Collaborate with a Teacher and Evolve Their Practice

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LIBE 467 - March 3, 2019

1 Abstract

Classroom teachers require support, care, collaboration, and concern by members of the

community, Teacher Librarians, and administration to ensure their students are best served.

Teachers' practice can be improved by considering the SAMR model of infusing technology into

the curriculum.

2 Background

The teachers referenced in this assignment are two specific teachers whom with I have taught

with over the years. Each of these teachers have been given a pseudonym.

3 Teacher One: "Winston"

Winston is a Social Studies teacher who is fresh out of University and has not taught grade 6

Social Studies, however, he is eager to test different ways his students can research and learn

about Government. Right now in his classroom, Winston uses a textbook called *Voices in

Democracy: Action and Participation* (Pearson, 2008). Other reference materials Winston uses

include local and national newspapers, political party pamphlets, and political party websites.

Recently, Winston began using weekly *CNN 10* clips online (https://www.cnn.com/cnn10) and

discussing current events around the world with his students. Winston would like to transform

his teaching from the substitution and augmentation phases of the SAMR continuum to the

modification and redefinition phases.

4 Plan for Winston

As Winston is already using some online resource materials, Winston's plan is more focused on transforming what is typically done in the Social Studies classroom into creating new experiences and new opportunities for student learning. Winston will be striving for "significant task redesign" in modification and "Tech allows for the creation of new tasks, previously inconceivable" in redefinition (Puentedura, 2009). While Winston understands the importance of primary source material and the scope of reference works, he lacks understanding in establishing context, process, and scaffolding an understanding of bias in his students.

Resource 1: *The Mock Legislature: A Student Handbook* **(Legislative Assembly of Alberta)**

This resource will allow students a greater understanding of how laws are made, which will also allow them the opportunity to host a legislative seating to try to pass a law. Previously, this resource was only available to students and teachers who managed to get to the Legislature during a session and watch the House in session. Now, the resource is available online and students do not need to go on a field trip to access the learning materials. Winston may choose to use this resource to create something new, such as a law. Again, previously students were unable to learn about creating a law unless they were on a field trip to the Legislature. Winston could be supported in using this resource by contacting his local MLA to help be a part of the classes mock legislature. Students may be able to film their attempt to pass their law and use it as a learning opportunity for later years or to show the school at an assembly.

Resource 2: Registered Political Parties and Parties Eligible for Registration
**(http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?dir=par&document=index&lang=e&section=pol#wl
p)**

This resource will allow students to read about and access materials for various political parties in Canada. Students can read about various political parties, find commonalities, and summarize what makes a "good" political party. Winston may choose to have students create their own political parties based off of what they find. This activity may extend into redefinition if students create their own political party websites and they hold a class election, and this would be a good culminating activity at the end of the local government unit. This activity could be supported by both the administration and the Teacher Librarian as *Leading Learning* states, "[administration] and teacher-librarian work with teachers to design challenges to empower student-led collaborative learning. Students learn how to build personal learning networks" (2014, pg. 11). Winston could find help from a technology teacher in the school or Teacher Librarian who may make suggestions for which website builders to use, or he also may access help from a local political figure (mayor, MLA, or MP) to help design logos or establish platforms. In our area, the mayor is often in the schools, so asking him to come in and help would be easy. Students will also see how difficult it is to establish a party platform and will appreciate the practicality of the activity, "Learning experiences are designed to have real world context and relevancy for students" (*Leading Learning*, pg. 15). By using this resource, Winston will not need to create a list of political parties and their information, as it has already been done. Not only will this save Winston time, but it will also encourage Winston to focus on other areas of preparation for the activity.

Resource 3: Canada 101: Just Political Parties

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nhaq5nWYUa0)

This resource will provide students with background knowledge of the various political parties. Winston will need to be careful in how he shows this with his students because it does contain bias. However, including biased materials is acceptable as long as students are aware that they do contain bias and know what bias is. Winston will likely need to do some pre-teaching about bias prior to showing this video. By using this video as a reference to springboard their political parties discussion, Winston will be able to work in the realm of augmentation where there is significant improvement but also direct substitution (Puentedura, 2009). While Winston spends most of his time already in the augmentation phase, it is important for students to have a base understanding about a concept prior to moving into modification or redefinition. Winston will be supported by the Teacher Librarian as the Teacher Librarian can pull together other resources which show bias and help Winston in the classroom.

5 Teacher Two: "Mary"

Mary is a veteran teacher in the public school system, having been a teacher of grade 12 English for over twenty years. Mary is known as being a strict no-nonsense teacher who primarily uses print reference materials such as encyclopedia sets and specific content area titles such as *Uncle John's Bathroom Reader Plunges Into Canada* to reach her struggling learners. Other reference titles she uses are: *the MLA Handbook*, *Webster's Dictionary*, and *Webster's Thesaurus*. As the head of the English department, Mary ensures she keeps copies of the local daily and weekly newspaper in her classroom for students to use, as she also covers current events in her classes. In the back corner of her classroom is a shelving unit housing years of old *National Geographic* magazines, "just in case". These materials, while serving her teaching practice well for a number

of years are insufficient in providing access to many students who are now coming into her classroom. Simply substituting these reference resources for electronic versions is not enough (lowest level of the SAMR continuum).

6 Plan for Mary

Mary is open to replacing many of her print resources and using digital resources, as she is familiar with their benefits and ease of use. Since Mary teaches in a one-to-one school where students have access to a ChromeBook for most of the day, she is interested in expanding the access of resources to her students to enhance her students' learning and to meet them at their level. The SAMR model indicates that simply substituting Mary's existing hard copy reference materials would be the lowest level of enhancing her students' learning, but Mary is not ready to move all of the way up the continuum to redefinition - nor should she be.

First, I would suggest to Mary that there are a variety of substitutions available, including electronic encyclopedias, dictionaries, and thesauruses. I would make her aware of the potential of these resources, as simple substitutes for what she is using currently in the classroom. I would also introduce Mary to Google Classroom as a way to distribute online materials to students. These suggestions are all substitution level suggestions. Knowing that Mary teaches Shakespeare across all of her classes, I would point Mary to the many resources online for establishing context into the day in which Shakespeare wrote his plays. Encouraging Mary to make changes one unit at a time, or one thematic focus at a time would be best done slowly and with purpose. By choosing the topic of Shakespeare, Mary can experiment with implementing electronic reference materials with her classes without making a semester-long investment. Assistance and continuous collaboration with the Teacher-Librarian will help ensure Mary is using the resources to the best of her ability. By the Teacher-Librarian coming into the classroom and modelling how

to access and use the materials, Mary can take notes, engage in her own professional development, and feel less pressure to "be the expert" (which more often than not results in the classroom teacher becoming frustrated and choosing to abandon implementation of a new idea or resource).

Resource 1: Shakespeare Resource Center (http://www.bardweb.net/)

This website is a collection of links to websites surrounding topics of Shakespeare's life, Elizabethan England, The Globe, and various performances. The site is maintained by an individual with a vested interest in keeping information accurate and current. Originally, the site was created for a university project. Mary may choose to use this website to direct students into completing inquiry work or research regarding the context of Shakespeare's time. Instead of all students using the same textbooks or reference materials, this website offers a concentrated list of options to choose from for research. By using this site, there is potential for students to skip the substitution phase and move up to the augmentation phase of the SAMR continuum as the "tech acts as a direct tool substitute, with functional improvement" (Puentedura, As We May Teach: Educational Technology, From Theory Into Practice, 2009). In using this resource, Mary may understand that implementing a different type of resource does not mean that she must "reinvent the wheel" as there are many other educators who have done most of the leg work by this point for her and she simply needs to access some of the great work that has already been done.

Resource 2: Shakespedia (https://www.shakespeare.org.uk/explore-shakespeare/shakespedia/)

This resource contains primary and secondary reference materials in an online collection. The website is maintained by the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust which is a registered charity. Mary may choose to use this resource to enhance her current practice in establishing context as well as conveying information about Shakespeare's early life. She also may choose to use this resource to discuss bias and compare the information on this site to the information on the previous resource to create something new online (in the modification phase of the SAMR continuum). This exercise would be known as modification because "tech allows for significant redesign" (Puentedura, 2009). Mary may also choose to give students guiding questions to help them as they browse the site, or she may assign students to examine a particular aspect of Shakespeare's life or find something which they find as relevant to them, as *Leading Learning* encourages, "Learning experiences support differentiated learning approaches and processes" (pg. 16). This resource will provide opportunities for students to access information from a variety of sources, using a website which is logical and well laid out. The charity is a reliable and welcoming resource - they have stated that they are available to assist teachers and are willing to work with schools who are unable to visit the physical site of Shakespeare's birthplace.

Resource 3: Electronic Databases (Explora Secondary)

Generally, in my experience, databases have not been made available to students for the purpose of research. In my opinion, failing to teach proper use of electronic databases have done those students a disservice, not simply because they will be using these resources in post-secondary schooling, but because there is more to research than using Google and exploring

items there. Databases contain articles, images, magazines, and journals which contain both primary and secondary reference materials, and a significant amount of information housed in the databases are not found via Google. Mary may choose to use databases in her classroom to examine different aspects of Shakespeare's life which may be controversial or unpopular. In using reference materials in this way, students can grow as critical thinkers, potentially resulting in moving to the modification or redefinition phases on the SAMR continuum. Using this database can open up the conversation in Mary's class toward creating something completely new, "redefinition: Tech allows for the creation of new tasks, previously inconceivable" (Puentedura, 2009): Mary's students may choose to create their own music to compliment one of Shakespeare's plays or they may choose to "modernize" the building of the Globe Theatre. Utilizing the database will provide opportunities for research which are unavailable through a typical Google search. Mary will likely appreciate the reliability of the resources on the database, but will likely need significant assistance or someone stepping in to teach her students how to use a database. Mary has likely never used an electronic database before. Going forward, it would be likely that the Teacher Librarian would teach the classes how to use the databases while Mary worked in an assistance role. In the event that the Teacher-Librarian is unable to provide assistance or teaching, there is a help section on the database and individual students (and Mary) can choose to use the help section and chat to have their questions answered.

7 Conclusion

While both teachers are working to better their teaching practice, collaboration with the Teacher Librarian and others in the community will help allow their students develop depth in their engagement with learning material. Both teachers are committed to handing over their classes to improve their own teaching practice, to learn, and to understand how their own teaching can be

strengthened. It is recommended that these teachers be supported by administration and the community to ensure their students receive the best resources available.

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