nClass

3 Surprising Ways to keep students focused using Technology

1. Allow smart phones in class

Yes, you heard right! Mobile phones don't have to mean disrupting beeps, giggles from back-row texters, or zonked-out young adults stuck on the fifth level of angry birds. Instead students can use them them to report feedback to you and even contribute in class with the help of mobile apps, may we humbly suggest nClass. Not to mention, these days students can pull up periodic tables, graphing calculators, dictionaries and many other classroom-related tools on what are essentially hand-held, ultra-ultra-portable computers.

2. Incorporate social media into your lesson plan

Your students love social media, and that's not a bad thing! Instead of reprimanding web-surfers, give them something class related to surf:

- Suggest twitter handles and hashtags that grapple with the topics you discuss in class
- Share helpful infographics and study games on a class blog or webpage
- Encourage students to ask experts questions by sending them to their social media profiles

3. Have them ALL answer a question using their smartphones or computers

Picture this: Your class is bored, unengaged, and unwilling to answer the questions you're posing. What do you do?

- Do you call on a student randomly to catch them unengaged?

Not only is that embarrassing for the student you called on, it means the other students are still unengaged. A 1 in 40 chance of being called on is simply not enough to scare students into paying attention.

- Do you tell the class "I guess I'll put that on the exam"?

That doesn't engage the students who understand the material but may forget later, and it definitely doesn't help the students who are genuinely lost.

- Instead, throughout the lecture, ask students to complete a one-question quiz on what you just went over.

Each student can answer the question using their smartphone or web browser on their phone or computer and if you allow students to use their devices, you don't have to collect their paper answer sheets to see how they did. In addition to a quick pulse check, you will get a sense of

whether your students need harder material or whether they are just not paying attention, your lectures will also incorporate active learning. *"A good rule of thumb is that if there's no point in your studying routine where you have the possibility of finding out you're incorrect, it isn't an active task."*

Remember when there was resistance to allowing computers in the classroom!!! The digital natives of today, use their smartphones for everything, they are more used to multi-tasking than the previous generations. Banning smartphones in the classroom is a step back not forward. Embracing them and integrating them into your pedagogy will enhance student learning and ultimately lead to better outcomes.