

The following is fictitious intended only for submission to ETEC 522 as a course requirement.

Transcript of an interview with SouthEast Cornerstone Superintendent, Vivian Watson:

VW – Hello Susan, I understand that you are having a successful trial with your Physics Connections venture. The board has received your proposal to implement Physics Connections in all 21 division high schools next year. I am here to ask you a few questions. I will be making a recommendation to the board based on your replies.

SW – Hello Velda. I am happy to have this opportunity to speak with you.

VW – First off, let's talk about your trial. How well is it working?

SW – I am currently using Physics Connections to teach grade 11 Physics to 18 students in three different locations. Student feedback has been positive. There is a lot of activity on our Secure-Blog site and the students have had some meaningful discussions with other Physics teachers in the division. Next week we will be doing our first webcast with a physics professor from the University of Regina. The students have submitted their collaborative science fair projects online and Professor Lumens has agreed to give them some constructive feedback.

VW - Sounds interesting. As you are testing your proto-type, have you found any areas that needed improvement? Has any value engineering been carried out?

SW – Well, I invited the Physics teacher from White Bear First Nation to join us for a discussion about the unit on light. He had some really good suggestions for local adaptations that could be made based on the traditional knowledge of the people at White Bear. One of the strengths of Physics Connections is that it is online and open to registered teachers so that they can alter the content and activities to individualize the program to suit their needs. I followed Mr. Candela's advice and integrated more of an aboriginal perspective into our light unit, but the key point here is that adaptations and improvements can be made quickly, easily and inexpensively by any registered teacher user. The changes only affect their application but go into a common repository in case others would like to use it as well.

VW – So do you think that your venture will be fully functional by the beginning of the next school year? If teachers decide to try Physics Connections, how much support will they need?

SW – Well, that is part of what I am asking the division for in my proposal. I believe it is important to have the teacher users feel comfortable with the learning environment. To do that, I would like to offer a three day training session, held at the division office, with teachers' salaries and expenses paid. Ultimately, this would occur during the summer so

that teacher users could be familiar with the course long before they implement it with their students.

VW – So if the division decides to go with your venture next year, they will have to pay extra salary and expenses during the summer?

SW - Yes. But keep in mind that after the initial orientation, there will be no need for teachers to travel to one location for training. Just like the students, teachers will have access to their own Secure-Blog and other collaborative tools. In the true sense of a cooperative learning environment, the teacher users will share, learn and problem-solve together.

VW – What scale of implementation do you envision in the first year and where do you go from here?

SW - For the first two years of implementation, I plan on having three additional Physics teachers offering Physics Connections to students in 8 different locations. With myself included, this translates to four teachers supplying the needs of 11 schools. After a successful two years, we will open Physics Connections up to more teachers and to more schools in the division.

As the use of Physics Classroom develops, I plan to begin work on the new Math curriculum. Since it is based on recommendations from the WNCPC (Western and Northern Canadian Protocol), Math Connections will be easily adaptable for use in all of Western and Northern Canada.

At this point, I will look for support from an educational publishing company like Pearson. Once I have the support of Physics Connection users, Math Connections will be very attractive to publishers; especially with the student tracking options that we are working on. Integrating student tracking will make Math Connections sellable to interested schools or divisions.

VW – Your plans sound ambitious. Can you do this all on your own? Does this development depend on any key product or service outside your control?

SW – The only issues that I am having right now are with copyright. I have sent out requests for use, but I still haven't heard one way or another. If I am not granted permission for the use of certain images, problems or simulations, it will not affect the quality of Physics Connections. It will simply mean that I will need to develop original versions. The only reason that I am requesting permission is to save some time in development. When I create Math Connections, I will use all my own original content so that there are no issues of copyright when I look for a buyer.

VW – So are you protecting your property rights as well?

SW – I will more so when developing Math Connections. Physics Connections will be open for free use for educational purposes. The opportunity for integration of local aboriginal content is one of the many strengths of the course. I do have a patent on

Secure-Blog however. Secure-Blog enables teachers to design group blogging so that only the students in their class can read and comment on each others' blogs. There is also a function that allows teacher moderation of blogs to ensure that the tool is being used appropriately.

VW – So let me be a devil's advocate. If your product is free, why would the board spend extra money in training and implementation when they could simply ask teachers to look for other free alternatives that are already developed?

SW – Good question, but there is really nothing out there like Physics Connections. I have built the course using a Connectivist approach using authentic materials. The aboriginal inclusion aspect is also revolutionary in terms of curriculum and application. I designed an information package for you. I will give you extras to share with the board as well.

VW – Anything else that you would like me to pass on?

SW – Well, I would really like to impress the board with the necessity of this venture. Rural Saskatchewan, like many rural communities across Canada are facing de-population, teacher cuts and professional staff shortages; especially in specialized academic areas like Physics. Physics Connections offers an efficient and effective way for qualified teachers to reach students in rural areas. At present, some teachers in our division have to step outside of their comfort area to teach Physics. Many schools are using outdated textbooks and old, sometimes faulty lab equipment.

VW – But the fact remains that people tend to use what is familiar. How will you instill confidence in your product?

SW - There will be a time of uncertainty where we will have to prove that Physics Connections works. We plan to have former students promote our course by videotaping their comments and uploading them right on the Physics Connections site. If you visit the site, you can see the video I made of myself. We are certain that once administrators, teachers, parents and students see the success of our trial group and view the engaging lessons and cooperative learning environment, they will be happy to offer Physics Connections in their school.

VW – Well, you certainly sound ready. I guess the only question that remains is, are we ready?

SW – I can't say that all adults are ready for the change, but I can say that educational change is coming. I can also say that I know the students are ready. Current research shows that their brains are actually changing as a result of technology use. The students that I am teaching right now had a little difficulty getting used to the new environment. I can't blame them, they are used to traditional teacher-centered, content-transfer

approaches. Now that they are accustomed to the connective approach, they are engaged, connected and learning.

VW – Well that is it. Thank you for your time. I wish that the board members could meet you before I give them my recommendation.

SW – No problem, just open up the physics Connections website and show them my video.

VW – I'll do that.

SW – Thanks, Velda!