

## ON THE QUEST FOR INNOVATION

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In giving of our best to the Master, Seventh-day Adventist Schools must strive to provide the best education to equip our students for service and success. How our schools use technology will determine how well we fulfill this goal.

Many of the ideals of [The Seventh Day Adventist Technology Integration Plan 2002-2005](#) proposed by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada (SDACC) Office of Education are reflected in The Manitoba Department of Education technology goals.

This document highlights the SDACC, as a body, possessing both the vision and determination to take the helm for innovation in technology.

But how do our schools rate in terms of innovation in technology? Is the SDACC integration plan of 2002-2005 just a flowery document that we can be proud of? Or are we successfully integrating the suggestions of the document? If we are taking the latter course, our schools are headed on the path of innovation.

Here in Manitoba, Red River Valley Junior Academy (RRVJA) is striving for technology innovation, namely in the areas of: technology planning, hardware and software acquisition, technology integration across the curriculum, teacher professional development and community partnerships.

### **Technology Planning:**

"What are you teaching now that you could teach more effectively and efficiently with this tool," is one question that an effective technology plan should answer and outline.

Viewing the planning process as a cooperative effort, RRVJA has capitalized on the strength of its staff and community. As a cohesive technology committee, we are comprised of two teachers, two pastors, one parent, two students and one technology professional. With a unified purpose a school-wide technology plan was born outlining where we have been, where we are and where we intend to be with technology.

### **Technology Acquisition:**

With limited budgets, it can become a daunting task for smaller denominational schools to acquire the equipment for an adequate technology program. Our school has learned that though refurbished donated equipment has a role, up-to-date equipment is required if we plan to be on the cutting edge. This remains true as technology continues to rapidly evolve. As we continue to strive for excellence in Christian Education, our goal is to acquire 30 state of the art computer workstations and other technology devices by the beginning of the 2003-2004 academic year.

In order to achieve this, RRVJA has adopted an aggressive mix of fundraising strategies. Our success has taught us the importance of communicating our needs to the church community and the surrounding business community.

### **Curriculum Integration:**

You can rate how innovative your school is with technology based on how effective the technology is being utilized by all learners. This can be accomplished when learners have the opportunity to use the tools at all levels of their learning. It is not uncommon to observe RRJVA students turning in completed assignments using video and multi-media presentations. Assignments they would have otherwise completed using the rote pencil paper method.

Striving for innovation, RRVJA recently partnered with the Manitoba Department of Education to provide a workshop on the [Curriculum Navigator](#). A unique web based resource; it links the curriculum outcomes in English Language Arts, science and math with a variety of activities that the classroom teacher can utilize to ensure the outcomes are met by the student.

Our Grade 7/8 students are preparing to complete the online [DC Adventure project](#) as part of their science and social studies unit. Students will cooperatively detect and solve environmental and energy conservation problems in and around their school following specific directives from their online host.

### **Teacher Professional Development:**

"Teachers often fail to use technology because they do not know how." If your school is to become innovative, then your teachers must feel empowered. We can no longer afford to shortchange our most valuable resources-our students. Innovative schools must include professional development for teachers in their annual budgets. RRVJA's administration supports and encourages all staff to seek out professional development particularly in the area of technology.

Beginning in January 2003 RRVJA will have a teacher representative participating in the Department of Education's Strategic Technology-Assisted Professional Learning Environment (STAPLE). This is a new initiative that addresses the [K-S4 Education Agenda for Student Success](#). The initiative will develop new formats for professional development such as teacher networks, on-line learning, mentoring or self-study.

### **Community Partnerships:**

In fulfilling the goal of representing Christ to the community, we would do well to invite members from outside our "Adventist circles" to work with us to accomplish our goals. In so doing, they will become better acquainted with who we are; and the value we provide to the community at large.

As an added measure of success, our province's leading telecom provider recently partnered with RRVJA to provide a state of the art [communications server](#) for a 1-year trial basis. The faculty and students now have the ability to communicate and share information on a wider level. This move not only created an awareness of the valuable service our school provides the community, but lends aid to our determination to be a technologically innovative school.

To make teaching and learning effective, our schools must become modern in the planning and use of technology in education. Beginning with determination and faith in Christ, innovation will follow. After all, His schools should lead in being the best.

### **Resources:**

- Lim, Dan. "Technology in Education: The Administrator's Role", Journal of Adventist Education, 1999.

- See, John. "Developing Effective Technology Plans", Minnesota Department of Education.
- Wade, Melvin. "Technology Planning: A Guide for School boards", Journal of Adventist Education, 1999.