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Unit 8

In my elementary and middle school years all I ever wanted to do was read. I wanted to consume as many books as I could, and it didn't matter how long the books were either. This meant that I had a familiarity with the library and all the wonders of information that it could offer me. Anytime that as a class we had the ability to use the library to do research I was always excited to find something new to learn from. In elementary school our researching was held only to libraries as there was no magical internet to make use of. We had to memorize the dewey decimal system so that we could more effectively research, and the librarians were the true rulers of the knowledge. The only technology that played a part in my life was my mothers Apple computer that she's had since before I was born, but it allowed me to write all the papers I needed.

The not so great technological moments in my elementary years were getting to learn Spanish by television. There was an initiative rushing through our school system that all students should learn Spanish, but since none of our teachers were certified we simply watched a VHS tape of important words. As quickly as this initiative rushed in it was quickly swept back out the door post parental complaints. I learned that simply watching something, without any actual use in the classroom, did not amount to any level of understanding. This was my first negative experience with technology and little did I know that many more would follow that would shape my future as a teacher.

The internet did not enter my family until I was in middle school because it was simply too risky, and expensive, for my single mother to pursue. She was very cautious about what it all meant and she was determined to let the "kinks" all get worked out first. I can still remember when we did our first research project on the internet. We spent a couple of days learning how to use the internet, and then we had to use a mix of paper and online sources to write a science research paper. There were no complaints from the class about having to search through the library for books, but the biggest complaints were about the internet searches. Through the frustration the use of internet for research greatly diminished my love for searching through a library for research material. Why would I ever think to step foot into a library when at the tip of my fingers I could do all the research I needed to? I still loved to go into the library to check out books for personal reading, but I was less interested in truly educational searching.

With the invention of AIM I soon became a crazy multitasker finding myself able to balance studying while chatting with my friends. This first "social networking" distracted me more often then helped, and it introduced me to a new form of literacy. With no knowledge of texting shorthand at this point in time all I knew was instant messenger shorthand. As shown in the studies in Digital Nation while working on the computer I was constantly doing multiple things at once lowering the performance of each thing I attempted to accomplish. This is when technology cast a shadow over my educational performance.

During middle school the other great technology that we came across was the use of Microsoft PowerPoint. This transformed the classroom presentation but also had its own downfalls. We mere students began to judge teachers based on their use of PowerPoint, or lack thereof. It seemed so "boring"

anytime we had to take notes from the board, and those were always our least favorite teachers. But when a teacher broke out PowerPoint we thought of them as technology gurus. How a simple presentation style could define a view of a teacher when we were still just sitting in our seats taking notes is beyond me. What was once a great technology to learn from has now transformed into one that is frowned upon. It seems that those who use it now are too traditional and are avoiding inquiry. Where once it excited us as students it seems that now PowerPoint only acts to diminish our education in the midst of all the other great technology that is out there. The speed with which technology changes its image only acts to scare me in the process of learning to be a great teacher.

The use of a cell phone, not a smart phone, entered my world my junior year of high school. There was no texting and I only had 60 minutes a month to use. I was only allowed to use it for emergency purposes due to just receiving my own car. There were no thoughts of staying up all night texting, using it to cheat in the classroom, or being able to find facts in an instant no matter where I was located like there is now. The phone played no significant part in my experiences with education but now it only works to frustrate me in the classroom when I am constantly trying to keep it out of my classroom. While I see the uses for it in instant fact finding there is still no method by which to control the personal uses of it at the same time. Like in the digital nation series I can see that many of my students now find themselves multitasking not with AIM like I was but with their cell phones as distracters.

In my five years of undergraduate studies at MSU I never once looked up, nor checked out, a book from the library. Every single piece of research that I did was based on their electronic database. I still considered that was I was making use of their library but why would I ever check a book out if I could find it electronically? It was not until this year that I checked my first book out of the Main Library at MSU for this masters course. The electronic library is with me wherever my computer is, and therefore I have unlimited educational resources right at my fingertips. In this way technology controlled my undergrad, and now graduate, career. My experience with educational research has helped me to properly teach my students about the best methods of doing research on their own time so as not to fall into the traps of poor websites.

As a traveling teacher the use of technology is both transformative, and cumbersome, in terms of classroom use. Every classroom that I am in has varying levels of technology (tvs, IBW's, overhead projector) so in a sense I must be prepared to create multiple types of the same presentation format. No matter what types of technology I have in the classroom my initial thought process must deal with making use of whatever type of inquiry will best fit the situation I am dealing with. With teaching biology I will be able to make use of various different forms of inquiry as discussed throughout the semester. There are the explorations of Howard Gardner, mixed with the observations of Bateson, and the technology to help guide us along through the year.

The technology that I will use in the classroom is heavily influenced by my experiences with it through my educational years. When used in the right context there is no issue in my head with PowerPoint, but it must be balanced with hands on activities that allow for students to gain their own information as well. The use of researching on the internet will be a large part of my classroom experience because there is access to abundant free resources that only require a classroom to have access to computers. I can give my students access to a world of information, and given a prompt they will have the ability to practice inquiry in searching for answers at their own pace. We will be making use of wikis, blogs, and the

website delicious to share interesting information we find throughout the year. Cell phones and ipods are not allowed in our classrooms so I will not be making use of those in my lesson plans, but I do see that they are going to be technology that we will have to use in the upcoming years.

My training in my masters of educational technology is almost contradictory in its own right because while I learn of the importance of technology I have left with no superior knowledge on any one technology per se. We are only taught to analyze the good/bad of any technology while realizing how we could use it more effectively in the classroom. While education appears to have changed over time due to the technology that is present there really has been very little change. We went from chalk boards, to white boards, PowerPoints, to interactive white boards. In the end though how are any of these really different when used improperly they all have the teacher at the board with the children in the seats being talked at? With the proper training however any technology can open unlimited numbers of doors to other worlds, and also they can create the proper motivation needed to stimulate great inquiry in the classroom. My life has been dominated by the transition of technology and I feel that it has shaped me to see the importance of it in the classroom itself because that is where the kids are at.