**Expert Project – Process Essay and Portfolio [http://expertprojectcrcrth670.weebly.com](http://expertprojectcrcrth670.weebly.com/" \t "_blank)**

**By: Brad Kozel**

I have an improved focus and a clearer path to evaluating educational technologies. I believe that these are the broad skills that I will take away from the expert project. Entering the class I would have described myself as technologically literate but inexperienced. I felt overwhelmed by the flood of educational technologies and powerless to do any level of assessment of there value. I do believe that at the start of the class I would have placed myself closer to the skeptic side of technologies given the thoughtless ways that I have seen them implemented in the schools. I now see that the technological world is here to stay and it will become even more pervasive as time goes on. There is urgency in me to develop the use of technology in the classroom that was not there before because I want a piece of the pie. Young peoples technological bandwidth cannot and should not be completely filled with snapchat and facebook. They need to develop skills to navigate the volume of information on the web and to experience learning on computers.

The expert project specifically helped me think through one focused application and while it was not directly related to my broad conclusions about technology in classrooms it has given me a model for trying new technologies. Finding a focus and following through I believe is the first lesson in for me from the project. Once I settled on peer feedback through Canvas I was able to push to the side the noise of all the educational technology and just pursue one idea and one technology. I think that this model I could use around several other technologies. I also like that since it was an *expert project*, I drove me to develop the method in a way that was supported by the literature around peer feedback best practices.

Another significant shift in thinking came from combining one of the class activities and the expert project. The activity was not directly connected but it helped me understand my direction more. The activity asked us to adapt existing group collaboration to a technology. I really liked this assignment because it connected what I have always have been doing in the classroom successfully to a different delivery mechanism. It also asked us to think about what is gained or lost in doing it through a technology. This moment shifted my thinking. I have always done peer feedback with writing assignments and had success. I realized that I was not necessarily abandoning those success but rebranding them. This helped me more fully develop my thinking about the new way of doing peer feedback. I do believe that something is lost when feedback is not given face-to-face but on canvas the feedback increased in volume and overall quality. I wonder still if the feedback has the same impact on the writer given it is being read? Does depersonalizing the feedback lower its perceived quality? Does depersonalizing allow the reviewer to be more honest?

The value of peer feedback as a practice became much more clear to me as I completed my research. Nancy Trautmann’s piece, Designing Peer Review for Pedagogical Success: What Can We Learn form Professional Science?was a large influence on my thinking around the value of peer review. I value real experiences in my classroom. This mostly manifests as completing doing as much science as possible given the constraints of the curriculum. I was interested to learn from her writing that research shows that students do not gain an understanding of the nature of science by simply performing experiments (Trautmann). Completing the circle is necessary to have a more impactful experience. This includes practicing expressing the findings of experiments through scientific writing and modeling the process of peer review. This was a great validation and placed me on firm footing revise my curriculum and devote more student effort towards the writing and the review. This set the stage for implementing the process through the Canvas platform. The technology provided me with the tools to manage this implementation. It gave me the control to extent the reviews out of the classroom if necessary and to compile the student work. The compilation of the work was important to me if I was planning to develop this skill in my students.

The pedagogy was driving the technology use. This brought me back full circle to the concerns of when and how technology enters classrooms. It was not gimmick but a technological solution to support a shift in priorities. The end result of this expert project is a proof of concept and a framework for trying out new technologies in a classroom.

This project also challenged my thing about the assignments that I happened to adopt when implementing the method. I primarily selected these assignments because they were happening in my classes while I was completing this project. I found that as I developed the peer feedback rubrics I was also streamlining the assignments to have clearer objectives. I am starting to think more deeply about the purpose of the work that I give, what I want my students to get out of it and how will they know if they are making progress.

This project is by no means finished. There is much work to be done in the area of evaluating student outcomes. Specifically I am interested in seeing how peer feedback could be used to develop content area objectives. There is more analysis I could do that could point to the peer feedback methods value. The data exists to go back and look at how many late assignments I received over the years. Very people missed the deadline this year. One reason missing work happens is because of reduced engagement in the assignment or a lack of understanding on how to complete the work. This correlation may show through if I looked back at my old grade books.

Trautmann, Nancy. Designing Peer Reivew for Pedagogical Success: What can we learn from professional science? Journal of College Science Teaching. January 2009.

http://www.researchgate.net/publication/234615016

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