

Fall 2020

# LINK

FOR COUNSELORS

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*Helping counselors  
prepare students for  
life after high school.*

**Developing a Senior  
Year Packet for  
Your Students**

**The Educator's Upgrade  
Notification: It's Time**

**Transitions to College:  
How You Can Help**

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Like airboats skimming over the Louisiana swamps, a small school lifted students from the malaise of sequestering and helped them navigate uncharted territory.

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# The Educators Upgrade Notification: It's Time

By Angela Cleveland & Stephen Sharp

With phones, tablets, and computers, we are all in a constant cycle of upgrades. Still, in most of our regular day-to-day practice, many educators continue to use the same practices. The comfort of 'tried but true' often gives way to stagnation or even obsolescence.

It is time for educators to upgrade! Like a favorite app or device, we can upgrade our daily practice with only a few modifications. We can improve time efficiency, productivity, and add additional style and elegance - promoting engagement, just by plugging in with the right tools.

Here are 4 fantastic favorite tech tools we recommend to start your upgrade:

## Email Signature:

**Old way:** A text-heavy, link-loaded list of information that often has more text than the actual email message

**Upgrade:** Make your email signature informative and simple.

Consider upgrading your email signature to include your district's social media accounts, website, and include a list of resources. WiseStamp is an email signature generator. It takes seconds to sign up for an account, and educators can include links and icons to direct families and students to resources for more information. Email signatures with links can get bulky and confusing.

Using WiseStamp cuts through the clutter and uses icons and simple fill-in-the-blanks to create a customized and eye-catching signature.

## Gather Takeaways from Lesson or Meeting:

**Old way:** Ask everyone to write down thoughts on a piece of paper or share with a neighbor, knowing that you will not get to hear everyone's response.

**Upgrade:** Create interactive presentations to gather feedback.

Crowdsource responses in a poll, scale, word cloud, or free response! Mentimeter is free to use and easy to set up! You set up the question and the audience can participate without logging in and from any device. They go to Menti.com and type in the code you give them. For example, if you want to ask school counselors in St. Maarten their favorite foods, you can collect responses as word cloud. At a glance, you can quickly see that Johnny Cakes are a popular local favorite item, and you know that you'll need to try them.





## Share Information with Families about Upcoming Events:

**Old way:** Print paper flyers. Cross fingers and hope students share with families. Post on one social media platform and hope people see it.

**Upgrade:** Synchronize your online tools.

Communicating with families, celebrating students, and promoting professional work can be stressful and time consuming particularly across multiple platforms. There is an additional challenge of finding content to have a thriving social media presence. Through a series of online tools called applets, IFTTT (If This Then That) connects social media platforms, web sites, and web-enabled devices. IFTTT can send high quality customized content right to your email or phone, synchronize social media accounts to perform actions with less effort, or automate some routine communication or data collection. The service is free, only needing an email, Google, or Facebook account. From there, users can select from a range of pre-designed applets or create their own!



## Mobilize Your Meetings:

**Old way:** Waiting to schedule a meeting, only to be delayed days if not weeks contingent of a parents or colleagues schedule and or proximity.

**Upgrade:** Create immersive meetings that can connect people anywhere.

Google Hangouts provides a free and seamless tool for video conferencing. Participants need only have an email address and they can click into a virtual meeting and still be “face to face” with the rest of the team. Even if the member isn’t available by email, the host can still call participants on their phone. Traditional

barriers of distance or transportation swapped out for a more immersive meeting where screen content, links and documents can be shared rapidly using this online platform.

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An upgrade does not need to be dramatic; it can build off of existing routines, practices, and educational experiences. Consider upgrading, guided by your level of comfort, present needs, additional supports, and experience using Puentedura’s (2006) SAMR Model. Through Substitution, Augmentation, Modification and Definition, all educators have a framework to the degree they want to integrate any tech tool as part of their upgrade. Like we did with WiseStamp, simple substitutions of more traditional educational tools of print or paper for e-versions can be a strong initial step into upgrading, promoting style and engagement. Mentimeter is an Augmentation that can take traditional classroom participation and transform it to dynamic formative assessment to guide discussion and feedback. To redesign the social media experience, IFTTT is the best Modification tool, pulling together messages and curating content across platforms. One of the best ways to create a new experience, redefining the traditional meeting, Google Hangouts allows for the free exchange of information without the constraints of space or distance.

No reminder notification pops up in school telling us when it is time to upgrade our work. Try out some of the four tech tools we shared. Let the SAMR model guide your continued integration, as there are many directions and dimensions any of our individual upgrades could go. As with any design or educational process, the true learning happens with action.

This is your notification.

*Angela Cleveland is a seasoned school counselor, is a Google Certified Educator, and she is the 2017 NJ School Counselor of the Year. Stephen Sharp is the 2017 PA School Counselor of the Year. He is an Apple Certified Educator and technology leader. Angela and Stephen are co-authors of the book 50+ Tech Tools for School Counselors: How to Be More Engaging, Efficient, and Effective from Corwin Press. They have presented across the United States and internationally about Technology Integration. They can be reached by e-mail at AngelaCleveland27@gmail.com or Stephensharp.mail@gmail.com. or and on Twitter at @AngCleveland or @StvSharp.*