The Technology Integration Outreach Project: Developing "Best Practices"
Curriculum Units

Mary Engstrom, Assistant Professor
LOFTI Coordinator
Division of Technology for Training and Development
School of Education
University of South Dakota
Vermillion, SD USA

Rosanne Yost, Associate Professor
PDC Director
Division of Technology for Training and Development
School of Education
University of South Dakota
Vermillion, SD USA

Ray Thompson, Professor
Division of Technology for Training and Development
School of Education
University of South Dakota
Vermillion, SD USA

Don Versteeg, Instructor
SILDL Coordinator
Division of Technology for Training and Development
School of Education
University of South Dakota
Vermillion, SD USA

Abstract
The Technology Integration Outreach Project (TIOP) is a joint project between the Southeast Interactive Long Distance Learning Consortium (SILDL), and University of South Dakota School of Education’s Professional Development Center (PDC) and it’s Learning Organizations for Technology Integration Project (LOFTI). Three outcomes guide the projects work: (1) develop partnerships with USD School of Education and K-12 schools; (2) create curriculum models of best practices in technology integration. (3) utilize distance technologies as a communication tool for professional development across the project. Three separate TIOP Projects have taken place. During the Spring Semester of 2001, the fall of 2001 and the spring of 2002 TIOP interdisciplinary teams were assembled and completed the development of best practices curriculum units with technology integration as a key element of the unit. About four-dozen teachers, faculty and pre-service teachers have participated in completing eight units. Experiences will be shared with text and video.

Introduction
The Technology Integration Outreach Project (TIOP) is a joint project between the Southeast Interactive Long Distance Learning Consortium (SILDL) the University of South Dakota School of Education LOFTI (Learning Organizations for Technology Integration) group and the Professional Development Center (PDC) in the USD School of education. Three outcomes guide the TIOP project: (1) develop partnerships with USD School of Education and K-12 schools; (2) create curriculum models of best practices in technology integration. (3) utilize distance technologies as a communication tool for professional development across the project.
Implementation

Teams of educators have worked together to develop technology enriched curriculum units to be used in their schools. The teams include two or more K-12 teachers from different content areas, one University of South Dakota School of Education faculty member, and two 3rd or 4th year pre-service teachers.

The teams attend five daylong workshop sessions where they work collaboratively to develop their curriculum units. While at the workshops the teams learn about: (1) assessment practices that support student-centered teaching and learning; (2) backwards curriculum design process; and (3) inquiry-based, constructivist theory of teaching and learning. In addition each team is supported with or has available to them: (1) Technology for Training and Development Division (TTD) faculty; (2) content experts from Arts and Science and/or Curriculum and Instruction; and (3) ongoing support to facilitate communication, site visits, and continued learning during the implementation and evaluation phases of the project. A daylong wrap-up session, in which teams share information about the unit implementation and participate in an Action Research process, concludes the project.

The workshops are spread out over a semester long period. Each team uses a video-conferencing system to communicate beyond the on-campus workshop sessions. K-12 teachers are provided with release time to attend the workshop sessions. Funds from a Department of Education TICG grant, the LOFTI project, are used to reimburse the cost of the substitutes. In addition, stipends are provided to all curriculum design team members.

All participant are expected to: (1) demonstrate a willingness to explore, learn and implement new and different teaching and learning strategies; (2) attend all workshops; (3) develop, in collaboration with others, a curriculum unit that incorporates the use of technology to be used in their classroom during the implementation period; (4) participate in project research and assessment activities; and (5) demonstrate a willingness to share their learning with other pre-service and practicing education professionals.

Project Results

Three separate cycles of TIOP projects have been completed over the past three semesters. The resulting “best practices” curriculum units, which incorporate technology integration to support learning for understanding, are implemented in the K-12 classrooms and are used as theory-to-practice examples in teacher education courses at USD. The teams meet on the USD campus and at a distance to collaborate in creating their instructional components. A total of eleven teams were assembled during the three project cycles. Approximately four-dozen teachers, faculty and pre-service teachers have participated in completing the eight instructional units. Most of the units include web sites incorporated into the instruction. A TIOP Project web site is used to disseminate information. The TIOP website also has a discussion board and links to best practices web sites.

As a result of the LOFTI project, the teacher education field experience program at USD is being revised to include more opportunities for pre-service students to work with use technology applications in K-12 classrooms throughout their program. Action Research findings indicated a need to involve school administrators in the TIOP project. By working with the curriculum design teams, administrators to will develop a better understanding of this conceptual framework and be in a better position to support their teachers’ efforts. In addition, their involvement affords us an opportunity to strengthen our partnerships and work collaboratively to create structures and practices that will impact student learning via technology integration in K-12 classrooms and in our teacher education program.