CURRENT TOPICS: ADULT EDUCATION & TRAINING

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Abstract

This paper was prepared to introduce my writing piece that was crafted to support my strong opinion about the overuse of technology in the elementary classroom. As an educator, I wrote mostly from my first person point of view.   This paper gives insight into the process used to create the first draft, providing a look at both the abstract and the self-critiqued introduction paragraph separately, then as components of the completed first draft. There are brief discussions on the influence that previewed articles had on my topic approach and style of writing. Lastly, to prepare for the next writing, I identified three readers who will provide me with feedback on my first draft.

Introduction

A majority of my tasks for this unit center around compiling and analyzing a variety of print and digital

resources to support my ability to develop and publish an article. Although much of the information

contained in the article was obtained through first hand observations and interviews with colleagues, I

still consulted with other sources to garner additional support.   As always, starting with measurable

goals keeps the work on track. In this case, the tasks are so closely affiliated that the following goals

will suffice for the project.

1. Briefly discuss how the resources I consulted informed me of the best approach for introducing my

topic.

2. Articulate my understanding of an effective introductory paragraph.

3. Draft an abstract and introduction paragraph for my paper. (Critique the paragraph.)

4. Create a first draft of my article, submit the draft to three work colleagues, and solicit feedback.

Use of Technology in the Classroom

My subject is a hot topic as more and more public and private schools incorporate technology into

every aspect of a typical school day. The question is no longer "if technology will be used, but how

much of the day will be consumed with screen time"?

I have had the opportunity to spend time in different elementary schools over the last three years. In

addition, as an active member of the military, my occupation afforded me the opportunity to visit

various elementary and middle schools located on military installations over the last decade. In all of

these situations, there is one constant. Well organized classrooms that are conducive to learning have a

healthy respect for incorporating technology devices into specific activities, but they do not rely on any

device to deliver whole lessons. Diametrically opposed, are the schools that attempt to use student

technology devices no less than 80% of a regular school day, expecting the device to deliver entire lessons. No wonder they are struggling to meet state standards, especially literacy standards.

My personal experiences, as well as the various articles that I consulted as a precursor for writing my article, worked in tandem to inform me of the best way to approach such a sensitive subject. I want my audience to seriously consider my argument, so the first paragraph needs to have all of the characteristics of an effective introduction that hooks a reader and begs them to keep reading. I used Thomson's and Kamler's (2013) model to construct the following abstract to accompany my paper:

"Technology in the modern classroom is a hot topic, with some school administrators pushing for automated classrooms that employ a device up to 80% of the school day. Research has shown that technology used in moderation can enhance learning, but that too much screen time has the opposite effect on young school aged children. Further, optimal results generally occur when the use of technology is coupled with direct teacher instruction. The combined effect leads to improved cognitive development in elementary students. This article argues that less asynchronous screen time and more teacher-student interaction in the classroom promotes learning, The argument is strengthened by incorporating postulated information from source studies, personal interviews, and first hand observations" (Burton, 2022).

I am considering using the following paragraph as my introduction: "Some schools treat students like miniature office workers. They plop children as young as three years old, students we refer to as Pre-Kindergarten, down in front of an ipad and actually expect them to learn something. It sounds like a good idea when the media tells us that innovative classrooms with the latest tech gadgets will enhance our students' academic skills. What they fail to tell us is that you only get remarkable results when the technology is used intermittently throughout the day and is always paired with direct teacher instruction.   The premise that keeping students on an ipad for 80% of the school day and building

lessons around technology will improve student performance is only a myth based loosely on misinformation (Burton, P 2022)."

My word choices in the first sentence should stimulate mental pictures for the readers. However, some changes were needed. I revised the opening sentence and removed the extraneous words and phrases, creating a smoother transition from reading to visualization. That technique itself is usually effective because it stimulates multiple senses, increasing the reader's interest. On a positive note, the introduction briefly entertains the false assumptions predicated on biased reporting that administrators use to support their poor choices about technology use in their areas of responsibility, and then strategically opens the door for relevant information that supports the argument. Let's review the completed first draft of the article.

First Draft of the Article

Abstract

Technology in the modern classroom is a hot topic, with some school administrators pushing for automated classrooms that employ a device up to 80% of the school day. Research has shown that technology used in moderation can enhance learning, but that too much screen time has the opposite effect on young school aged children. Further, optimal results generally occur when the use of technology is coupled with direct teacher instruction. The combined effect leads to improved cognitive development in elementary students. This article argues that less asynchronous screen time and more teacher-student interaction in the classroom promotes learning. Further, one of the greatest disadvantages is found in the area of administering assessments using technology. The opinion based argument is strengthened by incorporating information from source studies and first hand observations.

Introduction

Some schools treat students like miniature office workers. They plop pre-kindergarten children as young as three years old down in front of an ipad and actually expect them to learn something. It sounds like a good idea when the media tells us that innovative classrooms with the latest tech gadgets will enhance our students' academic skills. What they fail to tell us is that you only get remarkable results when the technology is used intermittently throughout the day and is always paired with direct teacher instruction.   The premise that keeping students on an ipad for 80% of the school day and building lessons around technology will improve student performance is just a myth.   To understand how this erroneous thinking came about, we only need to briefly examine the initial use of technology in the elementary classrooms.

Introduction of Technology into Public Education Classrooms

 Let's stroll down memory lane and enjoy a gallery walk through the use of technology in the classroom. Although filmstrips, "devices that could display as many as 50 still images on a screen or wall while students listened to an accompanying cassette or record" (Gray, 2020) were developed and used in 1925,   the introduction of instructional televisions in the 1950s ignited an innovative fire that continues to burn. A few other early devices that have emerged include overhead projectors in the early 60s, document cameras in the late 60s, and hand-held calculators in the 70s.   Next, we fast forward to the application of desktop computers in the 1980s, a phenomena that ushered in a new evolution in the classroom arena. Various resources may have confused certain dates when specific technology was used, but their information on the chronological sequence of devices used, is consistent.

The 1980s to Present

The introduction of computers demonstrated a turning point in education. Suddenly, teachers realized that they could relax and let the computer shoulder some of the responsibility for lesson instruction. Slowly over the course of the last three decades, electronic devices have gotten progressively smaller in size and more numerous in the classroom. In today's modern classroom every student has an assigned hand held device. In some schools, a regular instructional day begins with students on ipads and ends with students on ipads. The teacher is supposed to monitor device use, but usually spends the time grading papers or engaged in other activities not related to the immediate learning. Training is available for teachers who want all their lessons delivered via the electronic devices. The training arms the teacher with the ability to lock student devices onto a particular website. In this case, students are unable to navigate away from the designated site. When a student completes a lesson they are rewarded with even more screen time. There, you have it. The entire day revolves around the technology device. If there is any direct instruction delivered during the day, it is expected to be delivered via the smart board, allowing students to follow along using their ipads. It is an overwhelming situation that leads to exactly the opposite of the expected outcome, in some instances. You will be surprised to realize which instances.

Disadvantages

Relying on technology to run our classrooms appears to offer no drawbacks, but essentially one of the areas that requires the most precision has the greatest risk, the area of assessment. I can attest to the following information that I came across while studying for a test: " Technology based assessments have many advantages such as they can be given to a large number of students at one time, or the fact that they are scored instantly"(Mometrix, 2022), but there are serious drawbacks. The disadvantages can detract from the advantages. "Glitches and system errors can interfere with assessment process or

score reporting" (Mometrix, 2022). Also, students may simply lack skills to perform adequately on technology based assessments. Also, school aged children require interaction with other children to develop social skills. Strict use of technology devices diminishes the time spent engaging in the socialization process. Not only that, but lessons delivered using ipads and other such devices increase the margin for uncorrected misconceptions to persist in metacognitive processing.   Students are no longer talking about learning, so teachers cannot interpret and guide student's thinking processes. Modern classrooms and early classrooms have a lot in common. Both are composed of students who are on different learning levels. Teachers have always had to differentiate lessons to accommodate students. The overuse of technology devices puts us at a disadvantage when defining the differentiation boundaries. Disadvantages fall into both the objective and subjective categories, dismissing the counterclaim that my opinion is just that, a biased opinion.

Conclusion

  I am not against using the newest electronic gadgets in elementary classrooms, but I am advocating for more direct, face-to-face, teacher instruction time. Save the ipads and computers for specific uses like independent research and keyboarding instruction. These devices may save a few minutes here and there, but their overuse can have negative effects on developing minds. We get those remarkable results using tech devices only when they are coupled with direct instruction from a human teacher.

Reflections on the Article

The article was intended to be an opinion essay and I believe I met my target. However, I plan to submit my article to three teacher colleagues and solicit feedback on techniques that can assist me with project. Each person was chosen because of their positions within the teaching or literary field. One of my essay reviewers is a Literary Specialist for a school district, another is a retired English Teacher, and a third is a library director.

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