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Ed. Department to Ed. Schools: Rethink Tech Training for Future Teachers

By [Brenda Iasevoli](#) on December 14, 2016 4:36 PM

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Add yet another item to teacher prep's to-do list: integrate technology across the curriculum. The U.S. Department of Education issued this challenge to all education schools and announced on Wednesday that **71 programs have signed on**.

"Right now, many teacher prep programs teach technology in a single class," said Joseph South, the director of the Education Department's Office of Educational Technology. "Infusing technology throughout the curriculum will require a new way of thinking. It can't just be bolted onto whatever professors are teaching."

Teachers College at Ball State University in Indiana is one of the programs that has committed to the Education Department's technology challenge. The chair of elementary education at the university, Pat Clark, said the program's aim is to make sure candidates can use technology as well as teach it to their students. She described teacher candidates who first had to learn how to create video games in a class at the university, and then teach that skill to 3rd graders.

That means ed school professors are becoming tech-ready, too. "All of our faculty have to learn about tech and most are very open to it," she said. "They learned how to use iPads, not just how to play a game, but to integrate their use into the curriculum. You have to take risks, try new things. Our faculty does that and then take what they learn back to our teacher candidates."

Guidance on Tech Integration

Eighty-one percent of U.S. schools have high-speed Internet access in their classrooms, according to a recent survey by the Consortium for School Networking. That adds to the pressure on prep programs to teach their candidates how to make use of it. The current education school tech requirements for accreditation, according to the Office of Educational Technology, haven't yet produced graduates who feel ready to use technology in the classroom on day one.

Since integrating technology may indeed be a challenge for many teacher prep programs, **the Office of Educational Technology issued a policy brief** on Wednesday with the goal of providing some guidance. The brief includes explanations of four guiding principles for integrating technology into teacher prep curricula.

Guiding principle #1: Promote the active use of technology.

What does this look like in the classroom? Teachers guide students to publish blogs or create videos. They arrange for students to talk with experts in real time on topics they're studying. Examples of what you don't want to see: Students simply consuming media or filling out digitized worksheets.

Bottom line: Teacher prep faculty need practice using educational technology in order to model its use for teacher candidates. At Vanderbilt University's Center for Teaching, faculty get one-on-one support for technology integration and can attend a regular lecture series called "Conversations on Digital Pedagogy" that will help them develop a plan to integrate technology into their curriculum.

Guiding principle #2: Provide faculty with ongoing tech training.

Faculty who don't feel comfortable using technology in their own lessons won't be of much use to candidates who'll have to be comfortable incorporating technology into lesson plans by graduation. So education schools must make sure professors have access to training that will make them good model users of technology for their teacher candidates.

Guiding principle #3: Integrate technology across the curriculum.

Future teachers need more than a single course in educational technology. Education schools should move toward a model where candidates are using technology in all their classes. Future science teachers, for instance, might learn how to build lessons that allow students to use probes or sensors to collect real-time data. All future teachers might learn to build classroom websites as a tool to increase communication with parents.

Guiding principle #4: Align efforts with research-based standards.

The teaching field should unite around a common set of standards that will ensure candidates, whatever program they choose, will have training in using digital tools to support student learning.

The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation has worked alongside the International Society for Technology in Education to create a [set of standards](#) for tech coaches, leaders of district-wide tech initiatives, and computer science teachers. Arizona State University is leading a group of educational technology researchers in devising a set of standards for professors in teacher prep programs. The goal is to define the knowledge, skills, and behaviors of faculty charged with teaching technology use in the classroom. The standards will be released in spring of 2017.

EdTech in Teacher Prep Symposium

The Education Department's Office of Educational Technology hosted a two-day meeting in Washington that focused on helping teacher prep programs develop action plans for integrating technology. The meeting kicked off on Tuesday and brought together education school deans, faculty, and graduates, as well as heads of professional organizations like the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education.

Joseph South, the federal educational technology office director, said the aim was for education schools to leave with a technology integration action plan in hand. He also hoped the meeting would help schools connect with each other. "We want [ed schools] to leave here knowing that they have allies with the same goals," he said. "We hope they will call upon each other and rely on each other."

Liz Kolb, a clinical assistant professor at the University of Michigan, attended the Washinton meeting. She said the University of Michigan is far along in its technology integration, but that the Education Department's guiding principles have prompted the program to take a closer look at how it supports faculty in this process. "For years, technology was seen as an add-on, something you don't have to do, and many programs continue to treat it like that," she said. "But today technology is so ubiquitous in our global world that I see it as almost malpractice to not ensure that our teacher candidates have these skills and that our instructors are modeling these skills for them in an integrated and thoughtful way."

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