Enthusiastic Teachers About Infusing Technology:
Increasing Teachers’ Use of Technology in the Classroom

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Abstract

For the past decade, our schools have rushed to put computers in the classroom, in preparation for the 21st Century. Millions have been spent as the ratio of students to computers decreased from 125:1 to less than 6:1 in the state of Tennessee alone (Education Week, 1999). Internet connections increased, as school after school gained access to the Information Superhighway. No one offered a dissenting opinion when broad educational statements were made about the new Information Age replacing the Industrial Age, or about the need for technology in the classroom. And now that those computers are in the classroom, how are they being used?

Those struggling the most with this new technology seem to be today’s inservice teachers – all 2.8 million educators in kindergarten through 12th grade – who lack the skills, background, and opportunity to use technology as they should. A call was issued by the Office of Technology Assessment report (1995) for the technology training of teachers to become a national priority. For preservice teachers, technology training did become a priority of sorts: most all teacher education programs now require at least one course in technology in their degree program, some require two.
However, is it possible that only one or two 16-week undergraduate classes, primarily stressing computer competencies, are sufficient to ensure that once the students graduate from the university and find themselves in a classroom they will know how to integrate technology into the curriculum?

Of all the possible barriers to technology use, one that we certainly should address is the lack of adequate training to use technology effectively. Though most inservice teachers see the value of technology, and though most claim at least a novice-level of computer literacy, few are truly prepared to use technology resources in a classroom. Most of the instruction preservice teachers receive is about technology, rather than providing experiences in using and integrating technology into the curriculum. Therefore, when they transition from preservice to inservice teachers, in charge of their own classroom, they feel ill-prepared to make use of a technologically-enriched classroom.

Studies have shown that stand-alone technology courses, such as those taught in most teacher education programs, only develop basic computer literacy skills and do not prepare educators to use instructional technology in the classroom. A survey was completed by 168 teachers within a county school system to assess classroom uses of technology, dividing uses into classroom management (using such skills as taught in literacy courses) and instructional technology (infusion of the technology into the curriculum). Results supported the hypothesis, showing that most teachers were using classroom computers only for management tasks. Strategies for increasing the instructional use of computers in the classroom are discussed.