# 10-Year Learning Journal/Reflection

By Janine Lim, May 2009

The purpose of this artifact in my portfolio is to show that I am constantly learning new tools, resources, and skills in order to effectively support and promote technology integration in the schools I serve in Berrien and Cass counties.

The core of my learning is based on a constructivist philosophy (DeLay, 1996). Whether learning from a seminar, conference, or by researching online or networking with peers online, new knowledge is acquired so that something new can be constructed: workshops, seminars, online courses, resources, and support tools. My learning includes experiencing new tools and technologies and making connections to curriculum and pedagogy to translate into practical educational technology applications for teachers. I take responsibility for my own learning, and am actively involved in understanding and applying new knowledge.

All of this constructing is generally done socially (Vygotsky, 1978) and usually situated (Lave & Wenger, 2005): in conversation with my peers whether in the office, in the school districts, in my workshops, or scattered around the globe connected via the Internet, videoconferencing, and conferences. Collaboration with capable peers helps me learn within my zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). The zone of proximal development is the space between completing something on my own; and doing it with help. Much of my learning and growth in training and professional development has occurred through team-teaching and observing other expert peers. Within the videoconference community, I have learned "out loud" on my blog, with insights and tips shared by others in the community. My learning has been situated within a community of videoconferencing educators, mentored by others in offering different types of programs (Lave & Wenger, 2005).

My learning journal also reflects my Learner strength (Rath, 2007). The constant learning in the educational technology field is gratifying to me. I love to figure out new concepts and strategies that I can share with the teachers in our service area. I am not usually threatened by unfamiliar information and so my position as an instructional technology consultant is well suited to my Learning strength. Rath (2007) suggests that Learners should be in consulting roles where they can pick up new competencies quickly. I have a need for competency, as do other learners (Rath, 2007), and throughout this learning journey, you can see the growth to be a leader in the world of videoconferencing. My learning journey will continue as I apply new concepts, theories, and strategies to my work and my leadership in the videoconferencing world.

# 1999-2000 School Year

- Attended a workshop on WebCT, a course management tool, which was the beginning of my online teaching.
- Used the new found WebCT knowledge and my workshop resources to design my first online class in the fall: Internet in the Curriculum. In the spring of 2000, this was followed by the Creating WebQuests course, which won the WebCT award. I learned about WebQuests online and in live chats with TappedIn and at conferences.
- In the fall of 2000, we brought in two expert speakers, Tammy Worcester and Tom Snyder Productions, which increased my knowledge of technology integration and workshop design.
- January 27 I learned about instructional strategies for videoconferencing from an invited presenter.
- In February I attended Polycom and PictureTel training to learn the technical aspects of videoconferencing.
- In the winter of 2000, I learned Filemaker Pro, database software, and how databases work by reading the manual. I made our videoconference content provider database and our videoconferencing scheduling database.
- May 22-23, 2000, I attended facilitation training, which increased my workshop presentation/facilitation skills.
- In the summer of 2000, I attended two conferences on distance ed and online learning which solidified my understanding of how to teach online.

## 2000-2001 School Year

- During this school year, I polished and perfected the social constructivist format used for all my online classes since then. Each week has two discussions focused on readings and application of knowledge.
- This summer was the first time I attended the National Educational Computing Conference (NECC), and began to expand my learning network nationally.
- I also attended another distance education conference.
- I was invited this summer to be a facilitator for the Michigan Ameritech Technology Academy. I was exposed to the workshop styles of top trainers across Michigan and learned with and from them on best training practice.

## 2001-2002 School Year

- This year Kevin Clark, a colleague, and I started a new program where we took laptops out to a school for a week and did model lessons in all the school classrooms for a week. It was called TIME – Technology Integration Modeling Experience. We learned with the teachers as we co-created lessons that matched their current curriculum.
- This year I also started the Read Across America matching videoconferencing project with Sue Porter. We began a several year process of learning the best way to match classrooms together to celebrate reading via videoconference.
- By watching best practice from the Center of Science and Industry in Columbus, OH, I earned how to facilitate a multipoint videoconference. Based on that

knowledge and a project by LearningSpace, I worked with our social studies consultant to design MysteryQuest World, a multipoint geography game that is still popular today.

- This year began my first experience serving on the board of state level professional organizations. I served on the board of the Michigan Association of Computer Users in Learning (MACUL). I learned how to chair a committee and how to work with others to achieve common goals.
- Sue Porter and I, under the guidance of our REMC (Regional Educational Media Center) directors, started a new professional organization in Michigan for videoconferencing: Two Way Interactive Connections in Education (TWICE). I began learning about by-laws, policies, and procedures.
- Another year of the ATA Technology Academy continued my exposure and learning from other excellent technology trainers.

## 2002-2003 School Year

- As featured speaker's chair for MACUL, I learned how to interact with, choose, support, and communicate with featured speakers. As part of my duties, I attended the California Computer Using Educators conference to research and select featured speakers for the MACUL conference.
- During this school year, Berrien County Intermediate School District (now Regional Education Service Agency) was awarded a grant to put 3000 handhelds in the hands of $7^{th}$ grade students across the county. I had to quickly learn how to integrate Palms in the curriculum and provide weekly training to the three schools I was assigned to support. I attended training on handhelds during January; a Handheld Conference, January 28, 2003; and Palm Curriculum Integration Training, February 5, 2003.

## 2003-2004 School Year

- Two colleagues at Macomb ISD, Arnie Comer and Jim Wenzloff, taught me about the ASK (Author Specialist Knowledge) videoconference literature based program with authors & specialists. I learned how to run ASK programs and how to train my teachers.
- I continued to learn and expand our distance learning program.
- In the summer of 2004, I learned about Simple Updates, a content management system that is a database way to create websites instead of HTML/Dreamweaver etc. I learned it on my own by exploration, trial and error.
- In the summer of 2004, I learned Desire2Learn for AVLN and created a set of mini 1 week courses on how to use the features blended with best practice in online learning.

## 2004-2005 School Year

- I learned how to correlate the Michigan Grade Level Content Expectations to videoconference programs to make recommended grade level guides to videoconferencing.
- Added the equipment verification process to TWICE's Read Across America event and started learning about all the different ways that schools connect via videoconferencing. Used that knowledge to set up a system to match schools based on their equipment connection type.
- After learning about groups consisting of people at two difference locations at a conference, I wanted to try it out in my own workshop. In a workshop with colleagues and Texas, we tried out our first groups across two sites trading off meeting daily by videoconference or chat. This was the beginning of the "123 VC: Jazzing Up Your Curriculum with Videoconferencing" workshop.
- Applied my understanding of online environments to coordinate and online conference for the Adventist Virtual Learning Network (AVLN).
- After being inspired in a visit to Mexico, I took a Spanish for Educators offered by Berrien County ISD.
- Collected knowledge to create a distance learning coordinator's manual for my schools.
- In the spring of 2005, we switched from ISDN videoconferencing to IP videoconferencing. I learned all the new Tandberg infrastructure: how to run the MCU/bridge, how to use the gateway, gatekeeper and Tandberg Management Suite. This learning continues as upgrades come and I learn how to connect it to the various kinds of equipment in K12 education.
- Polycom approached Berrien County ISD to sponsor our videoconference database. I learned how to hire, train and deal with a student worker in keeping the database up to date.
- In March 2005, I learned about blogs and Web 2.0 from Kevin Clark, my colleague. I started blogging about videoconferencing, since no one else was recording good ideas. Here my Input strength surfaces (QUOTE) as I use my blog to document my own learning to share with others. I also started reading blogs of education technology experts and other educators. This was the beginning of my PLN (personal learning network) of educators and experts around the globe. The social constructivism bent to my learning strengthens.

# 2005-2006 School Year

- This school year I learned how to write a grant and actually get it, after several previous attempts. I wrote and received the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grant for 2006-2009. The spring of the school year was spent learning and planning for implementation the summer of 2006.
- I learned about wikis, collaborative writing websites. I made one for the collaborative projects I make teachers write in my classes: collaborativevcs.pbwiki.com to save me time on posting their projects online.
- Fall of 2005 I attended a 3 day workshop on Marzano's Classroom Instruction That Works instructional strategies.

- Fall of 2005 I started building a network of people across the United States to help us with verification for Read Across America, and piloted the project internationally with colleagues from Alberta, Canada and the United Kingdom.
- I learned more about Web 2.0 tools at the Connecting and Collaborating Conference, May 5, 2006.
- I learned more about the technical side of videoconferencing in a workshop called Understanding and Troubleshooting Videoconference Networks, May 24-25, 2006. I was surprised by how much I understood from the workshop. I underestimated my prior knowledge and experience.

# 2006-2007 School Year

- In the summer and fall of 2006, worked with a programmer to try to design a database to match for Read Around the Planet (new name of Read Across America). Struggled with how to communicate and interact with a programmer.
- In early 2007, TWICE decided to switch programmers to have long-term support. Learned how to communicate with the new programmer.
- Roxanne Glaser, Region 12 Education Service Agency, TX, taught me about GoogleDocs when we started doing workshops with our schools connected together. We used GoogleDocs in the Jazz workshop for the first time, the summer of 2007.
- Learned about online photo sharing and how it could be used in training from Roxanne in the Jazz workshop the summer of 2007.

# 2007-2008 School Year

- Attended the Internet2 Site Coordinator Training, August 16, 2007 and increased my knowledge of the technical aspects of supporting videoconferencing.
- At the MACUL conference 2008, I learned about Universal Design for Learning and how technology supports it. I also attended a workshop to learn tricks for Photoshop Elements.
- After getting frustrated with dialing problems in K12 videoconferencing, I invited 3 or 4 close colleagues with different kinds of videoconferencing equipment to participate in a "VC Dialing Day" where we tested all the different ways to connect and noted our learning on a wiki so we could easily access later.

# 2008-2009 School Year

- Upgraded my videoconference scheduling database from Filemaker Pro version 6 to version 10 and learned some XSLT and XML as the way to format the web interface to the Filemaker Pro databases. This required much Google searching, reading forums, and investigating to learn the features that I needed. In addition, I upgraded the Berrien RESA professional development catalog and REMC videos and kits catalog from Filemaker Pro version 4 to version 10. These projects had a steep learning curve.

- In August 2008, I was encouraged to join Twitter, a microblogging service. Throughout the school year as I learned how to use it and talked to my distance colleagues, I realized that we were building a stream-of-consciousness learning with Jazz facilitators "thinking together". http://vcoutonalim.org/2008/11/26/web-20-as-the-vehicle-of-community-for-jazz/
- After years of running my own MysteryQuests, learned some new best practices from those who had created similar projects based on my work. Started using more visuals to give instructions.
- After watching others use a wiki to support collaborative videoconference projects, I tried the first time using a wiki to schedule videoconferences in the pilot of We the Kids fall 2008.

# Learning Continues with my PLN

My specific field is educational technology, but the wider field is K12 teaching and learning. Learning in educational technology has taken a huge turn in the last 5 years. With the advent of Web 2.0, social networking, blogs, wikis, collaborative tools such as GoogleDocs, people are starting to use an intriguing term - PLN - personal learning network. A PLN is a network of people around the work from which you learn via Web 2.0 technologies. My PLN includes reading a collection of almost 100 blogs in my RSS reader, 5-6 educational technology blogs, subscribing to a small cadre of close videoconferencing colleagues on Twitter, communicating daily with VC buddies on Skype (about 6-8 main people), several email newsletters, and the people who comment on my blog. My PLN is at hand for learning, asking questions, giving tips, responding to questions.

In the Leadership program, my PLN includes the people in my classes, my faculty, and my regional group. Several of my leadership colleagues are available via email and Skype chat for when I get in need. I found this especially helpful during the statistics classes.

My learning is socially constructed (DeLay, 1996) and constantly changing. My knowledge and understanding of educational technology and how it can be used to benefit students constantly grows through interaction with my PLN (Lave & Wenger, 2005).

## References

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