

**Social media isn't a fad- it's a fundamental shift in the way we communicate.  
(Social Media Revolution 2)**

As I was reading, "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants" and "In the Classroom of the Future, Stagnant Scores," I had this same radical thought, not only about social media, but about technology in general. "In the Classroom of the Future, Stagnant Scores," Richtel focuses his writing on the use of advanced technology in different schools and attempts to make parallels or connections (or lack there of) with the use of technology and test scores. But as I read it, I began to think that technology isn't something that can be easily measured and using it, isn't ABOUT that. More essential than improved test scores; innovative technology IS the way that our students communicate. If, as teachers, we cannot communicate in this language, there is a huge disconnect and barrier that excludes us from reaching our students. Whether the technology is their social media, hundreds of shorthand texts per day, cell phone calls, emails, or what have you; these students may not know how to communicate without it. Having graduated in the year 2000, I don't consider myself to be technologically illiterate or genius, just somewhere in the middle. In high school, I attended a small school within a school that was student-centered and technology based. The mid90s had my friends locked in a closet sized room making digital movies. Sometimes I think this exposure fourteen years ago bumps me into the slightly more advanced category. However, when my students ask me, "Hey, Ms. Early, how did you talk to your friends at school, if you didn't have a cell phone?" I feel like a dinosaur when I explain to them I memorized my friends' schedules and could meet up with them during the passing period. "What?!" They look at me like I'm crazy and I know that they are Digital Natives and I am a Digital Immigrant.

**A key argument for investing in classroom technology: student engagement.  
(In the Classroom of the Future, Stagnant Scores)**

Just like Prensky points out in "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants," if you want to be able to speak to and communicate with your students, you have to speak this technological language. It's about reaching the students and engaging them. As teachers, we don't have to know HOW to do/use everything specifically, but we need to have a general vocabulary and knowledge of current technology. Using that base we need to figure out how to integrate technology into our classrooms to ensure that we can a) communicate with our students and b) engage them in learning. And it seems to be a fact that technology engages our students no matter where they are.

**Teachers who are truly digitally fluent will blend creativity and innovation into lesson plans, assignments, and projects and understand the role that digital tools can play in creating academic expectations that are authentically connected, both locally and globally, to their students' lives... They need to be the guide on the side rather than the technician magician.  
(Orchestrating the Media Collage)**

Like Olher says in "Orchestrating the Media Collage," we need to "blend traditional and emerging literacies." Students may be more interested (engaged) and able to do the more traditional work (Prensky calls this legacy) of reading, writing, critical thinking and understanding if we integrate them or use them parallel with more innovative work (Prensky calls this future) that is digital and technology based. A great example of this is "School Train." Teachers need to be masters at connecting content with relevancy in students lives, engaging them in meaningful work, and being

comfortable knowing they might not have all the answers or have the knowledge to do the same work that their students have done.

### **How Technology Changes Me**

As a teacher, remembering to integrate technology into my everyday curriculum, along with my long-term projects is important. Because technology and broadband can be a challenging resource to acquire at school, having students engage in websites, blogs, video games or other can be a good homework assignment that is both relevant to my content area and in their own lives (going back to the way students communicate). I have noticed more and more teachers have stopped giving homework because most students do not do it. If homework spoke the same language as the students (Digital Natives), was motivating, and somehow related to class work the next day, students would be participants both in and outside of school.

Figuring out the right balance of getting students engaged and then applying it or bringing it back to more traditional work is the challenge. How can I get students excited about the Constitution? How can I bring it to life or animate it using technology? How can I bring it back to the original formal text that our founding Fathers wrote it in? How can my students take that document, think critically about it, and then explain that in some sort of end product?

Technology changes me because I have to constantly evolve and be fluent in this digital language, along with crafting the mélange of both legacy and future work. I also need to constantly be on the ball. Thinking outside of my own experiences as a student; always thinking about ways to involve technology as an aid, an enhancement, and tool rather than combating against it (ex: How can I USE facebook to teach my content?) And always remembering: this new technology is how my students know how to communicate. Technology is no longer a bonus, but has become a bare necessity.

### **Assessment of School Train**

Similar to the assessments I had as a student in The Phoenix Program (former school within a school at Juneau Douglas High School), I would use a rubric following the N (needs improvement), IP (in progress), M (meets), and E (exceeds) model. For this assignment I might have categorized such as Understanding of Literary Concept (At what level did students show understanding of their concept?), End Product (Differentiate instruction- students could choose any end product to show their understanding- book, movie, power point presentation, etc. What end product did students choose? What level was it done at?), Organization (Did students organize their end product in a way that makes sense to the audience? Was the work load shared?), Presentation (Were students able to share their thought process for their end product? Was it clear and did it make sense? Could they answer audience questions?)

I would give these students an E for their project. These students showed that they understood their literary concept and went above and beyond. In order to produce something like this, they spent a lot of time and energy on it. Not only did they learn the technology skills in order to film, edit, distort, and produce video- they also had to collaborate and integrate lots of different students, teachers and school locations.