



Critical CTO Conversations:

Bringing Technology and Academic District Leaders Together

Academic goals and the technology that support them are inextricably intertwined in districts taking the digital leap. Achieving a successful transformation requires a close partnership between the district technology and academic leaders. Technology leaders need to understand the classroom implications of their decisions and academic officers need to understand the technology implications.

Conversations between the Chief Technical Officer (CTO) and Chief Academic Officer (CAO) are critical in aligning technology and academic initiatives. These conversations should be centered around purpose, policy, vision, logistics, communication and marketing.

Conversations about Purpose

Begin the conversation by focusing on:

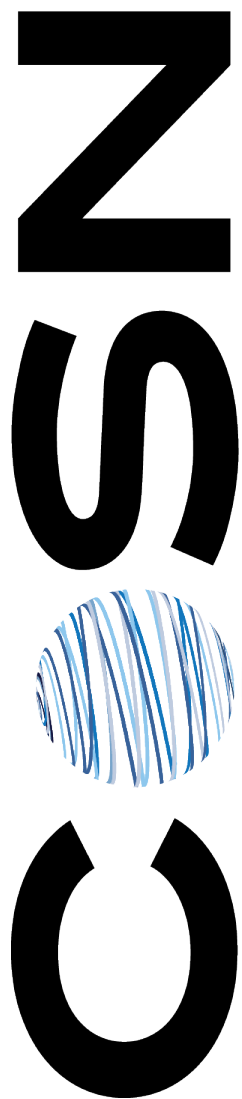
- Building a deep and shared understanding of the reasons for taking the digital leap. These fundamental reasons will drive future individual and shared decision making and are essential to achieve alignment.
- Extending beyond the superficial notions of technology used for engagement or efficiencies to the conversation of how technology prepares students for the modern workplace and life.

Conversations about Vision

Understand the vision for how technology will work in the classroom . The goals of learning are the essential component with technology supporting these goals.

Ask key questions like:

- What is the instructional approach?
- What will a typical day look like in a classroom?
- What is the gradual release model?
- What curriculum will be used?
- What content and tools will be used?



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Conversations about Logistics and Support

The CAO needs to understand what technology support will look like for teachers. The CTO can provide insight into the types of challenges that will be encountered and how teachers can overcome these challenges.

Ask key questions like:

- What are the plans for the technology rollout in a building?
- Who will bring devices to the school?
- How will the students receive their devices?
- How will students access their devices and content?
- What, if any, are the limitations on usage?
- What do teachers do if there are problems?
- What information/data can the IT organization provide to teachers regarding student usage of devices?

Conversations about Policy

Policy decisions can influence the design and implementation of the school network. The CTO and CAO – and the entire cabinet-- should consider the impact of policy decisions together and come to the decisions that will drive the network and support the learning environment.

Ask key questions like:

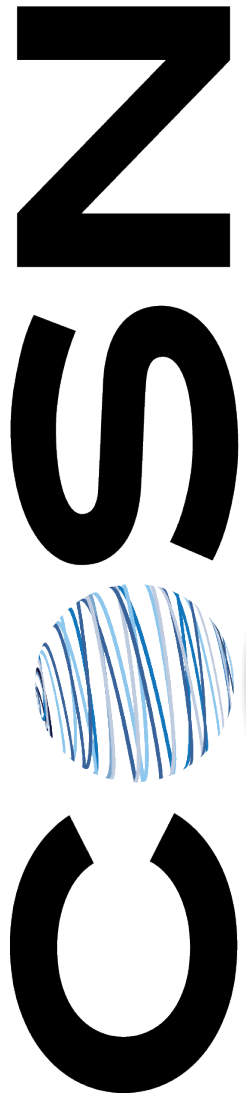
- Will students be allowed to bring their own devices?
- How many devices will the network need to support?
- What are the policies for filtering Internet content?
- Will students be taking devices home? How will they access curriculum, content and tools from outside the school?
- Will students be using devices outside of home and school? Will the network and devices need to support cellular data or other form of connectivity in the community?

Conversations about Communication

Implementing a new technology program requires consistency in the messaging to teachers, principals, students, parents, and the community. The CTO and CAO need to be able to talk about the program with clarity.

Ask key questions like:

- What are the defined channels of communication to different audiences?
- What messages/information will be communicated and who has ownership of each area?
- When measurements of performance and results are reported publicly, who reports what information?
- How is the information customized depending on the audience?



Conversations about Marketing

Every technology program needs a name, a brand, and a compelling message. This allows the program to be marketed to families, educators, and the community. The CTO and CAO must be aligned in how to tell their story, build excitement, generate commitment and celebrate successes. They must also present a united front to the press and community in making the program visible *and meaningful as well as transparently addressing issues when they arise.*

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