The Open Classroom
What is it? How is it working? What's up for Year #2?
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What is it?

The Open Classroom (OC) project provides an opportunity for Transitional ESOL High School teachers to observe a colleague modeling best practices and technology integration. Although the focus of the project is technology integration, lessons have also focused on techniques, including centers and other activities, and the integration of materials to teach literacy, such as Wikki Stix. These model lessons can take place in either the Open Classroom at Annandale TEHS or in the requesting teacher's classroom.

Components include:
- 1 day/month administrative leave for the Open Classroom teacher to visit other sites
- Recertification points for participants
- Outreach via Bb and loanable or downloadable materials

What does the research say about faculty development, especially vis-à-vis Instructional Technology?

- Long process with several stages
- Factors influencing whether an innovation is adopted (Rogers 1995):
  - personality
  - setting
    - need for change
  - characteristics of innovation
    - relative advantage
    - compatibility with existing culture
    - trialability
    - ease of use
    - observability
    - resources
- Barriers to technology-use
  - Time
  - Lack of ideas
  - Lack of training
  - Lack of equipment

How is it working? - the research project

Data collection and Analysis

Data was collected from October to March during the 2006-2007 school year.   Further data is being collected which is not part of the current analysis.

Sources of Data:
- o Faculty survey of all TEHS faculty (whether or not they have utilized the Open Classroom support).
- o E-mails to and from faculty and administrators regarding the Open Classroom.
- o Faculty Reflection forms completed after observations.
- o Researcher memos.
- o Open Classroom website.

Caveats
- o The researcher is also the Open Classroom teacher.
- o Not all data have been analyzed yet.
- o Analysis so far is based on e-mails and researcher memos --only a very cursory analysis of survey.

Methodology
Data were coded using NVIVO qualitative analysis software. Then the data were coded into categories such as "outcomes", "faculty attitudes", "barriers" and so on. Once the data were coded, I used NVIVO to sort through the data. Then I built models that explained the patterns we found in the data.

Findings

Successes
- 10 teachers participated (so far); 13 classroom visits (either to the OC or me going to their classrooms).
- Majority of faculty feel they have changed something about their teaching, planning or organization as a result of their participation & gained insight into themselves as teachers.
- Teachers have been encouraged to use technology – PPT, *Inspiration*, using laptops and digital cameras. Some mentioned they would not have tried technology-enhanced activities without the support of the OC.
- Diffusion of teaching techniques and materials:
  - o Center activities posted on Bb at request of teachers.
  - o Center equipment requested and purchased for ESOL Literacy Beginners classes (portable centers, table top magnetic boards, etc.)
- Materials/ Activities created:
  - o Technology-enhanced activities.
  - o Center activities.

Challenges
- Barriers to faculty participation:
  - o Traveling in traffic to another location.
  - o Finding and preparing for substitutes for peer observations.
  - o Accessing technology (technology unavailable or not working).
  - o Time/timing (What's the best day for visits? What else is going on?)
  - o Lacking a vision (What do I want to do with the OC teacher? Sharon's coming – what do I do with her? *Does this have to do with personality??*)
- Expansion of the role and time commitment:
  - o Handling administrative tasks like setting up visits and making sure people get recertification points.
  - o Responding to requests for technology help (Can you help me format this? My students can't log into Bb! What's wrong with my TV computer hook up?)

- o Doing more outreach (sending centers on the road, uploading material to Bb).
- o Evaluating software.
- o Attending meetings to brainstorm about applying for grants for SmartBoards.
- o Locating Internet resources to supplement units.

What's up for Year #2?

- More time – next year, the release for the OC will increase from one, 45-minute class a day to two.
- Less admin? Now that certain procedures are in place, I hope the admin takes us less time.
- More reaching out as opposed to visits to the Open Classroom.

Other Recommendations and Thoughts:
- Find a way to give faculty the opportunity to visit another classroom without finding a sub and laboring over sub plans.
- Is it necessary to reach *all* the teachers? If so, how can the OC accommodate different personality types (#1 most frequent reason for participation = wanted new ideas and perspective).
- Keep explaining what the OC is and does:
  - o Several faculty expressed interest in recertification points – these are already available!
  - o #1 most frequent reason given for lack of participation – lack of vision ("not sure how I'd like to work with them").

Attachments: Some activities developed for the Open Classroom
- Example #1 – Spelling Sort
- Example #2 – TPR Center with digital camera
- Example #3 – Some ideas for activities with Wikki Stix

Further reference:

See http://www.soundsofenglish.org/Presentations for other presentations I've given on related topics.