Technology Projects with Cooperating Teachers

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Abstract: This paper presents examples of activities, product of the partnerships with cooperating teachers that work in the teacher preparation program of the Faculty of Education. It will illustrate how cooperating teachers serve as facilitators in professional activities with their peers, the use of virtual forums in projects such as the process of reconceptualization of evaluation of student teachers, virtual forums between supervisors, cooperating teachers and student teachers, cooperating teachers modeling the integration of technology created by themselves and special institutes organized by the institution and the cooperating teachers to attend particular needs.

Introduction

The Faculty of Education of the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus admits over 200 students per semester in the student teaching program. These students are supervised by approximately 150 cooperating teachers in over 75 schools situated in the surrounding area of the Institution as well as other areas beyond the metropolitan area. Schools and university have initiated cooperative relationships to enhance the technology skills of their teachers, teacher candidates and students. The activities vary in complexity and duration and range from simple, voluntary arrangements between Faculty professors and cooperating teachers to formal, planned group commitments.

Cooperating teachers as facilitators of their peers

The Faculty of Education has a group of cooperating teachers with a high level of technology skills. They work with their peers as facilitators of their learning, offering workshops designed to teach basic programs skills, use of Internet and the integration of technology in different academic areas. Some of the cooperating teachers work as moderators of online forums, others are invited to present their strategies to the university students. In order to provide better collaboration the cooperating teachers have organized a professional association that presents several technology activities during the year.

Virtual forums

Using virtual activities has helped to improve the communication between cooperating teachers, university professors and student teachers. Online forums are gradually becoming a valuable form for developing a sustained communication. Such a high number of participants would nor be possible with personal communication. Although, due to a shortage of equipment and inadequate infrastructure in the schools we have experienced many start-up problems. The participating groups have created forums discussing diverse issues and length such as discipline at schools, evaluation of students and ideas for effective integration of technology. Some virtual forums have been very effective in providing channels of communication between our student teachers and experts in different areas such as special education.
Activities created by cooperating teachers

Cooperating teachers participate in special projects funded by the Department of Education such as The Virtual Classroom. Most of the projects focus on producing educational activities that are excellent models of integrating technology at different academic areas at different levels. The presentation will illustrate some of these activities in social studies, history and science. At a different level, teachers create activities by themselves, with the participation of the student teachers, for integrating into their day to day work with the students.

Summer Institutes

The PT3 Project (Preparing Teachers To Use Technology) has co-sponsored a summer institute with the Office of Student Teaching. The main objectives of this Institute are to develop skills in the use of different software, discuss ideas for effective use of Internet in the classroom as well as creating a community of learners for the integration of technology. One of the main achievements of this Institute was the participation of cooperating teachers as facilitators. The second summer institute will be on June 2003 and will focus on the creation by the cooperating teachers of activities for integrating technology in grades K-12.