Educational Technology Philosophy

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As our society has advanced into a dominantly tertiary sector economy (service-based) from primary (agriculture/mining) and secondary (manufacturing) sectors over the years, it has become increasingly apparent that teachers in the 21st century need to prepare their students with skills that are valuable in the business of service. I believe that the concepts introduced by The Partnership for 21st Century Skills advocacy organization sum up such skills perfectly, describing them as: critical thinking, solving complex, multidisciplinary, open-ended problems, creativity and entrepreneurial thinking, communication and collaboration, making innovative use of knowledge, information, and opportunities, and taking charge of financial, health and civic responsibilities (Vockley, 2008). Teaching these skills in conjunction with the use of technology would help prepare my students for more advances in the future and enable them to adapt as needed. As an elementary teacher in the 21st Century, I believe that teaching basic skills across a wide variety of subjects (Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, Science, etc.) is still necessary, but that I should use technologies that are available to me in order to help my students learn, communicate, create, and work together. All of this should be accomplished while sharing ideas and connecting with others to prepare students for success in the future.

I believe that education should be centered on the student with the teacher alongside, guiding and instructing. The responsibility of a teacher should also include being a positive role model who is friendly, but also a respected figure of authority (I would prefer to be a guide or facilitator instead of a strict authoritarian figure). As a Christian, being a model of academic and moral virtue is key, even if faith is not talked about openly; a teacher leads by example. I hope to make a positive impression on my students both as a teacher and as a person by being creative, using varied methods of instruction, and integrating current, relevant technologies to involve each learning style. In this way, the material would be more meaningful to them and I could succeed in motivating them to do well. I would also take on the role of facilitator by helping students to seek the truth for themselves, while also relating to each student honestly and directly in order to create a free, open, and stimulating environment for children. In such an environment there is motivation, but not to the point at which there is an excess of pressure.

By making education a fun, hands-on experience for children, I would hope to instill a love of learning in my students. Emphasizing an understanding of social skills and personal expression would also be beneficial to young children as they progress in their educational career. Technology can be helpful in every one of these areas and in the subjects covered by elementary curriculum with the use of video/photo editing and presentation, production of digital art, long-distance communication, writing programs, internet as a research tool, etc. These can all be used to interact with peers locally or throughout the world. Such tools could certainly be helpful when taking into consideration the many social and cultural differences we experience as a way to understand and connect globally. I would use these as a means to present and illustrate concepts from the required material and my students would also use technology, individually and in varying groups, to demonstrate their skills and, hopefully, come to understand better what is taught. At the elementary level, I would expect that my students could start moving beyond the relatively simple use of these technologies and begin to understand how the software works and how it can be used to interact in personal, business, and educational forums. They can learn how to be creative and use technology to illustrate their ideas and opinions to myself as well as their classmates. My hope is that I would be able to integrate technology seamlessly into the curriculum without it becoming overpowering.

Technology is a part of our every day lives now, and with the seemingly steady increase in the field, it seems that we can only expect it to become more and more integrated into our lives as we advance. While the tools we use now may become outdated and no longer useful, even in the near future, teaching children the basic skills today along with how to be resourceful problem-solvers will make it easy for them to adapt as new technologies are introduced. This is necessary so that my students will eventually be able to use what they have been taught to find a job, which is essentially the ultimate goal in receiving an education. While we do not know what kinds of technologies will be used by that time, many fields today are already heavily invested in technologies – medicine and other sciences, business, the entertainment industry, communications, politics, etc.

Along with all of this instruction in how to succeed in the 21st Century with the use of technology, I feel as though it is a teacher’s job to also teach students how to use such skills and tools in a way that is morally responsible and beneficial to all. Up to this point, I feel as though technology has been thrust on young people with no prior indications of the repercussions that their actions on the internet and how they choose to use technology will have on others. It is in this hi-tech information age that we must also consider instruction on the etiquette involved in the use of technology, hopefully resulting in a new generation of successful, ingenious, digital natives.

Reference

Vockley, M. (2008). *21st century skills, education & competitiveness*. Retrieved from http://p21.org