Action Plan EDPA 581

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I have learned many new things at every session of this course. It is amazing how much fabulous assistive technology is available. I will take away the knowledge that there are answers to almost every problem. I will also try low tech before high tech, and try to do deep learning of a few software programs before expanding my repertoire.

One of my goals is to increase the accessibility of software to more learners. I would like my Learning Assistance room to have Kurzweil, Clicker 5, and Classroom Suite 4. In addition, students deserve to have a teacher well versed in the programs which are being used. I often feel overwhelmed by the amount of choices available on the internet and want to learn how to do a few things well, rather than may things adequately. In order to reach this end I am sitting on a District committee examining the IT department goals. One of our first recommendations was to; upgrade, standardize and web license Kurzweil.

In order to share with colleagues I need to be competent with the software. Furthermore the hardware in the schools must be in good working order. To reach these goals the software should be accessible to teachers on their work computers. Ensuring teacher access to programs is another reason why I am sitting on the District committee. By sitting down with the IT department I hope to hear how we can help each other support learning.

I am continuing to grow my skills. The awareness of technology this class has given me has been awe-inspiring. I am very excited that students and parents will be able to contact me through a **wiki**. This will be a marvellous tool for parents, students, and me, to share information. I am now able to help teachers create their own wiki~~’~~s and explain why they are a great idea. I will suggest at a staff meeting that other teachers create a wiki for their classrooms.

The programs, add-ons and websites which have the potential to make a big difference to me are: Kurzweil, Kurzweil virtual printer; co-writer; Suite 4; Glogster; and making a Wiki. I know that the other sites are all fabulous and wonderful, but I want to focus on a manageable amount of information.

When Jane Rondow presented she said always try low tech first. The struggles my school has had with technology indicate we must keep our expectations within the range of our equipment. I know that there is incredible software and resources available, but I must work within a very limited budget.

The biggest, “Ah ha moment” for me, was the reintroduction of the Kurzweil virtual printer. I have had experience using it in the past, but had forgotten all about it. This is wonderful tool, and one which I plan on using soon. The rediscovery of the Kurzweil virtual printer is another example of why I want to focus energy on deep learning of a limited number of programs. Knowing that items can be printed on the virtual printer helps reduce the preparation time needed for lessons. People who use Kurzweil need adequate time to become familiar with the program’s many time saving features.

This District is at a point where they are looking for a compass regarding the programs they will purchase. This course has grounded my thinking on what to suggest. For me, the selection criteria used for software accusation must include: quality, longevity, transferability and ease of use. Programs, like Kurzweil, exhibit high quality and endurance. Students can start learning this program in elementary school and can continue to use it through their university years. Kurzweil is one of the programs students in high school may choose to help them write provincial examinations. Other programs that meet these criteria include Classroom Suite 4 and Clicker 5.

We have to work smarter, not harder. I would like to see wiki’s established for the exchange of information within the District. Teachers and teacher aides who transfer school should be able to use the software skills they acquired in their new locations. I dream about monthly meetings where SETs collaborate to create units that can be used in a Universal Design classroom, that are inclusive of all learners, special needs, and gifted. All of these things are possible and within our grasp.

Technology is growing in leaps and bounds. It is impossible for teachers and school districts to be constantly on the cutting edge. We must have a long term goal, purchase programs with care, and hardware that will offer long time support. Schools may never have the newest, fastest, and best hard and software, however, we can, will, and do teach our students the joys of being lifelong learners in an ever changing world. We can, will and do teach them that some things are worth doing well, and that deep learning provides skills needed for new learning. We can, will and do teach them that what they learn in school is valuable outside the walls of our buildings and needed for daily living.