

ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY >

in a Marian Education

The Catholic school finds its true justification in the mission of the Church; it is based on an educational philosophy in which faith, culture and life are brought into harmony. Through it, the local Church evangelizes, educates, and contributes to the formation of a healthy and morally sound lifestyle among its members.
(*The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School*, 34)

Mission: Educate the Whole Person

Marian High School has been forming students in the Catholic faith since 1964. With a view to the whole person, Marian is always working to adapt our instructional strategies, physical environment, allocation of resources, and staffing to best prepare students to serve and to lead in the Church and in the world. As contemporary culture and educational practices change, Marian continually discerns what is best for student learning and formation, remaining committed to our mission and to the understanding of the human person that is the basis of Catholic teaching. With this understanding in mind, we affirm the following regarding our philosophy of education and our integration of technology at the service of our educational and formational mission.

A Culture of Personal Encounter, Not a Virtual Encounter

We believe 21st-century skills are best taught in the context of community, within the contours of our mission, and never at the expense of personal relationships. Not discounting the good and useful ways digital technology and media can augment classroom instruction and student life, Marian recognizes the profound cultural shift and the many dire effects on students emerging from digital culture. Therefore, we are committed to an intentional integration of technology into classroom environments, student education, and student life, directed toward holiness by forming students to be critical, discerning, mature, and self-governing in the ways they utilize technology in their learning and in their daily lives.

For this reason, Marian High School intentionally limits our use of technology and chooses not to be a “one-to-one” school, that is, to provide each student with a school-issued electronic device such as a laptop, Chromebook, or tablet. Growing research states very clearly that increasing screen time for students does not increase student achievement, and, in fact, can be harmful to their cognitive, physical, social, moral, and spiritual development and growth. In the spiritual formation of young people, it is not enough to tell students how to rightly order technology and digital media in their lives, we must model it in our own classrooms and school community.

A Marian education emphasizes the following aspects of student formation:

The Marian Family

- We work to create a culture where students encounter one another— person to person.
- We challenge students to positive peer-to-peer and student-to-teacher interactions, focusing on good interpersonal communication.
- We model and teach students healthy ways to handle conflict.
- We serve the family: The Catholic school is a privileged place that can aid parents as the primary educators of their children, in seeking balance among the many competing interests of our students’ lives.

Personalized Learning

- Teachers know their students: their strengths and weaknesses, their habits and struggles, their personalities and interests.
- Teachers respond to student learning needs with understanding, compassion, and immediacy.
- Teachers differentiate instruction effectively based on student performance and data.
- Students learn better when they have personal, face-to-face interactions with a teacher or staff member in the building.

Best Practices for Student Learning

- Reading a print copy enables students to comprehend at a much deeper level than does reading on a screen.
- Taking notes by hand allows students to process material more effectively.

- Having constant access to a device increases temptation to distraction and to ineffective multi-tasking.
- Participating in seminar-style discussions and respectful dialog forms positive habits of interaction in contrast to encountering someone online.

Positive Mental Health

- Robust extra-curricular sports and clubs promote participation, balance, and positive self-image.
- Increased screen time and social media usage can have adverse effects on mental health in teens.
- Homework on devices can lead to distraction, which requires more time to complete assignments. This leads to less meaningful learning and less time for rest and sleep.
- Digital technology and media are designed to be addictive, especially for teens who, on average, spend 8 hours 39 minutes on their devices per day, outside of school and homework.
- Digital devices and media can alienate students from one another and themselves.
- Pastoral staff dedicated to creating and nurturing a Christian community focused on personal relationships serve as a means to combat the negative effects of the pandemic.
- Teens who spend less time on screens have more time for relationships, healthy habits, and their faith life.

The Intentional Integration of Technology in Education and Formation

At Marian, we intentionally invite digital technologies into the educational and formational process, in order to prepare students to engage in higher learning and in a workforce that utilizes such technologies on a daily basis. It is important not that our students merely obtain and hone 21st-century skills by becoming versatile and competent users of technology, but that they learn to rightly order those skills and competencies in the context of a real community and bring them to bear in service to the Church and to the world.

To this end, a Marian education presents to students the following opportunities:

- Access to computers for academic purposes, including a full computer lab, 2 mini computer labs, and 12 mobile Chromebook carts.
- Bring-Your-Own-Device Policy
 - Approved and monitored use of personal electronic devices for specific lessons, assessments, and activities that support classroom objectives.
- Access to library databases and research tools.
- Formation in the use of Google Workplace for Education and other computer-based technologies including email, word processing software, spreadsheets, and presentations.
- Courses in Computer Science, Engineering: Manufacturing and Design, Digital Applications, Web Design, and Science Research.
- Co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities including Science Olympiad, Digital Photography and Videography.
- Contribution to and interaction with our various social media platforms that contribute to the building up of community.

Tech Smart, Not Tech Heavy

While digital technologies can tend toward dehumanization, the Lord knows each of us intimately, and He encounters each of us personally. In the Incarnation, God came into the world as a human person, without mediation, entering deeply into our lives and in doing so became the pattern to which we, in our personhood, work to conform. He holds out to us the fullness of our own humanity in his very flesh. He humanizes us, and in so doing, he divinizes and saves us. To this end, the educational and formational mission of Marian High School is sanctifying work. In entering into the Marian family, guided by the Holy Spirit, one learns what it means to be fully human, fully alive in Christ. This happens most authentically through a culture of personal encounter and free from the various media that distract us from Christ, from our neighbor, and from ourselves. It is clear that in order to live full Christian lives, we must form ourselves and our young people to rightly order technology and media within our habits, routines, and priorities. We, at Marian High School, are committed to help you form your children with this in mind and heart.

Marian High School has developed its Technology Rationale by reviewing educational best practices, scientific research on the development of children, and documents from the Catholic Church. You can find these resources and other useful information at marianhs.org/rationaleresources.

**QUESTIONS? Contact Mark Kirzeder, Technology Director,
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