Focus 203: Digital Learning in District 203

Future Focus, designed to facilitate meaningful dialogue and discussion to shape the future direction for all stakeholders in our learning community, continued to gather information from parents and the community in meetings in January.

A total of XX parents, school, and community participants attended one of two sessions held Jan. 21 and 22. Presenters included Chief Academic Officer Dr. Jennifer Hester and Chief Information Officer Roger Brunelle, who gave overviews of the district's Digital Learning pursuits; planning and implementation of programs; and integration and expansion goals and time lines.

Parents and guests then were invited to work in small groups to identify what they learned in the presentation, questions they had, and a summary of what they believed to be the benefits of digital learning for District 203 students.

Task #1:

Identify three things your group learned from the presentation.

Sifting through the small group responses, it seemed clear the groups were delighted and pleased with the district's thoughtful planning and integration of digital learning. Three main themes emerged from the small groups:

- Many participants were unacquainted with but impressed with the Expanding Learning Opportunities (eLo) initiative and appreciated learning more.
- Groups also appreciated learning concrete definitions related to digital learning as well as receiving an overview of the district's plans and strategies, particularly the scope and vendor involvement in the Digital Learning Initiative pilot.
- Participants liked that digital learning allows teachers and students to focus on individualized learning methods and content.

List two questions from your group as a result of the information presented.

There were a few questions shared by participants in both sessions, but overall, they had quite different concerns.

Participants in both sessions asked:
- How students would be monitored to ensure technology is being used responsibly, and who would ensure students would be accessing reliable, valid information on their devices.
- What role parents would be asked to play, i.e., would they receive training on different platforms (Canvas, for example) in order to "keep up" with their students, would they be expected to monitor the curriculum and would they be able to exercise parental controls on devices.
- How "face-to-face relationships" would be preserved along with a balance between personalized instruction and technology/online and "bricks-and-mortar" learning.
- How students would be motivated and monitored to say "on task" in a self-directed, digital learning environment.

Other notable questions:
- Will there be requirements about how teachers use digital learning and will teachers receive professional development to assimilate technology in their classroom?
- How will the district evaluate digital learning?
- What happens to DLI pilot students who lose their devices next year?

List one point your group would like to make as a result of the information presented.

Generally both sessions were in agreement on three points.
- Support, personnel and resources – coupled with open communication -- should be available to teachers, parents and the community to ensure the success of digital learning initiatives.
- Technology should "complement, enhance and strengthen" the learning environment, not "drive the bus."
- Technology should reach all students, consistently and equally.

Task #2 – Nine Word Sentence
Create a nine-word sentence to communicate the benefits of digital learning for students in District 203.

- "DLI expands opportunities through flexible, personalized, self-paced differentiated learning."
- "Opportunity for self-directed learning accessing current information and prep for college and career."