CHECKLIST FOR A SUCCESSFUL 1-TO-1 ROLLOUT

Rolling out a 1-to-1 initiative is a huge undertaking, but it doesn't need to be a headache. From your first stakeholder meeting to putting devices in student hands, here's what your district needs to know to ensure a smooth integration.

ESTABLISH A SHARED VISION WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Whether you realize it or not, it takes an entire community working toward the same goal to make any technology initiative successful. While teachers are certainly a critical piece of the puzzle, make sure that everyone with a stake in the project —from IT to administrators, curriculum, teachers, special education, students, parents and community business leaders—is involved from the beginning of the discussion.

Establish a shared vision to help everyone understand what is possible for students and learning. A critical output is a statement or statements defining the vision statement with clearly defined learning objectives and measurements. Strong leadership and involvement from all stakeholders is essential to ensure all needs are met and to build support and a shared sense of urgency for change.

A good place to start is to host a district-wide "Vision Day" to reflect on what learning should look like in the digital age, and what your district needs to do to get there. Often, the first question to ask is 'Why are we doing this?' This process of self-reflection is a great way to discover the unique needs of your district, and how to overcome any challenges.

Host parent meetings and community forums to outline the plan, address questions, and gather feedback. Send out surveys to community business leaders to find out what skills are important for students to have when they graduate. Provide a number of options for the community to learn more about the initiative and to be a part of defining success.

These discussions are your opportunity to manage objectives and address issues before the project gets underway. Getting these individuals on board from the start—and then keeping them active participants—will go a long way toward ensuring a smooth rollout process.

DEFINE THE LEARNING MODEL

Define the learning model that will put the vision into practice. Traditional learning environments were designed for the industrial age, when there was a scarcity of information and students had to go to school to get information from teachers, books, and libraries. Today, we live in a world of information abundance and the skills students must master to succeed in college and/or career including critical thinking, collaboration, communication and creativity.

The modern learning model should be designed to reflect this reality. It should be experiential, empowering student voice, and should embrace failure as a critical step in learning.

Consider how to give students an opportunity to invest in how they learn by applying a range of learning resources, tools and products to show mastery of learning through an on-going process of inquiry, research and open communication. Ensure students maintain a high degree of control over the time, place, path and pace of their education.

Empower teachers to design this personalized learning experience based on their knowledge of each individual student, coupled with ready access to an array of personalization tools. In a modern learning model, teachers are no longer chief content experts, but rather facilitators of student learning.

Leverage technology, in combination with traditional learning, to enhance the learning process. Technology provides access to the resources, information and functionality that make personalization just a couple of clicks away.

CREATE A COMMON LANGUAGE

Establish a common language for teachers and administrators to use that reflects the district vision, core values and learning model. This common language is a tool to facilitate effective communication and establish a common framework to define and evaluate effective teaching within the learning model, and the associated integration of technology.

EMPOWER STUDENT VOICE

Students should be an authentic partner in education and have active participation in designing their educational experience. Not only do students have a unique perspective on teaching and learning, but when they have a voice and ownership in how they learn and how they show mastery of their learning, they are more engaged and invested in their educational success. Make sure students have a voice in every step of the process, from visioning to deployment and on-going support.

CREATE A DIGITAL CONTENT STRATEGY

Districts should develop a digital content strategy that meets the educational goals established. It's a good idea to start with an inventory of what technology is currently being used (and will continue to be used), and then add new tools as needed.

Productivity and creativity tools are one of the central elements in this discussion, as they are essential to empowering students to be producers, not just consumers. Consider the needs of the core curriculum, and which subject specific tools may be required. Do students need expanded digital opportunities for art, music, graphic design, or engineering?

Also decide how these tools will be accessed. Via the cloud? Installed directly on devices? Behind the district firewall? Are the tools and content optimized for touch?

SELECT DEVICES THAT SUPPORT YOUR LEARNING GOALS

Since ultimately it will be students using and learning with these devices, consider how, exactly, they will be using them. Will students need something truly mobile for take-home assignments. What about a device optimized for touch? Will they need access to Java and Flash to use existing software? Which applications are available given the chosen operating system, and how much will they cost?

Evaluate how devices will store content—either natively, on the device itself, or in the cloud. While some assignments may not require an internet connection, programs with an at-home component should consider surveying parents to determine if off-campus bandwidth is sufficient, and devise a plan to grant students internet access outside of class. Students with special needs may also require different accommodations, typically related to device accessibility. Many operating systems have accessibility features baked in, which can be supplemented with third-party applications like screen readers.

Assess how devices work with necessary peripherals. Keyboards, projectors, printers, document cameras, interactive whiteboards, and even some scientific lab equipment may be compatible with a variety of tablets and laptops, either via USB, wi-fi, or other means. Depending on your state's online testing consortia there are likely additional considerations concerning screen size, security, and keyboard accessibility (requirements for both PARCC and SmarterBalanced can be found online).

Most importantly, be sure that the devices you choose suit the objectives for each student group and adjust accordingly. The needs of high school students, for example, who frequently focus on prose writing may not align directly to those of young learners.

GET YOUR INFRASTRUCTURE AND POLICIES IN ORDER

Before any devices find their way into students' hands, it's important to ensure that your district's infrastructure — in particular the network, security, and storage—can sustain the increased demand and meet compliance requirements. Bring in a team to assess the existing environment and determine what's needed to get it ready for the rollout.

Talk with instructional designers to determine how the devices will be used for learning. Make sure you have the right firewall and security measures in place to support this use.

How will the devices be managed? With hundreds or even thousands of new devices pouring onto campus, an effective device management strategy is crucial for keeping devices secure and functional, without dramatically expanding IT's workload and budget. All districts should have some way of authenticating devices accessing the network. If students need to access secure networks (as determined in prior steps), then compatibility with existing authentication infrastructure should be considered beforehand.

In addition to new strain on your network and IT resources, there will likely be increased demand for storage space to house digital content and student work. And more and more of this work will be in the form of digital video and audio, which can take up more space. Prepare ahead of time with a scalable solution that can grow as your needs increase.

And don't forget your Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs). A number of security issues can arise with mobile rollouts, especially when cloud applications are used. Be sure you're ready with policies that govern use. Common Sense Media offers guidelines and suggestions for crafting comprehensive AUPs to suit many needs.
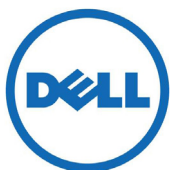
BUILD A PHASED DEPLOYMENT PROGRAM

Start with a pilot program. Pull together a team of students, teachers, instructional technologists, IT administrators, and other key stakeholders to develop and lead a test run with the goal of scaling up at a later date. These individuals will be key in developing the plan and milestones for the remainder of the project. They will also determine which schools should be involved in the pilot launch, and can provide instrumental support on their campus when deployment is underway.

Digital citizenship is very important for every student with a device in their hands, and districts should consider establishing digital citizenship policies and a training plan for students and staff beforehand. Students need to understand that their online behaviors and communications have permanency and repercussions, and they should be encouraged to take ownership of their learning in this area. A group of student and teacher leaders can discuss concerns, and help encourage buy in among their peers. They could even collaboratively develop a digital citizenship code that students can understand and live with.

Make sure you have a fully developed deployment plan that details how students will get their devices and how you will provide training and support for setting up and learning to use their new devices, including setting up their email accounts, learning how to use the systems, and how they can personalize them to make it their own.

Finally, establish support centers on each campus where students, teachers, and administrators can get assistance on a wide variety of issues, including technical problems, functionality support (how to use the system and software), how to perform successful searches, cite sources in the digital world, and more.

INVEST IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Put a strong professional learning program in place that supports your vision and learning objectives before giving technology to students. Talk to teachers, explain what the initiative will look like, and work to support their needs.

Afterward, you can use this feedback to center your professional learning plan on the technology, integration, and personalized learning support teachers really need. Post-integration, provide sustained professional learning opportunities, which includes development days, follow-up, and collegial support.

Encourage teachers to take risks and experiment with using new learning strategies and technologies. As they gain experience and become comfortable with integrating technology into learning, they will become evangelists to their peers. Establish professional learning communities for educators to share and learn from their experiences.