Presented by LibraryLinkNJ, the New Jersey State Library and the New Jersey Library Association: Technology Speed Dating - Parsippany Public Library (1/15/13)

Panel Topic: Best Practices for Teaching Technology to Your Community of Users

Heidi Schwab (Heidi.Schwab@mainlib.org
Miriam Parkinson (mparkinson@fairlawnschools.org)
Doug Baldwin (Baldwin@cranburypubliclibrary.org)

Heidi (A Public Librarian's Perspective)

Preparation for classroom style classes

- Start with an **outline** of the class; Teaching a comprehensive class on Word can take 6 months, you might have one hour. You need to filter out what is the most important and basic steps.
- Give your class an appropriate **name**; I took a class once called Microsoft Word Intermediate but it was only about Mail Merge. If the class is about Mail Merge call it that.
- Create a 2-4 page **handout** with a class outline and details of exactly what will be covered and how to do it.
- Have an **assistant/helper** who help them and let the teacher know that everyone is up to speed or not.
- Find a **training room** with a computer for each student.
- Have a **Projector** for teacher's computer; makes teaching the class easier since you'll be able to demonstrate to everyone at once.
- Some sort of **pointer for the screen**; for the teacher to pinpoint where on the page the students should be looking

Approach

- Classes are open to everyone; keyboard skills are often a **pre-requisite** but it is impossible to control the tech experience of the students. .
- **Introduction**: Classes usually start 5 minutes late since stragglers cause disruptions. I introduce myself and my helper. I talk about what we will be learning today. Never take for granted that the students understand what they signed up for; "This is a class on Microsoft Word, which is part of Office, which is used to create documents, etc. "
- **Training Computers**: My colleague teaches seniors and likes to idiot proof the computers; which means programs are always easy to find on the start menu. I don't believe in doing this. Students need to be able to locate these programs on their own PC or Mac and know that different versions of the software exist
- **Rhythm of a class**: The classes usually last an hour. I try to stick to the outline on the handout. If the students are experienced or fast learners I go off course and add content; for a slow class I try to stick to it. For a mixed group I might ask people to stay later for help with their advanced questions.
- **Questions**: During the class I like to ask questions but never single any one out. I try to make jokes and always tell personal stories that put people at ease. There are times I am asked questions I do not know the answer to. Sometimes my helper knows and other times I say we can figure it out after class or I'll figure it out and email the answer.
- **Terminology**: Explain all the terminology and concepts you introduce. Use words students will know like Apple computers, Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, etc. Avoid words they might not know.
- **Problems**: One big problem I always have is the premature clickers. I always have to say "Don't click yet, watch me." I find this so important but it is controversial; some people get insulted.
- **Wrapping up the class**: At the end of class I always reiterate what we covered in the class and tell them about the future; how this software is changing.

Teaching by Email

Teaching someone through email is very much like the old saying about giving a hungry man a fish or teaching him how to fish for himself. People email me Overdrive problems; Sometimes they're passed to Overdrive and sometimes I help them. Since this is not my only job, time is of the essence. On my computer I keep organized folders of instructional documents. After I narrow down their problem, I send off the corresponding document.

Being Courteous: With email learning the back and forth communication is slow. To save time it's critical to have as much information as possible in the original email. Instead of a link that opens an email form, using a link that opens a web form works really well. Users have to fill in all the necessary information that you need to solve the problem. Since there is no human contact with email help, it is very important to be **courteous**. Say you are sorry for the delay, etc. A little goes a long way with putting at people at ease.

Instructions can come in many forms:

- *Self-made Self-help videos or tutorials*
- *Links to YouTube videos or websites with links*
- *PDF or Word documents with photos and arrows*
- *Written instructions that you make yourself*

Doug (Other Best Practices and Suggestions)

- Use "real world" analogies to help explain complex technologies and systems in an easy to understand context
- Using step-by-step instructions on handouts allowing students to replicate what they learned in class

- Always leave time at the end for Q&A (or build Q&A moments into the class to reinforce complex/difficult concepts
- Take the time to breakdown 'concepts' before moving forward with the more practical steps in a lesson
- For mobile device instruction, I strongly recommend students they bring their own personal devices
- If certain students stray the class off-topic, attempt to use their own conversation to steer the class back on topic

For one-on-one sessions:

- Set clear boundaries for your one-on-one program (time/date; appointment requirements vs. drop in times; specific topics of inclusion for the one-on one program)
- Have them bring their own devices/laptops/devices to the session
- Immediately establish their specific interest/need either at the appointment stage, or during the first five minutes of the session.
- Do not be afraid to work "with" students/patrons in finding solutions together when you are unsure.
- Keep to your established time, and offer a follow-up appointment or drop –in time if the issues cannot be resolved within the given time allotted.

Miriam (A School Librarian's Point of View)

General Philosophy: Teaching technology is like teaching other instructional areas you have covered with students whether it is literature appreciation, story elements, catalog instruction or research skills. Teaching or instruction requires relevance. I don't recommend teaching technology in and of itself any more than I do with catalog or research skill instruction. It cannot be in a vacuum. It should have relevance to the learner's life in some way. In setting your goals and objectives, you need to consider what is important to your learners in planning, what you want them to be able to do at the end of your instruction, and how likely they will be to use the technology again.

Planning: It is important to know your audience, your patrons. In a school setting, a key group of patrons are your teachers. Your teachers provide the access to another key group, your students. Working with your teachers allows you to understand not only their goals and objectives but the educational objectives they have for the students. In addition, it is important to understand the students' goals and objectives they have for themselves as well as the educational objectives that are set for them. The technology instruction you offer should assist in reaching these goals and objectives. You want to select the technology that will accomplish that. Consider using:

- AASL Best Websites for Teaching and Learning which is aligned with their
- Standards for the 21st Century Learning

Learn and teach technologies that provide benefits to your learners. Other sources to consider are

- Common Core State Standards
- Framework for 21st Century Learning - The Partnership for 21st Century Skills

Stay in close contact with the teacher as you plan your lesson.

Teaching the class: Before the class, review your lesson plan with the teacher. It is always a good idea to double check your equipment and the online sources you plan to use for the class in advance. I recommend a hands on approach so each student can work through each step. Whenever possible, I provide a website which contains the essentials of the information presented in class along with links to the databases and websites used. I also find it helpful to shorten the url of any webpage I create. In addition, I also try to account for different ability levels and allow for peer tutoring. In working with middle and high school students as well as adults, it is useful to state what the goal of the class is at the beginning and at various points during the class such as "at the end of this class, you will have . . . " It keeps you and your learners on task. Examples of these goals are:

- sent an email
- setup email forwarding
- created a document, named it and shared it with your teacher and group members in Google Drive
- located and printed 2 relevant journal articles from the databases we have worked with in class
- recorded 15 facts in note form in your document using the magazine article you selected
- created an online quiz using Google Form

The following are some web sites or Online Assignment Guides I have created for my high school students:

- Brain Project
- The Enlightenment Salon
- Animal Farm and Events in the Middle East
- Muckrakers