MassDUE Evaluators Program Evaluation

Curriculum Directors/Department Heads Focus Group

April 30, 2014

**Question 1:** *Please describe the relationship—as you see it – between technology and the curriculum. For example, how integral are technology tools for teachers to help students master curriculum objectives?*

* Through Teacher Share, we create, add, and see what others are using. From a curriculum standpoint, the large piece is Teacher Share, then Edmodo…others.
* Edmodo is an excellent way to communicate with parents and students. We can send assignments out to them. Reduces excuses. This morning, a student sent a late assign via Edmodo.
* Some teachers use technology well, others are more uncomfortable. I see it as a real problem. It is because either they don’t know it’s out there or they are not familiar with how to use it.
* Some teachers don’t get same kind of support from peers.
* “Staying on top of it is one of the hardest things”
* “Can become daunting, going into Teacher Share…okay , where do I find that? Incredible amount of duplicate content. I see that as a real problem.”
* In art and tech, we need tech to teach. We have updated hardware and software in our dept.
* “We wrestle with Tech Dept. to get the software we need.”
* “We have one teacher computer in classroom, so it’s not always there for kids. “ ( Kurzweil)

**Question 2:** *Through what activities do students develop the 4Cs (don’t prompt them for each C, but let them describe) with, or without, technology?*

* “…a lot of project based learning…we create projects they have to present and are using integrated technology within that piece”
* “One thing that’s really great now is that students are so tech savvy, we can flip classrooms. They [students] can use links at home, it saves time in class. Kids like that too, it breaks up tedium. So many kids are visual learners… it speaks to them”
* Tweeting is a great way to communicate with students.
* “Science-Turn it in.com,(liks-?)-free article writing software. Took time to get it installed, but very easy to do…equations, formulas. We have a couple of people who use that. Kids learning how to write in science is very different.”
* “Collaboration –sending messages to outside sources”
* “Kids are Skyping with students in Spain and other students”

**Question 3:** *Can you provide what you feel is a good example of a student activity that demonstrates the characteristics of a self-directed learner?*

* Using Geometer Sketch Pad, our first activity is a scavenger hunt. It is student driven.
* Virtual High School: able to take courses we don’t offer
* Naviance: Kids take control of the process
* Naviance (Art): Students build portfolios and send them to colleges
* Interest Inventory, Personality Profiles, and Transition Assessments
* Honors Program - students do work outside of classrooms that others don’t have to

**Question 4:** *Describe, in your own words, what you think are the district expectations (and vision?) regarding the use of technology for teaching and learning.*

* Karen: Do you have a tech curriculum?
  + “No”
  + “Not consistent”
  + “So much teacher-driven”
* Prepare students for 21st Century
* “When we prepare students-that critical thinking piece, read and interpret data and solve problems”
* “The way we rethink the way we teach”
* “We have discussions about students in our office. Some are doing well academically, but might not have critical thinking skills - while others are better at this than ap and honors students.

Some of those high achieving students struggle more with collaboration and working with others.”

* “Good point! You give them a project and time to do it and they do well, but then ask them to now sit down with a problem (ex. AP exam), requiring them to think at the moment and it’s a problem. So, we’re trying to do a lot more problems and in moment challenges - to think on their feet.”
* “Here is where tech is interesting, they are dependent on tech in so many ways. Students can Google anything and come up with *someone else’s* solution.”
* “Need to look at curriculum, see how we can challenge students on spur of moment quizzes, etc.”

**Question5:** *How can the district convey its vision and expectations for technology’s role in teaching and learning?(prompt for ways to convey to teachers, parents, etc.)*

* “It changes so quickly, for ex. Edmodo, teachers are using Edmodo, but it changes so much”
* “Issue of communication-how do we get community to understand what it has to do?”
* Communication – if teacher shifts website to Edmodo, school site link still points to TeacherWeb and they look like they don’t have an online presence. Need to update link to new site.
* Difficult to get new software, also helpful to have support for those who are not comfortable with the software.
* “…like the interactive white boards, we have them in most rooms, but I notice some folks using it for all kinds of neat things, others just projecting. I don’t know how we move those people. I don’t see how we move along that spectrum.”
* “What are expectations for teachers? Expectations are not clear.”
* Once we have those, need support. Don’t think anyone knows what to do.
* “Even if we have (tech)support day, an all-day-long drop by…unless teachers know expectations …that it is clear they *must* do it…teachers are busy, and don’t do it…must be told you *need* to do it…this is what you *have* to do.”
* Model-other teachers using technology
* “Shifts so quickly. The greatest thing I ever used are these clickers, but the amount of work that went into a single lesson is 3-4 hours. Sounds good on paper, but…”
* “I would love to see a student be able to sign a laptop out for a day.”
* For other kids-executive function-need access to school printer (printer issues at home).
* “I am more and more encouraging students to email me homework-one third of a class is doing that.” Printer might not work-just email me.
* “Part of problem is that tech is fun and good, one vehicle to engage student in learning process, but not a panacea..good old-fashioned teaching is important…tech is an aid.”
* “Maybe there needs to be…certain tools we know are in place that are basic. Certain level of proficiency of teachers in Office, the interactive white board…”
* “Didn’t we have to take a tech assessment (teachers)? Should it be by department? Each department’s tech needs are different.
* “Let departments have a say…in expectations - not top down.”
* “I see teachers with static ppt and others have ppts that are interactive with videos. There are some folks who put in effort - others don’t.”
* “Create a file to see how teachers use it (technology), nice to go to one source and see how it’s being used.”
* “Some teachers are the ones to tap, teachers are our best resource…If we had those videotapes of best practice. “
* Need opportunities through day to see other teachers use it.
* Didn’t get to see others at tech night because I was presenting myself.
* “I like the interactive to ask questions, I like the personal…”
* “Do videotape and just sit in a classroom and watch.”
* Make it a day, food, travel around, videotape at same time, then you have a file to go back to.
* “What concerns me is when we try to have everyone do the same thing. Ex. *every* paper to go to Turnitin.com. I’m uncomfortable with that, I like to see paper, kids see my handwriting. I say if it ain’t broke don’t fix it. I get very uncomfortable when I am told I have to do this”
* “It’s a great tool for plagiarism, it is preparing them for next step…21st century”
  + “I know my students well enough to know if it is plagiarism, and I conference a lot and go through line by line. That’s where they learn a lot. For me grading is a tactile experience…My worry is that you see so many people tucked behind screens now. ..and that worries me…like Baseline. ..working on after school...it’s taking away personal one on one with students.”
* Teachers are scrambling when will we get in all we have to do, ex. Baseline Edge?
* Sometimes as teacher, it’s putting yourself out of that comfort zone to do what’s best for the student. College level must have those computer skills.
* Realize teacher observations are anecdotal, but what if observations don’t see a lick of tech in each of the 4 observations?”
  + “That’s what your evidence is for”

**Question 6:** *What can you, in your role as a department head/coordinator do to support effective use of technology throughout your school or department?*

* “Advocating for our depts.. .we all have such different needs. Advocate for our specific needs.”

**Question 7:** *Are there any district/school policies or practices that, in your opinion, hinder the effective use of technology in teaching and learning? If so, please describe.*

* “Very strong feeling for this. Open up websites please. A project that worked very well, kids had to go out there…teacher doesn’t do it anymore. Why? Sites blocked. Told, ‘give me a list.’ Next year it’s blocked again. Sometimes YouTube is blocked, teacher makes a vid for flipped classroom and then students have to wait to get home. Teachers investing a lot of time and it’s wasted.”
* All set up and students couldn’t access.
* I would rather see everything open and then punish the kids who abuse it.
* “Even substitutes don’t have access. Instead, have an agreement for them to agree to. Parents click here …agree..”
* “Other districts…acceptable use…then go. If they access something they shouldn’t, then the student gets locked.”
* “Students always on social media…if allowed to use tech in class.”
* “Makes sense to lock them out of those things, but not others that make it better.”
* “Had to choose a wireless phone or ipad. Make me choose?...Stupid”
* Gym: no wireless. Parents asking for access, “I had to say, don’t know what to tell you.”
* We have nine art rooms and only 3 have projectors and screens.
* “It [technology] is inconsistent from classroom to classroom, we inherit old equipment and have to use it.”
* “Teacher moving, but tech doesn’t follow and dept. purchased it for her.”
* “Put in Faces grant for a projector in every room and we don’t have one.”

**Question 7:** *Is there anything else that you would like to mention that has not come up in our discussion? (if not, then thanks!)*

* “Our Internet doesn’t go down, we are ahead of other districts with that stuff.”
* Long process for apps on ipads
* Good to be able to expand use of ipads out of substantially separate programs. All within Pave program. “
* “More devices for our kids who are mainstreamed… have device to sign out for the day.”
* Some way to access what teacher is doing. Have reading assignment and access through iPad-have it read to them …right there at that desk and iPad doesn’t look any different…allows students with disabilities to look like every other kid and get the support they need”
* Can set up Learning Ally accounts and they can have access if they have a device.
* Similar to math graphing calculator policies…sign out.