

Rick's Place

Notes, Thoughts, and Random Musings on the Online Experience

by Rick Hein, AMIS web master

Most adults are immigrants to the digital world who work hard to learn, understand, and use the new technologies. As digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001), we try to program our camera phones, learn the newest computer operating systems, and set the clocks on our VCRs. Our goal is to master the skills necessary to successfully use technology as a tool in our lives. Our skill-based lens on technology leads us to view technology as a tool for learning.

Students, particularly younger students, are digital natives (Prensky, 2001). From birth, and for some even before birth, these students have lived in a digital world. Many in this generation will not own a telephone that is connected to a wall by a wire. They do not know what a record or even a cassette tape is; instead, they carry an entire music collection in an MP3 player in their pocket. Many are connected to the Internet 24 hours, 7 days a week. Digital natives expect their world of information, music, and personal contacts to be with them at all times, whether at school, at home, or in the park. They do not see these technologies as mere tools for learning but, rather, as basic elements of their environment. This is a paradigm that is entirely different from that of the digital immigrant's tool-based view. Education leaders and policymakers must consider this growing paradigm difference carefully as they plan for the future.

Is a Laptop Initiative in Your Future?

Howard Pitler, Kathleen Flynn, and Barbara Gaddy
Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning

You probably knew that this one was coming all year. It is time for the "How To Spend All Your Spare Money and Your Summer Vacation" article. It is as inevitable as the graduation speaker's exhortation to "lead a new generation forward into a brighter, happier, more caring world". It is as inevitable as the boys taking off their shirts to play football on the first sunny day of spring. Many of you will turn away quickly after reading the initial quote which includes such emotionally loaded words as culture, tool-based, skill-based, and paradigm.

Our recent set of jazz band auditions were both musically strong and technologically strong. We heard metronomes. The balance of the backing track and the performer was generally excellent. There was even a beautiful moment hearing *Four Brothers* being performed at 208 bpm accompanied by a windup metronome beating four to a bar and dinging the bell on the first beat of each and every measure. Your technological gains in the recording process made it more difficult for the audition committee as we could hear all of the fine work that your students shared with us. Nuance and finer points of performance became increasingly important as the sheer musicality of your students shone brightly and made for difficult choices.

I do not encourage anyone to rest on their laurels, however. Technology marches on and we, as digital immigrants, must work hard to keep up with the new events. The summer break for re-creation should include some time for you to experiment with your recording techniques. It may also include some time spent working with the new versions of your sequencer or notation program. Chances are you or a family member will have been gifted with a digital music player. Take the time to put on your favourite music and arrange it into meaningful emotional play lists as well as "Albums". The native speakers have embraced *random* as an acceptable order. Our strict upbringing makes us bristle at the notion of the first movement of *Pathetique* being followed by *Un bel di* and that being followed by *Can't get you out of my head* by Kylie Minogue. Our digital native speaking students do not object to this type of playlist. They might just be responding to three composer's responses to passion.

If you do have time to reflect this summer, and I hope you will, maybe you will try to adapt your philosophy of music education to this new paradigm which is appearing. If music is all around us and a part of the environment, then the tools for judging musical creation and evaluating the music we hear are important skills for our citizens. As well as the tools of singing, playing, reading, composing, notating and analysing, we must also keep encouraging a constant reflection on why the music is important to the individual, the group and to the rest of society.

Rick Hein
rahein@mac.com