Assisting Elementary Teachers to Infuse Technology in Social Studies

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In the fall of 2002, an elementary school in Charlottesville, VA received a grant from the Curry School Foundation of the University of Virginia. This grant award allowed the school to install a wireless networking system and to purchase 14 Apple lap top computers. As a result of the new technology available for instruction, teachers in this elementary school will participate in a series of workshops designed to assist them in developing different approaches to meaningfully integrate technology in their instruction. This paper will explore how elementary school teachers utilize technology in their social studies instruction following an intensive series of professional development opportunities. The poster presentation will describe how the authors constructed a series of professional development opportunities that introduced fourth-grade teachers to a variety of approaches for meaningful infusion of technology in the elementary social studies classroom. In these workshops, we will provide teachers with an overview of the latest research literature on elementary social studies and technology; provide teachers with a broad overview of available technology and how it works (wireless lap tops, digital cameras, etc.); and we will work collaboratively with teachers to construct a unit that relates to state standards, is relevant to the high-stakes assessment guidelines, and meaningfully infuses technology. We will assist teachers in the classroom as they teach the lessons in the unit. Our efforts are focused on enhancing the content for the students through the use of technology while showing the teachers how to use it effectively, rather than merely demonstrating the technology for teachers. Secondly, we will offer insight into an exploratory study we will conduct with the teachers in which we examine the effectiveness of our in-service professional development. We will ask teachers to
complete written surveys before, during, and after their in-service workshop. Survey questions will include the following: demographic and educational background, educational philosophy; previous experience with technology, level of comfort with technology, views and attitudes towards technology. We will observe the teachers teach subsequent social studies units and assess the level of technology infused in the instruction. The survey results and our observations and reflections will offer interesting information on successes, failures, and future work. This poster presentation merits a national audience because will be exploring the effects of in-service workshop combined with sustained mentoring within an elementary school in a state with high-stakes standards and accountability measures.