

Chapter 13

A Scenario That Works: Adapting the Army's Soldier Skills Training Model to Teach K–12 Teachers Technology

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ABSTRACT

Technology use in K-12 classrooms in this era of rapid high-tech change ranges from deep and meaningful technological immersion to an outright classroom ban on electronic devices. Attempting to mitigate this technological divide between students and teachers, school districts increasingly require professional development in applicable student technologies and teacher support resources. Unfortunately, the standards for continuing education requirements are broad, money is tight, and development efforts are often far less organized. As unfortunate, current issues and general information sharing dominate the professional learning communities (PLCs) or teacher learning communities (TLCs) originally designed to fulfill professional development requirements. These challenges render the occasional professional development initiative included in a PLC or TLC event, ineffective where the fragmented, uninteresting, and often poorly planned technology instruction very rarely seems to stick. Drawing on experience with military training and continuing education training, the authors propose a simple, inexpensive, and internally resourced means used by soldiers to train individual and collective military tasks, to assist elementary and secondary teachers to learn how emerging technology works, and more importantly, how to maximize its effective use in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Constrained budgets increasingly limit the amount of money set aside for teachers' continuing education, deeming it less and less a priority. Nevertheless, while requirements vary from state to state, teachers in the United States must complete some level of continuing education to maintain state certification

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(Hoffman & Harris, 2016). Unfortunately, current issues, general information-sharing, and routine coordination now dominate Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) or Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs) originally designed to fulfill professional development requirements rendering the occasional fragmented, uninteresting, and often poorly planned technology instruction very rarely seems to stick. Simply put, a K-12 teachers' time outside of student instruction is limited and precious. Therefore, the best solutions for more effective teaching practices and especially those for familiarizing emerging technologies among teachers, must be simple, manageable, motivating, cost effective, resourced by internal means whenever possible, and void of everyday general information exchange. All school districts employ talented individuals whose knowledge they can exploit to further the use of technology across each school. What follows is a proven system used by the military adapted to help classroom teachers learn and more optimally utilize technology in their classrooms.

Professional Development for Teachers

Professional development is the periodic additional learning that takes place after one earns initial credentials required for a specific career field. Society rightfully expects and many states require attorneys, doctors, dentists, and other professionals to attend recognized educational events to retain licensure to practice where they reside. Most teachers endure similar mandates; however, standards are broad, they often change, money is tight, and development efforts are far less organized than those mentioned above, rendering teachers' professional development far more challenging and significantly more complex.

Hoffman and Harris (2016), in a state by state listing of continuing education requirements for teachers in the United States, warn that these complex standards both vary extensively and are subject to frequent changes by state legislatures and school boards. Developmental obligations range from no statewide requirement in states like California and Hawaii to "150 Professional Development Points (PDPs) plus 30 PDP's for each additional licensure" in Massachusetts (p. 4). Where no statewide requirements exist, school districts compensate with local requirements. Complicating matters, Continuing Education Units (CEUs) rarely transfer from one jurisdiction to another, sometimes not even within the same state. These challenges notwithstanding, teacher continuing education remains essential, particularly as it relates to technology. Renwick (2016) insists that classroom technology integration leads to almost endless enhanced learning opportunities, especially in the elementary classroom (p. 3). Nonetheless, evidence shows that teachers who speak highly of district-wide new technology demonstrations and research lectures on new and profound teaching techniques, rarely incorporate this new material into their own classrooms (Mouza, 2002; Orlando, 2014).

The New Teacher Project (TNTP) organization, a non-profit committed to improve teacher quality, recently conducted a two-year study on the impact of educational opportunities school districts provide for teachers. They found that districts spend on average \$18,000 per teacher per year on professional development and continuing education; however expected improvements did not materialize (TNTP, 2015). Additionally, although "...two-thirds [of teachers'] reported feeling relatively satisfied with their development experiences, only about 40 percent reported that most of their professional development activities were a good use of their time" (p. 3). Fred A. J. Korthagen, a leading researcher and well-published author on teacher improvement methodologies echoes the TNTP study findings in his recent article, "Inconvenient truths about teacher learning: towards professional development 3.0" (2016). He convincingly argues that, because teachers represent a wide range of emotional, intellectual, social, and

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