

## Don't pull the plug yet, digital tools might be critical to students' academic success

By: Dr. Sally l'Anson

Talk with any K-12 parent today and you will likely hear them bemoan the amount of time their children are spending on digital devices of one sort or another. Just yesterday, I noticed a baby, too young to talk or walk, yet old enough to be sitting up in a stroller playing and swiping through apps on an iPad. Today's children are digital natives. Given that technology is ubiquitous, and digital devices are the constant companions of many children, guiding these digital natives to channel the time they spend mesmerized by Stampy Cat Minecraft videos, toward technology that teaches them something, will reduce parent screen time angst and increase student learning opportunities.

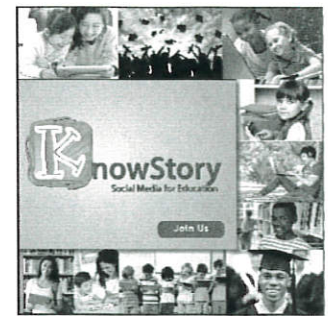
PowerSchool, a K-12 education technology company, conducted a nationwide, online survey reaching over 800 teachers, administrators, vice principals and principals regarding the use of and behavior toward in-classroom technologies. The survey revealed that 80 percent of teachers think "students need to be engaged in mobile learning outside of school to be successful." So, your child's time spent glued to a glowing screen may be the secret to keeping them engaged in their academic success.

Overwhelmingly, teachers realize technology, digital learning tools, and mobile apps are critical in engaging students by giving them access to information to improve their learning both within and outside of school.

Such is the case for one student in the Ramona Unified School District, located 30 miles northeast of San Diego, a rural district serving 5,700 students within seven elementary schools, two middle schools, and four high schools, that recently implemented a mobile app for students and parents. The app provides real-time updates on grades, attendance, and assignments, helping to enable student responsibility for their performance.

When one child saw a missing grade for a project he knew he had turned in, he immediately went to the teacher to discuss the problem. It turns out his assignment was put in the "no name" pile, which means he didn't get credit for his work. For this student, the immediate, mobile access to his grades allowed him to take personal responsibility for his assignments without having to wait until the end of the quarter to see he received a zero on one of his projects.

But it's not just the students and teachers that are benefitting from the adoption of digital tools and technology, it's the parents, too. In fact, 71



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percent of teachers and administrators shared that a personalized learning app that could track a child's educational data would be helpful, especially for those parents of struggling students. About three-quarters say that technology is very important or absolutely critical to engage parents and families to help them understand their child's performance and help them succeed.

The survey results showed that teachers feel technology is the key to effective classroom management, in addition to being a helpful solution for students and parents. Of the teachers surveyed, only 25 percent feel the current technologies they have to help manage their classroom are "very effective." In particular, teachers in the Midwest were least likely to say their in-classroom technologies were effective.

Surprisingly, the lack of efficient, integrated classroom management technologies wasn't the only thing receiving an unsatisfactory grade from teachers; current grading systems and learning approaches receive poor marks from teachers too.

While the majority of respondents (95 percent) said they believe it's important to understand a student's individual strengths and weaknesses when designing a lesson plan, 89 percent said that personalized learning models proposed need improvement.

Additionally, teachers recognize the need for better grading systems as nearly three-in-four (72 percent) agreed that the traditional grading system most schools use is broken. Almost one-third of teachers surveyed feels like their classroom management technologies are insufficient, revealing that the door is open for innovative, technology-based approaches.

So, what is the solution or new approach that teachers are seeking? A unified classroom.

Nearly all teachers agreed (97 percent) having all of their classroom applications for grading, attendance, learning management and assessment data unified in one place would save them time. Another 96 percent of teachers said that having a single online interface showing student performance is critical to improving student achievement.

Parents are concerned that too much screen time is rotting their kids' brains, and teachers are looking for technology and educational software to improve student engagement and learning. PowerSchool does both through its innovative, unified classroom experience designed to put the student's, parent's, and teacher's focus back on learning where it belongs.

**Tags:** screen time learning    Digital Curriculum    edtech