

Turn Any Technology Into an **ILT**



ISSUE ORIENTED

According to Jennifer Groff and Jason Hass (see pp. 12–15), innovative learning technologies (ILTs) such as Web 2.0 tools, multi-user virtual environments (MUEs), and serious games and simulations offer new ways to connect and collaborate. They allow users to move within digital spaces, to explore new ideas, and to try tasks not possible in the real world. They also provide scaffolded environments where players must work together, striving to accomplish increasingly difficult tasks, to excel.

MUEs, serious games, and simulations often have an extra cost in computer-processing capability, Internet access, and/or software charges. Web 2.0 tools, although free, are still blocked in some schools and districts. So while educators need to be exploring these new tools and using them with students whenever possible, they also can take heart that any tech tool coupled with innovative teaching and learning can be an ILT.

With either old or new technology, the goal is increased student engagement, along with deep content learning, problem solving, and the development of lifelong learning skills. Good instructional strategies and practices are necessary for the integration of any tool, but some extra innovation may be necessary to achieve your goals with an older technology.

Thanks to Miguel Guhlin, who started a “Do the LOTIMotion!” group on the NECC 2008 ning (<http://www.necc2008.org>), I was reminded of the LoTI (Levels of Technology Integration) framework, which has been renamed the Levels of Teaching Integration (<http://www.loticonnection.com>).

Chris Moersch developed this framework in 1994 and has written several articles for *L&L* about it. It is an excellent way to put student learning first and get to higher-level thinking skills and student engagement no matter what technology you are using.

The LoTI framework and process is a research-backed systems approach. The process at a district level involves assessing teachers, analyzing student achievement, providing professional development, and sustaining the progress to the highest level on the LoTI scale. The systems approach is key in my mind in that it allows for scaling the innovation up and reaching all teachers in a district. The LoTI questionnaire is available for six job descriptions, ranging from inservice teachers through instructional specialists and administrators to university professors. The LoTI connection Web site provides the tools and support for implementing the framework, which do have costs associated with them.

Teachers who reach the higher levels on the LoTI scale would be able to turn any technology into an ILT and meet the NETS•S and NETS•T as well. According to the framework, at higher levels the instructional focus is on applying learning to the real world and supports an inquiry-training model of teaching with student products that are authentic, relevant, and embed complex thinking strategies. Student-generated questions dictate the content, process, and products.

If you have been using the LoTI framework in your district and have educators making good progress to the higher levels, please tell us your stories of its use by writing an article for *L&L*. ■

By Anita McAnear

Anita McAnear is L&L's acquisitions editor and national program chair for NECC. A former middle school math and language arts teacher, McAnear has been with ISTE since 1983.