

# 10 Tips to Avoid Tech Integration Frustration

You've heard it before, you've seen it before, and you've most likely experienced it yourself before: technology integration frustration. Change is not easy. When we talk about change, especially technology changes that take us into the wide world of the unknown, things can quickly become even more complicated.

Technology integration is particularly important at the middle-level. Students in the middle school years use technology more than in their younger years. Part of teaching with technology, and helping students to safely and appropriately use it, is recognizing that technology is all around us, especially for students at this age level. The true challenge in middle school is to encourage technology usage while minimizing the "distraction effect" it can have on students, which can leave teachers frustrated.

Here are 10 tips to help you and your middle-level colleagues avoid technology integration frustration.

## 1. Establish a focus and a purpose.

One of the biggest issues plaguing education is the overabundance of initiatives in which participants don't see a clear and obvious connection. Before moving ahead with a technology integration plan, help paint the full picture by presenting teachers with the purpose and the overall justification for the movement.

## 2. Bring the goods.

There is nothing more frustrating than discussing the need for increased, integrated technology if there's no technology available. Despite ever-shrinking budgets and more and more financial demands, ensure that technology is available for educators and students to use before you begin the discussion. To account for limited budgets, many districts and middle-level schools use a hybrid technology model: The school provides a limited number of devices and also encourages students to bring their own personal devices (BYOD).



If you encourage students to BYOD, be sure to set clear guidelines for students, staff, and parents.

**3. Make sure your infrastructure is in place and has demonstrated, sustained reliability.** It's absolutely critical that middle schools have the proper networking capabilities and infrastructure in place prior to moving ahead with any kind of major technology integration initiative. When educators and students are looking to access the Internet, they need a reliable and robust system that makes access second-nature and easy.

**4. Have a serious conversation about Internet filtering and technology access.** Teaching digital citizenship and proper internet safety are crucial at the middle-level. Too often, though,

districts and schools have a divide between those who safeguard the network and overall system and those who are most often using the network and system. Collaboratively with colleagues, students, and community members, establish a set of guidelines and expectations that involve integrating digital literacy and citizenship into your curricula. Involve your technology department in this process, ensuring alignment between the overall integrity of the network while also allowing for trust, openness, and effective utilization of the network by educators and students.

**5. Differentiate, customize, and personalize the process for staff.** In order for this technology revolution to start and be effective, you must have an idea of your staff members' technology knowledge and background. Take time to both formally and informally ask questions. This will help you when it comes to knowing where to start, as well as what information could be skipped over and/or re-emphasized.

**6. Help make technology and social media applicable to content.** When someone asks, "How does this work for me in my class?," you need to have an answer. Put yourself in the educator's shoes and consider how these new tools can have a positive effect on the middle-level classroom. Provide your colleagues with lists of other people (in your district or outside of it) who may be teaching the same or similar classes. Your fellow educators will only take part in the revolution if they see how technology and social media integration can help them or their students.

**7. Do not drown your staff members with too much, too quickly.** Don't forget that our colleagues are learning, just as our students are. You can't, and shouldn't, give them too much to bite off at one time. Take it slowly by presenting one or two concepts at a time, allowing your fellow educators a better chance to fully grasp the topics

before moving on to new ones. Make sure you don't create a room full of brains that have shut down due to stress and confusion.

**8. Support and encourage your shining stars.** As the year progresses, a few "shining stars" will begin to emerge. These educators need to be encouraged and supported, because they are taking a risk by trying something new. Allow them to discover and explore, but also keep them in close contact. Be there to help if they start to struggle and want help. It is essential that they have your support and guidance.

**9. Don't make it just about the technology.** This point needs to be made clear from the very beginning: Technology is just another tool in a middle-level educator's tool belt. Technology is a means to provide additional opportunities to enhance the overall impact of the lesson and/or activity. Using the SAMR (Substitution, Augmentation, Modification and Redefinition) model is an excellent strategy to get this point across. It demonstrates to teachers how technology can redefine, or even completely change, the types of activities they can do with middle-level students.

**10. Prepare and acknowledge the implementation dip.** Growth will be fast at first, but then there will be a collapse. There will be disappointment that something didn't work out as planned, and there will be frustration when the students don't respond how we thought they would. This is all a natural part of the change process. Be sure to remind folks frequently that there will be bumps and setbacks. However, a strategic approach to technology integration will enable us to better prepare our middle-schoolers for success in the future, and that's what it's all about. 

**Justin Tarte**, a former middle school principal and assistant principal, is director of curriculum & support services for Union R-XI School District in Union, Missouri.



**LOCKERS** lockers.com 1-800-LOCKERS

- Cubbies
- Standard Lockers
- Vented Lockers
- Extra Wide Lockers
- Open Access Lockers
- Box Style Lockers
- Wood Lockers
- Plastic Lockers
- Benches Lockers

**SALSBURY INDUSTRIES**  
Proudly Committed to Quality Since 1956™

**Call us for a free quote or catalog!**  
**1-800-562-5377**



Dear Principal,

You may choose to give an **Environmental Hall of Fame Award** to the student and teacher that has done the most to help their environment in 2013. We will provide you with the award at **no charge. Earth Day is April 22, 2014.**

Since 2008, the **National Environmental Hall of Fame** has given awards to top green celebrities, including Harrison Ford, Pierce and Keely Shaye Brosnan, Ed Begley Jr., Art Linkletter and Hunter Lovins.

We have also given awards to over 64 Cities and Mayors.

For a small fee, you or one of your teachers are also encouraged to participate in a local **Environmental Hall of Fame** for your school. Your school will be allowed to give an award to your City and Mayor in one of 12 Areas. You can also honor individual students and members of your community.

Please see our website, [www.environmentalhalloffame.net](http://www.environmentalhalloffame.net)  
You can email us at [info@environmentalhalloffame.net](mailto:info@environmentalhalloffame.net)  
Or you may call us at 773-407-2109

Thank You,  
Allen Rubin Co-Coordinator  
**National Environmental Hall of Fame**