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Final Project

CEP-815

**A Little Background:**

For the past 10 months I have been working as an Educational Systems Coordinator for Brookville Center for Children’s Services(BCCS). BCCS is a program made up of five schools that provide education to students of all ages with developmental and learning disabilities. My job as an Educational Systems Coordinator is basically the same duties of a regular Technology Coordinator in any other school. I am responsible for managing the network, researching new devices that we can implement into our curriculum and training faculty on new technology.

 Although I work for the school, I am part of the Management Information Systems Department. My entire department, except for me, has a computer science background. This has been a challenge but also a benefit for me because I see things from a different perspective than they do. I feel like I am a huge contributor to my department and to the schools especially, because I don’t just dismiss things that “can’t be done.” I find a way because as an educator, saying, “I can’t” to something that can ultimately benefit any student just isn’t something I can do.

**The Learning Problem:**

 The learning problem that I recently faced in my school had to do with training faculty. A couple of months ago, we order over 500+ iPads to our schools and had no idea how we wanted to manage them. iPads are personal devices however, we did not want to make this a “personal device” for teachers, and we wanted them to be an educational for students. Also, we wanted to be able to manage all of these iPads at once, instead of individually handling the maintenance of each one.

After doing some extensive research, I discovered a program called Apple Configurator. Apple Configurator is a free program offered in the Apple App Store that permits you to manage multiple iPads at once. The only disadvantage, at the time, was that this program needed to be used on a daily basis. This meant that I needed to train teachers(since I cannot be in five places at once). Trainings at BCCS don’t usually go well. Most of the time they are scheduled meetings before, during or after school where content is presented as a video. Sometimes less than half the staff will show up to a training, simply because they claim that they do not have time.

Not attending trainings really upsets me, especially because this goes against everything BCCS stands for. The schools mission states, “*All programs are designed to enhance cognitive, communication, social/emotional, motor and adaptive development through the implementation of NYS standards. The fully licensed and certified staff follow a collaborative service model and research-based curricula while additionally providing therapeutic interventions that include, but are not limited to, therapeutic feeding, auditory training, music therapy, mobility, and prevocational training via education,*”([BCCS](http://www.brookvillecenter.org), 2013). In order for the schools to measure up to New York State standards, they must incorporate technology into their curriculum, especially for students whom have developmental or learning disabilities. Using a device like an iPad can really showcase their abilities and even be used as a communication device for low-functioning students. Upon hearing the lack of enthusiasm for professional development, I was nervous about conducting a training on the new software, but I aspired to make it different and convenient for all staff members.

**The Solution:**

 Due to schedule conflicts and lack of beneficial instructional methods, I decided to change the way new trainings by the MIS department were conducted. In order to conduct this training, I made it entertaining and virtual by using [MindFlash](http://www.mindflash.com). MindFlash is an e-learning software that allows you to create interactive trainings while managing your users as well. The e-learning software allows you to invite multiple users, set a due date for training completion, provides multiple means of representation of content, provide questions and quizzes and permits you to see the progress of your users.

 This helps to solve the BCCS problem of not attending trainings because it is virtual and can be learned at the own pace of each trainee. This alone solved a lot of the problems because it also allows faculty to attend the training whenever they want. Flexibility is the most favorable feature since it is difficult for teachers to attend trainings during, before and after school hours. Teachers will now also have multiple days to complete the training on their own time. MindFlash is also great because it is engaging. Apple Configurator is not an easy program to use, especially if teachers aren’t familiar with the Mac operating system. Luckily, I was able to break down the training into sections based on features of Apple Configurator. In between each section I had teachers answer questions of different formats and take quizzes. This allowed me to not only track their progress, but get feedback on my own design as well.

 MindFlash is very easy to use; even the least tech-savvy bunch of my faculty could access it no problem. All I need to do is invite them to the course with their email address and MindFlash sends them a link. Once the staff receives the link, they need to enter their username and password and they are good to go. Unfortunately MindFlash is not a free e-learning software. They offer three different types of packages that you can buy: The Basic Package $149.99 per month for 50 users, The Advanced Package $499.99 per month for 500 users and The Pro Package $999.99 per month for 500+ users. Since we do not train more than about 50 people per month, we decided to go with The Basic Package.

 Since we are a non-profit organization, BCCS receives many donations throughout the school year to help us provide the best for our students and faculty. We used donated money from parents and our supporters to help train our faculty. If we should ever not receive enough money to help pay for MindFlash each month, we will charge it to the MIS account that we have since it is technically something for our department. This will work best because the MIS department is allotted a specific amount of money each year and we hardly ever go over the budget. It is important that we do incorporate MindFlash into our budget plan if we ever intend to pay for it through our account.

**Implementation:**

 Before implementing this new method of training, I had to present the idea to the school directors and my department. Upon approval, I met with the teachers I had to train individually to explain to them what the new training method was like. I sent them an invite to the training course, in addition to a follow-up email that asked teachers to let me know if they had an questions or concerns when going through the training.

 Teacher’s not being able to attend trainings, nor learn much from them is really embarrassing. I personally think that there should be a consequence for not attending professional development days or trainings. However, this is not your regular public school. BCCS is very different and runs a completely different way than your average school. Teachers work very hard to make sure that they are doing the best they can for their students but they leave time to educate themselves on new resources that they can benefit from. This not only affects our teachers but it very much affects our students and reflects badly on my department and our schools.

 This is a solution that is favored by school directors, different departments and teachers themselves. They like the flexibility and the idea that they can go through the training at their own pace and at their own time. MindFlash makes training fun because it’s engaging and is a mix of questions and content. It is different from the usual lecture or video that lose people sometimes. MindFlash helps keep you aware and makes you apply what you learn. Trainee progress is also monitored and recorded so this is more of an incentive for them to pay attention and focus on the questions and content.

 In order to successfully implement this solution, teachers will need to have access to a computer with Internet. This is important because some teachers will try to complete the training at home but may not have Internet access. I made sure to inform all teachers that they will need to have Internet access in order to complete the training.

To begin my action plan, I started by going through the MindFlash training myself to make sure that the content was all correct and everything flowed nicely. I then invited the teachers to the course and encouraged them to email me with any questions or concerns they had. I monitored their progress throughout the week and got to see how effective my training was. It turned out that teachers understood the content much better through the MindFlash software and were able to actually take what they learned and apply it within their classrooms.

**Conclusion:**

 I will continue to make sure that trainings are now conducted with MindFlash, as they appear to be much more convenient and effective. I know that if I do ever leave the school, my department and school directors will encourage trainings through MindFlash because there has been a major improvement in faculty trainings since we have begun.

 This situation has really made me recognize the leader within myself because I have found a way to think outside of the box, while also working with many people to achieve a goal. I always thought of myself as a diplomat leader but now I can clearly see that I am actually a strategist. I was able to push staff to recognize the importance of trainings and how it all comes down to doing what’s best for our students. Now that faculty has had the proper training, iPads have been successfully deployed in most of the schools. It has truly been a blessing to witness the benefits on a daily basis that these pieces of technology have given to our students. In addition to this, faculty training has been at an all time high. The last five trainings I have conducted have had 100% attendance rate and a 92% success score. I am truly happy with where educational technology is going with my school and can’t wait to see what the future holds.

[Click here](http://prezi.com/sz8hlgtu5utf/how-instructional-design-made-a-difference/?kw=view-sz8hlgtu5utf&rc=ref-15439159) to view a Prezi demonstrating the differences between my original training and my training using MindFlash.