CEP 800

Module #6

Lesson Plan Reflection Paper

Discussion Forum M6.3

Lesson Plan:

The school district that I work for has been working hard to identify knowledge gaps in our student population. When this year’s MEAP scores arrived and we discovered we were lower in every testing area than we had ever been before our new Superintendant decided it was time for us to purchase a very expensive program(at least my district found it expensive) to help us isolate specific knowledge gaps in our students Kindergarten through 8th Grade. As a district we purchased the NWEA testing software which involves online testing of our students at least twice a year after which data is generated giving us specific information on the instructional information each of our students need to fill in their knowledge gaps. It was my job to train the Elementary Teachers on how to administer the tests, compile the data in reports, and analyze the data to identify learning gaps for their classroom students. I was able to stick to my original lesson plans from Module 5, with the minor exception of not planning for absent teachers during the training. I was able to regroup the teachers into new groups that followed my original plan of having them work in collaborative pairs that included one tech-savvy teacher with one not-so tech-savvy teacher.

Implementation:

The training started right after school on a Monday and ran for one hour after school for the entire school week. I had the Kindergarten through 5th Grade Teachers in groups of two with one strong technology person and one less strong technology person so that collaboratively they could work together as I explained the program and took them through the necessary steps for creating a test session for their class and then proctoring the test. Luckily all of the teachers had already been to a professional development session that explained the purpose of the tests and how the data collected from the test could be used to help the students in their classrooms, so there was very little need for me to justify the training sessions. It also helped that so many of these teachers were very distressed by their students’ MEAP scores, so the motivation level for my sessions was already very high.

Monday went very quickly and very well based on my observations. The teachers who I knew might struggle with this new program were taking notes as I talked, while still following along with their tech-savvy partners. The collaboration was working exactly how I had hoped it would. I do think that it helped that we have a small teaching staff that generally work very well together and truly enjoy each others’ company. Day 2 closely mirrored day 1 as I showed the teachers how to compile test results and then interpret the data. Since this was a concept that was already briefly covered by our professional development session it really ended up being a review for most of the teachers. Days 1 and 2 were based on a model of Apprenticeship Instruction as I walked them through the steps of proctoring a test, compiling the data, and interpreting the results. Days 3 through 5 involved the teachers working in their collaborative pairs carrying out virtual scenarios of the processes I had taught them in days 1 and 2. After watching the teachers work through the scenarios with only a few hiccups I was pretty confident that when they started their actual testing sessions the following week they would only require a small amount of guidance and oversight on my part to make the testing sessions run smoothly.

Reflection:

It was my goal throughout these training sessions for my elementary teachers to be comfortable with a new technology tool. Initially I wanted them all to see that this could be a great asset for us from an instructional standpoint. I also wanted to reassure our teachers who are not very comfortable with technology that there was truly nothing to fear from the NWEA testing process. Since the NWEA company has been training teachers for years on this program there were many affordances for teaching this process already in place, i.e. the virtual scenarios, which allowed my teachers to try out the process in a realistic way. I observed many different elements of learning, as teachers took notes and discussed the steps and processes. Modeling was also a common occurrence, from me as the “master” and as the teachers collaborated between their partners and between the groups to help out if someone missed a step or simply clicked on the wrong button. These lessons were instituted to help the teachers help themselves and their students. It was just my job to make sure the process was a relatively seamless one. I knew it would be a struggle to make the lessons user-friendly for my technology “scaredy cats”, as I like to call them, without the help of my more tech-savvy teachers. The high-low collaborative teams really helped move the lessons along so that repetition was not longer a factor. If a teacher had a question it was usually answered by their tech-savvy partner or someone else from one of the other groups. I felt that the lessons were a success because I witnessed exactly what I hoped I would witness; teachers working together to learn a new technology tool. When it came time for the virtual scenarios I was once again happy to see the teachers completing the process for testing, reporting, and analyzing I had taught them.

I chose to use the actual classroom testing sessions as my assessment to gauge the teachers’ competency with the NWEA testing program. I was an additional proctor for each of the three testing sessions (1 Reading Test Session, 1 Math Test Session, and 1 Language Test Session) each teacher was asked to carry out. Each teacher needed a little bit of help on their first go round, but by the time they were into their third test session they didn’t even need me there. All in all I was very happy with all of their progress, even my tech scaredy-cats.

Technology played a large role in my lesson as the whole NWEA program could be classified as a stand-alone technology tool, but I also had help from a computer lab full of PCs and a SmartBoard for modeling. The teachers’ learning was greatly enhanced through the use of the virtual scenarios and digital modeling and so I have to give our computer lab PCs a lot of credit for the success of this process. It simply would not have been the same if I had handed over printouts of test procedures and asked the teachers to read through them and be ready to test their students the following week. I was hoping that the teachers would respond positively to my “hands on” lessons and they did. All of them were much more confident when it came time for actual testing than I anticipated, but when you think about it they really had already done it at least twice in the virtual scenarios. Most of the questions I answered during the real testing sessions were things like, “Okay, now when I need to “suspend” a test I just click here and here, right?” The teachers really were able to make sense of the content because the technology allowed them real life practice that directly mirrored their final task. I just made sure they had a good foundation before the scenarios finished their learning experience off. When it came time for them to perform I was really pleased to see how confident they were in their own abilities. In my eyes that made the lesson a success. I still have a few teachers who are scheduled for testing sessions in the next few weeks, but I have been excited to hear the teachers discussing the process and preparing those teachers who have not had their sessions yet. It is great to see the collaboration continue.