In the Beginning...

In 2013, I submitted a proposal and became one of the first two Mobile Learning Fellows at Walters State Community College. Writing the proposal was the easy step. Implementing a new way of teaching and learning proved to be the more difficult part of the task, but it provided an opportunity for me to change the face of the...
One of the best decisions I made as a Mobile Learning Fellow was to document my journey. I wasn’t sure how to effectively do that, but I knew who to ask. Allen Nix, from Instructional Design at Walters State Community College, suggested I start a blog using the web tool, Wordpress. I took his suggestion home on a Friday, and after much sweat and many tears, the blog was up and running the following Monday.

I would recommend that anyone who is doing something that is considered “cutting edge” to document the journey for others to follow. I’ve looked back on my blog many times when I have been discouraged. I see the “fruits of my labor,” and I know everything will get better. I have proof. I’ve used my Wordpress blog as documentation at different presentations I’ve given. I have also had folks contact me because they located my blog while doing a web search and needed help with a similar idea. It has definitely been worth the time and energy I invested in creating the blog.
You must find a support system quickly. There will be times you can’t do it on your own. Four key people come to mind when I think about my support system:

- David White
- Allen Nix
- Darrel McGhee
- Jamie Posey

If it had not been for the leadership, guidance, and encouragement from these four, I am not sure I would have survived the year.

David White was the provider of anything I needed. I started out the year with five (5) iPads that Dr. White checked out from the library. Five was plenty since I was doing group projects in class. Each group had an iPad with which to build, research, and design their activities. He made sure I had everything I needed to be successful. Dr. White also served as a sounding board when I was trying new ideas and tools. He was always pushing me to go further and never questioned my abilities, even when I was doubting myself.

Allen Nix was the person who encouraged me to submit the Mobile Fellow Proposal. As mentioned above, he also introduced me to Wordpress. Allen was my go to guy for all my technical questions and/or concerns! I remember using FaceTime to bring Allen in my first flipped classroom activity. The students were working in groups, and I was just watching, which was so different to what usually happens in a college classroom. I was a bit concerned, but Allen reassured me that all was going well!

Darrel McGhee always seemed to be in the right place at the right time. I remember having a pity party during the first few weeks of flipping the classroom—you can read this in my blog. I was ready to give up. Creating this new teaching/learning environment was time consuming. The students were whining, the grading was overwhelming, and I was on overload. I was sitting in the dark in my office with my Kleenex box when Mr. McGhee came to the door…(see the rest of the story at: https://darlenesmithblog.wordpress.com/the-meltdown/)

Jamie Posey provided unlimited use of the Collaboratory and study rooms located in the library. These rooms provided quiet places where my students could work with their groups and their iPads and other devices. They could bring their devices and share information with one another. Students need time to collaborate and a quiet place to share and to think! Thanks, Dr. Posey, for supporting us!

Surround yourself with people who will walk the journey with you! You cannot do it alone, but with the right support system, the sky is the limit. ☺
I chose to implement my flipped classroom proposal in the EDUC 2010 Psychology of Human Development for Teachers course. It is required for all education majors. This course is about understanding, and the application of, the psychology of human development to the teaching and learning process in educational settings. This class also requires students to complete eighteen (18) hours of service learning outside of regular class time in a real-life classroom environment. This seemed the perfect course to “flip.”

For the flipped activities, The Chosen Ones had to choose a grade, subject, and web tool/app to create a project that was Common Core aligned and ready for teachers, in the local area and beyond, to use in their classroom. As my students were building the flipped activity projects, I decided to put their creations in a place where other educators and students could possible benefit as well. I tried the web tool, edclippers, but I found out quickly that 5 GB of free space was not enough for the projects my students were creating. That’s when I decided to use Pinterest.

I set up an account, built a single board, and used social media to advertise what my students would be sharing. Within twenty (20) minutes, I had eighty (80) followers on our blank board! That convinced me that this project had potential of being successful for all involved.

For security purposes, I decided to pin all projects that we posted myself so that students had to go through me before their work went on the Pinterest board. I also set up my account so that I would be notified every time someone re-pinned any of our creations. That was a great benefit because we knew where our boards and pins were being used. It wasn’t just our local school systems, but we discovered people from across the United States were using and benefitting from our creations. That is meaningful learning!
COLLECT EVIDENCE

Besides creating a blog, take lots of photos and movies. You will want/need evidence of your journey. One of my favorite movies was one I created using the app, Magisto. Right click on the link below to view:

HTTP://MAGIS.TO/ZICYWW6R
And take plenty pictures of students, working, doing, learning, socializing…

We’ve certainly taken our share of selfies! 😊
SHARE YOUR JOURNEY

During inaugural week of spring 2014, I was asked to present my flipped classroom at the WSCC all faculty meeting. Although I was honored, the success of the flipped classroom was the buy-in from the students. So, I asked if The Chosen Ones (the students from that Fall 2013 flipped classroom) could present with me. That request was granted. For some highlights of that presentation, click the link below:

[YouTube Video](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=niCLkmZu1ew&sns=em)

This picture was taken at a MOB meeting on campus. The monthly MOB meetings were design to allow faculty to come together to talk about apps and tools and discuss how to use them in class. Some of The Chosen Ones were honored to present to WSCC faculty, some community leaders, and folks from Apple. This was definitely one of the highlights of this year. Because of the presentation requirement in the flipped classroom, my students presented to this wider audience without hesitation. They were excited to show the audience in the room - no matter who they were - what students could do when given the opportunity.

It was a proud moment for me as an educator! That’s when I really began to realize the impact that the flipped classroom had on my students. They were decision makers and critical thinkers who presented their creations with confidence and conviction. WOW!
This journey has also provided me many speaking engagements as well. People were interested in what effects the flipped classroom had on learning and teaching. (This is another reason to keep documentation!) I was not the expert, but I just lived through it, so they were interested in what I had learned, and I was happy to share the good, the bad, and the ugly!

https://www.pinterest.com/darlene0638/
Looking back on my journey, I see many things I could have done better. I made many mistakes, but I've discovered that those mistakes are part of the learning process. Even though everything wasn’t perfect, flipping the classroom still had many benefits for everyone involved. Students began interacting with each other more inside as well as outside of class; we became a family! Student engagement definitely increased, and they had better attitudes toward learning and school in general. My students became critical thinkers and decision makers. What more could a teacher ask for?

Not only were my students positively impacted, but I was as well. My teaching improved, and I was re-energized by the heightened excitement of my students. My classroom was definitely a student-centered learning environment, and I embraced the importance of my role as the facilitator. Has this experience changed me? It has forever changed me.

As I added more technology into my classroom and stopped “teaching the way I have always taught,” I have discovered that each semester brings new challenges, but also new chances for growth. My students and I have become more innovative and creative. We’ve definitely learned to get comfortable with being uncomfortable, and I feel certain that I am preparing my students for the challenges of the real world.

My year as a Mobile Learning Fellow has ended, but the flipped classroom still continues…

The Chosen Ones: Check out this Slate story I made.