

# Technology: a catalyst to education

Business



Education is considered one of the most important things in our society.

People chant: better teachers, better textbooks, better schools. Hopeful parents, ambitious students, and our involved community all agree that due to the advanced technology we have today, educating the rising generation has been easier and more efficient as compared to the past. Of course, there are some people who prefer the old-style schools, with pencils, erasers, and papers. They claim that as more technology gets assimilated into the classrooms of many, more students lose focus and get distracted. However, there are ways to counter these negative effects created by technology.

Schools block access to websites that they deem as a distraction for their fellow students while teachers continually lecture and even rebuke students who get distracted by their laptops. In fact, the benefits of technology in a classroom outweigh the harms of technology. Teachers can, with the help of the technology, personalize their students' education experience. Also, now that we are able to look up any facts such as state names and important dates in a matter of seconds, teachers ask questions that require critical thinking skills and not just plain old facts. This way, teachers can teach more efficiently by saving precious time. So, technology benefits students in classrooms as teaching and learning become more efficient, allowing the students to have a more improved learning experience.

Interactive whiteboard offers more advantages than traditional whiteboards because it provides information to students in a more efficient and diverse way. Now, teachers can save time by using videos, diagrams, pictures, and notes to assist their lessons. An article written by an English teacher at the

Franklin Learning Center in Philadelphia states that she uses “ the board to share information for mini-lectures, to demonstrate activities, or to show video clips or images to enhance [her] lessons” (Leanness 1). In many cases, teachers use educational videos to either give their students a brief preview on their next unit or a summary of the unit they learned for the upcoming test. This way of previewing or reviewing saves a lot of time in class and the class can move onto the next unit more quickly.

Teachers cannot answer every question each student has and those are usually answered during office hours. During class, the teacher has to go over the general things that most people are confused about, and videos help do exactly that. Videos allow a different way of instruction as compared to the teacher talking the entire time. Therefore, the whiteboard not only is more efficient but also more diverse. In contrast, some people believe that the interactive whiteboards limit the interaction between the teacher and the student as some teachers rely too much on technology for their lessons.

Leanness disagrees as even though “ there are real concerns about the...loss of emphasis on teacher-centered lessons, interactive whiteboard is a tool that... does not dictate that all the instruction needs to be teacher-directed” (Leanness 1). Nowadays, the lessons are more focused on students and not teachers. With interactive whiteboards, teachers and students can collaborate together in a shared work area so that it is not just students receiving a mass of information one after the other.

By pulling up a picture or an interesting article that relates to the lesson, students will be able to be more engaged by having further discussions on

the topic with their teachers. Interactive whiteboards save time and benefit the students by making sure that every second count in the classroom.

Another technology that benefits the students in the classroom is laptops due to their quick accessibility to multitudes of information. The information stored in the web is limitless and enhances students' learning experience as they have complete access to all that information. The almost too easy access to online websites allows students to “ go beyond the textbook to study complex topics ... [and analyze] information from multiple sources, including the Internet and interviews with experts” (Edutopia 1).

Having textbooks and physical books as the only resources for students is a dangerous thing. Not only textbooks are heavy, but students then need textbooks for all of their classes. In contrast, laptops are lighter and hold more information than books. Books are now available in pdf files and quick to access as compared to physical ones. Borrowing a book from a library takes time and buying a textbook costs money every time a student starting a new subject. However, many schools lend students laptops and if the student's family is financially struggling, then they are exempt from paying the money that is required to borrow the laptop.

Instead of searching a 200-page book for the right information for a history research paper, it is more efficient to type in a few keywords and get the results that you want in a matter of seconds. Some people argue that students get distracted too easily. But in reality, these “ distractions caused by computers might be the result of a failure to involve students in the classroom rather than the reason they are not engaged” (Fang 5). Besides, even if there is no technology in the classrooms, who said that it will

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eliminate all the distractions? Who said that no alternative distractions will surface after technology's death in the classrooms? There will always be some kind of distraction, with or without technology. So, it is impossible for us to kill all distractions. But, it is possible to limit them.

Once students learn how to properly manage it, technology will not be a distraction that hinders the students from learning, but a tool for them to further their learning. Therefore, laptops, as controversial as it is, benefits the students in the classrooms by providing a variety of information for students' use. With every student in a different level of learning process, adaptive testing benefits each individual student by taking in each student's strengths and weaknesses. Adaptive testing allows students to learn at their own pace and is more efficient than pen and paper testing. According to a teacher at Westwood Schools in Camilla, " adaptive testing is really about personalizing the knowledge of the student...[and] understanding the individual student" (Davis 1).

Students are on different levels on learning even when they are in the same class. Some might confuse the word " affect" with " effect," while some might confuse metonymy with synecdoche. There are so many people who all have different things they have difficulties on, it is hard for a teacher to know what each of their student is struggling on. But by using the adaptive testing, teachers can have a better understanding of their students and know what most of their students struggle on, so they can go over it in class. Moreover, as more and more teachers use adaptive testing, schools can gain data and create a plan to help their students in their own learning levels.

But, technology is not perfect as some who oppose the adaptive testing point out. They worry about the reliability of the software, whether or not they can trust the algorithm. To them, it does not provide enough practice to determine that the student has mastered the skill. But in reality, adaptive testing scores are “ related to expected domains from external instruments, to have good scale reliability and to have stable scores as determined by test-retest reliability” (Validity and Reliability). I went to a school that use to have adaptive testing in the beginning of the year to know each student’s needs better. After the results come out, the school tries its best to meet every student’s needs.

And they do meet the students’ needs and turn their students’ weaknesses into their strengths. It is in schools’ best interests for their students to succeed and do well. So, the process in which they chose one of the many software for the adaptive testing is tedious and long. They must check and recheck the validity of the software before supplying it to the students. In the past, standard paper tests were used to test students and we trusted those paper tests enough to trust that our grade reflected our learning levels. Now, as adaptive testing became another source to test us, people are reluctant.

But whether it is a paper test or an adaptive testing, the people who make those questions on the tests and people who make the paper tests are the same. Educators still make those tests, whether it is a physical paper or a software. So, if we are questioning the reliability of the adaptive testing, are we not questioning the reliability of the standard paper tests made by the same educators? Adaptive testing benefits the teachers, schools, and most importantly students because it is more personalized and customized for

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each student. Students need to acquire information in a diverse and efficient way. They need to have quick access to information and need to be able to assess themselves and know where they are in terms of levels of learning.

And in order to accomplish all these things, we need technology. Much of our education is based on technology, and without it, our education will go back to where it was all those years ago. But we must not fall back. We must not remain stubborn. Our society is changing and our education system is adapting to the changes, with the help of the technology.

Now is the time for us to take full advantage of the technology available in the classrooms and improve our learning experience. Now is the time for us to adapt to the changing society and the education system. As time passes, technology will continue to be assimilated into our society and schools. And instead of focusing solely on the negative effects of technology, we should focus more on the benefits and how the improvement in technology will improve the learning experience of the students. Seasons change and centuries change, but the high tech world will remain as high tech world.

It is not right for us to ignore the technology that is everywhere around us. Some people do not even have access to the limitless resources we have on our electronic devices. So, we shall not take the technology for granted. Whether we like it or not, we will accept the fact that technology will be around with us for a very long time. Students who live in the 21st century and onwards, therefore, should not neglect technology but use it to its full potential so that it can serve its true purpose: to help and assist students and teachers alike.