

Project 3: Leadership Vision and eLearning Plan

Stephanie Talalai

New Jersey City University

Introduction

The ABC School of New Jersey is a private school educating students aged 3-21 with multiple disabilities. Historically they have been known as one of the foremost schools for educating disabled students, however, over the past few years they have lacked the innovation and resources needed to propel them into the 21st Century. Opportunities for collaboration, professional development and eLearning by the administration, faculty, staff and students needs to be improved. Streamlining of student documentation, attendance, IEP's, progress reports, new student registrations and student blended learning opportunities will be the focus of this eLearning plan.

Vision

As defined by Horton (2006), "E-learning is the use of information and computer technologies to create learning experiences" (p. 1). It is important as 21st Century learners and educators to successfully implement technology into the lives of our students with disabilities. For this to be effective, opportunities for professional development and learning communities within the school need to be established.

Teachers and therapists are required to complete professional development hours or continuing education units (CEUs) yearly. Many attend workshops, conferences and seminars related to their field of expertise. While many of the attendees gain significant knowledge and strategies to implement into their classrooms and therapy sessions, opportunities to share what they have learned is lacking. Learning is most advantageous when it is presented collaboratively with supportive colleagues and facilitators who can push thinking, provide accountability, and

ensure a quality learning experience (Bates, Phalen, & Moran, 2016). Having a portal to upload and share resources related to all aspects of educating students with disabilities will establish a community of practice within a school. Social learning and communities of practice are essential to our learning and are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning and share a collection of joint resources (Wenger, 2000).

Blended learning combines the traditional face-to-face learning environment with elements of online learning. In a blended learning environment, students learn partly through online delivery of content in which students have some control and partly in their supervised school environment (Staker & Horn, 2012). Blended learning implementation for students with disabilities provides personalized learning for each student which can be accessed by not only the student but by parents, support staff and IEP teams. The online content provides a foundation for how instruction may be defined for the student as well as how the instruction may engage the student in learning (Smith & Basham, 2014). Aspects of Universal Design can be embedded into the content to ensure ease of navigation and the accessibility of content.

The vision of this eLearning plan for ABC School is twofold. First is to establish an online community of special education professionals who learn, share and collaborate on the varied aspects of educating students with disabilities. Through a school-based online portal, teachers, therapists, administrators, and staff will have the ability to share resources related to their specific field. For example, a physical therapist would upload resources on best practices, step-by-step instructions, and images or videos on the optimal seating and positioning for students within a classroom setting. School staff will have access to these resources on a

constant basis as to aid in decision making or training of new staff when the physical therapist is unable to provide immediate feedback. Therapists will continually update the site and provide individual and group face-to-face training sessions as needed based on feedback from faculty and staff. Each department will continually upload and share resources they deem effective in the education of students with disabilities. Resources will be searchable to ensure ease of access.

Additionally, the use of the portal will streamline old and outdated practices within the school environment. The writing of IEP Goals and Objectives will be brought to the online environment. Teachers will have access to a database of goals and objectives specifically aligned to the school curriculum and common core standards. Online progress report forms will be accessible from home and will allow for teachers and therapists to collaborate simultaneously. Attendance records, class lists, and student records will be available to administration, faculty, and staff as needed and under strict guidelines as to protect student confidentiality.

The second vision of this plan is to assist teachers in implementing a blended learning model for their classrooms. Often, many of our students are absent from school due to illness associated with their disability. These students miss out on important content discussed during the school day. Having teachers create and publish content in an online environment will ensure that these students do not fall behind the other students in class. Furthermore, many of our students can benefit from the repetition and reinforcement that blended learning will provide as well as providing parents the opportunity to become more involved with their child's education.

To implement the blended learning portion of the plan, professional development learning modules will be created in the online portal with specific lessons and best practices in creating a blended learning environment. Modules will include: the definition of a blended learning environment and how it will benefit students with disabilities, resources and lessons on creating and uploading videos and content and solutions on how to include students who do not have a mobile device/ computer, internet access or appropriate parental support.

E-Learning Plan

Prior to the implantation of the ABC School's Blended Learning and Collaboration Portal, a school-wide needs assessment will be performed. According to the principles of instructional design, a thorough analysis of the current situation must be performed before a course of action can be implemented and change can occur (Brown & Green, 2016).

After completing the needs assessment and meeting with the administration, teachers, therapists and support staff of the ABC School, a Blended Learning and Collaboration Portal committee was established. Through surveys, interviews and evaluation of the results of the needs assessment, the following needs were established:

- School technology needs to be consistent throughout the building, and school-wide technology infrastructure needs to be assessed before implementation.
- The selected online portal or learning management system needs to be accessible from multiple locations and a variety of devices.
- Most faculty and staff are comfortable with technology. However, there are several members who will need extensive training.

- Most teachers are unfamiliar with blended learning and are wary or reluctant to implement it in their classrooms.
- Additional training for parents will need to be established.

To address these needs and ensure a successful implantation of the portal, the committee established the following goals:

1. Chromebooks will be purchased for all administration, teachers, therapists and support staff. Initial training on Chromebook basics will be completed by each faculty member before distribution of the Chromebook. Training will be offered by the Technology Coordinator. The school's wireless network will be upgraded to handle the increased volume of wireless devices.
2. After careful consideration of various online portals and learning management systems, ABC School will establish a Google Apps for Education account with Google Classroom. The Google environment provides the specialized customization that our school requires. The ability to share documents and forms and the collaborative features of Google Drive will add to our professional learning community. The features of Google Classroom will give each teacher the opportunity to create a portal for their blended learning content and access for each student. Members of the Blended Learning and Collaborative Portal committee have agreed to become certified Google educators and the school Technology Coordinator will become a certified trainer. After completion of the training, the committee members will produce online Google learning modules as

well as train all administration, faculty and staff on its use and implementation. Certified educators have also agreed to hold a few trainings for parents.

3. The implementation of Blended learning will begin after training and implementation of the Google Apps for Education and Google Classroom have been completed and essential documentation, lesson planning, IEP forms, attendance documents and student data have been uploaded and established. The Technology Coordinator will begin by seeking out additional teachers who have shown a particular aptitude for creating online content and work within their classroom to blended learning content. After creation, additional professional learning opportunities will be offered to review created content and practice video creation, screencasting and green screen technology.

The ability to work within a team approach will be instrumental in the successful implantation of this plan. The team leader will need to be supportive, flexible, organized, and focused on the goal. The leader needs to communicate clear goals and objectives for the plan and how the team can reach these goals. To help facilitate buy-in from the administration, faculty, staff, and parents, the leader must not only ensure that effective training is being implemented but that the stakeholders understand the pedagogy behind the plan.

Facilitating a team approach for this plan requires a supporting style of leadership. The leader must not only support the team as a whole but recognize individual strengths and how they can complement each other. In the face of adversity, a leader supports the team in resolving tensions and helps individuals to develop their strengths for the benefit of the team. The leader

prompts, encourages and challenges individuals to excel and stimulates the team to improve their skills.

Funding Proposal

One of the major decisions any organization needs to take into account before the implantation of a new initiative is the overall cost of the plan. Stakeholders need to be reassured that the plan will institute positive change and effectiveness of not only individuals but the school as a whole.

Implementation of the Blended Learning and Collaborative Portal will provide the school the following benefits:

- The replacement of faculty desktop computers with Chromebooks will save the school approximately \$64,000 over the course of 4 years.
- Choosing Google Apps for Education and Google Classroom allows for the specific personalization ABC School needs in a Learning Management System without the high yearly cost. Utilizing the collaborative features of Google will streamline the day-to-day operations of the building saving time for both teachers and administration.
- Creation of a Blended Learning model using Google Classroom allows teachers to effectively communicate with their students and parents, provide them with constructive feedback, and streamline the sharing of classroom documents and assignments. Students can access learning from home when they are absent due to illness or surgery potentially saving the school districts the cost of a tutor. Blended Learning increases creativity in teachers and engagement in students.

- Creation of an online professional learning network within our portal will foster a community of practice where busy educators can ask advice, offer opinions, and engage in deep discussions with colleagues. This online community will allow the sharing of lesson plans, teaching strategies, and student work, as well as collaboration across grade levels and departments essentially strengthening the school as a whole.

The overall projected cost of this plan for the first year of implementation is \$27,165.

The ABC school has allocated \$25,000 of their total yearly budget for technology. The additional \$3,165 will be re-allocated from the Educational Supplies portion of the budget.

Projected Costs of ABC School's Blended Learning and Collaboration Portal

Aligned Goal	Technology /Supports Needed	Cost
Goal 1	105 Samsung (Wi-Fi) Chromebooks	85 x \$249 = \$21,165
Goal 1	10 additional Aruba Wireless Access Points (two per floor)	10 x \$395 = \$3,950
Goal 2	Google Apps for Education and Google Classroom	Free
Goal 2	Google Certified Educator Exam - Level 1	5 x \$10 = \$50
Goal 2	Google Certified Educator Exam - Level 1	5 x \$25 = \$125
Goal 2	Google Certified Trainer Exam	1 x \$75 = \$75
Goal 3	Yearly Site License for Screencast-o-Matic	50 computers for \$450 yearly

Goal 3	2 Sony Handycam Video Camera and tripods packages available from Amazon	2 x \$570 = \$1140
Goal 3	2 Green Screens with stand and software available from Amazon	2 x \$80 = \$160
Goal 3	2 External Microphones	2 x \$25 = \$50
	Total	\$27,165

Conclusion

To promote acceptance and success of this eLearning plan, the key stakeholders need to understand its value and see evidence of teacher satisfaction and student achievement.

Evaluation is a vital part of the instructional design process. The data collected aids in determining the success of the participants as well as the success of the plan as whole (Brown & Green, 2016). The team will closely monitor usage of the portal by faculty and staff.

Adjustments will be made based on feedback and observable issues to ensure optimal usage and benefits. The team will need to anticipate potential problems and provide continuing support.

Successful implementation of this portal will provide the innovation and resources needed to propel ABC School into the 21st Century.

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