

## **Moving Forward with Technology**

### **By Emily Rouls**

I have been going to school for the most part since I was in Kindergarten. From high school I went onto undergrad, to a teacher education program to this master's program. I sometimes feel that I am a 'pro' at going to school. For about the last 22 years I have been in school and I think it will be very hard for me to just stop going to school altogether. With that said, I am not really sure where I want to go with my education from here.

As I finish up this master's program I cannot help but think about technology and what that means for me in the future. I completed my entire master's program online; however I do not feel like I am a tech savvy person. I can use technology in my personal life, but I have a very hard time exposing my young learners to it. I feel that I am not utilizing all that is available to me. Therefore, moving forward my goal as a lifelong learner would be to learn how to use technology in my classroom that would be the most beneficial to my students. However, I am not sure how I will go about learning this very important skill. I would like to say I could get another master's degree in technology. But, I think right now I need to take a break from student loans for a while. Fortunately for me, my school district that I work for is very large (one of the largest districts in the country) and is a strong believer of professional development. There are always classes being offered that could continue my education and to learn how to productively utilize technology within my classroom

I have not come to the decision that I need to learn how to utilize technology more within my classroom, without a lot of thinking of why this would be beneficial. Students are coming in to kindergarten with so much technology background. My 2 year old niece can flip through an iPad or iPhone to find 'her' apps to use with ease. She could likely go into kindergarten in a few years having much more knowledge of technology than her teacher. I do not want to be that kindergarten teacher who is 'behind the times.' I want to make sure that I can at least be on the same track with technology as my young learners walking through the door. I think I owe it to them to incorporate technology since it is such a major part of our society. Since the majority of students are coming in with that background knowledge of technology why not use it to my advantage? Students love using technology so it is a great motivational tool to get them to learn what they need to know.

As I think about using technology in my classroom. I cannot help but think about my own online learning experiences and how that will affect my future students. I do not believe that online learning will completely replace a formal in-classroom education because I think that online learning is much more hands-off. I believe online learning is a lot less social than a formal education and I think the social skills that students learn in a classroom is just as important as the content they are expected to learn. I know teachers who teach online classes try to make it more social by having group projects and such but I know personally once a class has finished I have never spoken to my classmates again. It is not because I dislike them in any way. It is just because I have only ever socialized with

them about the specific class and what needs to get done. This is very different from a face-to-face classroom. An in-person classroom is where friendships are formed because you can connect more with people when you are looking at their faces. Therefore, I think online learning (at least in elementary school) will become more of a supplemental resource as opposed to totally replacing a face-to-face classroom. For example, I think online learning would be great for those students who need extra support or even those students who are performing above grade level to get more advanced academics. Online learning in addition to a formal classroom could really help those intervention students.

In conclusion, I think technology is an extremely important aspect of not only my future as a learner but also for my future students. Therefore, I plan to continue my education by learning how to use technology in a way that will be most beneficial to my students.