“Crayons for Teachers”: Integrating Basic Applications for K-2

Abstract. This paper reports on initiatives to restructure pre-service teachers’ experiences to support the integration of technology through creative samples of basic, integrated technology applications. Methods courses need to integrate technology within current curricular plans in order to raise pre-service teachers’ expectancies, values, and self-perceptions in relation to successful technology integration. Implementing changes in current teacher education curriculum poses challenges to educators and technology coordinators. One ongoing project involves the use of basic integrated software applications applied for younger students’ use and creation in motivational ways. The article concludes with a discussion of outcomes obtained thus far and future directions that we envision for our integration samples.

Most teachers have learned basic technology skills. These skills, however, do not automatically transfer to the teachers’ use and curriculum integration of technology in the classroom (Wetzel, 1996-97). Teachers provide many reasons for wanting to use technology, including higher relevance in learning and more motivated students. However, pre-service teacher programs require more learning components to produce teachers confident in technology integration (Gillingham & Topper, 2000; Maeers, Browne, & Cooper, 2000).

Fife (2000) reported the need for technology-integrated experiences within several pre-service education courses. The “Crayons for Teachers” project provides a simple, easy format for teacher educators and pre-service teachers to follow in learning how to create age appropriate, technology-integrated samples and templates for K-2 students. Comprehensive and effective technology integrative instructional models in pre-service education are still rare (Moursund & Bielefeldt, 1999). However, the “Crayons for Teachers” project has thus far presented itself as an effective, integrative instructional model.

“Crayons for Teachers” was devised for the ease of teachers’ and students’ integrated technology use in the K-2 classrooms. The basic graphics, spreadsheets, databases, word processing, and presentation software applications that most everyone has on their computers was deemed the most accessible source of technology resources for educators. However, few finished examples existed at the time of the authors’ need for such samples. Finding creative and age appropriate samples was an even more difficult task. Therefore, constructing samples that would be motivational and easy to use for teachers and students was of paramount importance.

The project started with one creative elementary teacher’s vision of how such tools could be combined in order to motivate and engage K-2 students. Combining the basic applications to produce engaging, interactive activities for the K-2 students is now as easy for this teacher as her students’ use of crayons. Demonstrations and workshops for other teachers have produced a similar contagion of creativity and motivation.

The project was further extended with the creation of the “teacher to teacher” linked pages. These pages not only include the lesson plan behind the student sample product or template creation, but also the state standards. Further comments on this document provide insights from the original author, which also include possible variations of the provided sample. In short, this document provides the insights into the creative mind behind the product samples. The poster session will reveal multiple integrated samples, including the “teacher to teacher” linked pages further explaining the theories, lessons, and standards behind each activity.
References


