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Why EdTech PD is a Necessary Part of Teaching after the Pandemic?

~ estimated 20-minute read ~

Hello, everyone, and welcome to my podcast topic this episode, Why EdTech PD is a Necessary Part of Teaching after the Pandemic.

If you were teaching BEFORE March 2020, you can easily compare what you knew about and did with EdTech with what you know about EdTech now. Whew! What a tailspin!

As an educational technology instruction coach, part-time from 2012 to 2016, and fulltime since 2016, both principals at each high school gave me the goal to have 90-100% of teachers in our LMS, teaching, student learning, and assigning assessments. When I coached in the first high school in the urban education public school district I coach, there were 43% in 2016 before I moved to the next high school, compared to no teachers in the LMS when I began in 2012. Forty-three percent is not bad, given the school district in the four years I coached at that school went through THREE DIFFERENT LMSs: itslearning out of Norway, Blackboard, and Canvas. In the second high school where the school opened

brand new in 2016, right before March 2020, 65% of the teachers were actively teaching and assessing inside the district's then and present LMS, Canvas.

Before the pandemic, it was easy to place teachers in the following categories according to their use of and feel with technology in their instruction, student learning, and assessment:

- Used it, loved using it, knew exactly what new tech they wanted to try next, and wanted to meet with me weekly
- Used it, started seeing the benefits of using technology inside students' education, but it was not a daily practice
- Used it but was not confident using it and was more afraid of what the backfire and what could go wrong. Did not use the school district LMS, only used EdTech like Kahoot and Nearpod
- Did not use it or want to learn it unless mandated by the school district, for example, for BOY, MOY, and EOY testing, or the mandated digital citizenship curriculum that was posted and shared in our Canvas LMS.

Which category would you place yourself in before March 2020?

I remember when the district announced on March 13, 2020 (on day after March Madness 2020 was cancelled), that we, as a district were going to 100% virtually teaching for the next two weeks (ha!). I remember how the teachers in the bottom two categories above reacted with this news. "Horrified" is what I'd call their reactions. Our spring break that was supposed to be in April was moved to the following week in March, so teachers had a week to prepare for virtual learning. That week was the BUSIEST week of my EdTech coaching career, and a lot of my coaching was not only around the EdTech but building teachers' confidence that they CAN do it. Many teachers shared with me their regrets at that time that they did not learn how to use Canvas sooner. And since that time, many make sure they don't set themselves up for the same mistake with new technology.

What changes have we seen in education since the onset of the Pandemic that make it necessary for teachers to continue learning and using EdTech?

School District Virtual Learning Option

Now here we are, two years later, and either we are teaching back in our physical classrooms fulltime, teaching hybrid with some days in school and other days virtually, or teaching 100% virtually. For the 2021-22 school year, many school districts started a virtual option for students who have a student-first reason that virtual learning works better for these students than going to physical school. Virtual learning during the Pandemic provided the data that not all students do better academically attending school

in-person at a physical location. Also, with the concerns of COVID and the variants, some parents do not feel safe sending their children to school which caused districts who did not have a virtual option in the past for students and parents, to create a virtual learning option for the 21-22 school year. Note, states like Florida, offers a virtual learning option for years, long before the Pandemic.

We, as teachers, also noticed other ways students experienced advantages during virtual learning. You can read about those six advantages in my [Get What IS Working for Students in Virtual Learning to Work for You in your Online Classroom](#) (April 27, 2021) blog post. I'll add the link to the show notes that you'll find at edtechenergy.org/listen13 or melanie.education/listen13.

Teachers Changed Feelings and Confidence about EdTech

Many teachers, as they needed to learn EdTech to teach and assess their students during virtual learning, have increased not just their use but their confidence using EdTech. Teachers also realize how technology engages students in ways direct teaching does not grab and keep students' attention, curiosity, and engagement. With this increase in teacher buy-in and confidence, and seeing how technology increases student engagement, which results in achievement and performance increases, teachers are seeking out new ways to use technology in their instruction, student learning, and assessment. Teachers intend and plan to keep the instruction and learning interactive, innovative, and fresh, and they believe they can do it with tech.

Parents' Expectations in their Children's Education

Let's face it, with parents as the only adult in the "virtual classroom", especially for our younger students, parents got really good with EdTech as well. They learned how to navigate inside school district LMSs, participate in Microsoft Teams virtual classes, and learn how to go through a Nearpod lesson or a Kahoot game or submit assignments online. With that increased experience comes increased expectations. Parents were immersed as the teacher of their children, so they had a front row seat for many of us, a full school year of education. Now, with this increased parental knowledge and exposure of learning and assessment, and how the two go together, parents are in a place to be critical of what we as teachers do with tech inside learning and assessment in the physical classroom. One example of this is that having digital assignments, where students are working on those assignments on a computer or device, there is no way for children to "lose your work or homework." For parents who have children who may lack organization skills, their child not able to lose the child's homework was a huge benefit of virtual learning. If, for example, a teacher goes back to all paper homework when returning to the physical classroom, that may not fly well for some parents.

The Nature of Digital and the Advantages it Brings

Digital lessons, information portals, media, and increased and enhanced methods of interaction, communication, and creativity have made technology a real attention-getter and motivator in the classroom, whether we are in our physical classrooms or virtual classrooms. Gone forever is the passive and static textbook, notebook, and blackboard and chalk type of learning when I was in school so long ago. The big fun thing at that time, was when the teacher rolled in the film projector cart, and we knew we were going to see a movie (projected on the cloth screen the teacher pulled down or set up in the front of the room) that day. We have so many digital assets to use in the classroom to get our students to want to pay attention, want to do the work, and want to be in class. And digital assets cause action, offer manipulation, and place the students in a more interactive state with their education.

Below are some examples of digital assets for instruction, student learning, and assessment:

- Interactive lessons
- Instructional videos
- Images/videos/graphs/charts/timeline/infographics/mind maps/audio/music/sound
- Websites
- Search engines
- Community and global connections and audiences
- Production, creation, documentation, and presentation software
- Gamifications
- Curations of content
- Templates
- Online quizzes and tests
- Online curriculum
- Online courses
- Dual enrollment courses
- Translations

These digital assets close in on what used to be limitations in the classroom. With the openness and accessibility digital brings our students when it comes to availability of content and information, real-world connections, creative tools, interactivity, and placing the information in different scenarios and formats, like educational games, digital assets transform our classrooms to make our instruction, and student learning and assessment interesting, interactive, and innovative.

EdTech Companies are Always Introducing New Features

One thing that the Pandemic virtual learning did was provide EdTech companies information from teachers, students, and parents of what their EdTech tool was lacking. When teachers, students, and parents were using these EdTech tools, they started to post in online forums, and discussions, as well as social media about what problems they were having in using EdTech virtually. These posts gave EdTech companies information and feedback about what their EdTech tool was missing which resulted in EdTech companies adding new features almost weekly. I remember, Microsoft Teams, was advertising a new feature so frequently, I, as a Microsoft Innovative Educator, with the MIE network at my fingertips, was finding it hard to stay on top of all the changes and additions inside of Teams virtual meetings. Nearpod, Pear Deck, and Kahoot also followed suit and upgraded their features. What was SUPER impressive is that many of these EdTech companies offered their EdTech tools FREE to teachers during the March-June 2020 time of virtual learning. I was so impressed with generosity these companies extended to support teachers, students, and parents during virtual learning.

Another plus EdTech companies added is very comprehensive teacher training on their websites. You can find webinars, recordings, and step-by-step guides, manuals, and a Help team available and ready to support teachers. Many EdTech companies' Help assistance is 24/7 which also was not the norm prior to the Pandemic. What I really like about this around-the-clock support is it gives teachers who feel nervous about using technology some relief in knowing help is on the way any time of the day when teachers have questions or a problem that needs to be solved prior to the day's lesson or assignment.

EdTech Has Now Become a Criterion on Teacher Evaluation Rubrics

Prior to the Pandemic, the use of EdTech was not on our school district's teacher evaluation rubric. I asked, during the 2012-2020 school years, if we could give credit to teachers who were using technology in their classroom during teacher evaluations, bonus or extra points, since I wanted to give teachers another reason to use EdTech in their instruction, student learning, and assessment. I also wanted to reward the teachers who were using it and who were seeing increased student engagement and achievement in their classrooms. But even though extra points were not given or included in the teacher evaluation rubric, the teachers who used EdTech in their classroom WERE getting the higher teacher evaluations because administrators were seeing higher student engagement, initiative, and participation during the evaluation.

Now, with EdTech being high on our school district's expectations in the classroom, EdTech is now on our teacher evaluation rubric. Using EdTech in the classroom and using it in creative and effective ways are now paying off financially for our teachers, since teachers in our school district receive a monetary bonus when they receive a highly effective rating for a school year.

Using EdTech is a HUGE Timesaver for Teachers when it comes to Gathering Data

Now when teachers use EdTech tools like LMSs, Nearpod, Teams, and Clever, those platforms offer teachers learning analytics that provide data about student participation, achievement, grade averages, responses, and time length of interaction. The access to these types of data makes it so easy for teachers to have the type of data administrators want teachers to use to make data-driven decisions about instruction, re-teaching, and student assessment. No longer do teachers need to gather the data and calculate the averages; learning analytics are available to the teachers where Reports or Analytics are available inside the EdTech Tool.

One digital student assessment that always gets high results for students and teachers is **student video assessments**. This month (November 2021) in my [**EdTechEnergy Momentum EdTech Coaching membership**](#), the EdTech assets are about **Student Video Creation Assessment**. And to help teachers plan, design, create, deliver, implement, differentiate, and evaluate student video assessments.

The following resources are available to EdTechEnergy Momentum members in November 2021:

WEEK 1: Student Video Project (Summative) or Assignment (Formative) lesson in both audio and video formats (55:39 minutes)

WEEK 2: Step-by-Step Guide with screenshots on how to create a video using Microsoft PowerPoint

WEEK 3: Timesaving templates that provide teachers what they may use when assigning a video creation project or assignment to students

- Video Creation Time-management Timeline
- Video Creation Storyboard
- Media Licenses TASL Attribution Cheat Sheet

Grab the **Student TASL Approach to Attribution Cheat Sheet** here:

https://engage.edtechenergy.org/tasl_attribution_cheat_sheet

- High School Video Creation Rubric
- Middle School Video Creation Rubric

WEEK 4: Implementation Guidelines and Resources about Student Video Projects (Summative) or Assignments (Formative)

- Video Creation Assignment Blueprint
- Video Creation Peer Review Template
- Student Video Creation Reflection Template

If you are interested in joining the **EdTechEnergy Momentum EdTech Coaching membership**, click on the link below. The cost of membership is \$19/month or \$199/annually, saving you 12%.

Click here to join: <https://edtechenergy.thinkific.com/courses/edtechenergy-momentum>

I'll add the link to the show notes that you'll find at edtechenergy.org/listen13 or melanie.education/listen13.

Cancel anytime. Membership ends when the paid subscription time ends.

Why is EdTech professional development so important for teachers to participate and succeed in since March 2020? Teaching and learning has forever changed as well as the expectations administrators, parents, and students have about our instruction and their learning and assessments.

For the reasons below, make EdTech PD a part of your career currency and advancement.

1. School District Virtual Learning Option
2. Teachers Changed Feelings and Confidence about EdTech
3. Parents' Expectations in their Children's Education
4. The Nature of Digital and the Advantages it Brings
5. EdTech Companies are Always Introducing New Features
6. EdTech Has Now Become a Criterion on Teacher Evaluation Rubrics
7. Using EdTech is a HUGE Timesaver for Teachers when it comes to Gathering Data

With all these changes, teachers should make EdTech professional development part of their career plan. EdTech PD is so important for teachers to participate and succeed in since, I do believe, our delivery, design, media, and scope of our instruction, student learning, and assessment HAS changed forever moving forward.

Remember, EdTech PD can be as comprehensive as enrolling in an EdTech PD course about a specific topic or viewing an EdTech video on YouTube or a webinar recording on your favorite EdTech tool.

As teachers, EdTech PD should now be a natural part of our practice keeping students engaged and successful in our classroom. Digital information, media, interactivity, real world connections and examples, portability, and more make EdTech a welcome change in our physical and virtual classroom. Make EdTech your friend and virtual assistant by keeping EdTech PD as part of your practice and passion.

I've put together an [Edtech PD Checklist](#) for teachers to self-assess their EdTech knowledge, skills, and proficiency to bring structure and a planner timeline for your EdTech PD. You can grab that EdTech PD Checklist at the link below:

<https://engage.edtechenergy.org/edtech-skills-checklist>

Please comment below—What will be your next EdTech PD you take in? I'd love to know and please remember to share the link.

Share your ideas in the comments below. Or share them on social media and tag @EdTechenergy. I would love to read all your technology integration magic!

Remember, you can find today's show notes at edtechenergy.org/listen13 or melanie.education/listen13.

Next week's EdTech Episode topic: Where and How do you find EdTech PD as a teacher on your own? I will give you some tips and tricks that will make self-chosen EdTech PD in your career something you look forward to, and gets you excited as well as those higher teacher evaluation scores!

Remember, you can find today's show notes at edtechenergy.org/listen13 or melanie.education/listen13.

And some special news to announce this week: I have opened an EdTechEnergy store on TeachersPayTeachers and I am SO EXCITED to offer for purchase some of my EdTech creations with teachers who want to up their game with EdTech. Check out my store on TeachersPayTeachers the next time you are on the site.

Thank you for listening everyone to this episode on the importance of including EdTech PD into your teaching career. Make yourself timeless in your effectiveness as your students' teacher.