October 26, 2023

Dear Superintendent, Technology Integration Department, Director of Innovation and Blended Learning, and Principals of Gilbert Willie Sr. Elementary,

What do you think of when I write the words blended learning? Perhaps, the first few words that come to mind would be technology, 1-1 devices, or student ownership. But, where is the preparation for blended learning? What is the prerequisite? Think of the comparison between reading comprehension and blended learning. In order for students to master reading comprehension they must first master phonological awareness, print awareness, and phonics. In order to master blended learning students must receive the prerequisite of digital literacy (Tang et al., 2015). Now, more than ever post COVID era, students need assistance to understand technology for effective learning practices (Tang et al., 2016).

I would like to propose an innovative instructional plan for digital literacy in grades K-3 within our campus to foster the growth of student ownership and digital safety that will lead to effective and efficient blended learning environments as students transition through their academic careers in our school district.

I am proposing to pilot Digital Literacy Instruction (DLI) in which:

- K-3 teachers within our campus have the choice to apply, and from the application pool, two teachers from each grade level are chosen.

- K-3 teachers will receive modeled digital literacy instruction (DLI) and digital safety practice, and, as a result, K-3 teachers will be equipped to teach digital literacy instruction (DLI) and digital safety in their classrooms that they, too, will pilot, test, and share with their grade level staff members.

- K-3 teachers will inevitably build a technology community within our district that fosters professional development (Cifuentes et al., 2011), creation, and collaboration over the next 12 months.

- K-3 students will adopt a COVA (choice, ownership, voice, and authentic opportunity) approach to digital literacy (Harapnuik, 2018) by having a choice in digital tools, owning their engagement with learning, using voice to express what works and does not work, and authentic opportunity to experiment with new digital literacy skills.

The instruction will be designed to educate our K-3 teachers to learn how digital literacy instruction can foster a successful blended learning environment, how digital literacy increases student ownership, and, lastly, how it makes teaching more effortless and efficient. When teachers utilize digital literacy practices it's important to remember that there will be a switchover from teacher-led to student-led during this process and that once student's begin to engage with digital literacy skills they'll find enjoyment and motivation from authentic learning experiences (Harapnuik, 2015).

Furthermore, the instruction will also foster a COVA approach as adopted by Dr. Harapnuik, in which students through digital literacy instruction, will experience the ability to have choice, ownership of learning, voice in learning, and authentic opportunities to apply their newly learned literacy (Harapnuik, 2018). Get better every day and reach toward our common goal as a team–these are the things that our tigers value. If we want our students to model this, our teachers must model it first. Therefore, I believe that Digital Literacy Instruction (DLI) will be our solution to technology illiteracy.

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Again, the proposed innovative plan will have a projected timeline of 12 months.
During the 12 month timeline I will be conducting research through literature reviews,
collecting data from K-3 teachers within our campus who apply to pilot the innovative
instructional plan and sharing my data of the results with administration periodically. I
am asking for your support, patience, and feed forward while I trial through successes
and improvements to make the student's learning experience towards digital literacy the
most effective as well as creating a plan that works for our teachers. I hope you see the
vision of digital literacy being a prerequisite and have faith that with my passion we can
create an effective blended learning environment for our students at Gilbert Willie Sr.
Elementary.

Sincerely,

Sara-Ann Heinsohn

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