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MEDT 7475
Virtual Mentor Experience Journal Entries

Journal 1: I am observing Dr. Cristine Goldberg's MEDT 6466, Library Media Program and 7469, Supervision of a School Library Media Program. I sent my introductory email on March 3. March 4 Dr Goldberg replied and let me know she wanted me in both classes, not just 7469 and suggested a Skype chat or Wimba. I sent a follow up on the 7th with my gmail, Skype and telephone number as I had not heard back from my 3/4 reply with my contact information. I next heard from Dr Goldberg on the 13th, letting me know there was a Wimba session that evening.

I attended the Wimba session for the 7469 class on Tuesday March 13. We then had a Skype meeting on Thursday March 15.

The hour and a half Wimba session was not very active. I could not find a description of the session, there weren't any reminders sent out and the date for it was confusing in the syllabus. Also, there was no time stated. As a result, We trickled in starting at 7 and the last student showed up around 8. It seemed to be a touching base, if you have any questions about your project meeting, but the students only asked a couple of questions. Dr. Goldberg showed photographs and tried drawing the students out to discuss visual literacy, but again, there was not much participation. After the session Dr. Goldberg said that usually the students were more talkative. She also said that there were guided questions for the next Wimba session for the other class, which I think is a good idea, considering.

The Skype meeting was short, we talked about her issues with missing students and her surgeries. She let me know that all aspects of the classes should be accessible and for me to make myself at home, poke around everywhere.

As of today, I have read all of the discussion posts for both classes, and a good portion of the assignments. The classes don't seem to differ that much in content from my program at GSU, but the online structure is very different from Dr Huett's and Dr Moller's classes. Organization could be better, it isn't as intuitive as some of my other classes have been.

My goals for the first week are to finish looking at the graded assignments. During our next meeting, I hope to talk about the grading process as that is an area I have no experience with.

Journal 2: Has the 'cool factor' worn off?
A bit. While I really appreciate the opportunity to observe an online class live, I'm disappointed that I don't have a mentor that is doing what I want to be doing - being an online librarian. Dr. Goldberg is awesome, and I am learning a lot, but I don't want to be teaching librarianship, I want to be the librairan.

Based on the current unit or content, do the students demonstrate a solid understanding?
I am observing 2 different classes, and both sets of students have a good grasp of the content. The reading summaries are succinct and their posts show thought given to the subject matter.

What do you think the students are struggling with?
Some of the students are struggling with basic collaboration skills and toold. Why is beyond me. These are adult professionals, who should be able to set a date up in the discussion area or email

and figure out a common platform and go. At the most basic level, when the person who keeps using their work email keeps saying they can't access the Google Doc, someone should be able to tell them to get a Google account. Nobody did. I wish I had read these conversations before Dr. Goldberg opened up Wimba rooms, but I didn't feel comfortable suggesting options after the fact.

What suggestions, changes, or supports do you think would help?
Maybe it was just that I had such extensive experience playing with Google tools with Dr Bray, but a gmail addy is something everyone should have, even if it is primarily just a throw away email for spam. The Blackboard IM client that is available for download is also a fantastic tool, it wasn't suggested as an option. Having an instant messenger that is just your classmates is a HUGE help. Someone is always on in the middle of the night, when you need to bounce something off someone immediately.

How does the interaction within the class help or hinder student learning?
There really isn't much discussion in Dr. Goldberg's classes. While I don't like making discussing mandatory, I do see how not having discussions makes the student feel isolated. What else are you observing? Mostly, I am reading article or chapter summaries. The discussion threads have started to blow up now that group work is happening. I can see how having these discussions in the class is helpful for the instructor, but I would have liked more suggestions on collaboration options - they don't all have it going on.

Journal 3: Dr. Goldberg is great. I would have liked to really be her 'teaching assistant' - while I value the time I spent with the virtual school, I think that I would have preferred an actual internship- something that I can follow from beginning to end, see results of my work. Even though Dr. Goldberg is a good instructor and a fun person, I am still wishing that I could have had a mentor that was doing what I want to be doing. Good luck with that, right?

Go back and review your initial goals. Were you able to meet them? I hate to say it, but since this mentorship wasn't actually in my field, I didn't have any real goals. I started this assignment looking at the expectations and just tried to figure out how I could fulfill the requirements. It would have been nice to come out of this with a contact that I could use to get a job, as I am sure some of my classmates are. The goals I did set were met. I have read all the assignments and discussions, spoken with Dr. G about her selection process, grading, how to deal with frustrating students. She has been very helpful in helping me become a better instructor.

What are your lingering ideas and questions? I'm at an awkward point in my life, and this degree. I thought I was going to come out of this with the online educator's endorsement, which would allow me to get a job as a librarian with an online school. I won't be able to get the endorsement, since apparently, I am not a teacher. This tore the blinders off me and I've been really depressed since. The realization that I will have to create the job I want, that I will have to fight and politic, it's a bit overwhelming. I wasn't very good at politics. If I was, I'd still have my job.

Journal 4-final: Your final reflections on the whole experience. (Be more specific than ... "it was good." or ..."it met my expectations." or ... well you get the picture. Look at your initial goals, what you were able to accomplish, etc. What was the most interesting thing you

learned? Based on your experience, do you feel that eLearning will continue to grow? How do you see this environment impacting your specific instructional setting? What will you be taking back and playing forward?

Having an online mentor was an interesting aspect of this class. I would have liked for the mentorship to have lasted the whole semester, in that I would have had more opportunities to observe the online class meetings. I also would have felt more comfortable offering my suggestions to the students about collaboration options and overcoming technical obstacles. Even though I am grateful for this opportunity, it would have been a much more fulfilling and useful experience if I could have been partnered with a librarian for an online school, or even been placed as the librarian for an online school with an observer/mentor within the school, or even merely embedded as the online librarian for one class in a virtual school in partnership with that teacher.

With the GVS, or Henry County project from last semester, while a 'Media Center' page was provided, neither had an actual librarian available to the students, which I included in my evaluations. It would be interesting to see whether the schools would be open to testing an embedded librarian, it would have been a perfect dovetail for the 8484 Research project, as well.

eLearning is here to stay. I am very concerned, however, that with as much emphasis as we are putting on 21st Century Skills, that it seems as though no one is including that teacher – the librarian. Adding research skills and information literacy to the classroom teacher's responsibilities is unrealistic, we have seen these items missing from the GVS and Henry County projects. I would like to see if having an embedded librarian improved the evaluation scores.

I believe that students are much more willing to try new platforms than teachers are to learn how to incorporate them into the lessons, mostly because of time. If a librarian was available to rework the lesson plan to include new platforms, the teacher would be free to invest his or her time in learning the platform itself. Having the librarian teach the technology while the teacher teaches the content works in birck and mortar schools. It should not be left out of eLearning.