Student Engagement through Teacher Websites

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**Description of the Capstone Experience and Results**

 The process of analyzing students, parents, and teachers regarding teacher websites at Lassiter High school was thorough and yielded great results. Students, parents, and teachers each received specific surveys to gather information regarding which websites are used, the ease of access and navigation of these websites, commonly used features, and features that are not beneficial. After gathering all this data, the data was analyzed to determine which websites are the most favored by students, parents, and teachers and why these are the most favored websites. Tutorial videos were developed for the three websites that were most liked by students and parents to help teachers with future implementation. The process of analyzing these teacher websites has given teachers a platform to use the feedback from students and parents to develop a better method of communicating via a teacher website to encourage student success.

**Process Planning**

The process of the project went as planned until the final stage. Students, parents, and teachers were quite cooperative and willingly contributed important data during the initial gathering process. The final step of producing the screencasts was also successful but at the end teachers seemed to have little interest in the results of the study. Many teachers were interested to see the results but were still not inclined to change their current classroom website. A future conversation with administration is planned to attempt to streamline teacher use of websites.

**Obstacles and Project Evaluation**

The project had some minor issues initially and adequate responses were hard to gather. Students were thorough in their responses especially because the surveys were given in the beginning of the school year when they were already overwhelmed with the amount of teacher websites they had to learn to navigate so their frustration caused them to willingly reply in hopes of a change. Unfortunately, the time period that the surveys were conducted was a hindrance to gathering data from parents and teachers. Many parents did not have updated emails in the ParentVue program so when a mass email was sent out to parents, many emails bounced back or did not have replies. A few weeks into school after parent open house, many more parent replies were received after emails had been updated. Teachers also did not reply, most likely due to the overwhelming amount of tasks to complete at the beginning of the school year. After open house, another teacher email was sent requesting information and once again received many more replies. After the initial struggle to get an adequate amount of data, the results provided a clear picture to move forward with further evaluation of teacher websites. The project was a success as data was provided from all stakeholders to determine which websites were the best for all three. The three best websites were further analyzed and allowed for the creation of teacher tutorial videos to help teachers with successful implementation.

**Project Follow-Up**

Overall the project was a success and based on the importance of the data, an additional conversation with administration to follow-up with the results would be beneficial. Due to the wide selection of choices teachers have when it comes to choosing a classroom website, students can often feel overwhelmed by the many different websites they have to learn to navigate. Based on additional comments from students and parents, this overwhelming feeling can hinder student success, especially during ninth grade. The additional conversation with administration would suggest that teachers are given three options for classroom websites based on the results of this study. By administration offering three options, teachers still have a choice between websites, but students would have a more manageable amount of websites to learn as ninth graders and would then have the same three websites to use throughout their high school career.

**Discussion and/or Reflection**

In completing the capstone, several important technology concepts were learned about facilitation and leadership. In the facilitation of the capstone, research first had to be collected from students, parents, and teachers within the school. This research was easily gathered by offering incentives for completion. After gathering the data, the data was analyzed to look for trends. The true capstone project began after the data analysis. Based on the data, several teacher websites were continually referenced as being user-friendly and having the total package. Through this data gathering, the major websites were further examined. These websites were examined and tutorials about them were created to facilitate staff use and full implementation of more elaborate classroom websites other than basic Typepad. Leadership was also evidenced in the creation and delivery of the website tutorials. Teachers had questions and concerns with the implementation of the websites and needed strong leadership to feel confident using one of the websites in their classes. The leadership is also ongoing as teachers experience difficulties and have minor issues throughout the school year regarding the use of the websites.

 The successful completion of the capstone project required various knowledge, skills, and dispositions that align with the language of the Professional Standards Commission (PSC). The initial knowledge when beginning the capstone had to take into account the content standards and technology standards identified by PSC standard 2.1, Content Standards & Student Technology standards. The capstone specifically had to address how the student technology standards align to the creation of teacher websites and enhance the learning experiences of the students (PSC 2.1). Additionally, as identified by PSC standard 2.2, Research-Based Learner-Centered Strategies, research-based best practices had to be used to develop not only appropriate student and teacher resources, but the capstone also had to address technology-enhanced learning experiences for the teachers to aid in implementation of teacher websites (PSC 2.2).

The capstone completion also required various skills to successfully create and implement the project. First, as addressed in PSC standard 2.5, Differentiation, effective differentiation needed to be addressed to engage teachers of all abilities and learning styles while leading training the workshops for the teachers (PSC 2.5). The recorded tutorial videos also allowed for more differentiation by adjusting the learning environment based on learner characteristics and levels (PSC 2.5). Having skills in online and blended learning was also essential as identified by PSC standard 3.3, Online & Blended Learning. The introduction of more elaborate teacher websites supports and extends student learning and the screencast tutorial videos allow more choices and opportunities for professional learning for teachers (PSC 3.3). Basic troubleshooting was also a necessary skill as addressed via Standard 3.5, Basic Troubleshooting, as basic problems required solutions and quick fixes while working through the introduction and implementation of teacher websites (PSC 3.5).

Positive dispositions were also a necessary component to the capstone project. As outlined in Standard 1.1, Shared Vision, the development of a shared vision while working on the capstone project drastically improved the attitudes and enthusiasm of the staff members to want to implement more elaborate classroom websites in their individual classrooms (PSC 1.1). As addressed in Standard 1.4, Diffusion of Innovations & Change, this change in teachers was largely brought on by the research and recommendation of the capstone project that students benefit more from teacher websites with more options than a simple blog which could ultimately lead toward a change in the ways in which teachers use their classroom websites (PSC 1.4). Additionally, the capstone project also addressed Standard 2.3, Authentic Learning, in which authentic learning was modeled to demonstrate the capability of an engaging website and the resulting impact on the audience (PSC 2.3). After teachers participated in the authentic learning by the facilitator, they were more apt to involve their students in the authentic learning experience brought on by effective teacher websites.

For future implementation or an alternate study, several pieces of advice should be considered. First, the candidate needs to ensure that his or her colleagues are open to new ideas and technology integration. This capstone project was fortunate to work with fellow teachers that were very open to new ideas regarding technology. Second, when gathering data, offering a reward such as a treat or extra credit can increase participation and gather a wider array of opinions and results. Additionally, the candidate must not only be comfortable recording screencasts but be confident and engaging while filming the tutorials. Peer relationships are also essential to develop an environment where teachers feel comfortable asking questions and seeking help for troubleshooting.

**References**

GaPSC (2016). *Instructional technology standards.* Retrieved from:

<http://bagwell.kennesaw.edu/files/7514/0378/4486/PSC-Standards_Flyer.pdf>