

# Technology Management for School Leaders

*By John Wenrich, Ph.D.*

**T**MSEL is a new professional development model called Technology Management for School Leaders. The emphasis of TMSL is on building the capacity of school leaders in the systemic management of technologies essential to support and extend teaching and learning. TMSL was developed at Virginia Tech through a grant from Bell Atlantic (now Verizon) and funding from the Virginia General Assembly.

TMSL is comprised of two components, a website and a face-to-face training session. The website ([www.tmsl.org](http://www.tmsl.org)) is designed to provide a brief overview of eight key modules with which today's administrator needs to be familiar. The face-to-face training session uses a unique vertical slice of the administration having the Superintendent, Director of Finance, Curriculum Supervisor, Technology Coordinator, and Principals all together in the same room discussing their views on integrating technology into the classroom.

The underlying purpose of TMSL is to allow school leaders to interact with their colleagues and professional development facilitators, both in person and via distance education, to explore long-term solutions to problems they face in using technology to increase student achievement. The focus is on developing a common language and applying systems thinking to the full gamut of decisions related to a seamless, robust, cost-effective integration of technologies into all curricula. The goal is to use the technologies to extend inquiry and enhance production to increase authentic, complex learning that assists students to meet and exceed state and national performance standards.

The TMSL program asks the participating administrators to review the web site material prior to meeting for the face-to-face session. This review helps get everyone on the same page, technology wise. The web site modules are designed to give an overview of key technology components in a quick, concise manner so that a busy administrator gains an understanding of the topic without having to actually spend time learning unnecessary skills.

During the face-to-face training session, TMSL facilitators work closely with the local division team to assure an understanding of the topic and how it relates to their division and school level setting. Facilitators present content material designed to meet the needs of the division and also work in small groups with the local team

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to discern scenario concepts presented. The scenario discussion allows the participants to interact with individuals outside of their department. This interaction helps all parties understand the various viewpoints present during any technology-related discussion.

In 2001, the Virginia Department of Education working closely with Virginia Tech, the University of Virginia, and VETA (the Virginia Educational Technology Alliance) formed a partnership to provide administrator training to all Superintendents and Principals in Virginia over a three period. Known as VITAL (Virginia Initiative for Technology and Administrator Leadership) this program is currently being rolled out to school divisions in each of the eight Superintendent regions within the state ([www.virginiaedleaders.org](http://www.virginiaedleaders.org).)

The VITAL program (currently funded by The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) relies heavily on the TMSL material as well as the eTIGER administrative program developed at UVA. During the initial start-up year for the VITAL project (2001-02), evaluation results have been very positive towards this type of approach to assist administrators with managing technology in the schools.

One of the additions to the program that VITAL brings to the table is TAGLIT (Taking a Good Look at Instructional Technology). TAGLIT is an online survey component that looks at the Principal and teachers understanding and uses of technology in the individual school building. Results of the survey are provided to the Principal for use in technology planning and submitting grant applications.

TMSL is not a program of hard facts. It is designed to get at the real issues behind instructional technology. What percentage of the overall budget should cover technology? Should technology furniture be part of the technology budget or the facilities budget? It teaches an individual how to fish, instead of just giving them the fish.

The TMSL materials have now been combined in the VITAL program available to all school divisions in Virginia. For more information on VITAL, please see [www.virginiaedleaders.org](http://www.virginiaedleaders.org) or contact the author.

### About the Author

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