

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Getting Started	7
Chapter Two: Managing Classroom Details	21
Chapter Three: Managing Information	36
Chapter Four: Engaging Instruction	52
Chapter Five: Meaningful Activities and Projects	64
Chapter Six: Travelling the Information Highway	75
Chapter Seven: Have a Safe Trip	92
Chapter Eight: Professional Development	104
Chapter Nine: There is Life after School	109

Appendix

Favourite Websites for Teachers	114
Glossary	120

Chapter One

Getting Started

This chapter is designed to help teachers get started using a classroom computer. Teachers who have had some experience with computers will not need to spend much time in this chapter. However, even the most skilled classroom technologist will benefit from some of the organising principles outlined in the next few pages, so do not skip it completely.

Learning to use a computer can be frustrating and time consuming. One step that makes the process a lot easier is finding someone who can help a beginner learn the ropes. People with various levels of expertise are in every school, so there should be someone who will agree to serve as a mentor. Having a mentor to teach and guide teachers who are just starting out with a computer in their classroom will ensure that they get off to a good start and develop the skills they need to effectively use a classroom computer.

What to Look for in a Mentor

- Someone who knows more about computers than the teacher who needs help.
In every school, there are teachers who are computer-literate and who use computers in their classroom. A teacher should look for a mentor who knows more about computers than they do, but who is not so high-tech that they cannot work with someone who does not yet speak the language. As one teacher said, 'I don't want an expert. I want someone just expert enough to help me with my questions.'
- Someone who has some spare time and is willing to spend it helping another teacher.
Lack of time is the nemesis of education! A mentor has to be willing to spend time when it is needed. A teacher may be better off with a mentor who has less expertise and more time.
- Someone who works near the teacher's classroom or has autonomy during the day.
A mentor may need to drop in several times during the week to assist. Someone who works nearby, a lab teacher or a technology specialist who has a flexible schedule will be able to be there when needed.
- Someone who enjoys teaching others.
It does not matter how much a person knows if they are not willing to teach others. Find a mentor who will not lose patience when a concept is misunderstood. Find someone who can laugh when a mistake is made.
- Someone who knows how to teach computer skills to others.
People learn by doing, not by watching someone else do things for them! A mentor who sets up databases or prints banners is not teaching the learner to do so. Teachers should choose a mentor who will teach them to get along on their own. When working with a mentor, the teacher's hand should be on the mouse most of the time. A good mentor has their fingerprints on the screen, not on the mouse!

- Someone who understands the teacher's needs.

Make sure the mentor understands that they are being asked to provide long-term help. A mentor should be willing to:

1. help a teacher develop the skills needed to use a classroom computer
2. discuss instructional technology trends and teach the lingo
3. walk through the process of loading and using new software
4. help to troubleshoot if the need arises
5. answer questions and encourage a beginning teacher to try new things.

Evaluate Possible Mentors

- a media specialist
 - + Most media specialists are computer-literate and use computers on a daily basis.
 - + Media specialists know what peripherals are available and how to use them.
 - + Most media specialists have a more flexible schedule than classroom teachers.
 - Many media specialists are really busy and may not have time to mentor.
- a computer lab teacher
 - + Most lab teachers are computer-literate and are familiar with classroom computers.
 - + Most lab teachers enjoy teaching others about computers.
 - Most lab teachers do not have a flexible schedule.
 - Some lab teachers already have staff development responsibilities and may not want to assume a mentor relationship.
- a team-mate with computer expertise
 - + A team-mate already works nearby and cooperatively.
 - + A team-mate is familiar with the classroom instructional goals.
 - + A team-mate usually has common planning time.
 - + A team-mate will be nearby when needed.
- a student
 - + Most students grew up in a digital world and make great mentors.
 - + Students usually have more spare time than adults.
 - + Students gain a sense of belonging and usefulness when they mentor others.
 - Students may not be available when a teacher needs them.
 - Students should not be involved in confidential activities such as managing assessment or corresponding with parents.

Care and Feeding of your Mentor

Once you have found a mentor, make sure you nurture the relationship. It is important to remember that a mentor is volunteering time and energy to help you reach your goals. Plan ahead to keep a mentor feeling happy and appreciated. Add a personal touch to the ideas listed below.

Ways to Appreciate a Mentor:

- Respect a mentor's busy schedule; be as flexible as possible.
- Limit yourself to one emergency per week!
- Send thank you notes and tokens of appreciation.
- Inform your principal of a mentor's willingness to go the extra mile to help a fellow teacher.
- Offer to cover a class or do some kind of housekeeping chore to 'pay back' the time a mentor is spending away from their own work.
- Keep a portfolio that shows the mentor what you have learned.
- Say 'thank you' over and over and over again!

Getting to Know You!

One of the challenges of working with any kind of technology is fear of the unknown. The world of computers is filled with strange sounding jargon, meaningless acronyms and bewildering directions. Instruction manuals can be confusing and look as if they were written by geniuses. Add a natural fear of somehow breaking delicate and expensive equipment and horror stories of accidentally erasing hours and hours of tedious data entry. It is a wonder anyone ever lays their hands on a mouse or keyboard!

Not to worry! We are teachers! We know that knowledge is power! Armed with the information that can be gathered with a simple inventory and a few minutes of a mentor's time, teachers can assemble the information needed to broaden their technology comfort zone and make the most effective use of the technology in the classroom and school.

This computer information inventory will help teachers to get up close and personal with the computers in their classroom. Use it to help organise the information needed to make informed planning decisions.

Before you start the inventory . . .

- Number the computers in the classroom. Use a permanent texta or a stick-on label.
- Copy the inventory on the following page. If the computers are EXACTLY alike, only one inventory is needed. If they are different, a separate inventory will be needed for each computer.
- Locate any product information that came with the computer.
- Sharpen a couple of pencils and find your glasses. You will be looking for some pretty small print!

Getting to Know your Computer

Computer's Brand Name _____

Computer Manufacturer's Help Line Phone Number

Computer's Model Number _____

Type of Microprocessor _____

Microprocessor Speed _____
(How fast your computer can process information.)

RAM _____
(How much information your computer can process at one time.)

Hard Drive Capacity _____
(How much information your computer can store for future use.)

Does your computer have a floppy-disk drive? _____

Does your computer have a CD drive? _____

Does your computer have a DVD drive? _____

Does your computer have a zip drive? _____

Does your computer have a printer? _____

Is the printer:

dot matrix? _____

ink jet? _____

laser? _____

Printer's Manufacturer _____

Printer's Model Number _____

Printer's Serial Number _____

Printer Manufacturer's Help Line Phone Number

- The brand name will be something like Macintosh, IBM, Dell or Gateway.
- Most manufacturers have a phone number you can call for help. Look for it in the printed material that came with the computer.
- The model number should be on the front of the computer.
- Processor information should be in the documents that came with the computer. If you don't have this information, you can ask your mentor. If all else fails, call your computer manufacturer. They should be able to help you answer any questions.
- Processor speed is measured in megahertz (MHz).
- RAM is measured in bytes and megabytes.
- Your hard drive is a storage device usually located inside your computer. Its capacity is stated in megabytes or gigabytes.
- A disk drive is usually on the front of your computer.
- CD-ROM and zip drives may be built into your computer or attached with a cord.
- Printers often come 'bundled' with a new computer. The most common type is ink jet, followed by laser and dot matrix.
- Most manufacturers have a phone number you can call for help. Look for it in the printed material that came with the printer.