

The Intangibles

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INTRODUCTION

In today's world, any discussion about the requirements of a millennium teacher should naturally focus around technology and training. Millennium "must haves" should concentrate on two categories: (1) the obvious answers, and (2) the intangibles.

First, millennium teachers should focus on the obvious answers:

1. **The Seamless Use of Technology:** Laura Dias, an instructional technology specialist for Cobb County, clearly explains this by saying, "Technology is integrated when it is used in a seamless manner to support and extend curriculum objectives and to engage students in meaningful learning. It is not something one does separately; it is part of the daily activities taking place in the classroom."
2. **Professional Development:** In the Augsburg College/JDL Technologies monograph, *Nowhere in Technology: All Children Left Behind*, a lack of appropriate staff development was cited repeatedly as a major barrier to effective technology infusion. No one will ever argue against professional development being a "must," but at the same time, very few have a workable, affordable solution for how to best meet this challenge.
3. **Content Knowledge:** No one will ever become a great teacher without knowledge and expertise in content.

Second, millennium teachers should focus on the intangibles:

1. **Adaptability:** Technology is a funny thing, and often, difficult to adapt to. However, there is "technology" truth in every cliché: "Get back on the horse"; "If at first you don't succeed, try, try

again." If we are to have success with technology, we must also have patience and flexibility, because technology might not work the first three times we try it!

2. **Passion:** The teachers I work with were happy to see me upon my return because they know that we share a common trait: passion! And specifically, passion for learning, for the content, for technology, and for the students.
3. **Attitude:** Teaching is hard work. Technology infusion is even more difficult. Hal Urban, in his book *Life's Greatest Lessons*, points out what is essential for a successful life, including "choosing a good attitude, no matter what the circumstances, keeping a positive outlook on life, and always being thankful." Further, "accept the difficulties and challenges of life, work hard at everything you do, and if you fail, try again." Words of wisdom for millennium teachers.

In *Nowhere in Technology: All Children Left Behind*, Thomas Wilson dissects the nature of a typical educator by saying, "Educators have always selected their profession for reasons other than compensation, radical change and notoriety...anxious to 'make a difference' with individual students. While these are qualities we cherish in teachers, they are not the stuff of which challenge and change are made." Undoubtedly, these character traits are a significant barrier to effective infusion of technology, but I urge that it be a barrier we must find a way to work around. It is these intangible qualities that separate good teachers from great teachers. I have seen how important these "intangibles" are, and it is the reason, regardless of my financial situation, that my children will always go to public schools. These teachers have a passion for teaching and learning, they do the hard work, and they achieve greatness!

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