



## Technology and Learning in the Classroom

by [Patricia Morlock](#) - Tuesday, 19 March 2013, 8:34 PM

When I was a student, way back in the day, the most advanced technology we had was the overhead projector, the reel -to- reel movie projector and the occasional cassette player.

Today's classroom can barely keep up with all of the technology that exists, and teachers have to pick and choose what works best for their learning environment. Consideration for the availability of computers, readers, and other hardware, as well as monies for software and updates to outdated systems can create unwelcome difficulties in attempts to stay current.

Even though we have a wealth of technology available, schools may or may not be able or willing to make the leap to e-Learning to its fullest potential. Perhaps the real question is what best serves the learner, and what exactly does the learner want/need to survive and thrive in the technology world. In an article from *The Journal, Digital Learning, What Kids Really Want*, "*students not only have a vision for how they want to use technology in the classroom, they have a vision for how they want to learn.*" The article also goes on to discuss obstacles preventing this from happening.

Questions:

1. What is your first memory of technology in the classroom?
2. Is there such a thing as too much technology in the classroom?
3. What are the advantages to technology in the classroom for the least motivated learner?
4. What are the disadvantages of technology in the classroom for the most advanced learners?
5. What do you see as the greatest obstacle for schools in implementing technology in the classroom?

Here are some other articles that might be worth your time to read:

[Kids Want Online Education](#)

[The 21st Century Digital Learner](#)

Sources:

Reidel, C. (2012, Feb.) Digital Learning. What Kids Really Want. The Journal. Retrieved from <http://thejournal.com/articles/2012/02/01/digital-learning-what-kids-really-want.aspx>

Digital Learning Environments, Kids Want Online Education, Retrieved from [http://www.guide2digitalllearning.com/professional\\_development/kids\\_want\\_online\\_education](http://www.guide2digitalllearning.com/professional_development/kids_want_online_education)

Prensky, M. (2008, May) The 21st Century Digital Learner. Edutopia. Retrieved from <http://www.edutopia.org/ikid-digital-learner-technology-2008>

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### **Re: Technology and Learning in the Classroom**

by [Camille Peterson](#) - Wednesday, 20 March 2013, 8:11 PM

#### **What is the first memory of technology in the classroom?**

Wow, this is going back aways! I would say the apple computers in the computer lab where we got to play Oregon trail. Oh, how I miss the days of simplicity of Oregon trail! I think we had like 5 computers for our entire school and it was a combined school where the elementary, middle school and high school were all in the same building. The other memory would be of the slide projector in the science lab, where all of the students would fight to be the slide clicker which had to be timed out with the tape recording of the speaker that went with the slides. Oh, the great memories!

#### **Is there such a thing as too much technology in the classroom?**

In my opinion, absolutely! I've seen rooms where there is too much technology and it can become overwhelming to a person. Especially if you are expected to use all of the technology in some way shape or form! Technology now a days is not as simplistic as it used to be. They are not longer built to do just one or two things. Now you can do thousands of things on them, and just mastering one piece of technology that you have can take years!

#### **What are the disadvantages of technology in the classroom for the most advanced learners?**

I would say the distraction that the technologies can provide. Especially for the most advanced learners, if they have already mastered what is being taught on the technology, chances are they are going to start exploring what else the technology can do. Not that it is a bad thing from a learning standpoint, because knowledge is power, but if you are trying to engage them in a lesson, they may be distracted by learning more about the technology than what you want them to focus on.

**What do you see as the greatest obstacle for schools in implementing technology in the classroom?**

I have a couple of things in mind for this question. First, I would say just keeping up with the cost of the technology and getting upgrades of the technology when it is appropriate. The fast pace that new learning tools and technology are coming out and changing, how does one keep up, let alone a school. I have run into this at the company I work for. By the time we bought a vendor package technology solution, configured it to fit our company and implemented it, the vendor was already rolling out a new version of the product, which caused a lot of rework on our part (mainly because it was worked into our contract that we needed to stay up to date with any new releases they put out, else they would not support us). It was very painful! Technology is expensive to invest in, because it is not a purchase one time type of deal. This gets very costly for schools, and especially if they want to stay current and keep their students current on the latest technology this could be a great challenge for them!

The other obstacle I can see, is how do you pick the right technology that is right for your classroom/school? Often times, you are working with a vendor that is contracting with the school and what may work for one classroom/instructor, may not work for another one, and normally the school does not have the money to invest in multiple. So I could see the selection of a tool that can work across multiple settings could end up being a challenge within the classroom as well as across the school. Same thing applies at the Enterprise (corporate) level. You want to make a good investment for instructing adults, but again, what works for one may not work for them all. Most of the time the Enterprise wants an Enterprise wide tool selected, as it gets to costly to purchase technology for every department within the company. And vendors typically give you a discounted rate based on the number of users who are using the technology.

Great questions Patti, and a great topic!

I highlighted and bookmarked a few items from the articles you posted as well to Diigo. I thought they made some excellent points about how technology is actually shaping and forming a student's opinion about the control they want over their learning. Excellent reading!

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### **Re: Technology and Learning in the Classroom**

by [Patricia Morlock](#) - Thursday, 21 March 2013, 9:03 AM

*" By the time we bought a vendor package technology solution, configured it to fit our company and implemented it, the vendor was already rolling out a new version of the product, which caused a lot of rework on our part (mainly because it was worked into our contract that we needed to stay up to date with any new releases they put out, else they would not support us). It was very painful! "*

It appears your company learned a difficult lesson about the fast-paced world of technology development. What questions could they have asked or what could have been done differently to assure that the time lag between purchase, reconfiguration, and installation guaranteed that you had the most up-to-date product? For example, did anyone ask if there was a new version in development and if so when was the projected date of release? Were upgrades part of the contracted price within a certain time frame, (say two years) or were they extra? Did the company lose valuable down time due to the needed upgrades, hence revenue? Could that have been factored in to the contract with the software company? Were the objectives for the software clear for your company's use and concise for the software company before purchase? Was everyone on the same page?

I know this seems like a load of questions, which you may not be privy to the answers for, but when a school, or company, or anyone for that matter, invests in the purchase of technology of any sort, these are the kind of questions we should be asking.

What do you think were the "selling points" for your company's purchase? What were the distractions that led to them being blindsided? I have a few ideas, but I want to hear what you think.

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**Re: Technology and Learning in the Classroom**

by [Camille Peterson](#) - Thursday, 21 March 2013, 8:51 PM

Hi Patti,

We did learn a difficult lesson! We did not ask the question during the Request For Proposal (RFP) process about when they were coming out with the next release. The implementation of the software package took longer on our end than expected, as we were sold that it was an "out of the box" tool that could be easily configured to our specifications! That is also something to watch out for. When working with a vendor, they will pretty much tell you it can do anything you want it to do. The real question to ask is can it be done through configuration, or do we need you to specially code something for us? Configuration and coding are two completely different things. Configuration can be controlled by you, as the buyer/user, but when it comes to changing the code, they have to do that for you, and it then becomes a customized system and it is very difficult to upgrade to their new version. Sorry, a little rant there. Back to the original question, because it did take longer for us to implement, they had started working on this new release and we hadn't even yet implemented the version we were working off of yet! It was definitely a lesson learned for our company/business unit. I think the selling points were it was such a "flexible" system that could do anything we wanted it to (the blindside). Our business area is the one who really made the decision to buy the product without much involvement from the IT side (I am on the IT side), so when we got in there, we had a lot more questions to ask, but by then the contract had been signed. Yet, another lesson learned for the business unit!

Great questions!

Cami Peterson @ Star Prairie, WI

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## Re: Technology and Learning in the Classroom

by [Patricia Morlock](#) - Friday, 22 March 2013, 10:11 AM

I find it curious that when your company went to the expense of purchasing this product, they didn't think to include the IT people in the in-depth conversation with the company you were purchasing the software from. So, back to my initial question about the benefits or harms of technology. In the long run.....after all was said and done, did your company have to go back and purchase those costly updates? Is it a never ending cycle? Is it the chase for the perfect product to do what you want? Does that even exist? Is there ever a point of going backward to a simpler time? Just wondering.....

Patti

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### There's no going back...

by [Camille Peterson](#) - Saturday, 23 March 2013, 12:46 PM

Hi Patti,

It was curious to say the least that they did not involve Technology upfront! I think the business area had already made up their mind that this was the industry leading edge tool, and they did not follow the formal Request for Information (RFI) and Request for Proposal (RFP) process. And, yes, we did end up having to upgrade to the new release, as per our contract with the vendor, we could only be 3 releases behind before they would limit the support they provided us. It is a never ending cycle, especially when you are dealing with a vendor. I equivilate it to something such as Facebook. They will continuously make updates, and those updates will apply to the entire population of users. You may be happy and satisfied with the way it is working, but they are trying to be innovative and provide the most cutting edge technology and updates that they can to support the average population and to keep it the number one software. You are at their mercy! Eventually you will need to move to the new version and accept what they have built for you. It's the same thing with software packages and learning tools.

As far as going back to simpler times, I am not sure that is

possible. Because even though the technology we were using was simple, it was the most basic, painful tool to use. There was a lot of manual work involved and that has now been eliminated with the new tool (which is truly a benefit of the tool). It's kind of like storing your documents on your own drive and storing several versions in a folder when you update it, and then having to sift through all of those documents or support storing all of those documents, and eventually they get lost. Where technology helps you organize this, version control it, etc. So, I don't think there is even a chance to go back to simpler times. We just need to be more prepared to take updates as they come and make the best of it. We now have dedicated resources to do the upgrades.

This has been a great discussion topic! Thanks Patti!

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**Re: Technology and Learning in the Classroom**

by [Gregory Mason](#) - Friday, 22 March 2013, 6:49 PM

Thank you for the resources. I think we (at my school) rarely ask the students what their preferences are in terms of how they learn or want to learn.

What is your first memory of technology in the classroom?

My first memory of tech in the class was going to use the old Apple computers (maybe Apple II) and paying Paperboy, Carmen Sandiego, and Lemonade Stand (not sure if that is the real name of the game). I will date myself, I was born in 1981. I can remember the encyclopedia being the go-to reference for everything; I find that Wikipedia and Google have really changed learning for all of us.

Is there such a thing as too much technology in the classroom?

I think that too much technology in the class can mean a few things. We use Smartboards at my school, and we have wiki's without blog features for the students to view assignments and parents to see our assessment programs. There is a move to byot (bring your own technology), as we do not have enough macs or iPads for lessons that modern teaching practices dictate. I find that people with their phones out during lessons are usually

not paying attention to the right technology. At another school I worked at they gave each student a MacBook, so checking to see who is paying attention was harder, but the access to learning materials was in real time.

What are the advantages to technology in the classroom for the least motivated learner?

I find that the more ways we offer learning to students, the better a student will be at showing their capabilities to learn or show proof of their learning over time. We are encouraged to use different forms of assessment to show learning. I give projects with a simple direction, it must have a visual representation of your learning from the unit, which has been interpreted as a video film, PowerPoint, Oral Presentation with a poster board, etc. Students that are comfortable with technology can use it to their advantage, and others can use what they feel comfortable with. There is usually a comment or two about what was used to make interesting presentations, and we all learn from it.

What are the disadvantages of technology in the classroom for the most advanced learners?

The most advanced learners can be stunted in their progress if they are limited by constraints of assignments for using certain technology. They may be better served by showing their understanding on a written exam or essay prompt. The highest learners can also overshadow the less tech inclined if there are accessibility differences within a class. There is probably a greater divide related to economic access to new technology and the ability for students to utilize technology in classes than I have seen in my own professional experiences working with entitled children in overseas private education.

What do you see as the greatest obstacle for schools in implementing technology in the classroom?

I see budgets and competent instructors (to teach the teachers) as the biggest hurdles to implementing newer technology. While I am not a financial guru, I can see how my school uses the money it has for things the admin feel are important or look good, but then there is a gap in the facilitation of the new software or devices. No one taught me how to use a Wiki; I did have some help using Wordpress. A great tech coordinator (as they are called at my school) or IT department that can teach adults effectively are worth their weight in gold.



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## **Re: Technology and Learning in the Classroom**

by [Patricia Morlock](#) - Sunday, 24 March 2013, 1:50 PM

I love that you gave your birth year, and no, I won't give you mine. We'll just say take yours and add many more. Going from encyclopedias to Wikipedia, from blackboards to smartboard, from the old Apple to the new MacBook, all have served to do exactly what you said *"allow a student to show their capabilities to learn or show proof of their learning over time."* I agree with you that economic access is the greatest divide. I came from a school district that actually challenged the State of Ohio in the way it funded schools based on tax revenues and said it was inequitable as some districts had a very low tax base while others were very high. The DeRolph Initiative pressed the state to change the way funding for schools occur in a more fair way. Perhaps then, to your last point about budgets, if money were more evenly distributed, technology might be more accessible all around.

Patti