Technology Vision Statement

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In today's society it is virtually impossible to spend a day without being exposed to technology of one kind or another. On the other hand, if you spent the day in a typical classroom you would likely find the opposite to be true. Regrettably, technological innovation has vastly outpaced the speed at which our educational systems can absorb and implement these new tools. For our schools to be considered truly effective, technological integration is no longer an option, but a necessity. That is not to say that technology should be seen as a panacea, or that it is necessary in every type of learning situation. However, if students are to graduate with the skills needed to succeed in the 21st century, they must be not only exposed to, but surrounded by new technology throughout their entire education.

To begin, when implemented by a knowledge instructor in a well-structured learning environment, the benefits of integrating technology within the classroom can be numerous:

- Teachers can create individualized instruction and assessment, better tailored to their students' needs.
- Students can work at their own pace and receive one-on-one instruction through virtual lessons.
- Lessons can be more engaging, interactive, collaborative, and designed for multiple intelligences.
- Assessment results can be reported immediately.
- Students with special needs can access modified forms of instruction and assessment.
- Advanced students can extend their learning opportunities outside of a traditional curriculum. (Gudenius 2010)

And this list grows longer every day. However, these results cannot be achieved by simply giving every child a computer. Unfortunately, "most of the schools that have integrated laptops and other digital tools into learning are not maximizing the use of those devices in ways that best make use of their potential" (Education Week, 2011). Teachers need professional development and training to understand how to best utilize technology within their content area. Additionally, integrating technology cannot be an occasional occurrence. Indeed, "schools must incorporate technology into daily teaching to realize the benefits" (Greives, et al, 2010).

However, these issues can be resolved through proper teacher training. And when teachers are comfortable and experienced with regularly integrating technology, the results can be profound and powerful (Edutopia, 2007). Students become more engaged, teachers shift their focused to more problem-based, interactive lessons, and assessments more accurately judge the quality of learning students have achieved.

Finally, it should be pointed out that in many cases, teachers must open themselves up to learning from students. It is often the younger generation who first adopts these new technologies and teachers should be open to receiving input from today's youth. Indeed, "while many adults are talking about leveraging technologies in the future, the students are already paving a path for us today" (Project Tomorrow 2011).

However, it is important to note that many times students, while considered "digital natives," are actually not experienced with many types of technology. This misconception can often lead to teachers and schools assuming that students will be immediately able to understand every piece of technology laid in front of them. That being said, students in general do seem to have more of a willingness to learn and try with new technology, which can be beneficial in the classroom.

In conclusion, technology should not been seen as an instant fix for the woes of today's classroom. However, with proper training and integration, technology can be used to greatly improve instruction, engagement, and assessment. Teachers must realize the place that technology integration can serve in the curriculum and continually strive to adapt and modernize their classroom. With the constant and rapid evolution of new technologies, the necessity for teachers to remain ahead of the curve remains one of the most important issues of the day.

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