We Can Do This: Graduate Students Perspectives on Mentoring Faculty Technology Integration

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The call for teacher educators to integrate technology into preservice teacher education is not new. In 1986 Blackhurst and MacArthur found that special education faculty who were preparing teachers for the K-12 environment lacked the skills and knowledge to teach their students about technology. Similarly, over the past decade, researchers (Hasselbring, 1991; Office of Technology Assessment (OTA), 1995; Sheingold & Hadley, 1993; Wetzel, 1993) have argued that preservice technology training must become a priority if we are to have teachers who are both comfortable and competent with the respect to the use of technology in their teaching (OTA, 1995).

The infusion of technology into pre-service teacher education should be a major priority for teacher education programs across the country; especially in the area of special education where technology integration can be beneficial to student development (Schmidt, Weinstein, Niemic, & Walberg, 1986). This presentation features a faculty technology training program that utilized components from the Iowa State University model (Beisser, Kurth, & Reinhart, 1997; Fox, Thompson, & Chan, 1996; Thompson, Hanson, & Reinhart, 1996; Thompson & Schmidt, 1994). In an attempt to extend this model, we created a training program that featured the use of special education graduate students. Our study examined whether students with limited technology expertise would have the ability to assist faculty members in their integration of technology into the classroom teaching.

Utilizing Joyce and Showers (1995) theory-demonstration-practice-feedback-coaching model, special education graduate students-with limited technology experience (i.e., word processing)-instructed special education faculty members in ways to integrate technology into their method and educational foundation courses. Through weekly on-line journals and pre- and post interviews, we were able to ascertain the effectiveness of this training program.

This presentation will report these findings from the graduate student perspective. More importantly, this presentation will share preliminary findings about the mentoring relationships that grew between graduate students and faculty members due to the training interaction. Our hope is to share this data with participants and discuss further ways to enhance the integration of technology through graduate student/faculty mentorship.

We hope that participants will:
- understand the necessary components in effective technology training for faculty members in preservice teacher education programs;
- discuss the benefits of the theory-demonstration-practice-feedback-coaching model;
- learn how graduate students can be effective mentors in the faculty integration process;
- gain an understanding of the benefits of graduate student mentoring; and
- discuss the positives and negatives involved with technology training through graduate students.

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