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CEP 815

Sustainable Technology Project:

1. ***What is the teaching/learning problem?***

a. *State the learning problem.*
The learning problem is lack of parent involvement within the school.

b. *Describe the learning problem:*
There seems to be a disconnect between what's going on in school and at home.
Parents are not involved in volunteering, classroom projects, assignments, or the
overall academics of the students. Students feel that they are not supported at home
as much as they need and teachers feel that lack of communication has created a
roadblock for them to get parents actively involved in their children's education.

c. *Describe how the problem is central to the mission of your school.*
Parent involvement directly effects student achievement and makes a big difference
in the success of students. Teachers, administrators, parents, and students all need
to work together for there to be success within the school. Our school mission
statement is:

*"At our school, staff, parents, and community members work together to create a
joyous and caring learning environment in which all students are supported,
challenged, and successful. Our students master California State standards, develop
higher level thinking skills, and connect their learning to the real world in all areas of
academic study, the arts, technology, and character development."*

As our mission states, parents are a crucial part to creating a joyous and caring
learning environment. Parents need to be communicating and working with
teachers to support their children at home with their academics as well as
encouraging them to make the most of their education.

2. **Describe a current cost-effective technology that can help address the
problem.**
a*. What is your technology solution? What does it do? How does it help support the
problem you have identified?*
The cost-effective technology solution I have devised involves classroom websites,
blogs, and email. This may seem very simple, but I believe it can make a big impact
on parent involvement. My plan is for every single classroom teacher to create a
classroom website that is directly linked to the school's website. Every teacher will
agree upon which classroom website application they choose to use. There are
many free classroom websites available, including weebly.com, which allows for
classroom blogs as well. The reason for this is so that there is consistency among
grade levels so it will be easier on parents to navigate through the same program as

their child progresses through the elementary grades. The teachers can design the website to their liking as long as they have the mandatory requirements embedded within it. Teachers will also create a classroom blog, that can eventually be run by parents and/or students, and they will make available their email address and have a direct link to it from the website. Creating classroom websites and blogs bridges the communication gap between parents and teachers. By creating this site with a plethora of information, parents suddenly feel connected with what's going on in the classroom. Many parents today are working full time and don't have time to stop by the school to talk with teachers after the bell rings. They can feel isolated and "in the dark" about classroom happenings just because they haven't been given the information and/or the opportunity to give support. If parents are given one consistent place to go to for information, they are more likely to use it. Parents are bombarded with paperwork from their children and sometimes the paperwork never even makes it home.

The classroom websites will have the following information/pages:
Classroom Happenings- projects and events taking place in the near future
Daily/Weekly Homework- the assignments for the week
Volunteer Schedule- dates and time volunteers are signed up for or requests for volunteers
Photos- pictures of the students involved in different learning activities
Our Classroom- daily schedule, curriculum, parent FAQ's, orientation, back to school night information, classroom management
Technology- lists the different technologies used in the classroom as well descriptions of what and how they are used
Parent Communication- calendars, family projects, family nights, etc.
Links- educational links to helpful websites, links to classroom textbooks online, links to other related things happening in the classroom, interactive educational games
Blog- the blog can be used in different ways depending on the teachers' preferences.

These pages are not set in stone until discussed with the staff as well as the parents. I appreciate their input and we will tweak this as necessary to have the most comprehensive websites we are capable of.

We will also request parents to fill out a "Parent Needs" survey to better help us meet their needs. We want to find out what is causing the disconnect between home and school. We also want to know what works best for them. What information and expectations do they have for us? The survey will give us insight into what we can do to make a stronger bond between home and school.

There also would be time dedicated during "Back to School Night" for parents to become familiar with their classroom's website. They would have the opportunity to ask questions and give feedback to teachers.

b. *What does your on-going support and training look like? What creative ways can you devise to support your colleagues?*

The training and support for building and maintaining the classroom websites and blogs would take the form of a formal presentation set meeting times for group discussions and reserved time for creating the websites. A formal presentation would be required to get teachers familiar, comfortable, and enthusiastic with using the website program that they will be working with to create their sites. An outside vender knowledgeable in creating effective classroom websites would give the presentation. This presentation would hopefully only be needed once. (There are online how-to videos as well as YouTube that can provide support as well).

 After the teachers are proficient in using the program, they can support/teach new teachers on how to use it. I would also need to get a few volunteers to be the mentors for the staff in case of technology issues that arise. (Its important for the staff to support one another and be involved in helping the school run smoothly and successfully. There are various committees and responsibilities that we rely teachers to volunteer for, so this mentor position would be another one that would be assigned at the beginning of every school year.)

Since we have 4 scheduled staff meetings a month, we will dedicate 1 to 2 times per month to work on our classroom websites and share successes and frustrations we are experiencing. Grade levels will be encouraged to work together and teachers will be given ample time to get their websites up and running. More time will be needed earlier on in the year. Once the site is fully functioning, less time will be needed to maintain it throughout the year.

Since I am allowing time for teachers to work on this project during school hours, it will not be such a "burden" on them but more of a fun, exciting creation that can ultimately help them have a more successful school year.

I will also remind teachers WHY we are doing this. The lack of parent involvement is a concern shared by all the teachers and this project is our solution for getting on the right track. I will share all the positives for taking the time to create classroom websites.

Positives:
* All of your information is located in one spot and easy accessible to parents and students
* Forces teachers to be organized
* Makes it easy for parents to get involved and communicate with teachers
* Less paperwork and printing
* Time worth investing…once its created, you will have it for years to come and you can keep updating and improving it

c. *What does the solution cost [buying the tech, supporting it, upgrading, and training]?*
The websites, email, and blogs are all free of cost. All teachers are proficient with email but will need a little support in creating their websites and blogs. (I also think its correct to assume that any teachers hired after the start of this initiative, would be required to be proficient in word processing and email as well). There would be a small cost to hire a presenter for the formal presentation.

3. ***How will you fund your solution?***
a. *Other than district resources or grants, how will you fund your solution?*
This solution has a very minimal cost to it. The main resources needed are free to use and teachers already have computers in their classrooms to use for creating their websites. The one cost would be for the presenter to give the presentation on how to create a successful classroom website. We have a very active and successful Student Council at our school. They are always looking to make a difference in the school and help in any way that they can. They have raised money for different organizations in the past as well as helped fund our gardening program here at school. We could bring it their attention that we need their help with getting parents more involved in our community. We would explain the opportunity for them to have classroom websites and blogs, which would be exciting and motivating for them as technology in the classroom seems to generate enthusiasm. We would leave it them to (with help from their advisor) to raise the money for the presentation costs.

b. *How is this plan viable?*
I definitely think this solution is capable of working successfully. It's straightforward, affordable, and attainable. It's not asking too much of the staff and if we all work together with a positive attitude, we can create a very sustainable technology project that will benefit the entire school community for years and years to come.

4. ***What does your implementation path look like?***
Vision- *why is the problem a problem? Why is the solution a good solution?*

Lack of parent involvement is definitely a problem with the overall vision of our school. As our mission states, we encourage and count on teachers, parents, and community members to all be involved in creating the best learning environment for our students. Parents play a vital role in the success of classroom projects, field trips, and student achievement. Parent volunteering makes it possible to do more interactive and group projects and gives students the opportunity to work in small groups. Having parents knowledgeable about the happenings in the classroom and connected with what the students are learning on a daily basis makes a great impact on our success.

The solution makes sense and will be successful because it bridges the gap between home and school in a very manageable and applicable way. It is a straightforward

solution that will show results almost immediately. By having teachers create thoughtful and well-organized class websites, with access to blogging and emailing, it opens the line of communication to parents in a very inviting way. We are telling parents that we want their input, we want their involvement, and we can't wait to share in the learning with them all year long. Parents have access to a plethora of information about the classroom and the curriculum and they can communicate questions and concerns via email, which is quick and easy to do. They have the opportunity to be knowledgeable about the things their child is learning and they know in advance about volunteering opportunities and projects that they will be needed for. This technology is easy to use, cost effective, and manageable.

Skills- needed to implement the solution:
Teachers need to be:
Open minded- willing to take on this challenge and make it worthwhile
Creative- make the website welcoming and interesting, make it a place people want to visit and use on a regular basis
Proficient in basic computer skills- typing, uploading files & pictures, email, creating links, creating pages within the website
Organized- take the time to make the website easy to navigate, have things organized in a thoughtful manner
Dedicated- to keeping it up to date, informative, and helpful to parents and students

Incentives- *why would fellow teachers want to implement the solution?*
Teachers will be motivated to implement the solution because they want to see a change in parent involvement as well. Creating these classroom websites will eventually make less work for the teachers. They will be giving parents access to important information about the curriculum, class events, and volunteering opportunities by putting it all in one place. This will mean less papers lost in backpacks, less phone calls from parents complaining that they didn't know about the assignment, and they will spend less time defending themselves and more time working with parents on ways to improve student learning. There will be an open line of communication for both parents and teachers, which will be a welcomed idea from the staff's point of view. They will have to put in some hard work at the beginning but the benefits will far out weigh the work. Also, since they are given time during school hours and are not responsible for doing this on their own time, they will use the time given effectively.

Resources- *what's needed to implement the solution*
Every teacher will need access to a computer
Reliable Internet connection
Sign up for a free website account
Email address
Money for a presenter
Time allotted for working on website creations

Action Plan-*how will you ensure that the right actions are taken by the right people?*

Step 1: Meet with the staff about the technology project that I have in mind. Explain my reasoning and expectant outcomes of the project and how it can be the solution for our lack of parent involvement. Discuss with the staff the steps and timeline for this project and get feedback from teachers.

Step 2: Create the "Parent Needs" survey and make this survey available to parents through the school website as well as sending home a hard copy of it with each student. Make sure parents are aware of this survey and the importance of their feedback. Collect the data from the survey and review it with the staff as well as the parents.

Step 3: Taking into consideration the feedback you received from the teachers and parents, develop the requirements for the classroom websites. Have a definite outline and basic format for the teachers to work with. Then, as a staff, discuss where we can make improvements/adjustments to the requirements for the website based on what the teachers see as useful and worthwhile. Give teachers time to brainstorm with their grade levels as well.

Step 4: Inform the Student Council of our needs for a fundraiser. Give them all the details they need to start their project. Have the student council advisor aid them in any resources they need.

Step 5: Formal presentation on how to create a successful classroom website. Question and answer session to follow. Teachers are also taken through the steps to set up a free account for their classroom website. After the presentation, ask for volunteers to be mentors for this project. Teachers that are comfortable with this use of technology and enjoy helping others will fit well with this responsibility.

Step 6: Time. Give teachers ample time during staff meetings to create their websites. Make sure teachers are aware of the deadline for having their website up and running. They are to send you a link to the website before it is given out to students and parents.

Step 7: Stay in touch with the mentors and the entire staff on this project. Send emails asking how the websites are useful in parent involvement and communication. Address any frustrations and difficulties that the staff is having with the use of this technology. Include time each month to discuss the development of the project. Keep an open line of communication with the teachers and the parents about the positives and frustrations they are having so that it can be constantly improved for maximum potential.