Technology Integration in Teacher Education: Changing the Way Learners Think About and Do Their Work

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The Linking the Future to the Present PT3 grant at Kent State University is now in its third year of implementation. With a keen, questioning eye on our progress and insightful feedback from our evaluators, we are learning a lot about technology integration in our teacher education program. With this insight, we might simply say that in Year I we learned what didn’t work, in Year II we learned what did, and now in year III we’re learning why.

Linking the Future to the Present supports faculty development of technology integration models by providing student assistants, consultants, materials and supplies, field visits to technology-rich learning sites, and stipends only in restricted instances; university conditions prevent our support through release time, which is the most frequently requested faculty incentive at our institution. During Year I, our incentives were apparently not attractive enough to generate the degree of faculty participation we originally expected. Also during Year I, faculty participation was limited to a triad structure, involving education faculty collaboration with liberal arts and sciences faculty; the idea of collaboration was not a barrier, but timing of courses and workload was. PK-12 collaborations were already in place for faculty in education and arts and sciences so that was never a challenge.

In Year II we expanded faculty opportunities to include individual and program-level projects. This successfully increased faculty participation so that by the middle of Year II we were on track with originally targeted numbers. We also found faculty could now better articulate how their technology integration was changing their students’ learning, and more importantly, their own. Concurrently, the evaluation feedback helped the project implementation team consciously recognize and attend to the role informal networks were playing in our complex process of innovation. Now that we have begun Year III, we are intentionally exploring, nurturing, and examining these networks; we believe a new model of faculty development is emerging. We too are changing the way we think about and do our work!

To effectively Link the Future to the Present, we situate our technology integration in the context of highly intellectual and compelling inquiry work for learners. We have chosen the research of Newmann, Secada, and Wehlage (1995, also www.consortium-chicago.org/acrobat/Intellectual%20Report.pdf) to frame this type of work for learners.

In this paper, we invite you to visit our virtual gallery of faculty technology integration models, listen to their commentary on how this integration is changing their own and their student’s thinking and learning, and hear our preservice teachers’ firsthand comments about the same.
The gallery includes work such as explorations of digital photography and language development in early childhood, critical examination of new literacies in middle childhood language arts, sophisticated imaging techniques in middle childhood biological sciences, case study in WebQuest format in early childhood intervention, authentic application of mathematical processes through inquiry into Rock and Roll Hall of Fame data, and examination of urban sprawl using real data in geography. These projects involve education faculty, liberal arts and sciences faculty, student assistants, and consortium partners.