

Spotlight

TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION





Welcome

This academic year we officially opened the LAS Educational Research (LASER) Center.

One of the ways I've most often characterized what we are doing is encapsulated in this short imperative: "Document it!" Write down what you are learning, share it, push it out to the world ... and in so doing understand a little bit better your own thinking and your own work.

Keep up the good work, everyone, here at LAS and everywhere ... and share it with others.

*Paul Magnuson
LASER Director*

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Educational Technology Integration

Relatively speaking, the integration of educational technology is a new field. As schools struggle to keep pace with the advancement of technology and the need for expensive infrastructure, many models for the adoption of hardware and software - as well as the necessary training - are cropping up. Much of what is written in journals refers to the need to invest in infrastructure and professional development. At our school, the infrastructure has been advancing over recent years with significant investment in the area of networking. Then in the 2014-2015 school year we introduced a specific professional development program for new and returning faculty, who are interested in advancing their own practices with technology.

At the end of the academic year, first year faculty and a number of school leaders and administrators grouped together to discuss technology for education. We covered a variety of areas, highlighting positive outcomes and identifying areas of focus for 2015-16.

Participants agreed that the technology professional learning program itself was a positive step. LAS Educational Research (LASER) will continue to fund approximately 5 faculty member's attendance at an AppsEvents (Google) conference and will cover the cost of any faculty wishing to enroll in the Google educator or trainer process. LASER will also bring an AppsEvent to our school next spring. Participants in the Tech PD program enjoyed the flexibility, the discussion forums, the funding and support, and the format of our Speed Geeking event.

Each year the new faculty receive a technology introduction on arrival to LAS. Next year, in response to feedback from new faculty, the LAS tech introduction has been revamped further still. Thanks to the introduction of the Mentor Program, we are now able to spread out the learning to provide just-in-time information, resulting in new learning that is meaningful and situated in practice. We have a real opportunity to achieve a new goal:

Do not give new faculty too much, too soon ... AND be there to give them what they need at the moment they need it.

Moving forward, we have two focus areas:

- Developing a positive school ed-tech culture; and
- Aligning the use of technology across the curriculum.

There are many avenues to explore in order to build a positive-use culture. This coming year I will gather ideas and experiment with different models, giving us greater insight into how to move LAS forward. As a school we have a responsibility to ensure our students are taught key aspects of technology to support their learning and to prepare them for life beyond LAS. As we look to build horizontal links across the curriculum, technology is my main area of focus. Core¹ class teachers have begun developing a curriculum to support students in all of their subjects, to be delivered in their core classes, which is separate from the main curriculum. Part of this curriculum includes the use of technology: to support learning, to acquire technology skills, and for digital organization. Currently the planning lies with the teachers of 8th, 9th and 10th grade classes. An initial attempt has been made to identify areas of importance and an appropriate timeline. We will expand this in 2015-16 and ensure alignment with other subject areas.

2015-16 has been a successful year. This journal highlights exactly that. I'd like to extend my appreciation to the faculty involved in producing this journal and to Paul Magnuson and everyone associated with LAS Educational Research.

Jason Murphy

Educational Technology Integration Specialist

¹At LAS core classes are a 7th option block outside of the traditional subject areas. In this class students are given specific instruction ranging from Health & P.E., study skills, and Theory of Knowledge. This core class is designed specifically for each grade level to support students in all of their content areas.

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Using iPads to Support Learning

WITH BRITTANY HOLSAPPLE

Brittany Holsapple is a Learning Support Specialist at Leysin American School. She joined us in August 2015. She already had previous experience using an iPad as a teacher, but she was not part of the roll out to students in her previous employment. Fortunately, she was able to explore a small roll out with us at LAS. Brittany works in a very specialized program supporting six students in the classroom and in the evening in our Extended Learning Support Program (ELSP). As Brittany defines her role and the ELSP's role, she is exploring different strategies to support and engage students. Using technology is a large part of this. Brittany's students have been identified as requiring special educational needs and she shares some surprising results.

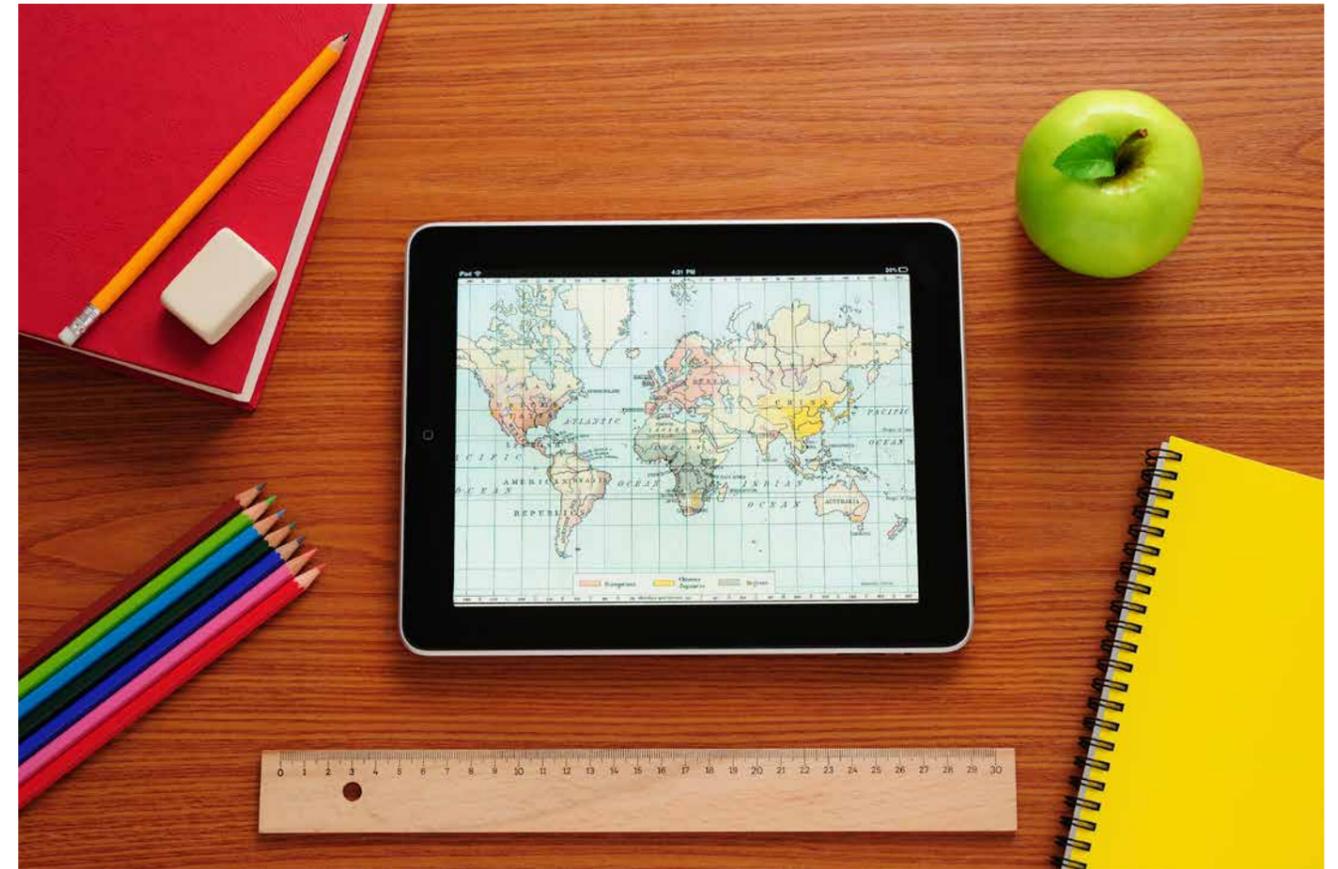
There are thousands of articles about how technology can support student learning, what is your take on technology in this sense?

There are obviously great examples of technology supporting students in learning, from simple but engaging apps that develop discrete

Mathematics or English language skills, to higher order skills like collaborating on Google Docs. One of the students I support is currently writing a paper in History, and even though I can't physically be with him, he really enjoys that he can send an email to me asking for help, and I offer him feedback right inside the document. It maintains that supportive feel, and we stay connected - I do it right on the go with my iPad

and that's one of those examples of technology allowing me to do something otherwise impossible. Also, I really like how engaged my students are when they are playing an apparently 'childish' game, but yet they are still learning.

I have to say though it's a real double-edged sword, often the students that need the most support are the ones most incapable of focusing on the task



at hand - technology is now providing students with easy access to distracting content. The trick is to unbalance the learning so good technology use outweighs the bad.

Having just spent six months using iPads in your program, can you summarize how it went?

It's funny, I started with my own iPad in our small group evening sessions and the students were curious about it, "Can we have a go, miss?" they would say. I quickly realized that I could use this as a behavior management strategy with the students and I'd offer an extension or reward task on the iPad. It worked really well. So much so that

within a couple of weeks I requested a class set from our IT support, and when it was up and running I was reaping the rewards - the students all bought into the idea that using an iPad was cool, so I just ran with it. I spent a lot of time researching apps and I set up the iPads in an individual way, so students have their own set of apps to use. It took a lot

“The trick is to unbalance the learning so the good technology use outweighs the bad.”

of time, but it has been worth it.

What challenges did you face with this project?

The biggest challenge I faced was an unexpected one: the students

are too motivated. Students will now rush through their work just so they can start to use the iPads. At times this meant poor quality work in favor of speedy completion. I started to check their understanding a lot more and this led me to another problem. I really want to build an element of trust, allowing students the flexibility

to build their own learning tools and paths, but the moment I 'check-up' on work completed and refuse

access to the iPad until the work is at an acceptable level, I receive a little push back as I become an authoritative figure. It's really hard to balance.

Another big challenge is the tendency of some students to jump

around from app to app, especially the students with ADHD. A colleague showed me how you can use parental controls and triple click to lock apps, and while I can see that being effective in some cases, it breaks down the trust that I try to build in our small group, not least the fact that it limits access to multiple apps at once - like when researching on the internet and creating a paper in the Google Docs app. I have no concrete answers on how to solve this yet.

What about infrastructure and acquiring iPads, were they easy to set up?

From the moment I wanted to move from one iPad to a small set six for the class, I placed a request with my IT support and I had a response within two hours. Credit to the team, we do have a lot of support with IT at LAS, when they came back to me with a response within two hours I was very

pleasantly surprised. The downside to that was that I felt the need to implement immediately and without really thinking it through I used my own personal login on each iPad. Nothing malicious was ever done, but it meant I had to request an extra layer of support to go through and remove any sensitive data or access credentials. Never underestimate the strength of your IT department, the least you can do is ask.

What advice would you give to a new faculty member who enters into a similar research project?

Research the devices and decide what you need them for, regardless of what technology you use. I read so many articles about iPads and titles with 'Best apps for...' are a good place to start, but really look in depth at how the apps can be used. I found so many great uses for an app when at first glance it looked really simple. A good example

of this is Explain Everything, it's much more than a whiteboard, read about it!

Play with the apps before you give them to students, and understand that age appropriate estimates are not always accurate. I have one student who declared an app childish while another loves it and won't put it down (Zombie Math). I have an ESL student with a reading age of 4.8 but she is in ninth grade, so it really does depend on the student. The key is to play with the app and you can decide whether it is age appropriate for your students.

Planning is key, I jumped in a little fast and I could have set up my iPads in a better way for each student without using my own credentials. I'm aware that Apple is trying to make it easier by setting up iPads without an Apple ID, the ETA of 2016 is a little too far off for me. It's important to scout for a little information in your school: Was there previously a project? What did users learn? It could be anything

A FEW EXTRAS



Explain Everything

A unique interactive whiteboard and screencasting tool used by over 1.8 million students and educators:
<http://www.morriscooke.com/applications-ios/explain-everything-2>



CoWriter

Co:Writer® is a writing tool that aids with phonetic/inventive spelling, grammar, and topic-related vocabulary:
<http://donjohnston.com/cowriterapp/>



Futaba

Futaba Classroom Games is a student centered application that promotes learning by strengthening key K-5th grade concepts in a fun and competitive manner. Up to 4 students can cooperatively learn using just one iPad" website:
<http://www.inkidseducation.com/futaba/>

from policies on allowing students to own the iPads to learning that volume purchase programs are not fully set up in your country. I could have learned all this from a few conversations at the start.

My final piece of advice is to understand that there is no such thing as a silver bullet. Cut yourself and students some slack. There will be good days, where the students will work great, the tech is functional, and everything's going your way. Then there will be bad days, the exact opposite will happen and you'll wonder why you bother. Just think back to those lessons where the students were really enjoying what they were doing, and remember the trick is to unbalance the learning so the good technology use outweighs the bad.

What's next for you?

I'm going to start incorporating the use of an Apple TV, I'll see how that goes - I want to see if it all 'just works' because I have heard of a number of

problems with crashes when mirroring an iPad. For this reason, it's good for schools to start with just one or two in various places. I'd also like to step back a little and replicate prior studies at LAS. I now know we have generic student Apple accounts so I'd like to see how I can use these and just generally investigate best practices for iPad implementation at LAS. Perhaps one day every student will have one, or even every teacher will have access to a set so that they too can come up with new exciting and innovative lessons.

Summary

Brittany has really developed a good sense of how an iPad roll-out can be achieved on a small scale. She has shared her experiences and we have realized the power of the iPad, but we have also realized what we need to be able to do to support an iPad initiative. One issue surrounds the culture of technology use and developing responsible learners. This means looking into the expectations of

students when using technology and also finding ways to allow faculty to use an iPad that supports and enhances learning and embraces the power of the iPad as a motivational tool. Most surprising for me was the idea of students becoming "too motivated" by the iPad, leaving other work by the wayside. It's not a problem that one would immediately consider, but it's definitely worth thinking about.

Small scale studies like this one really set the path for schools like ours. We can build on this and in time we might just have the tools we need to use technology to support learning at the highest level. The next stage for us is to solicit feedback from a few students, engage them in discussion about what it would mean for them to buy and own their own iPad, and ultimately plan for next year. Our IT team will be crucial in all this and they have built up a wealth of knowledge on how to support teachers with iPads. It's exciting to think what could come of this.



Pick-A-Path



WordsWorth



Bluster



Math Vs Zombies

BRITTANY'S FAVORITE APPS

BRITTANY'S FAVORITE ARTICLES & WEBSITES

"Teaching and Learning: Using iPads in the Classroom"
www.edutopia.org/blog/ipad-teaching-learning-apps-ben-johnson

Appolearning - Search thousands of expert-vetted apps, videos, websites & more
www.appolearning.com/

Free Technology for Teachers
www.freetech4teachers.com/

Using iPads in Sports Education

WITH BENJAMIN HALL

Ben Hall arrived at LAS in 2014 with a vision for the newly created course of Health and P.E. He was given carte blanche and the support of the administration to develop the curriculum in any way he saw fit. Central to him developing the curriculum content was inclusion and differentiation. Ben is passionate about involving all students. He has a real desire to improve the levels of participation regardless of ability. Ben requested one iPad to explore the application of tablets in P.E. He used it himself for teaching and he was able to hand the iPad off to a student when the right moment presented itself. Here is what he had to say about his research this year.

You have been using iPads in your P.E. classes, but why did you choose the iPad?

I was learning a little about the iPad in my last job, so when I arrived and was given lots of freedom I decided to explore the idea further. For me it's all about the iPad's portability and user friendliness. I really wanted a way to engage the non-performer in the same

lesson, so I figured I could have them using an iPad to analyze performances, research, and coach others. I also thought it might be a little more engaging; for many it's much nicer to video a friend, and then analyze, annotate, and verbally comment on a video than it is to write a 500-word description.

How did the students take to the device?

Kids are not as tech savvy as you think. They are excellent gamers and users of social media, but when it comes to using the intricacies of an app, they really struggle. So in many respects, the ease of use wasn't as easy as I was expecting.

I also had all the usual instances of irresponsible use of technology in the classroom. But, I'm not really a fan of a complete ban on technology. Don't get me wrong, I often 'locked' an iPad onto one app but this only gives peace of mind when only that one app is required. It doesn't work if I need students to shoot video, insert it into Coach's Eye, save in Google drive, and share on Edmodo.

For me, it's far more important that we ingrain responsible tech use into the core values of the school. After all, we give the students the devices, so we should teach them about using them responsibly. We all have the same tendencies, in meetings for example - we check the time, send a message or google additional information for our meeting. As adults we do it responsibly and we need to teach our students to do the same.

That said, that's an ideal world and humans are not perfect. So I have clear expectations then I give the students a choice of how to manage their phones and macbooks. They can choose to give me the phone or control themselves. Ultimately it comes down to very clear, consistent cause and consequence - the same with any misbehavior.

Did you encounter any technological hurdles in the process of learning how to use the iPad?

I didn't have many technological hurdles. I requested one iPad and I was fairly independent, so I didn't require much technical support. I used my own Apple ID and I have yet to claim

reimbursement for all the apps I have bought, so you could see that as a hurdle. I was happy to explore with my own Apple ID, I don't think it's that realistic for a whole school though. Ultimately I was happy to receive the device and the encouragement to investigate the possibilities.

What advice would you give to others conducting a similar project?

Conduct lots of research about which app you want and why you want to use it. Is it for self-reflection, video analysis and assessment, or for sharing work online with parents? And be clear with the students about why you are using the iPads. If you can, just use one device. Don't introduce a Macbook for video editing if it can be done right on the iPad. The Macbook will add a layer of complication and inefficiency in a lesson. That said, you have to remember that no one app will fit all situations.

I would recommend that you spend some time on the apps yourself. Every app has strengths and weaknesses, so do not be too committed to one idea or principle. You will likely need to find a way to merge the functionality of a few apps and change when you use each one. I learned a lot from www.thepegeek.com and www.neilatkin.com. I attended a PD

course conducted by Neil Atkin¹ and he had some fantastic ideas, primarily in the areas of science and sport. He really got me thinking about ways to apply the iPad to improve your own pedagogical practices. These are definitely professional development opportunities I would recommend, if you have access to them.

What's next for you?

I'm really excited with where I can take this. I started small with one iPad, but now I want to request a greater number of iPads. As we build our new gym we can really redefine the way we operate in Health and P.E., so I'd like to introduce interactive touch screens, or Apple TV and iPad solutions, to really engage the whole class in video analyses and feedback.

There is a professional development conference on September 11th, 2015 with the PE Geek² that's going to be really interesting and I'd really like to grow what I do with the iPad. My goal will be to develop a culture of analytical thinking in sports performance. Students are quite happy to think about their own movement, but I want them to be able to give effective feedback to others about their performance, and you can do that whether or not you are elite.

The iPad is really going to allow me to differentiate for every ability and I love how inclusive it allows me to be. The more I do this, the more resources I will accrue, including hours of footage of students performing right here in Leysin - there is power in that too. A strong connection can be made between the students watching the video of a performance right in the same location.

Summary

Ben has built on a number of iPad studies at LAS. He was able to use the iPad in a way that was naturally adopted by students. Ben didn't force the iPad into a lesson plan, but chose apps instead that really lent themselves to including the students in the lesson. Through data or video analysis Ben discovered the iPad to be an excellent tool. The way students learned about their own performances was redefined, especially when they were able to watch and analyze their own movements over and over again.

¹ CPD course from Neil Atkin http://www.independentcoacheducation.co.uk/seminar_programme/using_the_ipad_in_pe_and_sport-ice2338

² CPD course with The PE Geek <http://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/the-pe-geek-zurich-workshop-tickets-13508764077?aff=rss>

“Ultimately it comes down to very clear, consistent cause and consequence, the same with any misbehavior.”

BEN'S FAVORITE APPS



Live Video Delay
Perform a shot and watch it back on delay



Aurasma
Bring posters alive



Coach's Eye
Split screen analysis for performance comparison, and more



Dartfish EasyTag
records your key performance indicators and analyze the data

Assessment Using Technology in Mathematics

WITH VANISHA GORASIA

Vanisha is a mathematics teacher at LAS whose focus this past year was assessment strategies. She spent a lot of time researching suitable tools, assessing content, and examining the mode of implementation. Vanisha's teaching experience has been built in schools without a one-to-one computer program and without suitable access to the internet, so her knowledge of Google Apps For Education (GAPE) was limited. Vanisha is a product of a PD model that encourages teachers to engage with GAPE, embed Google's tools into practise, and gain recognition via Google for Education Exams and Certifications. Vanisha is now a regular and comfortable user of Google administrative functions and tools in class.

What did you find out?

At the AppsEvents conference in Rome I was inspired to find ways to give students instant feedback. I listened to the different ways teachers were using online assessments for students and I thought I would explore myself. I played with many different online programs, including Quizlet, Socrative, Flubaroo, and Google Forms, but unfortunately I found them all not yet quite good enough. As websites and

programs evolve it's hard to say if these sites will ever be good enough, but right now one of the biggest hurdles was how to include mathematical formulae. I played with add-ons like g(math), and other LaTeX editors, but I found they just weren't quite efficient enough.

What were the good bits?

I never lost track of the fact that I was trying to give students instant feedback. One of the nice things about LAS is the small class size, so I found it easier to have students work through a problem sat by my side and offer feedback that way. Keeping it simple was really the best option in this case. I am now aware of newer programs, like IXL, that can supplement www.myimaths.com. But in the end you can't beat human interaction for formative assessment. I leave no stone unturned when I test their understanding.



IXL is an adaptive piece of software that gives student ample practice at a given skill: www.ixl.com



MyiMaths has a good selection of self taught lessons: www.myimaths.com

I did begin using Google Sheets to record topic understanding. Mathematics is grouped by topics and learning objectives so I made a simple spreadsheet that records students' understanding of a series of learning objectives. I could then target students' weaknesses with sample questions and explanations, and the questions all came from material we already had, including paid subscriptions, past exam papers and online exam generators.

A video explanation of this grading sheet can be found at <http://goo.gl/R8GhPn>.

What were the negatives?

We have played with a few different quiz making tools, and none have quite reached the standard I was hoping for. One big challenge is the format of the questions and answers. For example, the answer 2.3 might be answered 2,3 by Russian and other students who use a comma instead of a period to show decimals, making it incorrect in the system, even though the mathematical thinking is correct. You find yourself wording the question in obscure and precise ways just to have students type in the correct format.

The reality for assessment is that we will need some sort of blended



approach. It's great to have the option of technology but solely relying on software loses the human element and a deeper assessment of what is going on when students are learning. So the negatives were much more than "it took too much time to create" or "all the symbols I needed couldn't be easily found." Online assessment didn't have the same impact as sitting with students, watching them work through a problem, and guiding them along the way.

What's next?

I will continue to build on my Google Educator status. I'm by no means an expert, but I am comfortable enough with Google to play with the tools and try to figure out ways of achieving a certain goal. I'll look at the blend of technology with traditional teaching, too. I like mini whiteboards

and the idea of exit tickets. Perhaps there is a technological tool that helps with these, I'll have to research it to find out. I can see myself using technology to help the students learn when we are not face-to-face, but when we are in class, I'll try to maintain as much one-to-one human interaction as possible.

"...you can't beat human interaction for formative assessment..."

Student	First Name	Last Name	Objective 1	Objective 2	Objective 3	Objective 4	Objective 5
1	Student	A					
2	Student	B					
3	Student	C					
4	Student	D					
5	Student	E					
6	Student	F					
7	Student	G					
8	Student	H					
9	Student	I					
10	Student	J					
11	Student	K					
12	Student						

GRADING SHEET TUTORIAL

A video explanation of this grading sheet can be found at <http://goo.gl/R8GhPn>.



The Importance of a Positive School Culture Surrounding Technology

WITH ALLEN BABCOCK

Allen Babcock is a Drama teacher at LAS and has a background producing shows of varying magnitudes and he has worked with school-age students and adults alike. One thing he has concentrated on at LAS is making the most of the sophisticated technology

embedded in a smartphone. Along the way he has discovered a lot about the adolescent use of technology in an international school, which is still developing comprehensive technology use policies.

What are the major challenges when it comes to using technology in class?

If a school has not developed an effective, positive culture surrounding the use of technology for teaching and learning, it can make things difficult in the classroom. Every school will need to tackle poor behavior with technology at some point and I think we at LAS are at that point. Together, we should come up with more unified strategies that aim to promote positive use of technology for educational advancement.

The technology we hold in our hand is a huge positive. In one \$600 iPhone we have all the technology that would have cost tens of thousands a decade ago. It's a high quality digital camera, it has fast internet, editing software, a sound recording device, and a media player. As a theatre producer, it has the perfect set of tools I need to teach young people how to perform, to give feedback and to create theatrical spaces. We just need to get to the point where the students respect the device as a tool for learning as much as they respect the device as a tool for socializing.

Another big issue is distraction. I was sitting in a class once and a student's phone was in front of me. The number of push notifications coming through was obscene. What's more, the messages were from our students too, so it's like the students are using this as a method of back-door, in class communication. I could barely concentrate with the number of notifications as an adult, so I can't imagine the impact it was having on an adolescent's developing mind.

Avoiding distraction is not easy

“We don't explicitly use the phone as a tool for enhancing our teaching and learning, so if we aim for educational use as a goal, it might go further in implementing a more positive message.”

to promote. We don't have a set of institutional rules when handling misuse of technology. In some classes the kids' phones are taken, and then there is separation anxiety. It's an incredibly personal device, we (adults too) feel so attached to our phones that when someone takes it away it is almost a violation of our personal space or rights. So we will have to tackle this. At the same time, I recently heard of Tech-NO Wednesday, where students are rewarded for interacting with peers without technology. I wonder if we would be able to extend this to a Tech-NO day for academics where all students were asked to leave their iPhones at home?

One way to improve might be to have a set of apps students must have on their device, turn the device into something that is acknowledge to be primarily for education - with permission to use it for other things. Currently I use my phone approximately 60:40 (personal:work), but I think our students are more like 90:10. It would be great to change this ratio. Perhaps we could also have students disable push notifications too.

This takes time to deal with, and all students are different. Those that were academically minded were easier

to mould than others. I had particular success in theatre rehearsal. Once the students were invested and familiar with the expectations, the phones did not reappear. This took consistency on my part, but it's conceivable that we could do this across a whole school.

What sort of strategies could we implement across our school?

We don't explicitly use the phone as a tool for enhancing our teaching and learning, so if we aim for educational use as a goal, it might go further in implementing a more positive message. Are there times when prohibition is required? Sure, this happens in some classes where the phones go in the box, but in drama they are always used, so it's hard to put them away. So blanket prohibition is not the best solution. We need to value the “we are all producers” mentality. Twenty years ago this was cost prohibitive, so we should embrace this opportunity.

A clear consistent message is important, and we could deliver this message through different avenues, such as our family time (student guidance). As I've said, we don't want to be a zero tolerant society, even if we teachers grew up in a society without social media and smartphones. Another

option would be to build the teaching of good technology use into our Integrated Core curriculum, and have teachers refer to it in important places in their own curriculum.

Let's start with the question “when and why do we need our iPhone?” This will allow teachers to own their classroom and adopt the strategy that fits them. If there are no phones required, then the students don't take out their phones. Whatever a teacher decides to do they must have consistency - even better if we can find consistency across the school. Teachers will find great strength in knowing they are doing the same thing as their colleagues, and the students will find it harder to resist understanding that teachers are acting in the best interests of the students, in line with a school policy.

I'm not sure what sort of discipline policy we might implement across the school, but it should be tiered and it should be positive. Ultimately the students need a set of clear and consistent rules that can be applied by faculty - this can act as a supportive backbone that gives faculty a concrete tool to follow up with beyond the positive requests and reflections.

Google Apps for Education Conference

WITH JASON MURPHY

In October 2014, Brittany, Jason, Kelly, Rebecca, Ronan, and Vanisha visited the Instituto Massimo in Rome for a two and a half day Google for Educators conference coordinated by AppsEvents.

While some of us were looking at Google tools for the first time, others were looking to bring back tools and strategies for LAS. In general, all of us were looking for ways to help LAS host their own Google Apps for Education conference. There was much to be learned, and although we had a wide range of experiences, each of us took something new from the conference. Some of our goals:

“I wanted to learn more about the platform used here at LAS. I quickly realized that I needed to learn more about Google in order to be able to collaborate with my students and colleagues better.”

“I was drawn by the financial support provided by LAS; they were willing to support me in my role as a technology coach.”

“My goal was to become a Google Trainer, so in addition to the new tools, I was watching the experienced presenters to learn how they presented their information.”

“This was a good starting point to learn more about and a good motivator to explore the apps further.”

“I would recommend that anyone who has an interest in using the Google Apps for Education suite take some or all of the tests to get the most out of what is on offer.”



The process for applying for the conference was easy, too. LAS Educational Research (LASER) funded the conference, and the School Operations Committee approved the absence of six faculty members for two days (the other half day was a Saturday). The first conference day was in fact a “pre-conference.” The pre-conference goal was to give those new to Google certification all the information and techniques required to pass this set of exams. Before the end of the conference, those without certification already had their first exam completed.



To become a Google Educator, one must pass four compulsory exams¹ (Mail, Calendars, Docs and Drive, and Sites) and one elective exam (Chrome, Chromebooks, Google Play, or Android Tablets) and to date we have six certified Google Educators - Brittany, Jason, Kelly, Paul, Rebecca, Ronan and Vanisha. Additionally we have Amanda, Caroline, Donna and Letycja who are working towards the certification, with many more interested.

Once you have completed Google Educator certification you have the option of applying to become a Google Trainer or a Google Certified Teacher, and to date Jason is certified as a Google Trainer and Kelly and Ronan are planning to extend their Google status.

I particularly enjoyed the energy of the group. October in LAS is not an easy time to find enthusiasm for new things, but the group came together and were creative about new approaches for LAS. We have so many new ideas and it really helped being immersed in a different environment with like minded professionals.

The learning that took place was evident. After the conference, LASER hosted a ‘speed-geeking’ professional learning session, where each of us who had attended the Google Apps for Education conference presented one tool of our choosing. The fast paced presentations gave everyone a small taste of a lot of information with options to engage further with a tool they found particularly interesting. The

morning was well attended and enjoyed by all.

Faculty who attended the speed-geeking event were given a small taste of the experiences of the Rome group, and many indicated their interest in attending the next round of conferences. LASER is committed to supporting faculty who wish to work toward Google Educator certifications and the application process for the next Google Apps for Education conference will start in September of the new academic year. Furthermore, LAS will host a Google event, coordinated by AppsEvents, on March 5, 2016.

¹Google is continuously updating their offerings and things will inevitably change. Visit <https://www.google.com/edu/training/get-trained/> to see the latest requirements.



Enhancing Art Classes with Technology

WITH KEEGAN LUTTRELL

Keegan Luttrell is an art teacher at Leysin American School. She tries to draw on many of her own experiences and connections in her teaching. It is through her graphic design connections that she was able to introduce LAS students to the realities of graphic design. Keegan has recently been accepted into an art residency in Berlin, where she hopes to draw connections between Leysin's history of treating tuberculosis in the mountains and the discovery of the bacteria which causes the disease. Keegan brings her interest of digital media to life for LAS students in class, in our Library Lecture series "What inspires artists to create?" and at

an exhibition in Geneva she held for a similar purpose.

How has technology been used to enhance your digital imaging class?

I think there are two angles to my technology use, but primarily I have been using technology to support students in their learning through a connected series of videos. I was creating a class from the ground up and I really wanted a way for the students to be able to revisit our lessons so that they could practice on their own time. digital imaging concentrates heavily on computer design software, so a screencasting tool was the obvious

choice. I decided I would create my own content, rather than create a mashup of the best bits that already exist.

At the same time, I really like how I am able to connect my students to the real world. I set up a series of interviews with graphic designers in the US and the students came up with a set of interview questions which really allowed them to explore what being a graphic designer was all about. It went really, really well - I think the students were surprised where graphic design can take you, whether it be freelancing, working for a major publishing company, or even a much smaller outfit.

It was nice to see the students realize that creating a portfolio was something the professionals were continuously developing.

You mentioned using a screencasting tool. Which one did you use?

I have had some problems with the sound when using Quicktime on Mac, and it is not the most obvious tool to use. So I googled alternatives and chose Voila. It cost \$20; I'm not sure on the pricing for school licenses. Perhaps a screencasting tool is something we can look into for our managed software center.



What were the best parts of what you have achieved?

I have now created a series of lessons that the students can return to over and over, and next year I can add to these videos by offering differentiated content for the students that need that extra support or push. As with most software tools, if we are not using them constantly they are so easy to forget. But now the students can revisit January's learning later in semester two. It has been great for our ESL students, too, and if I am 'stuck' presenting things at the front of the class, it really affects the flow if I find myself repeating several steps. Using videos has really released

me to support or stretch certain students.

It was also nice to use the screencasting to assess student learning. I asked each small group of students to create a tutorial video on a tool or technique that we had not used in class. The results were great, and not only do the students get to practice their presentation skills, we now have extra tutorials in our class.

How do you see the growth of technology usage in Art at LAS?

I have so many ideas, and it's really hard to choose which one not to work on! I have found some of my most successful lessons to be the ones where we do not use technology, and students still want to use their hands, so for me it's really important to not lose touch with this. That said, in a digital imaging class we will need to balance this with the use of the design software, namely the Adobe software.

One way to do this, I suppose, would be a blended learning approach, or even flipping my classroom. I have a lot of digital content now, so it might be possible to build an online course

"Deciding what not to work on has been difficult"

that supports the practical and tangible nature of art. I spent a lot of time creating this content specific to our assignments and our environment, so it makes a lot of sense to continue using the videos. Balancing it is going to be a

real challenge, but I'm looking forward to building it into our curricular progression, and really offering an individualized learning path for each student.

What have been the major challenges within your teaching?

Deciding what not to work on has been difficult. I have played with many ideas; for example, the 3D printer, and tying this to product design. When I got around to it, I realized it was just another hardware and software combination for us all to learn. So I decided the students and I were not ready for another major project. It's hard, but sometimes you need to say "no, that's too much." Next on the list is a science and art project involving magnified leaves, Dragon's Den style competitions, and developing a cultural trip that will expose students to international professional artists, their studios, and the city of Berlin.

I haven't really had any major problems with technology in my classes, but developing a culture of self-help in class has been a challenge. It's important for me to develop

the students' problem solving skills, and so I implemented something we used at Apple:

if we didn't know the answer to something we had a philosophy of "I don't know, let's find out!," so I point the students to the right tools: help, search and peers.



Flipping the Classroom in an English Class

WITH DONNA EVERETT

I began with a plan to connect my classroom in Switzerland to a classroom in the US. I have a friend who teaches the same level of English as I do, and we thought since our classes study similar works, it would be interesting to have the students connect and have us team teach a unit. However, our schedules never coincided this year. I hope to begin our year with a team-taught unit that would allow us to share student writing through Google Docs and student discussion via Skype.

I decided that since the team taught class would not work, I would attempt to use the 'flipped classroom' methodology. I'd only ever worked casually with the flipped classroom,

that is to say, I had never taught a complete unit of work using the flipped ethos. When I was given chance in the context of the technology PD program, I decided I would flip our Siddhartha unit, which I felt lent itself to the methodology.

What does flipping the classroom mean to you?

In a flipped classroom, the information that is normally imparted during a class is recorded, and is accessed by the students, on their own time, usually in the evening. I like the idea because the students are in control, it is student-centered, and the students have access to the videos 24/7

and can view the videos as frequently as they need in order to fully grasp the concepts.

I modeled it in a way where I gave students a reading assignment and the students were asked to write any questions or annotations in a private (between teacher and individual student) Google Doc. I would then read the questions and comments and use these to plan the next day's lesson. It really allowed me to maximize the class time for discussion, exploration and interpretation. It also allowed the students to communicate what they did not understand in a very low risk environment.

Did you encounter any problems with this method of teaching?

The lessons and planning were very student driven. When the questions became more discussion oriented, we had to slow the class down and spend a lot of time in the class on elements of Buddhism, Siddhartha's journey, or the hero cycle. Yes, it required me to be flexible, adapt and plan accordingly in the short-term, but that's what the students needed - and every class was different.

The only problem was recording the material. I didn't have easy access to the equipment required to record a lesson for students to watch nor did I have time to actually create and edit the films. I was able to use the material that another English teacher had produced. To start with, that worked fine. As I move forward with my experimentation, I'd really like to create my own material. I would also like to include other teachers in the video as sometimes it's nice for the students to hear from someone else other than myself.

What tools did you use to flip your classroom?

I kept it really simple. I didn't use any special platform - I simply asked every student to create a folder and share it with me. I collected all the folders into one class folder and repeated this for every class. It's really easy to set up and the time investment in the first weeks makes it much easier through the year. Every time a student

made a piece of work they saved it in the folder and I could access it. I also shared class documents in a publicly accessible folder where I shared all the links and docs the students would need for any given assignment.

How did the students respond to the flipped classroom?

It was new, something that the students have never come across, so they had to be coached into good habits. I think if this were repeated, then students would warm up to it. My grade 10 students were not overly motivated; the success lies in the student's ownership of the process. Those with intrinsic motivation did well and enjoyed it. I think many students attached value to the process.

The flipped classroom has potential. If there were more teachers who saw benefit in flipping their classroom, and utilized it, then the students would buy into it. School culture is important, we could do it as a group and have students experience the idea of a flipped classroom together. The consistency across the school would show solidarity and demonstrate to the students that we as teachers see value in this process.

I think it would be easily replicated in other lessons too. I know it's already being done in small pieces, but some sort of coordinated plan might go a long way in teaching our students about controlling their own learning and using class time to explore a concept further.

What did you have in your videos?

The videos only last 5 -10 minutes, but it is uninterrupted teaching, so the lesson is more efficient. It was not like I was presenting 50 minutes worth of material and asking students to do huge amounts in their own time, it was a really focused lesson. That's the trick: do not try to cram too many concepts into your video lesson, focus in on one small area and be as clear as possible. It's really nice to use materials available to us, for example, we can digitally attach a lesson overview, a vocabulary list, or even alternative web links. The nice thing is that once the video and materials are made, they could be placed in a video library that might be used as curriculum resources for new teachers.

Summary

Flipping the classroom has become a highly regarded teaching methodology. But without proper investigation it could be that implementing a flipped classroom does more harm than good as students are left to learn too much independently and outside of school. What Donna has done here is taken the first step toward determining how effective it can be for her classes and LAS. If in coming years she is able to collaborate with others, she could further her own work and roll it out to a larger group of students with profound effects for promoting individually tailored and independent learning.

“If there were more teachers that saw benefit in flipping their classroom, and utilized it, then the students could buy into it.”



Teaching with Digital Content

WITH RONAN LYNCH

Ronan Lynch is a geography and history teacher who is experimenting with teaching through digital content. He presented at the Irish Teaching Conference, Féilte, in 2014 and is hoping to share LAS's progress in technology integration at Feilte in 2015. Ronan is a technology enthusiast and he enjoys experimenting with new techniques. His energy will drive LAS in a new direction in social studies. Ronan is looking to become a Google Trainer in the coming year. He will also seek to further develop connections with other schools that work in the same way or who are working with a totally flipped classroom model of teaching and learning.

What have you been doing?

I have been using technology to allow students to work at their own pace. You could say I have been blending the learning, that is, I have used aspects of technology within my usual classroom practice. For example, I might give students a little pre-lesson information that they will read online before they come to class, this might include a shorter activity.

Is that what some would refer to as flipping?

Yes, it's a little like flipping, but there is great debate about what flipping actually is or what it amounts to. I didn't give a full 'digital lecture'

for homework, but I did give a few concepts that we would explore further in class.

How did you keep the students motivated?

Honestly, it was difficult. That's the benefit of a blended approach, in a fully online learning environment (not blended) there is little accountability or mentorship, and many students need that. So the key to motivation was first determining the students' attitude and working around that, or even working to change them into more independent learners.

In my case I found it harder with ESL learners who, perhaps, were not as motivated due to language barriers. It was definitely easier with mainstream students as they could actually follow more detailed content and we moved towards a more traditionally 'flipped' level of working. I found that the more able students were, the more input they could handle, which is perhaps quite

obvious. With the weaker students one lesson might become five, and it often wasn't flipped at all, but that was ok; with a blended model we had a lot of flexibility. This is something we could explore further.

What were your challenges?

The biggest challenge was balancing my desire to create something for my students and using materials already available. It is an incredibly time consuming process to create an online learning environment, so it definitely helped to use materials created by others. This comes with a drawback though, it's nice to create something specifically for your students and they can really respond to that.

I also found it hard to decide which platform to use. I've utilized Flipboard and Blendspace, but there are many, many others, such as Edmodo, Socrative, Studyclix, TES Classroom, and Gapminder. I used Google Forms once too, but again it took too much time and I know there are things like Quizlet that are already made. It just doesn't quite fit my students. It would be nice to find a way to bring it all together.

What were the nice bits?

Students like the project based learning, especially when they look up websites from the UN, for example. It's easy for us to do topics within major themes: rivers, glaciers, natural disaster, etc. So we usually take an aspect of the topic and create a presentation, and the students usually choose to create a traditional

presentation or use Google Slides or Prezzie. A blended approach allows students to progress at their own pace. You can make a framework of basic knowledge and vocabulary and then ask students to research further in areas of their interest. When students work at their own pace you need a mechanism to give and track feedback; students can submit work and I can give them feedback digitally. I found this really easy to do on Google Slides.

What platforms did you experiment with?

I started simple. I made a folder for each student in Google Drive, this worked well. I contributed to Flipboard, a kind of digital magazine, and this works well with the older students as I share current events and



it's really useful for the IB Diploma Program. It used to be possible to share on Facebook, but there are now problems with Facebook rule changes. I also tried Twitter, but students really didn't like creating an account on Twitter. Mostly, I used Blendspace. Blendspace allows you to create lessons

for students. I would attach a series of video and worksheets and the students followed through and referred back to content when they needed to.

We have a real problem with fragmentation at LAS, and I understand this is contributing to it, but until we decide on a common platform I might as well keep experimenting.

What's next?

For LAS I think I'd like to tie all this digital content into a central geography webpage, which will bring more content to teachers' fingertips, especially in the IB Diploma Program. I'll keep exploring with these digital platforms, too. I'd like to be involved with the training of new faculty and students, so I will aim to become a Google Certified Trainer and help develop the use of technology in LAS.

Summary

Ronan has touched on an area that others are working in, too. We hear in Ronan's words how LAS currently uses many different learning management systems (LMS), highlighting the need to have system that can support the delivery of content in an organized fashion, allowing for blended learning and online delivery of content. Amanda Bjorling is looking at Odysseyware and other popular platforms include Schoology, Moodle, and Blackboard. As we develop our platforms to support content and communication, this is certainly a functionality we should keep in mind.

Leveraging the Library's Position to Develop Online Learning Strategies

WITH AMANDA BJORLING

Amanda is a librarian at LAS with expertise in information literacy. She teaches in the Integrated Core, our 7th class, and supports students with the researching and writing process. Amanda is currently looking at the possibility of beginning a PhD in online learning and has written a paper on blended learning. Amanda's research ties together some of our other projects in the areas of assessment and computer assisted learning. With Amanda's expertise, LAS will investigate how to build an online presence with a view to diversifying and differentiating learning for our students.

Can you summarize what you have been working on?

I am enrolled in a course at the University of Wisconsin Stout called Instructional Strategies and Assessment Methods, which will extend my Masters

and offer a certificate. This course is the second of four. I have spent a lot of time looking at instructional design, particularly in an online environment, and this course is allowing me to explore some big issues in that area. Currently we are looking at information literacy and culturally responsive practices, to name just two.

“The future will involve blended learning - but we have to get the blend right.”

Where will this take you?

I really want to look at our online offerings at LAS. At a small school it is really hard to provide students with diverse opportunities, but with an online option we might be able to

meet those needs. We have self-taught courses in IB and credit recovery online, so perhaps I can help develop something more for LAS that will enhance our programs.

What sort of things would you like to see at LAS?

I have worked with a number of different online learning platforms, for example Odysseyware, Moodle, and Blackboard. The one that stands out for me is Odysseyware. It has a lot of capability and matches the need of the student with the need of the teacher. We could begin developing our own courses and have

teachers support students as they learn online, at their own pace. What I have found is that having the right balance of 'blended' learning is really important. Having students learning entirely online is not always stimulating or rigorous

and learning entirely face to face has its challenges, too. So it's about balancing the diversity of learning and interactive support and monitored instruction.

There has been an explosion of online learning recently, where do you think it is going?

The future will involve blended learning - but we have to get the blend right. A quote I like from one of my readings¹ is “the first generation to be bathed in bits,” meaning that with the proliferation of online learning comes

information overload. As librarians, our job is all about sharing information, so our job is evolving to find strategies for handling all of this information.

What is next for you?

I really want to pursue the idea of a blended learning approach and having students commit to online learning, perhaps by bringing in specialist teachers to offer the physical support and accountability. There is lots to think about and I think it would make a nice research project.

Summary

LAS utilizes, like many schools, online learning for credit recovery. This is an appropriate use of online learning that we will continue to improve. Amanda aims to develop an online learning program that goes beyond credit recovery. It's the future and I am excited to support this blended learning project.

¹ Tapscott, D. (2009) *Grown up digital: How the net generation is changing your world*. New York: McGraw-Hill.



Afterword

Reading these interviews about ongoing research in classes at LAS is exhilarating. Like all good teachers, these individuals are all learners themselves, committed to continually improving their ability to be effective. You feel it in every interview: nobody is satisfied with the status quo. Identifying shortcomings, either personal or organizational, is not something one shirks from, but rather a jumping off point for improvement.

Starting with the 2015-2016 school year, LAS is introducing, through LASER, a Resident Scholar program. Faculty members submit applications to the LASER steering committee in the spring. Accepted projects are supported through the following academic year, including help with sharing what they learn through presentations and papers.

Several of the faculty members in these interviews have been selected to be Resident Scholars next year:

Amanda Bjorling, who will extend the work with online learning she describes here to a pilot project with LAS students;

Vanisha Gorasia, who will draft an assessment policy for the school, beginning with the middle school curriculum;

Keegan Luttrell, who will return from her residency in Berlin to create a student-led art project in Leysin honoring the village's role in the treatment of tuberculosis; and

Jason Murphy, who will draft a technology usage policy that will address many of the issues brought up in these interviews.

A special shout out to everyone involved in this publication at the end of LASER's first year. You have done great work.

Paul Magnuson
LASER Director



Leysin American School
at a glance

overview

Since 1960, LAS students have come from around the world to study and excel on our campus. The school's focus on academic achievement and intercultural understanding, within a caring family-like community, provides a range of opportunities for students to succeed as "innovative, compassionate and responsible citizens of the world" in the twenty-first century.

contact LAS

Want to find out more about LAS or have a question?
Get in touch with our admissions office:
+41-24-493-4888
admissions@las.ch
www.las.ch/admissions/information

academics

Grades 7-12 (12-18 years old)
Postgraduate year - year 13
International Baccalaureate (IB)
US High School Diploma
English as a Second Language (ESL)
English Bridge Program (April-August)
Faculty-to-student ratio - 1:7
Average class size - 12
Full-time faculty - 72; 95% live on campus
70% with higher degrees
SAT/ACT/IELTS preparation and testing

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