

Teachnology

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Most traditional schools have changed very little in terms of instruction and how students are educated. Even though we live in a 21st century world marked by modern technology, traditional

schools lag behind in terms of the instruction of technology that most modern businesses and companies commonly use today. Many of these school districts, for one reason or another, are not equipped with laptop computers, tablets, mobile devices, software, applications and/or internet access to bring our students classrooms into the 21st century. Some school districts have the technology but have not changed their educational system and policies to allow for fluid integration of technology as a learning tool in the curriculum, and having students use this technology on a daily basis.

If we, as educators, are to assist our students in becoming academically and skillfully competitive for entry level positions in the future job market, we need to teach them 21st century skills today. The most effective way to do this is through web-based learning. Many careers today make use of computer technology and the Web to conduct business, to communicate with people around the world, and to run companies efficiently. It is only practical that we our students learn these skills early and frequently to ensure that they are fully prepared for these opportunities.

Our students are still being taught with 20th century skills in the 20th century classroom. The educational paradigm must shift to allow students to learn 20th century skills across the curriculum at every grade level. The The one size fits all curriculum, based mainly on a physical textbook and the teacher as the “sage on the stage” is no longer an effective instructional model for our students today. We need to transform our approach for the benefit of our students.

One of the most important paradigm shifts to be made in a traditional school is transforming the teacher from the “sage on the stage” to a “facilitator of learning.” Students are grouped together to form small groups to encourage communication and collaboration. By allowing students to be responsible for their learning, teachers better are able to walk around the classroom to monitor their progress, communicate with individual students, determine the degree of their engagement, and check for understanding with relative ease.

Collaborative learning takes advantage of social skills and enables the student to share their thoughts and ideas and practice communication skills. By sharing ideas, all students in a cooperative group become a community of learners enabling each of them to learn from each other. This type of “social learning” has been proven by research to dramatically strengthen oral and written communication skills for ELL learners, not to mention, all students.

Web-based Collaborative projects allow students to research and learn about topics within the content area by searching the internet and networking with their peers. Students are also required to complete a learning task and/or create a product, using higher order thinking skills to demonstrate their mastery of concepts and skills. Collaborative groups of students engaged in web-based learning within their curriculum

who create web-based writing projects and use higher order thinking skills score higher on standardized tests, develop their critical thinking and problem solving skills, increase their retention of the information they have learned, and learn vital technology skills they can use in the future. The benefits of this type of learning model is due to:

1. Students are able to use their social and communication skills to construct new knowledge. They are able to express their thoughts and ideas and also receive feedback from others.
2. Writing clarifies learning and slows down the thought process to allow students to think in a step by step manner and also promotes higher retention rates of information.
3. The use of the higher level thinking skills in Bloom’s Taxonomy promotes the development of critical thinking and problem solving skills at the analyzing, synthesizing, applying and creating

levels. Students also are able to understand key concepts and skills at a deeper level. This also encourages students to be independent thinkers, and to base their judgment and decisions on data and facts.

4. They also learn how to create learning products through the use of technology tools and web resources. Students learn how to research and gather information found on the web and create multimedia presentations, eBooks, portfolios, journals, websites, blogs, movies, podcasts and a host of other digital products to demonstrate their learning. [Chapter 2: What are 21st Century Skills?](#)

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21st century skills are at the heart of web-based learning. They are defined as the essential skills needed for success in today’s world. Students today must master specific skills, core content knowledge and expertise to succeed in work and life. Specific 21st century skills students will need to master include but are not limited to: Communication skills (speaking and writing), conveying ideas to others

Literacy, reading , and comprehension skills, summarizing, note-taking

Critical thinking, problem solving, defining a problem and its variables, making decisions

Higher order thinking skills (analyzing, evaluating, synthesizing, ability to see connections and patterns, correlations, cause and effect, compare and contrast, similarities and differences, grouping, sorting, classifying, prioritizing, interpreting data and graphs) planning. Innovativeness, creativity, inventiveness, originality, developing new ideas

Collaboration, cooperative learning, group learning, working as a team, resolving conflict, guiding others

Web-Based research, finding, using information from multiple sources, evaluating information

Teaching 21st Century Skills

21st century skills can easily be incorporated into authentic projects that simulate real life situations and problems. Projects are not only effective assessment tools to measure core content knowledge, they are essentially powerful teaching opportunities enabling students to demonstrate their knowledge and application of the skills they have learned. This is the opportunity many of our students need to practice and hone critical thinking and problem solving skills in a safe, nurturing environment, in preparation for life. Projects fundamentally allow teachers to monitor and assess the proper use, application, and mastery of skills.

Authentic projects allow students the ability to demonstrate the higher order thinking skills attributed to Bloom's Taxonomy such as synthesizing, analyzing, and evaluating. Employers today have seen a shortage of skilled students transitioning from our colleges and universities into the workforce. Their most common concern is that students have not been taught adequate critical thinking and problem solving skills. They state that our younger generation are not given enough novel and relevant experiences and real world situations to deal with. They lack the experiential opportunities that ultimately build success and inner confidence.

We must not forget why we are educators. We prepare our students for life. We teach them how to be life-long learners. We show them how to think for themselves. and make informed decisions. We are their models for how to conduct themselves as children and as adults. We prepare them for their futures in the workplace and in society even though they may not know or understand how they fit into the bigger picture. The students need adults who have learned from their prior experiences and who can lead, motivate, and support them. They need us. **Expectations for 21st Century Learners**

If students are to learn 21st century skills, they must have high as well as clear expectations for their learning. High and clear expectations, with the proper scaffolding and support, motivates students to always improve and learn new knowledge and skills. It gives the students the clear message that they must master new knowledge and skills to be successful in both the short (now) and in the long term (future). The goal here is to create a cycle of continuous learning for every student.

Expectations need to be crystal clear and comprehensible. As a result, students will be able to clearly envision how their education (knowledge and skills) will directly benefit them in the workplace. The student will understand that the outcome of their education is having a rewarding career and a better quality of life. They will recognize that their education has prepared them for the career they desire. *

Teachnology is a ground breaking book guiding educators in the development and implementation of 21st Century instructional tools using today's technology. Dynamic, engaging, and effective content area lessons can be created with websites, web 2.0 tools, movies, video, audio, eBooks, blogs, podcasts, screencasts, mobile apps, digital binders, and much more! This ground-breaking guide also shows educators how to integrate these lessons into the curriculum and how to allow students to easily access them on the Web and on their mobile devices.

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