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TECH 7/22/2014 @ 2:19PM | 1,781 views

## How Are Progressive Teachers Using Technology?

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*Answer* by [Peter Kruger](#), *HS English Teacher*, on [Quora](#),

I am a progressive teacher who uses a variety of strategies in my classroom to engage students in learning and to help them take ownership in their learning environment. Here are some of my methods:

Google Apps for Education is one of my best tools. I use a script called Doctopus to help manage the paperwork and control editing privileges for students, and an extension called Goobric to hand rubrics back to them. Flubaroo is another script that allows me to easily grade quizzes that I create through the use of Google Forms.

I use Blogger to post assignments each day and keep parents in the loop when they want it.

I have a managed YouTube channel where I post videos for a flipped classroom model so they can go back and take notes or review the lecture whenever they need to. I also will e-mail them with TED talks and other videos of relevance, and I have a “helpful links” document that I share with my students that they can submit videos, websites, or other information to when they run across things. I have recently discovered a Chrome extension at [videonot.es](http://videonot.es) that allows students to add a small notes sidebar to YouTube videos that will even time stamp where in the videos they are when they add the notes. This is an excellent resource for a flipped classroom.

Along with videos, my students often use iPads to create short videos and record discussions. Most recently, my students used iMovie to modernize and adapt *Hamlet* into short, 20 minute films and create a movie trailer for their work. I have used iPads and iMovie in the past for my students to create everything from TED talks for their classmates to using them as small mini-Smartboards.

I use Moodle, Google Docs, and Blogger to create web forums and discussion groups for the students. This is particularly useful when class time is at a premium and they can do it outside of class.

Sometimes, rather than have them do boring note-taking, I'll give the students a list of search terms and have them come up with a list of notes of things they think their classmates should know about various topics through

a giant group collaborative search effort. They can use Google Docs to quickly post their answers to each other, or sometimes Padlet to create a virtual wall to post things to each other.

I am hoping to put together a Google Hangout panel discussion with several biotechnology experts from around the country for a unit on dystopias and biotechnology. Skype is equally useful, but doesn't play well with conference calls. Google Chat and Gmail also allows my students to get after-hours help if they can't directly come in after school. Danger: students expect you to check your email on the weekends after a while.

Google Forms allows me to create surveys to rapidly gather student feedback and reduce that data so they can see their results. When we read *Romeo and Juliet* last year, I had my students take an introductory attitudes survey about some of the issues that come up in the play, teen romance, etc. I had them take a second survey with slightly reworded and mixed up questions at the end, reduced the data, and showed them how many of them shifted attitudes on things as a result of reading the play. They were actually kind of fascinated by it.

Google Sheets is an easy way for students to track their progress towards learning objectives and course progress (provided you have things planned out in advance enough for it to be effective). Students know what assignments are coming up and keep track of their current proficiency by changing colors in squares. I approve their sheets when they e-mail me that they have made changes or have some sort of evidence that they have reached proficiency on their learning objectives. They know they need to get all their squares green to pass the unit. Some of it is worksheets and quizzes, some defined projects, some of it is their own invention. If they want out of worksheets and busywork, they have to propose alternatives that I approve to meet the learning targets.

I print out QR codes each day with the daily objective for students so they can use their phones to copy them down if they can't easily see the objective board. Relatively simple to do.

Our librarian helps train the students to use databases such as EBSCO and JSTOR to help find scholarly articles, and I make them go through a "You Can't Google This" scavenger hunt to learn how to bring back old-school skills as well.

I've had students create fan-fic blogs for book projects in the past, write and direct webisodes for scenes from plays or important book moments, or make their own classroom wikis about novels.

I let students hold a class chat discussion using a text-messaging board that put everything up on the main screen so they could discuss without talking to their neighbors directly.

Socrative is an excellent tool that allows students to do lots of small in-class discussion prompts, short quizzes, and other quick formative checks.

A colleague just showed me how to use the free program Skitch (from Evernote) to allow the students to annotate excerpts from graphic novels and then post them to a class blog for review by their classmates. Another colleague demonstrated a paid program known as e-Backpack that allows her to assign electronic work and specify a time limit to turn it in. It allows her to see when students work on it, when they complete it and turn it in, and grade it. There is even student information system integration to upload the assignment data to the preferred district student management gradebook.

Sometimes, if they need a little grammar work, I'll take them to the lab and make them spend a day on [NoRedInk.com](http://NoRedInk.com)

In all, there are a tremendous amount of free and inexpensive options

*[This question](#) originally appeared on [Quora](#): [How are progressive teachers using technology?](#) [More questions](#):*

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