

Details

How to Support New Teachers with Technology Integration with Dr. Samantha Fecich - 123

In this episode, Dr. Samantha Fecich, educator, author, and podcast host joins me for a discussion around how best to support new teachers in today's diverse classrooms. You'll also hear some of her favorite versatile EdTech tools for any new teacher's tool belt.

Introduction

Hello there and welcome to today's episode of the Easy EdTech Podcast! If we haven't met before, my name is Monica Burns. I'm a former NYC public school teacher and I've been out of the classroom for a few years leading professional development for teachers, and writing about all things EdTech on my blog ClassTechTips.com

Before we jump into today's episode, a quick reminder — you can head to my website classtechtips.com/podcast for all of the show notes and resources from today's episode, and if you're listening to this episode on a podcast player like Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or Google Podcasts, you should see a link in the description that you can click on as you listen today and it will take you to all of the resources I mention.

Promotion/Reminder

This episode is sponsored by Microsoft Education and I'm so excited to partner with them this summer. Have you seen all of the new updates in Microsoft Teams? I love the new Reflect for Assignments that lets students share how they are feeling and think about their emotions. This is just one of the dozens of updates to Microsoft Teams. Head to <http://aka.ms/teamsPP> to find out more about Microsoft Teams and all of the new updates! You can also send me a DM on Instagram while you're listening to this episode and I'll send you the link.

Today's Intro

This week's podcast is titled: *How to Support New Teachers with Technology Integration with Dr. Samantha Fecich.*

Author of EduMagic: A Guide for Preservice Teachers

Episode Transcript

Monica:

Well, hello and welcome. I am so excited to have you on the podcast today to talk about all things new teachers, and technology integration. I'd love to jump right in and start off with, what is your role in education? What is your day to day look like?

Dr. Sam Fecich:

Yeah. Thanks so much, Monica, for having me on. Having a little bit of a fangirl moment here. Big fan of your work. Yeah. My name is Dr. Sam Fecich, and I have the honor of teaching future educators at Grove City College in Grove city, PA. If you know about PA geography we're between Pittsburgh and Erie. I get to work with them in areas related to educational technology and special education. My background is in special education and working with assistive technology, educational technology. It's so cool to be bringing up that next generation of educators of excellence. Thinking about how can educational technology be used for all students, not just our students with special needs, but also engaging our students, motivating our students, and also helping us as teachers learn along the way. It is so much fun to work with them. My day to day, I teach Monday, Wednesday, Friday have office hours, Tuesday, Thursday. It is the best job ever. So, yay. I love working with our future educators.

Monica:

That is so wonderful, and I have started my career, if you will, or my education, at the undergraduate level, jumping right into elementary education. I know that so much has changed when it comes to technology integration. We don't have to run the numbers to count back, but it's been a bit in terms of what is now available and out there. I think back to my first few years teaching in a classroom all the time, and I know that new teachers just have so much on their plate already when it comes to starting the first school year. This is something now, especially as we think about the past 16, 18 months or so have been very different for teachers at all levels. What type of preparation are teachers receiving, or I should say, students ready to become teachers or student teachers, if you will, what are they receiving in their teacher prep programs right now?

Dr. Sam Fecich:

Sure. For our student teachers who just student-taught through a pandemic, they were hybrid, they were online, they were face-to-face and any type of combination in between there. I truly think that this pandemic made them a stronger teacher, so they can hit the ground running in September when they are a full-time educator. It has taught them flexibility. It has taught them thinking on their feet, and being able

to, oh, that link doesn't work, or, oh no, Google or Microsoft is down. What do I do? Thinking quickly, having a backup plan, B, C, D all the way through Z. I think that that experience, although it may not have been a student teaching experience that they pictured themselves having their freshmen and sophomore year, it was the experience that really has made them stronger, and they can speak to those skills during interviews, and rely on those transferable skills as a first year teacher, because we know as first year teachers, we all have to go through it.

Dr. Sam Fecich:

We all get the t-shirt at the end, we'd been there, we'd done that. We got the t-shirt at the end of our first year. Some things to help prepare them so they can be ready as educators of excellence, is to get them in the classroom early and often. Now, as an undergrad, I don't think I went into the classroom until maybe my second semester as a sophomore, or as a junior. Then, we have that big student teaching. Well, at the college that I work at, we get students in the classroom, freshman year, starting off. Observations, and really thinking about, what does it mean to be on the other side of the desk?

Dr. Sam Fecich:

We can think about what is teaching from the student perspective. Oh, you have summers off. Sure. Oh, you only have to do one lesson if you teach it eight times a day. No, absolutely not, so thinking about those misconceptions of what teaching is, flipping it to the other side of the desk, so they're getting those observations. They're understanding why teachers teach the way they do. What are the best practices, and how to apply that in the classroom early and often.

Monica:

Yeah. Gosh, so much that you said there, I think is crucial when we talk about this past year with the hands-on learning experiences, because I know from my own experience, from mentoring, and working with new teachers that we often rely so much on what we experienced as a student. Like you said, when we're on that other side of the desk. It's hard to wrap your head around what this experience is like when things are hybrid, or there's a switch to remote. Hearing that, that's such a commitment that your institution makes around getting students in, and having those hands-on experiences right away is really fantastic. I'm sure that you found even just from a retention standpoint, people when they go out into different schools, they're just coming in with a very different mindset than someone who hasn't had such a robust experience.

Monica:

I'm confident that you've probably had similar conversations that I have around technology, and new teachers, where a lot of people will make assumptions that new teachers are young and they know how TikTok works, and their experience with technology, as if that's the same thing as walking into a classroom and using technology as an instructional tool. What do you hear from people when they're making some of those assumptions? What are you actually seeing from the students you work with in the field?

Dr. Sam Fecich:

Sure. Before I go into that, to piggyback off what you said earlier, getting into the field early. I think that's so important because, if you think maybe you want to be an elementary teacher, and then you go in for a full day with kindergartners, and you're like, oh, that is not my jam. I think I might want to do middle school, or high school, or specialize in something. I think that's also really cool to figure out where your fit is as a teacher, because you might think it's one thing, but it's actually something else. Getting lots of experience is really important. Now to the technology question, yeah. Monica, we all know what happens when people assume, right? It really depends, because just like with our veteran teachers, and our first year teachers, our beginning teachers, some of them, excellent with technology, I know how to implement this, and how to read that data.

Dr. Sam Fecich:

How do I look at that data to make plans for the next time I teach this, or do I need to go back and reteach this whole thing based on the data I'm getting from that technology tool? Then others are still a little nervous about using it. I think that this generation overall, not specific to technology, but just the mindset of trying something, and trying again, and trying again, and making mistakes. I once heard on a podcast, I don't remember whose podcast it was, because, you know, we listen to a lot of podcasts. Somebody called mistakes "must stakes." I was like, oh, that's really interesting because we got to learn from these opportunities. I think that's what this generation of new teachers does. They learn, and they repeat, they try, they try something else, and it's okay if they make a must stake or a mistake, they're going to try something new. Whether that's related to technology or not.

Dr. Sam Fecich:

I think just like with our pool of teachers, some get on the technology train, they're like, yep, let's use this. Let's learn how to use this. Let's take the training, let's implement this. Let's try it out. Others, a little bit more nervous, but definitely seeing

that shift of I'm going to try it. I'm not going to break the computer. I know it's not going to break. I'm not going to break the internet today. Just keep trying it out and seeing how it goes.

Monica:

I love that. Just that willingness to make a mistake, the problem solving piece. I think that comes from so many of the experiences that we probably all had with technology the past five or 10 or 15 years or so, where even when we come across something new, we're taking in what we know about how to fix a printer from 10 years ago, and try to make our Chromebook work this morning. That's great that you're seeing some of those same things with some of the students that you're working with. Just that ability to maybe have a little bit more confidence than we all had when we were first looking at technology in a classroom setting. My podcast, a lot of listeners have spent time in classrooms, are in a classroom teacher role, or a coaching role, or an admin role. They may not be walking into our conversation with a new teacher hat on, but someone who is supporting new teachers. Is there anything, or, what can a veteran teacher or coach listening in today do to support that new teacher coming into their building this year with technology integration?

Dr. Sam Fecich:

Yeah. I originally wrote down a few ideas for this one, but I'm going to not, listen, I have a different idea. One of them would be to give them time to observe in other classes, because so often in schools, we're just in our four walls. This is just what we do. We don't see what anybody else is doing. Giving them opportunities to observe other educators who are rocking it, and see what best practices look like, and how they're applied, and what their reflection process looks like. I think giving them time to observe other educators, whether it's in their grade level, or their subject area, or maybe it's one up or one down from where they are. Just being able to see other educators. We have amazing teachers all around us, in our schools, and in our districts and of course online too.

Dr. Sam Fecich:

Giving them those opportunities to observe that, whether that is, hey, you can go observe this period, I'll watch your class type deal, or whatever that looks like. Giving them flexibility to observe, and connect with other educators in real time as they teach. Then, also inviting other people to come in and observe them. I know that sounds really scary. First year teacher, I would get the sweats, whenever somebody will come in and observe me, but building that relationship first, whenever you're coming in to observe a new teacher. There's an author who talks about building trust

observations, and building that relationship with the educator from the administrator perspective, and having that relationship with them. Sharing, here's some really cool things that you're doing in your class. Just starting to build upon that. Then sharing, here's some things that can be improved, but you're doing this really well.

Dr. Sam Fecich:

We all have glows and grows, and new teachers, I know, sometimes it might sound like we have a lesson that just did not go well. I'm sure the whole lesson, not everything didn't go well, I'm sure there were some good things. Reflect on that, and that's okay. Ask for help, and when new teachers do come to you for help, give them, if you can share a story or something like, yep, it happened to me too, because it happens, whatever that may be. Whether you didn't group your lesson, you didn't group your students properly, or the technology didn't work, or whatever that might be. It happens. It happens. Share that you're not alone. You're not going to be alone. This won't be the first or last time this happens to you, but let's learn from it. Give them a quick win, a quick story, and share that they're not alone. That's what they need the most like, okay, I know I'm new at this. This is the first time this happened to me. It's okay. Happened to other people, and this is how they got through it. That type of stuff. Hope that helps.

Monica:

Yeah. I really like that emphasis on the transparency and almost that lifelong learning component. We're all in this together. Right. Just because I have more reps in, does it mean I'm necessarily right. At such a far away, or unattainable place. When you mentioned observations, whether it is going in and watching someone else, or having someone come in, as we talk about the technology integration today, I always like to think of coming in with a lens. We're not here to look at all the things, we're here to look at this one thing. I think sometimes that takes the pressure off. I'm not really worried about how your differentiation plan looks in action today. We'll talk about that next Wednesday. Right. Today, it's really about some of these other pieces. I'm so glad that you mentioned those kinds of observations, and demos that might be a little bit more low stakes, or might have a mentorship component too with that story sharing.

Monica:

There's just so many different directions you could go in there. When you are talking to your new teachers, whether it's your students who are in a student teaching role, or teachers who are maybe reaching back out to you, and they're those first few weeks in, and having that, oh no, what about this moment? I would imagine that's

happening a little bit too. What is something that is high priority in terms of focus? There's just a lot of directions you could go in with technology integration. Is there something that you suggest new teachers start with first, or just focus in on first?

Dr. Sam Fecich:

Sure. I would say the why. Focusing on why you want to use EdTech. Is this going to help your students? How is it going to help your students? It's going to help you as a teacher plan or deliver a lesson, or reflect on a lesson, be able to see that data. Once you have that why in place, then you can start looking at the how, and how am I going to get there? What tool am I going to use? Whenever I'm using my technology tools in my courses, I like to look at tools that are free, because they are college students, we need a college student-friendly budget. We only have money for pizza and coffee, right? They need to be free, they need to be easy to use and versatile. Easy to use, meaning, I'm not going to have to spend hours watching a YouTube video, or go to get a certificate to learn how to use this tool. Then, versatile. Meaning they can use it across settings, across learners, K to 12 different subject areas.

Dr. Sam Fecich:

One of my favorite tools that I like to introduce, and I like to do this early on, is besides professional learning networks, with Twitter and Instagram, and all those great things, would be Canva because with Canva, they have an educator account that is amazing. They could do their lesson. They have lesson templates, they have virtual classroom templates, they have worksheets. It gets them a good starting point. They can do their social media posts. They can make posters for their classroom. They can have students create within Canva Education, which is amazing. That's one that's always a big win, and a fan favorite. Then, a close second for that would have to be Nearpod or Pear Deck, because those are engaging tools. You can use those across platforms, across a subject grade level, all those things.

Dr. Sam Fecich:

Then you can really engage our students in that learning. We can do those checks for understanding. We could even add that SEL component. We can look at the data, and make decisions based on our instruction, to see where to go next. Then, a third favorite would have to be Bitmoji Classrooms. I know that became a very big thing in virtual learning. I think it's also a really neat thing to have as we get back into in-person learning for the fall, as a hub, as a space for your students to keep learning, keep growing, and connect, in case they miss a day, or whatever that might be. They still have that Bitmoji Classroom. Three very easy to use, versatile tools that

really do lots of different things that can help new teachers out when it comes to their first year, working with their students.

Monica:

I love that emphasis on the versatility, and things that you could use in lots of different ways. For anyone who's listening in to the podcast today, I'll make sure to link these in the show notes so you can go out and find those. I know, if the listeners are like me, I am on the run or emptying the dishwasher, and they'll be there for you to find. That emphasis on intention, that task before apps is the phrase I always use. Right? Yeah. Over my shoulder here on the Zoom. Yeah, looking at things from that why perspective, and I'm sure you find this too. I think it's a great point about the versatility is that, I know, when I was student teaching, I had a long placement in first grade. A long placement in sixth grade. I ended up walking into a fifth grade classroom and stayed with fifth graders for almost seven years.

Monica:

Having tools that can work in a lot of different environments, like Nearpod, like a Pear Deck, that you can really apply in different ways, I think, is just such a great reminder to help new teachers not feel overwhelmed, and just prioritize different things. Really appreciate those suggestions, and tools that are free, that you can [crosstalk 00:17:17] right away. Sam, I know you have a fantastic podcast, and we follow each other on Instagram, and there's lots of places to grab tips, and gather ideas from your work. I would love for everyone to hear a little bit more about what you're working on, things that are front of mind for you as we are finishing up the summer and entering into the back to school season.

Dr. Sam Fecich:

Yeah, absolutely. Be happy to. Thanks, Monica. Yeah. I'm the author of a couple of books. One is called EduMagic: A Guide for Pre-Service Teachers. It's definitely geared towards that future educator crowd, and then EduMagic Shine On: A Guide for New Teachers. They are truly acts of love. These are all things I wished that I knew as a future teacher, as a beginning teacher, and they kind of break down different areas of learning. Then, I'm also the host of the EduMagic Podcast, which is for future teachers. I got a nice little theme going here. If you'd like to find out about my work you can head on over to my site, sfecich.com. There you can find podcasts, blog, freebies, all kinds of goodies for our new and future teachers in the crowd today.

Monica:

Wonderful. I feel like in the past, I know book studies, book clubs were really a lot of fun, and I know a lot of people still participate in them. I think your books would make really great ones for that sort of new teacher crowd. Even just doing like a podcast listening club, right? Let's listen to this episode, and then talk about it. I think there's some real benefit to that too, for people who are looking for things that maybe are more bite sized. When we talk about today, all these ways to support new teachers with technology integrations, I think some of that professional development, and that mentorship, we can get really creative with the type of content that we are sharing there too. Before we finish up here, where can listeners best connect with you? If they're on social media and they want to follow along, where should they go?

Dr. Sam Fecich:

Sure. You can connect with me just like Monica and I connected over on, I think it was Instagram, @sfecich, S F E C I C H. You can also find me on Twitter, all the places, it's @sfechich, I like to keep it simple.

Monica:

Wonderful. I'll link out to that for everyone who's listening in, so you can follow along with Sam too. Thank you so much for your time today.

Dr. Sam Fecich:

Oh, thank you so much, Monica. The pleasure is mine. Thank you.

So let's make this EdTech easy...

First, hands-on experiences are so important.

Next, emphasize versatile tools.

Then, encourage learning from mistakes.

Finally, incorporate demos and observations.

Remember, you can find the shownotes and the full list of resources from this episode on classtechtips.com/podcast including all of the ways to connect with

Sam!

Promotion/Reminder

A big thank you to our sponsor for this episode, Microsoft Education! I'm so excited to partner with them to bring you new episodes of the Easy EdTech Podcast this summer. There are so many new updates to Microsoft Teams and I don't want you to miss a thing. You can find posts on my blog all about the updates, or head straight to their landing page to learn more. Just go to <http://aka.ms/teamsPP>

Outro

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Episode Resources

- Check out Dr. Samantha Fecich's [website](#), [books](#), and [podcast](#)
- Follow Dr. Samantha Fecich on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#)
- [Nearpod](#) (Student engagement tool)
- [PearDeck](#)
- [Canva](#) (Graphic design platform)
- [Bitmoji](#) (Avatar creator)
- [8 Ways to Check for Understanding with Nearpod](#) (Blog Post)
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