Capstone Log
Instructional Technology Department

Candidate: Cheryl Usher	Mentor/Title: Childress/Supervisor of Instructional Technology	School/District: Cherokee County School District
Capstone Title: Online Professional Learning for Educators		

Date	Activity/Amount of Time (Please total the time after the last entry.)	PSC Standards
6/18/11	Attended part of Introduction to Moodle training at our district training center. During this training I was able to setup the foundation for the Moodle site. I was conducting a different professional learning course the second day, so I was not able to attend the second day because of a scheduling conflict.	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 2.1, 2.6, 3.3, 3.6, 5.2, 6.1
7/25/11	Met with Supervisor of Instructional Technology and the Instructional Technology Facilitator to discuss possible courses needed that might be developed for this online professional learning course. A decision was made between us for the course to be Elementary and Middle Online Resources.	
9/1/11- 10/15/11	Begin creating Camtasia video segments to use for instructional videos in the course. Created five instructional videos during this time period. I planned on taking and completing the next Moodle class that was offered in November to finish development of the online course, but the Moodle course was cancelled because of lack of enrollment. (13 hours)	

Reflection: I started my capstone project with attending an introduction course to Moodle. Moodle is the Learning Management System that is used in our district. This training was offered as a two day, 10 hour course last summer through our professional development/technology departments. The course was being taught by Dan Gagnon, a teacher at Cherokee High School. He has been using Moodle for several years with his high school students. My intention was to take the complete course, but I was conducting a different professional learning course on the second day of the Moodle training, so I didn't attend the second part of the training. I was disappointed, but knew the training class was going to be offered again in the fall. During this summer training, I was only able to login, create the course title, and learn about site navigation, design of the course, settings, and permissions. We also explored the different resources and activities we could add to our course.

After this initial training, I met with Debbie Childress, the Supervisor of Instructional Technology and Esther Brenneman, the Instructional Technology Facilitator, within our school district. We discussed the three year district technology plan and the goals for professional development within that plan. We also looked at reports that showed usage data for our online subscription resources. These reports showed that usage was low for some resources. With budget cuts, these resources that had low usage would run the risk of being cut for next year's budget. We determined that an online course that would better familiarize the teachers with the features of all of our online subscription resources would meet the needs for professional learning, improve student learning, and impact school improvement. We also decided to focus on elementary and middle as the target audience. This would help build foundations for our younger

students to utilize these online resources as they advanced into higher learning.

One of my professional goals for last school year was to develop instructional tutorials for different software and trainings that I have conducted in the past. Many teachers attend training, but then may forget a few steps if they aren't using the software every day. These instructional tutorials were to be designed to help teachers remember. They were also created for any new teachers to a school or grade level that were not familiar with the software. Our district had purchased Camtasia software for the purpose of creating these tutorials. The tutorials would then be placed on our Mediacast server for everyone to access. During this time, I created several Camtasia instructional tutorials that I would be using for the online resources class. The tutorials included logging in to the site, navigation of the site and certain key features. I designed these tutorials to be short, about 5 minutes and focused on one specific thing so teachers could choose what they need. I planned on taking the Moodle course training that was going to be offered later in the fall, but the October course was cancelled due to lack of enrollment.

1/18/12- 2/8/12	Attended and completed a four week Moodle training course taught at our training center in our district. The course was taught by a high school teacher in our district that conducts online courses with his students using the district Moodle server. The Moodle training included an introduction, posting content, going paperless and blended learning with Moodle. Between classes, we worked on the design of the course, permissions, and learning about different components we would use with our students.	1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.4, 2.6, 3.3, 3.5, 4.1, 5.2, 5.3, 6.1
2/20/12- 4/20/12	During this time, I was working on creating the online course, to be taught later in the spring. This course would cover approximately seventeen online subscription resources offered by our district. I created a class information section; Introduce yourself discussion board, a news forum, a Class question and answer section, an outline for each week with goals, assignments, and discussion boards. Important links for our Cherokee County online subscription resources were also embedded within the weekly outlines. Some of these subscription resource sites had changed, so I had to create new handouts, recreate old handouts and instructional videos. I also created tutorial videos that explained how to login, navigate and search in the various resources. Next, I uploaded these handouts, links, instructional videos and tutorials for each week. I also created an evaluation in QUIA.

Before the class could be offered, I composed a course description for our Professional Development department to post in the district's online course catalog which would be made available to teachers. I also created an introduction email, which included login directions to the site, to send to the teachers that registered for the course. | |
| 3/18/12- 5/3/12 | During this time, I conducted a mini literature review on "The Effectiveness of Online Learning". The review included a search for relevant articles to answer three research questions. Fifteen published journal articles were found and reviewed on the topic of the effectiveness of online learning to answer the three questions. After reviewing the articles, I wrote a mini literature review on the topic. This was helpful to the development of my online course.

(82 hours) | |

Reflection: During January I was finally able to attend the full Moodle training being offered again through our district by Dan Gagnon. The course met every week for four weeks after school at our training facility. During the introduction course, Dan shared how he used the Moodle software with his high school students. We learned how to edit settings, which included the course name and course summary/description. We made decisions in the settings about format, course dates, and upload size permissions. We also learned about creating groups, so we could differentiate within the online course to assign our students different assignments. I thought this would be very beneficial to differentiate for K-12 students, but didn't see that it would help teachers. Then, I got to thinking about teachers that have attended technology training that I have offered in the past. They have suggested in the evaluations that we have beginner, intermediate and advanced courses available. Well, I think an online course is the answer because the advanced learner can move ahead and the beginner can take more time and review tutorials at their own pace. However, the group mode would allow me to create the same course, but assign different assignments to different groups. There was also a neat feature in the settings that I didn't find until after my course had started. It was called Completion Tracking and it allows the participants to check off assignments as they complete them. It's turned on now for my next course which I plan to offer in September. Between the first and second class, I designed a preliminary plan to what I wanted to include and cover during each week of the course. During the second class we learned about different resources and activities that we could add to our online course. Resources enable almost any kind of web content to be inserted into the course. Activities include forums, quizzes, wikis, and allow you to enable interactive content to the course. During this class, we also practiced posting content, such as uploading files, adding links, and embedding video. The remainder of the class was spent working on adding resources and activities to our course. The third class included creating and assigning assessments and investigating all of the components of the gradebook feature. The final class focused on blended learning and all of the report features.

I met again with Debbie Childress and Esther Brenneman to discuss progress, design, and evaluation techniques. Over the next several months, I spent revising my original plan, creating and revising handouts, creating various video tutorials, and reviewing all seventeen online subscription resources that would be included in the course. I realized that some of the resource sites had changed and would continue to change, so my handouts and tutorials will need to be updated possibly every year. The next step was to upload content, add links and create discussion boards. I also chose to create the evaluation in QUIA since that was one of our online resources. This whole process took a lot longer than I thought it would. I had some peer instructional teachers login and peer-review the site for problems and errors.

During this same time, I conducted a mini literature review on the effectiveness of online learning. The review involved searching and finding fifteen peer reviewed published journal articles that addressed my three research questions: (a) What does the literature say about online learning for professional development of teachers, (b) is online learning more effective than blended or face to face instruction for teacher professional development, and (c) what are the essential components needed for effective online instruction and learning of teachers? This mini review was especially helpful when creating my course. Instructor presence, the design of the course, authentic and meaningful assignments, and an evaluation component are all crucial elements that were revealed through my review for an effective online course. I used this information to improve the online learning experience for my teachers.

| 4/25/12-6/4/12 | This was the period of time when the course took place. The introduction and direction video was sent to all participants and the course began on 4/30/12. The course was scheduled for five weeks. During this time, I monitored the course by answering emails and online chat questions. I participate I discussion posts by reading, responding and commenting on discussions and assignments. I also posted news and reminders about the course. Sending the evaluation link was the final step for the course. After the evaluations were complete, I compiled the results into a report and sent them to my supervisor of instructional technology to review.

(25 hours) | 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.7, 4.1, 4.2, 5.2, 5.3, 6.3 |

Reflection: I really enjoyed being an instructor of an online course. I published specific times every afternoon and every Saturday morning that I would be available for online chats, if the students wanted to talk to me. But, I found myself logging in other times, as well, to read discussion posts, review projects, comment on posts and projects, and create news reminders. I enjoyed the email and online chat feature in Moodle. If a student sent me a message, it would pop-up as soon as I logged in and they experienced the same thing when I sent them a message. I really liked the conversations that went on between the participants in the class. They didn't just say, "good job". I believe they were learning from each other by seeing things that others had missed and creating projects that others could use in their classroom. I learned things about the online resources from the students, as well. They found some things that I hadn't seen before. This was supposed to be a 10 hour course=1 PLU. I believe most of the teachers that completed this course spent more than 10 hours exploring the resources and creating projects. I know that I spent more than 10 hours monitoring the course. I enjoyed it, but if I had been teaching face-to-face, this would have only involved 10 hours. This is what our professional development department would pay us for instruction. It's possible that this course could be offered as a 20 hour=2 PLU course, but this would need to be discussed further with the professional development department and my facilitators. Convenience of learning was one of the reasons why teachers choose online learning and originally twenty teachers registered for this course. This was very surprising for two reasons. One, we haven't been able to fill our technology training classes very well this year because of state not requiring the PLU credits. This should change next year. Secondly, this was surprising because the class was scheduled for the month of May, which is usually a very busy month for teachers. However, only twelve teachers completed the course, but the evaluations were very positive. Teachers really liked the ease of learning when it was convenient to them. They also liked the layout of the course and all they learned about the online resources they could use to improve student learning.

	Total Hours: [120 hours]:	

DIVERSITY (Place an X in the box representing the race/ethnicity and subgroups involved in this capstone.)								
Ethnicity	**P-12 Faculty/Staff**				**P-12 Students**			
	P-2	3-5	6-8	9-12	P-2	3-5	6-8	9-12
Race/Ethnicity:								
Asian								
Black	X	X	X					
Hispanic	X	X	X					
Native American/Alaskan Native								
White	X	X	X					
Multiracial	X	X	X					
Subgroups:								
Students with Disabilities	X	X	X					
Limited English Proficiency	X	X	X					
Eligible for Free/Reduced Meals	X	X	X					