I have been very fortunate in my teaching career to have had countless leadership opportunities presented to me. From coaching several sports teams, serving on my school’s leadership team, acting as an Instructional Resource Teacher, Positive Behavioral Intervention Support co-chair, team leader, as well as several other committee and club organizations, all of which have provided me with valuable experiences that have led me to where I am today. While I have been able to learn and hopefully contribute a lot to my colleagues and students, there was more, I felt, I could do to truly make an impact and show my leadership ability.

At the start of this current school year, a new committee was formed whose main interest was the incorporation of new, better and more technology use. I never considered myself a “cutting edge” tech person, but I like the idea of my students using technology throughout the course of the year to enhance their learning. Moreover, I know and understand how vital it is for our students to be well versed in how to use different technologies and comprehend how to successfully use these tools to prepare themselves for the future. According to the work done by the Miliken Exchange on Education Technology (1998), authors Lemke and Coughlin point out that “new technology can engage students in real life applications of academics and encourage students to be more independent and responsible for their own learning.” (p. 15). Several of the courses I have taken during my graduate studies have exposed me to a vast world of tools and applications our students can use to not only make learning more fun, but also to teach them the necessary skills required to succeed in an ever evolving technologically based society. As such, when I heard of a potential staff development the new committee was planning to present on an upcoming teacher workday, I knew I had to see if I could volunteer to work with the members to try to help make their presentation something our staff would see as an amazing opportunity to improve their teaching and subsequently, student learning.

From the time I began teaching until now, the Internet and the amount of useful and helpful tools that are out there for teachers to use has grown exponentially. In my mind, we are doing our students a disservice if we do not incorporate some of the amazing tools at our disposal in the classroom as frequently as we can. According to Lemke and Coughlin (2010), “technology adds a powerful tool to teachers’ repertoires, enabling them to meet the individual learning needs of their students more effectively” (p. 15). Fortunately for me, I have been exposed to many of these tools through my work in my graduate program and have been able to take some of these tools and apply them in my own classroom. However, there are a countless number of teachers who have no idea or have had no exposure to these resources which makes their teaching seem more, for a lack of a better term, “traditional.” As MacLean and Mohr (1999) state, “Too often, due to all the demands of school, teachers simply ‘love it or leave it.’ That is, if it works we keep it and if doesn’t, we throw it out” (p. 100).

One site in particular I have relied on recently is a conglomeration of hundreds of Web 2.0 tools that give teachers, and anyone for that matter, an opportunity to explore a new way of researching, creating and publishing their work. I learned about this site while attending the New Literacies Teacher Leaders Institute this summer and was eager to return to my school to share the information I had discovered for myself. I became extremely excited when I found out through my conversations with my administration and colleagues, that this was the same site our technology team envisioned sharing with our staff at the next teacher workday. After continuing my conversations with the people responsible for this staff development, I recognized my opportunity to take on another leadership role and to help organize this time to share with our staff the amazing opportunities using this site would provide for them and their teaching. I immediately volunteered to assist in leading the planning for this workshop in hopes of truly making this a positive opportunity for all of our staff.

Our first step was to recruit some of our teachers who had experience using some of the tools that were listed on this site. We were searching for teachers who did not just have some basic knowledge of the tools, but rather, would be considered experts in the eyes of our staff. To our surprise, we were able to find a dozen or so teachers who knew a lot about these applications and were willing to partake in our workshop. Once we had figured out our core group of teachers who were willing and able to help in this endeavor, we compiled a list of the exact tools they felt the most comfortable talking about and subsequently, teaching, to the rest of the staff during our presentation. We were able to compile a list of 22 different Web 2.0 tools that our group felt confident enough in their ability to present and share with our staff. However, we knew that just selecting the tools that we “liked” and used in our classroom, was not going to be enough to convince our staff of the effectiveness of their use. We tried to find tools that teachers could use for minor assignments such as journals and blogs, to assessment style tools students could use to illustrate what they have learned. Brown, Hinze and Pellegrino, as quoted in Pellegrino and Quellmalz (2010), found that “technologies are well suited to support many of the data-collection, complex analysis, and individualized feedback and scaffolding features needed for the formative use of assessment” (p. 123). From here, we began to think of how we could take the knowledge of what we had, and find a way to make it so our whole school bought into our presentation and did not just view it as another “flavor of the month” type of idea that was a waste of their precious and valued time.

Our next step then was to determine which of the tools were being used, and in particular, at which grade levels. We created a staff survey which we sent out three weeks prior to our workshop that asked teachers which of the tools we were thinking about presenting were ones they have used, heard of, had experience with, liked and more importantly, wanted their students to have knowledge of before they came to their class. We created subgroups to go out and talk to each grade level at our assigned grade level meeting times to really figure out which tools were most important at each grade level in our school. We also sent teachers to the high schools which we would be feeding our students to in the future to get their input about tools they wished their incoming freshman had knowledge of so we could properly prepare them before they left our building. After all of our information was collected, we were able to compile a list of the two most important and valued tools each grade level saw as vital to the students success at the next level. In addition, we made contact with several elementary schools that would be sending us their students in the years to come and made them aware of what we were doing and what we hoped for in the future. We now had an amazing set of information and a master plan in sight about where we wanted to take this workshop and how we were ultimately going to present this to our staff. However, as MacLean and Mohr (1999) tell us, “Data is not difficult to find – the problem is keeping track of it and managing it so as to assist you in analyzing it” (p. 39).

To begin our presentation, we pulled up the Web 2.0 tools website and gave a brief tutorial about how it functions and how teachers can access the site. Myself and another teacher showed how the site is broken up into different categories and how there are direct links to each tool they choose to use. I then showed our staff some examples my students have created using certain programs from this site and explained how, in social studies at least, I was able to create assignments using these different tools as a form of assessment. After fielding several questions about the site concerning how to sign up for certain programs, whether or not they were free, if students needed an active email to create their own accounts, how safe these sites were, etc… we then proceeded to explain how the survey data was collected and used. We explained that from the survey data, we were able to determine at least four Web 2.0 tools at each grade level that the majority of teachers considered helpful and potentially useful sites they would have their students work with. From there, we found two teachers at each grade level who had experience with these tools and were going to lead a tutorial in using these sites. At this point, we explained to the staff we would be moving into a breakout session where all the teachers would be moving through their grade level to receive instruction from our teachers on every aspect they needed to know in order to use each site. We then moved to our respective rooms and began our tutorials for our second part of the workshop.

In each grade level, we designated two teachers who would be teaching the rest of their grade level teachers about two specific tools that were determined to be the most valuable for their students to know and be able to use before entering the next grade. For example, the sixth grade teachers would be learning about the four tools that seventh grade teachers determined they wanted their future students to know; seventh grade teachers would be learning about the tools the eighth grade teachers wanted their students to have knowledge of; and the eighth grade teachers would be learning about the tools our information told us that high school teachers wished students had experience with before entering their building. In each break out session, teachers would be spending forty-five minutes learning about two Web 2.0 tools and creating their own mini projects to gain experience with them. Our elective teachers decided which grade level they wanted to attend and moved about the breakout sessions accordingly. At the end of the forty-five minutes, the teachers would rotate to the next room and learn about the next two tools chosen for their grade level. At the end of the day, each department then met for the last forty-five minute session and began to brainstorm ideas as to how these four tools could be used in their curriculum. We asked, begrudgingly, that each department at each grade level, submit an idea for each tool, before they left as to how they determined they would be able to use the tools they learned about. The feedback was very positive, however, as Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) point out, “as with all professional development, teachers must have follow-up and support as they attempt to use them in their school settings” (p. 108). Several teachers were still left wondering if they would be the ones responsible for teaching the students about these tools and how they were used as well as if there was a way to receive additional training if they needed it. Both of these questions were something we were prepared for as we moved forward with our planning and developing of this workshop which allowed us to reassure our staff by providing detailed answers for them.

With the information we received about the staff development, we then entered in to phase two of the process which involved teaching our students how to use each of these tools at each grade level. Our daily schedule has a time built in for an enrichment and remediation class where the students are assigned to a different teacher, for three weeks at a time, on a rotating basis. The teachers that served as the Web 2.0 tutors during our workshop were assigned the task of teaching the two tools which they were responsible for at our staff development to the students during this enrichment time. Our media specialist designated our laptop carts for these teachers during this time and gave them priority to the computer labs as well so that these classes had constant access to the Internet and computer use. She also provided the students who did not have an outside email address, with the county issued email each student receive when entering a school in our county in case certain sites required an active email to sign up. These enrichment cycles allowed the two teachers at each grade level to see and teach each student the tools we had discussed at our workshop. By the end of the year, every student in each grade was taught and had experience with the four Web 2.0 tools that the next year’s teachers, as well as their current teachers, desired them to know. In doing this, most of the classroom teachers did not have to waste their classroom time explaining and showing students how to use these tools during their class time and missing out on precious instructional time. The feedback we received was that of gratitude and excitement as teachers at each grade level now had the ability to use these tools in their classroom as much as they desired. We have planned for a review of this process at the end of the year during one of our last staff developments to determine how teachers viewed this process, if there are any suggestions or criticism and how we can make this a process to continue for next school year.

In thinking about this seemingly daunting task with which I have chosen to partake in, I never once considered the work that I was doing as an example of leadership. I envisioned feeling the way William Gaudelli (2003) felt when he said, “Professional development helped me feel intellectually alive and connected to my colleagues beyond my school, which allowed some of my students to catch my contagious enthusiasm for ideas” (p. 140). It may seem like I am downplaying the role I am in, however, when it comes down to working on and being involved in something with which I enjoy, it feels as if it is an obligation I have to others as opposed to being viewed as a leader. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) put it best by saying “teacher leaders realize that they can use their learning not only to impact their own situation but also to influence others toward improved practices” (p. 115). The use of technology excites me and this emotion is translated to my students in their learning. It is an unbelievable part of my day when I get to show students, especially my seventh graders, how to use a new tool which leaves them excited to return the next day. If there is anything I can do to show my colleagues what I am doing to feel this way, I want to try to do so in any way I can. That is why I got involved and was thrilled to learn about other teachers who felt the same way I did. The fact that these teachers were already in the process of developing a way to show the rest of the staff their ideas added to my excitement and eagerness to get as involved as I could. The idea of using technology to improve my teaching was one thing, but showing and explaining this potential to other teachers and having them reach out to their students was my motivation.

After choosing this as my example for my leadership project, I decided to go back and revisit Katzenmeyer and Moller and their “philosophy of education” survey I took earlier in the year. I wanted to see if the results of my survey matched up with how I felt about why I chose to get involved in this project. Sure enough, I fell into the ‘progressive educator’ category which prompted me to review what that meant. I decided to look first at how a progressive educator was defined in terms of my students. According to Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009), a progressive educator is someone who “values students’ needs, respects all students’ cultures, and requires students to take an active role in the learning process” (p. 184). The use of the Web 2.0 tools in my classroom gives me an opportunity to hit on all three of these features in several different ways. First, I spend a lot of time getting to know my students and understanding how they best acquire information. Technology is quickly becoming a universal language amongst our students and we should not be resistant to this trend. Using technology, especially the Web 2.0 tools, speaks to all of our students in a way that is familiar to them and somewhat exciting. It provides them an opportunity to become active in the learning process by giving them the freedom to put their own style, something teachers often overlook, into the learning process so they can make sense of what it is we are teaching them in a way they know and understand. When I interviewed one of my students when they turned in a project about the samurai and ninja classes of feudal Japan using Xtranormal, a Web 2.0 tool, I was thrilled to learn that they picked up and understood the concepts we discussed in a way I knew they would remember. John M. stated, “I learned a lot about these guys from doing a project like this compared to what I would normally learn by taking notes and taking a test. This was fun and it didn’t feel like work to me. I liked that we could put our own things into this project as long as we followed the rubric” (personal communication, March 3, 2012). Students become interested in learning when you make learning interesting to them. By utilizing these tools and others like them, we tap into what our students like and what drives them. We do not limit their creativity which is a major component to the acquisition of knowledge. As Daniel Pink (2006) points out, “Learning is about memorizing isolated facts. It’s about connecting and manipulating them” (p. 193).

The other component of the survey I decided to look at was how Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) defined a progressive educators ‘teacher role’. Progress teachers possess certain qualities such as being an organizer, guiding the learning process, providing real-life applications and helping students work cooperatively (p. 184). In volunteering to participate in this workshop, I believe I showed these specific traits to not only my students, but to my colleagues as well. As Barth (2001) states, “you can’t lead where you won’t go” (p. 27). In stepping up and taking on a leadership role during this process, I helped to guide the learning process for both students and staff. I presented both groups a new way to approach teaching and learning that allows for growth in an innovative fashion. Barth (2001) points out that sometimes to “reflect on practice, we must observe practice” (p. 66). By showing our staff the options that are out there and the different ways to practice the art of teaching, we allowed them an opportunity to reflect on what it is they are currently doing and to analyze what is and is not effective. Our staff was able to observe the other presenters and myself and how we practice our craft, and subsequently their students were able to observe them. In an effort to collect some information about the effectiveness of our workshop, I talked to one of our sixth grade teachers to see how the use of these tools affected their classroom. Marissa Crowell has been a Language Arts teacher for eight years and seldom used technology in her classroom. After her students went through the enrichment tutorials this year and used some of the tools in her classroom, she told me, “This was a great way for us to bring in new ideas to our classrooms. I think a lot of teachers are reluctant to try something like this for fear of the unknown. We do not want to put ourselves out there if we do not know if this new idea is going to work or not, but the way you all handled it made us a little more reassured in ourselves and our students” (personal communication, April 11, 2012). Our staff was able to lead by example in showing their students new ways to learn, and in the process, allowed them to take ownership of the learning process. This workshop and these tools encouraged students to ask questions about their learning in a way they have never viewed school and learning before. Students began viewing learning in more real life ways through the use of these tools and the research that went into the process. As Gaudelli (2003) puts it, “A teacher needs to guide students based on their experiences toward new experiences, helping them to inquire about their world in meaningful ways” (p. 153). After finishing our unit on the African slave trade, I had my students complete a journal project using Penzu. I interviewed Laura A. at the conclusion of this project to get her perspective on how she felt about the project and what she had learned about the material. She stated, “I felt like I was one of those people who, a historian, who had to collect different information from different places in order to get the facts straight. I guess too in a way, I also felt like a journalist since I could put my own style into the writing and pretend as if I were the people who I was writing about” (personal communication, January 20, 2012). In getting my students to look at learning in real life ways, a historian, journalist, editor and even writer, they stopped thinking about how much of a burden the learning process was on them. They worked through the assignment because they wanted to make their work mean something to them and not just work for a particular grade.

It is moments where you see your students take away not just something that they learned, but something that they can use in their own time for their own purposes, that has been the most gratifying experience of this whole process. As teachers, we strive for those times where we can make our students excited about learning and eager to come back the next day. Adding to this, it is even more of a nostalgic feeling to get the people we work with excited to teach new things and ideas to their students that they may have been reluctant to try before. Teaching is not so much an individual practice anymore where we can just lock ourselves in our own rooms and isolate what we are doing from the rest of the school. It is a collaborative effort where we all work together and think as one to make the learning process active and exciting for all of our students. Through working on this project, I have seen just how successful I, and my colleagues, can be when we are willing to go where we thought we were not able to go before.

Annotated Bibliography

Barth, R. S. (2001). *Learning by heart*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

This book discusses numerous topics about teacher leadership and ways of how

teachers can show leadership in the classroom and school setting. We learn throughout about the importance of school reform and the vital role teachers can and should play in that process.

Given the extent of this project, the knowledge and confidence that Barth provides in this book

makes the reader excited about their profession and the idea of taking charge.

Crowell, M. (2012, April 11). Personal interview.

My interview with my teammate provided me with a lot of detail about how certain new

ideas can inspire change. Mrs. Crowell did not use much technology in her classroom for

a number of different reasons but found the positive results of its use throughout this process.

She kindly volunteered to be interviewed to let me in on her style of teaching her willingness to

try new ideas in the pursuit of enhancing her students learning.

Gaudelli, W. (2003). *World class: Teaching and learning in global times.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence

Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

Gaudelli takes this opportunity to discuss ways in which teachers can help their students become more globally aware. In a time where our students need to know about the world around them in order to make sound decisions and judgements, Gaudelli offers thought provoking questions for teachers to use in their classroom to try to garner these thoughts from their students. However, another component of this book does a nice job addressing the concerns and issues of handling certain situations in our classrooms. While mainly targeted to those teachers in the social studies curriculum, it is a book all teachers can use to expand their students sense of the world.

John M. (2012, March 3). Personal interview.

I chose to interview this student for a number of different reasons. The main ones, however, were largely due in part to his struggles this year on assessment, and his passion for technology (I have taken away some kind of electronic device from him more times than I can count.) John is a very bright student but lacks motivation when it comes to school. Through the use of the Web 2.0 tools, he was able to see a new side of learning that made him interested and motivated. He has steadily improved his grades and constantly asks what tool we will be using next!

Katzenmeyer, M., & Moller, G. (2009). *Awakening the sleeping giant, helping teachers develop as leaders*. Corwin Press.

This book takes a deep look into how and what teachers do become and maintain a

strong sense of leadership. The reader learns how interactions among different people in the

School setting can lead to leadership and how certain factors need to be addressed in order to

maintain a sense of leadership. On top of that, the authors suggest ways with which teachers

can utilize programs to ensure a continuing commitment to teacher leadership.

Laura A. (2012, Janurary 20). Personal interview.

I chose to interview Laura because she is a straight A student who is extremely artistic and talented. When I first started using the Web 2.0 tools in class, she was always the first to be completed with the assignment and I often used her work as an example of what the finished product should look like. Laura is naturally motivated to do well but through the use of these tools, takes her work to a whole new level and who takes away more than most students in regards to the content.

MacLean, M., & Mohr, M. (1999). *Teacher-researchers at work.* Berkeley, CA: National Writing

Project.

This is a book I used last semester during my Teachers as Researchers class that was quite helpful in giving me a sense of what it takes to get a true sense of my craft and my students. It provides details as to how teachers can look at what is they are teaching and investigate those ways of teaching to try to find ways to improve as well as new ideas we have never known about. It provides case studies of teachers who have gone through the process and offers detailed descriptions about how to conduct research on your own.

Lemke, C., & E. Coughlin. (1998). *Technology in American schools: 7 dimensions for gauging*

*process.* Retrieved from: <http://www.mff.org/pubs/ME158.pdf>

The Milken Exchange on Education Technology, aims to answer the question of “what will it take to transition schools to effectively use technology to improve student learning” (p. 2) in this article. The authors start by showing us statistics of technology use by students today and how that number has dramatically changed over the years. After some more background on why it is necessary to implement technology, we are introduced to the seven dimensions of schools that need to change. Throughout the remaining article, we are given examples of how these dimensions looked in schools now, and what they will need to look like in education tomorrow.

Pellegrino, J., & Quellmalz, E. (2010-11). Perspectives on the integration of technology and

assessment. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 43 (2), 119-134.

Pellegrino and Quellmalz’s article looks at both large-scale and classroom-based technology assessments and how they integrate knowledge, critical thinking and problem solving. They provide numerous examples of how students apply technology in both cases as well as data that supports its effectiveness. The article then goes on to discuss the use of multi-level assessment system’s which looks to align school-based assessments with district and state level assessments too. Given the fact that the large-scale assessments already depend on some type of technology already, the author’s challenge why so many people are still hesitant to allow the change. They contend, “it appears clear that advances in technology will continue to impact the world of education in powerful and provocative ways” (p. 131).

Pink, D. H. (2006). *A whole new mind, why right-brainers will rule the future*. New York:

Riverhead Trade.

Pink’s book takes a look at how people who use the right-side of their brain have a different approach to situations. As teachers, we tap into this side of our brain to try to drive our students to become more creative and use what interests them to apply ways of learning the material being covered. It is very interesting to see the different scenarios and suggestions Pink makes as to how employers, teachers and people in general can utilize the side of the brain seldom overlooked to view and create a new understanding of the future.