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### Two Teachers, Two Technology Users

The two teachers interviewed, Sam Kriegal and Cassandra Leuty, are both in their first year of teaching at Hickman High School in Columbia, Missouri. Both teachers were student teachers at Hickman, so they began the year with an awareness of the available technology. In their classrooms they have a computer reserved for teacher use, a projector hooked up to that computer, and a SMART Board. Sam also has one computer available for students in his classroom. Sam teaches English 2 and Literacy Seminar, a remedial reading class. Cassandra teaches Special Education U.S. History and Special Education World History.

#### **1. What are the different types of technology you use in your classroom?**

**CL:** In my classroom, I used microsoft office to make my worksheets, tests, etc. I use eschool to take attendance and to follow my caseload. I also use NetIEP to work with special ed forms. As far as instruction goes, I use my smart board a lot. We often write on it to go over answers, I used powerpoint and smartnotebook for different lessons. I also use youtube, safari montage and discovery education to stream videos.

**SK:** I use the smartboard almost everyday to post the daily schedule and to do power point-type of lectures and presentations with slides that I can write on for examples. I use youtube at times, as well as the DVD to introduce film and other video. For music, I connect my iPod to the computer through a cord borrowed from the media center to play through the smartboard projector speakers. I use the Hickman High homepage and the Media Center website more than other websites. Recently during the beginning of my research unit, I have used the Media Center Website and the databases on the website to show students how to do advanced searches, and how to narrow down topic searches using different methods. I have also used the mini-cameras from the media center to film students doing think-alouds, which is the topic of my research for the fellows action research class. I use eschool to post and monitor grades and e-mail to contact parents, students, and others.

**2. Why do you use these items? How do they help either you or the students be more effective in the classroom?**

*CL:* I prefer to make my own worksheets instead of using a book or premade resources because then they are tailor-made to the needs of my student. I use my smartboard to give students examples or the answers when we are going over assignments. It also really helpful to put text up there because you can highlight parts of it to discuss with the class .Plus, the smartboard is much more convenient than the overhead. Powerpoint and smartnotebook are just really convenient as well as safari and discovery ed. We are required to use NetIEP and eschool

*SK:* I try to appeal to student interest as much as possible, so introducing topics through different mediums is important. I put my schedule on the smartboard because I switch from room to room, so I cannot write it on the board for every class. I also like to be able to write things on the smartboard pages, and I like to have students participate in brainstorming ideas, making lists, etc. on the smartboard. I think students are more effective in the classroom when they think things are interesting and relevant, and because most of the students in our classrooms are familiar with technology in their own lives, it can be a good way to reach students who can be unresponsive. Jill suggested I use a documentary on a female basketball player in high school who became pregnant and lost her eligibility to play. I used the text to introduce summary, determining importance, and some other objectives. I realize I could do this with a short story, or a larger text, but it would not seem as interesting or relevant, and I think this is the best way to use technology in the classroom.

**3. What other pieces of technology would you like to use if it were available or if you had more time to prepare it?**

*CL:* I would really like to learn to use the sensa (?) clickers. I think this would help kids be more involved in trying to answer questions without feeling intimidated about getting it wrong. I would also like to learn to do more stuff with smartnotebook than what I know how to.

*SK:* I think creating student-filmed book review commercials or Shakespeare scenes redone would be interesting. I also think having an angel website or a course website which I actually used to post assignments and schedules would benefit students, but I do that now with physical schedules and a crate with a folder.

**4. What types of training have you received--either in college or at your job--to help you use technology?**

*CL:* I have taken inservices for eschool and netIEP. I have had one technology course as a graduate student. Everything else I have taught myself or asked a coworker.

**SK:** In college, one of my undergraduate education courses was teaching English through media, which was part of a series which included teaching writing and reading as well. These were three separate classes. I did an in-service on Angel, which was offered through CPS, which gave tutorials on some of the technology listed above. We were also given an overview of e-school during our new teacher orientation. I am currently taking a class for fellows online which is titled: “Meaningful Learning with Technology.” This consists of discussion posts on reading materials and websites which are often “b.s.” to be honest.

### **5. How do you feel your use of technology impacts your students' learning?**

**CL:** I think my students definitely enjoy technology, so I wish I was better at incorporating it in my class. They seem to really like the smart board, especially to write on it, or to high light what they are reading.

**SK:** I think it creates more relevant and relatable mediums to offer more interesting content. The lack of availability of computer labs negatively impacts student learning, because I often have to sacrifice what would be better in the lab for what can be done in the classroom, just because computers are not available. I do think we have more availability than most schools though, so I am not complaining too much. I really love the media center website. I think the catalogue, book list function, and MP3 downloads of books can be very beneficial for students.

### **6. Are there ways in which your specific type(s) of students respond to technology differently than other students might?**

**CL:** I think my SPED students definitely enjoy are are more engaged when they can follow along with the reading on the smartboard. They often get lost or don't know what word I am on. Plus, it helps them see a model of active reading.

**SK:** I don't think so. I am continually surprised by how unproductive students can be in the labs, but I think this a common concern. They are also relatively unaware of some of the functions in word or other programs. I can learn things from my students, but on the whole, I think I am surprised by how little they know when they have grown-up with computers, like myself.

### **7. Is student access to technology an issue in your classroom? How does it change your use of technology when some students have limited access to technology at home?**

**CL:** I wish we had more resources as far as computers went. I would love to do a lot on the computer, but it's hard to plan in advance. I also think that most of my kids don't have computers at home so as our society changes I think it's important for them to be technology savvy.

Unfortunately, we can't always get to the computer lab. At least I can project some things that I am doing on the smart board for them all to see.

**SK:** I think making sure you allot enough time in the classroom to finish projects, do research, etc. is important, because even if you have a couple of students who do not have computer access at home, I think you need to make sure they can complete the entire assignment during class time. I think this is true with most assignments though, even if they are not technology-related. One major problem is the amount of absences and the amount of absences that coincide with lab days. It is hard to send a student out of class to make-up the work they missed in the lab when you are continuing with something else, but it is hard to deny that opportunity if they do not have computer access at home. I do stay after school most days, but students rarely take advantage of this.—I don't know if I answer that exactly how you wanted.

It's fair to say that both teachers make full use of the technology that is easily available in their classrooms. The most basic but most useful way seems to be for organization. They both use eSchool software to take attendance, figure grades, and communicate with parents and students. As a special education teacher, Cassandra uses NetIEP to keep track of the students on her caseload and to complete the extensive required paperwork. They each use a SMART Board and projector instead of a dry erase board to list each day's goals and assignments, which allows them to stay organized as they switch from classroom to classroom. Many of these uses of technology were forced upon them (e.g., NetIEP, electronic grades), but they both seem to see the benefits of using the technology.

Another similarity is that both teachers see technology as a way to engage students and to increase student learning. As teachers who are also recent students, they both understand Sam's sentiments when he says, "I try to appeal to student interest as much as possible, so introducing topics through different mediums is important." They use technology in an active way by putting texts on the SMART Board so that they can teach with them, modify them, and allow the students to interact with the texts. Due to a serious lack of available computer labs at their

school, the focus seems to be on using technology with a full class, not to teach individual students. I think Cassandra nicely lists some of the benefits of technology when she says her students “are more engaged when they can follow along with the reading on the smartboard. They often get lost or don't know what word I am on. Plus, it helps them see a model of active reading.”

One final similarity is that both teachers are aware of the limits of technology and, in some ways, the failure of technology. Although each would agree that it has made their teaching better, they seem to be slightly frustrated that it has not increased student learning as much as it could have. The causes of this include limited teacher training, limited time for teachers to prepare technology, the limited resources available at their school, student unwillingness to take advantage of technology, and a surprising lack of technological skills on the part of their students. In addition, student absences and a lack of Internet access outside of school mean that not all students get the same advantages from technology. Cassandra and Sam both seem to have a clear vision of how technology could *surround* their students and truly lead to increased learning, but they are also aware how far they are away from that.

While they both make use of the technologies available in their own classrooms, Sam has taken advantage of the equipment and resources available through the school's media center and seems to be more creative in implementing a variety of technology mediums. Both teachers regularly utilize the SMART Board, PowerPoint slides and streamed video, but Sam has also implemented lessons that utilize mini-cameras for videotaping student reflection, his students use the school's online resources like the media center book catalog and down-loadable audio books for locating reading material, and he uses the periodical databases to teach research strategies.

Time appears to be the main factor preventing these teachers from incorporating additional technology in their classrooms though both are interested in doing so. Cassandra is interested in learning more about the Senteo interactive response system which she believes will allow for more student participation through anonymous feedback. She would also like to learn more about the advanced features available through SMART Notebook. Sam wants to incorporate student filming to reinforce learned material and utilize a learning management system or class website for posting a class calendar and assignments. All these technologies are available to both teachers through the school district; therefore, it would seem that lack of time to learn and implement these technologies as well as schedule unavailability (there are only a few Senteo systems in the building) are more at issue.

Though both are relatively the same age, Sam's undergraduate education included some technology-infused coursework, though minimal, while Cassandra's education didn't include technology course work until graduate school, but again, very minimally. Given their considerably young age and access to all the current technological gadgets, the expectation prior to the interviews was that these teachers would incorporate a much wider variety of technology-based activities, tools, software, etc. into their daily practice. Given their lack of undergraduate and graduate technology training, this is more understandable.