

Guest Commentary

Technology skills will help students be better citizens

BY DEB EDWARDS

Maximizing Potential with 1:1 technology in East Noble schools will go beyond math facts. Before administrators considered moving forward with this technology initiative the impact on student learning was examined by East Noble curriculum experts, led by Amy Heavin, curriculum director and principal at the

Critical thinking and problem solving are essential to creative and innovative decision making ... Without these skills students (believe) that everything on the Internet is true.

alternative school.

The district is going to integrate a technology learning device for every student beginning in the 2011-2012 school year.

Surely a technology device can supplement current instructional methods to reinforce

basics such as math, science and language arts. But it will do more than that. With supervision, using technology students can be directed as to which information is valid and which is not. The old saying, "Don't believe everything you read" is alive and well, especially in reference to digital information and especially in reference to young people. Eventually students will gain the critical thinking skills needed to determine valid sources.

In addition, students will use critical thinking skills to do many things they are already doing, such as planning and conducting research for a science project or research paper. They will also be better prepared to organize and manage such a project using digital tools and resources. Learning expectations will include that students understand how to use various tools, applications and digital concepts in order to quickly gather and evaluate the information.

Misinformation can be quickly spread through social networking such as Facebook, Twitter and others. Tools for communication and initiating change can be used for very good causes; the tools can also be used for destructive purposes. Students need to practice proper virtual discussion techniques with supervision so that social networking does not have unintended negative consequences.

This kind of global interaction requires critical thinking skills that are sensitive to moral interpretation of information. Using digital media collaboratively with supervision will enable students to participate in virtual groups, and partner with one another to give an understanding of how virtual groups can result in real change or consequences.

Technology tools are just that, tools ... tools to get, distribute and organize information. Recent developments in technology tools enable users to interact and discuss on a global level for social, political and environmental change.

East Noble's initiative to maximize potential with 1:1 technology can enable parents, teachers and students to partner in developing a sense of community to embrace learning. Learning a new terminology for technology takes practice with the tools. This is essential for all students in the 21st century. Education in the 21st century for East Noble students will be able to include guidelines for establishing responsible virtual behavior with creativity and innovation.

DEB EDWARDS is the East Noble occupational therapist. Technology and education questions should be directed to Ann Linson, superintendent, at alinson@eastnoble.net or 347-2502.