Integrating 21st Century Skills into Core Instructions

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/2013/10/29/integrating-21st-century-skills-core-instruction/>

I chose this first webinar because we just recently adopted learning.com at our school and I wanted to learn about how other schools were using  the program and learn about other ways that I might be able to use it with my students.  I like the way the presenter, Dawn Siech, seemed to always keep the teachers in mind as the program was implemented and she continually asked for feedback from her peers.  She wanted it implemented with fidelity and buy in that would help them implement the program. Teachers were also given choices on how to present the program.  They could do it through centers, in the classroom, or as a whole group in the lab.

As the program was implemented, students were being referred back to different lessons that dealt with charts and graphs in the core curriculum and it tied in cross curricular information. In constructivism, this to me demonstrated a reflective process.

They are also finding valid and reliable resources to use from EasyTech to use while writing research papers in communication arts.  Students are coming up with better resources to cite in their papers.  Connections are made to bigger ideas and theories including in science and social studies. The understanding continued to evolve and students were actively engaged.

Students have also been given the tools to learn better keyboarding skills from Learning.com.  It has encouraged and supported the students with tools to collaborate with others. They would work with others to construct tables and graphs with groups using analytical tools with their peers.

The plan is to use the lessons to differentiate the instruction for the students as they come in with differing levels of prior knowledge.

With this program, I think that it is important to keep in mind the questions and goals mentioned at the beginning of the webinar.  They talked about students using the internet effectively, researching, citing sources, and safely using the internet.  The fact that we should always be keeping the end in mind, knowing that we want our students to gain employability skills and gain digital literacy throughout their schooling impacted my thoughts and beliefs about this program.

Launch a Successful School Common Core Initiative

<http://community.simplek12.com/scripts/student/webinars/view.asp?id=1225>

This webinar interested me because I am in a new grade this year and curriculum is very much on my mind along with implementing the common core.  When implementing the common core it is necessary to begin planning with the end in mind. As instructors we should be focused on preparing our students to gain college and career goals.

In this webinar, Maldonada shared a lot of different links that she had found to help with implementing the common core in classrooms.  For prep work she showed the site get2core.org that gave in state information and links along with the latest news and updates on the common core.  This relates to knowing that understanding of the core is constantly evolving and changing over time. It again reminded me of the constructivist beliefs about staying current in our teaching and changing practices as we learn and reflect on new ideas.

She also talked about achievethecore.org and how it helps to engage the community.  Our learning happens in meaningful contexts and our community is part of those contexts.  We constantly need to involve those around us and use the tools given in our communities to acquire new concepts.

There was also a variety of assessment sites like parcconline.org and smarterbalanced.org that give a variety of assessments to help improve teaching. The assessments should be used to inform instructors and help them make decisions about the learning process.

Going Google-Quick Start Guide to Getting Started with Google Tools

<http://community.simplek12.com/scripts/student/webinars/view.asp?id=194&watch=1>

Kimberly Thompson presented this webinar.  What I learned from this was that there are even more tools in Google than I previously thought that will help to actively engage my students.  Google seems to constantly be adding new features.  Some of the different tools shared were the search tools which included a dictionary and also a way to search by reading level which is very helpful for younger students.  She also shared how to set up safe search in Google and a way to see at a glance if your students are using safe search as you monitor the classroom.  I also learned how to see the weather and time zones in other countries.  There was also a way to pull up different pictures using panoramio.com from different areas to help the students learn about and understand different cultures.  These features would all help students with knowledge construction.

Using Google docs, students would also be able to work collaboratively. They could also create surveys that they could use to get results from other sources.

Using Emerging Technology to Improve your School Library Program

<http://www.instantpresenter.com/WebConference/RecordingDefault.aspx?c_psrid=EA58DD898546>

This webinar interested me because it deals with students bringing/using their own devices.  It also was presented by a librarian, Luhtala, and it shared ways in which she encouraged the use of different devices in the library.  I learned that in her collection she is currently focused on providing materials for the upcoming students in five years that will be looking for information in a different way from the students of today.  She talked about her collection that she currently has already meeting the needs of her current students.  She shared that when she decides what books to purchase, she has to decide whether to buy print or electronic.  I found it interesting that for nonfiction she typically chooses to buy electronic.  Although the electronic books cost much more than the print versions.  Because of the cost she is not always able to purchase the e versions and sometimes will provide links to information for the students in place of the e books. She still buys many of her fictional books in print because that is what her audience seems to prefer right now.

She used Destiny Quest in her library for the students to use in order to implement the uploading of e books. I know we currently also use that program at our school. After seeing the value of this program, I plan to investigate the use of it further in my classroom and challenge my own students to use it.

The way her library is set up is for collaboration with students and their devices.  She provides charging stations at the tables and her students seem to prefer to be at tables with their own devices and their friends close by to do their academic work rather than sitting at a desktop on their own. I had seen the benefits of teenage students using their personal devices for learning, but this webinar has challenged me to explore the use of the mobile devices even with my younger students. She talks about them being “bridge” kids going from print to digital and wanting to change them from just being digital consumers. She also looked into socioeconomics of the students and through grants she provided devices to those that could not afford devices.  However, because almost all of the students (even some of the poorest) had devices, she did not have to provide very many in order to implement having 1:1 in her building.

The biggest thing I noticed from the interviews with students in the webinars is that much of the use being done by the students is because of an assignment or blog one of their instructors had given to them. They encouraged the students with inquiry based teaching practices where the students were driven to find answers to support their beliefs.  Because their instructors were immersed in collaborating digitally, the students seemed to follow. The principals of constructivism played a big part in this school.  Because the instructors and the librarian looked at the students and their prior experience, they were able to take the learning farther and build on it.  The students were actively engaged, and constantly assessed using their mobile devices to guide instruction.  It also seemed that the librarian was constantly questioning new uses for devices and ways for the students to access information and she was always trying to improve on the practices in her school.