leadership literacies for 2019-2020.
This goes for the types of lessons that are taught in our classrooms and the types of experiences our students immerse themselves in beyond our halls. It also applies to the way we think about and implement technology, not only in terms of the education we offer, but also in the way we run our organization. HB is an entrepreneurial environment, one where students, faculty, and administrators are encouraged to have big ideas and run with them. It’s an invigorating and liberating model—one that keeps our jobs interesting, engaging, and fun.

But as you might imagine, sometimes visions don’t exactly align.

As school leaders, we want to empower our students and our colleagues to experiment with new technologies as they expand their perspectives and develop their facility with platforms and applications that can enhance education and improve workflows. While we encourage people to dabble, though, as the technology director and head of school, the two of us have to be on the same page when it comes to our overall philosophy, expectations, and pedagogical and organizational methods.

Recently, we had an opportunity to reflect on how we have refined our collaborative approach to technology at HB. We were privileged to offer a joint presentation at the 2019 ATLIS Annual Conference in Dallas, Texas — a presentation that shared its title with this piece. We structured our spring talk as an informal back-and-forth discussion, and we were invited to do the same in writing here. Our goal in sharing our story is to help other independent school leaders learn from our experience in building a relationship that is key to the institution’s overall success.

First, a bit of context: Barry Kallmeyer is the Chief Information Officer at Hathaway Brown. His HB tenure has spanned 22 years, most of which was spent working with a Head of School who was a strong proponent of technology but who was not himself an avid user. In 2016, Fran Bisselle was named HB’s 14th Head of School, coming from Maple Street School in Manchester Center, Vermont, where technology was a vital component in her school leadership repertoire. She brought with her a desire to reimagine HB’s learning management and organizational systems, not only in terms of day-to-day operations, but also in terms of overarching philosophy.
Here we discuss the ways we learned to see each other’s perspectives and work together in order to achieve our shared goal of keeping our school at the leading edge of technology integration.

**FRAN BISSELLE:** When we started working closely together, it became clear that we did not have the same strategic outlook for technology at HB. I knew we needed to build an alignment with our vision. In Cleveland’s educational landscape, which is filled with extremely strong schools, we need to answer a lot of questions. *How does HB distinguish itself using technology? How will our technology plan enhance our teachers’ expertise and efficiency? How will it help prepare our girls to, in the words of our mission statement, rise boldly to the challenges of our times?* We need to constantly prove that an HB education is worth the cost of tuition, and being at the forefront of technology is key.

**BARRY KALLMEYER:** In one of our first conversations, you posed some questions around who had the very best computer science and technology program in the country. It was a difficult question to answer, as there are so many great schools doing amazing things. As our conversation dug deeper into this topic, it was clear that I needed to get on the road. It was not enough to talk over the phone or send an email to technology directors at other institutions. I needed to see these places in action.

**FB:** Building innovation is a challenging task. The first step is to define innovation. Within a school environment, innovation can have a variety of meanings and pathways to success.

**BK:** I agree. That’s why I appreciated the fact that you were so supportive of my travels as I built an itinerary to visit seven schools in four different cities across the United States in one week. I ended up traveling over 5,931 miles. The opportunity to visit other independent schools doing innovative work around technology was one of the most powerful professional development opportunities I have ever experienced. It is very easy to be complacent in doing things the way you have always done them. Many have heard me say that we used to sometimes have the urge to “put the no in technology,” and this was something that I pushed hard to change in my tenure as the technology director.

**FB:** You were one of the very first people I met when I came to Cleveland, before I was officially hired as Head of School. It said a lot about Hathaway Brown and its Board of Trustees that they chose the technology director to give me my first tour of the school during the search process. I knew that you were seen as a trusted and insightful leader, and your long tenure at HB proved your loyalty. But I also know that when you are part of an organization for a long time, it makes it difficult to see things in new ways. HB was doing great things with technology already. But other schools were doing great things too. We needed to know what those were.

**BK:** By visiting other schools and talking with other independent school leaders, I had the opportunity to see a variety of innovative programs. This trip was a primary impetus for our transition to a K-12 computer science program and a shift away from our traditional technology classes and instructional technology model.

**FB:** In those earliest days, not only did we have to make sure we were in alignment about what would the forward-looking focus of our work become, but we also needed to learn how...
to be close colleagues who were in steady, open, and honest communication with each other. It was apparent that our professional styles are different, so we had to find ways to work together effectively. Add into that mix the fact that both of our roles keep us incredibly busy, so we needed to come up with a structure that would work well for both of us.

**BK:** You and I discussed the importance of the technology director having a seat at the table, beyond just being a part of the core leadership group at our school. I appreciate that you are keenly aware of the important role that technology plays in every aspect of the school community, so now I’ve been able to be part of discussions at the division, department, and grade levels.

**FB:** There are a lot of things the school needs from its technology, and likewise there are a lot of things a head of school needs from a technology director. To that end, there were several specific things I asked of you. We needed to gauge how people thought about and used our systems, so you were charged with creating surveys to highlight areas where training or growth were needed. I also wanted to get in sync with you at the highest altitudes, so I asked you to draft a yearlong plan with goals for your team. Through this exercise, it became very clear the ways in which we needed to support each other. With that in mind, we developed a framework for keeping in close contact by way of regular short meetings and very short emails. As a result, our routine communications became efficient, to the point, and effective.

**BK:** Before you joined our community, it was rare for me to receive feedback on my work as the technology director. It was refreshing to start to hear suggestions for how I could become better in my role and as a school leader. Both positive and constructive feedback is something I now appreciate — and need. Building strong working relationships does not happen accidentally. I agree with you that people in our roles must have open and honest dialogue. Regular check-in meetings are so important to our work. Additionally, we have an open-door policy where either of us will call, email, text, or meet if the need arises.

**FB:** Yes! That’s the biggest takeaway, I think. The head of school and the technology director need to do whatever it takes to get in sync with one another. Our time is precious, so it’s best to optimize interactions and be as efficient as possible. Be proactive in the information you share. It’s better to give a heads up than not. Finally, professionals in these important roles should be honest with each other.

**BK:** The driving forces in any technology department have to be the mission of the school and its strategic plans. Every decision we make should be guided by those things. When you keep that in mind, it makes communication and professional relationships much easier to navigate.

**FB:** We’ve worked hard on our collegial relationship, and I trust you and believe in your vision. In the last 36 months together, we’ve been able to lead our school through cybersecurity trainings, educational innovations, and major systems upgrades. Early conversations and setting shared expectations paved the way for the honest dialogue that has enabled us to build momentum for HB that has been incredibly positive and ambitious.

Several factors led us to build a productive working relationship as leaders for our school. Immediately, we began by asking and answering questions that drove us to dig deeper. There was immediate support for “on the road” professional development to learn about some of the best technology programs out there. We devised ways to communicate frequently and with efficiency, and used our conversations to find alignment. It was important to give technology a “seat at the table,” to research and plan

**THROUGH ALL OF THIS SHARED WORK, WE BUILT TRUST THROUGH THE GIVE AND TAKE OF HONEST DIALOGUE AND ALWAYS USED THE SCHOOL MISSION AS A TOUCHSTONE.**
strategically. Through all of this shared work, we built trust through the give and take of honest dialogue and always used the school mission as a touchstone. Working together in this way, we feel we discovered the best way — for us at least — to make a difference in innovation and technology for the students we serve.

DR. MARY FRANCES “FRAN” BISSELLE is Hathaway Brown’s 14th Head of School, having assumed the role in 2016. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Boston College; an M.A. in Liberal Studies with a concentration in History from Wesleyan University; and a Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies with a concentration in Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment from the University of Vermont. A graduate of the prestigious Klingenstein Head Fellowship program at Columbia Teacher’s College, Fran also has served on several boards of trustees, including for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, The ERB, Vermont Independent School Association, and Cleveland Council of Independent Schools, and as a trustee for the National Association of Independent Schools. She currently holds memberships with The Headmasters Association, The Country Day School Headmasters’ Association and The Headmistresses Association of the East.

BARRY KALLMEYER is Hathaway Brown’s Chief Information Officer. Starting at HB in 1997, Barry began as the Middle School technology teacher and coordinator. He served as the Director of Academic Technology from 2011 to 2015 and transitioned to CIO starting in the 2015-2016 school year. Barry has been involved in many exciting changes at Hathaway Brown over the past 23 school years. As technology continues to make its way into the educational fabric of the school, he is even more excited about the opportunities it brings. Barry also works with students in supporting digital media projects as part of his role as the Director of the Worldwide Communications Center. He is passionate about media creation, and he works to provide students with necessary tools and skills to facilitate this program.
DON’T GET LOST IN TRANSLATION: SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGY PLANNING

JAMIE FEILD BAKER | Strategic Planning Consultant, Memphis, Tennessee
GABRIEL LUCAS | Ed Tech Recruiting, San Carlos, California

Everyone in a school uses technology. In this way technology wraps us all together. Yet, each role in a school – fundraiser, classroom teacher, administrator, student, or comptroller – has distinct technology needs. This reality makes technology leadership in schools complicated and challenging because it involves making connections, facilitating collaboration, and building consensus in diverse, often siloed, areas across the whole school community. Being in a position to help others realize their goals through knowledge, expertise, and systems puts the technology department in a position of not always setting its own strategic vision and priorities. The typical Chief Technology Officer (CTO) must maneuver between operational and academic leadership, each area with its own priorities, somehow finding ways to serve everyone and offend no one.

Too often the exact opposite occurs.

Technology can also be a great divider. Few people outside the tech department understand the inner workings, routines, goals, pressures, pace, terminology, and potential hazards of technology management. Tech has its own architecture, body of expert knowledge, language, infrastructure, and community. Daily network management requires technical knowledge and its annual oversight requires dogged determination and deft project management. The advancement of educational technology innovations requires skillful persuasion, finesse, and patience. In essence, technology has its own culture and perspective. Unintentionally, the technology department can become a mysterious encampment, divided from the many others in the school who literally don’t speak the language or understand the culture. These gaps can become chasms that impede communication, service, and proper validation of the importance and complexity of technology administration.

There are some parallels. Consider, for example, a Mandarin teacher at a school. That teacher is asked to develop and implement an engaging, technically correct, and impactful program, yet few others in the organization speak the language. So, few others understand the Mandarin teacher’s work from a development and technical standpoint. Senior academic administrators have to evaluate and mentor the Mandarin teacher using consistent methodologies as with other teachers, many of whose work is more understandable to them. This is a challenging task due to the knowledge barriers that prevent deep understanding and validation of the teacher’s work. These same academic administrators are often also the people managing and working closely with CTOs, especially in developing the strategic technology plans and advocating for resource allocation. How can we make this collaboration work better?

The experienced CTO realizes that one of their primary roles is to serve as a translator for other senior administrators, explaining and framing issues into understandable
terms. The objective is to create mutual respect and understanding of the different cultures that are the basis of specific roles within the school. Working in technology attracts a certain skill set, personality profile, knowledge, experience, and way of thinking. The same is true for someone in a senior academic or operational leadership role. This constant connection and translation takes intention and patience, and misunderstandings about basic workflows still persist. How many CTOs have been told to take their vacation in July because that is when other administrators go away – even though this is often the time of year when critical updates for technology must be completed? This cultural divide is an essential consideration to be managed when trying to collaborate with other senior leadership on cross-departmental projects like the technology strategic plan.

Savvy tech leaders can keep cross-school relationships from becoming lost in translation by adjusting their mental models of department members as well as those of their collaborators. With some baseline understandings, others will better grasp the breadth of the mysterious fort that is the tech office, and technologists will be able to see and communicate more effectively beyond their native land.

In his 1990 seminal work, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, Peter Senge explains basic understandings as mental models:

> Mental models are deeply held internal images of how the world works, images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting. Very often, we are not consciously aware of our mental models or the effects they have on our behavior.

According to Senge, what we think and know greatly influences how we behave and act. Establishing baseline understandings creates a common starting point in order to minimize conflict and maximize collaborative potential. Below we offer a three high-level strategies to foster more reciprocal understanding, establish better relationships, and develop a platform for working and thinking strategically together in school.

**DEVELOP A MENTAL MODEL OF COMPLEXITY**

A veteran school network administrator once pointed out that as end-user applications and systems become simpler and more accessible, the behind-the-curtain underworld of technology administration becomes even more complex to manage. As obvious as this statement might be to those who manage technology programs, this reality is sometimes lost on less-tech-savvy senior administrators. Who among us hasn’t worked with an academic leader who makes cavalier statements such as “All students should learn to build an iPhone app”?

The lesson for senior technology administrators is that it is imperative to remind one’s peers of the paradox between end-user simplicity and backroom complexity. One simple technique is to develop a vivid analogy or metaphor, such as the foreign language department example described earlier, to illustrate the complexity of both the industry and the job at hand. Here are two other possible metaphors:

**TECHNOLOGY AS MUSIC**

Overseeing a school’s technology program used to be like conducting a classical symphony: end-users had to read from the same script. Now technology programs are more like large jazz ensembles, where end-users have greater choice and freedoms. Unfortunately, supporting unbounded improvisation can lead to syncopated chaos. The balancing act of every CTO is to work with the senior leadership team to construct a common “lead sheet” to ensure everyone plays the same tune but can still find moments for individual experimentation.

**TECHNOLOGY AS AIRPLANE**

The evolution of IT administration in schools is similar to the evolution of piloting in the airline industry. Initially, bottlenecks and failures were commonplace, and there were many opportunities for human error. Now the notion of keeping the Internet on at a school is compared to keeping the lights on or keeping a plane in the air, and it requires barely any human intervention. However, automation and outsourcing in the airline industry have in some cases led to spectacular engineering failures, like the current 737 Max 800 crisis. The lesson for many schools is that while day-to-day IT oversight should not be labor-intensive, long-term IT engineering and planning should be intentional and highly coordinated with all school areas to ensure that the critical services needed and expected by everyone will work efficiently and effectively.
Regardless of the chosen metaphor, the successful CTO owns the responsibilities of developing reciprocal understanding and helping others understand the challenges of the tech administrator’s job.

DEVELOP A RELENTLESS MINDSET TOWARD CUSTOMER SERVICE
Schools do not make use of technology for technology’s sake. Technology is designed and employed to achieve others’ objectives. For example, an SIS exists as no longer just as a repository of data for producing transcripts, but rather as a treasure trove of invaluable data for making better decisions. Technology administration is managing a primary service hub that helps other areas achieve their strategic objectives. Other departments and divisions within the school – the spokes – can be viewed as internal customers. The end result of serving these internal customers well by providing intuitive products and timely services is to make it possible for them to create a deliverable for the external customers of the school. More directly, the CTO must act from the belief that happy internal customers make for happy external customers.

The CTO must remember that most people who need something from the tech department tend to collaborate with a lack of knowledge of the tech department’s work challenges, process, routines, etc. The better we understand each other and our unique roles, the better we are able to collaborate, and this mutual understanding will not happen by chance. The process of understanding and valuing our different roles must be led.

Following are some reflective questions that can serve to build understanding and empathy into our interactions. Thinking about these perspective-based questions strategically and proactively within the tech department provides the foundation for a customer-service mindset. This exercise can easily be replicated in other areas to create reciprocal understanding as well. See how question 1 is re-configured for this purpose.

1. What are the top three things you would like other leaders within a school organization to understand about technology leadership? (What are the top three things you would like the CTO to understand about academic leadership?)
2. What are the top three least understood specific aspects of your role?
3. What expert knowledge does one need to be successful in your role?
4. What personal and professional characteristics do you need to do your job well?
5. What are your biggest sources of daily stress?
6. How do you define success in your role?
7. What are the top three responsibilities of your role?
8. How do you stay abreast of developments in your field?
9. What professional development have you found to be transformative?
10. In what ways can others support you?

Knowing the needs of each internal customer will help the service-minded CTO provide the best and most differentiated service to each individual and school area. In addition, leading the process of building mutual understanding allows the CTO to model a good leadership practice for peer senior administrators.

CREATE A MANAGEABLE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK
Finally, every CTO needs to develop a management framework. A management framework is a critical tool to help translate and simplify complexities when collaborating with administrators for whom technology is a foreign language. It is a 30,000-foot lens into technology management, and thus it needs to be simple, all-encompassing, and, ideally, elegant.

A management framework serves three primary purposes:

- It helps others to understand the major divisions of the program or department, without exposing every “weed” at the ground level.
- It provides a way of assessing performance, allocating resources, and setting priorities.
- It reduces focus on the cosmetic and tactical elements of a technology program – hardware, software, and the “red and green lights” – while illuminating otherwise overlooked strategic aspects.

A good rule of thumb is that a management framework should fit on the back of a cocktail napkin. If a CTO can’t summarize the entire program and department on 2.5 square inches, they have not developed the right level of abstract, “translated” language.

Here are two alternatives to build from:

1. Think with the organizational structure of a 3 x 2 matrix. The matrix below frames school technology in three functional units and assesses them at two levels of oversight (see image below).

   Using this frame to structure both thinking and communication, you can keep the main things the main things. This matrix reminds school leadership that technology in schools is not simply the red and green lights of network administration sprinkled with the teacher training of instructional technology. And it also resists the temptation to elevate so many peripheral areas of technology to the strategic leadership level, such as AV, website, help desk, and even security. These areas are important, yes, but they are part of larger functional units, or they sometimes transcend multiple units. A CTO’s downfall is to create such a web of complexity for framing management issues that other administrators resist collaborating on planning decisions, or worse, lose confidence in that CTO’s ability to communicate, collaborate, and lead.

2. Remember the 3 S’s of technology. Consider a framework that simply highlights the following three big buckets: strategy, staff, stuff. This framework underscores to senior leadership that hardware and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure</th>
<th>Data / Systems</th>
<th>Instructional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(with senior leadership)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tactical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(within tech department)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
software, which get all the attention, are but one third of the challenge for the average CTO. The framework also elevates technology strategy to a top priority, which for many schools gets lost to the more pedestrian choices like Windows versus Mac or tablet v. laptop. Finally, this framework underscores the fact that even with a great strategy and excellent purchasing decisions, a department will be crippled without sufficient and excellent staffing. All three elements are inextricably interdependent.

With a framework in hand, a CTO must use every opportunity to leverage it:

- Collaborating with non-tech leadership to forge a technology strategic plan,
- Partnering with the CFO to analyze departmental priorities,
- Working with the leadership team when trying to pinpoint the source of end-user frustration or reasons for lack of technology adoption,
- Engaging with the Board when discussing long-term technology strategy,
- Communicating by writing a year-end summary of accomplishments and challenges,
- And, perhaps most importantly, when trying to build a case for additional staffing or capital investment.

A CTO must resist the temptation to respond to every crisis or request with a one-off incident analysis and a new list of needed infrastructure or equipment upgrades. Rather, a CTO needs to utilize a consistent but open-ended framework, thereby reinforcing a proactive and planned approach to the rest of the leadership team, even when reacting to the unexpected crisis of the moment.

**SUMMARY**

Today it is easy for technology leaders to get consumed by issues du jour. On the instructional side, this includes everything from makerspaces to computer science to online learning. On the IT side, it is everything from cloud services to security to outsourcing. In the middle, data and analytics are the up-and-comers always clamoring for more attention. But a CTO can never be successful while also being misunderstood by the other school areas, lost in translation for lack of assertive strategic leadership. Thus, a CTO must take great care to step back and assess the department from the eyes of peers. Rather than being passive or becoming defensive, the successful CTO goes on the political offensive to help others realize the hidden challenges and potential of technology management by translating well, using a consistent, high-level, illustrative metaphor, and adopting a customer service mindset. With the right shared mental model for technology management, peer non-tech administrators will become advocates and supporters for a CTO, rather than adversaries saving face because of knowledge gaps barriers. This approach brings the CTO more easily and securely into the leadership circle and comprehensive strategic decision-making of the school, with them bringing essential knowledge, valuable tools, and a unique perspective important to everyone’s effectiveness and success.

**JAMIE FEILD BAKER** most recently served as the Assistant Head of School for Academic Life at Lawrence Academy (MA). In her role as a senior school leader, Jamie has often been responsible for the advancement of technology in the classroom and beyond. This work entails collaborating closely with the CTO to develop strategic plans and make proactive decisions to positively impact learning as well as the effectiveness of school operations. Jamie met Gabriel when implementing a comprehensive school technology audit designed to highlight the school’s strategic hiring needs for technology management and advancement. Jamie can be reached at jamiereverb@gmail.com.

**GABRIEL LUCAS** is the principal of Ed Tech Recruiting, a strategic hiring firm that helps schools and others hire senior technology leaders. Gabriel is the co-founder of ATLIS and currently serves on its board. A former director of technology at two independent schools in California, Gabriel frequently works with school management teams throughout the country to develop new strategies for technology programs and help improve working relationships between the technology department and other operational and academic divisions. Gabriel can be reached at gabe@edtechrecruiting.com.
The National Educational Technology Plan (2017) argues that technology can transform learning by empowering teachers and students to undertake new approaches that better meet the needs of all learners. To capture the transformational potential of educational technology we must enhance the knowledge and skills of classroom teachers by offering effective professional development programs. The one-shot approach to professional development has been shown to be relatively ineffective at generating the sort of classroom transformation described by the NETP (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson & Orphanos, 2009). In the hands of administrative leaders charged with launching new initiatives and designing professional development opportunities, as well as educational technology specialists who work directly with teachers facilitative coaching, is a leadership model that can be highly impactful in helping teachers develop the capabilities needed to make the best use of technology (DeMonte, 2013).

Increasing the effective use of classroom technology is a long-term endeavor that requires congruence between a teacher’s professional goals and the school’s institutional goals. Technology leaders are likely to see more success through the use of facilitative rather than pressure-based coaching.

**FACILITATIVE COACHING VS. PRESSURE-BASED COACHING**

The spectrum of specific coaching techniques can be loosely grouped into two general categories, facilitative coaching and pressure-based coaching. Facilitative coaching aims to align the teacher’s goals and purposes with the school’s goals to satisfy both. This approach focuses on achieving success both for the individual and the institution. On the other hand, pressure-based coaching focuses on not making mistakes. This technique emphasizes the negative consequences of falling short of expectations. Pressure-based coaching is a top-down approach in which the coach issues directions and applies pressure to get the results that the coach desires.

Facilitative coaching is a collaborative process that supports professional and personal growth. It is a collaboration between any coach and teacher that entails on-going interactions of discovery and problem-solving. Facilitative coaching has been shown to improve performance, motivation, peer relationships, and teacher engagement (Liu & Batt, 2010). Because of the sustained contact between the coach and teacher, it is possible to tailor the experience to the specific needs of each teacher. In addition, Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) point out that persistent support has a more significant positive effect on teaching and student achievement. The individualized and ongoing interaction typical of facilitative coaching is well-suited for supporting transformational change.

While the intent of coaching is likely meant to be positive, not all are coaching interactions are created equal. Research on organizational relationships demonstrates the potential for harm that can result from what is termed pressure-based coaching (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). A recent study compared the effects of facilitative and high-pressure,
coaching on engagement, commitment, and effectiveness (Weer, DiRenzo & Shipper, 2016). Over time, facilitative coaching produced an increased commitment to institutional goals and greater efficiency. On the other hand, pressure-based, coaching tended to undermine performance, provoke negative emotions, and erode commitment to institutional goals.

**COACHING LITERACIES**
Facilitative coaching begins with suspending judgment so that the coach can appreciate the situation facing the teacher from his or her perspective. The working assumption is that people try to do their best, given the skills and information available. One of the most potent techniques in facilitative coaching is to listen to the person being coached. Integrity requires the coach to honestly and consistently reflect his or her values. By matching words and actions, a coach achieves a high level of transparency with the teacher. The facilitative approach recognizes that the teacher has essential information to share. Mutual integrity and respect mean that the coach and the teacher learn from each other.

Communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity have been identified as essential skills by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and technology offers vital tools to address each of these skills. Coaching can be a valuable strategy for helping teachers integrate technology that addresses these skills into their instruction. Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2013) remind us to engage students in authentic problem solving, and technology integration can support that goal. The 4Cs identified by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills reach beyond the tools and methods employed by a particular teacher in a specific classroom. A teacher coaching program is a pathway to reflective practice that keeps a clear focus on student achievement. A well-resourced coaching program that enjoys broad support can be a useful approach for transforming a school to meet the needs of 21st century learners (Aguilar, 2013).

**The most important trait for teachers is the willingness to be coached. Teachers benefit most from coaching when they bring a growth mindset to both the practice of teaching and their students’ abilities to learn. Without teacher buy-in, it is unlikely that coaching or any form of professional development will have a positive impact on student achievement (White, Howell Smith, Kunz & Nugent, 2015). Effective teachers have more impact on student achievement than any other school trait (Sanders, Wright, & Horn, 1997). Research supports the potential of teacher coaching to increase teacher effectiveness and improve student outcomes. Kraft, Blazar & Hogan (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of 60 teacher coaching programs that found large positive effects on the quality of instruction. The greatest gains were seen in programs in which teachers volunteered to be coached.**

While coaching reaches far beyond the issue of classroom technology use, the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has published a set of standards for coaches. The standards begin by recognizing the importance of a shared vision for technology use in classrooms.
Technology coaches are challenged to help teachers differentiate instruction and model using technology to enhance lesson design. ISTE argues that coaches meet teachers where they are and focus on measuring the professional growth of teachers and improvements in student outcomes. In order to do this, technology coaches must work to stay abreast of advances in pedagogy and content knowledge.

CONCLUSION
Any school undertaking a coaching initiative should identify specific goals for the program and be prepared to evaluate its progress toward those goals continually. Kraft et al. (2016) recommend documenting the length, frequency, and number of coaching sessions as well as the number of teachers and coaches in the program. Another valuable resource is the Technology Integration Matrix (Florida Center for Instructional Technology at the University of South Florida).

One-shot professional development has proven ineffective at spurring teachers toward more effective technology use in their classrooms. Coaching, especially when it is content-specific, collaborative, and long-term has been shown to improve teacher performance and student outcomes. The transformative power of coaching offers a pathway to effective technology integration and promises to help teachers better prepare students for the challenges of the 21st century. Technology leadership that models and employs coaching skills will have a greater opportunity for success in the independent school environment.

REFERENCES


MIKE SPEER has served as the Technology Director at Berkeley Preparatory School in Tampa for 23 years. In addition to his directorial duties, he teaches Advanced Placement Microeconomics and Macroeconomics and serves as an instructional coach. Mike can be reached at speermik@berkeleyprep.org
Looking back on my 40-year career of managing change, I have come to recognize that systems don’t change, individuals change. Therefore, understanding human behavior has been paramount to my success. Many leaders accept a stimulus-response view of behavior that leads to a carrot-or-stick approach to leadership. I find this perplexing in light of Kohn’s research showing that punishments and rewards have little long-term success in changing behavior (1999). Additionally educational change has been focused on program-level changes rather than changes in mental models, which transform whole systems. Think of this as the difference between getting or updating a new program for your computer versus installing a new operating system. Shifting my mental model of behavior to one based on Perceptual Control Theory (PCT) has exponentially increased my success as a leader of change. Learning about the process of control, the hierarchy and strategies based on PCT, can provide a framework for leading change with less effort.

Since the 1950s, Professor Jay Forrester and other thinkers, such as Donella Meadows and Fritjof Capra, have promoted a more holistic approach to understanding systems, including human systems. They weren’t the first, as Capra notes the goal of Eastern mysticism, whether Hinduism, Buddhism, or Taoism, is to finally recognize the universe as an unbroken whole, despite the appearance of its being a multitude of separate objects (Capra, 1996). Systems thinkers understand that a system’s behavior is the result of the effects of reinforcing and balancing processes, not the result of specific stimuli. At the moment one thing changes, everything changes. This approach was in stark contrast to traditional analysis at the time, based on Descartes’ approach of breaking a system down into its separate parts and looking for linear cause-effect relationships.

It was not until 1973, when Behavior: The Control of Perception (Powers, 1972, 2005) was published, that a radically new view of behavior, Perceptual Control Theory (PCT), was proposed. According to PCT, behavior is a process of control, specifically a process of negative feedback control. Control in this case is about keeping something in a constant state or pattern in spite of unpredictable disturbances. Once we understand human behavior through this different paradigm, we can recognize that punishments, rewards, threats, guilt, praise, shaming, and bullying are forms of coercion that will not work in the long run and that, along the way, often create severe damage to the individuals involved, to their relationships, to the organization, and to society as a whole (Gossen, 1992). Control is an inside process, and coercion is about outside forces trying to get a system to act in a way it may not want to act.

A systems thinker understands:

1. Systems consist of interconnecting parts.
2. Structure of the system determines it behavior.
4. The evolution of complex systems is facilitated by their hierarchical structure and the understanding of complex systems is facilitated by their hierarchical description (Pattee, 1973; Bertalanffy, 1968; Simon, 1996).
5. Complex systems exhibit counter-intuitive behavior.
When we begin to apply even a few of these principles to human behavior, our leadership style shifts and we experience less stress.

**FEEDBACK LOOPS**

At the core of systems thinking are feedback loops. Take, for example, the cruise control on a car. The driver (something outside the system) sets the desired state (the speed the driver wishes to maintain). From that moment on, the car’s system records the present speed and compares it to the desired speed. If the car is moving too slowly or too quickly, the system adjusts the throttle. If the speed is *just right* — in other words, there is zero difference — nothing changes. People operate in much the same way. The biggest difference is that in a living system, something outside the system can’t set the desired state.

You can’t make someone want something.

**WHAT PEOPLE DO AND WHAT PEOPLE WANT**

In PCT terms, behavior is a process, not simply the actions of a person. People are systems that behave to control for the consequences (results) of their actions, not for the actions themselves. People can get the same results by varying their actions and use the same actions to get differing results. This is why people have the ability to manage very complex, ever-changing environments. This is also why you can’t always tell what someone is doing by looking at what they are doing. Understanding this can help to resolve problems that result from mistaking unintended effects of another person’s action for intended effects. We can never assume we know someone else’s intent.

**THE PROCESS OF CONTROL**

The secret to understanding human behavior is to recognize and understand the natural process of control and to operate based on that wisdom. Control is a simple process involving action, perception, and comparison. All living systems *behave* this way. A sunflower in a field *perceives* the amount of sunlight it is receiving and *compares* that to the amount of sunlight it wants, then takes *action* to decrease the difference between the two. When the flower registers not enough sunlight, it rotates until it senses just the right amount of sunlight. We are way more like the sunflower than we might like to think. As humans, we think our actions are conscious choices; however, in many cases, our systems simply do what is necessary to maintain control, to maintain a specific perception. Like the sunflower, we turn towards the light (our just right). We aren’t always aware of what we are controlling for, nor are we aware of what we are doing to get that result.

**KNOW WHAT YOUR PEOPLE WANT**

Actions are how we have a physical effect on the world. (Powers, 1996). For you and me, actions are many internal signals combining to fire neurons that affect muscles and glands creating movement and release of secretions. Typing (the action I am taking right now) is created when billions of neurons fire and signal muscles, which creates movement in my fingers. The only evidence I have that this internal signaling and firing is happening in the way I want is the perception of letters that form words on the screen in front of me. I am controlling for specific letter combinations to appear. To know if I am accomplishing this result, I am constantly comparing the letters I see to the letters I desire. I keep typing as long as what I perceive matches what I want. I vary my actions as a means of controlling my sensory inputs (perceptions). When I make a mistake, I take different actions, often without being aware of what I’m doing, constantly controlling for the words to appear on the screen as I want them to be. The leadership take-away is YOU must know what your people want. What results are they looking for. Better yet, know what they want, how they are recording what is happening and if the two match. “The basic question one asks about any behavior under PCT is – what perceptions are being controlled?” (Powers, 1996).

**THE HIERARCHY**

Understanding the complexity of a human’s system is facilitated by knowing its hierarchical structure. The more complex the living system, the greater number of levels of interconnected feedback loops. On one level, when I type, I am controlling for specific letter combinations; on a higher level, I am controlling for grammar, punctuation, and spelling; on a higher level yet, I am controlling for a message. What at first seems simple becomes complex, and beyond the complexity, there remains one simple answer to the question of why do we do what we do? We do it because
at that moment what we want and what we perceive do not match. Conscious awareness of what we want and how we perceive the world are essential ingredients in understanding ourselves and others.

Remember that coercion involves an outside force. In PCT we frame it this way: all we can be to each other is disturbance, a helping or hindering force in the environment. Helping forces facilitate keeping and maintaining reference perceptions, while hindering forces interfere with maintaining reference perceptions. In your relationships with others, how do you want to be perceived? Being genuinely curious and showing it in your tone and body posture, you may ask, “What do you want?” or “What were you hoping would happen?” Instead of making all sorts of assumptions about what would help, simply ask, “How might I help?” Operating with a PCT attitude embraces the potential within everyone and honors an individual’s ability to manifest what he or she desires.

6. In their book Nine Lies About Work, Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall recommend meeting with each of your reports once a week to “discuss the team member’s priorities, obstacles, and solutions in real time” (2019). Try asking these three questions: 1) What are your priorities this week? 2) What are you challenges? 3) How can I help? This suggestion is right on target with the PCT approach.

GREATER CHANGE COMES FROM ADDRESSING HIGHER-LEVEL REFERENCES

Even better, don’t stop at an initial response. First responses are often at a lower level, and greater change comes from addressing the higher-level references. Try the five whys, without using the word why. Whenever possible repeat language without personal interpretations of what the speaker is saying. Here is a sample conversation I had recently with a teacher who had just received her contract for the next year.

Me: “What were you hoping for?”
Teacher: “More money.”
Me: “If you had more money, what would be different?”
Teacher: “I’d be able to travel more with my family.”
Me: “What about traveling with your family is important to you?”
Teacher: “It provides us with quality time with each other and exposes my children to a variety of cultures.”
Me: “And if you spend quality time with your family and expose your children to a variety of cultures, what does that say about you?”
Teacher: “That I’m a good wife and mother.”

It wasn’t really about more money but about her relationship with her family and her self-image of being a person who has her priorities straight. As a leader, my keeping this in mind will not only help to build a stronger relationship with her, it will also help me know that if I interfere with her family time, she will probably resent it and push back. I call this a “high gain area.” High gain areas are any higher-level references that when interfered with garner strong resistance.

BUMP IT UP!

When employees are asked what they want at work, they will often respond with more time or more money. These are surface wants, so dig deeper. Bump it up! Behind each of these instances lies a higher-level reference. Higher-level references leverage greater change with less effort, which is why I stress shifting your mental model of human behavior. Your mental models are your highest-level references. A shift in a higher-level reference impacts all the reference below.

Think of yourself as a library of reference perceptions that connect in a complex hierarchy. At the lowest level of our mental hierarchy are six levels often grouped under the heading Sensory (Intensity, Sensation, Configuration, Transition, Event, and Relationship). The next level up, Category, includes our labeling of the sensory information with words and symbols. Above that is Sequence, steps completed in a specific order. Program, which is above the sequence level, is made up of differing combinations of steps in no specific order but based on if-then specifications. Think of a computer program or classroom procedures. Then comes the Principle level, which consists of generalizations, standards, priorities. At the highest level is System Concepts, which encompasses Sense of Self, Beliefs, and Mental Models. The structure of the hierarchy is present when we are about 18 months old, and it continues to grow, change, and shift throughout our lifetime. Although the hierarchy is built from the bottom up, higher levels set the reference signals for lower levels. This is why changes at higher levels have a greater impact. Shifting a higher-level reference impacts all the connected references below it.

To follow is a summary of Rijt-Plooij’s research on newborn development.
TO GARNER SUPPORT, GO UP;
TO BRING ABOUT ACTION, GO DOWN

In general, “why” questions take you up the hierarchy and “how” questions take you down. To garner support, go up; to bring about action, go down. Good questions are based on what the other person has said, using their language, and they typically start with what or how. As a leader, I most often ask, “What would help look like right now?”

Understanding both the process of control and the levels of perception can lay the foundation for several strategies:

1. Ask Don’t Tell: Never assume you know what someone is doing or what they want.
2. Seek the Reference: Discover the perception the other person is controlling for.
3. Bump It Up: Explore the highest levels by asking why without using the word why.
4. Form Agreements: Reach consensus about what you collectively want and about how you will recognize it once you get it (define what evidence is acceptable).

It is this fourth strategy of forming agreements that is especially important when working with groups or teams. You can form agreements on several levels; however, keep in mind that higher levels will always gain you greater benefit with less effort. Most change efforts are focused on the sequence and program levels. In fact, in education we talk about “implementing a new program” and then wonder why it didn’t work. Why? Program-level changes are too low – they require a lot of effort and have little long-term impact. Additionally, such changes often don’t work because people do not adopt the principles or constructs with which the program was designed. There is a big difference in doing something differently and understanding why versus just doing something differently. Be sure to define acceptable evidence. This is where I see most leaders fail. What will it look like when the desired change has occurred?

Build connected reference from the bottom up. If you do not have clear policies and procedures in place, start there. Policies are low-level references and are usually given to others. Providing a procedure that will be followed should a policy be violated is essential. Procedures provide the structure for people to accomplish tasks in ways that are less likely to interfere with others, to ensure compliance with laws and regulations, and to provide guidance for making decisions. Whenever possible, give those closest to the task a voice in creating the procedure. Think of procedures as negotiated. The next level up, Principles, is what you might think of as the “Who we want to be” level. As a group, team, or organization, who do you want to be when you’re together? Try to give as many people as possible a voice in this agreement. It is how decisions are made that often creates tension in an organization – not the actual decision that is made. Ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I have time to involve others?
2. Do the individuals involved trust you and others involved?
3. Is this a decision that can be used to build a team?
4. How important is this decision?
5. How important is acceptance of this decision?

The more you answer “yes,” the more you need to move towards consensus.

Shared decision-making aligns to the principles of PCT because it allows for collective references to be formed. Collective references create conditions for individuals all to control for the same thing. Better yet, shared decision-making can include a discussion of the evidence everyone will accept that the reference, goals, or targets have been met and how willing everyone is to participate. A consensus continuum can be a useful tool. It is a scale from 1-10 where individuals anonymously mark their agreement to a decision and their willingness to participate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consensus Continuum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Agreement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Shelley Roy@WmCDevBu@gmail.com
It can be completed anonymously, though I recommend encouraging those who rate their willingness to participate at 8, 9, or 10 identify themselves.

As a leader you are often confronted with complaints. When people are complaining, it can be draining to listen and even more difficult to not be defensive. A leader who lives by PCT principles will practice letting the speaker vent or move them towards action without expending much energy. Here’s how:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complain to Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Do you need some time to talk* or would you like to find a way to resolve this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Ideally how would you like it to be?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Why is this important to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Which part of this can you control?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What have you been trying to get what you want? (doing, thinking, feeling, creating)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* How has what you’ve tried served you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* What’s your next step?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* I have ___ minutes to listen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Without knowing it, Dwight D. Eisenhower understood Perceptual Control Theory when he said, “...by leadership we mean the art of getting someone else to do something that you want done because he wants to do it, not because your position of power can compel him to do it, or your position of authority” (Eisenhower Foundation, 1954). Ike understood that everyone is a control system interacting with other control systems in an ever-changing environment with each controlling for what they want. One of the greatest challenges we face in embedding a new innovation is our view of others. When we mentally put people into categories, we limit the potential for individual and organization growth. Instead, we need to remember the core lesson from PCT – that everyone is acting to reduce the difference between what they want and what they are perceiving.

REFERENCES
Powers, W. Personal correspondence with the author. 19 March 1996.

**SHELLEY ROY** has worked with thousands of adults and adolescents in a wide range of learning situations. As a leading figure in Perceptual Control Theory (PCT), a Pedagogical Coach and School Counselor, a Visual Strategist, and a Process and Facilitation expert, she has worked with public and private schools, businesses, social agencies, and jails on a regional, state, national, and international basis. She has authored and co-authored several books based on neuroscience and PCT, including *A People Primer: The Nature of Living Systems, Drafting Your Personal Blueprint for Living, and Creating Well-Being – and Freshman Orientation.* Presently she serves as the 8th-grade counselor at Gulliver Academy in Coral Gables, Florida. For more information, visit her blog at www.becreating.blogspot.com or www.miamiedguru.blogspot.com.
Parents and teachers share a common goal: the formation of healthy, safe, well-educated children. Technology has changed the appearance of some of these qualities, and to some, may even seem in direct conflict with these goals. However, the reality is that technology has empowered us to learn and create in ways that were never possible before and that will shape the way we work in the future. As we prepare our students for this future and help them navigate the present, we must also reach out to their parents. Parents’ partnerships with their child’s school to create a shared vision have become increasingly important as technology becomes more ubiquitous in education and in everyday life.

Parents are sometimes the forgotten and unseen constituents in our schools, especially when it comes to the topic of technology. With technology as an important educational focus and the operational lifeblood of schools today, it is important to consider parents in decisions, from how their children learn through and are affected by technology to how the parents are impacted by initiatives like one-to-one programs to online school communication in its various forms to how parents are informed about technology education in the school. Having parents as well-informed allies greases the cogs of an efficient and inclusive school. Successful parent partnership requires empathy, careful planning, and reflection by the technology team.

PLANNING THE PARTNERSHIP
In order to fully grasp the parents’ relationship to the vast spectrum of school technology, the first step is to identify parent needs and concerns. Consider mutual needs, such as those of the school and its students, as well. The technology team must have a foundational understanding of its own school culture and how technology fits into it. Program design considerations are crucial. These include identifying program and initiative goals, determining how technology is used in and outside of the classroom, and laying out the overall expectations of all parties. Underscoring all of these items is the curriculum, which is the catalyst for everything mentioned here.

While much careful instructional and technical planning is needed for every initiative deployed by the technology team, this planning should also be extended to the public relations side of the initiative: the message. The topic of public relations may seem foreign to those involved in educational technology, but reflection on the public-facing aspects of a project or initiative is an important first step in creating a successful message. In today’s world that is so dense with information, we are bombarded with messages seemingly coming from all directions. School technology teams need to break through the noise with meaningful, thoughtful communication. Investing time to consider essential questions, such as the following examples, can help the messaging strategy take shape and build the technology department’s empathy and understanding with the parent community before the conversations even begin.
● What will parents see?
● What will parents need to know?
● What questions might arise from parents?
● Why do parents need to know about a given aspect of an initiative?
● How can I be empathetic to the needs of parents on this topic?

Such questions will inform parent messaging and education – and may even help to find gaps in the process that were not yet considered. Extend this thinking into an outline of communication strategies that can help formulate an organized method of messaging. Beyond considering what parents need to know, consider how the message will be delivered and when. Timing is important; perhaps certain topics surrounding an initiative are more apropos for later in the timeline rather than at the beginning where the message could be lost or diluted, resulting in confusion. Conflict can occur when needs compete or when there is a perception of misaligned needs or poor communication.

The importance of planning leads to the importance of consistency in messaging. Consider the school or technology department mission or vision statements. Ideally, a school should be consistent in the application of these statements in everything that is done. Because the technology department is a subset of the school, reflecting on the mission and vision statements shows all that an initiative is not conceived in a vacuum, but rather designed to be reflective of a larger vision that is in play. This lends more weight to the message and provides clarity for parents about why the information they are receiving is important.

OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT

Because technology plays an integral part in many of the ways that parents interact with a school, transitions in systems provide an opportunity for the technology department to establish its team members as dependable, proactive partners to parents and school leadership. Keeping in mind that parents approach technology from a variety of perspectives and levels of familiarity, offering training for parents in systems such as the LMS, SIS, and other tools via in-person, pre-recorded sessions, along with clear documentation, builds trust and helps systems feel simpler and more streamlined for end users. Aligning the timing of in-person sessions with other on-campus parent events demonstrates respect for their time. Providing both in-person and recorded options allows for relationship building and flexibility, while establishing the technology department as thoughtful and available. By meeting parents where they are and through various modalities, we demonstrate empathy to the many different understandings held by parents and the constraints placed upon their schedules.

Especially as we consider device programs, we often focus on our students’ and teachers’ needs for training and support, but pay far less attention to the changes that these implementations can create at home. It is important to lean in to this challenge, acknowledge these changes, and provide support that parents are seeking, not only for the good of the school’s program and community, but especially for our students’ development of productive, healthy habits. Before and during device rollout, ensure that parents understand the opportunities that adding the device brings to their child’s learning. This builds the buy-in that is a key first step to creating a partnership in the one-to-one rollout. Because the curriculum should be the driver of technology use, we can incorporate information about the ways technology transforms learning across the curriculum and current research in educational practices to build understanding and credibility.

During the introduction of new devices, establishing and communicating expectations for students, parents, and the role of the school ensures that everyone views this endeavor as a team effort and knows their part, avoiding ambiguity and misunderstanding down the road. However, the partnership can be quickly diminished if we ignore the fact that devices can be a source of distraction and, for some, addiction. Making time for discussion of topics such as balancing time, recognizing and negating distractions, and general digital wellness in digital citizenship or health and wellness curricula for students is critical to our students’ health. Serving as a resource to parents by providing research and mentoring models best practices parents can employ within the home. Just as the technology team can work to understand the needs of students and parents, it can also provide current concepts on the parent/child/technology relation-
ship where mentoring rather than monitoring is advocated (Kamenetz & Weiner, 2019). Parents’ partnership in this effort is key; including them by keeping them informed of instruction further demonstrates and strengthens the partnership between parents and school.

As educational professionals, we understand that research is forever shifting beliefs and norms about topics related to technology use, such as the recommended amount of screen time for a twelve-year-old (AAP, 2016). For a parent, this constantly shifting information can be frustrating and confusing. In such cases, school technology leaders can help parents as navigators and decipherers, serving as experts who can offer the pros and cons of certain approaches, while allowing parents to choose what is best for their family. We know that technology can be an amplifier for good or bad, so being a human resource and providing external resources contributes to a meaningful relationship with parents.

Information and research are part of the equation, but we must constantly listen to the needs of our parent community as they relate to technology. In some cases, this may mean providing hands-on training for tools that focus on healthy, age-appropriate management approaches that can empower parents who have previously felt that technology management was too involved or overwhelming. When these needs arise, we must step back, examine the root of the issue, and be sure to address it in our offerings. For example, parents needing assistance in managing devices at home may need step-by-step information about management software, but it cannot be delivered in a vacuum ignoring the questions and family dialogue that are often the root of this struggle. Delivering both creates a healthier balance and creates a forum for dialogue between parents and the school about concerns and best practices.

The school can inform parents and teach students in health and wellness programs or through its digital citizenship curriculum, but ultimately, it is the parents and students who must navigate these decisions at home and outside of school, where most technology usage occurs. If schools can provide guidance for parents and students that directs them towards each other for on-going dialogue, they can support not only the parents and the students, but also the family unit as a whole. The school is in a unique position to support families by ensuring that both student and parent perspectives can be represented by a third party, and by providing information grounded in research that can help alleviate some of the emotionality of this topic between parents and children. Keeping family conversations a theme throughout our work with parents and students and providing direct conversation starters as part of our communications can further support this effort and send the message that we’re all in this together.

To provide a starting point at your school, we recommend the following strategies to keep in mind throughout all phases of program and initiative creation:

1. Inform parents of digital citizenship instruction as it is happening to encourage timely dialogue.
2. Share questions and topics for family conversation as part of parent and student sessions.
3. Ensure that examples of meaningful, creative technology use in the curriculum are highlighted in school social media and communications.
4. Present students’ perspectives as a part of parent sessions.
5. Host family technology events to highlight technology in the curriculum or digital citizenship topics.
THOUGHTFUL ITERATION
As students grow, as new social issues arise and new technology comes online, all of these concerns will constantly evolve, creating the need and opportunity to reassess, iterate, and respond. Communication, and thereby one’s messaging strategy around school technology, is a key component to successful relationships with parents and may need to evolve over time. Crafting effective communications takes planning and reflection, with periodic refinement along the way. Depending on the topic, coordination with counseling, academics, and communications offices may provide support and demonstrate that this work is also a collaborative effort that impacts our communities in many ways. By remaining focused on the needs and missions of our school communities, we can continuously look for opportunities to develop and deepen our partnership with parents. Through a thoughtful partnership among the school, students, and parents, we will better serve the needs of our school community with technology initiatives that empower our students and create opportunities for learning.

REFERENCES

EILEEN FORD is the Educational Technology Specialist at Trinity Valley School in Fort Worth, Texas, where she empowers students, teachers, and parents to leverage technology in meaningful and mindful ways. She earned a BA in History and an M.Ed in Curriculum and Instruction from Texas Tech University and found her way to educational technology support and coaching after teaching first grade for three years. Since then she served as a middle and upper school technologist, technology applications teacher, and an educational technology support manager before coming to Trinity Valley School in 2018.

DAN McGEE serves as Laurel School’s Director of Technology & Library Services, where he ensures students and teachers have access to the best possible digital resources. He has spent over a decade in independent schools for girls. Dan holds a BA in K12 Education and German from the University of Mount Union, an MA in German Studies from the University of Cincinnati, and an M.Ed. in Instructional Technology from the University of Akron. As a child, Dan enjoyed playing with his father’s TRS-80 computer, a device that is still in the family. He has been a member of ATLIS since its founding.

Support parents at key transition times and respond to the needs of the community through parent and family workshops.

#ECATD
EARLY CAREER AND ASPIRING TECHNOLOGY DIRECTORS INSTITUTE
INFORMATION AND APPLICATIONS FOR CURRENT COHORT
THEATLIS.ORG/ECATDI

Eileen Ford
Educational Technology Specialist
forde@trinityvalleyschool.org

Support parents at key transition times and respond to the needs of the community through parent and family workshops.
Independent schools are now seeing more clearly the relationship between library services and technology. This article will share how two schools that, between them, serve students spanning from three-year-olds to 12th grade. They have each worked to optimize existing positions and responsibilities in the library and technology departments to better serve the needs of their communities. The merging of technology and library team members was possible through leadership that demonstrated team building, clear communication, and vision setting, just a few of the leadership literacies any leader can use to achieve change and unite people. The authors share how this merger is working at each of their schools, other leadership literacies that helped the process, and the resulting impact on serving their schools’ needs.

CREATING A SHARED VISION
The Hotchkiss School is a co-ed boarding school for 9-12th grade students in Connecticut, where Erikka Adams is employed as the Emerging Technology Librarian. For the 2018-2019 school year, the IT department’s service desk area was being physically moved, and the department had lost two full-time employees. At the same time, the library was looking to solidify its role in technology support and integration, but had also recently lost its full-time employee in this area. Luckily for these two departments, the solution was not a complete restructuring, but a melding of the two departments in the creation of a new position, Erikka’s position. This was because both departments shared areas of responsibility.

At Sarah Rolle’s school, the change came about differently. As the Director of Technology at The Elisabeth Morrow School in New Jersey, Sarah has also been the department chair for technology with the responsibility to oversee related curricula. Over the many years that Sarah has worked with librarians on curricula, there has never been a formal department chair in this area. Luckily for these two departments, the solution was not a complete restructuring, but a melding of the two departments in the creation of a new position, Erikka’s position. This was because both departments shared areas of responsibility.

THE PROCESS
At Hotchkiss, the Director of IT and the Director of Library Services also saw long-term value in creating continuity and formalizing the connection between the two departments. The process started because both directors were open to discussing their departments and sharing their overall visions. This led to being able and willing to develop and share new ideas and solutions. Both departments had empty, full-time positions to fill, but the school was experiencing a hiring freeze. What emerged was a strong, shared vision for how a new Emerging Technology Librarian position could benefit both departments, enhance student learning, and support
faculty. An argument was made that convinced administrators and human resources of the need for and value of change. These leaders shared a vision-setting process and a collaboration model that can inspire school leadership to take notice. Their work modeled “a culture of innovation,” the third ISTE Educational Technology Leadership standard, in showing that two departments with similar areas of service, shared values, and overlapping curricula could integrate (ISTE, 2017).

The directors at Hotchkiss also decided to go one step further to make a more permanent integration of the two departments. The IT service desk moved into the library’s physical space, coinciding with Erikka’s first day on the job in August of 2018. Now the real hurdle continues to be in how exactly the Emerging Technology Librarian position will work with the IT team explicitly, while mainly being supervised and answering to the Library Director. Even after a year, it appears that this process will take greater reflection and consistent communication and assessment.

Sarah’s process at The Elisabeth Morrow School is further along, so it has been interesting to compare how each of these models works, to note the benefits, and to pinpoint areas of challenge Erikka may encounter later. When Sarah spoke with her team prior to presenting about joining the departments, many of them felt that there had been positive benefits to this new grouping. One team member shared how technology was now seen as less scary when connected to library sciences. Another team member commented that the joint department had increased information exchange with another member in their division.

In both schools, the IT team, educational technology staff, and librarians share a “customer first” approach to service. They strive to meet the customers where they are and help them in real-time if possible. Both teams, to varying degrees, also share the lending of devices and provide individual assistance using that technology. There is also an overlap in curricula at some grade levels. Both teams generally go out of their way to help others and, as a result, support various goals throughout the schools.

Combining these two departments may seem to be a natural choice, but the steps to achieve a merger are not necessarily easy. The complexity of making change is well documented. We all know that individuals may or may not work well together. The larger a group, the harder it is to make it functional and cooperative. Disparate personalities bring uncontrollable factors into the mix. Leaders with the skills and literacies for strong team building, vision setting, and communication are needed in situations like these to assure that individuals and departments transition to working well in their new teams. In addition, even teams that seem to work well together still need leadership to work effectively and achieve optimal performance.

TEAM BUILDING
While the circumstances were different, team building has been and will continue to be an essential need for the leaders to prioritize at both schools. ISTE confirms team building as one of the five standards for technology leadership, stating that leaders must “develop the skills needed to lead and navigate change.” This is defined further as “… building buy-in, listening, mentoring, providing opportunities for everyone to contribute, keeping vision and priorities at the forefront of stakeholders’ thinking, breaking down silos…” (2017). These are some concrete examples of how team building is more than just get-to-know-you ice breaker games and can really elevate and galvanize a team to achieve action steps and set goals. Skilled leaders will use team building strategies within their departments and with external stakeholders, sometimes even bringing the two together when possible to push forward the mission and vision. Modeling these character traits and expressing them as expectations for the team can allow a leader to set the tone for the team. Team members should also learn from and be accountable for demonstrating these skills.

Creating ways for people to work together is one way of team building, but good leaders find more ways to help their teams get to know each other, reach shared goals, and share information. Sharing information to keep the team up-to-date on methods, practices, and strategies is probably the least hyped team-building strategy. New team members need information as well as team building that welcomes them to the group, while existing members still need information, but may also need more team building that focuses on inspiration and confirmation. Regular and authentic ways to bring a team together should be a leadership literacy in every leader’s toolbox.

COMMUNICATION
The Elisabeth Morrow School is further along in the process of combining both library and technology departments; Sarah has already held combined department meetings (in many iterations) as a way to solidify the team and for increased communication. Her school has a six-day cycle, and meeting every cycle was a bit too often for this group. They also were in need of structured meetings, so that everyone
CREATING WAYS FOR PEOPLE TO WORK TOGETHER IS ONE WAY OF TEAM BUILDING, BUT GOOD LEADERS FIND MORE WAYS TO HELP THEIR TEAMS GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER, REACH SHARED GOALS, AND SHARE INFORMATION.

would come prepared. Last-minute topics were difficult for some people, and meetings without agendas were seen by some as potentially unnecessary. This, of course, had a negative impact on buy-in. Meeting structure and communicating in preparation for meetings may sound like simple solutions, but they are critical. It was also necessary to remind some of the team members of the reasons why everyone needed to meet and of Sarah’s responsibilities as department chair.

At Elisabeth Morrow, the shared oversight of a division head as supervisor and Director of Technology as department chair proved confusing for some. The more information shared about meeting or team structure, as well as about Sarah’s role in both, the smoother the team operated. Asking for feedback on what worked and what did not added to improving the meetings as well. Meetings evolved to a point where during the 2017-2018 school year, meetings cycled through as follows: full department meeting; meeting split by division (middle school members meeting together while early childhood and lower school met together); and the librarians meeting while technologists met separately. This gave everyone the ability to focus on more specific areas of need when they were in smaller groups.

This illustrates another leadership literacy that is invaluable: situational assessment. This can mean sharing ideas with someone or delegating when necessary. In order for leaders to gather missing or important information or a viewpoint others may have, reaching out to mentors and trusted colleagues helps give a balanced perspective. At other times, assessing a situation may require listening to one’s intuition and acting on one’s convictions for the benefit of the team and, ultimately, the whole school community. Sarah did this when she persevered in creating her new, combined department. Involving others and delegating are part of shared leadership and growing other leaders. This can include allowing others to own their curricula and their ideas on change – while being there to support them in making those changes. Sarah tries regularly to remind her department that she is available if they need something.

When leaders take on too many of the responsibilities of their group, they can become overburdened, a result that is often unnecessary or unproductive. Learning to let go is critical in shared leadership. Leaders need to ask for updates, offer support, and value the improvements that occur as programs and procedures improve. Erikka could see this happening in her work with faculty and technology at Hotchkiss when she created a group of technology leaders made of representatives from each department. These individuals could then be go-tos for the just-in-time support needed in their departments that Erikka might miss. The group collects information to share with their departments about technology, and Erikka collects information to share with IT, Library Directors, and other administrators for broader, long-term planning. Delegating, for Erikka, became not a sign of weakness but a sign of situational assessment that demonstrated leadership savvy by engaging the right people at the right time for the right tasks.

Situational assessment relies on communication between leaders and among leaders and their teams. During the 2018-2019 school year, Sarah’s department rarely met, and communication just was not happening regularly. One thing became clear – if teams do not meet with some regularity, information may not be shared broadly. For Sarah, this meant she sometimes missed important information. Scheduling a meeting time that worked for everyone in three buildings and three different divisions on a 14-acre campus is difficult; working to reinstate these meetings has proved, at times, even more difficult. The support of fellow administrators proved important in communicating why the request for a full department meeting time was so important. Thus, perseverance becomes critical when working in institutions with complex schedules. Meeting takes creativity when individual teachers’ schedules make finding a shared meeting time difficult.
As things have evolved, Sarah currently does not expect to have a set meeting time at Elisabeth Morrow, but she does expect division heads to support the need for individuals to rearrange their schedules approximately once a month to meet. The other administrators understand that the time spent together, when well used, is invaluable not only for team members, but for leadership generally, because leaders do not make decisions in vacuums. Instead, they need and want input to shape plans, and if they are the final decision makers, that input helps with making informed decisions.

Leaders have to model and prioritize meetings and hold themselves and team members to honoring them. At Hotchkiss, the IT and Library Directors did this by tasking Erikka with facilitating and holding regular meetings. The meetings would include the IT service desk positions, the IT service desk manager, and Erikka. Her role was structured with the added layer of sharing information between both departments and with the directors. Meetings of the IT team had lapsed, perhaps due to the loss of the two, full-time positions and the redistribution of work. They needed to be reinstated. When lapses happen, consistent and expected meetings should be reinstated as soon as possible.

Even with the few meetings that Erikka facilitated this past school year at Hotchkiss, she felt there were positive beginnings, and she has put some structure in place for sharing information using Google Docs among the teams and the directors. With continued use, this strategy should begin to strengthen and clarify channels of communication. Erikka does believe that more communication is needed from the directors down to the team members, because the larger goals of the shared team can get waylaid by last-minute operations minutiae that, when retraced, could have been communicated differently.

ISTE sees formalizing roles and communication as intrinsic to educational leaders. Another ISTE leadership standard states that leaders must “communicate effectively with stakeholders” in order to “engage in continuous improvement” and to “celebrate successes” of the team or individual members (2017). This applies both to individual goals and the strategic plan of the department. Both must consistently happen.

REINFORCING TRUST AND COMMUNITY
Transitioning from one independent school to another, Erikka noticed that, like team meetings, the team celebrations fell to the chopping block. While important structures, such as conducting annual employee evaluations and operational strategic plans, might remain in place, few connections occur that are more social in nature. Certainly birthdays or major holidays should be acknowledged, not to mention department or personal achievements. The absence of positive gatherings may have contributed to the breakdown of regular meetings within IT or possibly to the less open mindset of the library staff to embrace change. Celebrations give any formal group a chance to gather and be comfortable with each other as people. Socializing is critical to increasing comfort among group members. Leaders must find ways to include an occasional lunch together or birthday celebration to increase the functionality of their departments. While they may seem unrelated, connecting celebrations with the goals of the department may provide a different mood and thus greater reception of new ideas. Often goals are shared during formal meetings, when perhaps giving a team a general idea and then time to think may lead to better questions and more buy-in.

In addition to celebrations, showing appreciation for what the team members do is an essential part of being a good leader. Technology support teams are often taken for granted. A good department chair, supervisor, or other leader will gain a lot of respect as a leader by taking time to appreciate the group and individuals’ actions. Departments and teams will grow stronger as feedback is given and appreciation is shown when actions are in the best interest of the school (Kouzas & Posner).

One of Sarah’s goals in bringing the library and technology departments together is to help with future transitions. Sarah has considered scenarios including the following: What happens when employees leave a company or when teachers leave their school? Do things change markedly or move forward smoothly, as though there was little change? When personalities and relationships with students have such a big impact on a classroom, it may be difficult to have a transition without some hiccups; however, with support teams, the aim should be to have structures in place that allow everything to continue as smoothly as possible. Leadership is critical to create that structure. Working in teams or departments should mean that this transition does not impact the support provided.

In addition, the academic programs should continue smoothly during any adjustment period. At the Elisabeth Morrow School, grade-level teams are expected to cover the
same curriculum. This can prove a bit harder when a team of combined departments may have multiple initiatives or curricula to follow. Also, a leader’s mentoring of the team, even informally, can have a huge impact on managing shifting responsibilities when staff members have moved on.

**CREATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING**

As the co-authors have worked through each of their processes to improve support at their schools, they have kept in mind that assessment of change is also a critical need in order to have continual support and improvement through transitions. After Erikka’s first year, she defined two goals for the 2019-20 school year, based on the key literacies of communication and shared vision setting. First, she wanted to make a shared, educational technology plan that explicitly states student learning outcomes; second, she sought to more clearly define her own role within the IT department and in relation to the other IT members, connecting each role to specific student learning outcomes from the co-created plan. In order to achieve these goals, both directors and teams will engage in gathering input this year to define what the educational technology goals should be for the school.

Clarifying how the Emerging Technology Librarian role supports or works with other roles within the IT and Academic Technology groups will improve the functioning of the whole team. Similarly, Sarah plans to optimize her team meetings as one of her goals. Sarah’s team members are housed in different buildings, and, just as in a classroom, time is lost in travel to and from spaces and settling in to a new space. Two suggestions to gain back meeting time will be tested. One is to hold virtual meetings using Google Hangouts or a similar technology to allow everyone to connect without travel. The other idea is a variation on a standing meeting. Companies use standing meetings for sharing key information without wasting time. This is literally a five- or ten-minute meeting to share information without settling into chairs or getting comfortable, which often adds potentially unnecessary time to meetings. Sarah’s variation on standing meetings may use a virtual connection rather than briefly gathering everyone in the same room.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

While The Elisabeth Morrow School and The Hotchkiss School are different in many respects, it is clear that many of the same leadership literacies have been and will continue to be used as the new integration of departments continues to evolve. It should be noted that while major changes in a school do need to be supported at multiple levels of leadership, smaller changes can be achieved and enacted by any leader who utilizes leadership literacies. Everyone can seize the opportunity to be a leader in this regard.

In the end, many leadership literacies may be required for bringing groups together to form new, functional teams. Among them are creating a vision, team building, situational assessment, reinforcing trust and community, creative problem solving, and communication. While each literacy is necessary to leadership, both Sarah and Erikka have come to realize that communication may be the most critical. Essentially, communication is the basis for all leadership work, and it serves to reinforce other leadership literacies before, during, and after any school change. Moving forward, Sarah and Erikka realize that prioritizing long-term, sustainable processes, policies, and communications will help solidify and formalize their own leadership literacies and possibly those of future leaders who come after them.

**REFERENCES**


**ERIKKA ADAMS** is the Emerging Technology Librarian at The Hotchkiss School. She works to support the community in using technology to enhance and deepen learning. She enjoys finding new ways that technology can break down research into clear steps, making it a more transparent and engaging process for students. Prior to this role, she was the Head Librarian of the Lovejoy Library at Proctor Academy in New Hampshire and, way back, she was the director of a public school library in northern Vermont.

**SARAH ROLLE** is the Director of Technology at The Elisabeth Morrow School in Englewood, New Jersey. She seeks to improve children’s experiences by supporting colleagues. She advocates the use of design thinking and a constructivist approach to learning. Also a member of the ATLIS Board of Directors, Sarah, easily spotted due to her ever-present knitting bag, identifies as a maker and enjoys creating with varied materials.
First, a little back story.

Our Academic Technology team at the Lovett School has been in transition for the past eight years. When I first began at Lovett, our roles were defined primarily as technology teachers (some were former classroom teachers) who assisted colleagues with the integration of various tech tools.

Around 2013, we began exploring the maker movement in response to several Upper School students who were interested in participating in a High Altitude Balloon Challenge. As student interest grew, even among our younger students, we began purchasing 3D printers and laser cutters while creating clubs for making and robotics. We also began having more conversations about STEM/STEAM.

The learning curve for keeping up with the transition from initiative to initiative grew steep, while several team members’ interests lay elsewhere. This dilemma, while resulting in high turnover, presented an opportunity for us to redefine our department and roles, thus allowing us to search for candidates with different skill sets in areas that were gaining traction for our school, that is, programmers, engineers, tinkerers, etc.

TIME TO ACT
As these factors converged, in 2016, our team decided that it needed a mission statement. While we loved assisting our colleagues however was needed, often we found ourselves being more responsive to minor IT troubleshooting matters rather than bringing teachers into our new makerspaces, helping colleagues design curricula, or brainstorming innovative ways to engage students.

We began by discussing our individual values, thanks to an activity on mission alignment I experienced at the ATLIS annual conference in 2017 (also repeated in 2017 at the NAIS Annual Conference as “Technology at Your Service: Building a Mission-Driven Technology Department”). The activity proved to be a remarkable way for our team members to learn more about one another individually, then discover the values we shared as we prioritized the many directions an academic technology department might take. We sought to clarify our sense of purpose as well, and in many meetings found ourselves reflecting on the things that brought us joy about our jobs, along with the things we were more aspirational about.

Unable to create a cohesive statement that the six of us felt truly epitomized our collective goals, we decided to hire a consultant, someone who could provide objective feedback and challenge us to delve deeper. After two meetings with the consultant, combined with work on our own (reading of recommended articles and lots of discussions), we settled on a mission statement that now appears at the top of all of our meeting agendas – a constant reminder of our desired purpose:

The Academic Technology team serves as catalysts to bring new ideas to teaching and learning. The team serves as a bridge from theory to practice by modeling adaptive, iterative, intentional learning to support professional growth, instructional development, and enriched student experiences. We actively collaborate with the broader Lovett community.

SPEAKING OF MEETINGS...
As we progressed on our journey, our meetings were often logistical in nature and, quite honestly, a little boring. While I was vaguely familiar with some frameworks for designing meetings, I had never personally read such books as Kevin Hoffman’s Meeting Design or Kathryn Parker Boudett and Elizabeth A. City’s Meeting Wise. In 2017, I was introduced to the work of Elena Aguilar, author of The
First, we considered “Were all of our meetings even necessary?” The team decided that they enjoyed getting together, since we now had different roles and worked in different divisions, which frequently resulted in feelings of isolation. Next, we worked together to identify the purpose and objectives of our meetings. Using our full meetings to focus on technical skills was not always ideal. What might be useful in an Upper School Engineering Class might not translate the same for a Lower School resource class. We came to a consensus that the concepts that were most beneficial to the team involved personal development of soft skills that would assist us in inspiring our colleagues to collaborate with us more frequently.

This was quite a personal undertaking, one that would uncover characteristics about ourselves that demanded vulnerability. Therefore, we established team norms and added team-building activities to our agenda to continually help us to build trust. We began every meeting with mindfulness (allowing us to center ourselves and set personal intentions for the meeting) and some type of team-building activity that could result in greater camaraderie. While some team members liked the activities we would embark upon, a few made it clear that the “touchy-feely” parts of our meetings made them uncomfortable. Eventually, these nay-sayers came around, acknowledging the benefits that resulted when we truly trusted and supported each other.

STRENGTHS AND SHADOW STRENGTHS
In an effort to determine where to begin with our soft skills work, we all took the Clifton StrengthsFinder assessment (Rath, 2017), which “helps individuals identify, understand and maximize their strengths.” There are thirty-four strengths sorted into four themes – Strategic Thinking, Executing, Influencing, and Relationship Building. Analyzing our teams’ results, we were able to identify strengths in each other that would help those of us who weren’t as strong in the same areas. For example, if a team member was great at ideation (Strategic Thinking) but not so great with achieving (Executing), that person could benefit from partnering with someone skilled at making things happen. Early on, a colleague commented that they really appreciated the assessment because, typically, they would focus on skills that need improvement, rather than skills that allow them to maximize their talents.

Now, too much of a good thing can also be bad (think chocolate), so we also learned about the “shadow side of strengths” (Harrison, 2015), recommended by our new Head of School. A shadow side occurs when a strength used in the extreme can be self-defeating rather than productive.

In addition to building our trust and examining our collective strengths, we worked diligently on our communication skills. We had heard from colleagues on more than one occasion that conversing with members of our team could be difficult when the language became too technical. Therefore, we wanted to make sure that we were skillful communicators (listeners and speakers), ensuring that the objectives of the teachers were heard and that our suggestions were understood in lay terms. Therefore, listening activities (i.e., active listening, enhanced listening, empathy loops, etc.) were incorporated into several of our meetings as we created a collaboration protocol shared with teachers in advance to keep detailed notes together while planning projects.

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE
In the spring of 2018, I attended a leadership panel where a government official informed the audience about how emotional intelligence (EQ) is at times more important than intellectual intelligence in professional situations. After conducting a little research and skimming Emotional Intelligence 2.0 (2019), I realized how much sense this concept made. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, emotional intelligence is “the capacity to be aware of, control, and express one’s emotions, and to handle interpersonal relationships judiciously and empathetically.” As academic technologists, so much of our role depends on collaborating with our colleagues. Based on first-hand observations as well as informal feedback I received from colleagues outside of the team, I felt it was important for my team to learn how to better handle interpersonal relationships. Therefore, I proposed the idea of exploring the topic together. With full agreement, again, we allowed ourselves to be vulnerable by looking around our individual strengths and weaknesses around the concept of EQ.

FINAL THOUGHTS
As a leader of the Lovett School’s Academic Technology team for three years, where we have welcomed a new hire every year, I have discovered that one of my own strengths — adaptability — has been an asset. My StrengthFinders assessment tells me that I am, “at heart, a very flexible person who can stay productive when the demands of work are pulling ... in many different directions at once” (Rath,
There were times when I had nailed down specific goals for my team, yet had to make adjustments based on their needs or our institution’s desires. In the process, my own communication skills and emotional intelligence has been sharpened. More importantly, we have had to work intentionally to ensure that new members of our team feel valued.

I cannot stress enough the benefit of team building. Without it, our team would not possess the level of trust needed to explore opportunities of growth in a non-judgemental environment. Finally, it is imperative to ask regularly for feedback. While I would like to think that I consistently make wise decisions when it comes to the team’s needs, their input is key to our group’s success. I am honored to serve a team that allows me to try new things and learn alongside them.

REFERENCES

STACIA MCFADDEN currently serves as Director of Academic Technology at the Lovett School in Atlanta, Georgia, where she has worked since 2011. During her 14 years of working in independent schools, she has served as Director of Summer Programs, co-chaired Faculty Equity and Inclusion (formerly Diversity) committees, co-taught Middle School mathematics, coached Middle School tennis, sponsored student affinity groups, and more. Stacia holds a BS in Computer Science from Elizabeth City State University (NC) and an MA in Computing in Education from Columbia’s Teachers College.
I have been thinking a lot about how we create strong communities in our schools – communities where being collegial and helping each other grow moves past simply being congenial; communities where folks are invested and are active participants in improvement; communities where we have a clear, shared purpose that moves us forward. Here are a few books that I have read recently to explore those ideas.

*The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups*  
by Daniel Coyle  
New York: Random House, 2018

The book examines the language, practices, and habits that allow people to do their best creative and collaborative work. I love this book because not only does each chapter have a great narrative with compelling examples, but it also offers “ideas for action” so that you’re able to instantly apply these concepts in the workplace. It is kind of like a TLDR (too long didn’t read) for each major concept.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

If you lead a team, you should read this book. Coyle breaks down his text into three key skills that anyone looking to lead or to build a highly functional team should strive for.

**Build Safety**  
The first and perhaps most crucial skill is to build safety. Particularly where we are asking our teams for creativity, the ability for teams to feel safe with one another is absolutely critical. Coyle stresses that safety doesn’t come before vulnerability – we build safety by being vulnerable with each other. As a leader, it is your job to be vulnerable first.

**Share Vulnerability**  
Highly effective teams feel safe to be vulnerable with each other in order to do their best work. This section stresses the importance that the leader should strive for candor, not brutal honesty. We should listen “like a trampoline” (actively) and not “like a sponge” (passively).

**Establish Purpose**  
The most highly successful professional cultures have a strong sense of mission and purpose. Coyle stresses that you can’t overstate your purpose and advocates that we be super clear about our goals and priorities.

*The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why it Matters*  
by Priya Parker  
New York: Riverhead Books, 2019

*The Art of Gathering* is neither a business book nor a leadership book, but it has some great takeaways that can be applied to your work. Often when we plan to gather people together, we focus too much on the logistics when we should be focusing on the real human connections that gatherings offer. This includes your weekly staff meetings! While this book might not be your normal choice for professional reading, it truly does offer some insights that I know I will be applying to my next faculty meeting and my next dinner party.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

**Decide Why You’re Really Gathering**  
Every gathering, be it your opening faculty meeting or your child’s birthday party, should have a clearly defined purpose. Most of us have experienced meetings for the sake of meetings and know how ineffective they can be for...
our organizations. This book offers suggestions on how you can make your meetings more meaningful.

Close Doors
The people we choose to exclude from a meeting can be just as important as the people we decide to include.

Don’t Be a “Chill Host”
I’ve seen this time and time again in my professional career. People often believe that if we get a group of thoughtful and like-minded folks into the same room, then that group will facilitate themselves and accomplish great work. Unfortunately, I have never seen this happen, and neither has the author. Parker says that when we relinquish control over our gatherings, we leave a power vacuum which someone else is likely to fill...and not in the way we intended. Instead, she advocates for “generous authority”; that is, the host should have a clear, thoughtful purpose and should create an environment that allows the group to do its best work.

Create a Temporary Alternative World
This one might feel like a bit of a stretch, but one of the ways that we can exercise “generous authority” is by asking meeting participants to abide by a set of rules or norms. This can be as simple as asking your team to quickly share their mindset when beginning a meeting so that everyone knows where they are coming from, or it could involve asking meeting participants to only speak once until everyone else has had a chance.

Never Start with Logistics
You know how when you’re watching a show, and instead of starting with the opening credits, it begins with a compelling scene that foreshadows the topic of the episode? That is a soft open, and you should do it in your meetings. Instead of jumping into logistics or telling people about their parking spot for the year, take advantage of those first few moments together to connect. Parker has some great suggestions:

- Keep your best self out of my gathering: Parker, like others in the leadership field, emphasizes the importance of connection, and one of the ways that we connect most is through sharing vulnerability. I highly recommend her “fifteen toasts” activity!
- Cause good controversy: In independent schools, we can sometimes choose to be congenial rather than collegial with one another. Good controversy that is created using generous authority can help propel a group forward.

- Accept that there is an end: Just like opening is a powerful moment in a meeting, so is closing. Take some time at the end of each meeting to reflect, share gratitude, and connect before, of course, ending on time.

Switch: How to Change When Change is Hard
by Chip Heath and Dan Heath

This book was recommended by a friend who read it as part of the required reading for an executive MBA program. While this book is clearly geared toward the corporate environment, it has some interesting insights into human motivation and strategies that appeal to both peoples’ rational and emotional sides when navigating change.

KEY TAKEAWAYS
Central to this text is an analogy about human willpower and motivation, which Chip and Dan Heath likened to the relationship between a rider and an elephant. The rider represents a person’s rational side and willpower, while the elephant represents a person’s feelings and emotions. The core idea is that the rider’s control is tenuous, and if the elephant wants something badly enough, there is no amount of tugging on the reins that the rider can do to stop it from getting its way. This book provides strategies for addressing change that appeal to both the rational and emotional sides of our communities.

Direct the Rider
To be successful, riders need to know where to go, so clarity from leadership is key. The authors provide clear strategies and examples for communicating effectively with your team’s rational side.

Motivate the Elephant
Change leadership often means getting folks invested in the change we are trying to undertake. If we can appeal to people’s emotions, “the elephant,” and help them to see how this change will benefit students, for example, they are more likely to follow the directions of “the rider.”

Shape the Path
Ultimately, we need to make it as easy as possible for the rider to direct the elephant on the desired path. Some-
times it’s not really a people problem, but rather a problem with structures or processes within our schools. This chapter provides strategies for identifying roadblocks to change within our organizations.

Dare to Lead: Brave Work. Tough Conversations. Whole Hearts.
by Brene Brown
New York: Random House, 2018

Brene Brown has written and spoken extensively on the power of vulnerability and risk taking to inform our lives, and now she has applied her research to leadership in this book. The title comes from Teddy Roosevelt’s speech, “The Man in the Arena”:

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly....

Brown advocates that we should bring our whole selves into every aspect of our lives, including the workplace. I personally enjoy Brown’s work, and though she may not be everyone’s cup of tea, there are some real gems in this book.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Even though Brown’s work can feel a bit like a self-help workbook at times, I have found myself referencing this book with colleagues and returning to some of the concepts again and again.

“Rumbling with Vulnerability”
Brown names two behaviors that I have seen throughout my career but could never name. I think you have probably experienced these as well. The first one Brown calls “the invisible army.” This is when someone says that “people” or “teachers” or “parents” or perhaps just even “they” won’t like a particular decision or change, but in reality is generalizing their own opinion to a much larger group. The second Brown calls “cheap seat feedback.”

These are comments from the people in the stands, the critics who are not actually in the arena doing the work. To deal with these critics, Brown suggests an activity she calls “the square squad.” Take a one-inch square piece of paper and write down all of the names of the people whose opinions you truly value. These are people who are “in the arena,” showing up and taking risks alongside you. You only have time and energy for the opinions of so many people, so you should make the important ones count.

Living into Our Values
Brown suggests that to truly bring our whole selves to our work, we have to realize that we are the same person with the same values at work and at home.

Braving Trust
To work effectively in teams, we need to establish trusting relationships in which we feel safe being vulnerable. Brown provides the helpful acronym BRAVING to help us do just that. It stands for Boundary setting, Reliability, Accountability, Vault-closing, Integrity, Non-Judgement, and Generosity.

Depending upon your team and your goals, each of these books offers strategies that you can incorporate into your leadership toolkit. More than tips, theories, and meeting ideas, these texts have a common theme that I plan to embrace as a leader this school year – that is, to establish trust, take risks, and share vulnerability, always honoring the individual and the institution.

If you’re interested in talking about any of these books, or about change leadership in general, I would love to hear from you!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
LISA LAMONT is a graduate of the inaugural ECATD cohort. She is a conversation leader for the ATLIS Reads Book Seminar on leadership literacies in 2019-2020, and she introduced many of the books mentioned in this review in her Summer Reading webinar on change leadership for ATLIS. As Director of Innovation and Institutional Learning at Hopkins School, Lisa has led change efforts related to technology, classroom design, and the school schedule; she is currently working to found an institute for innovation at her school.
ON THE TOPIC OF LEADERSHIP

It’s Within Reach, but How to Know Where to Grasp?

CHRISTINA LEWELLEN, CAE | Executive Director, ATLIS

With web searches, downloadable texts, podcasts, and on-demand videos at our fingertips at any time of the day, leadership best practices are certainly within reach of today’s independent school leaders. With enough time to review, digest, and compare all of the leadership collateral available, we might all expect to be leadership experts and know how to tackle any strategic challenge or navigate any political landmine. But time is the critical component here, and I don’t get the sense that independent school technologists are drowning in excess time to curate and collect.

Because of this dynamic, it’s important for the technology leaders’ community to work together to sift and sort what might be relevant to the independent school setting and share successful approaches they’ve employed as leaders in their schools. We’ve learned to lean on each other for technology-specific solutions; perhaps now is the time to raise the collective bar on the leadership front.

A JUGGLING ACT
I’ll admit that it’s hard to keep all the leadership experts and their theories straight. Like you, I’m quick to pick up the latest bestseller or listen to a Ted Talk from a speaker who has gotten some buzz. I consume audiobooks and podcasts as I navigate airports, and I participate in professional development sessions as often as I can. It’s the volume of all the resources and chatter, I’m certain, that makes the collective body of “leadership literature” somewhat overwhelming. Where does one start to up one’s leadership game?

What we hear continuously from the technology leaders serving independent schools is that time is their most precious commodity. In the interest of streamlining the conversation and saving you time, here are some of the leadership mantras I’ve come to value that I believe are relevant to the independent school community.

#1 Leadership Is a Marathon...
Perhaps nowhere is lifelong learning more celebrated than in the independent school world. We empower our students to harness the breadth of information available to them to help them understand the world in which they operate. It’s a valuable lesson to take into adulthood, and we must carve out time to put this into practice in our own busy lives.

This marathon of lifelong learning is particularly relevant in the realm of leadership literacy. Most leadership best sellers are designed to be consumed during an afternoon or on a cross-country plane ride. Authors in this realm know we’re busy, so they’re getting better at getting to the point quickly. Some of
my favorite quick leadership reads lately have been *It Doesn’t Have to Be Crazy at Work* by David Heinemeier Hansson and *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why it Matters* by Priya Parker.

Fresh leadership ideas are useful, but I would encourage everyone to save some space to return to your classic leadership resources as well. I recently re-read *Good to Great* by Jim Collins, and it was an incredibly useful reminder of my leadership roots. I appreciate Collins’s commitment to research and data. Case studies are an effective way to learn from others’ mistakes. You may not serve as the technology leader for a Fortune 500 company, but what leadership lessons can you draw from this space to elevate your leadership competencies in your school?

I happen to be a book and audiobook person, but there are many formats that can deliver a leadership education – videos, online articles, discussions with colleagues. Pick what works best for you as you train for your leadership marathon.

**#2 Leadership Is Risky...**

You’ve read the book, watched the Ted Talk, or listened to the podcast. You’re armed with leadership greatness. But stepping forward to be a thought leader or to demonstrate leadership with a team takes a certain amount of confidence and bravery. Truth be told, it can be a risky move.

Depending on the structure of your school, carving out your role as a leader is likely easier said than done. It’s important to remember that you don’t have to be a Head of School or a department head to be a great leader. Leadership can come from anywhere, and it often emanates from the person who wants what’s best for the school community. If you are a level or several levels down from the top administration at your school, you can be a leader. In fact, this is all the more reason you should invest in skills that can make you stand out.

**#3 ...And the Payoffs Can Be Significant.**

Demonstrating leadership, regardless of the role you fill, can result in ripple effects in your organization. If you invest in studying various aspects of leadership, you’ll start forming your own leadership profile. This means you’ll craft a definition of leadership that means something to you. Is leadership being a good model of ethics and productivity? Does it mean inspiring your technology team to serve a distinct and indispensable role at your school? Does it mean viewing the success of your students and educators through a strategic lens?

Defining what leadership means to you and then honing the skills to behave and think in ways that are aligned with this philosophy can elevate your position in the school’s ecosystem. The payoff for your investment in leadership literacy can be significant.

**#4 Everyone’s Leadership Language Is Different.**

Just as a common language may be spoken with different dialects, leadership, too, is a language that can have slight variations or accents from person to person, or even school to school. The leadership competencies that brought you success in your last school environment may not translate to your current one.

I would urge you to find a voice that resonates with you. What does this mean? What might be useful for early-career professionals may fall on deaf ears with more experienced leaders. Further, certain issues may suit your leadership personality more than others. For example, I happen to appreciate the leadership voice of Howard Schultz (and I swear it has nothing to do with my Starbucks addiction). I like that he goes against the grain when he thinks something is the right thing to do. So I tend to pick up his books when they come out.

I appreciate women leaders’ perspectives, so I was quick to turn to Melinda Gates’s *The Moment of Lift*, and I often carve out time to study the latest from Facebook’s Sheryl Sandburg.
Which issues speak to you? How can you elevate your leadership game with issues that catch and hold your attention? Channel those interests into your leadership profile. You’ll find that your own leadership voice will start demonstrating its own accent.

**TURN TO ATLIS**
The Association of Technology Leaders in Independent Schools has taken strides this year to elevate our leadership literacy offerings. We’ve empowered members to have their say in the content for our 2020 Annual Conference with a crowdsourcing process that ensures the agenda reflects their current professional development needs—including in the realm of leadership.

This issue of *Access Points* places a heavy focus on leadership issues as they apply to technology leaders. We’ve included the perspectives of several notable community leaders who have unpacked topics such as the evolution of technology leadership and strategic planning for the future.

The association also recently launched ATLIS Reads 2020: A Book Seminar for Technology Thought Leaders on Leadership Literacy. This multi-part webinar series explores texts that experienced technology leaders have found valuable on their leadership journeys. They’ve digested the salient points and shared the ways in which they’ve successfully applied the concepts as leaders at their schools.

Don’t forget that roadblocks you hit along the way in your leadership journey can be minimized when you draw on the collective knowledge of the independent school technology community. Get involved with ATLIS events or join the vibrant SLACK conversations happening every day. Your peers will likely help you shape your leadership personality, and can give you guidance to challenges you face along the way.

Over time, as you solidify your leadership presence, you may find that you’re the person guiding the conversations happening in the ATLIS community. That is a good indication that your lifelong leadership marathon is coming along at a good pace.

**CHRISTINA LEWELLEN** is a seasoned association executive who has served industries ranging from window manufacturers to court reporters to proposal writers. She brings a data-driven framework to business planning and strategy, having earned her MBA from the Rochester Institute of Technology and the Certified Association Executive designation from the American Society of Association Executives. She was named the Executive Director of ATLIS in 2019, and she serves in a variety of ways as an advocate for independent schools and their leadership teams. She and her family live in Virginia; she tweets at @christinaATLIS.
MAKE TIME

MONTHLY LIVE CHATS
FEATURED WEBINARS
2ND & 3RD WEDNESDAYS
1 PM EASTERN
REGISTER: THEATLIS.ORG

ATLIS
Association of Technology Leaders in Independent Schools
4 Weems Lane #257
Winchester, VA 22601