

Personal Technology Plan

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Technology Vision Statement: Promises and Pitfalls

Technology is an ever-growing phenomenon that brings the world to students. As an educator, I have seen firsthand the difference that technology can bring to lessons. It brings not only excitement and motivation, but also real world skills that will be an asset to our students in the years to come. I have had the opportunity to frequently use different technologies in my classroom. Everything from Internet research to writing on a class blog can be done through my students' handheld iTouch units. My vision for technology in education expands on this application. I can easily foresee mobile computing becoming an everyday occurrence in education. Making use of handheld computing units means that technology is accessible to students right at their desks, without ever having to go to a computer lab. Many students already have Internet capable phones. Making use of such items in the future could really open the use of mobile units to anyone. I think that many of the restrictions on technology that we've seen in the past, from cell phones to music players, will soon become tools to enhance technology use in the classroom in the future. I envision technology as being used on a daily occurrence in my classroom. I envision students communicating on a more global level in the future as they utilize technology into their studies of novels and writing. While technology is already a major part of my curriculum, my vision plan for the future is to use technology on a daily basis as a routine part of class. I also envision using new technologies that constantly make ideas more accessible for my students allowing them to be creative and innovative in how they think and complete assignments.

Mobile computing units like cell phones and iTouches are just one example of the promises of technology. For my classroom and my school, iTouches have changed the way we teach. Instead of always struggling to sign up for the one computer lab, we are now able to use technology school-wide all day long. Students, regardless of income level and technology accessibility at home, all have access to iTouches all day and night. This means that homework assignments and new vocabulary words can be stored in the notes section of their iTouches and vocabulary review can happen nightly at home or during the school day using the gFlash flashcards app. Another great, new technology opportunity at my school is that we will soon have about 6-8 iPads to check out for classroom use. These iPads will provide opportunities for small group work on a bigger screen. Clearly, technology is valued in my school. Teachers are encouraged to use the iTouches daily. Such support means that I have a lot of freedom as a teacher to use all different technology formats in my classroom. Furthermore, the push towards integrating technology in the classroom across the US with the NETS standards means that more and more formats for educational programs are becoming available. It seems like every program from Pixton comics to Glogster presentations, offers an educational format. One of the greatest examples of this is Edmodo, a site resembling Facebook with similar features, but set up for classrooms. This push towards technology integration throughout the nation promises to create more useful and needed programs to make learning fun and more effective in schools.

Although the promises of technology in schools are numerous, there are also many

pitfalls that need to be addressed. Technology is imperfect. On a daily basis, I have to deal with iTouches that won't connect to the Internet, for whatever reason, or iTouches that will connect to the Internet, but not the specific site we need. There are always students who forget to bring their iTouch to school, crack the screen, or leave it in their locker. As a teacher who utilizes this technology, it is my job to be very patient, forgiving, and creative. When students break, lose, or forget their iTouch, it is my job at that moment to simply figure out how they can participate in the lesson that depends on the iTouch for the day. Of course when other problems that I mentioned earlier, like the iTouch not connecting to the Internet, occur, it becomes my job to both try and fix the problem and continue the flow of the class. Beyond the iTouches, we also have a school computer lab. The only way my students can connect to the Internet with the school computers is through their personal Connect2School accounts on our older school computers. I have found that these accounts are great for the basics, like writing papers and making PowerPoint presentations, but when it comes to utilizing newer technology, they often come up short. They are incapable of using some of the newer sites that are dependent on flash programs to work. They also block many websites that would actually be helpful for students to learn. Furthermore, it is hard to reserve space in the lab because all teachers seem to want it for one project or another. As an English teacher, I've found that typing papers is out of the question for my middle school students on the iTouch. Whenever we have a paper to do, the best option really is the computer lab. Yet with the shortage of computers in the school, it often takes months of advance planning to reserve the necessary days to allow students to write their papers. These are some of the pitfalls of technology that I've dealt with in my school. Although we are advanced with technology in some aspects, like having an iTouch for every student, we are low in others, like having just 30 computers for a school of 700, many of which break down frequently. It is my job as the teacher to become very creative in how I use technology in my classroom.

On a more global basis, there are also pitfalls of technology within the American education system. Technology is always changing and adapting and it requires knowledge and monetary backing to keep up with the adaptations of technology. With schools across America already facing budget crises, it seems impossible to keep up with the cost that current technology would be. Also, there is an equity issue at play. With the rise of new technologies in some schools, other, less wealthy districts, are falling prey to the digital divide. Another pitfall is with the adaptations of technology. Things can become outdated quickly. How does a school know what to invest in and what will last with how quickly things change? Some at my school are already wondering why we didn't wait to purchase all of the iTouches with cameras, as these could lead to some pretty great lessons as well. Our students are bringing in personal iTouch and iPhone units that are much more current than what we are able to offer. A major pitfall of technology in education is addressing how to keep technology current in American schools when many schools can't even afford new books and many teachers just don't have the time to become educated in all of the new technology options.

Although there are always difficulties when it comes to using technology in schools, the ability to bring technology to students is invaluable. It teaches students real world skills that will aid them through both college and as they progress towards their careers. Furthermore, it encourages collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking skills. Although technology is expensive and often comes with challenges, it is worth any pitfalls to be able to excite students

about learning and enable them to take ownership in their education.

Current Uses of Technology in the Classroom

As I mentioned before briefly, I use technology regularly in my classroom. My students access my class website to get their weekly vocabulary words. They also use the website to link to our class blog and our class Wiki. During literature circle meetings they communicate across class periods about the books that they are reading using the blog. They are able to ask other students questions about their books and they take time to answer other students' questions. They do all of this on their iTouches. They also complete an author study on their iTouch to research the author who wrote their book. They do this within their literature circle group. The group collaborates and chooses the most important facts they found about their author and they add them to the class Wiki. Each class continues to add to this Wiki until we have a page full of important, life-changing facts about this author. This teaches them collaboration, decision making, and summarizing. Once a quarter my students also use Glogster to create book reports. This allows them to link to videos and sites that provide more information about their independent reading novels. I also recently purchased Flip video cameras on the Digital Wish site, and my students have had a blast making movie trailers about their literature circle novels and editing them using iMovie. A new technology that I just started using in my class is Edmodo. This site has the feel of Facebook, although it is completely safe for school. My students posted timelines that they made on Dipity.com to this site as well as recordings of themselves as a poet they studied reading a poem made on Blabberize.com. Along with using technology to complete projects and discuss novels, students have also done warm ups using their iTouches. These either have to do vocabulary review or grammar review.

In the months ahead I envision being more consistent with the iTouch warm ups. I used them for a few weeks and it was great because the data was entered on a Google Form and then saved on my computer. This meant I could instantly see who responded and how they did on the warm up. However, I found that it didn't work quite the way I had hoped. I assumed iTouch warm ups would be more efficient than paper ones, but with the number of students who had iTouch problems or forgot their iTouches, I was spending more time trying to figure out how each student would get their warm up done, rather than using a warm to be a quick and efficient way to review. However, I know that there are many other teachers who use Google Forms warm ups on the iTouches in my school, so I plan to talk with some about improving the use of these. It was a good, quick assessment that provided instant documentation for me and instant feedback for the students, so I do plan to increase my use of this. I also envision using different presentation formats in class more often, both for me to present new information and as a platform for my students' presentations. For example, I would like to have the kids use Prezi and Glogster for their upcoming presentations about their current literature circle books. I am still in the process of completing a WebQuest from scratch for my students to analyze the social issues within their literature circle novels. After they finish the WebQuests, they will create a presentation using Prezi or Glogster to teach about their novels and the social issues within them jigsaw style to students who read other books. They will be turning in their projects by posting them to the class Edmodo page. They will then be grouped jigsaw style to teach others about their book using a school set of iPads. The iPads just became available for school check-

out so this will be our first time using them. I think they will provide a great format for multiple small group presentations to be occurring at the same time. In the long term, I would really love to do more with individual student blogging. Thus far I have only had students comment on blog posts that I have written. I think it would be very beneficial for them to have their own individual blogs so I hope to figure out a good, safe way to monitor that. I also would love to do more with digital storytelling. Even further down the line, I would love to become a technology specialist in a school and teach others how to incorporate technology into their classrooms. As for now, I'm just excited to see my students work their way through the upcoming WebQuests.

Future Plans to Enhance and Increase Technology Usage

By next year I hope to use Edmodo more frequently as a way of communicating with both students and parents and a digital way to turn in assignments. Thus far, students have been very excited to use Edmodo and they have really just skimmed the surface of the site's capabilities. I often have my students complete projects digitally and then print them out to turn them in. Edmodo will provide a digital way for students to embed links to their projects without wasting paper and ink. It also makes it easier for presentation purposes because everything we need is all on one site. This is just one example of a change I plan to make in the future. I'm certain that as I continue my educational quest, I will learn more great ways to integrate technology into my language arts classroom in a way that is both fun for students, and a more effective instructional tool.

Furthermore, I plan to increase how often I use technology and the types of technology that I use over the next few years. This is now my third year teaching and I have consistently added more technology based projects each year. With the tools that I have learned from CEP 810, and the CEP courses that I plan to take in the future, I know that I will have many more ways to integrate technology into my classroom. Just from this class alone I already added Edmodo as a frequent source of communication between my students and myself. Students have used it to turn in other technology based projects that they created, including Dipity.com timelines and Blabberize.com poetry recitations. Blabberize was another site I learned about during my duration in CEP 810. I was reading all of the great technology tips on the MACUL ning that we signed up for when I read someone's suggestion about Blabberize.

I look forward to utilizing such great resources, like the ning or the blogs that I now subscribe to on my RSS reader to improve my use of technology in the classroom. Such resources link me to hundreds of others who have created or found more innovative ways to effectively bring technology to students. I subscribe to both national organizations related to educational technology as well as individual blogs of teachers who make technology integration a priority in their classroom. This combination of resources will lead me to expanding my knowledge of the best ways to add technology based lessons to my classroom. My personal learning network has expanded greatly since joining this class and I believe that this network will be key to making sure that I stay up to date on the latest educational technology information. Finally, I plan to take advantage of professional development opportunities offered by my district to enhance my knowledge of technology integration. Each summer my district offers all day workshops that focus on different aspects of technology. I've seen courses on everything from podcasting to using YouTube in the classroom. I am excited to participate in one of these

hands-on sessions to increase my effectiveness as a teacher.

These are some of the ways that I will expand my knowledge of educational technology in the near future. I am excited to learn what else is out there that could make reading and writing come alive through technology for my students.

My Technology Education Timeline:

Weekly- Read technology blogs for tips, tricks, and new information

Monthly through school year- Staff meetings where teachers share information about how they use iTouches

January 2011- Begin CEP 810

February 2011- Apply for MSU MAET Masters, continue courses

March 2011- Begin CEP 811

Summer 2011- Begin CEP 812, earn Educational Technology Certificate

Summer 2011- NC Professional Development Seminars- Technology related

Fall 2011-Summer 2012- Continue with MSU MAET Masters Program, Graduate with a Masters in Educational Technology

Sites mentioned: (click links to access)

[Glogster](#)

[Pixton](#)

[Prezi](#)

[Edmodo](#)

[Glogster Student Project](#)

[Blabberize Student Project](#)

[Dipity Student Project](#)