

E+ Team Award Technical Services

I am honored to write a letter of nomination for our Weber School District Technical Services Department. They have gone above and beyond to support our students, staff and parents throughout the “soft closure” and beyond. There are many sections that make up the tech services department. All are of equal importance and value but it is their team work that marks their greatness.

To capture all the tech department has contributed and accomplished will be a difficult task! First of all, long before the soft closure, our tech department placed us in a prime position. Over the years they had structured our network to handle all of the stress caused by sending over 15000 Chrome books home. As you know we are a 1:1 device district and had many chromebooks issued to individual students. However, when Governor Herbert announced the soft closure of schools in March, many more chromebooks were needed in students' hands. The process of inventory, issuing, tracking and filtering the thousands of devices was already set. This made it possible for our students to continue their education without disruption in a distance learning environment. The tech department went into action making sure that many families who did not have sufficient technology in their homes (especially our elementary students who had not gone 1:1) had at least one device. Over 5,000 chrome books were issued to elementary students within the first couple of weeks. Can you imagine where our district would have been back in March without this amazing effort?

The next thing tech services did to provide students with the best learning experience possible in these circumstances was to change the settings on all chrome books to access the free XFINITY WiFi. This task alone took countless hours and much effort and was greatly appreciated by parents and communities.

Besides the hardware side of our tech department, there was much going on behind the scenes. Lynn and Nick rerouted ISM's to prepare and support teachers for digital instruction. The tech department's Ed Tech Coaches teamed with the curriculum department's Fellows to provide training and support for our teachers. Brian Fenderick and Alex Korkishko held a Google meet everyday where teachers could hop on and ask any questions or listen and learn about Learning Management Systems, etc. Engineers were also available daily via open sessions to provide support and troubleshoot any problems our teachers were experiencing. By the way, our teachers did an amazing job of moving to online instruction!

The tech department also put up training.wsd.net for employees. This a landing page which houses various trainings and supports for educators. After the conclusion of school in May, the tech department did not even think of taking a break. Many cancelled vacations, etc. in order to hone in on improving the distance learning experience our students received during the soft

closure. The tech department along with all departments looked at data from a parent survey that spoke to some of their concerns in regards to digital education. One of the biggest concerns was the wide variety of templates and learning management systems that teachers were using to disseminate their material. Within weeks, the tech department pulled together under Lynn and Nick's leadership to provide a training called Design Academies for all of our teachers on converting and developing digital instructional resources in Canvas, our preferred LMS. A schedule was put together offering teachers more than 55 different times and opportunities to attend a two day training session. These trainings prepared them to develop and move their curriculum in such a way to prepare for the many different family and student situations that we anticipated would come at the start of the school year. This has benefited parents and students because they didn't have to learn the many different systems and styles of teachers. The curriculum department contributed greatly to this effort under the direction of Curriculum Director, Sheri Heiter.

As the year came to an end and the discussion began around what type of graduation service we could offer students, our tech department was so helpful. No matter what scenario was on the table, (and there were a lot), the tech department had a "can do" attitude. Lynn attributes this attitude to kind of a "we work" philosophy held at tech services. The tech services department were instrumental in the gathering of chrome books from seniors and the collection of fees. I had stopped by tech services one day and Dawn was on her way to pick up generators to run the credit card machines to collect fees at drive up graduations. They helped all high schools with their virtual graduation show and coordinated the filming of board members and principals to help share their graduation wishes and wisdom. They also made sure that sound systems on the fields etc. were functioning properly. An amazing effort!

Along with all kinds of personalized training and support for educators, our tech department has also written and developed our personal emergency notification system which makes it possible to communicate through social media, text and email with our 33,000 students, approximately 50,000 guardians and over 3500 employees in an instant. When I mention all of these amazing things, we need to ponder them for a bit. In the instance of our latest emergency, the wind storm, it was possible to communicate to the whole district, a certain cone, or a specific school about concerns they were facing in a timely and accurate manner, without having to rely on an outside entity who might not see our need to communicate as great as we do. This is quite a feat.

The tech department also took it upon themselves to create a system within our Student Information System to help teachers track which students are in flexible long term, short term, and flexible learning etc. The different learning options are represented in the teachers gradebook by color and font type so that teachers can easily identify who is doing what in their courses. This has saved teachers time and sanity. Again this is all home grown and very specific to our district's needs. Another example of tech services responsiveness is the COVID-19 webpage. It

was put up within hours of the request. It has continued to develop and remains a dynamic site at this point. The webpage has no doubt answered many questions that students, teachers, and parents have. We Recently added a feature that tracks current COVID cases in our district. They also created a system that tracks all of the COVID cases and quarantined students in our district, as well as communicate with families of those students on the whole process of quarantine.

Tech services touch so many aspects of our district. We recently implemented Panorama, this is a data dashboard that will provide administrators and teachers with current data which they can make instructional and supportive decisions for individual students. It is with the help and support of tech services that this is possible. They work with Panorama to upload data from our SIS system. Again, these are simply amazing feats that occur each and every day. I hear other districts talk about the state of affairs that their tech departments are in and I realize how fortunate we are at Weber School District. Other districts are in awe of what we have going on. I can't thank Tech Services enough for the work, the dedication to students, the relentless effort and the many, many contributions they make daily to our district.