

## **Technology: Friend or Foe?**

by Tonya Harrison, Assistant Principal  
Reed City High School

The goal of inventions is to make our lives easier, allowing us to tackle tasks in less time and without as much work. Who wouldn't argue that Benjamin Franklin's lightning rod and its eventual evolution to electricity or Thomas Edison's "incandescent lamp," or the light bulb, hasn't created an easier life style? The 1979 production of the first cellular phone and the 1990 creation of the World Wide Web have created technology components that few today feel they can live without.<sup>1</sup> Although the benefits of these inventions have created a world where communication is at your fingertips and work is easier to complete, how has technology impacted the world of education?

Technology in the classroom has traveled across a continent of change. Chalk boards have been exchanged for dry erase boards or computer screens, the film strip has evolved into the DVD, and even animal specimens can be traded in for computer generated, live dissections. Students can be a part of a classroom, discuss subjects with students and teachers, and turn in assignments through a computer, speaker, and the touch of button in different parts of the world. These are amazing advancements and achievements that allow students to gain new knowledge in a growing and changing society.

The advancements that have improved opportunities for students have a flipside in the world of educators. As new technology allows teachers to grab students' attention and create a more "entertaining" environment, it also provides the student opportunities to "stray" from the classroom in places like chat rooms, email accounts, and various search engines. The Internet is not a simple information resource, as cyber bullying is the newest form of harassment. Students are learning faster methods to bypass blocked and potentially dangerous websites, forcing teachers and technology directors to constantly update software, at an additional cost to school districts. The cell phone, used by most parents as a valuable method to keep track of teenagers, is becoming a tool for cheating in the classroom, through text messaging and snapshot pictures of tests and assignments. Online courses provide students with an experience to work independently but take away needed interaction with others.

I wouldn't trade my cell phone or computer for the world, not to mention the electricity and light bulbs in my office and home. They make my life easier with communication and instant information with the spin of a mouse. The students at RCHS have capabilities only dreamed about by their parents. I wonder, though, if the Internet and "texting" can truly replace a good, old-fashioned library of books or a classroom, led by a teacher covered in chalk dust?

<sup>1</sup> "Inventions Timeline". About.Com. <http://inventors.about.com/timelines>. January 4, 2009.