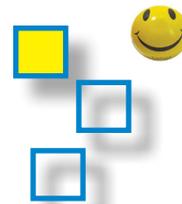


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White Board

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Let's Stop Blaming Technology

EVERY NOW AND AGAIN, an article about the perceived failure of technology in schools to realize the anticipated, expected promise of improved student learning and achievement crosses into my radar. I typically dismiss these articles because they usually present flawed and incomplete arguments, and/or fail to recognize the complexity of the situation. One of these articles, by Mark Bauerlein, crossed my virtual desk today -- *Online Literacy Is a Lesser Kind - Slow reading counterbalances Web skimming* -- and I am compelled to reflect. Here are my thoughts regarding the assumptions that often underlie the "failure of technology in the classroom" argument:

(a) Access to technology equates to effective instructional use of technology and appropriate integration of technology. The one thing teachers and students can tell us is that putting computers with Internet access in the classroom doesn't lead to automatic academic enhancements. In fact, without attending to infrastructure -- faculty and student training, instructional approaches and strategies, incentives and rewards, assessment and accountability, and the like -- technology can serve as a distraction, and derail attention to student learning and achievement. When schools do attend to infrastructure, then technology can be integrated with positive results. Not only for student learning and achievement, but to enhance students' motivation to learning, prepare students to use technology in productive ways (to support inquiry, knowledge construction, communication and collaboration, and expression), connect students and faculty to the world outside of the classroom, and reenergize teachers' instructional practice. That's pretty powerful stuff...but, cannot occur by only providing access.

(b) All content on the Web should be read and processed in the same way as content in books, articles, and print in general. If that's the case, then the Internet becomes just a

way to deliver print instead of something that is unique, giving us a different view on and way to work with content. Thinking about my own use of the Web, when I want to quickly gather ideas and information, then I scan Web content (following the "F pattern" -- or the like -- described in Bauerlein's article). But, if my purpose for access Web content requires deeper processing, then I approach the Web (and other resources, regardless of format) differently. So, context and purpose is an important aspect of this discussion, not addressed in the article.

(c) The problem is technology. I am so tired of this argument. Have the machines finally taken over as predicted by the Terminator movies? This is insulting to educators because it assumes that we don't use tools based on our expertise. As if a tool is just plunked into our classrooms, and we blindly use it (or not) without any consideration of student learning and achievement. Instead, the issue has to do with how educators use technology, and our need to address technology and information literacy in our classrooms. We need to help students (and our colleagues sometimes) learn how to use technology and online resources appropriately. This is not a failure of technology, but a failure of attending to the appropriate integration and use of technology and a failure to support educators in this endeavor (via training, support services, learning communities, strategies, resources, and TIME).

Now is the time to get real about technology and information literacy. We need to prepare students for their professions and for a world that increasingly uses technology in all aspects of daily function. Let's focus our attention on improving student learning and achievement, using all of the tools we have available to us.

Joni Dunlap, Let's Stop Blaming Technology, Thoughts on Teaching, October 2, 2008, [http://thoughtsonteaching-jdunlap.blogspot.com/2008/10/lets-stop-blaming-technology.html], June 21, 2010.

Faculty Workshops

August 2010



Fall Classes Begin: September 1
Open House: September 18
Faculty Meeting: September 29

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First Monday of the Month

September 6	March 7
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Center for Effective
Undergraduate Teaching
Carnel Learning Center, Suite 106.
Phone: 388-8426

Teaching Academic Honesty in the Classroom

THE PAST FEW WEEKS have seen a flurry of discussion around cheating and academic dishonesty, a perennial issue made fresh in part by Centenary College's decision to discontinue a program in China due to the high incidence of cheating among the program's students. The incident raised the question of how to clearly communicate (and police) academic honesty, not only among international students but also among domestic students. Given that many cases of inappropriate academic behavior arise from a fundamental misunderstanding of what constitutes academic work (rather than from an intention to cheat), relying on Turnitin and similar services to "catch" plagiarists is not by itself enough to address the issue.

We asked Tony Bates, president and CEO of Tony Bates Associates Ltd. and a key researcher on teaching and learning in the digital age, to offer a fresh perspective on how colleges can encourage the academic success of their students by addressing expectations around academic honesty more proactively.

Diagnosing the Issue

Bates suggests that the key issue is not getting students to adhere to rules, but getting them to develop the learning skills needed to succeed in an increasingly collaborative learning environment. Students need to be assessed not only on course content but also on critical learning skills, including:

- How well they reference sources
- How well they acknowledge the work of others
- Their contributions to collaborative work
- Their ability to separate their own contributions and conclusions from those of others in a collaborative learning environment

Attitudes toward intellectual property are changing. Students are used to open access to information on the Internet, file sharing, mixing and mashing media, cutting and pasting. - Tony Bates, Tony Bates Associates Ltd.

The difficulty, as Bates and others have suggested, is that the concept of intellectual property and what constitutes "cheating" is in flux both inside and outside of the classroom. Bates remarks, "What medical student now tries to remember all the possible drug interactions, but instead learns where to look up the information? If she did that in an exam, would it be cheating? The Hewlett Foundation and prestigious schools such as MIT extol the use of open content and the free flow of knowledge. Students

helping each other with their assignments used to be called 'cheating,' but is now called 'collaborative learning.'"

Three Critical Steps to Take

Given this climate, Bates recommends three critical steps to help students internalize academic integrity principles and develop appropriate learning skills:

- Create course-specific documents that clarify what academic behavior is not acceptable
- Use first offenses as teachable moments
- Integrate teaching on academic honesty and collaborative work into the first week of some first-year courses

"Some students will still cheat," Bates says, "even when they know the rules, and these cases should be identified and the institutional penalties enforced." But there are steps educators can take to help foster both an understanding and a climate of academic honesty in the classroom.

Clarify What Isn't Acceptable

Often rules, values, and principles about how to behave as a student are taken for granted, implicit, or unclear. You may know them, but often students don't. Institutional policy is sometimes buried deep in unfriendly documentation that is difficult for students to find or understand. Make sure students know where you stand from the very beginning of the course. - Tony Bates, Tony Bates Associates Ltd.

Bates recommends encouraging instructors to prepare a document that outlines "appropriate academic behavior." By supplementing the institutional policy on plagiarism with a course-specific document, an instructor can offer specific, concrete examples relevant to a particular course. Bates also suggests making sure these documents address more than just plagiarism in academic writing. Be clear on what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behavior in plagiarism, citation, collaborative work, sharing, and copying notes from other students. "Often these behaviors are not black and white," Bates warns, "but have shades of gray. You need to be clear with your students on where the boundaries are."

Use Breaches of Policy as

Teachable Moments

Many institutions have adopted a zero-tolerance no-plagiarism policy (for instance, requiring instructors to assign a failing grade for the course to a student who included plagiarized content in an assignment), but Bates worries that this strict approach sacrifices the opportunity for teachable moments.

"Instead of coming down heavily on a student who has broken the rules," Bates suggests, "make this a teaching opportunity the first time it occurs. Without identifying the student, give the example and ask the students what they think about this. When the discussion has run its course, give your and/or the institution's position, and make it clear that there are consequences if this happens again."

Integrate Teaching on Academic Honesty into First-Year Courses

First-year undergraduate courses present a critical opportunity to both reinforce policies on academic honesty and help students develop research and collaborative learning skills appropriately. During the first week of a course, an instructor can help set students up for academic success by walking them, interactively, through possible scenarios.

Bates offers one example of an exercise that has seen success in his own courses:

- Place the students in small groups of three or four
- Assign each group an exercise that involves finding information about one of the course topics (make sure to include guidelines on identifying sources and expectations for collaborative work)
- Ask each group to produce a page or two showing what they found
- Select three or four examples to discuss with the class the following week

When debriefing the examples, include discussion of whether these examples have followed the guidelines on citation and proper use of sources and the guidelines for collaborative group work. Bates suggests making this an ungraded (or minimally graded) exercise but having an open conversation about how the examples would have been graded, and why. "Encourage students to comment or ask questions, especially about how to assess collaborative work," he says.

Many issues and misconceptions your students have will arise during this first exercise, in a low-threat environment, as opposed to arising later during a critical point in their work. This exercise also allows the students to explore the issues while beginning their actual work toward the course's learning outcomes.

Daniel Fusch, Teaching Academic Honesty in the Classroom, Academic Impressions, August 19, 2010 [http://www.academicimpressions.com/news.php?i=105&q=6229o396946gL], August 23, 2010.