



The Tech Talk

Leading Through Parent Pushback & Community Curiosities



OUR NORTH STAR GOAL: EVERY STUDENT, TEACHER, AND LEADER WILL MEET OR EXCEED THEIR ACADEMIC GROWTH GOALS.

Presenters



Robin Gunter

Executive Director of Instructional
Technology



Morgan Cave

Director of Instructional Technology



OUR NORTH STAR GOAL: EVERY STUDENT, TEACHER, AND LEADER WILL MEET OR EXCEED THEIR ACADEMIC GROWTH GOALS.

Overview



- About Richardson ISD
- Origin of Presentation
- The Power of Why
- Bridge & Pivot Workshop
- Show, Don't Just Tell
- Commitments
- Questions



OUR NORTH STAR GOAL: EVERY STUDENT, TEACHER, AND LEADER WILL MEET OR EXCEED THEIR ACADEMIC GROWTH GOALS.

Richardson ISD

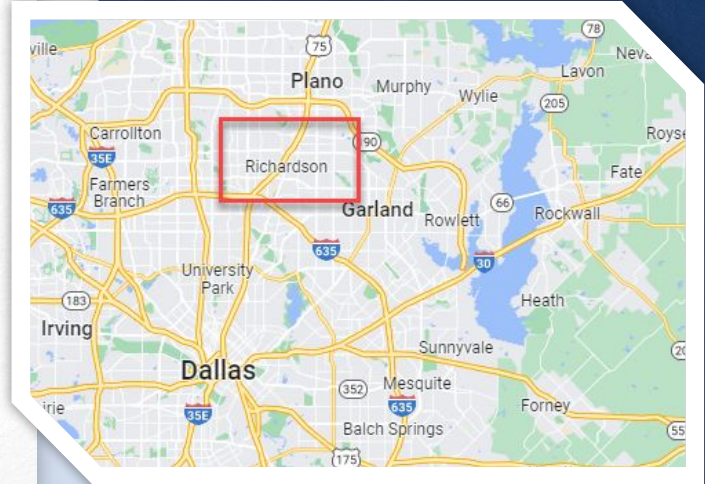
District Overview

Size:

- 36,500 students
- 5,000 staff
- 50 Schools
- Urban/Suburban
- Spans three cities.

Organization:

- Instructional
 - 6 Specialists
- Operational & Infrastructure



Instructional Technology Beliefs



Technology in RISD is not just about access to devices - it's about transformational learning.



OUR NORTH STAR GOAL: EVERY STUDENT, TEACHER, AND LEADER WILL MEET OR EXCEED THEIR ACADEMIC GROWTH GOALS.

Community Feedback & Concerns



Passive Usage - Concerns regarding too much time spent watching videos or non-interactive content.

Next Steps:

- Review and clarify screen time recommendations.
- YouTube restrictions extended beyond elementary and into secondary.
- No required minutes for instructional platforms.



Community Feedback & Concerns



Rewards/Unstructured Time - Technology being used as behavior incentives or 'busy work' rather than purposeful learning tools.



Next Steps:

- Technology will not be used as behavior incentive or as a reward.
- iPads will not be used as an indoor recess activity.
- When technology is used during independent learning, teachers will use district tools to monitor students and keep them focused.

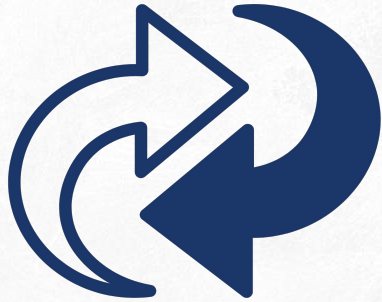


Community Feedback & Concerns



Substitution - Over-reliance on digital tools for tasks that do not enhance the learning experience, including as a replacement for teaching or peer collaboration.

Next Steps:



- Review and clarify types of screen time and screen time recommendations.
- Targeted work with teachers based on campus need and feedback, including alignment to Triple E and Technology Applications TEKS.
- Instructional Technology team publishing a new resource with clear examples by grade level to further support bridging content and training.



Community Feedback & Concerns



Accountability - There is a gap in expectation/guidelines and student technology use.



Next Steps:

- Campuses will reinforce guidelines and recommendations, ensuring accountability.
- The teacher and campus principal should be your first point of contact, as they have the most complete understanding of the classroom and instructional goals.
- Increase communication from elementary specials areas (PE, Art, Music).



**If we don't tell the
story of the *learning* ,
parents only see the
hardware .**



OUR NORTH STAR GOAL: EVERY STUDENT, TEACHER, AND LEADER WILL MEET OR EXCEED THEIR ACADEMIC GROWTH GOALS.

Tips for Shifting the Conversation



Shifting the Conversation from "Screen Time" to "Learning Time"

The Pivot Framework

When a parent or community member brings a concern, don't lead with policy. Lead with pedagogy. Use this three-step formula:

1. **Acknowledge:** Validate their concern (e.g., "I share your focus on balance...")
2. **Bridge:** Shift to the instructional goal (e.g., "That's exactly why we use these tools for...")
3. **The "Why":** Connect it to a future-ready skill (e.g., "...so our students can critically analyze information.")



Quick Pivot Cheat Sheet



If they say...

You say... (The Pivot)

The "Story" to Tell

"Too much screen time."

"We prioritize **active** use over **passive** use. It's not about 'time,' it's about the 'task.'"

Show students *creating* (editing video, coding, drafting) rather than just *watching*.

"They aren't learning the basics."

"Technology doesn't replace the basics; it **supports** with multimodal tools and **accelerates** by giving instant feedback."

Highlight how an app lets a teacher see exactly who needs 1-on-1 help in real-time.

"AI is just for cheating."

"We are teaching **AI Literacy**. We want them to be masters of the tool, not victims of it."

Share how students use AI to brainstorm or critique a draft, not generate one.

"Distractions/Social Media."

"All tools go through a vetting process (no social media) and are used at the direction of the teacher. We are developing digital citizenship (Tech Apps TEKS!) – learning to focus in a digital world."

Reference focus on balance between digital and analog tasks.



OUR NORTH STAR GOAL: EVERY STUDENT, TEACHER, AND LEADER WILL MEET OR EXCEED THEIR ACADEMIC GROWTH GOALS.

Scenario A



The Situation: A parent of a student sends an email to the principal requesting that their child be completely exempted from using their district-issued iPad/Chromebook and any educational apps. The parent states they are deeply concerned about "screen addiction" and feel technology is just being used as a "babysitter" or for "busy work." They demand that their child be given alternative paper-and-pencil packets for all daily lessons, assignments, and homework.



Scenario A



Possible Response:

- **Acknowledge:** *"I completely agree that finding a healthy balance with technology is vital, and I share your concern about avoiding passive screen time or using devices just to keep busy."*
- **Bridge:** *"That's exactly why our instructional model explicitly focuses on moving away from passive 'watching' and shifts strictly toward active, productive tasks."*
- **The "Why" (Pedagogy):** *"We use these specific tools not as a replacement for paper, but to allow students to design, problem-solve, and receive instant feedback tailored to their individual growth. Let's look at how your child's teacher blends analog collaboration with productive technology so you can feel confident in the balance we maintain."*



Scenario B



The Situation: Your junior high school is transitioning from student Chromebooks to iPads as part of a refreshed district technology rollout. At a campus PTA meeting, a vocal group of parents expresses immediate frustration: *"Why are we downgrading to iPads? Our kids are going to high school and college soon. They need to know how to use real computers and type research papers, not play around on mobile apps or watch YouTube videos all day."*



Scenario B



Possible Response:

- **Acknowledge:** *"I completely understand wanting to ensure our junior high students are equipped with the skills they need to type, research, and succeed in high school and beyond."*
- **Bridge:** *"That's precisely why we are shifting to a device that moves them beyond web tools, and allows more functionality and opportunities to use applications."*
- **The "Why" (Pedagogy):** *"While Chromebooks are great for processing text, iPads allow our secondary students to build multimodal skills—like recording audio reflections, editing instructional videos, coding, and sketching out science diagrams. We are elevating the rigor of the task, not increasing the time on the device. Plus, with tools like Apple Classroom and filtering, teachers can still monitor in real-time to keep students locked into instruction."*



Scenario C



The Situation: A parent sends a heated message to the principal after discovering that an teacher permitted students to use an AI tool to help brainstorm arguments and outline ideas for a major persuasive essay. The parent writes: *"Why are your teachers encouraging students to use AI to cheat? This is teaching them to be lazy and skip the basics of writing. They should be looking up sources and doing their own thinking."*



Scenario C



Possible Response:

- **Acknowledge:** *"I completely share your commitment to academic integrity—ensuring that our students are doing their own heavy lifting and critical thinking is a top priority for our campus."*
- **Bridge:** *"That's exactly why our teachers are introducing district-approved AI tools intentionally, transforming them from a shortcut into a collaborative 'thinking partner.'"*
- **The "Why" (Pedagogy):** *"Instead of allowing students to blindly copy a generated draft, the teacher is instructing them on how to critique AI arguments, verify facts against credible sources, and refine their own voices. Our goal is to teach them AI literacy safely and ethically here in the classroom, rather than leaving them to navigate these powerful technologies unsupervised later on."*



Show – Don't just tell!



Capturing one "Learning Story" does more to communicate than words in newsletters.

- The Collaboration Shot: Students huddled around one device. (Message: *Tech is collaborative, not isolating.*)
- The "Analog + Digital" Shot: A device next to a physical notebook or science experiment. (Message: *Balance and integration.*)
- The Project Shot: A close-up of a student's screen showing a complex project. (Message: *This is high-level work, not a game.*)

Pro-Tip for Captions: Never just name the tool. Always name the verb and/or the learning task.

- Bad: "Students using Chromebooks/iPads today."
- Better: "6th graders **investigating** global climate data to **design** their own conservation plans."



Continued Support



Instructional Technology Support:

- Refresher PL session over district beliefs and expectations
- Slides to use with staff during BOY
- Slides for use with parents/community during BOY events
- Support with storytelling
- New instructional resource with more concrete examples and activities
- Continue to support best practices with AIM/Transform Cohorts - leverage those staff!





Thank You!



OUR NORTH STAR GOAL: EVERY STUDENT, TEACHER, AND LEADER WILL MEET OR EXCEED THEIR ACADEMIC GROWTH GOALS.