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Trends in Educational Technology

Foundations of Educational Technology/EEND 675

March 16, 2018

New trends in education are arriving at lightning fast speed in classrooms around the world. New and improved “everything” is being developed to keep educators and students alike interested and highly motivated. As educators, we have many conversations about 21st century learning and what that model should look like in our classrooms. Collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking are essential for all students, at all levels. While educators have high expectations for tech-savvy students, the reality is that many students can teach teachers how technology works faster and more efficiently than teachers sometimes can learn (and teach) alone! Teachers need to elevate the level of technology that is embedded into instruction in order to meet the needs of our 21st century learners.

To include the vast array of technology resources and new trends in technology that are available to teachers today would be an exercise in futility. There is just too much out there today and it can be overwhelming! It is undeniable the impact that applications like Kahoot, Flipgrid, and Plickers have had on my classroom engagement. These tools have changed my enjoyment of teaching and my students have more fun learning. Learning the programs is made easy with included tutorials and every child is involved and collaborating with their peers. Other research based math programs like Zearn and Reflex have impacted student success more than traditional instruction since they can be accessed at home and repeated for mastery. Those two programs are very easy for teachers to monitor progress and assign at different levels of student need.

Another trend in technology I have found useful and effective for higher engagement in my classroom is the use of the green screen. Green screens provide the opportunity for authentic learning while also providing a number of different and unique ways to assess your students. Green screens are highly motivating for students. I have found my students are more invested in the research portion of an assignment when they know they get to “travel” to a new place to create and demonstrate their learning using the green screen. They enjoy the interactive component and are continually engaged. The idea that the students have the opportunity to “implement green screen technology as a way to transport themselves to another location or time” (Gordon, 2014) is exciting and extremely rewarding for them. WeVideo and Chroma Key are two applications that make use of the green screen easy for students and teachers. While the video and gaming components in different resources is hands-down a concept technology developers are using to engage students, the use of the green screen cannot be overlooked since it actually put the students IN the picture. The outcome of this is twofold, making students part of their learning and teaching them how technology works. I found that using this in my class is so much fun and the kids have taught me more about it than I have taught them!

While researching, I stumbled across many articles that focused more on technology use in higher learning vs elementary classrooms. Rhea Kelly’s article, “7 Ed Tech Trends to Watch in 2018” was fascinating in that she evaluated the landscape of technology in education by sharing what a few choice panelists from several universities

had to say. Some of the trends of that article included data-driven tools for educators, digital courses, mobile tech, the role of IT, and learning space design. It was interesting to see how some of these trends that are a focus for higher institutions are also of major importance for our early learners as well. At a recent Institute Day in my district, one session focused on the concept of providing alternative seating in the classroom, which one of the panelists in the article shared, “Changes in student behavior are informing the design of learning spaces on universities and college campuses,” (Vedanthan quoted in Kelly, 2018). While the space use concept is not necessarily technology related, it is very important to understand the drive for it’s based on the need for students to have spaces to most effectively work with technology and collaborate with peers. This is an identifiable need in the elementary classroom as well. He shared that some examples are “new library spaces that have movable furniture, writable surfaces, and multimedia creation devices.” (Vedanthan quoted in Kelly, 2018). This directly related to trends in technology to show the far reaching effects of implementing use of new tools with our students and the need to provide more collaborative environment as well.

People used to joke that one day robots will be teaching our kids and we teachers will all be out of jobs! One article was actually titled, “The Robots are Coming!” (Kominiak, 2016) I am absolutely fascinated by this up and coming use of robotics technology in the classroom. There is a robotic device that is called the “double” and it is used for homebound students who want to attend class and participate in their

education. The “double” is a device that basically is an ipad on wheels and travels to school in place of the student. The student runs the “double” from home. The students mobility and autonomy increases and it is more interactive than a laptop. This device has proven to be life changing for some because of the increased socialization and diversity to learning that it provides. Educators believe that this type of interaction with homebound students is a benefit for all and hope that more students and educators can take advantage of this new trend in technology.

I believe that these and the many other new trends in technology coming our way are going to positively impact our students’ learning and our instructional delivery. The days of a teacher standing in front of a class and instructing the entire time have gone away. Technology gets kids excited, interested and highly motivated. Having to embrace new ways to roll out curriculum to students is not a bad thing. It is essential for teachers to keep current and have the drive to want to try new things. Even making small adjustments and adding just a few new “tools” can really add to the overall value and student experiences in your classroom.

With anything new, there will always be challenges to face. Teachers need to be trained and educated on the new technology that they are bringing in to the classroom. Of course, these things take time and money, which everyone seems to be short on. Also, the obvious issue of technology failing is always a concern. We can only control so much, but if your servers and devices are not updated, the potential for failure beyond an educator’s control increases. Students who have limited access is always an issue as well as educators not willing to try new things. Many of the articles found on

tech trends included something about the main priority for the IT in school being working technology and servers!

When considering 21st Century learning and technology in the classroom, it is essential that one keeps the 4Cs, (collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking), in mind at all times. Pushing students to higher expectations and more meaningful learning is more critical than ever. Providing students with the tools to achieve those expectations is a priority that every teacher should be considering every day in their classroom.

Resources

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