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Capstone Report

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Description of the Capstone Experience and Results

Over the course of this project, the goal is to promote engagement and collaboration through digital writing processes using StoryBird as a technology tool in the classroom use modeling explicit writing strategies and monitoring the learners is at the heart of the instructional practices at Whitehead Road. The process will begin in one fourth-grade classroom, as the teacher works to embed Storybird into the writing instruction practice to gather examples and strategies to monitor the learners in that specific classroom. First, the teacher will monitor student engagement in the digital writing tool. Next, the teacher shares discoveries to help other teachers on the fourth grade team to embed Storybird into daily writing workshop model. Finally, the teacher will meet with grade level team and administrative to report on the project successes/failures and student engagement surveys. The objectives and activities of the project as listed below.

1. By the end of November 2018, students will learn how to use Storybird efficiently to publish their writing in the platform for their peers to preview.

2. By November 2018, students will engage in a collaborative peer editing process through a series of writing workshop lessons. These lessons will engage students in collaborative dialogue about writing samples. Students will make corrections to their posts and document these revisions in their writing journals. These corrections occur during writing conferences and in peer groups.

3. By March 20, 2019, a professional learning opportunity for teachers that are interested in learning how to use Storybird to support collaboration during writing workshop.

4. By May 2018, writing engagement inventories complete and shared with administrators and grade level team.

Project Activity One: Introduction to StoryBird

The priority for this first activity in this project was allowing students to become aware of the technology tool, StoryBird. In addition, during this time, the focus was creating an environment where students wrote at their leisure during independent small group rotations as a choice and during writing workshop to practice daily skills. Encouragement to post daily writing creations helped engage students in the beginning stages of this project. The teacher had to model how to log into the platform, how to post stories, how to comment and most importantly, how to engage in conversation about these stories. Simultaneously, the genre during this portion of the project was narrative writing. Storytelling and narrative writing lessons supported student learning and StoryBird serves as a digital writing platform for students to share narrative writing. This portion of the project students had the ability to choose what they posted. Building a digital classroom library was easier than expected. Students found pleasure in posting stories about their families, pets and even traveling experiences and trips to go see their grandparents. The challenge was getting students to go back and review their posts. Students began to post and then move to the next story without engaging in dialogue or reviewing their story. However, at this stage the goal was simply to build a digital library. Highlighting the skills necessary for revision and peer collaboration is the next activity for this project. The typed stories allowed the teacher and student to have meaningful one-on-one conferences. Students also had these stories written in their writing journal. Many times the teacher would provide some feedback on grammatical errors and reference going back and reading over previously published works.

When designing the project, this focus was not an evident as it was when the project implantation was underway. This additional focus on editing and reviewing made for powerful connections for the teacher. Despite the projects plan to create stories in this phase, the

intentional focus on teacher feedback and reviewing writing was a great transition into the next phase. The teacher was also able to distinguish writing trends for each student and preview writing before the conferences occurred. This stage of the project went as planned. The only deviations were the intentional use of conferencing to encourage peer review of the classroom library and discussions about previous writing works. The time allotted on the proposal was significantly shorter as well. Students adapted to the technology tool within the first two weeks of introduction. Even though students caught on quickly, going back and spending more time with setup would be ideal.

Project Activity Two: Collaborative Talks and Peer Review During Writing Workshop

Initially, the priority for the second activity in this project was to support engagement and collaboration in the area of writing with a digital library for peer review and feedback. As the project commenced, the intention became refined to focus on creating works that are well thought out and reviewed before, during and after publication in the digital library. The new idea is in understanding that a writing creation is never complete. Making changes, helps make writing stringer. Peer feedback and review became the collaborative talk model in writing workshop to support this vision of collaboration and engagement. This mindset came as lessons and student work samples took form. In this stage, StoryBird served as a means to access creative writing works easily.

This shift did not affect the instructional strategies of designing lessons for collaboration and intentional use of dialogue among peer groups, but it did affect the deliverables of this portion of the project. Instead of students completing an engagement survey, the teacher had conversations with students during whole group lessons and during individual conferences to gauge engagement and lesson structure feedback. This shift occurred because of time constraints.

This instructional decision also supports the focus on conversations in the area of feedback and reflective skills, which is the focus of this project. This enabled the classroom to make weekly and even daily adjustments to support the leaners needs and desires. The questions the teacher used were as follows:

Student Engagement Survey

1. What do you enjoy most about using StoryBird?

2. How has StoryBird help you connect with other students?

3. In what way could writing workshop be better for you?

4. What is your favorite part about writing workshop?

This informal conversation for data collection served this project focus. Students were encouraged to discuss what they enjoyed about their writing experience and the teacher was able to make adjustments and ask further questions as needed. The consensus was that StoryBird was easy and fun to use in the classroom. Most students stated the pictures made the stories more interesting and sometimes even gave writers their ideas for creative works. On connection, students agreed that the digital library connected them outside of school. Students also discussed how they wanted to make their stories better because there was an audience, someone who would be looking at their writing. For suggestions on making writing better, most students wanted more time to write and more time with the one-on-one time with the teacher. Favorite writing workshop activities ranged from being able to write about what they wanted, using the computer to type, working with their peers, props such as the glasses (looking through a specific lenses) and being able to choose weekly writing spaces. These instructional strategies progressed as the teacher learned the students and needs based on individual conferencing and writing style.

This phase of the project took the most planning and thought. Each lesson had a strategic intention to highlight communication among students and directly reflect the focus of this project, collaboration in the writing process. StoryBird served as a digital library for students to access their peer's work for review and inspiration. The digital library allowed students to connect and take ownership in their writing.

One consideration in the future is the use of the survey anonymously through Google. This would provide some tangible data from the student's perspective. By making the survey in a Google Form, the teacher could assess the data more critically in respect to the projects goal. Assessment of this data would also provide more insight on students thoughts on the use of StoryBird as a digital writing tool to support peer collaboration and communication.

Project Activity Three: Professional Learning and Collaboration

This stage of the project focuses on sharing this technology tool with a team of teachers. This meeting was initially for any teachers who were interested in using StoryBird in their daily writing instruction. The fourth grade team participated in this professional learning session. The session was not as formal as initially anticipated. This was due to the relatively small size of the professional learning session. A team agenda for the session and teacher survey provided a structured conversation for the teacher's involved in this professional learning session. The teacher presented the tool using a projector while the collaborating teachers followed along. Each teacher created an account and class for their writing blocks. The teachers practiced creating writing drafts as their students would in the StoryBird platform. The teacher provided a story for the team to read and discuss with a partner. The use of dialogue and collaboration serves as an instructional tool for the teachers to take back to their classrooms. At the end of the session, teachers asked questions and participated in a StoryBird questionnaire discussion. This

discussion determined the likelihood of teachers taking this back to their classrooms and general

feedback about the session for the future. The agenda was as follows:

4th Grade Extended Collaborative Planning Agenda
Thursday, Mar 7, 2019 | 3:00-4:15pm

OUTCOMES

Today we will:
- Create accounts on StoryBird
- Practice making various kinds of digital writing works
- Engage in peer collaborative talks using a narrative story (provided)
- Questions and Answer
- StoryBird Professional Development Survey Discussion

Meeting Norms:
- *Engage fully*
- *Take risks (be a vulnerable learner)*
- *Make wise use of time*
- *Be mindful of other learners*
- *Provide meaningful contributions*

Time	What	Why	How
			Materials
3:00 pm	Create StoryBird accounts	*To collaboratively discuss and practice creating stories in the digital platform to promote student engagement and collaboration.*	
3:20 pm	Create digital stories within the platform.	*To explore how the StoryBird dashboard works and become acquainted with the platform to gauge thoughts on the technology tools as a way to engage learners during writing workshop.*	John Henry Narrative Writing StoryBird as the digital library to house student works.
4:00 pm	StoryBird Question and Answer	*To reflect and explore any misunderstandings or confusions.*	
4:10 pm	Teacher Survey	*To explore interests and likelihood of implementation of StoryBird as a digital library for writing workshop.*	Teacher Survey Questionnaire Discussion

Teacher Survey Questionnaire Discussion

1. Can you see yourself adapting StoryBird to fit into your writing workshop model?

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of using this technology tool?

3. What improvements would make this professional learning session more successful?

This portion of the project was very successful. The professional learning session was simple and teachers had the opportunity to explore StoryBird as a digital tool to support writing instruction. The use of the narrative lesson was not on the initial proposal. This example lesson provides a format for teachers to take back to their writing lessons with the consideration for adding StoryBird to enhance their student's engagement and collaboration in the writing task. Teachers participated in a model lesson that promoted discussion and previewing other writing samples, which was this projects focus. This professional learning session went a little further than anticipated with the hopes to influence teachers to use this digital library. The survey could have been digital rather than a discussion to provide tangible data. Again, the intention was engagement in collaborative discussions. For concrete data analysis to occur, a digital survey can help with the next steps for this project. In the future, the teacher can document the discussion through a digital survey or other media collection form of choice. The deliverables for this portion of the project.

Project Activity Four: Key Stakeholders Presentation

This phase of the project was very different from originally planned. The initial goal was to present the project to a group of key stakeholders. However, the end of the year came rapidly. The Principal was the audience for the project presentation. In the beginning phase, the principal

played a major role in the design of this project. The discussion of this projected occurred during the teacher's annual conference. The discussion involved looking at the end of the year assessment data. Milestones writing assessments and individual conference notes on student progression, goal setting and work samples provided the necessary data for conversations about the digital library tool. After the conference follow-up, the conclusions were that teacher knowledge improved significantly based on intentional lesson design and reflection, writing scores showed improvements and individual student data was easily accessible for review and planning writing lessons.

Improvements to this stage include a formal project presentation to leverage the technology integration initiative to foster the goal of this project, collaboration and engagement. With more experience with this tool, professional learning opportunities can provide access to this technology to support writing instruction across the school. Holding these sessions at the school level will engage teachers in all grade levels to ensure more knowledge of this technology tool. Discussing writing strategies and best practices can make writing instruction beneficial to students and teachers.

The follow up plans are to continue using this technology tool to house students library of various work samples. Continuing to share strategies with team members and other grade level teams is the new focus. Continuing to monitor student progression, extending student access to the library and teacher discussions about student engagement and collaboration during writing will happen the following year. Gaining teacher buy in will serve as the next steps for this vision as well. The vision did not go beyond the teacher's classroom but the knowledge, skills and dispositions for this teacher improved in the area of writing instructing significantly throughout the duration of this project.

Capstone Reflection

  This project provides an abundance of learning opportunities in the field of technology integration. The knowledge, skills and dispositions reflect the extensive thought and activities in this project. Technology facilitation and leadership requires development of a shared vision for the use of any technological tool. In this case, StoryBird creates a digital library for students to build their writing capacity and collaborative classroom environment. The intention of the project was to increase writing assessment data through engagement and collaboration. At the end of the project, the student data is promising and shows an increase in writing instructional strategies and student understanding of the content standards through technology integration. Through consistent implementation of this tool, students are able to grow in their writing skills. Sheninger (2014) suggests, "By focusing on how specific technologies can be used to engage students, digital leaders are establishing a foundation for learning that will lead to eventual increases in student achievement (p. 135). This project explores ways to engage learners in the writing process through a digital library that encourages collaboration and communication.

  Not only was this project implementing a shared technology vision for technology integration for writing instruction, but also student technology standards provide opportunities for students to engage with one another through the accessibility of the digital library. The teacher grew in the knowledge of the technology tool by practicing within the platform and ensuring students understood how to utilize the digital library. The teacher ensures accessibility and endurance from the students. The intentional focus on communication ensures students are practicing real life skills, while building technology and writing capacity simultaneously. Troubleshooting, planning and developing lessons to ensure student competence in the technology platform and writing practices demonstrates the skills of a technology leader.

The teacher develops and implements a technology vision with respect to technology-enhanced experiences for students to address content standards in the area of writing through this project. The project focuses on engaging writers using a digital library to house student exemplars. Sheninger (2014) also states, "The driving question we should be asking is how we should use the technology that is available to us to improve what we do instead of why we should use it to improve what we do" (p. 45). Considering this, the most powerful takeaway from this project is the disposition of using technology to promote the "how" to engage writers through collaboartion. The answer or project solution is a digital library for students to reflect and publish works.

One powerful strategy that promoted building classroom community and engagement with one another was the use of unstructured activities. For these beginning stages of this project, the goal was for students to build a collection of creative writing works at their own pace. Hertz and Mraz (2018) suggest students build skills in working with others when they have access to unstructured time (p. 62). By providing time during writing and reading portions of the day for students to work on independent writing tasks, they are able to build collaborative practices and social skills in their peer groups. The knowledge of an effective tool is required for someone choosing to explore ways to engage with writers.

Basic troubleshooting and evaluation of technology tools ensures the technologies will work within the school infrastructure. This is critical when deciding on what tools to integrate into daily instructional practice. The only recommendation for others studying the use of digital tools to support peer collaboration and engagement is to provide students with a variety of tools to explore in regards to digital works. This idea may seem overwhelming but the purpose is to allow for various technology skills and organization of these technologies.

The overall evaluation of this project is that some components are in need of more development. The implementation of the project in the classroom and the professional learning session was the most successful components. However, the teacher realizes that improvements in implementation and professional learning sessions improve with time and practice. Technology integration takes time. It may happen in one room and the goal to continue to share new practices and successes. Accurate data collection and a commitment to documenting the data for a project or study would have improved the outcome of this project. The ability to reflect on a deeper level would be possible with data collection. The focus became dialogue and discussion based. This was powerful in building those initial stages of teacher buy in for digital tools. Knight (2007) suggests, "Collaboration, at its best, is a give and take dialogue, where ideas ping-pong back and forth between parties so freely that it's hard to determine who thought of what (p. 28). With dialogue and discussion on this projects professional learning design, teachers take ownership in their ability to develop their own ideas about technology tools. This project will continue to develop in various ways as the class makeup changes and the technology tools change. The key is in integration technology strategies to engage and provide opportunities for students to build skills in collaboration and communication through digital writing processes. Writing and speaking allow people to connect on various levels. Utilizing tools that support real life practice in these skills means leaners are engaged in authentic learning tasks that they can use later in their educational careers.

References

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