

My second blog! Technology in PE

Anyone who knows me knows that I absolutely love technology. I love using my Apps on my phone, I have about 50 GB of photos and videos of my classes, and this website is proof I can handle software.

I had no idea that technology would move forward at such a fast and furious pace but I love technology and have been enjoying the evolution of all of the advancements, including how technology use has revolutionized the way that students participate and learn in Physical Education.

Recently I listened to a podcast called Technology in Action, and it made me realize how the advancement of technology has the potential to cause a revolution in your Physical Education program. In the past I used pedometers and heart rate monitors, created digital newsletters, and used digital cameras to create slide shows. You can still use pedometers in Physical Education, but the vast array of iPad apps that can be used to teach content, increase physical activity, assist with classroom management, and assess students cognitively, behaviourally, and physically makes it such fun! In such a relatively short period of time, I have gone from enjoying technology as a novelty to becoming dependent on technology every single day in my Physical Education class! In fact, I do not know what I would do without my iPad! I firmly believe that technology can be both positive and negative, so it is up to us as adults to model use of technology in such a way so that our students can be good “consumers”. We should show students how technology can be a positive influence in their lives for health and wellness.

Applying Technology to PE Class

The addition of wireless access in the gym has been ground breaking. This advancement has allowed me to access the wealth of information that I can make available to my students. For example, I can show students videos of exciting events like the Winter Olympics, or I can reach back into the past and show Louis Armstrong (in black and white) performing What a Wonderful World!

While paper and pencil assessment is perfectly valuable and I do utilize this method of assessment for my portfolios and other assessments, technology allows me to collect data quickly and effectively for a large number of students. For example, using an application called Plickers I can gather data on hundreds of students a day in just minutes. This data can then be managed, organized, and reported with a few clicks. I use this data as both formative and summative assessment, which drives my planning and lesson delivery in a much more effective and efficient manner.

When I was a young teacher, teams and groupings were made using captains. We all know how awful it is to have a student picked last and have their feelings hurt. The technology revolution has taken this task out of my hands with very positive results. There are a variety of great applications out there but my favourite – Team Shake – creates pairs, triples, quadruples, teams, and more with a simple push of a button or shake of the hand! Not only is this method quick and easy, but also my students never argue about groups because the technology made the decision! Other great applications help me to randomly choose students to answer questions while making sure that I am not always picking on students raising their hands.

Showing my students that technology can increase physical activity time is probably the most important goal for my technology use in PE. I use technology to move, and I often show my students my Apple Watch Activity App stats so that I can be a good role model. The iPad has

really revolutionised my classes. I was so excited to learn about the potential of iPad use in PE! A former student teacher said it best when he said that allowing students to use iPads in PE (Concordia have class sets which can be borrowed) teaches them how to use technology to get moving and improve their health. Wow....it hit me then that this is our responsibility as PE teachers, and I set about finding new apps to use for student activity. There are so many great apps like Deck of Cards Workout, FitDeck Jr., Decide Now, Swork-it, Super Stretch Yoga, Stretch-it and more! Technology is supposed to be used to improve the quality of life. Through Physical Education use, we can teach students how to do just that!

I also use the iPad and my phone to show the students their performances on the big TV. I say 'this was the learning objective and look how many of you reached that goal!' For those who didn't, a little sidebar with the iPad shows them where they went wrong, and this provides instant and valuable feedback for them to make corrections.

Since my first day on the job as a PE Teacher in 1989 until now, the technology revolution has been nothing short of amazing! The challenge is finding the balance between too much technology and technology use for good health and wellness. Students and adults need to have access to appropriate technology and be taught how to use it responsibly as well as its potential to improve their overall health. As Physical Educators we are uniquely positioned to teach students this positive use of technology and model it in our own lives. I know that my dad would be astounded at the progress of technology, and I hope he would be proud of my passion to teach others to embrace it.