Capstone Report Part B #1

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This capstone experience, blended learning, was introduced at Russell Elementary School (RES), located in Smyrna, Georgia, in the Cobb County School District. RES students struggled in the areas of ideas and coherence in writing. During the 2017-2018 school year, second-fifth grade students scored an average of 1.65 out of 4.0 in this area on the Write Score Assessment. Test results showed that students lacked the skills to create, develop, and convey the main and supporting messages in their writing.  They also showed weakness in making their writing coherent and follow a logical structure. As a result, a blended learning model was implemented in all second-grade classes to aid in increasing students’ understanding of ideas and coherence in writing.

**Description of the Capstone Experience**

There was an interest survey sent out to all second-grade teachers in January 2019. The purpose of the survey was to identify all teachers who were interested in learning about blended learning. All four teachers on the grade level stated that they were interested, so a mini-workshop was scheduled. The mini-workshop took place in February of 2019. During the workshop, participants were given an overview of blended learning. Teachers were also informed about the blended learning folder on OneDrive that would contain all information shared with teachers during presentations and other useful information. Options for future professional development on station rotation (a form of blended learning) were also discussed. Since March was a very hectic time at RES, teachers decided it would be best to schedule the next meeting in April.

In elementary schools, teachers are sometimes moved to a new grade level, depending on numbers, school improvements, or at the principal’s discretion. Two teachers left the second-grade team, and two new teachers joined the team. As a result, the candidate felts as if she was back at square one with implementing blended learning. In October, the candidate sent out an interest survey to the other four, second graders (and one first grade teacher), only three teachers replied. In November, the candidate sent out a blended learning pre-test to assess what teachers new about the program. No one from the second-grade team took the survey. About a week later, the pre-test was sent out again, still no results. Realizing that the end of the project timeline was approaching, the candidate met up with the team leader to discuss dates to introduce and train the team on blended learning.

On January 10, 2020, the candidate conducted a blended learning professional development. Teachers first started by taking a pre-test on blended learning to determine what they already knew about blended learning. Luckily, the pre-test was in real-time, and the candidate was able to see that as a team, they scored 65%. After carefully analyzing the data, the candidate concluded that only 1/2 of the teachers knew what blended learning was, 25% of the teachers thought 1:1 was needed to implement blended learning. Furthermore, teachers did not know the benefits of the station rotation. Next, the candidate used a PowerPoint presentation that included information such as what does station rotation looks like in the classroom, research behind it, how to implement it in the classroom, how to use for differentiation, and the benefits of the model. The presentation included a video and also addressed questions asked in the pre-test. During the presentations, the second-grade team were active participants and very excited about implementing station rotation. Their attitudes and questions showed that they were eager to learn more about this model. At the closing of the professional development, teachers were asked to take a quick survey and to identify three strengths of adding station rotation into their teaching. The PowerPoint was shared on OneDrive with participating teachers after the session for further review.

On January 29, 2020, the candidate led another round of training with blended learning. However, this time, the candidate focused on Nearpod to increase teachers’ awareness of Nearpod. The candidate used a PowerPoint presentation that included information that explored Nearpod, the research behind it, and how to implement it within the classroom. The second-grade team were active listeners throughout the presentation, but it seemed as if they had lost a little of their drive; there were a few questions asked to the presenter about Nearpod. Teachers were given a formative questionnaire that asked them to state three things they learned about Nearpod and how they can use Nearpod in the classroom. The candidate uploaded the PowerPoint into the shared folder on OneDrive for future reference.

The final training for station rotation was completed on February 23, 2020, via screencast. The screencast provided detailed steps in implementing station rotation into a classroom:

• Setting up groups based on students’ ability

• Starting with whole group mini-lesson

• Number of rotations and examples of work to put into each station

• A look at students’ in action

• Advice to make sure the implementation is successful

The screencast ended by thanking teachers for participating in this learning journey, and welcoming participants to ask any additional questions they might have when implementing station rotation. The presentation also included a link to a post-test to determine how much teachers learned about station rotation. The screencast video was uploaded to the OneDrive folder.

**Barriers and Obstacles**

In April 2019, the candidate who was in charge of the proposed capstone was diagnosed with a severe illness. The candidate had to undergo immediate surgery. As a result, the candidate had to stop all course work and focus on her health. The capstone was set to be finished by September 2019. However, the candidate was not able to finish out the rest of the semester or attend the summer semester; this was a huge barrier for the candidate and caused a delay in the coursework. Nevertheless, the candidate was able to return to school in August 2019 to continue with the implementation of blended learning.

**Capstone Report Part B #2**

**Discussion and/or Reflection**

A great deal of learning took place through the implementation of the capstone project. From the beginning, the candidate played the role of an instructional leader; this role allowed the candidate to collaborate with the school community to identify an authentic research study that not only supported the school’s technology goal but also supported the school’s academic vision. Soon, the candidate immersed herself into examining research-based practices that would assist in the improvement of teaching and learning. That practice was station rotation, a form of blended learning. Once the candidate experienced success in implementing station rotation with her homeroom students, the candidate stepped into another role, technology facilitator. As the facilitator, the candidate was able to use research to provide several Professional Developments (PD) for the second-grade team at RES. The PDs gave teachers background knowledge on station rotation and provided instruction on how to implement and enhance the curriculum to support learning for all students. Throughout the implementation of the capstone project, the candidate was able to practice critical skills as a technology leader. The candidate was able to execute the duties of a technology coach by utilizing the Instructional Standards proposed by Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) standards.

PSC Standard 5, Element 5.1, states, candidates, conduct needs assessments to determine schoolwide, faculty, grade level, and subject area strengths and weaknesses to inform the content and delivery of technology-based professional learning programs. The candidate successfully met this standard by administering a pre-test on station rotation. The results of the pre-test were then used to find out what teachers knew about station rotation and their coaching needs. The results of the pre-test also helped in determining the goal of the Professional Development (PD) on station rotation.

PSC Standard 5, Element 5.2, states that candidates develop and implement technology based professional learning that aligns to state and national professional learning standards, integrate technology to support face-to-face and online components, models principles of adult learning, and promotes best practices in teaching, learning, and assessment. During PDs, the candidate used PowerPoint presentations on station rotation, as a means to support face-to-face technology.

PSC Standard 3 states candidates demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to create, support and manage effective digital learning environments. At the end of each training, the facilitator made sure to allow teachers to reinforce a skill or strategy they learned by allowing teachers to iterate the strengths of adding station rotation into daily rotation.

On the other hand, PSC Standard 2.6 states candidates model and facilitate the effective use of research-based best practices in instructional design when designing and developing digital tools, resources, and technology-enhanced learning experiences. As stated before, the candidate had several PDs throughout the capstone experience that allowed her the opportunity to facilitate and model several technology integration strategies for research-based best practices (blended learning), using a technology-enhanced learning tool, Nearpod.

Standard 3, Element 3.3, states candidates develop, model, and facilitate the use of online and blended learning, digital content, and learning networks to support and extend student learning and expand opportunities and choices for professional learning for teachers and administrators. The entire goal of this capstone project was to increase students learning by implementing station rotation. Giving teachers the chance to use blended learning themselves will give them a clear understanding of this element 3.3.

PSC Standard 5, Element 5.3, states that candidates design and implement program evaluations to determine the overall effectiveness of professional learning on deepening teacher content knowledge, improving teacher pedagogical skills and increasing student learning. During the final PD, teachers were given a post-test about the use of station rotation. The post-test gave the candidate critical information that determined if colleagues met the goals and objectives of the capstone project. Furthermore, completing this standard helped the candidate to conclude teachers’ understanding of the implementation of station rotation.

Overall, the experience from completing the capstone taught the candidate how to build relationships amongst all stakeholders. Implementing the capstone project provided the candidate with the opportunity to provide classroom instructional support for team members through modeling, co-planning, providing feedback, and developing resources. This experience taught the candidate that as a facilitator, their job is to help teachers transform their instructional practice and improve students’ learning experiences. The candidate believes that this can be accomplished through building awareness and creating excitement for technology and technology resources. Above all, this experience taught the candidate that teachers are also students who desire to learn.

**Advice or Recommendations**

There are several things that the candidate would advise someone who wants to address a similar need, problem, or question. The first advice would be to take the peer coaching route. The peer coaching route would allow the facilitator the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues and help them focus on their learners’ specific needs. In addition, this model gives the candidate a chance to build a rapport with colleagues by taking them through five stages, step by step (Beglau et al., 2011). The next advice the candidate would suggest is to work with a small group, especially if it is their first time implementing a capstone project. Starting with one grade level would be feasible or recruiting a small number of participants who are interested in implementing. The candidate also suggests that as soon as participants are identified, the the project should start immediately. Furthermore, the candidate should also schedule meetings in advance, so there are ample opportunities to meet and work towards goals and achieve those goals on time. The last advice that the candidate would give someone is to remember that coaching is a learning experience for everyone involved; one should remember that the primary goal of a coach is to help support teacher’s transform their practice.

**References**

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