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TE878

Final Project

Looking through the number of blended classroom models that teachers around me have piloted this year and in years past, I keep coming back to the flipped classroom. To give context to my school and district, in the past three years Omaha Public Schools has implemented a 1:1 technology initiative for K-12. Specifically, in my own school, Northwest High Magnet School received HP Streams for all students in the 2017-18 school year and was one of the first schools to participate in the program. For many of us in the school, the increase in technology was met with an expectation for more activities and strategies that used programs on the computer. In my own experience, this was not enforced greatly and some staff was resistant to change their practices using these new tools. For example in the last school year, before March, the school had begun to collect devices to retire and planned on having more computer labs and laptop carts in lieu of every student having a device which many teachers weren't taking advantage of. Then the pandemic happened and, in the course of six months, the district purchased new Ipads for all students and had multiple pieces of training for staff on how to utilize technology to navigate this sudden world of blended learning. In the midst of the increase of technology the teachers that had piloted these types of models early to implement it in a strategic and data-driven way became the unofficial tech leaders in our school. One teacher in particular, Kyle Carruthers, stood out to me for his early adoption of the Flipped Classroom Model, which he began a couple of years before the 1:1 rollout.

The school at which he teaches, Northwest High Magnet school, is an urban school in Omaha and has had an average enrollment of between 1500-1600 students for the last 5 years. It is racially diverse with 35.9% of students reported identifying as African American/Black, 26.7% identifying as White, 17.4% as Asian, 14.7% as Hispanic/Latinx, 4.4% as multiracial, and 1% as Native American (Maskel 2019). Around 19% of students are verified as receiving some kind of special education service and around 14% have been verified as English Language Learners (Maskel 2019). Also, of the student population, around 70% receive free and reduced lunch and the graduation rate is around 80% (Maskel 2019). This diversity can bring unique challenges in engagement and in the implementation of technology due to a lack of prior exposure by the students. It is important now more than ever that students are able to use technology within any class and to feel capable in their endeavors facilitated by their teachers.

In my interview with Kyle Carruthers, our now Title 1 coordinator, he described his process of choosing the Flipped classroom model, his data collection, and evaluation of the model with his students. He explained his classes during the years he taught were students from all high school grade levels, some with IEPs, some ELL designations, and typically racially diverse, reflecting the diversity of the school. His class sizes ranged between 27-30 students and he taught in one of the computer labs at the school. The lab was a part of an older district initiative and with the 1:1 the lab received newer computers and software during his years teaching his course.

Mr. Carruthers taught Graphic Design for eight years before moving to his current role and adopted the Flipped Classroom Model in year two. When I asked what drew him to this model, he explained that in the beginning he attempted to teach complex software programs to thirty students at the same time with direct instruction and using screenshots in Powerpoint for

tutorials. He found the process tedious and draining and the students were not responding well. It was at that point he began to look into the flipped model. He felt the model would best serve the diverse student body he taught. He also learned specifics about how the model worked from reading and watching material by Erin Sams, as Kyle stated, a pioneer in the Flipped Classroom Model based in Colorado.

As he began to create videos the amount of time at the onset was a large investment. He learned fast his videos needed to be between 5-7 minutes for students to retain and use the content efficiently. This is in stark contrast to his first video that was 16 minutes with no assessment to see if students were watching and using the video. He also learned that each chunk taught needed accountability and assessment so as to check in with student learning and to reduce students asking clarifying questions because they were not able to recall the material. Within his implementation, he continually collected data from his classes assessing if the students enjoyed the lessons, what he could improve upon, and further questions they felt they had. Overall he said 70-80% of his classes reported that they enjoyed the Flipped Classroom Model and the other students who did not identify that they preferred more direct instruction. With the flipped model this was an easy adjustment as most of the class was able to work independently and he could address the few that preferred another way.

He saw improvement in student engagement and felt the model fully supported differentiation. He commented that he could create assignments that could ask academic questions for all of his classes but allow students who would want to delve deeper into that freedom and space to do so. He reported that his classroom management didn't require much effort because students understood their expectations and could work in manageable chunks. He

is deeply passionate about this model and has often brought it up during my school's PLC meetings and is always willing to answer my own questions about this model.

I felt after our interview that this model is something I want to work to adopt in my own classroom for even next semester. As students now have more access to using technology and programs, the ease for the teacher to move into this model is less about accessibility restrictions and more about the onset time commitment. Within the professional development the district provided as we all went remote and then hybrid, there were many programs that were made available that could make the transition into the Flipped Classroom model easier. Kyle pointed out that with shared district applications like Edpuzzle, the content of a class can be housed in a format that will be familiar with students because we all teach from the same pool of programs. Now that Kyle Carruthers has piloted this model for his own classes' benefit, he is helping other teachers to see how this model can better support a wider range of students with more engagement that has been shown in his own data. This is not a building-wide initiative for the Flipped Classroom Model, but it does align with the building and district's call to provide 21st-century learning.

Sources Cited

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