R2 Innovates Update January 2017
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Overview of R2 Innovates

R2 Innovates, an incubator, laboratory and hub for innovation, was created in 2013 to encourage Richland Two staff members to develop innovative practices which support the four district priorities: learning, character, community and joy. Richland Two leadership believes that teachers and staff members have great ideas that can bring positive change in Richland Two with the right mentoring, resources and support. The R2 Innovates process identifies teams with great ideas and works with them to put their ideas into actions. The R2 Innovates Innovation Advisory group is an oversight group with representatives from Planning, Teacher and Learning, Communications and Strategic Partnerships, school leadership, Assistant Superintendents, and Information Technology that meets throughout the year to provide guidance and feedback. The advisory group looks for ideas that are desirable, feasible, and viable with the potential for scaling across the district.

Incubator teams are identified through an application process in the late spring of each school year. Teams make initial pitches of their idea and then are provided with a two day workshop to help them further develop their ideas through the human-centered design process. Teams that successfully complete a final pitch are provided with mentors, time to prototype their ideas, time to collaborate with other teams, and financial backing.They also have access to the R2 Innovates hub space at R2i2 for work sessions and team events.

R2 Innovates is expanding to provide more services and support to schools and departments as they seek new solutions to identified problems. R2 Innovates hosts a variety of workshops and events to facilitate the design and development of promising practices. The hub is also seeking partner organizations to provide staff with additional mentoring and resources. Focus areas for expansion of the hub include innovation and design, learning environments, and computational thinking to align with the ISTE Student Standards.

Over the past three years, 22 teams and over 200 staff members have participated in the R2 Innovates incubator. All schools have benefited from programs that have scaled through the innovation process. Some examples include the Level Up micro-credentials for technology integration, the Si Se Puede program which empowers families to ensure Latino student success, and a district-wide implementation of an early warning system to facilitate all students having support at the time of need. More information about R2 Innovates teams and their work is available on the R2 Innovates website.

Team Updates

Final pitches for the R2 Innovates Incubator were held on Dec. 8 and seven teams were selected to move forward with implementing their ideas. Each team has been assigned a district mentor and will also have a mentor from the community. Information about new teams will be posted on the district website. A list of teams with mentors and projects is available here. Teams come together on a monthly basis for updates, feedback and sharing. See the calendar of events for more details.

Several teams from Cohort 3 are continuing to expand their programs and test out

solutions.Teams are creating marketing materials to share out with the Richland Two community and will be providing virtual updates at Key Leaders meetings. A blog schedule has been created so that each team can share their work to a broader audience.

Partnerships

As part of our expansion, R2 Innovates has been seeking partners who can help advance our work through sharing of resources and other contributions. Current partners include the Teachers Guild, Intel for Education and Teach to Lead. We are also seeking partners who can assist us with funding and with knowledge management strategies for scaling initiatives.

Teachers Guild
In 2016, Richland Two became an [official partner](#) of the Teachers Guild, a non-profit out of IDEO. Through an online platform and face-to-face events, the Teachers Guild is connecting educators from around the globe to solve the most challenging problems in education. Using human-centered design, educators post their insights about Guild challenges, develop ideas for solving those challenges and prototype their solutions in classrooms and schools. Other Teachers Guild partners in the educator network include ASCD, Round Rock Independent School District, Sonoma County Office of Education, Reach Higher and Better Make Room (initiatives of First Lady Michelle Obama). Build partners who provide mentoring for teachers include Salesforce, Facebook, Google for Education, d.K12 Lab, and Mount Vernon Institute for Innovation.
As a partner, R2 Innovates has the opportunity to participate in developing collaboration topics, hosting educator events to develop ideas and prototypes, and providing face-to-face mentoring and support for Richland Two educators who are engaged on the platform. The upcoming collaboration beginning at the end of January, 2017 is aligned with district initiatives and provides a unique opportunity for teachers to engage in developing classroom experiences to build empathy for and across students of diverse backgrounds so that classrooms are inclusive, safe and supportive. Partnering with the Guild on collaborations also supports developing teachers as leaders and innovators.

Intel for Education
Intel has supported R2 Innovates and R2i2 by sponsoring the SC Midlands Summit. The Intel for Education team has also provided teachers with Arduino board kits in exchange for lesson plans to post on the Intel Engage website.

Teach to Lead
The Si Se Puede team attended Teach to Lead in early 2016 and was selected to partner with Teach to Lead to host a leadership lab in Richland Two. The lab was held in August 2016 and provided the team with the opportunity to expand their program.

Google for Education
The work of R2 Innovates teams has been featured in the Google for Education Transformation Center. Google continues to provide R2 Innovates with professional development opportunities. R2 Innovates is currently partnering with the Google for Education team on a design think tank as part of pre-conference offerings for the SC Midlands Summit.

Marketing and Reach

Innovation Ambassadors:
In an effort to provide more teachers and staff members with access to R2 Innovates programs and resources, we've developed an Innovation Ambassador program with [school contacts](#) who can get the word out about programs and exemplify the qualities of innovators. Ambassadors were selected through an application process and principal recommendations.
R2 Innovates Ambassadors:

       Design for Students' Needs
       Believe that Big Ideas Begin With Empathy
       Identify Problems As Opportunities
       Come Up with Solutions Not Just Questions
       Build Creative Confidence in Each Other
       Catalyze Creative Leadership in Their Local Communities

Innovation Fellows:
R2 Innovates is in the process of developing an Innovation Fellows program which will identify successful innovators to serve on the R2 Innovates operations team and assist with mentoring, hosting events, providing workshops, and expanding programs. In exchange for their work, R2 Innovates will provide fellows with additional resources, support and recognition for their innovative work.

Marketing:
We're in the process of moving R2 Innovates information from a blog site to the new Richland Two district site. The new website will allow us to share our work with a wider audience. Innovation teams connect through a Google+ Community and also share their work on Twitter using the hashtag #r2innovates. Follow us on Twitter at @r2innovates. We would like to improve communications and marketing through more diverse methods including Richland Two video updates and education publications. R2 Innovates will be featured in the January 2017 issue of ASCD's Education Update.

Professional Development Opportunities:

Workshops and Courses:
In addition to hosting workshops for R2 Innovates incubator teams, we are also hosting after-school workshops. Workshops include Designing Space for Active Learning, Maker Learning, Growing and Sustain Innovation, and Storytelling for Final Pitches. A Design Thinking 101 course is in development and will be a blend of face-to-face and online activities. R2 Innovates team members are assisting with planning and teaching the workshops.

Events:
Team projects will be showcased at an event in March. We are also planning other innovation events including a screening of ["If Your Build It."](#)

District Inservice and SC Midlands Summit:
R2 Innovates teams presented sessions at the October 2016 district inservice and will also be presenting at the SC Midlands Summit in June. An innovation strand will be offered. R2 Innovates is partnering with Google for Education on a pre-summit Think Tank event.

Innovation Goals:

Encourage and support innovative promising practices and the use of emerging technologies to transform teaching, learning and the work environment
- Provide staff with opportunities to participate in the R2 Innovates incubator and accelerator program
- Leverage Innovation Fellows and Ambassadors for promoting innovation efforts at the school level
- Develop knowledge management strategies for scaling initiatives
- Collect data and track innovation growth throughout the district to support connections, monitor patterns, and provide example cases to others

Expand R2 Innovates and aim to align innovation projects with district strategic goals and challenges
- Support school and district leadership in the identification of needs, capacity building and implementation of promising practices
- Develop a mentoring program to provide support to innovation teams
- Increase the capacities of educators in leveraging innovation as a component of continuous improvement
- Connect with innovation leaders at other schools and organizations to learn about new ideas

Establish the R2 Innovates space as a hub for innovation with workshops and events to grow the capacity of teachers and staff to design innovative solutions for existing challenges
- Create a safe physical and emotional space for innovators to collaborate and work
- Support ISTE Student Standards by providing workshops in the areas of innovation and design, innovative learning environments and computational thinking

Develop and expand local, national and international partnerships which will provide R2 Innovates with mentors, resources and expertise

Evaluation and Conditions for Success:

The following areas of focus will ensure that we have the necessary conditions for success.

Leadership and Support
Leadership and support of innovation at the school and district-level is key to our success.

Continuous Quality Improvement
A process of continuous quality improvement is built into the implementation of each goal. Through the innovation design process, we will ensure that a process is in place to continually monitor progress and make course corrections.

Professional Learning
Professional learning opportunities are provided at the school and district level to ensure that innovators have the resources and capacity to implement promising practices.

Model for Scaling Up Innovation Initiatives:

The process of scaling up to have broad-based adoption of an innovation is a key component of technology planning. The plan should address steps to achieve depth, sustainability, spread, shift and evolution.

Depth
Getting to scale produces deep and consequential changes in practice. Requires evaluation and research to understand and enhance the causes of effectiveness.

Sustainability
Sustaining scaled growth means maintaining these changes in practice over substantial periods of time. Requires robust design to enable adapting to negative shifts in context.

Spread
Scaling up is achieved by diffusion of the innovation to large numbers of users. Requires modifications to retain effectiveness while reducing the resources and expertise required.

Shift
Ownership of the innovation is assumed by users, who deepen and sustain the innovation via adaptation. Requires moving beyond "brand" to support users as co-evaluators, co-designers, and co-scalers.

Evolution
The innovation as revised by its adapters is influential in reshaping the thinking of its designers. Requires learning from users' adaptations about how to rethink the innovation's model.