**MSUrban STEM Final Reflection Paper Sussan Oladipo**

**Looking Back:** One of my major learning from the summer session of the STEM fellowship is the benefit of group work. The group learning model came alive for me not because I was not doing it before or did not know the benefits but because I experienced some of the benefits in a new way. I developed bonds with my colleagues at the table and this made it easier for us to ask questions from one another. Working together as a group also increased our sense of ownership of the work thereby making us more accountable. As time progressed, we were not just doing it to be accountable for our time with MSU but we were thinking about how the experiences will benefit students at our various schools. Ownership became stronger.

This piece matters a lot in my context because I work with adults in my building. It was important that I observed the moves and strategies that Punya and the instructors used to build our small groups and whole team throughout the summer. We were encouraged to see mistakes as opportunities to learn. Sometimes adults beat themselves up so much when they or their colleagues make mistakes. Punya’s explanation triggered the idea of a growth mindset for me. I had learned about the growth mindset in a different context.

These experiences will definitely change how I work with adults in my school building. I will build more team collaboration in my building because this will strengthen our teachers’ ability to work with one another in turn increasing their capacity for best practices.

My fun experience with group work over the summer began on the first day when I worked with a group of four educators. My group went on a picture-taking walk.

The interactions among our team and the fun of taking pictures around the downtown area helped to dissipate the little apprehension I had at the beginning. We saw downtown- went to the library, towards the lake and rest stops to take pictures. We created twitter accounts, posting our pictures and introduced ourselves using our pictures.

I thought this experience was a great outing and wonderful way to bond with others and to use picture to say more about who you are. I will take this strategy back to my building to apply it in our professional development sessions.

I also got to share about the reading selections from the Shulman’s article and how good learners unlearn and unpack prior knowledge and then negotiate new ones. Amnesia, Fantasia and Inertia were concepts from one of the two readings.

I agree whole-heartedly with the thinking behind this article because unlearning prior misconceptions is something that manifest in the classrooms visit at my work. Many at times, the misconceptions can only manifest when teachers ask the right questions aligned to the objectives. Without the manifestations, students may not absorb new concepts because the old one is still in their head. Probing students through questioning what students know and accessing what they need to change is crucial to growing their critical skills. It takes careful planning and skillful teaching to understand this and to do it consistently.

Part of my new learning was navigating my surface pro 2. The technology is very user friendly and fascinating to use. The features of the surface-pro, is unique. The uniqueness is in its size and functionality. I like that it is very portable and somewhat easy to navigate. It also has some in-built applications that my laptop did not have. It felt really empowering to be given a surface 2 pro! I was very motivated to achieve the objectives of the summer session and much more.

Another aspect of my learning was the interaction with the social media, Facebook and Tweeter. I have always seen these media as a social platform with little or no learning benefits. However I not only learned during our summer that it is a huge resource, I experienced the power of it as a way to share ideas as well as build healthy professional relationships. Even though I had opened a tweeter account two years prior, I more intentionally learned how to use hash tag during the summer training. In addition I learned how to create a video .

One of the hallmarks of the summer face-to-face session was the teaching that Akeshia presented and the whole context about providing feedback in a constructive way. This was very eye opening. I believe I will apply type of feedback whereby the observer is not looking for what is wrong but also looking for areas of strength that can build the teacher up.

Overall, the comfort level my colleagues and I had over this summer around technology was palpable. We had the same structured daily routine beginning with this day in history and daily readings and then we segued to the teaching demonstrations and I had the opportunity to share my own teaching on one of the days with my Tech crew team. I also shared my tech tip with our entire class.

Another highlight of the summer was the professional development from Second City conducted by a second city staff by name Brian. He was really good and taught us many teaching skills and team building activities. We acted a lot of the many skills and then shared among ourselves. The visit to the museum afforded me the opportunity to concretize my theme picture for my big idea. My idea made me deduce that learners come to the table as bare bones and that it is a process where all stakeholders have a role to play.

The reading on Teaching that Sticks by Chip and Dan Heath was quite revealing for me. The authors argue that teaching that is facilitated in form of real life experiences stick more with students than abstract interpretation of concepts. An example from the article was the teacher that used her students to demonstrate racial stereotyping. She asked a particular demographic group of students to assume superiority over another group and then she reversed the role after some time. When the process was over the students not only learned a lot about the feelings that stereotyping can have on other people they get to experience it and it got to their emotions. That will stick with them for a long time.

I agree with the authors on the idea of the teaching that sticks. I personally learn by doing and teach that way. Students better understand concepts when they experience it by doing it. For example, our group visits to the museum of science and industry provided an avenue for me to think about my big idea in the context of the concrete objects at the museum. That was a very helpful tool for me to nurture my idea.

Makey, Makey was another great idea of learning by doing. Each group created a circuit that passed current to move an appliance. For example, we used the circuit we created to play Marion Game. Some groups did similar circuit building using banana and other natural conducting objects.

I really enjoyed all the world of wonder that was presented. Researching new ideas is something that naturally gives me great pleasure. The STEM summer for me was an example of true innovation. I had never thought of presenting ideas the way Punya and his team did. I plan on borrowing these ideas and using them in my professional learning community (including grade level meeting and Instructional Learning Teams) back at the school.

Another big idea that I walked away with is that learning is rooted in a theory. I have to always find the theory behind any action that I am learning or making.

The idea in the video of our final day of the summer was listening to oneself, being more dynamic with less effort and finding alternative way of doing things.

**Looking Forward:** The key topics that will be important for me over the next six months are the Chicago Public Schools five pillars for school success. These pillars are very important because they are competencies that school leaders need to demonstrate in order to be successful at supporting students to grow academically. They also align with those competencies that are used to evaluate school leaders. The pillars include the following:

1. Rigorous standards, curriculum and powerful instruction

2. Systems of support for student needs

3. Engaged and empowered families and community

4. Effective teachers, leaders and staff and

5. Sound ﬁscal, operational and accountability systems.

I chose these topics because they align with my expected leadership competencies for the Chicago Public School system. This means that my success in these competencies becomes success for the instructors I work with and indirectly becomes success for the students they teach. The ripple effect is even greater because my cycle of network administrators get to share in these successes as well. Their institutions also become successful.

We currently use many resources to support our professional learning in the above domains.

For the Rigorous standards, curriculum and powerful instruction, we use the various media where the standards are published including the online version of the Common Core Standards as well as the numerous books and software resources such as word processors, excel, Google Docs and video making for our professional development in the area of curriculum and instruction.

With the much exposure I have had with social media and learning, I am eager to introduce them into our professional development as a school and my development as a leader. Classroom website, where each teacher will need to develop their own is something that I will be looking forward to institute at my school.

I believe that students and our school community members will benefit from sharing ideas that are packaged via the website and made accessible to others. My theory for this is that our school has invested almost half a million dollars worth of technology resources so finding avenues to interact both face-to face and online will be an added advantage.

I image myself and my colleague from school who was also at the STEM partnering to try to replicate some of the interactive strategies we used at the summer STEM training. For example, we will do some picture taking and discuss finding meanings in everyday objects, sharing the ability to see our content areas in everything we do, e.tc. I believe these ideas will help my team will grow more cohesively and we will be able to run a more tightly coupled institution of learning.

**Systems of support for student needs-**We currently use a lot of interactive media to support students. We call homes, email, use paper/pen to document infractions and the CPS VERIFY tool to record infractions. With the new CPS move to use peer remediation to support students instead of out of school suspension, I am thinking that blogging might be a way to create that platform among student leaders to reach other students.

This will give opportunity for students to express their views and increase their voice regarding issues of personal and collective concerns.

Currently we do a lot of face-face meetings to **engage and empower our families and community.** We also do automate phone messages to parents as well as make phone calls home. Our populations of parents have emails but majority have not embraced it as a form of two-way communication with the school. I believe this will be a great tool when every parent embraces it. It will not only save us a great of paper but it will also help us implement a two-way communication effectively.

Our school has a website but I am not sure that many parents visit this website. When our families get used to the media as a way to interact with the school, they will most likely visit the website to get information and make informed decisions about their children and school. We will also be able to link our teachers individual websites with the school website thereby releasing a chain of needed information to our parents and families as well as our students. The websites will have links to other sites that students can get help to complete homework and other assignments.

**Effective teachers, leaders and staff**-The role of technological resources in making teachers and leaders effective cannot be over emphasized. Texting, emailing, calls are all media that we use. I will look to add twitter and privatized face book and yahoo groups as other ways to add to the interactions. I believe these will be useful for my school because of the diverse nature of our students learning abilities and the need for teachers to share ideas that will build our collective capacity as a school team.

**Sound ﬁscal, operational and accountability systems**-The CPS ORACLE system helps schools to manage their funds and make informed budgeting. Excel is a useful tool for us when it comes to exporting the ORACLE spreadsheets so that schools can use it for planning purposes.I plan on using Google-Doc to share this kind of exported document so that our administrative team can continue to plan around it after a face-to-face meeting.

In conclusion, the MSU Urban STEM program that kicked off this summer 2014 was a pleasant academic turning point in my career. It further shaped my vision about science and technology and how to support my school constituents better. Looking back I walked away with lots of professional connections and skills that I can ready use at my school. Looking forward, I am poised to use the technology resources I have learned about the increase my competencies in the five pillars I am accountable for at work.