Inside This Issue:

"Without a consensus on the goals and practical function of faculty meetings, such gatherings do no more than force a group of people together in an artificial display of community, which, in the long run can lead to decreased morale, wavering commitment to the institution, and a lack of faith in the competence of its leaders. Therefore, it is incumbent upon those in leadership positions and those in positions of stability (i.e. full-time, contract faculty), to recognize the power of faculty meetings when they are planned intentionally and facilitated effectively. When such power is achieved, faculty meetings can be an awesome venue for all instructors to thrive and have a voice; a vibrant space where the ideals of inclusivity and collegiality can be put into practice; and an invaluable opportunity for instructors to share best practices in the spirit of professional development."

"Importantly, play contributes to overall language acquisition and can benefit English language learners (ELLs) in many ways that typi-cal worksheets aim to do. Benefits of play for ELLs include social interaction with peers allowing for authentic oral language practice in which new words can be used many times in different contexts. Rich, spontaneous conversation also takes place during play that leads to discussions or debates. Constructive, collaborative activities lead the way for telling and retelling stories and vocabulary development in context of authentic experiences, and opportunities for multi-age, multi-language, and multi-ability groups that expose children to needed language models."

"A lot of emphasis is placed on de-vices purchased for classroom use, but not enough time is spent on the instructional planning for those devices. As educators we have been thoroughly trained in ways to excite readers about writing and how to unpack the Common Core State Standards. But how much time is focused on teachers working collab-oratively to try out a tech applica-tion and then reflect on whether it was effective?

We should be asking each other, 'Was that an effective use of tech-nology? What learning happened for my students?' It takes time for us to address these questions—time to reflect, time to collect informa-tion, and time to collaborate with colleagues to ask those questions."

From the Editors

Throughout the pages of *Dialogue*, contributors encourage educators and administrators to evaluate the ways in which their practices build a thriving and welcoming commu-nity for all staff and students.

Michelle Chan challenges us to evaluate the purpose, structure, and inclusivity of faculty meetings and how they impact the morale of teachers and the sense of school community. Amanda Adair, on the other hand, prompts us to reassess the value of play in the classroom and the positive residual effects it can have for every student. Like-wise, Jeri Sue Aring addresses the importance of teacher collaboration and its role in creating technologi-cal equity across classrooms.

Tackling these topics, and many more, can help bridge divides on campus and play a role in fostering engagement and developing a trust-ing, respectful community.

We invite you to share ways in which you cultivate respectful, pur-poseful, and academically challeng-ing spaces for faculty and students by contributing to future issues of *Dialogue*.

More Than Just Touching Base: Hacking Faculty Meetings to Build Community

Michelle Chan, SDAWP 2018

When it's good, it feels like a glorious awakening, like you've recovered from a long, deep slumber. Cutting-edge ideas and conversations weigh heavily on your mind, but your heart feels inspired; your mind is transformed and ready to take on your next lesson.

As instructors, events like the one described above are precious opportunities to reset and recommit to our classes. Amidst the hustle and bustle of submitting print jobs and lesson planning, there is the customary coming together of faculty members twice or thrice a semester to receive institutional news, departmental updates, and touch base with colleagues whom we might not otherwise see. Anyone who has been a part of an academic institution is familiar with the general protocol of meetings, but as suggested in the graphic (page 3, top left), faculty meetings are met with mixed reviews. For some, these meetings are viewed as a waste of time, while for others, meetings are a fantastic opportunity for great minds to come together and reevaluate how we can support our students' paths to achievement.

How can this be? How is it that one participant can leave one meeting feeling optimistic and fulfilled, while another is already out the door before the facilitator can even say, "Have a nice day?"

If we are to address these questions, we need to get to the heart of the issue, which is first and foremost the purpose of faculty meetings. Without a consensus on the goals and practical function of faculty meetings, such gatherings do no more than force a group of people together in an artificial display of community, which, in the long run can lead to decreased morale, wavering commitment to the institution, and a lack of faith in the competence of its leaders. Therefore, it is incumbent upon those in leadership positions and those in positions of stability (i.e. full-time, contract faculty), to recognize the power of faculty meetings when they are planned intentionally and facilitated effectively. When such power is achieved, faculty meetings can be an awesome venue for all instructors to thrive and have a voice; a vibrant space where the ideals of inclusivity and collegiality can be put into practice; and an invaluable opportunity for instructors to share best practices in the spirit of professional development. In short, faculty meetings can be the lifeline on which to build an engaged, invested, and intellectually stimulating community for both full and part-time instructors.

Community and the Community College

The term community defines the very nature of the institution I work for—a college of the community, for the community. Community colleges are premised on the idea of coming together through a shared belief in inclusion, accessibility, opportunities, and investment in their community members. It is, therefore, imperative that this notion is prioritized not only for our students and institutions at large, but also for each other as faculty members and colleagues. As stated by Janet Mor-

> The term community defines the very nature of the institution I work for—a college of the community, for the community.

gan Riggs, president of Gettysburg College and professor of psychology, "Maintaining a strong sense of community is essential for recruiting and retaining excellent faculty members and for encouraging them to invest both professionally and personally in the college and their students." Riggs further notes that for instructors who cannot always be present on campus that "promoting a sense of community is all the more important to assure the development of mentoring, professional, and personal relationships." With the limited time and energy that instructors can spare in a semester, the design of faculty meetings as effective rendezvous places is, therefore, crucial. Facilitators must adopt a focus on building community to ensure that the quality, dedication, and professional well-being of both full and part-time faculty members are attended to.

Faculty Meetings for ALL Faculty

As a full-time faculty member, I am

First Faculty Meeting of the Year Bingo

Critical Thinking	Our students	Service	Knowing glance exchanged with colleague	Marketing
Optimistic	Room is freezing	Speaker laughs at own joke	Assessment	Fun facts about freshmen that make you feel old
Room is so hot you might die	Enrollment is up	FREE	Projected	Cultural
Someone is texting	Budget cuts	Experiential Learning	That guy with the short shorts	Enrollment is down
General sense of doom	Obviously a toupee	Research	Financial stats longer than one minute	Joke about summer weather

afforded the privilege of stability and a permanent space on campus, which allows me to connect with other full-time instructors on a regular basis. This is very different from my colleagues who are adjunct and currently make up, according to J.R. Hoskins, over 80% of the faculty in the San Diego Community College District. They not only face the uncertainty of reduced or cancelled class assignments each semester, but must also commute to two or even three other sites where they also teach part-time. This constant state of transience has fomented resentment and distrust in institutions of higher education, as articulated by one adjunct instructor writing under a pseudonym, Neil Beckett, who urges all adjunct faculty instructors to refrain from engaging in any pursuits beyond the classroom: "[O]ur acceptance allows universities to keep us in employment limbo and perpetuates the adjunctification of higher education. If we clamor for more unpaid or undercompensated responsibilities, we're only contributing to our own exploitation." Beckett goes on to compel adjuncts to "[d]o your job, and nothing more. Don't go to meetings you are not obligated to attend. Do not agitate for involvement in decision-making processes that you are not welcomed into...Do not contribute to the future of an institution that is indifferent to yours. Fulfill your contractually obligated responsibilities and go home."

Beckett's unbridled anger and cynicism is not unfounded. It has been documented by the American Association of University Professors Research Office, in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, and widely discussed by writers like Segran and Kendzior, that higher education institutions have reached a point of overreliance on adjunct faculty to fill teaching assignments. This has resulted not only in negative impacts on students and the dependence on already-stretched full-time faculty to shoulder more non-teaching related responsibilities, but has also led to a large portion of the teaching body feeling undervalued, underappreciated, and/or regret for entering a profession fraught with insecurity and uncertainty.

If a department is to thrive, it is imperative that it not contribute to its members feeling ostracized, undervalued, or ignored. As such, building a community is all the more vital for institutions to show appreciation to its members who so tirelessly serve on its behalf. One way that this can be achieved is through effective faculty meetings that, when designed to be accessible and inclusive of all faculty, function as the platform for connecting adjunct and full-time faculty to department and other institutional leaders so that the former's needs and concerns are recognized and heard.

What Makes a Meeting Effective?

As paraphrased by Charlie Tyson in his review of the book, *Meeting Wise: Making the Most of Collaborative Time for Educators* by Kathryn Parker Boudett and Elizabeth A. City, "Great meetings [...] are like great classrooms. With sound preparation, clear goals and stimulating activities, adult professionals can use formal meetings to learn from one another." In other words, the authors, Boudett and City, argue that if facilitators are as invested in planning and leading meetings with the same fervor reserved for their students, then meetings have the potential to be extraordinary spaces for intellectual and professional exchange. Leading effective faculty meetings must, therefore, involve intentional planning where the participants are at the center and the concept of community building is its premise. The following questions should be considered when planning and facilitating effective faculty meetings.

- Is the meeting necessary? Or, can the information be delivered more effectively and efficiently via other means, such as an email or memo?
- Am I prepared? Have I asked participants to contribute to the agenda? Did I send the agenda out at least 24 hours in advance? Have I arranged a venue that is appropriate and comfortable? Have I designated enough time to tackle all the agenda items?
- Do I know how to facilitate the meeting? Do participants have a shared understanding of the ground rules? Do I know how to communicate with or manage different personalities? Do I know how to de-escalate tense discussions? Do I know how to create a safe and nurturing environment where participants are encouraged to speak their minds? Do I need to reel in another faculty member to help me facilitate the meeting?

Voice

When you look at your agenda, do you see evidence of faculty voice, or is every item planned by you and you alone? Participant involvement should begin at the stage of agenda setting so that all have a say and a stake in the meeting. This means soliciting faculty input via email a week or so in advance for agenda items they'd like to discuss or present. Faculty are then held accountable for those items, and if follow-through is needed, an action plan can be constructed as a group, and outcomes can be addressed in the subsequent meeting.

Additionally, consider asking faculty for updates or news in their professional and (if they are open to sharing) personal lives. Recognition of such achievements helps them see one another as unique, multi-dimensional individuals with passions, talents, aspirations, and accomplishments that extend beyond the classroom. This contributes to a sense of community and pride where one another's accomplishments are worthy of celebration from the entire

cohort.

Engagement

Delivering institutional or departmental news is, of course, valuable in meetings, but there is usually an expectation that participant input will be acknowledged and delivered to the appropriate parties, and then outcomes of such input be reported in a subsequent meeting. However, if a meeting is called for the main purpose of reading information aloud, then it may not be a meeting worth calling. Such information can be delivered as effectively via email, and faculty can acknowledge they've reviewed the material by virtual means, such as by adding comments on an electronic version of the document (e.g. via Google Docs).

Reserve the luster and power of faculty meetings for meaningful engagement where participants will benefit from the physical presence of one another's attendance.

Reserve the luster and power of faculty meetings for meaningful engagement where participants will benefit from the physical presence of one another's attendance. Examples of meaningful engagement include:

- Participant presentations of his or her best teaching practices in their classrooms.
- Mini professional development opportunities led by the facilitator.
- Conversations on aligning instruction to student needs by levels.
- Breakout sessions by levels to discuss pressing issues in each participant's respective classroom.
- Be mindful, though, that when planning activities, collaboration should be balanced with individual time in order to accommodate those who might benefit from quiet reflection before sharing in teams.

Professional Nourishment

While attending meetings is typically mandatory for full-time faculty, part-time or adjunct faculty are most likely not compensated and not contractually obligated to attend. Therefore, the imperative to consider is: if some participants are not going to benefit financially, how will they be nourished otherwise? The impetus thus rests on facilitators to give non-compensated participants other worthwhile sources of nourishment so that they have an intrinsic motive to attend meetings. For adjunct instructors whose time and resources are already stretched, the most rewarding nourishment is very likely professional development.

Following the model of San Diego Area Writing Project's professional development events that I have attended, invigorating professional development tends to adhere to the following criteria:

- They meet the practical needs of instructors. Participants leave the event with tools, protocols, ideas, or best practices that they can implement in their classrooms the next day;
- They are grounded in theory and research, which not only introduce participants to literature they probably would have not otherwise explored, but also provide them the concrete rationale to inspire and articulate their own teaching beliefs;
- They include collaborative work; participants are given opportunities to discuss and engage in the activity rather than simply listen and take notes on it;
- They present evidence of student work and progress. There is evidence that the practice and theory presented can produce positive student outcomes;
- They present best practices that adhere to an inquiry-based and student-centered model of teaching, which gives participants an idea of how to better teach by being the "guide on the side;"
- They allow time for participants to reflect on how the practice and theory presented can be applied to their own teaching contexts.

As Riggs states, "An intellectually lively faculty is critical to the health of our community." By allocating time for professional development, faculty meetings not only provide participants an intellectually stimulating environment for lively discussion, they also help instructors achieve aspects of self-actualization by tapping into their creative and problem-solving skills. What's more, facilitators don't have to start from scratch; they can take lessons from professional development events they attended in the past and repackage them in a way that is more accessible for their own participants. For example, Denise Maduli-Williams, English Language Acquisition Program coordinator and professor at Miramar College, created a workshop that highlighted

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some of the best takeaways from the 2017 CATESOL Conference for faculty who were not able to attend. By doing so, she created an environment where her faculty's professional needs are met, members are engaged in participatory and leadership roles, and the ideals of community are evident in the collegial, inclusive, and supportive design of the event. For more ideas on how to make faculty meetings more collaborative, I suggest reviewing Julie Adams's "20 Ways to Make Professional Development More Effective."

Technology

If our goal as instructors is to prepare our students with 21st century

skills, knowing how to use technology and using it effectively in the classroom are skills that all instructors should have as part of their teaching repertoire. Faculty meetings, then, provide the ideal opportunity for modeling the use of tech in ways that foster creativity, generate discussions, and engage all members of the audience. In this case, not only can participants see the tech in action, they can engage in the role of a student where they have firsthand experience of its positive impact on learning.

> …anyone who chooses to adopt tech in the classroom must keep in mind the golden rule: technology follows instruction, not the other way around.

Drawing from my own experiences in the SDAWP Invitational Summer Institute, technology can be incorporated and adapted at various stages of teaching—from brainstorming and group discussions to out of class assignments, final projects, and presentation submissions. It is worth mentioning, though, that anyone who chooses to adopt tech in the classroom must keep in mind the golden rule: technology follows instruction, not the other way around. This means that the objectives of your lesson should not be obfuscated by the shiny appeal of innovative tech tools.

In the context of faculty meetings, the following are some ideas for how tech can be adopted to create a more inclusive and transparent space for all instructors:

- Google Docs (https://www. google.com/docs/about/) – can be used as a shared, living document to set the agenda with participants
- Google Forms (https://www. google.com/forms/about/) – for participants to submit their concerns or questions anony-

mously
- Google Drive (https://www. google.com/drive/) – a way to store and archive all meeting documents and materials
- Doodle (https://doodle.com/) – to determine the most convenient time and date to hold a meeting (promotes accessibility and inclusivity)
- Zoom conferencing (https:// zoom.us/) – to allow for remote conferencing for those who cannot be physically present; to provide a recorded version of the meeting for absent faculty to watch at their convenience
- Remind (https://www.remind. com) – to send out mass text messages to participants (i.e. meeting reminders, emergency messages, etc.)
- G+ (https://plus.google.com/) - a private community for faculty to post news, events, and items of interest or to communicate in an informal environment
- Canva (https://www.canva. com/) or Piktochart (https:// piktochart.com/) – to create visually pleasing flyers or invitations for announcing details and descriptions of meetings

Meeting Reminders

To ensure the highest attendance possible, facilitators should send reminders so that participants can put the information in their calendars. In lieu of traditional emails, whimsical and attractive digital invitations suggest the convivial atmosphere and activities that are in store.

Assigning Roles

The roles of minutes taker and time keeper can be rotating and assigned in advance. In addition to alleviating some of the pressures on the facilitator, having someone record the minutes will ensure that there is a record of the event on file. Having a time keeper will ensure that discussions stay on topic, the event will end on time, and that no one conversation monopolizes the meeting time (unless the participants agree that it is a pressing issue worth pursuing).

Respecting Participants' Time

When setting the agenda, a specific amount of time can be listed next to each agenda item so that presenters can prepare to deliver their infor-

mation in the most concise manner possible. Time limits will also help move the meeting along more efficiently and mitigate urges to belabor any one topic.

Space Set-up

According to Matthew Jennings, author of *Leading Effective Meetings, Teams, and Work Groups*, physical setting is a factor that affects participants' comfort level and engagement during meetings. Jennings suggests the following as ideal configurations depending on the meeting size and purpose:

- Single square or circle: 8-12 people; best for problem solving
- U-shape: 12-22 people; best for large group discussions
- V-shape groups of 4 to 5 people facing the front of the room: 16-40 people; best for group work
- For a detailed description on what message seating arrangements convey, read Samantha Whitehorne's article, "What Seating Arrangements Reveal About a Meeting's Culture."

> Just as our students struggle to learn on an empty stomach, faculty will benefit from a meeting that nourishes their stomachs as well as their minds.

Sustenance

Food is often an appealing reason to attend events, so consider hosting the meeting as a potluck where participants can break bread and bond over assorted food as they discuss curriculum and department business. As stated by Anthony Bourdain, "Meals make the society, hold the fabric together in lots of ways […] The perfect meal, or the best meals, occur in a context that frequently has very little to do with the food itself." Just as our students struggle to learn on an empty stomach, faculty will benefit from a meeting that

nourishes their stomachs as well as their minds

5-minute Icebreakers

To energize participants or entertain early arrivals, consider starting meetings with a short icebreaker. This will get participants active and engaged from the get-go and is an effective way to accommodate those who arrive late. The following are some activities I gathered from various sources over my years of teaching and attending professional development events:

- Participants share a successful student or teaching moment that occurred in the current semester (can be as simple as not having any classroom technology issues or achieving perfect student attendance the previous week).
- Have participants work individually or in pairs to solve a match stick puzzle: http://www. puzzles.com/puzzleplayground/ Matches.htm.
- Institutional Facts or Fiction —Each participant is given a piece of information about the school to read aloud and the group must decide whether it is true or false.
- Cartoon Me—Each participant draws a cartoon of how s/he is feeling and has 15 seconds to present it.
- Good News!—Each participant has 10 seconds to share a piece of good news in their lives.
- Poem About My Class—Participants write an acrostic poem about their teaching context using their first name.
- Feel the Music—Participants recite some lyrics from a song and to reflect how they are feeling at the moment.
- What Can You Do with It?—In pairs, participants list as many ways they can think of for using a mundane object (e.g. a brick, a toothpick, a coaster, etc.).

Faculty meetings need not be dull, methodical, and uninspiring. Just as instructors aspire to create a stimulating, collaborative, and student-centered environment in the classroom, facilitators can also adopt these practices for building community through face-to-face meetings with faculty. While, admittedly, there is more intentional planning on the part of the facilitator, the payoff of increased engagement, investment, representation, and sense of feeling valued among participants outweighs the alienation, isolation, and potential resentment or apathy that can result from not coming together on a regular basis. In sum, not only do effective faculty meetings provide a voice and lifeline for instructors to connect to their peers and supervisors, they offer membership to a community that recognizes their efforts and contributes to their ongoing development as teaching professionals.

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> Just as instructors aspire to create a stimulating, collaborative, and student-centered environment in the classroom, facilitators can also adopt these practices for building community through face-to-face meetings with faculty.

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A Challenge to Play

Amanda Adair, SDAWP 2018

Play is important and essential to development. We hear this all the time in education and research has proven this to be true, but how much do we let it really sink in? It has been shown that "developing a playful nature can help you loosen up in stressful situations, break the ice with strangers, make new friends, and form new business relationships" (Robinson, Smith, Segal). So, are we really listening to what the research is telling us? If we truly believed and digested what the experts are saying about play, then it would be more prevalent in our daily routines. We would be able to see some sort of play in each of our academic areas. Play is essential to development because it contributes to the cognitive, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth.

Across the curriculum, play gives students a chance to practice what they have learned. In a history lesson, undirected theater can happen: let students reenact the roles of those you are learning about. Let them play with words, readings, events and even equations. During a math lesson, give students dice to practice probability. Once they understand the probability of rolling certain combinations, give them a game in which they have to make strategic decisions—they can make informed decisions on whether to depend on the probability of a roll to get what they need or not (Neason). One lesson could have students pretend to run a real business that requires the use of inequalities to be successful. We are teaching them all these skills to hopefully be used in adulthood, so giving them an opportunity to play with these new skills in a safe environment only seems logical. Through play, we can show students how these skills will go beyond making a grade or reaching a predefined academic standard.

In fact, most people learn best through play by manipulating and testing stimuli in different environments. Adults play to learn constantly, too. When you first used Power-Point, did you whip out the trusty manual and read it front to back? Or did you open it and play around with the features until you learned how to use it? While learning a new task in a playful mood, the oxytocin helps the amygdala stay calm which then allows the prefrontal cortex to focus on higher order thinking and learning (Robinson, Smith, Segal & Shubin). As we play, we are creating and adapting and become more willing to take risks, which is exactly what we want our students to do with new information that they learn. We construct knowledge in a way that meets personal needs and abilities, which builds a stronger foundation for later learning when compared to didactic practices that seem to flood education (Suggate). During these play-involved activities, students are learning content while working together, staying focused, adapting to new strategies, and refining vocabulary in order to communicate with one another.

> Play is essential to development because it contributes to the cognitive, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth.

Amazingly, play stimulates the connection of neurons in the frontal lobe, which is the center for planning and decision making. Play requires decision making, negotiating, and attaining focus to see it to the end. While playing, students must negotiate what to play, what the rules are, and how to navigate new rules that are introduced throughout the play. While this is going on, new circuits in the prefrontal cortex are being connected (Hamilton).

Through play, they learn how to solve problems, work together, and work out what may happen next. When children pretend to be someone else, they are developing theory of mind. The students must walk in that character's shoes while thinking about what that character would do or say. A well-developed theory of mind increases a child's compassion and tolerance for others which in turn increases their ability to work well with others (Hartwell-Walker). A recent study has also shown a strong correlation between a weak theory of mind and becoming a bullying victim (Shakoor). Play lays the foundation and gives an arena for development of critical skills.

Importantly, play contributes to overall language acquisition and can benefit English language learners (ELLs) in many ways that typical worksheets aim to do. Benefits of play for ELLs include social interaction with peers allowing for authentic oral language practice in which new words can be used many times in different contexts. Rich, spontaneous conversation also takes place during play that leads to discussions or debates. Constructive, collaborative activities lead the way for telling and retelling stories, vocabulary development in context of authentic experiences, and opportunities for multi-age, multi-language, and multi-ability groups that expose children to needed language models.

English Language Development Standards strive to have students "internalized English language skills to such a degree that the teacher will often observe the students correcting their own grammar, usage, and word choices in speaking, reading, and writing," (ELD Standards). If language is to be internalized, then it must be learned in a meaningful manner that meets students at their individual ability levels and play is a way to make this happen. Language thrives when children are interacting with others in a playful manner. When students are with their peers, they feel more at ease and are more likely to take risks with language. Peers also have a way of influencing each other to be precise with language that is different than that of an adult.

Implementation of play can range from wordplay, including children's spontaneous riffing on phrases, cre-

ating secret languages, and making rhymes and world play including paracosms, elaborate and extended imaginary worlds (Weisberg, Zosh, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff). Readers' theater is a great way for students to play with reading. They can change their tone, their fluency, and their animation! They are playing with the reading. Ever use Post-it notes to cover a part of a text and allow students to discuss what it could be saying? Maybe even act out their predictions! Could students learn and digest vocabulary through the use of charades? Try allowing students to "play" the teacher and read a book to their class. The roles of leader, reader, and listener are all learning through play.

> ## The ability to negotiate group dynamics during play requires collaboration and compromise along with the ability to recognize and respond to emotions of others.

Social skills are also developed and sharpened through play. The ability to negotiate group dynamics during play requires collaboration and compromise along with the ability to recognize and respond to emotions of others. These skills assist students in learning and understanding the rules of society. These social skills are critical in academic success allowing students to have productive and high trust relationships with adults and peers. Students learn how to respond to others' emotions, take turns, and share. It is an environment that allows students to simplify events they have experienced and learn to regulate their emotional expressions (Isenburg & Jalongo). Students put themselves in pretend situations that allow them to work through stressors.

Play also assists students in coping with emotions (Piaget). Students can act out being mad, sad, or worried in a play environment that they control, leading to a sense of accomplishment that builds a student's confidence and self-perception. For example, a student who may have lost their dog will pretend play this scenario, which enables the student to cope with the experience and work through the emotions while giving others the opportunity to participate in the event. Through play, the students learn they can seek emotional support from others. Those who have the opportunity to glimpse into their student's world learn to communicate more effectively and are given another setting to offer gentle, nurturing guidance. Peeking into a student's play world is like getting to read their writing; it shows another layer of the student. During play, students are able to express their views, experiences, and even frustrations allowing others to understand them better. What play looks like from the outside changes as students get older, but at the heart of all play is an expression of one's thoughts, creativity, and emotions.

Further, play is so important to optimal child development that the United Nations High Commission has recognized it for Human Rights as a right of every child; alongside the right to life and the right to education (Convention on the Rights of a Child). Research has shown that a decline in the amount of time that students have to play correlates with an increase in mental health problems, such as anxiety and depression (Conklin). What play looks like as students get older changes, but it is just as essential throughout their entire lives. When you walk into a primary classroom you will likely see students playing dress up, pretending to be doctors or teachers. Center activities in elementary school can be play-like and can allow for choice. In upper grades, classroom play may look more like students developing their own version of a government for an imaginary place, preparing survival kits for climates around the world, or creating their own board games to review material (Conklin). Through the use of these play activities, students who may have tapped out can become engaged and thrive.

Not only do these play activities allow students to be creative, solve problems together, and persevere, they also meet the adolescent need for independence, while opening up avenues that allow them to express their competence through physical activity or creative expression. Research has shown that students who enlist their imaginations to make choices about their own learning are more motivated and engaged in school, thus creating a positive school experience.

> ## Students can act out being mad, sad, or worried in a play environment that they control, leading to a sense of accomplishment that builds a student's confidence and self-perception.

I challenge you to see play through a new lens—one that shows a way for valuable learning and development for all students. So look past the giggles, loud noises, and messes that play includes and see the essential learning that happens. Get past the thought of play as something that is childish and submerge yourself in the power of knowing it's undeniable positive effect. I challenge you to be a part of the play movement by listening to students and giving them opportunities to play. Look at your learning activities through a new lens. Make play a non-negotiable part of your lessons since that is a best practice in which students learn. Not sure how to insert play? Go to the experts—the students, and play with the act of play!

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Creating *Technological Equity* in the Classroom

Jeri Sue Aring, SDAWP 2018

I was thrilled when my principal called me and said that I would be receiving twenty-five shiny new HP computers for my third graders to use, an enormous 52-inch smart TV, and a new HP Surface Pro with the ability to connect wirelessly. Wow! I was definitely going to be technological innovation in action! I had all of the tech tools; now all I had to do was plan effective and innovative ways to use them.

My students' faces lit up as I passed out each precious computer. The children were eager to see what they could do with them. One little bright-eyed boy said, "Will I get to go onto Minecraft or YouTube?" I replied, "Not at this time. Let's just wait and see what we can do."

I proceeded to turn on my new Surface Pro computer that simultaneously displayed on the 52-inch monster screen in my room. But, on the TV screen, we could only see the default screen. Definitely not my computer screen. Now what was I going to do? How was I going to show my third-grade students how to wade through the different login codes, to finally send an email to me. I had envisioned so much more for my students—creating "how to" movies to show understanding, recording video of students' mathematical thinking, students writing collaboratively, and so much more.

I took a deep breath and proceeded because I had a plan. After all, I thought to myself, I am the tech savvy teacher. I can take apart a computer and put it back together. Teachers always come to me for help with their devices! So I took another quick deep breath and pushed forward.

I explained to the entire class how to properly sign onto their school email accounts. "We get email!" the class shouted as they erupted in conversation. I quickly quieted the class back down and proceeded with my plan

to have all of my students successfully log onto the computer and then eventually respond to an email that I had sent them.

Each child had everything they needed and I had my plan. As I passed out all of the laminated student login cards that I had carefully created over the last few days, I wondered if I should have spent more time exploring how to use my students' devices.

> I had all of the tech tools; now all I had to do was plan effective and innovative ways to use them.

Very quickly numerous hands shot up in the air with shouts of, "Mine isn't working!" and "I did it right; my password isn't working!"

I rushed around to get to as many computers as I could in an attempt to help the students troubleshoot their numerous problems. They ranged from students not understanding how to capitalize their password, computers losing internet connection because the students hit the airport mode button, or screensavers turning on and then requiring the student to login again.

In that moment, I thought, *If my TV and computer were communicating, we would be sailing through the login process and could move onto using our technology for creative purposes.* I didn't have the ability to show the students what to do, and I was the only person in the room!

Just then the same little boy who had been so excited to possibly use Minecraft at school said, "Mrs. Aring, it is past recess time."

That was it, we hadn't really accomplished anything in over an hour spent trying to simply log onto the computer. To be honest, it took about two weeks until I was able to get all students successfully accessing their email and other necessary apps. Gone was the excitement. My students were left with frustration and questions of which login and password to use for which app. I had been unable to think through the entire process of how to use these twenty-five devices in my classroom in ways that would not only excite my students but also challenge them to think more critically in all curricular areas. I was stuck in the "how to" section!

> The children in the tech savvy teacher's classroom will have more opportunities to use technology as a tool to enhance their learning.

Unfortunately, the situation that I described above is far too common. Many of my colleagues voice their frustration with helping their students to access the apps at school with multiple logins, devices that won't stay connected to the internet, and other issues. Sadly, that is often where the conversations end. Teachers get so frustrated by some of the uncontrollable technical issues that they end up either not using the devices at all or just having the students do work on the computer, that can easily be done on a sheet of paper.

Then, the greater issue becomes a question of equity for all students. The children in the tech savvy teacher's classroom will have more opportunities to use technology as a tool to enhance their learning. The other students simply will not. Many of those technical issues can be easily fixed with just a few steps. However, most teachers are not given the time, the ability, and the ongoing support to move out of this frustration stage.

To create technological equity for all students, the following suggestions should be considered:

- Districts need to provide each school with an on-site technical support person. Problems can arise quickly and they need immediate solutions. Teachers need someone available to address technical errors and issues. Waiting a month for a device to have updates run doesn't increase anyone's learning.

- School sites need to devote bi-weekly time for educators to meet in small teams to share and show the ways in which they have been using technology. The educators on these teams will have time carved out during the month to ask questions, offer support, challenge each other, and grow together. These teams need to be created with teachers of varying technological expertise and confidence levels.

- School administrators need to model the use of new and innovative applications of technology integration in staff meetings. For example, share a "word cloud" created on Wordle (http://www.wordle.net/) or have teachers share a video response on Flipgrid (https://flipgrid.com/). Administrators need to model effective uses of technology, when appropriate.

- Set aside time for teachers to be reflective about their current ways of using technology in their classrooms and to listen to their colleagues' successes and struggles. This time of reflection could be done in a variety of ways. Use video recordings on Flipgrid or quick responses on a survey using Survey Monkey (https://www.surveymonkey.com/). Teachers need to reflect on their current classroom practices and ask themselves, "Is there a technology tool that will make my students' learning stronger? Was that use of technology helpful for my students to meet expected learning goals?"

- Create an online space where teachers, students, and the community can share what is happening around the school. All stakeholders in a child's

education need to be brought together to share, create, and celebrate the innovation in the classroom. This might look like classroom blogs, active Twitter or other online social media sites, or a student-created on-line newspaper.

I am happy to say that my school district has created single sign-in capability for the students' computers. Now students only need to have one login and password to work on their school computer. These changes were as a direct result of the school district responding to feedback from classroom teachers. There was a major obstacle getting in the way of creating technological equity for students, and it was solved through communication and action.

In order to increase communication with my students' parents, I now use Class Dojo. This app allows parents to text me without having my personal phone number. In addition, I send parents information, reminders, and photos. This use of technology has improved my parent-teacher communication, and frankly, it is easy to use. It is also important to know that I began using this app after another teacher shared the benefits that he saw with the students and parents in his classroom. This is a great example of the importance of colleagues sharing their technological successes and challenges with each other. This easy communication tool gives me the opportunity to share with parents their student's work, needs, and future goals.

Another positive impact of tech equity in my classroom has been for my students with learning disabilities or other learning challenges. Like most classrooms, I have a few students who are reading and writing far below the expected level. These students use Learning Ally, an online audiobook program, to have access to many of the books that their peers are reading. This program provides audio support along with the digital text for many books that the students want to read. As students listen to the text, the words are highlighted, so that the students can hear and see the text at the same time.

This use of technology was especially beneficial for a young boy on his first day of third grade. To

my surprise, he leaned over to me and whispered, "Here's the thing; I don't know how to read." His father also informed me that he had refused to attend school the previous year and it was going to take some work to get him to school each day. As a veteran teacher, I took a quick breath and told him that if he came to school each day, I would promise to help him learn to read. I am happy to say that by the end of the school year, he was reading—not at grade level yet—but he definitely became a reader. My favorite image of this precious young boy is with his knees folded up under his chin and a book resting on desk, with headphones on, listening to his favorite book on the Learning Ally program. This simple use of technology allowed a struggling and reluctant reader to have access to the books he wanted to read.

My approach to creating tech equity in my classroom has changed in a dramatic way. Initially, my plans for using technology in the classroom were limited to sending and receiving emails and using word processing programs. However, now I ask myself this question: "Is there a technology tool that will enhance the learning and work to be done in this situation?" As I work with each new student, colleague, parent, and principal, I am always searching for ways to improve or enhance the work that needs to be done.

A lot of emphasis is placed on devices purchased for classroom use, but not enough time is spent on the instructional planning for those devices. As educators we have been thoroughly trained in ways to excite readers about writing and how to unpack the Common Core State Standards. But how much time is focused on teachers working collaboratively to try out a tech application and then reflect on whether it was effective?

We should be asking each other, "Was that an effective use of technology? What learning happened for my students?" It takes time for us to address these questions—time to reflect, time to collect information, and time to collaborate with colleagues to ask those questions.

Calendar of Events

SDAWP's Fall into Writing Conference

September 28, 2019
8:00am - 12:00pm
UCSD

SDAWP's Spring Writing Conference

February 29, 2020
8:00am - 12:00pm
UCSD

National Day on Writing

October 20, 2019
For information and ideas,
visit whyiwrite.us.

California Association of Teachers of English Convention

ELA Confidential: Investigating Teaching, Texts, and Truths

February 21 - 23, 2020

CWP's Preconvention
February 20, 2020

Los Angeles—LAX Marriot
For information, visit
cateweb.org.

#USvsHate Fall and Spring Student Contests

For anti-hate teaching resources and information about anti-hate student messaging contests, visit usvshate.org.

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