

# Changing with the Times: Professional Development Resources

*Don't underestimate the resources available on the Internet.*

By Robert J. Safransky, Ph.D.



**T**empora mutantur nos et mutamur in illis! Translated, this Latin phrase means “Times change and we must change with them!” School business officials are no exception. SBOs should learn about and use the latest technology tools to manage the increasingly more complex business affairs of their school districts.

One of those tools is YouTube. Most school business officials probably are familiar with YouTube as a source of entertainment; others may turn to YouTube for its how-to videos about a wide range of topics, from fixing a car window to mastering the latest dance steps. However, YouTube is also a valuable tool for

teaching about and learning about school finance.

Take a look at “The World of School Finance,” a video produced by the Vandalia-Butler City Schools in Ohio at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=g39s-\\_B6p4Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g39s-_B6p4Y). This fun, engaging 15-minute primer about public school finance features simple graphics and the voices of two students to explain:

- The demographics of the school system.
- The school district leadership.
- The various elements of the school district that must be funded, including transportation, facilities, air quality, technology, special education tools and

resources, food services, human resources, risk management, staff, professional development, data management/reporting, cocurricular activities.

- The decrease in funding and its implications for educating students.
- Sources of funding.
- School district achievements.

Vandalia-Butler City Schools produced their own video specifically about their district. School districts might consider doing something similar, if possible, and posting the video to their district website and to YouTube as part of their effort to not only explain school finance, but to garner support for the district.

Another option is to search for videos on the Internet that are related to a topic your district is interested in explaining, learning about, or promoting, and using them for professional development and marketing. Here are some questions to ask yourself as you consider their use:

- Does the video provide the information that your intended audience needs? The Vandalia-Butler City Schools video provides the public with an overview of school finance. If your goal is to provide school district leaders with an overview of the collective bargaining process, you'd search for videos specific to that topic.
- Does the video take the approach you are looking for; for example, is it humorous, serious, animated, live-action?

- Is the information presented factual?
- Is it relatively high quality and understandable?
- How long is the video? Some videos are less than a minute long while others are an hour or more.

Keep these same questions in mind if your district is interested in making its own video.

## Consider These Resources

Here are some videos that I came across on YouTube and across the Internet that may be of interest and value to school business officials as they plan professional development activities for themselves and others or work with the public communications department to promote their district. (The links were live at press time.)

- **School Finance Reform**

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pxb7RWev\\_NQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pxb7RWev_NQ)

This 23-minute video provides an overview of the politics and ideology behind school finance. This



The World of School Finance, Vandalia-Butler City Schools ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=g39s-\\_B6p4Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g39s-_B6p4Y))

link is for part 1 of the three-part series, published online in May

2012. You'll find links to subsequent parts on the YouTube page.

- **Business & Finance Info**

[www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXJ\\_mbbO7OsD4Ao7VxAL2IybFieLMpS8F](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLXJ_mbbO7OsD4Ao7VxAL2IybFieLMpS8F)

ehowfinance videos cover everything from the difference between notes and bonds to claiming damaged goods for insurance to accredited vested hours in a pension plan. All videos run for less than 2 minutes.

- **American Education in 2030: The School Finance of the Future**

[www.hoover.org/research/american-education-2030-school-finance-future](http://www.hoover.org/research/american-education-2030-school-finance-future)

How will the schools of the future be funded? In this 7-minute video from The Hoover Institute, Caroline M. Hoxby, a professor of economics at Stanford University and the director of the Economics of Education Program for the National Bureau of Economic Research, takes a look into the future.



The Hoover Institution ([www.hoover.org/research/american-education-2030-school-finance-future](http://www.hoover.org/research/american-education-2030-school-finance-future))

- **Investopedia**

[www.investopedia.com/video](http://www.investopedia.com/video)

What's a general ledger? What's capital structure? SWOT Analysis? Investopedia offers short (less than 2 minutes) videos that provide the basics.

Many state education departments have videos on their websites that explain school funding and finance specific to their state. It's worth taking a look, even if you are outside those states, to see what challenges your colleagues are facing and how they are addressing those challenges.

## Open Courseware Opportunities

Several universities offer free online courses. Some are video-based; others are a combination of video and paper. Consider taking advantage of their offerings—and today's technology—to advance your own professional development. For example.

- **Finance Theory**

<http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/sloan-school-of-management/15-401-finance-theory-i-fall-2008>

This online course, presented by MIT's Open Courseware program, introduces the core theory of modern financial economics and financial management. Topics include functions of capital markets and investments, asset valuation, common stocks, and capital budgeting.

- **The Foundation Series**

<http://blog.coursera.org/post/60889088289/the-wharton-foundation-series>

The Wharton Foundation Series, offered by The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania through the Coursera online platform, offers An Introduction to Financial Accounting, An Introduction to Operations Management, An Introduction to Marketing, and An Introduction to Corporate Finance.

## Consider Your Sources

Certainly check out the resources available on ASBO International's website ([asbointl.org](http://asbointl.org)). Education on Demand offers videos of past Annual Meeting & Expo sessions that you can share with your staff, as well as access to publications, resources, and ASBO's Global School Business Network.

As you turn to the Internet for resources and information, be a conscientious content curator. Not everything you find is true, good quality, or applicable to your district. View everything with a critical eye.

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