Empowering Educators in the Digital Age: Bridging the Professional Development Gap

Presented by: Leigh Davidson

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Who Am I?

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North Carolina Community College System Office

Putting the Cart before the Horse

Based on research from Dr. Elizabeth Roumell and Sarah Haroon Sualehi (Texas A&M University), in which they explored the gap between student focused digital literacy efforts and the professional development offered by instructors.

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Icebreaker

How Digitally Literate Are You?

Join Mentimeter to respond

Scan QR Code OR

Join at menti.com
Use code 2462 2160

Share your honest perspective

Discover our collective digital competencies

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Digital Literacy

Definition

> "Digital literacy is the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship."
>
> *—UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018*

- Access
- Manage
- Understand
- Integrate
- Communicate
- Evaluate
- Create

Two Digital Divides

First Divide: Access

- Hardware is present
- Software is present
- Connectivity exists

Second Divide: Adoption

- Skills building opportunities
- Usage is encouraged
- Communal support

Am I a Digital Native because...

I have access to technology through personal and professional roles (re: phone, PC, laptop, wifi) and I figured out how to use them?

OR

I had regular professional development and training opportunities to build my digital skills, with communal encouragement from my peers and colleagues?

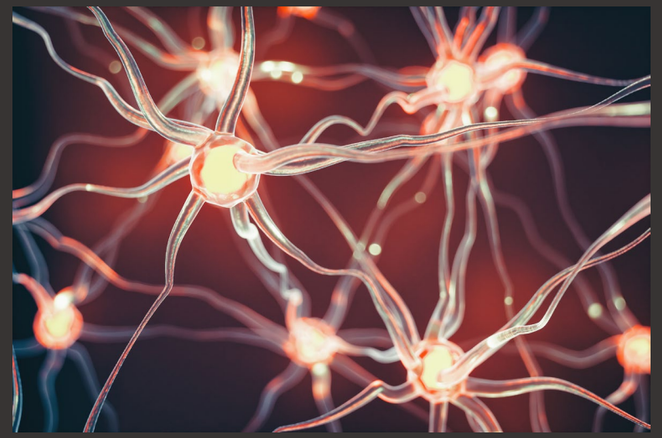
What happens when the digital world keeps turning, but we assume that digital skills learning will *just happen*?

Digital Literacy vs Competency vs Fluency?

What is it?

Literacy =

Skills + Knowledge



Access, Manage, Understand, Integrate, Communicate, Evaluate, Create

Competency =

Skills + Knowledge + Attitude

Confidence, Critically Engage

Fluency =

Deep Knowledge + Mastery

Innovate, Adapt, Critically Think, Transfer/Evolve/Pivot, Problem Solve

Some Basic Assumptions

Access

Everyone has the same access to digital technology

Andragogy

Everyone is able to self-teach digital skills

Adoption

Professional development is available, you just have to take it

Some Basic Facts

37%

Of the world has **never** used the internet

33%

Of US adults **do not** have access to broadband

51%

Of adults in the US are **uncomfortable** learning digital skills

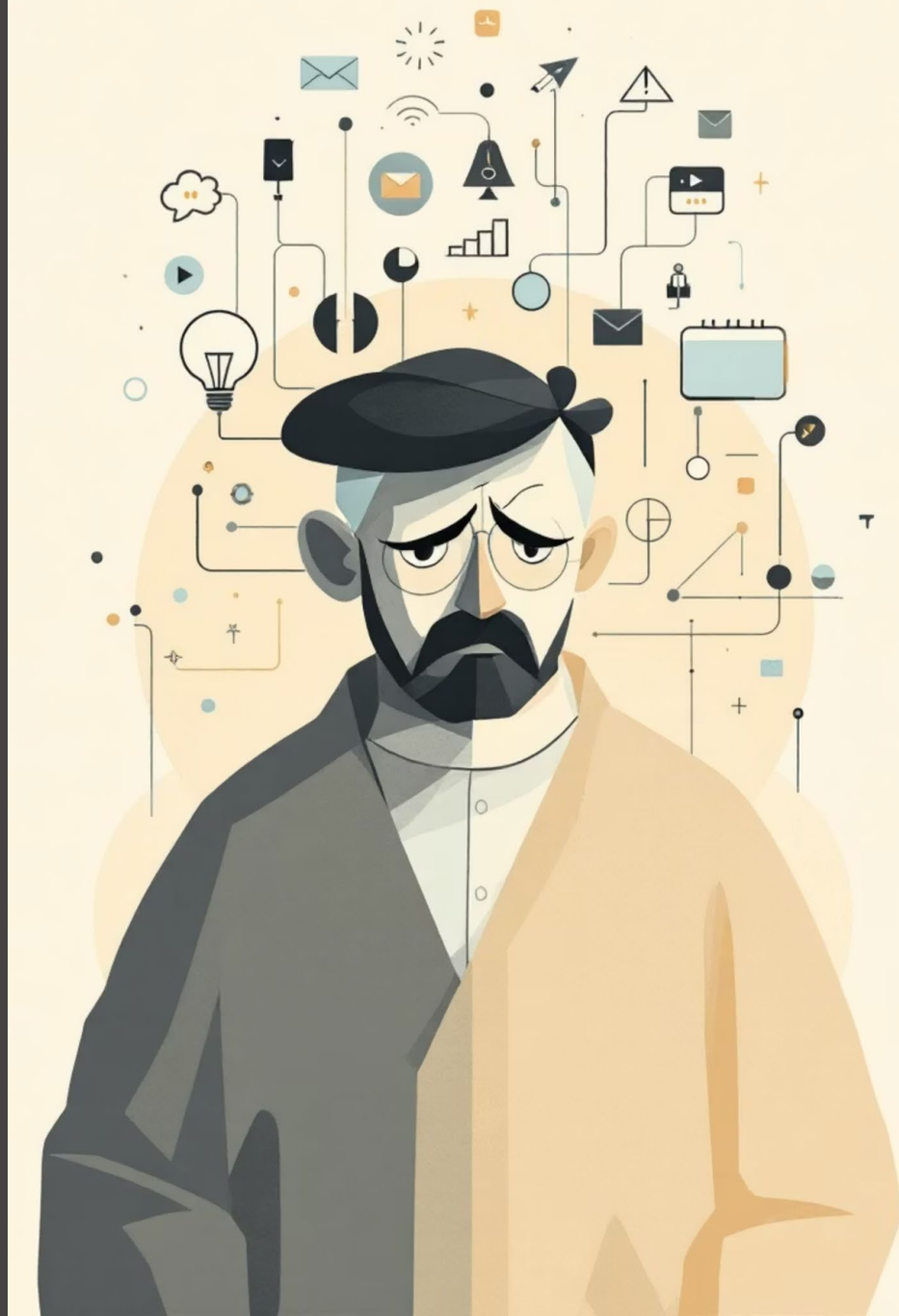
68%

Of the digitally ***illiterate*** population in the USA are native-born adults

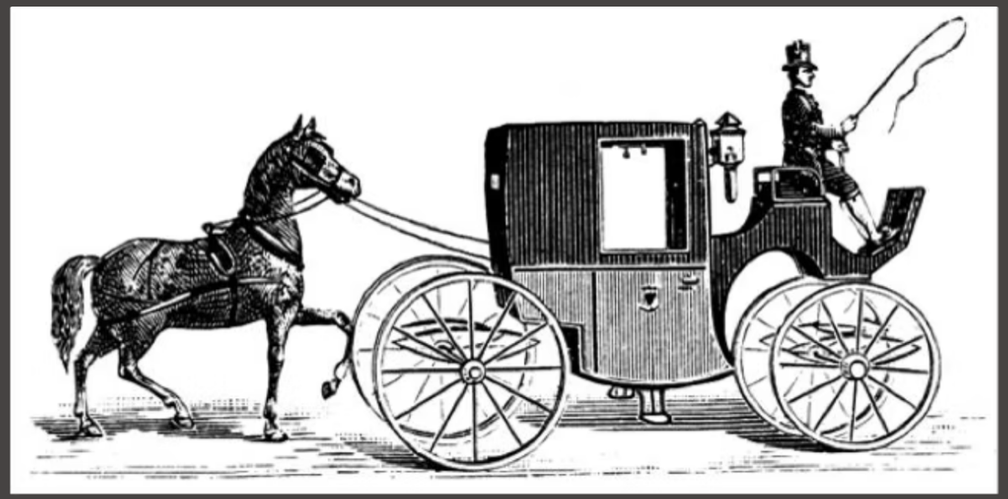
Are these your students…

Your teachers…

Both?



Not all, but for some teachers...



System Expectations

Professional Development

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Barriers to Learning

Three Recognized Barriers to Adult Learning

1. Dispositional

Negative perceptions about ability to learn

"I'm too old to learn"

2. Situational

Conditions that limit ability to learn

"Work takes up all my time"

3. Institutional

Procedures & requirements cannot be currently met

"I am not eligible for PD yet"

Which Barrier Can PD Help Overcome?

1. Dispositional

Negative perceptions about ability to learn

"I'm too old to learn"

2. Situational

Conditions that limit ability to learn

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Simulation

Simulation

01

Current Role

You teach digital literacy modules: email, Microsoft Word, Excel

02

Challenge

State-mandated career pathways program for software developers

03

Your Task

Develop a 60-minute lesson on the basic "How-To's" for APIs as a software developer

04

Activity Instructions

Work with your group partners.

Ready... go!

Simulation: Debrief

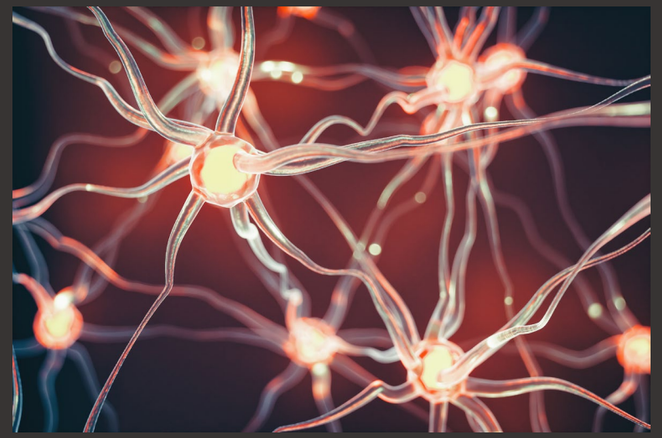
- How did that go?
- What helped you?
- What held you back?
- How did that make you feel?
- What could I have done to support you?

What's the difference if we ask teachers to develop and lead these digital literacy sessions without professional development support?

Professional Development improves teacher self-efficacy

Literacy =

Skills + Knowledge



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Lessons Learned

Technology for Connection

Necessary connections to plan for:

Learner – Content

Instructor – Learner

Learner – Technology

Learner – Learner

> When we use tools to build meaningful connections and directly support desired learning, both content and technology skills development are supported.

And how does Generative AI fit into these considerations?

Things to Consider…

Psychological Safety

Is it safe for your teachers to admit when they don't know something?

Could it jeopardize their job?

Irony

Does your training already require an amount of digital literacy (*is it online or requires use of an unfamiliar application/platform*)?

Honesty

Are your system expectations requiring digital abilities before digital training?

NC-Context

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Survey Questions

1) Useful Data

- How many of your instructors are full/part -time?
- How many of those instructors teach synchronous online classes?
- Does your program currently offer PD (*digital literacy development* **for instructors** and/or training on *synchronous online instruction* or *instructional technology)?*

Survey Questions

2) Local-Provider PD/Training

- Type(s) of PD/training provided to your instructors?
- Frequency of this training (*monthly, quarterly, annually, instructor onboarding, as needed*)?
- Effectiveness of this PD/training (to improve instructor skills & competencies)?
- How do you assess the impact of your PD/training on instructional quality?
- Any successful strategies/models to improve your instructors' digital competencies?
- Any recommendations to enhance PD/training for online instruction?

Survey Questions

3) Challenges & Future Needs

- Biggest challenges in providing digital literacy and instructional technology professional development to instructors?
- What specific digital skills or tools do your instructors struggle with the most?
- What types of professional development, or resources, would be most beneficial to your instructors?

Type(s) of Training

- Video-conferencing (e.g. Zoom)
- Use of specific tools & platforms (*Burlington English, Nearpod, Canvas, Moodle Northstar, Newsela*)
- Virtual classroom management
- Use of smartboard & collaborative platforms

Training Frequency

- Varies widely (quarterly, during onboarding, as needed)
- Some with no formal schedule OR
- Reliance on informal mentoring

Training Effectiveness

- Mixed responses
  - 3 or 4 out of 5
  - Unsure
  - Low effectiveness
- Programs with structured PD & instructor onboarding, external support (e.g.: vendor visits), and in-house support (e.g.: digital navigators) reported **higher success**

Common Challenges

- ✗ Instructor buy -in & time limitations (part-time)
- ✗ Technology phobia or discomfort
- ✗ Funding constraints
- ✗ Lack of access to devices or reliable internet
- ✗ Difficulty finding best practices for synchronous instruction

Instructor Struggles

- Navigating platforms
- Integrating tech meaningfully into lessons
- Managing hybrid or synchronous environments
- Learning new software or tools
- Engaging students virtually
- Stable connectivity

Successful Strategies/Models

- **Techie Fridays**: casual, low-stakes workshops
- **Digital navigators** : in-class support
- **Vendor partnerships** : e.g., Burlington English reps providing hands-on support
- **Embedding tech into regular PD sessions**

Role of the State Office???

- ✓ Pool resources across providers to offer joint PD sessions
  - ✓ Regional PD Consortiums
  - ✓ Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
- ✓ Micro-learning opportunities (Rhode Island Tech Tuesdays)
- ✓ Leverage the Digital Navigator Network (DNN)
- ✓ Prioritize training and technical assistance on high demand software

Coming Soon … !

Teaching in the Digital Age Boot Camp

Survey on PD Offered on Online Instruction & Instructional Technology

Alamance CC
Beaufort County CC
Bladen CC
Brunswick CC
Caldwell CC & TI
Cape Fear CC
Davidson-Davie CC
Edgecombe CC
Lenoir CC
Martin CC
Mayland CC
McDowell Tech CC
Nash CC
Pamlico CC
Rockingham CC
Stanly CC
South Piedmont CC
Southeastern CC
Southwestern CC

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Endless Gratitude…

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Sarah Haroon Sualehi, sarah.sualehi@tamu.edu

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