10 Tips: How to integrate technology with your lessons
By Daniel Reio

Technology is becoming as ubiquitous in Canadian classrooms as pencils and notebooks. No longer do teachers need to be experts to use the latest, greatest technology -- they need only an open mind and a classroom full of eager students.

As the 2nd annual Teaching With Technology Story Contest and Sweepstakes (www.teachingwithtechnology.ca) draws near, CDW Canada has some ideas for worthwhile yet easy ways teachers can incorporate technology into their classrooms to educate, captivate and even entertain their students this year.

Get in the game: Use video game systems with educational games to teach students music, history or math skills. Popular games such as Rock Band® can help students learn to focus on a task at hand and gain social skills such as teamwork, while capturing their attention with a fun activity they are sure to enjoy.

Can you see me now: Use your classroom's web camera to hold a web conference with students in another part of the world. Your students will learn about lives and interests in other cultures in areas such as sports, language, geography, foods, etc. Then ask students to write a story based on the experience, and share them with parents and their new global friends.

Music therapy: Augment lessons with music from an MP3 player to provide students with an alternative way to learn. Playing music from an historic era or a certain musician can help students connect with course materials and enhance the learning environment. Playing classical music during tests provides a calm environment which could enable better concentration.

Get smart: Smartboards combine the simplicity of a whiteboard with the technology of a computer. Solve word or math problems on the board, then print off the information for review. Smartboards can also display presentations and photographs from on a classroom PC.

Post it online: Record a class play or presentation using a webcam or digital video recorder, then upload it to a classroom PC. Students can edit the video, add music, text and credits, then post it online for classmates, parents and friends to enjoy.

No strings attached: Use a wireless router to make your entire classroom Internet accessible. Laptops and other web-enabled devices can be used anywhere in the room, allowing all students to share educational content without limits.

It's all about video: If your class has a projector or Smartboard, use it to show online videos and programs to supplement text-based lessons. Then, assign a project for students to create their own video lesson and share them in class.

E-mail penpals: Partner with another classroom across the country and use your class' e-mail address to share penpal letters between students. Ask one student to write each week about what they have learned, and then present what experiences and lessons their penpal has shared.

Blog it!: A classroom blog or website can be an excellent portal for students to display their work to family and friends. Try asking a different student each week to write about the activities they did in class to get everyone involved. Classroom blogs are also a valuable tool for teachers to share homework assignments, due dates and keep in touch with parents.

A picture is worth a thousand words: Throughout the school year, have students take digital photographs of classroom activities and upload them to your class computer. Later in the year, have students select their favourite photos and use them to create a video together with music, poetry, images and text. Copy it to CDs and each student can take one home as a memento of the year.

Technology enables students to get involved in classroom activities in challenging and exciting ways. When preparing your lesson plans this year, think about venturing beyond the chalkboard and books to create a new, fun learning experience.

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