

Chapter 50

Engaging Preservice Teachers in Professional Development About iPads

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ABSTRACT

The iEducate mini-conference was a professional development approach used in a college of education that has a one to one iPad initiative. Students were strongly encouraged to attend workshops on effective iPad integration strategies for the classroom during a one-week period. A total of 87 students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members participated and two-thirds indicated they would participate in similar events in the future. Participants indicated that opportunities to share their knowledge and collaborate with peers to explore new applications and integration strategies, connect new knowledge and skills to K12 classroom practice, and talk to K12 students about their vision for technology integration were beneficial outcomes of the experience. Discussion of the structure and management of the event, student feedback and plans for future implementations are provided.

We know from K-12 one to one initiatives that professional development is important for effective use of iPads in the classroom (Ostashewski & Reid, 2014); but what kind of training is effective for preservice teachers? Research regarding preservice teacher education shows that completing a single class on technology integration is not enough and findings suggest technology should be integrated across the undergraduate curriculum in order to be effective (Mehlinger & Powers, 2002; Niederhauser, Lindstrom, & Strobel, 2007). There is a gap between the technology skills that inservice teachers use regularly and what most teacher education programs address in courses (Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Ertmer, & Tondeur, 2015). Additionally, preservice learning opportunities frequently fail to model the kinds of activities that may constitute professional development for practicing teachers (Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Ertmer, & Tondeur, 2015). Preservice teachers who have more experiences learning how to use technology, are more

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-7305-0.ch050

confident and more likely to use technology in their teaching careers (Paraskeva, Bouta, & Papagianni, 2008). So in the context of a one to one initiative it may be important to offer more technology instruction beyond what can be included in coursework where competing requirements (ie.. content, classroom management, learning theory) may not allow sufficient time for adequate technology instruction; and model different approaches that better mirror inservice teacher experiences.

Niederhauser, Lindstrom, and Strobel (2007) found that in order to support K-12 teachers to integrate technology in their classrooms to address the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) their preparation for the classroom must include models of integration paired with content and pedagogy aligned with the NETS. Further, multiple studies propose technology integration to address the NETS be coupled with methods courses that weave content, pedagogy, and technology integration practice together (Martinovic & Zhang, 2012; Niederhauser, Lindstrom, & Strobel, 2007; Zhao, Pugh, Sheldon, & Byers, 2002).

For teacher preparation programs that have not yet merged technology integration into methods courses, how might extended and enhanced technology integration learning occur? One approach to preservice teacher support is through the development of a Community of Practice (Wenger, 1999) that assists beginning teachers to make the transition from the university to the classroom (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; Sim, 2006). This community approach has shown promise with inservice teachers (Kopcha, 2010). An established support program that provides ongoing opportunities for critical examination of preservice teachers' practicum experiences can support students in developing the "consciousness of practitioners" (Kemmis, 1982, p. 12). Preservice teachers participating in communities of practice indicated that these engagements supported them to reflect on their teaching to make connections between theory and classroom practice and share with peers (Le Cornu & Ewing, 2008; Sim, 2006). However, survey responses from preservice participants indicated they still struggled to make salient connections between theory and practice, as their chief complaint of the program was the aligned reading component (Sim, 2006). Supporting preservice teachers to grow in their professional identity prior to making the transition from the university to the classroom can also impact retention of new teachers in the profession (Hong, 2010). Sociocultural practices that preservice teachers may not at first fully value as relevant to the profession can support development of beginning teachers and nurture professional identity and longevity in the profession (Hong, 2010; Vygotsky, 1980). From this perspective, classroom technologies are viewed as tools supporting innovations in classroom instruction and learning (Goos, 2005). As preservice and new teachers become proficient using technology tools the technologies become an "extension of self", integral to content instruction planning, delivery, and assessment (Goos, 2005, p. 40). It is through this lens of professional growth for preservice teachers that we engage in a professional development experience for teacher preparation students and faculty.

CONTEXT

The college of education being studied started a one to one iPad initiative in the Fall of 2012. Faculty received iPads and training from October to December and then undergraduate students received iPads in December and training continued with a joint model where faculty and students were encouraged to learn about iPads together through professional development workshops offered both during work hours and at night. In addition, several large training events were held that incorporated different themes to motivate and encourage students and faculty to extend their use of the iPads. This initial integration

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