

## **Integrating Technology in the Classroom**

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We are all well aware that we work in a system that cannot always (some may say can never), afford the latest, cutting edge technology to take teaching to its zenith. Yet we must ensure that we move away from the chalk/board and marker/board method which, in our ever-changing world where students are constantly exposed to new technologies, is becoming obsolete. To integrate technology into the classroom in the face of these challenges, teachers must get to know their own weaknesses as well as how their students currently use technology outside the classroom. This will, in turn, allow them to create unique lessons and assignments that will capitalize on their students' technological skills using current technological tools.

Over the years, I have had to seek out creative ways to deliver my lessons, not only because I loathe boredom, but because my penmanship leaves much to be desired. When I use chalk and board, students are often left to wonder if they have written down the right words. For this reason, I deliver most of my lessons via laptop and overhead. I type many of my lessons, especially ones that require note taking, and deliver them using a projector. I type the majority of my lessons on Powerpoint so that I can make the lessons visually and auditorily stimulating. Often I cannot find an LCD projector so am forced to resort to an overhead projector which, though not as visually or auditory stimulating, gets the job done well. Using these techniques has erased all questions of clarification that arose from the chalk and board method. The ideal, though, is the LCD projector coupled with a laptop, the internet and a few speakers.

As I'm sure you're aware, students love YouTube, and this provides another great avenue for reaching visual and auditory learners. Last year, during a history unit on *A Mari usque ad Mare*, Canada's motto derived from Psalm 72:8, I decided to give the students an assignment which required them to create a video presentation on Canada's railroad legacy during John A Macdonald's terms as Prime Minister. I found some wonderful video presentations on YouTube that mirrored what I wanted from the students. There are also many videos that can help science class come alive with real life examples. I found the ones on light reflection and refraction to be helpful. Recently, I found a few excellent videos that teach students how to create a slide for the microscope. I have also found this site to be a great icebreaker tool providing great examples for comic relief because there is nothing worse than a boring teacher or class! *Parents doing math* is a classic that cannot be beat. I dare you not to laugh when you watch it!

Another way to integrate the internet is to have students work on community involvement campaigns. During the Christmas season, I had students create a positive community involvement campaign for Toronto's Daily Bread Food Bank. The campaign allowed students to work together to create posters using Microsoft Publisher. These posters were posted in halls and sent home with other students. To generate more support, the students were asked to create a website using <http://www.tripod.lycos.com>. Together, these campaigns generated enough support and helped the students gather over 600 lbs of food that helped to feed Toronto's hungry. This assignment with its use of technological tools was great for the kinaesthetic learners because they had a chance to get involved in a more hands-on way.

Many other methods and tools are available for integrating technology into classrooms. As teachers seek to build on what they already know and seek to discover what the students like to do with technology outside of the classroom, they will gradually expand their repertoire of technological tools. I have intentionally not mentioned television, radio, and the VCR because these tend to be more passive, rather than active, tools where students are encouraged to watch rather than do. This year, I am hoping to start the food drive again as an even larger assignment. Students will be required to generate support for the project using such sites as Facebook and other sites they visit on a regular basis. They will also be required to use the latest software which they are already using in their “out-of-school” lives.

Technology is always changing and developing. If we truly want to reach our students, we must make concerted efforts to incorporate these new technologies into our teaching.