Implementing Technology Training for New Teachers

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SETTING AND CONTEXT

The setting for this proposed project is Brantley County school system, located in rural, southeastern Georgia. Brantley County is made up of four primary schools (Prekindergarten through third grade), three elementary schools (fourth through sixth grade), one middle school (seventh and eighth grades), and one high school (ninth through twelfth grade). Brantley County has a total of only 773 residents with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher out of a total population of 14, 124 (United States Census Bureau , 2015). Despite this, all of Brantley County schools score competitively on the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (Georgia Department of Education, 2016). In addition, Brantley County schools consistently scores higher than the state on GA Milestone testing (Georgia Department of Education, 2015).

Brantley County school’s administration is made up of one principal and two assistant principals, one being a new addition this school year. Under this administration, Brantley County schools have undergone new initiatives within the last few years. One initiative that has greatly impacted our students and teachers is the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Initiative. This initiative rolled out just before receiving a grant that allowed schools to purchase Chromebook Carts (with thirty Chromebooks each) in 2016. In January of 2017, schools had the opportunity to purchase additional Chromebook Carts. A change that has impacted Brantley County Middle School teachers has been the requirement of each team of teachers to create and maintain a website to meet the communication needs of parents. Each teacher is responsible for maintaining a shared calendar of assignments with links to resources, plus an additional resources page. Teachers are not only required to keep up their websites as part of their Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) evaluation, but all teachers are also required to use instructional technology as a part of their curriculum for their TKES evaluation. These two new requirements have posed a problem for some teachers who are less comfortable or less familiar with technology. All teachers are required to use G-Suite for Education, which includes Google Classroom. While not all teachers are required to use its products, such as Docs, Slides, and Sheets, most have made the transition because of the students’ use of Chromebooks. Additionally, Teachers will be required to use an updated version of PowerTeacher, a gradebook management system, next school year, which has caused anxiety for some. Furthermore, teachers are required to use multiple formative assessment tools. The specific tools are not mandated, but teachers are required to use some form of technology with formative assessments. All teachers are equipped with an interactive whiteboard, at least one desktop computer, and one Chromebook. Most classrooms have student desktop computers, as well as access to Chromebook Carts to be checked-out.

Brantley County has provided support for teachers through professional development from the local RESA Instructional Technology Specialist, however, this professional development was focused on one elementary and the middle school. These trainings were vital in teachers’ exposure to Google Classroom. Following these trainings, Brantley County Middle School provided further professional developments and support from a teacher-leader. This teacher-leader also conducts periodical trainings for all administrators for Brantley County. However, there is a prospect of new teachers joining Brantley County in the upcoming years. The local university, College of Coastal Georgia, does not require a course on or related to technology use in the classroom in their Education Program (College of Coastal Georgia School of Education and Teacher Preparation , 2015). Nor is technology use in the “New Teacher Training” curriculum offered from our district. This creates a problem with new teachers being unprepared to use technology in and for the classroom as they join the workforce in Brantley County, which is a significant part of the reason local administration supports my involvement in “New Teacher Training”.

PROBLEM AND RATIONALE

In general, student-teachers do not come to their placements with knowledge of their technologies and tools required by administration. Because most of Brantley County’s new hires are teachers coming directly from student-teaching, this leads to new teachers being unprepared to effectively implement the technologies needed in their new jobs. According to a study conducted by Kent and Giles (2016), there is a strong connection between teacher self-efficacy and effective technology integration. In order for new teachers to reach a successful level of self-efficacy in regards to teaching with technology, preservice teachers must not only be taught effective ways to use technology within their curriculum, but also be exposed to the benefits of technology integration (Kent & Giles, 2016).

The need that prompted this specific proposal stemmed from my current student-teacher’s experience at the local university. Coming into my classroom, my student-teacher expressed how unfamiliar she was with all of the different technologies we were using. She did, however, express great interest and excitement in learning ways in which technology can enhance student achievement, foster parent communication, and maximize teacher workflow. This is when I learned that the local university, which produces the majority of BCMS’s new teacher population each year, does not require a course on or related to technology use in and for the classroom. According to my student-teacher, Instructional Technology is embedded into one of the courses, but was limited to Prezis and Microsoft Office products. Because over half of Brantley County’s new hires graduate from this university, there is a lack of knowledge and confidence in using technology in and for the classroom at the start of a new teacher’s career. Research suggests that there is a disconnect between what preservice teachers experience in their classrooms and what they are taught in their coursework, and that these beginning teachers do not feel prepared to integrate technology in their classrooms (Tondeur, J., et al, 2011). It is imperative that this is addressed prior to or in the beginning of the new teacher’s first year because the lack of knowledge can prove to be a significant detriment in the learning curve all new teachers must conquer. Furthermore, research also indicates that beginning teachers’ self-efficacy is significantly impacted by the support of mentors (Moulding, L., et al, 2014). All teachers in Brantley County have received two consecutive years of instructional technology workshops and website creation/management support, putting College of Coastal Georgia’s (CCGA) graduates behind.

DESCRIPTION

My proposed project is to implement technology training for new teachers during next school year’s “New Teacher Training” hosted by Brantley County Board of Education (BOE).

This training will address technology-use to achieve three goals that support the vision and mission of Brantley County schools: enhancing student achievement, fostering parent communication, and maximizing teacher workflow. Because time for the current “New Teacher Training” hosted by the local BOE is limited, I will need to incorporate a flipped-style training. Participants will be given materials in advance with the opportunity to explore and practice, then receive guided instruction during the training at the Board Office. Additionally, there will be

online or in-person support for all new teachers throughout the year. The “basics” for the training day would include, but are not limited to, the following: current assessment software (ExamView, USATestPrep, Google Forms, etc.) required at Brantley County schools, current gradebook software (PowerSchool), general online formative assessment tools (Kahoot, Quizziz, clickers, etc.), website management and “must-haves”, current parent communication software (Remind App), Google Basics (Top Tricks for 2017, Drive, Gmail/Calendar Tips, Forms, Slides, Docs), and Chrome Extensions (OneTab, Boomerang, Save to Drive, SpeakIt, etc.). This is a very general list of proposed activities needed to get new teachers up-to-speed on current technology use in Brantley County. All new teachers attend a “New Teacher Training” hosted by the local BOE every pre-planning for a full in-service day. The head of Curriculum and Instruction, Dr. Greg Jacobs, leads the training and the Superintendent, Dr. Kim Morgan, leads some components of the training. For 2017-2018 school year, I will be added to the schedule to lead a new “Technology Use” portion of the training. I will plan, implement, evaluate, and provide on-going support for this proposed training. This on-going support is tentative to last through October, dependent on the participants’ needs.

Table 1.

*Project Activities Alignment*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Project Item/Activity | Project Objectives | Deliverable |
| Participants Explore Assessment deliverables prior to training. | Improve teachers’ ability to create assessments with ExamView, Google Forms, and USATestPrep.  Improve teachers’ ability to gather and utilize data from ExamView, Google Forms, and USATestPrep to drive instruction. | Interactive Beginner’s Guide to ExamView (step-by-step and screencasts)  Interactive Beginner’s Guide to USATestPrep (step-by-step and screencasts)  Interactive Beginner’s Guide to Google Forms (step-by-step and screencasts) |
| Participants Explore PowerTeacher Gradebook deliverables prior to training.  \*\*Highlight during training. | Improve teachers’ ability to maintain a gradebook in PowerTeacher.  Improve teachers’ ability understanding of various reports in PowerTeacher. | Interactive Guide to PowerTeacher (step-by-step and screencasts) |
| Participants Explore digital formative assessment tool deliverables prior to training.  \*\*Highlight during training. | Improve teachers’ exposure to various digital formative assessment tools.  Improve teachers’ understanding of best practices for digital formative assessment tools. | Interactive “Web 2.0 Tools for your Classroom” |
| Participants Explore Remind App deliverable prior to training.  \*\*Highlight during training. | Improve teachers’ ability to utilize the Remind App for parent communication | How-to Guide to Using the Remind App (step-by-step) |
| Participants Explore website deliverables prior to training. | Improve teachers’ understanding of a parent-friendly and administrator-approved team or teacher website.  Improve teachers’ ability to create a team or teacher website.  Improve teachers’ ability to maintain a team or teacher website. | Interactive Beginner’s Guide to Teacher Websites (step-by-step and screencasts) |
| Participants Explore G-Suite deliverables prior to training.  \*\*Highlight during training. | Improve teachers’ exposure to G-Suite for Education products.  Improve teachers’ exposure to Chrome extensions and add-ons. | Interactive “Top Google Tricks for 2017”  Interactive “Apps and Extensions to Keep You Organized”  Interactive Gmail and Calendar Tips (screencasts) |

OBJECTIVES

In order to address technology-use to achieve three goals that support the vision and mission of Brantley County schools (enhancing student achievement, fostering parent communication, and maximizing teacher workflow), the following objectives will be used during the training:

1. Improve teachers’ ability to create assessments with ExamView, Google Forms, and USATestPrep.
2. Improve teachers’ ability to gather and utilize data from ExamView, Google Forms, and USATestPrep to drive instruction.
3. Improve teachers’ ability to maintain a gradebook in PowerTeacher.
4. Improve teachers’ ability understanding of various reports in PowerTeacher.
5. Improve teachers’ exposure to various digital formative assessment tools.
6. Improve teachers’ understanding of best practices for digital formative assessment tools.
7. Improve teachers’ ability to utilize the Remind App for parent communication.
8. Improve teachers’ understanding of a parent-friendly and administrator-approved team or teacher website.
9. Improve teachers’ ability to create a team or teacher website.
10. Improve teachers’ ability to maintain a team or teacher website.
11. Improve teachers’ exposure to G-Suite for Education products.
12. Improve teachers’ exposure to Chrome extensions and add-ons.

PSC STANDARDS

This project exemplifies Visionary Leadership (Standard 1) and Teaching, Learning, and Assessing (Standard 2) from both Professional Standards Commission (PSC) and International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). As part of visionary leadership, this project includes the facilitation, development, and implementation of a project that will aid in a change process. This change process is the new addition to the “New Teacher Training” in our district, which will then aid in the sustainability of this change (requirement of teachers to use a variety of technology within their curriculum). Additionally, this project exemplifies the Teaching, Learning, and Assessing standards by assisting other educators in their use of technology in the classroom.

DELIVERABLES

Because of the length of the objectives and the limited amount of time allotted, deliverables will be given prior to the training time. This will allow participants time to explore resources prior to the training. The resources will be given to participates through email, but will also be posted in Google Classroom for Professional Learning, as well as on a website designed to house resources for Brantley County teachers. Deliverables will include the following:

* Interactive Beginner’s Guide to ExamView (step-by-step and screencasts)
* Interactive Beginner’s Guide to USATestPrep (step-by-step and screencasts)
* Interactive Beginner’s Guide to Google Forms (step-by-step and screencasts)
* Interactive Guide to PowerTeacher (step-by-step and screencasts)
* How-to Guide to Using the Remind App (step-by-step)
* Interactive Beginner’s Guide to Teacher Websites (step-by-step and screencasts)
* Interactive “Top Google Tricks for 2017”
* Interactive “Web 2.0 Tools for your Classroom”
* Interactive “Apps and Extensions to Keep You Organized”
* Interactive Gmail and Calendar Tips (screencasts)
* Pre- and post- survey for all participants.

EVALUATION PLAN

The purpose of this project is to provide training to new teachers on current technologies used within Brantley County schools, so evaluations will be focused on new teachers. To evaluate the project as a whole (training and deliverables), a survey will be given after the training to participants, as well as their administrators. In addition to the survey, administrators will have the opportunity to opt-in for their participants to receive assessments of the training. These surveys and assessments will be used to aid in further support and coaching provided by technology teacher-leaders within the county school system.

PROJECT TIMELINE

Because there are so many deliverables provided in this project, most time will be spent creating support materials for the training. The training will be limited to one hour, and the evaluation plan will follow. The survey to participants and their administrators will take place two weeks after the training, while the assessments will take place any time from one week to three months afterwards, depending on the administrator’s preference. The table below depicts this project’s timeline.

Table 1.

*Project Timeline*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Month | Project Item/Activity, or Evaluation Item | Hours |
| June | Create all Deliverables and Support Materials   * Interactive Beginner’s Guide to ExamView (step-by-step and screencasts) * Interactive Beginner’s Guide to USATestPrep (step-by-step and screencasts) * Interactive Beginner’s Guide to Google Forms (step-by-step and screencasts) * Interactive Guide to PowerTeacher (step-by-step and screencasts) * How-to Guide to Using the Remind App (step-by-step) * Interactive Beginner’s Guide to Teacher Websites (step-by-step and screencasts) * Interactive “Top Google Tricks for 2017”      * Interactive “Web 2.0 Tools for your Classroom” * Interactive “Apps and Extensions to Keep You Organized” * Interactive Gmail and Calendar Tips (screencasts) | Approx. hours  Approx. 12 hours  Approx. 6 hours  Approx. 2 hours  Approx. 12 hours  Approx. 2 hours  Approx. 12 hours  Approx. 3 hours  Approx. 12 hours  Approx. 4 hours  Approx. 3 hours |
| July | Implement Project Training | Approx. 2 hours |
| August  August - September | Evaluation: Survey and Optional Assessments  On-going Support (Leading Professional Learning Days, one-on-one support, small-group support, etc.) | Approx. 1 hour  Approx. 30 hours |

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