

Course 360: Professional Practices Paper

Each student is required to include a technology review component in the Professional Practices Paper. The review includes an evaluation of the nature and frequency of technology use by the supervising teacher and a description of the Hope student's use while at the placement. The review may be embedded in the narrative of the paper or appear as an appendix. The following excerpt is an example taken from a recently written paper:

“rather than asking teachers.

Clark and Starr say, “The more resources teachers have available, the better they can teach” (350). If so, the teachers at “xyz” high school have a leg upon many schools. The extended use of technology in Mr. D----’s classroom was one of the first things I noticed. It was much different than any I used in high school and even different than any technology I have seen throughout my placements at Hope College. Each group of three students had access to a computer fully equipped with the Internet. This is the first time I have seen so many computers in a regular classroom. It is both exciting and distracting at the same time. It is especially exciting for a science class to have such a wealth of information at the students’ fingertips. I think back to all the times in high school when I had unanswered questions that could have easily been answered using the “net.” The Internet also gives students the opportunity to be self-sufficient and independent. They do not need the teacher for everything. They can simply look things up for themselves, As Clark and Starr add, “using computers gives students a sense of control and power, allows active learning, and demands interaction” (362). The negative side to having so many computers is that students can become very inattentive and distracted at times. There were many times when Mr. D---- was talking, and many students were experimenting with the Internet. However, it is hard to blame twenty-five curious ninth-graders for surfing the net.

The opportunity for all students to use the Internet must be prefaced by instructions on how to use it efficiently. Our textbook suggests that much of this should be done in the late

elementary school to middle school grades (362). However, since the computer revolution is relatively modern, many high school students need to be introduced to basic computer use. Mr. D---- begins the year by using two weeks to teach the students how to use search engines and the most helpful websites. It is review for many students; but necessary for others who do not have the Internet in their homes.

There are many other uses for the computers besides the Internet. Clark and Starr encourage the use of computers for simulations in science classes (364). There is a particular program that focuses on data probes and student gathering data. It helps students measure variables such as temperatures changing over time and ice water changing to steam. Students simply need to enter the data, and the computer keeps track of trends and graphs. This is what real scientists do. There is also a motion detector program that relates distance, velocity, and acceleration. Since it is geared towards physics students, I did not use this particular program very often. “xyz” high school also uses web-based testing, called CAPA, like Hope College uses. This includes online assignments, where the computer actually does the grading. My problem with computer grading is that students get no credit for showing work if they arrive at the wrong answer. To me, one’s thought process and the way one *approaches* an answer through showing work is much more important than the actual answers. This is especially true in science.

One of the up-and-coming forms of technology in today’s schools seems to be PowerPoint. I gave a hand to many students with PowerPoint presentations throughout the semester. One thing I love about PowerPoint is that students can use it to teach each other. This is one of the highest forms of learning. As we mentioned in class, you do not really know a topic until you can teach it. Mr. D---- uses PowerPoint for many of his units. For example, during a unit on erosion Mr. D---- divided the class into groups, each focusing on a different type of erosion. The goal was to

work cooperatively as a group and become “experts” on their type of erosion. They then taught the material to the rest of the class using PowerPoint. On the day of the evaluation, each member of each group took a turn teaching their segment of erosion to other students. The groups rotated until every individual had presented using PowerPoint, and every group had listened to the other groups present. Students were expected to take notes and ask questions in order to prepare for the test. It was basically an “erosion fair.” This is one of the components of Mr. D----’s style I intend to adopt. There are many advantages to this type of learning. Student interaction is at a premium. Also, the students shoulder the responsibility of learning. If they want to earn successful marks on their tests, they need to ask each other questions and be self-sufficient. Students are more compelled to the learning process because they are the ones teaching each other. There are many other advantages to this cooperative learning that we discussed in class. Students learn how to listen and to provide input. They learn to compromise and consult each other’s opinions. Students meet new people. This creates a more comfortable environment in the classroom; Mr. D---- does a pretty good job of managing the teacher considerations for cooperative learning to ensure most effective use. He monitors groups well to make sure they are on task, he assigns roles to all students. D---- is effective when facilitating disputes. Finally, he uses group assessment sheets. All of these components put together make for quality group work.

Another form of technology I was exposed to for the first time was online grade books. Rather than keeping a hard copy of the student’s grades, Mr. D---- kept track of all grading on the Internet. This way, using codes, students can follow their own progress. Once again, this fosters maximum student responsibility. Parents and administrators are also free to follow students’ grades if they so choose. When parents question a low grade, which parents will always do, they can find out for themselves which assignments were not handed in or areas in which

students struggled. This saves a lot of time and grief. Administrators, when checking athletic eligibility and things of that nature, simply need to boot up the net rather than asking teachers.

Mr. D---- was also very high on the “palm pilot.’ It is a hand held device with a magnetic pen that is useful for recording grades or making notes for oneself Mr. D---- used it as a quick way to walk around the room and record daily assignments. For example, there would be a weekly theme in his classroom that related to lifelong learning or values the students should be working on in their lives. The students would be expected to write a short paragraph explaining how they have incorporated a certain value into their lives. Mr. D---- would walk around the room, make sure everyone wrote their paragraph, and record points on the palm pilot. He could save the screen and then transfer the grades to his online grade book later that night. Once again, this is a quick and easy way to work on the moral education of students.

Diversity is an interesting topic when.....”