

Tablet Reflections for October:

--To tell you the truth, I feel like I am a better teacher since I have acquired such wonderful technology.

--I love this model and can't wait to get to class each day. It makes each lesson unique, even when I am just creating notes, or showing a PowerPoint.

--I've found that one of the best things about the tablet is the increase in student participation.

--I am finding that the tablet has become almost necessary in order for me to complete my lessons...Finally, I am relieved when I remember that if this model is not implemented next year, we all get to keep these awesome tools that I feel have enhanced my teaching, my organization, and most importantly, student learning in my classroom.

--Still, I am sometimes suspicious that my dear tablet is occasionally possessed by the devil (and I'm not referring to the Regan-like swiveling head)... Hall duty is paradise now instead of banishment; I must get 10x the work done. I grade and enter into GradeQuick immediately, work on PowerPoints, research online, check my email, work with other teachers, etc. Additionally, I feel like a constant tablet commercial: everyone stops by to ask questions and ask where they can get one...Although the tablet occasionally creaks and moans and rattles (but not since Hillary tightened that screw), all in all it's been a treat. I consistently feel empowered.

--The "good" - Having a personal PC is wonderful! The tablet allows me to work almost anywhere at anytime; I'm hoping that others haven't noticed me working during meetings...This week, my AP students completed a complex lab in which they quantitatively investigated osmosis and diffusion. I was able to help them understand these processes by drawing lab set-ups on the tablet, asking them to show me the direction of flow, and coloring in results as we discussed them. I like not having my back to the class (which is what would have been the case if I had written on the traditional white board). I like the "colored ink" - students oohed and aahed as I chose the exact shade of lavender that they had just seen in their own biochemical test for a positive reaction!... The "bad" - Time issues continue to be a problem for me because of the fast pace in the AP curriculum. I need to switch to the desktop computer if there are any "problems" with the tablet. It takes longer to do attendance, so I take it on the desktop. If I lose the connection to the wireless overhead and can't regain it quickly, I immediately switch to desktop.

--Pros- Having a computer on demand is wonderful. The days of waiting for machines during prep and being unproductive during duties are gone...Cons-Speed. The tablet lags when starting various applications like email, attendance

and SIRS. Time. Time spent on presentations I see as an investment. Time spent during class fixing little things is annoying.(We could always chalk that up to the learning curve)

--The portability of my tablet has allowed me to take my work with me anywhere I want/need to go. I can have my tablet with me doing my work while making photocopies allowing me to be more efficient in the use of my time.

--I am starting to use it more in the classroom but I must admit that I do get a little self-conscious using it. I don't want the students thinking that I am tethered to it constantly and that I couldn't teach without it. I also don't want things to get too routine and for the Tablet to become an object with negative connotations ("Oh man, he's using that thing again?") But that's my insecurities talkin'...I do find it cumbersome to use if I am making a PowerPoint or writing a test. Formatting stuff with the touch pad mouse is frustrating because it's so sensitive. I end up selecting stuff I don't want yadda, yadda, yadda. So for that stuff I use my PC at home and transfer it to the tablet.

--It's also great when I'm teaching 40 kids in the big room, I can sit in the middle of the room while I'm writing notes on the board that are large enough for everyone to see. That in itself is enough reason to have a tablet!... But I will say, that when I have a whole day of problem-free tablet lessons, I do feel like celebrating because there are often days when one or two glitches are enough for me to stop using the tablet for the block (like the mysterious loss of connection to the network and hence, the projector).

--A student just stopped by while I was in hall duty - he said..."Nice computer. My other teacher has one of those - they are SWEET!" I couldn't agree more...

--This has been the most fun & exciting month of my teaching career - after 14yrs, that's saying a lot. True, problems do exist, but this IS a pilot program. Once I accepted the fact that every once in awhile things would go awry, my stress level plummeted...I had my first observation last Monday & for once, was not nervous. Teaching sensory writing using the internet, snipping pics, and sketching all over the place made the block fly. Probably the easiest observation I've had yet.

--So many people comment on how cool this thing is as I sit in the hall for hall duty! I agree. I am so productive out there, and I can print stuff from there and pick it up from any printer on campus. Life is good.

--Most days I love my tablet....but there are some days where I have used a few choice expletives when referring to it! Fortunately, our fantastic helpline has bailed me out of whatever glitch I've had a timely fashion...Other uses: I had an injured student in class on Monday that was unable to participate. I gave her an assignment while the rest of the class was engaging in the activity. She wrote

her observations in a One Note file, which I reviewed after class. She thought it was neat; I thought it was convenient...Last thought....I thank my lucky stars that I am fortunate enough to be a part of this pilot. It's a practical tool that makes my life easier. Despite the glitches, it's been a positive experience!

--I have begun to really get into using the tablet for everything in my classroom... at one point, the class and I started to create our own power point from scratch during a lesson in class-- they were presenting their research on various sexually transmitted diseases, and either the students or I would bullet/write those facts into a power point-- then a couple of the students added all of the "bells and whistles"-- and I have an awesome student created power point on std's all put together now!!

--My overwhelming reaction to the first month of school is that there is not enough time to do what should be done. Unfortunately this frustration extends to the tablet pilot. I can see what is possible but I cannot find the time to make it happen...I experienced problems connecting to the projector for several days. I lost an hour of class time the first day. Lesson: have an alternative method for presenting ready and don't try to fix technical problems during class time...One of the best outcomes of the pilot program is interacting with other teachers and staff from outside my department. I enjoyed teaching the ETTC class last summer for the same reason.

--Now, things are much more calm, and I'm to the point where I can even use the tablet's functions on the fly. For example, when discussing women's roles in Beowulf, my class was struggling with the idea that Grendel's mother and Modthryth were described using nouns and pronouns typically reserved for male characters. So, I froze the screen while they continued the discussion, pulled up a picture of Marion Jones, and one of Serena Williams, and then unfroze the picture. I then asked the kids to describe the women they saw on the screen. They came up with "beasts," "monsters," "butch," "powerful," "strong," etc. Then we used those terms to talk about female stereotypes and why masculine women are seen as "monsterous." From there we discussed other contemporary women who fulfill the feminine stereotype and whenever another woman came up, I would pull up a picture of her to compare to the "beastly" athletes that were already on the screen. I was pretty proud of that lesson. The kids even said that it was fun.

--I am beginning to get the hang of the tablet, at first it was very frustrating and hard to navigate. Now it has become part of me and has created less paper work and has made my day more productive. I am able to spend more time conversing with my students before and after class since I do not have to find a computer and take attendance. I can be in the locker room supervising, checking my email, taking attendance, conversing with the students, or taking care of my students concerns and questions. I think the word multi- tasking comes to mind.