

technology



“The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” - Franklin D. Roosevelt

Fear of the unknown

Many teachers admit they are unsure of ways to incorporate technology in the classroom. They may feel uncomfortable with their own computer skills, or they may be confused about the ways their students can use computer technology to enhance their learning. Some teachers even admit to having a fear of “what lurks on the Internet” (Hopkins).

There is no time like the present to tackle these fears. The students in our classrooms are

already technology savvy in many ways. If we aren’t enhancing the traditional curriculum with computer technology, then we are doing them a disservice.

Most teachers realize that students will need technology skills to survive in the job market as adults. Computers can do much more than that, however. They can get students excited about what they are learning. One teacher who is using blogs with her fifth grade class states, “putting those same questions in the form of a blog, they are not

only motivated to learn the information, but they are motivated to write.” (qtd. in Bafile).

In the paragraphs below, you will find a few suggestions for ways that you can integrate technology into your classroom. If you need help locating resources on the Internet for an upcoming assignment, you have a valuable resource in your building! The media specialist is your partner when it comes to finding information resources in print or on the computer.

Don’t
reinvent
the wheel

There are millions of resources created by teachers around the world that might be exactly what you need for your class. Try searching for your topic and include the words “webquest” or “pathfinder”. See what resources already exist before you spend your precious time creating one. You will also find a plethora of lesson plans that use technology to enhance traditional teaching methods.

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Below are examples of three types of technology integration:

Pathfinder

This pathfinder gives third grade students information about solar systems:

http://web.me.com/alshoema/Solar_System_Pathfinder/Introduction.html

WebQuest

This WebQuests introduces third grade students to traditional trickster tales, and challenges them to write and illustrate their own version:

http://web.me.com/alshoema/Trickster_Tales/Welcome.html

Transmedia Storytelling

This is one example of a transmedia story that uses websites, audio and video clips to teach students about the life of a cheetah:

http://web.me.com/alshoema/Transmedia_Story/Home.html

“We have yet to reconsider our traditional school model, which is based on the obsolete idea that knowledge is scarce.”

- Will Richardson



Pathfinders

If safety on the Internet is one of your concerns, what better way to lead students to safe and accurate websites than a pathfinder? A pathfinder is a guide that lists a variety of resources on a particular subject. Instead of simply listing print materials, pathfinders may include non-print materials such as websites, electronic databases, audio and video sources and more (Lamb, “Pathfinders”). This type of resource gives students a “path” to find information on reliable websites that teachers have prescreened. Students are not given the answers to their questions, but they are given targeted resources in which to find those answers.

Pathfinders usually contain a “selection of resources”, not all of the resources available. They also include information that helps students learn how to search electronic databases. This is a wonderful way to model proper search techniques while allowing students to locate information on their own (Kuntz). See the sidebar for an example of a pathfinder, as well as the other two project types.

Transmedia storytelling

This format transforms readers from “passive receivers of information to active creators and innovators” (Lamb, “Divergent Convergence”). A transmedia story is one that combines many media platforms to tell a story. For example, a fictional story about a boy taking a trip around the world could include audio or video clips that expand upon the information in the text. There could also be links to websites that give more information about the areas that the boy is visiting in the story. Beyond instructional transmedia stories, authors are using this new

media to take their fictional stories into new and exciting directions. Others are creating stories specifically for this media type, combining blogs and video clips to capture reader's imaginations.

In a classroom environment, this type of story is the perfect way to include learners of all varieties. Some students do well reading the text in a book. Others are more visual learners, while still others are stimulated by sounds or music. Incorporating all of those features into one story is a wonderful way to get all types of readers connected to the story. There are many transmedia stories already created, or you can design your own. The possibilities are endless!

WebQuests

WebQuests are Internet based lessons that go beyond simple scavenger hunts. They are projects that use a selection of websites "as the starting point for a complex activity that involves multiple perspectives, possible group collaboration, and a final project of your choosing" ("Filamentality Formats"). WebQuests are designed to encourage higher-level thinking, instead of simply having students copy answers to simple questions. They can be either long or short term projects. They also include the information resources that students will need to complete the assignment, similar to a pathfinder. Scaffolding is built in to the WebQuest to help students successfully finish the assignment without teacher assistance. These do take more time to create, but the outcome is worth it! Again, the media specialist in your school can help you find appropriate resources for your topic.

Other ways to integrate technology in the classroom:

Blogs

Teachers can use blogs to communicate with parents about what is happening in the classroom. Blogs can also be used by students to describe their process of inquiry as they complete a classroom assignment. Teachers can also have students respond to assignments on their blog. This format encourages students to write outside of classroom assignments for a worldwide audience.

Podcasts

Students can use this format to report on school projects, books that they are reading, or other interests that they have outside of the classroom.

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