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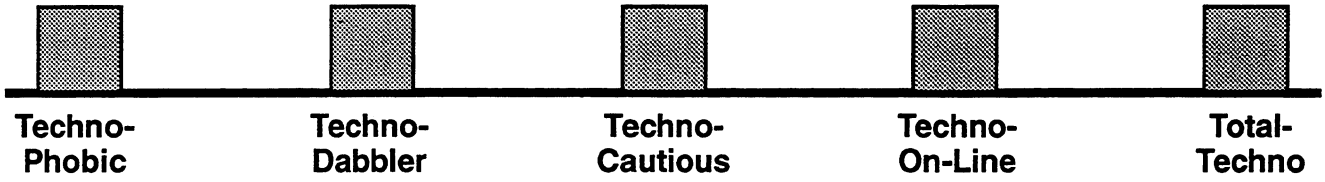
INTRODUCTION

Where do you fall on the technological continuum?



Welcome to the wonderful world of educational technology! For some teachers, discovering the realm of superhighways, Power PC's, multimedia, and virtual reality will be one terrific adventure. For others, this experience will be similar to paying taxes. Wherever you may find yourself on the technological continuum, teachers all over the globe recognise that technology in the classroom is here and planning on a lengthy stay.

For those people who consider themselves Techno-Phobics, a common lament might be, *Whatever happened to the good old days? Nothing to plug in, nothing to log-on—just books, the board and thou.* A short walk down the corridors of teaching history offers an interesting object lesson. During the mid-1800's, schools were being equipped with the latest item in educational technology. This piece of equipment was supposed to bring about mass educational reform, changing the face of learning forever. What was this revolutionary piece of hardware? Nothing other than the blackboard!

Surprising to the reformers was the fact that teachers simply did not use the board. They did not know how, nor were they comfortable integrating this new piece of equipment into their one-room schools. Consequently, the "blackboard reformers" wrote manuals for teachers offering tips on how to use the new piece of classroom equipment. Teachers, however, did not see a need to use a large display device with a class of possibly 12 different year levels. Students were all using individual textbooks, slates, paper and pencil, etc. However, over the course of time, schools became more crowded, building needs changed, and students were then grouped by ages. With this shift to group learning, the board became a perfect tool for the teacher and was eventually embraced as the mainstay of the model classroom lesson.

Any time history is reflected upon (or repeated), there are many lessons available for learning. The story of the board generates several thoughts, perhaps the most prominent being that some things never change. Those early teachers were not about to use any new technology unless there was an actual reason for them to. If the new technology was a hindrance, teachers were not going to use it. But as the classroom changed, the needs of the teacher and students changed as well, thus creating a new set of problems needing solutions.

As classrooms gear up for the 21st century, student and teacher needs are changing again.

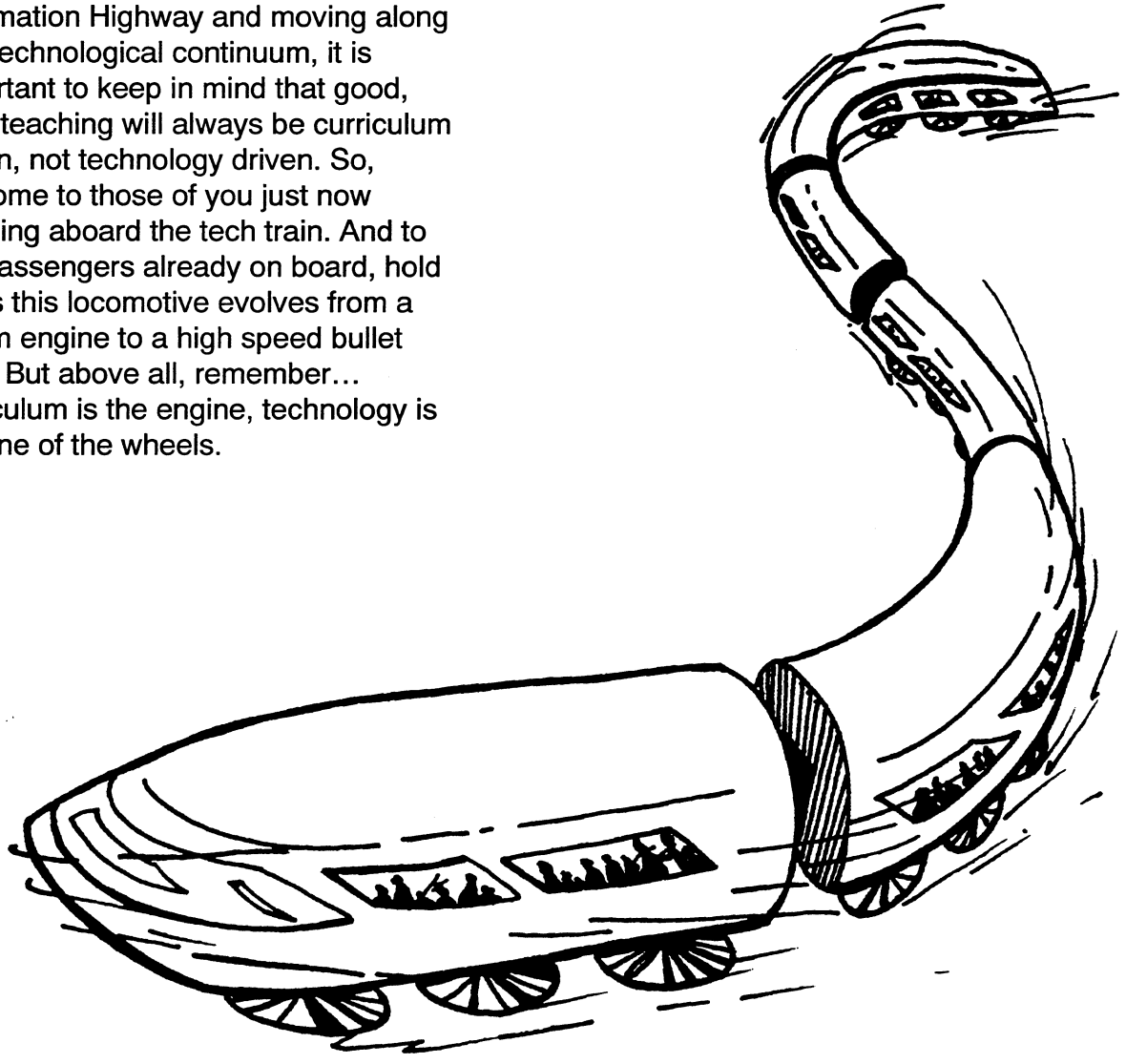
Access to information, information management, multicultures and languages, the global economy, and a rapidly changing world in which students are growing up, all make for new and challenging demands upon the classroom teacher. One of these demands, of course, is how to successfully integrate and manage technology in the classroom program.

INTRODUCTION (cont.)

Perhaps those on the opposite end of the technological continuum are so eager to learn more and teach more, they try the latest innovations and forget which drives which, the technology or the curriculum.

The fundamental question asked by teachers over the centuries has always been, How do I excite my students about learning? Educators are constantly asking themselves, What goals do I want my students to achieve and how do I help them obtain these goals? Regarding the question of using technology in the classroom, the question should not be, How do I use technology in this lesson?, but rather What tools can I use to help make this a more successful and meaningful lesson? As Dr. David Dockterman of Tom Snyder Productions says, *You would never sit down and construct a lesson thinking, Now what can I do that will use the board?* The same holds true for technology tools.

As educators begin cruising the Information Highway and moving along that technological continuum, it is important to keep in mind that good, solid teaching will always be curriculum driven, not technology driven. So, welcome to those of you just now climbing aboard the tech train. And to the passengers already on board, hold on as this locomotive evolves from a steam engine to a high speed bullet train! But above all, remember... curriculum is the engine, technology is but one of the wheels.

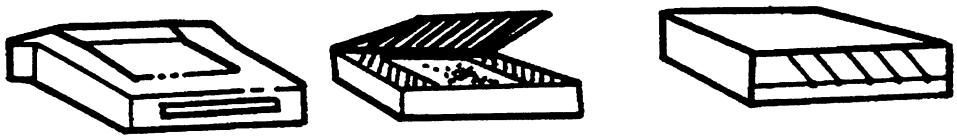


JUST THE FACTS

With all the equipment and technological jargon floating around these days, even the Total Techno can become confused. One way to help a tech user understand all of the technology out there is to break it down into two categories. These categories are known as *hardware* and *software.*

Hardware

Hardware consists of all the electronic components and equipment that make up the computer. These parts include the CPU (Central Processing Unit, the actual computing part), keyboard, printer, modem, monitor, scanner, and any other peripheral equipment. Think of hardware as the technology parts that you can bump into.



Software

Software is the language and instructions needed to make the computer do what you want it to do. These instructions are usually stored on a small floppy disk which is then loaded into the computer. One example of software is the word processing program contained in Microsoft Works®. When you purchase this software program, you get a kit which includes a thick manual and several floppy disks. On the disks you will find the encoded language which tells the computer what to do. Software is also known as a program or application. Some software programs are stored on small chips inside the computer. In this case, the software becomes known as firmware.