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ED 800

Technology is a rapidly changing aspect of culture today along with an influence in education today. We all must learn to live and work with these new information and communications technologies in order to be successful. This developing technology can help education in many ways, and students must be able to use this technology and others in their jobs.

Technology has played an important role in my education and life so far and will continue to. During my elementary years I had the opportunity to attend computer class which consisted mostly of a typing class and playing some educational computer games. It was very important in school to learn the home row and how to type correctly so that homework in the future would become more efficient. My favorite day was when we played typing games to see how quickly and accurately we were able to type. Making things into game form as a student was exciting and competitive. We also would play geography games to learn the locations of states and capitals or we would play Oregon Trail.

Technology continued growing as I moved to high school. Still a computer class was required which again covered typing skills and then taught the basics of using Microsoft word, excel, and PowerPoint. The cell phone was starting up, but it was not something that I had during high school so I was not distracted by constant communication. When working on homework at home, it was necessary to use the computer to write papers, but not as much was used for research purposes yet. It was probably a good thing because at home we had dial up internet, which took forever. Searching things would take a long time so I would mostly use my computer time for being on AOL instant messenger to talk with my friends. This still did not happen extremely often, because we only had one computer in the house which needed to be shared and the connection was slow.

In college the technology started to boom even more and it was during this time that I just began to explore a lot of the options for using technology. For the first time I had my own cell phone, no texting yet, and no internet connection on it. I also had my own computer, desktop of course, to have in my dorm room. During this time, even though it was still important to research topics in the library and find print sources, it was also the time where I began surfing online resources of magazines and newspaper articles. I spent hours in the ITC (Information Technology Center) searching through articles, because I was not used to the system. Once locating an article that was useful, it would be difficult to locate it back if I had not printed out the resource right away. There were also many opportunities for taking technology classes. I took advantage of a few of these classes to feel more comfortable developing websites or presentations. However, the communication and researching advantages of technology I learned through repetition and the exploration of the technology on my own. As I became more proficient it became second nature to search for information online.

Today, I use technology everyday in my classroom and in my life. I am comfortable enough on the internet and learning online to enroll in an all online masters program. I pull up PowerPoint presentations to go through math notes with my classes and I am connected at all times to my cell phone and the internet. Most of my knowledge has been through exploration and experimenting since my few college classes. I use the search tool to find answers to questions or I text a friend who knows more about technology.

Due to my connectivity to technology personally, I find it very difficult not to incorporate the technology into my teaching. In Digital Nation the statement is made that “technology is like oxygen to students.” Without this oxygen the students feel out of place and that school is the worst thing that could happen to them. Without my technology I feel a bit lost as well. While teaching I am connected to my computer to answer school e-mails and connected not only to my classroom phone, but also my cell phone. If teachers need to be connected throughout the school day for important information, how do we expect the students who are technology natives to disconnect themselves? With this ease and comfortableness that young students have with technology it seems natural to incorporate some of this into the education in which they spend most of their time. Just the feel of the classroom being a bit more comfortable offers the students a sense of peace and calm. When students connect they are more likely to remember. Technology is able to help them connect.

Preparation for the future is the goal of education. The future is going to be linked with many different forms of technology and these will continue to change at rates that the research will not be able to keep up with. The Microsoft Digital Literacy website defines its goal as “to teach and assess basic computer concepts and skills so that people can use computer technology in everyday life to develop new social and economic opportunities for themselves, their families, and their communities.” This means that education must consist of opportunities for students not only to learn about technology, but to explore its uses. Success after schooling is going to require the use of different forms of technology and the ability to be connected at all times and finish job requirements. In education we can allow technology to help the minds develop and prepare the students for their future jobs.

Aside from preparation, it is necessary to distinguish what is useful information and what is excess. In section 8.9 “From Digital Literacy to Online Abilities” it discusses this. “Having a search strategy means locating, examining, evaluating, and comparing what is found at Internet sources, which is often more than information.” The types of assignments during the school years, allow students to begin exploring how to use the vast amount of information available. There is a need for some guided research to help students learn how to interpret the information that they are able to find with this technology. The only way for students to feel comfortable determining this is to have used the information numerous times with someone there to guide them through.

One of the main concerns with the growing use of technology is the impact that is occurring on reading. Reading online is changing reading into short increments. The need for instant gratification is causing less reading of books and decreasing the ability to focus for

extended periods of time. Students are able to write well in paragraph form, but struggle more with consistent papers that are not just a combination of paragraphs. In the article “Literacy Debate: Online, R U Really Reading” says that “the Web inspires a teenager like Nadia, who might otherwise spend most of her leisure time watching television, to read and write.” It is important to realize that even though the form of reading and writing is different, reading and writing is still being done. Many children would sit in front of the television in their leisure time, now many are spending this time online. The amount of time spent reading and writing is not realized. However, there is something to be said for reading novels and it is something that should be continued. This should be an influence of schools, but it also has to be seen as important in the home. Michigan State University professor Rand Spiro states that reading on line can be beneficial; “young people aren’t as troubled as some of us older folks are by reading that doesn’t go in a line. That’s a good thing because the world doesn’t go in a line, and the world isn’t organized into separate compartments or chapters.” It is great to get lost in a book, but it is important to be able to connect topics and thoughts on our own. When working and living ideas are thrown together and must be interpreted and connected. It is hopefully developing students into discerners and problem solvers.

As discerners we must look at many different forms of inquiry to learn and think about different topics including education. Autobiographical inquiry can be useful with its very applicable stories of what has happened in an author’s life. It is a form of inquiry that can be easy to read about just like it was easy to read about Vivian Paley’s work in the classroom. You may feel a connection to the author by having experienced similar situations or having similar ideas. You can also take some different ideas away from these situations and experiences based on how you as the reader interpret them. It is important to look at autobiographical inquiry as one person’s ideas, but not as having specific research applied to it. There are no scientific applications and studies that are being applied to these stories.

There can be limits with this form of inquiry due to the nature of it covering the experiences and emotions of one single author. Even in articles going with the other forms of inquiry, one author is referencing a certain topic, but many times they are also including thoughts and quotes from other notable individuals to help make their points. When looking at autobiographies as a form of inquiry it is necessary to view it as simply one person. The ideas presented should be compared with other autobiographies or be compared with your own experiences.

Inquiry and technology are parts of education that will continue to be important and topics of discussion. Inquiry is used to discuss the topic of technology. There is no way to completely avoid technology in education. Being a Roving Node tech user’ as I discovered from the online quiz at Pew Internet and American Life Project, I can see the importance of information technologies and feel comfortable incorporating them into the classroom setting. As Digital Nation stated at the end of its documentary, “Technology is powerful and complicated, but it is neither good nor bad.” We must be willing to incorporate technology, but not leave out

all other forms of learning. Learning comes from a variety of resources that students must have access to.