

Integrating Technology at Crawford Adventist Academy

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As an information technology teacher, I see it as my responsibility to be a leader in the area of information technology, not only in what I teach, but also in the way in which I use technology to organize and teach my classes. I recognize that I have an advantage over many educators, in that all of my classes (business and information technology) are taught in a well-equipped computer lab. For me, technology is integrated into my entire teaching practice, and I will choose to concentrate on three areas: communication, delivery, and on-task maintenance.

Communication

In my classes, all students are part of an exclusive MSN Group. That group contains documents (course outline, classroom expectations), a calendar (listing dates of new units, unit tests, assignments, and school events), and messages. The message section contains a daily account of the content of the worship experience, any announcements, as well as the day's instructions. If there is a worksheet, it is sent along with the message as an attachment. While instructions are usually given in verbal form, having them given in the group serves as reinforcement, and meets the needs of those students who do not listen well, or who prefer visual stimuli. In addition, when students are absent, it is easy for them to stay caught up, especially if they have a computer at home.



When students have completed their assignments, they email them to me, as attachments, and I send them back an email receipt. This ensures that papers are not lost (as sometimes happens to the best of us), and also saves valuable paper resources.

While parents are not part of the class group, at the beginning of the semester, I ask each child to take home a form which asks parents to agree with the classroom expectations and discipline policy. On the form is a place for parents to put their email addresses. I have several parents with whom I keep in contact by email, sending them the assignments the students are working on, so that they can support their children's educational success.

Delivery

In my classroom, I have access to an overhead digital projector, which I connect to my notebook or one of the desktops. This gives me the ability to project what I am doing to the students, as they work on their computers. This can facilitate taking notes, and is especially useful when teaching practical skills, such as functions in word processing or spreadsheet software. PowerPoint presentations, for teachers and for students, are also enhanced through the use of the technology. There is another tool that I sometimes use, although less frequently, to assist in delivery. When we are working on creating knowledge together, I will use NetSupport School software to project what's on my screen onto the individual students' screens. (This also prevents distraction.)



On-Task Maintenance

One of the biggest risks in an electronic classroom is that students will choose to use the time and resources for non-productive use. The same software mentioned above also allows me to observe what is taking place on each student's screen, sending messages to them, chatting with them, or taking over their mouse and keyboard if necessary.

Other Uses

In addition to the above, I also use technology to find information on the internet, especially using my favourite search engine, hotbot.com. In our networked environment, I have the ability to access the work of the "conveniently-absent" group member who happens to have the crucial part of an assignment stored in her storage area. I can send my attendance record for a period straight to the printer of the registrar. I can communicate instantly with a teacher a floor below, or across the school. My students can reason in a text chat environment when they would not be as open in a verbal environment. Grades are easily maintained for instant reports (assuming prompt grading), and students can be assisted at their desks without me having to leave mine.

Technology is a wonderful invention. Used wisely, it opens avenue for us to enhance our students' experience, and lighten our own loads. May God bless us as we live and teach, for His glory!