STAFF SKILLS FOR DIGITAL LITERACY

In this 21st Century all educational environments require teachers to have basic digital skills. While these are now being taught in every teacher education program in colleges and universities, even for students who may have grown up with technology; there are many teachers who have never acquired these required skills. Even in a PreK environment there is a necessity to be able to do most if not all of the tasks listed below. Not just for instruction, but also for better interaction and communication with parents and other staff members. It is my hope that during the 2022-2023 school year I will have the opportunity to teach you many of these skills that you may not already know.

Learn basic tech problems

You probably know the most common tech problems faced last year like hooking digital devices to the school WiFi, running a tech-infused lesson, or what students face with technology. Good idea: Next year, collect a list of the problems students, parents, and other teachers struggle with and teach students how to solve them. There are about 25 (click for a list or click here for a more detailed explanation), Know how to solve them. If you need help, add a comment at the bottom. I'll give you ideas. (**See detailed list starting at the bottom of Page 3)**

Don't be afraid to fail in front of students

There's a lot to be learned from failure. Show students how you handle when your best efforts don't work. Here's more detail on how students learn from failure.

Don't feel like you have to know the answer to every question

In fact, you can't. There are too many. Remind students that most webtools and apps are similar to others they already use–tools, toolbars, screen layout, and keyboard shortcuts to name a few. Review problem-solving strategies that students can rely on (like 'How did you solve this in the past').

Annotate a PDF

One of the many benefits of using digital textbooks is users can write in them. Become comfortable with both the native tool included with the ebook and other options students might use at home or during research like iAnnotate, Notability, and Acrobat. Don't forget to show how to delete these notes as part of cleaning up the text for next year's students.

Submit homework digitally

Most schools celebrate Earth Day. Next year, incorporate it into your classroom management by asking students to submit their work electronically (if you don't already). This could be by sharing it with you, posting it to a class blog, embedding it into a Discussion Forum, or uploading it to their digital portfolio. This not only makes submitting work painless (and less likely to get lost) when submitted to a public forum, students benefit from each other's knowledge.

Know where files are saved

This sounds easy, but many students–especially youngers–don't know where their files are saved. If you're in the file storage area, look at the bar at the top of the screen that shows the file's full path–where you are in the file structure.

Know how to backup data (and where it's backed up to)

This is a total geek if you've never tried it, but simple if you have. You drag-drop folders (or copy-paste) to your backup location (like a removable hard drive or a USB device). If your school backs up files automatically, find out what the process is, which files are included, and where this backup is found. It probably won't include files from your local drive (the hard drive of your personal device), but will include those on school servers. Know what they are so you save important files there.

Know how to use the digital devices available in your class

Your school probably uses a variety of hardware (laptops, iPads, Chromebooks, and more) to access class websites, blogs, online grade books, and/or an LMS (like Otus, Google Classroom, or Edmodo). These are all fundamental to managing classes. If you aren't already comfortable in those environments, change that this summer. Try lots of activities in the hardware your students use. Post enough blogs and webpage articles that you know how to do it and can use it effectively the upcoming school year.

Have a Plan B if tech doesn't work

Why? Because one of your greatest worries is that the tech you plan to use won't work. Know what to do if that happens and then don't worry anymore. Most webtools work fine. They only break if the entire website breaks (which is

unlikely with well-respected tools). Plan B is likely to be as simple as having a different webtool that will accomplish the same goals.

Minimize your chances of needing a Plan B by running through the tool and using only those that are vetted by your IT folks or your PLN.

Be flexible

If you ask students to demonstrate their knowledge with technology, be open to their suggestions. They may love a tool you've never used before. Let them 'sell' you on its good fit with your project and then let them use it. After all, it's not about the tool; it's about the Big Idea and sharing their knowledge.

Model good digital citizenship

Always practice good digital citizenship. Cite sources; don't use illegal media; treat online individuals respectfully. Insist your students do the same. When you use online resources, take a moment to ask students why it's legal for you to use it. For example, if you use Google images in the classroom, let students know this is legal because of the concept of 'fair use'–and explain what that is.

Empower yourself

Instead of blaming your administration for not providing professional development, search YouTube for webinars. Rather than whining because a solution someone gave you didn't work, Google it. There are lots of education video collections designed to answer the most common education questions. Model this behavior for students–that you are inquisitive with a bias for seeking answers.

Expunge "This is the way we do things" from your vocabulary

Know why every action is the right choice or change it.

Technology is a tool–not a goal

Don't use technology because it's cool; use it because it enhances the lesson. If it doesn't, move on to something that does. I know; it's tempting to use that glorious new 3D printer for, well, anything, but take time to find a lesson plan it will support and roll it out that way. Students will find more value if they see why it's important to their learning.

Build your PLN

Attend TwitterChats like #edchat or #csk8 or any other that interest you. Learn from others and share your knowledge.

There are about twenty problems that cause eighty percent of the tech stoppages. I'm going to tell you what those are and how to solve them. Trust me. They're easier than you think to solve. I routinely teach them to third, fourth and fifth graders, and then they teach their parents.

I'll tell you the problem first, then why it generally occurs and the most common solution to fix it:

Deleted a file

Why? By accident or changed my mind
What to do: Open Recycle Bin; right-click—restore

Can't exit a program

Why: Can't find the X or Quit tool. This happens with young children's programs and those pesky internet ads that marketers don't want you to be able to exit
What to do: Alt+F4 works 95% of the time. Try that.

Can't find Word

Why: Shortcut moved, was deleted by accident or became inactive
What to do: Right-click on desktop—select 'New'—"Word Document"

Keyboard doesn't work

Why: Lost the connection
What to do: First check to be sure it actually isn't working by pushing the 'Num Lock' on the right side. Does the 'Num Lock' light go on/off? If it does, the problem is something other than the keyboard. If it does, try this: Re-plug cord into back of tower or reboot

Mouse doesn't work

Why: Lost the connection
What to do: Move it around to see if the cursor moves. If it doesn't, re-plug cord into back or reboot

Start button is gone

Why: Task bar disappeared

What to do: Push Windows button in the lower right corner of the keyboard

No sound

Why: Mute is on; Volume is down; headphones are unplugged
What to do: Unmute the sound or turn it up from the lower right corner of the screen; plug headphones in; reboot

Do you notice how often I say reboot? Sometimes, the computer simply gets confused and drops actions out of the queue which means they stop working. All you have to do is restart the system to get things back to normal.

Can't find a file

Why: Saved wrong, moved
What to do: Push Start button—Start search; when you find it, take note of where it is. Better yet, resave in a location you will remember

Menu command grayed out

Why: You're in another command
What to do: Push escape 3 times. This gets you out of whatever you were working on and makes the command you'd like to use available

What's today's date?

Why: You forgot!
What to do: Hover over the clock in the lower right corner; if you're in Word, start to type the date and it will prompt you with the current date. Another way to enter the date if you're in word is with the shortkey Shift+Alt+D

Taskbar gone

Why: Student interference
What to do: Push the Windows button on the keyboard (between Ctrl and Alt on the left side). If it's been hidden, drag the top border up to expose it

Taskbar was moved

Why: Student interference
What to do: Click on an open part of the taskbar and drag it to the bottom of screen (or wherever you prefer it to be)

Desktop icons messed up

Why: Student interference; you added more icons and now everything's confused

What to do: Right click on screen—select 'Sort by' and select the method you'd like the icons arranged (name, type, etc.)

Computer frozen

Why: Mouse frozen; keyboard frozen, dialogue box open
What to do: Check solutions in this list. If nothing works, reboot

Program frozen

Why: Dialog box open; not selected on taskbar
What to do: Look around the screen until you find a dialogue box open. It's probably asking for input. Once you supply the answer, it will close and your program will work again. Clear the dialog box. Or, the program may be blinking on the taskbar because it accidentally fell asleep down there. Click the program on taskbar to reactivate

I erased my document/text

Why: Ooops
What to do: Ctrl+Z

Screen says "Ctrl-Alt-Del"

Why: You rebooted
What to do: Hold down Ct+Alt—then push Delete. This will either bring you to the log-in screen or to the desktop

Program closed down

Why: Ooops
What to do: Is it open on the taskbar? If so—click on it; if not, reopen program—see if the right sidebar shows that it saved a back-up and select that to open

Tool bar missing at top of www

Why: Pushing F11 key
What to do: Push F11 key

Toolbar missing in MS Office (2003)

Why: Closed by accident
What to do: Right click in toolbar area; select missing toolbar

Follow me

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A lot of online sites can make learning letters fun for kids. Here are a few of my favorites:

1. **Find the letter–easy, medium, hard–from PBS kids, intuitive to use; even K won't have any trouble with it**
2. **Hands on Learning--20+ Simple Activities for Kids to Start Learning Letters**
3. **Learn Letters with Max (video)–20 minute video with over 200 million views**
4. **Owl and Mouse Learn Letters–a group of websites to learn letters and sounds**
5. **Starfall Letters–follow the link but also check out other pages on this stellar website**
6. **Wheels on the Bus (video)**