

Technology

Help school district form a high-tech plan

While some of the most amazing developments in technology are nurtured in some dark lab far from the public eye, figuring out the best way to use new technology in the classroom should be a very public affair.

The Plano school district understands this, and officials have set out on an ambitious listening tour. For months, parents, students and staff have been supplying feedback for an update to the school district's technology plan. But the district is trying to take a more objective approach to collecting opinions, and, fittingly, officials have turned to the Web.

Parents, students and staff are being encouraged to fill out an online survey found at <http://k-12.pisd.edu/tech-plan/>. This information, combined with past feedback and data from focus groups, will help officials craft a plan in the next two months.

So what does the district need to hear? Now is the time for imagination. It's the time for students to ask themselves what they would like to do that they can't do now. It's a time for parents who see innovation in their workplaces to ask, "Why can't we do this in our schools?" It's a time for teachers to dream about what kinds of tools they could use to teach old lessons in new, more meaningful ways.

Some school districts put a lot of emphasis on distance education. Others put their energy into using the Web to share lesson plans and homework assignments.

In Irving, just this year, most high school students were issued laptop computers they could take home. Students say that the computers give them seemingly endless resources; a few even report that it has made them more interested in their school work.

Plano already integrates technology in the classroom, but as technology improves, so can that integration. Besides, parents may also want to consider ideas that are not directly related to instruction. Just this month the district announced a new ePay program that will allow online payments for lunch, rendering lunch-money-seeking bullies powerless.

Look around your home, your office and your online world. Dream of new ways the Plano school district can make life a little easier and education a little more meaningful. Then log in and speak out.