

## The benefits of technology for teachers

Technology permeates every facet of contemporary society. From I-phones to GPS systems modern day Americans are connected to each other through gadgets of one kind or another. The ubiquitous nature of technology has led to advancing horizons in every field of human endeavor, including the field of teaching.

What benefit can teachers make of instructional technology (IT)? The answer to this question is simple-the sheer enormity of available IT options allows teachers to tailor their instruction to the needs of the students. Perhaps a better question would be, how can teachers teach effectively without instructional technology? Technology has changed the pedagogical landscape in recent years. The rise of on-line courses has been phenomenal. Teachers simply cannot teach the old-fashioned way any longer. Students expect their teachers to be cognizant of the rich technological resources available and to implement them into their instructional practices. This has resulted in a completely transformed paradigm for the educational process.

Students today are connected to each other constantly. The advent of connectionism has radically changed the way people interact with each other. Students call each other on cell phones; they keep in touch with each other through Internet sites such as Facebook and My Space. If someone needs the answer to any question all they have to do is Google the subject on the Internet and a myriad of web sites is at their disposal.

While older Americans grew up with a linear concept of learning today's students (and teachers) must have a global concept of learning. In the past students had to look

through books to find the information they needed, today the information is only a mouse click away. In some ways this revolution is wonderful, but sometimes it results in shallow or superficial learning.

Today's teachers must understand that the underlying pedagogy has been transformed. Teachers must take advantage of all that IT has to offer. While some media reports highlight the abuses of IT in educational settings, the positive benefits far outweigh any negatives.

Many universities, such as Drury University offer a remarkable assortment of courses online. These courses, in conjunction with regular seated courses, provide students with great flexibility in scheduling. Whenever schools and colleges tailor their curriculum to the needs and wants of students they gain much in the bargain.

Teachers can communicate with parents and students through email. Schools can post assignments and announcements on websites. Through the use of blogs faculty members from disparate regions can collaborate on issues that are of importance to them. Many schools allow access to student grades through secure websites. The posting of video and audio files online has allowed students opportunities to take "virtual" fieldtrips to destinations they might not otherwise be able to see.

The utilization of high speed Internet connections has generated the ability for educators to take their courses online. Web pages can be created allowing for synchronous (real –time) and asynchronous communication. Chat rooms and regularly scheduled times of interaction facilitate the creation of online communities while designated "drop-off" points are available using asynchronous portals. These points

allow students to respond to their classmates without worrying about being online at the same time as well as providing opportunities to submit work to their teachers at anytime.

The ease with which communication occurs in a highly technical age offers great advantages to educators. Through the use of websites, blended classrooms (where elements of instruction are provided through the use of technology) and email, educators gain many advantages through technology. Computer technology has and will continue to transform education in a positive way.