



### *The Technology Question*

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Technology is a necessary evil. While it is quickly ruining the social skills of the world, over the past twenty-five years more advances in medical, information, assistive, and instructional technology have been made than in the past one hundred. Not only is it easier, but technology is more accessible, more all encompassing, and more student-friendly. Does it hinder student engagement? Only if you let it. The challenge for teachers is to accept that technology can be used far easier as a tool than an encumbrance, and may actually engage students more than the traditional pen and paper trick.

By grade twelve, students are taking courses because they want or need to take them for personal goals, not because it's a graduation requirement. This means that their attention span has the opportunity to absorb information, or disengage entirely. In Principles of Math 12, a student often comes across the opportunity to watch their teacher struggle to draw a perfect graph on the whiteboard, or tune out with their iPod whilst they wait; most often forgetting to tune back in when said teacher has finally gotten the graph right. However, with the use of a technology-friendly SMART Board, a student has no chance to let their mind wander, as a graph can be drawn, translated across the y-axis, horizontally compressed by a factor of three, and reflected over a line where  $x = 2y$  in a matter of seconds. Every equation, every execution is shown perfectly and accurately while students remain focused, their education easily accessible by a touch of a few buttons. Plus, the teacher can be pleased with a class that remains engaged.

There is an old Chinese proverb that says, "Tell me, and I'll forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I'll understand." It's all well and good to have a teacher utilize technology as a teaching tool, and expect success in doing so. Nonetheless, more can be accomplished by allowing students the chance to actually make use of technology themselves. Around sixty percent of students are kinesthetic learners; people who learn best by participation and "hands on" work. Therefore, it can be ascertained that by allowing students to dabble with technology in projects and classroom work, they may actually be more successful, and absorb more knowledge. This can be done in virtually any class, even one traditionally suited for visual and auditory learners, such as English. Repeatedly asking a student to answer questions responding to a poem, short story, or lecture is not only tedious and mundane, but can become daunting and discouraging for many. On the other hand, assigning a project that involves PowerPoint or video presentation not only allows students to explore their creativity and cuts kinesthetic learners a break, but also forces those audio/visual learners out of their comfort zones, expanding prospects and horizons for everyone.

Of course, as with anything, technology can be taken too far. Less and less youth of today know how to do basic math without a calculator, and a startling number can only read digital clocks. Technological advancements such as email and texting are deteriorating not only spelling and grammar skills, but weakening students' social competence, making a world where communication is easier than ever a socially challenged planet. The trick is in balancing both: technology and humanity. Both are important, and both are essential to the human races' progression. Starting with the minds that are influential and flexible, the challenge for teachers is not so much to accept and utilize technology, but to teach students how to understand the necessities of the world.

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Is there a place for technology in every setting? No. Should society throw out its books and replace shopkeepers for robots? Definitely not. There is as much a spot for newspaper clippings and encyclopedias as there is for the internet and online banking. Technology, such as life, is all about choices. It is all about learning a balance. There are ways to abuse it, and there are ways to utilize it. In a world where cars can run on electricity, a cellular device is used more often as a GPS than a phone, and a touch-screen computer can ring through your groceries at the supermarket, it is amazing that technology is still not employed as widely as it could be in schools across the nation. If high school is about giving students the skills and education to live and participate in the real world, then shouldn't it be keeping up with mankind? Yes, there will always be the student who uses computer time to play Tetris, or group discussion periods to text friends in other classes, but there are also the students who make the most of the opportunity to utilize what is quickly becoming the young people's expertise: technology.

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