

Help!! Computers Are At My School

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We are in the age where invention is colliding **daily** with innovation.

A friend of mine, who has been involved with computer technology since 1972, once told me that if a rope stretched from Chicago to Toronto represented the world's timeline on technology, there is more activity in the last **INCH** of the rope than in the entire rope itself.

Great, that's all us non-tech heads need to hear to increase our blood pressure.

"And knowledge shall increase and **teachers** will run to and fro."

Increased demand for technology education has placed a lot of pressure on parents, school boards, and government, but most all the classroom teacher. Sometimes it feels overwhelming; especially those of us who have been out of college for a number of years.

Our challenge, if we should choose to accept it, is to teach in a way we were never taught before. It's about trying to keep our heads on and in the high-tech game. As a non-tech teacher, I have become painfully aware that the real world outside the walls of my classroom is daily increasing their expectations of what students should know before they graduate from elementary school, much less high school. I remember when keyboarding was a grade 11 class, not a grade 5 requirement.

These demands often lead the teacher, who may feel they don't have enough training in computers, multimedia, or any technology, to say things like: "I'm doing as much as I can!!!", "That's the computer teacher's job!!!!", or my personal favorite, "HELP!!!!". In many schools, even if a teacher may be capable of integrating technology in the classroom, there's the BUDGET challenge.

As technology continues to change our life, language, relationships, I have found that for me, and others like me, who are about 10+ years behind, there are **5 basic keys to managing and integrating technology**: Google search, Ask Jeeves, hotmail, Yahoo!igans, and Surfing - just kidding.

Managing Tech

1. **Stay Current:** It is not as much about keeping up or trying to get ahead, it is more about jumping in, staying in (despite failures), and going with the flow.
2. **Learn as you go, and implement immediately.** It's more fun when you are learning from mistakes and sharing that with others.
3. **Attend classes or seminars focused on where things are GOING.** These classes often base things on where things are, as a foundation to where things are going, thus killing two birds with one stone.
4. **Develop relationships with people in your community that are involved in many areas of technology, and ask questions about where they see things going.** Remember that amidst all the high-tech, the key will always be **high-touch**.

Integrating Tech

Here are some simple guidelines I use to integrate technology in my classroom:

1. Decide what you want to accomplish. Communicate the idea to your students, making the idea seem "with- it", "cool", "phat", "sweet", "real".
2. Have students give 75+% of the input to the development of the idea.
3. Ask them what types of technology they would like to see used in the project.
4. Guide them in realizing that whatever we plan, or do, must appeal to as many senses and people as possible to keep it high touch. .
5. Divide students into "consultant teams" (groups), where different strengths are represented. Example: Leaders in technology, people management, academics, and good social skills. Let each person know what role they play on the team.
6. Promote the usage of books, cd-roms, internet, T.V., videos, their experiences, and most of all networking with "safe" people outside of the classroom, not just the local library.
7. Set the usual requirements, dates, grading strategy, and especially creativity, "Outside The Box".
8. Remind them the viewing audience is an important part of the project. It's not only what you want, it's what they want.
9. Step back and become a project facilitator. Ask questions so you understand where things are going, and voila - you'll be learning alongside your students.

That's it!! No more frustration and stress. You're on tech street. It will be a breeze from now on. Not really!! All it means is that the light at the end of the technology tunnel is not the train coming the other way. My last piece of advice is: Have fun!!! Jump in, the water's warm, but don't drown. Stay human.