From the Convention to a Classroom:

Carole and William facilitated this work in a variety of ways. Carole scheduled meetings with teachers during my visits. She also attended a majority of the meetings. Her expertise with inquiry learning and resources to support inquiry perfectly paved the way, connecting our work to an existing framework within which the new literacies made sense to teachers. Inquiry learning was as much a district focus as balanced literacy approaches. William also modeled lessons and provided planning and instructional support throughout the year.

We acknowledged the steps teachers were taking to develop their use of new technologies and teaching of new skills and strategies. Some teachers embedded new tools within which their students communicated and shared expertise daily. Others opted to develop expertise at less rigorous paces, using one technology and set of skills to support one unit. Each group, however, was embedding new literacies skills and strategies in their instruction.

One Teacher's Journey

Now that you have a general sense of the professional development context, meet Karen Pelekos, a first grade teacher who began collaborating with us three years ago. Karen's journey reflects a set of experiences across multiple years that prepared her to support high-quality Internet Inquiry with first graders. At our first meeting, I vividly recall Karen saying, "I don't want to integrate technology for the sake of integrating technology. I need to know that my students' learning will be enhanced by doing so." Karen had used websites to support instruction. Her students, however, were not yet using Internet resources independently.

William and I suggested she consider using a blog as a context for communication and organization of Internet resources. This stacked the start of our journey with Karen, a teacher who had not yet used many Internet technologies herself. Karen's expertise is best told in her own voice, so I will end here. But it is important to note that only three years later, Karen now presents with William and Carole, sharing her new literacies expertise at International Reading Association conferences. We continue to learn together, pooling our unique experiences to find new ways for providing students with stronger literacy skills.

Lisa Zawilinski is a faculty member in the College of Education, Nursing, and Health Professions at the University of Hartford, zawilinski@harford.edu.

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