

# Professional Development is Key to 1:1 Success



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Bellmawr School District in Camden County, New Jersey has long recognized that teacher training is critical for the district to meet its educational objectives. To that end, the district schedule includes dedicated and protected time for ongoing professional development, with peer-led professional learning communities, common planning times, and regular team meetings for teachers at all grade levels.

As such, it's no surprise that when Bellmawr administrators decided to implement a 1:1 initiative at the district's middle school, providing training to help teachers effectively integrate technology into their classrooms was deemed as important as selecting the right computing devices.

“That's where Intel really stepped up for us,” says Anthony Farinelli, Principal of Bell Oaks Upper Elementary School (grades 5-8), where students began receiving HP EliteBook\* Ultrabook™ devices in the fall of 2013. “We knew going in that Intel would assist us with professional development and implementation of the initiative, and that was a big factor in our decision to go with Intel-based laptops.”

## **Boosting Student Engagement**

Bell Oaks teachers learn how to effectively integrate technology into their lesson plans through “Intel® Education Transforming Learning: Student Engagement with One-to-One,” a graduate-level course supported by Intel and delivered by eNetLearning of Colorado. Course participants learn how to identify the characteristics of engaged learners and assess their students' levels of engagement, and reflect on their own teaching practices for engaging students. Throughout the course, they work to transform their own curricula to better engage students by rethinking their content, teaching, and learning processes. In addition to the knowledge they gain by completing the course, teachers can earn two units of graduate-level credit through an agreement with Adams State University in Colorado.

The six- to eight-week “blended-learning” course includes at least six hours of face-to-face and/or online web conferencing components and 30 hours of interactive tutorials, exercises, individual work, and facilitated discussions. Carolyn Gardner, eNetLearning Senior Facilitator who delivers the course for Bell Oaks, emphasizes that ongoing, personalized support is also critical to enabling teachers to effectively implement a 1:1 program in their classrooms. “I monitor class discussions and provide resources,” she says, “and if teachers have individual questions, they can contact me anytime—during and after the course—and I work to provide answers and additional resources.”

Farinelli notes that the district’s longstanding emphasis on professional development has helped teachers complete the course and integrate technology in their classrooms quickly. “We already had professional learning communities [PLCs] embedded in our schools, and our teachers have been able to take advantage of their PLC time to work on the 1:1 course modules.”

He adds that the cost of the course is minimal for the district, and that implementation has been easy. “The eNetLearning/Intel support team set it all up, and Carolyn has provided a great ongoing support system if we have questions or concerns.”

### Transforming the Classroom

Dana Litwornia, Bellmawr District Instructional Technologist, says, “The Intel course, in particular, has really helped lay the foundation for our moving forward with the 1:1 laptops. It’s helped our teachers think about what’s important in implementing such an initiative.”

She gives an example of how 1:1 learning has transformed a lesson on plot summary in a Bell Oaks English class: “We essentially had the kids become the teachers, creating their own instructional videos about plot summary on their laptops. They had to learn to use the Windows Movie Maker\* program, write their own scripts, learn how to speak effectively on camera, and work collaboratively as a team.”

The completed videos were posted online, so students could share them with parents and others. “Because the students became the teachers, they really had to develop a good grasp of the content,” says Litwornia.

### Powerful Shift in Education

Fifth-graders were the first recipients of laptops when the Bellmawr District launched the initiative in the 2013-2014 school year. This school year, both fifth- and sixth-graders have laptops, and in the fall of 2015, the program will extend to seventh graders. The district expects that by the fall of 2016, every Bell Oaks student, grades 5 through 8, will have a laptop.

“It’s been an absolutely perfect way to integrate technology,” says Litwornia. “To many adults, technology is a novel thing, but to the kids, it’s just normal. As the kids move up a grade each year with their computers, they’re helping the teachers. The kids know that they’re helping us, and it’s amazing what that does to really engage them.”

She continues, “It’s just awesome to see a theory really work in the classroom, and to see it happen so quickly. Our teachers are really integrating the technology—not just using technology as a big prize, but using it as an everyday norm in their classrooms. It’s a total paradigm shift in education, and it’s really exciting to be right on the front lines.”



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