Kathleen Berglund

Grade 3
Heritage Elementary

St. George, UT

When we first interviewed Kathleen Berglund in 2017, she taught at Diamond Valley Elementary School, which enrolls about 300 students. The student body is 95% white and about a third of students qualify for free or reduced price lunch. It is one of 25 elementary schools in the Washington County School District, which has about 31,400 students. Kathleen now teaches 3rd grade at Heritage Elementary which is in the same district but is an urban school close to downtown St. George, UT. It is also a Title 1 school and has a more diverse group of students than she has experienced in the past. This was quite a big shift in demographics compared to working at Diamond Valley Elementary.

While teaching at Diamond Valley, Kathleen had extensive blended learning professional development through the school's Educational Technology Endorsement Program. She had also taken the initiative to tap into Donor's Choose to help fund the acquisition of Chromebooks for her classroom. Raising money in this way helped her get computers for her students, and also gave parents a chance to read and understand how the technology would be used in their child's classroom and education.

When Kathleen moved to Heritage Elementary, she was able to take the Chromebooks she had acquired through Donor's Chose with her, but she still needed more devices to to achieve the 1:1 ratio she had previously. The principal and Title 1 Coordinator from Heritage Elementary recognized the need she had for Chromebooks to continue the blended learning environment. Kathleen told him that she couldn't go back to copies, paper tests, and pencil and paper notebooks. They were able to supply her with a few more Chromebooks so that she achieved the 1:1 ratio when the school year started in August 2017.

"*There are so many aspects of blended learning I find valuable.* Students have more control and flexibility over their learning. Having technology in the classroom has helped increase their critical thinking, engagement, motivation, achievement, and problem solving. I had to teach them to critically think and problem solve with their peers, or sometimes on their own, instead of them coming to me for every technical challenge and class question. Collaboration and communication are key components to a successful blending learning environment.

Blended learning is helping me save time grading and planning. The technology has helped by grading assignments immediately and giving me time to discuss the outcome with the students, then set goals and plan their next steps. Having these extra resources has helped support student learning by using student data to personalize instruction. For example, at Diamond Valley, I had four different spelling groups based on their level, which is much easier to do using the technology. Blended learning also makes it easier when a student misses a lot of school because they can easily work from home. It's

been valuable having the student be able to access instruction through Google Classroom or Schoology. This allows the students to learn at their own time, place, path, and pace. Also I'm finding it to be much easier to communicate learning objectives and goals with the parents as well.

I noticed that at my new school, Heritage Elementary, copying and using paper is a common practice even with one-to-one devices. I concluded that unless a teacher is actively learning how to use technology through professional development or taking classes to receive their technology endorsement, then the technology in the classroom isn't being used to its fullest potential. Blended learning doesn't just happen because students have one-to-one devices, rather it takes training, practice, and even risk and creativity on the teacher's part.

In addition, with the many budget cuts in education, our school has definitely felt the effects. For the 2018–19 school year, all third grade classes were supposed to get touchscreen Chromebooks for each student, however, it would be fortuitous if we even get one class set at this point. My experience with G Suite and using Google for Education and sharing this knowledge with my colleagues will have to be put on hold for a while.

The world is constantly changing, if we can't be flexible as teachers how do we teach our students to embrace change? To successfully teach with technology, the teachers need to shift their whole mindset and continue learning. It has become a necessity for our students to go beyond the fundamentals of reading and writing and to also include technological skills to be successful and navigate the current changing, media-driven environment. Teachers need to practice, attend workshops, go to professional development and keep

learning themselves. As teachers we need to get out of our comfort zone and continue to learn and evolve. We are doing the students a disservice if we don't personalize their learning and give them some control over their own education.

I've seen teachers really wanting to embrace technology, but there's a difference between "wanting" and actually "doing." With the demands of day to day teaching, that consists of lesson planning, communicating with parents, grading, and meetings, not mentioning school assignments, it's hard to find the time. Many of my colleagues were already involved in other endorsements that made it even more challenging to find the time to embrace technology. However, in my district there's many opportunities throughout the year (especially during the summer) to take technology classes. In addition, we have the Utah Coalition for Educational Technology as a resource and throughout the year there are edcamps hosted around the state. This is where educators get together to discussion ways to improve their teaching and tech skills. Each year I notice that more and more educators are learning how to implement technology in their classroom.

In addition, my colleagues are very motivated to find ways to "save time" and to use less paper. I'm excited to be the team leader next year (2018-19) for 3rd grade. As part of our weekly meetings, I plan on having a time set aside for professional development, specifically for using technology. I want to listen to their concerns about grading, lesson planning, parent and student communication, creating student data graphs, increasing student engagement and motivation, etc. With these concerns, I want to share with them my knowledge about how they can use technology to save time and resources, and even increase student engagement and parent communication! Even if their students don't have

one-to-one Chromebooks next year, there are many ways that teachers still can take advantage of the many online resources that are available to them at no cost! Learning how to use technology simply requires an open mindset and trying something new that is a little out of our comfort zone. Being vulnerable and not understanding everything is part of the learning process.

Teaching my students to be good digital citizens has been an ongoing challenge. It has been hard to trust students and give up control. As a teacher, you cannot see what is happening on every student's device. I do my best to teach my students how to safely navigate the Internet, not to ever give out information and not to talk to anyone. I have a "Crash and Tell" policy. If a student at any time comes across something inappropriate or makes them feel uncomfortable they immediately close their computer and come tell me. Kids who struggle with classroom rules and procedures and school-wide rules in general, also tend to struggle with being a good digital citizen. After one student played a game, a virus appeared on the tablet. Having that situation happen, and the problems it created, showed them that their actions have consequences.

Making sure my students were using Google Classroom as a platform for online learning and learning at high levels was hard to measure sometimes. Sometimes being clear with the purpose and the "why" for everyone online assignment could get muffled and confusing for my students. I also found it challenging at times to make sure students were able to demonstrate their knowledge using critical thinking and problem-solving skills. It's really easy for students to become passive learners using technology. They need constant monitoring, feedback, and supervision. In addition, I encouraged collaboration and teamwork using technology. Sometimes, it felt that students ended up playing around instead of actually learning. Modeling and teaching students how to use technology to enhance their learning takes a lot of time and practice. Just telling students or showing a tutorial video on how to do an assignment may only reach a small percentage of them. Lastly, I noticed that the students who struggled the most with listening and paying attention in class during Tier 1 instruction (curriculum that is typically aligned with state standards), also struggled the most with digital skills. As a result, I always had "tech helpers" to help monitor and assist their peers when they were off task or not where they were supposed to be on the computer. ■