Technology to Support Learning

It has been quite a journey bringing you our PowerPoint presentation; I hope you'll learn a lot from it, I know I sure learned a lot about the technologies out there while helping Lisa to put it together. The chapter is organized by five categories, new curricula, scaffolds and tools, feedback, reflection and revision, bringing community to the classroom, and expanding opportunities for teacher learning. Although I found this chapter to be chocked full of great information here are some of what I consider to be the highlights.

New curricula - this chapter makes a great point about how technology alone cannot bring success to the classroom and that it needs to implemented using sound pedagogical principles to be successful. Some of the things that this section talks about is bringing real-world problems to the classroom and creating active environments for students to not only solve problems but also to find their own. Some of the example curricula ranges the gamut from video-based problems to computer simulations. Some really creative instructional aides like the Voyage of Mimi, the Jasper Woodbury Problem Solving Series, and Classroom Inc's banking simulations are just a few of the examples. Interactive technologically enhanced environments like the Global Lab which allow students to literally solve global problems is also an astonishing program.

Feedback, Reflection, and Revision - I think this section was my favorite because it opened my eye to some really creative learning tools like ClassTalk which allows teachers to create active learning collaborative environments which makes students' problem solving visible and graphical in a statistical manner. CSILE is also a very cool network-based tool that allows students to receive feedback from their peers and to reflect on their own learning in a very active and engaged way. Of the cognitive tutors, I was most impressed by the Sherlock Project used by the U.S. Air Force to train technicians to work on complex systems involving thousands of parts. The simulations also offer a coach to mentor the technicians with assistance that is reduced while the technician's proficiency increases. Learners can also replay their simulations and reflect on their performance, just like watching game films in sports.

I do wish that there had been a little more in the teacher learning section, they do make an important point about how teachers need partners in innovation, including administrators, students, parents, and community. I think as teachers we sometimes feel like the innovative burden has been left up to us and everyone else just wants to see results. Another point that is made is how we need time to learn, how true. With new technologies abounding, the opportunity to participate in learning experiences where we can be trained and introduced to what's new and what is working would be very valuable. I know most schools offer pay raises for adding educational units to our resume, but being given some time off to be able to better focus on the subjects we are learning would be helpful too.