

Are your schools getting the most out of what technology has to offer?



3-Step Technology Evaluation

Step 1: Set Goals

- Establish and train the evaluation committee
- Formulate and review evaluation questions
- Develop indicator rubrics

Step 2: Collect and Analyze Data

- Collect data using surveys, focus group interviews, classroom observations, and artifact analysis
- Analyze and report data

Step 3: Recommend and Report

- Score rubrics using collected data
- Present findings and recommendations in a final report
- Disseminate the report in a formal presentation

Finding out could be one of the most important things you do this year.

Educators, parents, and policy makers across the country want to know:

What is technology's impact on student achievement?

Teachers, administrators, and students can all provide anecdotal evidence, but your district needs factual documentation that shows that educational technology is having a positive impact on teaching and learning in your district.

The Sun Associates 3-Step Technology Evaluation examines technology's impact on student achievement in your district through a comprehensive data-driven process.

Meaningful technology assessments transpire over time and take into consideration a variety of factors. Sun Associates' approach to technology evaluation employs a formative process to help your school/district develop indicators of success. Specifically, the 3-Step Technology Evaluation examines "how your district is doing" rather than "how your district has done." Sun Associates facilitates a process whereby your district creates indicators of success that employ both quantitative and qualitative assessment methods.

The Sun Associates 3-Step Technology Evaluation develops your capacity to improve, build upon, and effectively integrate educational technology district-wide. The recommendations you receive will be supported by descriptive data from your own district and richly detailed research-based knowledge on how technology can improve teaching and learning.

Sun Associates' evaluation strategies are designed to inspire reflection and change. Our evaluation work is customized for each client and focuses on an organization's entire current technology initiative. The 3-Step Technology Evaluation will help you visualize what is possible in your district and how to reach that vision.

Step 1: Set Goals

- Establish and train the evaluation committee
- Formulate and review evaluation questions
- Develop indicator rubrics

Establish and Train the Evaluation Committee

Sun Associates will work with district leaders to select and form a district-wide evaluation committee. This committee should include individuals representative of the various constituencies across the district. Generally, committee participants are teachers, administrators, parents, board-members, and students. The composition of a committee will vary by district and should reflect the values and priorities of the district conducting the evaluation.

Once the committee is selected, Sun Associates will conduct a full-day training that is designed to provide committee members with the essentials of technology program evaluation. During this orientation training, the entire evaluation process is covered in detail, milestones are set, and initial responsibilities are assigned. The goal is for committee members to have a shared understanding of the purpose and intended outcomes of the evaluation process. Further, each member will have a working understanding of his/her role in the overall evaluation process.

Formulate and Review Evaluation Questions

After the initial training, the committee meets for another two days to develop the district's key evaluation questions and to create indicators for those questions. This work can transpire over the course of several partial-day sessions and need not occur in a single two-day block. In most cases, the evaluation committee breaks into subcommittees to develop indicators for individual questions. Sun Associates will facilitate each subcommittee (or the committee of the whole) and provide expert guidance in the development of questions and indicators.

Develop Indicator Rubrics

Using the questions and indicators developed by the committee (or its subcommittees) as a basis, Sun Associates will edit the questions to the satisfaction of the overseeing administrator. Additional input from the committee will be solicited as required. The end product is a finalized set of rubrics that will be used to conduct the district's formative evaluation.

District Time Commitment --
3 - 4 working days for each committee member

Oversight Required --
District Technology Coordinator or equivalent district-level administrator

Step 2: Collect and Analyze Data

- Collect data using surveys, focus group interviews, classroom observations, and artifact analysis
- Analyze and report data

Data Collection

A data collection strategy is designed in response to the district's evaluation rubrics. The goal of data collection is to gather information that will enable the district to "answer" the evaluation questions and "score" their performance on their evaluation rubrics. While it is not possible to predict a data collection strategy without knowing something about a district's evaluation rubrics, a typical Sun Associates data collection effort will include the following elements:

- Surveys -- Our surveys can be of teachers, administrators, students, and/or community members. Unique surveys are created for each target population. Survey formats can be secure online or hardcopy.

- Focus Group Interviews -- As with surveys, a district can choose to collect more or less data by scheduling more or fewer focus groups. Typically, we interview teachers -- one group at each school -- administrators, and technology staff.

- Classroom Observations -- Our team of external evaluators will spend time in schools throughout the district. We do not simply observe teachers and students using technology. Rather, we find that we can learn much about how technology is being used to impact teaching and learning by also observing classroom setups, teaching styles, and student behaviors.

- Artifact Analysis -- Our team will develop an assessment protocol of student technology work. This assessment will focus on an examination of how students at different grade levels and subject areas have used technology to enrich content-area (curriculum) learning. We will work with the evaluation committee and school administrators to develop an accurate sample of student work for this assessment.

A Sun Associates evaluation never relies on a single data source (e.g., surveys). Rather, we design a data collection strategy that best captures the big picture of technology's use and impact within the client district.

Data Analysis

All data, regardless of source, is summarized and reported in tabular and text format. We provide a summary report for each data source. Where tabular data exists, we will conduct a range of statistical analyses on the data and also supply raw data to the client for their own use/analysis.

District Time Commitment -- Sufficient time for teachers, students, parents, and administrators to be interviewed, surveyed, or observed.

Oversight Required -- District Technology Coordinator or equivalent district-level administrator.

Step 3: Recommend and Report

- Score rubrics using collected data
- Present findings and recommendations in a final report
- Disseminate the report in a formal presentation

Score Rubrics Using Collected Data

A Sun Associates report starts with data and then uses that data to score a district's performance against its own rubrics. Our reports provide a detailed explanation of how scores were given and the rationale for choosing one score - or level of performance -- versus another. All of this information is contained in the final report's detailed, documented, and fully supported Findings section.

Present Findings and Recommendations in a Final Report

In addition to findings, the final report will include recommendations we make for how the district can adapt or change current practices to achieve higher levels of performance in succeeding years. Our recommendations are always based in a research-intensive knowledge of best and proven practice as related to teaching, learning, and technology. Furthermore, our recommendations are all relative to our findings. We do not make recommendations that are incongruent with a district's desired outcomes as documented in their indicator rubrics

Prior to creating a final report, Sun Associates will review its findings and recommendations with the district evaluation committee and the overseeing administrator. These key individuals will be given the opportunity to edit, modify, or suggest additional reported information. After this input is received, a final report will be issued

Disseminate the Report in a Final Presentation

Reporting is the most critical stage of a formative evaluation effort as it establishes a common knowledge base for reflection. An evaluation that never gets shared with the community it evaluates never results in reflection; and of course, no reflection means no positive change.

Traditionally, our evaluation projects end with a formal presentation to the district committee and other audiences as identified by the overseeing administrator. Many clients request that we prepare a PowerPoint presentation that summarizes key report elements (e.g., process, findings, and recommendations).

District Time Commitment -- Approximately 1 day from each committee member to review data and suggested rubric scores. Additional 2 or 3 days from the overseeing administrator.

Oversight Required -- District Technology Coordinator or equivalent district-level administrator.

You Should Know...

- A formative evaluation effort which will establish a framework for accountability for years to come can cost less than 10 computer workstations. The evaluation will last much longer than the physical workstations, will benefit all students and teachers in your district, and will provide guidance as to how you can maximize the use of millions of dollars of technology in your schools.
- Sun Associates evaluation projects are generally fundable using professional development funds. This is due to the heavy emphasis on capacity-building and training of in-district staff. Participation as a member on a district evaluation committee is a highly effective professional development experience.
- Accountability is the key to establishing a stable funding basis for effective technology implementation. A formative evaluation process -- such as that facilitated by Sun Associates -- provides a framework for technology accountability.
- Sun Associates works with districts to create indicators of student and teacher technology impact that are keyed to standards and frameworks such as the National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) for students and teachers, the CEO Forum's Seven Dimensions, state curriculum frameworks, and other gauges and measures (where they exist).
- Once a district has worked with Sun Associates to create and manage a technology evaluation, the tools -- rubrics, surveys, data collection instruments, etc. -- developed are licensed at no additional charge to the district for indefinite use. This supports the formative nature of our evaluations in that the instruments can be used again and again in an ongoing evaluation and reflection effort.

How much does the 3-Step Technology Evaluation cost?

\$15,000 is a typical price for an average sized district to implement a full Sun Associates 3-Step Technology Evaluation. This is only an average fee and can vary according to the following:

- Size of district- (Number of schools, teachers, students)
- Scope of the evaluation effort

Sun Associates is committed to working with every school district to maximize the use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning. Contact us. We will make every effort possible to tailor an evaluation project that delivers maximum benefit for the minimum budget.

For more information please contact Sun Associates by e-mail at information@sun-associates.com

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