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Extron Streaming Solutions Integrate with Popular Enterprise Video Platforms
This article was originally written for the Spring edition of (in)CITE, before the entire world changed. The intent was to introduce myself as the incoming president of CITE and set the stage for the year to come. Now the context has been not only reset, but demolished by the pandemic and the new reality that it has forced upon us. While much of what follows below still stands as relevant, it’s framed differently now. So as opposed to writing an entirely new article, I just wanted to set that frame, and then take the members back a few months and share my reflections and excitement for the future that still exists even today. And make sure to check out the breadth of pandemic-related content from our awesome members throughout this issue.

I’ve been working in my District for 20 years. I’ve been to 20 CITE/CETPA/CEDPA conferences. It’s 2020. Whoo (cue Twilight Zone theme music). That’s a lot of round numbers. Here’s another one, 60. CITE has now begun its 60th year of existence as we start this new decade. And in my 20th year as a member, and 5th year serving on the CITE Board of Directors, I am now honored and humbled to be serving as board president for Year 60 of the organization, and Year 1 under the CITE name and identity. And I think all of these milestones make it a perfect time to reflect.

A lot of you don’t know me at all. For some I’m a familiar face you see maybe once or twice a year. Others, you’ve heard the name but can’t place the face. But I’ve been here, every year, like clockwork. When I was hired by Hanford Elementary School District in October of 2000, I was told on my second day that I should attend this “CEDPA” conference in Santa Barbara happening in a few weeks, tag along with a couple of the technology resource teachers that were already going. It was election week, the week of hanging chads.

I lived through the era of over-the-top hospitality events and prizes (vacations and Harleys and cash, oh my!) and the glorious days of the Network Operation Center (NOC). When I first heard about the CTO Mentor Program at the 2006 conference in Monterey, I knew I wanted to be involved in that, and quickly applied for Cohort 1. By the end of that first cohort, the iPhone 1 was released, and one of the instructors was giddy to show off his shiny new device to the group.

The golden anniversary of the organization was magical in Monterey in 2010, who could forget dining and dancing amongst the sea life at the Monterey Bay Aquarium during the president’s reception? Lots of fond memories of the venues we’ve simply outgrown; Santa Barbara, Indian Wells, and sadly Monterey too.

But it’s not ALL about the fun over the last couple decades. There’s a lot of reflection about what it means to be involved with CITE through the years, what it means to be a member. continued on 20
Our goals for 2020: Strong leadership, member engagement, transparency.

By Andrea Bennett

We began this year with so much excitement. We had revealed our new name and it was time to start delivering new benefits and programs to our members. It was time to reintroduce ourselves to the California Legislators and strengthen our partnerships. We were just getting ready to publish our newly named magazine and we had just launched the 14th cohort of the CTO Mentor Program. The excitement for our 60th Annual Conference was building.

Then, the virus hit. Then, schools closed. Then, everything else closed. As I write this in early May, we have been on a statewide lockdown for over six weeks.

We shifted our focus to providing as much information as we could. Facts and figures were constantly changing but the one thing that was sure, people needed to be able to communicate from where they were: at home. Our daily meetups for members were made extremely valuable by the input of the attorneys at F3 Law and all the input from our members. Our members were, and are, amazing. They shared any information they had and were not afraid to ask questions.

Back in February, BC (Before Corona), the CITE Board of Directors and the staff held a two-day retreat. But it was anything but restful. We worked with a strategist both before and during the meeting. Our goal was to examine our processes, policies, and habits to develop goals to strengthen the organization. In the spirit of transparency, I'd like to share the information we gathered and the work we did to keep improving the organization for our members.

The renaming from CETPA to CITE and the rebranding took a lot of time throughout 2019. The data gathered by the professional marketing firm showed us that we had an opportunity to be an even stronger recognized authority for IT Professionals working in schools. By focusing on IT staff at all levels, we are in position to be a unique and highly visible organization throughout the state. By leveraging national partnerships with organizations like SETDA, CoSN, and ISTE, we will also have a national voice. However, the data also showed that while our members are proud to be a part of us, there is little opportunity for engagement outside of the annual conference and regional groups. Conference attendees get membership activated through their registration, but then do not engage throughout the year. We want to change that.

The strategist we worked with started several weeks before our meeting with an extensive lifecycle analysis meant to identify the Board’s current stage of development. She also interviewed each board member separately. She gathered all the data and presented it to all of us. Overall, the results showed a
OUTBREAK AND EDUCATION: ONE DISTRICT’S EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE DURING A PANDEMIC

BY GREG MCWHORTER, Ed.D.
Citizens in the United States first started testing positive for the novel COVID-19 virus last January with the first confirmed deaths in February (Baker & Fink, 2020). School districts, ever vigilant to protect the nation’s youth, were keeping up with the daily news as it related to health and safety concerns with this new virus. District office administrators at Val Verde Unified School District were following developments, which were changing daily. By early March, COVID-19 was being talked about regularly in planning meetings, but with mostly a ‘wait and see’ approach.

Our district was in the fourth year of a Chromebook take-home initiative in which students kept their devices all-year long. We had also adopted Google Apps for Education (GAFE) around 2013. Over the previous few years, our district included technology training as part of professional development. Although we faced resistance by some teachers, we were getting increasing numbers to attend technology training and gradually boost our capacity. Luckily, for our district, Superintendent Michael McCormick has always maintained a vision of technology serving an important role and having great potential for student learning as a force-multiplier. However, McCormick cautions; “Technology alone is not a silver bullet, but the effective introduction and integration of technology has exponentially increased the effectiveness of our pedagogy and helped us focus on what matters most—strong core instruction for all students.” (Telfer, Howley, & Thurlow, 2019).

McCormick’s disseminated vision, combined with increasing attendance at technology trainings, were driving our teachers to consider 21st century learning strategies which made use of technology for greater student engagement.

The two-man EdTech Office (Phil Harding and myself) had just wrapped up a major event on March 7th (attendance 1500+), which we produce annually for the district, and COVID-19 was talked about heavily in our office. The week of March 9 started with a frenzy of information disseminated by the state and other districts. My EdTech partner and I realized the need to arm teachers with as much information on technology apps, software, tutorials, and teaching strategies with technology as possible. We started sending out emails to all district teachers with information on how to use district-purchased apps and technology under the guise of additional professional development because we did not want to alarm them. Our district administrators cautioned us to disseminate information only for district-purchased resources. We were afraid fostering a dependence on newly offered free services would eventually become usable by purchase only. We sought to develop greater capacity in our teachers with the resources we already had in place instead of having them develop skill sets with programs we may never opt to purchase.

continued on 8
By the end of the week, it was suggested we start developing resources to share with district teachers. Phil and I had already taken the initiative to mine and curate resources as we both hold value in being prepared for any eventuality. That Friday after work, we received the district email stating the district office and all district schools would be closed immediately. Although shocked by the sudden announcement, we felt the EdTech Office had prepared our teachers, as much as possible, for digital/distance teaching.

Most Val Verde USD teachers, of all grade levels, were able to adapt to the situation, armed with the knowledge we had shared through emails and various PD sessions. The greatest thing in our favor was our Chromebook take-home initiative and the fact that we had been a GAFE district for so long. Our district IT Director, Matt Penner, had the foresight to start the take-home initiative several years back and it was easy to see how this was now a boon for students stuck at home. IT Director Penner has asserted; “It’s our job to support the district’s mission through the use of technology” (Cybersecurity at Val Verde ISD, 2020). Our teachers quickly started video-conferencing with students along with using GAFE to ensure learning was continuing during the lockdown. Many district teachers enacted these measures weeks before solid directives came out.

When the district laid out directives to maintain learning through a digital/distance learning approach, many of our teachers had already been doing so for weeks. I believe our successes were due to the visionary leadership of Superintendent McCormick, IT Director Penner, and our district’s Education Services team, which includes our EdTech Office. Our district had also built up a network in which all departments could be tapped for information, ideas, and help. In eroding district hierarchies (unlike some of our neighboring districts), we abolished silos and mustered our partnerships to address all issues which the COVID-19 situation offered. During this situation, the EdTech Office even collaborated with Risk Management on the creation of protocols for engaging students via video-conferencing. A lot of our success came from the ability all departments had to speak with each other with no regard to job title. Our district has always embodied the idea that ‘we are all in this together’ united for the betterment of students and our community we serve.

Although I mentioned we chose Chromebooks and GAFE for district-wide use, I believe any district who has gone 1:1 with any device for students and uses a well-developed Learning Management System (LMS) should have experienced similar success (Ironically, all of these initiatives were also a part of our Future Ready plan). The brand is not as important as having the right tools to aid in digital/distance learning, but also for future-ready preparedness for students. Our teachers seem content with the tools we have in place as they quickly created online materials and resources without asking the district to purchase new resources. In a recent meeting we had with Jon Corippo (Chief Learning Officer for CUE), he expressed how impressed at what our teachers had created and accomplished and how the teachers never once made...
comments like ‘If only we could purchase X, we would be successful.’ The PD and tools we have carefully curated for our teachers, along with eroding departmental silos, has helped our district in numerous ways.

When I think about what we learned, I feel although our teachers can accomplish a Herculean effort in adapting, we also need further teacher training on how to understand the social/emotional needs of students and why synchronous presence with their teachers is so important for them. While asynchronous learning might lead to higher cognitive achievement, it is through synchronous learning wherein students achieve better skills acquisition (Ogbonna, Ibezim, & Obi, 2019). We further overcame many logistics problems with technology (ex. How to repair Chromebooks during this emergency), but increasing student engagement online has been difficult. Many teachers reported low student turnout online and this is something we are struggling to change. We are looking at ways to increase accountability in learning, but we also need to develop within our teachers a sense of engagement to rival the distractions students face at home (video games, TV, etc.).

Our next steps will be to continue the dialogue with teachers on how to present digital lessons in ways that will be more engaging as well as offer more PD on tips and tricks when using technology. We will also need to conduct more training on the social/emotional needs of students in this situation, being mindful of all dynamics experienced by a varied student body and their families. Overall, I believe our educators have an imperative to be compassionate and intentional with student learning. COVID-19 has taught us that teaching is not merely a 9-to-5 job, but a calling in which all district staff need to be flexible and be giving with their time and energy in order to help students to learn and have achievement success with digital learning.

Dr. Greg McWhorter is an educator and writer who resides in Southern California. Since the 1980s, he had worked for newspapers, radio, television, and film before entering the field of education. He has been a guest speaker at several universities, TV shows, film documentaries, past CITE conference, and the San Diego Comic-Con. Over the past few years he has had two books published of his fiction work. Today, Dr. McWhorter is a Technology Integration Specialist for the Val Verde Unified School District.

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COVID-19 presented itself in the fall of 2019; to many of us, it was not the center of discussions during the CITE Annual Conference in Anaheim. The majority of us were focused on the networking and growth opportunities that the conference brings to us each year better to serve our students, schools, and districts.

In January, the year started with new beginnings and the hope to be better than the previous year. The news was slowly building momentum in covering a fast-moving pandemic. However, its implications were still not clear.

Many colleagues recalled H1N1 and SARS to think the impacts would be similar. Little did we know at the time that the impacts of COVID-19 would be unprecedented. Different aspects of life were starting to shift as national and local leaders were providing guidance to stay at home, impacting over 6 million students in California alone. During March 2020, we saw a rapid reaction to ensuring public health and a stay-at-home order was provided.
The normalcy of students going to school had changed. Questions and the search for guidance were proliferated in conversation. The call for leadership during this time was the loudest sound in a room filled with the noise of uncertainty. Technology was at the forefront to help during this unprecedented time as the idea of telecommuting was previously only heard in other industries, and was now becoming the answer for business and educational continuity.

Technology is sometimes thought to be the hardware and the software to help run the operations of an organization. The pandemic has showcased the leadership that has always been part of technology.

AGILE LEADERSHIP

The call for leadership was met head on by many of our districts through the state. I saw firsthand with districts in my own region, Riverside County, rise to the challenge.

The idea of agile leadership was happening organically as many in our community stepped up in shaping the environment through the pandemic and leading through change.

There are many instances where we encounter a solution and search for the proverbial problem. In this instance, many districts defined their expectation for student and staff outcomes then developed solutions to meet those expectations. Months of planning was not made available to help accomplish what was done. There may have been disaster recovery and business continuity plans, but not many addressed the scenario that we have experienced.

Examples of agile leadership have abounded in our community as decisions were being made to adapt to complex, uncertain, and rapid change. This concept also seemed to have been adopted by other areas in education in championing the outcomes for our students. Though not every action was perfect, teams adapted to the change, reassessed, refocused, and did what was needed.

COMMUNICATION

The speed and accuracy of communication can dictate the success or strife in any given situation. The method and means we had to communicate had to compete with the speed and uncertain and changing nature of the pandemic. Technology leaders were placed in the forefront by the urgency of the situation to help communicate during this time. State leaders were calling on organizations to lean on their ability to leverage technology to overcome the challenges.

In the rapid response to the situation, districts leaned on the ability to communicate. The change in the work environment for students, teachers, staff, and administration provided more moving pieces than normal. The ability to provide clear communication channels was essential. In speaking with districts in the Inland Empire, they defined their communication channels but also managed expectations through those channels. Technology teams were spread very thin and had to maintain expectations by communicating priorities and establishing timelines for a response. Districts created systems that allowed them to provide service to a changing environment.

The situation caused through the pandemic continued to evolve, and the communication practices of our districts continued to evolve with it. Districts were able to reassess the success and build from them.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The response to the pandemic required technology teams to create the means for distance learning and telecommuting. Districts were able to function in this new environment, and many individuals never saw

continued on 12
the countless hours that it took to make it happen. Adapting to the environment of change brought out the characteristic of servant leaders. Technology leaders listened, provided empathy, became more aware, engaged in stewardship, built community, and grew others. The essence of servant leadership was made evident by the technology teams through the state as these teams sought the opportunity to be out of their comfort zones and serve others.

The pandemic brought the topic of the digital divide in the forefront, though it was there before, the situation made it more public. Technology leaders through the state stepped up to champion means to close that divide. Creativity and passion drove many to seek resources to ensure that our students were provided the opportunity to learn.

In the Inland Empire region, districts collaborated with other districts sharing resources and techniques in this environment to better serve their community. The pandemic may have created a situation we were not prepared for, but in many instances, it brought the best out of our community. The pandemic brought many together to serve together.

**THE NEW**

I am proud to be part of a community that rose to the occasion and continues to grow with all situations. The collaboration between members and districts demonstrates our unity and our hearts in serving our students.

The pandemic introduced a different environment for many districts throughout the state. Different responses were made based on every situation that was provided. The crisis provides the opportunity to create “the new.” The educational landscape will now be forever changed and provides a moment to take advantage to reinvent our normal. When going back to normal, be considerate of which parts of normal are worth going back to.

Eric Calderon serves as the Chief Technology Officer at the Riverside County Office of Education. Eric has been serving TK-12 for over 15 years and has experiences in other public agencies, private sector, and higher education. He also serves as board member for CITE (California IT in Education) and continues to be active in the technology community serving students in California.
Emergency Distance Learning: How Irvine Unified’s EdTech Team Supported the Shift

The State announced the closure of school sites in March 2020. IUSD’s EdTech Team mobilized swiftly to provide training and ongoing support to over 4,000 staff members, 48,000 students and the community. EdTech reacted with a variety of communication and support models to ensure all staff, students and families were ready to continue high quality instruction through Emergency Distance Learning (EDL). The IUSD EdTech Team consists of 13 people: Web and Digital Media, Software Support, Professional Learning, the Coordinator, and the Director. The approach to support EDL in IUSD was designed to couple intentional and consistent forward-facing communication to all stakeholders, as well as capacity building and ongoing support with staff as they navigated this sudden and drastic paradigm shift.

FORWARD-FACING COMMUNICATION

As details in the news seemed to change every minute, keeping our community informed and up to date became vital. Our Web Team moved instantly to create a forward-facing page on our District website. IUSD’s dedicated COVID-19 resource page housed information including but not limited to mental health and wellness, meals and community resources, how students could access technology if in need of equipment at home, and how to stay connected with ongoing information and next steps. The Web Team also closely supported sites with virtual graduation, producing and sharing easy-to-use templates customized for each site to create a celebratory sense for the occasion.

As the community began to see technology as much more at the forefront, EdTech wanted to make sure they connected with families and share how they support the district. Promotional videos were created and shared on unplugged robotics activities and updated metrics about the support of EdTech during EDL.

For staff, it was quickly realized that communicating data privacy best practices were a top priority. Teachers had to suddenly navigate the deluge of “free” software offers coming in from vendors, and often forgot or misunderstood data privacy points. Resources were created and given to Tech Coaches at each site with the message of best practices for non adopted software. EdTech worked closely with CITE and our Contract Specialist, and were able to secure a number of California Student Data Privacy Agreements with widely used companies, such as Zoom.

Recurring communication became an important way to message updates, resources and supports in a

continued on 14
consistent way that was manageable for staff to ingest. EdTech worked in tandem with EdServices to send out specific tips and resources to teachers throughout the week. These focused on bite-size, relevant tips that teachers could implement immediately. In order to best communicate constant updates, known bugs and fixes, and new resources, the EdTech team updated an ongoing log of Topic Updates that was shared with all teachers. This familiar log was updated on a monthly basis prior to EDL. During EDL, the log was updated almost daily. Teachers preferred going to one place for updates instead of losing emails.

**SUPPORT AND BUILDING CAPACITY**

In the sudden shift to EDL, all stakeholders stretched their typical use of technology far outside of their comfort zone. It was vital for EdTech to be on guard and ready to support all users in formats that fit their needs. IUSD’s Help Desk system would be used more than ever before. A shift was made to have all members in Help Desk for the first several weeks of EDL. Over the duration of EDL, EdTech has resolved over 7,000 new tickets in Help Desk. Our Software Support Team also staggered hours to provide a faster response time to those needing support outside of usual work hours.

On March 16th, teachers received an online curriculum guiding them through the considerations for successful distance learning as well as an invitation to participate in 10 live webinars hosted by the EdTech Team. The content from these webinars was recorded and shared via the district professional learning platform. EdTech produced countless resources for teachers to utilize across their journey through EDL. In order to reach all learning styles, EdTech provided a variety of support: tutorial help docs as well as live one-on-one and small group support. To date, EdTech TOSAs have provided well over 100 hours of live support to staff during EDL through video conference appointments. The one on one support topics are identified by the teacher requesting the support and span from a technical “how-to” to pedagogical coaching.

EdTech has delivered a handful of live training during Emergency Distance Learning. These include a two full-day EDL Substitute training that onboarded the select candidates so they were ready to continue high-quality instruction in the absence of the teacher. EdTech worked closely with EdServices to provide this robust training that is now available in an ongoing format in the district’s professional learning platform.

EdTech also produced a live training for Instructional Aides focusing on Management and Engagement during Video Conferencing.

Across the globe, people have shifted to keep life going during this pandemic. In IUSD, the small but mighty EdTech Team has shown incredible adaptability to make sure that the entire district is moving forward with the “highest quality education {we} can envision”.

A classroom teacher before making the move into the EdTech, Shaney now plans and implements the professional development and support for educational technology across the district.

Teacher, principal, EdTech Director; Harmony Briscoe brings her years of leadership in IUSD to EdTech, and aligns the overarching initiatives of the District to the team’s mission and goals.
The COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be a multi-faceted and complex challenge to many school districts nationwide, and at the Brea Olinda Unified School District it has been evident from both a support resource, and technology standpoint. While COVID-19 has pushed us into a distance learning model, we have seen a number of successes, but not devoid of challenges. As a small K-12 district of 6000 students in north Orange County, consisting largely of middle to upper-middle income families, the transition and ability to provide equitable access to technology has proven to be difficult. Not every student in each household has access to a computing device. In some cases there exist only 1 computing device in a household of 4 family members. Additionally, a number of households do not have access to the internet. Looking back over the last two months, we have learned and experienced a number of challenges and hope that the California State Legislature will take measurable actions:

1. Each and every student must have access to a computing device. Our school district needs adequate funding to be able to provide a device for each and every enrolled student, and a sustainable budget to refresh these devices over time. Technology in this present day should not be an option, as we are tasked to build essential 21st century skills, while assessing them through online digital tools to efficiently provide real time data. And while many middle to upper middle income households may have access to technology, it is not fair to assume that they would be willing to purchase a device for each child per household.

2. Technology devices should come from school districts in order to maintain a consistent learning experience. While some households may own their own technology, we have learned that it has been challenging to support our students who own different types of technology, making it difficult for teachers to provide a consistent learning experience. Not every household knows how to troubleshoot a computer, and places district IT support teams with limited staff in situations to support systems that are either unfamiliar or restrictive due to personal configurations on those devices. Providing standardized technology to every student helps bring that consistent experience and minimizes the amount of support needed.

3. High-speed internet access for all households go hand in hand with...
the access to a computing device. A number of households in our district only have a cellular phone, and no home high-speed internet. This proves to be challenging as oftentimes students cannot use their phones due to limited data caps, and other restrictions. At Brea Olinda, we have managed to provide a small handful of wireless hotspots to a select few students, but not enough to provide equitable access. Educational content today requires a fast and stable connection to the internet, and with the possibility of multiple members going online simultaneously in any given household, can greatly reduce the performance of their access. While distance learning may not be the common instructional delivery format, school districts need to ensure that every student has access to high-speed internet in order to maintain a consistent and near equitable learning experience.

4. School districts need greater support to ensure that all online tools are secure and maintain adequate privacy for our students. We are hoping that legislators can help raise the bar in security and privacy by partnering with technology companies to ensure that our students, and the data stored, are safe when using online tools. The cyber attack surface has broadened due to the pandemic, and proper funding for cybersecurity and digital safety is key as we transition to distance learning models.

5. In order to comply with the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA), we are required to filter and block web sites that are deemed unsafe for students while on campus. The switch to the distance learning model has proven to be a major hurdle as we are not able to filter personally owned devices. Loopholes abound when students are learning outside of the classroom. If we were able to provide every student a device (ie. Chromebook) we would at least have some ability to filter the websites they can access. Additionally in many households, parents do not have the time or means to supervise their students access during instruction time.

It is clear that COVID-19 has uncovered many deficiencies around equity and accessibility beyond the scope of technology. I’m sure that our experience and that of many K-12 districts share similar stories with different backdrops. Our focus is our students, with the goal of providing innovative learning experiences while instilling the principals of being a lifelong learner. We hope our stories will bring to light some of the challenges that we are facing and that the California State Legislature will take proactive steps to provide more resources to bring about greater equity for our students and schools.

Derrick Chan serves as the Administrative Director of Technology Services at the Brea Olinda Unified School District, a small K-12 district of 6000 students in the North Orange County region. He currently oversees all aspects of technology throughout the District, with a focus on flexible and agile systems, and finding ways to simplify the teaching and learning experience. Prior to his role in Brea, he has served as the Technology Support Manager, and Network Engineer at the Orange County Department of Education, and has held various IT roles at the Los Angeles Unified School District, and the University of Southern California. He is also a graduate of the CTO Mentorship Program.
Interview with CITE Member
Rachel Yochum

What are your responsibilities at Apple Valley Unified School District? How long have you been there?

I am currently the Database Systems Analyst. I have been here for almost 3 years. I integrate data between our SIS (Aeries) and many third party programs used by students and staff. I also help with implementation and training of some programs. I work with our district data team to maintain and report accurate data.

How long have you been in the technology in education industry?

Almost 8 years. I started in technology in November of 2012, after being in education since 2006.

What drew you to this industry? What do you like most about it?

I started out as a Records and Attendance Clerk in 2006. When we switched our SIS, I was invited to be part of the team to decide on the new program. It was then I got to see the tech side and caught the bug! I am the kind of person who wants to learn and grow. In technology things are always changing, so there is constantly room to learn more. I never imagined I would know or do some of the things I do now!

What is something in the industry that has surprised you in the last 2 years?

The use of technology in the classroom! I have seen the number of applications/programs used by teachers grow exponentially in the last few years. It is paralyzing to a class if the network goes down. The second a student enrolls, I get requests from the teacher to sync their data.

With the recent events, I think how it all would have played out without technology. Like most districts, our district provided students with devices to work at home. One of the benefits of the programs used in the classroom is that the students were already familiar and comfortable with them. I feel that helped in the chaos of the adjustments we all had to make.

How has CITE assisted in developing your knowledge of the industry?

I don't know if I would be where I am without CITE. But one of the biggest benefits for me - the networking! I have had the opportunity to be part of a community that supports each other. I am able to reach out to so many to get advice or help. In most districts there is only one person who does what I do. Without the CITE community, who could I ask?

Again, with the recent events, CITE was there to support us. It was nice to be able to connect with the CITE community to share ideas, plans and pain points. The virtual meetings CITE held to share information from the state were incredibly helpful!

Who are some people who have met that have helped you in your career? Where did you meet them?

I have had the privilege to work for some great bosses. Jason Buchanan, Greg Taylor and Robert Saffel have all pushed me to learn more. They have pushed me to expand my knowledge. They have supported me by allowing me to attend various trainings and conferences. Jason was the Tech Director at my first district, before I was in Tech, and is now the Tech Director at AVUSD. Robert was the next Tech Director at my previous district and my boss for 4 years. I met Greg, who is my current supervisor, through CITE.

Where are you from and what do you like to do in your spare time?

I have lived in California my entire life. I have lived in Northern and Southern California. But the majority was spent in Barstow. Anyone who knows me knows I am a Disney Fanatic! I spend as much time there as I can! But I also love camping and anything with my family!
We’re excited to announce the all new (in)CITE Podcast!
The podcast launched in early June and the first episode features CITE President, David Goldsmith (CTO, Hanford Elementary School District), and President-Elect, Phil Scrivano (Director of Information Technology, Simi Unified School District). David and Phil were interviewed by CITE members and hosts, Jamie Lewsadder (CTO, La Cañada Unified School District) and Shane Pinnell (CTO, Colton Joint Unified School District). David and Phil discussed how CITE responded to the COVID-19 pandemic and how it impacted them at their LEAs.

The goal of the (in)CITE Podcast is to interview industry professionals and subject matter experts to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information for IT professionals in education. By using a medium that is accessible anywhere, anytime, you can get the information at your convenience.

From eSports, to cybersecurity, to special education resources, and more, we hope to cover everything to inform you and help your work. The podcast will be released every other month (or more frequently if timely topics arise!). If you have a topic and want to participate, email podcast@cite.org

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Board of Directors that is strong in Leadership and Management and is concentrating on determining how to meet the needs of its members. This leads to building the capacity to support growth, and finally to governing the association to increase impact and sustainability. Ongoing training and development of staff skills is an area of growth which, in turn, will strengthen internal processes of running the association. We are fiscally strong with good financial management practices. We looked at several areas to define the roles and responsibilities of the Board and staff. The Board made the decision to establish several committees to increase transparency and member engagement and to create strong leadership that will offer a pathway to service on the Board of Directors. These committees were announced in late April 2020 and are just beginning to form.

The committees will have different areas of purpose, with established requirements for members who wish to serve. The details of service will be developed as part of each committee’s development and will be shared with the members as they are finalized. Initial focus areas are listed below.

**Advocacy** – We currently have a small committee which consists of a subset of the Board and staff. We will be increasing the opportunities for members to participate in advocacy activities. Most of the advocacy will be within California with possible opportunities to serve nationally.

**Finance** – The Board provides financial oversight and ensures adequate resources. The Board aligns the budget with the strategic plans, ensures long-term health by maintaining an adequate financial reserve, validates the financial controls that are in place, and will establish a finance committee to oversee finance policy.

**Conference** – Our annual conference is our largest event of the year. There are many components to the event and one of the most important is the selection of sessions. The Conference committee will review, and rate submitted sessions and help build the schedule. Other tasks may also be delegated to this committee.

**Resource Programs** – This committee will be involved in our Resources and Educational programs. As we develop this committee, subcommittees may be established to concentrate on specific programs.

We are excited to move forward with a model that will allow members to engage regularly and help shape CITE’s member benefits and help maintain our excellent reputation.

I am so proud to be a part of this organization and I am excited for the growth we will see this year. Stay tuned in as we roll out more information! 😊

Andrea Bennett has been CITE’s Executive Director for more than 14 years and has worked in the education community as a programmer/coder, trainer, and director for nearly 30 years.
When the organization began the process of rebranding in 2019, the number one theme that quickly rose to the top of the discussion was the community, the sense of being part of a unique and highly skilled network of professionals. That’s my biggest takeaway to this point as well, that our community is unmatched in not just its breadth of knowledge but its willingness to share, collaborate and simply be there for one another. I can confidently say that my career has been not only enriched through my involvement with this organization, but accelerated too; my elevation to CTO within my district was in no small part assisted by my participation in the CTO Mentor Program and the knowledge gained through that experience.

Now looking forward, that’s what the CITE Board envisions for the next 60 years, to strengthen the support mechanisms of the member community, and enrich their professional experiences and hopefully their careers. There are so many exciting ideas and initiatives to be explored in the near term, starting this year, and we can’t wait for you to share in them...after all, you inspired them. You are CITE.
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