Teachnology: Teaching and Learning with Evolving Technologies

While attending the NCTE (National Council of Teachers of English) conference in 2010, Bud Hunt, Troy Hicks Ph.D., and Sara Kajder Ph.D. discussed how literacy was in an interesting period of change as technology continues to evolve. One idea that particularly stood out was Bud Hunt's commentary regarding his daughter ability to not only access content on demand with an iPad, but also interact with the text and literally change how she took in information. I often think back to that moment in my professional development, as it was then that I began to consider how influential technology could be in education.

Before that moment I had always had an interest in technology, but considered it more of a cute novelty that could be added to teaching, as most of my mentors did not have a strong understanding of how to apply these resources. Regardless, I had a strong interest in technology and knew students did as well. This in mind, I began the Michigan State University Educational Technology Certificate Program. Here is where I discovered TPACK and found that the key to changing how students learn through technology was not to expect tools to teach, but rather know why the tool is important to the content you are planning to teach.

After the first set of courses, I felt that I was truly able to change how I applied technology. The results I was seeing in my students work motivated me to pursue the Masters of Arts in Educational Technology. When I applied to 2011, Google Docs and the iPad were just starting to catch on, and I commented in my video submission that the increase interaction these tools were allowing users to experience with reading and writing was simply amazing. These tools available had changed the common practice of reading, then writing, and finally waiting for a response. All parts of academic conversations were now happening instantaneously. I couldn't quite wrap my head around this, but in my narration reflected my excitement to know more

At about the same time, I was hired to join a school in which students had a 1:1 laptop program. I believed many would share the same ideas I had, but instead I faced a staff that didn't really care about tools they hadn't heard of before. This disappointment was a burden I carried when I headed to the year two MAET Summer 2011 hybrid program. I wanted to know more so I could bring it back to these fellow staff members.

During time I spend with these folks, I enjoyed rich conversation with great people and gained both insight and knowledge. Yet, it was the wise words of Kristen DeBruler (formerly Kereluik) that stood out to me. She commented that everything that we use is a technology, as it is an advanced model of a previous tool. I don't know if she spent many a night pondering this, or if the thought was

generated from our conversation, but it changed how I viewed my approach to using technology in the classroom. No longer did the latest and greatest tool need to be applied to responsible for effective teaching. A past tool could work better than one was relatively more recent. The important thing is the right tool is used for the job considering what we are teaching and what our students will need in their own set of skills for the future.