

East Noble's Pedagogical Shifts Benefit All Students

By Ann Linson



Five years ago, East Noble School Corporation began a technology journey by providing all students in grades K-12 a tablet or laptop partnered with a robust infrastructure including Wi-Fi in all buildings. We believed these devices contributed to our efforts of preparing students to be career and learner ready. How naive we truly were!

We quickly learned that vision does not become reality in a swift and painless manner. Our vision is to have technology integration become a natural part of daily instruction in a student centered, student driven learning environment where the vital skills of collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, and communication are being developed to ensure students are future ready.

As we all know, giving a device to students does not mean students or teachers will use the device to its maximum potential or dramatically change the learning environment! During that first year of integration, we had pockets of high level integration; however, we had more pockets of low level substitution. We were "ok" with substitution as long as we were seeing progressively more complex integration that moved toward our vision and goal of creating a student driven learning environment that included deeper levels of learning through analysis, creation, evaluation, and application of skills and knowledge. Substitution still happens today and it may be appropriate at times. However, students expect and are capable of so much more!

During the past five years, we have seen significant changes in classroom pedagogy, as well as curriculum focus, in our efforts to prepare students for the world in which they will live rather than the world of school accountability. Learning now has the possibility of taking place on the student's schedule and interests rather than a regimented school schedule since all K-12 students take their devices home nightly. When walking into an engaged, technology rich classroom, you will most likely see a flexible learning environment, student and teacher movement, noise, and, oftentimes, perceived chaos.

Teachers are facilitators of learning who have perfected their questioning skills in a way that inspires students to use technology as a tool to debate, research, create, collaborate, demonstrate, and share their work. You will see groups of students who may be collaborating through a single, sharable document or using video conferencing to interview an expert across the world. A chaotic classroom may be the best demonstration of differentiated learning where all students are focused on the same lesson but using multiple levels of activities or resources that inspire and motivate them. Students can express themselves through video, art, audio, blogs, interactive field trips, and numerous other engaging activities that are current and relevant. When using a tool with "serious" *unlimited* possibilities, students and teachers now have choice and voice in authentic learning paths using an endless supply of digital resources.

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Traditional lecture is now replaced with a flipped lesson. Using this strategy, instruction is provided through short videos, which allows the teacher to work with students in small groups or independently which creates a more personalized learning environment. Through shared documents, authentic feedback can be given in written and auditory forms by both teachers and students which allows uninterrupted progress from the student. No longer does it take days or weeks for a student to receive critical feedback. Students are engaged in authentic projects that solve real world problems and give students meaning to their work.

Technology integration as a natural part of instruction has changed our learning environment from a teacher centered environment to a student centered environment. This has completely transformed the profession of teaching in our district. For those teachers who embrace the “facilitator of learning” role, they are seeing significant progress, increased independence, and engagement from students. They now have more time to build relationships and trust with students.

Instead of standardized tests, this pedagogical shift allows our teachers to focus on learning...the true point of education.

