Who Am I?

I have been an educator since 1999. I began my career as a Learning Assistance teacher. I later became a primary teacher for three years, and then began teaching grade 5 seven years ago and I have been teaching this grade level ever since. During my time spent as a Learning Assistance teacher, I was able to work with students in small groups for remediation. Being able to support students in these smaller settings makes a world of difference in their level of focus and also in the amount of growth that they can potentially make. These early experiences have stayed with me, and have contributed to my interest in incorporating technology into my own classroom. Technology in a sense, can allow me to capture some of the advantages of that small group support by enabling me to individualize my instruction. I have been using technology in my classroom for quite some time, but I continue to find myself looking for more ways to incorporate educational technology into my instruction. District level professional development opportunities can only take my skills so far, so when I discovered the MET program, I knew that this was the next professional step for me to take. I began my MET journey this past September. I completed all four of the core MET courses last year, as I thought this would make for a solid foundation when completing my electives.

My Learning Goals

An area that I am challenged in every day in my classroom is how to go about meeting the diverse learning needs of my students. Through the MET program and in this course specifically, I would like to find out more about how technology can be used in the classroom setting to differentiate my instruction. Each year it seems that the students that I am working with are more and more diverse in regard to their learning needs and ability levels. It is so challenging to meet the needs of such varied students and I am hopeful that in this course I will learn to create, select and implement technology tools and resources to enable me to strengthen my skills as an educator. I am also ready professionally to make some serious changes in my classroom practice in the hopes of engaging those reluctant learners more consistently. I would like to create a more student centered or constructivist approach in the classroom in the hopes of increasing both student engagement and student accountability in regard to their own learning. I would love to take on the role of facilitator in at least some subject areas and encourage my students to take the lead on their own. I believe that technology coupled with sound pedagogy can help me attain these professional goals.

While conducting research in a previous course, I closely examined the potential benefits and pitfalls of technology in the classroom for both students and teachers. It quickly became clear that technology on its own is not going to automatically enhance student achievement or increase student engagement. McManis and Gunnewig propose that three criteria must be met in order for teachers and students to benefit from technology. The technology must be developmentally appropriate for the students, it must include tools to enable teachers to use it successfully, and it must be integrated into the classroom and curriculum. When children use computers in the classroom, they have a natural tendency to help one another, providing information and explanations to solve problems (McManis and Gunnewig, 2012). This picture painted by McManis and Gunnewig is what I hope to create for my learners. To do this, I would like to increase my knowledge base in regard to web and learning tools in general, while honing my skills at efficiently and thoughtfully selecting appropriate educational resources using a framework such as Bates and Poole's SECTIONS framework and/or Chickering and Gamson's Seven Principles of Good Practice.

LMS, Assessment, Social Software and Multimedia

I am keen to learn more about learning management systems (LMS) and social software. In particular, I would like to determine if these tools would be appropriate for the students that I work with (10 and 11 year olds). I am also excited by the potential that they both have to offer in regard to collaboration opportunities among my students, between my students and myself, and as a possible means of communication involving parents as well. I would like to learn all that I can about the inclusion of a wide variety of content forms in order to provide my students with a multimedia enhanced learning environment. As my knowledge in these areas is still quite basic, it is hard to pinpoint specific goals as to what I would like to learn about these resources. At the end of this course, I would love to have created some resources that suit the needs of my learners and can be used in my classroom to help deliver a unit of study. I would also like to learn how I can use these tools to both assess and provide prompt feedback to my students.

Resources Required

As a novice professional, I will require a number of things in order to master these technologies. I will require further background knowledge of the merits of using such technology, as well as practical 'how to' information as this is an area in which I need substantial growth. I will need to draw on the knowledge gained through my course work, as well as from the expertise that the course instructors and my fellow classmates can provide. I also have a few colleagues that are very confident technology users that will be assets to me should I need some troubleshooting support or advice. Becoming more familiar with the technology options that are available to me in my own school and any limitations placed upon me due to privacy and security policies imposed by my school district will be essential.

References:

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