Teaching With Tech

A New Brand of Learners: Millennial and Technology

When analyzing the instructional needs of any group of learners, there are two considerations that automatically leap to the front of the line: 1) The nature of the audience, and 2) The alternative means for effectively communicating the instructional message.   This delineation is particularly critical when considering the learning needs of today's university students.   In the book *Millennials Rising,* Howe and Strauss (2000) assert that this group of individuals, alternately referred to as the "MTV generation," "Generation Y," and "Millennial students", comprise a new brand of learners. They come to the university campus equipped with a new level of technological awareness, sophistication, and expectation.

To illustrate, consider the advances in commonly used technology that have been created and proliferated during the lifetime of today's first year college students:

- Widespread increases in the availability and use of computers
- A cell phone for   every ear in America
- Pagers, Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), CDs, DVDs, MP3s
- Video games and a variety of video game devices
- Internet sites, email, instant messaging, and chat rooms
- PowerPoint presentations and LCD projections
- New language terms including net surfing, information superhighway, web site, chat room, cyber, browser, online, homepage, HTML, and @.

Predicting the Future of Technology: What Do You See?

Past predictions about the future of technology have greatly underestimated the powerful influence and development of these important tools:

- "Everything that can be invented has been invented," Charles H. Duell, Commissioner, U.S. Patent Office, 1899
- "I think there might be a world market for maybe five computers," Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, 1943
- "Computers of the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons," *Popular Mechanics*, 1949
- "I have traveled the length and breadth of this country and talked with the best people, and I can assure you that data processing is a fad that won't last out the year."   This observation from the editor in charge of business books for Prentice Hall, 1957
- "So we went to Atari and said, 'Hey, we've got this amazing thing, even built with some of your parts, and what do you think about funding us? Or, we'll give it to you. We just want to do it. Pay our salary, we'll come work for you. And they said 'No'. So we went to Hewlett-Packard, and they said, 'Hey, we don't need you. You haven't even gotten through college yet.'", Apple Computer founder Steve Jobs.
- "There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home," Ken Olson, President and founder of Digital Equipment Corporation, 1977.

These quotes and others on technology can be found at: from:http://www.bible-reading.com/quotes.html

What are your predictions about the future of technology and teaching?

Tips on Tech… Getting Ready

Technology can be a wonderfully powerful supplement to a well prepared instructional lesson. Conversations with faculty members have yielded several important tips for the use of technology:

Enhancement not replacement: Technology can provide a powerful means for enhancing the communicative power of a classroom presentation. Technology, however, cannot stand alone. It must be skillfully placed within the context of lecture, discussion, and group activity. Weave technology into the fabric of your lessons as a way of enhancing the vibrancy, color, and tone of the instructional content.

Guiding Questions:

1. Does this media or technology strengthen the message of this lesson?

2. What is the best way to link and introduce the technology and the content?

3. What are the ways to process/discuss this information after the presentation ?

Part of being "informationally literate" is the ability to successfully use the internet as a learning tool. This requires that students have the skills necessary to search for specific resources and determine the quality and validity of the information that they have located. A "webquest" is a strategy for helping our students to gain skills in these increasingly important areas of learning.

A webquest consists of an internet-based assignment. Student will read, examine, and respond to specifically identified web sites and search for specific types of information. One additional aspect of this assignment process involves the creation of solutions to presented scenarios or problems.   Check out these internet sites featuring webquests in a variety of learning disciplines:

- www.http://webquest.org

- www.http://ozline.com/webquest/intro.html

- www.http://eduscapes.com/tap/topic4.html

Check out the possibility of including webquests in your course options for students.

Equipped and ready: Technology is a wonderful tool. To reduce the possibilities of malfunctions and enhance transitions, advanced planning is strongly advised. Time spent before delivery of the lesson will greatly increase the power, impact, and effectiveness of the chosen technology.

Guiding Questions:

1. Do I know the points in my classroom presentation that call for the integration of technology?

2. Have I checked the equipment and materials (e.g., CDs, DVDs, audio/video tapes, software, internet) to assure that they are in working order and properly cued?

3. Do I know who/where to call for help?

Back up planning: Your worst nightmare: Although you have done the necessary planning and have checked out the equipment that you will use, for some unknown reason, it fails to operate correctly. What do you do now?

Guiding Questions:

1. What will you do? How will you respond?

2. What are the strategies that you will employ to continue on with your lesson without the aid of technology?