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MAET Summer 2011

Final Reflection Paper

Look Back:

Education used to involve teaching technology. Teaching the correct way to insert a piece of paper into a typewriter, where to place your fingers while typing, and how to insert and save on a floppy disk. However, as we enter a new era education is now about the integration of technology. It's about creating digital stories, using smartboards, and teaching via the Internet. As the digital age continues to evolve, educators must evolve as well. The summer hybrid course at Michigan State University gave me an insight on how to turn my teaching into integration and allow for innovation in my classroom.

During the two-week face-to-face portion of the course we covered a lot of material. My learning was broken into two major parts: the theories behind learning and how technology fits into education and education fits into technology.

When talking about learning we discussed different learning and psychological theories. Behaviorism was the first learning theory we covered. Behaviorism is based on measureable responses and various ways to change behavior. Although I had heard these terms before, they were brought to me in a new light through our discussions. In order to further our learning we were given the task to create a presentation about educational software that portrayed a specific concept. I took a lot out of this assignment. Our group was given chaining and extinction, the one concept I was having a hard time grasping. So through this assignment I was able to gain a better understanding of chaining and extinction and how it is displayed in

educational software. Also, I found a new educational software to explore and enjoyed learning about it (WolfQuest). Finally, I gained a lot of knowledge about screencast-o-matic, jing, and powerpoint while creating the assignment. I was able to really see the connection between the technology (WolfQuest, powerpoint, jing, etc), pedagogy (give an engaging presentation) and content (chaining and extinction). It was because of this assignment that I finally had my a-ha moment** with TPaCK.

The next day we discussed Cognitive Psychology. This may have been my favorite day overall. I learned so much and was excited to show off my learning and share it with my peers and students! The readings and discussions were insightful and educational. While reading, "Changing Minds" by Howard Gardner I came across many passages that really brought me a better understanding of this theory. For example, "a key to chaining a mind is to produce a shift in the individual's 'mental representations'". This links directly to misconceptions and in order to "shift" an individual's thinking you need to provide a new way to look at it and a new understanding. The second reading by Levstik and Barton talked about prior knowledge and its role in learning (and forgetting). They said, "If you can't build on something they [students] already know, they can't learn it". It makes sense. You must tap into their experiences and prior knowledge in order for learning to take place. They went on to say, "To help students develop their understanding, teachers must directly address the knowledge students bring with them to school and build on it whenever possible". A simple, 'tell me what you think you know', can make the difference between learning and memorizing. Both articles helped me to

understand that cognitivism is the manner in which information is organized. When we got into

class that day, we completed several different activities. I really enjoyed the various activities

we did to help us see cognitivism in action. They were great examples of how we encode

information, retain information and retrieve information. I immediately thought about how to

incorporate what I have learned into my classroom. Many students have trouble with their

metacognition. I can see myself sharing some of the activities with my students to help them

understand how they encode, retain and retrieve information. (Not to mention if they can spot

the gorilla.)

I related the excerpt Teaching that Sticks by C.Heath and D.Heath. to the Cognitive

Psychology theory. This excerpt got me thinking about how can I make learning stick and how

can technology help me do this. Punya shared an acronym to help remember how to make your

teaching stick: C-Success. Create Simple yet Unexpected, Concrete and Credible, Emotional

Stories that Stick! Once again, the focus was on "anchoring the information to what students

already know".

While discussing Piaget, another theory, Punya talked about assimilation and accommodation.

He made that connection that assimilation is making the strange familiar, or taking new

information and fitting it into an existing schema. Accommodation, on the other hand, is making

the familiar strange. I was directly able to relate to this. In 5th grade we teach that when you

multiply 2 numbers the product is always larger and then we take it back when we teach

multiplying fractions. Using those two words, familiar and strange, helped me to understand

why so many students have difficulty with understanding why it is when you multiply fractions it results in a smaller product. I'm taking a concept they are familiar with (multiplication) and making it strange (product is smaller).

One day in class we were posed with the question, "What is an educational technology?" I automatically started thinking of gadgets only used in my classroom and educational software and websites. However, I was pleasantly surprised when I realized I needed to see things through new eyes. While most technologies are not educational, we as users and teachers need to redefine it and re-purpose it to become educational. For example, the professors in this course were able to take a technology such as wikispaces and relate it to an elementary special education teacher and a superintendent by teaching us about the website and allowing us to repurpose it to fit our needs. Therefore, when integrating technology into my content areas, I don't have to use specific websites, but rather take on technology and re-purpose it.

With thought of redefining and repurposing technology in mind I was able to look at technology with new eyes. I learned so much about technology and different technologies I can use in my classroom. Through the mini-assignments and tech tips, I have a browser full of bookmarked sites. One of my bookmarked sites is Weebly. I have to say, I fell in love with this website. I have created or contributed to over 5 different sites. Our group decided to use Weebly for both of our graded group assignments, I put my portfolio on Weebly and I created a classroom website to use with Weebly. I look forward to sharing the tools this wonderful website has to offer. Another website I learned a lot about but did not enjoy as much was

Wikis. I attempted to use it a couple times and decided I liked Weebly much more. However, Wikispaces is a good tool for collaboration. While Weebly does allow collaboration, only one person can be on a page at a time, unlike Wikispaces, where numerous people can type on the same page at the same time.

During our face-to-face portion of the course, I found myself using Jing and Camtasia on almost a regular basis. I am so happy to have learned about these because I see so much potential for them in my classroom. I have continued to explore both of them and I am learning a lot during my exploration. While Jing is more straight forward, Camtasia has a lot to offer and I am continuously finding new little tricks.

One of the most beneficial aspects of the course were the small mini assignments in which we were given different websites to explore and then present to the class. A lot of my learning about various sites took place during the presentations. Hearing about the pros and cons of each site allowed me to narrow down the list of sites that I could potentially find beneficial in my classroom (and daily life). I constantly took notes, opened the various sites and played around with them of those that were deemed useable.

Overall the amount I learned in the span of two-weeks was incredible. I was able to expand my knowledge about technology and understanding which will inevitably make me a better teacher. I look forward to school starting so the implementation, integration and innovation can begin!

Look Forward:

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There was a time when I thought the year 2000 would bring flying cars, vacations to the moon, and the ability to record a television program without a VHS. At least I predicted one out of the three. I can't believe I thought there were going to be flying cars, but maybe what is scarier is that I never thought about the concept of the Internet and World Wide Web. So how do I plan for a future that is so uncertain? I'm not quite sure, but I'm going to try. In 5 years I can see my career going in a couple different directions. I do know for sure that in January I will graduate from the Master's Program. I plan to start this year and continue as long as possible integrating technology into the content I teach. However, I also want to be a leader and share my knowledge with others. I would like to work more closely with our technology department in our county. In five years a lot could happen. One reason for obtaining a Master's in Educational Technology was to open doors career-wise. While I love the classroom, I also can see myself becoming a technology teacher or coach. Or even leaving the education setting and working for a software company or corporation that focuses on educational technology. Either way, I see educational technology as my future whether it be in the classroom or a cubicle.

Due to my uncertainty of my future, it remains critical that I keep up with my personal and professional learning networks. Our class alone has provided many resources in which I plan to use to expand my knowledge. Most of our assignments dealt with website and/or software and many websites were created in which we discussed resources and gave links to others. This course is rich in information and I plan to continue to explore it. While in East Lansing, I was fortunate enough to have met many people and was introduced to many blogs, books, articles

and journals. One book I ordered and plan to start reading in the new future is <u>Made to Stick</u> by the authors who wrote <u>Teaching that Sticks</u>. Although the book is said to be business orientated, I feel that the education system and business system do share some similar aspects. Another neat website I came across while searching for the book is a blog called "Teaching that Sticks". Although the blog is not the same author as the book, there are many valuable resources and articles noted. I will also, of course, stay up to date with Punya's blog as well as Petra's. It is not only just reading the blog, but the comments have a lot of rich information in them as well. I have come to find blogs as an interesting resource that I may have not used in the past.

Another wonderful resource that has been created I our facebook group site. We have created a wonderful network of people this summer. This network has taught me so much already. Our facebook group constantly has updated information and most of it is useful. I will continue to partake in the facebook group discussions and I hope other do as well as it has proven to be a valuable resource. I plan to look back through the facebook group starting with Day 1 and check out the different links that people have posted. What a great way to create a classroom community and encourage communication.

As we all know, there is nothing stagnant about education or technology. Both are always changing, adapting, and evolving. There are new theories, new gadgets, new studies and new revelations. It is important to stay up-to-date and current with all the resources.

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As I look back and look forward, I stand in the present. I can see the blue computer screens of the past and the tablets that become teachers in the future. But I stand here in the present. I have learned from the past and look forward to the future. It is now though that we as educators have to take charge. Embrace change and prepare for more. I started my teaching career using an overhead projector and I have NO clue how I will end it. I do know that when we teach our content we must integrate technology and allow for innovation.

(**Aha Moment- I was introduced to the TPaCK framework in CEP 812. I had a vague understanding of the concept, but was not fully grasping what it was. That is, until I entered the summer hybrid course. It clicked- TPaCK, I get it. They were going to help us with getting to know various Technologies, teach us various theories to help us with our Pedagogy and as classroom teachers, we all have our different content that needs to be covered. I'm not sure why it took so long, but finally I was able to see the connection and understand the integration.)