

Final Project CEP 815

Sustainability Technology Project Notes

Don Erickson

The Teaching/Learning Problem

I have noticed over my first six years as a middle school teacher that communication between teachers and parents seems to be a major problem, especially in the middle school context. We all know keeping the lines of communication open is essential, so why do we sometimes only contact parents when the report cards go home? This is simple: we get inundated with everything in our lives (i.e. grading papers, tutoring, taking care of our own children, being a positive supportive husband/wife). Some of us don't contact parents because it is sometimes unpleasant. It is simply not possible to deliver good news during every parent contact. So what do we do to ensure better parent-teacher communication even in the middle school? My sustainability technology project will answer just that. According to John Hattie, two of the six factors of educational success are the teacher and the home. Classroom climate, engagement of all students, and teacher expectations are just some of the contributions the teacher offers to a student's educational success. All of these contributions can be made while utilizing this initiative. Likewise, the contributions made from the home include parental expectations and aspirations for their child and parental knowledge of the language of schooling. Parents expectations and aspirations can be communicated easily with the technologies in this initiative. Parental knowledge of the language of schooling will also increase as a result of the work accomplished in this plan.

Stakeholder Survey

The survey will be accessible using a link sent to each parent and teacher (<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1Qtzycw-B3ohYNv-upQ5DIgwbpCsQnBnTqMeJ0BhTvlQ/viewform>). The link will direct the stakeholders to a form on Google Drive. The great thing about this is each

individual stakeholder would NOT need to have a Google account to take the survey. The survey would also be made available in paper form to accommodate any stakeholder without a computer and Internet access.

Please respond to the following statements.

1. There is a lack of parent-teacher communication at our school.
2. Technology (i.e. Twitter, Engrade, Remind 101) is an important tool that should be used in parent-teacher communication.
3. My child's teachers effectively use technology to communicate any comments, issues, or concerns to me.
4. I am usually contacted immediately if a problem (related to my child) arises at school.
5. I often initiate communication with my child's teacher(s).
6. Overall, most parents do not communicate enough with the teachers at our school.
7. Our school has a detailed parent-teacher communication policy that is always employed.
8. The teacher provides convenient methods of communication for me and other parents.
9. How frequently would you prefer to be contacted by your child's teacher?
 - A) Daily
 - B) Weekly
 - C) Monthly
 - D) Once each quarter
10. In your opinion, what can be done to improve parent-teacher communication at our school?

Cost-Effective Technologies to Address Problem

There are numerous technologies available that could be used to help address my school's problem with parent-teacher communication. For example, we have Remind 101, Class Dojo, Engrade, Twitter, online content management system such as Blackboard's Coursesites, and using student-made websites through Weebly. As you can see this is an extensive list of technologies that could be easily utilized individually. As it would be nearly unmanageable, I have narrowed our technology list down to only two. Let's take a closer look at Remind 101 and Engrade.

- Remind 101
 - A great tool that affords quick and easy communication between teachers and parents. Parents and students can receive texts from the teacher immediately regarding

important happenings at school. Teachers never see students' and parents' phone numbers. Parents and students never see theirs. It is extremely easy to set up an account and begin using. Students and parents sign up by simply sending a text message or email. OK, so let's say we have our final project in 8th grade American History due next Friday. I could send home a paper newsletter that may or may not find its way to the parents, OR I could send one text reminding all the parents and students of the project's due date. Remind 101 obviously helps support the problem of parent-teacher communication. As long as parents have cell phones (there's no need for smart phones), they can receive Remind 101 text messages from the teacher.

- Class Dojo
- Engrade
 - An online organizational tool that affords several means of communicating with parents and students. Each parent and each student receives individual usernames and passwords. They may log into Engrade at any time to receive real-time updates of the gradebook, attendance, and common core and state standards already taught. But wait, there is so much more...the students can take quizzes online and receive the results immediately, parents can send a message over the protected server directly to the teacher, and assignments can be posted allowing students to continue working on coursework after going home. Giving parents another quick and easy option to contact the teacher helps support our initial problem of parent-teacher communication.
- Twitter
- Online content management system (CMS)
- Student Websites (Weebly)

With all these great technologies, it is vital that on-going support and training is offered and encouraged. During each weekly staff meeting, I would confirm that each teacher is progressing positively with the two programs. If teachers have questions or comments I would attempt to answer them during our staff meetings or get back to them as quickly as possible. Also, like most schools, we have planned in-services each month, which would afford valuable time to discuss any pitfalls of the technologies found by the participating teachers.

Funding Solution to Pay for Initiative

All of the technologies being used to implement this initiative are completely free for users. Even better, our school does not need to fund professional development on these technologies because we have teachers already using Remind 101 and Engrade within our school context. Without having to

worry about a funding solution to pay for the initiative more can be accomplished in other needy areas of the school. Also, due to the lack of funding needed to implement this initiative, this proposal can be 100% self-sustaining.

Implementation Plan

OK, so here's my vision for this initiative. Parent-teacher communication is a problem because parents feel disconnected, we need to keep parents informed and happy (for enrollment among other things), if parents and teachers are on the same page, the kids will be more successful which makes teaching easier, and currently we are not taking full advantage of the great, easy technologies available. My solution of using Remind 101 and Engrade to improve parent-teacher communication is a viable solution because it is free, easy for teachers and parents to use, and little training is needed. The only skills needed to implement the solution are Internet browsing and personal cell phone use. As with any initiative, it is important to remember the incentives for the stakeholders involved. It is my hope that all teachers would quickly embrace this initiative because implementation will be so easy and the end result will be happier parents. Let's be honest; we all want happier parents! The resources needed to realize the proposal's full potential is a short list. All stakeholders will need readily available Internet access and only the parents will need a cell phone to receive texts. So essentially, what is my action plan? As the technology specialist in the school, I would enroll myself in each class via Remind 101 to assist all teachers with any questions during the early stages of application. I would also discuss the importance of using a unified online gradebook with our principal to ensure her full backing of the program. We both would have administrator accounts to again support all the teachers and parents while they are beginning to learn the program. In the interest of concluding, I would like to implement this plan with the action logic of strategist. David Rooke and William Torbert explained the strategist action logic in "7 Transformations of Leadership." The strategist is effective as a transformational

leader. This would be essential while attempting to transform the culture of little parent-teacher communication within our school.

Below you will find the links for the two videos describing this project.

<http://www.touchcast.com/stfrancis/CEP-815-Final-Part-1>

<http://www.touchcast.com/stfrancis/CEP-815-Final-Part2>