

Digital Learning Initiative Committee Meeting Notes: Tuesday, November 17, 2015 (3:30 - 5:30pm)



Welcome

Mary Morgan Ryan welcomed committee members and described the plan for the meeting.

D181 Staff Presentation

Madison School's Nancy Gadzala (5th grade teacher) and Lorene Himpelmann (Differentiation Specialist) shared information regarding the way they use technology.

Nancy: Discussed blogging with her students, which she said gives students an authentic audience for their work. She starts the year with a smaller blog assignment, and each time, Nancy adds a new component (photo, video, links, etc.). Following winter break, students are given more freedom in their writing topics. Nancy uses a flexible classroom design (student choice in seating), and one of the first blog posts was about the classroom. An architect from Canada read their posts, Nancy and he tweeted with each other, and that led to an opportunity for students to give feedback on his company's school design via Skype. It was an experience they could never have had before, Nancy explained, and it created a truly unique exchange. Blogging takes some time, but because of the class having 1:1 device access, students work on them at home after getting started in school. Their blogs also create a virtual portfolio of sorts, which students can self-review at the end of the year. Nancy notes that she doesn't check their posts for errors, just for safety, and students want to self-correct their work.

Lorene: Discussed using technology for differentiating activities so students can work on a level appropriate for them. Computer coding was introduced in 2014-15 and has continued this year. Every student K-5 has participated in some kind of computer programming activity - a project Lorene led in collaboration with teachers. By using an online resource and iPads, every student learned a mini lesson on coding and programming, and then worked at their own pace on age appropriate activities. Students had the opportunity to extend their learning at home, and were able to progress and explore faster. Access to technology in the classroom has been very valuable.

Nancy: Having 1:1 iPads in the classroom has been helpful in her reading blocks. As an example, Nancy has students go to a subscription news site, Newsela, read an article, write facts and opinion about the story, and create a Google slide on the topic. They choose a word that is unique or interesting, practice the definition, etc. In another example, she allowed students choice in which creative app to use to create an explanation or illustration of the three branches of government. Her instruction on these types of project focus on the outcome, and it is not necessarily a project she can grade or measure. She explains to students that their grades on report cards are just one way to show what they have learned.

Mary, Nancy, Lorene: The group discussed the way Google Classroom has been used to communicate with students and send / submit assignments with real-time feedback. Lorene described it is a fluid process that allows continuous learning.

Committee Discussion: Teacher may have to set parameters about his/her availability in responding to students. Students are told they can't "expect" the teacher to be available at all times. Some members discussed the need to standardize the District's technology access because there is a lack of consistency, which is one of the challenges the DLI Committee is hoping to address. Teachers have transformed their practices and can't go back. It was suggested that the DLI Committee talk to the Board Learning Committee about possibly expediting the process due to the "immediacy" of the issue. It was noted that students' sick days and potential snow days are good examples of opportunities for students to use 1:1 access at home. It was requested that the committee see an inventory of devices, with a listing of 1:1 in the District (identifying PTO-purchased devices). It was noted that availability of devices during the school day is critical and something teachers get used to, not that students use them all the time, but the devices are ready for on-the-spot learning. Mary and Dr. Schneider explained that the Board will be presented with options, and there will need to be understanding around the consequence of "doing nothing" particularly as it relates to current devices and the replacement cycle. Committee members also discussed the quick implementation some other districts have done.

Ian Ball / Google

Committee member and parent Ian Ball works for Google. He discussed his background in technology, including work for Dell, Xerox, and hardware/software startups. Every company and organization is heading in the direction that Google has gone, he noted. The work world lives on email, calendar, IM, collaborative docs, remote meeting software, etc. Every function of the work day is a collection of apps (i.e. performance management, HR, training, tech support). If there is a way to "appify" something and make it self service, it's happening. He reviewed his tasks during a week while working at Google (runs a piece of the sales end) and said he received 978 emails, engaged in 27 different IM conversations, had 36 calendar entries, operated in 12 different collaborative documents, created and delivered four presentations, and accessed 13 different apps. His observation has been that younger employees are not intimidated by this the way some older employees may be.

Ian explained that a lot of hiring is done by committee. Google had 3,000,000 worldwide applicants and hired 7,000 people. "It's an arduous process but it works," he said. An applicant will talk to 7-10 people to get hired, and being on the hiring end requires significant preparation and documentation.

Key Employee Skills

- Process heavy amounts of information (archive, dismiss, retrieve, read, etc.)
- Learn in multiple ways (in a classroom, online, self paced, video) - learn how to learn and teach as much as you learn
- Collaborate around the world - need technology proficiency AND cultural IQ, situational awareness (work together to produce something)
- Find and analyze data - manipulate data well in spreadsheets / must be wildly proficient and able to back up plans with data
- Present with clarity and impact - present ideas well so people will remember them
- Negotiate for resources
- Creative and independent thought - what separates those who do very well (new, better, different ideas, AND carry them forward)
- Operate at a fast pace (while balancing with personal life)

Key Traits

Ian stated that the skills above will get you in the door at a company like Google, but to succeed there, you need certain traits: engagement (passion, very "into it"), resilience (grit), strong work ethic, connection to others (like dealing with people), thrive on change (fine with things coming out of left field, comfortable not knowing the future - you can't Google an answer for it), curiosity (not waiting for problems to come to you), bias to action (let's just try it - instead of dragging the process out, not afraid to fail, reward the bravery)

Committee Discussion: Google now worries less about applicants' degrees and more about the other traits he noted. Per a committee question, he estimated a 60% American / 40% International employee demographic. He noted that students need to have complete comfort with self-teaching and exploration, and that schools should find a way to reward the "soft skills." Ian noted that in his previous district (Austin, Texas), he saw that once the district got past the first leap with device implementation and the community saw the way technology was part of the curriculum, the process became smoother.

Marlboro Digital Journey**

Michael Ballone (Curriculum Director) and Adam Lindstrom (Technology Supervisor) shared information about their district of 5,200 students PreK-8 in eight buildings (including an early learning center). They have 25 people in the administrative team. Students come from very privileged homes, near the top in socio-economic level, high achieving, heavy parental involvement, with a well educated and involved community in the suburbs of New York City.

Four or five years ago, there was a vision of students having devices in the classroom - they had laptops and labs, but not personalized learning devices in every student's hands on a daily basis. They initiated a BYOD plan in approximately 2011. It was piloted with willing teachers and knowing students may know more than the teacher and coming with

varying devices. The teachers could not necessarily be fully versed in every device and platform, which became one of the biggest challenges. It was not seamless or integrated, and took away from classroom time. The intent was there but not working, which prompted research into devices. District was on the Apple path but considering Chromebooks as well. They convened a committee that (a) met regularly and discussed the pros and cons, (b) gained feedback from many sources, and (c) talked with vendors from Apple and Google. They traveled to Google headquarters and recommended that experience. Their philosophy was to create personalized learning, open source, and teach students how to put the information they get through a vetting process. They didn't want to only share what Apple decided to share and from a tech management perspective, were worried about the cumbersome nature of pushing out information that was available at the time.

- Early Learning center still uses Apple iPads (not 1:1, about 1:3) / Otherwise Google throughout the District (would recommend transitioning out of iPads for the one group)
- Grade 1: Nexus 7 tablets
- Grades 2-8: Chromebooks
- Year 1 (2012-13): Pilot
- Year 2 (2013-14): Additional rollout
- Year 3 (2014-15): Full rollout but while middle schools had enough for every child, distribution was by room so couldn't ensure there was one in their hand at all times / didn't send them home
- Year 4 (2015-16): Assigned per student and they now send the devices home; the committee continues to meet monthly or more
 - Experienced some pushback on sending devices home because they can access Google products and services without having the device
 - Charged a \$35 fee (District cost was approximately \$286 for the device plus a \$20 case) - some didn't want to be told what to do, knew their child would break the device, considered about the devices being left at sporting events, etc.
 - 50% of students take it home, and 50% leave it at school
 - Built in 8 minutes at the end of the day to manage devices staying in school (took one minute off each class) - the students return to homeroom at the end of the day to drop them off, which they said is not ideal but it works
 - Periods went from 42 minutes to 50 minutes, and now are 49 minutes due to the added homeroom
 - Measuring success - surveys, proficiency levels, which apps they are using and how / They bring their Academy trainers together to reflect on staff proficiency / Administrators are expected to demonstrate use of products (i.e. Curriculum Council via Google Classroom)
 - PD - Can't put devices in students' hands without putting it in teacher and administrator hands - Teachers received the same devices as the students / PD included two full days on Google Education / Administrators additionally learned Google Apps for Education (weekly) and now serve as trainers for other districts / PD started very basic (i.e. Gmail, Calendar, Classroom, Hangout, Apps in the classroom) with the goal of getting to a place of being seamless (part of instructional day, part of every lesson) / They emphasized providing a lot of support and PD and frequently ask what staff would like more help with to drive next PD sessions / Federal grant funds of \$200,000 are used in part for their Academy on Google, led by teachers (paid a stipend) and attended by colleagues (not paid for attending but they get earned credits) / Have trained enough people in the district that now outside trainers are not needed / Have a Google Site full of resources, videos, etc. created within the district for staff (learning ecosystem) / Three PD days in the year (two in September and one in November, 15 hours totals) plus three half-days - not as productive from a District perspective
 - Some students need more help than others, see a spectrum - The change to 1:1 has really supported what they do with data / Online program they use helps them look at trends (quality of question type, which students answered correctly, etc.) and allows them "close the circle" on what they want to do with data, and it is more timely / Their goal now is to really use data to drive instruction
 - Acknowledged that infrastructure is critical

***Notes from other school districts' comments are the interpretation of District 181..*

Book Recommendation

Made to Stick

Next Meetings

- DLI Committee - December 10, 2015
- DLI Small Working Group - December 17, 2015