iRemix Education:

Engaging Mentors as Teachers

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It's late morning at the Renaissance Academy. All the mentors, DYN leadership and facilitator are sitting in the media arts room. The DYN team is facing a large plasma television screen that is mounted high on the wall. On the screen is a PowerPoint slide that reads: "iRemix Education: Professional Learning Community Learning (PLC) group." Outside the media arts room students are rushing to get to their classes before the passing period ends. Locker doors are slamming and the voices of the students are echoing throughout the room.

One of the mentors, Brother Mike, is leading this meeting. He goes to the board and points to a section titled, "Agenda" and to the word "Connections." As Brother Mike begins to address the group, the school bell rings loudly. He continues to speak, "I'm wondering how we can reach students. ... For us to be connected in this work we have to stand for our students and make that our dedication for the whole year and when we come in...take 3 minutes to yourself to reflect on that student, who you are going to stand for, if students are at the center of our work, then which student are you going to 'ride' with, who are you doing this for?"

—DYN professional development session field notes, 2007

A core principle of the Digital Youth Network (DYN) is that youth participants are not just students, but rather they are part of a global community, and it is the responsibility of the DYN adults to prepare them

to become 21st century learners and digital media citizens. This is a significant undertaking, and program leaders recognize that as much as students need support in this type of growth, so too do their adult mentors. Through formal and informal professional development spaces, DYN mentors develop their own professional identities as well as their classroom practices and pedagogical tools. In turn, their learning environments are transformed, as they form a common language and shared goals and practices in support of developing digital media citizens.

In this chapter we first discuss DYN's early growth, and describe how this growth led to the need for DYN mentors to develop specific pedagogical practices. Next, we describe the ways in which the DYN professional development model evolved to include structures for collaboration, community, and accountability. In the final third of the chapter, we offer an introduction to the core group of mentors at Renaissance Academy, including three in-depth mentor portraits that illustrate the diverse ways that mentors have integrated domain, artistry and pedagogical practices into in- and out-of-school learning contexts.

Factors for Developing Professional Mentors

The Digital Youth Network was initially designed to provide a safe out of school space for youth to interact with technology and to work with mentors who possessed high technological fluency. Similar to the Computer Clubhouse (Resnick and Rusk, 1996) and Fifth Dimension models (Cole, 2006), DYN mentor/student interactions expose youth to new ideas and provide compelling spaces for them to further develop their interests and technological fluency. Programmatic evaluations of the Computer Clubhouse model revealed the vital link between effective mentor practices and student engagement (Center for Children and Technology, 2001), and, in part, guided by these findings, mentor development became an essential component within the DYN model.

DYN was first implemented in Renaissance Academy's out of school space. After one year of implementation, however, DYN leadership and mentors observed the limitations of a traditional out of school model for attracting and retaining students. Preliminary observations of the program suggested that when mentors relied primarily on youth interest to support engagement and retention, they often struggled to attract and sustain participation among those who were novices in digital media production. This challenge was compounded by the fact that, as discussed in earlier chapters, DYN targeted urban youth who had relatively little prior hands-on experience with digital media production. Unlike their Silicon Valley peers (Barron et al., 2010), maintaining youth interest in urban and rural communities is at times a challenge, because students from these communities may lack awareness of the productive capabilities that digital technologies offer.

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DYN began to expand beyond the limits of a traditional out of school program, first through collaborations with Renaissance Academy school day classes around the Living Museum project—an annual, district-wide competition in which students research and present historical events. (See Chapter 5 for additional detail.) As this partnership evolved, Renaissance staff continued to teach the academic skills necessary to conduct the research, but school members sought DYN's technical assistance with the creation of multimedia presentations.

Living Museum and other collaborations grew to the point where the DYN program was integrated into the Renaissance Academy school day through elective media arts classes led by DYN mentors (as we described in more detail in Chapter 2). Unlike the out of school space where youth participation was voluntary and classes had approximately 5-10 students, these classes were mandated and involved 25-30 students. This integration into the school day required mentors to adjust instruction with respect to class size and student interest. It also meant that mentors were required to position themselves as teachers whereas in the out of school space, they were primarily advisors and artists. As a result, mentors needed to develop pedagogical knowledge such as implement lesson plans, assessments, instructional practices, and more formalized classroom management techniques.

Looking back, it is clear that two principal factors compelled the formation of a more expansive and institutionalized mentor professional development component within the DYN program: (1) an internal push from the DYN leadership team to create more intentional and structured mentor-youth interactions around digital tools and digital production within the out of school context with the goal of better supporting and retaining students and (2) an external pull from Renaissance Academy, requesting DYN presence in the school day environment. The resulting combination of in-school and out-of-school programming—these push and pull factors—required a new type of DYN mentor, charged not only with exposing youth to new ideas and providing them encouragement and compelling work spaces, but also with the added responsibilities of:

- Blending the formal practice of teaching with informal mentoring;
- Creating a digital media literacy curriculum that infused digital domain knowledge into traditional literacies; and
- Creating and adapting rubrics to support critique and understanding of students' digital media work.

Evolution of DYN Professional Development Structures

Led by Tene Gray, a veteran teaching coach, the professional development at DYN reflected of some the best practices in the literature. In particular, the professional development (PD) model at DYN contained structured and unstructured formal and informal learning opportunities such as face-to-face professional development sessions, observations and coaching, and common planning time for teachers to problem-solve and collaborate. Table 4.1 provides an overview of DYN's professional development structures during Year 1 and Year 2. These structures included whole group meetings, retreats, institute days and common collaboration space called "power hour." Each component was designed to seed the DYN professional development community through opportunities for meaningful, sustained engagement.

Table 4.1. Group Collaboration Structures

	Participation structure	Description
Year one	Whole Group Weekly Sessions	Six mentors and the facilitator/coach met weekly for two hours to discuss classroom structures, routines, expectations, and to develop lessons and rubrics.
Year two	Whole Group Monthly Sessions	Six mentors and the facilitator/coach met monthly for three hours to discuss instructional practices and assignments, examine student work, and problem solve
	Retreat	Six mentors, the program coordinator, the principal investigator and the facilitator met during a week-long retreat to define and develop 21st century literacies and student learning outcomes
	Curriculum Institute	Six mentors met for one week, four hours a day, during the summer of 2007 to develop and revise unit plans with a focus on 21st century literacies and student learning outcomes

The DYN mentor team was challenged to create and implement a goals- and interest-driven learning environment for youth across in-school and out-of-school contexts. Previously, DYN only served in the out of school space. As the program expanded into the school day, professional development goals were expanded to include:

- Supporting mentors in developing solid instructional practices for teaching digital media literacies.
- Creating spaces for mentors to work collaboratively using shared norms, common language, structures, and routines for implementation across all programming.
- Supporting the empowerment of mentors to take on leadership/facilitative roles in their own professional development.

Underlying these expanding goals guiding mentor professional development were four important assumptions: First, the mentors were willing and able to manage the roles of artist, mentor, and teacher. Second, these individuals came to the program with high-level content knowledge in media, but (likely) without sufficient pedagogical knowledge to be effective in a traditional classroom. Third, it was assumed that traditional pedagogical tools for literacy development could be adapted for digital media instruction. And fourth, the lead facilitator, with a background in literacy and industrial design, was able to support the development and implementation of a digital media arts-based curriculum across multiple modes of communication.

With these expanded goals and shared understandings, the team designed a digital media curriculum, which was implemented and revised in DYN pods and classes, and within online spaces. This section reviews the steps the team took in order to reach that point.

Developing Skilled Mentors as Teachers

Mentors were included in the DYN model in order to create opportunities for professional artists with diverse expertise to serve as positive role models to DYN youth and offer them multiple ways to access digital tools and build technological fluency. The mentors selected to become members of the DYN community were proficient in or were committed to building proficiency in the following areas: **technical fluency** (knowledge of technology and tools); a personal **digital media portfolio** (compelling examples of mentor created work); and **cultural capital** (relationships with students and relevant professional and local communities). With the expansion of DYN to include both in-school and out-of-school contexts, a fourth proficiency also became necessary: **pedagogical knowledge** (the art and science of teaching). Thus, the program's model for developing skilled mentors evolved so that mentors could more effectively share their knowledge and skills with students.

In order to foster pedagogical proficiency, DYN expanded its professional development model to include the creation of professional learning communities (Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995; McLaughlin and Talbert, 2001). Based on successful professional development among K-12 teachers, this approach creates a framework for cultivating shared norms, routines, and practices among mentors, which lead to consistent and intentional interactions with youth. The guiding principle in the design of the DYN professional learning community was that mentors would become socialized into teaching by becoming a part of a community of learners and practitioners who question, reflect, and view learning as a lifelong task (Cochran-Smith and Lytle, 1999).

As DYN's learning community developed, mentors worked with Tene to strike a balance between experiential, hands-on learning and more structured, intentional learning. Tene introduced pedagogical concepts and processes to mentors, and guided them through the design and

implementation of a digital media curriculum. Weekly whole group meetings supported mentor professional development through discussions and the creation of lesson plans and rubrics. These conversations incorporated the Critical Friends methodology, a framework rooted in cooperative learning that draws on reflection and discussion to promote collaboration and improve teaching practices (Annenberg Institute for School Reform, 1994). In the process, mentors developed effective pedagogical practices and learning goals that informed lesson plans and interactions with youth (Gray et al., 2008).

Through regular weekly workshops, mentors were offered key concepts and strategies intended to support their work as teachers. For example, a series of sessions revolved around the use of questioning as an instructional technique. Mentors were introduced to Bloom's Taxonomy using an inquiry-based approach (Cecil, 1995). Learning objectives were classified under three categories: cognitive, affective, or psychomotor. Within each, higher-level learning, Bloom's taxonomy, has been used as the basis for teacher professional development (Bambino, 2005), and the mentors learned how it could be applied to their work, as well. Mentors also learned practical classroom tools, such as how to design guided practice activities (Calkins, 1994) and create instructional supports for independent student learning. Finally, they were taught how to analyze student work for evidence of learning and understanding using the Critical Friends methodology.

Although working with Tene, and developing a curriculum were helpful to the mentors, they continued to report significant challenges in the classroom. As professional digital artists with fluency in expert languages that were generally foreign to students, some of the mentors found it difficult to reflect on their own practice and effectively use pedagogical tools such as guided practice and rubrics in the classroom. After three months, DYN leadership realized a more extensive professional development model was necessary (more about this challenge is provided in Chapter 9). The next section describes this re-design, which was intended to develop instructional approaches appropriate in both out of school and in-school contexts.

Instructional Theory of Action

In an effort to incorporate mentor expertise with pedagogical practices around a shared organizational vision, the facilitator and mentors drafted an *Instructional Theory of Action* (ITOA). This artifact would serve as a touchstone for the DYN team as they engaged in professional development (Gray et al., 2008). The purpose of the ITOA was to highlight the mentors' abilities as artists and teachers and to outline the various steps necessary to prepare their students as 21st century learners.

Over the course of four meetings, the founders of DYN, the facilitator, and a lead mentor created the first draft of the ITOA. This first draft was based on existing models that were in development within

schools that were partnering with the Urban Schools Institute at the University of Chicago. The completed first draft was presented to all the DYN mentors. The entire team was invited to ask clarifying questions and share critical feedback regarding the ITOA. Based on the team's feedback, the four DYN leaders revised the final ITOA (see Box 4.1).

Box 4.1. DYN Instructional Theory of Action

Our instructional theory of action states that . . .

If we:

- Develop students media literacy skills while mentors share expertise, analyze teacher practice, and examine student work for understanding, and
- Develop a collaborative, reflective community of students and mentors, and
- Create opportunities for students to become producers of media artifacts while mentors provide consistent, guided feedback and
- Develop students ability to critique their work and others while mentors consistently monitor student understanding and
- Implement workshop structures to support student learning and student dialogue,

Then our students will demonstrate deep learning and fluidity in 21st century literacies and become digital media citizens.

The DYN Instructional Theory of Action required not only that mentors develop technical fluency, digital media portfolios, and cultural capital, but also that mentors were committed to developing their pedagogical knowledge. As such, the Instructional Theory of Action informed the goals and practices necessary for DYN mentors to be successful which in turn, informed the design of the professional development structures.

Group Collaboration Structures

As DYN leadership and mentors addressed the need for more focused and intentional interactions with youth during the school day, a more sustainable and differentiated mentor professional development plan was created. The first significant change was a shift from weekly to monthly whole group meetings. As a result, the length of the whole group sessions - which included all of the mentors and the entire DYN staff - could be expanded from two to three hours, allowing more time for DYN personnel to reflect on both their own pedagogical development and on youth development of digital media literacies. Moreover, less frequent meetings gave mentors more time to develop additional collaboration spaces

where they could work together to design lesson plans, partner and support teachers within the school, and create professional opportunities for DYN youth to partner with local media networks.

A central component of the mentors' professional development was participation in self-reflective practices. These practices were designed to allow mentors to critically engage in their own development and to collaborate with the facilitator to refine instructional practices (Gray et al., 2008). Whole group meetings were mandatory for all DYN personnel, and Tene created the agenda and led the meetings—these aspects did not change from the original model. However, a new reflective space, called "Opening Moves," was added to the first 30-45 minutes of each meeting. Here, the facilitator invited mentors to describe how they were connecting to or struggling with some aspect of their own professional development or of their work with DYN youth. The facilitator also shared anonymous, written mentor reflections from previous weeks. The subsequent two hours of the meeting remained similar to the earlier model and consisted of various activities focused on specific learning goals and outcomes. The team also continued to use the Critical Friends methodology as a tool to support collaboration and create participation structures that allowed all members to actively and jointly engage in achieving targeted learning goals and outcomes.

Additional group collaboration opportunities—such as retreats and institute days—were also added to the professional development model. After the creation of the Instructional Theory of Action, the staff participated in a retreat in Vancouver, British Columbia. The goal was to ground staff members in a shared understanding of pedagogical knowledge and digital media literacies. At the retreat, the team created an organizational vision of the characteristics and attributes of the "digital media citizen" which, as described in Chapter 2, included key literacies across multiple modes of communication. In addition to the summer retreats, three institute days were implemented during the Renaissance Academy's winter break. During these institute days, mentors and the facilitator critiqued unit plans based on student-produced artifacts. These retreats and institute days became an important piece of DYN's professional development model.

The DYN Professional Development Cycle

A formalized mentor professional development cycle (see Figure 4.1) was designed to address diverse mentor professional development needs and provide structures and spaces for mentors to actively engage in their professional development. The creation of a cycle allowed the facilitator to differentiate supports and guidance for each mentor while at the same time introducing and developing shared programmatic learning goals, pedagogical concepts and practices that the DYN community would work in collaboration to develop and implement. The learning cycle, which typically lasted four weeks, was comprised of numerous spaces that varied in terms of time, levels of participation, roles, norms,

attendees and types of artifacts created. Each cycle began with the *whole group professional development* meetings. These whole group meetings introduced and reinforced programmatic goals, pedagogical concepts and practices. The second week included the *Mentor Learning Group* meeting where mentors would lead and participate without the facilitator and DYN leadership. During the third week of the cycle, the facilitator and a designated mentor would meet one on one in a *coaching session* to identify individual mentor needs. The facilitator would then identify additional supports to assist in the mentor's pedagogical development. The final week of the cycle ended with a Mentor Learning Group meeting.

Whole Group Professional Development
Time: 3 hours
Who: Facilitator and all mentors
Content: Introduce and explore core DYN concepts and compare and discuss examples from the field
Artifacts from week: Reflections and lesson plan

Mentor Learning Group
Time: 1.5 hours
Who: All mentors
Content: Further explore concepts, and provide unit plan feedback
Artifacts from week: Reflections and lesson plan

4-week DYN Professional Development Learning Cycle

Mentor Learning Group
Time: 1.5 hours
Who: All mentors
Content: Further explore concepts, and provide unit plan feedback
Artifacts from week: Reflections and lesson plan

Individual Coaching Sessions
Time: 1 hour
Who: Facilitator and individual mentor
Content: One-on-one coaching sessions
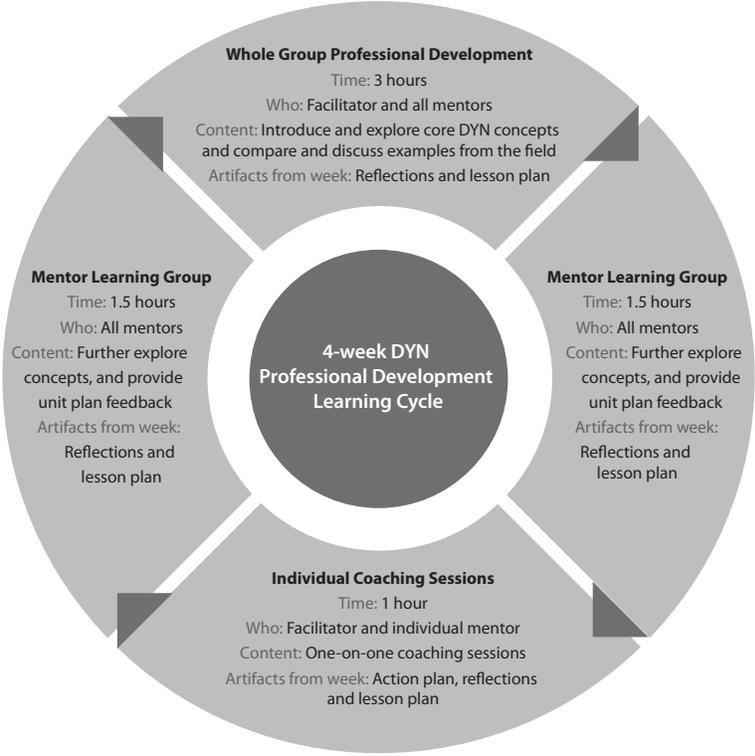Artifacts from week: Action plan, reflections and lesson plan

Figure 4.1. The Professional Development Learning Cycle

Overall, each mentor was expected to engage and interact within the formal spaces (Whole Group, Mentor Learning Group and Coaching Sessions), to produce weekly lesson plans, and to create and reflect on individualized action plans with the lead facilitator. The model also included less structured opportunities for development, such as a virtual space within the program's social networking site, Remix World, where mentors could digitally post work, comment and communicate about events and other relevant information (Pinkard and Austin, 2011). Mentors could access this online space at any time of the day and from any location. Likewise, within a face-to-face, in-school space called "Power

Hour," mentors could interact with no rules or formal expectations. The space was intentionally designed to be less structured as a way to spark creativity and collaboration among mentors (Gray et al., 2008). Specific aspects of DYN's professional development cycle are discussed in more detail in the remainder of this section.

Community Development Structures

In an effort to leverage mentor expertise and build a sustainable, adaptable learning community, several formal community development structures were implemented (see Table 4.2). For example, the Mentor Learning Group (MLG) was intended to build leadership capacity within the team and to provide the mentors with bi-weekly support around lesson planning and instructional work. Brother Mike, one of DYN's lead mentors, was the first MLG facilitator until another mentor, Asia, took over; both had attended Critical Friends facilitator trainings at a local university in order to prepare for this leadership role. Although the lead facilitator did not attend the MLG sessions unless invited, she did meet regularly with the two lead mentors to plan the meetings. This mentor-only setting provided a space to hold discussions, build understanding and critique knowledge presented in the whole group meetings while also connecting these concepts to lesson plans and instructional practices with the DYN youth.

The MLG sessions were patterned after the monthly professional development sessions, but the original structure was "remixed" to better serve the needs of the mentors. For example, similar to the "Opening Moves" in the Whole Group meetings where mentors were invited to share experiences or struggles in developing their pedagogical knowledge, the MLG space began with a reflective space for mentors to discuss or to represent ("stand for") individual youth. The purpose of these interactions was to ground pedagogical concepts in reality and to motivate the mentors to work towards the development of best practices for the youth of DYN.

Power Hour was created as a less structured space for encouraging mentor collaboration and creativity when preparing lessons. Held three days a week, these sessions enabled mentors to grapple with issues around the implementation of unit and lesson plans, the design of student projects, and the use of rubrics. They also motivated mentors to take the time to read professional articles that informed their practice.

A third community structure, Skill Building Workshops, created a forum for mentors to lead workshops and to share their knowledge and expertise with colleagues. These sessions were framed as a competition that would reward the mentor who best represented the DYN image of a 21st century learner. They were designed to foster healthy competition and morale among staff members, model the ideals of a 21st century learner, create examples of exemplary work to use in the curriculum, and allow students to judge the work of their mentors. This final goal benefitted students directly, as they

envisioned their own end products and built their critiquing abilities. Through the Skill Building Workshops, mentors had the opportunity to cultivate their own professional learning community while sharing craft and subject matter knowledge with each other and with students.

Table 4.2. Community Development Structures

	Participant structures	*Description*
Year one	None	N/A
Year two	Mentor Learning Group	Monthly, 1½ hour sessions led by one mentor that involved revising lesson plans, deepening understanding of content presented in whole group professional development
	Power Hour	One-hour sessions, led by mentors three times per week, that involved cross-pod planning, designing student projects and rubrics
	Skill Building Workshops	Five days of one-hour sessions led by mentors during the summer of 2007 that provided a space for participants to share knowledge and expertise

Accountability Structures

In the first program year, mentors were asked to submit lesson plans and reflections on a weekly basis. This first year of implementation the lesson plans followed a template that was pre-selected Tene, and the reflections were open-ended, allowing the mentors to reflect on any struggles, successes or questions that were pertinent at the time. The movement of DYN into the school day, however, required that mentors appropriate professional standards more aligned with those applied to K-12 teachers. To build these standards, several accountability structures were instituted (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. Accountability Structures

	Participant structures	*Description*
Year one	Lesson Plans	Day-to-day explanation of what content is being taught and how it is being taught
	Open Weekly Reflections	Weekly written reflections on what is happening in DYN
Year two	Unit Plans and Lesson Plans	Quarterly/daily lessons describing learning outcomes and how they will be met
	Structured Weekly Reflections	Weekly written reflections that describe strengths, challenges, supports, and next steps

	Mentor Action Plans	Individualized learning plans that describe goals, resources and timelines

In an effort to support mentor agency and expertise in the creation of the curriculum, like the Instructional Theory of Action (ITOA), mentors were invited to collaborate on the design of a curricular unit that would, in turn, inform the re-design of the lesson plan template. Using the *Understanding by Design* framework (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005), the facilitator introduced the guiding principles of evidence, outcomes and activities as a way to structure the unit plans, to create a common language for talking about unit plan features.

Also in the program's second year, mentor reflections became more structured. Each week, the mentors were asked to think about the previous week and identify strengths and challenges related to their practice. They were encouraged to consider what supports were needed, and what the logical next steps would be. This allowed the facilitator to more readily assess mentor development and learning and provide needed support and scaffolds related to instructional challenges (Gray et al., 2008).

As in the first program year, mentors were still expected to produce weekly lesson plans and reflections, which were then submitted to the facilitator. These documents became artifacts around which the facilitator and mentors could interact and build knowledge related to mentor practice. These artifacts eventually became central to the norms and practices of the DYN professional learning component, clearly illustrating the extent of mentor participation within the professional learning community. These and other documents were developed and stored using online collaborative writing tools—first within an interactive online document or wiki space, second within a list serve or blog space, and then later using a more sophisticated virtual platform called SPACE, a database-backed web application designed to support evidence-based instruction within schools (Shapiro et al., 2010).

Finally, a coaching model was adapted from work used by literacy coaches (Newmann and Wehlage, 1995). The adapted model consisted of a series of coaching sessions between one mentor and the facilitator. These coaching sessions included a pre-conference, an in-class observation, a debriefing following the observation, and formulation of an action plan/next steps. Together, the mentor and facilitator created individualized action plans. These action plans were used to differentiate professional development for each mentor based on needs identified during the coaching sessions. Each mentor's plan was based on individual strengths and challenges, and included the following: (1) goals, (2) responsibilities of the mentor, (3) responsibilities of the coach, (4) necessary materials or resources and (5) a timeline. The goals included overarching learning goals determined by the facilitator and individual goals set by the mentor, which were related to a specific instructional

area or to a strategy that the mentor wanted to learn more about.

Understanding Mentor Pedagogical Knowledge Development

During DYN's second program year, the entire mentor team consisted of nine total members that included one facilitator and eight mentors, two of whom were DYN co-founders. A unique characteristic of the DYN mentor team was that the program leaders were also positioned as mentors, working with youth participants. The mentors had expertise in spoken word, film, computer programming, robotics, digital video games, graphic design and music production. Table 4.4 introduces three of the 16 mentors who were part of the DYN mentor team over the three-year research study, including their background knowledge and expertise within the targeted proficiencies. Table 4.4 also shares this same information for members of the leadership team including founder Nichole Pinkard, co-founder Akili Lee, and professional development facilitator, Tene Gray.

Table 4.4. DYN Professional Development Team

Mentors			
	Brother Mike	**Raphael**	**Asia**
Role	Mentor	Mentor	Mentor
Joined DYN	2005 (Pilot year)	2006 (Year 1)	2007 (Year 1)
Technical fluency	Digital music and publication tools	Video / Film production using digital tools and software; video game programming	Digital music; digital video production tools
Digital media portfolio	Published poetry; performed on television, and in local spoken word showcases	Directed and edited music videos, short films, and documentaries	Music and television performance artist
Cultural Capital	Lived in the community while working for DYN; former teacher assistant in the public schools; former artist in residence in the public schools; hip-hop and spoken word performer	Lived in the community while working for DYN; mentor in out of school digital arts program for youth in grades 6-12; independent film director, editor and writer	Part-time support staff member at Renaissance Academy prior to joining DYN; mentor working with youth using digital media to address social / emotional issues affecting young women; musician and vocalist in local funk and

punk bands.

Design Team	Nichole	Akili	Tene
Role	Founder/Mentor	Co-founder/Mentor	Facilitator
Joined DYN	2005 (Pilot Year)	2005 (Pilot Year)	2006 (Pilot Year)
Technical Fluency	Computer programming tools; educational software development and design tools, robotics, video game design tools and software	Computational programming tools; social media development and web design tools; marketing and graphic design tools; Video game design skills; audio editing; production software and tools	Industrial technology background; CAD software, computer programming, instructional design language; iMovie software
Digital media Portfolio	Designed and developed educational software targeting culturally relevant literacy development (STEP); designed social networking site (Remix World); programmed and designed video games	Designed and developed websites; designed and developed social networking site (Remix World); programmed computer software; DJ, radio host and producer	Designed visual graphics for developing writing processes; designed website; created personal movies using iMovie
Cultural Capital	Led efforts to implement one-to-one computing in urban schools; integrated digital media learning opportunities outside of the school day; served on the advisory boards of a charter school and organizations connected with children, learning, play and technology	Associate director of digital media and technology in local community based organization; consultant for small businesses and community organizations to leverage digital media; owner of an events promotion company; strong networks within artist communities	Former middle school classroom teacher and education doctoral student; professional development facilitator for Chicago public school teachers; Developed and maintained personal relationships with students and their families; coached volleyball in the elementary school; tutored students in the foster care system; member of Critical Friends group

The diversity of the DYN mentor team in terms of background knowledge and experience with pedagogy and media arts presented a challenge in developing an adult community of learners. The DYN professional development learning cycle described earlier in the chapter was designed to create opportunities for these mentors and the facilitator to develop shared practices, leading to the growth and

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adoption of digital media pedagogical concepts and tools. Mentor-created lesson plans and reflections became shared artifacts around which they could develop a shared language and practice. Mutual understanding among this diverse group created a way to design and organize student-driven learning and interests. Mentors had to be open to learning pedagogy and to transforming from artists to teachers of digital literacies. This section describes three DYN mentors and tells the story of how the professional development impacted their pedagogical knowledge and interactions with youth.

DYN Mentor Portraitures

Given the diversity of technical fluency, digital media production, and cultural capital among the mentors, it is not surprising that each had a unique experience with the Digital Youth Network. The three mentor portraits that follow illustrate these variations. As we compiled field notes and conducted interviews (in this case, in the summer of 2007 and spring of 2008), it became clear that these mentors viewed their work with the Digital Youth Network not as a job, but as a social responsibility to bring state of the art equipment and knowledge to a community that had historically been neglected.

In spite of this common motivation, we also learned that each mentor internalized pedagogical concepts differently. For example, as will be discussed, Brother Mike connected theories of learning and teaching to his practice; Raphael found success using curricular structures and questioning strategies to support project-based learning and critique; Asia found success with goal-based scenarios and inquiry in her all female out of school class. All three were able to draw on DYN structures to provide the children with access to digital technology and opportunities to learn digital literacies across multiple domains. The quotes in this section are taken from interviews with mentors from 2007 through 2008.

Brother Mike

> *Once you're on the playing field, you got the tools. You got the access. You got the*
> *ability to become this 21st Century Learner. What are you going to do?*
>
> —Brother Mike, 2007

In 2005 Brother Mike was approached by DYN co-founder Akili Lee to consider joining the Digital Youth Network. As a working spoken word artist and performer, as well as a former teacher assistant in the public school system, Brother Mike saw this as an opportunity to develop transformative learning opportunities for youth and for himself: "I teach out of an approach of knowledge and love. I feel like [the students] are mine. I think many teachers feel that way." This notion of personal transformation and growth was not new to Brother Mike, who described the motivating influence that hip-hop had on him

early in his life: "To see the entrepreneur where it was like, 'I don't just rap. I make movies. I'm an actor, I direct videos.'" This cultural renaissance within the hip-hop community is what inspired Brother Mike and DYN co-founder Nichole Pinkard to explore the connection between hip-hop culture and the development of a 21st century learner and digital media citizen.

Brother Mike was well established as a spoken word artist and core participant within the open mic spoken word scene. During college, several prominent spoken word artists such as Sonia Sanchez, the Last Poets and Reggie Gibson apprenticed Brother Mike: "They're like, 'You have to read, you have to write…' They were artists in practice." After college, Brother Mike continued to organize open mic performances and stayed active in the local hip-hop community, performing with well-known and highly influential musical artists such as Erykah Badu, Common, Talib Kweli and the Roots. In Chicago, Brother Mike was a founder of the spoken word group POETREE (People's Organized Entertainment Teaching Righteous Education Everywhere) and regularly MC'd and performed in various spoken word performances throughout the city.

In addition to performing, Brother Mike also worked in the public school system, leading workshops and working in the classroom as a teacher's aide. These experiences had a great impact on his commitment to building transformative learning experiences for youth. Brother Mike recognized the challenges to real transformation in schooling, noting that he "didn't feel like the student was valued as much as the testing of the student." Although he was at first hesitant to join DYN, his skepticism shifted after he observed the program, learning about the design principles behind it and the collaboration with the University of Chicago's Urban Education Institute. In his words, "All the little solutions were in place and I felt like I would be the next solution".

Brother Mike joined DYN as an influential, successful spoken word and performance artist as well as a mentor who was able to build trust and work with youth. His pedagogical approach began to form when he was working as a teacher assistant along side a veteran teacher who as Brother Mike explained, "put the children and the community at the center" of her pedagogy. Brother Mike described his own pedagogical approach in three ways: "For the most part you'll find me in three different characters in the classroom. One is the loving grandma, like, 'Baby, now sit down. It's all-good, Grandma got you. Mm-hmm. It's okay. We don't got to fight.' Or the very stern, you know, Brother Mike. 'I'm not playing. This ain't happening, G.' I'm in their vernacular. It's almost… Big Brother-ish. As a straight mentor teacher, 'All right, I'm here to teach you, assess you.' "

Figure 4.2. Brother Mike working with DYN students.

While Brother Mike was confident in spoken word, writing and performance, he initially struggled with the technology. When confronting the digital aspect to the DYN program he described himself as "a technophobe." His lack of digital expertise motivated Brother Mike to position himself to the students as both a learner and a teacher. He spent "hours and hours on [his] own" learning the technology. And, as he put it, "I made it my business to sit there and learn from the kids and studied digital media through those kids. I learned from those students and they learned from me." Brother Mike was open with his students about his own learning and saw himself as a model for the youth. "I'm always a blueprint to the students."

Brother Mike constantly changed his classes and pods based on observations of students' interactions and work. In the spoken word pod, for example, Brother Mike designed his lessons around the reading and writing of text and media related to student interests. His goal was to "plant seeds" and to promote "cross pod collaborations" where students would take ideas that began in the spoken word/radio pod and carried over into the music and video pods. In each class students would "start off with a journal, watch some media, and do a journal reflection on it." This structure became more intentional when Brother Mike integrated the workshop model and then, with guidance from DYN leadership, began incorporating goal-based scenarios into his repertoire of pedagogical practices. The 2006-2007 professional development program further supported Brother Mike's endeavors, and also provided a structure for group collaboration that connected students and their work with other mentors and DYN pods.

Partnerships and collaborations between Brother Mike and teachers were also commonplace. Out of these partnerships emerged as "signature projects"—projects that were short in length, required

from two to five days of instructional time, and were created using a workshop driven instructional approach. Brother Mike and other DYN personnel worked with classes during the school day to develop understandings of disciplinary content. For example, at the Renaissance Academy, Brother Mike collaborated with the social studies teacher to develop documentaries for the Living History Museum project (see Chapter 5 for more detail). As Brother Mike explained, these signature projects allowed DYN to "ease into the school day."

In summer of 2006, the principal at Renaissance Academy took notice of these signature projects and invited the Digital Youth Network into the school day to teach a media arts class. This opportunity pushed Brother Mike and other mentors to begin to develop an artifact-driven, project-based curriculum. The idea first came to Brother Mike during the DYN summer program in 2006. After engaging with DYN youth around many different projects, he noticed that the "star of the summer" was the record label project that yielded the highest number of student-produced videos. "Just the involvement [of] those students really inspired what would be the media arts class". The year long, in-school DYN class was called iRemix Records, and became a project based simulation of a record label company.

The goal for iRemix Records, which was taught during 6th grade as an introductory survey course, was to motivate youth to develop critical literacies and to introduce them to digital tools that could lead to deeper participation in out-of-school DYN pods. The challenge for DYN's effort to increase participation and motivation, according to Brother Mike, lay in how to scale up the curriculum for a school classroom and extend and expand the smaller signature projects into a year long-project. During the course's first year, Brother Mike drew on his professional development experiences and began to apply his pedagogical knowledge to the design of the course. Using a project-based approach, he experimented with various structures for the class. For example, he assigned roles—such as sound engineer, reporter, etc.—within the record label, and each role carried a level of responsibility, privilege and practices.

As Brother Mike developed his pedagogical knowledge, he became a key leader and supporter of DYN's professional development vision. He participated in the creation of the Instructional Theory of Action framework for the professional development and he attended the retreat in the summer of 2007 where, together with facilitator Tene and fellow mentor Asia, he worked to transform this instructional theory into practice. During this retreat, Brother Mike began to shift into a leadership role, as he learned facilitator techniques and the Critical Friends methodology. When recounting these experiences, Brother Mike repeated his belief in a need for structure and accountability systems that ensure engagement and participation, as well as the constant improvement of the DYN program. "We have a culture where it's not cool to be like, 'I just ain't doing it.'" Brother Mike describes the professional development program as a "support system… I have a theory of action. I have research to back up what happened in the

classroom. I have Tene to say, 'let's be more explicit about this,' which all transfers back to the student who is the center of all this."

Raphael

> *Being able to want to for your own benefit, to learn or be able to explore media and then eventually be able to utilize it on your own.*
>
> —Raphael, 2007

Raphael joined the Digital Youth Network in September of 2006 with a strong foundation in film theory and the visual arts. His formal education included an undergraduate degree in Fine Arts (in photography and cinema studies) and he was working towards a master's degree in Film and Media Arts. This background provided Raphael with experience learning visual art concepts and practices in a formal instructional setting. While working on his master's thesis, Raphael was a teaching assistant, and for five semesters he led an undergraduate film theory course. In the summer before joining DYN, Raphael taught film and video game programming to 10- to 17-year-olds at a technology focused summer camp. He was acutely aware of the advantages his campers had, noting that, "Some had been using computers all their lives…There was serious advantage because a lot of the students were going to private school."

At DYN, Raphael taught Broadcast Film, which would later become Digital Video pod. In spite of his extensive background, however, he faced the challenge of having to translate highly academic and abstract concepts and terminology into a language that was accessible to middle school students. As Raphael explained, the students "are learning film theory and visual art theory, but they still needed a product to show. That's part of the reason why I was interested in this program." A major focus in Raphael's teaching was providing students with skills that were technical and conceptual so that when consuming media, the students would know, "The fact that whatever (the youth) are watching on television or Internet, that it was intentionally edited for a purpose and where students are able to say to themselves, 'Man, this was a whole production. This wasn't just someone with a camera telling people to start talking.' So for them to be able to know that and know that, 'Okay, I can rearrange this to how I want and it'll tell this story. As long as I can get the same lines to stop here and start here, I'm good.'" Raphael's experiences as a university teaching assistant and an out-of-school instructor helped Raphael to develop his own distinct pedagogical style. He focused on creating connections, trust and rapport with students as a way to build pathways for sharing his knowledge. In describing his ability to relate to the youth participating in DYN he noted, "Sometimes it's about taking the work that I know, the skill sets and being able to kind of translate it into a way, making it practical for the (youth)." Raphael cited his

eldest sister, a tenured university professor, as a primary influence on his style of teaching: "She had the same kind of approach, still trying to maintain those social connections and being honest…in [her] teaching."

When Raphael joined DYN, he not only had a developed pedagogical approach, but also a strong understanding of what students needed to learn about film production and editing. As he engaged in DYN professional development, he began to develop a structured curriculum, identifying key literacies, concepts and terminologies that were essential for students to learn in digital video production. In the summer of 2007-2008, Raphael engaged in several unit-planning sessions and, using this project-based approach, designed the digital video course into three main stages: pre-production, production and post-production. Within each of these three phases of project development, students were exposed to new concepts, roles and tools.

As Raphael's students learned about digital video production, they experienced a mix of whole class, small group and one-on-one structures, with a primary focus on small groups. When describing his rationale for this approach, Raphael explained, "It's a very collaborative medium, very collaborative if you want to get (the film) done well." It was important to Raphael that students be able to identify their interests and roles within the film production process, and he formed production teams based on these roles. As he described the students' successful collaborative production of a film called "The Missing," Raphael explained that the students "had recognized each other's skills and had no problem doing their role because they knew they could it well."

Figure 4.3. Raphael working with DYN student.

Although he emphasized collaboration, Raphael was also very aware of the value of one-on-one instruction. He referenced a video produced by a student named Calvin (described in greater detail in the case portrait and Chapter 5), to explain the process:

Calvin and I planned the video out visually. He knew how to do it visually, and he had the whole narrative down. I worked with him on translating that visually and we did (the narrative) in storyboard form. He performed it and that was it for him… At that point it was his.

<div align="right">

—Raphael, 2007

</div>

But when it came time to edit Calvin's video, Calvin was not interested in this process, so Raphael identified another older student who enjoyed editing, and the two students collaborated on this phase of film production. As Raphael notes, "I kind of forced (Calvin), like, 'No you sit with the editor and you make sure that she's doing things the way you want them to be, otherwise she can represent your project wrong.'" These types of partnerships across grade level were commonplace in Raphael's digital video pod, where he often positioned older students as junior mentors.

Because the digital video pod was project-centered and highly collaborative, Raphael struggled to consistently engage all students and maintain participation levels throughout all three stages of video production. He discussed how challenging project-based learning could be for students, noting, "It's very difficult to hold an 11-year-old's attention and to work towards a project that they can't see yet." A turning point for Raphael's digital video pod occurred when students began to display the videos they had produced on the online social networking site, Remix World. Raphael could show students work that was produced by their peers, and "Just the weight of those projects and the attention that they got, I think that kind of solidified a lot of people's attendance with the (digital video) class."

As Raphael prepared for his second year with DYN, one of his major struggles was how to develop instructional practices that could guide and build understanding and skills in individual students and teams, engaging them as they moved across diverse roles and through all three phases of production. The focus for Raphael in his pedagogical development was how to create independent practice and then integrate it into a collaborative framework. To accomplish this, Raphael recalled an activity from art school where students were asked to individually express a concept following a common set of rules and using the same raw materials.

With this earlier experience in mind, Raphael designed a project where all students used the same video footage and worked in pairs to execute a "match cut." Raphael created a scoring rubric that was a modified version of the cinematic rubric that the professional development team created. Raphael described his rationale for using the rubric in his media arts classes. "After the students finished their first editing exercise, I wanted them to separate and know the two components that they had edited (sound and image) and that these are the two components that we were going to judge (using) a scale, one, two, three, four. So if one's the worst, (and) four's the best, what does (a one or a four) sound like?"

Raphael used this rubric and scale for students to critique the match cuts. The student-edited footage that was created in the media arts, in school classes were then used as an instructional tool to teach match cutting in the out of school spaces. In the conversation below, Raphael is leading the Digital Video pod in the out of school space and several students are viewing a student-produced video.

> Raphael: We need to figure out which angle.
> (Raphael shows the three different angles in the video by playing back each scene).
> Calvin: Both angles because you'll see both expressions on the face close up then go to middle shot…Cut right there, then find the one closer to her face apple t [using a Macintosh computer, students use two function keys to cut and paste], then the middle shot, apple t, then bam!
> (Raphael plays the footage again).
> Raphael: Let's see this from the beginning.
> Student 1: Yeah that's good.
> Raphael: At what moment are they doing the same thing?
> Student 2: Right there! (When the actor says): 'You're not worth a penny to me.'
> Raphael: Everything we just did is matched cutting.
>
> —Digital Video pod field notes, 2008

Rather than simply telling the youth the meaning of a concept, Raphael used questions and student responses to guide understandings. The concept of "matched cutting" was contextualized through the use of mentor-youth interactions using talk around the artifact. Raphael intentionally designed this classroom interaction after reflecting in the professional development different activities that would integrate terminology into classroom dialogue as a way to build digital literacies, "Am I using terminologies consistently or am I--in my dialog with them, just giving it? Is there a dialog with this terminology among the students? ... And then in terms of the students, listening to their language."

Asia

> We are all accountable… If I'm lacking in some sort of digital skill, then somebody needs to come in and help so that we can all have the best functioning group. (Working for DYN) is not an individual thing.
>
> —Asia, 2007

When Asia began working at DYN in March of 2007, her artistic background was expansive. Working as a performance artist in television and improvisation theatre, as well as a musician and singer, Asia brought extensive knowledge to DYN. While completing a degree in film, Asia also worked as a film instructor in an out of school program for youth from a local housing project. There, she worked with a group of young women who, in spite of any interest they may have had in the subject matter, were constantly pulled by other responsibilities at home. As such, attendance was a sacrifice for many of them, and participation was inconsistent. Asia found that she struggled to connect with her students: "The goal was to get them to come every week, just doing (work), just to finish".

It was while she worked as a film instructor that Asia began to develop what would become her vision for the DYN pod, Digital Queendom. She focused on developing social emotional awareness, on creating a healthy language of communication with the young women, and on the use of digital tools as a way to creatively express one's voice. As Asia explained, "a lot of getting out all the things that (the young women) really didn't have a voice for; how do you channel what you're feeling instead of having verbal confrontations?".

Asia identified herself as a learner who welcomed support from her peers and students. "Before (the professional development) it was like, 'yeah, I know I'm working with computers but I don't even know anything about computers.' And they gave me these girls and I like it and I want to do better but I don't know how. I don't know what I'm supposed to be doing". While Asia possessed strong skills and confidence in film, writing and critical media theory, she also acknowledged her desire to develop her technical fluency with digital tools and to develop her knowledge within the pods. Brother Mike and other mentors assisted Asia in cultivating her technical expertise through the creation of podcasts, and editing video using iMovie software.

Figure 4.4. Asia working with DYN student.

Chapter 4

Asia co-taught and in school course with Raphael, this partnership was influential in developing her pedagogical style. Asia explained that when she was teaching the Digital Video pod, she worked with one group of students on a script, while Raphael had a separate group of students working on a different script. Raphael chose to have his students create their storyboard collaboratively as group, whereas Asia assigned different students to develop different parts of their story. She learned from this process, as she saw the outcomes of each approach: "I saw the difference. The way I did it, it was all over the place". Asia equates this outcome with her instructional decision, "Don't break up the group, when you break up the group, you break up the concentration".

During the 2007-2008 year, Asia began to use an inquiry-based approach in her classroom and pod. She used goal-based scenarios and questioning strategies to structure the interactions in her classroom and pod. The following example of Asia's teaching style, taken from field notes collected in January 2008, illustrates her evolving approach to effective practice in her classroom:

> Asia: "Ladies we are working on a four-week goal. I need a video blog and slogan product, and a commercial so that in four weeks, you will have four products. By the end of the day you all should have learned these practices." [She is reading from her lesson plan]. "I asked you, 'What do you assume about the power of words?' So what we are doing to do is look at these slogans."
>
> —Digital Queendom pod field notes, 2008

In this interaction, Asia stated the goals and the guiding question, both of which were designed to motivate the production of digital artifacts. In her interview, Asia pointed to the concepts and materials introduced in the whole group professional development as influencing her pedagogical approach. She explained, "The whole art of inquiry… may actually take a life unto itself and they're doing it on their own. [W]orking with that has given me a tool into how you produce [student created media artifacts]. [The] PD (professional development) also helps in helping you focus in on what it is you want to come out of a class." Asia also incorporated professional development protocols and activities by organizing students into dyad structures, groups of two students within her pods, noting, "I usually do dyads. We do that in almost every single PD (professional development meeting). I usually put it in the guided practice".

As Asia was developing as a teacher, she was also becoming a leader within the program. In the summer of 2007, Brother Mike, Tene and Asia attended facilitator trainings, which prepared Asia to take on a leadership role in DYN professional development. In November 2008, she became the facilitator of

the Mentor Learning Group (MLG) space. She met with Tene to design the agenda and plan the activity structures. Asia treated the MLG space as an opportunity for professional development, appropriating many of the same structures, practices and norms from the whole group meetings, "Whatever we did in PD [professional development] before, we come back (in the Mentor Learning Group) and we support it...We did a protocol and what I wanted out of that was for mentors to actually take a step back and reflect on what it is that we're doing. Is it working? And how do we know that it is working?"

Summary

For these DYN mentors, the students were at the center of the work. The nature of the work evolves over time, however, from mentoring students as they learned to use technologies, to helping them create new artifacts, to developing their abilities and skills as they shift from design and development to reflection, critique, and analysis. As the students have grown, so too has the DYN program; as it expanded and moved into the school day, mentors needed to acquire new skills and pedagogical knowledge. The skilled DYN mentor needed to be a K-12 teacher as well as an out of school mentor. In other words, to develop 21st century learners, the mentors needed to develop into 21st century teachers.

Developing skilled mentors required the creation of a professional development model that positioned them as experts with technical fluency, digital media portfolios and cultural capital, and as students learning to adopt and implement pedagogical knowledge. As DYN leadership sought a balance between leveraging expertise and cultivating a community of learners, the professional development program evolved through a process of constant reflection on student work and mentor development. DYN mentors had to be willing to engage in this reflective process in order to identify challenges and areas where they needed support. They were able to learn and employ the most effective pedagogical practices when they engaged in all aspects of DYN professional development, drawing from their past experiences to articulate and plan for where they wanted and needed to go next.

The development of mentors' pedagogical knowledge affected the interactions between them and their students. The impact of this model on student learning and development will be explored in the next three chapters. In Chapter 5, we will see how mentors intentionally "seeded" projects to encourage student identities as digital media citizens across multiple social spaces within and outside of DYN. First, we present our first case insert, an introduction to our nine focal case learners who you will hear more about in the chapters that follow.