

TO TEXT OR NOT TO TEXT—THAT IS THE QUESTION!

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Recently, I heard the news that one pastor was encouraging his congregation, especially the youth, to text responses to his sermon during the church service. Now there's a revolutionary idea.

How would you like to introduce that idea in some of your classes? Have the students text their responses to your quiz questions. That would be quite a switch from disallowing cell phones in the classroom as is the case in some of our schools and even in the public system. The electronic interaction would be quite normal for students who text quite a bit with their friends and at times with their parents. There is the possibility that some students could actually get excited about school.



In this age of “instant everything,” the idea of texting back and forth between teachers and students may be one way of deliberately engaging the students who tend to be easily distracted. As the students text their responses to questions, the teachers give them instant feedback, their total score, etc. Do you think this could actually revolutionize the delivery of course material and appeal to the “not-so-enthusiastic-about-school” students?

Read the excerpt below from an article that describes a professor who actually experimented with this in his class. Although it was a tertiary level class, it speaks to those who are determined to make technology work for them because it is surely not going away. On the contrary, it is here to stay. Remember when we were not allowed to carry calculators to class?

The real question is: “How can teachers best utilize the technology in order to make it work for them and for their students?” I see it as a case of “use” or “lose.” The fact is, students will continue to sneak their cell phones into class, and they will continue to text their friends during class and hope that they are not caught.

“Most professors consider text messaging in class from rude to downright intolerable, but in physics professor Oliver Baker’s class last semester it was not only acceptable, but encouraged.

“Students enrolled in Physics 150 this past fall had the option of using zuku, a new technology that allows students to ask and answer questions in class via anonymous text messages to a Web site accessible to the professor. . . .

“Co-Founder and President of zuku Patrick Barber said he started working on the project fourteen months ago after realizing during an especially long conference that he wanted to ask a question, but did not feel like raising his hand. As he watched the audience fiddle with their blackberries, he considered the possibility of using that technology as a vehicle for anonymous, instantaneous feedback to facilitate interactions between speakers and spectators in conferences, corporate meetings and education. . . .

“Baker utilized the technology to assess how well students understood the material with quick multiple-choice problems. In seconds, the zuku Web site provided Baker with a distribution of answers so he could see whether his students had a good grasp of the subject or needed more explanation.”

Are we as teachers prepared to use the technology or lose the battle with technology in class? We can decide to use it to our advantage or risk losing our “healthy” relationship with students and their engagement in our classes. Think about this seriously. It may take some time to wrap your brain around it. But ready or not, technology is here to stay.

Resources:

Faxon, H. *Yale Daily News*, Wednesday, February 20, 2008.

Read the full article on this website: <http://www.yaledailynews.com/news/scitech-news/2008/02/20/text-messaging-system-allows-questions-feedback-in/>