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EdTech: THE RIGHT WAY

How to successfully integrate educational technology into your classroom

By Anthony Carabache

Are you thinking about moving forward with integrating technology in your classroom? Experience has shown there are three rules to successful integration of educational technology (EdTech):

1. Have a plan
2. Use non-invasive technology
3. Be OK with "trying again"

The Plan
Having a plan is the most critical factor for success when attempting to integrate technology into everyday teaching. The plan can be broken down into three main parts:

1. Identify the overall expectations from the curriculum you would like to explore.   .
2. Identify a non-invasive tech tool that will help facilitate learning based on that expectation.
3. Build in time for trial, error and retrial within the activity.

When you begin with the big ideas featured at the beginning of each section of a curriculum document, you start with broad ideas that promote student inquiry.

Non–Invasive Technology
The web has become saturated with a variety of tools and apps that help make learning fun, engaging, visible, measurable and interactive. On the surface this looks like a very good thing, but, as teachers, we must remember our responsibility to protect our students. Consider the following questions before selecting your next online tool:

1. Is the tool licensed by the Ministry of Education or by your school board?
2. Does the tool respect student privacy?
3. Does the tool collect invasive data such as age, location, gender and school name?
4. Does the tool necessitate use of your personal device?
5. Does the tool necessitate parental permission?
6. Does the tool require you to keep pictures, videos or any other data locally on a device?
7. Are data recoverable if lost?
8. Is there teacher support at your school or board for that particular tool?

There are many applications that are powerful learning tools and are also non-invasive. The key here is to answer the question, "What do you want the tech to do?"

Trying Again
Understand that being patient with yourself is just as important as having patience for your students. Select a tool that is simple to implement and manage, and establish rules and expectations with your students. When you select a tool, set a realistic goal about its frequency of use. Once or twice a week is an ideal pace for someone beginning a tech integration journey.

Here is an example of a sample lesson for Grade 9 mathematics that uses non-invasive tools:

Curriculum Goal: MPM1D – Investigating Properties of Slope
1. Have the class view video 1 from Study.com (see link below) and select five students to write notes using Todaysmeet.com. Assign another student to moderate the notes.
2. Watch the second video from Khan Academy via YouTube and ask five other students to write notes about points made that may not have been made in the original video. Assign another student as the moderator of those notes.
3. Have a class discussion about which video achieves its goal to introduce slope and why.
4. Create groupings of three students and challenge each group to create a tutorial about how to calculate slope (with paper, tech, etc).
5. Build in time for exploration and dialogue
6. Attempt to solve real-world problems based on the lessons learned.
7. Assess for learning and provide meaningful feedback.

Non–Invasive Tech Tools:

Study.com	You Tube	TodaysMeet
An excellent video repository for all subject areas.	An excellent video repository for all subject areas but requires vetting.	An introduction to 'back-channeling' and collaborative note-taking.

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