Character Building through Technology Capstone- Part B

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Capstone Experience and Results

When carrying out the Capstone Project at Taylor Elementary the project went very well despite the changes that occurred to the original plan. The first step was to teach teachers (one from each grade level) to use the functions on eClass through video tutorials and meetings that would help the teachers explore resources. First, teachers did a survey and they indicated that the most difficult part of using technology was that there were not enough resources available to help them and it took them too much time to explore the resources. The video tutorials really helped with this. The tutorials were placed on a special webpage that was made called TaylorTech so that the teachers could access them at any time. Through the survey it was also indicated that teachers needed the most help with eClass functions like discussions, adding videos to lessons, quizzes, dropbox, and assessments so the focus for learning was on these topics. Once the video tutorials were posted instead of doing pre-planning meetings teachers attended SOAR University where they attended professional development to learn more about how to use these forms of technology. 100% of teachers in the class based on a survey said that they had everything they needed to be successful when using the eClass page and 86% said they had used what they learned once or twice so far right after the class. This survey indicated that the initial goal for helping teachers learn more about eClass was met. The goal was also to have one teacher for each grade level do the training but due to SOAR University around 30 teachers were able to complete the training.

For the second objective in this project one teacher from each grade level would teach a character-building lesson from the eClass page and collaborate about this lesson. Instead of using one teacher per grade level there was collaboration with a fifth-grade teacher. We were able to collaborate and we created the seven eClass lessons together about Character building. Due to

the fact that our school was focusing on reading we linked each online lesson to a book about

that character-building trait as well as created a lesson/activity for each. By creating the activity

and the book video the fifth-grade teacher was using eClass for multiple types of technology. She

was able to learn how to navigate the page, embed videos, create discussions, create quizzes, add

links, and create assessments on eClass and other online tools and link them to the page. This

became a trial run for working with a larger group of teachers. Once we collaborated on the

lessons, we taught some lessons together so that we could observe each other and provide

feedback. As a coach there was also the ability to be one-on-one with this teacher and help her

enhance her technology knowledge. This was a great trial run for future years. We were able to

work out all of the kinks in the lessons and use collaboration sessions to enhance professional

development. Even through this part of the project did not go as planned with one teacher per

grade level it did feel very successful from a coaching perspective. Instead of doing a survey

since it was just one teacher there was an end interview with this teacher and she was very

pleased with how this project turned out. She indicated that she felt more confident using

technology in her classroom as a tool instead of a drill and kill method. She said that before

working together she always had students get on math sites and do facts or type a paper and now

she knows how to create full lessons that are online. She also stated that she felt confident

enough to try something like flipped classroom that she had been wanting to do because of the

skills she learned during the coaching sessions.

The plan for the last objective was to have teachers create their own lesson about

character building and teach it using what they learned in the class. The fifth-grade teacher

created her own lesson and taught it to both classes- third grade and fifth grade as a group. She

created a lesson where students reviewed the definitions of the character-building traits that we

learned through eClass and then collaborated to create a reader's theater about that trait. The

students were able to video their drama to be able to show later. This was successful because the

fifth-grade teacher has a degree in drama and performing arts so she was able to incorporate

technology and what we worked on together into something that interested her and made

learning fun for the students. Students got to do an authentic task as their assessment of their

learning using technology.

Overall the end result of this project was that even though it was on a smaller scale than

intended it was a success. Many teachers were able to learn about how to use technology and the

eClass page through the technology tutorial videos, and we did a trail run of a yearlong

technology initiative. The hope for this project is that it will be completed on a larger scale in the

future. Hopefully the school will encourage more teachers to work on technology lessons and

learn this collaboration technique so that we can enhance our technology skills as a school. Due

to the fact that the fifth-grade teacher was successful in her learning and due to her positive

feedback of the experience the hope is to continue this method of learning in years to come.

Discussion and Reflection

During this capstone project I learned an immense amount about technology

facilitation and leadership. While completing the technology professional development lessons I

had to use research based best practices and really know what I was talking about and why I was

talking about it. Being knowledgeable is a key factor in technology leadership. I also learned to

be prepared for all questions that could be asked. Teachers are skeptical about technology can

frequently poke holes in the benefits of using technology. During the sessions I had to be sure to

make teaching points as simple to follow as possible and explain what each form of technology

could do for their students and classroom learning. Being prepared and aware of emerging

technology is a must for a technology leader. I also learned the key to technology facilitation is learning with the person you are teaching. When working with the fifth-grade teacher the best part was that I was collaborating with her to create the lessons instead of showing her how to do the lessons. We were working together to complete the task so she felt comfortable working with me instead of feeling intimidated by me telling her what to do. Another key to success when collaborating with this teacher was letting her observe me first and then we discussed what I did well and what I could improve on then after we did the same in her classroom. Knowing that as a technology leader you can always learn and grow is a way to make everyone you are teaching feel like they are on the same page as you and in turn they are more relaxed and trusting to your suggestions.

This Capstone project related to knowledge or what you must know because as a technology leader you must know how to use the technology coaching standards. If you are knowledgeable of the standards you will be able to meet the needs of all parties involved like students and teachers. ISTE standards state that technology coaches should be able to have the knowledge and skills to conduct a needs assessment and develop technology based professional learning (ISTE, 2019). Being knowledgeable of this standard helped this project become successful. The needs assessment was sent to teachers as a survey before their technology training so that the professional development provided gave them exactly what they needed. The needs assessment made sure that the teachers did not feel as if the professional learning was a waste of their time and gave them the knowledge, they needed to implement technology in the classroom. Another standard that this capstone required knowledge of was ISTE Standard three that I needed the knowledge to create, support and manage digital learning environments (ISTE, 2019). Throughout the process the knowledge to actually use the tools that I was going to teach

was especially important. Teachers needed to know that I could use the tools I was teaching and give them all the details they needed.

This project also related to skills or what you must be able to do by including ISTE standard three which was the skill to integrate technology into teaching as well as collaborate with educators to enhance their technology use (ISTE, 2019). Without knowledge of this standard this Capstone project could not be done. Collaboration was the key factor of this project being successful. The skills that is very important to collaboration was listening to the needs and knowledge of the person you are coaching. Before working with the fifth-grade teacher we sat down and discussed what she wanted out of the collaboration and then I was able to cater my teaching toward what she needed in her classroom. This is a skill that is needed for all technology coaches because if people feel as if the professional development is not worth their time they will not benefit from the teaching.

This capstone project also related to dispositions because as a technology leader and facilitator you have to believe that technology is beneficial to teachers and students and be enthusiastic. Throughout this process teachers needed to feel the enthusiasm that I had about technology use. When you mix knowledge with enthusiasm more people will feel willing to listen to what you are saying. When doing the professional development I made sure to test out what I was teaching with my class to be sure it worked and was helpful in learning so that when I taught it I was not only knowledgeable but I believed in what I was saying was the best thing for the students.

The advice that I would give someone who might attempt to address technology integration with character building would be to ensure that you sell what you are doing to the staff so that they are interested. One of the best things that I did in this capstone was create a

video that was fun and funny to get everyone excited about learning. Many times, teachers get wrapped up in everything else they have to do and don't have time for anything extra. If they are not aware of the benefits and how it will help their students, they will not be excited to learn. During my first session we watched a fun video as well as we discussed best practices and I gave some technology fun facts so that teachers could see what the professional development could do for them. This really helped get the teachers excited and eager to learn. One other recommendation is for teachers to get to try out the tool they are learning about. One tool I taught teachers about was a discussion so I created a discussion and had the teachers try it. Because the teachers were able to see how it worked on the student side, they understood the process better in the end. Teachers are usually very visual so this was helpful to their learning.

Overall this capstone project taught me about the ways to succeed as a technology leader and facilitator. It showed me that a lot of work goes into preparations and planning but all of that is worth it when collaboration runs smoothly and teachers are benefitting from what you are teaching them.

References

International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). (2019). ISTE Standards for Coaches.

    Retrieved from https://www.iste.org/standards/for-coaches