

River Valley School

Student Consultant, Amish Bhatt
Community Partner, Gina Quintana

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

River Valley started out as a home schooling cooperative in 2000 and is now in its first academic year as a privately licensed school. It is located on the second floor of the Wilkins School Community Center in Swissvale. This community center is situated at the corner of South Braddock Avenue and Charleston Street in Swissvale.

River Valley states its mission as “*providing an educational environment in which academic excellence, artistic expression, and cooperative learning cultivate each child’s potential to become a competent and caring individual in a living democracy*”.

The school serves families in the greater Pittsburgh children in preschool through grade 4 who would like their children to be educated in the environment provided at River Valley. There are currently 18 students enrolled at the school. The school plans to expand to 40 students for the next academic year. Admission to the school for a given academic year is obtained by submitting an application during the previous spring.

There are a total of five rooms that are currently occupied by the school. One of these rooms is divided between the community partner’s office and a computer room that houses the school’s four computers, a printer and a printer/scanner/fax machine. Three of the other rooms are used as classrooms. Each classroom is capable of holding about 25 students. The last room is about half the size of the other classrooms and it contains the school’s library as well as an area that can fit about 10 people.

The programs at River Valley can be divided into 3 categories:

- Classes for Students
- Classes that are Open to the Community
- Special Events

Classes for Students

River Valley offers classes in pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and grades 1 through 4. These classes are focused on disciplines like reading, woodworking, foreign language, and painting. One example of how education at River Valley differs from education at traditional schools is that the school believes in exposing children to languages at a very young age and has Spanish and Mandarin as a part of its curriculum.

Classes that are Open to the Community

These classes are offered as a part of River Valley’s effort to reach out to the community. They include classes in foreign languages that are open to the general public at a very low cost. The languages included in this program are Spanish, French, Italian, Arabic and Mandarin. There are also classes in knitting and crafting that are offered.

Special Events

There are also special events that are held at the school. One recent event was the Wintertide Heritage Celebration. This event included programs involving winter celebrations from several different cultures. Another ongoing series of events at the school is a series of international storytelling sessions where

storytellers are invited to the school to present stories and symbols from different cultures. This summer the school will hold a summer camp for children from mid-June through late August.

The community partner, Gina Quintana, is the executive director of the school. She is also a member of the board of trustees, which has a total of five members. In addition to these people, there is also an educational director who is part of the executive staff of the school. As executive director, the community partner's responsibilities include listening to and working with the board of trustees, managing the teaching staff, and overseeing the school's finances along with the treasurer. She is also the primary person in charge of hiring and she is the person who interacts with parents and the media on behalf of the school.

The teaching staff at the school is composed of a primary teacher, a kindergarten teacher, a nursery teacher, an after school teacher, a handwork teacher, a foreign language teacher, a nursery assistant, a woodworking teacher, a music teacher and a watercolor teacher. There is also a treasurer on the school's staff who is part of the administrative support staff. In addition to her executive role, the educational director also plays a role in administrative support.

At this time, River Valley doesn't actively pursue funding from the community or from private organizations. Their annual operating budget is \$80,000. Their primary sources of funding are the tuition of the students and private donations.

TECHNOLOGY SITUATION

The school currently uses computers for the following tasks:

- Maintaining a Mailing List
- Financial Accounting
- Internet Access and Email
- File Backup
- Making Fliers and Newsletters

Maintaining a Mailing List

The community partner maintains a database of the school's contacts in Microsoft Works. The contacts in this database are mainly parents of current students or parents who have expressed interest in the school at some point even if their children don't attend. Entries contain names, addresses, phone numbers and sometimes email addresses. The database is currently used exclusively to print out mailing labels for mailing out the school's newsletter.

Financial Accounting

The school's treasurer uses Peachtree accounting software to handle the school's finances and to pay the school's bills.

Internet Access and Email

The school maintains an email account on Yahoo! for all the school's email needs. This includes communicating with parents, professional contacts or anyone else who needs to be emailed. Gina Quintana handles the email account. In addition to using it for email purposes the school also uses the Internet to research information that is pertinent to the school.

File Backup

The school also uses a two-computer network that it has to back up files. The community partner is the person who backs up the files by saving them on both computers.

Making Fliers and Newsletters

The community partner uses Microsoft Publisher to design fliers to promote special events at the school. These fliers are usually printed out at a copy store and then put up in the community to promote the school. The community partner also uses Microsoft Publisher to design the newsletters that are sent out to all the people on the school's mailing list.

At the beginning of the consulting period, the school had four computers. One of these was recently donated and had not been set up yet. One of these, the IBM, was set up to access the Internet using a dial-up modem. A third computer, the Compaq, was the computer with the Peachtree financial software installed on it. The fourth computer, the Gateway, was the computer that was used for word processing or use of Microsoft Publisher. This is also the computer that was used to maintain the database. The Gateway and the Compaq computers were connected in a network and they shared access to the school's HP Deskjet Printer. The exact specifications of each of these computers can be found in Appendix A.1.

The school does not have an official manager of technology. However, the community partner is the person who is actually responsible for managing the technical environment of the school. This is a result of the fact that the school is a recent start up so, as the executive director, the community partner plays many roles in the organization. She organizes computer use and maintains the database. She often seeks the help of students' parents in troubleshooting any minor computer issues that arise.

PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The main problems and opportunities regarding technology that were identified at the beginning of the consulting period were:

- Organization of the Technical Environment
- Increasing Public Visibility and Public Communication
- Owning an Internet Service Account
- Computers in the Classroom

Organization of the Technical Environment

Each computer that was set up was used for a specific purpose and was not currently capable of being used for other purposes that the other two computers were used for. The computer with the highest performance capability was not set up and was not being used. The slower machines could have been eliminated from the technical environment if the faster machines were made capable of handling the tasks that the slower machines were used for. This problem arose as a result of the fact that the computers were set up with functionality in mind as opposed to efficiency. Since the full desired functionality was available, no efforts were made to change the organization because the functionality could have been jeopardized. The IBM computer that was set up at the school had very poor specifications and it was being used only because the dial-up Internet access that had been set up on it wasn't set up on any other computer. The Compaq was being used even though it froze all the time only because it was the only computer that had Peachtree accounting software installed on it.

Increasing Public Visibility and Public Communication

An opportunity that existed concerning technology use at the school was that technology had not been used to a great extent to enhance the public visibility of the school and to allow the school to communicate with parents and the community. The school needs to communicate with parents and the community in order to promote special events happening at the school, to provide information about the school to people who would potentially be interested in the school and to update parents on what is

currently going on at the school. Microsoft Publisher was being used to make fliers that were then printed and put up around the community but this was the only way that technology was involved in communication with the public. There were clear opportunities for using technology to communicate with the public, such as developing a website, that had not been pursued by the school. This problem was a result of the heavy workload of the staff at the school. Because the school works with a limited budget, the staff is very busy and they are often so caught up in the daily operation of the school that they feel that they don't have the time to develop new technology to expand the school's capabilities.

Owning and Internet Service Account

Another problem at the school was that it didn't own its own Internet service account. The school had the permission of one of the student's parents to access the Internet through the parent's account and this is how the school accessed the Internet. This was a problem because any change in the status of the parent's account would drastically impact the technological capacity of the school. This situation came about because the school needed to develop an Internet access capability on its limited budget and this opportunity arose.

Computers in the Classroom

Another opportunity to use technology at the school was with respect to the fact that computers were not involved at all in the classroom although there are definitely ways that computers could be integrated into the curriculum to supplement the programs at the school and to enhance the educational environment at the school. This had not yet been pursued because the school is still young and in the process of establishing itself. As time goes by, the curriculum will probably develop and become more diverse and the school may become interested in using computers in the classroom.

THE CONSULTING SITUATION

The scope of work that was chosen was aimed at addressing three problems:

- Organization of the Technical Environment
- Lack of Public Visibility and Public Communication
- Owning an Internet Service Account

Organization of the Technical Environment

The fact that the technical environment wasn't organized efficiently was significant because efficient organization would have allowed the computers to be used more conveniently and effectively and also because it would have been difficult to build upon the technical environment in the future since it wasn't organized effectively. The consulting work in this area was focused on consolidating and better organizing the technical environment of the school with the community partner and to make sure that the community partner would be fully capable of manipulating the technical environment independently in the future.

The first step that was taken was to remove the Peachtree software that was on the Compaq computer. Once this was done, the monitor of the Compaq was disconnected and the 400 MHZ computer was set up to use that monitor. Once this was done, the 400 MHZ computer was configured to have the same dial-up Internet access that the IBM was configured to have. Once this was done, both the IBM and the Compaq were disconnected. In order to set up the 400 MHZ computer in a network with the Gateway the way the Compaq was set up before the network card from the Compaq was removed and installed in the 400 MHZ computer. Then the network configurations on both the Gateway and the 400 MHZ computer were set so that the network would operate just like before, except now with the 400 MHZ in the place of the Compaq. After all this was done, the IBM was donated to another organization and the Compaq was thrown away.

Expected Outcomes

It was expected that this work would result in the school having only its best two computers set up while still being able to do everything that they were previously able to do. It was also expected that by working alongside with the consultant on the technical environment would increase the community partner's confidence to work on the technical environment independently in the future.

Lack of Public Visibility and Public Communication

The second task was focused on addressing the opportunity to use technology to improve public communication and visibility. The goal of the work in this area was to initiate a website development program at River Valley School. In order to do this, the community partner and the consultant researched web host and domain name registration services on the Internet. Then the community partner registered the domain name, www.rivervalleyschool.net, and signed up for web hosting services with NetFronts.com. After this was done, the school purchased Macromedia Web Studio, a software suite used for web development. Once the software was acquired, the consultant worked with the community partner to teach her how to build and manipulate web pages using Web Studio. In addition, an ftp program was downloaded and the community partner learned how to ftp files back and forth between her computer and the web server so she could display her pages on the school's site. Finally, the community partner set up and put online a basic webpage for River Valley School that she can continue to build upon in the future.

Expected Outcomes

It was expected that this task would result in a basic website being established and it would result in the community partner having a working knowledge of how to set up and maintain a web site and how to use Macromedia Web Studio to make web pages. The initiation of this web development program would mean that people who would be interested in finding information about River Valley School would now have a means of finding it and learning about it. It would also allow the school to reach a greater audience in the promotion of events that are going on at the school. Finally, it would give the school a strong connection with parents where information and current events could be communicated regularly.

Owning an Internet Service Account

The remaining part of the consulting work was focused on establishing an Internet service account that was owned by the school. In order to do this, first research was done on the Internet to find providers that offered Internet service accounts in the school's price range. Once some providers were identified, their features were compared and Hawk Communications was selected as a provider. The community partner then signed up for an Internet service account for River Valley School with Hawk Communications.

Expected Outcomes

It was expected that the work in this area would result in the school owning its own Internet service account thereby increasing their self-sufficiency. It was also expected that if any problems were to arise with the new account, the community partner would be able to find a new provider as a result of the research that was done before establishing the account.

ANALYSIS OF OUTCOMES

Problem: Organization of Technical Environment

One area that was focused on during the consulting period was the improvement of the organization of the technical environment at River Valley School. Prior to this project, there were four computers at the school. Three of them were set up and each of these was used for a specific task. The fourth computer was the most advanced computer owned by the school but it was not set up. One of the consulting goals in this area was to consolidate the technical environment so that only the better computers would be used

and so that these computers would be set up to handle all the functions required by the school. Another goal was to put the community partner in a position where she understands how to manipulate the technical environment and feels comfortable doing so.

Consulting Task: Consolidate and Improve the Capacity to Manipulate the Technical Environment

The following was accomplished:

- The technical environment of the school is now set up so that only the school's two best computers are being used, and they are set up to handle all of the computer needs of the school.
- These two computers are connected in a network so files can be shared between the computers
- The school's HP Deskjet printer is also connected to this network so printing can be done from either computer.
- In addition to the new organization of the technical environment, this part of the consulting work also has resulted in the community partner having an increased knowledge and understanding of the set up of the technical environment and the manipulation of the technical environment. In this project the community partner did all of the technical work involved in reorganizing the technical environment. This included removing and installing software, disconnecting and connecting computers and peripherals, removing and installing an ethernet card and configuring network settings and dial-up settings. She can now feel more confident in working independently with the technical environment.

Evidence of Increased Capacity and Sustainability

- The school now uses more reliable, faster machines to do work that they were doing on less reliable, slower machines before.
- The school's computer equipment is now better organized, making it easier to manipulate in the future.
- The school previously relied on outside contacts to help set up new equipment when it was donated or to troubleshoot equipment problems when they occurred. However, the community partner has done a considerable amount of equipment work in this project and she can now set up equipment and troubleshoot some problems on her own without seeking the help of outside contacts. This means that the school can now set things up in the manner that it considers optimal as opposed to the manner preferred by some outside contact. It also means that the school is more self-sufficient because it can manipulate the technical environment on its own.
- When it comes time to add to the technical environment or manipulate it in some other respect, the community partner will have the ability to manipulate it on her own. When new equipment is donated it can be put into use more rapidly than before because the community partner can do it herself instead of seeking outside help in doing this. This will cause the school to pursue donations more actively because there is a better idea of what will be needed and how to use what is needed.

Recommendations

One recommendation is that the school use the scanning capability of the fax/scanner/printer that it has. The school currently only uses the fax capability of the fax/scanner/printer that it owns, but a scanner could be very useful to the school and can easily be set up by the community partner with the knowledge that she currently has. The scanner wasn't set up during the consulting period because the school didn't have an extra cable to connect the scanner to the network and it didn't feel the cost was worth setting up the scanner because the community partner has access to a scanner at her home. However, it would increase the capacity of the school if they had their own scanning capability set up and they were not dependent on the community partner for scanning capability even though she is the executive director. The consultant and the community partner have already discussed the process of connecting the scanner to the network and setting up the software for the scanner on the 400 MHZ computer so that the scanner could be used. It is recommended that the school actively pursues donation of a cable or adds \$10.00 to its budget for the purchase of a cable so that the scanner could be set up. The scanner could be used for

scanning pictures for the school's newsletter, something currently done on the community partner's home scanner, as well as scanning pictures to be used by the school in online applications.

A second recommendation that is being made in this area is that the school actively pursues new computer equipment now that the community partner has an increased ability to set up new equipment. The school currently relies on private contacts, such as parents, to donate equipment to the school. However, there are organizations that work exclusively with non-profits to provide free computer equipment or low cost computer equipment. With the increased understanding of computer specifications and technical environment manipulation that the school has as a result of this project, the school could greatly benefit from seeking out these organizations and trying to work with them now and in the future to get newer equipment. This will allow the school to update its technical environment as time passes as well as to improve its technical environment because more equipment or better equipment will allow the school to expand its computer use.

Resources

As mentioned, the community partner and the consultant have already discussed how to connect the scanner. The consultant will write out the process that was discussed and provide the community partner with this write up. This write up can be used for reference or for troubleshooting when the community partner obtains a cable and attempts to set up the scanner.

There are several web sites that River Valley School may find useful in developing an active pursuit of new computer equipment.

<http://www.yellowbugcomputers.com/nonprofit.html>

This is the web site of a company that works with non-profits to help them procure new computer equipment. It allows the non-profits access to a database of available equipment as well as to links to other information about obtaining equipment that the school may find useful. It also will allow the school to advertise what equipment it is looking for so that someone with that equipment can donate it or sell it to the school at a low cost.

<http://www.computers.fed.gov/school/eligible.asp>

This is a web site where the school can go to register for a federal program that provides computers to eligible schools. The school should first verify its eligibility using the information at the site. It can then get information about the program and register at the site.

<http://www.npware.org/links.html>

This is a web site with an extensive list of links to resources for non-profit organizations. Many of these links deal with technology and some of them deal specifically with obtaining computer equipment. In addition to resources specific to this recommendation, the school may find many other useful resources from this web site as well.

In addition to these web sites, the school should attempt to contact other non-profit private schools, perhaps ones that have been established longer, to find information about how they get new computer equipment. There are probably other schools with extensive experience in this area that would be willing to share information with River Valley School.

Problem: Increasing Public Visibility and Public Communication

A second area that was considered during this project was that the school had a very limited visibility to the public and a very limited ability to communicate with the public. The consulting project aimed at using technology to improve the visibility and ability to communicate of the school by establishing a web site program at the school.

Consulting Task: Develop Web Site

The following was accomplished:

- Researched and selected a web development software suite: Macromedia Web Studio
- Discovered how River Valley School qualifies for significant price discounts in purchasing software.
- Registered a domain name **www.rivervalleyschool.net**
- Signed up for a two-year web-hosting contract with NetFronts.com
- Downloaded an FTP (file transfer protocol) program; learned to use it (see Appendix A.2)
- Designed and implemented a webpage @ <http://www.rivervalleyschool.net>
- Solved software problems using the program's documentation (manual and online help) and by talking with the company's technical support representatives.
- Determining content, design and plan for implementing entire web site.

Evidence of Increased Capacity and Sustainability

- The school now has a homepage with basic information about the school that is readily available to any interested party via the Internet. This means that the public visibility of the school has increased because anybody who desires information about the school can get it from the Internet. It also provides the school with a medium to present information directly to the public, so the ability of the school to communicate with the public has increased. Also, the school now owns web development software and the community partner knows how to use it so the website capabilities of the school have greatly increased.
- A final way in which increased capacity is evident is in the Macromedia Web Studio purchase that was made by the school. In researching this purchase before making it, the consultant and the community partner discovered that as a non-profit school, River Valley qualifies for significant price discounts in purchasing software. This allowed the school to purchase Web Studio at a significantly discounted price from the normal price. More importantly though, the knowledge that the school qualifies for these discounts that the community partner has gained will motivate the purchase of new software in the future and will assure that the school gets the best deals on future software purchases.
- The community partner is very excited about working with the website and she sees a lot of potential benefits that the website can provide. This excitement means that she will be motivated to continue developing the web site in the future.

Recommendations

One recommendation that is being made concerning the web site development program is for the school to submit its web site to major Internet search engines. This service is included in the web-hosting contract that the school has signed up for. This can be done using the user menus that are present at the web-hosting site. The community partner and the consultant have looked at these menus and discussed how to do this. It was not done as part of the project because the community partner would still like to develop the site further before submitting it to search engines.

A second recommendation is that once the school has designed and built a full web site and placed this web site online it hires someone to help the school put a form on its web site that can be filled out by visitors with their contact information. This contact information can be added to the school's database so that its newsletters and other informational items can be distributed to a wider audience. Because building a web site with forms where information can be submitted and then put in a database requires significant programming in a language like PHP or JavaScript, doing this is beyond the scope of work that can be done by the community partner or anyone else at the school. However, the school shouldn't have to hire a professional because this is a job that many college students would be able to do. Therefore,

the school should attempt to get a student from Carnegie Mellon University, Duquesne University, or the University of Pittsburgh to come in and help the school with this task when the time comes.

Resources

As mentioned, the consultant and the community partner have already discussed how to submit the school's web site to major search engines. The consultant will write up a detailed outline of this process and provide the community partner with a copy of this write up that she can use for reference or troubleshooting when carrying out this task independently.

The following web sites are also helpful resources:

<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/career>

This is the web site of the career center at Carnegie Mellon University. The school can go to this web site to obtain information about getting a student to come to the school to help with web site development. The contact information for the person at the career center who can help the school get a student to get involved is:

Pati Kravetz, Coordinator, Campus Employment & Special Projects
412-268-7052
pk13@andrew.cmu.edu.

<http://www.hr.duq.edu>

This is the web site to the human resources department at Duquesne University. The school can go to this web site to obtain information about getting a student to come to the school to help with web site development.

<http://www.hr.pitt.edu/default.htm>

This is the web site for the department of human resources at the University of Pittsburgh. The school can go to this web site to obtain information about getting a student to come to the school and help with web site development.

<http://www.ismineternet.com/>

If the school does decide to hire a professional to do this task then this web site may be useful. It is the web site of a company in Pittsburgh that does web design. It will take some time to get to the point where this work can be done and the specifics of the job will depend on the school's decisions. Therefore, it is impossible for the consultant to get a quote on the price of this work from this company at this time. However, the company will provide free quotes through this web site so the school will be able to obtain a free quote if it decides to consider using this company for any aspect of web development.

Problem: Owning an Internet Service Account

At the beginning of this consulting period, the school was using an Internet service account that was owned by a student's parent who gave the school permission to use his account. Because this situation puts the school in a position where it is completely dependent on the parent for Internet access, it was decided that the school should attempt to establish its own Internet service account in order to become self sufficient.

Consulting Task: Establish an Internet Service Account

The following was accomplished:

- Researched Internet service providers in the school's price range on the Internet
- Found Hawk Communications which offers unlimited access and multiple local access numbers
- Established an account with Hawk Communications for \$9.95 per month

Evidence of Increased Capacity and Sustainability

- This outcome has increased the capacity of River Valley because it has made them more self-sufficient. They are no longer dependent on the parent's account for Internet access.
- This project is sustainable because the community partner and the consultant spent time searching the Internet for information about different providers before choosing Hawk Communications. Therefore, if the account that has been set up turns out to be unsatisfactory for any reason, the community partner can cancel it and choose a different provider without any difficulty. The community partner is fully aware of how to find and contact service providers so she is completely capable of maintaining the account.

Recommendations

The consultant has also found out that there are state grants available for establishing Internet access for qualified non-public schools in Pennsylvania. If the school qualifies for this discount, then they should be able to set up a discounted account through the technology department in the Pennsylvania State Department of Education. The web site for the Department of Education is:

http://www.pde.state.pa.us/pde_internet/site/default.asp . The school should be able to use this web site to determine if it qualifies for any of these grants and to apply for these grants if it does. It is strongly recommended that the school use this web site to try and find out how to get a grant even if it does set up an account by the end of the consulting period. This grant may allow the school to get better service, cheaper service or to get both.

It is also recommended that the school seek grants from places other than the state if it doesn't end up qualifying for a state grant. A web page that is very useful in finding out how non-profits can get grants for Internet technology is <http://www.library.wisc.edu/libraries/Memorial/grants/basics1.htm> . The school can use this web site to find resources for getting a grant to get Internet access. Again, this may allow the school to get cheaper service or better service so it should be looked into even if an account is set up by the end of the consulting period.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation A: Incorporate Computers into the Classroom

A final recommendation that is being made is that River Valley School incorporate computers into its classrooms. These computers could be used to access the Internet or to run educational software. There are definitely benefits to using a resource like the Internet in any type of educational environment. The school should actively try to obtain computers using resources like the ones earlier mentioned in order to get computers to put in the classroom. The specifications on these computers should be sufficient to support Internet access and any software that the school would like to incorporate into the classroom. The school may want to eventually consider pursuing grants or increasing its budget to obtain high speed Internet access but even with 56K access, Internet access in the classroom will have benefits.

Rationale

Incorporating computers into the classroom brings educational resources into the classroom that otherwise are not present. This is because they allow teachers to use the Internet to complement any educational program or to use software as a part of educational programs. River Valley now has some resources to use in trying to obtain new equipment and this would be a beneficial application of new equipment. This would also put the teachers in a position where they would be dealing with technology regularly. While this may involve some initial training, it should eventually result in the teaching staff being more comfortable using technology and more motivated to incorporate new technology in the future.

Resources

There are several web sites that will be useful in working towards using computers in the classroom:

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/professional/teachtech/techsetup.htm>

This is a web site that describes different ways to use computers in the classroom. It explains how to set up computers based upon the number of computers and the class size and where to get help or more information.

<http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol2/issue3/perrone.html>

This is a site that describes how to get the greatest educational benefit from computers in the classroom.

<http://www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/slides/integrate/>

This site contains a presentation on how to successfully and effectively incorporate technology into the classroom.

<http://www.preschoolfun.com/pages/technology%20fact%20sheet.htm>

This site provides information about integrating computers into preschool classrooms. It suggests many techniques that can be used to introduce young children to computers once they are in the classroom as well.

The school should also look at the web sites that were mentioned earlier that deal with obtaining new equipment or grants for equipment or Internet access.

Recommendation B: Develop a Technology Plan

River Valley School doesn't currently have any established technology plan for the future. This consulting project has caused the school to evaluate its current state of technology and to identify ways in which technology could be used to benefit the school in the future. Therefore, it is a good time for the school to establish a technology plan to make sure that it is working towards improving the technological state of the school. The school's technology plan should cover the next two to three years and should be approved by the school's board. It should also be designed with the school's budget in mind so that it is realistic. The plan should outline what changes will be made in technology in the school, when these changes will be made, and how much these changes should cost. It should be based on what technological changes are affordable and what technological changes will result in the greatest increases in capacity. Because she is the primary person who deals with technology at the school, overseeing the execution of the technology plan and revising the technology plan should be the responsibility of Gina Quintana. However, an important part of this responsibility should be for her to seek out others with specific technological expertise that can help with development of this plan. .

Rationale

As a part of this consulting project, there were several technological problems and opportunities at River Valley School that were identified. Some of these were addressed in this consulting project and some were not. Of the ones that were, new opportunities have arisen out of the work that was done. Therefore, there is a clear opportunity for River Valley to continue to increase its capacity through technological projects. In order to assure that River Valley continues to develop its technological capacity and use of technology and to assure that River Valley identifies what realistic potential there is for technological improvement, creating a technology plan is vital. Without a technology plan, there is a strong possibility that the staff at River Valley will be so preoccupied with other work that technological development will be delayed. A technology plan will be a constant reminder of the need to improve technological capacity.

Resources

There are several web sites that deal with technology planning for non profit organizations and they should give an exhaustive amount of information on developing a technology plan:

<http://busboy.sped.ukans.edu/~601/techplan.html>

This web site contains many links to sites that explain how to develop a technology plan and give examples of technology plans.

<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/methods/technlgy/te300.htm>

This web site gives instructions and ideas on how to develop technology plans specifically for schools.

http://www.teach-nology.com/teachers/educational_technology/tech_plan/

This is an educators' web site that gives many links to sites containing information about developing technology plans for schools.

<http://www.techsoup.com>

This web site has extensive information on technology development and technology planning.

Recommendation C: Increase the Technical Capacity of the Staff

It is recommended that River Valley School develop a program of technology training for the staff. Currently, the executive director of the school, Gina Quintana, is the primary person who is involved with technology. Aside from the accountant, other staff members do very little work with technology and aren't required to have any specific technological skills. One of the main reasons for this is that the rest of the staff is very busy with the work that they do that doesn't require technology. However, if the school wants to continue to improve its technological capacity and incorporate technology into new areas of the school then it will be necessary that staff members are comfortable working with technology. Because Gina Quintana is the most proficient technology user at the school, she should be responsible for deciding what skills each staff member should have and then for helping them develop these skills. This may involve one on one training with staff members or sending staff members to take outside courses in technology. Examples of skills that may be desired in staff members would be the ability to use the Internet comfortably and the ability to work with educational software so that it can eventually be put into use at the school. Obviously, there are many other skills that may be desired and the skills that are chosen will depend on the specific technology goals that the school has.

Rationale

It is important for the staff members at the school to be comfortable working with technology because this is the only way technology use can be expanded into places like the classroom. Currently Gina Quintana is the primary user of technology at the school so technology development is limited by how much time Gina Quintana has to work with new things or what areas she works with that don't require staff involvement. Staff level technology use is a pre-requisite for sustained technology development at the school. It is critical that more people become involved in technology use at the school so that technology use can be expanded beyond Gina Quintana.

Resources

There are several web sites that will help the school's management develop a staff level technology training program:

www.techsoup.com

This webs ite was previously mentioned. It contains extensive information on learning how to use specific technology so it can be used to train people to become comfortable with new technologies.

<http://www.carnegielibrary.org/subject/compinternet/edu.html>

This web site gives a list of computer and Internet classes that are offered at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. The school may be interested in enrolling staff members in some of these classes.

<http://www.nonprofit-tech.org/about/index.php3>

This is the web site of an organization that is dedicated to helping non-profits increase their use of technology and may have some resources that would be useful to River Valley in developing technology use among its staff.

Recommendation D: Develop Electronic Fliers that Can be Distributed via Email

It is also recommended that the school develop electronic fliers. These fliers can be distributed via email or posted to the school's website. At the beginning of this project, it was noticed that the school relied on fliers to promote many events at the school. It was also mentioned that there was an opportunity to distribute similar fliers via email because there are some email addresses in the school's database. Now that the school has a web presence, these emails can be linked to the web site so the fliers can be relatively simple emails that link to a more carefully designed flier that is posted on the web site. This is closely related to the web development that is already going on, but linking the web page to emails is something that hasn't been thought about and using email distribution to promote events is something that hasn't been done at River Valley.

Rationale

One of the main reasons why this option wasn't chosen as part of the consulting project was because the paper fliers used by the school are often elaborately designed and it wouldn't be possible to achieve the same quality of design in email. However, it would be possible to achieve high quality design on a web site and now that the school has a web site it can post nice fliers to the site and put links to the site in the emails. Paper fliers are often used to promote events that are happening soon. They are not sent through the mail but they are instead posted in public places. Email fliers would provide the school with a way of inexpensively and quickly providing potentially interested parties directly with the fliers. This would increase the number of people who see the fliers.

Resources

The Macromedia help resources that the community partner already has full knowledge of how to use should be sufficient in helping her develop the fliers as web pages. She may also want to get the art teacher and anyone else who helps her with the regular fliers involved with the design of the online flier.

About the Consultant:

Amish Bhatt is a fourth year student at Carnegie Mellon University, majoring in Chemical Engineering and Computer Science with a minor in Business Administration.

Computer Specifications

COMPUTER	DESCRIPTION
IBM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16 MB RAM • 1 GB hard drive • 66 MHZ processor • Only used for Internet access • Windows 95
Compaq	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32 MB RAM • 1.5 GB hard drive • 133 MHZ processor • Only used for accounting • Windows 98
Gateway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 32 MB RAM • 2 GB hard drive • 233 MHZ processor • Windows 95 • Uses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Word Processing - Database - Microsoft Publisher
400 MHZ computer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 400 MHZ processor • 22 GB hard drive • 64 MB RAM • Windows 95 • Recently donated and not set up at beginning of consulting period
Additional Hardware	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fax/Scanner/Printer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only used as a fax machine • HP DeskJet Printer

A snapshot of River Valley School's Homepage

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the homepage of River Valley School. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://www.rivervalleyschool.net/>. The page content includes the school's name, a tagline, contact information, a list of program features, a photograph of students, and a navigation menu.

River Valley School
...imagine a school that supports a child's ability to learn by doing
Charleston and South Braddock • Pittsburgh, PA 15218
(412) 247-9133 • Fax: (412) 247-3455
rvspitt@yahoo.com

Why River Valley?

- Pre-Kindergarten through 4th grade
- Half day Kindergarten
- Extended day program
- Hands-On Learning
- Small Class Size
- Parental Involvement
- Multicultural School Community



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