Managing Content, Guiding Learning

Galileo Academy of Science and Technology is a large urban high school in San Francisco, with a diverse student and teacher population numbering over 2300. With the aim of using the school's rich computer infrastructure to support teaching and learning, the administrative team and an on-site teacher consultant from UC Berkeley’s Bay Area Writing Project initiated the “Managing Content, Guiding Learning” (MCGL) project in August, 2003. The MCGL project recruited and trained teachers in a sustainable model for integrating a school-wide, weblog-based content management system (CMS) into their classroom practice.

The CMS software provides a set of accessible, fast and reliable web-based tools for curriculum materials development and for directing and supporting student research, reading and writing across the curriculum. The MCGL project, coordinated by the on-site BAWP teacher consultant, scaled slowly, starting with a small group of interested teachers, and gathered interest and involvement over time. Initially, the teacher consultant provided one-to-one training in use of the weblog software to seven lead teachers for use in their classrooms. After further and larger training sessions, these lead teachers served as informal technology integration coaches, extending staff availability to meet requests for one-to-one follow up training in software use and deployment. The lead team assisted regularly in improving the design and architecture of the CMS to meet specific needs as its deployment spread into new departments and organizations within the school. Simultaneously, teacher consultants from the Bay Area Writing Project (BAWP) offered staff development sessions focused on integrating the content management system to support practical, classroom-tested approaches in the teaching of writing across the curriculum. BAWP's contribution emphasized use of the technology in service to pedagogy. Staff, parents and students learned to provide school information and news to groups within the school community; to guide students and staff to resources; to provide online work spaces for students'
works-in-progress; to publish exemplary teacher and student work; and to explore and evaluate new technologies for teaching and learning.

Over the course of the two year project, we have learned three lessons of value to others searching for models of technology integration:

1. Collaboration between school districts and local universities can provide a powerful combination of curriculum leadership and technology support to transform K-12 teaching and learning with innovative tools if the collaboration is classroom-centered.
2. Content management system software offers an inexpensive, reliable and secure range of tools for K-12 school library use of web-accessible school and public library print and digital resources.
3. Collaborative project design by staff developers and teachers, combined with the use of a flexible web-based toolkit, can maximize use of print and digital resources to reach a full range of students (from academically struggling to high performing) and to increase student motivation for research and publication.