

# Providing Technology Integration Professional Development for a Suburban School District

ISD 197 is a mostly suburban, medium sized, school district located southeast of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The district has approximately 4,800 students in kindergarten through grade 12. About two thirds of the students (63%) are Caucasian, a fifth of the students are Hispanic (20%) and 11% of the students are African American; the remaining students come from other ethnic groups.

Thirty eight percent of the students are eligible to participate in the free or reduced lunch program, and three of the schools in the district provide Title 1 services for struggling readers. About fourteen percent of the students are receiving special education services, while ten percent are English Language Learners.

The district has won several awards, including being labeled a Blue Ribbon District by the state of Minnesota and a 2009-2011 National Magnet School of Excellence. At the same time, however, three of the eight schools in the district failed to achieve AYP last year.

## The Challenge: Improving Teacher Technology Skills

Independent School District 197 has always prided itself on providing students with a sound, comprehensive education that enriches their lives and prepares them for their future. But like most schools, ISD 197 faces a significant technology challenge.

Dramatic changes in technology have resulted in considerable changes in the workplace. While the number of jobs open to unskilled workers dwindles, the number of jobs available for people who possess excellent technical skills grows by leaps and bounds. The job opportunities today's kindergarteners will find when they are ready to leave school will be vastly different from opportunities

### **Problem:**

Lack of computer literacy skills and confidence in how to use technology in instruction among teachers—resulting in slower integration of technology.

### **Solution:**

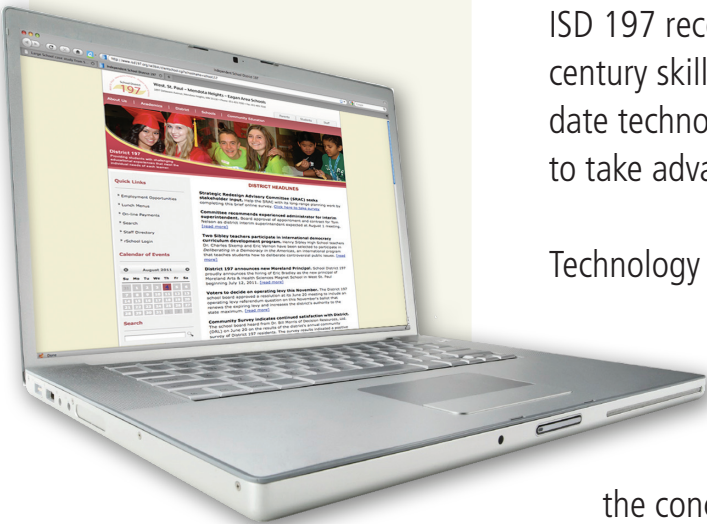
An online tool to increase teachers' ability to keep up with and integrate technology.

### **Outcome:**

Increased use of technology in the classroom to engage students in 21st century learning.

**“ Teachers and support staff within the District must possess the confidence, understanding, and skills to effectively incorporate technology ”**

ISD 197 Technology Plan



available today. Thus, the need for well-prepared students is greater now than ever before.

In addition to a sound background in traditional academics, today's students must be competent in using a range of technology in a variety of settings. Today, even many entry-level and technical jobs require the use of computers and advanced communications.

In short, students must know how to apply technology using 21st century skills. This means that they need to be as comfortable using a computer or other technology as they would using a pencil and paper, and must learn to use technology as a tool to access information to efficiently develop dynamic, effective projects.

To develop this proficiency and skill set, students must have access to technology on a regular basis so that they can become proficient in using it in many ways.

ISD 197 recognizes that teachers are the key to developing 21st century skills in students. Therefore, they must have access to up-to-date technology and the appropriate training and technical support to take advantage of it.

Technology is a tool to assist teachers in many ways, from creating and presenting lessons in new, dynamic ways that engage students to assessing individual student's needs and monitoring progress. Additionally, teachers must be able to prepare students by teaching the concepts and skills needed for them to understand and use technology effectively. Essentially, technology must be deeply woven in to curriculum to engage and prepare college and career ready students.

ISD 197's Technology Plan cites Professional Development as one of their key concerns. "Staff Development: Due to lack of computer literacy skills, we have more technical support requirements, slower adoption and integration of technology throughout the District."

More specifically "the ability to offer an online tool such as Atomic Learning will greatly increase teachers' ability to keep up with

technology. If technology is to be used by students, then teachers and support staff within the District must possess the confidence, understanding, and skills to effectively incorporate technology into not only teaching practices, but also the practices of all employees.”

One of the key goals of the District’s technology plan is to “provide staff with the skills to apply technology to enhance student learning and increase productivity.”

## Atomic Learning: Meeting the Challenge

Margaret Hinke has been helping ISD 197 address this challenge. She is a Technology Integration Specialist with ISD 197. Margaret has been with the district for about 5 years, but provided training in the airline industry for 30 years before coming to the district. Margaret holds a BA in Psychology and a Masters degree in Instructional Design.

Margaret was drawn to training and education by the rewards of showing people how something works and lives for the “aha” moment when people “get it”—that moment when you know you have made a difference with students and staff.

The constant change in technology and seeing people grow and learn keeps Margaret motivated and looking forward to the technology challenges that each day brings.

Most of the teachers in the district have more than 20 years of teaching experience and began their teaching careers before the current technology revolution. Providing technology training and professional development on the application of technology to 21st century learning is critical to ISD 197’s success.

Margaret sees the importance of technology training and how Atomic Learning can help fulfill this need. According to Margaret “Atomic Learning provides an important bridge to ISD 197 teachers helping them get the knowledge and skills they need to reach 21st century learners.”

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Margaret Hinke  
Technology Integration  
Specialist



“Once teachers start using Atomic Learning, they can see how easy it is to use and they become more comfortable using technology tools,” according to Ms. Hinke. “This increases the amount of time they use technology in the classroom with students engaging in 21st century learning.”

This past February, ISD 197 had a large staff development meeting devoted largely to technology. Many of the sessions were built around the Atomic Learning tools and follow up support was provided in part using Atomic Learning.

Ms. Hinke is a frequent user of Atomic Learning herself and frequently refers the teachers and staff to the Atomic Learning lessons; she even encouraged them to use the Atomic Learning iPad® tutorials during the winter break when many staff received iPads as part of a grant. Thus far, the district has had high adoption among new teachers and anticipates improved student academic performance as more teachers utilize the Atomic Learning resources.

“ This  
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Margaret Hinke  
Technology Integration  
Specialist



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