

Teacher Expertise and ICT-supported Learning

The following ideas related to helping teachers acquire the expertise needed to use ICT-supported learning strategies in their classroom are based on my involvement with the leaders and teachers of the BCT Network, that is, the Building Community Through Telecollaboration Network. The excellent resources developed by those involved in that community of practice are documented in the references section at the end of this document.

Stages of Professional Learning Related to ICT-supported Learning

Based on the typical experiences of the teachers and leaders in the BCT Network, teachers usually moved through the following four over-lapping stages when acquiring the knowledge and skills related to the facilitation of ICT-supported student learning:

Stage 1: Personal use of ICT Tools, that is, they acquired the skills related to the use of email, Word, Internet searches, Facebook, etc.

Stage 2: ICT Tools to Support Teaching including skills related to the use of Power Point, LCD Projectors, Smartboards, tablets and related tools.

Stage 3: Facilitation of ICT Tools by Students, which involves the integration of ICT into the curriculum, managing the classroom to ensure safe and ethical use of computers and related tools, organizing collaborative student learning opportunities, sharing the products of learning online in a sensible manner, and encouraging students to provide support and learn from each other.

Stage 4: Sharing Teaching Practices in face-to face and online situations, with an emphasis on reflecting on the teaching-learning process and ways to enhance teacher learning and sharing.

Facilitating Professional Learning

As a brief perusal of the above four stages of professional learning shows, teachers need to acquire a considerable amount of expertise if they are to optimally use ICT tools to enhance student learning. Hence, several important factors need to be considered to ensure that the professional learning process will be an enjoyable and beneficial experience. Let us consider some of them.

- 1. Teacher Belief in the Value of ICT-supported Learning:** A major initial consideration is the degree to which teachers believe that the use of ICT-supported learning will actually help their students. Encouraging collegial discussions related to the benefits and challenges of using ICT tools in the classroom can provide teachers the opportunity to come to a professional decision on this important matter. If teachers believe learning to facilitate ICT-supported learning will benefit their students, they are much more likely to dedicate the time and effort that is needed to acquire the required expertise.

- 2. A Sensible Learning Progression:** It is important especially when initially setting out on the above professional learning journey that teachers focus on learning to use one or two ICT tools at any given time. One of the major factors that inhibit the process is trying to reach too many learning objectives within a short time period. Such “overload” often results in deciding not to continue the learning journey. One of the key mantras of the BCT Network teachers was “don’t rush, take baby steps”!
- 3. Ongoing Collegial Support:** Positive collegial support from fellow teachers can be a major factor in helping teachers acquire the above expertise. So often, it is the “just-in-time” support that another teacher can provide that helps a person over the inevitable bumps in the learning journey. The establishment and ongoing support of a collegial culture within a school can be one of the most effective ways to encourage teachers to acquire the expertise related to the facilitation of ICT-supported learning.

After reading the above ideas, the following two resources on theleadershipwall.com website may be of interest to you. Click on the highlighted title to access them.

[Facilitating Professional Learning: The SHARE Process](#)

[Developing Leadership Skills: The Four A’s to Mastery](#)

[Supporting Teacher Leadership](#)

References

- Wall, A. E., Breuleux, A., & Tanguay, V. (2006). *IT-supported learning and networking in the Anglophone educational community of Québec*. Quebec: CEFRIO.
- Wall, A. E., Breuleux, A., Heo, G., Rye, K., Goyette, M-H, & V. Lemay (2011). Teacher-based inquiry in the BCT Project, *LEARNing Landscapes*, 4, 2, 325-344.
- Wall, A. E., Breuleux, A., Heo, G., Bilodeau, P., Rye, K., Bennett, N., Foreman, T., Lemay, V., & . M. Verreault (2012). *Promoting ICT-supported Learning: Lessons from the BCT Network*: Quebec: Cefrio.