

# Technology Team Professional Development: Implementing Change at RHL

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I teach 5<sup>th</sup> Grade at in the Cherry Creek School District. Rolling Hills Elementary School is in Aurora, CO and feeds into Falcon Creek Middle School and Grandview High School. Rolling Hills is a year-round school with 736 students; however we will be moving to a traditional calendar for the 2012-2013 school year. Of our student population, 12% are Asian American, 8.3% African American, 6.9% Hispanic American, and 72.8% are Caucasian. Seven percent of our student population qualifies for free and reduced lunch.

About two years ago, our fifth grade team applied for (and won) a 21st Century Learning Morgridge Family Foundation Grant that supplied each member with an Interactive White Board (SMART board). As per our grant agreement, we attended a year's worth of professional development around using and sustaining SMART technology in our classrooms and building. We learned everything from basic lesson design, to more advanced techniques for getting higher student engagement using the technology.

Last year, our Parent-Teacher-Community Organization (PTCO) matched funds we raised as a school in order to equip *every classroom with an Interactive White Board*. However, this influx of technology came with no planned professional development, aside from basic operation. I became the building's SMART board technical support for any and all issues IWB related.

Although I teach the fifth grade, my graduate work in the ILT program led me to conduct necessary technology needs assessments and spearhead a new technology committee. My goal has been to provide leadership in helping my staff not only adopt new technologies, but more importantly, effectively use the technology we currently own. Therefore, I spent this past school year conducting technology audits, specifically assessing the use (or nonuse) of technology (specifically, SMART boards). Many of the SMART boards have become very expensive projector screens. The accompanying "Notebook" software used to create interactive lessons for the SMART board is being used to create glorified overhead transparencies. It is shocking that tens of thousands of dollars were spent on technology that is designed to increase student engagement, deepen critical thinking skills, and increase student motivation, yet they are ***not being used***.

My goal with my technology committee is ***to create and sustain meaningful professional development*** to the Rolling Hills Elementary staff. Much of this last school year has been spent troubleshooting basic technology needs. I have presented at a variety of meetings, slowly introducing convenient technology (i.e.: Tablet use, Microsoft Outlook use, Wikis such as GoogleDocs). I would like to enter the 2012-2013 school year with organized and supportive professional development that will transform my school into a 21<sup>st</sup> Century, collaborative team.

## Planned Intervention

Rolling Hills Elementary lies in a technology paradox. We have an abundance of technology (as compared to other schools in the district), yet this technology is not being used to its potential. My original intention with the Technology Team was to not only create a committee responsible for technology, but to institute real change in the building. I naively thought I could create a new culture of learning in a single school year while providing direction for instructional design. Rogers (1995) discusses diffusion of technology as a series of stages, where the process occurs over time.

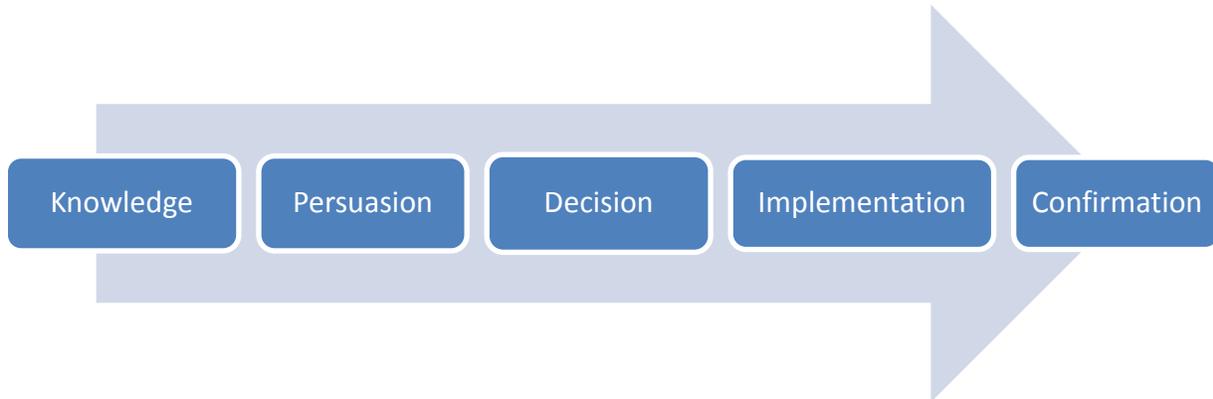


Figure 1. Five stages of Rogers' (1995) Innovation-Decision Process Model.

The adoption of an innovation is not a single act. Each step in the process may take any amount of time, depending on the group of individuals. For example, in the 2011-2012 school year, I feel that I was successfully able to take my staff into the "Knowledge" stage, where they gained "basic understanding" of the building's technology, into the "Persuasion" stage, where staff members are "forming positive and negative impressions of such technology" (Rogers, 1995).

I plan to intervene next year to a staff that closely mirrors Roger's (1995) estimation of the bell-curve distribution of a group's feelings toward change.

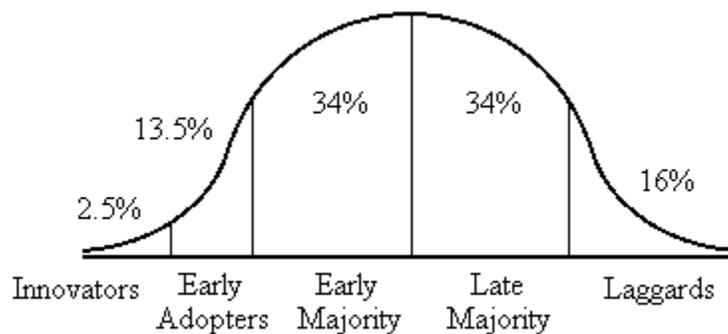


Figure 2. Hypothesized distribution of adopter categories within a typical population.

My staff is "more likely to adopt [professional development] if [it] offers them a better way to do something, is compatible with their values, beliefs and needs, is not too complex, can be tried out

before adoption, and has observable benefits” (Ely, 1999). In order for next year’s professional development to be successful, I will need to be cognizant of Ely’s (1999) eight conditions of implementation, so that I can constantly evaluate our progress toward a common goal.

## Timeline

Date	Action
<b>June 13, 2012</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review Rolling Hills’ (RHL) technology status quo.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What things can be better?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Review RHL’s knowledge/skills base               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What skills do we currently possess in the building that we can use for future professional development?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>June 20, 2012</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss RHL’s available resources               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What hardware/software do we have?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>June 27, 2012</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs assessment               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Review satisfaction survey from 2011-2012 school year.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Discussion of time-line for 2012-2013 technology professional development.</li> <li>• Goal(s): What do we want to accomplish by the end of the school year?</li> </ul>
Week of:	Action
<b>June 11</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create handout outlining RHL Technology use/non-use (status-quo)</li> <li>• Create handout outlining RHL’s knowledge base</li> </ul>
<b>June 18</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare presentation of RHL’s available resources</li> </ul>
<b>June 25</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create charts/graphs of RHL satisfaction survey for 2011-2012 school year.</li> <li>• Create handout to collect staff’s end-of-year technology goal(s)</li> </ul>
<b>July 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review collected information</li> <li>• Begin outline of 2012-2013 Technology Professional Development Plan</li> </ul>
<b>July 9</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review other CCSD schools’ technology PD (school-level)</li> <li>• Review CCSD technology PD (district-level)</li> </ul>
<b>July 16</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formative peer review of PD rough draft (INTE 6750 colleagues)</li> <li>• Formative peer review of PD rough draft (Technology Team)</li> <li>• Formative peer review of PD (Principal)</li> </ul>

<p><b>July 23</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise Technology PD Plan</li> <li>• Meet with Technology Team to discuss <b>implementation vs. institutionalization</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How can we ensure Ely's (1999) final conditions to implementation</li> <li>○ Is institutionalization possible?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>August 8-15 Work Week</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce 2012-2013 Technology Professional Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Present quality indicators that will be present throughout year</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Evaluation Plan

In order to fully evaluate the success or failure of a school's professional development, there need to be many formative check-points throughout the school year. For Rolling Hills' professional development, I (with the help of the Technology Team) will create a number of quality indicators that will be present throughout the 2012-2013 school year. For example, staff will be required to complete a short survey, which accompanies all staff meetings and/or technology professional development meetings. I anticipate distributing these monthly.

In addition, individual grade-level teams will be required to spend at least one of their team planning times discussing the effectiveness of the professional development. They will complete another quality indicator document, which will provide me with information on how previous professional development meetings went, how information is being implemented in classrooms, and ideas for next steps. I want the staff to feel that they are part of a shared decision making process, and that *the school* will indicate the direction of our professional development. Although there will be an outline of anticipated topics and trainings, the staff will really determine what we will accomplish through professional development.

## Expected Findings

Based on the current 2011-2012 school year's reaction and reception to the Technology Team's presence, I anticipate some resistance. This year, we were given many different staff meetings to present technology however, during meetings, about a third of the staff were resistant in participating. For example, these staff routinely did not bring their laptops and/or Tablets for staff meetings, and often were continuously disengaged from the presentation. When the Technology Team issued a "mandated" customer satisfaction survey in order to evaluate our presentations, less than 25% actually completed the questionnaire. The data, although insightful in determining some of our school's culture surrounding technology, did not accurately represent the predominant philosophy of the school.

It is vitally important that this professional development, although created by the Technology Team, be mandated via the principal. The 2012-2013 school year will be our first year under the traditional calendar, so all staff will be present at all meetings. We have a considerable amount of other change occurring during this upcoming school year, including implementing a new Behavioral Development program in the building, Equity/Achievement Gap professional development, piloting a Recess Before Lunch initiative, and a completely new school schedule. If technology is not discussed in the same manner as these other issues, then I fear it will continue to be given lip service.

Nonetheless, I am confident that our principal will support our technology professional development plan. She has been very supportive this last school year, and has given no indication of not committing our school to innovation and student achievement through technology.

## Ethical/Stakeholder Impacts

As stated above there are a few key individuals that will need support our proposed technology professional development plan:

- Darla Thompson school principal
- Sarah Finizio school technology teacher
- Grade-level leaders one teacher from each grade level
- PTCO

These stakeholders determine the participation and commitment of the staff with any innovation. I will spend a considerable amount of time discussing this professional development with grade-level leaders and the PTCO because they have the most influence in our building. I plan on meeting with grade-level teams either over the summer or during work-week to introduce the professional development, and invite them to participate in making decisions for the upcoming school year. My goal is to establish one teacher-leader in each grade level to ensure participation and implementation.

Our technology teacher, Sarah Finizio, may be negatively impacted by this initiative because of fear of disrupting her current position in the school. During the 2011-2012 school year, she indicated feeling usurped in her role as technology leader. In recent years, her position has been more “teacher of technology” in the classroom instead of “professional developer of technology” in the building. I worry that she will not want to support any new professional development unless she feels like she is one of the top decision-makers in the process. We have a good relationship, and I plan on discussing any and all of this with her.

## References

Rogers, E.M. (1995). *Diffusion of innovations, 4th ed.* New York: Free Press.

Surry, D.W., & Ely, D.P. (2001). Adoption, diffusion, implementation, and institutionalization of educational innovations. In R. Reiser & J. V. Dempsey (Eds.), *Trends and issues in instructional design and technology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall. Draft online: <http://www.southalabama.edu/coe/bset/surry/papers/adoption/chap.htm>