

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND ISSUE: TECHNOLOGY AND THE PROMISE OF PROGRESS

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The theme of this edition of *Antistasis* is “Technology and the Promise of Progress” in education”. When I think about this theme, I ask myself whether technology has helped us progress in our thinking about teaching or not. In doing so, I am reminded of a scene from the film “Charlie Wilson’s War” where a CIA agent tells a story to Charlie Wilson as a warning about selling arms to a rebel group in Afghanistan, and in doing so, reminds him that perspective is often dependent on circumstances or a particular situation.

The CIA agent tells Charlie “A boy living in a small poor village was given a horse as a gift, and everyone said “Oooh, how lucky”, but some time later the boy was riding the horse and fell off breaking his leg. Everyone said “Oooh, how unlucky.” Several weeks later a war broke out and the boy could not go to fight because he had a broken leg and everyone said “Oooh, how lucky.”

Perspectives can be determined by circumstances and the situation you find yourself in, and I know my perspective on technology in schools changes, dependent on the situation. Perhaps I should say, it is the way the technology is being used that sometimes has me thinking “Oooh, how useful and progressive” and other times thinking “Oooh, how useless and backwards”.

Technology has allowed us to make many advances in our understanding of learning, in our thinking about how we can connect with our students, and in reaching students who may have been unreachable in the past. We have the potential to create engaging classrooms in ways we might not have been able to dream about thirty, twenty or even ten years ago.

When technology is used in ways that engage students, bring new meaning to old ideas, allowing us to be in a moment in ways never before possible, I think “Oooh, how useful and progressive”. When the same piece of technology is used in ways that are simply for ‘flash’ or because it is convenient, I feel the opposite way.

Like all great teaching tools, the technology available to us in schools today needs to be carefully integrated into pedagogy in meaningful and relevant ways. When that occurs, the technology can enable us to be even more progressive in our thinking about teaching. But it is the thinking that needs to be progressive. There will be times

when a piece of technology adds to a learning situation in ways that no other teaching tool or strategy can. But there are other times, for me, when no kind of technology can replace a face-to-face discussion, a paper and pen, or time spent alone pondering a big idea or question.

This edition of *Antistasis* provides different perspectives on technology and the ways it has affected progress in schooling. In this edition, some writers will describe innovations and teaching practices that utilize new technologies. Others will prod you to think about the wisdom of some of the uses of technology we see in today's classrooms.

For me, whether technology has helped us progress in our teaching comes down to the way we think about our own teaching practices, our purposes, our intentions ... the way we approach and choose to engage our students. There is a television commercial that is airing for the new iPad 2. Perhaps they have it right. To paraphrase, it says "Technology alone is not enough. [Technologies that are] lighter, thinner, faster are all good things. But it's when technology gets out of the way that everything becomes delightful, even magical."