Identifying and Assessing Emerging Tools and Technologies

Identifying and assessing emerging tools and technologies for the K-12 classroom is a challenging task. There are different ways teachers can identify and assess emerging tools and technologies, such as joining a professional learning network or accessing online research-based classroom tools platforms, like Common Sense Education. When identifying and assessing content, teachers need to consider important factors like whether the emerging tool or technology is appropriate for the students' ages and skill levels, if the information is accurate and unbiased, and what technical requirements are identified by the digital tool. It is good practice to review technology requirements and avoid using emerging tools or technologies that are not supported by the school devices, or do not comply with schools' permissions protocols.

1. How can I identify available or emerging resources and technologies?
2. What important factors should I consider when assessing if I should utilize emerging technologies?
3. How does the organization Common Sense Education support teachers with identifying and assessing emerging tools and technologies?

? to Consider

KEY Elements

Identifying and assessing emerging tools and technologies for the K-12 classroom is a challenging task, because new technologies and tools are constantly developed. Cutting-edge technology is ever-changing, and more sophisticated platforms are introduced continually. It is unreasonable to know all emerging tools and technologies, and even more challenging to apply them all effectively. Teachers should hone their skills in assessing emerging tools and technologies so that they can identify if and how new tools and technologies may be beneficial.

Teachers can leverage professional learning networks to identify and assess emerging tools and technologies. These networks allow teachers to learn what digital tools fellow teachers are implementing. Professional learning networks supported by technology companies provide opportunities to learn about the technologies offered by the companies and assess them. One way to find professional learning networks is searching social media platforms, such as Facebook or Twitter. Technology and instructional coaches are also valuable connections for teachers when it comes to identifying which emerging tools and technologies are being used locally and might be good to implement.

When assessing whether emerging tools and technologies should be used in the classroom, consider if the emerging tool or technology is appropriate for the students' ages and skill levels. Determine if school-issued student devices meet the technology requirements of the digital tool. Reviewing technology requirements helps to avoid unintentionally using emerging tools or technologies that are not supported or do not comply with schools' permission and safety protocols. Some emerging tools and technologies require users to open accounts, so investigate if and how to sign up and if there is a cost. Also, specific attention should be paid to the terms and conditions, as there are often age limits or requirements such as a "13 or older" clause that limits tool use for students under 13. A good practice is to always check that digital tools work on school-issued devices, as teacher and student accounts and permissions may differ.

Consider using Common Sense Education, a nonprofit organization devoted to helping parents and teachers assess media. Within Common Sense Media, Common Sense Education specifically supports teachers. One of its features is a database of tools and technologies that teachers can use to assess whether emerging tools and technologies are appropriate and beneficial for classroom use. The database provides comprehensive descriptions of the main features of each digital tool or technology and includes experiences from other teachers already using them in the classroom. A 5-star rating system is used to score the tool or technology based on student engagement, pedagogy, and support. A community rating based on teachers' experiences is also offered as well as a privacy rating that focuses on student safety when using the digital tool, user rights over their data, and user tracking.