



## Report AAACE Scholarship 2015

Visited Conference: SITE 2015 – March 2-6, 2015– Las Vegas, Nevada  
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1. **Introduction** (more information about the reasons why you applied for this scholarship and why you selected this conference)

I had not, until this opportunity presented itself, attended SITE or any of the Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education conferences. It was my hope that applying for, and receiving, this scholarship opportunity would allow me to start a relationship with AAACE that would continue into the future.

In the past I have attended, presented and facilitated workshops and sessions at many education technology conferences. During my previous 12 years at the State in the Department of Information Services and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and my 7 years with Microsoft's Partners in Learning many conferences were on my list to attend for professional development and information gathering. The International Society for Technology in Education Conference was always high on the list. Occasionally I was fortunate enough to attend the British Educational Training and Technology conference, gaining information on what was happening with technology and teachers in the European arena. As a current board member of the State Education Technology Association and a past President of the Northwest Council for Computer Education I have not only attended, presented and facilitated, at these two conferences, but have been an integral part of the planning and preparation.

Being in my first year of PhD. studies at St. Patrick's College in Dublin, Ireland in the Education, Leadership and Change program and working full time for Washington State at the Office of the Chief Information Officer my limited time and funds prevented me from attending most recent conferences. This scholarship gave me the opportunity to interact with others in my field of study. It also gave me the opportunity to immerse myself in the topic I am working on: the intersection between policy and practice and how education technology can be more impactful for learning and teaching through the deliberate policy supports of the essential conditions for successful technology integration.

It was also my hope that the SITE Conference would help me to broaden my understanding of current research into the area of technology in the learning and teaching environment. Further I hoped that the opportunity to attend the conference would allow me to become involved in an organization that is a leader in information technology and teacher education.

Also, pursuing a PhD. at a distance can sometimes be an isolating experience. Although my faculty advisor and my US advisor are always at the ready to support me in my learning needs, attending the SITE Conference would broaden and support the learning I am presently undertaking and allow me face-to-face interaction with a community of learners who are passionate about my topic of interest. Being able to interact and learn from and with this group is a vital support in the continuation of my studies. It was my hope that this conference would also allow me to continue to build my virtual and physical community of practice.

2. **Research Questions and Expectation** (more detailed information about your research interest, the questions you expected to get an answer on and expectations you had before you visited the conference)

Currently I am working on the literature review and research design for my dissertation. My focus is on how policy at multiple levels -- Washington State, the school districts in Washington State and the schools in Washington State, impacts practice and educators use of technology in their pedagogical practices. And how these policies support the learner's development of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, the teachers use of Information and Communication Technology to support the learning, the essential conditions for successful integration of technology and the learner's skills as expressed in the Washington State K-12 Technology Standards. The SITE 2015 Conference gave me many opportunities to explore this in depth as can be witnessed by the below attended sessions.

This intersection and narrowing of the gap between policy and practice is a critical piece for a successful modern education that uses technologies potential to take learning to another level. Just as research needs to look at how evidence can be policy ready, as expressed in Chris Brown's work "Making Evidence Matter" (Brown 2014), policy makers must look at how they can make the policies they write practice ready and narrow the gap between these two important education spheres, policy and practice. My hope for the SITE 2015 Conference was that I would be able to explore my research question in greater depth and see how other researchers address this critical area of need and to understand the current state of the research into this area and areas that impact the intersection between policy and practice.

Before visiting the conference I expected that the sessions at SITE 2015, the conference attendees and being immersed in a culture of research would help me explore my research question in greater depth. Before coming to the conference I spent time studying the current conference schedule as well as some focused time reviewing previous papers from the conference using the EdITLib tools, which I had purchased as part of my registration. This time was well spent and allowed me to focus on the papers and presenters that would most likely support the specific learning I hoped to accomplish. Also before visiting the conference I hoped to be able to develop a personal learning network, both physical and virtual, that would go beyond the conference walls and would help me learn more about my topic area

as I continue to work on my research question, my literature review and my research design.

### 3. **Planning and visited sessions per day** (incl. pre-conference workshop)

Commenting on all the sessions I attended would take more room than this report allows. Below I will highlight the sessions I found most helpful to my research and development.

I did not attend any pre-conference workshops. I was not clear if these were included in my registration or if I had to pay for them separately. However Monday was not a lost day. I spent the day meeting new people as well as spending some focused time with my PhD. advisor and my Qualitative Research Methods professor who had both travelled from Ireland to attend the conference.

Before the conference I identified several areas that I would focus on: TPACK, Information Literacy, Assessment and eFolios, Teach with Technology and Engaging Students through 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning. Once I was at the conference I had the opportunity to review the schedule in depth and start to narrow down my choices. This was a difficult process. There were so many sessions and topics I would liked to have attended. I am grateful for AACE providing AcademicExperts.org so I can easily download the papers and presentations I was not able to attend. It must be pointed out that there was one session time slot where there were 6 sessions I wanted to attend! To get a good flavor of the conference I decided that not only would the topic drive my decision to attend, but I wanted to experience each kind of presentation. I would attend a mix of Panel Discussions, Round Tables, Brief Papers, Full Papers and a Symposium. I also wanted to attend a variety of topic areas. After review of the sessions I attended, the LEAD – Technology Leadership was clearly the topic area that interested me most. With the help and advice of my supervisor I was able to narrow down my huge list into a manageable size. Some of the sessions I attended were:

- LEAD – Panel - The Changing Landscape of the Digital Divide: Opportunities and Challenges for Teacher Education
- VS – Panel - Data Visualization Research in K-12 Online Schools
- EVAL – Round Table - Evaluating the Progress Towards Technology Integration Standards From the Perspective of Teachers Survival Solutions
- ML – Panel - Learnings from Singapore: It takes an Ecology to Change a School
- LEAD – Roundtable – Modeling Technology Integration in Policies and Practice
- EVAL – Panel – Technology Enhanced Quality Learning for All
- ITE – Brief Papers – Learning Design and Teaching Beliefs: Integrating Technology into Instructional Process

- EVAL – Full Papers – Measuring 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills in Technology Educators
- LEAD – Full Papers – Towards the Development of a New Digital Strategy for Schools in Ireland
- EVAL – Brief Papers – Technology Models and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning: How Models, Standards, and Theories Make Learning Powerful
- GE – Symposium – Part 1: TPACK SIG Symposium: Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK): Revision and Rethinking
- GE – Symposium – Part 2: TPACK SIG Symposium: Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK): Revision and Rethinking
- LEAD – Brief Papers – Key Elements of a Sustainable Framework for Teacher Professional Development
- LEAD – Brief Papers – Principal’s Experiences in Leading Change in a 1:1 Environment: A Phenomenological Pursuit
- LEAD – Brief Papers – Information Technology Personnel’s Perceptions of Barriers to Technology Implementation in Rural Schools

Almost every session had at least a one, if not two or three, nugget of information that was directly related to the research I am conducting. My only disappointment was that many of the presenter’s papers did not address any of the policy implications of their work. They were excellent presentations about the work they were doing, but most of them were not policy ready and many were not practice ready. What would the policy maker or the practitioner take from these sessions to change what was happening in schools? As researchers our audience is often focused on the academic community and not on the “users” of our research. Policy and practice recommendations must become an integrated part of what we do, think and know so the important research that we are conducting can live beyond the confines of a conference or a research project.

4. **Scientific discussion** (elaborate on the keynote-sessions topics & the presented content and materials from all other attended activities from an academic point of view)

The Keynote presentations I attended were inspiring and set the stage for the rest of the day and week. They made me think about the sessions in different ways and allowed me to frame the information I would take in during the day in terms of the topics that were addressed in the keynotes.

Kathleen Tyner’s Day One Keynote, Creative Disruption at the Intersection of Arts and Technology Education, was a good reminder about integration of technology across the curriculum. It was inspiring to hear from one of the first author’s I read when starting this journey towards a PhD.

Unfortunately I was not able to attend Jongwhi Park's Day Two Keynote, Education for the Future We Want: a Call for Action. I had to attend a Quantitative Research Methodologies Class online. Once again I am grateful for AcademicExperts.org!

The Day Three Keynote, American Innovations in an Age of Discovery: Teaching Science and Social Studies Through 3D-Printed Historical Reconstructions, presented by Matthew Hoffman, John Lee, and David Slykhuis made me think about how technology might be used in different and unique ways. 3D-Printing has so many applications. The potential for learners to create their own machines and to bring artifacts into the learning environment is a powerful tool that this keynote highlighted.

Finally the Day Four Keynote, Language, the World, and Video Games: Teaching & Learning in an Imperiled World, presented by James Gee was a great way to end the conference. Dr. Gee made me think outside the box of traditional learning and think about ways children were learning in their everyday life and how policy might support these new ways of learning in and out of school.

5. **Assessment and reflective evaluation on the conference** (Did the conference reach your expectations? In your opinion, what was excellent and where is room for improvement?)

The SITE 2015 Conference met my expectations. The sheer volume of information was overwhelming but the tools (AcademicExperts.org) will allow me to return to the information over and over again. This conference, and the information I have gained from it, will allow me to move forward with my research in different ways. It has opened my thought process to different and new pathways to explore and given me resources to explore and incorporate into my thinking.

From the perspective of a PhD student it would have been useful if there had been a session or two devoted directly to my group of colleagues. While I met others who were in the process of writing their dissertations, gathering research or were in the midst of coursework this was only because I reached out to talk to the person sitting next to me in a session or at coffee. A meet and greet for students and their advisors would have helped create a community that will eventually be the next wave of researchers and would have helped us connect and collaborate. This session, or another aimed at the student attendee, could also encompass the fast changing tools we are using in our research efforts. Technology is creating different applications to visualize, collect and analyze information. Creating a session for students, and others, to share the tools they are using, or have used and discarded, would be of great benefit to the attendees.

Furthermore a session aimed at explaining the tools AACE has available (AcademicExperts.org, EdITLib.org, etc.) as well as the other conference offerings that AACE puts on would be a great session for the first time conference attendee. Perhaps this could be discussed in a more concrete way in the newcomers meetings.

## 6 Concluding thoughts....

Upon reflecting on all aspects of this conference I learned several valuable lessons I will use in my continued research efforts. First and foremost being exposed to the community of practice that SITE 2015 brought together was essential to my growth as a person and as a researcher. The many different ways that each presenter approached their topic and problem showed me the diversity of thinking within the community. The rigor and methodology of each presenter was evident and their joy in sharing what they have learned was apparent in each of the presentations and throughout the conference and within this community of learners.

Second, the real world application of the theories and methods each presenter engaged in with their topic will help me become a knowledgeable and skilled practitioner of research. The experience I gained from reading the papers and discussing the topic with the authors will added to my knowledge base and has, in part, prepared me for success in the future.

Finally, meeting fellow students, and established researchers, who are interested in the same topic areas as I has helped in establishing my personal community of practice. At the conference I met people from Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and many other countries around the world. Since the conference I have already connected with many of them via email and social media. This community was the biggest gift the conference gave me.

The lessons I learned and the people I met at SITE 2015 will inform my practice moving forward. I will be back to the SITE conference. Not only as an attendee, but hopefully one day as a presenter.

## References

Brown, C. (2014) *'Making Evidence Matter: A new perspective for evidence-informed policy making in Education'*. London: IOE Press