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Technology Budgets: When to Say No

During this time of year, as a superintendent or business administrator, you are probably beginning to think about the school's and/or district's budgets for next year. This month, I would like to stress the importance of fully understanding your technology budget and when you may need to say no.

I recently met with a superintendent who was frustrated by a budget meeting that he had had with his district's technology coordinator. He was frustrated that the district's upcoming technology budget was not outlined to him in a way that he could fully understand. He understood the financial requirements, but was having trouble comprehending the district's technology needs and how they were to be met.

One of the critical roles of your district's technology coordinator is to clearly communicate not only the technology, but also the process as to how one (or many) arrived at their budget priorities and conclusions.

All too often those involved with a school's technology, whether it be your technology coordinator or related consultants, get lost in technology lingo and lose the importance of providing the audience with a clear understanding of what is needed, when it is needed, and why it is needed.

What should a superintendent or business administrator do when they find themselves in such a position? My suggestion is to simply say no.

If you do not understand from a superintendent's or business administrator's perspective why these monies are being spent or allocated than it is impossible for you and the board to challenge the priorities, conclusions and amounts. Remember the best technology budgets should be able to withstand numerous questions from experienced and inexperienced eyes.

As you draw up your school's or district's technology budget this winter, require your technology coordinator, or associated personnel, to provide you with a clear understanding of the technology portion of your budget to insure that your school can maximize the intended benefit.

If you don't understand, just say no. You will be surprised at how often the word "no" can remove much of the technology lingo (which, for the most part, is not required) and get your technology personnel back to speaking in layman's terms as it pertains to your school's technology needs.

Enjoy the winter,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'R' and 'L'.

Paul Crawley

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