Internship Reflections

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| **September 2018**  I am currently at the very early stages of my internship. I’ve changed my mind a few times in regard to what I wanted to focus my internship on. Back in the spring during my last class, I was interested in using virtual field trips in the classroom. It seemed like a good idea at the time, but I quickly realized that realistically, it would be difficult to focus on for my actual internship, especially once I realized that it was only going to last one semester and not the entire year. I thought it would be hard to reflect on the success of the implementation of virtual field trips. I also thought teachers would not have enough time to learn about and use Skype (virtual field trips) in the time allotted for this internship (approx. 2 months). Once I realized this, I decided to go down the “tech tool” route for my internship. At the end of last school year, I sent out a quick survey to my staff asking if teachers would be interested in participating in sessions focused on tech tools and which types of tools they would be interested in. At this point, I still didn’t have a set action plan that I was going to follow.  During our first week back to school, I began to really think about how I wanted to present my PD sessions. I first thought I would have sessions after school on Tuesdays, but many of the teachers at my school don’t like to stay late and do “extra” things. So, I had to figure out how I wanted to promote participation for my internship and what kinds of incentives I could provide. I decided to focus my internship on 4 tech tools—ActivInspire, Screencast-O-Matic, SeeSaw, and Socrative. I also decided to format my sessions in an asynchronous way through the creation of websites. I thought this would appeal more to adult learners because they could work through the PD’s at their own pace, on their own time, and revisit certain resources as necessary. I also met with my S.T.A.T. teacher to discuss my proposed plan and inquire about being able to provide a CPD credit to participants. After working with her, and her getting in contact with the necessary BCPS office, I found out I got approved to offer the CPD credit to participants who completed all 4 sessions! This was a big success for me. I was so happy to hear this news. I am grateful to have such a supportive S.T.A.T. teacher at my school that’s willing to help me because I know that not all teachers are as lucky. I’m hoping this will be an incentive for teachers at my school to participate in my internship. After meeting with my S.T.A.T. teacher, I presented my internship (officially) to our staff at a faculty meeting. I explained briefly about the focused tech tools and offered the credit to anyone who completed all 4 sessions. I had 10 teachers sign up to participate.  Now, onto planning and creating my first session… |
| **PD Session 1- ActivInspire Reflection**  Once I sat down to create my first session, I felt really overwhelmed. For this specific program, ActivInspire, the tools available are endless, and I really had no idea where to begin. I talked to a few of my colleagues who signed up and asked if there was anything specific that they would like me to cover. This was helpful because I was able to gather a sense of direction in the way I wanted to go. I had to start with the basics and decided to not go into the more in-depth tools for this PD because those that signed up really still didn’t understand just the basic tools available. I underestimated how time consuming creating the website would be. It took me much longer than I thought. Going forward, I need to remember this and begin making my sessions earlier.  After pushing out the session, I got some great feedback from participants. They liked the set- up of the PD which consisted of the following steps:   1. Learn what the program is. 2. Sharing some ways I have used flipcharts personally as well as other ideas I found through research/ accessing my PLNs. 3. Learn how to make a flipchart using the program. 4. Create a flipchart/ use it with students. 5. Finally reflect on the successes and challenges.   I decided to continue using this format since it seemed easy to follow. Participants expressed to me that they liked that they could work at their own pace, on their own time, and then come to me with individual questions. So, at this point, I am happy with the way I am presenting my PD sessions. Personally, I think ActivInspire is the most overwhelming tool out of the 4 I chose, just because it has so many features embedded; so, my hope is that the next 3 sessions will be easy to navigate as well, as long as I keep the format of the websites the same. Overall, I think it was a good thing I chose this tool. Participating teachers expressed to me the following findings:   * Students were motivated/ engaged * Flipcharts helped to keep the teachers on task and move through the activity/ lesson * Allowed all students to participate during small- group instruction * Good visual for students * Creating flipcharts can sometimes be tedious work and take time, but are helpful to use in the classroom * 100% of participants said they would use ActivInspire again in their classrooms |
| **PD Session 2- Screencasting Reflection**  I am currently still following my original timeline. I released this second PD session two weeks after my first session. I felt like two weeks was enough time for participants to learn about the tool, try it out (at least) one time in their classroom, and then complete a reflection on it. At this point, all participants have completed all required parts of the first PD session.  Session 2 focused on screencasting using a free, online program called Screencast-O-Matic. Since I quickly realized how time consuming it was to create my first PD session, I began working on this session immediately after pushing out session 1. This helped me to not feel as overwhelmed and finish a little bit at a time. I used Weebly as my platform for creating my websites. I found a way to copy my first site and then edit it to fit the needs of my second session. Because I got such positive feedback on how the first session was set up, I chose to keep the format the same. For this session, I had to create some screencast tutorials showcasing the different aspects of the screencasting program. I liked to do this because I think it made the PD feel more personalized when the participating teachers were listening to me explain the tool instead of using a video created by someone they didn’t know personally.  Creating and pushing the session out was successful, but a glitch occurred for some participants as they were completing the session. This year, all teachers in BCPS got new computers with a new main adapter to connect their device to their interactive whiteboard. Some participants attempted to create their screencasts with their device plugged into this adapter. The video part worked, but their voice was not recorded. A few of the teachers came to me and I helped them solve the problem. They had to make sure their device was not plugged into the adapter during their recording. This ensured that the voiceover would be recorded as well. Another issue was that if they wanted to use their ELMO, they had to unplug it from the main adapter and plug in directly into their device. These issues were easily fixable. They were just more annoying to deal with than anything else. I didn’t come across this issue as I was creating the PD because I used screencasts that I had previously recorded before we got the new adapter and created screencasts at home without my device being plugged into it. This is something I wish I would’ve known ahead of time, but I was able to successfully help those who came to me asking for clarification. Going forward, it will be important for me to double check all the tech needs for the next 2 sessions to try to avoid any other mishaps during the sessions.  At the end of the session, again, I received all positive feedback, even with the technological glitch that occurred for some. Thankfully it wasn’t discouraging and an easy fix, so participants weren’t too upset with having to create their screencast a second time. All participants loved learning about screencasts and felt like there were many benefits of using them. Surprisingly, many of the teachers hadn’t heard of or knew what screencasts were before this PD, so I was super excited that I chose to focus on this as one of my tech tools! Participating teachers expressed the following findings during their reflection:   * Found that screencasting can be utilized in a variety of ways from giving to directions, to sharing an example, to pushing them out as sub plans (which I hadn’t thought of myself) * User-friendly for students to access and watch/ rewatch if need be * Easy to create screencasts once they got the hang of it and found it to be extremely beneficial to use with their students (motivating, engaging) * Didn’t have to repeat themselves over and over again if used to give directions * Could be in “two places at one time” * 100% of participants said they would use screencasting again in their classrooms |
| **PD Session 3- SeeSaw Reflection**  For this third PD session, I learned from before to make sure I start working on the websites early, so I continued to do that. I started creating this website right after I sent out session 2. This allowed me to not feel as stressed on time, and I was able to not rush through creating it. For this PD, I had to create a few screencasts, which take more time, only because I had to delete a few before I was happy with the ones I wanted to use for this PD. After giving it much thought and thinking about the steps it too me to implement the use of SeeSaw into my own classroom, I decided for this session to not make teachers have to try this tool in their classrooms. For the first two session, they were required to try the tech tool at least one time in their classrooms, but for this session I was not mandating that they do it with SeeSaw. Realistically, I didn’t think it was fair for them to only have 2 weeks to learn about the tool, create their class expectations, show their students how to use it, and then actually use it with their students. This took longer than two weeks for me to incorporate SeeSaw into my own classroom, so I didn’t want to overload the participating teachers. Instead, I had them join my class on the SeeSaw site and post their reflection in the journal, rather than using a Google Form this time. This allowed teachers to explore the SeeSaw site themselves and learn how to navigate. My goal was to allow teachers to learn about the benefits of using SeeSaw in the classroom, gaining some ideas and inspiration from my examples as well as the database on the SeeSaw platform, and eventually maybe using it in their own classrooms when they have time to implement a new (time-consuming at the beginning) tool.  By the end of this session, I was glad I chose not to make participants use this in their classrooms. I had a few participants who were a little bit behind with their reflections from the first two sessions, and I think this would have just been such an overload for them. Overall, I received good feedback from this tool; however, all teachers agreed that it’s definitely time-consuming to set expectations and introduce this tool in their classrooms. Many felt like they would like to use it, but just didn’t have the time to implement in right now in their classrooms, which I expected as part of their reflections. Participating teachers also expressed the following findings with the use of SeeSaw in the classroom:   * Great way for students to collaborate and communicate with each other * Shyer students have a platform to share their ideas * The commenting aspect could become a problem among students; CLEAR expectations would have to be firmly in place * Could be used as an extension activity for journal prompts- students could extend their thinking * A good tool to help improve typing & proofreading skills * Internet connection has been an issue in BCPS this year, so relying on an online journal prompt may not work with connectivity issues * Built- in word corrector, similar to Microsoft Word * Engagement levels could be higher among students since some teachers are limiting the time spent on devices this year   At this point, I have been stopped numerous times by participating teachers sharing that they really love how I’ve set up the (asynchronous) sessions online, they’re learning a lot of valuable information, the workload is fair, and they don’t feel overwhelmed with the expectations. So, I feel like my internship has been a success so far! I’ve spent a lot of my own time and energy creating these PD’s so the fact that teachers are really getting something out of them and it’s not a waste of their time makes me feel like everything I’ve done is worth it! |
| **PD Session 4- Socrative Reflection**  Finally, my last session! I think my internship was a success, but I really just didn’t have any idea how time-consuming it was going to be to create all my sessions, find/ make resources, etc. I feel like I’ve spent the last 2 months straight on my computer, so the fact that this is my last PD session helps to relieve some stress!  My final session was on Socrative, an online assessment tool like Kahoot. It allows teachers to create and customize quick quizzes and exit tickets to connect with any lesson. This seemed to be the most popular session among participants. Many knew of or have used Kahoot in their classrooms, but no one had used Socrative before. They liked that the site was easy to navigate and didn’t promote the competition among students, unlike Kahoot. It is a good tool to use to form small-group instruction or to use for an assessment.  Creating this session took the least amount of time. I think this was because there weren’t many examples to provide. It’s an assessment tool, therefore teachers use it for assessing students. There are not many other things you can do with this tech tool. When I planned out my internship, I wanted this to be the last session for that exact reason. With Thanksgiving shortening the time participants had to implement the tool, I felt like saving this one until the end would make the most sense. Most participants were able to create and implement their Socrative quiz within the shortened two-week period. Participating teachers expressed the following findings about using Socrative:   * Motivating and engaging for students * Free to use * LOVED the immediate feedback Socrative provides for teachers * Very easy to create quiz and very easy for students to navigate- no issues * Wish reports could be printed in color in the “report view” instead of exporting it into an Excel spreadsheet * Not set up like a competition/ race like Kahoot, so students are more likely to take their time and not just guess an answer to be first |
| **Overall Reflection & Next Steps**  Overall, I think my internship was successful! My goal was to provide teachers with more technology tool resources to create customized and differentiated instruction for their students. I believe that I met that goal. All participating teachers expressed that they learned several new things that they didn’t know before from a totally new tech tool to just new things within a tool they already knew about.  If I were to complete this internship again, I would conduct it in the same format. Participants all said for this topic, they liked the website-based PD as opposed to meeting face-to-face. They could work at their own pace and when it fit their schedule. They also said that they thought they had adequate time to complete the sessions with the two weeks they were given. For myself, however, I would push sessions out every three weeks instead. I think this would help with me not feeling as overwhelmed with finding resources and creating the sessions. Another thing I would change, which I thought of towards the end of my internship, is pushing out the sessions to all coworkers who are interested. I sent out a sign-up sheet and had teachers sign up at the beginning to complete all 4 sessions. However, I had some teachers interested in the ActivInspire PD who were not completing all 4 sessions. I sent out the website to them but told them they did not have to complete the reflection. If I were to do this again, I would send out a sign-up sheet for each tool, and then tell teachers that those who participate in all 4 sessions earn the CPD credit. There’s no reason I couldn’t have sent out each of my sessions to everyone, and then teachers could choose which one(s) they were interested in. Although I felt like I had good commitment and participation, this could have increased participation for individual sessions. A positive about creating my PD sessions online is that I have them readily available for any teachers who are interested in the future. I can easily access the website with relevant information and send it to them. This would be something I couldn’t do if I chose to do these sessions in a face-to-face environment.  As I move forward in my school, I definitely see myself being a tech- support teacher. I’ve had many teachers come to me even before going to our current tech liaison asking for help. With the knowledge I’ve gained in the Ed Tech program at Loyola, I feel confident with my technology skills, and only hope I can keep learning with the ever-changing technology tools and practices as I continue to teacher in the 21st century. |