Technology Conferences for Professional Development

by Susan Martin

Description: I attended my first technology conference in March 2012, where I met Barb Jenkins from the University of Akron. She helped me make a decision about pursuing this master’s degree. At the conference, I attended sessions with an eye on what I could implement easily in my low-tech school. In 2013, I volunteered at eTech. While at this state-level conference, I focused on sessions that related to Google because I hoped to advocate for a class set of Chromebooks in my school. In 2014, I was able to attend NEOtech again; most of the sessions that I attended covered either Common Core State Standards or the PARCC Assessments. This year at Dr. Cheryl Ward’s suggestion, I submitted a proposal to OETC for a session on flipping professional development; unfortunately, my proposal was wait-listed.

Impact: One of the major benefits of attending technology conferences is networking with other technology professionals. I enjoyed hearing how other schools integrate technology. I also found that my school was not as far behind other schools as I had previously thought. Although we do not have internet access outside the computer lab, other schools have unreliable connections. This factor makes a teacher’s flexibility essential because if a teacher plans an online lesson but cannot connect, she must be ready to improvise so she does not waste instructional time. I also learned much about the new state assessments, although at the time even the state seemed unsure of what it would mandate in 2014-2015.

Intent: Although I was discouraged after having my proposal wait-listed, I plan to present at a local or a state conference within the next two years. I believe that I have much to offer to teachers concerning the effective integration of technology. However, I also believe that I need to be in a position that allows for more technology and has more resources for teachers in the classroom.