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Dear KCI Supporters,

I was in my twenty-second year of teaching math when I faced a harsh reality – I was a teaching dinosaur. Really, I was. I had to make my own copies on the mimeograph machine because there was only one photocopier for 40 teachers. Back then “cell phones” sat in the car and weighed 20 pounds. I worried about leaving my film camera at a table while on vacation, and then worried where I put those little film canisters when I returned back home. While the math hadn’t changed, I was still using a textbook from the early ‘80s.

A lot transpired in those twenty-two years and I needed to join the new reality that I kept hearing about, teaching with an eye to new technologies. I applied for and was accepted to the 2011 MERIT class at the Krause Center for Innovation. Little did I know, how little I knew!

This two-week intensive summer course upended my life. There was a program for this and an app for that. There was organizing software, content-specific programs, apps that could enhance all subject areas, ability to make movies, student-oriented programs that helped kids not only learn material but integrate today’s technology into lessons, study guides and presentations. The MERIT team scared me, awed me and inspired me. I was ready to go to work.

I started small, introducing Google docs and surveys into my curriculum. I was excited to ask kids about how math flowed from skills to higher-level thinking. Then I connected them via web-based groups, so they could work outside of the classroom more effectively.

Harkening back to the lessons of MERIT about creating student-centered, technology-enhanced activities, one culminating activity stands out from my geometry class at the end of the chapter on quadrilaterals and their property differences. Each group was asked to give an overview of the material before we took the test; they were given a week to develop their review project and needed to incorporate one technology tool.

The results were amazing! I had students create slideshows, another created a deck of flashcards on Quizlet, others used Evernote as their storytelling tool, but my favorite was a group of three creating a math rap video combining GarageBand and iPhoto.

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Today my classroom is a much livelier place, particularly important with the advent of the Common Core state standards. I emphasize a flipped-teaching model so students have more time to collaborate on problem solving and real-life situations during class time. I am not going this alone – several geometry and algebra 2 teachers have joined me in exploring new applications to improve student

understanding and learning in this technologically-driven environment. Over the last few years, students have been more actively engaged in learning and that is refreshing!

On a personal note, MERIT challenged me from day one, helping me evolve from that 20th century dinosaur. KCI gave me the chance to discover tools to enhance my teaching skills, gave me the courage to try new and different programs and, with opportunities to continue meeting with my MERIT peers throughout the year, the confidence to keep at it. This helped me become a better teacher while my students are getting a better understanding of how to utilize technology in the classroom.

Without good friends like you, teachers wouldn't have these opportunities to be so successful. Your generous support of the MERIT program is a source of encouragement to all educators who are working to do great things with students!

Thank You!

Dolly Sandoval