

Consider a recent poll administered by Edutopia. Edutopia asked its readership to consider the following:

“With the increased pressure of school districts needing to achieve high scores on standardized tests, there is more scrutinization on what methods teachers are using to reach their students. In an effort to determine what best fosters student learning, some schools asked their teachers about which teaching approaches are the most meaningful and engaging for their students’ learning. Many agree that teachers know best how their students learn and what works best for instruction in regards to the use of technology, collaborative learning, demonstrations, book work, or lectures. Others believe that district curriculum directors or administrators spend time doing research on what works in the classrooms so they should be the ultimate decision makers.”

Depending on what approaches are most advantageous, it would be decided as to how Title 1 funding is spent based on what resources best meet students’ needs. Furthermore, the money could be allocated towards specific technologies, manipulatives, learning games, books, or any other learning resource that benefits student learning and engagement. When money is tight and assessment data is powerful, districts are looking to spend their money in the best interest of the students and how they can best be successful.”

Tell us what you think! Who do you think is better fit to make decisions on how students should be taught and what resources should be used?

Edutopia divided responses into the following categories:

Results-

- 67% (670 votes) **Teachers**. Teachers know their students and how their students will respond to certain lessons. With experience, they know that different lessons and concepts need to be taught in different ways for different students. In teaching, you must be flexible to use different approaches in the classroom to best meet student needs and achieve positive results.
- 31% (310 votes) **Curriculum directors and/or administration**. These professionals have more time to research how students respond to different teaching approaches and which resources, including technologies, best influence student learning and motivation. They have more time to attend trainings and gain insight into student achievement.
- 2% (20 votes) **Other**. Fill-in format: These responses included: Students, Superintendents, Parents, School Boards, and State Legislature.

**Explanation:**

I believe that my survey portrays missional thinking better than the original survey. Missional thinking does not assume that technology is the answer to all problems in the classroom, but rather takes a look at what needs to be accomplished. In this case, the goal is for students to be successful and engaged in learning; not for teachers to be required to use technology just for the sake of using technology. It is important to recognize the goals that we have for our students before jumping right into using an innovative technology. An important take on how this can happen is in considering who makes the decisions on how the curriculum is taught. This is why my survey focused on who made the decisions on how the curriculum should be taught in order to best meet student needs and the increased demand for high student test scores. Rushton Hurley influenced my thinking in his interview with David Nagel as he states, "I believe that if something educationally meaningful is going to happen with technology, it happens in the teacher's heart first, and this is a function of seeing various possibilities, choosing those to pursue, and having time to explore with colleagues." I think that too often, teachers are told what to do by superiors based on instrumental thinking and the societal push to use technology. When really, everyone needs to take a step back and look at the goals at hand and what resources can be used to reach our students. I rewrote the original survey to reflect this because it is instrumental to assume that tech training will automatically create higher-quality teaching. It is necessary to look at all of the possibilities in regards to the bigger picture, not just technology, before jumping into something new simply because someone *heard* that it works well.

This shift to missional thinking looks at the big picture and the goals that we have for our students, rather than the tools that we need to accomplish those goals. This assignment has been very eye opening. In the district that I work in, we are very lacking in the technology department and have recently been adding more and more to the schools, like new computers, document cameras, and built-in projection systems. However, there is not much research behind it, just the knowing that we "need" it. I feel very greedy in that sense in wanting more technology, when in reality, my lessons do not revolve around it, but rather different technologies can support and add to my lessons when appropriate. Katz says it best as, "technology is not something that happens to us. We create it. It is our responsibility to ensure that technology serves higher education, first by thoughtfully considering on each campus what our fundamental educational goals are, and then by addressing how technology can serve those goals" (Katz, 50). Before spending money on various technologies, we all need to take a step back and look at what resources we need to achieve our goal of providing a high-quality education to our students.

D. Nagel, "[Bringing Teachers OnBoard with Tech.](#)" THE Journal (1/27/2011).

S. Katz, "Don't Confuse a Tool with a Goal." Princeton University.