Educational Technology Professional Development for Educators

Capstone Report B

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**Description of the Capstone Experience**

 In general, the capstone proposal and experience had great potential, at the beginning. It did not go as planned only due to the changes that happened within the school structure. The school’s administration was very open for working with the teachers with this professional development since the school was already at scrutiny with being on the Opportunity Schools List. The plan was to provide professional development tutorials about technology for the school district. It involved with working with one of the instructional coaches who has great expertise in modeling and facilitating training and helping teachers on a volunteer basis spend some time better familiarizing themselves with all of the various technological tools that the school district had to offer.

**Barriers and Obstacles**

There were so many things scheduled for the school to participate in so even though there was approval to do the professional developments, they did not go off exactly as planned. So one of the obstacles that had to be reevaluated was the demands of the Turnaround School program. It involved a lot of time devoted to those changes and those ended up becoming a priority.

There first quarter of professional developments for the staff did happen but did not happen as efficiently as planned. There was planning into what would be taught but there had to be some deviations from the type and length of presentations. So for the October to November timeframe where there would be a website to share information, it was changed to handouts and information regarding certain sites. For example, Mastery Connect was introduced to the school district so the October November time was spent assisting teachers who were still struggling with using Mastery Connect. This was an assessment program that was purchased to help alleviate some of the paperwork that went into assigning assessments throughout the school year. It also allowed teachers within the district to share assessments in the community. This program was brought to the teachers during preplanning and there were still issues with teachers implementing this program. So instead of trying to throw another program at teachers the professional development time was used to assist teachers with the program that the district wanted the schools to use.

 As a coach, it is necessary to meet the teachers at what they are currently working on so it does not seem like the teachers are being thrown a bunch of technology all at once and end up using none of it. Changes were made to the presentation and it became more of a “playdate” of how to better use the technology that the district had paid for and wanted teachers to use. It became necessary to rethink how to best use professional development with technology.

 The other barrier that was to be overcome regarding the project was for it to work into the upcoming school year. Unfortunately, with the school dropping enrollment and changing of administration the experience was unable to be completed as hoped to come full circle during the school year. Including the leaders of the professional developments and administration who approved them, a majority of the staff had moved on to other schools so that meant there would be no continuation of those professional developments or a way to see if what was learned was being used and what the new needs were.

**Discussion**

 One of the first things learned regarding technology facilitation and leadership was to enter with the mindset of helping first with the technology that is already there. This year, a lot of schools are adding touch screen boards to replace the Prometheans. There should be needs assessments (PSC 5.2/ISTE 4b) created throughout the school at the beginning to determine what would be the best professional development to be provided. From there, the technology coach needs to determine what tools and resources should be best used to teach the content with technology and to show that the use of technology is not just for technology’s sake, it is for teaching, learning, and assessing student (and teacher) growth throughout the school year.

 The purpose was to develop and implement technology-based professional learning that aligns to the state and national professional learning standards as stated by the Professional Learning in Standard 5. The coach needs to do the needs assessment to determine the best professional learning, which is what was supposed to happen. This gives the faculty a chance to discuss where the strengths and weaknesses lie and what professional development would be the best ones to do for the school faculty. The coach needs to be skilled at determining the best way to present the technology so that it is just as engaging as teaching a lesson to the students and very informative where the faculty walks away knowing more about the technology presented.

 The project also requires that the coach design and implement program evaluation to asses if the professional learning was helping to increase teacher content knowledge in the technology. This required that the coach be prepared to take in varying degrees of compliments of complaints. The overall knowledge that there may be people who did not feel that this was a good professional learning will hopefully stand up and say I want another look This is the calm disposition that the coach needs to have in order to an effective coach. The coach will then assess how the professional learning went and how to continue with the rest of the professional learning sessions that will be important to improving the teachers’ skills.

**Reflection**

 The best recommendation to anyone who wants to go into working with professional development is to know that it may not be perfect. The best advice is to be willing to adjust and adapt to the schools you are working with. Every school will be different, so will the need and it is up to the technology coach to be there for the school’s needs. “Implementation is considered the key step between teacher PD and student learning” (Claesgens, Rubino-Hare, Bloom, Fredrickson, Henderson-Dahms, Menasco, & Sample, p. 11). It does not stop at just showing them how it works, but the coach needs to show how to successfully implement it towards student learning. When the teacher grows in confidence of doing it, they want to implement it and then move on to the next level of how they can grow.

 Technology coach is not perfect, it is not easy. It is working harder than you have worked before. You will be looked to as the go to person for everything technology from when you walk into the building until after you leave. As coaches, you need to be prepared professionally to handle all types of technology concerns and be open to feedback to help improve your career as a leader. There is more to technology than just teaching it. Great technology leaders learn from the data at the schools and their needs to determine the best instructional approach to help improve that school. This job does not take you out of any classroom, it puts you front and center in all of them and technology coaches need to train and be prepared for what is required of them in this profession.

**References**

Claesgens, J., Rubino-Hare, L., Bloom, N., Fredrickson, K., Henderson-Dahms, C., Menasco,

J., & Sample, J. (2013). Professional Development Integrating Technology: Does Delivery Format Matter?. *Science Educator*, *22*(1), 10-18.