Embrace the Mobile
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How do you feel about students’ personal technology devices in the classroom? Can they enhance student learning, or are they merely distractions leading to classroom management issues?

Both ideas were expressed by teachers who participated in a Pew Research Center survey. The teachers agreed or strongly agreed that today’s digital technologies (cell phones, social media, search engines, and the Internet) connect students to resources about topics of interest to them (90%) and help immerse students in topics they study (76%), while 64% stated that the technologies do more to distract students than to engage them academically.¹ Utilizing digital technologies is also an easy way to incorporate visual and aural learning techniques into your classroom.

My experience with both BSU students and elementary level children in a variety of settings has taught me a powerful lesson about eliminating distractions from the classroom. Lesson plans that incorporate engaging, active learning techniques not only eliminate most distractions (including the use of mobile devices), but also increase the depth of learning that occurs. Active learning allows little or no time for students to play games or text during class. More importantly, students see their devices as learning tools, not just entertainment.

I hope you might see using digital technologies in the classroom as an opportunity for you to grow as a professional. My foray into using iPads with BSU preservice teachers and other students was challenging, but involving, and involved a good deal of trial and error. Collaborating with librarians, teachers and technology experts is beneficial and rewarding, and will leave you with new skills and a new view on your teaching philosophy.
