SWOT Analysis: Educational Technology

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I draw from educational technology experiences as a grade school student in the 90’s and early 2000’s, a college student 2004 to today, and as a resource teacher for the last four years at a K-8 elementary school. It is inspiring to see technology evolve; however at some point over the last five years, it feels as if technology has evolved faster than I have kept up with. Working in an elementary school setting for the last four years, I have seen the students interact with technology in creative and innovate ways that make me realize that there are accessible technologies that I am not familiar with – both in and out of the classroom.

Strengths

One of my greatest strengths is my openness and willingness to learn technology and integrate it into student learning. While introducing technology to students, I can self-talk myself through the anxiety, actively reminding myself that it is “okay” if the session with the technology did not go as planned, and that it may take some time coupled with trial-and-error to figure out how to use particular technologies efficiently for learning objectives with different students. I monitor students to make sure they are on track with the technology without hovering over them. I want to use more technology, even if I am not sure how to go about doing so.

Instruction time with my students is limited to 6 – 8 weeks, for 30-45 minutes two to three times a week. Or, I provide support for particular in-class projects. Of the technology that I make available for my student, it is implemented well. It serves a focused objective and keeps the student engaged. Google Earth is a great application to use with students. It is a common one, but students do not think to use it to accompany learning in the classroom. There is nothing like being able to travel anywhere in the world in under a minute. To practice basic math facts, students use the app “Flash to Pass.” For some students, this is the first thing activity they complete when they enter the classroom. They know to get the iPad, they know which operation to practice and how many items to do, and how
to record their time. Students enjoy competing with themselves. When students can do a certain amount of problems within a given time frame, they can advance forward to the next “level”. Another strength in this situation is that an established routine and expectations are clearly understood.

Other go-to technologies support skill development in reading and math. All the classrooms at my school have a RAZ Kids and Matheletics, which are both comprehensive reading and math web-based accounts. Each program provides content material, documents student work and progress, and can be accessed from any computer or tablet device with Internet connection. Up until this year, we used a multisensory Leaptrack program to develop language arts and math skills. However, the program was created in early 2000s, and many of the pictures and vernacular were too culturally unfamiliar for current students in kindergarten through second grade. Not only did the program work on language and math skill, it gave students the experience of “paying attention” and being focused during an academic activity. It enforced some sense of advocacy because there was a “repeat” button to press when they did not hear the verbal information the first time.

I have attempted to use a few websites and applications, but do not use them regularly. I have used the application Voice, by Adobe to create an electronic visual story with voice over. I use nextvista.org to find educational videos, rather than using YouTube. Kevinhoneycutt.org is a website made by an educator full of links to general education related technology and ideas. For ideas teaching ideas, behavior or classroom management ideas, and more, I go to pinterest.com, teacherspayteachers.com, or educents.com. I have connected with some educators by sharing diigo accounts, an online bookmarking program.

As a college student and professional educator, I am proficient with Blackboard, emails, Microsoft Word, basic PowerPoint creation, and using both Apple and PC computer systems. I am confident in my research skills. Within the last year I have become familiar with Google Docs for doc sharing. I am learning to use Chromebooks. I am learning to use Facebook and twitter as a way to
connect with other professionals and gain access to education profession related organizations. I use the calendar system, to-do list apps, and sticky notes to manage the schedules of the different hats I wear in my life.

Weaknesses

My weaknesses begin with the bit of anxiety I have about using technology, and worrying about if it is a good idea or not to use certain technologies. The school purchased iPads for the resource department that I work for, however I do not know how to use them with students. Perhaps I need to make more time to study technologies in order to feel more comfortable experimenting with it.

I have heard about teachers integrating social media into their curriculums and I would like to learn more about how this is implemented. At my school, there is only talk about how the student misbehavior involving social media. I was shocked to find out there are social media websites I am not familiar with, such as Snap Chat, Vine, and a few others. I come from the generation of MySpace, Facebook, tumblr, and twitter – although I never became too acquainted with tumblr and twitter.

At my school of employment, the Archdiocese highly encourages technology in the classroom while the administration is not pushing strongly for technology and rather constantly reminding teachers of the importance of pencil and pen to paper.

Opportunities

I am the resource coordinator at a Title I school, and so we have a fair stipend of money to spend each year. In previous years, a bulk of the money was invested in fraction calculators, keyboarding technologies, and sensory regulation items however with the integration of Chromebooks for the classrooms, there are monies available for spending. As technology becomes more prevalent, it becomes more affordable and so I should begin my research. The only downside is that the materials cannot be ordered until an allocated time in the year.
There are many free educational websites and applications to take advantage of – some have opportunities to upgrade features for a fee. The wonderful thing about the Internet is the that there are websites dedicated to reviewing products, and so I can find educators’ opinions about different products. Free does not always mean useful, especially when free is often a ploy or advertisement for businesses to reel in customers to purchase products. An article by Kovalik, et al. (2014) explores the integration of free web tools in the classroom. It is helpful to read about each teacher’s intention, implementation, and then finally what worked and didn’t work. What seems to be crucial throughout the article is planning how to engage the students with the technology.

With my strengths I should connect with other educators to see what technologies are being implemented with their students. I should just dive in and organize the implementation of a technology without hesitation. Perhaps I could pace myself and try one or two at a time.

**Threats**

I worry about the vastness and insecurity of the Internet. Although it seems that people can find out any sort of information about anyone in the world, I worry that something can happen that will threaten myself of my students. However, I also worry that so many classrooms out there have progressive teachers implementing technology into my classroom and I fear that my students may be missing out on educational opportunities and experiences that other students have access to. The middle school teachers are moving toward assignments and communication on Google docs, online presentations, website creation, and Google classroom. I may be falling behind and be excluded from the technology evolution in my own school, causing me to be useless in supporting students or participate in curriculum that involves these technologies.
References
