



Marian Myers

Ms. Myers is one of the excellent and dedicated teachers at Binford Middle School in Richmond, Virginia. As a History major in college, she decided early on that she would like to share her love of the subject with middle school students. She believes that students aged 12 to 14 are at the age where they can appreciate historical events and the impact of the past on the present and the future.

Environment

Ms. Myers deals with the reality of academic constraints on a daily basis. The teacher: student ratio at the school is 1: 21, whereas the average ratio in Virginia is 1: 16. This means that she is not able to devote as much time as she would like to improve the learning of each student. Time is another constraint – majority of the school hours are spent on actually teaching in the classroom or on required administrative activities. Unless she uses her free time in the evenings for lesson planning, actual time available for lesson planning during the school day is minimal. She makes the most of this time by preparing History lessons that use PowerPoint lectures, readings, maps, and videos. Finally, although there are classroom desktops available, the use of technology in her classroom is limited. She finds that any class activity that makes use of the computers end up using too much preparation time. She has decided that the best use of the classroom computers is to ask the students to research maps online and to watch videos on the current subject matter.

Attitudes

Ms. Myers enjoys sharing her love of history with her middle-school students. She genuinely cares about the learning of her students. She actively tries to get to know each student's natural interests, skills, and home environment so that she can respond to their learning needs in as individualized a way as possible. Ms. Myers is very interested in the current technological trends in education, but is at a loss as to how to deeply integrate technology in the classroom, given the academic limitations that she faces.

Skills

Ms. Myers knows her History subject matter very well and is a Civil War aficionado. Living in Richmond provides her many opportunities to explore relevant historical sites during her spare time. This gives her Civil War knowledge a depth and breadth that other History teachers may not have. She is also very organized, so her lessons are extremely focused and well-presented.

She is a good researcher, and will go beyond textbook material to try to find additional information that can enhance her lessons.

Mobile Technology Proficiency

Ms. Myers is considered a “digital immigrant” since she was already an adult by the time computers became commonly-used. She is considered an “Eager Adopter” however, since she has become quite adept at using productivity software and enjoys discovering the varied ways that computers can enhance her personal and professional life.

Recently, she bought an iPhone and is now getting used to the available features and applications. The applications she has downloaded so far are for personal and leisure use - she has not downloaded any that might help her in teaching. In some of her professional readings, she has come across the term “Mobile Learning”, and is amazed and intrigued by the ways a personal item such as a mobile phone is now being used to teach people of all ages. Some of the "Mobile Learning" articles talk about a technology called "Augmented Reality" that could be used for teaching. She is not sure what Augmented Reality is and how it relates to Mobile Learning but she would be very interested to find out the educational possibilities.

Frustrations

Ms. Myers is frustrated by the academic constraints described in the Environment section above. She feels that the constraints prevent her from planning more interactive lessons that will keep the students more engaged in the subject matter, especially those students who seem to lack general interest and motivation in the subject matter. The constant pressure to focus the lessons on achieving the Standards of Learning (SOL) objectives also prevent her from planning activities that are more exploratory, discussion-based, and collaborative.

Goals

Ms. Myers would like to:

- Find more interactive and technology-based methods of teaching history in order to increase students’ interest and motivation
- Find ways to achieve SOL objectives without relying on simple memorization of historical dates and events
- Use the natural skills and interests of the students in classroom activities