Jennifer Irazabal

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**Technology for Learners Reflection**

Technology for Learners is a class that every teacher should be required to take as part of a teacher preparation program. Integrating technology in the classroom can benefit the entire class when used appropriately. Unfortunately, many teachers are unaware of, skeptical, or uncomfortable using technology. Not taking advantage of technology is a missed opportunity and a serious disadvantage to students. Prior to taking this course, I considered myself technology savvy and felt I had the knowledge that I needed to integrate technology in my classroom. I soon realized that I did not have the immense knowledge that I thought I had. Each day I was introduced to at least one, if not several, technology resources. No single person could ever know of every resource out there. Technology is dynamic and changing on a constant basis. Technology allows us to communicate with others outside of our own personal network and obtain countless resources that we would have otherwise been unaware of.

Technology can engage students and keep them on task. Technology can reach students that could not be reached previously. Technology can give students with special needs the opportunity to participate and contribute in a regular education classroom. Assistive technology can give non-verbal students a “voice”. It can allow students who cannot read the chance to participate and hear directions or stories audibly. Without this course, I would not be prepared to handle these special circumstances. Our class trip to NEAT was eye-opening. It was bittersweet because it was awesome to see the technology that is available, but it was disheartening that many teachers, schools, districts, and families were either unaware of what was available to them or they simply did not have the funds to obtain the assistive technology they need.

I also learned that integrating technology is only part of the process. As educators, we need to teach our students about becoming responsible digital citizens, and this needs to start young. The average age that children are first exposed to using technology is 3 ½ years old! If we do not start teaching our children about digital citizenship at a young age, the results would be the same as if we had our children start playing a game and then started giving them some rules as they were playing. That just doesn’t make sense. You can’t successfully play a game without the rules, so how can we expect our children to be responsible digital citizens if we do not first teach them the concepts of digital citizenship?

At the beginning of this course, I thought of technology for learners as computers. I really wasn’t aware of the multitude of things technology in the classroom could be. With the semester coming to an end, I’m leaving with numerous resources and a much more comprehensive understanding of digital citizenship and its importance both inside and outside of the classroom. I also feel as though I am going to miss out on more information and resources after the class concludes. Technology is changing so rapidly that we must make an effort to stay up to date with new technologies. I would encourage schools to offer more professional development to their teachers regarding technology in the classroom. If this isn’t possible, I would urge teachers to find other ways to stay informed.