A Principal's Reflections: Engagement Does Not Always Equate to Learning
by Eric Sheninger

I am always hearing about how technology can be used to effectively engage students. This is important as the majority of students spend six to eight hours a day in schools where they are completely disengaged. I can’t blame today’s learner for being bored in school. All I have to do is observe my son at home playing Minecraft to see his level of engagement. His Minecraft experiences provide meaning and relevance in an environment that is intellectually stimulating and fun.

With or without technology, there always seems to be a great deal of emphasis on student engagement, but engagement does not necessarily equate to learning. I have observed numerous lessons where students were obviously engaged with technology, but there was no clear indication they were learning. Having fun, collaborating, communicating, and being creative are all important elements, but we must not lose sight of the importance of the connection to, and evidence of, learning. Students can walk away from a lesson or activity having been very engaged, but with very little in the form of new knowledge construction, conceptual mastery or applied skills. When speaking at events I often ask leaders and teachers how they measure the impact of technology on learning. More often than not I receive blank stares or an open admission that they have no idea.

It is important to look beyond student engagement when it comes to technology. If the emphasis is on digital learning we must not get caught up in the bells and whistles that are commonly associated with the digital aspect alone. Engagement should always translate into deeper learning opportunities where technology provides students the means to think critically and solve problems while demonstrating what they know and can do in a variety of ways. Technology should be implemented to increase engagement, but it should not be used as a digital pacifier or gimmick to get students to participate. Ask yourself:

- Is the technology being integrated in a purposeful way grounded in sound pedagogy?
- What are the learning objectives/outcomes?
- Are students demonstrating the construction of new knowledge? Are they creating a learning product/artifact?
- How are students applying essential skills they have acquired to demonstrate conceptual mastery?

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“Sometimes, we think that in order to get students really engaged, we have to find some fun activity or some cool demonstration. We think that is the only way to capture and hold their interest. But be careful. There is a difference between a kid who is engaged and one who is merely entertained. A student may get excited about an activity and still not be engaged in the learning.”

~ Robyn Jackson, “5 Myths About Engagement”
A **digital citizen** is one who knows what is right and wrong, exhibits intelligent technology behavior, and makes good choices when using technology. To understand the complexity of digital citizenship and the issues of technology use, abuse, and misuse, Mark Ribble has identified **nine elements** that together make up digital citizenship.

- **Digital Rights and Responsibilities** - The privileges and freedoms extended to all digital technology users, and the behavioral expectations that come with them.
- **Digital Communication** - The electronic exchange of information
- **Digital Access** - Full electronic participation in society.
- **Digital Etiquette** - The standards of conduct expected by other digital technology users
- **Digital Security** - The precautions that all technology users must take to guarantee their personal safety and the security of their network.
- **Digital Literacy** - The capability of user digital technology and knowing when and how to use it.
- **Digital Law** - The legal rights and restrictions governing technology use.
- **Digital Health and Wellness** - The elements of physical and psychological well-being related to digital technology use.
- **Digital Commerce** - The buying and selling of goods online.

For information and resources for Digital Citizenship, go to: [http://www.hpschools.org/Page/88](http://www.hpschools.org/Page/88)

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**Well Connected Goes Digital!**

In an effort to deliver the most current and relevant information, this newsletter can best be accessed online. The print version will continue to contain a few topics and highlights, but please go to [http://www.hpschools.org/technology](http://www.hpschools.org/technology) for more news and resources.

**You will find:**

- Integration highlights
- Integration tips
- Software and hardware user guides
- Assistive technology news
- ISTE Standards for students and teachers
- Digital literacy and Internet safety information
- App watch list
- HP’s Acceptable Use Policy
- Archives of Well Connected!
- Resources for teachers
- Resources for students
- Links to cool web tools
- iPad tips
- Recommended app lists
- Virtual field trips
- District technology handbook
- Much, much more!

Also, use of FAQ section for help on any technology related topic.

Don’t forget to lock your workstation when you walk away. Leaving it unlocked is a serious security risk.

To lock it quickly, press your Windows key and L and the same time!

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“Our kids are growing up on a digital playground and no one is on recess duty.”

~Kevin Honeycutt
Apps that Violate Your Privacy (Maybe) Without Your Knowledge

Apps have become an essential part of our productivity and entertainment. Unfortunately, unless we are vigilant, many, especially the free apps, come at the cost of our privacy. Some ask for your permission to access contacts, location and other identifying information. Others do so automatically. Most apps won’t tell you for what they are using the data they are collecting. For Apple devices, you can go to Settings > Privacy and look at individual features for most apps. Not all apps share the information they collect, but it’s important to be aware of which ones do. In the meantime, here are a few apps you might want to be particularly cautious about using:

- **Draw Something Free:** Has built in libraries for targeted ads.
- **Words With Friends:** Not only uses your location for the game, but uses it for location based ads.
- **Go Locker:** Acts as a screen locker, but links you to app stores besides Google Play, which may have malicious content.

(Watch out for all the “Go” apps; Go Battery, etc.

- **Camera360 Ultimate:** Tracks what other apps you are running as well as your location, phone number, carrier, and more.
- **My Talking Tom (and its sister apps):** While fun, this app actually sends advertisers the audio you create from your microphone, as well as your phone’s identifying information.

For information about other apps to watch out for follow our App Watch list here: [http://www.hpschools.org/Page/2386](http://www.hpschools.org/Page/2386)

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Simple Ways to Free Up Space On Your iOS Device

There’s almost no limit to what you can do with your iOS device, but unfortunately there is a limit to the amount of stuff you can store on it. Here are a few quick tips for freeing up space if you’re getting close to that limit.

First, see what’s using up the space on your device. To do this, click on Settings > General > Usage. This will show you how much space is available, as well as a list of which apps are taking up how much space, in order, starting with the app taking up the most space.

You can show all the apps on your device by clicking on “Show all apps” at the bottom. Start clearing up space by deleting some apps that you don't use anymore, keeping in mind that unless they store data you can always download them again. You can delete the apps directly from this screen.

The biggest offender on most of our devices is photos and videos. Videos are huge files. The best practice is to upload them to your computer or a cloud storage like Dropbox and delete them from your device.

iMessages are another space hog that we often forget about. Go through your messages and delete any full conversations that you don’t need, particularly ones that include images. Or, just delete the images from the conversation.

Another way to clear up space is to delete cookies and data in Safari. To do this go to Settings > Safari, and choose Clear Cookies and Data.
Engage Your Students With Speaking Avatars

Speaking avatars can be effective learning tools. A free Voki account allows for up to 60-second clips. Here are a few ideas for how you can use this tool in your classroom:

• Language classes: Students can design their avatar to speak the language they are learning. A set of instructions could be given to, for example, pronounce new words or state their definitions. Students can use their Avatar as a teacher who speaks the correct version of the word and definition after they have spoken it.

• Historical figures: Instead of telling the students about their historical significance, allow your Avatar to do the speaking. They could give first-person accounts of what happened during their time and highlight important events.

• Summarize a lesson: Have students create a short summary of a previous lecture. Their Avatar could summarize the important points.

• For a presentation: Not every student is comfortable presenting in front of a class. Let students create a classroom presentation through their Avatar. You can make the project more creative by asking them to create a character that would most likely fit the role of the person presenting. The other students will enjoy listening to a talking character.

• As a substitute for you: Bring your lecture to life by asking your avatar to do the talking instead of you. The quirky character will certainly increase their attention span.

• Assigning work: Humanize that boring Word Doc with a list of projects or assignment instructions and let the Avatar articulate what they are expected to do. The clip can be embedded in your website so students can refer back to it whenever they need to.

  
  http://www.voki.com/

Understanding Cloud Backup vs. Cloud Storage

While there are similarities between these two services, they are designed for different purposes and there are key differences to consider.

Cloud Storage works like an online hard drive or flash drive. Its main goal is to store files online to be accessible anywhere. You upload your documents, photos, etc. and share them between devices and/or people. Popular cloud storage services include Dropbox, Google Drive, OneDrive and iCloud. Generally these services provide a base amount of space for free with the option to purchase more. The main drawback of cloud storage is that the user must keep track of which files have been stored on the device, which are stored in the cloud, and which versions are the most recent. Also, keep in mind that there is no guarantee to these services, particularly if they are free.

Cloud Backup creates copies of your files in the cloud, its main goal to back up the files on your computer and store them safely for disaster recovery purposes. This means if your computer dies you still have a copy of your files somewhere else. Cloud backups are automatic, and upload the most recent versions of files so you don’t have to worry about which version you saved. But, Cloud backup does not provide for sharing files.

I recently had the incredible opportunity to be in the audience for a Jaime Casap (Google Education Evangelist) keynote address. I’ve heard many speakers, but this was the most inspirational guy ever! I encourage you to check out his website: http://www.jcasap.com/

Following is a quote from his speech at the White House.

“Often we ask our students the wrong question, ‘What do you want to be when you grow up. I don't like this question. First, there is a very good chance your “job” doesn't exist. Second, I do not expect kids growing up in communities like Hell’s Kitchen to tell me that they want to be a microbiologist or a sustainable materials architect. Instead, I want to ask you, ‘What problem do you want to solve? What problem occupies your thoughts? I want you to think about the knowledge, skills, and abilities you need to solve this problem. When I ask you to think about what problem you want to solve, I am asking you to take ownership of your learning. I am asking you to begin to create mastery for the most critical skills you will need.”