

Transforming from Replacement to Creation

When I started the Master of Arts in Educational Technology (MAET) program, my main goal was to improve my delivery of classroom content by using technology. Although I didn't know it at the time, I was really looking to for ways to digitize paper assignments that I gave my students or substitute paper assignments with digital assignments. For example, instead of having them read a section from the old textbook, I was looking for ways to replace it with a digital (article or video) version of the section. Or instead of taking a paper and pencil assessment, I was looking for an application the students could take the test on. As I started replacing paper assignments with digital assignments, I found student interest and engagement was significantly increased but their actual understanding of the content and ability to transfer it to real life situations was not increased.

Through the MAET program, I have learned about other ways to weave technology into my teaching that go far beyond digitizing paper assignments. I now have a vast collect of knowledge about different applications that exist, their affordances and constraints, and ways they can be used to enhance my teaching but not just replace a paper assignment. For example, my students recently studied potential and kinetic energy and how energy transfers from one form to another. To demonstrate their understanding of these concepts, they built a rollercoaster out of pipe insulation and video recorded their rollercoaster in action. Then using the abilities of the video software, they annotated the video and added audio to explain their understanding about how the rollercoaster worked in terms of potential and kinetic energy transformation. They were able to share their videos on Blendspace and leave feedback for each other. This assessment went far above and beyond what my students would have been able to do with just pencil and paper. In terms of the SAMR (substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition) model, I redefined the assignment with the way I was asking the students to enhance their learning and deepen their understanding with the technology. They were actually able to transfer their learning to a real life situation.

Being part of the MAET program has opened my eyes to the ways technology can be used to enhance students' learning and understanding instead of just replacing paper assignments. As I leave the program, my goal has not changed. I still want to improve my delivery of classroom content by using technology. But how I interpret my goal has transformed. Improving my delivery no longer means substituting a technology assignment for a paper assignment. Instead it means using the affordances of the technology to enhance or remix the assignment so the students do less rote memorization and more discovering. From here on out, when I incorporate technology into my lesson, I will do it in a purposefully way to ensure my students gain a deeper understanding of the content and have the opportunity to create new products.