

# READERS **respond**

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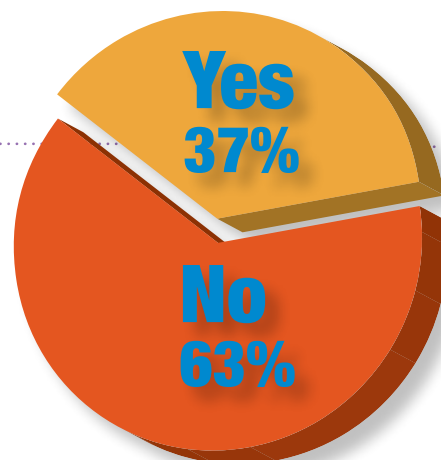
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## POLL RESULTS

### Is Ed Tech Shortening Student Attention Spans?

Poll takers and those who sent comments are divided, but most believe technology is the solution to reaching less-attentive students.



#### Technology Is Not the Problem

In one word, no. Technology is not the culprit; rather it may be the solution. Today's students are wired differently—just look at all they do outside of the classroom! As educational technologists, our job is to find ways to capitalize upon technologies that students use outside of the classroom, expanding our teaching methods.

*Mara Linabarger  
Intermediate Unit One  
Coal Center, Pennsylvania*

#### Blame Consumer Technologies

The attention span of students has shortened due to consumer technologies. Educational technology allows educators to adapt to that phenomenon. Television sound bites, communication software, the Internet, video games, cell phones, MP3 players, and other devices that enable “instant communication” contribute to our brief attention span.

*Nanette Stillwell  
Pitt Community College  
Greenville, North Carolina*

#### Media Shorten Attention Spans

In all aspects of their lives, students are bombarded with a wide range of media stimuli that promote the development of short attention spans. I believe educational technology gives us one more tool in our kit that we can use to engage students and cope with their short attention spans.

*Gary Hoyne  
East Aurora High School  
Aurora, Illinois*

#### Maybe It's Boring Lessons

When students don't even look up as the bell rings because they are engrossed with a technology-based project of their own choosing, it's hard to blame shortened attention spans on educational technology.

*Rozanne Donald  
St. Cuthbert's College  
Auckland, New Zealand*

#### What Was I Doing Again?

As I was writing my response, my Twitter feed shared an interesting Diigo link from a colleague about a Google form she created. It was great except for that I forgot to write my response to your question.

*Howard J. Martin  
Austin Independent School District  
Austin, Texas*

#### Use Technology to Grab Attention

On the contrary, I've used technology to GRASP student attention. I have witnessed teachers harness the novelty and creative explosion that comes about when technology is used to introduce difficult or uninteresting drill exercises. Educational technology allows for student attention to naturally stray away from the teacher and gravitate toward the class topic—challenging the traditional classroom structure but making way for growth and imagination.

*Jennifer Gaspar-Santos  
St. Matthew's Episcopal Day School  
San Mateo, California*

#### Amplification Helps Attention

Research in educational audiology indeed points to the prevalence of short attention, particularly in young children. Auditory processing abilities are still maturing until children reach their teen years. The result is that children are more prone to off-task behaviors, including inattentiveness. One solution is the use of amplification. In classrooms or labs where computer-based instruction is taking place, noise levels are even worse. If I were a classroom teacher and could only have one piece of technology, I would choose classroom amplification. It is that critical.

*Kim Hepworth  
Provo City School District  
Provo, Utah*

#### What's Bad About That?

The question is loaded in its assumption that shortening attention spans are even a problem! Educational technology is a response to the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners who think and learn differently so if anything, ed tech is a response to shortening attention spans not the cause of it, and that's great!

*Justin Hardman  
Hong Kong International School  
Hong Kong*

*We love to hear from you!*

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