Growing Up Online

Examining the role of technology on the lives of today’s youth.

If you assemble a group of high school teachers in a room, it is not uncommon to hear a veteran teacher say, “Kids are just different today.” Well, it turns out they may be right. A recent episode called Growing Up Online by PBS Frontline examines the impact of widespread available technologies on the youth of today. An assertion made by the producers indicates that the Internet has “created the greatest generational gap between kids and parents since rock-n-roll.” Much of the focus of the episode focuses on social networking sites, how students communicate with one another, and the ability for some students to reinvent their personalities online. Issues such as cyber-bullying and Internet predators are addressed through interviews with kids, parents and educators. The full episode is available for viewing by chapter on the PBS website at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/kidsonline/

The follow up report called Digital Nation: Life on the Virtual Frontier will premiere on PBS at 9 p.m. on February 2nd and will continue to examine the impact of technology on our personal relationships, our children’s education and even on how wars are fought. The upcoming episode will focus on how new technologies will impact this, and future generations of students by possibly altering their attention spans and increasing their ability to multi-task. A full description of the broadcast and a preview can be found at http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/digitalnation/
GS Teacher Tech Stories – *In Their Own Words*

**Glogster in the Spanish Classroom – From Mr. Gerofsky**

“Traditionally, to sum up a unit on the past tense students would need to write a script and present a news broadcast in front of the class on an event in Spanish history, as well as create a poster to sum up their research. With Glogster, I was able to have the students create videos of their news broadcasts and embed them in an interactive online poster that contained all their information as well as pictures or maps to compliment. Groups were able to present in class by visiting their Glogster site to view their digital poster, which I as the teacher was able to moderate.” To see Mr. G’s Project Guidelines Glog, visit: [http://spanishwithmrg.edu.glogster.com/guidelines/](http://spanishwithmrg.edu.glogster.com/guidelines/)

**Modern History Movies – From Mr. Leaman**

“My U.S. History Movie Project had several purposes: through research and application, students developed a rich understanding of their modern event and were exposed to several others when they reviewed the work of their peers. Writing a script scene and developing a movie preview helped students tap into the emotions of traumatic events in U.S. history and develop empathy, all while the students explored and used technology resources to produce a higher quality finished product.” For an example, visit: [http://leamanhistory.wiki.elanco.net/Oklahoma+City+Bombing](http://leamanhistory.wiki.elanco.net/Oklahoma+City+Bombing)

**Google Docs in the Physics Lab – From Mr. Upham**

“As students collect data during my Physics Labs, I have them use the spreadsheet feature to organize their values. They are then able to easily share their charts with their partners and with me. An advantage of this feature is the ability to view progress and provide feedback as students perform the lab. Once their data has been collected, each student is required to do a lab write-up using a template that I created. Prior to the lab, I make a document that outlines instructions and questions that students must address for the lab write-up. Instead of sharing this document with the students, I upload it to the template gallery where students are able to copy it to their personal Google Docs folder and modify it to meet the requirements of the assignment.”
Online Teaching Resources

Today's teachers are well aware that the Internet has an endless supply of free teaching resources at their disposal. However, with limited time to plan for daily lessons and long-term units, the three web resources listed below are a great place to start.

Thinkfinity is dedicated to providing teachers and students with quality content-specific resources and primary source materials, along with professional development services. They have incorporated “standards-based web sites that include lessons for teachers, activities to use in and out of the classroom, games for young children and teens, adult literacy resources, and reference materials for anyone in the education field.” Thinkfinity's resources are free for educators and can be found at http://www.thinkfinity.org/

Discovery Education has organized their huge catalog of online educational resources into one place. Their curricular resources include Discovery Streaming, “with over 9,000 full-length videos segmented into 71,000 content-specific clips,” Discovery Education Health, “a comprehensive health and prevention library that addresses the needs of the whole student,” with topics such as Nutrition, Drug & Alcohol and Physical Activity, and Discovery Education MediaShare, “a web-based content sharing system that enables educators to utilize the best resources through uploading, sharing, managing, and distributing user-created or licensed-digital content.” IU13 provides teachers with free access to these resources. To create an account, contact rebecca_schrecengost@iu13.org. For more information visit http://www.discoveryeducation.com/

PBS has always been a great partner with public education and their newly designed website is a great example of their ongoing dedication to providing teachers with the highest quality teaching resources. Both online and offline activities, lesson plans, and resources are cataloged by subject area and grade level on their website. Many of their programs are available on-demand courtesy of their website, and also include discussion questions and activities to accompany each episode. New content is constantly being added as events take place around the world. Please take some time to visit they wealth of resources at http://www.pbs.org/teachers/
Featured Web Links

Below you will find a few links to educational websites that could be used to make teaching and learning a little bit more interesting and a lot more fun for both teachers and students.

**Animoto -** [http://animoto.com](http://animoto.com)

Animoto has attempted to put an end to boring slideshows by making it easy for anyone to add music, narrations, transitions, and text to photos put to your music of choice. Short video clips are free, but they charge a fee for longer videos. Animoto is a great web application for quick, multi-media projects for your students.


MyWebspiration is an online graphical organizer tool, similar to the software Inspiration, but includes features such as the sharing of workspaces, outline development, and publishing to web pages. This web application could be used for individual or groups of students.

**Delicious -** [http://delicious.com/](http://delicious.com/)

Delicious is an online bookmark service that allows you to host, organize and share your bookmarks with anyone. You are able to upload your current computer bookmarks to Delicious and sort and tag them by type and category. Other Delicious users have their bookmarks available as well, so you can view the most popular web sites for thousands of other people.

**ScreenToaster -** [http://www.screentoaster.com/](http://www.screentoaster.com/)

ScreenToaster is web application that allows you to capture and record your computer’s onscreen action without installing any software. The application works together with your computer’s microphone and webcam to record you and your voice as you navigate your computer. ScreenToaster could be used to record specific computer directions or for students to capture a “how-to” video to demonstrate their understanding of a concept.


Eyejot makes sending a video message to someone as easy as sending an email. Just log into your account and record yourself using your computer’s webcam. You can also add a button on your web browser’s toolbar to share a quick video comment on a website you visited. Eyejot is a great tool to connect with students who may have missed several classes due to an illness.
A January 2010 report by the Kaiser Family Foundation titled *Generation M²: Media in the Lives of 8- to 18-Year-Olds* found that “the amount of time spent with media increased by an hour and seventeen minutes a day over the past five years, from 6:21 in 2004 to 7:38 today.” This statistic does not even take into account if students are multi-tasking with multiple forms of media (TV, computer, iPods, etc.) and does not include time spent sending text messages using cell phones. A comprehensive summary of the report can be found by at [http://www.kff.org/entmedia/entmedia012010nr.cfm](http://www.kff.org/entmedia/entmedia012010nr.cfm).

So, what does the results of this study mean for us as educators? First of all, it means that students today are exposed to an incredible amount of visual and auditory stimuli. In my opinion, it is going to alter the learning methods and styles for many of our students. As a teacher, it is important to recognize that students may learn differently than the students of 20 years ago and our teaching methods and strategies must evolve to meet their learning needs. These changes may provide us with the opportunity for a more student-driven learning environment and learning experiences with more multi-media components. The so-called “traditional” methods of paper and pencil writing assignments, class discussions, and poster projects could be seamlessly replaced or enhanced with an electronic alternative that our students are accustomed to using as part of their social lives.

The Kaiser Study also noted that students at the highest end of the spectrum had no household rules limiting media time and consistently scored lower grades in school. So for some of our students, they are spending time too much time using media and not enough of their time studying. This is nothing new to most teachers. However, if students come from households where limitation and rules are placed on their media use, their grades are significantly higher. So it is my belief that we as teachers, have a responsibility to educate our students on how to manage their use of new technologies to allow them to direct their digital interests, in areas such as online social-networking and gaming, in order to improve their ability to learn important concepts that we teach in our schools everyday. This is not an easy task for teachers and we certainly need regular access to the same technologies as our students to accomplish this endeavor.

Finally, we must be careful not to assume that all students have equal access to the most current types of media, because there are still a significant number of households where web-enabled personal cell phones, computers, and high-speed Internet access is not the norm. However, as a school, we need to provide access for those students to be sure they have an equal opportunity to succeed. Our students will need these skills as they enter the job market. If you examine a recent [NPR study on the decade ahead in jobs](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyID=102250111) in this country, you’ll see that most of the emerging occupations will require some form of computer and technical skills. We owe it to our students to provide them with a world-class educational experience today that prepares them with the skills to succeed in the job market of tomorrow.

Tim Leister

Technology Integration Coach @ GSHS

---

Read this article and find other resources at my technology blog, “The Leading Edge,” at [http://timjleister.edublogs.org/](http://timjleister.edublogs.org/)