



FUTURE READY CASE STUDY #7



Lockwood,
California



San Antonio Union
Elementary School District



170
Students



1
School



Rural

Increasing Future-Ready Capacity and Comprehensiveness

San Antonio Union Elementary School District is a small district located in central California, just southeast of Big Sur. The district enrolls students in grades Prekindergarten through 8. Its student population is 49% White, 34% Hispanic, 7% Two or More Races, and 6% Black. Approximately 52% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch, and 9% of students are classified as English language learners.¹ Approximately one third of the students come from Fort Hunter Liggett, the local military base.

When Superintendent Pam Gildersleeve Hernandez came to San Antonio Union, she knew the district was already making progress toward implementing Future Ready practices, such as one-to-one Chromebooks. However, she and her leadership staff identified two primary barriers to effective technology integration in the district. First, limited resources, infrastructure (e.g., staff, network size), and staff knowledge and understanding prevented many teachers from effectively leveraging technology in their instruction. Second, the Chromebooks and other education technologies and practices were siloed. Although individuals were implementing technology in the district, no comprehensive approach was employed to ensure the efforts were targeted toward student learning. Superintendent Hernandez and her colleagues used the [Future Ready Schools \(FRS\) resources](#) to increase district capacity and support the comprehensive approach to education technology and student learning.

FUTURE READY FOCUS AREA

- Collaborative Leadership
- Personalized Student Learning
- Robust Infrastructure
- Personalized Professional Learning

¹ Source of district statistics is the 2014–15 Common Core of Data, the most recent year available at time of publication.

Transition to Digital Learning

At the beginning of her tenure at the district, Superintendent Hernandez initiated an informal scan of technology practices. Although she was aware that Chromebooks and other technologies were in place in the district, she was unaware of the practical use of those technologies (and others). She learned through a survey of staff that the majority had little to no knowledge of many technology tools. For example, when staff were asked how they employ Google Apps for Education (GAFE—now known as G Suite for Education), Superintendent Hernandez estimated that 30% had conducted their own research in how to use GAFE, while the remaining 70% “gave [GAFE] a one out of 10 in terms of their familiarity [with the apps].” In addition to this clear need for further staff training, the district’s infrastructure was insufficient to support broad technology use. Staff had only a 10-megabit platform for Internet access, and the staff needed to provide technology support was lacking.

San Antonio Union began to address these capacity challenges through a variety of approaches. First, the district worked to enhance staff knowledge through formal and informal professional learning. As a rural district, getting in-person speakers could be difficult and expensive, so Superintendent Hernandez used Skype to bring in national experts to address staff. She made a concerted effort to model staff members’ expectations and benefits around the use of technology, both in their daily lives and in their instruction, in order to increase buy-in. For example, during a professional development session, it became clear that few staff members knew what a QR code (a two-dimensional barcode) was, so the district worked with staff to help them realize all the information that can be accessed by using these codes. Her efforts focused on both licensed staff and classified staff, as the latter often live in the community and can share knowledge and build community support for technology use in the schools. The influence of these staff was harnessed when a large fire broke out in the San Antonio area. The state fire department communicated about the fire’s status through paper maps with QR codes. The custodian shared information about QR codes with other community members, including how to use them to get more current information about the fire. It was a real-world example of the power of technology and how it can inform daily lives.

Superintendent Hernandez worked strategically to employ resources to support technology use. Through grants and in partnership with the Monterey County Office of Education, the district increased its network to 50 megabits and sent staff to conferences and university programs. The conferences and university programs, in particular, served to enhance classroom instruction by building connections between staff and other resources and communities. For example, one teacher is part of a collaboration that includes polar scientists in Antarctica. The teacher uses Skype to connect her students with those scientists to witness live data collection and discuss polar science. Superintendent Hernandez partners informally with other rural district leaders to strategize about how to address capacity issues, such as potentially pooling resources to hire a shared information technology support person who can travel to and serve each district. In the meantime, some staff serve in dual roles to provide technology support (e.g., troubleshooting) to other instructional staff.

Use of FRS Resources

The FRS resources became available to San Antonio Union just as Superintendent Hernandez was beginning her tenure with the district and initiating her efforts to enhance educational technology use (a coincidence that she described as “serendipitous”). The Superintendent gathered a team of innovative teachers in the district who could speak to the current state of technology use to take the District Leadership Self-Assessment together and identify goals for the district. In addition to identifying its capacity issues, the assessment underscored the district’s lack of a comprehensive approach to become Future Ready. These findings dovetailed with some of the results of Superintendent Hernandez’s earlier surveys of staff, which she said indicated that, “Nobody was having a conversation about how [technology] supports actually would mesh to make sure we were developing the best instructional experience using 21st century tools for our students.”

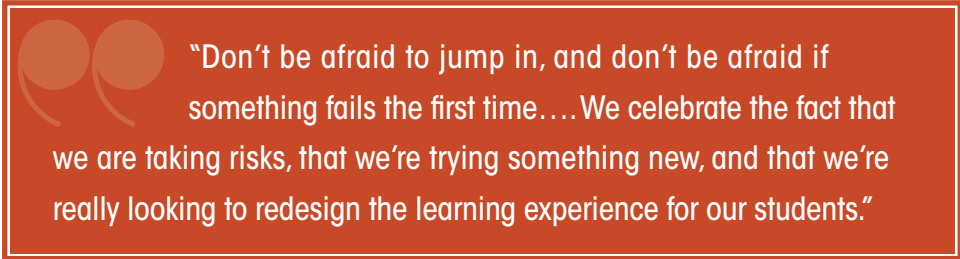
As a result, the district began to use the Future Ready Framework to take a more comprehensive approach to technology integration. For example, when considering an instructional resource, such as a new curriculum, the team also takes into account other Future Ready Gears that relate to that resource or approach, such as budget, infrastructure, or community, to ensure the effort addresses all related aspects. The district’s efforts in these areas are enhanced by new resources it has developed, including alignment between the Future Ready Gears and the Local Control and Accountability Plan, as well as embedded priorities adapted from the state of California. Through this alignment, Future Ready practices and state requirements become complimentary and work to facilitate planning to address multiple priorities. San Antonio Union created a new report card for elementary grades that reflects standards-based instruction, including technology standards. As a result, teachers will have a framework of expectations for student technology learning and use for each primary grade.

Results

From the perspective of Superintendent Hernandez, some of the quick wins of the Future Ready work include staff members’ increased familiarity with GAPE and the continuous availability of relevant information (on both professional and personal fronts). Staff engaged in collaborative conversations, and these practices trickled down to students. For example, more cross-grade-level instruction is occurring, and students are improving their presentation skills through group interactions. Superintendent Hernandez noted that teachers are more willing to take risks in instructional design and that external experts (e.g., polar scientists, volcanologists) are involved in the classroom through Skype and other technologies. She attributed the district’s higher standardized test scores (compared with other districts throughout the county) to the quality of instruction being provided by the teaching staff and their more systematic and creative use of technology.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Superintendent Hernandez emphasized that a district cannot look at each Future Ready Gear in isolation and that it is important to consider all aspects of technology integration. She recommended that other districts involve teacher leadership from the beginning. These staff members, as Superintendent Hernandez stated, "... can plant the seed, spread the word, and model for the rest of the staff," which increases buy-in through peer influence rather than through a top-down directive from district leadership. Finally, Superintendent Hernandez emphasized embracing the process, the risks, and the failures that are inevitably involved: "Don't be afraid to jump in, and don't be afraid if something fails the first time.... We celebrate the fact that we are taking risks, that we're trying something new, and that we're really looking to redesign the learning experience for our students."



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About This Case Study

This is one of nine case studies that examine and document districts' uses, applications, and perceptions of the Future Ready Schools (FRS) professional learning resources in their efforts to become Future Ready. The resources of interest include the Future Ready District Pledge, the Future Ready Interactive Planning Dashboard (and District Leadership Self-Assessment), and the Future Ready Summits. The FRS resources are built on a Future Ready Framework with a set of seven Gears to support a comprehensive transition to digital learning.

Visit <http://futureready.org/> for more information on Future Ready Schools and the resources discussed in the case studies.

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