Chapter L
Moodling Professional Development Training that Worked

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ABSTRACT

Three junior high teachers and 12 senior high school teachers were introduced to online teaching strategies and tools in a three-day workshop. The teachers developed their basic online course shell on Moodle, an open-source online course management system. Following the workshop, teachers revised their course shells and created short teaching modules to meet the differentiated needs of their students. The modules were evaluated using a modified version of the Quality Online Course Initiative (QOCI) Rubric (Illinois Online Network, 2007). All teacher participants completed the workshop training and 14 successfully met all the QOCI criteria on their modules. This Moodle training was a capstone experience following three years of curricula, content, and pedagogical training through the ISAMS project. The project was funded as part of a No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Teacher Improvement grant which provided professional development for math and science teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Educators need to stop talking about how much and how fast the world is changing and start providing educational experiences that reflect those changes. Twenty-first century skills such as digital-age literacy, inventive thinking, and effective communication are necessary for students entering the Digital Age workforce (Lemke, 2002). According to a 2006 North American Council for Online Learning and Partnership (NACOL) and Partnership for 21st Century Skills report, 84%

of employers do not believe that K-12 schools are adequately preparing students for the workplace. The report suggested that online learning can offer students "access to online, collaborative and self-paced learning environments – settings that can facilitate 21st century skills" (p. 2).

This chapter describes a professional development model using workshop and post-workshop activities that helped junior high and senior high school teachers design, create, and use online course materials and alternative online strategies for delivering content that encourages student participation. The model followed the theoretical frameworks focused on the professional development research and Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development. The model paid small stipends for teacher training and for the completion of each Moodle course supplement. The development and implementation of the professional development training will be described. Participants' workshop evaluations and their continuing use of the online course modules in their classrooms will also be discussed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Continuous improvement is the prize sought by all effective school administrators. Yet, it is difficult to achieve at the secondary level and even more challenging to sustain. This project was developed using the research on adult learning theory, professional development, and technology integration to impact instruction and thus student learning.

Adult Learning Theory

Knowles (1990) reported that adults learn best when they are a) given a voice in determining the topics of study, b) shown how the class will help them connect new learning to their existing knowledge and/or experience base (Speck, 1996), and c) are provided with a program that is organized and has clearly defined goals and course objectives. Additionally, Knowles found that the learning must have practical application to the adult learner's work. It is also critical that adults be treated with respect. With a basis in Knowles' theory of how teachers (adult learners) learn best, we then examined the research on professional development.

Professional Development

Professional development (PD) models where teachers *sit and get* or experience *drive-by teacher training* do not work (Fullan, 2001; Guskey, 2002; Hoban, 2002). Professional development that does work: a) is sustained over a period of months or years, rather than days (Association of Curriculum & Supervision, 2003; Corcoran, 1995); b) focuses on the content taught by the teacher (Birman, et al., 2000; King & Newmann, 2000); c) has daily application (King & Newman, 2000); and d) is collaborative, fun, and is perceived as needed by the teacher (Killion, 2002; King & Newmann, 2000; Speck, 1996). Vygotksy's (1978) zone of proximal development can be used by the trainer through scaffolding strategies. Welk (2006) describes how Vygotsky's model can be used when working with faculty facilitators in an asynchronous online environment. Scaffolding strategies such as providing many opportunities for instructing, monitoring, and providing continuous feedback allows the shift of responsibility for learning to move from the trainer to the facilitator.

In order to build capacity for change, a job-embedded professional development (PD) framework was utilized. Job-embedded PD is defined as, "learning that occurs as educators engage in their daily work activities. It can be both formal and informal and includes but is not limited to discussion with others, peer coaching, mentoring, study groups and action research" (Galloway, n.d., p. 1). In job-embedded learning, participants learn by doing, by reflecting on their experience, and then by stretching (singularly or in a group) to the next level of excellence.