

Win-Win Professional Development: Providing Meaningful Professional Development While
Meeting the Needs of All Stakeholders

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Keywords – blended learning; professional development; technology integration

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7 Abstract – Teacher professional development can be poorly executed with little regard to the
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9 needs of adult learners, and this can create barriers to successful transfer of knowledge into
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11 practice. In order to create a successful professional development program, a group of educators
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13 engaged in a collaborative effort with a local university to offer on-site graduate courses in
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15 technology integration that was geared toward the specific needs of teachers in our district. By
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17 offering graduate courses covering district technology at reduced tuition held after hours on
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19 school grounds, we created a “win-win” situation for our staff and administration. Such a
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21 program can be replicated in other environments with continuing education credits or other
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23 recertification units to offer “win-win” professional development for K-12 educators.
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7 Designing effective professional development programs for K-12 educators can be an
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9 inexact science. While there are frequent calls for more effective, focused, or targeted in-service
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11 teacher training, how to meet these requests at the district level is not an easy feat (Wilson &
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13 Berne, 1999). Professional development often involves a mix of informal, voluntary learning
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15 opportunities and the formal, mandated workshops and in-services mandated by an administrator
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17 or district (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Lord, 1994; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Smylie (1989) found that
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19 teachers viewed district-provided training as the least effective training method; this could be
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21 because such offerings do not undergo a careful design process, or because they are seen as
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23 disconnected from the classroom and discontinuous throughout the school year.
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28 Teachers, researchers, and policymakers have consistently indicated that the lack of time
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30 is the greatest hindrance to quality professional development (Abdal-Haqq, 1996; Wood &
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32 Stanulis, 2009), even though most states require school administrators to provide opportunities
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34 during the year. However, many groups clamor for the same slices of time (e.g., curriculum and
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36 instruction, technology training, service learning, special education), and districts' negotiated
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38 teacher contracts may prevent required training or attendance outside of school hours (e.g., after
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40 school hours or during the summer). To add to these complications, many communities can attest
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42 that teacher in-service days are often placed at times to ease the parental burden (i.e., adjacent to
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44 longer breaks). Imagine teacher motivation and attention the day before a holiday break: the
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46 adult learner may be just as disengaged as any student!
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52 Our goal, therefore, was to provide a way to efficiently evaluate, plan, implement, and
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54 monitor professional development activities that were inexpensive to both district and teacher
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56 and fit within the busy academic school year; an additional focus was helping staff meet the
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requirements for renewing their teaching certificates. To accomplish this, our school district collaborated with a local university to offer technology professional development to staff. The purpose of this paper is to describe our experiences with this joint effort and provide suggestions for others wishing to pursue such a collaborative endeavor.

What is Good Professional Development?

When structuring and designing teacher professional development, it is important to consider what makes such offerings effective and transformative for both teacher knowledge and student learning. Knowles's theory of adult learning (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005) holds that adult learners learn best when they know their purpose for learning the material at hand, are allowed to be self-directed, can bring in prior experiences, and realize the need for learning as a vehicle for growth, making the motivations for learning more internal than external. Licklider (1997) stated that professional development has the greatest impact when the emphasis is on changing teaching behaviors that affect student performance, the skills learned can be practiced and applied in the classroom, and the content is research-based and skill-specific. The idea of practice demands revisiting the content several times; therefore, most single event professional development sessions are poor by design. Ingvarson, Meiers, and Beavis (2005) found that effective professional development leads to reflective and collaborative teaching practice, which in turn gives teachers time to try new things. Time needs to be allotted for instruction, practice, reflection, discussion, and feedback, thereby making structural design one of the pillars of professional development.

Broadly, the most effective models of professional development have their foundation at the district level while being grounded in school buildings, mindful of school culture. This

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4 macro/micro structure, with professional development integrated into daily school life and seen
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6 as part of a teacher's daily work, allows for both formal and informal learning opportunities to
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8 develop (Garet, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001; Ingvarson et al., 2005; Schrum &
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10 Levin, 2013). In fact, Ingvarson et al. (2005) stated that schools that see the most success with
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12 professional development programs offer "fertile ground for professional learning on an ongoing
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14 basis and as a routine part of the job" (p. 17). In these cases, teachers are asked to focus on
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16 content knowledge and actively engage in their own learning, which allows educators to consider
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18 what students are to learn, content-wise, and the issues they may encounter in the process.
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24 Building environments that lead to such practices involves considering training format
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26 and learners' needs. The affordances of the Internet in communication and learning offer unique
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28 training possibilities for teacher professional development. In particular, the creation of online
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30 learning environments can foster teacher learning and knowledge building. Green and Cifuentes
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32 (2008) found that online peer interaction was an effective way to increase motivation and follow-
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34 through for professional development activities. Tallent-Runnels et al. (2006) found online
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36 learning effective in providing learning opportunities and creating knowledge, with this type of
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38 learning showing no significant difference in learning as compared to face-to-face instruction.
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40 More specifically, online learning for teachers has shown no significant differences in teacher
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42 learning or performance, or student performance when compared to face-to-face trainings
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44 (Fisher, Schumaker, Culbertson, & Deshler, 2010; Walker, Downey, & Sorensen, 2008). Since
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46 online-based education has become, and will continue to be, a component of the K-12
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48 educational experience, it is useful for educators to experience online learning from the student
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50 perspective (Picciano, Seaman, Shea, & Swan, 2012).
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4 Online learning environments offer a diverse array of formats, from the highly connected
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6 synchronous class sessions to more independent asynchronous workspaces. Blended learning
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8 environments, which employ a combination of traditional, face-to-face instruction or coaching
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10 with supported and scaffolded online learning activities, give participants agency or self-
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12 direction while connecting students with their peers and instructors (Bonk & Graham, 2005;
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14 Fleck, 2012; Staker, 2011). This option, then, provides a meaningful learning option in teacher
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16 training. In comparing blended teacher professional development and purely online professional
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18 development, Matzat (2013) found that the former reduces both issues of teacher attrition and
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20 participant “free riding,” while increasing participant trust, interconnectedness, and practical
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22 benefits and implications for the classroom. Blended teacher professional development
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24 programs have also been shown to provide teachers an effective option for on-the-job learning
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26 while relating to student learning (Owston, Wideman, Murphy, & Lupshenyuk, 2008).
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33 Blended learning can be used to positively affect one of the key areas where teachers
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35 need professional development: technology integration. The standard disconnected days of sit-
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37 and-get professional development are inappropriate for technology training. Teachers are not
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39 motivated to learn in such a format because they do not see the purpose in the training, and have
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41 no time to bring in their prior experiences. There is no time to practice, let alone reflect and
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43 discuss with their peers. Thus, one could hardly fault a teacher for showing disdain for
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45 inadequate training on a topic that, if implemented, would require more work on their part (i.e.,
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47 redesigning lesson plans) and may or may not yield gains in student achievement. Structuring
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49 technology integration in such a way would be akin to giving someone several short golf lessons,
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51 and then registering them in a tournament without so much as even letting them go to the driving
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53 range after each lesson! Instead of such a training format, offering teachers an iterative cycle of
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4 connecting with other educators in discussion, independent practice with technology tools and
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6 concepts, and reflection on their own learning may provide more meaningful professional
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8 development.
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10 11 12 13 14 15 16 **The Challenge** 17

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19 It has been a constant struggle for both teachers and school districts to meet all of the
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21 requirements for professional development and continuing education. Beginning in 1992 in the
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23 state of Michigan, newly certified teachers must complete 18 graduate credits within their first 6
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25 years of teaching to renew their teaching certificate, and must complete six credits or 18
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27 Continuing Education Units (CEUs) every five years after (Michigan Department of Education,
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29 2009). The incentive to continue toward completing an advanced degree included financial gains
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31 due to the structure of pay scales in the state.
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36 However, offering professional development in the summer or after school hours presents
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38 challenges related to motivation and logistics. Teachers have responsibilities after work, and the
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40 workday is often defined by a collective bargaining agreement, making any participation
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42 completely voluntary. In some states, continuing education is mandated by law in order for
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44 teachers to renew their teaching certificates, and this can only be accomplished by taking college
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46 courses or attending certain workshops or seminars. College classes are expensive and time-
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48 consuming, and while some of the content is common to all of education, teachers may not
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50 receive training specific to their district, whether in regards to student demographics or the
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52 specific software and technology available to them.
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4 Thus, the challenge was to be able to provide relevant professional development to our
5 staff that met their needs as well as the needs of the school district. For the district, this meant
6 providing quality professional development outside of the normal time frame. For teachers, this
7 meant receiving relevant professional development that translated into practice while also
8 meeting their needs for cost, convenience, and recertification.
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19 **The Solution**

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21 The first major decision was whether to offer these courses for graduate credit (through
22 the local university), CEUs, or both. From a cost perspective, the CEUs were much less
23 expensive for teachers to earn. Aside from a modest processing fee, there was no additional cost.
24 In terms of time, the state required 18 CEUs, with one CEU being the equivalent of ten contact
25 hours. The CEUs had to be approved by a governing body in the state, often either a local
26 university or regional intermediate school district; this consisted of filing the appropriate
27 paperwork and submitting an overview of the instruction documenting the time allocated for
28 each activity. Instructional time was difficult for the team to gauge because of the proposed
29 online component of the course.
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43 On the other hand, graduate credits were more expensive, but they offered several
44 benefits. First, graduate credits could be applied toward moving up on the district salary scale,
45 which offered a track for teachers who accumulated 30 credits above a Master's. Second, the
46 amount of contact time required to earn graduate credit was less than the time required by CEUs.
47 To earn six credits (the amount needed to recertify a teaching certificate), only 84 contact hours
48 were required (i.e., one credit hour is generally defined as 14 contact hours). Finally, since the
49 university shared revenue with the district, there was a potential for the team to be compensated
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4 for their work, and the district could also receive additional revenue. This sharing agreement
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6 became an important aspect of the initiative, as the teachers developing the course wanted
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8 compensation for their efforts while the district maintained that the initiative could not be run at
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10 a loss. For these reasons, the decision was made to provide these courses for graduate credit
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12 rather than CEUs. While the possibility for offering both existed, this choice was deemed too
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14 burdensome with respect to paperwork and meeting differing time requirements.
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19 The next step was to survey the teaching staff for interest. We initially decided to offer
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21 any pilot courses to the high school and junior high teaching staff only. In the spring, these
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23 groups were surveyed for overall interest in the opportunity as well as topics of interest. While
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25 technology was the primary focus of the professional development, we were open to offering
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27 courses on other topics in the future. After reviewing the results, the team decided to offer a
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29 “Tech Basics” course during the fall 2011 semester. The goal was that, following a pilot of this
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31 course, the team would repeat this course and offer an additional course in technology
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33 integration; these winter courses would be offered to both elementary and secondary teachers.
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36 The basics course would not be a prerequisite for the technology integration course, but the more
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38 advanced technology course would offer an option for participants in basics course to continue to
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40 grow their skills and knowledge. Moreover, secondary teachers who enrolled in both courses
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42 could meet recertification requirements without ever leaving the district.
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48 In the summer of 2011, a six-member team (three teachers, two media specialists, and the
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50 technology director) worked to develop the course to the university’s standards. Team members
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52 brought in materials from previous college courses and workshops, as well as their own subject
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54 matter expertise when it came to district technology, to the course creation process. One of the
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4 teachers was near the completion of his doctorate in instructional design, which lent added
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6 expertise in the development of the courses.
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9 For example, the team determined which topics would be best suited for “online weeks”
10 and which topics would benefit from the added personal support that could be provided in a face-
11 to-face session. While the level of expertise would vary from student to student, topics such as
12 enhancing a teacher’s web page (n.b., the district used the SchoolCenter platform for teacher web
13 pages) necessitated experts on hand to help students with very patient explanations as well as on-
14 the-spot troubleshooting for problems that had nuanced solutions. Topics such as file
15 organization were more informational in nature and better suited for online content distribution.
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26 The school district used Moodle as its learning management system, as it was provided
27 for free from the regional intermediate school district. All of the course content was accessed
28 through Moodle, with links to external websites, YouTube videos, and Google Documents
29 containing original content developed by the instructors. The course was organized into weekly
30 modules (with some carryover) with an introductory agenda, content, and assignments (i.e.,
31 submitted work, screen shots of completed tasks, discussion forums, etc.). Figures 1 and 2 show
32 examples of the layout in Moodle.
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45 [Insert Figure 1 approximately here]
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53 Finally, as with any course in K-12 or higher education, the evaluation criteria of the
54 district’s professional development courses had to tie to the course’s stated goals and learning
55 objectives. This involved creating measurable assessments (e.g., technology-enhanced lesson
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plans, reflective papers, discussion forums) and the associated rubrics. Once the course and instructor credentials were received by the partnering university and sent to the appropriate university department for review and approval, the university sent the district a financial letter, credit roster and credit registration packets. This allowed the instructional team to enroll participants and offer the course for graduate credit. Once all students were admitted to and registered at the local university, the instructors were sent an official grade list for completion at the end of the semester.

Results

For the three courses offered throughout the year – two sections of the basics course and one section of the technology integration course – we had 30 teachers participate. While this only represents about 15 percent of the teaching staff, a large number of staff were either already enrolled in graduate programs or, because they began teaching before the law regarding certification changed, did not need continuing education credits. Thus, this was seen as a successful recruitment effort. In addition, after the first week of classes, there was no attrition, and everyone received a passing grade for their efforts in the class.

We administered mid-term and final course evaluations to all of the students. Data from the participants showed a high level of enthusiasm and motivation from their experiences in the courses (See Table 1). Many of the participants felt that this experience was the best professional development they had ever received and had already begun to incorporate their knowledge into their practice. For example, from the Technology Basics course, a meaningful project evolved between a junior high school physical education teacher and an elementary school educator. Using the district's available videoconferencing technology, students in a 9th

grade physical education class led a fitness session for elementary students. These teachers embraced the concepts addressed in the professional development course and used their learning to impact students' knowledge and experiences.

[Insert Table 1 approximately here]

Another reason the teachers found this experience to be so beneficial was the consistent interaction over the material for a significant period of time (i.e., 14 weeks rather than the usual 30 to 60 minute sessions they had seen), the high instructor-to-student ratio, the availability of the instructors (i.e., they were often in the same building and could visit them during the school day), and the instructors' knowledge of the tools they were using everyday. Surprisingly, while the courses were offered in a blended format, many teachers felt that the face-to-face sessions were more worthwhile, and suggested that in the future the class would physically meet more often, despite the inherent inconvenience to their schedules (see Table 2).

[Insert Table 2 approximately here]

There were also some criticisms of the courses. Despite the reduced rate of tuition, many felt that the costs were still too high. Further, they felt that since the content was part of their job duties, the district should do more to subsidize the tuition. While the instructors conveyed the point that the tuition was very competitive and the fact that graduate credits are rarely offered for free, the participants still felt that the district was sidestepping their obligations to provide training for the tools the teachers were required to use on a daily basis.

Anecdotal complaints from other teachers centered around those who did not need the credits but were interested in the course, or those who were accumulating CEUs as their means for renewing their teaching certificates. The instructors were not able to shoulder the administrative burden of separating the classes into students who needed academic grades, students participating for CEUs, and students who may or may not participate depending on their motivation if they were not required to complete any assignments or pay any money. Courses could have been redesigned and reoffered for the less expensive CEUs, but monies generated would not have been enough to adequately compensate instructors.

In terms of course administration, there were several additional issues. After an initial round of offering the courses and sharing revenue with the district, the instructors sought to design a more stable compensation system for course design and instruction. Initially, all compensation had been based on enrollment revenues, and the instructional team sought to set up a pay structure based on flat rate minimums for designing and teaching the courses. But, outside of monies brought in through the partnering university's tuition sharing program, the district was unwilling to allocate additional resources for continuing the initiative. This became further problematic because with a revenue system based only on student enrollment numbers, the instructors felt their efforts were unnecessarily focused on marketing the program. Based on participants' anecdotal complaints on course cost and the team members' rather uncomfortable positions as colleagues *and* instructors, this focus was problematic. Because the district was unwilling to waver on their stance, the program was put on hiatus for the 2012-2013 school year.

Concluding Thoughts

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4 Given the current economic state of many K-12 districts in the United States, the ability
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6 of districts to provide and teachers to spend money on quality professional development is
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8 becoming more difficult. Our project was one attempt to create a climate of “win-win”
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10 collaboration, where both the teachers and the district were able to benefit not only from the
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12 information provided in the courses, but the additional benefits of cost savings, location,
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14 repurposing, and time-shifting of the professional development. While this win-win was briefly
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16 achieved, it was unfeasible to continue given the current economic climate and the initial design
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18 for compensation and college credits. For districts interested in developing a more successful
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20 professional development plan than what is currently in place, more interaction between the
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22 district and teaching staff is needed to come to consensus on each other’s needs, so that these
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24 opportunities can create multiple mutual benefits for all parties involved. For the administration,
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26 there needs to be clear idea of what technologies will be in place in the short-term as well as the
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28 long-term future. In addition, budgeting time, money, and possibly other non-monetary
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30 incentives for personnel to develop and implement the training needs to be considered. Perhaps
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32 incentives such as additional personal days (i.e., vacation) or being given a higher priority for
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34 open courses or positions within the district could compensate for developing courses for a low
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36 (or no) stipend. For teachers, the times and locations of the courses, a preference for face-to-
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38 face, online, or hybrid delivery, as well as how course completion can best provide
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40 documentation for professional certifications and salary advancements need to be considered in
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42 addition to the usefulness of the instruction.
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Endnotes

¹Further information about the development and format of a syllabus, the Course Submittal Form and other pertinent information can be found at www.cel.cmich.edu/4educators/ddpd.

²The laws regarding teacher professional development and recertification in the State of Michigan have changed since the writing of this article.

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Topic 2
Week 2: 9/21-9/27 (Online)- Gradebook and School Center

-  Week 2 Agenda


SchoolCenter

-  Screenshot tutorial
-  Evaluation of a website





Gradebook

-  Gradebook Features Tutorials
-  Gradebook Features
-  Gradebook Reflection
-  Week 2 Forum - Questions and Suggestions for Gradebook (Optional)



Topic 4
Week 4: 10/5-10/11 (F2F) - A/V equipment, Cloud computing, Google Docs

-  Week 4 Agenda

A/V Equipment

-  The AV in your classroom
-  How to Tune the TV in your classroom
-  The Projector Remote in your classroom
-  Identifying the AV in your classroom

Cloud Computing

-  Cloud Computing in Common English
-  20 Things Learned - Cloud Computing

Google Docs









-  Google Docs How To Guides
-  Google Docs in Plain English

Figure 1. Examples of topics in Moodle.

Topic 11
Week 11 - Online (3/21-3/27): Videos for the Classroom

Please complete all assignments for this week by Tuesday, March 27, 11:55 pm.

-  Week 11 Agenda
-  1. Explore Resources
-  2. Utilize Familiar Resources
-  3. Integrate Into Student Learning
 -  Week 11: Integrate a Video or Video Clip Into Your Instruction
 -  Week 11: Reflection

How can video enhance your students' learning? Please integrate a video or video clip into your instruction by completing the following activities:

- Explore the resources listed in this section and identify some websites and videos you could use in your instruction. Even better, bookmark the resources using Diigo! :)
- Experiment with the clipping and de-cluttering tools.
- Identify a place in your instruction where a video or video clip would enhance student learning. Find at least one video or video clip and include the link.
- Describe why you believe a video or clip could improve the student experience. Be specific by discussing the learning objectives/targets, the desired student outcomes, and how the integration of a video or video clip advances these objectives and outcomes. In other words, in what ways does including the video in your lesson change the lesson for the student? For you as the teacher?

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Figure 2. Example of an online assignment for the technology integration course.

Table 1

Summary of responses from selected-response questions on end-of-course evaluations

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The face-to-face sessions provided valuable and easy to understand information.	0	0	0	4 (33%)	8 (67%)
The online “sessions” provided valuable and easy to understand information.	0	0	2 (17%)	3 (25%)	7 (58%)
The assignments were valuable and clearly defined.	0	0	0	6 (50%)	6 (50%)
I would recommend this course to other teachers.	0	0	0	3 (25%)	9 (75%)
The instructors were knowledgeable.	0	0	0	0	12 (100%)

Table 2	
<i>Selected comments from open-response section of final course evaluations</i>	
Theme	Comments
<i>Face-to-face and online interactions</i>	I liked the idea that we met periodically. I do not believe that education can be just an online experience. Face to face allows us the opportunity to interact with other people, discuss successes/issues on a personal level, etc. I will always believe that the social component is paramount in a developing student!
	I wish that we would have had more face-to-face - maybe every other week. It gave me a set amount of time each week to dedicate to this class. Plus it allowed questions to be solved quicker. All 3 instructors were always available by phone or e-mail but it was nice to connect with the people in the class and bounce ideas off of each other.
	The face to face was valuable. Sometimes so much information was given not all of it was comprehended.
	I enjoyed the on-line sessions because I could do them at any time.
<i>Instructors</i>	Oh my yes, the instructors were very helpful. They were just a call, text or e-mail away. This made a world of difference. They were also very flexible in understanding the needs our students. We were a pretty diverse group; Elementary, Support, PE and individualize [sic] academic teachers. They allowed us to work on a projects [sic] that had purpose for our students and us as teachers.
	The only critique I have is to stay consistent on when assignments or post are due. Knowing who is in charge of the assignment would help when questions come up. Some of the assignments expectations could have been a bit clearer.
<i>Applying information in practice</i>	Google docs was something that I wasn't 100% sure of before taking this course. I now feel comfortable enough to use it for more things as well as set up assignments for my students to use as well. I also found the Web 2.0 portion of the class very useful. There are so many options available out there and this forced me to investigate and actually put something into practice. As a matter of fact, my students are turning in a project this week based on my Web 2.0 project.
	Google Docs - even my students are LOVING it - were are [sic] doing our essay unit complete paper free for the first time!
<i>Suggestions for improvement</i>	Delve deeper into some of the technology tools. We covered a lot of them. I just began to feel like I understood one and then we were on to another.
	Learn a bit more about the technology that is in our buildings or will be coming to our buildings such as: Smart-boards, Team-boards, I-pads - Apps that we can refer to parents, Ideas of what to look for when parents are looking for apps for their children... Although not all buildings have these. This is technology that is out there and technology that the district is looking to get.