

The Cell Phone Inservice



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There is not a school in this country that does not have problems with cell phone usage by students. Different schools have developed policies to limit the use, or ban the use of cell phones in their schools; however, students continue to find ways around these policies as they

perceive cell phones as an essential communication tool for them to have. Therefore, schools may find a solution to the cell phone problem by turning the cell phone into a learning tool, rather than only a communication tool.

As with all new technology, schools struggle to find appropriate use of that technology to enhance learning. And, as with most new technology, we have little research that tells us if it will work or not and we have little data on providing inservice training to help the teachers master the technology. This paper provides suggestions on how to provide inservice training to teachers to convert the cell phone from the position of “unwanted” in the classroom to the position of a desirable tool for learning.

There are one and a half billion cell phones in operation around the world, and a large percentage of them are in the hands of students. Yet these phones are barred in most classrooms because they currently are perceived as distractions that may interrupt lessons or enable cheating. Essentially small computers, cell phones can be used to support language lessons and serve as the gateway to larger learning resources, if properly employed in the school. The question then becomes, “How do we appropriately enable the use of cell phones (i.e., small computers) in the classroom?”

Today’s students compare entering a classroom to entering an airplane. Shut off all your digital devices and sit qui-

etly. If your goal is for students to be prepared for their future OUTSIDE of school, sitting quietly without their electronic devices is not the way to enable them. Consider implementing the following four simple ways to utilize a tool almost every student already owns and loves to enhance their learning experience in their classroom.

When considering what the cell phone inservice should look like, it is best to consider what the lowest functioning cell phone is capable of, rather than what can be done with a high end iPhone. The ubiquitous level of use will enable a more even and universal implementation. SMS, the format by which cell phones exchange text messages, fulfills this objective. Using the cell phones’ SMS text messaging system means you can add a classroom response system, a shared discussion screen, and internet search tool, a structured texting tool (Whadya think/Whadya know) and a scheduler. While the cellphone cannot do everything, it can do these, all without cost to the school.

While using SMS may seem somewhat limited as a starting point, the advent of Web 2.0 tools, such as Wiffiti, PollEveryWhere.com, and Google SMS extend the capabilities far beyond the original capabilities of the cell phone. PollEverywhere allows teachers to create a poll, and allows students to answer it anonymously. Students can share responses on academic questions, or respond openly to ques-

tion they would likely be hesitant to respond to otherwise. The combination of PollEveryWhere .com and the student's cell phones create a classroom response system where instead of "clickers", students answer a poll displayed by the teacher with their cell phones.

How it works

The polleverywhere website works like this. Create a username on the PollEveryWhere website, then create a Poll. Polls can be responded to via text message OR computer website. I encourage the use of cell phone for the experience, but either device can work. PollEveryWhere.com enables the downloading of a PowerPoint slide with the poll embedded. This poll is then updated in real time as the audience responds. During the in-service, teachers should be shown not only how to create a poll, but also how to create and use a poll relevant to their subject area. The poll may look something like the example below.



What sets it apart

Classroom Response Systems are not unique, but creating them via a website (PollEveryWhere.com) and implementing them with cell phone text messaging is. When first used in a Human Growth and Development class, PollEveryWhere.com allowed an anonymous Poll relevant to the class discussion of teen sexuality. Faculty were somewhat surprised to find a

LARGE majority of the class had recently (in the last year) engaged in unprotected sexual activity. The openness of student responses enabled a robust discussion about the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy.

wiffiti

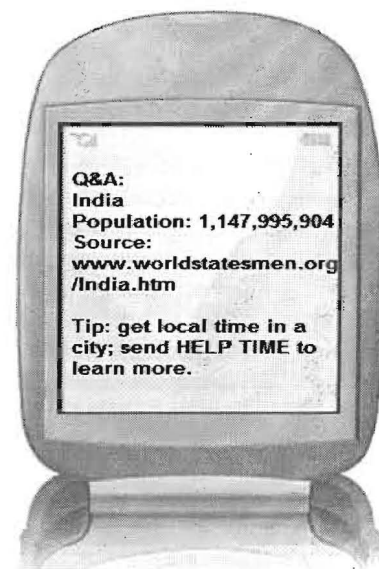
Wiffiti is a teacher displayed screen which allows students to text message thoughts and ideas to be shared with the entire class. Not only can students respond, but they (or the instructor) can solicit outside comments on a topic under discussion in the classroom. This could be a tool that not only teaches students, but allows teachers to show relevance by soliciting opinions of parents that would be likely to have an opinion on the subject, for example, what would a nurse be likely to say about the healthcare bill. Wiffiti would allow the display of the responses, showing real world relevance.

To use Wiffiti, the teachers need to create an account, so they can be given a "board", a screen on their computer that can be used to display student results from a given question. Teachers should be encouraged to come up with at Least four or five "What do you think about..." Or "What do you know about..." questions. Students should be encouraged to partner up, and either agree or disagree with the results. This requires them to use the higher order thinking skill of analyzing, rather than simply settling for student recall, the lowest order thinking skill.

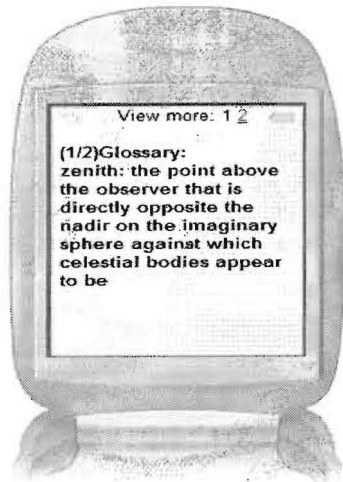
A Wiffiti screen may look something like the following below.

The third tool which can be useful is the use of Google SMS to access internet content, in text form. This allows students to have virtual dictionaries, encyclopedias and web browsers in their pockets. Teachers should be taught how to use SMS to text Google. There are many formats that can be used, but two of the most likely to be useful are Q&A, where the students text in a short question, or even a small collection of terms, like, "Abraham Lincoln's birthday" or "India's population." Teachers should still have students partner up to discuss the results (Are these correct? Are they correct in EVERY circumstance? What might affect these results? How can I or should I verify them?). Partnering students has the added advantage of helping to ensure each group has access to a cell phone. One device per student is not necessary to achieving results with presently available technology.

Using Google SMS might look like this to the student:



Google define can also be used to define words and terms, for example:



Teachers should be strongly advised not to overuse this capability, as there may be some temptation to repeat the mistakes of the past, like, "Copy this word and definition down, and use it in a sentence" instead of having partners carefully discuss the returned definitions, then sharing their conclusions with the class, possibly on a wiffiti board, for further discussion. Reading specialist and author of *Why Kids Can't Read*, K Beers, compares this to making a reading casserole

(undesirable) as opposed to making a reading treat (highly desirable). In the context of Google SMS, it is important to treat the cellphone more like a thesaurus, instead of a dictionary. Let students collaborate to develop shared meanings.

The fourth and final function of the cell phone that should be implemented is the scheduler. Instead of asking students to write down important dates on paper, which they will not carry with them and cannot "call" them, why not use the date reminder function that is now part of almost every cell phone. Students can schedule the alarm or reminder to go off two or three days before the assignment is due, the day the assignment is due, or the day before the assignment is due. It is important that teachers do not "overuse" this tool, saving it for the most important assignments.

Key beneficiaries

There are multiple beneficiaries of the cell phone inservice. By educating teachers on productive uses of cell phone technology, we are helping to bring the internet into hundreds of classrooms where schools cannot afford to support a one2one computer initiative. We are making classroom response systems available where they would not have been available before, and moved the school into the 21st century by forc-

ing the recognition of the computer existing already in the pockets of most of our young. But to convince the vast majority of teachers, principals and school boards of encouraging cell phone usage in classrooms rather than banning them from classrooms, we need forward thinking educators to provide inservice programs to teachers on using cell phones as teaching tools and gather data as to the effectiveness cell phone use as a teaching tool on student achievement and learning.

References

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Book Review

Encyclopedia of Curriculum Studies

Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA 2010

This just published all encompassing two volume publication covers ten topical categories:

1. Biography and Prosopography (tribute to the deceased)
2. Concepts and Terms
3. Content Descriptions
4. Influences on Curriculum Studies
5. Inquiry and Research
6. Nature of Curriculum Studies
7. Organizations, Schools and Projects (Includes ASCD)
8. Publications (Includes Educational Leadership)
9. Theoretical Perspectives

10. Types of Curriculum

According to Craig Kridel, "*The Encyclopedia of Curriculum Studies* includes many distinctive features and entries....the publication includes a series of five essays attending to the nature and future of the field. Each account although different in its portrayal is also authentic and honest in its description of the nature and future of curriculum studies." (Vol. 1, p.xxxi). Marcy Kysilka, editor of *Florida Educational Leadership*, has written one of those entries, as well as other entries in the encyclopedia. Craig Kridel states the "with an assortment of good-natured responses, distinguished professors throughout the field of curriculum studies" agreed to write entries of 500, 750, 1000, or 2500 words. The readers are the beneficiaries as they have "the opportunity to review succinct, comprehensive statements from the curriculum studies' senior leaders—Michael Apple,

Jean Clandinin, Michael Connelly, O.L. Davis, Jr., William Doll Jr., Geneva Gay, Maxine Green, Madeline Grumet, the late Joe Kincheloe, the late Paul Klohr, Marcella Kysilka, Gloria Ladson-Billings, Sonia Nieto, William Pinar, Thomas Popkewitz, Edmund Short, Christine Sleeter, Daniel Tanner, Max van Mansen, and many others." (Vol. 1, p.xxxiii). The consulting editor of the encyclopedia was William Schubert, University of Illinois at Chicago. The Editorial Board members were: William Ayers, Tom Barone, Noreen Garman, Janet Miller, Thomas Thomas and William Watkins.

This is a publication that should be in every university's library and certainly in every school district's central office, if not one in each school. It is a reference book that thoroughly defines curriculum in its broadest sense.

Reviewed by: **Marcy Kysilka**