

Joe Jenkins

He helps school districts build bridges over silos

By Nicole Krueger



Photography by Hope Harris

IMAGINE YOUR TEACHERS WALKING INTO SCHOOL on the first day, equipped with fresh digital lesson plans and new ideas for leveraging technology in the classroom. Imagine hundreds of students firing up their tablets and laptops, ready to learn.

Now imagine discovering the network is already crowded with the chatter of more than 2,000 devices – the new smart outlets the district installed over the summer without telling anyone.

These types of snafus are common in the education space, where heavy compartmentalization continues to get in the way of technology integration, says Joe Jenkins, education business adviser at CASBO Associate Member and Premier Partner Development Group, Inc. (DGI), a Redding firm that helps schools and districts implement objective-driven technology systems.

“You have your facility master plan, your [Local Control and Accountability] plan, your instruction plan, your technology plan. The odd thing you’ll find in districts is that they’re

all operating in a vacuum,” says Jenkins, who spent two decades at a tech integration firm and 14 years as a district chief technology officer (CTO). “Often the instruction plan calls for digital curriculum, but it’s not in the facilities master plan or the technology plan. That’s fairly common.”

Jenkins now works with school and district information technology (IT) leaders to build better communication structures and bring their technology plans into alignment with their organizations’ objectives. Through conversations with various stakeholders, he helps clients identify each department’s technology needs and design an infrastructure that will deliver the desired outcomes.

“In the past, districts typically just bought stuff to replace old stuff; it was kind of a cycle. Now they have to ask better questions of the organization because everything they do impacts everyone in the company,” he says. “I learned early on to build bridges over silos.” Those bridges are more important than ever now that technology pervades nearly every aspect of school, he adds.

“Education is making a big mind shift right now. The consumption of digital curriculum is changing the way the classroom is supported. It’s changing the way teachers teach, it’s changing what’s in the facility supplies room, and it’s changing what IT has to support.”

He applauds CASBO for offering crucial opportunities for cross-pollination, where school business leaders can learn more about the various departments they’re trying to support. He first got involved in the organization more than a decade ago in his role as a district CTO. Now, as an associate member and partner, his goal is to create a connected ecosystem of member partners who work together to develop better solutions for school business professionals.

“It’s a phenomenal place, from an IT leadership perspective, to learn your business,” he says. “You can go to the annual conference, sift through all the people you’re trying to support and find out what problems they’re trying to solve.” ■■■