**SB-83 'Teachers must embrace new technology or risk becoming obsolete'**

[Tom Whitby](file:///news/author/tom-whitby)

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'In the past I have always said that a computer could never replace a teacher, because learning was based on relationships. Today, I am not so sure'

One undeniable fact about teaching is that teachers not only need to be masters of content within their subject area, but they must also be masters of education as a subject. Another undeniable fact is that neither of those subject areas looks the same as when any teacher first mastered them.

One effect of the integration of technology into our society is that change in almost everything is happening at a pace never before experienced by mankind. As much as some people may yearn for the simpler times of the past, life will continue to move forward as the natural order of society requires.

The influence of additional information on any subject often affects how we deal with that subject. Once we had more information on the effects of smoking, smoking habits of millions of people changed. Once we learned what we now understand about the benefits of physical activity, several sports related industries were spawned. Once we learned what we now know of communication, music and print industries disappeared while being replaced with better in many ways.

**Adapt or die**

If we do not take time to understand new information and how it interacts with what we do, we, as a profession, may go the way of typewriters, photographic film, super 8 film, 8 track cassettes, landline telephones, or block-ice refrigeration.

I always viewed education as a preparation for students to learn enough content and skills to use for creating their own content in whatever field they decided to enter.

Teachers residing in schools were the keepers of information. Schools determined who got what information and when they got it. Information for kids was determined and dispensed by the teacher. Control and compliance were the keys to the information and allowed for the orderly distribution of content. This was education for centuries.

Now, with the advent of technology and the unlimited access to what often appears to be limitless information, as well as access to untold numbers of people through social media, there is a great change for those who understand it.

**Do It Yourself Learning**

There is also a great change for those who do not choose to understand it. The cold hard fact here is that technology is now providing us with the tools for “Do It Yourself Learning”.

It is not the “mail order courses” of days gone by. It is a real way for some students to circumvent the system that is in place and at their own pace and their own direction learn what they choose to learn.

All of this can be delivered in whatever form a student determines is in his or her learning preference, text, video, music, or live face-to-face interaction. There may come a time for some that they will learn in spite of their teachers not teaching them what they need in the way they need it.

In the past I have always said that a computer could never replace a teacher, because learning was based on relationships. Today, I am not so sure.

In a profession that is information-based, we must acknowledge that information undergoes change. What we knew a short while back may no longer be relevant in a rapidly changing world. Both areas that teachers are required to master, their subject content and education, have undergone change no matter when it was any teacher mastered them.

Staying up-to-date, relevant, on information in your own profession is a moral imperative. We can’t expect what we learned as college students to carry us through a 30 or 40-year career.

Time and money are often the reasons educators give for not seeking to develop further professionally. They are powerful reasons indeed, but not insurmountable.

**Leave your comfort zone**

A fear of technology by many is also offered up as a reason for lack of development. I have come to believe that these are just the excuses, while the real reason for the lack of professional development for educators is the comfort of the Status Quo.

Comfort zones are obstacles to change. It may be change itself that most are fearful of. We can’t all agree that change is needed in education, and then refuse to change as individual educators.

The system can’t demand change of teachers without examining its own professional development programs that have been so ineffective over the centuries that PD has been offered. Colleges can no longer continue to produce teachers based on a twentieth century model of a classroom teacher.

Anyone entering teaching as a profession must do it with the awareness and a commitment to life long learning, because the teacher you come out of college as is not the teacher your students will need. It will forever be a changing and evolving position.

Teaching is not an easy job. It requires teachers to be comfortable with change for a lifetime. However, if we are to better educate our kids, we must first better educate their educators.

***Tom Whitby is an author, teacher, blogger and founder of #Edchat. This article first appeared on Tom Whitby's website***[***My Island View.***](https://tomwhitby.wordpress.com/)

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