A Nine-Step Program

A Successful, Replicable Model for Professional Development

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Subject: Teacher technology use

Standards: NETS•T II, III; NETS•A II (http://www.iste.org/nets/)

Phase 9, a teacher-designed, classroom centered model, takes teachers through a nine-step process that results in the development of integrated instructional units. As president of the EdVenture Group (the nonprofit organization offering the Phase 9 Professional Development Program) and an educational researcher, we will use our background knowledge to describe the program and how you can use it in your school or district. Teams of teachers come to an intensive five-day training with lessons they know work well with students. In interdisciplinary teams, they fold technology, state and national standards, multiple subject areas, and constructivist pedagogy into their multi-lesson units. At week’s end, they post them on the Solution Site (http://www.thesolutionsite.com). From its inception, the project has focused on time,

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Using Standards in the Classroom

To be selected for Phase 9 training, teachers must have completed the EdVenture Group’s Utilizing Standards in the Classroom course. So step one is actually a prerequisite. The course addresses ISTE’s NETS for Students and Teachers and offers practical hands-on computer training for professional teachers. The completion of this course ensures that teachers enter Phase 9 training with the skills needed to begin complete classroom integration.

2

Team Application, Commitment, and Preliminary Research

Teachers who wish to participate in the training must complete an application/commitment form. Three teachers and an administrator from a school submit their application as a team. The school administrator must agree to participate in a separate one-day training.

3

Integration Workshop

Participants attend a five-day integration workshop that gives them the time, tools, and strategies to develop integrated, cross-disciplinary technology units. The five-day workshop consists of hands-on training to help teachers compile the technology-integrated units and post them to the interactive Web site. Throughout each day, teachers have opportunities to discuss how they envision a connection between applications and curriculum standards, constructivist forms of learning, and alternative forms of student evaluation.
tools, and strategies. Teachers need time to mold their everyday lessons into technology-rich integrated units of instruction. They need the tools necessary to use these units in the classroom. And they need strategies, offered throughout the week of professional development, to help them put all of this together.

At the heart of Phase 9 is a “for teachers, by teachers” philosophy with an emphasis on cross-curricular units of instruction. The model is a solution not only for teachers seeking creative instructional materials, but also for educators trying to balance statewide mandates for student achievement and technology literacy with individual classroom needs.

Phase 9 is one of the 1998 recipients of a U.S. Department of Education Technology Innovation Challenge Grant. The five-year partnership between the Marion County school
system, the EdVenture Group (of which co-author Lydotta Taylor is president), and the West Virginia Department of Education had a positive effect on classrooms in all 55 counties in West Virginia. Teachers gain new teaching strategies, curriculum development experiences that showcase their expertise, and co-ownership of a rich repository of integrated units. In addition to the curricular riches of the Solution Site, the project gains some assurance that teachers will use these units to enrich their teaching and that students will ultimately benefit. One elementary teacher said, “Phase 9 training helped me blow life into my curriculum.” Another added, “It has helped me reach students that maybe I normally would not have been able to reach.”

**Replicability**

The program is designed to make replication very simple. We see three options.

First, teachers from all over the world can use the Solution Site in their classrooms at no cost. They can search the site by grade, subject, topic, and standard and have lessons at their fingertips within minutes. Because Phase 9 has included teachers from all grade levels and several subject areas, users have a wide range to choose from. The site also includes a feedback section that offers users the opportunity to communicate with the developers of the units and with the EdVenture Group.

Second, those who want to participate in the further development of the Solution Site can easily replicate the training model. Both public and private school systems outside West Virginia are currently doing so, very successfully. School systems, individual schools, or state departments of education can easily implement the model themselves, with or without training from the EdVenture Group. The most popular method is to adopt the train-the-trainer approach. Trainers spend two weeks training certified teachers to become Phase 9 trainers. The first week is spent in the standards course to reinforce basic skills needed for the Phase 9 development. The second week is the Phase 9 Workshop to develop units of instruction, which then become part of the Web site. After completing the two-week certification, trainers may train an unlimited number of teacher teams within their school systems.

A third option is available for systems that wish to establish lessons on the Solution Site without training additional teachers. The EdVenture Group will train teachers how to develop units and will host these units on the Solution Site. This option includes the same steps discussed above, however, the focus is on assisting individual teams of teachers to develop units as opposed to certifying them to carry out training.

**Evaluation**

In today’s climate of rapidly changing technology, limited funds, and heightened accountability, the Phase 9 training model is gaining the attention of teachers and other educators concerned with standards-based instruction. Our evaluation found many significant improvements from teachers’ and students’ perspectives.

Teachers were found to be using more technology more frequently, to better understand content area standards and constructivist strategies for instruction, and to be willing and able to serve as in-house technology mentors for their peers. Students showed statistically significant gains on standardized tests and improved motivation. The Solution Site contains more information on the evaluation—click the Rockman Evaluation link.

Phase 9’s for teachers, by teachers philosophy makes the classroom instructor the architect who crafts the learning process. The quality of such instructional design strategies is a direct result of the nine-step process. This is a process that assists teachers not only in developing but also in taking ownership of curriculum content. The by-product by default becomes enhanced student learning, rich in the content standards embedded throughout each lesson unit. Reflecting on the program, one participant who went from classroom teacher to county administrator, and served on the Expert Panel, said “The Phase 9 initiative has opened my eyes to the wealth of curriculum expertise possessed by teachers throughout the state. Technology is the catalyst that is helping education evolve to higher levels of learning.”

**Acknowledgements**

The authors wish to thank the following for their contributions to the writing and editing of this article: Bill Burrall, coordinator for instructional technology for Marshall County (West Virginia) Schools; Donna Casto, Phase 9 lead at the EdVenture Group; and Kay Sloan, managing research director for the Bloomington, Indiana, office of Rockman Et Al.

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