

Classroom Technology Integration at Parkview Adventist Academy

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How many times have you been impressed by a technologically savvy presentation at a teacher's convention? How many times have you whispered to yourself, with conviction, I will have that in my classroom, only to have your plans evaporate after a good night's sleep? For many teachers, the integration of technology into the classroom still means only the use of a VCR or, on rare occasions, a laser disc presentation.

There will remain a segment of the teaching profession that will never become proficient in the use of technology. As individuals they may not resist the change, but lack the internal motivation to invest the time required to acquire the skills. Yet, for those looking for ways to integrate technology into the classroom, Parkview Adventist Academy has various suggestions that may assist your classroom situation.

The integration of technology has been stressed in the curriculum of Alberta, Canada, and therefore by the administration of Alberta's schools. Ironically, the school administration is the level that is ultimately responsible for the content of technology in classrooms, but not through the pressure that is applied on individual teachers. It is through the finances that the administration is prepared to invest in an up to date computer system. There is very little that a teacher can do without financial support. The administration at PAA has grappled with this problem and although the solutions have not always been successful, at this point the students, teachers, and administration believe they are on the right path.

The physical set-up of a computer network is of vital importance. For example, one of the features that makes PAA's network available to in-class use is that every classroom has access to the network. An instructor may create lesson plans that revolve around technologies like PowerPoint or even a web site. Currently physical connections to computers are used (Ethernet), but potentially wireless connections would not tie a teacher to any one place in the classroom.

Each employee and student organization have a network connection within their respective rooms, but does each room have a computer? No, each teacher has a laptop computer. Thus, an instructor may take that computer to any room and access the network. What's more, an instructor may take their computer home to work in a significantly different environment. Presently there seems to be little advantage for a typical teacher to have a bulky desktop computer.

The quantity of computers purchased by the school is reduced when each instructor uses a laptop. Now the classrooms themselves do not require a computer that multiple people use. That in itself is of value. When teachers create lessons on their laptop, they have total autonomy. There will not be others deleting/altering programs or even changing the setting of the computer.

Larry Gascoyne, a chemistry teacher, is a good example of how this system can be used. Mr. Gascoyne has Multiple Sclerosis, which makes it difficult for him to use white boards or black boards. He creates PowerPoint presentations for every chemistry lesson. Now, not only can he easily display charts, pictures or comics, all the standard notes are presented via Power Point. He concedes that the initial preparation time was great, but each semester when he presents the same material, the lessons are already made.

Another example can be seen in the English department. Mrs. Popik has created a web site where course outlines, study guides and assignment information can be found. This information can be shown to the students in any classroom.

The number of classes where lessons revolve around technology is growing. The first year science classes are presented using PowerPoint and the upper division physics classes are close behind. Mr. Buttler's ultimate plans are to place his physics PowerPoint lessons on the PAA web site. At this point each teacher has a web page hosted on the PAA server, but this resource will be utilized more in the 2003/2004 school year.

The black boards are still present, for classroom situations are fluid, but the core material, that remains the same for years, can be presented in a way that captures interest and reduces instructor preparation time. At this point PAA uses large screen televisions for classroom presentations. This choice was made to save money at the time. Now with the cost of video projectors falling, a limited number of projectors have been purchased. Future plans at PAA involve the use of SMART boards in technology classes. We'll see how the future unfolds, for technology will always remain only part of a positive learning environment.