

Chapter 3: Procedures and Methods

Major Project Design

The intent of this project was to help bring digital citizenship skills and practices into the classroom through the development of a series of lesson plans tied directly to the outcomes listed in the B.C. Ministry of Education's Digital Literacy Framework (n.d.). It concentrated on seeing the creation of a website that would become a resource hub containing lesson plans, activity ideas and links to valuable resources where further information on each topic could be found. With a notable increase in technology use in B.C. classrooms and the resulting need for lessons in the safe and responsible use of technology, this collection was meant to support and guide teachers in their own exploration of effective digital citizenship practices.

It was an enormous task to develop such a large collection of lesson plans for this project and it quickly became clear that I would not be able to reach every outcome listed. First of all, many of the outcomes are intended for grades 1-3 and 10-12, both of which are out of the range of my teaching experience and, thus, I found it difficult to plan lessons for an intended audience that I did not know. Secondly, there are 140 outcomes listed in the Digital Literacy Framework and it would take months, if not years, to develop a comprehensive resource base for every topic and level included. Instead, I narrowed my focus by identifying specific outcomes relevant to my own needs and interests. I then developed a lesson plan template and created a website (<http://ksviudigitalcitizenshipdlf.weebly.com/>) to house all of my work. Finally, I wrote 60 detailed and specific lesson plans that touched on 51 of the outcomes itemized in the framework. In doing so, I reached my goal of providing at least one lesson plan for each subtopic of the Digital

Literacy Framework, covering topics such as research skills, copyright issues, digital citizenship practices and the implementation of new technologies in educational settings.

A number of the lesson plans that I developed outline practices that I already use in my own classroom; however, many more were developed specifically for the purposes of this project. Although many of the plans encourage the use of technology in innovative ways to complete the assigned tasks, classroom discussion and collaboration were often required in order for students to play an important role in the development of their own knowledge surrounding technology use. Though these lesson plans contain ideas or suggestions for only one way of covering the outcomes, I have also developed a number of lesson plans for the same outcomes to show that there are a variety of resources and many different ways to achieve the same end result.

I knew from the beginning that I would have to define parameters for the scope of this project and would not be able to create lessons for the entire framework. I have, however, reached my goal of preparing 60 lesson plans to complete the development phase of my project. Upon reflection, I now see this website as simply a starting point on my own journey towards implementing effective digital citizenship practices in my classroom. There is definitely room for further study and development and there will always be new and engaging resources to link to, ideas to share and activities that will excite students and help them to build understanding in this field. My hope now is that this starting point will engage other educators in the need for this line of instruction and assist them on their own journeys towards digital citizenship.

Major Project Development

The basis for this project was the Digital Literacy Framework (n.d.), drafted by the British Columbia Ministry of Education and available at: https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/dist_learning/digital-literacy.htm. The framework, which identifies outcomes that promote digital literacies in today's classrooms, is broken into six sections: Research and Information Literacy; Critical Thinking, Problem Solving, and Decision Making; Creativity and Innovation; Digital Citizenship; Communication and Collaboration; and Technology Operations and Concepts. All of the lesson plans developed as part of this master's project are tied to specific outcomes listed in the framework. There are 140 outcomes for a variety of digital literacy topics and I realized very quickly upon starting the project just how large the undertaking of developing lesson plans for every outcome would be. By focusing on the development of lesson plans and activity ideas for specific outcomes within the framework, the more manageable scope ensured the successful completion of the project, leaving the potential for further development if, and when, resources permit.

After spending three weeks writing and fine tuning the first two chapters of my process paper, I started work on the project by choosing outcomes that were relevant to my teaching contract, grades 4, 5 and 6, and interests, primarily digital citizenship. As I reviewed the outcomes, however, I found that there were many slated for grades 10-12 that were also quite applicable for younger grades. For instance, the impact of cyberbullying and the anonymity of posting comments online does not only pertain to older students, it is also an issue of huge importance for younger students who are just beginning to develop an understanding of the potential long-term effects of their online interactions. As a result, I included select outcomes from the 1-3 and 10-12 grade levels in my intended list to work from.

In the end, I was able to identify 56 outcomes specific to my needs, including at least one for each subtopic in the framework, therefore covering each aspect of digital literacy outlined by the Ministry. I then set to work developing and tweaking a lesson plan template (Appendix A). After a few revisions, my template included a range of headings, such as the importance or significance of each lesson, the intended duration, the applicable grade ranges as identified by the Ministry, links to additional resources, outcomes that could be met from other subject areas and possible adaptations for younger and older students, as well as the proposed lesson plans and activities themselves. During this process, I also developed a tracking system on my website to identify each outcome by section, subsection and outcome number in the framework. This made it easier for me to organize my work and track my progress.

From there I worked to research and formulate an understanding of the importance of each outcome and started to plan how each lesson would look in the classroom. I also spent time collecting resources for each topic and bookmarking them for future reference. At this point, I realized the need for a place to house all of my work, so I began to develop a website titled Digital Citizenship in the Intermediate classroom (<http://ksviudigitalcitizenshipdlf.weebly.com/>).

This is one aspect of the project that I am particularly proud of. Prior to my OLTD coursework I had not done much creating of my own using Web 2.0 tools. Through the completion of my graduate degree, I created a number of websites and have developed a certain level of proficiency in building pages to suit my needs. Though the name is long, each element has a purpose: I chose my initials (ks), the institution for which I am working on this project: Vancouver Island University (viu), the fact that it is about (digital citizenship) and the basis for the work: the Digital Literacy Framework (dlf). It took me a number of days to determine the outline and information that I wanted to include in the site. I settled on having a quick introduction on the

Welcome page that included information from my proposal for the project, a quick description of the overall project and of myself, an overview of the Digital Literacy Framework with links to the Ministry website, and then a separate page for each of the sections of the framework which would include the outcomes that are listed for each. I also included a references page, which seems somewhat redundant as the references and resources are cited within each lesson plan, but it gave me a place to cite where I found the pictures used on the website, an important aspect of my own digital citizenship lessons. Finally, I added a blog page for each element in order to allow people to comment on the website and lesson plans contained within it during the peer review process.

I feel that my website is pleasing to the eye, easy to navigate and clearly identifies the location of each section of the framework. It is not overly showy, but it contains a lot of information and resources in a logical and organized manner and I am quite pleased with how it turned out. A substantial amount of time was spent designing, populating the site with information and tweaking the overall look and format, about three to four days in total. In the end I feel that the published result portrays a good representation of my work and it was well worth the time and effort spent to develop the website.

After completing the groundwork for the project, I began to take on the seemingly insurmountable task of actually creating the lesson plans for my chosen outcomes. While writing the proposal for this project and the preliminary chapters, I found myself eager to get to the main part of the project – the lesson planning itself. However, after many consecutive days of brainstorming, researching and formulating lesson plans, I found myself longing to be able to simply write another chapter of my process paper and the irony of that is not lost on me. In order for the finished product to prove valuable for B.C. educators, I spent between 80 and 100 hours

working on this exhausting and challenging task and tried to maintain a high level of creativity, relevance and accountability.

In developing the lesson plans, I started with outcomes that I have already worked on with students in my own classroom. This was an easy way to transition into developing lessons and allowed me to realize the need for amendments to the lesson plan template before getting too deep into the creative process. I enjoyed this part of the project because it was hands on and doing what I initially intended for the project, but also because it involved searching the internet for resources and links. I spent many afternoons getting lost in the thick of it all as my eyes were once again opened to the vast amount of resources available.

Some lessons that I developed can be completed in one lesson as they cover a small aspect of digital literacy. Others are quite involved and lengthy, covering multiple aspects of digital literacy and requiring multiple lessons over a period of weeks or even months. All of the lessons can be modified to suit the needs of individual teachers and the subject(s) they are teaching. However, a requirement of use for all of these lessons is an open mind to bringing technology into the classroom to enhance student learning. Teachers should be confident and capable in dealing with the negative aspects that can occur, such as limited access to technology, lack of strong Wi-Fi, varying levels of student experience using technology or online resources that are 'down' for periods of time, as well as the positive growth that can be found when students use a tool effectively. Teachers also need to lead by example and support their students and other staff in their use of technology. This is not to say that they need to be experts, far from it, but they need to understand how to work with technology and should have experience using tools like wiki's, social media tools such as Skype, Facebook or Instagram, and other collaborative and communicative technologies.

I also tried to make use of resources that are free and easily available on the web. What I did not intend was for teachers to have to create an endless series of profiles or for students to be required to remember login names and passwords for use on multiple sites. Further, I understand that classroom funding is precious and cannot be used to purchase numerous licenses for website resources. Luckily, there are a large number of online resources that are easy to use and free for students and so I was still able to develop some exciting lessons tied to digital literacy.

Throughout my work I kept a journal to track my progress. In reviewing my journal entries I found that my eagerness and motivation formed the pattern of a series of waves over the length of the project. Initially, I was quite excited to get moving and dive in to the fun part of lesson planning. That eagerness quickly waned when, during my research, I came across the website MediaSmarts (n.d.) at <http://mediasmarts.ca/>. After embarking on what I thought would be a unique and exciting endeavour, I found what seemed to be an exact version of what my proposed project was to be – and a Canadian version to boot! Though initially disappointed, I soon came to see discrepancies in what they had accomplished and what I was trying to do. I realized that a lot of the information contained on their site was developed with middle to high school students in mind and that the intent seemed to be to integrate technology into other curriculums, such as Language Arts and Social Studies, but not specifically to focus on digital citizenship skills. Though associations and connections could be made to their lessons, I felt that specific lessons in digital literacy concepts were still needed for the intermediate classroom. Since my focus was on distinct digital citizenship skills and outcomes while incorporating elements of other subjects, I felt that there was difference enough to allow me to proceed with my work and that the two resources could work side by side to provide teachers with more options and information.

My optimism improved and I set about starting to write lesson plans. Again, there was an ebb in motivation when I realized just how much work the project was going to be. After my first day of lesson planning, I wrote:

Truth be told the first lesson plan took ages to create. I was fighting with the format, changing the layout of my webpage, saving and then fixing and re-saving the template again and finding a format that worked for me. I spent a lot of time on the organizational aspects of the project and a lot of time developing lesson plans, too. As I kept at it, the lesson plans came quicker. I got into the groove a bit and was able to produce 4 decent lesson plans. There is a lot of work collecting resources and ideas to put these together – more so than I thought. I finished the day discouraged but hopeful that as I get better, these will come faster. (Sward, 2014)

As I crafted more lesson plans, it did, indeed, become a more streamlined process, but that did not mean it was any easier. Though some would take me only an hour or so to create, others took three to four hours to gather resources, research information, find unique and interesting ways for students to work with the information and write out the lesson plan. Mentally, the process was exhausting and I often felt overwhelmed by my task. As I pushed myself to get the job done, I began to notice patterns in my work habits. If I could get an early start I seemed to make a lot of headway, but through the long hot afternoons it was a real struggle to get work done. At night I would rally and have another burst of progress between ten o'clock and midnight, but that also made for long days of lesson planning and usually resulted in me not having the early start that I needed. This stage was definitely overwhelming, exhausting and fraught with frustrations. There were many times where I lacked the drive and focus needed to continue, but once I became attuned to my work patterns, I found that I was less harsh on myself when I lacked motivation and often allowed myself to give in to the many distractions that surrounded me.

About halfway through the planning process I had one particularly discouraging day where I felt that it was unlikely that anyone would even read the lesson plans I was writing or use the

resource collection I was creating. Luckily for me, that day fell right before a planned family outing and the break in work and resulting perspective gained allowed me to come back to my lesson planning refreshed, ready to work and able to see the value in what I was creating. Even though my project work was hanging over me on my 'day off', it was important for me to find that balance in order to be able to move forward in a positive manner.

The second half of the project proved easier than the first, partly because I was into the groove of lesson planning and knew my template well and partly because I decided to divide my work into themes. Rather than jump around within the framework and complete lesson plans here and there, I decided to focus on one topic within the framework and work on those lessons for the entire day. I found this approach to be much easier as I was researching similar information which allowed me to cover more area in less time. At this point, as well, I began to see the light at the end of the tunnel and gained momentum from being on the downward slope.

I finished off on a high note with 60 lesson plans completed (four more than originally intended) and 51 outcomes covered. I was thrilled with having achieved such a goal that I had set out for myself, felt one step closer to my overall achievement of earning my master's degree and set about to publish my work for peer review with my heart in my throat and my stomach all a flutter. I sent the link to my website out to my OLTD cohort via Facebook and logged on to Google+ to search out some communities from which I could request feedback. In doing so I immediately experience a crushing sense of anxiety and dread. As I flipped through community after community I saw amazing tools and resources that I hadn't even considered, looked at things other teachers were doing in their classrooms that I'd never even imagined and read about technologies that I hadn't even heard of. Here I was developing new and cutting edge lessons for digital citizenship and I felt that I wasn't even up to date in my efforts! Well, it figures that I had

to have one last ebb before the final surge of motivation. I left it for the night and gave myself a pep talk. I looked back over what I had accomplished, over the variety of amazing lesson plans that I had created and at the professional looking website where I had compiled all of my work and told myself, one more time, that there was great value in my project and that it was exactly what I had intended it to be – a good starting point for those setting out to use technology in their classrooms in an effective and responsible way. I knew from the start that it wasn't going to cover every aspect of the Digital Literacy Framework and, as such, that it would always be a work in progress with great potential for further development in the years to come. I now view it as the starting point of my own journey in digital citizenship and as a basis for my work and learning after the completion of my degree work. That is what I wanted it to be and that is exactly what it has turned out to be.

Major Project Delivery/Implementation

After working for over a month developing lesson plans and gathering resources, I felt the project was ready for a peer review. On August 8th, 2014, I solicited a review from my OLTD cohort members via Facebook. After my ‘pep talk’, I also sought feedback via three Google+ communities (EdTech, School Technology Leadership and OLTD) and posted it for the world to see on Twitter (#digitalliteracy). I emailed the link to a number of friends, family members and colleagues requesting that they review it and provide me with feedback on the website itself.

I have requested that the peer review be completed and feedback be provided by August 20th, 2014, at which time I will review the responses and make amendments to the project as necessary. After the project is revised, my Field/Beta Testing and Findings (Chapter 4) and Conclusions and Recommendations (Chapter 5) will be completed and I will submit my project to my faculty supervisor for review and then it will be forwarded on to the Dean of the Faculty of Education at Vancouver Island University for approval.

From there I will continue to provide access to the site and share it with friends and colleagues throughout B.C. I will repost the finished project via various social media and networking sites and continue to solicit feedback, make amendments and add resources and lesson plans as I come across ideas and useful links. In this way, my project will continue to evolve in order to provide ongoing support to those looking to implement digital literacy lessons in their own classrooms.