



Monograph

Technology in the Classroom

Part 1 – Privacy and Safety

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This monograph outlines some recent questions and concerns that have arisen from Board Technology programs. Specifically, your Federation has concerns around your privacy, safety and the erosion of your personal time.

Privacy

There is growing concern that many of the Apps and platforms we are implementing are sacrificing our students' and our own privacy. A recent piece on [CBC radio's Spark was dedicated to this topic](#).

Despite what we are told, that the Ministry has a special agreement with Google to protect student privacy, that protection is very limited. From the Spark story:

“According to Google's privacy policy for their educational products, the company doesn't collect student data for advertising purposes or sell them to third parties. The apps are also ad-free. But that doesn't mean Google isn't collecting data on students. The policy allows for the collection of information including location or GPS data, what mobile network a user is on, or their phone number.”

Also, according to David Murakami Wood at Queen's Surveillance Studies, in a recent presentation to parents and educators, “One of the general lessons of surveillance research is that surveillance [or data collection] tools end up being used to watch the workers who use them – i.e. teachers and staff.”

It is time we start to think about the implications of these technologies in our classrooms to protect ourselves and our students. An excellent resource was recently published by the Badass Teachers Association called [“Educator Toolkit for Teacher and Student Privacy: A Practical Guide for Protecting Personal Data”](#). Although it is American, it has a lot of applicable information for Canadian educators.

Health and safety

Besides the privacy concerns, there are serious concerns about health and safety related to screens and wireless technologies. There is mounting evidence that while digital technology brings many benefits, screens can actually harm learning by hindering cognitive development. Too much screen time can affect sleep, eyesight, mental health and is even associated with type 2 diabetes, obesity and coronary disease. This is all besides the fact that, during our classes, devices are used for cyberbullying and other very negative activities. OSSTF is advocating for a system by which Teachers can control the WiFi from their own classrooms so that they can decide when students can or can't access the free data. At the Joint Health and Safety Committee, Scot Gillam has said Teachers can contact Andre to request to have the WiFi turned off in certain locations at certain times.

Another aspect of health and safety is related to the proliferation of wireless signals (radiofrequency EMFs). There are legitimate health concerns that some parents and staff have about this. For more information, visit the Environmental Health Trust website (www.EHTrust.org).

A corporate agenda

As supporters of Public Education we must be cautious about what we bring into our classrooms. Part of this must be in resisting the corporatization of schools by Apple, Google, Desire-2-Learn, Microsoft and others.

Often, this corporatization is embedded in language that encourages you to be; “a 21st Century Teacher/Learner” by “transforming your practice” as you “lead with pedagogy and follow with technology”.

Unfortunately, much of the education reform today is driven by corporations. The P21 Foundation was started in 2002 by AOL Time Warner Foundation, Apple, Cisco, Dell, Microsoft, the National Education Association, the US Department of Education and others. It was this group of partners that brought us “21st Century Skills”, also called Global Competencies, Personalized Learning, Blended Learning and the STEM push. They promote these products with their own “research” and peddle them to Ministries of Education around the world. Indeed, most Ministries have become partners in this initiative without asking the question, “Where’s the [real] evidence?”

The motive? Education for cheap by replacing Teachers with machines and massive corporate profits. You only need to look to our post-secondary institutions to see it has been done.