Two apps that will make you rethink your cell phone policy

View this email as a web page here.

FACULTY FOCUS
HIGHER ED TEACHING STRATEGIES FROM MAGNA PUBLICATIONS

July 31, 2017

I'm in 'Kahoots' with Technology in the Classroom

By Cassandra O'Sullivan Sachar, EdD

Teaching tool or distraction? One of the most vexing issues for faculty today is what to do about cell phones in the classroom. According to a study conducted by Dr. Jim Roberts, a marketing professor at Baylor University, college students spend between eight to ten hours daily on their cell phones. Regardless of whatever "no cell phone" policies we attempt to enforce in our classrooms, many of our students are sneakily checking Instagram or texting friends when they're supposed to be engaged in solving matrices or analyzing Shakespeare.

Because college students use technology in nearly every aspect of their daily lives, incorporating it into the classroom can raise student interest and participation. Rather than banning all electronic devices, we can restrict off-task behavior and increase engagement through the supplementation of educational apps. Here are two apps I recommend:

Kahoot!: I absolutely love Kahoot! and have used it across disciplines and age groups. Whether reviewing for a test on *Julius Caesar* with high school sophomores, assessing teachers' prior knowledge on the state of literacy in America, or teaching freshmen to write stronger thesis statements, I have found this game to be motivational, learning focused, and fun. Students use their smartphones individually or in teams to respond to questions on the screen. The first student or team to respond correctly scores the most points.

The key to any engaging lesson in the classroom, of course, is to connect it to the learning objectives, and Kahoot! makes it easy to do so. User-friendly and aesthetically appealing, Kahoot! has helped me turn what might have been boring Q&A sessions into competitive and exciting learning activities. Plus, by assessing students' ability to recall information from previous lessons, you will quickly uncover topics that may merit revisiting.

How to get started: First, go to https://getkahoot.com/ and sign up for a free account. The FAQ provides helpful hints to get your head around the gist of the program. I also recommend browsing through a few of the thousands of free Kahoots ready to use in your classroom under "Find Kahoots." While I like to create my own, I often look there to get ideas. Once you're ready, just click the "New K!" tab to begin inputting questions and answers, choosing your time limit per question, and selecting graphics (if you're into that kind of thing). Within a short time, it'll be ready for classroom usage. Tell your students to go to https://kahoot.it/ and launch your Kahoot! to give them the appropriate game PIN. Once they type it in, they'll be ready to play!

Slido: This is a relatively new app to me, but I was hooked by its simplicity and usefulness. Slido is a quick way to get various types of feedback with minimal effort from both you and your students. There are two main functions of Slido in the classroom: students can ask *you* questions and you can question *them*. During the former, students type questions on their phones, which are displayed on a projector for the whole class to see. As the teacher, you control how often and in what way you want to respond, such as during or after the lecture, and you can also decide if the questions are anonymous. This tool can be a great way to combat shyness because students often hesitate to ask questions in class due to worries of appearing foolish in front of classmates. You can even allow students to vote on the questions they would most like you to answer. Second, you can poll your students to check prior knowledge or assess interest, giving you a quick snapshot of where students are at that moment. Finally, there's an infographic feature that acts as the "interaction report" from the event, recording information such as the number of users and the most popular questions.

How to get started: Sign up at https://www.sli.do/. A basic account is free. Though this package does not allow question moderation and restricts the number of polls you can ask per class, this version is still interactive and informative. The site has helpful videos and information on how to proceed, but here are the basics: first, you'll create an event, which can just refer to a class on one particular day. If you want to make use of the question feature, instruct your students to go to the main page and enter the event code on their phones. On your end, click on the "Questions" tab so students can ask questions whenever they like (as long as you keep that feature turned

on). If you want to question students rather than vice versa, just click on the "Polls" tab and create your poll prior to class. I prefer the multiple-choice format, but you can set this up as "open text" and allow for more varied responses as well. Once it's class time, students will head to the main page and type in the event code; you'll activate the poll you want them to answer. Though I'm not the most tech-savvy educator, I found Slido extremely user-friendly and easy to implement.

Do you have a favorite app you like to use in the classroom? Please share in the comments.

Cassandra O'Sullivan Sachar is an assistant professor of writing at Bloomsburg University.

If you haven't signed up for **Faculty Focus Premium**, you're missing out. **Faculty Focus Premium** takes you beyond the core content available on *Faculty Focus* to provide members with a wealth of tools and resources on subjects ranging from course creation to grading policies, rubrics to assignment strategies, student engagement to instructional technology, and everything in between.

Membership in **Faculty Focus Premium** includes access to a growing repository of professional-development tools, such as:

- lead articles from each issue of *The Teaching Professor* and *Online Classroom*,
- a wealth of sample rubrics, graphs, and checklists providing insights into the latest trends and topics in pedagogy,
- one 20-Minute Mentor program each quarter (a $196 annual value), including the current featured program titled *How Can I Avoid Communication Misfires with Students?* and
- exclusive discounts on new products and upcoming conferences, including **a $70 discount on the 2017 Teaching with Technology Conference**, if you register between now and Aug. 18.

All of this is yours with an annual **Faculty Focus Premium** membership fee of just $99. These are resources you'll turn to again and again for ideas to help you meet your classroom challenges and hone your pedagogy. And with fresh content arriving every month, there'll always be something new to learn!

Group pricing is now available! Your department, school, or entire campus can join *Faculty Focus Premium* at a discounted rate. For more information, contact Magna Publications' sales dept. at 800-433-0499 (ext. 3) or email sales@magnapubs.com.

Learn More