

"Does your technology curriculum surpass the basic Microsoft suite functions?"

Tim Buttler, Teacher, Parkview Adventist Academy, Lacombe, AB

In high school the process of following the curriculum of teaching word processing, spread sheets and data bases do not create excitement in students. Standard graphics programs and even Power Point have lost their impact on a student body that has used these programs since their elementary years.

I agree that the types of programs that come standard with most operating systems must be taught. There needs to be a minimum level of technological skills found in high school graduates. There is also financial pressure that encourages instructors to use only standard software, for there are rarely funds available for specialized software.

Yet, students at all levels of education become excited and take ownership of work when what they have created is unique. The difficulty I have encountered is that the projects I require my students to create are not unique. Yes, each project was unique for each person, but since we were using all the same software, there was no star power.

What electrifies my students needs to be significantly more visual. To begin to awake the imagination, I have recently encouraged students to take on advanced Power Points projects. Hyper-linking, using movies (.avi) and adding sound files (.wav) creates a desire that a word document can not. Graphic programs like PhotoShop move students many levels past the basic paint programs. The most loved assignments are movie building projects. Programs like iMovie create a desire in students that will never be found with a spread sheet project. Once a student learns the basics, I have trouble ending class on time. They really want to stay in class. That never happened while teaching the basic Microsoft suite applications.

I agree with Davina Peters that video yearbooks should be created. At Parkview Adventist Academy these yearbooks are created for each graduating class. They are created by the students and thus may not be ideal for marketing, yet this memento is always in high demand following graduation.

In another CAT~net article, Mr. Atherton stated that, "We are caught in a society that compels us to get the newest and best technology we can. The problem is that for most of us having the newest and best is more than we will ever need." He is correct. Do I really need the newest software applications in my classroom?

So what needs to be done in the classroom? The dilemma is most acute with computer literate students. These students know what is possible and are often disappointed with the basic level courses. A possible solution would include some (one) of the specialized software programs in every school's curriculum. I use video editing module as a motivator. Once a student has shown proficiency in the standard modules that are recommended in the Alberta curriculum, we sit down and plan how they are going to create their movie.

Ask yourself, "Am I doing enough to motivate students to excel in technology courses?"

Resources:

- Atherton, Alastair, *The Misuse of Technology*, Canadian Adventist Teachers Network, September 2004.