



Summer Institute of Technology Integration A Tremendous Success

by TOM KENNEDY

In response to a general need for professional learning (PL) highlighting technology integration, the Technology Education Special Interest Council (TESIC) recently facilitated a three-day event over the summer break, an event offering teachers the opportunity to participate in practical and theoretical sessions grounded in the NL classroom. The Summer Institute of Technology Integration (SITI), hosted at Memorial's Faculty of Education July 25-27, was a tremendous success due to its committed facilitators, dedicated attendees and supportive partners. While SITI@MUN 2014 was a TESIC PL initiative, the event relied on the successful partnership between the special interest council (SIC) and educational stakeholders.

Success through partnership

By securing partnerships with educational stakeholders that share the TESIC vision of professional learning, the SIC is able to offer a diverse catalogue of PL to individuals across the province. In general, these partnerships provide the Council with venues, expertise and opportunity, which serve as the necessary scaffolding to support the delivery of PL. Like most events offered through the TESIC catalogue, SITI@MUN was no exception.

Venue / facilities

When the framework for TESIC's Summer Institute of Technology Integration was discussed with representatives of Memorial's Faculty of Education, the Faculty was eager to offer its resources and support for the initiative. A partnership with the Faculty of Education allowed the SIC to host a professional learning event on site at Memorial and avail of the recently renovated facilities within the Education building. Sessions were hosted in rooms such as the newly upgraded Teaching Commons, STEM room and McCann Centre, all of which offered a comfortable setting for professional learning. The Institute attributes a portion of its success to the sheer volume of participants and sessions the Faculty of Education facilities could accommodate. As a result, SITI could

offer registration to a high volume of interested individuals without having to impose limitations on general registration. While individual sessions had limited seats available, these sessions could accommodate larger numbers due to the spacious classrooms slated for the event.



Dr. Kirk Anderson, Dean of the Faculty of Education, addressing SITI attendees and facilitators.

Sessions and Facilitators

An integral element of the Institute's framework was emphasizing hands-on PL for teachers looking to integrate technology in their respective curriculum. Therefore, the SITI slate was scheduled to offer both practical and theoretical sessions on technology integration during the morning and afternoon slots, respectively. Participants could choose from a wide range of sessions and piece together an event schedule customized to their integration focus.

Monday morning sessions included breakout groups on iPad deployment, Web 2.0, inclusive technology integration, project-based learning, iPad basics, Firstclass as an instructional tool, elements of visual design, Minecraft as an educational tool, and 21st century learning and social media. As a complement to its practical counterpart, afternoon sessions drew on the theoretical by offering discussion-based sessions highlighting trends in technology integration, teaching and learning in the 21st Century, barriers to technology integration and assistive technology for exceptional learners. Together, all sessions were reflective of current trends in technology and

drew on the experiences of the facilitator.

SITI facilitators formed a diverse group with a healthy mixture of experiences and specialty areas. With representation from Memorial's Faculty of Education (staff and students), the Department of Education, the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District (NLESD), the Centre for Distance Learning and Innovation (CDLI), industry leaders and classroom teachers, the Institute left no resource untapped. And, while this diverse group as facilitators was a great feather in the Institute's hat, their participation as attendees added to the collegial tone of the event. As one participant commented, "...seeing facilitators as attendees was a great thing as well. The notion that these experts were still learners as well was very empowering."

Gauging Success

Often when individuals judge the success of an event like SITI, they link success to numbers. Number of participants, number of sessions, number of facilitators. With over a 100 attendees, 37 breakout sessions, 25 facilitators and a slate offering 6 concurrent streams of PL, many would say these statistics alone indicate a successful institute. However, for the SIC, the positive feedback from attendees which praised the relevance, diversity and necessity of the Institute's professional learning painted a better picture of SITI's success. Participants were pleased with the grounded nature of the sessions, as one such participant explained, "It is my experience that some of the best PD comes from fellow teachers sharing their practices and the advantages and challenges they have experienced. Also, because they are still in the classroom, it makes the material more current and relevant". Others enjoyed the collegial, relaxed nature of TESIC's approach to professional learning. At the Institute's closing, many attendees were already asking about SITI@MUN 2015.

SITI@MUN was undoubtedly a successful offering of professional learning in our province. Feedback from attendees and facilitators has already provided important information on how to improve future offerings of the Summer Institute of Technology Integration. SITI@MUN 2015 will be a PL event you will not want to miss. Check back at TESIC.org throughout the year for more information regarding SITI and other PL events being offered in the coming months. And remember, free membership is only a click away.

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