36 Articles on How to Put Technology into Your Classroom

From

Ask a Tech Teacher

36 Articles on How to Put Technology into Your Classroom

By Ask a Tech Teacher

2014

Visit the companion website at [http://askatechteacher.com©](http://askatechteacher.com) for more resources to teach K-12 technology

To receive free technology tips and websites, click here

ALL MATERIAL IN THIS EBOOK IS PROTECTED BY THE INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY LAWS OF THE USA.

No part of this work can be reproduced or used in any form or by any means—graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage and retrieval systems—without the prior written permission of the publisher

For permission to use material from this text or product, contact us by email at:
info@structuredlearning.net
structuredlearning.net

Printed in the United States of America by Structured Learning LLC

© 2008 Structured Learning LLC. All Rights Reserved

Introduction

Technology has become synonymous with education reform. Like starter on a barbeque, squirt around enough iPads and digital tools and classes start to sizzle.

Everyone agrees it's a transformative tool, but there's little consensus on how to integrate it into a curriculum. Endless conversation. Spirited debate. An impressive number of pilot programs and great ideas all with decidedly mixed results.

When Common Core State Standards arrived in classrooms across the nation, debate had to end and action begin. Consider these tech-centric Standards spread throughout K-8 strands (truncated for brevity):

- *Expect students to demonstrate sufficient command of **keyboarding** to type a minimum of one page [two by fifth grade] in a single sitting*
- *Expect students to **evaluate different media** (e.g., print or digital …)*
- *Expect students to **gather relevant information** from print and digital sources*
- *Expect students to integrate and evaluate **information presented in diverse media** and formats*
- *Expect students to **interpret information** presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., … interactive elements on Web pages)*
- *Expect students to make **strategic use of digital media***
- *Expect students to use **glossaries or dictionaries, both print and digital** …*
- *Expect students to use information from **illustrations and words in print or digital** text*
- *Expect students to use a **variety of media** in communicating ideas*
- *Expect students to **use technology** and digital media strategically and capably*
- *Expect students to **use text features and search tools** (e.g., key words, sidebars, **hyperlinks**) to locate information*

…and this Common Core note:

> ***New technologies** have broadened and expanded the role that speaking and listening play in acquiring and sharing knowledge and have tightened their link to other forms of communication. **Digital texts** confront students with the potential for continually updated content and dynamically changing combinations of words, graphics, images, **hyperlinks**, **and embedded** video and audio.*

The underlying theme can't be ignored: A 21st Century learner requires technologic proficiency. The problem: Many teachers either don't understand tech or aren't clear on its place in their classroom. Sure, it's all around them, their colleagues use it, but often it seems more a knee-jerk reaction—to show the school is modern and cutting edge. But in private, alone at night, teachers whisper questions like, "Is it authentic? Rigorous? Or busy work? "

Here are 36 articles to demystify tech for you, so when colleagues and/or Admin bring up issues, you can respond with confidence.

Companion Website

Questions? Visit the author website at Ask a Tech Teacher. Find answers to questions about technology in education, pedagogy, free stuff. When should you start teaching keyboarding? How do you introduce computers to kindergarteners? What do you do when students know more than parents (or teachers)?

Come on over.

License

If you purchased this ebook, you have a single-user license. To reproduce this book for an entire class, school or district, please contact the publisher for a multi-user license.

About the Author

Ask a Tech Teacher *is a group of technology teachers who run an award-winning resource* ***blog*** *where they provide free materials, advice, lesson plans, pedagogic conversation, website reviews, and more to all who drop by. The free newsletters and website articles help thousands of teachers, homeschoolers, and those serious about finding the best way to maneuver the minefields of technology in education.*

About the Publisher

Structured Learning *is the premier provider of technology instruction books and ebooks to education professionals including curricula, how-to guides, theme-based books, and one-of-a-kind online help—all to fulfill the tech demands of the 21st century classroom. Materials are classroom-tested, teacher-approved with easy-to-understand directions supported by online materials, websites, blogs, and wikis. Whether you are a new teacher wanting to do it right or a veteran educator looking for updated materials,* ***Structured Learning*** *and its team of technology teachers is here to assist.*

Table of Contents

Professional Development

5 Must-have Skills for New Tech Teachers—Plus One More
These 5 skills plus one will make thriving with technology work oh so much better.

5 Must-have tools for Ed Conferences
There's no better place to break in new technology than an education conference. Here are five tools you'll want to include.

5 Tech Ed Tools to Learn This Summer
Bring your laptop to the local hotspot and try five new tools to change your class.

BYOD—the lowdown
If you're considering a BYOD program, here's what you should know.

New Literacies Enable Smarter Researching
New literacies—the ones that rhyme with 'technology'.

Should Tech Teachers be in the Class or Lab
Tech teachers are struggling with their future: Should they teach skills or integrate technology into class inquiry?

The Elephantine Impact of Technology on Education
Have you noticed what's happening in your child's school? It's called 'technology' and it's taking over.

8 Education Tools That Are Going Away
Technology is forcing out what we consider cornerstones of education. Here are eight that will disappear… soon.

In the Classroom

11 Things to Love About Common Core
As you acclimate to Common Core, you'll find reasons to be thrilled they are part of education. These are the top eleven.

7 Ways Common Core Will Change Your Classroom
Here are 7 of the most dramatic shifts effected by Common Core.

Common Core wants publishing. Tech makes it happen
The world of student work being shared with the teacher only—maybe hung on

the classroom wall for a few weeks—is over. Common Core expects it to be published so all can benefit.

5 Sure-fire Ways to Teach Vocabulary

Common Core moves vocabulary from a weekly class to a constant theme, woven throughout inquiry. Here's how you make that happen.

5 New Web Tools for School

You don't have to know all 2,878 (and counting) tech tools Early Education Adopters use. You just need to know five.

Time to Toss Binders

3-ring binders—the mainstay of education—have been replaced. By what, you ask? Read on.

What's a Digital Portfolio and Why Should You Use it?

In a nutshell, it's a locker in the cloud that can be accessed from anywhere. And that is why you should use it. Need more detail? Read this article.

20 Tech Problems Teachers Need to Know How to Solve

80% of the tech problems you face in class are from the same 20 problems. I'll share those and how to solve them.

10 Things a Blog Taught Me

The more I blog, the happier I am that I blog. It's not about social media; it's about writing skills, speaking and listening, and much more.

13 Reasons to Tweet in Class

Want Twitter in your class? Here's ammunition for what often turns into a pitched, verbal brawl among stakeholders on using Twitter

12 Tips on Hard-to-teach Classes

The Hard-to-teach Class, one that makes you reconsider your academic career. You're willing, but how do you do you teach these oft-brilliant students?

7 Great Tech Tools that Differentiate Learning

Technology can optimize learning better than any other educational strategy. Here are 7 tools to make that happen.

Be an Inquiry-based Teacher

11 traits shared by inquiry-based teachers. Does it describe you?

Teach Inquiry based Classes

In inquiry-based classes, teaching is more about process than product. The doing, not the test. It's what you'd hoped to do when you started your career. How do you make it happen?

17 K-8 DigCit Topics

Using the internet safely and effectively must be taught. Here's how to do that.

Is Keyboarding Dead?

Is keyboarding the cornerstone of Common Core Standards—or is it dead? You decide.

When is Typing Faster Than Handwriting?

Most elementary-age students are better at handwriting than typing, but at some point, that changes. When is that?

How to Use iPads in Class

If you're planning to introduce iPads to your Elementary-age students, here's a lesson plan for you.

The Tablet's 'Killer App'

Kids love tablets. It doesn't matter they won't run most software, don't have USB ports, have no flash, allow little storage, and can't print (with ease). So, you ask, why? There's one great reason.

Will Texting Destroy Writing Skills?

Trying to separate students from their smartphones for eight hours is a nightmare. Is this a battle worth fighting or is it a tempest in a teapot?

5 Digital Tools for the No Budget Class

Here are 5 freebies that will make a difference in your class.

Minecraft In school

Using programs students love—like Minecraft, SimCity, Hunger Games—makes learning fun, authentic and rigorous. Have you gamified your class?

7 Digital Ways to End the School Year

What better way to grab the end-of-school attention of tech-loving students than a tech-centric project. Here are 7 you'll love.

14 Educational Websites Students Will Ask to Visit

These are perfect for a summer program, summer homework, but also to inject tech into inquiry in authentic, rigorous ways.

5 Digital Tools Parents Love

Getting parents on speaking terms with their child's tech needs is difficult. Here are five tools that make this easier.

Personal

13 Tips To Speed Up Your Computer

Treat your computer like a car. Every few months, do preventive maintenance to be sure it's in tip top shape.

A Virtual Oil Change for your Online Presence

For most teachers, life zooms by with few breaks to clean up the clutter of their everyday online presence. Like updating where we work, what awards we've received, who our latest boss is—who has the time? You do. Now.

Yes, I'm Resilient, and I Wish Computers Were

I hate to think about the many times I've had to adapt because the tech I wanted to use in class didn't work. It's no one's fault, but it sure makes me tired.

5 Must-have Skills for New Teachers—Plus One More

If you teach technology, it's likely you were thrown into it by your Admin. You used to be a first grade teacher or the science expert or maybe even the librarian and suddenly, you walked into school one day and found out you'd become that tech person down the hall you were always in awe of, the one responsible for classroom computers, programs, curriculum, and everything in between. Now that's you—the go-to person for tech problems, computer quirks, crashes and freezes, and tech tie-ins for classroom inquiry.

You have no idea where to begin.

Here's a peek into your future: On that first propitious day, everything will change. Your colleagues will assume you received a data upload of the answers to every techie question. It doesn't matter that yesterday, you were one of them. Now, you will be on a pedestal, colleague's necks craned upward as they ask , *How do I get the Smartscreen to work?* or *We need microphones for a lesson I'm starting in three minutes. Can you please-please-please fix them?* You will nod your head, smile woodenly, and race to your classroom for the digital manuals (if you're lucky) or Google for online help.

Let me start by saying: Don't worry. Really. You'll learn by doing, just as we teach students. Take a deep breath, engage your brain, and let your brilliance shine.

That's the number one skill—confidence—but there are a five other practical strategies that have worked for those who came before you. Consider:

Be a communicator

Talk to grade-level teachers weekly. Scaffold your lessons with what they teach. Ask them to stay during tech class and offer on-the-spot tie-ins between what you teach and they say in class. Yes, they might want/need the time for planning or meetings, but the benefit to students of this team-teaching approach is tremendous. And it benefits the teachers, also. Many of them are not yet sold on integrating tech into their classrooms. They know they must if they're in one of the 46 Common Core adoptive states, but they don't like it, don't know how to do it, and don't see why it's so important. When they see you do it, they will be more willing to weave it into their lessons. For example, when they hear how you reinforce good keyboarding skills, they will be more likely to insist on those traits in their classroom.

Be a risk-taker

Flaunt your cheeky geekiness. Start a Twitter feed. Use your iPhone as a timer for a speed test or the iPad to scan in an art project for a digital portfolio. At any opportunity, share your geek glee with students. Let them see that tech is part of life, not a subject taught in school. It's a habit, a time-saver, a facilitator, a joy. It won't take long to convert them. A couple of admiring glances from friends or appreciative thanks from parents and they'll be sold.

Be an explorer

Go to the grade-level classrooms and demonstrate how technology is part of learning. This can be via iPads, the class pod of computers, the netbooks, or whatever is available. Ask students what they are doing in class and offer tech methods to make it easier. For example, are they submitting homework in a pile on the teacher's desk? Try a drop box—or email. Could they type reports instead of handwrite them (I know—this gets philosophic, so be prepared for that discussion)? Instead of hand-drawn posters where success leans toward the artistically-talented, could they use Glogster? Encourage students to plug in during class.

Be a negotiator

You need parental buy-in on tech ed, but it is a topic typically outside their comfort zone. I often hear from 2nd grade parents that their children know more than they do (I'm talking MS Office, internet use, and some online tools). Understand that this frightens them and part of your job is to mitigate their fears. Here are some ideas:

- Have your door always open. Be ready and willing to talk with them about how to complete their child's projects—not so they can do for them, but so they feel it is within their child's grasp. Take as long as needed and welcome them to return.
- Answer parent tech questions, even if it's about a home computer problem. My experience is these are often simple, but intimidating. If you mitigate fear, you maximize support for tech ed.
- Offer a parent class that teaches the skills students are learning. Listen to your group. What makes these intelligent adults nervous about tech? Solve it for them. I often start with an agenda and end with a free-for-all, where I answer questions or help parents create fliers for soccer teams or solve home-based tech problems. It's all good. They leave feeling I'm a partner.

Don't take life too seriously

Have a sense of humor about everything. You're going to have computer meltdowns. It's why robots can't replace teachers, so embrace chaos. One of the true joys of tech is the puzzling. Why doesn't the mouse work? Why does a website work on one computer and not another? Where'd the taskbar go? Let students see how much fun it is to engage the brain.

That's it, just these five skills plus one. Any questions? Add a comment if you agree.

BYOD—the lowdown

In 2010, 'BYOD' officially entered the national lexicon with this pronouncement in the National Education Technology Plan:

Only with 24/7 access to the Internet via devices and technology-based software and resources can we achieve the kind of engagement, student-centered learning, and assessment that can improve learning in the ways this plan proposes. In addition, these devices may be owned by the student or family, owned by the school, or some combination of the two.

BYOD—Bring Your Own Device—one of the cutting edge tools available to schools. Rather than investing in schoolwide iPads or laptops or Chromebooks, everyone brings their own digital device. Sure, the school must make available some devices for students who don't own one, but that's a fraction of the investment in funds, training, and technology normally required without a BYOD program. With students bringing their own favorite digital device, students get to use the device they're already comfortable with, one that is easily transferred to home use (which encourages its use for homework and projects). Suddenly, lots of activities that weren't possible before become a reality. Like:

- *digital note-taking via Evernote*
- *sharing and collaborating via GAFE*
- *use of backchannel devices like Today's Meet*
- *feedback via Twitter (for age-appropriate students) and/or blogs*
- *answer to questions not in subject-provided material, outside the curriculum scope of but not the student curiosity*

If you're considering a BYOD program, here's what you should think about:

Your unique infrastructure

Does the school's physical infrastructure support the addition of hundreds—or thousands—more devices to your network? That's not only bandwidth, but hot spots for Wi-Fi. Know ahead of time what your network will handle so you can be prepared.

What about personnel infrastructure—faculty and staff? Students will want to use their extra computing power. Does faculty know what to do with this extra computing power? Do they require professional development to make this happen? What about teachers who don't support this digital expansion—they're used to traditional books-pen-paper. Be prepared to help them overcome old habits and find the bright future in these changes.

Decide if school resources will be used for printing and saving from student devices or will students save and print to their own device or the cloud.

Finally, will students be allowed to charge devices at school? Doesn't sound like a problem? What if lots of students come to school expecting to charge devices prior to class? Are there enough outlets? You might decide to allow charging only at home (adjusted in emergencies).

Appropriate use

'Appropriate use' is no different than with school-provided devices. Establish an Acceptable Use and Electronic Devices Policy for digital devices—whether these are school- or student-owned. Students must adhere to the policy. When students use technology inappropriately while on the school network, the same consequences apply, regardless of who owns the device.

Determine consequences of violating policies. Reserve the right to inspect student personal devices if you believe the student violated policies. Examples of inappropriate use include:

- *student bypasses the school Guest network to use a personal network.*
- *student records a video without the permission of the teacher or stakeholders.*
- *student takes pictures of other students and sends them electronically to friends without approval.*
- *student uses device for non-school, non-approved activities.*

Student concerns

Are students ready for the leap to all-things-digital? Some students are perfectly happy with pen-and-paper, not at all interested in moving to a digital delivery of education. How are you going to accommodate them as they stretch outside their comfort zone?

What about students who find digital devices distracting? Their own, but also those of classmates? How are you going to be sure these are a tool of learning, not play?

Privacy

To protect privacy among a myriad of devices, require that students use the school's Guest wireless network. Use of their own service bypasses the security filter. This makes it impossible for the school to enforce both the District Acceptable Use Policy and the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). Both of these require all network access be filtered regardless of the device that is used to access it while in a public school. While students own the device, the network they are using belongs to the school, so Internet access must be filtered

Equity

Insuring that all students have access to digital devices—even if they don't have a personal one—is easily solved by the school having overflow digital devices for use by students who either don't

have one at home or whose personal device isn't available/working a particular day. To determine what that number is likely to be, survey your student body prior to rolling out the program. Find out what digital devices they use and how many will require school-supplied devices.

Responsibility for Device

Your school cannot be held responsible if a student's personal digital device is lost, stolen or misplaced. Recommend that students enable the device locator, a password, and/or a thumbprint requirement if possible.

Make a decision about how much help your IT staff will provide students when they have difficulties. Will they assist with connectivity to the school's network? Will they get programs on student device to work? Or will this be the responsibility of the student, their parents and friends?

Interestingly enough, schools using a BYOD program find that students take better care of the digital devices because they own them.

Parent involvement

The importance of parent support for BYOD programs cannot be over-emphasized. Include parents in planning.

Baseline for Digital Devices

Baseline expectations should include:

- *which operating system is allowed—Windows, Mac, Linux*
- *which digital devices are acceptable. Does it include tablet computing (like iPads) or must they be full computers? What about smart phones?*
- *device must be capable of wireless access. No Ethernet cable plug-ins!*
- *current virus protection required.*
- *student is responsible for their own device. If it's lost or damaged, that is student responsibility, not school*
- *each student must sign the acceptable use policy, outlining the correct way to use home digital devices in the educational environment*

Pros of BYOD Programs

- Provides personalization in student education, encourages flexibility & self-directed learning, provides a bridge between formal and informal learning
- Offers potential for increased learning
- Encourages parental engagement
- Benefits staff productivity and efficiency

- Encourages the initiation of problem solving by students because they are using a tech device they own and understand
- Extends learning opportunities to wherever and whenever students have the time and inclination
- Differentiates for student learning style. One student can use text while another uses art—it's much easier when all the tech is in one place

Cons of BYOD Programs

- Consider potential security risks via personal, unmanaged devices that connect to a managed network
- Consider safety issues, theft in or on the way to/from school, breakages and insurance needs
- Address equity issues–how to support learners without a device
- Balance pedagogical benefits versus potential classroom distractions.
- Determine the best way to support educators and encourage responsible learning behaviors (avoiding "bring your own distraction")
- Determine how to balance the different options available on different devices
- Determine school's LAN and broadband capacity–multiple devices and applications being used simultaneously may place a significant load on institutional networks and broadband connections
- Understand power management and re-charging considerations
- Determine how to insure privacy, especially considering that devices with 3G/4G capability can bypass school networks

When you consider the pros and cons, keep in mind that a 1:1 digital environment is the future. Within a short time, all students will use technology to shape their educational future. The only question is, what will that technologic world look like?

8 Education Tools That Are Going Away

If you don't have children, you may not have noticed the massive changes going on in how students learn. Where adults are struggling with adjusting to the onslaught of technology in their lives, hoping to slowly inch their way into its use, students have no such luxury. Every year, there are new iPads, apps, online grading systems, a teacher website they have to visit every day for homework. As a teacher for twenty five years (the last fifteen in technology), it has my head spinning.

But students don't mind a wit. They're ready, wondering what's taking us so long to use the tools they can't get enough of at home.

For every tool added, one that has been a mainstay of education for decades must disappear. Here are eight that you should wave goodbye to because within the next ten years, they'll be gone:

Books

Do you remember when you used to have a textbook for every subject. When it was social studies time, you pulled the textbook out and followed along chapter-by-chapter, hoping to finish by the end of the year? Not anymore. Now, teachers use a variety of multimedia materials, rarely as mundane as a text with pictures. Now, history comes alive with primary source audio and video, simulations of events, and games that reinforce math and science.

Textbooks—if not already in your school—will soon be all digital. Not only does that eliminate overstuffed backpacks, lost and forgotten book, they're lighter and highly portable wherever students are likely to end up for studying. Plus, digital books are usually interactive, including links to movies, animations, and other multimedia that teaches students in ways they learn better. Even literature is read on ereaders rather than checked out of the library.

Pencils

Pencils have been the mainstay of the classroom for decades. Teacher kept cups full of them, nicely sharpened, available for students who forgot theirs. Now, all those reasons that made pencils irreplaceable are disappearing. Tests are as likely to be taken online with a keyboard as

by passing out paper. If there are tests at all. Assessment is as likely to be by a project, a presentation, or anecdotal observation of student work. Notes are often taken with Evernote or OneNote (Or Google Apps for sharing with classmates) on a netbook, iPad, or laptop. Notes to the teachers are via email or a shared document through Google Docs. If by chance, a pencil is required, students probably have a mechanical one.

Chalkboard

Blackboards gave way to whiteboards, and now, those have been replaced by Smartscreens. They're interactive, touch-sensitive, can be saved or erased with a touch.

And there's no chalk dust.

Face it. When was the last time you saw a chalkboard?

Teaching from the Front of the Class

The traditional classroom with neat rows of desks pertly facing forward, the teacher occupying pride of place at the front as s/he pontificates Important Information, is dated. Chairs are now collected in inward-facing tables circles, the teacher weaving her way through student groups collaborating on projects—sometimes on the same topic, usually self-directed and self-paced . Teachers are now coaches, mentors, guides, part of educations new 'flexible learning paths', responsible not for dispensing of knowledge but differentiating for each students unique learning style.

This is nowhere more apparent than the growing interest in online classes. It's not just in college anymore. Now, students can go to accredited K-12 schools online, never setting foot into a classroom with a teacher marching along the front. Online classes have changed over the past decade, adding tools like screen-sharing, online group collaboration (like Google Hangouts), multimedia (like audio and video) on demand, 24/7 availability, never the worry of losing homework or assignments. Once they can offer 3D and holograms, there'll be no reason to enter a school building.

Technology-free Class

Common Core has stuck a fork in this one. If teachers were clinging gamely to the hope that they could retire before being forced to add tech to their classrooms, they just lost that race. The new Common Core Standards mention 'technology in the classroom' and 'digital devices' at least twenty-seven times I counted as tools for accomplishing the goals of college and career.

Technology is required for all the significant K-8 goals, including publishing, sharing, constructing knowledge, deep learning, close reading. Consider these (truncated for brevity):

- *Expect students to demonstrate sufficient command of **keyboarding** to type a minimum of one page [two by fifth grade] in a single sitting*
- *Expect students to **evaluate different media** (e.g., print or digital …)*
- *Expect students to **gather relevant information** from print and digital sources*
- *Expect students to integrate and evaluate **information presented in diverse media** and formats*
- *Expect students to **interpret information** presented visually, orally, or quantitatively (e.g., … interactive elements on Web pages)*
- *Expect students to make **strategic use of digital media***
- *Expect students to use **glossaries or dictionaries, both print and digital** …*
- *Expect students to use information from **illustrations and words in print or digital** text*
- *Expect students to use a **variety of media** in communicating ideas*
- *Expect students to **use technology** and digital media strategically and capably*
- *Expect students to **use text features and search tools** (e.g., key words, sidebars, **hyperlinks**) to locate information*

…and this Common Core note:

***New technologies** have broadened and expanded the role that speaking and listening play in acquiring and sharing knowledge and have tightened their link to other forms of communication. **Digital texts** confront students with the potential for continually updated content and dynamically changing combinations of words, graphics, images, **hyperlinks**, **and embedded** video and audio.*

The underlying theme can't be ignored: A 21st Century learner requires technologic proficiency. Final proof is that Common Core summative assessments will be completed online—only possible if students use technology as comfortably as paper and pencil to demonstrate knowledge.

By the same token, parents who want to shield their children from technology are losing their battle. It used to be acceptable to not want your student to use the internet for research or online work, but now, that is no longer an option. As much as teachers must change, so must parents.

Memorizing

Memorizing state capitals is so yesterday. Now, students know where to find the answers they need using strategies like online websites, tools like Google Earth. It's not enough to *know* an

answer—the student must provide evidence and sources. Critical thinking is as likely to be evaluated as that the student can rattle off 50 capitals.

Teacher as expert

Teachers are no longer the last word in any discussion. Now, teachers are coaches. They prod students to understand material, figure out the logic, solve problems. The buzz word is 'inquiry'—students learn a little, get curious, ask questions. Student interest drives the class. The teacher has a general syllabus, but s/he is tuned into student needs and interests, listens to what catches their attention, then expects students to seek out answers, experiment.

This plays right into another major shift in education, that being collaboration. Look at the growth of Personal Learning Networks, face-to-face meetings like Google Hangouts, forums, and group chats. The importance of peer-to-peer is replacing working alone. The firestorm of dread and worry over social media is not going to stop it. Students are rushing ever-more-quickly that direction, no matter how we try to scare them away. We as teachers might as well teach kids the way they want to learn rather than stick our finger in a failing dam.

Cursive

This one's going to get me into trouble, but please—don't kill the messenger! It's not my fault that cursive is finding less and less utility in the modern classroom. There's a reason Common Core never mentions the word 'cursive', yet keyboarding is critical. By middle school, students use keyboards (much) more often than handwriting. Sure, there are things that will always require handwriting (I used to say checks, but those are going away, too, so let’s say notes from parents), but how much time should teachers spend preparing students for those rare events?

That's eight trends that will no longer be part of a student's life. I bet you can come up with a few more.

11 Things I Love About Common Core

America's first public school opened in the mid-1600's to only a handful of cerebrally-thirsty students. Most colonists agreed education should be done at home, not in a one-size-fits-all schoolhouse. Even in the late 1700's after John Adams famously pronounced, "There should not be a district ... without a school in it, not founded by a charitable individual, but maintained at the public expense ...", it took until 1918 before all children were mandated to attend public schools.

Even then, no one agreed on what students would be taught. To misquote William Butler Yeats, *often it was more about filling the pail than lighting the candle.* Today, over 3 million teachers and 99,000 public schools educate the almost 50 million schoolage American children at a cost to the taxpayer of over $590 million—but here's the kicker: lessons are delivered in accordance with 50 separate state education standards. No wonder we struggle to be even 'average' on the world academic stage.

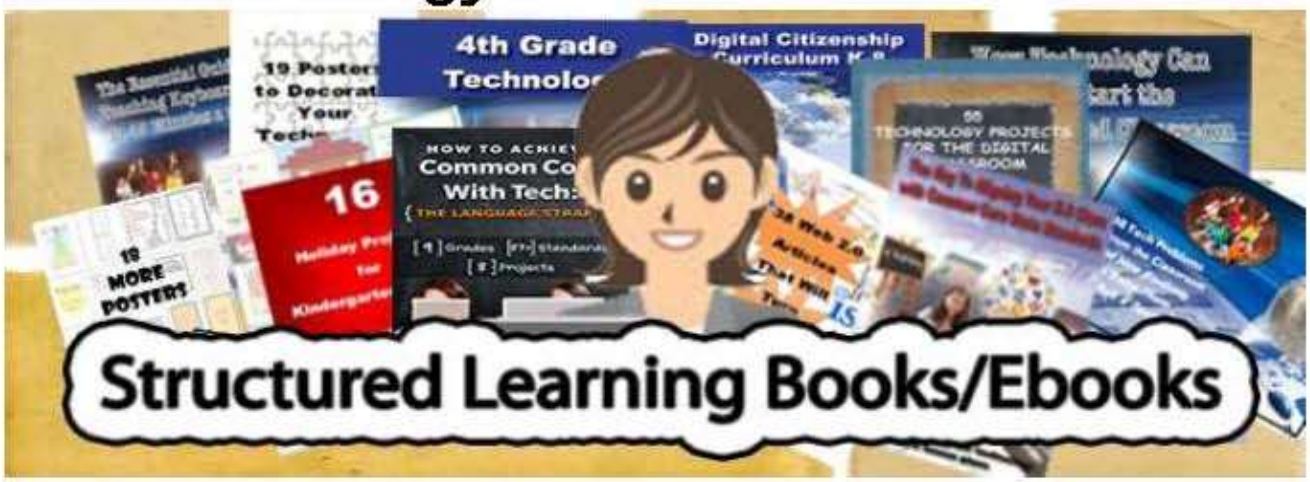
The National Board of Governors changed all that when 45 states supported their **Common Core State Standards**. Adopted in 2010, it immediately found a busload of detractors, engendered fierce arguments, but perseveres in its effort to reform how America prepares its children for college and career. I'm not going to debate these guidelines today. Instead, let me share the top eleven things I love about the new Standards now the law of the land:

1. They teach **speaking and listening**. Of all the skills that make a difference in a child's future, their ability to speak and listen to others tops that list. How have we not included this in the past? I have no idea and truly don't care. I'm happy it's part of the plan now.
2. They **differentiate between fact and fiction**. Too often, Hollywood movies that fictionalize history are taken as fact by viewers. Teachers show the movies as though this is what really happened. The ability to compare two presentations of events and determine truth from Other is a mature concept which appear in the 8th grade Reading-Literature (#7) and Reading-Informational (#9) standards, but the requirement of educated minds to question the world, seek out authentic information, evaluate what they hear/read/see/taste is a common strand throughout the Standards.
3. They make tech **part of a learner's life**. Oh that makes me happy. Considering children enter kindergarten with a love for technology (iPads, parents' smartphones), it only makes sense that we scaffold on that appeal to educate them

4. **They spiral.** Learning builds year to year, each grade level scaffolding the next. If a student struggles on a subject, it is easy to spiral down a level, shore up that knowledge to bring the student up to grade level. Or, conversely, if a student excels in an area, teachers can spiral upward to the next level of learning. Differentiation has never been so clear.
5. The anchor standards are **highly flexible** in how teachers achieve them. They encourage 'flexible learning paths'. Teachers understand the broad strokes and are expected to fill in the picture. For example, I can use games (that's right—visual) to achieve the goals of reading (literature and informational—not foundational or Language) to accomplish goals like *Explain the relationships or interactions between two or more individuals, events, ideas, or concepts (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.5.3).* The big point: Common Core is not a curriculum. It spells out what should be accomplished, but not how. That's up to the teacher. They use any method that works for their student group.
6. **it isn't a curriculum—it's a guideline**. That bears repeating: It isn't more material to stuff into already over-packed teaching days. It's a framework to organize thoughts, goals, ideas. A school adopts a curriculum and uses Common Core to implement, focus, and highlight.
7. it gets teachers thinking '**outside the-way-its-always-been-done box**'. There's a lot to accomplish, none prescripted. It uses words like *collaborate, publish and share, domain-specific, lead high-level text-based discussions, focus on process not just content, respond to the varying demands of audience-task-purpose-discipline, comprehend as well as critique, value evidence, demonstrate independence, build strong content knowledge,* leaving who-what-when-where-why-how in the teacher's competent hands.
8. It concentrates less on hard skills than **a way of thinking**, asking students to create thought habits, be problem solvers, approach life as critical thinkers. It expects students to integrate and evaluate, interpret, make strategic use of [technology tools], understand other perspectives and cultures, value evidence, comprehend as well as critique. The teacher decides how best to accomplish these goals.
9. It focuses on **not just college, but career.** Either choice is OK.
10. It gives permission (and a nudge) to teach traditional literature. Yes there's good new literature, but what do you skip? Common Core gives permission to students to value books like *Wizard of Oz*, , The *Odyssey*, *Metamorphoses*, Sandburg's *Fog*. I get goose bumps just thinking of what's contained in those tomes. This literature shaped our world, added similes like 'it's a tale of two cities (replace with the comparative noun of your choice)', 'me thinks he doth protest too much', and more. I love all literature, but to understand my world, I have to understand what great have said about it.
11. a **return to non-fiction**. For those of us who believe 'history repeats itself', this is a no-brainer. For those of us who believe students must understand the world around them to fix its problems, this is brilliant.

How about you? Now that you're diving into Common Core, what are your favorite parts of how it's changing your teaching?

SL Technology Books for Your Classroom



Which book	Price (print/digital/ Combo)	How Many
K-8th Tech Textbook (each)	*$29.99-32.99/23.99-26.99/48.58-53.99+p&h*	
K-6 Combo (all 7 textbooks)	*$190.74/$153.84/$344.57 + p&h*	
K-8 Combo (all 7 textbooks)	*$246.52/$200.62/$447.14+ p&h*	
35 More Projects for K-6	*$31.99/25.99/52.18 + p&h*	
55 Tech Projects—Vol I, II, Combo	*$32.99 /$59.38–digital only (free shipping)*	
K-8 Keyboard Curriculum	*$29.95/25.95/50.31 + p&h*	
K-8 Digital Citizenship Curriculum	*$29.95/25.99/50.38 + p&h*	
Common Core—Math, Lang., Read.	*$26.99 ea/72.87 for 3–digi only (free ship'g)*	
K-5 Common Core Projects	*$29.95/23.99/48.55 + p&h*	
16 Holiday Projects	*$14.99 (digital only) + p&h*	
19 Posters for the Tech Lab	*$6.99 (digital only)*	
18 More Posters for the Tech Lab	*$12.99 (digital only)*	
98 Tech Tips From Classroom	*$9.99 (digital only) + p&h*	
760+ Tech Ed Websites	*$14.99 (digital only) + p&h*	
Tech Ed Scope and Sequences	*$14.99 (digital only) + p&h*	
New Teacher Survival Kit (K-5)	*$338.21/$287.85/$567.08+ p&h*	
New Teacher Survival Kit (K-6)	*$370.20/$314.84/$620.16 + p&h*	
New Teacher Survival Kit (6-8)	*$280.83/$261.83/$415.74 + p&h*	
Bundles of lesson plans	*$7.99 and up—digital only (free shipping)*	
Mentoring (1 hr. at a time)	*$50/hr*	
Year-long tech curriculum help	*$100 per year (online)*	
Consulting/seminars/webinars	*Call or email for prices*	
	Total	

Free sample? Visit Structured Learning LLC website
Fill out this form (prices subject to change)
Email Zeke.rowe@structuredlearning.net
Pay via Paypal, Credit Card, Amazon, TPT, pre-approved school district PO

Structured Learning
Premiere Provider of Technology Teaching Books to the Education Community