Technology in the Classroom

Sometimes it seems as though technology has invaded every aspect of the life that we live today. We hear about technological breakthroughs of some kind nearly every day, be they automotive technologies, space technologies, medical technology, or even the newest app that we will all be obsessed with until we forget it exists again next week. But sometimes we forget that the children of this generation are also growing up in the midst of this onslaught of technology. In 2011, it was reported that ninety-five percent of students used the internet on a daily basis (Harlan, 2014). And who taught these teenagers how to use the internet, and the plethora of other technology that they now have at their fingertips, responsibly? We could hope that their parents did, and for some, that is entirely possible. But for others, the classroom may be the only place students can learn to use technology responsibly, which means that their teachers have to learn the same lesson first. Research shows that teachers who have not been trained in how to use technology in the classroom, or who simply choose not to use technology for much of their instruction, leave their students at a disadvantage as opposed to students whose teachers use technology frequently and teach them to do so (Jameson, 1999). Nearly every teacher can honestly say that they want their students to be prepared for a successful future, so why avoid such a useful tool that could be used to help them?

For many teachers, the first step is to simply learn how to use the technology. As technology is constantly changing, this really means that teachers must learn how to teach themselves to use new technology as soon as it becomes available to them. They need to learn its capabilities, limitations, benefits, and potential dangers, until they can practically use it in their sleep. But just knowing how to use technology is not enough to make it a useful tool to students. One study identified that schools where technology is successfully implemented in the classroom are schools where the parents, students, and teachers collaborate to make sure the technology is beneficial to the students' learning needs, teachers clearly state class goals, the school supports a learning environment that suits both the individual learners and the learning goals, and the school provides universal technology access to all students (Brown, Higgins, and Hartley, 2001). Two of these things can be controlled by teachers, and two cannot, but even if the school does not play the same role, teachers can do their part simply by communicating with parents and students. This could be done through a class website or emailed newsletter, or even a podcast, blog, or video that explains how technology is going to be used in the classroom. After implementing the technology use, the teacher should encourage it as much as possible, not just making it something to use on special occasions, but absorbing it into the curriculum of every subject in one way or another, until the students know it inside and out. Like any tool used in the classroom, teachers must be careful to present it equally to all students. One study found that teachers often instruct students differently based on their ethnicity, giving some students tasks that emphasize only rote memorization and others tasks that encourage critical thinking (Browns, Higgins, and Hartley, 2001). Teachers must be careful to avoid this and other biases when presenting technology to students. Teachers must also be constantly on the lookout for potential problems like inappropriate materials students could access and the various distractions that unmonitored technology could present. But teachers can also embrace the many uses that technology provides as a tool. Just by being excited and showing their students how much they

can learn with technology, teachers can encourage their students to also be excited about using technology to learn. And as Rick Jameson, assistant principal of Burbank High School once said, "It is through technology that our young people will create their future" (1999).

I know that implementing technology in my future classroom will not be easy. I will have to work hard to stay up to date on all technology that will be available in my classroom. One thing that I find really important is to never assume that just because we live in a digital age, my students will already know how to use technology. I have been the student who had far less access to technology at home than anyone else in my class, and I want to make sure that student in my class never sees their academic performance suffer because they don't know how to use technology to show me how much content knowledge they really have. Even though I am the first to admit that I am far from being technologically gifted, I will do my best to tackle it with a smile on my face, presenting it to my students as a unique opportunity to learn in ways no one else has before rather than a source of frustration.

Works Cited

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