

Why Teach Technology

Technology is embedded in the lives of our young children. "Most children have spent more time watching television and videos than they have spent reading. They have grown up with remote controls and computer toys," according to Erik Strommen of the Children's Television Workshop. "Our children are being raised in a world where they have instant access to information, where they control the flow and access of that information through a mouse, remote control, or a video game controller." Technology had become a vital part of our daily lives.

With that in mind, common sense tells us that young children need to have access to technology on a regular basis. "They need to have the opportunity to construct their own knowledge through play and exploration, so they can create, reflect upon and work out their own understanding" (Vygotsky, 1978).

"Technology is a tool that can change the nature of learning," according to Lynne Schrum of Education World. The real world is not broken down into separate academic subjects. Through technology, educators can create project-based integrated lessons. Through the use of project based lessons, children have the opportunity to acquire knowledge, and take an active role in acquiring that knowledge. Using technology also allows children to learn through exploration, which is an integral part of learning. Exploration provides children with a range of learning experiences, allowing for a variety of learning styles.

While students are acquiring knowledge through their exploration, they become active learners. When that occurs, it allows educators allow for a range of acceptable outcomes, instead of insisting on one correct answer.

Even our youngest of students, those in Early Childhood can benefit from the use of technology in their classrooms. According to the National Head Start Association, computers can meet the developmental needs of children, through the use of meaningful computer activities. By using technology as a tool for exploration and learning, we are preparing our children for a lifetime of learning. As technology continues to advance quickly, children of all ages need to have the skills to analyze information and problem solve. Using technology as an integral part of our curriculum, aids children in becoming critical thinkers, cooperative learners, problem solvers, and life long learners. These are all skills they will need as they enter the workplace.

Lessons that incorporate technology into the curriculum can consist of many different types of activities. Some examples of technology enhanced activities are; exchanging e-mail with pen pals across the world, to taking virtual field trips with the class, completing WebQuests, researching a particular subject on the Internet, gathering and analyzing information to present to the class, or using a software program or online resources to sharpen ones basic skills. While integrating technology into the classroom curriculum, educators can cover a range of standards within one project. For example my Butterfly Web Quest covers Arizona State standards in the academic areas of Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, Social Studies, Science, Life Science, Physical Science, Technology, and Work Place Skills. This Web Quest also covers Standards from the National Education Standards.

Technology changes the educators' role from engaging in mainly direct instruction, to becoming a facilitator of learning. Technology allows the curriculum to be centered on the students, adapting to each child's learning styles, learning preferences, and interests. When students have more choices within their learning, they tend to take more responsibility for their own learning. Technology allows

choices of what topic is explored, what materials the student will utilize, and what path the student will use within their process. Students using technology have the opportunity to use authentic sources, not out of date textbooks. They are allowed the freedom to choose what they want to know, and they will be exposed to several versions of the truth. Students will learn to form value judgments about their learning rather than being evaluated on text memorization. Technology allows for open ended exploration, hands on learning, and critical thinking.

Literacy looks different in the 21st century than it did even 10 years ago. Today we are inundated with an overwhelming amount of new information daily. 21st century students need to have the ability to identify information, locate new information, critically analyze information, and then incorporate that knowledge into their schemas. Technology is a vital part of our rapidly changing world. As an educator, I believe it is my job to prepare my students to meet the challenges they will face. My students need to have a strong foundation of knowledge to be successful in today's society. Teaching with technology integrated into our daily routines, will build a stronger knowledge base, therefore preparing my students for their technology laden future.

References

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