

## 2015 ICEM Presentation

For some time now, the call for technology integration in classrooms has been a regular topic of school reform, transformation, and improvement. Nonetheless, many educational leaders will attest that while technology is increasingly finding its place in classrooms, it is only a small cadre of teachers actually utilizing technology in classrooms to improve student learning. It may be that merely "integrating" technology is not the real issue. If pedagogy itself is not changing through the use of digital technology then the problem is clearly not the tool but the method in which it is used.

Much has been made of this inability of technology to add any real capacity to improved student learning regardless of academic level. Increasingly the evidence has shown that "teachers have been painfully slow to transform the way they teach, despite the influx of technology into their classrooms" states Benjamin Herold in his article for Education Week, June 11, 2015.

It is, therefore, critical for 21<sup>st</sup> Century educational leaders to address this situation.

There are many already concerned with the situation:

"In general, teachers at many schools seem to view technology as a more valuable tool for themselves than for their students." Kelly Shapley (2015), Educational Researcher, Shapley Research Associates.

“The net effect”, says Leslie A. Wilson (2015), the chief executive officer of the One-to-One Institute, a nonprofit based in Mason, Mich., that has consulted with hundreds of schools and districts across the country and world, “is that schools rarely realize the full promise of educational technology. There's nothing transformative about every kid having an iPad unless you're able to reach higher-order teaching and learning. If schools take all this technology, and use it like a textbook, or just have teachers show PowerPoint presentations or use drill-and-kill software, they might as well not even have it.”

“Public schools now provide at least one computer for every five students. They spend more than \$3 billion per year on digital content. Nearly three-fourths of high school students now say they regularly use a smartphone or tablet in the classroom. But a mountain of evidence indicates that teachers have been painfully slow to transform the ways they teach, despite that massive influx of new technology into their classrooms. The student-centered, hands-on, personalized instruction envisioned by ed-tech proponents remains the exception to the rule.” Benjamin Herold, Education Week, “Why Ed Tech is not Transforming Teaching” (2015).

“The introduction of computers into schools was supposed to improve academic achievement and alter how teachers taught,” said Stanford University education professor Larry Cuban (2015). “Neither has occurred.”

Andy Hargreaves, the Brennan chair in education at Boston College, suggests, "change in K-12 education typically is instant, short-term, the quick fix. As such, little attention is paid to long-term planning and even less to leadership succession or stability. The change agenda is the leadership agenda and from the very top, both are being mismanaged" (2015).

From the Blog, MIND/SHIFT (KQED) "What Will It Take for iPads to Upend Teaching and Learning?" By Katrina Schwartz. FEBRUARY 13, 2014.

"In visiting a middle school located in an affluent Bay Area suburb in Silicon Valley, now in its third year of piloting iPads to each student, grade by grade, Principal Erik Burmeister has led the effort to help define those amorphous, complex goals (of critical digital pedagogy.) But even with his fairly sophisticated level of knowledge and expertise going into the iPad pilot, Burmeister has no illusions that, at this point, the iPad program is doing more than just "enhancing" classroom learning. That is, it's helping with homework management, organization, and other logistics, but the introduction of the device hasn't yet become transformative, which is his ultimate goal."

The purpose of this paper is not to make projections or proposals to be followed for success, rather to consider the teaching, leadership and/or management issues that likely must be attended in improving this situation: 1. Developing a culture for critical digital pedagogy for use in K12 schools or HE program, 2. The leadership support needed for same, and 3. The sustainability of effort and effect of the leadership for ongoing success.

1. Developing a culture for critical digital pedagogy.

What is critical digital pedagogy? Who decides for teachers... for students.... what that culture will be? Do teachers or students have a voice? What would this culture look like in a classroom? In a school/ HE program? How does critical pedagogy inform the use of digital technology? What is the purpose of technology - for teacher instruction - output - or - for student learning - input? Who decides how much of either or both? How does the decision of how much, what kind, which tech tools, what pedagogic digital/instructional methods will happen in a classroom? What does student use look like? Why do we think these methods will work? Is there any existing research that might inform our process(es)?

2. Leadership Support. What is the leadership role? Who decides - district, school, department? How does the leader determine and establish this culture for critical digital pedagogy? What equipment will be used? What behaviors are required? Where should the leader start? How shall the leader engage the other members of the school/program? What are the most important processes in beginning and developing the culture?

3. Sustainability of effort and effect. How long will this “culture change” take? What do we need to do first? What should we want the effect be? Is there an important affect? How will we know when we reach the first level of success? What will the first level of success look like? Is there a sustainability plan?

What would a sustainability plan look like? What should be sustainable.... what should not? How should we decide what is and isn't sustainable? Who decides? Everyone? The leader?

The ultimate function of success in utilizing critical digital pedagogy to improve student performance is much more likely based on collective processes at the school or department level to answer the above questions. More importantly though may be the consideration and discussion among teachers and leaders regarding the improvement of actual, critical pedagogy in their own classrooms. Fortunately there are educators considering the issues of critical digital pedagogy and how this consideration might inform and improve student learning, thinking, and academic performance.

As Sean Hackney (2015) points out in his article, "Effective Teaching Remix: Answering the Call for Digital Literacy,

"K-12 teachers must make a decision to approach teaching from a perspective of critical pedagogy, as a heuristic to working out their teaching philosophy. Critical pedagogy necessarily introduces students to nuance and complicates dichotomous thinking. In addition, with access to digital technologies that can find and curate different perspectives at the click of a button, it is especially important for students to learn to critically engage multiple points of view. It is the teacher's responsibility to create an environment where the exchange of ideas is productive. I would argue that this is where seeing teaching as an art is crucial. This is messy work...the work of effective critical pedagogues."

Further, Troy Hicks and Kristen Hawley Turner delivered a call to action with their 2013 English Journal article, "No Longer a Luxury: Digital Literacy Can't Wait."

Current teachers need to heed this call. According to Hicks and Turner, “Digital literacy is no longer a luxury, and we simply cannot wait to build the capacity in our students and colleagues, as well as ourselves” (64). We must design our courses to champion “digital literacy, not just technology, in a way that will reconceptualize our discipline” (61) so that our students – and us as a result of practicing this shift – experience the growing benefits of digital literacy. We should hope that most teachers would agree with Hicks and Turner that “we need to have the courage to dump the dittos, throw out the workbooks, and remix our teaching for a digital age” (61).

From a leadership perspective there are some very specific questions to ask of a site staff. Ben Hazard, a principal in Canada offers the following suggestions:

“These questions started as my own reflection as I began a new principal placement at a school

- A. Why are we here (collectively as a school and individually as a professional)?
- B. Why do our efforts matter (impact)? How will we know if we are successful?
- C. Instead of professional learning that is another 'thing', another 'initiative', or another non-negotiable, how will our learning be promoted as part of where we have been, where we are, and where we all want to go?

- 1) What we collectively learn needs to be connected to what our students need to learn. How do we diagnose their needs? How do we prescribe interventions to meet those needs?
- 2) What we collectively learn needs to be connected to our own learning next steps as professionals. How do we diagnose our own individual needs? How do we focus our professional growth to attend those needs?
- 3) What we collectively learn needs to be connected to our curriculum.

- 4) What we collectively learn needs to be connected to the resources we have.
- 5) What we collectively learn needs to be connected to what we share at the next session.
- 6) What we collectively learn needs to be connected to what feedback we provide each other.

That being said,

- 1) How are we going to learn? What is our plan? How often shall we revisit our plan?
- 2) How will we tell our story? Who shall we tell? When/where shall we tell it?
- 3) How will we know that we are having impact? Where/how do we share that data?" (Personal interview, 2015)

Learning is a magical process centered in the learner's brain, not the policymaker's, the administrator's or the teacher's. The learner determines what will be retained, and thus learned, and what will not. No specific policy, curriculum, method, or teacher, can guarantee learning. The educator's job is about finding those methods, opportunities, connections, tools, and topics that are more likely going to engage, provide meaning, connect, or inspire learners to increase their experiences and, hopefully, some academic retention of critical social and intellectual needs.

The process itself is the point, questions not answers, process not product, relationships not knowledge. We must accept the fact that control is an illusion. Education is a about the learner deciding what will be retained, learned.

As Hicks and Turner (2013) conclude:

It is even more difficult to let go of traditional ways of being and doing when we do not totally understand the technology that makes new literacies “new.” Students need—and deserve—for us to catch up quickly, to let go of the past, and to critically examine whether what we do is indeed supporting the development of their digital literacies. Digital literacy is no longer a luxury, and we simply cannot wait to build the capacity in our students and colleagues, as well as ourselves”

The point of this a presentation is not to offer “the Six Ways to Improve Critical Digital Pedagogy and Thus Student Learning.” Suffice to say the presentation is based on the belief that each organized professional educational group of shared focus, e.g. schools, districts, or education departments must answer the important questions themselves. Their decisions regarding pedagogy, technology, and student performance will require shared goals, shared commitments, and regular review of their growth. Unless the professionals themselves ask the important questions about improving critical digital pedagogy and student performance, regardless of tools used, any real success will be fleeting.

In his essay “Self-Realization as the Moral Ideal” (Early Works, 4:50) John Dewey writes, “...if I were asked to name the most needed of all reforms in the spirit of education, I should say: ‘Cease conceiving of education as mere preparation for later life, and make it the full meaning of the present life.’”



As we have our professional discussions let us all remember Dewey's words, let us make the point of education, "the full meaning of the present life."

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