Technology influences nearly every aspect of our global society. As time passes, the reliance on technology seems to be ever increasing. In schools around the world, teachers, administrators, parents, and community members are working diligently to find creative and innovative ways to cater to 21st Century learners. In order to prepare students to compete and succeed in the 21st Century, all stakeholders must unite to work toward a common vision of technology usage in education.

 The presence of technology in schools today is quite evident. There is access to a variety of devices, software, and resources that have the potential to dramatically enhance learning experiences. Expanding the usage of these devices, beyond productivity purposes, to truly enrich student-centered learning is necessary. The ability to bring global experiences into the classroom through technology allows students to build a first-hand, knowledge base through experiences that could not otherwise be facilitated. Through these experiences, students will be engaged in true, student-centered learning. This technology has the potential to facilitate relationship building and collaboration on a global scale. The opportunities and potential for these technology-based resources are endless, harnessing their potential to revolutionize today’s classroom is a process that starts now.

Research suggests that the availability of technology resources in schools promotes the use of collaborative learning, problem-based learning, and a utilization of varied educational resource in addition to boosting creativity (Rakes, 1999). While it is definitively established that technological literacy is a vital component of the educational process, the focus must shift to *how* this will occur. We must define how all stakeholders will contribute to the development and preparation of highly equipped students that are prepared to succeed in the 21st Century. The realization of this vision will take place when the following criteria are met:

* All teachers will utilize a variety of technology resources to facilitate, enhance, and enrich rigorous learning experiences that encourage individual exploration, and allow students to construct knowledge, problem solve, and apply critical thinking skills across a variety of content areas.
* Technology will be consistently utilized to facilitate local, national, and global communication for collaborative, educational, and relational experiences between teachers, students, family members, and community members.
* Teachers and administrators will consistently use technology to collect, analyze, compare interpret, and share student learning data.
* Technological resources are available to all stakeholders (teachers, staff, students, family members, community members, etc. have access to these working resources )
* Training and ongoing support is accessible to all stakeholders. (This encompasses professional development and it extends to preparing and training family and community members to utilize these resources.)
* Various levels of technology leaders are available in each school: Technology Coaches, Teacher Leaders (emphasis on technology), Technical Support
* Ongoing longitudinal research is conducted to evaluate the impact and influence of technology on all stakeholders.

Achieving this vision will require the investment of all stakeholders, working together toward a common goal. Looking from the outside, one might see students engaged in authentic learning experiences that not only require student-driven learning and choice, but facilitate student construction of knowledge. One may see students sharing their learning and experiences with students across the world through technology based communication. One might see teachers engaged in flexible and relevant professional learning experiences that enhance their usage of technology across the curriculum as well as school leaders continuously supporting teachers in their implementation of technology. One might see teachers collaborating with others within their school, district, state, or nation on best practices for infusing technology into the content areas. Related to the other stakeholders, one may see parents and family members involved in a variety of relevant workshops designed to enhance their ability to help their students be more successful in school using technology based resources. Ongoing and varied research is also a vital part of this vision. Knowing quantitatively and qualitatively how the integration of technology is impacting student achievement, attitudes, and beliefs is necessary for continuous evaluation of practices. The impact of this vision, the bigger picture, could not be seen in one glimpse into a school or classroom, but rather in a revolution of highly motivated and successful students ready to succeed in the global society.

Consistent research suggests that the role of technology in education is increasingly important and a necessary component of authentic learning experiences designed for 21st Century learners. According to the Center for Applied Research in Educational Technology (CARET), “Technology improves performance when used in environments where teachers, the school community, and school and district administrators support the use of technology.” State, district, and school leaders must unite all stakeholders with urgency to work together to achieving the vision of true technology integration.

Citations

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