

E-mail and the internet

Business, E-Commerce



Another way that computers can be used more effectively in classrooms is to use them as mindtools. Using computers as mindtools means two things.

First, the students learn by designing. Second, the computers are (un)intelligent tools (Jonassen 30). Students learning by designing means that instead of simply entering data into a spreadsheet or database that already exists, they design the entire database from scratch. The students decide how the spreadsheet or database should look, what information should be included, and how to use it to solve a given problem or objective. By actually doing it they not only learn how

to use the software, but become even more active in their learning process. Using computers as (un)intelligent tools means that the information is provided by the student, not by the computer. In current applications of computers, the information is stored in the computer and the students have to get it out. This means the students are more passive in their learning. If the computer relies on the student for information as opposed to the student relying on the computer for information, it makes the learning process more beneficial.

In order for schools to better prepare students they should also use the same types of software as they will in business. This includes spreadsheets, databases, word processing, e-mail, and the internet. Spreadsheets are often thought of as a tool only for accounting, but they can be applied to more subjects than this. Spreadsheets can be used to create simulations (Morrison 214). An example of a spreadsheet simulation that could be created by students in a social studies class would be to recreate the results of an election.

They could enter in the number of popular and electoral votes for different candidates and then determine who the winner would be. They would use the formulas in the software to calculate the vote totals for them. This would give the students a chance to create and use a spreadsheet, to examine the way the voting system in our country works, and to practically and actively apply what they are learning. Databases can also be used in a wide variety of subjects. Creating and using a database requires a student to think critically (Morrison 93). An example of a

database that could be created in a social studies class deals with countries of the world. Students would enter in the names of several countries and enter in information about each country. This information might include population, the area of the country, which continent it is located on, type of government, title of leader, dominant religion, major imports and exports, and so on. The students could then apply the filters to compare the different countries.

These comparisons could be used to answer specific questions about the countries. Students could also make inferences from the data that they could research further. Students could then create a report that would contain the information that they found to be most interesting. By allowing the students to create the database they are not only learning about different countries, but learning the software.

By allowing them to decide what data should and should not be included in the report it helps to engage them in higher-level thinking. Word processing is probably the easiest type of software to integrate into the classroom since

students write nearly everything they do. One benefit of using word processing to create a final product is how easily revisions can be made. Another benefit is that students can personalize their papers. By using different colors, fonts, and borders students can easily create a unique product. It is also convenient to be able to see what that product will look like before it is actually printed. A third benefit of using word processing software in the classroom is that students can easily begin turning out professional looking work at a young age.

Because word processing is used so commonly in the work place, using it in schools will benefit students in their future careers as well as in their learning (Morrison 186). E-mail and the internet can also be used in the classroom. The internet is can be used to gather information on nearly any topic. By performing key word searches, students can instantly be provided with the location of countless resources. Many web sites also have links to the e-mail address of someone who can provide even more detailed information on the subject. The students could then e-mail this person and possibly get the answers to more specific questions they might have. For example, if students are learning about the Vietnam War, they might be able to find the e-mail address of a veteran of the war. The students could then e-mail this person with questions and get first hand knowledge of what a typical day was like for a soldier during the war.

It is the job of the school to prepare students for the real world. The real world involves the use of personal computers in business. The ways in which computers are used currently do not prepare students for this. It is possible

for schools to better prepare students to use computers in their careers. With some minor adjustments to lesson plans and a few extra minutes of planning by teachers, computers can become the tool that they are in the workplace in schools. Until some changes are made however, every penny spent on computers in classrooms will be a penny wasted.