

Version 2

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Social, Ethical, Legal, and Human Issues with Technology in the Classroom

Understanding and using technology has become a fundamental 21st century skill that has permeated its way into people's everyday lives. It is no wonder that our education system has jumped onto the technology bandwagon and begun using online curriculums. There is much debate on the pros and cons that technology brings to education. Some scholars believe that online education can not give students the socialization that traditional classroom instruction gives. On the other hand, there is proof that eLearning creates online learning communities where students can virtually socialize with each other. Similarly, some scholars worry about the ethical issues that arise with using eLearning technologies, while others argue that students have always been faced with ethical decisions while learning. While still some scholars argue the legal ramifications that teachers and students face if the technology is used incorrectly.

The most common human issue facing technology in the classroom is the lack of social interaction that technology causes. Many people worry that technology will begin to replace classroom discussion and debate. They worry that students will not learn to interact in a social setting where they can verbally share ideas and ask questions. One professor at New Mexico State University decided that since most kids live in a virtual world, they might as well study there too. Michael DeMers created an online virtual community for his students to come to class. DeMers and the students meet in the virtual world and have classroom discussions. The professor stated that the kids that are not comfortable raising their hands in class can have better discussions in the virtual world because they are more comfortable there. This is just one way that technology can be used in a positive way to get students involved in the classroom.

The most common social issues facing technology in the classroom are hate groups, pornography and something teachers call the digital divide. Hate groups and pornography are protected by the First Amendment and cannot be regulated online. It is easy for students in a classroom to get off track when interesting pictures begin popping up on the side of their computer screen. Most schools have filters that protect students from seeing pornographic images, but it is harder to filter hate groups. These groups will pose as a harmless website simply providing information but after looking closer, it will be filled with racist comments. The best way to prevent students from seeing inappropriate material online is teacher monitoring. Teachers should be walking their classroom and actively monitoring what websites the students are visiting. The digital divide is a little simpler, but it is causing a giant rift in America's schools. The digital divide literally divides the haves from the have nots. It is the line between the students that have access to technology at home and the students that do not. It is also the line between the students that have access to high speed internet and those that are still using dial up at home. These divides make it difficult for teachers that are trying to incorporate technology into their curriculum.

The most common ethical issues facing technology in the classroom are plagiarism and privacy. Plagiarism existed long before technology did, but the internet has certainly made plagiarism much easier for students. Teachers can not check every

paper for plagiarism, but there are now technological tools that can help. These tools will check the paper that is downloaded for similarities to other papers that are online and other papers that have been turned in to the school. Privacy is a major safety concern for two reasons. First, students must be taught to protect their own privacy when they are online. They have to be told how much information they can share about themselves and on which websites they can share it. Second, teachers must be careful to protect their student's privacy. Teachers should not post pictures online without prior parental consent and should not post student's full names. They should also be careful with the software that they choose to keep student records.

The most common legal issue facing technology in the classroom is copyright infringement. Students and teachers alike must be very careful when downloading images, videos or music to use in the classroom. The copyright laws allow a video to be used one time for teaching, but can not be used multiple times. Likewise pictures and music have certain copyright rules that need to be read before using. Software is also copyrighted and teachers should understand the user agreement before downloading.

Even with the issues surrounding technology being utilized in the classroom, it is still necessary and educators will find ways to use it while keeping their students safe. The goal of the classroom is to create a learning environment that reflects an understanding of what it takes to keep children interested and makes them life long learners. Likewise, the advancement in technology necessitates advancement in our children's classroom as well.

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