

A photograph of three children in a classroom setting. A girl with long brown hair and a pink bow is looking at an iPad held by a boy. Another boy in a red shirt is visible in the background. The iPad screen shows a colorful illustration of a landscape with a tree and a path.

iPads in K-3

Notes From Maine's Leveraging Learning Institute

By Bonnie Blagojevic

"All kids are rockets. Our job as educators is to ignite the fuse." Tom Morrill, Former Maine Superintendent

When the Auburn, Maine schools announced last April every Kindergartener in the district would receive an iPad, some people had their doubts. How could such an expense pay off? These questions were discussed last month (Nov 16-18) during a three-day conference, called the Leveraging Learning Institute. In case you weren't one of the 100 participants, here's a run through the agenda, along with some links that will let you follow Auburn's iPad initiative.



Technology should help kids "power up" while at school, not just outside of school. They shared stories from Maine's statewide 1-1 laptop program, the first in the nation, the Maine Learning Technology Initiative, also known as the MLTI. For more on this topic, you can read Commissioner Bowen's post, called Taking a chance on behalf of kids <http://goo.gl/P0ESN>. Some key points:

- The current proficiency scores of 63% for literacy and 60% for math by third grade are unacceptable. The goal is 90% mastery by 2014-15.
- Teaching the same way, only harder, has not worked. We need a new approach.
- The best time to reach a learner is when they are at the beginning of their public education— not at the end.

Day 1 – Why iPads? Why This New Initiative?

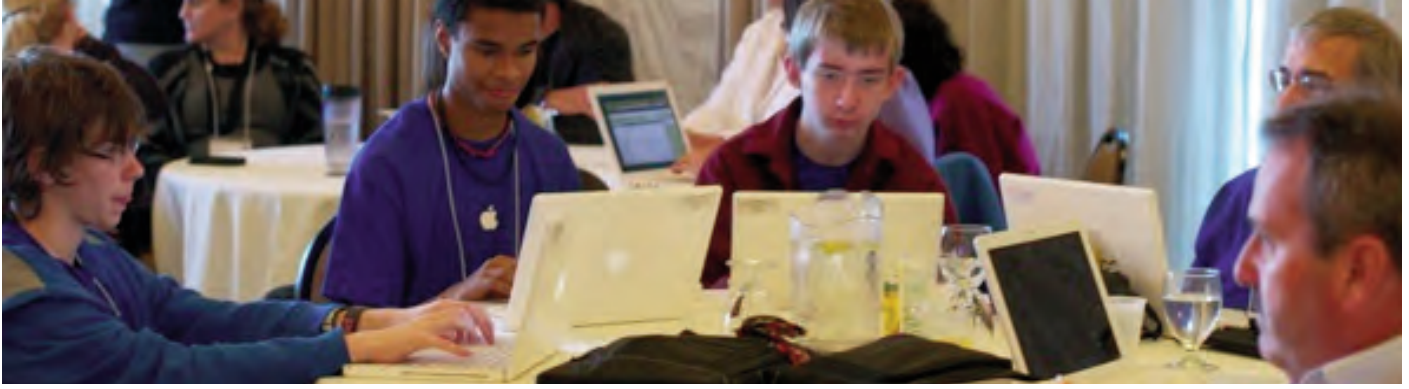
We started with a lively Q & A session with Education Commissioner Stephen Bowen and Former Governor Angus King, moderated by Mike Muir, Auburn's Multiple Pathways Leader, called "Considering Education in the Past, Present and Future." The panel discussed the need to create an education program that is customizable for each learner and engaging.



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STATEMENT OF DISCLOSURE

"I am an Apple Distinguished Educator, however I don't work for Apple. I have no direct commercial motivation for writing about or mentioning the products in this article."



Auburn middle schoolers were asked to tweet about the sessions using their MLTI MacBookBooks

You can follow Maine's Learning Technology Initiative at <http://maine.gov/mlti/about/index.shtml>.

In the afternoon, former Auburn Superintendent Tom Morrill shared Auburn's Advantage 2014 story. He said "All kids are rockets. Our job as educators is to ignite the fuse." His memorable quote was aptly captured by one of the Auburn Middle School tweeters (https://twitter.com/#!/ams_trevor). Morrill expressed his hope that we could provide every child with the tools and support needed to not only develop the creative and problem-solving skills valued by future employers, but that can allow them to lead lives filled with purpose, meaning and happiness.

The next panel, called "Auburn Understands - It Takes a Community to Raise a Child" consisted of a school board member, the parent of a Kindergartener, Auburn's Technology Director, a Kindergarten teacher and Auburn's Superintendent. In this panel, each member provided his or her perspective on the application of new technologies. The panel helped remind the group that any change to a school happens under the umbrella of the larger community.

That evening, Mike Muir who serves as one of the project consultants gave a talk entitled "Being Deliberate About Change." in which he emphasized that the focus must always be on children's learning, and that it is important to use a blended and balanced approach of technology alongside regular classroom tools. Being deliberate includes providing responsive professional development and including all members of the teaching team when it comes to decisions about how to use a new technology, such as an iPad.

DAY 2: From Theory to Practice

The second day was devoted to the nuts and bolts of iPad implementation, with presentations describing four key elements-or strands-required for the success of such a project. Schools were invited to send teams to attend each strand. These included (1) leadership and professional development (2) curriculum, pedagogy and assessment (3) research, on how to collect data to measure how well an initiative is meeting goals, and (4) technical project management, from purchasing, managing and syncing apps to establishing policies and procedures. There were also open time blocks of time for collaborating, planning and discussion, where attendees could network, ask resource people specific questions, and learn together. The idea was to both give and take information. Both evenings, there were presentations involving app use and selection and "appy hours," for participants to share their favorite apps.

Day 3: Planning for Implementation

A highlight of the last day was when two Maine high school students, Hannah Potter and Chris Jones, shared stories of how

the MLTI program influenced their lives. Hannah, a senior at Yarmouth High School, did not consider technology a strong interest area. However, after participating in a Global Village program in the US, together with Iraqi teens, she started a blog called New View <http://newviewus.blogspot.com> demonstrating how technology can break down geographic and cultural barriers. Chris Jones, of Oak Hill High School credited MLTI for introducing him to technology. His technology adventures include his current involvement with an innovative company called Studio 182, which is made up of members all under 18. See their work, at <http://www.studio182.net>.

After the concluding luncheon, there was an opportunity to sign up and visit Kindergarten classrooms. We watched children using iPads alongside traditional classroom materials, at Center time. The children were happy to show and explain to visiting educators what they were doing, as you can see in the Auburn Sun Journal article "Auburn Shows How Students Learn on iPads" <http://bit.ly/uexLaA>.

What's Next

We were invited to review Institute Resources, posted at http://institute2011.auburnschl.edu/Institute_Resources.html, and you can too! Goodies include a list of apps aligned to literacy targets used by Auburn Kindergarten students, presentation slides on topics such as "Deliberate Leadership," "Leading for Change," and "How Do We Know It's Working?" that details the implementation plan, professional development strategies, data collection and research efforts. You can also discover practical classroom management tips, such as photos of a poster with a poem children recite to help them remember how to hold the iPad, and with iPad storage systems.

It's important to remember that the Advantage 2014 Initiative has just started. Half the Kindergarten children received iPads in September and the other half will receive them in December in order to study their effects, and the research results are expected next year. For those interested in the project, your first stop should be Advantage 2014 website, <http://bit.ly/vhWS1F>. Stay tuned!

Additional Resources

News article — Lucas Rice, a Kindergarten-age child, shows five teachers from Auburn, Maine how he uses an iPad
<http://www.sunjournal.com/city/story/1014429>

YouTube video — Here's a video called "Advantage 2014: Learning in the Hands of Children"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8GM41Mboyg>

News article —from CNN: School gives kindergartners iPads:
<http://bit.ly/twN98x>