

ETEC 533: Interview Transcript

Date: Wednesday, January 18, 2017

Time: 9:00 p.m. (via Google Hangouts)

Interviewer: Dana Bjornson

Interviewee: "Brianna"

Me: Thank you for doing this... I just first want to know how long you have been a teacher for?

Brianna: For about 14 years.

Me: Wow! Holy smokes! And so you've been teaching science for most of those years?

Brianna: Yes.

Me: So my first question: if you were to pick your top one or two changes to your practice that involve technology what would they be?

Brianna: So the ones I've done already?

Me: Yes. things that you are doing now that you are doing in your classes.

Brianna: OK. So the things that I do the most are Google Drive and Google Docs together. Being able to share the docks with other teachers, being able to share with students and students being able to share with each other... And Google Drive just being able to access anything anywhere, that would be my first one. And then my second one would be Google classroom. So being able to post and share and access from anywhere, having our online textbook, students know where they had in their work, it has due dates attached to it. Google Drive and Google Docs together along with the Google classroom.

Me: ok. What sort of things are you sharing? When you say that these things allow you and your students to share, what kind of things?

Brianna: Assignments, so I created an assignment, for example we did this thing like the Genius Hour, but not--- we did this project and I had it set up into three parts and so each part we did a check-in so that I could see what they were doing and when they decided to work in groups then they would share that with their group members so that all 3 of us could look at it. And with teachers, we are working on, well there's 3 of us working on a brand new Biology 12 lab and so we have the Doc at the same time each doing different parts and seeing what the other people are working on, and adding feedback and comments and stuff like that.

Me: yeah so it's uppin your collaboration game...

Brianna: yes.

Me: awesome! I use it for the same reason! so right now, I'm in this course that is specific to science and math and how to incorporate technology effectively into these classes and one of the focuses that I think I want to do is on addressing students' misconceptions and how technology can help us discover what those misconceptions are and how to deal with them. Have you, in anything that you've done in your classes... has technology helped you or your students themselves recognize or remediate any scientific misconceptions?

Brianna: ummm, hmmm...<laughing> I don't know...

Me: I guess it is kind of hard to know if it is a misconception, as they are learning unless you are specifically targeting that.

Brianna: ya. umm.. an interesting one with a student who was really anti-technology and her like misconception about technology she was only thinking about it as like using a cell phone all the time--- so she was really scared and was in tears.... throughout the semester she ends up adapting to the technology and once she adapted, she got over the fear of using it. And it was a misconception of how we use it in the classroom. That is indirectly related to technology, not science, but she was using it in the classroom and ended really liking what we were doing.

Me: That feeds into one of my questions... Can you think of any examples of when using technology based approaches yielded a positive outcome that wouldn't have happened otherwise? And I kind of wanted you to think of students who have learning challenges, or anxiety or language barriers... has tech done, because you know that you have been teaching for over ten years, that in the past, no way that this wouldn't have been able to happen but now, whoa, this is really cool!

Brianna: I think that one of the things is about group projects... 1 student was sick and the other student was upset because they weren't there doing their part. But they were able to talk using the comments on the Docs, right on the document. So they were chatting over what they were going to do, like they were able to work together even though one was sick. And, so.... um... for me, for when I'm away, I've used Google Classroom as a really clear way of saying "this is what you need to be doing" and I don't have to worry about the TOC because I can post everything on there and the kids know exactly what they are supposed to do and I can come up with something on the fly and stick it up for them to do. Just attaching it from the Drive, without worrying about photocopying or where it is on my desk--- I just stick it on the Classroom.

Me: That's totally awesome--- I do the exact same thing. I think of your example, with the student who was really anxious about the technology but then once she got past the fear, she just dove right into it and conquered some of those fears. That would not have happened if you weren't using technology--- she could have carried that fear, throughout her life!

Brianna: Ya and you know how I found out, was that survey that we did at the beginning and part of it was one of those questions. So I read her comment about being scared about using tech and not wanting to use it, so I asked her to stay after class and chat about what she was worried about.

Me: Can I get you to go back a bit and explain what the "survey" is?

Brianna: So, it was a Google Form that was an introduction when you first start your class to gather information about students like: interests, previous classes, ... a Google Form and the information goes into a Google Sheet.

Me: Have you used the Spreadsheet in other ways, since then?

Brianna: I haven't done too much--- it is on my to-do list because when I went to the Google Conference there was all of this cool stuff to do with quizzes and inserting videos into quizzes--- that is on my to-do technology list, <hahaha>.

Me: That was one of my last questions for you, <hahahahahahaha> So actually, I am just going to go into that question now: one of my last questions for you was, Moving forward, what were your goals in Ed Tech? So to learn about Forms?

Brianna: Ya, and then doing this collaborative project where we are going to do a mini-flipped classroom, so we are going to tape our Google Slide with us talking over it, with our new tablets, whenever we get them... anyway we are going to tape our Google Slides and insert videos, and talk and that's my like, and the other one is going to be to Google Forms more because there is so much to use them for but I haven't used them enough.

Me: We should talk about that because that is one of my goals too! Ok--- we are getting there! we are over halfway there... over the span of your career, have you noticed any differences with your boys versus your girls in terms of their achievements? Have you noticed them on average, girls and boys are neck and neck, or something else?

Brianna: mmm... I would definitely say that girls excel way more than boys do, in classes.

Me: And has that been over the 14 years?

Brianna: yes.

Me: so, since you've been... I know you have only been using technology for a short time, like the last two years? or three years? We have had Google Classroom in our district for almost two years now, so in the last two years, since you have been with going with GC, have you noticed any achievement gender gaps shortening? Because I am wondering if the technology is in any way acting as a carrot pulling the boys more back into academics?

Brianna: Well I have only been using GC for this semester...

Me: oh, ok.

Brianna: I do have some boys in my Science 9 class who are at a lower level, and they definitely like using Slides and being able to create that... because it is almost all boys--- but they definitely enjoy using the technology a lot. As far as data, to say that it has increased their learning? Well... they are interested in using it.

Me: Fair enough. Almost done... In the spirit of not throwing babies out with bath water, and as some of us are going deeper and deeper into technological dependence, there may be... I was just wondering if you have low tech or no tech practices that are still indispensable to you. Like for example, personally, I still think one of the best things I started doing is using table top whiteboards as I teach. A whiteboard is not very high tech, but it has been indispensable for me. Is there anything that you are not prepared to give up despite technology being your thing?

Brianna: I think... hmmm... not giving up... Writing on a whiteboard <hahahaha> an actual board! I still write on a board a lot for things, like doing diagrams and stuff like that. Even though I want to do the flipped classroom, I think a teacher telling stories in the classroom, like kids really enjoy that... I'm not sure if that is considered low-tech but story telling adds to your lesson, I think that's important. I guess I still use the whiteboard a lot, with different coloured markers, <hahaha>.

Me: That's awesome! <giggle> I've got one last question... do you have any advice for colleagues wanting to bring more tech into their practice? So for people who aren't on board with GC or Docs--- what would be your advice?

Brianna: My advice is that you have to... it's hard to perfect. I think like when I was going to start, I was just going to jump in and do it and I'm going to have to be OK with the fact that I don't know everything and it was actually really cool because it was my Grade 9s who helped me the most... and they were like, if you show that you are learning, they were really like "OK , Ms. B, let's try this and push this button..." and they were really ready to help me learn, so we learned it together. As teachers, we always want things to be organized and planned. But this is not going to be perfect, and you just have to jump in. We want our kids to take chances and be brave, so you have to take chances and be brave.

Me: Thank you so much!!!!