

Credit Flexibility: Teacher-Led Initiatives Audio Transcription

**Monday, May 17, 2010
2:00 – 3:00 p.m. EST**

Jennifer: Good afternoon everyone. My name is Jennifer Reed with the Great Lakes East Comprehensive Center at Learning Point Associates. I'd like to welcome you to today's event, Teacher-Led Credit Flexibility Initiatives Using Technology, hosted by the Ohio Department of Education and Great Lakes East. This web conference is the seventh in a series designed to provide information related to the local implementation of the Ohio Credit Flexibility policy. The series discusses the recently released guidance and will connect participants with Ohio schools, districts, and organizations that are currently working through the policy implementation. An archive is currently available on the Ohio Department of Education's website for the previously events in the series. At this time, I'd like to introduce Sarah Luchs, associate director with Student Success with the Ohio Department of Education.

Sarah: Good afternoon everyone. We have a really exciting session to share with you today, all focusing on the use of technology. Today we're going to cover a couple things. The first thing we're going to do is showcase, as you saw on the pre-slides, two case study sites, Delaware Area Career Center and New Boston Local Schools. We're going to talk to those sites about how they got started, what technology they're using, and their experiences with credit flex. We're also going to respond to your questions as we do in every web conference. In the last couple of conferences, we mentioned the contextual drivers and there are a couple I want to mention at the start of this one. The first obviously is the 21st century skills and the movement and emphasis on critical thinking, collaboration, problem solving, and communication – many of you are familiar with the diagram that comes from the national partnership. In addition, there is a recently released national technology plan, it's called *Transforming American Education, Learning Powered by Technology* and came out in March 2010, from The Office of Educational Technology at the United States Department of Education. There are two resources; one is the report and then a video excerpt that's available on the ed.gov website. Recently, there's been some information through Ed Week and an insert in Ed Week, the April 28 edition, a special report on the *Emerging Policy Debates on Virtual Education*. You can see the link on the PowerPoint. I would strongly recommend folks check that out. It's pretty extensive, lots of different lenses on the issue of technology, and has lots of wonderful supports. With that, I want to introduce our guests today, from the Delaware Area Career Center, Mary Beth Freeman, Tammy Hall and Kelly Kohl; as well as from New Boston Local School, Mike Staggs, Beth Smith and Chad King. Both of these

sites have interesting activities underway. They were initiated at the local level and it's interesting because they represent two really different contexts. New Boston is in a rural area, the second poorest district in the state, relatively small, and Delaware Area Career Technical Center, which is just north of Columbus, is a school of choice, they have north and south campuses. So you might be thinking what do these two sites have in common? When we did the site visits for the case studies, we found out they had quite a bit in common. I want to ask both Mary Beth and Mike to kick us off. How about Mike if you go first, just talk a little bit about your model and how you got started and then we'll turn it over quickly to Mary Beth to do the same?

Mike: We began our journey on this about three years ago when I came to the district. We had probably 30 to 40 outdated computers in the high school and not a whole lot of anything else. We started at a very quick pace because we teamed with ITSCO, Instructional Technology Services of Central Ohio. Over the last two years, we offered 16 different professional developments on not only technology, but how to use the technology, which jump started everything for our district and probably advanced us two years faster than where we thought we would be. Also during that time as we got a few resignations, we allocated the money for those salaries to purchasing technology. Now all but two of our teachers have laptops and we have white boards in probably 60% of our classrooms. So we've utilized the money very well. The in-services actually created a great interest in the technology itself in several of our teachers, two of whom are here today. But at this point, we have a third-grade classroom teacher who has a blog, which to me was pretty amazing with her age group. The teacher went through an ITSCO workshop and thought a blog would be a good thing for her kids. It's been very successful. That's how we got started and we're spiraling down a course that we can't turn back now.

Sarah: Thank you Mike. Mary Beth, do you want to introduce what's happening at your site?

Mary Beth: Thank you, Sarah. Back in 2008-2009, we purchased Blackboard, a content management system. We started it from the perspective of, how can we use this as more of an internet to improve communications among our staff members both on the same campus and between the two locations, the north and the south campus. We knew that down the line that this would be a tool that we would want to use inside the classroom. We looked at Disrupting Class by Clayton Christensen, Nine Shift by William Draves and Julie Coates, and Bill Daggett's work with the International Center for Leadership in Education and started to see some common threads and pieces of information that we're going to have to adapt to in order to meet the needs of the 21st century learner. As a career center and a school of choice, we have to listen to those things and adapt accordingly if we're going to have students coming to our school. So as we explored transforming technology, actually our staff came on board and they started to see some ways

that this could be incorporated into the classroom. The other thing is, last summer with the staff interest we had, staff provided the leadership to pilot a project that would start integrating Blackboard technology into the delivery system and utilizing new Internet-based information. I want people to keep in mind as we started this; this was not a top down approach. Teachers led the charge to this hybrid class; they presented the plan to administrators. It wasn't administrators saying here's what you're going to do. The district then provided the tools and the support that they needed in order to further offer this hybrid piece to the students. This allows the teachers some ownership and then they work diligently to make this work and actually progressed at a much faster pace than I would have expected. The second thing I want to indicate is, we didn't start this with - we've got this Flex Credit policy, how can we use it? What we started with was a design that's going to be good for kids, that's going to meet those 21st century learning skills. It's going to be intrinsically motivating because we're now adapting to the world of the student, not the world in which the rest of us, at least at this table, grew up in, in terms of education. So we designed a plan that was good for kids. The nice thing was that the Credit Flex policy allowed us a means to overcome some traditional obstacles that maybe we would have had in the past. The other thing that we've learned, we've gained and have made much more progress than we anticipated. We started to use this as a means of professional development for our staff and it's been very well received, starting to get away from face-to-face meetings, you've got to be here at this time. It's also a way that our folks can start to see how it's going to be a benefit in the classroom. So as we've progressed with that more and more opportunities are unfolding. I'm going to be quiet at that point because I think the real story can be shared with you between our director of secondary operations, Tammy Hall, and Kelly Kohl, one of our instructors who has given a lot of leadership to this.

Sarah: Thanks, Mary Beth. Kelly and Tammy, go ahead and tell this story. I know both of your sites are using Blackboard as the application and, of course, there are lots of choices in the technology world. So Blackboard is an obvious one. Many Higher Ed institutions use it. But if you could just share a little bit about why you selected Blackboard, and how you constructed the cohort design that you have. I understand that your model has part classroom time and then part solely online time. So if you could unpack that a little bit for our listeners.

Tammy: Okay. We started our pilot program with a group of 18 seniors. We wanted 15 for sure, and then we ended up having 18, so we took the whole group. It was an all or nothing for the students. We had four classes that they had to be part of. They took AP English, a government, forensic science and a dual credit statistics class. During the time, the first interim portion was just regular standard 40-minute classes and then, at interim, if they had a C or better average they were eligible to start working on Blackboard. Before that Kelly had worked with them to get them used to working with Blackboard. If they had a C or better, they would have four days of instruction and then their Friday assignments were completed between when they left class on Thursday and when they came in

Monday morning. Their assignments would be posted using Blackboard and could be accessed from home, or public places like. If they had no access, they could come into the class. If they did not have a C or better, they had to report to the regular class to get extra help. So during that time, they would have the teacher all to themselves to get caught up on anything they were missing and also complete that assignment using our computers. The students were excited. As I said, we had more than we had anticipated. We set up a staff development program to prepare teachers. We didn't want the Blackboard assignments to be just worksheets posted online, so we researched and got best practices for online instruction and we developed a plan where the teachers would learn Blackboard. For instance, the first thing the teachers did was a discussion board working with Kelly and she'll tell you how that works here in a minute. The first assignment they did with their students online was a discussion board. Kelly, do you want to explain how that worked?

Kelly: We took the best practices as Tammy mentioned and we broke them down to components. I took what I had done in a class over the summer and used a lot of the highlights of Blackboard. Then I worked with the three academic instructors and we did a discussion board as professional development to get them used to using the discussion board tool. They, in turn, turned around and had their students do the same thing. That proceeded into blogging, we did some online discussion, we did some PowerPoint. We did have some things where they had to download a worksheet that we gave them. Usually that included doing some kind of Internet research where we would give them the links to websites as reference and they would have to look up those links. We used some videos off YouTube. One of the things that I did with my own lab was an online lecture from a professor. The kids accessed that and then they gave me their feedback. So, like Tammy said, it wasn't just putting worksheets online. It was really interactive, not only between the students and the instructor, but between the students and students. That was probably the most exciting part - watching these students interacting with each other. There were some common things they had to say and there were some unique things. So they learned from each other, probably more so than they learned from the teacher on the days that they were doing Blackboard assignments.

Sarah: Thank you. That's excellent. I want to point out a couple things and then turn to Mike's team. The *Learning Powered by Technology Report* talks about how technology can help us leverage the one-to-one relationship in addition to cooperative teaching, a cooperative learning, a learning community. That's part of what we're transitioning into and your site does a wonderful job of helping us begin to think about how that works and what some of the benefits are, not just in the multimedia, but as you explained the students co-teaching each other and certainly professional development among staff. The other thing that Mary Beth mentioned earlier is, you had initiated this work prior to the Credit Flex policy. I believe that's true in New Boston as well. The *Learning Powered by Technology Report* from the United States Department of Education cites moving from a seat

time model to a performance-based model with many more kinds of structural support for fluidity in the learning context. So I want to note that both of these sites had this work underway and the philosophy just really fits well with the Credit Flex policy. Mike, I know at your site, part of your role is to support Beth Smith, your English teacher, who wanted to try something new that she learned at e-Tech. I'd like you and Beth to chime in on how your model got started and what this first year has looked like.

Mike: Sarah, to be honest the only role I had was to say yes.

Sarah: That's a great response, Mike.

Mike: I did submit the plan and the course outline to the local board of education and they were enthusiastic about it. Now I'll let Beth talk about everything else.

Beth: Okay, last year I was part of the Credit Flexibility team since we knew that Credit Flexibility was coming. After maybe a day of thinking, I thought it would be neat to try an online class, just to try to get ahead and see what it's like. So I went to Mr. Staggs and he graciously said yes. I'm so lucky to have someone who was willing to do that with me. We came up with an online class and it's a film and literature class. We do it mainly through Blackboard, but I only use Blackboard to turn work in or at least the discussion boards. A lot of my work is pulled from wikis or podcasts, we do web casts, so we do a lot with the technology part of it. The class was mainly supposed to be juniors and seniors, but we had interest from freshman and sophomores. So the class was open for 9th through 12th grades and basically it's an individualized class for them. They have a set of lessons that they have to go through and projects that they have to complete. But they work at their own pace. I have found that some of the students that we normally have who are very quiet in class, who don't participate, have really excelled with being able to do an online class. They are able to move ahead very quickly, quickly to the point where they're almost waiting for me to post stuff on to the Blackboard for their next assignment because they're just moving so quickly through it. If they were sitting in a class, it would be much different to get something from them. But they're able to respond very well online. Next year, we plan on adding another online class, a creative writing class. Mr. King is going to talk to you about our hybrid classes. I think our online class has shown that students respond well to it. It's something that we should be open to and that they do enjoy.

Sarah: Thank you, Beth. We are getting some questions as you were sharing your story as to whether the course that you're offering this first year at least, was it already an existing program of study or did you develop it specifically for this online mechanism?

Beth: I created it completely for the online mechanism. What we have, during the day, is called our Flex period. We have a lot of students who do not have Internet at home or had Internet at home at one time and have lost it. So during this Flex

period, this allows the kids to have a certain time where they can meet with me, if they have questions or to have a time when they can be working on the computer. Also, with it being a film class, we show movies online. I have a Netflix account, so I'm able to let the kids go onto the account, watch movies from the account and, that has worked out wonderfully.

Sarah: For both of your sites, I wonder if you would answer this question. You mentioned Beth that you've got students who don't have an Internet connection. Obviously being a small school district and rural and low income, that's often the case. What would you tell folks who are concerned that their students don't have access either to computers or to Internet types of connections?

Beth: I would tell them, if you give the students an option of being in class to do the work or that they can be out of class to do the work, if they can find some place with Internet connection, chances are they're going to find some place that has Internet, either the local library or a friend's house. But again we've opened up the class, we've moved to a block schedule and this block schedule has allowed a Flex period, which is during our lunch period, to allow kids to do their work during that period. We allow them plenty of time daily to complete work online so anyone can take the class.

Sarah: Kelly and Tammy, how do you handle similar kinds of circumstances.

Kelly: It's interesting, just what Beth had said, if the students have the option out of school, they'll find a place to get on the Internet. We did provide them with a list at the beginning of the year of local establishments including Panera Bread and McDonalds down the street that have Wi-Fi where they could go. Our Delaware County Library has a computer lab that is free to people visiting the library. We have a few laptops that are owned by the school that the kids can check out. They can also load the information, the items that they need on a flash drive and take it home and use it on a computer that may not have Internet. Tammy, do you have any other ways you can think of?

Kelly: No, I think you covered all of them.

Sarah: Tammy and Kelly, both of you have gotten a lot of questions, because your model has this hybrid nature where you have a cohort of teachers and students who are in class, Monday through Thursday and then they're out of the building on Friday. Operationally, how do you manage things like attendance, making sure students are making progress, if they're actually in the community in a McDonalds or a Panera. Is the work getting done? Are you reducing behavior or discipline types of issues? Can you speak to these issues?

Kelly: Students are marked present on Friday. When they come in on Monday, if their work hasn't been turned in over the weekend sometime, then they're marked as an unexcused absence and the parents are contacted. Then they would not be

allowed to go out the following Friday. But we haven't had an issue with that. We talk to parents at the beginning of the year and they sign forms so they were aware that students would be out. Staff members, the teachers call the parents if there is any kind of a problem, but we haven't had any issues.

Sarah: Great, thank you. I want to talk a little bit about what you're finding now that folks have a good sense for how your models are working and how you've engaged students and parents and others. Can you share a little bit about what you're finding, has anything surprised you? What do you see as some of the benefits to date of putting your model in place? Let's go back to New Boston and, Mike, start with your team.

Mike: Before we go any further I'd like for Chad King to give you some background on what he's planning for this coming year.

Chad: This past year, I did not have any online or hybrid classes. But starting next school year, similar to what Delaware is doing, we are going to start a hybrid class for our upper level math classes, our advanced math, our AP calculus and AP statistics. Students are going to report to class two days a week and be online the other three days a week. It's going to be first period and we haven't started it yet, so I can't go into what any problems would be with it. The whole idea of attendance is one that will come up. I like the idea of the discussion board so you can easily see who has posted and who hasn't. You can easily get attendance that way. It is still a work in progress that really won't start until next school year.

Mike: The nice thing about Credit Flexibility is the seat time is not mandatory. The time they can spend on the class may not be at first period. It could be in the afternoon. I think a lot of the programs at New Boston will head towards a hybrid model. We have the plans and are beginning to go to bid on a new building that I think will help us facilitate this change.

Sarah: Chad, do you want to speak to why you are doing this? Clearly, Beth does this first-year model and Mike is supporting it. I know you had some conversations about looking at what this could look like scaling up in your site, Mike. But Chad, what would be the advantage for you to do something in mathematics for next year?

Chad: The big advantage for me is that currently I am the only high school math teacher in our district. So I have all classes 9 through 12 math. This will allow us to increase our course offerings. Currently, I do have a couple classes where I have two different classes in the same classroom this year, which has some logistical advantages and disadvantages. It does increase our ability to offer, especially upper level math classes, for these students.

Sarah: Great, thanks. Mary Beth, your team, do you want to talk a little bit about what your experience has been and what some of the benefits are that you're having to date?

Mary Beth: We were just sitting here brainstorming all the great things we've been able to do this year. I think the number one thing is the extra help to the students. If they haven't maintained a C, they come in and they have more one-on-one time. With that said, I think it's been noticeable that they do work a little harder to maintain that grade so they can be eligible to be out week from week. There's been more of an increase in completing the assignments. I've definitely seen that. I've also been doing it in my lab as well as the academic side. I think there's been probably students who typically would not speak up in class, have been a little bit more comfortable typing on a discussion board or a blog. They are more articulate as to what they're saying because they have time to stop and think about what they want to type, and before they send it they can read or look at their words. One of the biggest benefits has been when we need to be out of the building. There's been a couple Fridays that we've had opportunities to do professional development. We have one teacher onsite, which allows a couple of us to go out. We haven't had to have subs on those days which saves the district money in the long run. Tammy, is there anything else?

Tammy: More collaboration time. Friday is when a student or two may be on-site. So you can get them started and then the teachers have an opportunity to work together and collaborate. They then know what each other is doing and learn from each other.

Sarah: Kelly, I'm curious about how you got exposed to Blackboard and your experience along with the other teachers who are involved in your pilot, how they got up to speed. A lot of teachers communicate that they are a little bit intimidated by the technology, the students seem naturally better at it than they are. How do you manage that feeling of intimidation or at least some intimidation because it seems to come to this generation of students so easily.

Kelly: I was asked last spring to consider doing this training because I had some time in the morning. I actually took my Blackboard training through Blackboard online. That was my first experience with an online class. I've done a couple since then. I was just ready for a challenge and I have a high schooler of my own at home. I know how kids learn. I saw it as a 21st century skill and the direction we need to go. I was intimidated. I took a ten-day class in June and then in August I took a 15-day class through Blackboard. I was really fascinated. We didn't have any seat time at all or face-to-face time as we call it. I was fascinated with the comments. There were 20 to 25 students in each of the classes. They were people like me who had never worked on Blackboard to people who have been using it six, seven, eight years from all over the country. I was fascinated to read the discussion board and the blogs and I learned so much from that. I realized it was just a matter of trying something new and getting comfortable with it and figuring

out a way to keep up with the kids in a new delivery system in course management. So I think Tammy can speak to how the academic teachers got involved, because I'm not sure what the process was.

Tammy: We just asked for volunteers, who would be interested in doing it. They were all excited. Craig had already been working on opening a forensics class, had done some labs in with our law enforcement lab, and there was a group of students who were excited about that. Several of our teachers are adjunct faculty and they are already using Blackboard at the colleges that they work for, so they were already using it.

Sarah: It's interesting that you mention that Tammy, because it's a notion of alignment, preparing kids for college. Certainly, there is an academic side to that, but increasingly there's a technology side. If Higher Ed is already using tools like Blackboard, this helps prepare students to engage in that way. Do you have any thoughts on that?

Tammy: Students do come out better prepared for going onto college. Most of the colleges, at least the community college, around us have been using Blackboard for a couple years now. We are in partnership with Columbus State. Kelly and I went down there several times to meet with their staff on what they do. They use [Camtasia](#) to do the video so we purchased it and can follow along. We can share with staff development.

Sarah: I know in our previous conversation, the flip side of the alignment to Higher Ed is also competition with Higher Ed. Chad, you mentioned in your thinking about next year, trying to keep students in your district and provide a full range of services, since you're the only math teacher. A whole range of courses that are what they might need. You were interested in a competitive edge that the technology might provide you.

Chad: Yes, I don't know exact numbers, but we do have quite a few students who do post secondary option. A lot of post secondary options, where the school districts are small, is just to get the variety of classes. We only have staffing to do so many English classes and so many math classes. There are only so many hours in a day. So once they get through with the offerings they wish to take here, then they go to a wonderful program. Post secondary option is a good program, a lot of students get a lot from it. But it's nice for them to have the opportunity if they don't want to go into a college class, they don't feel they're ready for being in with college students, to be able to take some of the same types of classes at our high school. Some big schools don't have this problem because with a larger staff, they have more flexibility in their offerings.

Sarah: So Mike, some of the questions that we're getting have to do with the cost of a tool like Blackboard. Your district isn't necessarily a wealthy district, how are you managing the cost of Blackboard? Are there other tools, say [Moodle](#), that

might fulfill the same kinds of services that are open source or freely available? Have you all been talking about that?

Beth: Yes, actually this is our first year using Blackboard. Due to the work that we have with [Cisco](#) and South Central Ohio Computer Association (SCOCA), we were able to get a one-year trial run because it's only my one course that is through Blackboard. But we do know it is pricey. We had thought about using Moodle. I have gone to conferences about Moodle, like the e-Tech conference and then the Ohio School Improvement Institute. I have not tried Moodle, but I know the end result could be the same. The only difference is that Blackboard is a little bit more put together, easily accessible, easily usable by students from what I understand. I haven't used Moodle, but I do really like the features that Blackboard does offer.

Mike: Sarah, if we do move to Blackboard, it would be through a consortium through the ITC. So it would be a reduced price, but it would still be a significant cost.

Sarah: We always release the PowerPoint after the web conference, which will include the resources for Cisco and e-Tech. E-Tech recently did a web conference on creating learning communities and Ed Week has several recorded webinars on different features of good, quality e-learning and discussion blogs and things. So after the conference, please do go and review them. There's also a college professor video from YouTube talking about using social media and her experience with that. So Mike, I'm hearing you suggest reaching out to your regional resources to get support, such as price breaks, for your technology decisions.

Mike: Absolutely. Peggy White who works for our ITC has been very helpful. She actually even helped train some of our teachers on not only Blackboard, but also Photoshop and several other software packages that we're using throughout the building.

Sarah: Mary Beth, on your end of things, do you have Tammy and Kelly researching other tools than Blackboard? Are you concerned about costs? Are there ways that your team is thinking about this moving forward?

Kelly: Prior to my role at the Delaware Area Career Center, I was involved in a situation where that research had taken place between Moodle and Blackboard. I go along with some of the things that Beth alluded to. From what we learned, Blackboard is a more sophisticated, I think more intuitive and it's easier to use. If we want our staff to venture out and try something new, we're going to have to make it as simple as possible for them. Sometimes when you look at costs there's more than just the dollar amount versus people not moving forward. The other thing is the level of sophistication then we truly can get to the point that when they talk about the learning is going to be web based, 50% of high school courses by 2017, that we have a very sophisticated vehicle in order to do that. I don't want to start with

one means and then in several years decide we need to transition into something different. We have dual enrollment classes and, as Tammy alluded to, we have people who teach as adjunct professors. So if kids are doing dual enrollment classes as well as our classes, again, it's the same vehicle, it's the same format. The students are well aware of that technology and when they do move forward into post secondary I think you're going to find that your post secondary experiences are using the Blackboard more than Moodle. So upfront, while the initial cost may look more, I believe in the end, in the big scheme of things, there's going to be some costs that are going to weigh themselves out and balance out.

Sarah: Thank you. I want to thank the folks who are chatting, they're sharing resources, asking about synchronous and asynchronous kinds of formats. Some of you are offering up websites for different tools that you've heard. So we'll certainly add those to the resource list when we release everything after the conference today. But we do appreciate you sharing anything that you've heard of with everybody else that's tuned in today. This question is for the Delaware team, of your original 18 students what was your completion rates? What's been your experience with student satisfaction in the course this year?

Tammy: We just took a survey about two weeks ago. All the students have completed their class. I don't think we have any failures, do we, Kelly?

Kelly: No, not that group of seniors. We all got together as a team, talked about next year, talked about how the kids did. Tammy had requested a summary of all of our grades and all of our assignments. I think across the grid when we all looked at it, I don't think there were any failing students. I think they're all online to graduate and they're all going to pass each of those four classes at least.

Tammy: So all 18 were successful.

Sarah: Excellent. And this is also a related question again coming from our chat box, how are you all determining mastery? How have you designed your course to focus on that? There are some obvious things in terms of when students log on and their freedom to do so and the amount of time they're in this space that isn't directly aligned to how we traditionally think of seat time. But can you speak to some of the other aspects of how you really know students are hitting the proper benchmarks and performing at your expected levels?

Mary Beth: I'm a believer in dream big and start small. So we started small. There are multiple ways to deliver Flex Credit. There are some ways that you're not in class at all and so you have a final assessment or project. We still are looking at the mastery. As we did in the past, you still have all of the same assignments, the projects, all of those pieces, you're still responsible for. You are not exempt from anything because you are in this particular program. So the mastery is determined just as it was before. We are in a situation where the delivery is evolving and

changing and those students who are on top of it have that opportunity to spend that time outside of class. Maybe I'm jumping ahead, but I know there was a question about the AP hours. There again, we're not taking kids out of class every day or 50% of the time. We're saying that if they are on top of things, hour wise I'm not uncomfortable with credit flex at all. They're putting in the hours, both in the seat time as well as out, and what we're learning is actually through the projects that are being given to kids. We may expect that they may take three hours out of class time, but they're putting in five and six hours because they are so engaged and so interested. So students are giving above and beyond, versus the old delivery in the past.

Sarah: Beth and Chad, want to comment on the mastery notion?

Beth: It's a lot like what Mary Beth said. The difference is that my class is completely online, so I very rarely see the students unless I happen to pop in and a lot of them are working on the Flex period. But for me again, their responses are on the discussion boards, every day they have something that they have to respond to and that is almost like in class, if you have exit slips. That is my way to see if they were able to reach the goals that I had set for them. Also, any projects that we complete. It's a lot like a regular classroom, just giving students the opportunity to be outside of class. It's giving them the opportunity to work at their own pace. Some students can work very quickly and they are able to master it very quickly. I'm able to tell that just by the projects that they complete, the discussions that we have on the discussion board. Also with Blackboard, there's a tool, and I've used it some, where you can create quizzes, tests, and they can complete them online. You can create them in a way that it's only open for a certain amount of time. You can have different questions for different people and that can also determine what they have learned.

Sarah: So a lot of what you're describing, Beth, sounds like differentiated instruction, customization. It sounds like those tools are actually built right into the technology itself.

Beth: Right, exactly.

Sarah: Beth, whereas Mary Beth's team is dealing with a little bit older students and you had initially thought you would do the same, you ended up with some 9th-graders this year. What was your experience with them?

Beth: Mixed feelings. I had some who did great. I had some who had to be told to do the work. What I learned is that I should probably next year with these online classes, spend a few days with them completely by themselves and let them know what kind of responsibilities are expected of them for an online class. They have to be very independent workers and they have to be very responsible. I have found some of the freshmen weren't very responsible and had a hard time getting their work done. When that happened, I was able to go grab them from their flex

period and make sure that they were working on their assigned work during the time that we allotted to them. So I think that you have to make sure the kids who are doing this are responsible enough to do their work.

Sarah: I know that in North Carolina they offer a system where they have a prerequisite on how the online environment works, here's what you'll need to know, here are how to use some of the basic tools. We're all figuring this out together whether it's either an individual class or as large as a state-wide network. It's interesting how those same kinds of themes run through.

Sarah: So, our participants are already planning efforts for next year and you heard both of them say they have small initiatives under way. They started with one teacher, one course, or one cohort group in order to see how this works. You heard Mary Beth say that she gave a lot of thought to *Disrupting Class* by Clayton Christenson, the prediction that by 2017 50% of all high school coursework might be delivered online. You're looking at this very much from - How can I be competitive in the market place moving forward? If this is what students, my customers want, my community and parents want, how do I position our institution to do that? I know based on conversations with Mike, that he's thinking the very same thing. So this was your way of getting started and to choose tools wisely, but not necessarily lock yourselves in. I want to ask both sites - What your expansion plan is for next year? What do you hope to achieve? Any early thoughts about what you've seen this first year. So Mike, back to your team in New Boston.

Mike: Initially three years ago we started working on individual learning plans Pre-K through 12. I think this ties in very, very well with that. Within three years, I would guess that at least 40% of our classes will be hybrid courses and especially with the design of the new building and the access that students will have that will not disrupt the rest of the building. I think the collaboration spaces that are built into the building will just intensify the effort. But up until that time the class that Beth taught this year and will teach again next year and the landmark class that Chad is going to teach this year will lead to more acceptance amongst the staff. Not that most of our staff would be opposed to it, but I think these two have really taken the responsibility to be leaders for the rest of the building.

Sarah: Great, thank you. Mary Beth, your team? I know you're making some changes that are already underway.

Mary Beth: We believe this is so important, but a key piece to making this happen is going to be professional development. So we have a new position for next year, it's called instructional projects coordinator which is going to incorporate the 21st century literacy skills, the technology, the instruction, and not just for our teaching staff but for our support staff as well. Our entire staff has to be onboard to help move the district forward. Actually, I will tell you that Kelly applied and her name will be taken to the board later in May for that. I think one of the things as we look to

the future, we're looking at how do we customize instruction for students versus standardized instruction. Everything so far has been standardized. We've got to turn that around. So we're looking at how do we customize. We're looking at some professional development for our staff. Starting this summer, everybody will have an opportunity to take Blackboard and learn how to incorporate it into instruction. So our goal is, probably within the next two to three years, every single staff member will be utilizing some type of hybrid delivery within their instruction and I'm going to let Tammy talk a little bit more.

Tammy: For our courses for next year, we will offer them on both campuses. This year, the hybrid model was offered only at the south campus and next year it will be offered at the north campus as well. They had a cohort group last year. So the teachers are going to actually flip flop and add a new twist with a block schedule. They'll be teaching at one campus one day and then the other team will be teaching at the second campus the other day. Labs have also got on board. Some of the things that we've been looking at are the online sources for new textbooks we purchase. Like for our general program, everything is available. They sent the resources to us in a Zip file, when we unzipped it in blackboard all of the resources, tests, etc, were available, everything was already there. So Kamal (our dental instructor) is actually way ahead of everybody else. We also have the [Kindles](#) we purchased for our cohort group. So like in the AP class, all of their classic type books that they read were free on the Kindle. So as we are getting materials, we're also looking to see if it's compatible for that.

Sarah: Mary Beth, I just know from our earlier conversations, you mentioned part of your priority as a leader was to have opportunities for faculty and staff to learn 21st century skills themselves. So technology and technology literacy clearly being one. But creating collaborative environments is relevant in a professional world, especially as a career center because so many of the professions today use technology in the day to day work environment. Do you want to speak a little bit to all the professional development and the choices that you all are now offering in part due to this experience?

Mary Beth: There have been many more positive outcomes from this than we even expected in the short period of time. Our two campuses are about seven to eight miles apart. So for our staff to work together and learn from each other has been very difficult. Communication has not always been at its best. What we have found is when we offer the professional development through the online experience that we don't have to meet face-to-face. There's been great dialogue and suggestions that our teachers from the different campuses have offered to one another. They're starting to build more of camaraderie. I'm not going to say there was an adversarial relationship, but as you always know if you've got multiple schools, you're very close with those that you're connected with physically. Now what's happening is they're developing these relationships even virtually. The other thing we've done is, if the staff took these online professional development opportunities, which really took more time than a half-day professional

development day in January, which required them to do multiple sessions in different areas, and then they didn't have to come to work on that day. Or, they didn't have to come for that half-day of professional development; actually it was in March when we did that. So they were exempt from that. As we look at starting some professional development using Blackboard as a tool, they will have to experience the online learning. We want to start it this summer and go through December. We're looking at paying a stipend through grant dollars. Again, trying to make a win/win and support our staff, while helping them to become comfortable that they're going to have to include this in their class. We want to be cognizant that some people are more comfortable or less comfortable and to be able to try to help them through that pace for those who have more fear. But I think with this new instructional projects coordinator, that's going to be another piece that's going to be huge in helping our staff adapt and evolve.

Sarah: Tammy or Kelly, when we were talking with your team, they indicated that they thought that the teachers enjoyed the sense of autonomy and choice. This kind of customization in professional development that you've been offering is the same that kids appreciate that about their online learning options. Tammy was that you or was that Kelly?

Tammy: I think it might have been both of us. But we did find that out. We set a minimum that they needed to participate in three of the sessions and do a response on Blackboard to equal their half-day and many of them participated in five, six, or seven of them. So it wasn't that they only wanted to do the minimum. But just like the students in class, they were excited about what their choices were and they were going above and beyond what our expectations were.

Sarah: And Mike, I know Beth has certainly seen this and Chad is now looking into it, these notions about using the same kinds of tools for your professional development, do they also apply to New Boston?

Mike: Absolutely. I do think eventually that we'll have Blackboard throughout the district, unless we can find something cheaper. But I can see that. I can also see there's been limited discussion on actually providing a one-time stipend for a week long professional development to include the use of technology in the classroom.

Sarah: I think the tools might get cheaper for us. I know e-Tech and others are, due to the state technology plan, looking at these kinds of open source platforms and networking tools. The handheld devices are getting cheaper. There was a wonderful article recently in Fast Company about the use of handheld devices that were under \$100 that were being used with children up through age 3 and 5 to learn letters and colors. The technology moves very fast. So in about 18 months we'll have a whole new set of choices I'm sure. Some of the folks that have dialed in today are asking if they can visit your sites, if they brought a team to be

on the ground and see how you operate and talk to you personally, would either of you or both of you be open to that?

Marybeth: This is Delaware, yes we would. I would like to look at that at the beginning of next year. What I'd like to do is have more of an organized presentation and invite multiple people so that we make it well worth their while.

Sarah: Mike, how about at New Boston?

Mike: Sure, we welcome visitors any time.

Sarah: I know Mike, you used ITSCO and we did put the link for ITSCO on the website. You said they came out and did a whole series of professional development. Is that something that you would recommend for other sites to consider?

Mike: I would highly recommend it, not only was it very good, but it covered almost every area that we've taken an interest in. With the registration fee, you actually get the equipment, whether it is a digital camera or GPS or an iPod. There were many benefits and our teachers actually got to utilize the equipment and then they keep the equipment.

Sarah: That's definitely a nice feature. Here are recommendations from our earlier conversation. Mike, you said just do it, get in there, it's not going to be perfect, you've got to be willing to try. We've already had somebody asking about visiting the sites and you're both open to that. Mary Beth, you were the person of dream big and start small, both of your sites have something underway that was very tangible, that gave you a chance to safely experiment and have a great deal of learning within a year's time. Then Mary Beth's team I remember in particular said, go with the teachers who are willing to try this out, they're open to trying new technology. That certainly is the case in New Boston with Beth and Chad in terms of who initiated and sought leadership support. Because students are excited and engaged about this, don't be afraid to invite them into the process, whether planning or helping to support implementation of new technology in any school or district. And, partners like ITSCO, e-Tech and SCOCA, they're all at different levels of being able to either be contracted or support you for free. So those were recommendations that both of you made. You had some big ideas that were similar to those recommendations, just in the notion that you felt that it was such a tremendous benefit, not just to students, but also to teachers, that the technology was supporting already your strategic plans to achieve 21st century skills, to graduate more students, to make sure they're ready to transition successfully to college and career kinds of environments. It's interesting that you all chose an integrated approach. You went about things not just strategically, but you looked at multiple tools, multiple teachers, and multiple content areas which is always a kind of a best practice. So these are all from our earlier conversation and we just offer them as kind of thinking points. I think it's really a benefit to talk to two really diverse sites with different kinds of communities and mission

and vision in terms of who you're serving and how you're thinking about serving them and how you're thinking about being competitive in the future. I want to thank both of the teams for joining us today. We're getting close to wrapping up. I want to give both of you, Mike and Mary Beth, a chance to offer any last thoughts. Mary Beth, why don't you go ahead and kick us off. Any last thoughts from your team?

Mary Beth: As one of your slides indicated, just start, don't wait until you have all the answers or you'll never get there. You'll learn along the way things you won't do in the future, but just get started, jump in and do something.

Sarah: And Mike, from your team, any last thoughts for our listeners today?

Mike: I absolutely agree with Mary Beth. It's not going to be perfect and I think Beth would probably tell you that she did some things that she'll do differently next time. But it's meeting the students where they are and it's individualizing instruction. The future of public education is going to be individualized and it's going to include the use of technology in virtually every class.

Sarah: I don't know if you'll agree with this, but Daniel Pink's new book talks a great deal about motivation. Of course, motivation is linked to achievement and our ability to learn and our interest in doing so and the passion that we bring to it. Both these leaders, Mike and Mary Beth, have tremendous passion and their teams do as well, and excitement for learning the technology. Part of the fun is just figuring it out, right? Even if that means falling on our face a few times, the opportunity to figure it out is a special thing. Looking forward, that's something that we all get to engage in. In terms of our web series, this is the final session in our spring series. So as we always do, we post the transcript and the PowerPoint and even an executive summary for you. This particular session had a tremendous number of web links and resources embedded in it, so I'd encourage you to download the PowerPoint and check those sites out if you didn't get a chance to in the pre-conference session. This ends the spring series. So if you're just tuning in for the first time or you didn't see the official posting, feel free to listen to any of those. They're all about Credit Flexibility and they're all reinforcing, because it affects the entire system design. All those resources can be found on the Department's web page and you'll see guidance documents there as well as the case studies, again two of which were featured today, in addition to the series. I want to thank our presenters and our listeners today and those of you who have joined us for many of the topics this spring series, we hope to bring you many more interesting topics with the start of next school year. In the meantime, thanks again for joining and best of luck to you all.