TEAM

What Makes This TEAM Reflection Paper Successful?
Some specific examples/evidence that <u>contributed</u> to the success of this paper are provided below.

Module Three: Instruction   Grade: 5   Subject: Technology

Criteria I: Development of New Learning (How the teacher developed new learning and what was learned)

How the teacher developed new learning:
- Read *Literacy in the Middle Grades* by Tompkins and other educational articles
- Discussion with mentor, teammates and Media Technology teacher

What the teacher learned:
- "My mentor reminded me of the importance of both modeling and stepping out of my comfort zone when it came to using Word processing and other technologies with students. I realized then that I couldn't let my fear get in the way of student learning."
- "… I found that 'webquests are inquiry-oriented online projects that enhance students' learning by scaffolding their thinking and involving them in meaningful task' (Tompkins, 2010).   When I read this, I remembered a number of times when I asked my students to use the Internet to research a specific topic … My students had no formal skills in researching, and often became lost or confused in the process … a web quest seemed to be a thoughtful and realistic way to build research skills."

Criteria II: Impact on Practice (How the teacher's practice is different)

- "One of the guiding questions for the unit was, 'What are human rights?' I decided to start off the learning with a web quest that would build students' background knowledge … Instead of telling students about human rights, I then directed the students to search for information about the timeline of human rights, as well as information about each of the 330 human rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."
- "I modeled how to appropriately search the Internet for pertinent and meaningful information … I made sure that each group bookmarked their information on a designated computer. When it was time to meet, we would sit down and review their findings. This helped me to acknowledge good finds on the Internet and then explain why something did not seem credible."

Criteria III: Impact on Students (How student performance/learning has improved as a result of changes in the teacher's practice)

- "Overall, students were more comfortable using the computers, and they were also more excited about completing school work. One student even added a full paragraph to his writing because he wanted to make sure he had enough text on the page."
- "On an exit slip, one student noted that consuming multiple resources helped her 'understand better because everyone has a different story.' Another student said the videos and illustrations helped him to 'see what it was like to not have freedoms.'"
- "As students were deciding which information to include, I heard them asking each other questions, such as: 'Does this website have an author?' 'Do we see an email address for the author?' 'Where's the date on this website?'"

Indicator: 3-Teachers implement instruction in order to engage students in rigorous and relevant learning and to promote their curiosity about the world at large by: Using technological and digital resources strategically to support learning.

Goal:
I will learn to strategically integrate technological and digital resources into my classroom. As a result, students will be able to use technology in a responsible and efficient manner to improve their learning.

Initial Summary:
Currently, I am primarily using technology as a teacher resource to create and deliver lessons. On a daily basis, I use my classroom SmartBoard to deliver lessons and to pull up text to model a given strategy. I also utilize Discovery Education, Study Jamz, BrainPop, and other video-based websites to play short clips.   These are used as hooks for my lessons to immediately engage students. The students aren't using much technology in my classroom. They have seen me use technology during the lesson and talk about how important it is, however, I need to branch out and allow my students to have the same opportunities with technology as I do. If I want my students to achieve at a high level beyond their time with me, I need to be sure that they established a high level of comfort with technology.

Reflection Paper:
At one of our first meetings of the year, my mentor and I had an in depth conversation about using technology as a way to enhance instruction and student learning. She explained the value technology has on developing 21st century learners and how incorporating student use of technology into my daily instruction was the next logical step in my growth as an educator.

While reflecting on my conversation with my mentor and seeing the lack of technological experience my students had, I decided to take a closer look at what the current literature says about the effective use of technology in the classroom. Important factors of my professional growth were reading, talking, and most importantly trying out new techniques outlined by several current educational researchers and my colleagues. In an article I read, the importance of education and technology in today's youth was well explained. One researcher in particular stated, "Technology education must prepare students to understand, control, and use technology. Students need to learn how to adapt to technological change and how to deal with forces that influence their lives and potentially control their future" (Boser, 1998). This author helps confirm for me that technology is never going to go away, but rather it is going to become an even more essential part of our everyday lives. With that being said, in order for students to be prepared for the future, technology must be a part of their educational process, allowing them to become technologically literate. I need to better support my students with technological literacy. Another article I read said, "students regardless of socioeconomic level, race, ethnic background, community, disability, or career aspiration, need to be able to cope with change, identify and solve problems, make appropriate decisions, and employ technology in their daily lives" (Wright, 2001). From reading this, I am continuing to realize how important it is to have the skills and confidence to utilize technology.

After much thought, the easiest way to incorporate technology into my classroom seemed to be through language arts. My mentor and I had a conversation about how much students enjoy using the computer

to edit, revise and finalize their work. I typically strayed away from having my students create their final copies in a word processor program because of my personal fear of the varying degrees of comfort and knowledge of the program. My mentor reminded me of the importance of both modeling and stepping out of my comfort zone when it came to using Word processing and other technologies with students. I realized then that I couldn't let my fear get in the way of student learning. I took this information with me into my classroom and contacted my students' Media Technology teacher. I hoped to gain a better understanding of what my students' knew and did not know about word processing. Luckily for me, my Media Technology teacher had already introduced my students to a word processing program and taught them the very basics of the program. From this information, I was then able to use my SmartBoard to appropriately review the already learned material and model how to take a drafted piece of writing and turn it into a finalized product.   I also gave my students information on how to choose an appropriate font and font size, so that their work would be legible to all audiences. Providing these choices allowed students to give more voice in their writing and helped them take greater ownership of their work. After multiple modeling lessons, 100% of my students successfully created a word processing document. They were even eager to show their work to one another. For example, one pair of students took turns reading each other's papers and then made changes based on their peer's feedback. Overall, students were more comfortable using the computers, and they were also more excited about completing school work. One student even added a full paragraph to his writing because he wanted to make sure he had enough text on the page. These students truly enjoyed seeing their final work typed up and printed out!

Following this successful implementation, I found myself wanting to push my students to the next level with using technology. When I informed one of my teammates about what I wanted to do in the classroom, he informed me that he had attended and Expeditionary Learning conference. At the conference, one of the master classes revolved around the idea of using webquests to enhance student engagement, while at the same time building research skills. He directed me to the book, <u>Literacy in the Middle Grades</u>, by Gail Tompkins. While reading this book, I found that "webquests are inquiry-oriented online projects that enhance students' learning by scaffolding their thinking and involving them in meaningful task" (Tompkins, 2010).   When I read this, I remembered a number of times when I asked my students to use the Internet to research a specific topic. When I did this, I was shocked with the varying degrees of proficiency. My students had no formal skills in researching, and often became lost or confused in the process. Therefore, a web quest seemed to be a thoughtful and realistic way to build research skills.

Using the information I gathered from my teammate and my previous knowledge, I decided to try a web quest in my classroom. In thinking about an appropriate way to incorporate this instructional strategy, it seemed to be a great fit for our mini-unit on human rights. One of the guiding questions for the unit was, "What are human rights?" Seeing how this concept of human rights could be incredibly difficult to understand, I decided to start off the unit with a scaffolded web quest that would build my students' background knowledge. After engaging my students with a video clip on human rights, my students set out on their web quest. According to Tompkins (2010), these types of projects "foster students' ability to use the internet to search and retrieve information from websites [because] with web quests, the resources have been bookmarked so students can locate them easily". The web quest that my class was assigned allowed them to explore human rights. All web quests have specific components that allow students to gather information from the Internet, in a responsible manner. The one I used included an introduction to and a brief history of human rights. Students were then given several tasks to complete using a variety of websites that were already predetermined. This allowed students to effectively and responsibly search the

Internet. Each student was provided with a rubric, which allowed them to self-assess and have teacher feedback, as they completed each task. Instead of telling students about human rights, I then directed the students to search for information about the timeline of human rights, as well as information about each of the 330 human rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. From this, students learned a great deal about each of the human rights through short stories, photo montages with captions, and short video clips. This guided research allowed my students to work through reputable resources to become comfortable with receiving information in a variety of ways. On an exit slip, one student noted that consuming multiple resources helped her "understand better because everyone has a different story." Another student said the videos and illustrations helped him to "see what it was like to not have freedoms."

To wrap up the unit on human rights, one of my teammates suggested I continue with the same idea of integrating technology into the culminating project. I decided to strategically group my class into groups of three and had each group present a poster on a chosen human right. The information included on the poster had to be typed and could be pulled from both in-class readings and the Internet. In doing this, I wanted my students to feel that they had significant leeway in making their own decisions. I wanted to push them to use the Internet as they would at home. However, they did have to meet certain criterion that was outlined in the rubric. In order to ensure student success, I modeled how to appropriately search the Internet for pertinent and meaningful information. I knew that modeling alone would not suffice, due to the fact that many of my students did not have the research skills necessary for determining appropriate sources from non-appropriate sources. Therefore, I made sure that each group bookmarked their information on a designated computer. When it was time to meet, we would sit down and review their findings. This helped me to acknowledge good finds on the Internet and then explain why something did not seem credible. Those small group meetings allowed me to clear up a number of different misconceptions. In the end, students had to choose what information to include and what to leave out based on their rubric. As students were deciding which information to include, I heard them asking each other questions, such as: "Does this website have an author?" "Do we see an email address for the author?" "Where's the date on this website?" In the end, I was very proud of their work, but also recognized the need to continue working on identifying relevant and reputable information from an online search.

The success I had with this implementation of technology in my classroom prompted me to think of the different ways I could include technology into my students' education at school. I wanted my students to take more ownership of their learning and monitor their own understanding. Last year, each student was given access to an online math program called Dreambox. This program is aligned with Common Core State Standards and allows students to practice all necessary math skills. Another great feature about this program is that it enables students and teachers to track their learning in a way that makes it more meaningful. Each student can track what standards they passed, what standards they are working on, and where they will move to next. I arranged specific times during the day to be sure that every student gets online for 20 minutes a day. They love to pull up their data and show me how far they have come and where they are heading next. One student even asked if he could help another student because his data showed mastery on the order of operations lesson. I feel as though

my use of this program in the classroom has had a positive impact on both the use of mathematics and technology by students.

As I reflect on my progress toward my goal, I can see proof of meaningful growth. I moved from using technology in a simple and traditional manner to integrating it into my everyday instruction. At the beginning of the year, I was apprehensive when thinking about having my students use Microsoft Word or researching a given topic on the Internet. I soon realized that my insecurities about letting my students' explore technology did nothing but hinder their learning. With a commitment to using technology on a daily basis, I have seen their confidence grow significantly. I have seen an increase in productivity and a positive attitude towards technology and learning!