A Robot Inquiry

Robotics can be overwhelming at first. There are so many different kinds: Sphero, Dash and Dot, Ozobot, Lego WeDo, Mindstorms. It's difficult to know where to begin. A robotics inquiry can be a good starting point. Students can work in groups to choose a robot and come up with some questions. Then they can play, explore and find answers. The best part is when they demonstrate their new knowledge to the rest of the class. Students also can be prompted to figure out how the robots can be used with the curriculum for their grade level.

QR Codes on Tech Bins

Find some tutorial videos on YouTube that show students how the technology works. Paste a QR code (goqr.me) that links to the video on the bin where the material is stored. Students can scan the code, watch the video and try out the tech tool. Better yet, have other students – library helpers –create the tutorial videos themselves.

Tech Buddies

Recruit older students (or students with already established expertise or interest) to learn about new tech tools first. These students can then partner with younger peers to help them figure out what to do.

Make use of volunteers and co-op students. They may be tech savvy in an area where you need help.

Students Teaching Teachers

Involve students in professional learning. When I was asked to provide a lunch and learn on Minecraft for teachers, I was a little nervous. I knew the basics, but I certainly wasn't an advanced user. I decided to call in the experts. I brought some of my Minecraft club members to host the lunch and learn. They played Minecraft every day and were able to not only teach the teachers, but answer all their questions about the game and its curriculum applications.

Ask for Help

We are fortunate to live in such a connected world. There are so many educators with expertise in different areas that we can contact. Your board may have technology resource teachers, who can help you get your head around new tech materials and co-plan lessons with you to use that technology in meaningful ways as part of your curriculum. Look for Twitter friends using similar tech tools and ask questions. Attend workshops and conferences or connect with other librarians in your area and book some time to play and explore. Hands-on learning is often the best way to fully understand how something works.

So, try that new app, buy that new robot and give your students the chance to enhance their 21st century skills and become leaders in the classroom. You'll build the confidence of your students and maybe even your own.