Chapter IV

Teaching in the Digital Age: “Teaching as You Were Taught” Won’t Work

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INTRODUCTION

Playing school. It’s a part of childhood. Children don’t have to be taught to do it; they just do it. The pretend “teacher” gathers her pretend “students” in the basement, on the back porch, or on the school playground and they reenact what they know so well. Some of those “pretend” teachers grow up to be “real” teachers, and they continue to reenact what they know so well—models of teaching and learning that have predominated in the United States for nearly a century. For years that worked, but it won’t work now. Teachers can no longer look backward for models of teaching; the digital age demands that they look forward and create new models.

A year 2000 survey by the National Center for Education Statistics found that only one teacher in ten felt “very well prepared” to integrate technology into his/her classroom (Teacher Use of Computers and the Internet in Public Schools, 2000). Teachers typically respond to this lack of preparation in one of three ways. First, many teachers simply ignore the technology. Nearly 40% of teachers surveyed said their students don’t use computers at all (Trotter, 1999). A second response is to “play school” with the technology, reenacting old models of teaching that don’t take advantage of the capabilities of
technology to help students learn in new ways. A third response is to look forward and create new models of teaching and learning. Unfortunately, this is an uncommon response, not because of teacher incompetence, but because of a system that does not encourage or reward such risk-taking.

**A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPROVEMENT**

In order to teach effectively in the digital age, teachers must realize that “teaching as you were taught” will no longer work. We believe that teachers will come to this realization when faced with three things: (1) research, (2) instructional models, and (3) success stories. We are creating all three in the Ameritech Electronic University School Classroom at Kent State University. The purpose of this chapter is to share our research, success stories, and instructional model with you as a scaffold to help you look forward and create your own new models of teaching and learning.

**Ameritech Electronic University School Classroom**

The Ameritech Classroom opened in Spring 1998 and is housed in the newly renovated Moulton Hall at Kent State University. The purpose of the Classroom is to provide a technology-based classroom for K-12 students and a research laboratory for college faculty and education majors. The Classroom is comprised of an observation room and two classrooms, each equipped with up-to-date computers, AMX integrated systems, extensive peripherals, and a support team. The Classroom is “school” for students for a half day, every day as they complete six to twelve week units of study. The teachers choose which instructional units they will teach within the Classroom. Most units reflect an interdisciplinary examination of a particular K-12 curricular topic.

Researchers in the one-of-a-kind, attached observation room study the impact of technology on teaching and learning. Their findings are shared widely with educators, legislators, and pre-service teachers so that the lessons learned can benefit large numbers of teachers and students. We anticipate that the understandings generated by this exciting classroom concept will contribute greatly to the development of technology-based knowledge and skills that will be of value in meeting the educational needs of our nation’s children.

*Research.* The research agenda for the Ameritech Classroom was established by a statewide (Ohio) network of researchers who determined that the questions below must be examined in order to fill gaps that currently exist in research regarding the impact of technology on teaching and learning.
Student Decision Making in Technology Application
www.igi-global.com/chapter/student-decision-making-technology-application/20786?camid=4v1a