

A New Way of Learning

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A positive learning experience is evaluated through the engagement of the members involved in a specific learning activity. Although learning outside the classroom shapes a student to be better rounded, learning inside the classroom is vital to a student's success after their academic years in society. A student can follow one of two paths when facing adversity in the classroom: 1) to be overwhelmed by a challenge and give up, or 2) methodically observe, examine, and overcome the conflict. The internet in the classroom is a subject matter I learned extensively about this semester that builds the confidence of students as they are learning. This confidence has instilled a change in student's study habits and their eagerness to learn. This was not evident before technology was inserted into the classroom. My paper will analyze the benefits of using the internet and technology in the classroom, and the major concepts I have learned about this semester about technology in the classroom. The learning skills developed in the classroom at an early age transfer to adulthood. Through trial and error, students are conditioned to make wise decisions that prepare them for life experiences. During the 20th century, the internet was pushed to the forefront of technology and transformed the way students learn. As students continue to grasp new information and this phenomenon of technology in the classroom continues to grow, there is no boundary of how far or where technology can take a classroom setting. "The nature of communication has undergone a substantial change in the past 20 years—and the change is not over."

Education is instantly enhanced by using technology in the classroom. Technology serves many beneficial purposes to student's learning experience. In an article written by Nicole B. Ellison and Yuehua Wu titled, Blogging in the Classroom, both authors recount how much time students spend using technology throughout the day. Other relevant articles mentioned have opened my eyes to students being more receptive to learning if what they are learning is enjoyable and they can relate to the subject matter. "These millennial learners may respond more positively to teaching practices that incorporate these tools to expand learning outside the classroom's geographical and temporal boundaries." Recent studies have proven confidence has risen through the use of the internet in the classroom as it allows students to explore new adventures and methods to learning on their own at their own pace. This semester I learned student's writing skills have developed more vastly, as well as: innovative lesson plans being instituted, grades and class participation rising, and the attention span of students growing which allows them to retain more information. In a society where media is displayed everywhere students look, students relate to technology more so than ever. With the technology continuing to increase why not take advantage of all the possibilities students can gain from this in the classroom? This leading-edge style of learning is an escape from textbooks and the traditional learning methods taught up until now. "No generation is more at ease with online, collaborative technologies than today's young people—"digital natives", who have grown up in an immersive computing environment. Where a notebook and pen may have formed the tool kit of prior generations, today's students come to class armed with smart phones, laptops and iPods." In the following paragraphs

I will discuss in detail how games and simulations, and social networks such as twitter, blog accounts, and skype have impacted the classroom in a positive fashion.

In recent years games and simulations have been created to challenge students in ways they have never been challenged before. These games allow students to make mistakes without error and give them a sense of freedom. Although these games can be an exciting experience, they call on students to be good decision makers, develop analytical skills, and give the students a chance to see a connection between what they are learning and their reason for learning it. After reviewing many readings on the games and simulations I learned how students can start as amateurs in gaming and eventually develop into masters of these games. The success experienced during the games will translate to the classroom because the material in the games will be class related. The videos surrounding games and simulations discuss how boys in the classroom find disinterest in what they are learning, and are a harder crowd to tap into when teachers attempt to teach. As games have evolved into educational venues, reports have noted how boys have begun to become more interested in school because technology is being used in the classroom. It has been documented that adolescent boys enjoy video games as well as computer games, with this said when educational games are inserted into a lesson plan, boys are familiar with these gaming devices and willing to play. An important aspect also mentioned in the videos and readings were students finding a career in designing their own games. Teachers consistently tell children they can achieve their goals and dreams if they put their mind to it, and this will possibly trigger an occupation for students once complete with their academic years. Students involved in games will learn from their errors, and educators emphasize students learning from their mistakes and not making them over and over. As essential as learning from mistakes are, students will not fear mistakes because there is no harm in being wrong in educational games or simulations. "Complex games also adapt on the fly to each player's ability, making them feel like they want to continue and struggle, because they feel like they can win despite the challenges." The Horizon report states there are non-entertaining games that are very educational. "Games, unlike traditional school study, also offer students be-a-hero goals that encourage players to persist in their efforts. In addition, games offer "leveling up" with rewards that encourage players to practice extensively. Finally, games offer second-by-second decision making that takes players over and over through the loop of decision, action, feedback, and reflection that is the basis for all learning." This same report notes the variety of games that appeal to all curriculums and all age levels. Multi-player, goal oriented, foreign language, and easy, medium, or difficult level games are just a few of the games listed in this report. Some of the positive outcomes of using games and simulations in a classroom are as follows: problem solving, developing into a risk taker, improving cognitive skills, and the confidence of the students skyrocketing which will translate to their future endeavors inside and outside of the classroom. The internet in the classroom combined with technology is a new way of learning for all ages. The videos and readings the class analyzed this semester dealt with elementary school, high school, and college students, but our graduate course used the internet just as much as other classrooms proving it is a key element to all classroom settings. "Good games are now both teachers and motivators. The newest "complex" games offer scores of hours of

challenging problems of great complexity and sophistication -- often much harder than schoolwork -- that a player typically has to learn many skills to solve.”

Our wikis pages and skype accounts allowed students to communicate without meeting face to face, evidence of how far technology has come along due to the fact at one point in time learning primarily took place in a classroom setting and not over the internet. “Internet calling services like Skype or Yahoo! Voice turn a computer, a webcam and a headset into a video phone. Blogs, while not new, have grown in usage over the last few years and are now a common way for many people to communicate their ideas to a broad audience and, in most cases, to hear back from that audience. Both Internet calling and blogs are relatively easy to accept, because they are based on understood models (telephones and magazine columns).” Blogging, twittering, podcasting, and second life were also used in our classroom to engage students in communicating. “Broadcast technologies like Twitter transform these short bursts of communication from one-on-one conversations to little news (or trivia) programs: we can “tune in” when we want an update or have something to say, and “channel surf” to other activities in between updates.” An interesting fact about these communication and network sites was students can view and edit their work at anytime, which allows the students to feel a sense of accomplishment seeing their work posted on a website. Upon reviewing the Horizon report I learned that students who blogged enhanced their writing skills and are more prone to write better research papers. “The results of Bachenheimer's project line up with a second recent study showing that students who blog also write more and write better. “Writing, Technology, and Teens,” released earlier this year by the Pew Internet & American Life Project, reported that teen bloggers are far more prolific writers than their non-blogging counterparts. For example, more teen bloggers (47 percent) write outside school for personal reasons than do teens who don't blog (33 percent). What's more, 65 percent of teen bloggers consider writing essential to later success in life, compared to 53 percent of non-bloggers.” As I familiarized myself with these social networks I observed the creativity and twist students can put on their own blog or twitter page. While reviewing other blogs by fellow classmates I gained an insight on how they perceived our assignments. What I took away from this was students can comprehend assignments differently but still do a great job on addressing the goals of the course work. “Blogging is relatively new, with little research to support its academic benefits, it showed that students who blogged felt better about writing overall, and about writing research papers in particular. Of the 25 students in the English class, 74 percent believed that blog posts helped them articulate their ideas better, and 68 percent said blogs helped them determine what to say. Another 60 percent felt blogging helped them begin writing their papers, which is compelling because 84 percent of the students said that the hardest part of writing a research paper is starting it. The students commented that blogs helped them organize their thoughts, develop their ideas, synthesize their research, and benefit from their classmates' constructive comments.” While blogging and twittering, I was exposed to new social communities and learned how much time people spend on the internet throughout their day. Using these websites displays a student's work and other students can view it anytime of the day. This will result in instant communication between students and faculties because of the frequency students use their computer. While using these social networks I gained software skills that I will retain beyond this class. Some of

the skills I learned were designing my own wikis page, downloading and using class material, and applying web 2.0 applications to my course assignments. Becoming computer literate is a key component in today's society considering how many people use personal and work electronic mail to convey messages or send resumes. Many teachers and classrooms now institute some form of learning through the computer, making it significantly important for students to hone in on their computer skills. Students can follow other student's blogs and comment under a post. This is good for a classroom because not only are the teachers editing or reviewing one's work, but students are as well. These critiques will make students strive to write better and continue to add to what they have already posted on their site. "The researchers concluded the following: "First, general attitudes toward writing improved. Second, the quality of writing samples increased as compared to similar attempts from prior third-grade classes, as well as compared to previous writing samples within this group. Third, students remained motivated throughout the nine-week blogging project, primarily due to the excitement generated by each new comment from a college partner." As students continue to see the relevance of using social networking sites in the classroom, their eagerness will grow to contribute to class and reflect on their work after seeing it published. Many educators are excited by the potential of new internet technologies, such as blogs, wikis pages, and online discussion groups, to reinvigorate student engagement and learning. "The inclusion of new technologies may be more intrinsically engaging to today's college students, whose daily media practices may include a wide range of technologies, including instant messaging, blogging, downloading audio and video files, and online role-playing games."

Teachers all across America are releasing new teaching ideas by posting work on the internet or finding creative ways to expand the mindsets of their students. The culture in classrooms has changed since technology expanded in the 20th century. Students no longer wish to sit behind a desk and be lectured from an aging textbook. Through the various readings posted on our class website and the videos viewed, I have learned teachers use the internet to assign course work and give students a glimpse into the digital world. Posting assignments and quizzes online have taught me to be punctual with my school work and not to wait until the last minute to complete the course work. This course has allowed me to break down new ways to assess the information discussed and comprehend the work in a way that makes sense to me. Myself, along with the other student responses from the videos have built upon the previous study habits and ways to bring success to the classroom. Teachers posting course work on the internet teaches students responsibility because they will need to be responsible for checking the website and making sure their work is submitted accordingly. Students and parents can check their work from home which is beneficial because they do not have to be in the classroom to see what they missed or the current lesson plan. There was a time where students were mandated to take their work or report cards home. I recall being in elementary school and seeing kids throw their report cards away or dispose their report cards before making it home. Having work online prevents this and parents can be notified when the grades or work is posted so there is no confusion. Social networking websites such as: twitter, blog websites, and podcast taught me these websites can be incorporated into the classroom and allow teachers to present information in a new fashion. Technology's connection

with society has resulted in students learning in nontraditional ways and presents a more stimulating learning experience for students of all age levels. An article from the Horizon report discusses the most opportune time to teach a student is when you have their focus, attention, and they are curious about what is being taught.

Throughout the semester I have learned there are more positive outcomes than negative outcomes when students use technology in the classroom. There will be critics of stepping outside of the norm and striving for new innovative ideas that will lead to creative learning activities and experiences. These same critics will offer that the internet is a danger to one's privacy, will be a distraction to school work, and is a form of entertainment and not education. My analysis of technology and the internet in the classroom rebukes these ideas and explain why using all of the resources attainable to students and teachers is an essential part of learning and a key for success. Textbooks and traditional ways of learning should always exist, but my explanation of the development of technology in the classroom proves as technology continues to expand so should the classroom and the way students go about learning. As noted earlier, students are participating at a higher rate in the classroom, retaining more information, and finding an interest in what they are learning. Blogging, twittering, podcasting, games and simulations are the new social networks and games that are enlightening students to new adventures and allowing them to see their work published on professionally designed websites. Technology gives students the chance to complete their work inside and outside of the classroom and learn at their own pace. It is a must that teachers and administration monitor what is being viewed as students use the internet so they do not spiral off into dangerous territory. As the digital age continues to progress it is essential to expand horizons and explore new territories in order for students to receive the best education they can and continue to crumble the barriers that prevent students from accessing the information that will help them beyond their academic years.

“Technological innovation, long a hallmark of academic research, may now be changing the very way that universities teach and students learn. For academic institutions, charged with equipping graduates to compete in today's knowledge economy, the possibilities are great. Distance education, sophisticated learning-management systems and the opportunity to collaborate with research partners from around the world are just some of the transformational benefits that universities are embracing.

Work Cited

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