

Mentorship Notes

Email: 3.14 – 3.21

Mr. Matthews,

Hello! I'm Libby King, and I was paired with you for my West GA distance education project. I look forward to working with you, and this will be a great chance for me to review my physics knowledge.

Hope you are having a good week!

Let me know what you need me to do for you. I really haven't been told much of anything except that you guys are going to be in the classes.

Mark Matthews

I don't have a ton of information on my end either as of yet, but what I'm going to start with is taking a closer look at your course and generate a list of questions. After that I hope we can schedule a meeting (using the medium of your choice!) to discuss.

One question I already have (although I may find the answer after I read all of your course documentation) is how students complete the labs. Looking at your schedule, I remember doing circuitry labs and I don't think I could do them at home. Do students have a F2F lab component?

Thank you!

No they have access to lab simulation websites

How cool!

Are you available to talk sometime during the week of March 18 - 22? I'm not sure if you were told this, but I'm supposed to "meet" with my mentor 4 times.

Also, I realized that I never told you anything of my background. I graduated from Wesleyan college with bachelors in English and biology/pre-med. I went on to earn my masters in public health. While earning that degree I worked in a hospital's learning annex as an audio-visual/IT person. After I finished my MPH internship I realized that I liked educational technology more than public health, so I began working as an AV/IT specialist at the Atlanta Speech School. While there I became really interested in technology professional development and technology integration. Two years ago I started my M.Ed in media/instructional technology at West Georgia, and I hope to someday work as a fulltime technology integration specialist. A few months ago I decided to become a full-time stay at home parent to my one year old, so I am not working in a school at present.

Thanks!

We can set up a chat session in the Adobe Classroom if you want, or you can call. Whichever you would rather do.

Mr. Matthews,

I hope my previous email went through -- I think UWG is having issues with its mail server. I'm not sure if this will reach you in time to set up a meeting for this week, but Adobe classroom works for me.

*We can try tomorrow - I have a 9:00 and 10:00 review session with my students tomorrow, so maybe about 10:45 at the following link <http://impactacademy.adobeconnect.com/r4p4gzjngcn/>
We may still be finishing up.*

Meeting 1

**3.22.2013, around 11am
(Adobe Connect Classroom)**

Notes:

(Original notes)

Justin sent an email asking for volunteer, that's how he signed up to mentor PhET online lab simulator, check it out
Started with Henry Co, credit recovery, test scores came back positive, development work for the state

Two distinct groups online, some kids flourish, some kids trying to just get out of going to school, 80s or 90s, or 10 and 15

Lots of freedom teaching online, schedule day however he wants it, be anywhere in the country, flexibility, spend more parts of the day dealing with students, students calling at weird hours, takes more time building rapport with kids

Some kids will always need brick and mortar, see more and more blending,

Kids can spend more time doing what they need to do, go in more for what they need (like they get physical education, but has to go in for more math help)

Not so much flipping, but lot more flexibility, more kids will take courses online

Some counties giving up on foreign language, so kids go to Ga virtual

Teaches AP physics for the state, calc based almost not offered anywhere else.

Different set of skills, some people have gone online and not liked it (long time to develop courses, so don't like teaching other people's courses) problem with technological skills, mastering adobe) Having taught before helps, but don't have to.

Ga virtual – he built some courses, added stuff (state requires one discussion per module)

To be happy as online teacher, have to like to interact via words

Worked on development for some of his courses, Ga virtual more picky about adding or taking away, Impact they can do more what they want – have added more labs (don't have to worry about the funding)

Ga Virtual – D2L

Henry Co night school – uses Angel

Impact – Gradpoint

Angel is easiest, specialist has to convert for D2L (best for teacher), Brainhoney (too many bells and whistles, can't turn things off)

(Expanded notes)

How did you become involved in the mentorship program?

Justin Castile sent an email asking for volunteers

How do students perform labs without a F2F component? Do you feel this is just as good as students physically performing the labs with an instructor?

Students use the PhET online lab simulator, and yes.

Why did you decide to start teaching distance ed? Prior to that, how many years were you in a classroom?

Started with Henry County, working with students who needed credit recovery, the test scores came back positive, so he then started to do some development work for the state.

Where do you see the future of distance education?

Some kids will always need brick and mortar, but we will see more and more blending.

Kids can spend more time doing what they need to do, go in more for what they need (like they get physical education, but has to go in for more math help)

He does expect to see much flipping, but hopes to see a lot more flexibility and more kids taking courses online. For example, some counties no longer offer foreign language, so kids go to GAVS. Personally, he teaches AP physics calculus-based for the state, which is almost not offered anywhere else.

From your observation, do students perform just as well or better in an online environment?

There are two distinct groups online, some kids flourish, some kids trying to just get out of going to school. Students tend to make 80s or 90s, or 10 and 15.

What are the best and worst parts about teaching online?

Lots of freedom teaching online, and he schedule day however he wants it, and be anywhere in the country. There is greater flexibility and he can spend more parts of the day dealing with students. The downfalls are students calling at weird hours and it takes more time building rapport with the kids. To be happy as an online teacher, teachers have to like to interact via words.

Do you think teachers need any special training to teach online, or is classroom experience enough?

It requires a different set of skills. Some people have gone online and not liked it (long time to develop courses, so don't like teaching other people's course, problems with technological skills, mastering Adobe Connect). Having taught in a classroom before helps, but he doesn't think it is necessary.

Did you receive any professional development to teach online?

No

How did you develop your course?

For his GAVS classes, he built some courses and added material. The state requires one discussion per module.

How do you feel about the LMS used? What would you change?

He has worked on development for some of his courses. GAVS is pickier about adding or taking away. At Impact they can do more what they want and he added more labs. A benefit is that he doesn't have to worry about the funding.

GAVS uses D2L, Henry County night school uses Angel, and Impact uses Gradpoint. Angel is the easiest to use for students. For D2L technology specialist has to convert new material, but it is the best for teacher. He has also used Brainhoney, but it has too many bells and whistles, and options can't be turned off.

Email: 3.25 – 3.28

I saw that you are on spring break this week. Are you able to meet, or should we wait until next week? Thanks!

We are on spring break next week. Do you want to meet Wednesday after my sessions - that would be about 11:00 in the same room as last time.

I hope I didn't miss you!

No, my modem died and I had to go to the store to get a new one. Now the new one won't hook up. I'm on my iPhone hotspot trying to get work done. We may have to schedule for Friday around lunch since my modem isn't supposed to be fixed until then.

That should work. I won't have access to a babysitter on Friday, but my son normally naps between 12 and 1.

Not sure what is happening tomorrow between 12 and 1 - do you just want to call? 770-XXX-XXXX.

Meeting 2

**3.29.2013, around 1pm
(Phone call)**

Notes:

(original notes)

fvs collaboration working with other ppl, physical science as doesn't later if only having small number of students
send emails letters and call to parents to catch up
get feedback in beginning about discussion
harder to communicate with kids using imoact platform, lms have let them know
have to respond twice
discussion responses are comparable to what ppl would say in class

honors kids take over might not be willing to speak up in regular class
look in pacing guide for adobe
physical science one, attendance
links at the end of each module, same link everytime

(expanded notes)

What is the collaboration component in chemistry?

The students work with other people. The physical science class generally has the same, but doesn't if there are only a small number of students in class.

With the students who are really failing right now (like under 10%), what can you do with those students?

He sends emails to the student and parents, letters to the parent, and calls the parents to try and get the student to catch up.

For the discussion questions, do students have any guidelines for what constitutes a good discussion response?

There are guidelines at the start of the year and students get feedback on their posts in the beginning.

Do you participate in discussions?

It's harder to communicate with students using the Impact LMS because of the way the LMS handles posts on the instructor side (harder to tell what he's already read).

Are the discussion responses about the same as to what students would say in a face-to-face class?

Student responses are comparable. Sometimes the honor's students tend to take over the discussion posts, but in a regular class they might never speak up.

The last part was just a reminder for myself on when and where Adobe Connect sessions would be held.

Email: 4.9 – 4.10

Just double checking -- you're having a review session at 10 this Thursday?

Physical Science is scheduled for 10:15

Meeting 3

**4.11.2013, around 10:15am
(Adobe Connect Classroom)**

Notes:

(expanded notes)

I participated in a review session via Adobe Connect, which had a PowerPoint for students to download. He started the session with a reminder to turn in material for grading.

No one showed up for the review session – does that happen frequently?

Very common

Can you tell if students view it?

Students are given bonus points if they turn in notes about the session. They are given a week to turn it in. About 60% of students do so.

The PowerPoints he uses are modified from the face-to-face classes he used to teach.

Does Impact dictate that you have to have review sessions?

No, teachers only have to do module reviews, but it makes more sense to have a weekly session. GAVS requires it. At first no one was doing it weekly, but they evolved into doing it.

Are there any mandates as to how many interactions you have with students?

There are only a few teachers at Impact, so they make up policies as they go, such as setting office hours and determining how often they (teachers) have to be there. The Impact staff will soon increase since the number of students will more than double based on applications they have received.

Are your students all totally online, or are some of them in hybrid?

None are blended learning. Some are somewhat hybrid in terms of coming in for math tutoring. If students are failing they are supposed to come in.

What do you think about cheating – is it more or less prevalent?

He doesn't think they cheat more. In the English classes teachers run papers through search engines, and it's easier than in face-to-face because the material is already all electronic (compared to having to search using a handwritten paper). They do catch kids turning in the same work, especially if there are more than one kid in the family. Highly motivated kids aren't going to cheat, and the highly unmotivated the ones don't care enough to cheat. He doesn't mind if students work together, as long as they don't turn the same thing in.

Do students take their tests open book?

When tests pop up it locks the rest of the computer so they can't search, although they could pull out an iPhone, but it's pretty easy to figure out who cheated.

Do students use any 2.0 tools?

Everything is built into the course. They don't want kids to have to learn anything to use the course and don't want them to get bogged down in the technology. Complaint – even the emails are external. He believes the point of online learning is not to be tech savvy. Students in general shouldn't have to learn other software, just need to be able to use a computer. Distance education is just a different way of learning.

Do you think over time teachers will begin to design their own courses from scratch? Design is so labor intensive, so there might be more and more taking other peoples' courses (such as FLVS) and modifying it. That way they have a pile of resources to work with. It takes months and months to put courses together.

Email: 4.15 – 4.18

Can I please have the link for the Thursday session? It's at 10:15?
Thanks!

We won't be having the Physical Science Session this week due to CRCTs - do you want to come to the earlier session for Chem or Biology?

Either works for me if you'll just let me know the time. Thanks!

I have a 9:00 Biology Session this morning, but usually there is nobody in that one. Chemistry is tomorrow, but there usually isn't anyone in that one either. Do you want to sit through a session, or just call me today?

I can call anytime you are free.

I'm in the office all day, but can take your call whenever.

Meeting 4
4.18.2013, around 1pm
(Phone call)

Notes:
(expanded notes)

What is your future as a distance educator? Do you want to continue teaching the classes you're teaching or move on to something else?

He is content with what he is doing and will continue to do it for another 5 years or so until he retires.

Do you think we'll see more and more students are going k-12 in distance education?
Yes. Impact is looking at middle school.

And these students will be ok socially?
Yes

(His phone was breaking up badly and he was in a rush, so the session was very short.)