

New in Town: New Teachers on the Rise

Capstone Report Part B

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### New in Town: New Teachers on the Rise

According to Ghavifekr and Rosdy (2015), the integration of ICT (information, communication, and technology) will assist teachers to the global requirement to replace traditional teaching methods with a technology-based teaching and learning tools and facilities. When beginning to look at this capstone project, it was evident that the new teachers at North LaFayette Elementary were understandingly overwhelmed by the technology applications that are purchased for the school. Although they had the tools necessary to use these programs, they did not have the training or basic understanding of how to implement the programs into their daily curriculum and instruction. Technology can help rural districts address declining populations, ignite social change in remote communities, make the most of limited resources or funding, and address staff shortages (Vareberg & Platt, 2018).

### **Description of Capstone Experience**

**Pre-Survey.** This project began with a pre-survey for new teachers. A lot of our new teachers were not using the instructional programs that are offered at North LaFayette Elementary. According to Lawless and Pellegrino (2007), the sheer increase in the availability or electronic resources in schools and classrooms makes it important for teachers to be prepared to effectively integrate technology into their instructional practices. They were all equipped with the technology that was necessary to use these programs, however, they were not aware of how to implement these programs into their instructional time. Training was not offered for these programs, and teachers were unsure of what elements of the programs would be most beneficial to them. The survey results showed that all of the new teachers

were unfamiliar with these programs, and needed to be trained on how to effectively use these instructional technology tools in their classroom. There is a shortage on time and personnel to train these teachers in technology integration. We used this information to guide the planning for this project.

**Professional Development Sessions.** Professional development provides the opportunity for teachers to be exposed to, practice, and obtain feedback on professional goals for intended change of pedagogy (Joksimovic, Dokic, and Drazeta, 2019). After reviewing the data from the survey, it was obvious that the teachers needed professional development training sessions. They expressed through the survey that they had a lack of training in the programs of Study Island, Reading Theory, and IXL. These sessions were labeled “Tech Talks,” and they were held after school and varied from an hour to an hour and half in length. Throughout these sessions, teachers were informed about the programs individually, what instruction can be completed with these programs, what type of data reports that could be collected, and how student achievement can be measured and attained. The sessions began by covering the basic facts of each program. Teachers were taught how to log in, how to set their settings and preferences, and how to load and delete students. After basics had been taught, teachers were able to focus on each program individually to have a better understanding of how it can be used in their classrooms.

Study Island was the first program that was covered in the training sessions. It was the one that the most people wanted training in first. Since Study Island was one of the nonnegotiable programs used for benchmark assessments for North LaFayette this past school year, it was one of the programs that held the most importance. Beginning of the year benchmarks had been completed in the Literacy Lab block class already when the

training sessions began. After completing the benchmark, students are assigned an independent learning plan. They move through the course as they are successful in their completion of the assigned lessons. The next benchmark would need to occur in the classroom with teachers. After working through the first two Study Island trainings, teachers were encouraged to try the things that they were learning in their classrooms, and report back to the next session with feedback. During the next session, teachers were already feeling more confident with beginning to use the program, but they had more questions about troubleshooting errors. Students were getting into their benchmark assessments, but then were unsure what to do after it was completed. Teachers were able to ask questions, and work through those questions as a group using the SmartBoard.

IXL was the next program that was covered throughout these training sessions. IXL is a program that North LaFayette purchased for math. This program has other subjects that can be purchased as well, but math was the only subject that was needed at the time for the school. IXL is similar to Study Island because it is a nonnegotiable that teachers must benchmark students on at least three times throughout the school year. After students take the benchmark assessment, they are given an independent learning plan to complete. As they complete lessons, they move through the grade level assignments. The main issue that teachers were having with IXL was that they didn't understand how to assign specific lessons to students. For example, if they saw an issue in small group lessons, or wanted a student to complete one lesson before another, then they would need to assign that lesson individually to the student. This is a task that took a while to model and explain. When teachers were able to understand how to do this task, they felt more confident about the students learning what they needed to be learning. Some of the lessons that the

students move through are lower grade level standards depending on what benchmark score they received, and this makes it more difficult to see where the student is according to the grade level expectations.

ReadTheory was the last program that was covered throughout the training sessions. It was covered last because it is not currently a nonnegotiable at North LaFayette. This program was recently suggested for use in the school with grades 3-5. It is not a program that the school had to purchase, because the accounts that the teachers can sign up for are free. This program is similar to the others because it uses a benchmark assessment to be able to guide students into their individualized learning plan. Teachers were not as interested in this program, because they feel more obligated to use the programs that the school pays for and that are required as nonnegotiable programs.

**Instructional Videos and Website.** After meeting with teachers, the feedback provided for program utilization and important aspects were used to create instructional videos for the teachers to use throughout the school year for guidance and reference. Information was also pulled from the pre and post surveys that were conducted. These videos were created and added to a Weebly website for North LaFayette. The website was easy to access and use. The website, videos, and other information were presented at a faculty meeting, so that veteran teachers could use this information as well. During the faculty meeting, several teachers voiced that they were very pleased that this website was created, and that they would be using the videos for reference as well when troubleshooting.

**Post-Survey.** At the end of the capstone, teachers were provided with a post-survey to fill out regarding their experience with the entire capstone process. 100% of the

teachers who took the survey were able to express a substantial increase in their understanding of how to use these instructional programs. They gave positive comments as well, and requested that this website be shared with other teachers as they come into North LaFayette as new teachers.

### **Implementation**

In the beginning, when writing the proposal for this project, it was planned that the instructional videos would be completed before the trainings were held. However, after seeing the survey results and realizing how many different topics needed covering, it was decided to first ask and answer questions and provide guidance in the programs, and then later the instructional videos would be created when it was decided what topics needed to be included.

In the proposal I also stated that I would allow two weeks for implementation of the programs before we met again, and time did not allow this to happen. The teachers met more than originally planned, but it was a lot more organized and they had more questions than I had originally thought as well. They were more actively involved in discussion, and also provided feedback that allowed planning for future sessions.

### **Project Outcomes**

According to the post-survey, this project was very successful. The teachers who utilized the website were able to go through the videos and reference different aspects throughout their entire semester. Even some of the veteran teachers were able to use this site to refresh on some of the things that they had forgotten about.

The principal and vice principal have been very supportive in this endeavor. They have requested that our technology team be able to continue using this website for new teacher orientation items. When the teachers meet with administration, they will show

them the website, in order to be able to help these teachers understand more about the instructional programs that North LaFayette uses. We may also choose to put other references on the site for teacher use.

Although the project was successful, the initial timeline that was created was not followed as originally thought. In the original plan, teachers were going to be provided with webinar presentations, however, I decided to move forward with the “Tech Talk” sessions after school. After these initial sessions, creating the videos was a lot easier because I was aware of the different topics that teachers wanted covered in these instructional videos.

Throughout the entire process, it felt as though it was more rushed than I had originally planned it out to be. The meetings were closer together than originally planned, and there was more involvement than planned for. Also, in the proposal I did not take into consideration the things that would come up along the way.

### **Barriers Encountered**

Throughout the process, certain things did not go as planned, and were considered barriers in this project. For example, time constraints. I had to work the sessions into the schedule the best that I could without messing up everyone’s schedules throughout the semester. When working in the spring semester, it was difficult because the teachers in grades 3-5 were in testing mode. They were focused on the upcoming tests, and some of those teachers missed more days of trainings toward the end due to getting ready for testing and tutoring after school.

During one of the sessions, there were some technical difficulties. The Study Island program had shut down for maintenance during the afternoon and we were not aware.

That session was more or less for questions being answered if possible, but I could not model how to do anything using the technology.

Teacher participation was a barrier that we faced. Some of the teachers that came were there each time, but some came sporadically. Teaching is one of those careers that is unpredictable, so when things come up, or parents want meetings, then the teachers have to deal with those things first.

### **Follow-Up**

Although the capstone did not go according to the timeline, it still worked out to be beneficial to the teachers at North LaFayette. The new teachers were appreciative of the trainings that were held, and the veteran teachers were excited because this is a program that we thought would be used in upcoming years of school and students would have already been familiar with it. The videos were not created before the training sessions, but they were created from the common topics that we discussed during the sessions. This way, I was able to understand the important things that teachers wanted to know more about.

As of this year, we no longer have two of these instructional programs. Toward the end of the year last year we were able to get the MAPS program. This school year, instead of purchasing IXL, North LaFayette decided to only use the MAPS program for these benchmarks. Study Island is also a thing of the past. This year, they have purchased Education Galaxy. I am eager to see how these two programs differ from the previous ones. My administration team has already asked about creating instructional videos for these programs for the new teachers this year. Although the programs have changed, the idea remains the same that these teachers need to know how to use these instructional programs in their classrooms. It will be interesting to see how successful students are with



these new programs. Although I made the instructional videos about those programs, there were still things that I did not like about them.

### **Discussion and Reflection**

I learned a lot about technology facilitation and leadership from completing this capstone. I have always believed that technology integration was important in the classroom, but lately, it has become more important due to us having a surplus of technology devices to use. When our school purchases instructional programs to use, we need to be prepared to integrate these programs into our curriculum. My capstone project will make this an easier transition for teachers who may not be aware of how to use these technologies in their classrooms. I was able to develop a survey for staff to voice their concerns on instructional programs, facilitate and lead the instructional sessions after school, develop a post-survey to see the changes that teachers had made following these instructional sessions, as well as develop videos to cover topics related to the programs for teacher reference. These videos were put on the website for teachers to use in order to become more successful in their classroom integration. As a leader throughout this capstone, I was able to understand the importance of the teacher feedback, the ability to relate to someone's issues, and the importance of the ability to understand what you are teaching others. I believe that I also learned a lot about the type of questions and help that teachers may require from a technology coach.

As we move into the future, I believe that teachers will continue to learn the importance of technology integration in their classrooms.

When looking at the standards that I originally used to discuss the capstone project that I would complete, I am proud that I was able to cover as many topics as I did. The first standard was "Visionary Leadership." I was able to lead a group of new teachers at North LaFayette toward our school vision with technology integration. I was able to train these teachers on how to use the instructional technology programs that NLE has purchased, allow them to instructionally plan using these programs, as well as recommend and implement strategies for these teachers to use in their classroom. Standard two was "Teaching, Learning, and Assessment." I was able to cover this standard as well with the training that I gave to teachers. I showed them how to teach using technology, provide differentiation to a variety of students, as well as how to assign specific assessments to students and use the data that the assessments give them. Standard three relates to the "Digital Learning Environments." Teachers were able to see the importance of using these technology devices in their classrooms. They were able to learn how to classroom manage with these tools, select which tools to use for their students, and communicate and collaborate with not only myself, but with other teachers who are using these programs as well. Standard four is focused on "Digital Citizenship & Responsibility." Before students and teachers even start using these programs, they have to understand the importance of internet safety, digital equity, and diversity awareness. I was able to help these teachers understand how to teach these concepts to students. Standard five is based on "Professional Learning and Program Evaluation." By using the survey in the beginning, I was able to see which programs had the most teachers needing help, and which topics needed to be covered in these programs. I was able to provide trainings based on these needs, and then to also use a post survey to see what teachers had learned throughout the

process. Standard six addresses “Candidate Professional Growth & Development.” The teachers who attended the trainings were great to share their information with others. They also spoke volumes about attending other training sessions about various topics in our school. I’m glad that a field experience such as this had the impact that it did on these teachers.

I am proud of myself, and the fact that I have been able to move forward from the beginning assumptions when starting this program. I remember taking those first semester classes and thinking, “What in the world have I gotten myself into? I can’t teach people how to do this stuff.” After time and learning new skills, I have become a more confident teacher, and I have been able to help many friends already with technology difficulties. I believe that if the opportunity arises, I will make a great technology coach in my school district.

### **Recommendations**

Teachers should support anyone who tries to offer a series of trainings at a school. It is believed that teachers need more support than they are currently being given, and they may feel more comfortable with a teacher showing them how to do things because they can easily relate. The teacher who trains should be mindful that although teachers may not all attend the trainings, they can offer their support to other teachers and the concept will be shared. Teachers should also offer suggestions as to the days that they can attend, that way the training teacher can have good participation. It was good to complete a website presentation as well, that way the teachers who could not attend could still get the information that was presented. There is a new found respect for those people who choose

to spend the extra time that they have in their day helping other teachers become more efficient learners.

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