

Managing Technology: Is Technology In The Classroom Good or Bad?

There is little debate that innovation and technology is constantly redefining and shaping the everyday world in which we live. Meanwhile, there is significant concern that the introduction of technology into California's classrooms would result in an over-reliance on technology to provide solutions, thereby stifling a student's educational and creative growth.

Too often a school's approach to the use of calculators and related technology in the classroom is entrenched in the fear that the use of calculators might have a negative impact, becoming a mental crutch for students, rather than a tool that promotes higher-order learning and a balanced mathematics program. Preventing the use of calculators in classrooms differs from their general acceptance in the work place and in daily life. The issue should not revolve around whether or not students use calculators in the classroom, but rather how to appropriately introduce and manage their use in order to enhance the learning experience.

A balanced mathematics program should provide students with a range of knowledge, skills, and tools. This includes a variety of operations, such as the use of computational procedures, mental mathematics, estimation, and the proper use of a calculator. Although it is critical for students to develop proficiency in pencil-and-paper procedures and mental mathematics, these methods alone will not meet contemporary needs and demands. Students need to be able to master all of these methods in order to fully understand and use mathematics.

Although the appropriate use of calculators in the classroom is a component of a balanced mathematics program, it is critical to know when to introduce and use a calculator and to know when other methods are more efficient. It is important that students become accustomed in making decisions about which method or approach to use for a range of different situations and become proficient in using their chosen approach to solve a variety of problems.

In order to provide proper instruction on how and when to use a calculator, it is essential that teachers are properly trained and knowledgeable on how to successfully integrate the use of calculators and related technology into the classroom. The introduction and proper management of technology in the classroom can play a crucial role in a student's development and ability to use and master technology that is widely used in the workplace, and therefore provide a fluid transition from the classroom to real world application.

The purpose of utilizing calculators and related technology in the classroom is not to stifle mathematical understanding and growth, but to enhance and expand upon it.