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Reflection
MEDT 8462

When completing the needs assessment and technology plan, the biggest take away I've learned is how much a pandemic complicates things. For my needs assessment, I really thought that I started early enough, with my surveys going out at the end of January. I had my necessary 10 responses within 24 hours, which I found heartening since my entire school only has 25 staff members. I followed up with those who indicated they would be willing to complete an interview. I tried to schedule Google Meets (since we were working from home at the time), but that didn't work, so eventually I just emailed my list of interview questions. I received one response by the time the needs assessment was due. I received another completed interview the Monday after the needs assessment was turned in, and my admin completed one about a week ago. I fully believe that had we not all been working from home and overwhelmed by teaching virtually I would have gotten my five interviews, if not more, because we are such a close-knit staff and willing to help each other out. With such little data, it was somewhat difficult to tease out definite needs, but I still enjoyed the challenge and felt like I identified true areas of needs.

Looking back, I wish I had done my initial survey differently. As I noted in my needs assessment, I focused too much on hardware and not enough on integration. I wish I had been able to steer more towards the KSA of using technology with 21st century learners and how it changes teaching, to see which people were in the substitution/augmentation category and which were engaging in modification and redefinition. Furthermore -- and I kick myself for not including this -- I asked the question "What limits your use of technology" and included "Inability to access online tools" as an option, but then didn't ask for/include a space for respondents to list examples of tools they wish they could be using. This information would have been incredibly useful when writing up my technology plan, especially in terms of my proposed

budget. One of my identified needs was better access to online sites/tools, and one of the identified solutions was using budget or grant money to purchase subscriptions/licenses. However, since I didn't know exactly what sites people wanted access to, I went with some of the most popular that I've heard people discuss, and contacted those companies for quotes. Furthermore, I didn't know how many people would want to use those sites, so my proposed budget was very general. For example, with Flocabulary.com, teacher access is \$96 a year and \$2 per student, but how many teachers would want access? Brainpop.com has a school license for \$1,695 a year that would cover all teachers and students, but would that be cost effective if only two or three teachers would reliably use it?

Throughout the whole process, it really made me wish we had more access to an educational technologist and/or a media center specialist. The two needs I identified were very realistic and really should be pursued, but I'm a full-time teacher and we don't even get planning periods or student-free lunch periods, so anything I did would have to be outside of working hours (developing material, etc.) and/or impact my own students' learning, like if I offered a training session during the day.

In order for technology to be used to its full ability and be impactful upon student learning, school leadership must engage in needs assessments to identify what is lacking. One can't fix a need, a lack, a gap, unless one is aware that it's there. A prime example would be the purchase of the touch screen TVs for my school. The technology was acquired without any input from staff (we actually requested electric pencil sharpeners) and then there was no follow-up on how to use and integrate them. That's thousands of dollars of equipment, and for the most part teachers use them to show movies, even though we already have projectors and sound systems in the room. If a school has an unlimited budget and endless amounts of time, they can take a more

haphazard, slapdash approach to integrating technology, but for the most of us, we need to be focused and fix what needs fixing.