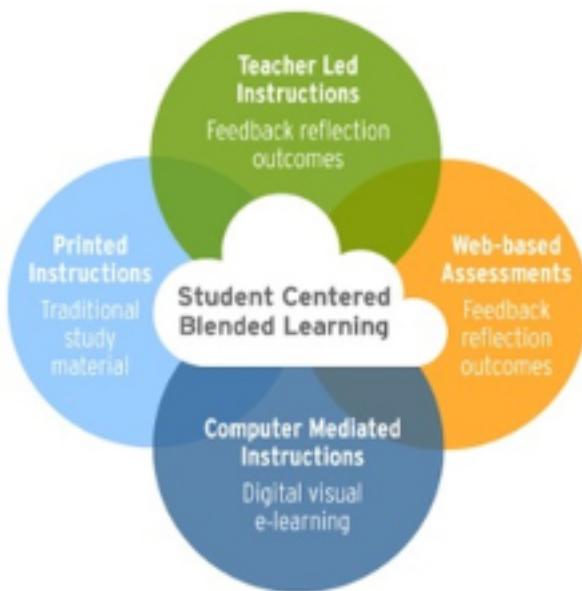# EdTech Monthly

November

Emerging practices in education today stem heavily from the incorporation of technology in the classroom to foster a greater dedication to lifelong learning by our students. By identifying effective methods of implementation, teachers are now able to create a more individualized learning experience for each pupil, tailored to their specific learning styles and needs while providing a greater opportunity to foster communication between the teacher/student and teacher/parent. As with all tools of the trade, however, integrating technology in the classroom requires an increased sense of responsibility by all parties involved. Beyond financial needs, the use of edtech also affects the workload required of faculty and staff in learning how to navigate through new software programs and adjusting their daily lesson plans to maximize these new digital tools.

BLENDED CLASSROOMS

Educators have begun adopting a blended classroom approach to provide supplemental instruction and encourage students to take control of their learning. Through a facilitator role, teachers provide hands-on learning and guided practice as students work through course material online. Software such as Google Classroom allows teachers to distribute materials and instructions to students/parents instantaneously, while also integrating into most other educational apps for ease of grading Apps such as Class dojo and infinite campus also provide greater transparency for parents monitoring academic progress while serving as a direct and instant line of communication between parent/teacher.

INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION

Through the use of software including Microsoft Forms, HP School Pack 2.0 and SMART Learning Suite, teachers provide students with an individualized learning experience by utilizing short informal quizzes known as formative assessments. These quizzes assess students as they learn, highlighting areas needing further emphasis, rather than relying upon summative assessments given at the conclusion of the unit. Perceivant, an emerging edtech company, takes this individualized approach to another level entirely by integrating deep analytics such as how long a student stays on one page, stop and start behavior, and mouse movements to measure student confidence levels in the given material; these indicators are combined with the overall assessment performance to create an individualized study guide for each student. This type of on- the- fly assessment allows teachers to adjust their teaching to meet the learning styles of students more efficiently.

DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

In response to increased technology use in the classroom, school systems can implement responsible digital citizenship within their existing curriculum to encourage cybersecurity awareness, critical thinking in determining the authenticity of information, and awareness of digital piracy / plagiarism. School district administrators are not immune to this responsibility. When considering the need for edtech vendors data mining to improving upon and updating existing software, clear guidelines should be developed to monitor what specific information is being collected by vendors, whom will have access to this information, and what safeguards exist to minimize potential security breaches. A truly comprehensive program places parents and guardians in the center of this issue, maintaining transparency on the part of teachers and administrators.

EFFICACY OF TECHNOLOGY

 In the face of waning educational funding at local levels, the influx of available technology resources requires a comprehensive analysis of digital tools prior to implementation in the classroom to maximize budgetary resources. Policymakers must be vigilant in validating the circumstances surrounding the effectiveness of proven programs against their own local district demographics to avoid investing monies on programs that won't effectively target the pupils we are trying to reach. Administrators should consider staffing resources as well as potential software conflicts when introducing new technologies. Issues in software compatibility place a larger demand upon respective IT departments limiting response time to daily issues. Above all, the implementation of new digital tools must be both proven and practical for everyday use in order to maximize limited budgetary and human resources.

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