

INHALING THE JUICES OF TECHNOLOGY (If You Can't Beat Them, Join Them)

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In today's world of technological wizardry, we are constantly bombarded with a never-ending stream of laptops and desktops. It seems that more and more homes are sheltering these modern wonders. Some say it is a hassle and a cause of financial headaches. Others say it is the best thing that has happened since Pop-tarts. With young people, it seems to be an automatic obsession.

Many youth are drawn to these screens, and it is rising to pandemic proportions. In many sad cases, computers have taken our children away from past pursuits, such as physical activity and family togetherness. On the other hand, there could also be some positiveness spilling from within this jungle. No doubt that many of these children not only enjoy computers, many of them excel in it. As educators and parents, many of us try to distract our children from computers to more healthy avenues and more common sense ones, such as their studies. No matter how much coaching we do, children will always try and achieve their quick-fix of chatting, emails, and games. As a teacher, I had this wild idea. Since they are already in the World Wide Web, why not meet them half way to get their attention? That's right my fellow teachers, if we can't beat them, join them. What I mean here is assignments from students by email, and creation of teachers' personal web pages.

I have seen several students from my own classroom that excel far greater in computers than in any other avenue as far as completing assignments go. As teachers, we must meet the individual needs of every student's learning style. And since many of them are computer savvy, why not choose that route. And the beauty in all this is that teachers learn along the way as well. I must also emphasize, at the risk of sounding contradictory. We must not forget that it is still beneficial if we can reach students in all modes and styles other than computers. That would be the ideal. At the same time, this style I am pointing out is a good starter in stimulating their learning experience, especially for a chronically-ill computer child. And please keep in mind, this style may not work for every student and teacher.

At the first day of school, I give my students a course outline. At the top of the page is my contact information. It entails my home and cell numbers, as well as my email addresses. I give my students the option to email me their assignments if it is more convenient for them. Some really enjoy this option. Some of them may email me questions regarding an assignment as well. I know the phone should be the obvious logical option, but surprisingly many do not choose that route. Perhaps they feel that they are bothering me at home, etc. So they feel email is more their taste. But I do make it clear to them that they can call me at home any time within reason. These young people are on the computer anyways, if they need an excuse to be online, this is it.

Another approach is building a personal web page. It is really easier than it sounds. There are several providers on the web that provide free service with limited yet generous space to start your building, as long as you do not mind some advertising "pop-ups" once in a while. If you do not want any advertising being used on your site, then you have to choose the paid option, which is reasonable in most cases.

Yahoo is a popular provider for personal web pages, and that is the one I am currently using. Here is my web address: <http://www.augiemedina.com/>. Please check it out! I'm currently still working on it. Yahoo also has a step-by-step tutorial to help you get set up.

Another nice thing about having your own web page is that you can help out your school, your conference, and your church with witnessing and exposure. You have to remember, not only are your students benefiting from this, there may be other people across the globe that may suddenly find themselves looking at your web page. It's a humbling thing. And if your school has its own web site, they can put a link from your name to your web page. The nice thing about this is that the school can reserve more valuable space for other things, such as large space-taking photos and video clips. The more space the school can save, the more money will be saved as well.

The beauty of having a web page is that you can put loads of information on the page for your students, such as assignment schedules, study tips, a memory verse, and much more. You can even add your email address on the page so that they can reach you as well. Many students love this option because they love to see web pages by other people, and no doubt they'll be curious about their own teacher's web page. You can also make your page very comical and entertaining for your students, so that they keep on coming back for more. With so much trash on the Internet, why not give them a site that reflects not only you as a caring teacher, but also of the Master Teacher.