

The Media Center: All Set for Summer?  
Summer Technology Academies for Staff  
By  
**Mary Alice Anderson, Lead Media Specialist**  
**Winona Middle School**

---

This article originally appeared in *Multimedia Schools*, March 2001.

It's March and time plan our district's annual summer technology academy. Celebrating Success with Technology 2001 will be our 7th annual district wide academy. Our first academy was a celebration of our first major district-wide technology acquisitions. We offered 20 classes over a three-day period of time. We are now offer 50 classes in June and August, reach out to area school districts, and work with post-secondary institutions. CST has become an annual event, expected by our own staff and area teacher. How do we do it? Take a look at our timelines and tips for success.

**HOW FAR IN ADVANCE. . . . .**  
**6-9 MONTHS**

**Announce dates**

We establish the dates early winter to avoid competing with other district wide initiatives. Some summers CST is offered only in August; other summers we offer both June and August sessions. There are benefits to each schedule. Some teachers prefer to "get it over with" in June; staff involved in coaching fall sports find it difficult to attend August classes. Most staff prefer August after a summer's rest. August is the best time to reach new staff. We held morning and afternoon sessions the first two summers; now classes are in the morning only because we found afternoon attendance rates were not always good.

---

**6 MONTHS**

**Form a planning committee or establish a core group to work with. Assign specific responsibilities.**

Initially we had a planning committee and meetings; throughout the years it became more efficient not to have a formal committee. As chair, I stay in touch with a small core group of people for input and assistance. Collaboration is the buzzword these days; the truth is that everyone has more than enough to do. Planning is more efficient with a small group that "just does it." Of course input is always welcome.

**Develop a proposal and submit it to the district staff who will provide support and funding**

Develop a plan that includes potential class titles, instructors, a budget, logistics, and a rationale. I submitted detailed plans for the first several academies. With success behind us, a brief letter to our superintendent and staff development coordinator is sufficient now. Do what is appropriate for your situation. Our annual budget of \$4000.00 is adequate for instructor salaries and gifts, door prizes, a few decorative touches, and refreshments. Food is essential!

**Determine on class locations**

Factors are availability of space and technology, of air conditioning and convenience for potential attendees. We touch basewith maintenance staff to see if any major cleaning or remodeling projects may make using a location difficult. If the class has a grade level focus it makes sense to hold the class in the

building where the teachers are located. We prefer to have all classes in one location; it's easier for the technicians, food service, and the committee and promotes a sense of camaraderie.

### **Contact potential instructors**

Our instructors are almost entirely our own staff who enjoys sharing with their peers. This is doubly beneficial. Teachers like learning from each other and it keeps costs low. An ongoing instructor makes this a snap. Each year we add one or two new instructors.

### **Contact potential sponsors and donors**

Technology vendors, PTAs, and local businesses contribute door prizes, beverages, financial support and in-kind contributions through instruction. Businesses benefit when teachers are skilled technology users.

### **Contact post-secondary institutions about sponsorship or credit.**

Our track record speaks for itself. We established CST as a one-semester credit class in 1996. Participants attend classes in the summer, complete follow up work in the fall, and receive credit and grades at the end of fall semester. Last summer the state technical college used grant funds to promote CST to area schools and pay the registration fees for non-district employees. We plan to work together in an expanded capacity this summer.

---

## **4 MONTHS**

### **Develop class lists, descriptions and finalize instructors**

What to offer? There is always something new, something that is a compelling reason for people to attend. Last summer's compelling classes were the district's new online grading and attendance software. We offer a mix of "how to" and integration level classes. We offer classes for secretaries and office personal on administrative software updates. They are of course welcome to attend all other classes that may be of interest.

I would like to think that after several years the need for "how to" classes would diminish; new software, updated versions, new staff keep these classes alive. Integration level classes have a small enrollment; as an instructor I welcome these opportunities for small group interaction; it's time well spent. We maintain a *Filemaker* Pro database of class titles and descriptions to make it easy to create the brochure.

### **Begin publicizing**

We promote CST in district newsletters, on our web site, with posters throughout the district and in area schools, and our state media listserv. We have official stationery printed to add a touch of class. We use the same color and fonts for posters, brochures, and stationery and on the web site.

---

## **2 MONTHS**

### **Develop and print the brochure**

We use a similar layout each year to streamline the process. Through the years we've learned the brochure needs all the information you would expect in a conference brochure.

- o Clear registration procedures. We accept registration by phone, snail mail, email or online. Most people now register by email.
- o Clear class objectives, prerequisite skills, the platform and as much descriptive information as possible.
- o White space for ease in reading.
- o Graphics that call attention to specifics.
- o Summer contact information.
- o Information about how peoples will learn if they are enrolled in the class and/or cancellations.
- o Clear information about fees, food, parking, continuing education, driving directions, and parking.

Have a minimum of two people proofread the brochure before it's printed.

### **Distribute the brochure**

All district employees receive brochures. We also distribute them to post-secondary institutions, private schools, substitutes, past attendees, volunteers, board members, and area teachers.

### **Create a registration database.**

People register within hours of the brochures being distributed. We use the relational aspects of File Maker Pro to merge the class list database with other pertinent databases. The media center secretary enters registrations in the database as they arrive so we can keep on top of the situation. The database includes:

- \* Name
- \* School
- \* Job category
- \* Summer contact information
- \* First and second class choices
- \* University credit options
- \* Fees paid, if any, and the check number (Teachers from outside of our district pay a small registration fee.)

Send information and expectations to instructors Instructors receive a letter that includes a final description of what they willbe teaching, expectations about handouts, tips for teaching adult learners and summer contact information. Ideally all handouts should state the class objectives and be professional looking in appearance; the end result varies. Write a letter rather than email; in our hurried world people often pay more attention to paper copy.

---

### **6 WEEKS**

#### **Invite staff hired over the summer**

Our human resources offices provide mailing labels for new staff; I send a personal invitation to each of them. I ask principals to send letters to staff encouraging them to attend classes that will be especially beneficial and invite administrators to classes they might be interested in.

#### **Check on creature comforts**

Schools can become a maze of moving and reorganization in the summer. All class locations need to be clean and ready for use, air conditioning and fans need to be operational halls. Halls and doors need to be accessible; restrooms must be equipped with necessities

**Purchase door prizes, gifts** We also purchase small gifts for the instructors.

---

## **1-3 WEEKS**

### **Registration is due**

We ask people to register early, but there is always a last minute rush and need to do some tweaking of locations, instructors and equipment. Stay on top of registration; This is like running a conference.

### **Finalize class locations**

We announce building locations, but not specific rooms until we know the final count. This causes less confusion than announcing room locations in the brochure,

### **Send out confirmation letters**

Do not underestimate the importance of a written confirmation letter. People do not remember what they have registered for and want something in writing. We use the database to print a letter that includes the essentials: class title, location, time, length, what to bring. We send street and building maps along with Convention and Visitor Bureau Brochures to out of town participants.

### **Send instructors final information**

Again, do not underestimate. People often forget what they've committed to. Provide detailed specifics regarding the class and remind them of your expectations and their responsibilities. Follow-up phone calls are helpful.

### **Arrange for publicity from local news media**

I contact the education reporters of local newspapers. We also have information put on school marquees.

### **Order food, beverages**

We have local caterers and beverage services deliver food and pick up serving items at the end of the day.

### **Prepare continuing education certificates**

When we know the approximate attendance numbers I have blank certificates and special announcements printed. As CST chair I sign my name to the master and have the necessary number printed. Instructors to fill in the name of the person, sign, and date them when participants have completed the class.

### **Double check all equipment**

This speaks for itself. Work with technicians to ensure that all equipment works. Make sure you have spares including spare bulbs, projection systems and extension cords.

### **Print the final schedule, notes, and handouts**

I send what I can to our district's central printing service.

---

### **1-3 DAYS**

#### **Print class lists**

We wait until the last possible minute to print the class lists; there are always last minute registrations and changes.

#### **Assemble registration desk supplies**

A computer with access to the registration database is essential. We always need a supply of tape, pins, disks, repair tools, system software, paper, scissors, cables, bulbs etc.

#### **Meet with instructors**

We meet with instructors the day before the classes begin for a final equipment and software check. At this time they receive an instructor packet which includes:

- \* Last minute instructions
- \* Final attendance list
- \* Vouchers for their salary
- \* Certificates for attendees
- \* Special announcements
- \* Last minute and follow-up instructions
- \* Door prizes

#### **Post signs**

People like to know exactly where they have to be. We always post signs in the halls and on each lab or instructional area. Make them classy!

#### **Decorate**

Little touches like balloons, plants or sometime festive add a touch of fun.

---

### **ACTUAL DAY**

#### **Arrive early---attendees will!**

I arrive at least an hour early. There are always people who want to make sure they are in the right place, want to register for other classes, or just like to visit. Be sure the coffee and other refreshments are readily available and visible.

#### **Be prepared for questions**

It helps to have a greeter and "errand person" available to provide assistance

---

### **END OF DAY ONE**

Take time to reflect and make any necessary changes for tomorrow

**IMMEDIATE FOLLOW UP**

**Make notes about what went well, what could be improved.**

**Celebrate your success.**

**Send thank you letters** to instructors, sponsors, donors and anyone else who contributed.

**Record attendance and complete paperwork** for continuing education, university credit or other incentives

-----  
**NO LATER THAN ONE MONTH AFTER THE ACADEMY**

**Compile a final report**

Distribute the report to administrators, committee members and the school board; keep it on file for future planning. Organize all planning materials and databases so you have them on file and ready to use next year.

A significant change in CST since the beginning is the increasing number of non-district staff attending. The income from their attendance is enough to pay for the costs of after school technology classes that we hold each winter.

Chairing CST is like chairing a small conference. Use what you can from our model; modify what meets your unique needs. Have fun as you begin your summer tradition.

-----

3/04/01