

#325 — AVID Open Access for Professional Learning

AVID Open Access

11 min

Paul Beckermann 0:01

Welcome to Tech Talk for Teachers. I'm your host, Paul Beckermann.

Transition Music 0:04

Check it out. Check it out. Check it out. Check it out. What's in the toolkit? What is in the toolkit? So, what's in the toolkit? Check it out.

Paul Beckermann 0:16

The topic of today's episode is AVID Open Access for Professional Learning.

As a member of the district level Ed Services and Digital Learning Teams, I was often tasked with developing professional learning for teachers, admin, and support staff. When doing this, it was always important to begin with a need. What did staff need? Nobody has extra time to waste on professional learning that is forced in or just developed to fill a time slot. That's aggravating. We're all too busy for that.

Equally frustrating is when PD is not learner-centered and differentiated. For that reason, my team and I always started with the need to find a learning outcome targeted to meet that need, and then work to design differentiated and flexible learning opportunities to allow staff to meet those outcomes.

To do this, we often leaned on blended learning strategies like station rotation, playlists, and flipped learning experiences. In each of these, we strive to offer voice and choice opportunities for collaboration and hands-on time to generate authentic and actionable takeaways.

If you're looking to engage in or design these types of professional learning experiences, I recommend looking at the resources we have available at AVID Open Access and considering if these resources might help you meet your professional learning goals. In today's episode, I'm going to do two things. First, I'm going to share a quick overview of the resources you can find at AVID Open Access, which I'll sometimes refer to as AOA. And second, I'll offer some ideas of how you might structure flexible and targeted PD using these resources. So first, let's look at what you can find at AOA.

Transition Music 2:00

Here's the, here's the, here's the tool for today. Here's the tool for today.

Paul Beckermann 2:06

Number one, podcasts. Since you're listening to this podcast right now, let's start with that. On our website, you'll find a main menu item at the top labeled podcasts that will take you to our

archive of episodes. Today is Episode Number 325, so you'll find 325 unique episodes broken down into two separate podcasts. Both of those podcasts are released each week. One of them is Tech Talk for Teachers, and that focuses on ed-tech related topics. That's this podcast. And then the longer form podcast called Unpacking Education, where we feature great educational guests that help us explore relevant education topics that you want to hear about. We've been really fortunate to have a wide variety of both national thought leaders and local teachers who are experts in the classroom join us on the show. In addition to classroom teachers, school administrators, and support staff, we've been joined by guests such as Dr. Caitlin Tucker, Elena Aguilar, Dr. Katie Novak, George Couros, Dr. John Spencer, Thomas Murray, Carl Hooker, Jimmy Casas. We've had representatives from Khan Academy, Common Sense Media, and the National Department of Education, as well as industry leaders like Adeel Khan from Magic School and others. Honestly, these conversations have been some of the best PD that I've had personally, and I think you'll find them beneficial, as well.

The second major type of resource you'll find on AVID Open Access is the catalog of searchable articles. These articles address education topics that are important to both classroom teachers and school leaders. They're broken down into six areas: Teaching in a Tech Empowered Classroom, Strategies to Empower Students, Community and Connectedness, Digital Tools and Templates, Digital Citizenship and Media Literacy, and Digital Study and Life Skills. Within these sections, you'll find articles and actionable teaching strategies, tips for both digital and offline tools that you can use, and even templates and graphic organizers that you can grab for free and use right away in your lessons. While you can definitely search the site for topics that are important to you, you can also find these articles, either under the six section categories or by browsing our topic collections, where we have related articles and resources conveniently grouped together for quick access.

Number three, Grab-and-Go Lessons. In this section of the website, you'll find ready-to-use lessons broken down into five categories: Critical Reading, Coding and Robotics, Cardboard Engineering, Exploration, and Invention. Many of these lessons have been designed in collaboration with some of our education partners, such as YES (Youth Engineering Solutions), Microsoft Hacking STEM, EiE (Engineering and Elementary), Carolina, AIAA, and a bunch more. The lessons include learning objectives, materials, and three lesson sections that include Explore, Reflect, and Extend Beyond activities.

Number four, education partners. In this section, you can explore resources and opportunities provided in collaboration with our education partners, code.org and Microsoft Philanthropies. These resources primarily focus on the areas of STEM and computer science.

And number five, journeys. This last resource is a tool that we've created and built into the AOA website. By creating a free account, you can log in, bookmark your favorite AOA resources, and then save them into shareable playlists, which we call "Journeys." You can create these playlists around as many topics as you'd like. Then you can give a shareable link to that journey to your colleagues, or use it yourself. When you click on the link, you'll be guided, resource by resource, through the items on the list that you've created. It's a great way to curate customized learning

pathways. You access Journeys by clicking the little person icon at the top right corner of the AOA website. Okay, now that I've outlined some of the key resources you'll find on the AOA site, let me share some ways that you can use these resources to develop quality professional learning.

Transition Music 6:14

How do I use it? Integration inspiration. Integration ideas.

Paul Beckermann 6:20

Number one, Journey. I'm going to start where I left off the last section with journeys. I highly recommend taking advantage of the Journeys feature to both bookmark the resources that are most meaningful to you and also to group them into journeys or playlists of related content. You can create as many different journeys as you'd like, and share them with whomever you'd like. They don't even need to have an account to access them. For example, if you are interested in learning more about blended learning, you could bookmark the articles that we have about the different blended learning models, as well as the podcast episodes we have from blended learning experts like Dr. Catlin Tucker. The articles can provide the foundation, and then the podcast conversations offer virtual access to a national thought leader with incredible insights. As I mentioned earlier, journeys are a great way to build customized learning pathways. They can also help you keep track of your favorite AOA resources and have them available for quick access whenever you need them.

Number two, playlists. Playlists are one of my favorite blended learning strategies. If you're not familiar with these, a playlist is a list of resources that a learner can work through. Ideally, they're differentiated and allow for choice. The Journeys feature in AOA works great for this, since you can build a playlist and then share that link with others. Or, rather than building the playlist yourself, you can have your learner set up an account and build their own playlists on topics that either you specify or that they identify as priorities. Having learners create their own playlists gives them increased voice and choice and ownership in the process.

Number three, station rotation. You could set up a series of stations using AOA content. Teachers would rotate through the stations during a staff learning experience. If you go this route, you could once again provide Journey links for each station, or you could provide access through a staff learning management system or LMS, or maybe a website. Personally, I've also used QR codes and shortened URLs at stations. Most times I would put the codes on a sheet of paper that I left at the table, and then teachers use that to access the resources. If you have an LMS for teachers, that works really great as a home base for links and resources, too. As you design stations, I encourage you to have a variety of learning experiences. It's best if there's a mix of both online and offline activities, as well as a mix of individual and collaborative experiences. Since you've brought your staff together in the same physical space, it would really be a lost opportunity if they don't have a chance to share and collaborate together.

Number four, professional learning communities or PLCs. Again, you could use the Journey feature to curate related and relevant resources to share with your PLC groups. Or you could

have the PLCs develop their own journeys. And certainly, you can go beyond the resources on AOA. And if you do this, you could post links in your LMS or staff portal, mixing in the journey links, links to specific AOA content, and links to other documents, websites, and resources that you find valuable. PLC teams can then work through these resources with actionable outcomes.

Number five, self-paced courses. Virtual PD can be offered through a learning management system. Using an LMS, you can design a sequence of links, resources, and learning activities for teachers to work through. Ideally, these experiences allow for choice and interaction with other educators in some form. The AOA resources are easily linkable, and you can mix in articles and podcasts as desired. In my previous district, we used this approach to offer on-demand PD opportunities for staff, where they could log in and take a course whenever they had time.

Number six, individual growth plans. The AOA resources work really well for teachers to develop their own individual growth plan, as well. Teachers could create Journeys and then share those links as needed with whomever is facilitating the growth plan process. I've seen some districts offer Lane Change credit or stipends for this type of professional learning experience. You might even build this type of experience into an EdCamp atmosphere. There are many more ways than these that you could structure professional learning, but hopefully these get you thinking about how you might utilize AVID Open Access resources in ways that can empower you and your staff.

To learn more about today's topic and explore other free resources, visit AvidOpenAccess.org. And, of course, be sure to join Rena, Winston, and me every Wednesday for our full-length podcast, Unpacking Education, where we're joined by exceptional guests and explore education topics that are important to you. Thanks for listening. Take care, and thanks for all you do. You make a difference.

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>