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### *Author's Note*

While writing this essay, I wanted to establish the link between beneficial education and technological learning while simultaneously showing how technological implementation is not possible in every setting. For example, each article provided a different key point to the essay—trends in an increase in literacy to be connected to technological advancement, the benefits of technological literacy resources and the disparities that emerge when some get to use them and others do not, and finally, the national presentation of digitalization in the classroom compared to traditional methods to show that it is not a national standard—yet. I believe I integrated the interviews appropriately, taking key quotes from each to round out a more personalized approach. Thus, my argument comes from a place of action, as the evidence provided shows that more needs to be done to accommodate the educated masses.

### *Technology*

Learning is a fundamental process for people of all backgrounds, and as traditional modes of education begin to fall to the wayside in favor of more technologically advanced opportunities, schools take on the resource to integrate a more online-blended learning experience within the classroom. Yet technology, as resourceful as it is, comes with a financial burden not accessible by all. Thus, if technology becomes a mandatory integration within the educational realm, efforts need to be made to improve quality of access to suit all populations. As learned in recent months since the coronavirus pandemic, technology is imperative to the learning process yet when assessed as a mandatory implementation in education, it widens the technological divide, increasing the distance between those who have and those who have not.

Although one would assume that an increase in technological advancements like cell phones and the internet would contribute to distractions for a learning population, it has actually fostered higher literacy rates within recent years. According to the NEA, literacy reading is on the rise for the first time in 26 years (2020). This has reversed a two decade long trend in which adolescents have read the least but at the same time, adolescents *now* read the most (NEA, 2020).

It is not merely a coincidence that the rise in technological advancements procure this ability—easier access to downloading books, edited versions of texts, summaries, resources to aid in the literacy process—but rather, an opportunity for those who might have been distracted before from the actual journey to the library to get a book versus the ability to put one on a Kindle, that fosters a new type of readership. Furthermore, 84% of adults who report reading, report doing so with an online component. Thus, this facilitates the ability to find reading material to learn and grow at every turn. According to an interview with Jane Dillinger, a Tech Ed teacher, “A lot of projects we do are focused on book. You’d find it strange in Tech Ed, where robots or lasers are usually the *go to* topic, but now, we do thematic analysis with NVIVO to use technology to increase the ability to find and discover words” (2020). Thus, these are opportunities that have not been present in years, now, easily accessible.

Yet not to all. Facilitated access to software like NVIVO is not possible for all. There are schools that have limited resources in which books trump laptops and as such, the trends fall to the wayside. This is not to say that those who contribute to the increase in literacy trends only do so via digital means, but rather, the facilitated access is not present and as such, basic things like cell phones that could contribute to someone able to look up a word here and there is not present, which can be a deterrent, especially when others have access (Coppi 2002). Furthermore, this complicates the ability to foster cross curriculum endeavors as standards for literacy in a digital age supplement multiple courses and cultures that would not be analyzed otherwise (National Council of... 2020). Thus, through digital additions, people can become more tolerant of other cultures and learn about different narratives in order to analyze the best perspective on a certain work. This includes a variation of language accessible by projects done online or sustainable communication from a multitude of authors and publications (National Council of... 2020). Yet

if the laptop, wifi, or additional literacy standards are not in place—whether the school is underfunded, or the mode of education is outdated, certain populations will suffer and not reap the same rewards. The best standards are met with a variety of digital tools operating to standards, frequently; this is not feasible in every classroom (National Council of...2020). Therefore, something needs to be done to bridge the gap between those who operate through blended learning opportunities versus those relegated to brick and mortar experiences, only.

There is a clear discrepancy between schools that have technological literacy standards and those that do not. Thirty three schools across the nation have National Education Technology Standards while 50% of four year colleges and 30% of community colleges require students to use electronic course management materials (NCTE 2020). This means that seventeen states do not operate to the same digital literacy standards and half of four year colleges and 70% of community colleges fall behind as these innovations take shape. Allison Murphy, a digital artist, explained how her college education in studio art failed to prepare her for career as a digital logo creator. “Granted, I grew up in a different time, but as an artist, someone already displaced from getting a normal job, to find something like logo creation for employment is a God-send. Yet as soon as I was told I had to learn the digital version of art platforms, I happily agreed, but not without a lot of sleepless nights having to learn software that I *knew* some new graduates had learned in their courses” (Murphy 2020). Therefore, for those who get the opportunity to explore digital learning options, they find themselves with a better reach for employment. Yet the NCTE (2020) believes that “even teachers with relatively little technological skill” can provide effective instruction in the digital realm—which makes the inequality of access all the more saddening, as underfunded schools need the basics *first* before they can even consider enlightening teachers with the ability to teach critical thinking in this manner.

Therefore, provisions of digital access to online instruction becomes a necessity the longer the world advances toward a more technologically globalized realm. Those schools that have access at present will be ahead of those who don't, but the sad part is that schools with limited resources may *never* be able to catch up. Disparities among educational institutions naturally provides disparities between the type of teaching conveyed. Yet all of these educational organizations believe that even without digital resources, effective instruction could be had. Yet *with* the digital literacy elements, it could be better—and people should strive for the best.

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