THE CHALLENGES OF ONLINE LEARNING AND DIGITAL BASED CLASSES

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SECTION ONE: PROJECT INTRODUCTION

Topic Selection

One area of concern I have for student and teacher achievement is the continued implementation of technology and software-based learning. The need for training and professional development, both for students and staff, impacts the learning experience for all those involved. These tools are necessary, especially as educators and school leaders have had to implement them into day-to-day classes and provide virtual learning experiences. Educators learned just how vital technology is now when the COVID-19 pandemic required a transition for all forms of education with haste and troubleshooting. When school campuses were shut down, or families feared face -to- face instruction due to the spread of the virus, the circumstances forced problem solving and innovation daily.

However, digital literacy continues to be an issue, whether it be veteran teachers who have fallen behind on innovations, lack of resources and training by school or district leaders, or when students and their families are unable to access computers or digital platforms. If school leaders continue to adopt and implement new software, technology, and multimedia related material into the day-to-day workload of teachers or student learning, valuable time training and showcasing can prevent a lot of misunderstanding, headache, and loss of instructional gain.

For some time, college and universities have already been implementing digital classrooms and online learning into their day-to-day instruction. While colleges may have the expectation that students and professors stay up to date and have the necessary, resources, as well as having additional avenues of funding, the challenges still exist when moving from a traditional classroom setting to a digital or online one. Professor Lewis, a Psychology Professor

at Glendale Community College in Arizona, shared her own data with the APA Leadership Conference (2014) on what sort of divide can exist between the two teaching fashions.

> When she examined data from her own program, where most classes are face-to-face, she found that online students in an introductory psychology class were more likely to drop out and did not perform as well as face-to-face students. While more than 90 percent of face-to-face students completed the class and 76 percent earned a C or better, just 74 percent of the online students finished and only 65 percent earned at least a C. (p. 38).

Another concern I have will be the consequences of having less human interaction during educational experiences. Students and teachers can still communicate via webcam and microphone, but it creates a buffer or delay that normal face-to-face instruction does not. Sentences and messages can be misinterpreted. Some students may have reading and writing deficiencies such as comprehension, dyslexia, or just need additional tutoring and growth. Digital calendars, classroom platforms, and messaging can be foreign to some and take time to become comfortable with.

Teachers and students are not fully prepared for a digital communication etiquette, as current hybrid classroom circumstances have shown issues with interaction, participation, and collaboration shortcomings. And implements a leader, I will never find a one-to-one system of digital learning that replaces the face-to-face nature, but there are opportunities to get close and have academic success.

The third area of concern I have for digital learning methods is the technical issues and shortcomings. Depending on the economic situation, many students and families may not have access to high-speed internet or digital devices in their home. There is a real concern for equity

in the school environment if a student's opportunity to learn and perform depends entirely on their ability to obtain the necessary tools. My school district has had many growing pains, whether providing enough laptops and hotspots to students or overcoming their network issues. As a school leader, I want to ensure that all teachers are comfortable enough to implement their classrooms into a digital format that is accessible and a presentation that students will be able to access and understand quickly.

Technology usage has shown significant benefit not only for learning purposes but also for future careers. Students entering college and the professional workforce need to perform various tasks and have a general sense of understanding of how technology and software work. By ensuring teachers are trained, course materials are efficiently implemented into a digital learning environment, and students have the tools and knowledge necessary to work in this new age environment, other school leaders, teachers, and I can ensure our community is receiving trained and skilled adults for further education or careers.

Data Selection

At the school under study, classrooms and curriculum have begun to adapt to digital platforms. There have been a series of growing pains, such as becoming a true one-to-one school. Each student and teacher have been given a laptop, internet access, and the necessary software to replace textbooks and printed materials. However, despite the best intentions, this has led to a decline in academic success.

One teacher spoke with me on the impact laptops replacing textbooks have had in their English class, stating, "Students tend to have less of voice when writing any sort of response or reflection in their essays. Before, writing would require you to think and plan out your paper.

Now, with the backspace button and being able to copy and paste from google, the amount of effort and quality work has continuously decreased" (citation withheld to protect anonymity). The teacher went on to also share that it is estimated that the typical gains students would make in high school could be hindered and lead to shorter improvements in reading and writing levels reflective of their grade level.

Longterm effects of mandatory transition without preparation and practice were addressed by many, including the educational organization NWEA. Authors Megan Kuhfeld and Beth Tarasawa drew allusions to summer breaks and how student retention was impacted. They estimated both math and English learning would drop significantly more than it would in a typical summer holiday, opening the door for concern in the long term for student success (2020). As school leaders and teachers transitioned to online learning for their students, they now not only have to deal with adapting technology and resources to teach the material but also making up lost ground on academic success.

The faculty and staff at the school under study have unfortunately shared just as much decline in academic success, thanks in part to the current COVID-19 circumstances. Now, not only are students more dependent on using digital tools to complete work and study, but they are also now required to always communicate with them. A science teacher at the school under study shared the unforeseen circumstances and his student participation data. "I estimate that on a normal school day, I would have anywhere from 90-100% attendance across my six classes, with at least 75-80% true participation and interaction with labs and experiments. With the hybrid learning model, I'm fortunate to have 50% of all my online students show any sign of interaction or participation in our virtual class settings" (citation withheld to protect anonymity).

Purpose

Whether the classroom exists in a physical form or the digital realm, a school leader is still responsible for ensuring student achievement and success. As recent times have proven, many things will need to be adapted or modified. The traditional classroom may not exist for some time or ever again. A school leader "Maintains a safe, respectful and inclusive student-centered learning environment that is focused on equitable opportunities for learning and building a foundation for a fulfilling life in a democratic society and global economy" (Florida Department of Education, 2011). Parents and community members need reassurance and a guarantee that school leaders and teachers will continue to work together and ensure a student's future.

A transition to entirely depending on technology and software worries many. Can students effectively learn by looking at a screen? How are comprehension skills, writing skills, and interaction skills impacted if we move away from the pen and paper approach? As a school leader, these conversations need to occur not only amongst other leaders and teachers but also with the parents and community. What are the pros and cons? How can we overcome these issues?

Teachers and school leaders will have a responsibility and a guarantee to maintain when utilizing technology more commonly. Communication needs to exist just as often as it does throughout a typical school day. A student needs to reach an educator just as easily for support and understand their digital message just as well as they would face-to-face. Students and staff should be introduced and taught how to maintain a new day to day routine of checking assignments, responding promptly, and communicating effectively without a loss of understanding, time, or engagement (Bork & Rucks-Ahidiana, 2013). Educational author Michael Fullan (2018) says of change and decisions, "When the decision-making skills of

individuals and group decision making feed on each other, professional judgment in the school as a whole becomes more powerful" (p. 80). School leaders, staff, and parents need to share communication of the opportunities available with the digital platforms, how everyone will benefit, and the next steps to learn and become more successful.

The Florida Principal Standards state, a leader is to "...maintain a school climate that supports student engagement in learning." (Florida DOE, 2011). As a leader, I want to help overcome the struggles and worries that educators, students, and their families face when it comes to innovation and adaptation. These new tools and resources take some time to learn and become comfortable with. However, with full support by myself, my administration colleagues, and providing the time and resources to learn and implement, education can exist in both a traditional sense, and a digital venue. Students and families with a variety of circumstances or troubles that would normally impact the academic success of the student could become more accessible and supportive when more opportunities for learning exist. The first step is ensuring our teachers and staff are comfortable and understand the process, so that is my first step as a leader.

Exploratory Questions

The guiding exploratory questions that I will explore in this project include the following. What are the shortcomings of teaching students on digital platforms or online? What sort of obstacles or roadblocks get in the way of day-to-day consistency and success with software and technology? How can I make sure my teachers and staff are competent and comfortable enough to transition their traditional lessons to a digital platform? How can students and their families be prepared for digital learning as a whole?

Conclusion

Digital classrooms are the future and will continue to be the way education goes from here on it. The conveniences and innovation are incredibly valuable, especially when students and teachers must work remotely. Suppose teachers, students, and school leaders can learn to become successful and knowledgeable with technology and software. Work can then go towards collaboration and innovation, so the human disconnect is not as prevalent. Schools and the many programs that exist on campuses have an opportunity to exist anywhere now, for good and bad.

SECTION TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Over the past century, technology has grown at an exponential rate and left quite the influence on all aspects of society. Just as it has become a part of day-to-day life, business operations, and even entertainment and leisure, it is only appropriate that technology would also reach the realm of education and all those involved. Technology has opened many doors of opportunity, such as new digital focused courses and careers, high speed internet allowing instant data and research collection, and allowing communication and resource sharing between educators and school leaders. There also come side effects to this, such as the actions needed to properly implement these tools, how to avoid abuse or misuse of these tools, and even how to reach those that have trouble with technology in various aspects.

In this section, I am going to be sharing evidence from my literature review to explain how digital classrooms and online learning operate, the training and resources needed, shortcomings and conflicts that may arise with technology and interaction, and how proper execution can benefit a variety of classrooms and students in various circumstances.

The Difficulty of Digital Learning

Despite having advantages of instant access, data monitoring, and digital tools, many teachers have found that students are just naturally more successful when having a traditional face to face class. Online options have existed for years, especially at the collegiate level, but this delivery of education has continued to show a sharp contrast to traditional classrooms. Professor Lewis of Glendale Community College documented that "...more than 90 percent of face-to-face students completed the class and 76 percent earned a C or better, just 74 percent of the online students finished and only 65 percent earned at least a C" (Clay, 2014, p. 38). When achievement

gaps exist between the two styles of learning at a collegiate level, what sort of success can be expected at a K-12 level?

According to Jackson and Loffreda (2018) a true sense of synergy must always exist between school leaders, teachers, and the community of parents and supporters to provide the necessary resources and tools to students. The initial difficulty any school leader or teacher will face with digital classrooms is the proper implementation of all the necessary hardware, software, and networking. The number of resources needed to be purchased, professionally installed, and maintained can be a burden for some school or district leaders. The synergy required had to accommodate not only the substantial number of students but the teachers, staff, and even parents or guardians that will also be sharing access (Jackson & Loffreda, 2018). Proper evaluation and planning will be key when moving towards a reformation for any school.

As Maeng (2017) states, instructors will need to be capable of supporting and accommodating students, as well as providing the necessary intervention when academic achievement is a concern, especially regarding digitally focused classrooms. It is important to remember that while students will always need additional assistance or instruction with their material, the students will also need another level of assistance with the layers of digital presentation now in place. Planning and preparation will also be an initial endeavor for any group of school leaders to overcome. Teachers will need to be professionally trained and prepared to handle any digital tools or software that is going to be utilized. More importantly, instructors need to be capable of accommodating students and providing the necessary intervention when academic achievement is a concern (Maeng, 2017).

COVID-19 and The Race to Adapt

During the spring of 2020, educators across the globe were suddenly not only facing a pandemic that threatened the health and wellbeing of everyone but also their day-to-day instruction. As local and state governments shut down businesses, public gatherings, and enacted curfews to help slow down and prevent spreading of the virus, many would assume it is understandable that the doors would close on classrooms. Education would not be able to exist with health and social distancing concerns, nor was it fully prepared to handle the burden of K-12 education.

Because of the real-world implications of the situation, many school and district leaders were mandated by their local, state, or federal government to immediately abandon traditional schooling and adapt to some sort of alternative. There were also instructions that education must continue, along with intervention, tutoring, and support. For many though, this was completely foreign and there was no guidelines or rulebook; it was a simple manner of execute and maintain until the situation improved. School and District leaders now had to tackle issues that were completely new to them; how to conduct virtual meetings, how to reach students and families at home, how would lesson plans and other traditional documents be shared and handled. All these formalities, along with the day-to-day instruction expectations, required quick decision making and a continuous sense of adaptation, providing a lot of feedback and learning opportunities along the way for educators (Rasmitadila, 2020)

Authors Megan Kuhfeld and Beth Tarasawa (2020), in a journal titled The COVID Slide, drew allusions to summer breaks and how student retention was impacted. They estimated both math and English learning would drop significantly more than it would in a typical summer holiday, opening the door for concern in the long term for student success. As educators across

the world learned, this impact came to fruition throughout the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year and into the 2020-2021 school year.

Strategies and Advantages

Contrary to traditional classroom preparation and presentation, digital learning provides many options for instructors. Written or pre-prepared material can be effectively used, to provide a higher quality and more thoughtful learning experience with notes, assignments, or even journal reflections (Stein and Graham, 2013). Sources can be prepared and properly cited as well to be included to be used alongside learning material. The teacher has the power to create thoughtful and enlightening lessons that can improve learning or interaction with the students.

Schedules tend to be more flexible for students that participate in online or digital classrooms. Whether the student experiences absences or needs additional review, teachers can keep a digital archive and set of resources up for students to view or review lessons at their own pace, allowing more time than allotted in a typical school day (Journell, 2014, p. 9-10). As attendance concerns or the need for tutoring vary from school to school, teachers and school leaders could use this flexibility to their advantage and encourage additional learning outside of school hours.

Visual aids and online tools have a unique way to appeal and attract students of all ages. Software such as Edmodo exists as a pseudo-social media platform. Teachers can enroll students into blocks or classes and have online discussions and interactions as they study virtual content. With a controlled online tool environment, teachers can now focus their attention on the curriculum and not technical or etiquette concerns. Traditional classes, such as science, can

benefit from 3D rendered labs, experiments, and instant information being provided along the way (Didem, 2017).

An online learning platform can also provide ease of use and workflow for students. Google classroom, another popular online educational platform, has students sign up to a teacher's class with a unique code. From that point on, the virtual classroom presents itself as a web page with assignment, quizzes, and announcement categories, all with the modern and functional use students have become accustomed to with their experience with Google branded tools (Shaharanee et al., 2016).

Now, an important part of the success with online and digital focused learning will rely heavily on classroom management, planning, and providing directions to the students, especially the younger they are. Routine and consistency are key, and additional work on the educators involved initially, but result in a better educational experience overall. Authors Zydney, Denoyelles, and Seo shared from their research with two classrooms that experienced additional planning and interaction versus one with less, students who received the extra stimulation and experience were able to achieve more and have an overall better experience in a virtual classroom. "Students reported that the group discussion made them feel better about their work and interacting with the class. One student reported that "the discussions gave me a feeling of belonging and collaborating with other students," while another commented that, "I was able to interact with my peers more than in any other online course I've taken" (2012).

Ground rules could be the term used by school leaders when conducting online or digital focused classrooms. "Ground rules provide an opportunity to build trust, clarify expectations, and establish points of reflection to check in with the group to examine progress" (McDonald, p.82, 2012). Much like a student code of conduct, or a class syllabus, students need to be made

aware of what will be acceptable forms of communication, participation, and proper use of resources made available. This attention to planning will lead to success and a healthy expectation for all students.

Opportunities over Struggle

Technology often provides resources and learning opportunities that would traditionally not be accessible to students. This is especially effective for schools that are only just adapting digital learning in any aspect. Teachers can share a variety of lessons, material, and examples to students that gives them a broader and modern view of the subject areas (Robinson, 2016). While there will still be routines and a need to establish consistency with day-to-day interaction and responsibilities, digital and online learning can offer a much faster and up to date experience for students and their learning material.

Some students require special assistance, even in a normal day to day classroom environment. The planning and coordination needed in place to ensure that special needs students are receiving equivalent or additional support needs to be met, no matter the circumstances. That also applies to the families and paraprofessionals that are a major part of assisting and supporting students in need. This may or may not be something school leaders and staff are prepared to execute, depending on the preparedness and resources at the school (Tomaino, 2021). However, unique circumstances and difficulties may also allow students to learn in more intimate and focused ways, improving their education.

Many educators and parents focus on the present when it comes to day-to-day instruction, but the true success lies in the future. Incorporating digital tools and software into a classroom, or utilizing online platforms and resources, can better prepare a student for higher education or

even a future career. As daunting as it may seem to expect more out of students, the dividends this can return in creating enlightened and skilled individuals will help them have advantages with their academics and skillsets (Ozerbas, 2016).

Leadership and First Steps

School leaders are going to need buy in and support from their staff, no matter what the initiative or action plan for a school is. Educational author Douglas Reeves (2016) writes that a leader should always challenge themselves and ask what should be done to "...have both an immediate and lasting effect on my school" (p.99). Improvement plans take time, but require the patience and support of all those involved. Things will not be perfect, but as academic leaders, mistakes, and challenges should be acknowledged and overcome with leadership skills and support to those around the leader (p.25).

Leadership will require a growth mindset, the notion that you yourself or those you are teaching have a higher potential contrast to their own personal beliefs or prior success (Dweck, 2010, p.26-29). The challenges faced with change, action plans, and a new vision can lead to frustration and conflict. This can all be avoided, and turned into a positive with the right leadership mindset. By utilizing data, working with the students in their areas of need, and utilizing tools and technology, we can better identify solutions and share that vision with the team.

Leaders should also bring teachers and staff members in on the process of change. Michael Fullan discusses collaboration between school teachers and school leaders, stating "When the decision-making skills of individuals and group decision-making feed on each other, professional judgment in the school as a whole becomes more powerful" (2018, p. 80). One individual cannot

be entirely in control of all decisions or directions aspects of education go. Having input and suggestions from multiple parties helps ensure widespread success.

A true sense of community must exist between the staff members, educators, and school leaders as well. Professional Development and Curriculum focused meetings that focus on the school's action plan can be beneficial opportunities for brainstorming, feedback, and data collection. "Conversation must take place to involve a review of mutually held values and beliefs among those who will participate and bring the vision to life" (Daresh, 2010, p. 19). Leaders will have to provide opportunities, as well as support the notion that comradery and teamwork will be essential in the coming school year.

Data collection and analysis will be the backbone of tracking and supporting school change. Bambrick-Santoyo (2019) shares experiences and information on the topic of assessing students and one area of importance he highlights is interim assessments and using them to gather data on your students. The four steps he lists out for these interim assessments are analyzing the end-goal test, building your own in class assessments for each lesson or unit, planning lessons to meet the rigor of that assessment, and establishing a college ready goal (p. 28). This data will provide the information necessary to maintain or modify the initiative and build student success.

Leadership extends to the students and their families in the community as well. According to academic authors Purinton and Azcoitia (2018), affirmation is essential to leading a successful school, and the school "signals that individuals and groups are accepted as they are with the richness of their lives' experiences" (p. 4). Families and their students need to be made aware of a transition or drastic change to the learning environment, as well as what procedures, behaviors, and norms will be a part of that change. Most importantly, the way leaders can support and assist students and the families will be essential to success.

Conclusion

Students and their instructors deserve the best possible scenarios for learning and teaching. Expectations of traditional learning have increased in the past few decades but with it comes the aid of many tools and resources, especially in digital form. Being able to instantly post assignments, collect data, and support students is an incredible benefit of the digital age but all that goes nowhere without the proper knowledge and training to go with it. If a leadership can properly educate not only the teachers, but the students and the community on accessing these tools in a routine manner, then technical or social shortcomings can be overcome and met instead with success.

SECTION THREE: PROJECT PLAN AND ACTION PLAN

Project Details and Goals

My Capstone Project focuses on how digital resources and tools can help improve education and the necessary training and exercises needed to help improve digital literacy. To help reach and succeed with these goals, I will begin by working with my school administration team to develop a year-long plan for training and formally implementing digital learning. The years past, especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic, showed that many teachers were either unprepared entirely or digitally underdelivered their curriculum. This needs to be addressed, not only in the event schools would ever need to shift to at-home or digital learning but also to ensure education can exist digitally. We also need to ensure students can utilize and understand the technology and not fall behind as innovations, advancements, and dependency continue every day.

The first goal for my capstone project is to establish a baseline for how comfortable and successful each teacher is with the aspects of digital learning. I will announce to the staff and faculty the plan for the year during pre-planning and request their participation in data collection and surveys. This will be an opportunity for teachers to anonymously share their concerns or questions, their successes and expertise, or that they are entirely new to the idea of digital education. Data collection is significant to show growth and track achievement, not just for students. Teachers need to know it is okay to be unfamiliar with this initiative and that the only expectation is that they learn and support their students through this.

My second goal is to conduct yearlong support and mentoring. Professional Developments will be held throughout the school year to help judge where everyone is, train and

build them up to a higher sense of understanding and success, and then collect results and data on their performance throughout the year. The most prominent aspect of this will be testimonials and anecdotes from staff. Everyone will have a different approach to how they use student electronic devices, digital tools, and software because of the courses they teach and the curriculum. That is completely fine, as the main goal is to improve digital literacy for the teachers and then reflect that on the students throughout the school year.

The third and final goal is focused on long-term success. While the primary purpose of any school leader or teacher is to ensure student academic success, a long-term plan for higher education and careers will be a general understanding and sense of creativity with computers, software, and other technologies. So many aspects of society rely on software and electronics, and education will continue to be influenced just the same. Students need to adapt to eBooks, social media, and other elements of digital literacy. This goes beyond typing versus writing, but real-world applications such as working as a team over the internet or creating a presentation to a broader audience.

Action Plan

The first step in this initiative will be establishing a starting point with survey data. The main objective of this initiative is for teachers to become comfortable and efficient enough to implement aspects of digital learning in their curriculum throughout the year. This implementation will vary, depending on the prior knowledge or understanding by the teacher, and of course, on the level of comfortability of the students. Teachers need to gauge where they stand and where their students stand as far as digital literacy. Begin there, document it, and share those findings and questions and thoughts on the initiative during a beginning of the year survey.

Change at any point can be daunting and overwhelming, especially when individuals become comfortable and efficient with their current workflow. However, education requests a continued sense of growth and adaptation over time due to constantly changing higher education and career fields. Students and their families need to be helped in becoming more efficient and capable of blending into the next steps of their lives once they complete grade school. As a leader, I want to share the importance and passion of facing challenges and struggles with the opportunities and experiences that await my co-leaders, teachers, and students. Educational author and leader John Kotter explains Leadership and a plan of action by stating, "Leadership is about setting a direction. It is about creating a vision, empowering, and inspiring people to want to achieve the vision, and enabling them to do so with energy and speed through an effective strategy. In its most basic sense, Leadership is about mobilizing a group of people to jump into a better future" (p. 60, 2014).

The second step of my plan is to gain buy-in and show support for teachers and staff. The entire faculty needs to know that there is no specific level of success or set of expectations being implemented right away. Still, there needs to be a collection of results and data that show the effort and progression towards long-term success. As the first professional development meeting for the year, this survey data will be shared anonymously and anecdotally. The staff will understand that every teacher is different with their utilization or understanding of how to utilize digital tools in the classroom. The objective for growth and just general knowledge will be shared with the staff, citing prior years of digital learning and especially the troubles and concerns of the COVID-19 Pandemic and shift to at-home education.

Throughout the year, teachers will be asked to collect data on their curriculum and their students with the digital initiative. They will be asked to just screenshot lessons and ideas and

submit them as part of their qualitative data initially. There will be no concrete way this is expected, as every classroom operates differently depending on its subject manner. As the year progresses, teachers will submit additional data and examples, such as fully-fledged lesson plans that highlight the digital resources utilized, the skills involved, and the essential curriculum. This information and data will benefit PLC groups and others teaching similar courses as it can help generate ideas and creativity for learning tactics and strategies.

The same will apply to quantitative data. Teachers will be asked to collect some aspects of monitoring and growth for students and their digital literacy throughout the year. This can be tough, as a substantial portion of school courses do not have an essential curriculum focused on digital software or technology. School leaders and curriculum leaders will need to work with teachers individually or in teams to brainstorm and think of ways that the curriculum can be tied to some digital literacy or skillsets on a computer or tablet. An English class, for example, could utilize typing software that monitors for grammar and writing or a science program that assesses student's knowledge of content through activities and quizzes. Collaboration and planning will be essential when gathering this data and establishing long-term resources to build from.

Another step will involve helping teachers and teachers individually. Of course, some teachers and staff will have difficulties adapting to this new sense of education, whether it be their unfamiliarity or struggles with technology or how to assist students with specific needs. This would be an excellent opportunity to work with ESE (Exceptional Student Education) and ELL (English Language Learner) staff and what resources or steps could help those students.

Resources themselves are going to be a huge concern. Technology is not cheap, especially when there is an effort put towards one-to-one device implementation, where every single teacher and student has a laptop to take home. The software itself becomes an issue, with

license management placing a restraint on how many digital copies you can obtain and install across a school campus's network of computers or devices. The biggest hurdle will be training, paying for experts to visit the school during training sessions, paying for teachers to get trained and comfortable with aspects of technology and software, and the variety of options available that need to be researched and highlighted depending on the course. School leaders like myself need to take the time and effort to become comfortable with the action plan and research and advocate for specific needs depending on the circumstances of the students, teachers, or courses.

Communication and comradery are going to be two points of emphasis during yearlong professional developments and training. Because of the openness of this initiative and the end goals, a significant aspect of the school year will be introducing a large variety of options and resources to teachers. This will depend incredibly on word of mouth and research from teachers and staff. PLCs will be encouraged to utilize their workflows or tools they discover adequate for their curriculum needs. Electives, especially, such as Art, may find a unique way to have students interact with technology than an English class would.

The final step of the initiative will involve an end of the year discussion and highlight during professional development to reflect on the year. Teachers can, as they have been encouraged all year, share their successes, shortcomings, and plans. Student achievements and success with technology can be gauged, citing examples and data if necessary. The following steps will involve how to continue improvement, what resources, technologies, or tools should be allocated for purchase or upgrade, and how school leaders can continue to support digital literacy for students and teachers in the year following. These findings can be collected in a year-end survey and submitted and all other data to school leaders to document and review.

Methods

Throughout the training, implementation, and highlighting, I plan to collect data and samples from all teachers. Because every teacher and class will be different in how they incorporate and highlight technology usage and achievement, I want to allow teachers to provide their own unique qualitative and quantitative data.

Qualitative data could be examples of classwork or assignments, and the digital tools they incorporated, and a snapshot of the lesson from beginning to end. Teachers could provide lesson plans they developed by themselves or with their PLCs and a list of the digital tools and resources they used in that lesson. The big takeaway here for review and building for the future would be reflections that detail pre-planning, the actual lesson, and post-planning. Teachers could share their successes, concerns, and ways to improve in the future.

The quantitative data provided could highlight data such as student achievement, how ELL and ESOL students were supported in the lesson, and any other data that could support student engagement and interactions. The big takeaway and goal here are to gauge whether the teacher feels they have made gains in combining the curriculum with digital teaching and learning. As with qualitative data, different teachers and different courses will mean various data submissions and methods. The goal here is to collect and improve so data collection can be at the discretion of teachers and their PLCs.

Finally, surveys will be collected throughout the school year from both students and teachers. This will provide an opportunity for colleagues and students to share their thoughts and opinions on the initiative, share feedback, and try to help improve the outcome of the digital implementation and improvement plan. Of course, this data will be anonymous if anyone feels the need to remain so, but opportunities will always exist for assistance and mentoring if necessary.

Ethical Considerations

Although professional developments and training opportunities will exist, privacy will be respected for those teachers who feel they are struggling and request one-on-one opportunities. The same can be applied to students, and teachers will be encouraged to monitor and suggest some digital tutoring opportunities for students. Professional standards and expectations will always be maintained for training or tutoring to ensure respect and assistance are given to anyone. They will not be insulted or feel they are being looked down upon for their difficulties.

Teachers will record data and information on this initiative in classrooms, but anything published or shared during professional developments or training will be filtered to appear anonymous if requested by the teachers. No students will be explicitly identified either. Any work samples or data will be referred to in anonymity.

Conclusion

This project will focus on increasing digital literacy and the efficiency of its use in the classroom amongst teachers and students. Through professional developments, training seminars, and smaller group-focused mentoring, it is intended to help all teachers find successful and efficient ways of utilizing technology, digital tools, and software with their curriculums and increasing students' academic growth. I want teachers and students to become comfortable enough with this initiative that technology use becomes second nature in the way pen, paper, and textbooks have been for decades. Education can exist with a farther reach in ways that have never been possible before.

Section Four: Anticipated Results

I anticipate the results of this initiative to be very general in the first year of its inception. While the long-term ambitions are to establish a solid foundation and understanding of digital literacy for teachers and students, the initial goals are to create a baseline for all teachers and students. Considering the school-wide initiatives already in place for teachers and their classrooms, it would be respectable and a true sign of leadership to support them with further requests and keep expectations to a reasonable level.

Device management and day-to-day routines with digital platforms are a great starting point for anyone involved in education. Technology is not cheap, especially with the large volume of staff and students who will need to be supplied with the tools to work in a digital learning environment. Initial goals should be centered around one-to-one device management. Students and families learn the responsibilities and expectations of having a laptop in place of a notebook throughout the school day. Early success could be as simple as using safe storage or a backpack for the student's laptop or tablet, keeping track of a charger and accessories for the devices, and logging on and interacting in class. Teachers unfamiliar with this mentality also receive laptops and learn the importance of digital documents, records, and communication.

Over time, the focus can now go towards the daily lessons and curriculum vital to student achievement. Here, students can become better writers through email or online discussions, become comfortable creating documents and files for submission, or even utilize testing and assessment software. Teachers can work alongside them, doing demonstrations, practicing, and building permanent skills that can make off one another while learning how to collect data and grade in this medium.

The long-term goals are, of course, to utilize industry-specific software or tools concerning the student's respective academics. For example, a media-focused classroom could

learn how to edit photography or videography with non-linear editing tools. Engineering-focused programs could learn real-world drafting software and create their smaller-scale blueprints or construction projects. The possibilities are endless, but it requires the right mentality and support from the school leaders and instructors before implementation can efficiently achieve these results.

Results

This action plan on campus will need to focus on short-term goals initially before long-term success and innovation can occur. The initial stages of the school year should focus on proper safety and usage procedures for devices. Teachers can share the importance of keeping devices charged, avoiding damage or loss, and how to transition essential assignments into a digital medium. While no schoolteacher should be expected to become an I.T. (information technology) professional overnight, they can share the basics of creating word documents, checking email and messages, and the proper etiquette and demeanor for online communication.

Data and surveying will prove incredibly beneficial, not just for results but for encouragement and support. Survey results will reflect hesitation and unfamiliarity in the initial stages. For example, many teachers at my school are still struggling with day-to-day computer use and cloud-based software required by the district. However, by establishing the norms of the general and moderate successes, I am confident that teachers and students will not be overburdened by pressure or anxiety and instead work at their pace and comfort level to improve their digital familiarity.

As teachers and students introduce laptops or tablets into the classrooms, it is important to note that traditional learning methods do not have to disappear overnight. As a school leader, I

want to encourage digital software and technology, not eliminating what works. The long-term goal is to create an environment where curriculum can occur digitally and a productive and supportive transition.

What would be incredibly beneficial to evaluate throughout and after the school year is the day-to-day usage of technology and documenting the scenarios utilized. There should be a clear picture that teachers could improve and innovate their lessons and classroom management with technology from the beginning to the end of the year. It should also be clear that students are not being restricted with digital literacy for general classwork and can highlight their advancements and comfortability with the medium.

Section Five: Reflection, Recommendations, Standards Alignment

Personal Reflection

This leadership initiative has given me insight into just how important planning and compassion can be when providing solutions and options in education. Teachers and students have been under incredible pressure for years to constantly adapt and meet performance expectations in a finite amount of time. School leaders are even more pressure, as success and data results influence the future of funding and employment in some cases. Support and training are not always readily available, especially if the school district is too small to provide accommodations or too large to micromanage. Critical situations like this call for educators to go beyond the call of duty and innovate.

Change is possible, but it is never overnight. Compassion and support and clear and realistic expectations can help any student or teacher, especially during professional developments and improvement plans. A real school leader will realize the number of

responsibilities and tasks that their staff is already in charge of and the unique personalities and struggles our students themselves must overcome when learning. Working alongside other school leaders and curriculum leaders, I will help develop a plan that more efficiently incorporates the yearlong action plan in consideration of day-to-day responsibilities. Other school leaders under my leadership and curriculum and special department leaders can work together to evaluate the school year calendar, planning opportunities for professional development, intervention, and other necessary steps, and meeting goals throughout the year with the initiative. Finding time will always be difficult, especially with assessment days, emergency drills, and so forth. However, school leaders must find an efficient way to work alongside their staff to achieve any support and momentum towards change.

I have learned that I am passionate about technology and its potential for educational growth and its role in supporting my teachers, students, and community. Many aspects of education seem like impossible mountains to climb and discourage individuals from innovating or trying new things. If I can be a school leader who helps build individuals up to their full potential and supports them in their progression, there is no reason any aspect of education should be too difficult to overcome.

Recommendations

For an initiative like this to gain any success rate, school leaders must have a presence in classrooms for both students and teachers more so than ever. I would recommend that my school leaders establish a diligent and thorough schedule for professional training sessions, classroom visitations, outside third-party training support, and especially school-wide meetings regularly to reflect and support one another. I also believe school leaders should allow teachers to leave their classrooms, primarily when a new teaching method like technology is implemented. This

mentality is incredibly beneficial to the staff and leads to collaboration opportunities. Michael Fullan supports this notion of collaboration between schoolteachers and school leaders, stating, "When the decision-making skills of individuals and group decision-making feed on each other, professional judgment in the school as a whole becomes more powerful" (2018, p. 80).

Many teachers and students will face other success or difficulties, especially with lesson building, technical support, and creativity. Student intervention will be a present issue throughout the first year and will need collaborative and supportive action. Students and teachers will have a varied level of success and understanding when new teaching and learning methods are introduced, contrary to the routine they are used to on a typical school day. Educational author Michael Fullan states, "What we need is consistency of purpose, policy, and practice. Structure and strategy are not enough. The solution requires the individual and collective ability to build shared meaning, capacity, and commitment to action. When large numbers of people have a deeply understood sense of what needs to be done—and see their part in achieving that purpose—coherence emerges, and powerful things happen" (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). Students and teachers will be relying on school leaders to be there to help, resolve these problems, and show support for its importance and long-term purpose

Standards Alignment

The first standard I believe aligns with my initiative is Standard One of the Florida Principal Leadership Standards. The first standard states, "Effective school leaders achieve results on the school's student learning goals" (Florida Department of Education, 2011). As the education field expands and expects more from students in how they learn, it is essential to focus on how we can make these transitions and adaptations more efficient and effective. In the digital

means of teaching, my initiative focuses on the necessary development and growth of technology and software in the classroom and its introduction to the students.

Standard 5 continues this notion, as it states, "Effective school leaders' structure and monitors a school learning environment that improves learning for all of Florida's diverse student population" (Florida Department of Education), 2011). As mentioned, there will be cases where some students succeed quickly with the transition to digital learning. However, many students may need additional support, especially those of ELL status or other learning circumstances. It is crucial to provide the necessary time and resources to support the students in different need and their teachers or staff assisting with their education each day.

Finally, an area I am deeply passionate about regarding the classroom and workday is communication. Communication is standard 9, stating, "Effective school leaders practice two-way communications and use appropriate oral, written, and electronic communication and collaboration skills to accomplish school and system goals by building and maintaining relationships with students, faculty, parents, and community" (Florida Department of Education, 2011). A school-wide initiative such as improving digital literacy requires everyone to be on board, be comfortable learning something new, and working as a team. School leaders need to sympathize with teachers and staff on their already burdened workdays, the limitation of resources and tools, and provide the necessary guidance and support to help those the most in need. I have often witnessed teachers and staff not taking training or team meetings entirely seriously due to the lack of compassion and support being given in return. As a school leader, gaining buy-in from your staff and maintaining that support system is key to accomplishing anything that impacts the classroom.

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