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## Personal Technology Plan

Regardless of how involved individual students, teachers, and schools are in the world of educational technology, it is impossible for any to deny the prevalence of technology in today's educational system. Beyond technology literacy needs for students there are requirements set before teachers and students by each state's curriculum expectations. According to the [State of Michigan Educational Technology Plan](#), it is every teacher's job to create the experiences necessary for students to become global competitors in the technological world. Because technology is an unavoidable and now a very necessary part of today's society, students rely on teachers for the preparation they need to be competitive in the workforce. This reliance does not need to be seen as a burden, however, but instead a blessing. Seeing that technology is all around the world today and that students are so naturally inclined to use it, I find it wonderful to have so much access to it in my classroom and to be encouraged to use it to my students' benefit in learning.

Almost every job in society today relies heavily on one's ability to make use of technology to quicken the pace, quicken the accuracy, and quicken the profit. It is impossible not to see that we've become so accustomed to using and needing the technology to survive everyday life and that any deviation from the plowing forward we've been doing to investigate new technological opportunities would be seen as going backwards for our society. Rather than seeing this dependence upon technology as a bothersome thing, we need to continue our pursuit of keeping up with the capabilities of technology for the sake of moving forward. Technology truly has transformed life as we know it, and it continues to do so for each soul of each generation, as that technology we began our lives with becomes obsolete before we graduate from kindergarten.

This isn't to say that technology is a bad thing, however. It is to say that we need to employ technology to our greatest advantage. Not only has the business world realized this, but the world of education has long since noticed it as well. It is because of this realization that we even have the call before us to teach technology and its effective use to our students. It is also because of this that our students are begging us to do so with creativity, energy, and innovative mindsets. As I come into my classroom filled with technology of many kinds, I approach it with an analyzing mindset. I want to use it, and I want my students to enjoy the creativity and play which can accompany new technology. But I also want to teach them to use it as a tool. And so I teach lessons that rely heavily on technology to be accomplished and in which I can see technology working for me in real-world scenarios. I want to achieve the state standards for teaching technology as well as interest my students, and thus I set out to hold their attention with new and exciting opportunities for learning.

The danger in this mindset, of course, is that I may become too wrapped up in technology for technology's sake, and that I might lose sight of the learning that is really my goal for my students. To avoid complete reliance on technology I try to stay balanced. As I teach a lesson using the graphing calculator to organize and view data, I also remind

students and possibly even lead them through the process of how to do the same work by hand. And while this is all done with a well-intentioned heart, I am using even more class time to do the same thing twice—in two unique ways, yes—instead of making the learning more seamless and efficient.

As technology continues to grow us into the future (note that is “grow us” rather than “grow with us”) we as educators need to constantly be evaluating our intentions for directing student learning. Technology is by no means a bad thing; in fact, it has been changing civilization for many, many generations and will continue for all time. Educational technology has continued to keep up with society and should keep doing so, as school is the place where tomorrow’s workforce will get its education and preparation.

My own experience with technology in education began much earlier than my life as a teacher. Growing up and attending school in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, technology was often a part of my schooling. At home, my dad encouraged my use of technology and modeled for me a curious and exploratory approach to the subject. I was taught that technology was a tool and a means to an end—not the end itself. Because of this, I do enjoy being wowed by technology and all that it can do for me today, but I do not get wrapped up in that thought of it or forget that it is just that: a tool.

In my classroom, I try to model for students an inquisitive view of the world. I want my students to understand that the world is always changing and flowing and that we, as citizens of that world, need to be willing to change too. When it comes to technology in the world and workplace, we find that there is always more to learn. When looking at the results of my technology survey it became clear that my students—although active members in the technological age of today—do not have a very well-rounded experience with technology. They are familiar with cell phones and iPods, laptop computers and the World Wide Web, but they do not know how to use Microsoft Excel to set up a spreadsheet or video editing software to make a movie. Many students have digital cameras but are not familiar with creative photo editing or managing software. In my classroom, I want to change that. I am trying to teach my students to have a more well-rounded view of the technology around them and to understand that it *can* do a lot for them, but only if they step out on a limb and experience it.

Being a teacher who sees the need for technology education and the advantages of it, I work hard to understand the technology available to me and to apply it to my classroom. I analyze the usefulness of specific technologies and try to incorporate what is available to me whenever I can. I have desktop and laptop computers that I use every day for basic classroom management and lesson creation, and I also use a projector and document camera to try to make learning more interactive and personal—as well as easier to see and experience—for my students. My students are familiar with and accustomed to those technologies that I use every day.

Beyond this basic approach to technology though, I am working to foster understanding in my math students that technology is a very powerful tool for understanding and sharing mathematical concepts. By using graphing calculators, we can see real-world data come to life in a very analytical way. These calculators work faster and more accurately, with cleaner results, than we can work by hand—especially under the limited time constraints of normal class periods. Outside of being time savers, learning to use the new graphing calculators that our school has purchased (sets of TI-

Nspires) is helping my students to practice skills that they can apply to computer software for data management and analysis in their future careers.

Recently I also acquired a Mimeo for use in my classroom, and this piece of technology has done great things for student motivation and interest. The Mimeo turns my white board basically into a smart board, with even better technology as it allows me to access my computer desktop via the projector's image on the whiteboard. This allows students to write with special pens that show up as writing on my computer and to push buttons on a four-foot-tall simulated image of the same graphing calculator they have at their seat. Since beginning to use this technology even only for warm ups at the beginning of class, I have students who never cared to answer questions on the board before now begging to give it a try. I also find that this technology makes it easier for me to instruct with the calculator simulator because it is much larger and easier to read than me putting my graphing calculator under my document camera like I used to.

As I continue learning about technology and its available uses in education, I plan to continue practicing using technology in my classroom and finding more effective means of material delivery with the options available. One way I am doing this now is by taking classes towards my master's degree in Educational Technology. As I continue past the certificate program, I will learn a great deal more about technology theory and practice more skills for using technology effectively in my classroom.

Another way I want to become more involved in technology is by using my skills in my school as well as in the classroom. Because I am more technologically savvy than some of my colleagues, I am often called upon to help with Microsoft Excel formatting and internet problems, among other things. A couple of my fellow teachers have mentioned my needing to run some sort of training for some of the things I'm learning to do through my Michigan State classes. As I get further through my courses, I am realizing that I actually *am* building a realm of useful knowledge that my colleagues may not have, and I would like to begin helping out more and bringing them along into the future.

One way I know this technology-based method of teaching is going to start really taking off for me soon is by my getting the TI-Navigator system implemented in my classroom (which should happen next school year) and by helping another math teacher to do the same. Our math department as a whole is working hard to incorporate more real-world applications into our material and to bring the technology available to us along to help our students master the more rigorous Michigan Merit Curriculum. The Navigator system is going to revolutionize the way I structure my math classroom, placing great emphasis on technology and using it as a means to master mathematical concepts in an interesting and efficient way. I plan to use it to increase motivation in my students to work hard and focus during class, as well as to find ways to apply the concepts studied to their everyday lives.

I will also increase my knowledge of technological "hot" topics in the world of education, as I am well aware that there are new products and resources available all the time and that research is constantly being done pertaining to different technology's effectiveness for learning. Outside of reading blogs and RSS feeds such as [Techlearning](#), I plan to become more aware of state level issues regarding technology in education. By becoming more familiar with the state technology standards for education I can help to

ensure that my students are being taught what will be expected of them in the workforce and on standardized tests.

My plans for using technology in my classroom stretch far beyond these next couple of years. Although I do not intend to become a technology director, I do intend to continue becoming a leader in technology in my school. This summer I will be receiving technology training in our ISD's new Data Director System for common assessment management and also to complete more training in the TI-Nspire-enhanced way of teaching Geometry. For the next year and a half I will be working towards earning my Master's of Educational Technology. As a part of that program, I will be taking a course specifically geared towards teaching math using technology. After I complete my coursework I will continue to make use of what I learn and to begin attending or leading more trainings that focus on technology as a theory for driving instruction. I am finding that it is completely necessary to teach with technology as we are commanded by the State of Michigan to be not only content area teachers but teachers of technology as well.

There are many everyday technologies available to me in my classroom and school that I use often without a thought. I would like to train myself to be more intentional with how I am using that technology to best enhance learning, rather than using it just because it is there. One of my most recently realized beliefs about technology in education revolves around the idea that technology, in addition to being innovative, should be used to actually enhance instruction and do something that cannot be done the same without it. Technology isn't meant to dazzle and excite without actually doing something new; I plan to practice the use of technology in my own classroom and to encourage my colleagues towards that end as well.