

***THE VALUE OF
FULL-TIME
CAMPUS
TECHNICAL
SUPPORT***

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Coping in Non-Supportive Environments

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Technology people have always amazed me. These folks devote countless hours, technical expertise, and their very souls to bring about positive, effective changes in education.

These incredibly creative folks are found in the trenches making sure equipment works properly, helping students learn to use all kinds of computer applications, troubleshooting lab problems, installing networks, making sure the satellite is functioning, handling budgets, ordering needed equipment, and training their colleagues, family, and friends to use powerful resources.

Upbeat and positive, these folks have big hearts, a sharing, helpful nature and will almost always greet you with a smile. Even in the midst of non-supportive environments, tech people carry out their mission and assignments knowing that adversities are windows of opportunities.

Tech folks understand that technology will make a difference in students' lives. They know that the integration of all types of technology into all areas of the academic and extracurricular programs of a school will prepare students for a successful future.

They realize that using technology in all classrooms and academic subject areas is much more cost effective than traditional programs and can increase attendance rates, decrease drop-out rates, heighten students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and raise test scores. Most importantly, the use of technology in the classroom brings back an enthusiastic love for learning.

Tech folks comprehend that education is going through phenomenal changes—changes largely due to the information age triggered by new technology. Change is something most tech people thrive on, but change also creates stressful situations, invokes fear, and generates hostile emotions. Change also leads to negative reasoning, non-supportive environments, and digressive, instead of progressive thought.

Unfortunately, many technology people are rarely appreciated, and become stereotyped, stifled, and plagued by the very changes on which they thrive and grow.

Progressive thought and innovation confront traditional concepts, and a war zone is set up in an ongoing technology revolution. The battlefields are littered with bright, creative teachers, administrators, and technical specialists wounded and left bleeding by those who cling to an ineffectual traditional past. Misinformation and computer bigotry produce major fatalities, and casualties become prisoners of time. Pioneering souls wait for a word of encouragement and for the rest of the traditionalists to catch on and catch up to the new world.

The rudimentary lines for battle are usually drawn in the areas of funding, training and technical expertise, and a lack of fundamental knowledge about the dynamic nature of technology.

Funding, or lack of funding for technology equipment, ignites a fuse. Millions of dollars are being spent on equipment and programs every month, and millions of dollars are available through public and private corporations, grants, and local funding. The issue is not “lack of funding”. The issue is a lack of priority to spend money on more cost-effective technology programs, and the indifference in implementing new innovative ideas. Never in educational history have so many powerful resources been available to students to prepare them for the future, yet too few educators are willing to make those resources a priority.

One key ingredient to successful use of technology evolves around the availability of someone who knows how to work with computers, telecommunications, networking, video, satellite, and can train others to use this technology. Staff development and hands-on training are critical components if technology is going to work effectively. It is critical that time (lots of time) be scheduled for staff members to work in pairs or on a one-to-one basis with a tech person. Even an extra lab aide will make all the difference in the world to the teachers and the students.

Having and using technology is an ongoing process. Schools progress from one level to the next as new technology becomes available. Start with the basics, work up moderately, and each year advance to the next level. This step-by-step process, governed by new technology developments, does change rapidly, but be assured that the process is progressive and always continuing. Develop a plan, but be flexible, and nurture a vision—a vision that will inspire not only your school, but also others across the globe.

For those tech folks who cope in non-supportive environments, I offer you a minuscule bit of relief. A little list of things that might help you make it through the revolution:

- Watch Star Trek (old or new shows) at least once a week!
 - What is dreamed often becomes reality!
- Watch Jerry Seinfeld at least once a month.
 - Humor goes a long way.
- Develop your own supportive network using The Texas Education Network.
 - A friend is always there to make you feel better.
- Start a multimedia project just for yourself about something silly like “How to create spaghetti no one will eat.”
 - A break from the same old grind helps prevent burnout.
- Go check out the new computers at your local computer store. Do lots of test drives and look over new software programs.
 - Techno-lust knows no boundaries!
- Talk to folks about your ideas and form consortiums (small & large)
 - Sharing is the essence of happiness.

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