

Evaluating Technology Use in the Classroom

13



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Evaluating the use of technology in a classroom environment is not something most administrators are trained to do. It is easy to walk into a classroom and see that every student is using a computer, but how do you really assess if and what type of learning is taking place?



In the past, I have had administrators tell me *“I walked into the teacher’s room and all the students were on laptops.”* As though just the site of students working on laptops meant they were engaged in the learning process.

I have been trying to wrap my head around a simple way for administrators to evaluate the use of technology in the classroom (a thank you to [Dennis Harter](#) who got me thinking about this).

When most administrators evaluate teachers during the evaluation process, they have some sort of check sheet they are working from either mental or as part of a school’s evaluation process. I wanted to come up with an easy way for administrators to add to that list some questions that they can answer without knowing a lot about technology and by just observing its use within a lesson.

I remembered a [Marc Prensky article in Edutopia](#) in which he talks about the typical process of technology adoption:

1. Dabbling with technology
2. Doing Old things in Old Ways
3. Doing Old things in New Ways
4. Doing New things in New Ways

What if we turned these stages of technology adoption into questions that an evaluator could use during the evaluation process?

1. Is the technology being used “Just because it’s there”?
2. Is the technology allowing the teacher/students to do Old things in Old ways?
3. Is the technology allowing the teacher/students to do Old things in New ways?
4. Is the technology creating new and different learning experiences for the students?

This could be a simple list that any evaluator can use to decipher how the technology is being

used in a particular lesson.

Is the technology being used “Just because it’s there”?

This would be the use of edutainment software, the use of a particular piece of technology because it happens to be in the room. The teacher dabbles with technology, not having a real focus on its use within the lesson but uses it as an add-on or at a very basic level (no real impact on the learning process).

Is the technology allowing the teacher/students to do Old things in Old ways?

Publishing a piece of writing in Word rather than hand writing it would be an example of this.

Also, using an LCD projector instead of a white/black board for a lesson.

Another example would be researching on the Internet rather than in an Encyclopedia.

These are all great things, and great ways to use technology, but they are only replacing the way we have always done things with something that might be faster, easier, and more accurate. In the end however, they are still the same old things we have been doing for years in education.

Is the technology allowing the teacher/students to do Old things in New ways?

Examples would be: watching Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech or listening to a recording of Stalin. Old things in New ways could also be reading and evaluation an original piece of writing or visiting a battle site via Google Earth.

These are not new things...just new ways of doing old things. We used to read Martin Luther King Jr.’s speech to the class, now we can watch him give his speech in Washington D.C.

We used to read the words of Stalin, now we can hear him speak them.

We used to read from a book, now we can read and look at the original document.

Instead of talking about a battle site, we can now visit that site virtually.

These are not new things; they just enhance the old ways of doing things.

Is the technology creating new and different learning experiences for the students?

Does the technology allow students to learn from people they never would have been able to without it?

Does the technology allow students to interact with information in a way that is meaningful and could not have happened otherwise?

Does the technology allow students to create and share their knowledge with an audience they never would have had access to without technology?

Many of our teachers are not at this level yet and many might never get here because this level of technology use requires a new way of looking at learning. One in which many of our schools are not yet prepared to look deeply into.

Prensky puts it this way:

For the digital age, we need new curricula, new organization, new

architecture, new teaching, new student assessments, new parental connections, new administration procedures, and many other elements. Some people suggest using emerging models from business — but these, for the most part, don't apply. Others suggest trying to change school size — but this will not help much if we are still doing the wrong things, only in smaller spaces.

As you evaluate a teacher, you should be looking for answers to the above mentioned questions. I am not advocating that every lesson should use technology or that every lesson should try to answer “New things in New ways”. However, it is good to know just how the technology is being used. There is nothing wrong with only using an LCD projector, or Google Earth to visit a battle site. I get excited when I see both of those things happening in a classroom. I just think it is good to put it into perspective just what impact the technology is having on teaching and learning. If a teacher is only ever ‘dabbling’ or doing ‘Old things in Old ways’ then a conversation can start about how to move the use of technology to a deeper more meaningful level within the classroom.

It is great to see teachers using technology in their lessons during an evaluation. It is even more informative if you can evaluate at what level that technology is effecting learning. Is it a replacement for the way we do things or is it something completely new and pushes both the students and teacher to new heights, new learning, and new knowledge?

[tags]administrator, evaluation, 21st Century Learning[/tags]

Technorati Tags: [marcprensky](#), [evaluation](#), [education](#), [administrators](#), [technology](#)

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This entry was posted by [Jeff Utecht](#) on January 23, 2008 at 11:13 am, and is filed under [Random Thoughts](#). Follow any responses to this post through [RSS 2.0](#). You can [leave a response](#) or [trackback](#) from your own site.

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#1 written by Mathew
about 2 years ago

Excellent arguments for why technology should transform teaching and not just replace paper and pencil activities with remedial pointing and clicking and the

equivalent of digital worksheets. However, it's not easy to get teachers who don't want to give up their worksheets to adapt new ways of teaching via computers.



#2 written by John Maklary
about 2 years ago

Jeff, I like the differentiation of levels of use of technology. I think for the most part it quantifies it nicely that administrators can better understand.

However, I'm not seeing a defined line between #2 and #3. I guess it depends on how you define Old Ways...I think you are referring to using MS Word. If so, using MS Word is not such an old way for many folks!

I'm trying to define some performance review tech guidelines for teacher evaluations. This will help a lot. Thanks!



#3 written by Dean Mantz
about 2 years ago

As an aspiring Director of Technology with a deep passion for true, effective technology integration I am too trying to motivate teachers to look for new ways to instruct old things as well as using developing education trends implementing Web 2.0 tools.

One program that I have tried to use in the past has been Intel's Teaching Tools and the Teaching to the Future curriculum. Well, now I have experienced and truly believe in LoTi (Levels of Technology Implementation). With this program, teachers learn the difference between being teacher centered and student centered classrooms. The program offers training specifically for teachers to develop into mentors, administrator specific training on how to effectively evaluate integration/implementation, and has designed programs for the program to be implemented district wide. Another feature I have began using is LoTi's survey. The survey has three categories that it ranks each participant in. First category is Personal Computer usage. Second category is Current Instruction Practices. The final category ranks the individual based on LoTi's own levels. The survey is also broken down into levels of 21st Century skills and areas of importance based on participants' answers.

The surveys have permitted me to point out to the district administration that our teachers need professional development that goes beyond what has been offered since we established our 1 to 1 laptop program nearly four years ago. Unfortunately, the teachers association itself is going to be the BIG issue. They do not want to see additional professional days added to the calendar for 2008-2009.



#4 written by Gary S. Stager
about 2 years ago

So where are the examples of “transformational practice” with computers?

Prensky certainly does not offer any.

I've begun giving this issue a good deal of thought. You may read my first paper on the subject at:

<http://www.stager.org/eurologo/StagerEurologo2007paper.pdf>



#5 written by Jeff Utecht
about 2 years ago

Gary,

From my understanding Marc is not an educator and therefore probably can't give the examples you are looking for.

I have seen lessons that have been transformative in nature. Lessons that would be considered New thing in New ways. There are some examples out there and more being created on a daily basis. The post was not to show examples, but more to give administrators some guiding questions of how technology can and is being used in a classroom. Hopefully someone finds it useful...if not it was a great reflection for my own learning.



#6 written by AllanahK
about 2 years ago

Another really useful post Jeff.

Just yesterday I just won a new position as ICT facilitator with oversight of 14 schools. I will keep this post in mind as I meet for the first time, the students, teachers and schools in my area.

My mind set is shifting as I take on this role- so far I have really only been concerned about making sure that the children in my class are doing new things in new ways and trying to model what I see as 21st century learning.

It will be a whole new ball game helping others to transform their thinking.

Have I bitten off more than I can chew???



#7 written by Jill
about 1 year ago

Do you mean ICT as in Instructional Consultation Team? I found that a very worthwhile endeavor. Funding has been cut for our program so it no longer happening in the form it was meant.



#8 written by Doug Johnson

about 2 years ago

Hi Jeff,

Great post as always.

Your ideas here reflect what Zuboff in her book *_In the Age of the Smart Machine_* described as the difference between automating and infomating. As I remember, 20 years ago she was writing about the lumber industry, but the question holds true for schools still today: is technology allowing us to do things that were impossible without the use of technology.

Do give those teachers who use technology to do old things better some credit, though. Amplifying proven teaching methods isn't all bad either.

All the best,

Doug

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shoshana_Zuboff



#9 written by Mary

about 1 year ago

great question. using new tools to do old tired things does not make them less old and tired. we're looking for meaningfulness..



#10 written by Page Lennig

about 2 years ago

Hi Jeff - thanks for this post - i always like to see these thoughts "out loud". This year my teachers have been asked to do some adopting of technology in their classes. Some have done it with some success. But others have not because they can't see how this will help them teach the same old things - "why should I use technology, when the way I do things works just fine?" I'm a struggling a bit to help them beyond that point - to show them that maybe the technology can help them so new things that may have more meaning in their curriculum. Have you had success there? Any pointers?



#11 written by Jill

about 1 year ago

We as teachers need to see the examples to help us understand there might be something out there that could help us. BUT the help needs to be MEANINGFUL. I don't want to do it just because my students have laptops. I'm still looking for a meaningful way to incorporate math. I am able to see

old things taught in a new way but have not really seen a way to teach math in a new way. Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated.



#12 written by Matt
about 2 years ago

Great post Jeff. Thanks for putting some words to a problem that has been nagging me for some time now.

Your questions are going to be helpful as I work with teachers to help shape a vision of technology use in our district.



#13 written by H B Wenger
about 2 years ago

Awesome post, Jeff...it not only provides a checklist for administrators, but it provides an opportunity for us to reflect on our own teaching and see how we can push the envelope a little bit more in our own classrooms. I agree that you can't be doing new things in new ways all of the time, but it forces us to think differently so those opportunities can occur more often.



#14 written by Gary Stager
about 2 years ago

If Marc Prensky is not an educator and is incapable of providing examples for his paradigm, why should he be trusted? On what basis is he an expert?

Since the 1980s there have been educators offering models virtually identical to the hierarchy of technology implementation attributed to Prensky.

I hope some folks will consider the work I shared here:

<http://www.stager.org/eurologo/StagerEurologo2007paper.pdf>



#15 written by Amanda Hill
about 2 years ago

Thanks Jeff! I think that you brought up some good points about the way that technology is being used. Technology has definitely increase within the last few years, and sometimes I question whether some of the "old things in Old ways" techniques will ever become obsolete. The fact is that the demand for student learning is going up, and teachers need to keep up with the demand. If the teachers choose to use Google Earth to show battle sights, or just write notes on the chalk board, I think that it will have a positive effect on the students. The real problem is trying to get the students interested in the material, and that's where technology comes in. As time progresses new programs such as PowerPoint introduce new ways to present lectures, and I think that that is the

main key in getting the children to learn.



#16 written by Hersh Joodey
about 2 years ago

Hi Jeff,

Nice article though a bit elusive. There's no denying the fact that the future of eLearning lies in tech-driven edutainment.



#17 written by Darren Draper
about 2 years ago

Jeff,

It was great to have you drop in on us during yesterday's OpenPD class. Your insights were a valuable addition to the discussion (and were along the same lines as this post) and greatly appreciated.

Thanks again,

Darren



#18 written by Dennis Harter
about 2 years ago

Jeff, I like the realism of your post. Not only are you sharing the highlights that administrators can look for in positive technology use, but you are also reminding them that there is more to look for than JUST technology use.

Administrators can get caught up in our own excitement and push for quality tech use and in an attempt to be "tech-savvy" may take too much of what we say to heart, at the expense of recognizing quality learning when it happens.

A great part of your points is the focus on what learning experiences the students are having. After all, it isn't about using technology, but rather about what learning is happening.

In that vein, then, administrators need to ask themselves whether they understand the possible answers to these questions, so that when they see old things happening in old ways, they can say to a teacher, "have you considered doing this or using (insert appropriate tech here) to enhance that learning?"

When we have administrators like that, we can make big steps forward in bringing learning into the 21st Century.



#19 written by Jamin Lietze
about 2 years ago



Yes! what revealing questions!! Nothing like popping a good question to really tell if what is going on is beneficial. I will use these questions on myself to evaluate my own teaching. We have to be critical of our own work to develop and improve the education we provide.
Thanks Jeff.



#20 written by Technology
about 2 years ago

Excellent arguments for why technology should transform teaching and not just replace paper and pencil activities with remedial pointing and clicking and the equivalent of digital worksheets.



#21 written by Dietrich May
about 2 years ago

“Is the technology being used âJust because itâs thereâ?
Is the technology allowing the teacher/students to do Old things in Old ways?
Is the technology allowing the teacher/students to do Old things in New ways?
Is the technology creating new and different learning experiences for the students?”

I thought this and the examples you put along with it were very interesting. In high school we only used technology in the first two ways on the list and did nothing more with it. I also thought in high school that when someone was on a computer they were just playing games or messing around because that is about all the kids did, most because we could get away with it. This is the opposite of how you said administrators thought that just because some one is on a computer they are doing school work.

In my first year of college we used the computers to do old things in new ways. It helped me understand things better and enjoy the course more. Now that I'm in my second year of college we are beginning to completely new things, such as blogging and many other things.

It's very exciting in my opinion to see the technology slowly improving in my years to get us to new places, but hopefully it is being incorporated at a younger and younger age.



#22 written by Jeff Mason
about 2 years ago

Very useful questions for assessment/reflection as teachers/schools implement the technology(gies). Here is a matrix that some may find useful in assessing their level of technology integration. <http://fcit.usf.edu/matrix/>



#23 written by Peter Arashiro

about 2 years ago

Thanks for this post, Jeff!

I came across your posting in the middle of developing a PD piece on implementing blended instruction in the classroom. I think the four uses listed help teachers frame the bigger question of what is it they want their students to gain from the integration of technology (in my case online resources) into their course or subject. Is there a perspective or appreciation that students will achieve if online resources are used? Will students “get it” faster?

Without knowing, or being mindful of, what it is we want our students to achieve with the new technology, I think we end up getting stuck at levels 1 and 2.

Peter



#24 written by edge2100

about 2 years ago

That is a great set of questions for looking at the use of technology. One of the most important ones is “are we using technology just for the sake of using technology?” I think that question can come up when using the Smart Board; some teachers use it so much that the motivation level of the students goes down. Does the technology have an impact on what we are doing, or is it just a gimmick? These are the questions teachers need to ask before they implement the technology they are looking to integrate.



#25 written by Shannon Shepherd

about 1 year ago

I see this a lot in schools. We just purchase things, hand them to teachers, and say we have a great technology in our schools. It is so much bigger than this. We must get regular learning opportunities in front of teachers so that their technology understandings grow before we can even think of expanding our students. It is not all about test scores our kids get, but preparing them for a technological future..which starts with what our teachers know and can do around the area of technology integration.



#26 written by Rong

about 2 years ago

This is a very good reminder for educators. I noticed using an LCD projector instead of a white/black board for a lesson is a very common phenomenon at the school I used to work for. We surely should look deeply into the application of

technology in the classrooms.

However, from my teaching experience, traditional teaching tools such as a white/black board is one of the factors making students feel boring in class. Another way to display teaching material can arouse students' interest more or less. Printed letters displayed by LCD projectors are more comfortable to read than handwritten letters. Besides, by using LCD projectors instructors are supposed to prepare well for the content display and do not need to spend time to write and to clean the white/black board. Therefore, using an LCD projector in class is more efficient compared to using a white/black board.



#27 written by Miss Elphaba

about 2 years ago

As a student fresh out of high school and still in the beginning stages of my college career, I have gathered some opinions about technology in the classroom. The "biggest" technology my teachers ever used were personal computers or projectors. Most however used the white board or overhead projector to teach. I didn't sit behind a laptop or computer all day, but read from various textbooks and handouts. I think that we have new ways to do things that are easier and faster and often necessary, but we should not put behind the old ways.

One comment I have about the laptops is that a teacher may assign a reading or something on-line and the student may do it or may feel that they'd rather IM their friend in the next classroom or get on their email or facebook. I don't think having laptops for everyone would make teaching any easier - most likely it would be harder.



#28 written by Lisa Nielsen

about 2 years ago

These resources may be of interest to those following the conversation:

This is a rubric I created along with input from others on assessing classroom instruction:

<http://spreadsheets.google.com/pub?key=pjV2wGxpR6LMHBAVcv1nYBO>

This is a list of tech assessments I compiled:

<http://theinnovativeeducator.wikispaces.com/TIE%27s+Tech+Assessments>.

Lisa Nielsen-The Innovative Educator

<http://theinnovativeeducator.blogspot.com>



#29 written by Rob Hansen

about 1 year ago

We still need to be careful not to separate the definitions of "good teaching" and

“good teaching with technology”. The goal is for relevance, engagement, and rigor for all students. However a teacher accomplishes this is appropriate. Obviously, technology creates opportunities, and teachers need to be made aware of (and trained in) these opportunities. I am a huge advocate of doing so, and I believe ed-tech can be the transformative lever in reform. But, we need to guard against the “tail wagging the dog”. Treating ed-tech as the “end” instead of a “means to the end” will create opposition. The way the evaluation criteria are framed is a good start.



#30 written by Jane Porath

about 1 year ago

The process of evaluating is not easy with or without the use of technology. While the provision of a checklist or a place to start thinking is useful, it is by no means conclusive. I remember administrators focusing on how many times I called on girls vs boys etc. A far better use of time may have been to focus on the types of questions I was asking. I think the same can be said for the use of technology. The integration of technology is much more than having laptops in the classroom and out of the boxes. Finding a way to evaluate the use of technology is rather like finding a way to evaluate good teaching. It takes a trained eye and can be subjective. Knowing the curricula in use and what effective technology integration looks like is paramount.



#31 written by Jana

about 1 year ago

Jeff,

I appreciate your post as I agree 100% with your comments and observations regarding evaluating the use of technology. I too have had administrators walk into my classroom thinking that just because students are on a laptop they must be engaged in something meaningful, and yet they do not really have guidelines to follow. I think the guidelines you refer to would be very beneficial to administrators faced with the challenge of evaluating the use of technology in the classroom. Thank you for your insight.



#32 written by Karen

about 1 year ago

Some kind of rubric should be added to administrator’s evaluation tools. It should include some piece that requires the administrator to check his/her observations with the teacher before marking the rubric. Administrators might otherwise jump to conclusions that aren’t based on all the premises.

#33 written by Nicole Huett



about 1 year ago

Ensuring students learn is a different thing... do we really need to focus on that or rather I think the focus needs to be on creating an environment for effective study. When students have a casual discussion in a cafeteria is usually what is remembered and understood well. Can we create technology and environment that can effect such, one good example so far I've seen is <http://www.funnelbrain.com> - a great collaborative online resource for students and teachers!



#34 written by Susan Childers

about 1 year ago

It will be exciting to do new things in new ways. I believe that most of us are going to need to be shown how that is done, though. If we can improve student learning through doing old things in new ways I would count that as a victory.



#35 written by group 3

about 7 months ago

What is new things in new ways? What are some examples of...



#36 written by Nicki

about 6 months ago

i need to become more aware of the technology before my students are teaching me. I am not afraid to ask for their assistance. doing new things and lod things a different way will be exciting and also challenging.



#37 written by Alissa

about 5 months ago

When I was reading this article, I had to laugh because I used old things new ways all the time in the classroom. It is now time to use new things new ways. I need to develop things that will fully engage my students and give them new knowledge that they may not be able to get in other resources.



#38 written by Marilyn

about 1 year ago

Just getting teachers to integrate technology into the curriculum is tough. Evaluating their efforts is an even bigger challenge. I like the turn of questions you came up with for the technolgy observation. I think a truly honest evaluation

of this would involve observation of a lesson taught, maybe interviewing a student about the type of learning experiences they have had in the classroom and looking at products students produce as a result of being in that class. That would take lots of time, but would possibly give a more accurate view of what is really happening with technology and learning in that class. Just some thoughts.



#39 written by skoneman
about 1 year ago

This topic was very helpful in helping me understand the concept of technology helping us to do different things as opposed to doing things differently. In many classrooms today, teachers think they are technologically advanced because they use powerpoint presentations on a daily basis. In reality, this is just a more colorful way to do the same old thing.

I would love to have a classroom where every student has their own laptop and technology integration is of key importance. The limiting factor here, however is that my classroom has 3 computers (including mine) and they are all the old big white monitor computers. This makes it much harder to figure out a way to effectively use technology so that every student is actively engaged in the necessary tasks. Any suggestions?



#40 written by Kelly
about 1 year ago

Administrators need to evaluate how technology is used to force teachers to use it. In our district teachers only focus on what the administration is worried about, and technology is not under that umbrella!



#41 written by Melissa
about 1 year ago

I agree with Marilyn (June 6) that the rephrased questions are useful and that an admin would need to sit in on blended lesson and possibly chat with students about their experiences to be able to fully & fairly evaluate such a lesson.



#42 written by Doug
about 1 year ago

I have to admit this put things into perspective. I considered myself tech savvy but it now appears I'm doing old things in new ways. Time to raise the bar for my own ways of using technology. I guess the first step would be to subscribe to the RSS feed eh?



#43 written by chen



about 1 year ago

Teachers are using computers more than ever before for everything from instruction to administrative tasks. to communicate with parents and colleagues teachers agree that computers improve performance on standardized tests, yet educators do not feel that they have enough computers or training to make the most of the technology in their classrooms.

In order to evaluate task or project or any other assignment teachers would need

1. More training for themselves;
2. More computer access for their students
3. High-quality technology that's appropriate for their classrooms.

Educational technology, is basically like teacher training, it is a work in progress. Technology facilitates collaboration. As schools begin the switch of integrating the new technology into the teaching process, they will need to dedicate training and well built plan for ongoing professional development.



#44 written by Chen

about 1 year ago

Facilitators are using computers more than before for everything from instruction to administrative tasks, to communicate with parents and colleagues, or just to get the message across.

Teachers believe that computers improve performance on standardized tests, yet educators do not feel that they have enough computers or training to make the most of the technology in their classrooms.

In order to evaluate task or project or any other assignment teachers would need

1. More training for themselves;
2. More computer access for their students
3. High-quality technology that's appropriate for their classrooms.

Technology which is used in the classroom is basically like a teacher who teaches, it is a work in progress. Technology facilitates collaboration. As schools begin the switch of integrating the new technology into the teaching process, they will need to dedicate training and well built plan for ongoing professional development.



#45 written by Jane Mit chinson

about 1 year ago

I would try using Clickers. You only need one computer and you still get students using technology but in a much more organized and interactive way that still allows for verbal discourse. It's more important to use technology effectively rather than worrying about individual and independent access.

**#46 written by Becky**

about 10 months ago

Many teachers use technology to teach old things in a new way. It is a place to start, but now it is time to move beyond that. I agree that administrators should have some kind of evaluation form with a rubric that indicates how technology is being used in the classroom and if the instructor is making an effort to introduce new curriculum in new ways, or at least moving in that direction.

**#47 written by Resa**

about 10 months ago

Students now have been raised with constantly changing and upgrading technology. They use it daily: cell phones, ipods, computers, video games... we should embrace that knowledge base and use it to their learning advantage.

**#48 written by Diane Oberlies**

about 8 months ago

Most teachers probably use technology to teach old things in new ways. At least they are using technology. Probably teachers are going to need a lot of Professional Development to move out of the box. At a staff meeting teachers could be challenged with the idea of presenting new information in new ways using technology. I agree that administrators should have some kind of an evaluation form with a rubric that indicates how technology could/should be used in the classroom. Teachers could see the rubric in advance to understand that introducing new curriculum in new ways is more advanced than teaching old curriculum in new ways.

**#49 written by Julie**

about 7 months ago

I really liked the comment about using technology to do new things in new ways. I think that I am, currently, really good at the previous three things that were discussed but this one is something that definitely gets me thinking. I like the idea of using an evaluator to check off whether or not the activity fits in which category. I am always looking at ways to push myself, my students, and my classroom further into the technology world and this article has given me some great things to think about. Thanks!

**#50 written by Mary**

about 9 months ago

I believe that not only will administrators need rubrics for evaluating teachers, but

teachers will need rubrics for 'how to'....and I really liked the concept of teaching new things in new ways, which is going to require much new learning for 'old' teachers!

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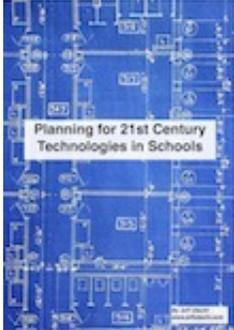


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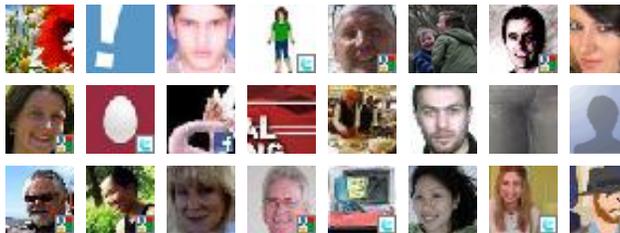


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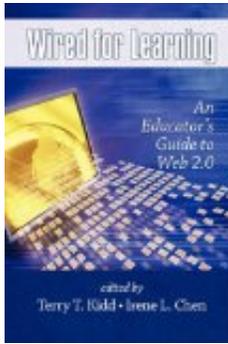
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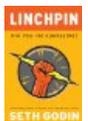
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