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EDMT 627

Technology Coordinator Interview

Professor Copeland

 On February 13, 2014, I had the privilege of interviewing John Tavernier who is the executive director of technology for Huron Valley School District. John has worked for my school district, in the technology department, for 13 years. Prior to that, he taught math for four years. Recently, John was promoted to the position he is in currently. Before that he was the head of instructional technology.

 John rates our district’s technology department very highly. They are able to quickly handle most situations and help teachers move on with they want to spend their time doing, namely teaching. Huron Valley recently created technology integrators. Each middle school received one three years ago. Having found success, the district rolled this model out to the high school and elementary schools in the district.

Last year, Huron Valley’s technology department went through an external review process and received high rankings. It was suggested that we move to a 1 to 1 model, but due to lack of funding, that is not possible at this time. John said that we are making do with what we have. The technology department is supporting teachers through the newly implemented BYOD model. To account for the added bandwidth required, Huron Valley updated it’s wireless infrastructure over the summer. Students in any building across the district have wireless access. Staff has also been trained in using mobile devices and managing a class using BYOD.

 John makes small, day-to-day, decisions. When larger decisions are required, he looks to the Instructional Technology Advisory Committee, or ITAC. The ITAC is a “think tank” which consists of teachers, member of the technology department, administrators and community stakeholders from across the district. They help make larger decisions for the district regarding technology. They also review the strategic plan to ensure we are following it. When higher ticket decisions are needed to be made, sometimes an outside consultant is brought in. For example, when the WAN was upgraded recently, Plante Moran was hired to help with the process. Bids were collected from different companies and the most cost-effective option was used.

 The most critical issue relating to technology that Huron Valley is facing is funding, according to John. He talked about the fact that a bond was passed a few years ago for technology and suggested that passing another bond may help ease some of the financial pressure, relating to technology, in the future. John also mentioned a concern in the push for BYOD that not all students have equal access to technology.

 John offered me a very brief tour through our data center, which is housed at Milford High School. Throughout the tour, John told me that all schools in Oakland county have access to the internet due to a private fiber network, through Oakland Schools. We also have a back up link to Farmington, in case our direct connection is every lost through Oakland Schools. We have a 4 gig connection currently, but the county is moving to a 10 gig speed in the near future. Our district is wired in an open ring configuration. John mentioned that there was talk that we may lay the cable to connect the ring. This would improve connection speeds and, more importantly, provide each school with two pathways, in case a link is ever accidently severed.

 Our district currently uses Novell as a server operating system. Next year, we are transitioning our school machines to Windows 7. With that change, John mentioned that our server operating system will be switching over to Microsoft. Novell does not operate well with Windows 7, which is why we will be making the transition to Windows Server.

Below is a summary of how we ranked our district on the TSI Checklist. It was on a four-point scale, with a one being low and a four being high. Both John and I agreed that our district is doing very well in most areas.

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| Domain 1 – Equipment Standards | 2.9 |
| Domain 2 – Staffing and Processes | 3.1 |
| Domain 3 – Processional Development | 3.0 |
| Domain 4 – Enterprise Management | 3.5 |

I learned a great deal from interviewing John. Very little of our discussion related to my day-to-day teaching, however, the information was interesting none the less. Prior to my interview, I was not very knowledgeable about many of the nuts and bolts to how our networking infrastructure works. I now have a decent, foundational understanding of how I am able to access my home directory or go online while at school. Every teacher should have the opportunity to interview John, so they too will understand how their computer works!