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ACTIVITY 2.0: EDUCATIONAL ASSUMPTIONS (OPTION 2)

Student Motivation

Students are generally more motivated when technology is used for lessons or completing assignments. I have been fortunate enough to have multiple student computers in my classroom for all seven years that I have been a teacher. Students always want to use the computers. Even something as basic as a worksheet seems to gain more student interest if they are allowed to somehow use a computer. Students also seem to show more interest in lessons where the teacher uses technology to present the material. Well-designed PowerPoint presentations or cool animations to demonstrate a concept seem to go a long way toward student understanding because they are more engaged in the material.

Teacher Motivation

When presented with a new technology application during training, teachers are mostly excited about it, but they usually do not end up applying the new technology to their own teaching. It seems to me that many teachers do not know how to make the jump from professional development to practical classroom application. From what I have learned in previous classes, I believe this is due to a lack of follow-up coaching. Furthermore, it seems as if teachers are so busy accomplishing the demands of teaching that they are reluctant to step out of their comfort zone to try something new. I have been guilty of this myself at times.

Teaching Effectiveness

The ability of teachers to effectively use technology in their teaching depends on how comfortable they are with technology in general. There are several teachers in my school who are just plain uncomfortable with technology, almost to the point of being phobic. Others are willing to learn, but they have established in their minds that they will fail or that something will inevitably go wrong with the technology when they try to use it. They seem to feel that they have never received enough training to actually use it in class and they have felt overwhelmed when they have sought out training in the past. These teachers seem to think that the ability to use technology is something that people are born with. They do not realize that most of us who are adept at using technology learned a great deal through our failures. It is not a matter of us being smarter, more trained or born "techies". In truth, we are simply more willing to be adventurous when it comes to technology usage in our classrooms.

Administrator Practices

Administrators recognize that technology can benefit education, yet they are reluctant or unwilling to financially support technology innovations using the district's general budget. In a previous class assignment, I was required to take a detailed look at

our district's technology plan. It outlined many great ideas involving technology, all of which sounded great on paper. The costs were also outlined, and needless to say they were very high. However, when I later looked at the district's budget, the amount budgeted for new technology was $0. It seems that while administrators want teachers to use new technology, they also want teachers to find ways to pay for it through grants or other sources. Furthermore, in some instances the administration has pulled funding for technology that was already in place. Just last year, the superintendent decided that we were spending too much money on toner, so they pulled out all of the laser printers in the district and now refuse to buy cartridges for teachers' ink jets. We now only have the option to print without color to a copy machine. Technology is great, but it *does* cost money, and usually a lot of it. We could surely save lots of money by getting rid of all the computers and requiring students to use chalk and a slate board. However, if we want to be a modern educational institution, we have to be willing to pony up the cash.