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Leadership Vision and E-Learning PLan

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Introduction

The Pleasantville Public School District is located in Pleasantville, NJ. They have four elementary schools that serve a diverse population of about 2,000 students in grades pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade.

The district does not currently offer any world language opportunities for elementary school students. According to the NJDOE (2017), "All districts are required to have K-12 programs that ensure students meet the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for World Languages". The lack of exposure to world languages is not only a disservice to the students; the district is also not meeting the state standard.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a vision, e-learning plan, and funding proposal to help the district implement a blended learning World Language program for their elementary schools.

Vision

The impact that technology can make in a classroom is limitless. Classes are becoming filled with more and more technology. If you walk through a school, it is common to see various types of technology including SMART boards, document cameras, Chromebooks, and other devices. Schools need to embrace this and use these powerful resources to impact the nature of teaching and to reach their students better.

Today's learners come to school with many different needs. They have a variety of abilities, and one classroom can have students at many different levels. It is difficult to meet the needs of every learner in the school. Teachers need to be able to differentiate and individualize

their instruction. Students come to the teacher at so many different levels; it is tough for the teacher to reach each of them effectively. My vision for the future of technology in education is to change this. Technology can significantly help facilitate this process (make this happen more easily).

Lecture style or teacher-centered learning is usually dull and not appealing to students. We know this, yet we still see it a lot in schools. Learning that is interactive and engaging is more effective. The more engaged students are, the more likely they will be able to recall what they have learned. A study showed that students remember 10 percent of what they read, 20 percent of what they hear, and up to 90 percent of what they experience, even if it is in the form of a game (Federation of American Scientists, 2006).

There are a variety of resources and methods that teachers can use to help them reach all aspects of the SAMR model. Classrooms can genuinely transform when teachers use a variety of techniques and work through the SAMR model (Puentedura, 2015).

Technology can support an interactive and engaging environment. However, for technology to make a significant difference, teachers need to move past simple substitution type of activities because they do not change the nature of teaching. Typing an essay is not using technology effectively. My vision for education is that classrooms will use a variety of tools and methods to not only substitute, but to augment, modify, and redefine lessons. To do things that they never thought were possible before. Moving through these different levels of technology adoption will help provide students with meaningful learning experiences and uses of technology.

Pleasantville has a few teachers that do this very well and others repeatedly do substitution type activities. Perhaps with training and awareness of the SAMR model, they can use it to guide and transform their lessons.

My immediate vision for the Pleasantville School District is to take a step forward with technology and address the impinging need of world language. We can use digital content in the area of world languages to help meet this need through the use of a simple, gamified, adaptive language-learning platform called Duolingo. Duolingo is the most downloaded and used educational app in the world. It uses gamification techniques such as those used in Candy Crush and Clash of Clans (Draycott, 2017). Using this particular e-learning program will meet the following goals:

1. Expose students to world language(s)

2. Provide individualized and customized e-learning experience

3. Motivate students to learn and take ownership of their learning

4. Meet the NJ world languages state requirement

Duolingo has fun, game-like lessons that motivate students and get them excited about learning another language. This is important because exposing students to world languages at a young age can help them in a variety of ways. Children can become more creative, more flexible, better problem solvers, and even score better on tests by learning another language. Younger students have an easier time learning pronunciation and new sounds (Tassinari, 2106). The program gives students personalized feedback and practice so that they can get the most out of the experience.

E-Learning Plan

In order to bring this vision into reality, I will need to get key stakeholders on board. As an educator that aims to be a transformational leader, I plan to use my enthusiasm and passion to influence stakeholders' beliefs about e-learning and my long-term vision (Northouse, 2013). I will show my dedication to this initiative by offering my time to providing training to teachers. The timing of this training would be a half-day workshop given at the discretion of the district. However, I would not need much time. A half day workshop would be enough to help teachers become familiar with Duolingo for Schools. It is an easy to use program for teachers to monitor their students progress. Three hours should be enough time to show teachers how to set up their classroom and use their dashboard to monitor their students.

Duolingo is intended to be used daily in five to twenty-minute sessions. The goal is for Pleasantville elementary students to use it for 10 minutes a day. This amount of time is a realistic expectation that can fit into the existing curriculum. Learning a new language is hard. When someone only has to complete small lessons at a time, it seems more attainable. 10 minutes is a reasonable amount of time that will not create frustration or allow the students to lose interest. Students will look forward to working in Duolingo each day.

Teachers will have the option to do it while they are in their classroom or during computer lab time, whenever the classroom teachers think is appropriate. The Duolingo program works on any device.

There are 29 different language courses offered by Duolingo. It will be the discretion of the district to give the students the option to choose any of them, give them a choice between a few, or tell them what language they will learn.

While students work in Duolingo, they will go through a series of gamified lessons. The lessons are organized by themes, and each lesson is broken down into useful pieces. They will have to translate words and phrases, listen to a phrase and type what they hear, use a microphone to speak answers in the target language.

The progress bar shows how many questions that the user has answered correctly. When the student completes a lesson, they level up, and they receive virtual currency that can be used to buy a variety of prizes. They have options to wager their currency to double up on it. They also can receive a 'streak' and extra currency for using the program every day. This aspect is helpful when encouraging students to complete their 10 minutes of practice on their own even when they are not in school. This gamified design of Duolingo helps to create a daily learning habit because students do not want to lose their streak. The streak is a useful technique used in the gaming world (Draycott, 2017). It is influential in getting people to come back daily because once they have a streak, they hate to lose it.

Although there is a way to protect the streak on the weekends, students will be encouraged to continue their practice on their days off from school. Giving students the option at home creates an Enriched Virtual, blended learning environment (Horn & Staker, 2015). Since the program works on any platform, this is easy to do and is beneficial to the students.

There are additional motivating aspects that push students to continue through the program, such as badges. Students can receive badges for things like going through a lesson without getting anything wrong or when they earn 100 points. Once a user earns a badge, it is theirs to keep. They cannot lose it. The various aspects of this program provide immediate

feedback and make the learner feel like they are winning or have accomplished something. It is a contagious feeling that makes them want to continue working.

My vision is to implement this program in grades three and up. Students in these grades have their own Chrome accounts and access to Google Classroom. These classrooms are also already equipped with one-to-one technology. As the elementary technology facilitator, I will also help teachers along the way if they have any questions or need assistance.

Duolingo also has free online resources, tutorials and training to help teachers get the most out of the program in their classroom. Teachers that feel inspired to complete the Duolingo educator certification program will be encouraged to do so. Teachers that complete this program will be encouraged to display their badge on their classroom door, as well as in their email, as well as badges earned for other programs such as Google Educator, BrainPOP. By doing this, teachers have a sense of pride in what they have accomplished, and other teachers know whom they could probably ask if they have a question.
They also provide a Duolingo teacher ambassador as the next step to identify leaders.

Teachers will create their account. It takes two minutes to create a classroom. Once they do this, they will post the class code in their Google Classroom so that students can join. During the signup process, students will also enter their parent's email address so that they can monitor their child's progress. Due to their age, entering a parent's email is a Duolingo requirement.

Once this initiative is running smoothly this the upper elementary grades, I would like to explore some world language apps to use with grades K-2. A few recommendations of apps to check out are *Stories By Gus On The Go*, *Little Pim*, *Rosetta Stone Kids Lingo Letter Sounds*, and *Learning by MindSnacks*.

Funding Proposal

Providing world language exposure to their elementary students is an issue that the Pleasantville School District needs to be addressed. This initiative is an opportunity to meet students' needs and meet the required state standard with the most economical means possible. It will save the district money because there is no need to hire a World Language teacher for the four elementary schools and Duolingo will not cost the district any money to use the program. Their goal is to give anyone and everyone an equal chance to learn a new language. Therefore, it is entirely free (Duolingo, 2018).

In order to create a teacher account to monitor students' progress, teachers need to go to schools.duolingo.com to create their account. Each teacher's free account is good for unlimited students. Teachers have the ability to group students into classes, assign work, and track when the work is is complete.

I would like to note that there is a School Pro version that costs $9.99 a month. However, the only benefit to paying for it is that there are no advertisements and support from the company. The free version is sufficient for the needs of the district.

Between the computer labs in the elementary schools and the recent implementation of one-to-one technology throughout the upper elementary classrooms, Pleasantville already has the equipment needed in order for students to be able to gain access to the program. They are structurally ready to start this program tomorrow if they wanted to.

Professional development is usually very costly, especially when outside companies come in to train the staff. Training for Duolingo will not be a financial issue because it will be done in-house. We will utilize the district's two Elementary Technology Facilitators, and they

will train the teachers. The only cost incurred would be if the training takes place during the school day, the district will have to get a substitute teacher to cover the teacher's classroom. A cost-cutting measure for this would be to provide a half-day workshop for the teachers. As stated earlier, this is more than enough time to show the teachers what they need to know and to make them comfortable with the program. Providing a half-day workshop will cut the cost in half because the district can have one substitute cover one class in the morning and a different class in the afternoon. Therefore, only half the amount of substitute teachers would be needed.

Conclusion

The implementation of this e-learning plan would be beneficial to the Pleasantville School District on many different levels. It is not only the most economical way to address current issues, but it is also an effective way to meet the needs of the district.

A 2012 effectiveness study showed that Duolingo users enjoyed the product and overall succeeded in improving their knowledge of another language (Vesselinov & Grego, 2012). With 1.2 billion users (Duolingo, 2018), they must be doing something right. Providing students with an Enriched Virtual, blended learning environment such as the one described in this plan will foster students' growth and make them want to learn, even when they are not in school. It will create students that are comfortable with technology and technology-rich environments.

Although Duolingo does not grade students' work, teachers can monitor their progress. They are able to see how many points students have, as well as the completed assignments, course overview, and streak days. Being able to do this will make it easy to assess and measure the students' success. As students successfully progress through a lesson, they unlock the next lesson. They will not be able to advance until they have mastered the current lesson

Using a gamified program such as Duolingo good because it motivates students. They want to use the program. This habitual practice that Duolingo provides vital in language learning. Even if students are practicing the same level over and over for the pure pleasure of trying to earn more points, badges, or rewards, they are still practicing and getting that exposure to the language. The repetition will only help them. Eventually, they will get bored and move to the next lesson.

With the number of Chromebooks and classrooms that have one-to-one technology in the Pleasantville School District, it would be advantageous to give this e-learning initiative a try. Duolingo will probably not make someone fluent in another language, but it will do a great job of exposing them to a new language. The gamification aspect motivates children.

With free resources such as Duolingo, there is no reason that the district is not meeting this state requirement. Additionally, there are no districts in the close vicinity that are using e-learning like this. The successful implementation of this program will result in the Pleasantville School District leading the way for other schools to begin implementing an Enriched Virtual, blended learning environment in their elementary schools.

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