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**MAET YR2**

## **DreamIT Project**

### **PART I - Brief Project Description (200 words)**

Throughout my tenure as an administrator it has become increasingly clear that sub days need to have more value added for student learning. It isn't a reflection of the teachers, because absences happen for multiple reasons, many of which being that the district is working on professional development during the school day. From the perspective of the building principal my DreamIT project will be to develop continual learning for students even in the absences of their content area teacher. Substitutes are aplenty at the MS these days. However, they technically just come in to babysit the "troops" for that day. Not only is it a waste of money, but it impacts the instruction the students are "supposed" to receive. During those sub days, we often see videos playing, students goofing around and not much higher-order thinking going on.

I am going to take those "sub-filled" hours and turn them into something more powerful learning-wise. We will offer a cyber-hour for students that have scheduled substitutes in their core classes. They would report to this classroom for attendance and then send them off on an "online" learning journey. This idea would incorporate collaboration, investigation and creation of a product within that hour. So the plan is to create a partnership with the classroom teachers and develop plans related to their content or maybe to a technology initiative that would provide an enriched learning experience. I will begin by taking baby-steps and working with the language arts teachers who currently have release days to do reading assessments. These reading assessment days are prearranged so this

helps with the planning process. By having a cyber-hour this will allow me to become the instructional leader with technology at its focal point. With this project my vision will be to expand this concept with additional staff implementation as we enter year two.

**PART II - What is the transformation in understanding that you would like to see in your students and teaching (300 words)**

Today we see that students are so involved with technology, they're so savvy and facile, but very often the classroom becomes a little dead when their teacher is out for the day compared to what they are typically used to. This transformation will be new to all involved, the teachers, students, parents and myself as the building administrator. It will be exciting and in reality the right thing to do by our students and their learning. I'd like to take those "sub-filled" hours and turn them into something more powerful and useful as far as learning is concerned. With the support and collaboration of the classroom teacher I'd like to offer a cyber-hour for students during class periods that a substitute is required. We would begin with baby-steps and work with our Language Art teachers, who have release days so that they can access their students in reading. These days are pre-planned so that we can coordinate which lessons will be used. We would forego paying for substitutes, reallocating those monies toward technology and other need resources. The students would know to report to the cyber-classroom on their scheduled day. This would be planned in collaboration by me and the Language Arts teacher and the students would have an idea of what they would be doing that day. Attendance would be taken and then send them off on a "online" learning journey. One that incorporates collaboration, investigation, creation of a product within that hour.

At the end of the day, I am looking for a way to have students be more interactive, more in control of their learning, where everyone has access to resources that we have available for them to use.

Creating a classroom with banks of wired and wireless computers, ceiling-mounted projectors, interactive whiteboards, and mobile tech-enabled work carts for students, all linked to allow for dynamic, multimedia presentations that inspire learning. This space will provide individual workstations and group tables to foster hands-on and collaborative projects. (SEE PICTURES AT END)

### **Part III: Presenting the Total PACKage (1200 – 1500 words)**

#### **Context:**

I currently am the Saline Middle School Principal within the Saline Area School District. Saline is an upper middle-class community, primarily Caucasian. As a district we encompass the Ann Arbor area. I have held this position for six years, however I have been a building administrator for the past fourteen years across four different buildings. Prior to becoming a building administrator, I was a high school Marketing teacher, Drivers Ed teacher and Coach.

Saline Middle School is currently the largest 6-8 middle school in the State of Michigan with over 1250 students. We have approximately 80 staff members who work in multiple capacities. We will begin our third year as a BYOD (Bring Your Own Devices) school building. Saline Area Schools is committed to prepare all students and teachers to maximize learning by fully integrating relevant technology into academic content. As part of this commitment, the District recently added wireless capabilities to Saline Middle School to allow student-owned devices to be used in a classroom setting to support instruction. With classroom teacher approval, students may use their own devices in the classroom to access, interact and save information from the internet, communicate with other learners and use web productivity tools to create assignments/projects or take classroom assessments.

In Saline we have a very supportive Superintendent who is a proponent of using technology within our schools. Our Director of Instructional Technology is a former classroom teacher, who is our

ambassador for moving into 21st century learning environments. She will not only provide direction, but she will provide instruction and the tools needed to transform learning into a tech rich lesson. Being in Saline it is obvious that I have the opportunity and support to move forward and begin my implementation of my DreamIT idea.

**Content:**

This project / idea has endless possibilities, however I want to begin by taking small steps to work with the staff to ensure that this will be a meaningful learning opportunity. All too often we rush into making decisions and we forget to “cross” the T’s and “dot” the I’s. At Saline Middle School we offer our language arts teachers release days to complete reading assessments on their students. The teacher is present, however a substitute is needed. This idea would begin by working with these teachers during this school year to develop the “cyber-hour”. The good news is that these release days are set-up in advance and the language arts teachers coordinate their schedules so that they are not out on the same days. This leaves the realization that we can actually coordinate a schedule and have a plan moving forward. I believe technology should be embedded in everyday learning as a means for our teachers and students to collaborate, create, and connect on a daily basis. Taking our time to develop the technology and integrate it more seamlessly into a cyber-classroom experience will ultimately be the key to this DreamIT project. I had the chance to speak to one of our 7th grade language arts teachers the other day. I gave him a quick overview of my idea and his response to me was “I think this would be a more effective use of time when a substitute teacher is in the classroom. I can see this being meaningful technology time above other aspects, but I’ll enumerate those reasons later when we meet.” Ceo, M. (2013, July 17). Interview by D.W. Raft.

Originally, I was going to claim this as my idea and push this onto the teachers. However, after a

wise conversation with Punya, having this be a collaboration with the teachers seemed like a much better thought process. As I started to rethink some of the obstacles I may encounter it was clear there would be challenges. The number one barrier would be Teacher buy-in! This may be difficult, as many teachers may not have the technology proficiency to facilitate such a plan. Additionally, many teachers have a great deal of content to cover and may be unwilling, or unable, to support such an idea. The diversity in how teachers plan for absences might also have an impact. For example, if a teacher knows they are going to be gone - they might have a specific lesson/learning objective that the substitute could carry out. There are also some logistical issues such as having the technology available along with the space to house the classes. Not to mention it takes time to develop these types of lessons and time is not something we have in excess. However, these are the types of conversations that I need to have with our language arts teachers and assure them we will work with them to make this as stress free and accommodating as possible. For me, this will be a great opportunity to demonstrate my instructional leadership skills as I work with the teachers, students and the IT department...I'm getting excited!

**Technology:**

I am a full proponent for technology use in the classroom. I see students receiving meaningful instruction with the use of technology. Every aspect of life is becoming more ingrained in technology, so the more technologically savvy students become, the better prepared they will be when entering the workplace. Technology is becoming the paper and pencil, the encyclopedia, the textbook, etc. But, beyond that it will provide much greater capability than ever before. Instant connections with resources around the world, real-time pictures and videos, etc. There are so many possibilities. Currently, the adults can't keep up with the kids when it comes to technology usage, and that's a problem. The need for teachers to diversify their instruction cannot be overstated. As educational methods are researched

and adapted, it has become increasingly apparent that students are diverse learners. By making material more interactive and accessible through different mediums, the students will engage and make learning more concrete. Technology is the best vehicle to accommodate a variety of learners. We can no longer ignore the need for technology, the time is upon us. This is where I see the value for the implementation of my DreamIT project, and an eagerness for it to come to fruition.

I want to develop a technology plan that is helpful for our students and teachers when the classroom teacher is absent. For starters, I will need to allocate resources that are available for students during these assigned times. Not only a space, but a well developed space that has technology at their fingertips. My vision is redefining the media center and how this space is utilized. This will take monies, which is not easy to find these days. It would be great if we had a technology bond, but that is a few years away from reality. I have allocated \$13,000, plus our Instructional Technology Director is supporting an additional \$12,000. If I can get our Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum to support \$5000 and we use the monies we save on substitute, which is a value of \$5000 I am looking at \$30,000. This seems like a lot of money, but it will only provide a start to my dream 21st century learning space.

I'll begin with the layout of the current media space. It will continue to serve as our media center, checking out books, doing research, etc. However, it is a large space that offers some flexibility in its layout. I look to develop one section that is tucked away in the back of the media center as my targeted "cyber-classroom". Below is a picture of our media center and the second picture is of what I envision as the ideal space. There is some good news, we have a sinking fund that allows for the cost of wiring of computers, network drops, wireless and other technical items that need to be wired or relocated. Then the purchase of tables, LCD monitors, computers, Ipads and wireless charging devices

[Helios Wireless Charge Stations](#) will be added to our media center in the coming months. Overall, this will require some reorganization and the purchasing of products, but we are in a good position with a solid plan to move forward.

**Pedagogy:**

This is probably the one of the most important aspects of this project. Engagement is key! and is an area that I feel creates learning. If we cannot engage our learners in what we want them to know then it is hard to have productive learning. Thinking like Willingham suggests, which is that students will benefit from a mix of pedagogical approaches no matter their preferred learning style is how this plan needs to roll. The great thing is with this DreamIT project is that it is based around the use of technology, which offers a vast array of available ideas of which to take advantage. I see our students doing group work early on in the process. It is a great way to intertwine collaboration and cooperation and the use of Google Presentations, which is a wonderful tool for working within a group. In the early implementation stages it would be beneficial to have the lessons developed and ready to go, with the focus being on the use of a technology to create a product. I would use some of my MAET summer training and how an idea was taken and then made into a tech product. Another pedagogical approach would be a focus on student-led education which would be supported by the use of technology instead of the teacher necessarily having to develop the lesson. For example, interactive projects would be a great way to go with this idea. This would really allow for some "choice" in terms of topics of great interest to students. Middle Schoolers like some freedom, but at the same time they need some direction. Keeping the delivery methods varied will help with the engagement of the students during this time. At the end of the day, having a well laid out plan for the students, with specific goals and outcomes from the lesson will be the key.

### **The Total TPACKage:**

Technology in this instance becomes the facilitator for learning, creation and collaboration. Instead of having a teacher in a classroom or sub stand up and be the sage on the stage (pushing information) on students...the technology is the vehicle to open the doors for student inquiry and knowledge gathering. The technology opens the doors for students to work with peers, other classrooms and people all around the world to collaborate instead of sitting at their desks like soldiers. The technology encourages higher-order thinking because students will actually use apps or websites to create a product on the spot instead of having to take a paper/pencil assignment home.

I am a realist regarding this DreamIT project and I believe that being able to offer a cyber-classroom experience will benefit our students. However, as a realist working in the actual environment everyday...I'd be hard pressed to make such large-scale substantial changes in a new program. Our culture, our parent expectations and lack of resources really has us growing our change at a slower, managed pace. With that said, we have a solid plan and we are moving forward...it just may take a little long to get to full implementation.

Throughout this planning process and development the SAMR Model has be considered. In year one of this major change I am thinking we are only able to go so far up the SAMR Model...due in part to organizational culture. In year 2 of this project as we build on our learning I see us getting it completely at the redesign level. I'd say my plan straddles modification/redesign, but we are getting closer!

### **Part IV: Evaluation (500 words)**

#### **Evaluation:**

I can only imagine what some of the teachers will say when I propose this project. "Not using a



substitute when a teacher is out of class...what? This can't be done!" or maybe "I don't want to have to spend more time preparing another lesson" or "it's never been done like this before, why now?" I need to be prepared to answer many questions- not because this idea is a bad one, but because it is a different one. Having a solid plan to measure whether this plan will be successful can assure future success.

First, preparing a survey for some initial staff input on this idea would be essential. I plan on sending this out early August to hopefully gain support of the idea. This survey would be geared towards the staff specifically to inquire about their thoughts and ideas on the subject of a "cyber-hour." Even though the first steps will be to work with 7th and 8th grade language arts teachers having input from the entire staff will be helpful. This would also provide some assurance that this is a collaborative process that would actually benefit the staff during times they are out of their classroom. [STAFF SURVEY](#)

Second, giving the students a voice in what they would like to learn related to technology. This will help myself and our instructional technology department on what we need to prepare for. This also would be a google survey that I will send to our student body via their school email addresses. I will provide them some choices and give them an opportunity to elaborate on their needs. [STUDENT SURVEY](#)

Third, at the completion of a daily lesson we would provide time for the students to respond to their experience. Giving them ten-minutes at the end of each cyber-classroom project to reflect on their learning will provide immediate feedback to use for future lessons. I have found that our students have a strong voice and take their learning seriously. Having a rubric for their learning will also be included in their assignments during each class period. This rubric will be developed by myself along with other staff to ensure that it is student friendly and easy to follow.

Finally, at the completion of each trimester having an instrument to measure what we are asking our students to do is engaging and helpful in their learning process. Taking this data and using it as evidence that this DreamIT project makes sense. Also, verifying that using our resources that we have as a school is more meaningful than having a day with a substitute. I'm confident that what we develop as a technology lesson will be more useful than any video or worksheet we provide our students in a time of teacher absence.

**Part V: How does your project connect with other key issues in Educational Technology (500 words)**

Is wikipedia a good source? For many of our students they look at wikipedia as an easy tool to gather information and then disseminate out facts. Most English teachers would argue against this! They would caution their students about using Wikipedia as a reliable source when researching a topic. Developing information literacy, technology skills within our students is a must. Part of my plan is to continue to develop our students skills and educate them about the factors of reliable sources. Making certain when they look at a source they can identify that it is indeed a good source. Hopefully, the students will have some background knowledge that they can pull from as we discuss this topic.

I actually am going to erase the word "differentiation" from teachers vocabulary...OK, I'll try;) If we as educators focused on developing a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) we could meet the needs of all students. UDL is a set of principles for curriculum development that give all students equal opportunities to learn. UDL provides a framework for creating instructional goals, methods, materials and assessments that work for every student instead of a one-size-fits-all approach. Technology is a

great way to provide equal opportunities for all students to learn.

Here's are some of the web tools that I will be using with our students to help build technology-based UDL experiences in the cyber-classroom:

**GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS:** Bubbl.us - brainstorming and organizing tool. Good for visual thinkers/learners. Easy to use, sharing capabilities & customizable features. Prezi.com - online presentation program to illustrate information, ideas, concepts and research. Takes a little practice constructing a Prezi. Has sharing capabilities.

**STUDY SKILLS TOOLS** - Study Stack - create interactive web-based flash cards or use ones already created. Quizlet - create flash cards or use ones already created. Diigo - use the highlighting and extract annotation tools to collect important information.

**WRITING TOOLS** - StoryBird - collaborative storytelling. StoryMaker - online story tool. Provides structured support with audio. The story can be printed off or linked as a PDF. Animoto - create a video slideshow to have students express what they are thinking about. VoiceThread - students can create a digital story using pictures, text, voice, etc., to tell their story.

**COLLABORATIVE TOOLS** - Google Docs - create online documents, spreadsheets and presentations and share out with any student or teacher in Saline Area Schools. Glogster - online poster. WordPress.org - blogging tool.

To share the Digital Citizenship message as easy and consistent as possible, Saline Area Schools has adopted the following Cybersafety Campaign - **STOP. THINK. CONNECT!** Easy to remember and can lead to a classroom discussion or serve as a reminder of the steps everybody should think through before going online. **Stop:** Before you go online, take time to understand the risks and learn how to

spot potential problems. **Think:** Take time to think about the places you are visiting online, the information you are sharing and the communities you are participating in. Always watch for warning signs and consider how your actions online could impact your safety or others. **Connect:** If you have taken the time to STOP & THINK, then you can CONNECT online with greater confidence and enjoy knowing that you've taken the right steps to safeguard yourself and your computer. This is the message that we continue to educate our students with from the time they enter Saline Middle School. A message that we continue to review with our students each time they boot up.

The focus of my project will be project based learning opportunities. I not going to provide them with the answers, this is where they will use technology, prior knowledge and understanding to come up with the solution. I can assure you that it won't be just an item that is "googleable" and bam there's the answer. Nope, they will have to use technology tools, research and creative thinking to create the project they are working on.

This plan will be one that builds on itself and over time more and more staff will become trained in the cyber-classroom understanding. In the beginning, it will be myself, the director of instructional technology, the media specialist and the assistant principal. The five of us will be developing the lesson plans and actually working within the cyber-classroom. Shortly after the first trimester we will target a small pocket of staff to be trained. The overall goal would be to have the staff train each other and over the course of the school year we can have the majority of the teachers trained. In my opinion and my experience that by using this method of teacher training teacher has proven successful in prior years with other new initiatives.

**Current Media Center at Saline Middle School.**



**This is ideally what I would like to have part of the media center space become.**

