

TECHNOLOGY NEWS



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Tech Teaches

once thought to corrode reading skills; computers are a key tool in improving them.

By Grace Rubenstein

http://www.edutopia.org/magazine/ed1article.php?id=Art_1449&issue=fcb_06#

The transcript of a typical teenager's instant message correspondence -- full of acronyms, symbols, and misspelled and partially spelled words -- might bring despair to adults. How, asks the appalled reader, do we improve the literacy of adolescents bent on destroying it through technology?



The answer is surprising: Computers may represent TEOTWAWKI (that's "the end of the world as we know it," in the NetLingo.com dictionary) to the old-school observer, but those computers -- and the technology that fuels them -- also represent a new world of improved literacy, and not just literacy in the traditional sense. Technology promises to play a crucial role in helping adolescents cope with reading and writing deficits, at the same time teaching digital literacy, an essential skill in the world beyond school.

"There are all these new literacy's that kids are engaging in that are in the workplace but haven't made their way into schools yet," says Bridget Dalton, chief officer of literacy and technology at CAST, a Massachusetts-based organization that creates educational technology for all kinds of learners. "We could create a new group of kids who have a literacy disability if we don't prepare them for working in these new environments." The International Reading Association goes so far in its position statement on technology to say

students "have a right" to instruction that develops critical forms of literacy for using computers and the Web.

Despite what may appear to be grammar-busting drivel in instant messages and chat rooms, many education researchers report that the unfiltered chatter found online doesn't seriously threaten kids' literacy. Stanford University professor Michael L. Kamil, who researches literacy and technology, analyzed hundreds of random Web sites through a search engine and found that the text consistently hit an eleventh- or twelfth-grade reading level -- nearly equal to that of the *New York Times*, on his scale.

Clemson University researcher David Reinking, a co-editor of *Reading Research Quarterly*, believes kids are reading more now because of the Internet's appeal. Overall, Kamil and others say, any drawbacks of computer technology are far outweighed by its potential for aiding struggling readers, engaging kids in their learning, and leveraging instructional time to target students' individual needs.

Because computers enable kids to access text through multiple media, such as image, audio and video, they can dynamically support students' reading and expose struggling readers to stimulating content that would be out of reach to them through print alone, says Dalton. Julie Coiro, a doctoral candidate at the University of Connecticut at Storrs, adds that the interactive nature of the Internet allows readers to choose their own pathways through information in personally relevant and interesting ways.

"The technology does bring in ways of leveling the playing field," Dalton says. "Sometimes it's the kid who's the struggling reader who can actually thrive in this environment."

The key benefits of computer-based reading lessons are simple: They help students practice reading at their own pace and give individualized instruction and immediate feedback -- all when the teacher might be occupied helping other kids, Kamil says. For example, in a study Kamil published recently in *Threshold*, the magazine of Cable in the Classroom, Kamil assigned fourth- and fifth-grade students to read a multimedia lesson on coral reefs with or without an "adaptive agent." The agent, an animated hermit crab, gave lessons on tough vocabulary, asked questions to monitor comprehension, and modeled good reading strategies. Both groups made gains on multiple-choice questions before and after the test, but only the crab-assisted group

improved on the short answer questions, which required more inference.

Computers also can engage students in a powerful way, broadening the opportunities to connect to a world outside school, says Mark Warschauer, professor of education and informatics at the University of California at Irvine. He tells the story of a fourth-grade teacher who, in a southern California school with many English-language learners, used Amazon.com in a literacy lesson. The exercise is detailed in Warschauer's upcoming book, *Laptops and Literacy*, from Teachers College Press. After reading *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes*, by Eleanor Coerr, the class critiqued readers' reviews of the book on Amazon. Armed with those self-generated lessons about what makes a good review, the children wrote their own, submitted them to Amazon, and were delighted to see their work posted, Warschauer writes.

Another tool for engagement is WebQuest, a lesson model developed at California's San Diego State University in the mid-1990s in which students embark on a guided inquiry by way of the Internet, beginning with an open-ended problem and culminating in an original solution. Webquest.org archives more than 1,500 ideas for such projects, such as sleuthing Shakespeare's identity, planning a vacation through past and present Egypt, or briefing the UN secretary-general on the situation in sub-Saharan Africa.

Though these possibilities seem inspiring, research on the effectiveness of teaching literacy through computers is thin. A review of the research sponsored by the National Science Foundation in 2003 found that technology had marginal impact on reading performance. Yet author James A. Kulik, who produced the report for SRI International, wrote that the body of work was too patchy to draw sweeping conclusions. In contrast, a 2000 report from the National Reading Panel -- a group of experts convened by Congress in 1997 to assess various reading-instruction methods -- found generally positive results in the existing research and called for more study on the best uses of technology for teaching. The results of a \$10 million study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education to evaluate reading software are due out in April.

But researchers warn that educators should not focus simply on the ways that technology can teach traditional reading skills. What also needs to be investigated, they say, are ways to teach the sophisticated skills needed to navigate information and communication online.

Donald J. Leu, John and Maria Neag Endowed Chair of Literacy and Technology at the University of Connecticut at Storrs, says the process -- and sometimes the purpose -- of reading online can be profoundly different than those for reading print. To be digitally literate, Leu argues, students must identify an important problem or question, pinpoint information within an unchecked world of resources, critically evaluate material

for bias and reliability, synthesize information from disparate texts, and effectively communicate through email, blogs, and other forums. Those aren't technology issues to be relegated to computer class, he says; those are literacy issues. Both books and computers are technologies for reading.

As Elizabeth Birr Moje, an Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Educational Studies at the University of Michigan, sees it, the ultimate benefit of technology in teaching reading comes down to a simple maxim: It's all about how you use it. "The potential in technology is enormous; of course, there are lots of risks, too," says Moje.

Without proper supervision, explains Moje, some readers could become dependent on high-tech crutches to understand text. Or the vast scope of the Internet could habituate students to seeking breadth over depth of learning experience. That's no reason to fear computers in teaching or miss out on all they can provide.

This coverage was made possible in part by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.



Technology Tips

Renaming Photos

As I do, you probably have loads of photos on your computer. Does it drive you crazy that when you import your photos, they all show up as numbers or dates? Unless you really have lots of time on your hands, I don't think you want to go through each folder and rename each picture. I just found out how you can put a batch name on each image within a folder on a Mac and PC.

- Open the picture folder
- Select View > Thumbnails
- Select all pictures (Control-A or click the last picture in the folder, hold down the Shift key, and click the first picture to select them all)
- Right-click the first photo. Select Rename from the drop-down menu. Type in the name and add .jpg for the file extension. NOTE: be careful to NOT delete the .jpg file extension, otherwise the picture becomes unrecognizable to photo software.
- Click the white space outside the photo. Windows will automatically apply the name with sequential numbering to each picture in the folder. Now your photos will be renamed and you can search by title, album, or even put in keywords.

<http://www.techlearning.com/story/showArticle.php?articleID=1965137>
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Nettrekker

Nettrekker d.i. is the #1 search engine schools are using to offer differentiated instruction to help every child learn!

Click on the link: <http://school.nettrekker.com/frontdoor/>

Click on **Register** and fill out your user information. Each user can choose a username and password.

Create New User
Please fill in the following form, making sure all the required fields are complete. Then click "Next" at the bottom. The links with an asterisk (*) indicate required fields.

Account Information

- *Create a username: [] (no special characters)
- *Create a password: [] (8 character minimum)
- *Re-enter your password for verification: [] (8 character minimum)
- *Choose a secret question: [] (select a question)
- *Answer your question: [] (type your answer)

Choose your school role: Student Teacher (or Other) Parent

Please take a moment to review our [Privacy Policy](#) and our [Terms of Use](#) before completing registration. By clicking the "Next" button you are agreeing to our Terms of Use.

[Next] [Cancel]

Select **NH** and type in **Kimball** for the school.

Create New User
Enter Your School's State/Province and Name:

State/Province: [NH] [v]
School Name: [Kimball] [Clear]

(only the first word of the official name)

Select **Kimball School**, Concord and **Done**. You are not registered. Be sure to bookmark Nettrekker for quick access.

Create New User
Matching Schools:
Choose your school from this list by clicking on it and then click 'done' below.

Kimball School, Concord, NH
Kimball Union Academy, Mendon, NH

Still Can't Find Your School
[Done]

Now that you are a user, the best way to start is to go to Help and take the tour. This is an interactive overview on how to use Nettrekker d.i. Enjoy...



The IT Guy

<http://www.techlearning.com/itguy/showArticle.php?articleID=193100179>

Save, Save, Save

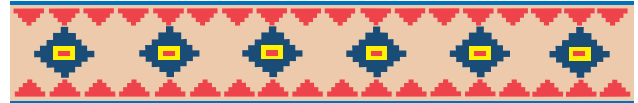
Question: Is there any foolproof way to guarantee that the work I've been doing will not be lost, even if I forget the adage "Save Early and Save Often"? Sometimes I get so involved in the work that I forget to save what I've done.

The IT Guy says: you don't want to lose valuable data that you just entered but you say you forget to save as you write. There's a method to help you to save Word files periodically as you are writing. Go to the Tools section on the main toolbar; click on the Options section and then the



"Save" tab. Make sure the "Save Auto Recover Info" box is checked and pick a time interval, such as every 10 or 15 minutes. I also check "Allow Background Saves." These two will insure you save automatically even if you forget to do it. That way if the phone rings, or the power goes down you are not left with a blank screen.

You'll also notice there are a password section and a read only selection to consider.



Coming in January!

"Morning Meeting"

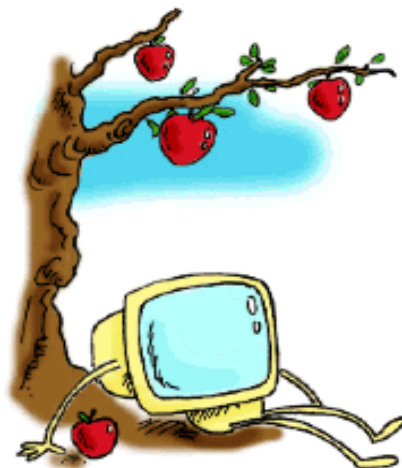
joins the 21st Century

Good Morning
from inside the Kimball School
in the city of Concord, New Hampshire

TODAY IS
Daily

SCHOLASTIC News Online
USA TODAY
THE HISTORY CHANNEL
HISTORY.COM

details to follow





8 Steps to 21st Century Learning

Lydotta Taylor and Jill Fratto, from Educators' eZine
<http://www.techlearning.com/story/showArticle.php?articleID=196513461>

Corporations are constantly organizing and reorganizing in search of the most up to date, innovative and efficient methods of doing business. Ultimately, businesses want to make the most of their money and increase their bottom line. They seek more efficient work practices, better products in the marketplace, and more attention to detail and quality, be it product or service.

As the building block of our society, our schools deserve the same diligence that companies give to their businesses. Re-directing schools to adapt 21st Century Learning means change – which is not always easy. No matter how you look at it, change means rocking the boat. Along with the technology tools and skills that 21st Century Learning demands, come shifts in the way teachers think and teach in the classroom. For many, this represents a huge departure from the chalkboards and lesson plans we have relied on for years. So if we know it is imperative to face the rocky waters and seriously commit to creating 21st Century Learning Environments in our schools, how can we make it easier?

1. **Communicate.** Open and consistent communication is key when attempting to create large-scale change. The more your team feels involved in the process, the more they will buy in and the more smoothly things will operate.

2. **Understand the Change Process.** Don't just go into the project without really knowing what to expect. The more educated you are about the change process, the fewer surprises you will have as you actually put new procedures in place.

3. **Recognize Barriers to Change.** Again, educating yourself can be your biggest ally in this process. If you know the common barriers and responses to change, you will be more prepared to “coach” your team through the process. Arming yourself with information in advance will make your job easier in the long run.

4. **Set Goals.** Setting clear goals that are timely and measurable will help you navigate your course with ease. Goals help us organize our action and move forward to the

results sought. Further, when everyone knows and agrees on the goals, the team can move forward with more direct focus.

5. **Work as a Team.** The whole is greater than...well you know the rest. Working as a team can make the difference between sinking and staying afloat. Effective teams communicate, trust, support and inspire one another to the end goal. No matter where you are in this process, it's not too late to enhance your team building efforts. Creating a cohesive team will be your greatest asset not only in building technology into your school, but in everything that you do together as a school community.

6. **Create Accountability.** Accountability helps people stay on target and not put their goals on the back burner. By constructing vehicles for accountability, you create clear expectations and a way that your team can support each other.

7. **Evaluate.** Evaluation lets you know where you are compared to where you were and where you want to be. It also helps you know what's working and what could be improved. Evaluation is a sister to accountability because it also helps people stay on track and know how they are doing in the process.

8. **Celebrate!** As we all know, technology doesn't stop evolving, so we never “graduate” to a fully technical environment. However, it is essential that you regularly look at how far you have come and celebrate. Remember that it is not just the destination, but the journey that makes you successful in evolving to a 21st Century Learning Environment. The more fun the journey, the less you end up rocking the boat! Jump in and enjoy the process.

