

Benefits of cell phone technology in the classroom

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Benefits of Cell Phone Technology in the Classroom Technology had become engrained in our society. Everywhere people are using cell phones, including children and teenagers. Cell phone technology and technology in general have change the way we do everything in our society. Technology has dramatically altered our world. They have become a necessary part of everyday life so much so that it is leaking into the education world as a new tool despite the concern of the negative effects of cell phone technology.

There is a new wave in some schools around the United States. There are some districts that are embracing the use of cell phones in the classroom. Some administrators have come around to the thinking that the use of this technology in the classroom can be of benefit in the learning setting. There are also concerns that the same technology can be too distracting for students. However, the use of cell phones in the educational world is worth looking at despite some of the concerns that many adults share. Texting has become the preferred method of basic communication between teenagers and their friends. Seventy-five percent of 12-17 year olds own cell phones, which is up from forty-five percent in 2004 (Lenhart, 2010). Phones have no doubt become an indispensable tool in communication for teens. Eighty-eight percent of teen cell phone users are text messengers (Lenhart, 2010). More than half (fifty-four percent) are daily texters. Among all teens, the use of texting has overtaken the frequency of every other form of communication. The concern about the overuse of cell phones is that it may have negative consequences in teenager's education. $\frac{1}{4}$ of text messages

that teens send are sent during class. A survey conducted by Beneson's online poll, polled 1, 013 teens- eighty-four percent that have cell phones- show that a significant number of students have information stored on their phones or has texted answers to their friends. The same poll also found teens send 440 text messages a week on average, 110 of them sent during class (Toppo, 2009). For this reason cell phone use is prohibited for use during the school day within most public schools in the United States. Most administrations and teachers feel that cell phone usage is a negative distraction and deterrent to learning. Administrators are often concerned about the inappropriate use of cell phones, which is the reason that there are restrictions of cell phone (according to Obringer & Coffey, 2007, St. Gerard, 2006). Cell phones ringing can present unwanted distraction and for some students, sending and receiving text messages that can lead to cheating (according to Gilroy, 2003). There is also the real possibility of students posting improper pictures is a concern (according to Obringer & Coffey, 2007). However, many are choosing to look at cell phones as a new learning tool in the classroom setting. Over the years we have seen on the news about students posting improper photos and language on social networking sites, which causes administrators and teachers to have a real concern. These concerns that many have are valid, and should be addressed. There have been many cases in which the abuse of cell phones has been a huge problem, but administrators want to take a chance on using cell phones in this setting. The important thing to keep in mind that there is down side, yes, but there is a way to monitor the use of this technology too. PPCD teacher Debra Vela, who has 17 years of teaching experience says, " Sexting,

posting of improper photos and cheating may be a legitimate worry, but the benefits outweigh these negative points. " Students today are referred to as " Digital Natives" (according to Prensky, 2001). They have grown up with technology and multitasking, and in the habit of quickly processing information (Humble-Thaden, 2011). However, as cell phone technology expands with the possibilities of texting, web browsing and gaming have increased over the recent years and administrators are still worried about the distractions of electronic devices. A survey of students and parents by the group Common Sense Media found that almost seventy percent of schools around the country ban cell phone use during the school day (Schachter, 2009). There are some districts and administrators, though that are beginning to realize the potential of cell phones. It is a part an " anytime, anywhere" learning movement (Schachter, 2009). This leaves laptops and even smaller netbooks behind, in favor for more mobile, affordable and reliable handheld devices like " smartphones" that can run such programs as Windows Mobile. " Technology has finally progressed to where mobile devices are cheap and powerful enough to use, " observes Elliot Soloway, a professor at the University of Michigan (Schachter, 2009). A study of twenty-five mobile learning initiatives worldwide by the Joan Ganz Cooney Foundation Center at Sesame Workshop anointed them the wave of the future. " Just as Sesame Street help transformed television into a revolutionary tool for learning among young children four decades ago, advances in mobile technologies are showing untapped educational potential for today's generation, " the report author's wrote (Schachter, 2009). In 1969, the way children learned changed when Sesame Street aired on PBS.

The loved Muppets of the educational show captured the hearts and attention of toddlers. The show taught them the basics of 123's and ABC's to the importance of friendships. Before the age of four, children had already learned the basics for their future education by watching this television show. The same is happening today with the use of cell phones. It is drastically changing the face of the way children learn and take information in. Fifth graders at Trinity Meadows (Keller, TX) spent most of their days on their HTC 6800 smartphones, using the GoKnow's platform. Fifty-five students led the way in a pilot program using the new generation of cell phones and their advanced technology for educational ends. For example, students can draw the solar system on their devices and animate them to show them in real orbit. Students can also upload assignments the teacher sends to the server and then the teacher can grade them and submit them back to the student electronically (Schachter, 200). At an early age, children are learning the advantages of technology, and will carry it into the future. They are learning to use cell phones as a learning tool, and making the best of what this technology has to offer. Children today have a chance to express themselves creatively and learn in a way that they are familiar with. They are at an advantage since they are already so used to using the technology the world has to offer. "Allowing children to use cell phone technology in the classroom will provide them with the tools for more creativity to create wonderful projects," Vela says. This pilot program has shown that the use of cell phone technology in the classroom can be of benefit to the students. Not only that the teachers have a new method of reaching students that they otherwise would not have. With the use of cell phone teachers have new

ways of teaching lessons, and the interactivity of these lessons are more likely to reach the minds of students. With the use of cell phone technology in the classroom the children that need a more creative outlet this provides them with platform to do so. Children that need this outlet can create and not be tied down to pencil, paper, marker, crayons and glue. This allows them to be able to express themselves using the medium that they know best. Using cell phones in the classroom settings as a tool enables them to stay focused and interested in the things that they are learning. Technology is such an important part of everyday life, especially in cell phone technologies. And because of the increasing improvement of cell phone technology has allowed the next generation to use them in a whole new way to learn. Although, there is concern about the overuse of cell phones, the benefits may outweigh the negatives. " I still think students need to learn the ' old fashion' way because what happens if technology becomes unavailable to them? Also students need to be able to use their brains for higher learning, " says Vela. Technology is a wonderful tool to use in the classroom for all age groups. They can benefit from the interactivity of the Internet and all the information that the World Wide Web has to offer students as well as teachers. Children in today's classrooms have an opportunity that past generations did not have. They have the chance to make a big impression on their lives by allowing themselves to use cell phones to their advantage not their disadvantage. The technology of cell phones has taken over almost every aspect of human activity. Adults as well as children have been consumed by the use of them, and now it has leaked over into the world of education. There are many concerns about the overuse of this technology,

but many districts are taking the chance to embrace it and try it out in the classrooms. It has been shown that there are benefits for school children. Although, there is some debate about this issue it is important to remember that there is a need for balance. Reference Lenhart, Amanda. (2010). Teens, cell phone and texting. Pew Research Center Publications. Retrieved 3 June 2012 from <http://pewresearch.org>. Humble-Thaden, Beth. (2011). Student Reflective Perception of High School Educational Cell Phone Technology Usage. Journal of Technology Studies. Retrieved 3 June 2010 from <http://web.ebscohost.com>. Toppo, Greg. (2009). Survey: Many teens use phones in class to text or cheat. USA Today. Retrieved 3 June 2012 from <http://www.usatoday.com>. Schachter, Ron. (2009). Mobile Devices in the classroom. District Administration Magazine. Retrieved 4 June 2012 from <http://ww.eric.com>. Interview: Debra Vela, PPCD Teacher, 17+ years teaching.