Let’s Get It Done Together:

Engaging and Supportive Professional Development for Lee County K-5 Schools

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**Setting/Context**

I will be completing my research for my capstone within Lee County School System, specifically faculty and staff of Lee County Primary School (LCPS), Kinchafoonee Primary School (KPS), Lee County Elementary School (LCES), and Twin Oaks Elementary School (TOES) in conjunction and cooperation with Lee County Board of Education (LCBOE). Permission has been obtained from the Lee County superintendent, Dr. Larry Walters, and from the instructional coordinators at each school. Lee County School System is located in Leesburg, GA and there is a total student population of about 2,800 students in the four schools listed above. Though the system currently holds a Bring-Your-Own-Technology (BYOT) policy, this policy is challenging for younger students, as parents do not like their young children to bring expensive devices to school. Our system will be attempting to overcome this challenge with the purchase of more technology including student computers and tablets.

**Capstone Problem and Rationale**

Due to the large amount of money being spent on new technology that will be used by both teachers and students, the Lee County School Board felt that the faculty and staff could use some guidance and support for innovative ways to use this technology. In order to provide this, two instructional technology specialists were hired in June, one for schools that serve kindergarten through fifth grade students (my position) and one for schools that serve sixth through twelfth grade students. One key responsibility for these positions is to lead professional development for teachers in the implementation of technology into their lessons. One main goal for professional development this coming school year is to promote the four C’s (Collaboration, Creation, Critical Thinking, and Communication) with the use of these new technologies. Much of what has been seen in the past few years is primarily teacher use and teacher-directed use of technology, rather than student-directed use. It is essential for students to begin to use the technology in transformational ways to promote these 21st century skills but teachers need guidance on how to do so.

Up until recently, generally the professional development teachers received in Lee County has been “listen and lecture,” where the faculty sits through a presentation full of information with little interaction between the presenter and the faculty. There has been a push for more interactive professional development in which faculty have a more active role in their learning. When teachers have been surveyed, it has been found that teachers prefer to have professional development that takes the following into account: a “focus on content knowledge, opportunities for active learning, and coherence with other learning opportunities” (Beijaard, 2005). It is also necessary for teachers to have a commitment to lifelong learning and to promote their own learning through self-evaluation, reflection, and troubleshooting their own methodologies (Beijaard, 2005).

In professional development promoting technology integration, this is especially needed. When teachers learn how to develop technology-infused lessons to promote student learning with the instruction and support of coaches and a professional learning community, they will be much more effective at effectively integrating technology on a consistent basis (Beglau, et al., 2011, Welch, 2014). When planning technology professional development, facilitators must first aspire to make the learning relevant to what teachers are doing in the classroom (Welch, 2014). It is much the same as any other professional development, as we saw above: it must be important and useful for them to use in their classrooms. Once teachers see the need for the tool they are going to use, teachers must also have assurance that they will be supported when trying new things in their classroom. It works best when teachers have a strong support system with other educators with whom they can trust and with whom they can collaborate when they have issues (Beglau, et al., 2011, Knight, 2007, Welch, 2014). Professional development must also be personalized. This can be achieved by tapping into technology. Online learning allows teachers to not only guide their own professional development with the help of their professional learning community but can also allow teachers have a more powerful hand in the creation and direction of school-wide professional development (Olofsson, A.D., & Lindberg, J., 2010).

In order to drive transformational change in the way teachers and students are using technology in the classrooms in Lee County, it is necessary to provide professional development that is no longer the “sit-and-get” model that has been used for so long. Teachers need professional development that they see is relevant; instructional and technological support from other teachers, media specialists, and technology coaches; a way to grow professionally at their own pace; and a voice in what they are learning. When developing professional learning, coaches must guide teachers towards the creation of lessons that promote student transformational uses of technology.

**Objectives**

* Evaluate teacher needs and wants for professional development
* Host a “playground” development session in which faculty works with the technology and various web tools and apps in an informal setting
* Introduce new applicable tools and apps at bi-monthly development sessions
* Provide online support website with tutorial videos for various technology along with printable step-by-step instructions and examples
* Work with teacher groups (grade level and subject groups) on creating and evaluating technology-infused lessons at least once per grading period
* Provide face-to-face support for individual teachers and groups as requested (Knight, 2007)
* Evaluate the overall effectiveness of the development strategies including the teachers’ application of strategies learned

Deliverables

* Needs assessment data
* Link to resource website
* Evaluation data

**PSC Standards**

**1. Visionary Leadership**

Candidates demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to inspire and lead the development and implementation of a shared vision for the effective use of technology to promote excellence and support transformational change throughout the organization.

**1.4 Diffusion of Innovations & Change**

Candidates research, recommend, and implement strategies for initiating and sustaining technology innovations and for managing the change process in schools. (ISTE 1d)

**2. Teaching, Learning, & Assessment**Candidates demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to effectively integrate technology into their own teaching practice and to collaboratively plan with and assist other educators in utilizing technology to improve teaching, learning, and assessment.

**2.1 Content Standards & Student Technology Standards**Candidates model and facilitate the design and implementation of technology-enhanced learning experiences aligned with student content standards and student technology standards. (ISTE 2a)

**2.2 Research-Based Learner-Centered Strategies**  
Candidates model and facilitate the use of research-based, learner-centered strategies addressing the diversity of all students. (ISTE 2b)

**2.3 Authentic Learning**  
Candidates model and facilitate the use of digital tools and resources to engage students in authentic learning experiences. (ISTE 2c)

**2.4  Higher Order Thinking Skills**  
Candidates model and facilitate the effective use of digital tools and resources to support and enhance higher order thinking skills (e.g., analyze, evaluate, and create); processes (e.g., problem-solving, decision-making); and mental habits of mind (e.g., critical thinking, creative thinking, metacognition, self-regulation, and reflection). (ISTE 2d)

**2.5 Differentiation**  
Candidates model and facilitate the design and implementation of technology-enhanced learning experiences making appropriate use of differentiation, including adjusting content, process, product, and learning environment based upon an analysis of learner characteristics, including readiness levels, interests, and personal goals. (ISTE 2e)

**2.6 Instructional Design**  
Candidates model and facilitate the effective use of research-based best practices in instructional design when designing and developing digital tools, resources, and technology-enhanced learning experiences. (ISTE 2f)

**2.7 Assessment**

Candidates model and facilitate the effective use of diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments to measure student learning and technology literacy, including the use of digital assessment tools and resources. (ISTE 2g)

**3. Digital Learning Environments**  
Candidates demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to create, support, and manage effective digital learning environments.

**3.2 Managing Digital Tools and Resources**

Candidates effectively manage digital tools and resources within the context of student learning experiences. (ISTE 3b)

**3.6 Selecting and Evaluating Digital Tools & Resources**

Candidates collaborate with teachers and administrators to select and evaluate digital tools and resources for accuracy, suitability, and compatibility with the school technology infrastructure. (ISTE 3f)

**3.7 Communication & Collaboration**

Candidates utilize digital communication and collaboration tools to communicate locally and globally with students, parents, peers, and the larger community. (ISTE 3g)

**5. Professional Learning & Program Evaluation**  
Candidates demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to conduct needs assessments, develop technology-based professional learning programs, and design and implement regular and rigorous program evaluations to assess effectiveness and impact on student learning.

**5.1 Needs Assessment**

Candidates conduct needs assessments to determine school-wide, faculty, grade-level, and subject area strengths and weaknesses to inform the content and delivery of technology-based professional learning programs. (ISTE 4a) **5.2 Professional Learning**

Candidates develop and implement technology-based professional learning that aligns to state and national professional learning standards, integrates technology to support face-to-face and online components, models principles of adult learning, and promotes best practices in teaching, learning, and assessment. (ISTE 4b)

**5.3 Program Evaluation**

Candidates design and implement program evaluations to determine the overall effectiveness of professional learning on deepening teacher content knowledge, improving teacher pedagogical skills and/or increasing student learning. (ISTE 4c)

**Project Description**

A. Narrative

As a part of my position, I will be expected to guide professional development regarding technology implementation in four schools: LCPS, KPS, LCES, and TOES. I plan to begin by issuing a survey to faculty and staff at each school to evaluate their skill levels, available technology, and needs and wants from professional development (Welch, 2014). I plan to lead four face-to-face professional development sessions at each school this year with the entire staff (one scheduled every other month). At the first session, I will begin by hosting a “Digital Playground” session with the assistance of the media specialists at each school and the technology team at each school. I learned by experience at ISTE 2014 that being able to experience technology in a no-pressure setting is very valuable. In addition, before teachers can implement a tool effectively, they must have used it themselves. For each tool available at the playground, links to video and printable tutorials will be made available on the school technology assistance page so teachers will be able to access them on their own time after the session (Welch, 2014). Teachers will be encouraged to try to implement at least one tool they have tried into a lesson before the next session (scheduled two months from the first). Between the sessions, I will provide support on an individual basis to those who need individual help, and teachers will also be encouraged to seek the technology leadership team members and the media specialist for assistance and support (Knight, 2007, Welch, 2014).

At the second development session, which will also be full-staff, we will begin by holding a jigsaw share session, in which teachers will be grouped with teachers of other subjects or grade levels to share what app or tool they have tried in their classroom. After this share time, the sessions will be largely based on the needs assessment done at the beginning of the year. My goal is to work with the teachers on evaluating how the four C’s are, or likely are not, being used in the classroom and how technology could be used to achieve this. I hope to do this as a station rotation in which teachers will analyze and evaluate various examples to find evidence of the skills.

At the third session, which will be small group sessions throughout the day, teacher groups will be asked to work collaboratively to develop a technology-infused lesson that promotes at least one of the four C’s. Teachers will be asked to implement the lesson with the support of the media specialist and myself, to access the tutorials made available to them, and to seek help from online professional learning communities (Facebook, Twitter, Edmodo) (Welch, 2014). They will be asked to share what they have done in the last session of the year. At the end of the year, teachers will be asked to evaluate the professional development and support they have received throughout the year through a short survey. In addition, throughout the year, I will be conducting classroom observations (both drop-in and scheduled), which will help to determine the effectiveness of strategies used by the teachers as well as during the professional development.

B. Timeline

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| **Month** | **Goal** |
| September | -Issue skills and needs assessment to faculty  -Development of teacher technology assistance website (videos and printable tutorials) |
| October/November | -Digital Playground professional development  -Provide support as needed |
| December | -Jigsaw Share, What Do Collaboration, Critical Thinking, Creation, and Communication Look Like in the Classroom? Professional Development Session |
| February/March | -Technology Lesson Creation (will provide online and face-to-face support during creation and implementation) |
| May | -Highlight Session (teachers will share with others how implementation went)  -Issue follow up survey |
| Ongoing | -Provide face-to-face support as requested  -Update teacher technology assistance website with new tools and tutorials  -Observations |

C. Resources

* Computer
* Internet Access
* Class set of iPads (made available for playground session by media specialist)
* Screencasting software
* Headphone/Microphone Headset
* Digital Camera
* Presentation Software
* Google account (for Google Forms)
* YouTube account
* Weebly account

All resources listed above are owned and made available by Lee County School System or are personally owned.

**Evaluation Plan**

A. Narrative

To evaluate whether the objectives of this capstone have been met, I will issue an end-of-year survey to teachers, media specialists, and administrators at each school served. Google Forms will be used both at the beginning of the year for the needs assessment and for the end of year survey. In addition, I will be conducting drop-in and scheduled observations in the classrooms to see how effective the professional development has been.

B. Sample Survey Questions:

What level of comfort did you have using technology at the beginning of this school year?

How often did you use technology in your instruction at the beginning of this school year?

How often did students use technology in your instruction at the beginning of this school year?

What level of comfort do you have using technology now?

How often did you use technology in your instruction now?

How often did students use technology in your instruction now?

How helpful do you feel the professional development has been in implementing technology use in your classroom? (Using a Likert scale)

What aspects of the professional development helped you implement the technology for engaging learners?

How helpful do you feel the assistance of the instructional technology specialist has been in the implementation of technology in your classroom?

How often do you use the online resources when developing lessons for your classroom?

Describe how you are using the online resources in your classroom.

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