



Professional Development in the Future: Possible Scenarios



By Barbara Bray

What will professional development look like seven years from now? Will schools look different? What about our students? How will teaching and learning be different than today? Here are several possibilities:

As a new teacher, Mary sees her third-grade classroom as a research laboratory. Before school, Mary checks her online calendar with her mobile phone to review today's activities—some added last night by her principal. A new event includes a short video example with another third-grade teacher who is teaching the same lesson with a similar group of students. She feels well prepared for a virtual field trip since she did a pre-visit the day before by lurking in the background of another trip of a colleague that lives in another state. Mary was encouraged to develop online collaborations with other elementary teachers during her own education. Now, as part of an online team from around the country, she and four other third-grade teachers share lessons, reflect on what worked and what didn't, and try to help each other with day-to-day issues. Everyone on the team text messages ideas and lessons to everyone else via their phones.

Down the hall, Susan, a 20-year veteran fifth-grade teacher, is reluctant to use technology with her students. The

principal encourages every teacher to work as part of a team, so Susan asked Mitch, the other fifth-grade teacher, to be her mentor. He's young, loves technology, is a good listener and has been very supportive of Susan. The principal builds in regular release time, stipends and enough resources for Susan and Mitch to adapt lessons to integrate technology. Susan is great on differentiating learning for her students, but has issues about letting students construct their own knowledge with the use of technology. Mitch created a model cross-curriculum inquiry lesson on the Revolutionary War. Susan contributed her expertise on differentiation to the lesson while Mitch helped her design a student radio podcast show. Both are pleased with the results.

Students at the high school are assigned a teacher mentor who works with 20 students starting in their freshmen year and following them until they graduate. Each teacher has an extra period a day and online office hours with a digital drop box for students to share files and reflections from their growing ePortfolios. Each teacher is part of an online learning team where they can share concerns and issues about the students they are mentoring. In the summer, the teachers create an action plan on how they will meet their own learning goals. Each teacher has a classroom blog where they post assignments, videos of lessons and podcasts of lectures. Many of their classes are online and students do more independent study.

Are these scenarios that far off? In a few years, many teachers—those “digital

immigrants” or some may call them “digital aliens”—may be retiring or figuring out that they have to jump in the digital revolution. In several years, the new teachers that join the profession are the “digital natives” we talk about that have used technology all their lives.

By 2014, phones, televisions, computers and MP3 players will merge or be something completely different than what we have now. All curriculums will be available online and textbooks will offer interactive activities online with PDF downloadable versions of the textbook. Collaborations will happen for teachers and students using Web 2.0 tools and online learning communities. School buildings may still be mired in tradition, but that doesn't mean that teaching and learning cannot change.

Barbara Bray writes a column on professional development for OnCUE, coordinates the PDQs (Professional Development Quick Tips) for Techlearning.com, and is President of My eCoach at www.my-ecoach.com. Check out her new blogs: barbarabray.my-ecoach.com and newsblog.my-ecoach.com. See the complete article with suggestions for accomplishing effective professional development at www.cue.org. She can be reached at barbara@my-ecoach.com.

*** This article first appeared in OnCUE, Vol. 29, No. 1, Spring 2007 and was updated in June 2008.*