

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Strategies for Professional Development

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## **Learning Teams and Clubs:**

A critical component of any high-quality professional development program is the ability of that program to extend participant learning beyond the initial learning experience. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, however the creation of learning teams is generally recognized as a strategy that has the ability to enrich and extend learning, and in the process, serve as a stimulus for the creation of professional learning communities. Learning teams are generally composed of interdisciplinary groups of four to nine teachers and administrators and are led by the participants themselves. Members of learning teams are usually responsible for planning learning sessions (usually about two hours) that are embedded during the school day. Teachers interact with each other and with high-quality reference materials to extend the initial learning experience and discuss direct classroom application and extension of the principles learned in the original professional development experience. In District 99 in Downers Grove, IL, learning teams and clubs (clubs meet after school) have resulted in:

- A greater application of the principles/content of the professional development experience to classroom practice.
- The initiation of the development of professional learning communities, where the development of teacher leadership has greatly increased.
- The breakdown of teacher isolation and a greater understanding of the responsibilities and classroom practices of teachers of other disciplines.
- An opportunity for peer review, support, and sharing of classroom strategies.

## **Personal Learning Environments**

The new tools of Web 2.0 enable individuals to define their own personal learning environments by connecting to individuals and resources through a variety of social software tools. Blogs enable individuals to engage in a global conversation about mission-critical issues relative to education. Because of the ease of blog creation, anyone can be a contributor and can have a voice in a matter of minutes. Podcasts, or voice recordings in mp3 format, enable anyone to produce their own “show” with “episodes” about any topic. Wikis enable a group of individuals to have a shared, collaborative Web space where ideas can be posted, remixed by others, and in the process, produce a social negotiation of understanding. Social bookmarking sites, such as del.icio.us and Furl, enable users to store and share online resources, allowing anyone to leverage the cumulative power of many users to find the best resources.

Each of the above resources produce a syndication feed, called an RSS feed (Really Simple Syndication) that can be collected in a piece of software called an aggregator.

The aggregator is similar to a home's mailbox, which collects various pieces of mail. In this case, the aggregator (Bloglines is an example) collects the information from blogs, wikis, podcasts, and from social bookmarking sites that is distributed by RSS, and presents it to the user in a single interface for processing. As a result, a teacher can collect multiple types of resources about a topic, and have that information automatically fed into one location, in effect, creating their own personal learning environment that is constantly updated with new content as it is produced.

### **Getting Started:**

#### **Blogs:**

**Techlearning Blog**, featuring David Warlick, David Jakes, Miguel Guhlin, Wes Fryer, and Terry Freedman

**2 Cents Worth** | David Warlick

**Weblogg-ed** | Will Richardson

**The Strength of Weak Ties** | David Jakes

**Moving at the Speed of Creativity** | Wes Fryer

**Bud The Teacher** | Bud Hunt

#### **Wikis:**

Wikipedia

Bud Hunt's Wiki page on Blogging

Downers Grove Summit Wiki: used during staff development on emerging technologies

Educators Guide to Podcasting | David Warlick

#### **Podcasts:**

Connect Learning | David Warlick

Downers Grove Summit Podcasts

Room 208 | Bob Sprankle

#### **Social Bookmarking sites:**

del.icio.us: <http://del.icio.us>

Furl: <http://www.furl.net>

#### **Aggregator:**

Bloglines

**These sites, plus many more, available at [Jakesonline.org](http://www.jakesonline.org)**

<http://www.jakesonline.org/tfchicago.htm>