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An Engaging Way to Learn

Our world is constantly changing, constantly evolving into something new, something different. As a student in this rapidly changing world, it is not always easy to balance work and school, or to learn effectively in the class time we are given. However, I have found that my willingness to learn comes as a result of my teachers' and administrators' willingness to see me succeed, something that is extremely important within the school system. With the help of my teachers and their creativity and challenging ideas, I have found that the challenges of life are a lot less menacing. With the fast pace of today's society, technology is playing a huge role in engaging students in the classroom, as well as the programs put into place by school districts and regions that enable students to understand their material and learn more effectively.

Technology is a large part of student engagement, both in my high school, and around the world. For example, in my French 12 class, we have recently become part of a program that has exposed our class to an entirely different type of technology within our classroom. As an ongoing experiment, we have each been granted the use of an iPod Touch within our French class. This is a huge step in gaining access to different French resources. As different students learn at different levels, especially in a language class, these iPods enable students to listen to or watch readings, recordings, or videos at their own pace, rewinding or pausing to suit their needs. Before this, students would have to listen to a recording, for example, on the teacher's computer, and they oftentimes fell behind the class in responding to questions because they were unable to understand the material at such a fast pace. Now, each and every student in this class is able to effectively learn the material at their own pace, while still being on par with the class. In our rapidly changing world, students are expected to keep up with the others, and adapt to expectations wherever they go. The use of technology within the classroom enables students to not only learn better, it prepares them for the future in that the technology of today is constantly progressing and the workforce is becoming very much technology-oriented. It also enables students to think outside the box, such as creating a brochure on the computer, using photos, graphs, and charts, rather than doing one up by hand. By teaching and encouraging students to use technology in their everyday lives, the schools are encouraging them to constantly make new discoveries and make use of new resources in our world.

Programs within our school system that help students learn better are also large parts of creating students engagement in our schools. At my high school, I have seen a program such as this evolve and teach students to become better listeners, better

learners, and better leaders. One such program is the AVID program at North Peace Secondary School, which enables students to alternatively learn different subjects on different days, while also teaching them how to effectively learn their materials to the best of their ability. Several of my teachers are involved in the AVID program, and their teaching methods in this program also spill over into their other classes. It is in these classes, with these teachers, that my understanding of concepts grew and my note-taking skills began to flourish. Before coming to these classes, I didn't always ask myself questions about what I was learning, or take notes in a certain way. My teachers challenged me to think about what I was learning, and also introduced to me the Cornell system of taking notes. This concept is not new, by any means, but because it was new to me, it made a large difference in my not-taking. By categorizing my notes and organizing the information I was given in a certain way, my notes were much more easily read and understood, and my studying skills improved. I am certain that as I go on in education, to college and university, I will be utilizing this style of taking notes, and my studying skills will be much improved because of the teachers involved with the AVID program and their ideas and teaching methods as a result of that.

In my education history, I have been most challenged and engaged in the classroom within the last two years. At my high school, many teachers are open to progression and advancements in technology or teaching practices within their classrooms, accepting anything that will either enable them to teach more effectively or their students to learn more successfully. Some teachers, not so open to change, also are able to get their points across, but lose some the students' willingness to learn as a result. Each and every student in today's education system has the opportunity to make a difference and to achieve their goals, be it obtaining a high school diploma or a master's degree. Attaining these goals will not be easy by any stretch, but with the support of teachers, administrators, and other figures within the school system, no challenge will be too difficult, including financial barriers for students wishing to go on to post-secondary education, situations where students must work to support their families, teen pregnancies or other situations that challenge a student's ability to learn. Schools must take these challenges into consideration, and create a classroom environment where students are encouraged to reach their goals through effectively learning what is set before them. These standards can be reached via many directions: new technology, support from teachers, and new, creative ideas that challenge a student's mindset and maintain student engagement within the school system. ■