Final Paper: Using Technology with Heart: A Plan for Elementary Classrooms

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In today's society, technology is becoming more and more advanced and prevalent each day. It plays a large role in our everyday lives and with many constant improvements, we find ourselves living in a digital age. Technology has had such a large impact on so many different aspects of our lives, such as education, communication, transportation, health, entertainment, etc. Technology has become the main foundation of learning and helping students grow and succeed both in and out of the classroom. Access to technology in the classroom is extremely useful to education because it gives students the opportunity to have all of the information they could ever need at their fingertips at all times. Technology keeps learning up-to-date and provides a variety of engaging learning opportunities. Through my work in my Critical Media Literacy course, I have learned so much about the integration of technology in the classroom and how it is can be beneficial to student's education in the 21st century.

It is important that educators understand the large impact technology has on the classroom environment and our society as a whole as well. Technology has the ability to connect people from all around the world with just the click of a button. Technology users are able to communicate with one another and spread their thoughts and ideas anytime, anywhere. In today's digital society, different types of technology constantly surround us with "access to an abundance of information" and "rapid changes in technology tools" (P21 Framework, 2009). The dependence on technology that our society has today greatly connects to education because teachers must learn to integrate technology into their lessons and curriculum in order to effectively teach their students.

Incorporating technology into the classroom can benefit students' learning and education in a variety of ways and has many consequences, both good and bad. Also,

"there is a growing body of evidence that technology integration positively affects student achievement and academic performance" (Edutopia, 2007). As the use of technology increases and advances, the use of textbooks for learning in the classroom is quickly declining. This can benefit the students because instead of using textbooks that were most likely written a while ago and are outdated, they are able to find constant, new, updated information all over the Internet.

Technology also allows students to communicate more with their peers by working together and sharing their thoughts and ideas. Technology plays a large role in getting students to connect and collaborate with one another, which are two very important skills that students will need throughout their lives. Students now have the opportunity to work with others and learn from people online. As time goes on and technology continues to advance, it has been noticed that more and more people are succeeding academically and a large part of that is "technology and its transformation effect on work, and demography, and the huge explosion in population" (Robinson, 2006). This is a positive consequence of technology that teachers should take note of because it helps their students to succeed.

Although technology has a plethora of positive consequences, it also can have some negative consequences on education, as well as on many other things in our society. It is often difficult for some teachers to incorporate technology into the classroom because some of them may be from the older generation of people who are not aware of some of the newer, more advanced forms of technology. These teachers can diminish today's students' education due to the students being more disconnected to the world than others who are able to use technology and integrate it into their learning. To fix this, "today's teachers have to learn to communicate in the language and style of their students. This

doesn't mean changing the meaning of what is important, or of good thinking skills. But it does mean going faster, less step-by step, more in parallel, with more random access, among other things" (Prensky, 2001).

Another consequence that technology has brought upon us is the dangers of the Internet, such as cyber bullying and information that may not suitable for specific age groups. Individuals are able to find any information they need in a matter of seconds, which may seem like a positive consequence, however, there is also a lot of negative, inappropriate information that could be found on the Internet as well. It is very important that teachers, parents, caregivers, etc. help their children become smart users of technology to ensure that they are always safe. Adults should try their best to teach children to always use technology with a heart because "there are large parts of the Internet that are completely safe… but there are other places that are much less secure. Maybe even places you would want to avoid completely" (Google for Education, 2017).

Teachers need to focus on all of the positive effects of technology and learn to integrate that into their academic curriculum. As an educator, it is important to keep the students in mind and think about what they are capable of. It is significant to incorporate technology that is developmentally appropriate for the grade level that can help support the students' growth and development. In order to be considered developmentally appropriate, the technology must fit the age range it is being used for and it must not be too easy or to hard for the said age. Developmentally appropriate means knowing about children's development and learning, knowing what is appropriate for each individual student, and knowing what is culturally appropriate as well. "Technology, when integrated into the curriculum, revolutionizes the learning process. More and more

studies show that technology integration in the curriculum improves students' learning processes and outcomes" (Edutopia, 2007). It is crucial for educators to make sure that the technology they use in the classroom is relevant and can connect to an academic curriculum so that students can use the strategies they learn throughout their lives.

My philosophy for integrating technology into the classroom would be to ensure that both students and families are comfortable with the use of technology to aid in learning. I will make sure that the tools I bring into my classroom enhance the curriculum and positively impact the students' lives in some way. Although technology will definitely be used in my classroom, I plan to teach using a combination of both technology and hands-on assignments. In my future classroom, I plan to be the kind of teacher that is able to engage the entire classroom of students, allowing them to communicate and problem solve with each other. I will use technology to support this plan. I strive to become a memorable, effective teacher and not a teacher who solely stands in the front of the classroom lecturing to the students. Thankfully, "there are many technologies that can help teachers streamline daily processes and increase opportunities to incorporate critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity into students' learning" (Google for Education, 2017).

Some of the effective tools I plan to use as a future teacher include Voice Thread, Google Classroom, and Quizlet. Voice Thread allows individuals to create a multimedia slideshow through many different kinds of content, such as audio recordings, text, video, images, etc. This will help students learn a lot of new information about different areas in a digital way. This interactive tool can be used for all types of learners, including those who may learn differently. Voice Thread allows users to see and hear what they are

learning about. Google Classroom is another useful tool that I plan to use with my future students. Google Classroom is an online system where a teacher can create a page for the class. On the class page, the teacher is able to post updates about things going on in class and on assignments for students and their families to view. Children can access their Google Classroom both at home and at school. This tool is extremely beneficial because it allows students and families to keep up to date with classroom events and activities. It is also a great source of communication for teachers, students, and families. Another tool I will use as a future educator is Quizlet because I am certain it will enhance students' learning. Quizlet is an educational tool used for studying and memorizing content. Students can use this study tool on their own or with their friends, classmates or families in order to learn a lot of new information. Quizlet can be used to create study guides, quizzes, flashcards, games, and other learning strategies.

    As a future teacher, it is important to develop a plan on how to incorporate the use of technology into the classroom in a way that will enhance the students' learning. As I plan, I will take into consideration the costs of different technological tools such as iPads and laptops. This could be an issue if the cost of all the devices cannot be covered for the full class. I hope to have an EnoBoard in my future classroom because it will expand my students learning experience. On an EnoBoard, students are able to come up to the interactive board to express their thoughts and ideas. An EnoBoard can also be used as a dry erase board, which can be very convenient in a classroom. "When used in collaborative learning methods and leadership that is aimed at improving the school through technology planning, technology impacts achievement in content area learning,

promotes higher-order thinking and problem solving skills, and prepares students for the workforce" (Edutopia, 2007).

Technology has revolutionized the way we think, work and play (Edutopia, 2007). Although technology has both good and bad consequences, it overall enhances education and society as a whole. Integrating technology into the classroom improves students learning process and the outcomes. As a future educator, I plan to use my knowledge of technology in my classroom to improve the quality of learning of my students. It is very important for teachers to stay up to date with technology developments, plan how to use them in the classroom, consider developmentally appropriate practices, and consider the students' interests and skills in order to integrate technology into their classrooms with a heart.

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