

David Carpenter: Narrative- IT & Social Studies

Providing fresh and innovative ideas for improving student understanding while learning from others makes me a good teacher for my students. I bring skills of leadership, attentive listening, pro-active thinking, creativity **and knowledge of instructional models and curriculum design** to my classroom and to the meeting table. My **flexibility, ease in handling change and desire to learn** leads to reflection and improvement of my instruction. When teaching the skills laden technology and social studies curricula, I work to balance direct instruction with self-guided portions of lessons that put the students in control of their learning.

I use my **counseling skills** whether working in grade level teams or in one to one curriculum meetings with my teaching partners. Being a **good listener and seeking to understand** guides my interactions. I focus on what are the instructional needs and expectations for the students' gaining true understanding. As I work to facilitate curriculum meetings (whether in a structured or unstructured **leadership** role) I strive to improve communication to make sure everyone feels connected and empowered by the creative process.

I can draw on a fifth grade technology and a seventh grade social studies lesson as examples of my work. I developed and continue to refine a series of lessons (in my current roles as an instructional technologist and as a social studies teacher) that include a WebQuest to support the school-wide goal: *students create electronic portfolios to present their learning*. Just as in our regular curriculum, the tech lessons focus on teaching knowledge (in this case good design and information literacy), skills (using a web authoring tool) and reasoning (using words and images to best communicate concepts learned). Once much of the direct skills instruction on how to author web sites is completed, I am able to step back and facilitate as the students participate in a carefully crafted WebQuest to improve their understanding of good design in web page creation. As students work in teams looking at good versus poorly designed web sites, I use **effective questions** to help them reach their own conclusions. I also draw on student understanding of social networking sites to include and expand

upon their ideas to make electronic portfolios even more relevant to their lives.

Collaboration enhances learning opportunities for most learners. As an instructional technologist and social studies teacher, I work to find ways for technology to increase our opportunities for social constructivism as provided by the Web 2.0 and other resources. We use our Learning Management System to create our virtual learning space with multimodal learning modules, forums and other tools that students use to share, communicate, critique and expand each others' ideas. One example of this work is when our students and teachers use digital mind maps based on the essential questions of our social studies and science units of study. Students can visually build their own mind maps or collaboratively construct one as a class.

Our students are developing remarkable confidence in the use of technology for learning. They are developing **lateral thinking and a wide repertoire of skills** and questions to apply in an **inquiry approach** to learning. They find multiple options for learning **according to their individual interests, ability levels and learning styles**. A collaborative approach to integrating technology with the rest of our curriculum has realized these goals for our learning community.