Case Studies of Professional Development

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This presentation is a self-reflective case study of the authors’ involvement in a faculty professional development program. This case study of our professional development teases out what might be learned from an innovative program that teams a faculty member involved in teacher education one on one with a “knowledgeable” graduate student. Our experiences over the first year have led us to believe that this form of professional development provides contextual learning in a job embedded manner, such that faculty members leave the experience better prepared to infuse the use of technology into their work with preservice teacher candidates.

For years, the university has struggled to infuse technology in its teacher education programs due to lack of resources and equipment, lack of faculty expertise in technology integration, and lack of programmatic alignment with the ISTE Recommended Foundations in Technology for All Teachers. Recently, the barrier of inadequate equipment and resources has been addressed at the university as well as area K-12 schools. However, program restructuring, curriculum revision, and faculty training are imperative for effective technology infusion in teacher education. The overall goal of the project is to enable preservice teachers to fully utilize modern technology for improved learning and achievement in their future classrooms.

To describe and support the notions of professional development for technology these cases are framed around the topics of: partnering, structuring the work, characteristics of learners, evolving roles, and impact. The case studies are based on the experiences of two professors and their graduate student mentors for technology training. These case studies represent different learning styles in the professional development process. The similarities and differences will be addressed. Clear indications present us with the need for individually driven / motivated effective professional development.

Standards are only somewhat threatening in the abstract. However, in real practice, especially practice that is reflective, our own work, skills, knowledge can cause us to back away from the enormity of what NET-T means for faculty involved in teacher education. We are not experts. One of us describes herself as having played with a lot of hardware and software at a surface level, but is overwhelmed by the potential for classroom use. The other claims that he plays with the various technology tools, even though they don’t work all the time. Sometimes he feels like they don’t work at all. And yet as professionals we have been acting to push ourselves and our institution to look at, investigate and struggle with meeting the ISTE standards in one of the largest teacher education programs in the United States. We are seeking to do this by involving ourselves in a PT3 funded program.