Instructional Technology Philosophy

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A philosophy is a guiding principle for behavior and is established through someone’s thoughts, feelings, and experiences. There are all different types of educational philosophies demonstrated in the classroom, and all have a unique twist based on the person teaching. Technology in the classroom also follows this idea. An educator establishes an environment in the classroom that is built for students to be comfortable, enthusiastic, and engaged for learning. The teacher manages behavior in a certain way, building lessons that incorporate the standards and objectives students need to learn. However in the 21st century classroom, this can be even harder on teachers to engage the students when some many outside factors are affecting that environment.

The 21st century student has a multitude of factors affecting their education. Students are focused on life at home with family, relationships, athletics, and other hobbies. The distractors in a student’s life can be even more challenging. Social media, video games, and text conversations are a few examples of what is seen by a number of educators in the classroom. So how can educators combat the distractions, and build an environment that breeds enthusiasm and engagement for learning? It’s about bringing the right balance of technology into a classroom environment. The Handbook of Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK) for Educators (2008), broadly defines technology as “tools created by humans knowledge of how to combine resources to produce desired products, to solve problems, fulfill needs, or satisfy wants” (pg. 5). When it comes to finding technology for lessons, technology cannot become routine. Educators have to find something that helps enhance the lesson and engage the students.

TPACK brings about the idea of a technocentric focus in the classroom. This is when the focus becomes more about the technology being used, rather than a focus on the students who are trying to use them. When finding technology for lessons, technology cannot become routine. The technology must help enhance the lesson. TPACK (2008) helps focus more on authentic use of technology, rather than a constant misuse of it in the classroom. It can help navigate the waters for educators looking for ways to bring effective technologies into the classroom and enhance student experience.

The amount of technology and software for education today is astronomical. Sometimes, it can be difficult for educators to choose. Technology in the 21st century classroom should be educational, appropriate, and able to establish a skill students will need to be effective contributors to society. Obiageli Sneed wrote a piece discussing the integration of technology using Bloom’s taxonomy in which he states, “The purpose of Booms Digital Taxonomy is to inform instructors of how to use technology and digital tools to facilitate student learning experiences and outcomes. It aims to expand upon the skills associated with each level as technology becomes a more ingrained essential part of learning.” (Sneed & ASU, 2016)

Bloom’s Taxonomy is concentrated on higher forms of thinking in education and this idea of Bloom’s Digital Taxonomy focuses on what types of platforms help facilitate those higher forms of thinking. There are days where technology doesn't need to find its way into the classroom. The goal is to find the correct balance. Use of several different platforms throughout the school year is the goal, however, finding the time to work with multiple platforms, and comprehending all they can do in a short amount of time, can be difficult. This is where Blooms Digital Taxonomy can be effective. It can focus your attention to the correct forms of technology for what an educator is trying to accomplish. It all comes back to the idea of finding the correct balance of technology being used in a classroom and not making technology a routine.

Educator’s jobs are not finished when they find the correct technology to use for a lesson. They are also responsible for educating students on digital citizenship. In the ISTE-NETS Standards for Teachers, one major focus is to “Promote and Model Digital Citizenship and Responsibility, meaning teachers understand local and global societal issues and responsibilities in an evolving digital culture and exhibit legal and ethical behavior in their professional practices” (ISTE for Teachers, 2008). As you read through and explore the standards, there are several phrases that jump out. A focus on learners being empowered, digital citizens, and willing to collaborate with other learners. Understanding and applying these staples are what should change the way educators think and use technology in the classroom. By focusing on these things, educators can change the perception of how technology can and should be used to drive instruction, and create lifelong learners.

It’s not just on the educator to focus on these standards. Students have just as much responsibility in this environment and being aware of their role as a student of technology. Students need to be aware of their digital footprint and what it means to use technology in innovative and appropriate ways. The ISTE Technology Standards (2008) focus on this in several different ways, and by emphasizing these standards, students will become better learners. Educators can also help students think about technology by empowering them as learners. See to what lengths students will grow in their knowledge of technology use. By stifling creativity and limiting what students can do with technology, both in society and the classroom, it will only make digital citizenship that much more difficult for students to understand. If learners are able to understand the importance of technology, and how it can be used to advance society in a multitude of ways, they will be empowered to seek out those advancements and make a difference. By focusing on both of these things, students and leaders will be able to collaborate and help each other grow in the ways they both think and interact with technology.

Educators must model these behaviors daily for students to pick up on and implement in their daily lives. An educator’s ethics are a major concern, both in and out of the classroom. In the journal publication by Lucilla Crosta (2004), she refers to a definition of ethics by Peter Jarvis. "Ethics is concerned with analyzing moral values and seeking to understand what people consider to be good, right, just, etc. It is also about what individuals consider, or feel, that they ought to do and about the actual way in which they behave" (pg. 7). This is very important focus for anyone educating others about the use of technology. Ethics are something that must be a focus, and to educate learners about the proper use of technology is a major component of learning. It is also important for educators to model these behaviors in the classroom.

An educator’s role in appropriately modeling digital citizenship for students to learn from is important. Educators are responsible for the private information of students on a daily basis. Parents trust school districts with keeping this information about their child private, and for the eyes of the specific people that need to know about it. This information can be very beneficial for educators to know, as it can help give them insight into possible ways of implementing strategies to help that specific student. However, educators must be aware that this information should be handled with the utmost care as described in the statute as “Although electronic data collection and warehousing offer great potential for improvement, educators are obligated to protect the privacy of student records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974” (Williamson & Redish, 2009, pg. 127).

Districts need to be aware of how educators monitor this content and train them on the effective ways to protect it from others. In a classroom, there are many distractions that take place throughout a lesson. Educators must be aware of what is going on at all times in their classroom.

Students should never be near an educators work station. Educators should always have private information in a separate window. Private information should never be projected on a board for others to see. As an educator, you are in control of all your students’ personal information. Access to this private information is entrusted to educators by the district, and must be treated just like their own. Liability falls on that educator if something is accessed and needs to be cared with properly at all times.

Technology in a 21st century classroom for educators is becoming more and more important every day. The world is constantly innovating and adapting to new technologies. Students not only need to be aware of new technologies, but also how they can be implemented for use today. This does not just fall on the students, but the educators as well. Educators of technology wear multiple hats when teaching new learners about the appropriate uses of technology today. They must show students what new technologies are available, and the use of Blooms Digital Taxonomy is an important reference to do so. Understanding digital citizenship is of the utmost importance for students in today’s world. They must be aware of their digital footprints and how their personal information must be protected. Lastly, the ethical standards everyone must have when it comes to technology will help drive innovation in the proper direction. Technology can be a phenomenal resource for educators, but it must be treated with respect. It is not something that can become routine, but must be used to innovate and challenge the next generations so it continues to grow.

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