

Something amazing happened last Wednesday. No, it wasn't the first day of school. OK, yes, last Wednesday was the first day of school and that is always wonderful—the coming together of parents and communities and states and taxpayers and educators and students in a recommitment to the future of the country and civilization in general—but something unique also happened that day. Unique and amazing. Amazing like when the Rural Electrics first brought electricity to farmers and everyone living outside the urban, lit world. Amazing as when Neil Armstrong left his boot print on the moon. Amazing akin to the day when the first driverless car successfully navigated traffic.

Last Wednesday, the Mitchell School District launched a 1:1 technology initiative in grades K-12. On that date, for the first, time each and every one of our students had a computer specifically assigned to them and them alone.

At this point, no doubt, some of you are exhaling a bit of escaping breath through pursed lips or the side of your mouth in an unmistakable of expression of 'yeah, big whoop.' As in, in our society today where technology is basically ubiquitous, having kids working with computers on a one-to-one basis is really not that big a deal. Except it is. I would argue that if your response to a K-12 1:1 technology adoption is roughly equivalent to the discovery of a new flavor of bagel on your breakfast plate, you have become callous.

And in the world of technology, becoming callous, becoming inured to even the most fabulous of new capabilities, is an all too common reality. What might this look like? Sometime ago, I read an account of a writer flying on a commercial airplane. The captain announced that for the first time, passengers could access plane-based Wi-Fi on their laptop computers. What had once been not just impossible but specifically banned—the use of technology on a plane since it was feared it might interfere with flight navigation—was now offered to all. The writer noticed that the man seated next to him was happily surfing the net, playing on-line games, and texting home and office. Thirty minutes into the flight, some glitch in the Wi-Fi access occurred and his seatmate was kicked off access to all of these. The man's response to this disruption was a loud, clamorous objection, culminating in an exasperated outburst to all around him, "Oh, come on, this is ridiculous."

What only the day before had been impossible, a technology completely unavailable to him on board an airline, was now not a novelty but a need, a fundamental expectation, a quality of life issue so presumed as to make existence unlivable in its absence. Though not all is rosy in life, it remains the case that so many things keep getting better so dramatically and so quickly that we are in danger of losing all perspective.

So please don't lose perspective on just what an astounding feat a 1:1 technology adoption is for schools. Like rural electrification, it extends to all people, not just those in urban cocoons and with upper-class socio-economic status or better, access to the world. Electrified farms drove back the arbitrary and draconian strictures of the night, brought even dwellers in the most rural settings access to the world through radio and television. A 1:1 technology adoption

drives back the 'night' of a lack of access to information and ideas and inspirations. And it does so regardless of the background or resources of the individual child in the classroom.

Like the first moon walk, a 1:1 technology initiative inspires a child with the knowledge that a much greater reality is now available to them. When America landed on the moon, it was no longer enough to have the whole world as our oyster. We wanted the whole solar system, the whole galaxy, the whole universe. What is the exponential growth in understanding and expectation for the school child who moves from what is available to them in a textbook to what is available to them on the internet? A thousand? A million? A bazillion? (I know, I know, that last one is a made-up word but in its hyperbole, I suspect, it might best capture the actual demolition of walls and horizons so distant we weren't even aware they existed.)

Like the first driverless car, a 1:1 technology initiative offers all-comers not just a new piece of technology but access to such technology almost entirely regardless of one's techie-ness. Counter-intuitively, one can make use of a driverless car even if they know pretty much nothing about the internal combustion engine, rack-and-pinion steering, or automatic transmissions. Cars just became wildly more complicated and the user of cars were just relieved of the need to understand even the complexities they needed when cars required an operator. Just so, as the new computers and educational technology devices find their way in to the hands of all children, they have become more adapted to the children, not the other way around. The computer serves the child and their educational needs and just how that is done is less and less dependent upon the child's mastery of all things technology.

But a revolution—and a qualitative enhancement of life and education of this magnitude is precisely that to my mind—is a revolution even if we don't happen to notice it or notice it inadequately. So I am going to write down the date, 8.23.2017, in my calendar as one to remember. It might not carry the same cultural cachet as 7.21.1969 but, in part, that is simply because we have become so used to the velocity of innovation in the modern world, that we have become difficult to surprise and all but impossible to impress.

Well, count me both.