

Executive Summary of Pre-practicum experiences  
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The enclosed documents are descriptions of and reflections upon the five pre-practicum experiences I had during the year 2004 as a participant in the Certification in Technologies of Education program at the Harvard Extension School. Each document is a recording of what I observed or participated in at each site. Each site differs in the age group of its students (adult, high school, or middle school learners) as well as the learning environment (in-school, after-school, and summer camp programs).

I began my pre-practicum experience in June at a three day professional development workshop called The Leadership Initiative for Teaching and Technology (LIFT<sup>2</sup>) in Marlboro, MA. The workshops were developed for adults preparing to go on to externships for the summer. I assisted the lead teachers during the last two days of the workshop in the area of web development.

My second pre-practicum was located at TechBoston Academy's summer school program in Dorchester, MA. TechBoston Academy is a pilot high school whose mission is to teach and learn with and through technology. I co-taught with the 9<sup>th</sup> grade history teacher, Mr. Malenga, a refresher course on 9<sup>th</sup> grade history infused with web development skills.

In late July, I assisted and observed the Math and Technology Charter School's (MATCH) summer academy at M.I.T. in Cambridge, MA. Incoming freshman to the MATCH school underwent an intensive seven day session of eight hours of preparatory classes. During the afternoons, they participated in a two hour technology skill development class in which they learned how to use digital cameras, how to change images, how to make web pages using HTML, and how to use Flash. I assisted the lead teacher, taught and managed the student TAs, and documented lesson plans.

At my fourth pre-practicum site, I ran a two day ten hour workshop on web design and digital imagery at the GEARUP Leadership Conference in Dudley, MA. Sixteen male and female middle school students from areas such as Lowell and Lawrence filed into a four hour morning class, and returned in the afternoon for another four hours of the class. Our focus was on being "creative and reflective" about leadership by building group web sites on the topic.

The final pre-practicum site was a summer camp located in Duxbury, MA, for at-risk youth. The lead teacher, Julie, and her three assistants, (Laura, Ian and I) ran the Wiredwoods curriculum ([www.wiredwoods.org](http://www.wiredwoods.org)) in a log cabin lab in the middle of Camp Wing. Each session of a morning and an afternoon group runs through creative technology projects (digital photography, Photoshop, and web design) in eight days, culminating in a group presentation on a celebration day. I lead my two small groups of four students through the curriculum and assisted Julie with technical problems and lesson plans.

My experiences were important to my certification because, although I have already had two years experience teaching technology at the high school level, I needed to experience a broader range of teaching and learning environments, such as the middle school and adult learner levels in the after-school and summer sessions. I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Camp Wing with the middle school students. The environment was relaxed and, although there were set objectives each day, I never felt the pressure an academic setting usually puts on me as a teacher. I realized that when I set project deadlines at school for my students, I feel the stress, too! I felt the students were also more engaged due to the lack of pressure and the encouragement of project-based learning. I felt overall that the projects were more theirs in ownership, and the learning more in their own hands. One of the top things my high school students complain about in my class is the inability to make "their own" web sites, and to an extent they are right. There is so much more emphasis on integrating subject matter into the web projects. Students fail to see that they can apply the same features that they think are "cool" and "fun" to web sites about these topics, too. I find middle school students to have more energy and enthusiasm about topics IF the topic interests them, and that energy can be very contagious! But at times their lack of maturity frustrates me. I do realize that high school students challenge me to know more which improves my skills. Their questions and challenges drive me! I enjoyed assisting the adults at LIFT<sup>2</sup>, and I think I was able to identify and adapt to the multiple levels of comfort in the room. Some adults were visibly new to technology and uncomfortable, while others were bored and needed a challenge. There is a delicate balance between accommodating the slow learners while pushing forward the advanced. Being an assistant forces you to address the entire spectrum at once!