CIO NEWS

Creating tech-savvier teachers

46 percent of teachers say they lack the training needed to use technology effectively with students

By: Alison DeNisco

Decades into the computer revolution, many teachers still lack the training needed to use technology effectively in the classroom, according to a new survey. It’s a major problem as schools are investing more in devices and blended learning to improve student achievement, experts say.

To realize the full educational benefits of these tech tools, school leaders need to prioritize professional development, says Geoff Fletcher, deputy executive director of SETDA, the State Educational Technology Directors Association.

Some 93 percent of teachers believe that technology has a positive effect on student engagement. But 46 percent of teachers say they lack the training needed to use technology effectively with students.

The national survey of over 600 K12 teachers was conducted in February by digedu, a digital technology and curriculum provider.

To address teacher training needs, district CIOs first need to learn teachers’ technology skills, while others are uncomfortable with the instructional change that teaching with devices brings.

“We have a free-floating anxiety about technology, because it is something different, and in some cases means giving up control to kids,” Fletcher says. “If we can understand the nature of the problem, we could do a better job serving teachers.”

Steps for administrators

A CIO or other administrator should meet with teachers individually to learn their technology and training needs, says Thomas Arnett, an education research fellow at the Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Education, a nonprofit that researches
and promotes blended learning.

Hiring a part-time technology coach who can model lessons in the classroom and offer personalized support with teachers is one way to improve tech skills. Providing time for teachers to work together to share insights and best practices is also important, Arnett adds.

Training is more than showing teachers how to operate an iPad—in many cases, implementing technology requires a change in classroom structure. Before purchasing any new devices or software, school leaders need to set the specific learning goals the technology can help achieve, Arnett says.

“Sometimes teachers who are used to teaching in front of a class and guiding students through one instructional activity are uncomfortable relinquishing that format,” he says. “It’s important to teachers to recognize up front that there is a shift in mindset that has to occur to get the learning benefits.”

School leaders should involve teachers when choosing new technology products, says Allison Powell, vice president for state and district services at the International Association for K12 Online Learning (iNACOL). And training should be planned out before any technology initiative is implemented, she adds.

“Getting teacher buy-in is important,” Powell says, “as is providing professional development and support so they know [the technology] is important for learning.”

Professional Development  Classroom Integration