

We Can't Let Educators Off the Hook

Scott McLeod

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Editor's Note

This was originally posted to [Scott McLeod's blog](#) on September 29, 2010.

[Steve Dembo said:](#)

I don't see it as teachers spurning technology, or choosing not to take advantage of those new ideas and tools. I think most teachers don't even realize that there's a decision to be made. It's not a matter of choosing the red pill or the blue pill... if you don't know that there are even two pills available as options.

... A teacher that has never heard of Blabberize or Glogster or Prezi, has never been introduced to the new world of online applications that are available to them. They likely don't follow blogs or listen to podcasts. They have probably never been to an EdTech conference or seen a TED talk. In short, they're just ordinary, average educators who aren't aware that there's a whole other world that they have easy access to... if they just 'take the blue pill'.

... I'm all for conversations about 'big' change. And yes, I agree, it's not the technology, it's the pedagogy. However, I also think that you need at least a minimal base to build from before you can have those conversations. And the vast majority of the educators in this country do NOT have that base yet.

Every day that I present for educators, I have a greater appreciate for how distorted the view is as seen through the eyes of a typical EduBlogger. In fact, the majority of the voices in the EdTech Community are so far ahead of the curve that it doesn't even seem like their on the same road anymore. Most educators have never listened to a podcast, much less created one. They've never edited a wiki, much less started one of their own.

So how on earth could they be expected to have a rational conversation about the impact new technologies are having on the skill sets our students need? Simply put, they can't. The majority of the voices many of us listen to on a regular basis... actually represent just a tiny fraction of the educators out there. We're the minority, the outsiders, the ones who talk using strange terms involving words with far too many missing vowels.

[Darren Draper said:](#)

the large majority of teachers that I know are very caring individuals that believe firmly in life-long learning. Most love teaching because making a difference in the lives of our youth can be the most rewarding profession on the planet. Most love kids, love community, and want to share. It's not that they don't want to try new things, it's not that they're lazy, and it's not that they're incapable. Rather, it's that their priorities don't always line up with those of other progressive educators in and out of the blogosphere. I'm not saying it's right, but I am trying to describe the reality that so many in the blogosphere seem to misunderstand.

[Darren also said:](#)

Those content to lurk but still hesitant (or unable, for whatever reason) to contribute.

The fact of the matter is that there exist a very large number of effective educators that are simply not able to contribute in any significantly recurrent amount to online discussion. All told, it's not that they're incapable of participating and it's not that they're unwilling. Rather, this group maintains perceived silence online because their professional priorities prohibit them from spending the time or energy required to provide plausible contribution.

To which I say, **NO, WE CAN'T LET EDUCATORS OFF THE HOOK.** Whether they're teachers or administrators or librarians or education professors, they have a voluntarily-assumed, paid responsibility to be relevant to the needs of children and education TODAY and to prepare graduates as best they are able for TOMORROW. 'Professional priorities' must be aimed at preparing students for the world as it is and will be. Otherwise, what are educators there for?

You can't 'firmly believe in life-long learning' and simultaneously not be clued in to the largest transformation in learning that ever has occurred in human history. Those two don't co-exist. Being a 'life-long learner' is not [ignoring what's going on around you](#); you don't get to claim the title of 'effective educator' if you do this.



[My fish hook](#)

Look, it's not like those of us who now 'get it' were born with this knowledge. We weren't like this at the beginning. At some point in our personal histories we were the same as these educators that for some reason now get to be labeled as 'unable' to do this. **Unable to do this? Poppycock.** At no time in the personal computer / Internet era has this technology and social media stuff been easier to initiate. It's not like back when you needed to know computer coding. Want to use a wiki? Click Edit; type; click Save. Want to leave a comment on a blog? Click on Comments; type in your name, e-mail, school web site, and comment; click on Save. There isn't an educator alive who 'can't do that.' They engage in similarly-easy activity every time they search or order something online.

The reason many of us now 'get it' is because we realized that the world is changing, we recognized our responsibility to our students and schools, and **we dived in and learned as we went along.** Changing inertia into momentum, not waiting for someone to hand us the answer, taking responsibility ourselves rather than blaming others for our own inactivity - **that's what life-long learners do. That's what effective educators do. That's what we owe our children.**

If you're a teacher / administrator / librarian / education professor that somehow 'doesn't even realize [yet] that there's a decision to be made,' should you even be working in a school or university? Don't our children and our school systems need and deserve someone who's in a different place than you are? It's one thing to still be a learner; heck, we're all learners with this technology stuff. It's another to opt out or not even recognize the choice. If we look at what our kids need, shouldn't we replace you with someone else?

It's not about us. It's not about our personal or professional priorities and preferences, our discomfort levels, or any of that other stuff that has to do with us. It's about our students: our children and our youth who deserve at the end of their schooling experience to be prepared for the world in which they're going to live and work and think and play and be. That's the obligation of each and every one of us. No educator gets to disown this.

We can't let educators off the hook. Not a single one. So keep that fishhook firmly wedged in their mouths. Keep tugging them along on the line. Keep scooping them up in our nets. Feed them tasty tidbits if need be. Do whatever it takes to make this happen. But insist on them doing the same.



[Slide - Should teachers get to choose?](#)

What do you think?

Should teachers be allowed to choose whether or not they will integrate technology in their classrooms?

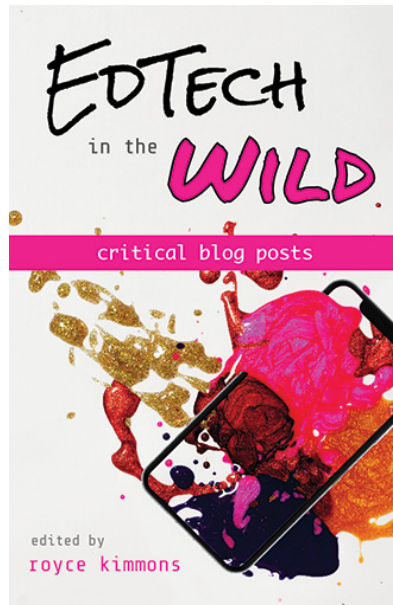
- a. Yes
- b. No

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