



## Digital Leadership: Changing Paradigms for Changing Times

By Eric Sheninger (Corwin Press, 2019)

### S.O.S. (A Summary of the Summary)

*The main ideas of the book:*

- ~ We must change the way we view leadership if we hope to engage and prepare students for success in a digital world.
- ~ The seven Pillars of Digital Leadership introduced in the book will help leaders make this change.

*Why I chose this book:*

I like that Sheninger says it's not about adopting the latest tech tools, it's about changing the way we lead. He's really advocating a *mindset* shift so leaders appreciate the value in technology and leverage it as a powerful resource.

Sheninger bases the ideas in the book on his own experience as the principal of New Milford High School, "I radically changed my beliefs on how school should be structured and function." Basically, he had a wake-up call and became a digital leader in 2009.

From this experience he created a framework to help *you* become a digital leader. He's aware that not everyone is tech-savvy, "You don't have to like technology, but at this point in time you need to accept that it is not going away."

But have no fear. The framework he introduces in the book outlines clear skills and behaviors that will help you lead in a way that is much more aligned to the shifts we are seeing in the technology-infused world around us.

### The Scoop (In this summary you will learn...)

This book introduces the seven Pillars of Digital Leadership:

- ✓ *Student Engagement and Learning*: Technology engages students in real-world tools to do real-world work.
- ✓ *Innovative Learning Spaces and Environments*: Research shows the positive impact of innovative spaces on learning.
- ✓ *Professional Learning and Growth*: To move from professional development to learning, digital leaders form PLNs.
- ✓ *Communication*: Various technology tools allow leaders to provide more relevant and timely information.
- ✓ *Public Relations*: Leaders need to become the storyteller-in-chief or someone else will tell the story of their school.
- ✓ *Branding*: Digital leaders maximize the use of social media to create a positive image of their school.
- ✓ *Opportunity*: Leaders leverage connections made via technology to bring partnerships and opportunities to their schools.
- ✓ *Professional Learning Suggestions* from The Main Idea to use **during the current pandemic** along with a **PowerPoint** you can use with staff.

## Preface and Introduction

Digital leadership isn't about "flashy tools," it's about changing the school leader's mindset to use innovative ideas and digital strategies to prepare students for the real world. Sheninger compiled seven "pillars of digital leadership" from research and his own experience leading New Milford High School to help you become a digital leader. To give you an idea of what digital leadership looks like in action, Sheninger describes a day in the life of a digital leader:

The first thing in the morning, after greeting people, Sheninger would boot up his computer and begin to browse Tweets from his Personal Learning Network (PLN) through TweetDeck to find free resources to put into his email to staff. These resources would be curated in Diigo and Pinterest so staff could access them when needed. Next, he would update student announcements on a Google Doc and share these links on the school's Twitter and Facebook pages. He made sure to keep all school social media accounts updated with the latest school news.

When the school day began, he would conduct walkthroughs with his smartphone and tablet and collect information on a Google Form so teachers could receive feedback. By spending the majority of the day in classrooms he was able to share examples of student work and successes via social media tools. He saw numerous ways technology was used to deepen thinking such as students using their mobile devices to engage in interactive discussions or collaborate on digital projects. As it was a BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) school, the students also had their devices during lunch and could be seen doing schoolwork, researching, or playing games. Because of the school's Wi-Fi and mobile charging stations, Sheninger was able to work anywhere in the school so he constantly interacted with students (and got tips on Minecraft for his son!) By the end of the day, from having observed numerous examples of innovative learning, he had plenty of material to blog about. Finally, he would end the day chatting on social media to gather more resources to help teachers improve their professional practice.

## Chapters 1-4: A Foundation for Change

### Eric Sheninger's Path to Digital Leadership

Back in 2009, previous to the scene painted above, Sheninger had prioritized what many principals had always focused on – maintaining the rules, conformity, and compliance – in other words, preserving the status quo. Then one day in 2009 he had his "aha" moment. He was informed on his walkie-talkie that a student had his phone out. Sheninger ended up chasing down that student to confiscate the phone (since it was against school policy) and the student responded with, "Thank you Mr. Sheninger for creating a jail out of school."

This one line became the moment when he started to change his purpose and his behavior as an educator. The following weekend he read an article about Twitter and things slowly started to change.

**The first change** was in his belief. Previously he had believed that technology, and certainly social media, wouldn't do much to enhance learning. Now, he started to transform his beliefs so that he came to see the value in integrating technology and innovation into everything from teaching and learning to learning spaces to his own leadership practices.

**The second change** was his move to educate his staff about the value of integrating technology *without* mandating it. He decided to find small ways to model, support, and encourage staff to be innovative in order to boost their confidence to take risks.

**The third change** came from the realization that students had to be a part of these efforts. He had to get comfortable with giving up some control, allowing students to bring their own devices (BYOD) to school, and giving them access to the Internet throughout the day.

**The final change** was becoming a more transparent leader. He decided to share the innovative practices that were taking place in his building with the world via Twitter and Facebook. In addition to sharing the new teaching and learning, he was also able to share examples of his new role as a digital leader

### Rationale for the Change to Digital Leadership

Change isn't coming, it's here. With the exponential changes going on in technology we have arrived at the fourth Industrial Revolution. You can probably name countless innovations in many walks of life that have changed business as usual. Every aspect of life has been impacted by technology in some way. We need to prepare our students for these changes and yet, the pace of change in schools is slow. There are numerous opportunities to maximize technology tools to prepare students for that future. Not only will the use of new technologies prepare students, but it will also more readily *engage* students in their learning as they already enjoy time spent online connecting with friends, browsing content, and creating their own content. Schools *say* they want to improve engagement, and yet many still ban students from bringing devices or using technology in school.

How many of us are capitalizing on this interest in and need to prepare students for a digital world? As Sheninger puts it, are we preparing students to do *something* when we really should be preparing them to do *anything*? He argues that now is the time to turn schools into vibrant and connected places that fully integrate educational technology. If we do, we will see the following results:

- increased student engagement and relevance to real-world applications
- improved learning (higher standardized test scores)
- enhanced economic viability of students through building 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (e.g., critical thinking, communication, creativity, productivity, global awareness, and more)

### We Need Digital Leaders

Everything around us is changing at a tremendous rate. And yet our schools today look very much the way they did a century ago with bells, distinct periods, rows of desks, workbooks, lectures, textbooks, and different teachers for different subjects. While students have embraced the Information Age, schools have not. The only way we are going to see change in schools will be if school leaders initiate it. We need “digital leaders” to champion change in schools and back bold ideas. It will be digital leaders who change the culture of schools to support 21<sup>st</sup> century competencies such as creativity, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, entrepreneurship, technological proficiency, and global awareness. The truth is that leaders don’t need to *like* technology but they need to accept that it is here to stay. And technology has tremendous potential to change the culture and learning in schools.

### The Six Keys to Change

So, what were the changes Sheninger made that led New Milford High School to become a far cry from what it once was? The following are the key elements that resulted in this change.

- 1. *Connectedness Matters*** – Knowledge is everything. Being connected via social media was the catalyst that helped Sheninger learn how technology can be truly integrated into teaching, learning, and leadership.
- 2. *Vision to Action*** – It’s important to bring together all stakeholders to create a shared vision that outlines the *why* and *how* for any plan. If you want a vision to take root, it must be a *shared* vision. Once you have this shared vision, rather than leaving it in a document you need to bring it alive in everything you do by: prioritizing it, communicating it, inspiring people with it, promoting it, living it yourself, and delegating parts of it.
- 3. *Value*** – One obstacle is that people don’t perceive the *importance* of technology integration. Be sure to emphasize that the value of technology lies in its ability to support learning and create meaningful and relevant experiences for students.
- 4. *Support*** – Successful implementation won’t happen without proper support. Be sure to provide needed infrastructure like a functioning wireless network throughout the building as well as “soft” support structures like encouraging teachers to take risks and supporting them through their fears of failure.
- 5. *Professional Learning*** – Without actual opportunities to learn how to integrate technology, changes will not occur. Sheninger supported teachers in developing their own online PLNs (Personal Learning Networks), held trainings on digital tools afterschool, and gave staff time and flexibility (Professional Growth Period) to integrate these new tools.
- 6. *Embracement*** – Sheninger made a conscious effort not to seek “buy-in” which sounds like something a salesperson might aim for. Instead, he chose to pursue “embracement” – a combination of empowerment and autonomy – without any mandates to encourage technology use at the school.

### Potential Roadblocks

Change isn’t easy and doesn’t happen quickly. In fact, when putting together a plan for the integration of technology, it can be helpful to know and address roadblocks in advance. Below are some roadblocks to plan to overcome:

*This is too hard* – Of course it’s hard, that’s why we don’t see a ton of examples of innovation. We need to build a culture so teachers feel comfortable taking risks and learning from mistakes.

*Lack of collaboration* – Innovation will only occur if it is a collective process.

*Directive approach* – Just because you’re smitten with a piece of technology does not mean it’s effective to mandate it. You need to start by modeling its use and then get people on board with a process of shared decision making.

*Poor professional learning* – Leaders need to ensure that they invest in quality professional learning that is *relevant*, gives teachers *choices*, and is hands-on.

*Frivolous purchases* – You can’t throw money at the shiniest new toy and just expect to it be well implemented. The key lies in effective professional learning.

### Common Technology Investments School Make

Despite the roadblocks to technology integration, schools have already started using technology in different ways for different purposes. School leaders should know what types of technology schools are currently adapting. While the types of technology will certainly change over time, it is helpful to see the ways current tech tools aim to advance student learning. Below are very brief descriptions – for full descriptions see pp. 8-17.

## Examples of Technology Schools are Using

Each of the following shows promising research

<b>Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs) and Displays:</b> Provides a more interactive and connected learning experience for kids.
<b>Tablets:</b> Allows for more portable learning such as through station rotation models in blended learning. Increases engagement through 1:1 initiatives and provides much more access to information than a traditional textbook.
<b>Document Cameras:</b> Like an embellished overhead projector, can be used to share student work or thinking with the whole class.
<b>Chromebooks:</b> With no operating system or hard drive, these cheap devices provide much greater and more equitable access to the Internet
<b>Augmented and Virtual Reality:</b> Makes learning more active and engaging by altering student perceptions of the world or inviting students into an artificial world with images and sounds. Helps with field trips, distance learning, and investigations.
<b>Cloud Computing:</b> Inexpensive virtual servers (“the cloud”) allow students to efficiently save and manage documents and information.
<b>Web-Based Tools:</b> Applications in the cloud (web tools) help students develop competencies in collaboration, communication, creativity, and global awareness.
<b>Mobile Technology:</b> Initiatives known as BYOD or BYOT (bring your own device/technology) allow students to bring their own mobile phones, tablets, and e-readers. These devices support students with content curation, assessment, research, organization, and collaboration.
<b>Video Conferencing:</b> With video-conferencing technology (Skype, FaceTime, Google Hangouts, Zoom), schools can create virtual field trips, connect with authors, and collaborate with others across the globe.
<b>Open Education Resources (OER):</b> These openly licensed text, media, and other digital resources are free to use to support teaching, learning, and assessment. Further, there are entire online courses students now have access to through OpenCourseWare (OCW) and massive open online courses (MOOCs), for example.
<b>Gaming:</b> Often thought to be a distraction, even gaming is beginning to show some positive effects on cognitive abilities. Gaming supports tactile and kinesthetic learning and can help students learn more quickly.

### The Seven Pillars of Digital Leadership

With Sheninger’s awareness of the importance of technology integration, he was able to distill seven Pillars of Digital Leadership. These pillars represent the new skills and behaviors that will help leaders lead in innovative ways more aligned to the types of societal shifts that require increased technological fluency and integration. These pillars also align to the International Society for Technology in Education’s (ISTE) Standards for Educational leaders. These pillars will each be discussed in a chapter that follows:

1. Student Engagement, Learning, and Outcomes
2. Learning Environment and Spaces
3. Professional Growth and Learning
4. Communications
5. Public Relations
6. Branding
7. Opportunity

## The Seven Pillars of Digital Leadership

### Chapter 5 – 1<sup>st</sup> Pillar: Improving Student Engagement, Learning, and Outcomes

All digital leaders know that the key to integrating technology is that technology must follow pedagogy. Or, as Sheninger puts it, “pedagogy trumps technology.” We need to start with what we know about effective pedagogy and *then* integrate technology to enhance that learning. Further, the point of technology should never be for its whistles and bells. To be worthwhile, it must lead to improved student learning. However, technology does have the potential to address a serious problem in schools – disengagement. In real life students want to create, collaborate and use technology for learning, and connect with peers, but schools often don’t reflect this reality.

#### Five Ways Digital Tools Improve Learning

Even if a school is completely infused with technology, teachers may still be using it for direct instruction. One way for leaders to think about this issue is to ask the question: *How are students using technology to learn in ways that they couldn’t without it?* Below are five ways technology can be used to transform learning.

1. *Increase collaboration* – Digital tools allow a new level of give-and-take between students and teachers. Web-based discussion threads, Google Docs, and more provide opportunities for expanded levels of exchanges online.
2. *Innovate assessment* – The openness of the online learning environment allows for innovations in assessment, particularly formative assessment.
3. *Enable learning about information and research* – Students can access a much broader range of online materials from texts to data to photographs.
4. *Transform time frames around learning* – Digital tools that are used for asynchronous (non-simultaneous) learning allow learners to respond at different times and in different ways that in-class discussions do not.
5. *Ownership of learning* – There are thousands of digital tools that allow students to *do* things and not just be passive recipients of knowledge. Students can now more readily choose the best tools, create something, and be more involved in learning.

The Rigor/Relevance Framework

Maximizing the use of technology means we need to go beyond engagement and ensure that teaching builds rigor and relevance. To help with this, the International Center for Leadership in Education has created the Rigor/Relevance Framework. One axis focuses on the *rigor* of learning based on Bloom’s revised taxonomy: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The other axis looks at *relevance* in terms of the application of learning: learn in one discipline, apply in discipline, apply across disciplines, apply to real-world predictable situations, and apply to real-world unpredictable situations. The goal is to structure learning at the higher levels of each of these axes, that is, learning in which students think in complex ways *and* apply knowledge and skills they have acquired even when confronted with complex unknowns.

The Rigor/Relevance Framework						
6. Creating	Knowledge Taxonomy					<u>Adaptation</u>
5. Evaluating						Even when confronted with unknowns students use extensive knowledge and skills to create solutions and take actions that further develop their skills and knowledge.
4. Analyzing						
3. Applying						
2. Understanding						
1. Remembering						
<b>Application Model</b>						
		1. Knowledge in one discipline	2. Apply in discipline	3. Apply across disciplines	4. Apply to real-world predictable situations	5. Apply to real-world unpredictable situations

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See <http://www.daggett.com/our-philosophy/rigor-relevance-framework.php> for more information

*Rigor* at the highest levels asks students to compose, create, design, invent, predict, research, summarize, defend, and more. *Relevance* at the highest levels addresses *why* students are doing this and how it will help them. A quick test – if learning is relevant, students will be able to tell you: 1) what they learned, 2) why they learned it, and 3) how they will use it outside of school. With a focus on *rigor* and *relevance* teachers will be able to find unlimited ways of integrating technology. However, the key will be the leadership. It is the leader who will ensure that the framework is used to enhance learning by providing a common language, framework, and vision for what effective pedagogy with technology integration looks like.

## Chapter 6 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Pillar: Transforming Learning Spaces and Environments

Importance of the Physical Space/Environment

If we want students to engage in meaningful, real-world learning, we need to create the types of schools, classrooms, and culture that supports this type of innovative learning. Research shows that the design of our learning spaces affects students. Elements such as lighting, heating, and classroom displays impact student learning. We’ve learned that we should keep three design principles in mind when creating learning spaces: **naturalness** (humans want light and air), **individualization** (each brain is different), and **appropriate level of stimulation** (not too much to distract or too little to detract from learning). Below are some ideas to help the digital leader re-think the ways we design learning spaces and environments.

*School design in which form follows function*

While many schools will not have the finances for a large-scale redesign of their buildings, it is inspirational to hear about what *could be*. In this chapter one school designed a 51,000-square-foot building that looks nothing like a typical high school. It is not only a bright open space with lots of nooks and crannies for individual and group learning, but the teachers did an in-depth study of project-based-learning to ensure that the building’s new spaces and technology were supported by equally innovative and sound pedagogy.

Another place to take inspiration from is the environment at Google offices. The goal of their design is to spark curiosity and includes everything from a Lego wall to rooms for gaming, napping, and massages. Who wouldn’t want to work in an environment like that? Imagine if our students and teachers got the same inspiration from their surroundings. Below are suggestions that are more within reach for most schools.

### *Makerspaces*

A makerspace is “a unique learning environment that allows for tinkering, play, and open-ended exploration for ALL.” The goal of these spaces is to allow students to do real-world work with real-world tools like Arduinos, snap circuits, LEGOS, and Raspberry Pi. Engaging in this type of work represents the highest levels of the Rigor/Relevance Framework because the work is both applied and higher-order.

### *Devices for All and BYOD*

Because many educators did not have easy access to technology in their own schooling, they are often skeptical about providing it for their students. However, a number of schools are now aiming to get a device in the hands of every student throughout the day to become a 1:1 school either by providing those devices or letting students BYOD (bring your own device). But keep in mind that it’s not enough to just place devices in students’ hands and expect a miraculous transformation.

To make 1:1 work, digital leaders need to make sure the infrastructure is in place (enough access to the Internet); establish a shared vision and plan in which everyone knows the goal is to focus on student learning; set clear policies for acceptable use, equity, liability for lost devices, and more; and ensure ongoing professional learning to prepare teachers.

### *Blended Learning Environment*

The distinction between blended *instruction* and blended *learning* is that in the former it’s what the *teacher* does with technology while in the latter, it is when *students* use technology to have control over path, place, and pace. A blended learning environment may mean that students have flex spaces, choice of seating, or students rotating through different stations (teacher directed, independent, formative assessment, flipped activity, and collaborative problem solving, for example).

### *Online Courses*

To allow for personalized and online learning, some spaces have been transformed by the possibility of online course offerings through the use of OpenCourseWare (OCW) and massive open online courses (MOOCs).

## Chapter 7 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Pillar: Professional Growth and Learning

Research shows that *effective* professional learning is sustained, collaborative, coherent, and job-embedded. For school leaders in particular, the traditional face-to-face professional learning they’ve engaged in has not met these criteria. Digital leaders prioritize their professional learning based on *what works*. They make the time to learn and do so using a *connected* model. This chapter introduces two models of improved professional learning for digital leaders and teachers.

### Professional Learning Networks (PLNs)

Becoming a school leader is a choice and with it comes a great deal of responsibility. In order to improve, schools must change. And at the forefront of that change is the leader. To bring about these changes, the best leaders are always learning. Shenger writes that “Learning is the fuel of leadership.” For this reason, he suggests that leaders carve out some time each day (as little as 15-30 minutes) to develop and learn from a Professional Learning Network (PLN). A PLN can be defined as a collection of like-minded people with whom one exchanges information and engages in conversation. For professional growth we have always gathered with colleagues to give and share tips and strategies to improve.

With PLNs, you can now extend this network across the world as a way to communicate, collaborate, get new resources, receive support, and share ideas. Using this free resource you can connect with experts in the field as well as other practitioners doing a similar job to you. Not only does connecting with others online help with feelings of isolation, but this type of professional learning meets many of the criteria for effective professional learning. Leaders become the ones who decide *what, where, how, and when* they will learn. This is the type of learning that is fueled by passion, not compliance.

So, where to begin? There are a number of resources you can use to connect with others that are described on pages 151-154 and which are listed briefly here: Twitter, LinkedIn, Blogs, RSS Readers, digital discussion forums like Ning, social bookmarking, Facebook, Voxer, and more.

### The Professional Growth Period (PGP)

Teachers as well as leaders can also benefit from their own PLNs. In order to give teachers time to explore their own learning passions, one idea is to create the Professional Growth Period (PGP). This is a time that is set aside during the school day to allow teachers establish a PLN and learn about tools and resources they want to integrate into their teaching. At Shenger’s school they were able to cut noninstructional teacher duties in half to provide a few 48-minute periods per week for PGPs. Being given autonomy to follow their passions sparked the motivation of their teachers. The only caveat was that the learning done during the PGP had to impact student learning and the teachers had to submit a learning portfolio at their end-of-year evaluation meeting.

## Chapter 8 – 4<sup>th</sup> Pillar: Communication

You won't find an effective leader who isn't an effective communicator. Communication is vital for almost all tasks that leaders do such as providing information, gathering information, initiating change, building consensus, and inspiring people to embrace change. The *best* communicators know that the exchange of information must be two-way: they must listen, facilitate dialogue, and build an open environment for discussion.

While face-to-face communication will always be worthwhile to build relationships, we are at a point where the overwhelming majority of our students, parents, and other stakeholders use technology and social media for communication. And digital leaders know they need to use a wide range of media to meet people where they are in order to communicate most effectively. While newsletters, snail mail, website updates, and even e-mail were sufficient in the past, today most of these do not meet the criteria for effective communication as they are one-way.

In contrast, social media has opened entirely new channels of communication that provide for two-way dialogue. This allows leaders to engage more stakeholders and to do so more frequently, accurately, and in a deeper way than traditional methods. When Sheninger started to use digital tools more regularly, he found that there were three keys to the use of these tools: *transparency*, *flexibility*, and *accessibility*. The tools allowed him to be more *transparent* about the school's successes as well as its challenges; they gave him the opportunity to be more *flexible* by, for example, inviting more stakeholders into decision-making processes; and he was now able to make information more *accessible* to all at any time and any place. This chapter provides more information about two forms of social media and then lists a number of other digital tools leaders can use to enhance communication.

*Twitter* – Sheninger describes the time he started using Twitter as life-changing – it literally shifted the entire course of his instructional leadership. Using Twitter allowed him to stay abreast of much more information and be in touch with a vastly wider range of stakeholders. He could now tweet messages about weather closures and sports wins as well as celebrate all student and faculty successes in the classroom. Not only did he set himself up on Twitter, but he helped to get the entire school community on board as well. He explained how Twitter would be used for school communications and sent out instructions for families to create their own accounts.

*Facebook* – Billions of people are on Facebook – even more than are on Twitter. Sheninger created a Facebook page for New Milford High School and this became the hub of all communications. He used this page to post events, conduct polls, and post updates with information, pictures, and videos. When he posted a message on one platform it could be set up to link to others. Facebook and Twitter became interactive two-way platforms for all types of communication. Again, by using these types of social media, digital leaders meet their stakeholders where they are.

To give an example of the wide of a range of communication efforts one school can use, take a look at what the Knapp Elementary School provided the its school community: Twitter, Facebook, a family engagement wiki, an eBully reporting system, Hope & School 2.0 (for monthly meetings), Remind (to send reminders), Poll Everywhere (to get feedback), Google Translate (for parents who don't speak English), Kidblog (for students to share their experiences at the school), and more.

## Chapter 9 – 5<sup>th</sup> Pillar: Public Relations

You may initially cringe at the idea that an important role of the school leader is to leverage social media and other tools for public relations. But most schools need a positive image for their survival and viability. Unfortunately, the media get more attention with negative stories, so if something negative happens at your school they will be much more likely to broadcast this than all of the other more positive events that are occurring. When Sheninger got fed up with all of the bad press, he knew that he had to become the storyteller-in-chief.

Another reason to build positive public relations is to help you make the kinds of changes suggested in this book – integrate technology and bring schools up to date. You may face resistance to this. However, a good PR campaign helps by keeping stakeholders informed of and involved with all of these changes. It helps all stakeholders buy into and see the need for reform.

How do you do this? *Get connected, tell your story, do not walk alone.* First, you need to get connected using the tools and approaches outlined previously. Next, you need to share your story, that is, build your digital public relations strategy. You can do this through Twitter, blogs, Facebook, sharing videos (Youtube), sharing photos (Instagram), and more. You can set it up to share in one medium and have your posts automatically shared or linked to the others. Finally, involve others so you do not need to do this alone. Digital leaders understand the importance of building a solid foundation to foster positive relations using social media in addition to their communication efforts outlined in the previous chapter.

## Chapter 10 – 6<sup>th</sup> Pillar: Branding

Whether you like or not, your school is considered a brand. And if you don't paint a positive picture of your brand, someone else will paint a less positive one. (If you don't believe this, Google your school and see what comes up.) When we talk about *branding* in education, we're not discussing *selling*, but rather *telling*. Your brand is what your stakeholders and others say about your school/district. One way to distinguish between the two is to use the term *brandED* to mean branding but with the heart of an educator. It involves a combination of the ideas introduced in the previous two chapters:

Communications + Public Relations = *brandED*

Digital leaders know that it is more important than ever to establish a positive brand presence for their school. Why is it so important to take this business concept and apply it to education? By promoting your school brand and getting the word out about your school's excellent "product and service" you will see improvements in your school culture, student achievement, and resources. Think of the following benefits by imagining...

- ... how much easier it would be to get school budgets approved if schools marketed their brand every day.
- ... the impact on potential qualified teacher candidates when your school has a positive brand.
- ... the impact on parents who are considering moving into your school district when they know your school has a positive reputation.
- ... how students and staff who already work at your school would feel if they knew people thought highly of their school.

Here are two steps to build your brand: build your own professional brand and then build the school's brand.

*Build your own brand* – It is not an egotistic thing to build your own brand. It's an expression of what you stand for and who you are. Once you know what you stand for, let this propel you forward in the actions you take and the messages you send both in person and via social media. Digital leaders know that this is a matter of survival in a digital world of messaging.

*Build your school's brand* – Think about developing your school's brand and then work with your team to figure out how to communicate this brand to the community. Go beyond thinking about a logo or a mascot. Take a look at your mission statement and determine what simple message you wish to convey in all of your communications. For Microsoft, Bill Gates had a simple one, "A computer on every desk." So, what should your team be communicating about? Here are some topics: student growth and achievement, the quality of the staff, the innovative practices and programs your school has, and extracurricular activities.

Your school has so much that is great about it. Now is the time to share that greatness with the world.

## Chapter 11 – 7<sup>th</sup> Pillar: Opportunities -- Partnerships and Academies

As you embrace the Pillars of Digital Leadership you will find that numerous opportunities arise that will further improve your school. This chapter outlines two of those possible opportunities: partnerships and academies.

### Partnerships

Once digital leaders start regularly utilizing social media to get the positive word out about their schools, they will find that potential partners will be energized by this new image. By embracing these partnerships, leaders open the doors to a wealth of support and resources for students and staff alike. Consider building relationships like the following:

*University Partnerships* – Universities bring all types of expertise as well as practicum students and resources for the classroom.

*Experiential Learning Partnerships* – Community organizations like the YMCA or Audubon Society can provide students with outside-of-school opportunities.

*Interschool Partnerships* – By working with other schools, teachers can partner with other classes studying similar topics.

*Community/Corporate Partnerships* – Local businesses and organizations can provide opportunities for students to dive more deeply into topics they are interested in studying.

*Mental Health Partnerships* – Local mental health organizations can help schools expand the services they provide for students.

### Academies

When Shenger was a principal he decided to launch "academies" – holistic programs that allow students, together in a cohort, to follow their learning passions. These are like "schools within a school" that prepare students for *both* the workforce and entrance into higher education. His school had three academies – STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), Arts & Letters, and Global Leadership. Each one had special features such as professional mentorships; access to field trips, resources, and virtual courses; Independent OpenCourseWare Study (IOCS); a capstone project; and specialized transcripts.

## Chapter 12 – Leading for Efficacy

In order to get support for technology use, digital leaders need to show that it actually has efficacy, that is, an impact. Sheninger defines efficacy as “the degree to which desired outcomes and goals are achieved.” For some, this may mean achievement on standardized tests. Sheninger worked with one school to integrate technology, and as a result, they got amazing results of 93% to 99% of students achieving proficiency on state tests.

However, Sheninger’s own measures of success are different. First, he notes that his daughter attended this same tech-infused school, but what he and his wife were most pleased with was to see her love of learning grow. Every day when asked how school was, she would respond, “It was great Daddy.” Why? Because her school allowed students to use their own devices (BYOT), had a station-rotation blended-learning model, used portfolio-based assessment, no homework, a staff connected with their own PLNs, and more. Sheninger’s own goal against which to measure success is that students are empowered to own their learning, create artifacts, demonstrate conceptual mastery, use their voice, be responsible in online spaces, and connect with the world in authentic ways.

So, where does the path to digital efficacy begin? It starts with a clear goal in mind. Without a clear goal it is unlikely that adding technology on its own will achieve results. Next, a strong pedagogical foundation grounded in the Rigor/Relevance Framework provides a common language and a common vision for curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Once this vision is in place, digital leaders focus on the following five keys to achieve digital efficacy:

1. *Essential Questions* – Ask the kinds of questions that will yield answers to demonstrate the impact of technology in your school. For example, “What is our evidence of the impact of technology on school *culture*?” “How are our learning tasks preparing students for the future?” “What observable evidence can be used to measure the effect of technology on learning and achievement?”
2. *Research* – Digital learning efforts must be grounded in the research on effective pedagogical practices such as student ownership, project-based learning, and collaborative learning.
3. *Practicality* – Technology integration must be practical. That means it must engage students in skills they need for the future such as applied critical thinking and problem solving but it must also prepare students for current demands, such as success on today’s standardized tests. Practicality also means realizing that technology won’t solve everything. Humans continue to thrive on in-person interactions, and digital leaders must support a balance.
4. *Evidence and Accountability* – Evidence and accountability exist in every profession and certainly have a place in education. In order for technology to be taken seriously, we need to demonstrate its impact on student learning outcomes. Digital leaders must determine how they can use data, observations, portfolios, and artifacts to illustrate success.
5. *Reflection* – In the end, it is vital to reflect. Sheninger provides some useful questions, in addition to the essential questions in the first key above, to help reflect:

- Did my students learn?
- How do I know they learned?
- How do others know the students have learned?
- What can be done to improve?
- What point of view have I not considered?

Overall, digital leadership is about transforming your school culture by creating a more engaging and interactive institution of learning. In this type of setting, students become more empowered to apply their learning in innovative ways and to adapt to a constantly changing world. This book is a call to action to encourage leaders to use the framework of the seven pillars to build and sustain these powerful changes.

## THE MAIN IDEA's PD suggestions for *Digital Leadership*

Below are three sets of PD activities. The first is for leaders to reflect on their mindset and self-assess their role as a digital leader. The second helps leaders create a plan to improve communication and professional learning. The third includes activities for teachers to re-think how they infuse technology into their lessons. This comes with a **HANDOUT** (at the end) and **PPT** – email Jenn for the PPT.

**\*\*\* Note these PD ideas were written during the COVID-19 pandemic \*\*\***

Can these activities be done during the COVID-19 pandemic?!? Yes, they can. *Should* they be? It's up to individual school leaders to have their fingers on the pulse of their schools to see if it's appropriate to introduce these ideas now.

### **I. Your mindset**

Probably the most important aspect of becoming a Digital Leader is your mindset about technology integration and innovation. Sheninger had a powerful wake-up moment when a student, in reference to the school's ban on cell phone use, called the school a jail. I imagine many school leaders are experiencing their wake-up calls during the current pandemic which is occurring as I write this.

A. Take some time to reflect and perhaps journal as you think about the following questions alone or with a leadership team:

- Sheninger writes that school must prepare students to do *anything*, not *something*. Reflect on what this means to you.
- Are you preparing your students for an ever-changing world?
- Think about the technology your school already has. Is it being used to do what older tools did (like the blackboard) or is it being used in new and innovative ways to bring about higher-order and real-world thinking?
- How comfortable are you with technology? If you need to move forward with your own practices and behaviors, what obstacles stand in the way?
- Have you ever had an aha moment that made you realize it's time to move into the 21<sup>st</sup> century like Sheninger's example above?

B. Do a self-assessment of where you are with the seven Pillars of Digital Leadership.

School Leader Self-Assessment on the Seven Pillars of Digital Leadership	
Rating from lowest (1) to highest (4)	The 7 Pillars of Digital Leadership
	1. <i>Student Engagement and Learning</i> : At our school, students are using technology to learn in ways that they couldn't without it (to increase collaboration, innovate assessment, access a wide range of online materials, transform learning time frames, and to take more ownership of learning). Further, technology is used to build rigor ( <u>creating, evaluating, analyzing</u> ) as well as relevance ( <u>apply to real-world, unpredictable situations</u> ).
	2. <i>Innovative Learning Spaces and Environments</i> : The physical space and environment at our school is designed to help students engage in meaningful, real-world learning.
	3. <i>Professional Learning and Growth</i> : To ensure that professional learning that is sustained, collaborative, coherent, and job-embedded you and your faculty have become more <b>connected</b> via your own PLNs (Professional Learning Networks).
	4. <i>Communication</i> : You use a wide range of media to communicate most effectively, including two-way media such as Twitter, Facebook, and other social media. These various types of technology tools allow you to provide more relevant and timely information.
	5. <i>Public Relations</i> : You have taken on the role of storyteller-in-chief and see it as one of your primary roles to tell the story of your school.
	6. <i>Branding</i> : You actively maximize the use of social media to create and maintain both a personal brand and a positive brand for your school.
	7. <i>Opportunity</i> : You leverage connections made via technology to bring partnerships and opportunities to your school (such as partnerships with universities, mental health agencies, community organizations, etc.)

C. Rank the 7 Pillars from your strongest to your weakest and reflect.

Look at the rankings you gave yourself above. Which Pillars are your strongest? Your weakest? Why do you think this is the case? Reflect alone in writing or with a trusted colleague to think about what you might want to start to improve.

Reflect on and/or discuss Jenn's "**Top Ten Lessons from *Digital Leadership for the Current Crisis***" with a colleague or your leadership team. Do any of these suggested recommendations resonate with you for immediate implementation during the pandemic?

## II. Your Plan of Action

Again, these PD ideas were written during the COVID-19 pandemic and are more tailored to that time.

### A. Take an EPIC approach to build your PLN (Professional Learning Network).

Given the current pandemic, it is a key time to connect with others outside of your school via a PLN (Professional Learning Network) online. No one has gone through this before and we are all learning to tweak the plane while flying it. There are valuable lessons to be learned from others now more than ever.

Many leaders have no idea where to begin in creating a PLN, so I've created a simple acronym to get you started – EPIC.

Take an EPIC approach to build your PLN - **Explore, Post, Interact, and Continue** beyond COVID.

**EXPLORE** – Choose just a few types of social media to reach out beyond your school. I suggest starting with Twitter and LinkedIn. To create accounts, simply Google, “How do I set up a Twitter account” – I like the Lifewire and Wired explanations. Once you have accounts, start by just observing what others have to say. If they have interesting things to say, then “follow” them. Give yourself permission to just lurk, but aim to follow at least 50 people, including colleagues you know and new ones.

**POST** – Try your hand at posting some things you're observing right now. Share one lesson about leadership during the pandemic. Share one success story about your school community coming together. Try tagging people who might be interested in your post. (Google, “How to tag people on LinkedIn?”) It's different on LinkedIn and Twitter.

**INTERACT** – Join and participate in education groups on LinkedIn or join a Twitter chat. I just joined #822chat – just 8 minutes– because I knew some of the people. Here is a list of all Twitter chats (quite overwhelming - <https://sites.google.com/site/twittereducationchats/education-chat-calendar>) or just try one of those below:

**#satchat:** Saturday mornings at 7:30 AM EST

**#engagechat:** Friday at 8 PM EST focuses on engagement in schools

**#edchat:** Tuesdays at 12 noon and 7 PM EST

**#suptchat:** Superintendents' chat on Wednesdays at 8 PM EST

**CONTINUE** – Create a routine to ensure you continue connecting with others online after COVID-19. It could be 15 minutes at the beginning of the day to read posts and 15 minutes at the end to share your observations of the day. But if you don't plan for it, it may fall by the wayside.

### B. Expand your communication with your school community.

Sheninger says you need to meet people “where they are” because not everyone in your school community uses the same tools to communicate. And there's no more important time to do that than now.

1. Create a survey – Find out which tools your school community uses *most often* to communicate. Use a survey with a Google Form via email, a different online survey (like Survey Monkey or Zoho Survey), or another method. Try to reach as many members of your school community as possible to find out which communication tools staff, students, and families, most use.

2. Next, Sheninger writes about three keys to the effective use of communication: *transparency, flexibility, and accessibility*. Alone or with a leadership team, think through these issues during this difficult time:

- Discuss how you will use communication efforts to be *transparent* about what the school is doing well and what challenges still exist.
- Discuss how your communication efforts will be *flexible*: That is, how you will respond to the needs of the community. If they crave consistency, can you regularly send out communications? If they want access to the leaders for questions and support, can you use two-way communication? If people can't be online at the same time, can you create asynchronous communication options?
- Discuss how you will ensure that your communication efforts are *accessible* – How will ensure that those with and without Internet have access to your communications and to the school?

3. Based on the results of the survey, decide which media you will use (Facebook, Twitter, Email, Blogs, etc.) and be sure to use a *combination*. For inspiration, see the wide range of communication efforts one school in the book used (Chapter 8):

Twitter, Facebook, a family engagement wiki, an eBully reporting system, Hope & School 2.0 (for monthly meetings), Remind (to send reminders), Poll Everywhere (to get feedback), Google Translate (for parents who don't speak English), Kidblog (for students to share their experiences at the school), and more.

4. Finally, think about the *content* of your communication, especially during this pandemic.

Think through your values. This will prepare you for branding and PR later, but do it now during the Coronavirus. *What* values do you want to emphasize at this time? These may come from your mission statement. For example, for Microsoft Bill Gates had “A computer on every desk.” During this time, he might adapt it to be, “Access to the most recent and accurate information right from the computer at your desk.” Use these values to shape all of your communications regardless of the medium you use.

For more tips on communication during the pandemic, take a look at the one-pager I created. Click here: [Clarity & Communication](#).

### III. Have Faculty Re-Think and Innovate Teaching with Technology

A. Have staff self-assess how they've used technology so far with their classes.

Individually, have teachers think of a few examples of how they've used technology in their classrooms. Next, have them choose one or two of those activities and rate them on *rigor* and *relevance* by doing the following (use the **HANDOUT**):

1. Rate the activity on the **rigor** scale from 1 to 6 (1= remembering, 2 = understanding, 3 = applying, 4 = analyzing, 5 = evaluating, and 6 = creating).
2. Now have them rate the activity on the **relevance** scale from 1 to 5 (1 = knowledge in one discipline, 2 = application within one discipline, 3 = application across disciplines, 4 = application to real-work predictable situations, and 5 = application to real-work unpredictable situations).
3. Tell the teachers there will be an opportunity to reflect further on **rigor and relevance** later (activity below). For now, have them reflect on their own in writing or with other teachers: What are the implications of your ratings above?

B. As a large group, discuss using technology when it adds a dimension to learning.

In the book (p.88), Eric Sheninger suggests that students should be using technology to learn in ways that they couldn't without it. Ask for volunteers to share any examples of how they've used technology to do what they *couldn't have* without it. If you are doing this virtually, have teachers share their ideas using Padlet (padlet.com) and comment on each other's ideas. Discuss.

C. Have a discussion about the goal of technology use.

Sometimes teachers forget that technology should be a means, not an end. First, before showing the graphic below, ask teachers to discuss in pairs what they think the *goal* of technology use is (if doing this virtually, send pairs to breakout rooms in Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.)

Next, show the following graphic (also on the **HANDOUT**) created by educator Bill Ferriter and on p.109 of Sheninger's book. Ask a very open-ended question and have teachers think and perhaps write individually: What's your reaction to this graphic?

<b>WHAT DO YOU WANT KIDS TO DO WITH TECHNOLOGY?</b>	
<b><u>WRONG ANSWERS</u></b>	<b><u>RIGHT ANSWERS</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make Prezis</li> <li>• Start blogs</li> <li>• Create Wordles</li> <li>• Publish Animotos</li> <li>• Design Flipcharts</li> <li>• Post to Edmodo</li> <li>• Develop apps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness</li> <li>• Start conversations</li> <li>• Find answers (to <u>their</u> questions)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join partners</li> <li>• Change minds</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Make a difference                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take action</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Technology is a tool, <i>not</i> a learning outcome.	

D. Ask teachers to move an activity from engagement to empowerment.

As Bill Ferriter says, "Engaging students means getting kids excited about *our* content, interests, and curricula." In contrast, empowering students "means giving kids the knowledge and skills to pursue *their* passions, interests, and future."

Have teachers think of one of their most engaging lessons. In the chart below (and the **HANDOUT**) have teachers write what they previously did to *engage* students. Next, have them share this with a partner and together think of ways to tweak this lesson/unit to *empower* students. (Again, if doing this virtually, use breakout rooms in a program like Zoom.)

For guidance, have teachers look at the Ferriter quote above and the useful questions on p.99 in Sheninger's book, both in the **HANDOUT**: *What can you create? What can you design? What can you develop? What can you plan? What can you invent? What kind of original problem could you produce?*

Before I <i>engaged</i> my students by...	Now I could <i>empower</i> my students by...

Finally, as a large group, do a *before* and *after* share-out. How did your *engaged* lesson compare to your *empowered* one?

E. Have teachers re-imagine a lesson to put students in control of the technology.

1. First have teachers examine the Rigor/Relevance Framework graphic below and on their **HANDOUT** and give them freedom to react (perhaps use a program like Padlet to share their reactions and let them comment on each other’s reactions).
2. Next, ask them to think about and discuss what technology use at the **lowest level** would look like, that is, technology aimed at helping students remember (1) and which includes knowledge from only one discipline (1). For example, when teachers use a program like Kahoot! to test students’ basic knowledge.

The Rigor/Relevance Framework					
6. Creating	Knowledge Taxonomy		<u>Verbs</u> Argue, Conclude Create, Explore Invent, Modify Plan, Predict Rate	<u>Examples</u> Animating, Audio Casting, Blog Commenting, Broadcasting, Collaborating, Composing - GarageBand Digital Storytelling, Directing, Mashing-Mixing/Remixing, Modifying/Game-Modding Networking, Photo/Video Blogging Podcasting, Reviewing	
5. Evaluating					
4. Analyzing					
3. Applying					
2. Understanding					
1. Remembering	Application Model				
		1. Knowledge in one discipline	2. Apply in discipline	3. Apply across disciplines	4. Apply to real-world predictable situations
					5. Apply to real-world unpredictable situations
Copyright © 2018 by International Center for Leadership in Education, a division of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. See <a href="http://www.daggett.com/our-philosophy/rigor-relevance-framework.php">http://www.daggett.com/our-philosophy/rigor-relevance-framework.php</a> for more information					

3. On p. 88, Sheninger writes, “It’s not what the adult does with technology that ultimately matters, but instead what the learners are doing with it.”

Have teachers discuss this quotation and then think of a lesson where they have mostly been in control of the technology (a Kahoot, a PPT lecture, a teacher-directed Zoom discussion, etc.)

4. Now have them re-imagine the lesson with the *students* being more in control of the technology (by collaborating, searching for information, creating a product, having freedom to complete a task asynchronously, etc.) Point their attention to the verbs and examples in the upper right-hand corner of the Rigor/Relevance Framework for ideas.

Have them re-think one way they have used technology when *they* were in control and imagine how it could look if *students* were actively using the technology (they can fill out this chart on their **HANDOUT**):

Before, I ( <i>the teacher</i> ) used technology by...	Now, I could transform the lesson so <i>students</i> use technology by...

\*\*\*Don’t forget the **HANDOUT** on the next page ⇒ ⇒ ⇒

## HANDOUT

### Re-Think and Innovate Teaching with Technology

Self-assess how you've used technology so far with your classes.

<b>Example of how you've used technology in your class</b>	<b>Rate the <i>rigor</i></b> (1= remembering, 2 = understanding, 3 = applying, 4 = analyzing, 5 = evaluating, and 6 = creating)	<b>Rate the <i>relevance</i></b> (1 = knowledge in one discipline, 2 = application within one discipline, 3 = application across disciplines, 4 = application to real-work predictable situations, and 5 = application to real-work unpredictable situations)
Ex 1:		
Ex 2:		
What are the implications of your ratings above?		

The goal of technology use

What's your reaction to the graphic below? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

<b>WHAT DO YOU WANT KIDS TO DO WITH TECHNOLOGY?</b>	
<b><u>WRONG ANSWERS</u></b>	<b><u>RIGHT ANSWERS</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make Prezis</li> <li>• Start blogs</li> <li>• Create Wordles</li> <li>• Publish Animotos</li> <li>• Design Flipcharts</li> <li>• Post to Edmodo</li> <li>• Develop apps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Raise awareness</li> <li>• Start conversations</li> <li>• Find answers (to <u>their</u> questions)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Join partners</li> <li>• Change minds</li> <li>• Make a difference</li> <li>• Take action</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Technology is a tool, <i>not</i> a learning outcome.	

Move an activity from *engagement* to *empowerment*.

Bill Ferriter says, "Engaging students means getting kids excited about *our* content, interests, and curricula." In contrast, empowering students "means giving kids the knowledge and skills to pursue *their* passions, interests, and future."

Think of one of your most engaging lessons. In the chart below, write what you previously did to *engage* students. Alone or with a partner think of ways to tweak this lesson/unit to *empower* students. For guidance, the Ferriter quote above might help and there are some useful questions from author Eric Sheninger that might help (*What can you create? What can you design? What can you develop? What can you plan? What can you invent? What kind of original problem could you produce?*).

Before I <i>engaged</i> my students by...	Now I could <i>empower</i> my students by...

Re-imagine a lesson to put students in control of the technology.

Examine the Rigor/Relevance Framework graphic below and share your reactions.

The Rigor/Relevance Framework					
6. Creating	Knowledge Taxonomy			<u>Verbs</u> Argue, Conclude Create, Explore Invent, Modify Plan, Predict Rate	<u>Examples</u> Animating, Audio Casting, Blog Commenting, Broadcasting, Collaborating, Composing - GarageBand Digital Storytelling, Directing, Mashing-Mixing/Remixing, Modifying/Game-Modding Networking, Photo/Video Blogging Podcasting, Reviewing
5. Evaluating					
4. Analyzing					
3. Applying					
2. Understanding					
1. Remembering					
Application Model					
		1. Knowledge in one discipline	2. Apply in discipline	3. Apply across disciplines	4. Apply to real-world predictable situations
					5. Apply to real-world unpredictable situations
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Record your reactions to the Rigor/Relevance here or share them with other teachers online:

Author Eric Sheninger writes, “It’s not what the adult does with technology that ultimately matters, but instead what the learners are doing with it.”

Think of a lesson where you as the teacher have mostly been in control of the technology (a Kahoot, a PPT lecture, a teacher-directed Zoom discussion, etc.) Now, re-imagine the lesson with the students being more in control of the technology (by collaborating, searching for information, creating a product, having freedom to complete a task asynchronously, etc.)

For guidance, look at the verbs and examples in the upper right-hand corner of the Rigor/Relevance Framework. Now re-think one way you have used technology when *you* were in control and imagine how it could look if *students* were actively using the technology:

Before, I ( <i>the teacher</i> ) used technology by...	Now, I could transform the lesson so <i>students</i> use technology by...