



## New Tech Network

### Bay City School Leaders: From building stewards to school experience designers

*New Tech Network spoke with district leaders Patrick Malley (Chief Academic Officer) and Shelly DuCharme (Director of Elementary Education) of Bay City Public Schools about district innovation, school closures and deeper learning.*

Q: Why is pushing your school leaders to think outside the box key in your district's journey to get better?

A. PM: My goal is to foster leadership through a learning lens. One of the things that always struck me about New Tech Network (NTN) was how impactful the focus on learning has been for me and for those in the network. In my district leadership role, I saw an opportunity for our team to take a similar stance with all of our principals—to approach leading through a learning lens. I'm trying to get principals to think about themselves as designers of schools and experiences as opposed to just the stewards of the buildings.

Q. Why is innovating now an urgent priority? Why not wait until the way we “do school” stabilizes?

A. PM: It's important for us to innovate right now because distance learning creates inequities. Making sure that we design our plan with that in mind is crucially important. In this period of school closures, I am stressing a culture of empathy and grace over compliance; by taking that stance of compassion and connection over compliance with a grading system, we built a plan to work with teachers and make sure that our most under-served students receive what they need.

Q. Why is it important for each school team to direct its own learning?

A. SD: This framework of professional learning is effective in gauging each team's readiness and allows them to dig deeper into specific areas to meet their needs. Much like our students, our educators and leadership teams have a variety of strengths and opportunities for growth. Allowing each school team autonomy gives them ownership and the gift of time they need to ensure they are ready to move forward.

Q. Why Deeper Learning, specifically?

A. PM: I want our kids to be able to use all the resources at their disposal in order to solve their own problems and to be challenged in school to do that. We spend a lot of time in Bay City asking teachers to focus their curricular energy on the verbs (process of learning) instead of nouns (memorizing content). It's a matter of designing learning experiences around problems and still ensuring that the content is learned. Deeper Learning comes down to the “why” of school for me.

Q. Why is it important to have a partner instead of DIY?

A. PM: By partnering with outside organizations with expertise as well as distance from the day-to-day work, it allows us to think differently about our own schools. When you have outside partners with quality standards for what the work in schools should look like, then you can leverage that a great deal in your local site.

*Explore more about the New Tech model and transforming your school at NTN's [School Design Studio](#).*