

TET Task 3: Technology Evaluation

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The topic of this paper is evaluating technology for its appropriateness to my audience and purpose.

Instructional Setting

The instruction for this will be completed online due to the distance and availability of the learners. The content area of focus is building a virtual classroom community. Learners will access the coursework through the internet using their computer. They will interact with each other through online discussions and be able to interact with the instructor through the board, reflections or by email.

Learners in the Instructional Setting

The learners are public school teachers in the United States who want to improve their virtual classroom community. The learners teach a variety of subjects but the common theme between them is that they are all teaching virtually currently. They all have previous experience teaching; ranging from 2 years to 30 years. The learners were identified from a Virtual Teaching Facebook group and expressed interest in the training after completing a needs identification survey.

Evaluation Tools

For this instructional setting, I am planning on using Google Classroom to host my instruction. I have previous experience using it as a middle school geography teacher and believe it would be the best fit for this type of instruction. Before committing to this technology tool I set out to evaluate its appropriateness for the task.

The first evaluation tool I found is Hopkins Public Schools' Instructional Software Evaluation Rubric. The rubric is broken down into five topics: type of software, content/design,

support materials, technical aspects and other considerations. This rubric was thorough without overwhelming. It clearly defined the criteria and used a Likert scale to easily gauge the effectiveness. I especially appreciated that the rubric encourages the evaluator to look for additional reviews to encourage a more well-rounded evaluation. The rubric can be found at https://www.hopkinsschools.org/sites/default/files/public/downloads/software_eval_rubric.pdf

The second evaluation tool I found is The Vanguard Schools' Educational Technology Resource Evaluation. This evaluation has a limited number of check off questions relating to costs, content area, and availability. The main portion of the evaluation is open ended responses covering the following topics: what will the tool accomplish, how will the tool add to effective classroom instruction, pro/con list, and how we know if it is effective. Although this form provides plenty of opportunity to discuss and demonstrate the possible benefits of a technology tool, I feel it is limited in identifying the important issues and concerns that need to be addressed when using a technical resources. The evaluation can be found at <https://www.vfes.net/cms/lib/PA01916220/Centricity/Domain/373/Form-Technology%20Evaluation.pdf>.

I will be using the first evaluation tool from Hopkins Public Schools because the rubric is very clear when evaluating technology. I have experience using Likert scale rubrics and believe it is easier to share the factually findings due to the quantitative data that can be derived from it.

Findings and Recommendations

After using the Hopkins Public Schools' Instructional Software Evaluation Rubric, I found the rubric to successful for evaluating Google Classroom. From the rubric I was able to confirm that Google Classroom has many accessibility features built directly into it, such as screen readers, voice typing and braille displays (Mennuti, 2019). It provides the structure to

develop my training course in a manner that organized in a way that my learners can easily understand the tasks asked of them and provides me a variety of ways to provide feedback to them. The rubric helped remind me that when planning activities inside of Google Classroom I must think carefully about the length of time an assignment might take. If it is a lengthier assignment, I will have to design the it, in a manner that will autosave their files. One weakness of Google Classroom is the requirement to use a personal Gmail account. Although they are free, for some learners this might require them to create a new email address. This could deter some learners from participating in the training.

The only thing I felt like the rubric was missing was a chance to evaluate the ease of designing a Google Classroom from a teacher's perspective. As with all new learning management system there is a learning curve and I would have liked the rubric to evaluate the process for teacher training more thoroughly.

Based on my findings from the evaluation tool, I am comfortable using Google Classroom to deliver the content of building a virtual classroom community to public school teachers. Google Classroom provides the closed, private setting that my learners need to learn and explore the topic. It provides the opportunity for them to interact with each other and for me to provide feedback. Even when they complete the training, they will be able to go back into the Google Classroom and use it to structure my unit. Discussions between learners will occur inside of Google Classroom and provide a safe location for learners to submit their assignments. I will be able to use the topic feature to break the training into manageable chunks for my learners.

References

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https://www.hopkinsschools.org/sites/default/files/public/downloads/software_eval_rubric.pdf.
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