Capstone Project Report

Nkenze Jones

Kennesaw State University

**Description of Capstone Experience and Results**

The plan outlined in the capstone project proposal was to provide Google Applications training for teachers at Westside Elementary School. Data collected from a needs assessment suggested that teachers needed training in Google. The plan was to increase teachers’ ability to complete simple task using Google Applications for Education (GAFE). Things did not go as planned; I was unable to train all the teachers at Westside. Many teachers did not want to give up their time or felt like they already had too much on their plates.

At the start of the project, I met with my mentor and my administrators to discuss my plans. Together we brainstormed a list of teachers for me to meet with and review my plans. We feel that fourth and fifth grade teachers would benefit the most from the training. I met with the teachers to discuss the project and to give suggestions about how using GAFE could promote a blended learning environment for their students. Only two out of eight teachers were willing to do the training. I later approached the kindergarten teachers about GAFE training. I was able to train the kindergarten teachers. We covered sharing and setting up Google Classroom. I was also asked by the administrators and leadership team to design a system for teachers to record student achievements for each grading period using Google Sheets. After completing a worksheet for every teacher, I trained the academic coach to use the spreadsheets. She now is in charge of updating the achievement system. The system proved to be very beneficial for everyone. We no longer have a paper trail that sometime get misplaced. The system allows teachers a quick and easy way to identify the students’ achievements for our school’s celebration assembly.

Two months into my capstone project, my school district changed its focus from GAFE to a district-wide rollout of Illuminate. Illuminate is a web-based assessment (learning) system. My administrators selected me as the lead teacher for Illuminate training. I attended the training sessions for Illuminate and started training the teachers at Westside. The training of Illuminate has been successful for the fourth and fifth grade teachers. They immediately started using the program after the training. Our school decided to complete the state assessments online for fourth and fifth grade. The teachers felt using Illuminate would help prepare their students for the online format of testing.

At the start of this school year, I created handouts for all teachers in the school district to use for self-directed training in Illuminate to create and assign assessments from the item bank and by uploading previously saved assessments in pdf or word. I also have provided one-on-one training for new teachers in other grade levels. I plan to follow-up with the training by creating interactive assessments for the teachers to use as instructional tools.

**Reflection**

In completing the project, I learned that facilitating leadership in technology is extremely difficult when teachers do not see a real need for the technology. I was able to show leadership skills by developing an agenda for trainings. Some teachers gain knowledge about GAFE and were able to implement and expand their skills with the applications. I effectively integrated technology into my teaching practice by teaching my kindergarten students about Google and how to use Google Docs to write and share sentences. It was obvious the lesson was a success when my students were able to write complete sentences and share their work with me and other students in the class. My colleagues and administrators were impressed with how well the students used the applications and wanted the same for their students. This give me the opportunity to help them set up Google Classroom and have some mini-lessons on GAFE. My main goal was to help teachers provide a blended learning environment for their students and maybe implement a flipped classroom approach. No one seemed to want to put in the work to start this part of the project.

My mentor was a great help and support for me throughout project; because of him, I was able to expand my training to other teachers in the school district. He also helped me gain more knowledge and skills for use GAFE. I was able to share that knowledge with the school counselor, academic coach, and other teachers. They were able to create spreadsheets and databases using Google Sheets. I assisted other teachers in successfully utilizing technology to improve assessments through the use of Illuminate. Illuminate is a learning and assessment platform that allows teachers to assess students on standard. Teachers can use the data to drive instruction by differentiating instruction or providing one-on-one instruction for struggling students. The majority of our students complete the state assessment online; Illuminate provides students with experiences of using an online platform and getting familiar with the online format. Illuminate is used to create, support, and manage effective digital learning environments. The training with Illuminate was more successful than the training for GAFE. More teachers were willing to learn about Illuminate because the implementation of the program was coming down from the superintendent and it was something that could really benefit them. I was able to help the instructional technology coordinator by creating handouts of step by step instructions for creating two types of assessments and how to administered the assessments.

The best advice to give someone who is going to provide professional development to other educators would be to make sure the professional learning is something the teachers want and need to improve teaching and learning in their classrooms. I used a needs assessments completed by administrators about what technology their teachers needed. I wished that I have create or design my own needs assessment before beginning this project. I plan to continue helping others use technology to improve teaching and learning. I love assisting and teaching others about technology.