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Personal Technology SWOT Analysis, Goals and Plan

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My current employment is at Woodward Academy’s Primary School as an instructional technology facilitator. My primary function is to assist the teachers and students in using technology effectively. I teach computer classes to kindergarten through third grade students and provide staff development to the teachers. I also make available individual time with teachers to aid them in planning instruction. Trouble shooting and technology maintenance consume a portion of my time, as well. I maintain a blog for sharing our technology use and make changes to the Primary School’s portion of Woodward Academy’s web site.

Strengths

My background is teaching; therefore, it is my greatest strength. Since 1991, my experiences include preschool computer teacher, second and third grade classroom teacher, social studies teacher in upper elementary, and two years as an instructional technology facilitator. I feel that I have been well educated for the tasks that I have before me. I have a Bachelor of Science in Education specializing in early childhood education. My Master of Education was obtained with a concentration in Media. With my experience and expertise in the elementary education and technology fields, I feel I am better able to serve my constituents. I have been in a classroom full of students and the technology did not work. I have also experienced the great feeling of when it worked perfectly. Either way, they were learning opportunities for everyone involved and have allowed me the benefit of that experience to help others.

Another strength that I feel is extremely important is my attitude. I firmly believe that what I am doing is going to make a difference in the lives of students. I began my endeavor with rose colored glasses and the hopes that every child would leave our school with enormous potential to do great things with technology. I still believe this is possible with effort and constant communication with the teachers. Even though there are many challenges and problems to solve when using technology, my attitude remains positive.

Weaknesses

I am a teacher, not a techie. I do not know enough about hardware, networks, and the infrastructure of a technology department. The biggest weakness in this area is troubleshooting. I do not understand the language of the error messages on computers. I have general knowledge about using the network, and understand the way it is wired, but I am still afraid of manipulating it. When the laptops won’t connect to the wireless network, and I have exhausted the possible corrections, I realize that I could know more about this topic. I have learned an enormous amount about these concepts during the past two years and plan to continue to learn. I am thankful to have an IT department that I can call for help whenever this weakness becomes apparent.

Another weakness I have is letting my frustrations get in the way of solving problems. It is extremely frustrating to put tremendous hours into directions and help aids for teachers, and they don’t read, attempt, or completely ignore the directions. I usually do these in written form and Jing tutorials. It is even more exasperating when teachers get upset, because I can’t drop what I am doing at the moment (teaching a group of 18 students in the lab) to come solve their problem. I really have to put the frustrations aside when I go to their room after this occurrence, especially when the problem was as simple as a cord has come unplugged. The weakness is internal, but I sometimes show the frustration in my demeanor.

Opportunities

The opportunities at my current place of employment are extremely optimistic. We have more than adequate hardware for an elementary school. My students have two stationary labs, four student computers in every classroom, two teacher computers in every classroom (one is a laptop), three sets of Smart Response System (formerly called Senteos), and a mobile laptop lab. We have been approved to order another mobile laptop lab for next year. Every instructional room in the building has a Smart Board. All teachers have a digital camera and multiple printers. We are adding a TV studio this fall for school announcements. The presence of technology is throughout the building.

We also have privileges to freely access all that is appropriate for this age level student. Our IT department does use a filtering system: however, it is leveled by user access. Teachers have access to every instructional website they need. Our students are allowed to blog, contribute to wikis, and use most web 2.0 tools. We do have to use different approaches to some of the web 2.0 tools, due to lack of student email addresses. We have a few teachers who have used Skype in learning opportunities in their classroom.

Another great opportunity for my students is that most of the teachers are willing to pursue the use of technology in their classroom. At the opening of our school 2 years ago, the concept of technology use was mandated by the administration. Even though some of the teachers were fighting the change, they all made progress. A kindergarten teacher, who was not a proponent of technology, just finished a Web 2.0 course, and has had an epiphany. Her blog reflections changed from a negative tone to one with positive attributes about technology, as a result of her experience. She will now help others in their shift, as well.

Threats

Time is the biggest threat for our situation. Teachers want to learn more technology, incorporate it into their lessons, and allow students to use it for productivity and assessment. It takes time to attend staff development classes, lab time, and to meet with me for help on technology integration. It is also important to realize at the early elementary level, students need developmentally appropriate, hands-on activities of content areas that should not incorporate technology, such as building with blocks and fine motor handwriting skills. Technology can help to make efficient, more productive use of our time, but one has to find the time to first learn these skills.

Time is also a factor for my situation. In one day, I may teach two classes to students, do a lunch staff development, meet with two teachers for planning projects, troubleshoot three or four hardware/software issues, plan for an upcoming staff development, and prepare technology notes for the weekly faculty notes. Lunch is often my only break of the day that last from 7:30 a.m. until 4:00 a.m. I also work approximately 25 additional days in the summer to prepare for the upcoming year.

Goals and Plan

I have two goals that will aid in guiding my future as an instructional technology facilitator. My ultimate target is to progress teachers to the place where they are self sufficient at automatically implementing technology into their personal use, instruction, and activities of their classroom. In saying that, the real goal would be to make myself obsolete; however, with new innovations constantly emerging, there will always be a place for me. My second goal is to continue to learn about technology. I feel this is important for the duration of my career.

In order to obtain these goals, education will be the key. Pursing my Educational Specialist degree in Instructional Technology is one step toward achieving these endeavors. I plan to learn more about the Levels of Technology (LoTi) program. I want my school to obtain continual progress through the levels, and I plan to become LoTi certified to aid in this advancement. Staff development classes will continue to be offered on a regular basis at my school. In order to address the time issue, I will offer several options. I will continue to offer group “Lunch and Learn” and after school classes. Teachers also have the opportunity to reserve a time with me for individual instruction. Technology conferences are another way to help me learn continually about the latest advances in my field. Over the next year, I will attend various workshops, the Georgia Educational Technology Conference, and the Atlanta Association of Technology Educators’ meetings. My knowledge advancement will be used to help my teachers and students achieve success in the realm of learning through the use of technology.