

Technology Savvy? Not So Much

By Megan Sparks

I can use a computer, Office programs, email, a smart phone, an I-pod, download music and pictures, and Facebook. I can figure out a new Windows processor or functions in Excel and power point. I am technology savvy right? I used to think that I knew the cutting edge of technology because I could do all these things. Starting work on my Master of Arts in Education (MAED) online was not a concern for me. I was confident in my skills to brainstorm and explore new programs. And while my lack of technology knowledge didn't create any road blocks for me, I realized how narrow my perspective of the most current technology resources was.

My thinking used to be so limited in the ways I thought I could use technology. Now, from all the exposure through my online courses I have realized that the possibilities are endless. Anything that I can dream up of wanting to do is probably already available as a piece of technology. I am at constant awe as to how many options are available to make collecting and presenting information easier. As more and more innovations are created, I want to be able to stay ahead of the curve on knowing the options.

I have already used so many of my new found resources in action. I now use google docs regularly to share information or make my information available to myself anywhere. I also found that google forms is a free cheap way of collecting information, especially evaluations that then allow you to easily export the information to excel and derive data from it. I even proposed a website version of training that included embedded videos and questionnaires to track the training status of volunteers. And now I am much more observant as to what others have on websites and realize that anything they have done, I can probably do too.

I love the feeling I get from showing others a different way of doing things from the old methods, such as website trainings instead of low attendance onsite trainings. The combination of new technology and using it in creative new ways intrigues me. But how do I help keep myself informed of all the new resources available to the public?

One of the biggest ways I plan to help keep myself informed is by being **vigilant** while using technology, specifically the internet. Often times, available resources are presented right

to us without even recognizing them as an option. Most free resources put a citation on themselves to help make others aware of their availability. For example, when sending out a google form it lists “this form was made with google forms.” Thus by being vigilant in emails I receive, blog or Facebook posts that I read, and websites I read, I can more readily recognize resources being used and then explore them for myself.

Another way I plan on continuing to learn is to **explore**. Many of the resources I know now have more functions than I could imagine. By challenging myself with finding new ways to use programs, I will be expanding my technology base. Recently, I found myself exploring function in excel because I wanted to track the number of 5’s given in a stack of evaluations. Instead of trying to adjust my data to my current understanding of Excel, I pushed myself to explore Excel in search of a more efficient method that fit my needs better. After I found a function I hadn’t known before, “countifs,” I felt so proud of myself and was excited to find more new tools. This same idea can be done in exploring new functions of a program or finding new resources to fit new ideas.

The last way I plan to continue my technology education is to **challenge** myself. I want to challenge myself to keep finding uses and projects that technology can be applied to. And I also want to challenge myself to find online learning centers to help me achieve my overall goal of gaining technology resources. I think a great way to start this goal would be to challenge myself to use the Google Educator Group to complete trainings of google tools and network with other teachers using technology.

By being vigilant, exploring, and challenging myself I feel like I will be able to continue learning about technology resources and continue to grow in my quest for new knowledge. Each of these pieces will keep me mindful of all that is out there instead of settling for the status quo.