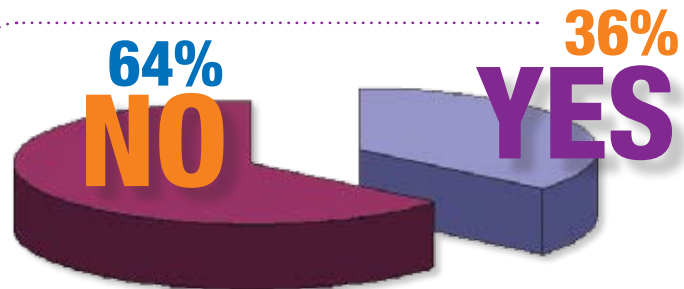


READERS respond

Should we allow the use of personal technology devices (e.g., cell phones, MP3 players) in the classroom?



POLL RESULTS

Although poll results ran almost 2 to 1 against allowing students to use their personal technology devices in the classroom, a letter writer advises teachers to open themselves to the unfamiliar.



Your magazine recently ran an editorial regarding the usage of technology devices in the classroom. I found the start of the article quite

comical because it outlined a proposal for banning pencils. I could relate to this from my own experiences.

I have seen through the years that many of those people in education want to ban things from the classroom that they feel would become a distraction because this is unfamiliar territory for those people. Change is difficult for many of us; therefore, we often resist change. I agree that there are situations where technology owned by the students can and will be abused to the point that it is a distraction. However,

we as educators need to become more technologically literate and use some of these devices in our own classroom to help the students learn more and learn more effectively.

Yes, there may be a situation where you have students who cannot afford these items. But what I have found is that most of my students are quite willing to share during classroom time to allow their peers to experience what they are experiencing. I have also found that a little faith and belief in the students helps them go a long way. I have seen a decline in distraction during times when a student is allowed to use a CD player during reading and homework time. I do not think it is my place as an educator to judge what lyrics a student listens to.

As long as they are not passing them around the classroom and creating a distraction, technology can be a good device used to keep concentration.

We as educators need to lay out the ground rules that we feel are acceptable use in the classroom with our students. Allow the students to be an active participant in deciding what is appropriate and not appropriate. When the students feel they have a voice and ownership of the ground rules they are more likely to respect them and not abuse the privileges they have been given. For our students' sake and the sake of education, we are going to have to become more receptive to using the different technologies that students have available to them in our classrooms.

*Dawn Coleman
Teacher, Gateway Academy High School
Mayfield, Kentucky*

LETTERS

Myths about Africa Persist

Ethiopia is not in the "middle of Africa," so why should I imagine students there, as Judith Szente implores me to in the beginning of her article on "Technology in Ethiopian Schools" (February 2006, p. 14). Ethiopia is on the eastern coast very far from the middle.

It seems that she is pushing the myth of Africa as the Dark Continent

and the "middle" of Africa being the remotest place on earth to emphasize how wondrous technology in schools can be.

*Charles Bender
Web Designer, Special Education District 75
New York, New York*

Articles Relevant for Tech Planners

I am the media specialist at Cedarwood School in Mandeville, Louisiana, and have been a subscriber to

L&L for several years. Our technology committee is in the process of updating our school technology plan to be submitted to the Louisiana Department of Education this spring. I found so many relevant articles that touched on almost every aspect of our technology plan: access, technology integration, professional development, technology leadership, technology policy, partnerships, and public awareness. I

Readers cont. on page 9.

Readers cont. from page 5.

was inspired and enlightened by articles that ranged from better school to parent communication (“Getting the Word out with List Servers,” February 2006, pp. 18–21) to asset management tools to make the tech administrator’s life easier (“No Data Left Behind,” pp. 22–25). As a teacher, I was motivated by articles such as “Digital Storytelling” (pp. 45–46) and “Harnessing Movies for Language Practice” (p. 43). The Buyer’s Guide section is especially helpful in evaluating technology equipment and affordability.

L&L has proven to be very useful in setting technology goals and objectives for our school. The “how-to” is so helpful, but having the rationale expressed behind everything we do as educators is the most important part. Please keep up the good work; it makes my job so much easier.

Alison Statton
Media Specialist, Cedarwood School
Mandeville, Louisiana

Violent Stories Are Inappropriate

I always enjoy reading about projects that occur in the classroom. I was somewhat dismayed by the content of “Digital Storytelling” in the February 2006 (pp. 45–46) issue. I actually had to read the article twice to make sure that I understood the content correctly. Digital storytelling is a powerful tool and an engaging one for students. Could the author of the article not come up with examples of students who did not develop a violent story? Of the examples given, one group reenacted the sinking of the Titanic,

another group reenacted the disaster of the space shuttle, another group had the climbers of Mt. Everest fall to their death, another group had horses trapped in a barn as it caught fire, and finally another group had their classroom involved in an earthquake. Where were your manuscript readers?

I often share articles with colleagues and administrators. Rest assured, this won’t be one of them!

Nancy Sharoff
Math Teacher, Ellenville Middle School
Ellenville, New York

Speaking the Languages of Learning

Regarding “Plans for NECC 2006 Are Heating Up!” (ISTE News, March 2006, p. 8), the NECC Cross Border Steering Committee was created to recognize the unique technological contributions and needs of the borderlands between the United States and Mexico as represented by the San Diego-Tijuana region. Its purpose is to determine topics, speakers, and other contributions to attract Spanish speaking teachers, parents, and students from both sides of the border to this unique conference, in which they will have a chance to learn more about technology and find ways they can use it to their advantage to succeed in their educational goals. Our hope is to promote a continued educational cross-border collaboration through the use of technology, in order to positively affect the Spanish-speaking population in the United States and Mexico.

Jose Enrique Gonzalez
Special Programs Assistant
San Diego County Office of Education
NECC 2006 Cross Border Steering
Committee Chair

Mapping Standards Provides Tech Direction

Kudos to Bjorn Norstrom and his colleagues at Colchester Middle School for their work in mapping the ISTE NETS for Students with the industry ICT standards! (“Mapping Curriculum to Ed Tech and Industry Standards,” March 2006, pp. 14–17) The notion of mapping out a curriculum for what students should know and be able to do with technology from both education and industry perspectives meets the original intent of ISTE’s NETS for Students.

Norstrom questions, “Are the NETS too ambiguous?” and correctly identifies the exact dilemma the standards developers grappled with during the six years prior to publication. The intent was to place the responsibility of providing relevant detail and specific grade expectations on the states and districts; the thinking at the time was that arriving at a national consensus for standards is a considerably difficult and time-consuming process. Setting the original intent aside, perhaps, the better question Norstrom has raised is: Should ISTE now engage in a revision process that includes the principle of creating standards that can be unambiguously operationalized? I think it is time.

It seems that Colchester Middle School has a wonderful start to building a comprehensive technology program. I applaud Mr. Norstrom for raising all the right questions.

M.G. (Peggy) Kelly
Co-Director, ISTE NETS Project

Coming Next Issue in *L&L*

Ed Tech Research

The National Technology Leadership Coalition brought together a group of teacher educators from technology and subject matter associations to discuss the need for rigorous research on the use of technology in the content areas. Read their specific recommendations.

Transforming Teachers’ Use of Technology

Principal Evan M. Glazer (Roanoke Valley Governor’s School for Science and Technology, Virginia) and technology coordinator Kathy Page (Simonton Elementary School, Lawrenceville, Georgia) describe how their collaborative apprenticeship program has improved the effectiveness of their technology coordinator and transformed their teachers’ use of technology.

Paving the Road to Technology Integration

Seventh grade teacher and ISTE Institute participant Angela Mulligan (District 146, Illinois) describes how her school built a successful WebQuest project involving both her seventh and a third grade class that “transformed into an unforgettable learning experience for both students and staff that will resonate for years to come.”