

DEVELOPING
DIGITAL
LITERACIES

DEVELOPING DIGITAL LITERACIES

A Framework for
Professional Learning

Dustin C. Summey

Foreword by Patrick Larkin





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Corwin
A SAGE Company
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
(800) 233-9936
www.corwin.com

SAGE Publications Ltd.
1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
London, EC1Y 1SP
United Kingdom

SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd.
B 1/1 1 Mohan Cooperative Industrial Area
Mathura Road, New Delhi 110 044
India

SAGE Publications Asia-Pacific Pte. Ltd.
3 Church Street
#10-04 Samsung Hub
Singapore 049483

Acquisitions Editor: Arnis Burvikovs
Associate Editor: Desirée A. Bartlett
Editorial Assistant: Mayan White
Production Editor: Jane Haenel
Copy Editor: Beth Hammond
Typesetter: Hurix Systems Private Ltd.
Proofreader: Joyce Li
Indexer: Michael Ferreira
Cover Designer: Scott Van Atta
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Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record of this book is available from the Library of Congress.

978-1-4522-5552-1

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

13 14 15 16 17 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Foreword

Sit back for a minute and think about the number of changes a teacher of 15 years has seen in his or her decade and a half in the classroom. It is very likely that this individual has transitioned from chalkboard, to whiteboard, to interactive whiteboard, to tablet, and is wondering what is coming next.

As a matter of fact, this question of *what's next* is probably on the minds of all educators regardless of their experience. We live in a day and age where yesterday's *new thing* can have a very short shelf life (i.e., Flip Cameras). While it is exciting to be teaching in a time where technologies are available that allow us to engage students in ways we never dreamed of, it can also be overwhelming. How can teachers stay up to speed when new devices, apps, and web-based resources are multiplying at a dizzying pace?

Adding to the complexity of this issue is the fact that most schools do not spend an ample amount of time providing focused professional development for the integration of new resources into the classroom. After spending large amounts of money to buy stuff, there seems to be little evidence that there was any thought given to support teachers (and students) in using the stuff.

Fortunately, there are examples of schools where the support of teachers in integrating technological resources has been done thoughtfully and in a manner that can be replicated. One person who has orchestrated the type of meaningful professional development necessary to take advantage of the infusion of technological resources in classrooms is Dustin Summey, the author of this book. Summey, an expert in instructional design, provides a concrete framework that can be utilized for district and school administrators as they work on visioning or by individual teachers as they look to enhance their ability to access and integrate technological resources in their classrooms.

In fact, the format described by Summey can be accomplished with little or no additional budgetary implications. The approach

taken is one that builds internal capacity by letting teachers take the lead and share best practices. If schools are going to be able to move forward in the teaching of digital literacies to students, then they need to embrace a thoughtful professional development approach like this one that focuses on a school-wide understanding of these literacies by faculty and staff.

Our students need to be prepared for a world in which the acquisition of digital literacies is at a premium; therefore, we cannot leave it to chance that our teachers will grasp these skills on their own. Communication and collaboration have always been important skills for our students to master, but in the structure of many schools, they have not been modeled well. We are so fortunate to be living in a time where the development of digital tools makes communication and collaboration easier than it has ever been. A thoughtful reading of this book and the use of the reflective questions at the end of each chapter will assist school communities in filling this void.

Numerous reports say that our students will be applying for jobs that do not yet exist. In order to best prepare them for this, we need to change the way we do business in our schools. The examples provided throughout this book can help educators meet this challenge.

Patrick Larkin

2012 NASSP Digital Principal Award Winner
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Preface

This is a book about professional development that supports teaching and learning with technology. It presents a highly adaptable framework for professional learning that enables teachers to infuse digital literacies into classroom instruction. Digital literacies are defined here as the essential skills for managing information and communication in the rapidly changing and increasingly digital world that is the 21st century.

Approaching technology through the lens of digital literacies facilitates the development of teachers and students as tech-savvy digital citizens with skills and competencies that can adapt to technology that is constantly evolving. When teachers and students learn to leverage information and communication technologies in order to *locate and filter, share and collaborate, organize and curate, create and generate, and reuse and repurpose*, they become fluent in digital literacies.

This paradigm shift in technology-infused teaching and learning can only happen when first modeled and then supported by high-quality professional development that is ongoing and embedded within the broader scope of professional growth activities. The approach described in this book capitalizes on personnel and resources that are already available internally. In fact, the program implementation that this book draws from was accomplished with a zero budget and no new hires. The use of teacher leaders and a train-the-trainer model means that not only responsibility but also ownership of the program is shared among the faculty. This leads to less burden on individuals and increased buy-in by participants.

This is not a one-shot, hit-or-miss approach. Readers are guided through the process of planning and implementing a digital literacies professional development emphasis and leveraging buy-in across the board. *This is one of those rare books that bridges the gap between knowing and doing.* Teachers become empowered to harness existing technologies and readily accessible digital resources in order to build upon their own teaching expertise and change the way students learn.

Rationale and Origin

This book is in many ways a result of my active and continued involvement in professional development leadership over many years and in diverse contexts. Those experiences have certainly afforded me a unique perspective. Technology-related professional development too often seems to fall short of equipping teachers to make full and appropriate use of the resources that schools spend huge amounts of money on. It is my desire through this book to encourage a more comprehensive, sustained approach to instructional technology integration at all levels.

The inspiration for this book came from an extensive professional development program I had the privilege of developing and facilitating as a faculty member serving in the role of a teacher leader. The challenges and successes of that initiative have informed many aspects of the professional development framework presented here.

My hope is that readers will find this book to be refreshingly practical. I have aimed to address many of the common problems that too often seem to be ignored. At the same time, I qualify my recommendations by acknowledging the reality that each context is unique and there is no single method that meets every possible need.

Intended Audiences and Suggested Uses

This book is intended to be read by teachers, principals, staff developers, curriculum directors, instructional technology coordinators, and other academic leaders at both the school and district levels. Advanced technological knowledge is *not* needed, although tech-savvy educators will definitely find the book to be relevant and challenging. Administrators and teacher leaders can use it during vision building and planning, and then as a guide to developing and implementing professional development—whether as a full-scale initiative or as a smaller piece of a broader effort. The concepts and ideas are certainly applicable at all grade levels and can be adapted to meet the needs of teachers and students in both upper and lower grades. This book is also designed to be used for a faculty book study. Questions located at the end of each chapter may be used to generate discussion and encourage practical application and timely results.

Format and Approach

The core of this book focuses on professional development, describing a modular framework that is both innovative and practical. Surrounding this is a carefully measured treatment of digital literacies and the information and communication technologies (i.e., technology tools) that go along with them. This intentional balance results in *an in-depth professional development resource complete with the technology-related supports to enable school-wide curriculum integration*.

Chapter 1, “New Literacies in a Digital World,” sets the stage by establishing a scope and definition for digital literacies in order to frame the discussion into something that can be applied in diverse contexts.

Chapter 2, “Professional Development That (Really) Works,” describes the traits that tend to characterize effective professional development and provides strategies for planning, marketing, implementation, and follow-up. It also takes a fresh look at both traditional and innovative models of professional learning. Common problems are addressed by providing practical solutions.

Chapter 3, “A Framework for Program Development and Implementation,” is in many ways the heart of the book. This chapter presents a modular framework for developing and implementing professional development to support the integration of digital literacies into teaching and learning. Rather than adopting a singular model, it capitalizes on the best of several approaches, including among others, the professional learning community, peer mentoring, and personal learning networks. One of the unique aspects of the approach described is the degree to which the digital literacies are embedded throughout all aspects of the program.

Chapter 4, “Teacher Leaders and Support Structures,” describes key roles within the context of the framework presented in the previous chapter and discusses administrative leadership while emphasizing the use of teacher leaders. It also suggests effective approaches for establishing both human and technological support systems.

Chapter 5, “Promoting Buy-In and Active Participation,” gives focused attention to an often-overlooked aspect—marketing—that can be a game changer for powerful professional development. Anecdotes and cases are shared in order to illustrate these ideas in action in real situations.

Chapter 6, “Long-Term Planning: Ensuring a Lasting Impact,” encourages long-term planning and foresight by providing methods and tools that can be used to ensure that digital literacies become

well-embedded into the school-wide curriculum far beyond the conclusion of the professional development emphasis. A phased plan for training and support that looks at year one, two, three, and beyond can provide for a successful program that yields lasting results.

While technology skill acquisition is not the primary purpose here, it is a natural part of developing such digital literacies. Chapter 7, “The Tools of Technology,” takes a look at the information and communication technologies that are widely considered to be new genres in digital literacies. Strategies and resources are provided for addressing each technology within the professional development program as a whole and ultimately integrating it into classroom instruction. *This final chapter also serves as a sort of technical reference, and readers may wish to refer to it periodically throughout the book when various technologies are mentioned in context.*

Open source tools referenced at various points are readily available on the Internet for enabling the technology integration that is needed within professional development and in classroom instruction.

Companion Website

The book’s companion website (<http://www.digitalliteracies.net>) includes electronic versions of planning and implementation materials, sample instructional tools, and links to additional supporting resources such as tutorials, lesson ideas, and multimedia content that will further enable a successful professional development initiative and ultimately effective integration into classroom instruction.

Acknowledgments

Writing this book was in no way a solo endeavor. I owe my deepest appreciation to the numerous colleagues, friends, and family members who have made invaluable contributions toward the development of this book in the form of encouragement, creativity, and expertise.

I am grateful to Kevin Costley and Deborah Barber for the initial encouragement to write a book and to Deb Stollenwerk for believing in my idea. Patty Phelps, Vicki Parish, and Paige Rose were excellent sounding boards and lent their creative talent to the book-writing effort on many occasions. There are so many others who have played equally important roles in bringing this book to life.

It is a privilege to have the opportunity to be a teacher of teachers. Thousands of educators nationwide have graciously allowed me to learn alongside them while also empowering me to support their own professional growth. This book might not exist, were it not for the diverse opportunities I was afforded while on the faculty at Russellville High School in Russellville, Arkansas. I learned so much working with the teachers and administrators at Russellville, and the relationships that developed during that time continue to have a significant influence on me as an educator. I especially appreciate Wesley White and Margaret Robinson, who at that time were principal and assistant principal and who called upon me to develop the digital literacies emphasis that ultimately inspired this book.

Writing this book has been a professional learning experience in itself. I have had wonderful editorial support from Desirée Bartlett and Arnis Burvikovs, to whom I owe much appreciation for making the entire process such an enjoyable and fulfilling experience. Thank you!

Publisher's Acknowledgments

Corwin would like to thank the following individuals for taking the time to provide their editorial insight and guidance:

Barbara Cavanah, Technology Specialist
Monroe County School District
Marathon, FL

Beverly Ginther, Retired Staff Development Coordinator
Minnetonka Public Schools
Minnetonka, MN

Renee Peoples, Third Grade Teacher
West Elementary School
Bryson City, NC

Dr. Judith A. Rogers, K-5 Mathematics Specialist
Tucson Unified School District
Tucson, AZ

Kathy Tritz-Rhodes, Principal
Marcus-Meriden-Cleghorn Schools
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