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Role of Technology

In an ideal world, the usage of technology in the classroom would be strictly an educational one. Technology wise, times have changed drastically. Technology is used not only in the classroom but also as a means of entertainment outside of the classroom. In a recent *Nature Valley* commercial, the granola company touches upon an important issue that today’s generation of children face. The advertisement asks three generations the same question, “What did you like to do for fun as a kid?” The two older generations in this advertisement described their childhood fun as playing outside. The commercial opens with a grandmother saying that when she was a child she would pick blueberries outside. When the commercial shifted to the children of this generation and asking them what they like to do for fun, not one of the children answered differently. All of them stated that they like to play video games or play on their iPad. One child even states that he would probably “die” if he did not have technology. Upon hearing this, parents and grandparents were shocked and upset. *Nature Valley* asked a very poignant question and made not only parents and grandparents realize that children today are growing up surrounded by technology.

I think it is important to have a balance with technology, especially in the classroom. In middle school classrooms, pre-teens and teens are already conditioned to constantly check their devices. It is difficult to shut off middle school students from technology for six and a half hours each day. Incorporating technology into a middle school English Language Arts class has the potential to be difficult at times. Since it is an English Language Arts class, reading is a large component of the curriculum. However, there are various ways in which students could utilize technology in a middle school English Language Arts classroom. When used correctly, technology can open numerous opportunities to students in the classroom.

I find myself fortunate enough to have grown up with technology, but not as advanced as technology is today. I find that cell phones, which are essentially small computers in our pockets are a continuous distraction. There is a forever temptation to check our cell phones. I for one, know that I am guilty of this. In the middle school I work in, each student is distributed a Google Chromebook. Teachers will designate when students can use their Chromebooks. Although I’m sure that all middle school teachers would like to believe that all of their students are doing when they should be doing on their Chromebook However, it is difficult to simultaneously teach a class, while being in the back of the classroom monitoring all students computers. Currently, in the middle school classroom, students are addicted to a game known as “Snake,” and yes, it is the same game, reincarnated from the Nokia cell phone.

Twenty-first century skills are a composite of many skills and bodies of knowledge that students are expected to know by the time they leave high school. However, it is not entirely up to high school educators to provide students with all of these twenty-first century skills. Similar to the Common Core Standards, these skills are introduced at the early stages of schooling and carried on through elementary, middle and high school. As the students advance, the depth of the skills advance as well.

Twenty-first century skills that are taught in classrooms today are comprised of academic skills including reading, writing, communication, collaboration and research. Additionally, soft skills are a necessary component in twenty-first century skills that should be taught in schools. These soft skills are made up of life skills such as how you dress and how you are to greet someone. Twenty-first century skills are necessary because they are the skills most relevant and useful to students. Additionally, these skills are useful and applicable universally. Teaching twenty-first century skills reflects the demands placed on the students in the future.

Technology is a fantastic tool to use to help assist in teaching. Instead of the teacher being the only source of information of assistance to the students in the classroom, the students can access school appropriate online resources to aid them. However, it is important to remember that technology is not and will not be the only source in order for students to obtain information. Fortunately, the school curriculum drives the use of technology in the classroom and I truly believe that technology can be a motivator in the classroom. Websites and applications that are readily available to teachers to use in the classroom. Educational games like *Kahoot* are a fun way to engage students, while incorporating educational material. Technology integration in the classroom also allows teachers to connect to students of all various learning styles. As a teacher, technology also gives the educator opportunities to communicate with students.

Students have technology at their fingertips. It is important that technology is used appropriately in the classroom. In terms of technology assisting students to be better students, they have access to many resources. Technology in the classroom assists the teacher to help the students stay better engaged in the lesson, in turn, making them better students. Something even as simple and basic as spellcheck is an extremely helpful tool for students. Additionally, owning a device or having a device on loan from the school gives the students a sense of responsibility. Students are also held accountable for making the right choices in using these devices.