**Microsoft SharePoint: A Virtual Learning Experience**

In order to stay on the cutting edge of technology in education, schools are adopting 21st Century Education Models. One of the critical components of these models is the implementation of an effective Virtual Learning Environment. Often leadership in Educational Institutions requires their faculty members to utilize a VLE in their day to day instruction. As a result, in several schools teachers are choosing which platform they wish to use to fulfill this VLE requirement. In some cases, students may have classes running on three or sometimes four different VLE platforms. This is counterproductive to the end goal of education which is to increase learning. In order to successfully implement a Virtual Learning Environment it is critical that schools agree on a uniform platform.

There are several different tools that can be utilized as a VLE. Blackboard was one of the first solutions utilized by colleges and universities. However many schools are moving away from this platform due to its extremely high price tag. Many schools are adopting other free online solutions such as Ning and Moodle. However the lack of an infrastructure behind these tools makes processes such as support a very difficult task. Furthermore their lack of permission control can lead to abuse of the environment, especially at the high school level.

With Microsoft’s initiative to make Office 365’s A2 plan free for Education Institutions, Microsoft SharePoint is quickly gaining popularity among schools at the K-12 and College and University level. SharePoint is more than just a way for teachers and students to share information virtually. SharePoint serves as a portal between teachers, administrators, and parents. Parents can stay up to date with projects, homework assignments, grades, attendance records etc… Teachers can truly take a team teaching approach by sharing lesson plans, lecture notes, assessments and more with other teachers in their school. SharePoint can also make it easy for all staff members to collaborate and contribute to school newsletters. Furthermore, SharePoint can be utilized for athletic team and extracurricular sites. Today’s Virtual Learning Environment is so much more than a way for students and teachers to share information on a digital platform. By adopting a uniform Virtual Learning Experience like SharePoint, all the members of the school community can easily and effectively communicate and collaborate.