What's the Difference? Infusion or Integration

NADTDEC recently sponsored an online professional development session using www.gotomeeting.com. The discussion was over two buzzwords - *infusion* and *integration*. Typically, when individuals are asked to explain the meaning of these terms, we find that the terms are used interchangeably and often, inaccurately. It makes one wonder. What *are* schools today actually doing with instructional technology? Are schools integrating or infusing technology into the teaching and learning environment? What *is* the difference? Is it possible to have one without the other? Is this really something new?

Let's take a look.

INFUSION

Definition - An introduction of a new element into something.

Ed tech translation - Acquisition and accessibility of hardware and/or software for students and teachers to use in the classroom.

Examples include:

Historical
- Pencils and pens for writing
- Overhead projectors for large-group info sharing
- Opaque projectors to enlarge flat inanimate objects
- Ditto machines
- Tape recorders and record players
- Filmstrip and movie projectors
- Subscriptions to weekly hardcopy nonfiction articles

Current
- Computers for writing, editing, and revising
- LCD projectors for large-group digital information sharing via computers
- Document cameras for 3D object sharing
- Copy machines
- MP3 players
- DVD players
- Online subscriptions for daily nonfiction articles differentiated by reading levels

INTEGRATION

Definition - the intermixing op people or items previously segregated.

Ed tech translation - Using technology appropriately and seamlessly as a tool for learning and teaching in the classroom.

Examples include:

Historical

- Handwriting a report including "cut and paste" photos
- Viewing a filmstrip about mitosis
- Gathering around a teacher's demo station to learn how to complete an electrical circuit
- Rotating to a stationary listening center for reading a book via a tape recorder

Current

- Creating a multimedia presentation with text, audio, photos, and video
- Watching a downloaded digital video clip from the Internet about mitosis
- Using a document camera to project the teacher demo of how to complete an electrical circuit
- Listening to a story or an extended lesson downloaded to an MP3 player

Students and teachers have been infusing and integrating technology for decades. The difference today - it's digital, rapidly changing, and inequitably available to all students. It is possible to have technology infusion without technology integration but not the other way around. Once technology infusion has been attained, the professional development around technology integration becomes an imperative.

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