

21st Century Classroom Project
At
North Brunswick High School
Report on a Performance Problem



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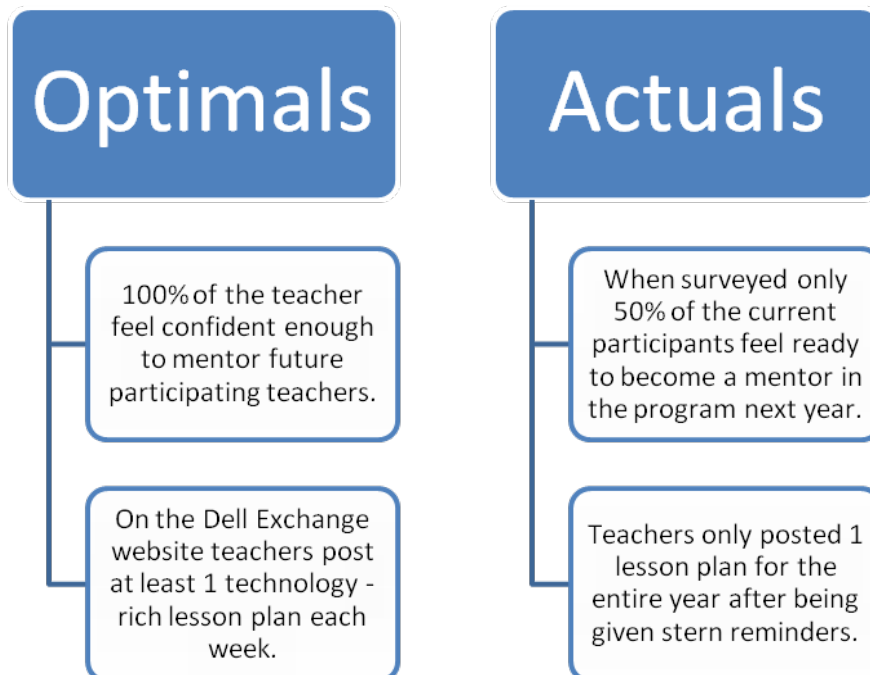
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Executive summary

As a requirement a group of human performance technology students studied a performance problem concerning the results of the "21st Century Classroom" professional development program at North Brunswick High School. The 21st century classroom program was administered by the technology department of Brunswick County Schools in partnership with Dell Computer and Pearson Publishing Company. The basics of the program entailed professional technology educators coming to the school to train, coach, and mentor 8 teachers. There was an intensive week long training with the 'head teacher', monthly meetings during the school year with all program teachers and a program consultant, access to the dell exchange website and a wiki to share ideas.

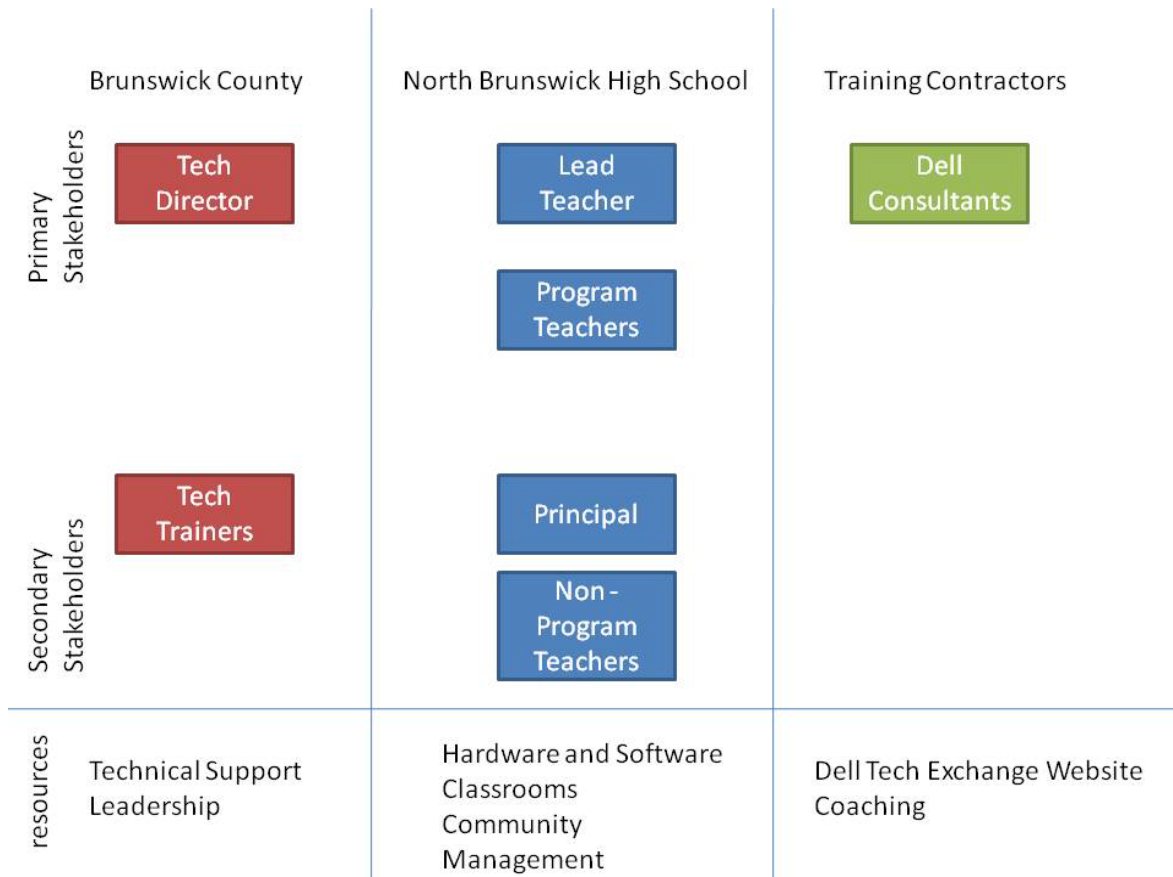
At the end of the first year, the technology directory was not satisfied with the improvement in teaching performance. His assessment was based on personal opinion and supported by the fact that only one lesson plan was uploaded to the dell sponsored program website. He did not feel confident that the teachers could mentor and support the next cohort of teachers. The teachers themselves have mixed feelings / are not confident. Fifty percent of the 8 teachers are not confident in their ability to mentor the next group, as well.



Purpose of the project

The purpose of the project was to define the problem, collect and analyze data, determine possible causes, and make recommendations to the Technology Director concerning the performance of the '21st century classroom' program.

The organization involves a number of other systems joined together for the purpose of the program. Those systems are Brunswick County Schools, NBHS, and Dell/Pearson. The major stakeholders are the technology director, the 8 participants (including the lead teacher), the principal, and the consultants.



The performance problem is that teachers are not 100% confident that they can mentor the next cohort of teachers to participate in the program. The tech director's expectations were that 100% of teachers feel confident enough to mentor future participating teachers and that teachers post at least 1 technology - rich lesson plan each week on the Dell Exchange website. When surveyed only 50% of the current participants feel ready to become a mentor in the program next year and teachers only posted 1 lesson plan for the entire year after being given stern reminders. The necessary improvement is a 100% increase on the survey regarding teacher confidence and a 2000% increase in the number of lesson plans (from 1 to 20)

Data collection methods

A number of different data collection methods were deployed to gather specific data for defining the problem and its causes. Extant data was collected from program flyers, emails, applications, formal and informal interviews and surveys. Initially, a school-wide survey conducted by the BCS Technology Coordinator indicated that teachers felt they needed more staff development. After discussing the results with the BCS Technology Director and subsequently interviewing him a related issue surfaced. It appeared that the BCS 21st Century Classroom project pilot which included a substantial amount of staff development was not as effective as the director had hoped. He stated that participating teachers at North Brunswick High School were not ready to train the next group of 21st Century teachers. He cited apathy and unwillingness to change as reasons for the problem. The following excerpt from the interview with the technology director gave crucial insight into the performance problem.

“This year we provided more focused staff development than ever. Teachers were given outside consultants who worked with them throughout the year to transform their teaching and help them integrate technology. They had access to the Dell Exchange for On Demand staff development and we gave them a space on the exchange to share lesson plans. They also had wikispaces to collaborate with each other. These lead teachers only posted one or two lesson plans for the whole year... At this point these "lead teachers" aren't even ready to mentor the next group of teachers who will receive 21st Century equipment next year.”

A focus group was held with technicians to ascertain possible causes for the problems indicated by the director. Upon review of project documentation this team found that participating teachers signed an agreement that outlined the program expectations and a survey was conducted to identify possible causes of the obvious performance gap. This led to a survey created just for the teachers who participated in the project this year. The following questions are the basis of the stated need.

1. Did you clearly understand the goals of the 21st Century Teacher Project?		
Responses	Count	%
yes	7	87.50%
no	1	12.50%

2. Were you given enough feedback on your progress in this program?		
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Responses	Count	%
Yes	4	50.00%
no	4	50.00%

3. Do you believe you are ready to successfully mentor another 21st Century teacher next year?

Responses	Count	%
Yes	4	50.00%
No	4	50.00%

4. Did you receive enough staff development?

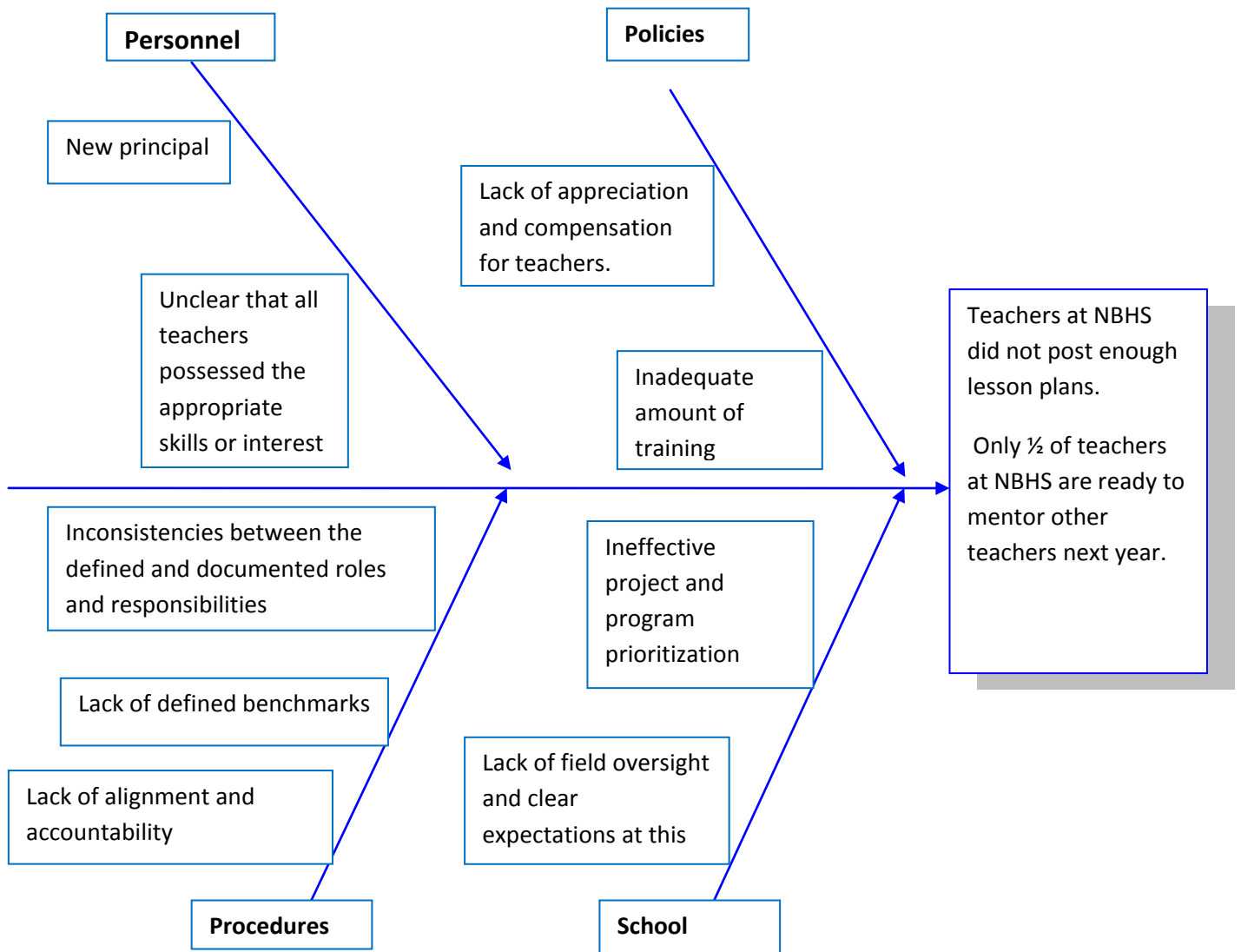
Responses	Count	%
Yes	4	50.00%
No	4	50.00%

5. Throughout the year how often did you teach technology rich lessons?

Responses	Count	%
daily	7	87.50%
weekly	1	12.50%

Findings

Fishbone Diagram of Findings



District Level Issues (Programmatic)

The district did not enforce its own policy when the teachers from North Brunswick H.S. were allowed to participate despite their blatant disregard for the requirements. It is unclear that all teachers possessed the appropriate skills or interest to carry out all required contract and project implementation functions. At the end of the year prior to implementation each teacher was asked to apply to be a part of the program. Applicants were asked to respond to 3 questions about their level of expertise with computers and other devices used in this initiative. They were also asked to describe their experience and interest in integrating technology. The applicants at the 15 other schools submitted the requested items along with the principal's recommendation form. However, none of the teachers at North Brunswick High School complied with the instructions on the application. There was an inadequate amount of training for some specific areas of need in contract and project management. Four out of eight of the participating teachers said they did not receive enough training.

Lack of defined benchmarks in specific contract and project management areas although teachers say they understand their contractual obligations and that certain project activities must be accomplished, there is a lack of emphasis and direction and no defined benchmarks to serve as a guide for improved performance or to assess whether activities and lessons meet a certain standard. In addition, the lack of clear expectations about the number of technology rich lesson plans desired was a serious issue. When surveyed most teachers felt that they performed well in this pilot program. The survey indicated that more than 87% of the teachers taught technology rich lessons daily. (see above) However, they only posted 1 or 2 lessons on the website all year. The consultant from Dell and the technology director intended to quantify the success of this pilot with the number of lessons posted on the Dell Exchange website and/or the county's website. When asked during informal interviews, teachers at North Brunswick all said they were not aware of a particular number of lessons.

There are inconsistencies between the defined and documented roles and responsibilities for participation in the project. The lead teacher, other teachers, and the principal all felt that they had done a satisfactory job with the pilot this year. However, the technology director does not agree. The fact that teachers did not participate at the level stated in the contracts they signed indicates apathy in his eyes.

Site Based Issues

There was a lack of alignment and accountability between the lead teacher, the principal, and the BCS Technology Director. This is evidenced by the fact that the principal at North Brunswick High School failed to complete the rating form for each applicant or get signature of approval from the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. This shows a lack of project oversight at this particular school. There was a lack of field oversight and clear expectations at this school. The principal who actually selected the participating teachers was no longer the principal at the beginning of this school year. The new principal, Mr. Grimes, did not have the benefit of participating in the "buzz" about this pilot program during the previous year and he didn't know that he was supposed to help oversee the implementation and provide classroom leave time for those teachers to mentor, coach, and share with each other. The technology director sent an email to all the principals explaining this but apparently Mr. Grimes joined the faculty some time after that email.

The lead teacher who was responsible for project management functions and the other teachers who were responsible for specific contract functions did not effectively communicate and work together to integrate their activities, which results in inconsistent, performance, oversight, and results. There was a lack of alignment and accountability between the lead teacher, the principal, and the BCS Technology Director. The lead teacher participated in 40 hours of staff development while the other teachers only received about 12 hours. Lead teachers were supposed to arrange for monthly meetings with the other participants to share the knowledge gained through their additional training. Teachers said that the lead teacher only called one or two meetings so they thought we were being given a break because of all extra meetings and tutoring sessions after school brought about by the turnaround process.

Ineffective project and program prioritization at this particular school in comparison to the attention the project received at other schools. Due to the demands of the Turnaround Process often times there were competing, and in some cases, conflicting guidance between programs. In addition to Wednesday faculty meetings, the entire staff met often to work on the Turnaround plan which also mandated that teachers had to offer tutoring at least 3 afternoons each week.

Implications and recommendations

Assemble an Action Learning team comprised of at least 4 of the 8 current 21st Century Classroom participants for 1 day this summer to reflect on what they did and devise their own

realistic strategies for success. An action learning team is an instructional performance support intervention that will give the teachers time to reflect and generate questions about the implementation this past year and brainstorm for strategies to make things better question the The returning teachers will be more refreshed and objective this summer and it's the perfect time to get some good feedback from them. The formation of this team will increase each participant's level of commitment and give them more ownership. They need to feel empowered and valued. Teachers need to know that their requests will be valued. Their list of strategies should also describe specific support they need from their principal and or lead teacher and technology coordinator (1/2 day each quarter for staff development, more coaching and modeling with each other and/or outside consultant). The Action Learning Team may also be called upon to reflect upon the progress of the program mid year.

Actual benchmarks or a professional/integration portfolio should be maintained by participants to introduce more accountability into this initiative. This portfolio should be reviewed by the principal and shared with the technology director and/or the coordinator at least twice each year. It should contain evidence of 21st Century leadership. For example, one tech rich lesson plan per week or 1 tech rich unit per quarter is a minimum requirement for each teacher. Additional evidence may be included as well such as webquest or classroom wikis or online forums that provide a platform for teacher to student and student to student collaboration.

Each semester the team of 21st Century Classroom teachers should host 1 hour staff development for all the teachers at the NBHS. BCS's goal is to keep adding more teachers to the program each year until every teacher will have the skills to deliver "21st century content in a 21st century context with 21st century tools and technology" (taken from the State technology plan) that increase student levels of engagement and improve the entire teaching learning process. By requiring this team to provide staff development for the entire staff you kill 2 birds with one stone. The current teachers gain confidence and develop their 21st Century skills and the other teachers in the building can receive technology CEU's and be better prepared to embrace 21st century concepts. Likewise, a sense of community is established that will expedite the process of new technology adoption.

The tech coordinator, tech director, and principal should meet to develop an instrument that can be used to give 21st Century teachers technology specific feedback. The instrument should provide clear guidelines and scales that will assist an administrator or another colleague in providing relevant and effective feedback to the 21st Century teacher. The technology

director is rarely in the building but the principal and his team of administrators observe teachers daily through formal observations and informal walkthroughs. Development of this instrument would empower the principal at North Brunswick High School. The principal is the instructional leader so he should play a more active role in supporting this initiative which is directly aligned with district and state BOE mission. The principal's active participation would also ensure that ample time is given for these 21st Century lead teachers to support each other.