



Cisco's Global Education group is actively engaged in the work of transforming education systems to meet the needs of 21st century learners, educators, and organizations. This transformation will require a shift in the way teachers teach, leaders lead, and students learn.

# Case Study



## Louisiana School District Engages Teachers in Technology Selection Process

Dr. Diane Roussel, superintendent of the Jefferson Parish Public School System (JPPSS), observed an interesting phenomenon during a recent classroom visit in her district. Instead of going outside for recess, the students wanted to stay in and continue learning with the interactive whiteboard in their classroom.

The technology that captured the students' imaginations was carefully selected through a process that involved teachers, administrators, and experts across the district. The results, in terms of student and teacher engagement and performance, exemplify how the selection of technology is an important step in the bigger picture of education transformation.

### Jefferson Parish Public School System

**LOCATION:**

Greater New Orleans area

**NUMBER OF SCHOOLS:**

87

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS:**

±44,000

**GRADES:**

Pre-K through 12

**SCHOOL STRUCTURE:**

Suburban

**PERCENT OF STUDENTS ELIGIBLE FOR FREE OR REDUCED LUNCH:**

75

## The 21S Holistic Approach to Education Reform

After Hurricane Katrina struck in August 2005, Cisco unveiled an initiative, known as the 21st Century Schools Initiative (21S), to help rebuild the devastated Gulf Coast schools and communities. In addition to equipping each school with instructional technologies and advanced networking equipment, the focus of 21S is to develop a blueprint for 21st century education based on a holistic approach to education reform, supported by Cisco's business experience in management and system change.

21S is a multiphase initiative that aims to create a sustainable, scalable, and replicable model of education reform that will extend beyond Mississippi and Louisiana. The 21S model incorporates transformative technology, tools, and training; backed by the expertise of a dedicated technology and business partner. Support for every implementation is provided by an onsite Cisco Fellow.



### Technology Acquisition

Spreading out over much of suburban New Orleans, Jefferson Parish was one of the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. JPPSS is one of the largest districts in Louisiana and among the 100 largest in the United States, with 87 schools and approximately 44,000 students.

In previous years, administrators and teachers within the JPPSS district were allowed to purchase technology with their individual school budgets. This approach created a lack of standardization, with schools purchasing different types of technologies. In addition, new technologies were not always distributed equitably to teachers throughout the district, since the budget was not consolidated and controlled centrally.

This changed in 2006 with grants from the Cisco® 21st Century Schools Initiative (21S). By providing technology, training, and staff support to select school districts in Louisiana and Mississippi, the 21S initiative is creating replicable models of education transformation. In support of this initiative, JPPSS brought together stakeholders who were vital to the project's success, including administrators in charge of curriculum, central office personnel, and teachers. These stakeholders formed "goal groups" to develop a technology implementation plan. Each group focused on a specific area such as classroom technology, professional development, and administrative efficiencies. The groups held monthly meetings to articulate their goals, evaluate solutions, identify potential vendors, and set benchmarks for measuring results during the program implementation phase.

### Standardized Processes

Through these goal groups, the district emphasized the standardization of learning technologies across the district instead of allowing schools to select different technologies. With standardized equipment, the teachers would be able to learn together and help one another find solutions to common challenges. In addition, teachers and technology support staff would need training on fewer products. Finally, standardization would streamline vendor management and allow the district to negotiate lower purchase costs and more favorable service agreements.

Tracey Zelden, the 21S program manager for JPPSS, explains, "If we're going to send out teams of people to maintain LCD projectors, then everybody needs to know how to maintain them. We cannot replace bulbs in 10 different types of projectors. Similarly, if we're going to have a team servicing laptops, we need to use a laptop that everybody can service, sustain, and support."

### Teacher Participation and Product Evaluation

As part of the research process, the district's technology selection group identified the baseline equipment that would be available in each classroom: a laptop for the teacher, a ceiling-mounted projector, and audio speakers. Interactive whiteboards would also be installed in approximately 40 percent of the classrooms in each school. The whiteboards would be distributed to select teachers based on grant applications in which they described their vision of a 21st century classroom.

The group provided a few options for each type of learning tool, such as projectors and interactive whiteboards. Vendors from each company were brought in to demonstrate their products to a team of representatives from each school—including teachers, administrators, and technology staff. By having teachers participate in evaluating the technology, the district helps encourage teacher adoption and facilitates the transition to technology in the classrooms.

The teams objectively compared the products in a side-by-side analysis. Each representative used a scale to rate each product. Rating criteria included comprehensiveness of warranties, ease of product customization, availability of technical support, and total cost of ownership, including future expenses for maintaining and upgrading the equipment. According to Zelden, “Total cost of ownership looks at the sustainability of a purchase. We can buy cheaper equipment, but what support will we get if something breaks?” Overall scores were tallied along with written comments to arrive at a decision.

### Phased Implementation

The selected technologies are being distributed in phases to accommodate the work capacity of the district support staff and installation partners, and to help ensure that teachers are adequately trained in the effective use of each technology. This phased process has also enabled the district to address infrastructure issues, such as ensuring that classrooms have sufficient electrical outlets to accommodate new technologies. Zelden believes the infrastructure is best assessed prior to the technology selection process to determine whether to upgrade classrooms or choose equipment based on existing conditions.

Zelden also recommends testing new technologies in a classroom before making a final selection and distributing the equipment. Doing so may help identify issues that are not readily apparent in a product demonstration.

The district’s next steps include measuring the program’s impact on learning and teaching to assess whether the outcomes measure up to their educational goals such as increased student engagement, more individualized instruction, and greater collaboration.

### Results

The district’s technology selections improved student-centered learning and helped engage and motivate students. By following a formal process with participation from all stakeholders, the district helped ensure that the technology selection was objective, equitable, and likely to be supported by teachers and students.

As Zelden notes, “The teachers and the students are more engaged.” Now, with eager students wanting to forgo recess to spend more time in the classroom, those who participated in the technology selection process can benefit from the results of their careful planning.

For more information about Cisco Global Education, please visit our website at <http://www.transformgloaleducation.org>.



“The teachers and the students are more engaged.”

Tracey Zelden  
21S Program Manager

# Cisco Recommended Ecosystem Partners for System Transformation

## Information on Integrating Technology

- **Metiri Group**  
([www.metiri.com](http://www.metiri.com))  
Education consultant that provides a broad range of services that empower educators to advance effective teaching and learning, use technology in powerful and meaningful ways, and foster 21st century skills.
- **November Learning**  
([www.novemberlearning.com](http://www.novemberlearning.com))  
An organization that promotes the effective use of information and communication technologies to support and enhance learning for children and communities
- **Partnership for 21st Century Skills**  
([www.21stcenturyskills.org](http://www.21stcenturyskills.org))  
An advocacy organization that is focused on infusing 21st century skills into education; Cisco is a founding member
- **WIDE World – Harvard Graduate School of Education**  
(<http://wideworld.pz.harvard.edu>)  
Offers online learning programs for professional development and using technology in classrooms

## Online Content and Tools

- **Discovery Education Streaming**  
(<http://streaming.discoveryeducation.com>)  
A digital video-on-demand and online teaching service to help improve students' retention and test scores
- **ePals Global Community**  
([www.epals.com](http://www.epals.com))  
A community of collaborative classrooms engaged in cross-cultural exchanges, project sharing, and language learning
- **History Channel**  
([www.history.com](http://www.history.com))  
Television station that offers free programming related to history and culture
- **Jing Project**  
([www.jingproject.com](http://www.jingproject.com))  
An online resource that offers free software that allows teachers and students to capture and share videos and other content
- **NASA Education Program**  
([education.nasa.gov](http://education.nasa.gov))  
Program that provides activities and information related to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
- **National Geographic**  
([www.nationalgeographic.com/education/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/education/))  
Online resource for lesson plans, activities, and information related to geography, history, culture, animals, and other topics
- **Ning**  
([www.ning.com](http://www.ning.com))  
An online platform that allows individuals and groups to create their own collaborative networks
- **Promethean Planet**  
([www.prometheanplanet.com](http://www.prometheanplanet.com))  
An online resource that includes lessons and professional development materials related to interactive whiteboards
- **Smithsonian American Art Museum**  
(<http://americanart.si.edu/index3.cfm>)  
Provider of education resources such as state standards-based, multidisciplinary lesson plans that span the fields of art, design, science, technology, history, culture, and language arts



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