



# EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEPARTMENT

September Newsletter



*Photo courtesy of Vanessa Monterosa*

*LAUSD Instructional Technology Initiative team presenting at the ISTE Conference in Denver, CO.*

## Cohort 8 student leads Ed Tech vision for LAUSD

### Instructional technology gets new direction with district-wide report

The vision for instructional technology in the Los Angeles Unified School District just got a little bit clearer with the help of Vanessa Monterosa of EDLD's Cohort 8.

Vanessa coordinated a task force made up of district and community members, students and parents to research how education technology should look for the district moving forward. She works for the Instructional Technology Initiative for LAUSD.

"There are several recommendations we made that are all focused on aspects of personalized learning," Vanessa said. "They're founded on developing a student-centered learning environment and each recommendation speaks to ways we can really empower our students and our teachers and our school leaders to not only be consumers of information, but producers of knowledge."

The group of about 60 people researched and discussed student-centered learning environments, the SAMR model of classroom tech integration, and brought in nationally renowned speakers to have all the latest information available to them, including Dr. Ruben Puentedura, who is the creator of the SAMR model.

"Because what we were trying to do all year long was really trying to be on 'the cutting edge' of what

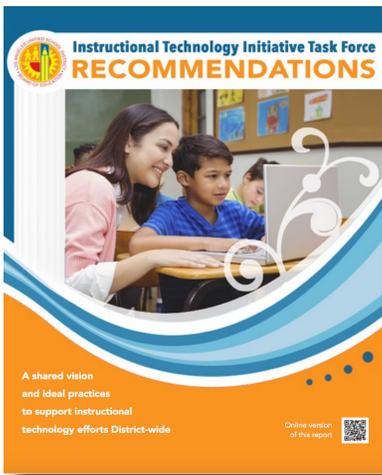
it means to use technology in the classroom, a lot of our research wasn't from two or three year old journal articles," Vanessa said.

"We were reading blog posts, we were all over Ed Week, we were following experts on Twitter who are constantly doing work in this field to see what's the latest information we can have access to. We really wanted everything that our task force members did and what this report produced to be based on research and not just solely on opinions and discussions. We wanted people to approach the topic informed."

Vanessa's role was to coordinate all of the research materials and speakers and to compile everyone's work into the recommendations that were presented to the district school board. The board approved the recommendations with flying colors on June 14 and the report was featured at the International Society for Technology in Education conference in Denver. LAUSD was also featured as the first district in the nation to adopt the refreshed ISTE Standards for Students. The standards center on four principles: creativity and innovation, communication and collaboration, research and information fluency, and critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making.

Now Vanessa and the task force are working on developing specific examples that parents and

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teachers can look at and have as a reference to integrate digital tools. The group is set to meet quarterly and Vanessa is creating a digital counterpart to the report that will be available to the public as well.

“There is no right way to implement education technology,” Vanessa said. “There’s so many ways people are approaching this and it’s so critical

to stay abreast of this topic ... We want to take a huge step back from prescribing types of tools and types of devices. The whole report was written from an agnostic perspective when it comes to devices. Because what’s important is how we consider technology instructionally and what’s possible by the different opportunities that are afforded by technology.”

To read the report, go to <http://bit.ly/2caw9Qn>

## Student Spotlight: Babak Aminitehrani

### Cohort 8 student continues journey where he started

**B**abak Aminitehrani of Cohort 8 graduated from Bellflower High School in 2005 as valedictorian of his class and is now back in the same halls and known as ‘Mr. Tehrani’ to his students.

“The great thing is that I already knew the school culture ahead of time,” Babak said. “I was raised in the same community, so for me to come in, it was a very seamless transition ... It’s great because many of the teachers I work with were my own teachers. Even one of the Vice Principals was my 10th grade english teacher. Now I get to work with her and it provides a different dynamic and I love it.”

Although when Babak graduated from BHS, he says he had never really imagined himself going into education, he was certain he wanted to become a heart surgeon. But during his undergrad at UCLA he began volunteering at high schools, including his alma mater, tutoring and teaching students.

“Over time, I just really enjoyed working with the students, and really enjoyed giving these kinds of lessons and presentations,” Babak said.

He became passionate about guiding and helping students and first thought he would go into counseling. However, due to the budget cuts at the time that cut most counseling jobs, he decided to train to be a teacher instead.

“I still do a little bit of guidance work anyways,” Babak said. “Students trust me a lot and still come to me with guidance questions.”

This year with the help of his principal, Babak began a new honors program for students, called Academic Program of Excellence where he meets with students on a consistent basis and helps them plan out their high school career and develop leadership skills as well.

Like many educators, he enjoys using his own experiences in life and school to inspire his students.



*Photo courtesy of Babak Aminitehrani*

During his undergraduate, Babak studied abroad in Egypt and Italy and participated in archeological digs. He uses these experiences to engage his students in his Government and AP Geography classes.

“There’s a particular lesson I do on Egypt, so we’re looking at things like arithmetic density and how the Egyptian government has affected environmental systems, for example,” Babak said. “... And I’ll randomly have maybe a picture of the pyramids with me in it and the kids will do a doubletake, and go: ‘wait a minute, is that you?’ And I’ll tell them about my whole archeology experience there and it gets them more interested in the topic because they get to see how I’ve interacted with that particular country that we’re looking at. And it also gets them thinking about what activities they want to try to do while they’re in college, like studying abroad.”

He is also a recipient of the Gates-Millennium Scholarship, a program that helps minority high school students pay for their education. He now encourages and guides his own students when they submit their own applications to the program.