

Strategic Recertification: JMU Technology Integration Portfolio for Recertification (TIP•R)

OVERVIEW

The need for accountability in the purchase and utilization of educational technology has never been greater. Budget battles, calls to cut and even eliminate funding, efforts to dismantle innovative programs such as Virginia's Instructional Technology Resource Teacher (ITRT) initiative - all stem from a lack of awareness of the criticality of technology integration in enhancing teaching and learning.

And with ever increasing competitiveness in the global marketplace, the stakes rise even higher. As reported in a recent survey of public attitudes in the United States, *There is near universal agreement (99 percent) that teaching 21st century skills is important to our country's future economic success.*¹ Problem-solving, creativity, innovation, collaboration – these are the skills that are vital to our future. And technology enables them all.

In a review of the evolution in the use of technology in K-12 schools, a 2007 Technology Counts survey² noted that much progress had occurred over the past 10 years in improving schools' access to technology, but that significant deficits remain, particularly in the area of teacher competency:

- Only nineteen states (38%) require teachers to take technology coursework or testing as a condition of initial licensure.
- Only nine states (18%) require teachers to demonstrate technology proficiency or take technology coursework for recertification.
- Only seventeen states (34%) offer teachers professional or financial incentives for the use of technology (technology integration).

The survey concludes:

*How states grapple with evolving demands for... educator competency..., and for improved integration of cutting-edge technology into instruction remain to be seen.*³

¹ http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/documents/p21_pollreport_2pg.pdf. Retrieved November 29, 2007.

² <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2007/03/29/30dsr.h26.html>. Retrieved February 11, 2008.

³ <http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2007/03/29/30dsr.h26.html>. Retrieved February 11, 2008.

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The absence of adequate professional development, particularly in view of the rapid evolution of technology, leads to profound obsolescence of knowledge. For example, without adequate professional development over a teacher's career:

- Teachers with 15 or more years of experience would have missed the introduction and evolution of the World Wide Web.
- Teachers with 5 or more years of experience would have all but missed the rise of Web 2.0 and Google; they could be described as existing in the era Before Google (B.G.).

According to estimates derived from U. S. Census Bureau data, **almost half of all teachers have been teaching for 15 years or more, and 84% have taught for 5 years or more.**⁴

Of course, many teachers and divisions provide for professional development even without standards-based requirements to do so. However, even among these forward thinking educators and schools, the implementation of suitable professional development is often inconsistent, leading to great variance in the knowledge and skills acquired across divisions. Further, when such standards do exist, they are often outdated and inadequate to address the reality of technology-enhanced teaching and learning in the 21st Century. See the accompanying handout – *Teacher and Technology Timeline: The Context for Strategic Recertification* for a closer look at this issue.⁵

JMU NETS•T CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The James Madison University (JMU) NETS•T Certification Program⁶ was designed to address the need for mastery of the skills and knowledge required for proficiency relative to the National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers (NETS•T) published by the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)⁷. The program provides a rigorous assessment on the basis of an e-portfolio developed by teachers to address all NETS•T standards and performance indicators. Beginning in 2003 with the Shenandoah Valley Technology Consortium (SVTC) and now extending beyond the SVTC with the aid of funding from Microsoft Corporation, the JMU NETS•T program is a proven success in leading educators to competency in technology integration. The more than 500 Virginia teachers and Instructional Technology Resource Teachers (ITRTs) who have attained their NETS•T certification via this program to date provide powerful witness to the many benefits provided by the program. For more information on this program, see the booklet – *JMU NETS•T Certification Program Overview*.⁸

⁴ <http://www.census.gov/prod/2007pubs/08statab/educ.pdf>. Table 241: Public Elementary and Secondary School Teachers—Selected Characteristics: 2004–2005. Retrieved February 10, 2008.

⁵ *Teacher and Technology Timeline: The Context for Strategic Recertification*. (2008). JMU Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Harrisonburg, VA: James Madison University.

⁶ <http://coe.jmu.edu/netst>. Retrieved February 10, 2008.

⁷ <http://cnets.iste.org/>. Retrieved February 10, 2008.

⁸ *JMU NETS•T Certification Program Overview*. (2008). JMU Partnership for 21st Century Skills, Harrisonburg, VA: James Madison University.

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The program was awarded the ISTE Seal of Alignment in the summer of 2007. The review summary noted that ISTE “finds the JMU system to be an exceptionally well-designed and robust assessment system.”

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The JMU NETS•T Certification Program brings rigor to the evaluation of teacher technology integration. However, the very rigor that it engenders renders it less than optimal for many mainstream teachers. The path to certification via the program is challenging, even for Technology Integration Specialists (such as the Virginia ITRTs) and the extremely motivated mainstream teachers who strive to attain the certification.

Even with the introduction of the JMU NETS•T Certification Program, a need remains for those teachers and divisions who wish to stay current with the use of technology-enhanced teaching and learning but who do not require the breadth of coverage reflected in the full certification program. The JMU Technology Integration Portfolio for Recertification (TIP•R) was developed to meet this need. As implied in the title, **the TIP•R Program is designed specifically for use with teacher recertification programs.**

The approach taken by the TIP•R program is referred to as **Strategic Recertification**. Using this approach, administrators and teachers actively manage the recertification process, taking advantage of the opportunity to focus on that subset of NETS•T standards and performance indicators (rubrics) that best address the teachers’ and divisions’ specific needs in support of the division’s Strategic Plan. For the rubric or set of rubrics chosen by the division, the teacher experience is the same as that for teachers who pursue the full NETS•T certification. However, in the case of the TIP•R program, completion of the recertification occurs in a fraction of the time. Further, since formal certification is not the goal of the TIP•R program, no specialized evaluator training is required. As such, the program can be implemented quickly and easily. When the strategic goals have been met for a given recertification cycle, the strategy is re-evaluated to determine the additional skills that should be addressed, as guided by the division’s Strategic Plan.

For example, suppose that a division wants to stress the issue of **internet safety** among its teachers who are candidates for recertification. The division can elect to highlight NETS•T Rubric VI-D: *Teachers promote safe and healthy use of technology resources*. As described in the rubric, the teachers upload their schools’ Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) and descriptions of its use, along with reflections regarding how the AUP might be improved in the face of ever-changing technology.

Another division may want stress the development of **creativity and innovation** among its students for a given recertification cycle. So, the division chooses to focus attention on NETS•T Rubric III-C: *Teachers apply technology to develop students’ higher order skills and creativity*. Coordinating the teachers’ effort in this manner leads not only to skills enhancement, but to the sharing of ideas and resources around a shared topic.

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The two examples noted address one rubric as the focus of recertification. However, multiple rubrics can also be addressed in a recertification cycle if a particular combination of rubrics covers the skills and topics targeted by the division.

The **Strategic Recertification** program allows divisions and teachers to build a comprehensive set of NETS•T-aligned skills, individually and collectively, one recertification cycle at a time. In so doing, the TIP•R program yields the following benefits:

- **Common focus/language/framework.** Provides clarity and consensus regarding the goals of professional development for technology integration for all teachers in a division, not just those who complete the full NETS•T certification program.
- **Ease of implementation.** Does not require specialized training for reviewers or teachers.
- **Targeted professional development.** Assists in the identification of areas of professional practice in greatest need of supportive attention for individual teachers as well as for the division as a whole.
- **Flexibility.** Allows teachers to pursue development of their portfolio at their own pace, schedule, and location, using the professional development activities of their choosing, both formal and informal, face-to-face or online.
- **Reinforcement of ITRT role.** Supports ITRTs in the role of serving as reviewers for the teachers with whom they work.
- **Scalability.** Can expand for use with all teachers in a division or consortium.
- **Sustainability.** Once adopted, the program is easily sustainable due to its low-cost and reliance on local resources.
- **Foundation for NETS•T Certification pursuit.** Provides an introduction to and foundation for pursuit for full NETS•T certification for those teachers who want to move to the next level of technology integration proficiency.

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