The Pros And Cons Of Using Tablets In The Classroom

With the advancement of touch tablets such as the iPad or Microsoft Surface and a plethora of educational apps, one-to-one digital learning in schools is on the rise. Changing the education landscape, these powerful portable devices are being used in a multitude of ways to enrich the learning process and breakdown barriers.

Educational establishments are increasingly reporting tangible benefits of using tablets to engage students on a wide range of subjects. However, there are some genuine concerns over their use in education. So, let’s weigh up the case for and against integrating digital devices into the classroom.

The benefits of tablets in schools:

Extending learning

iPads and other mobile devices are extending learning beyond the classroom walls by moving with the student from the classroom, to the library to the home. This provides the flexibility and opportunity to continue learning where and when the student chooses.

A vast library of resources

With thousands of apps, students and teachers have instant access to a wealth of information from experts in their fields. For example, Khan Academy has a variety of high quality lecturers on a range of curriculum subjects and the Encyclopedia Britannica app allows you to explore an array of knowledge in an easy to use digital format.

Reducing printed material and books

iPads are being used to reduce the need for heavy textbooks and the production of reams of printed material. Digital content can be updated continuously and has the ability to include hyperlinks and videos. It can also potentially offer financial savings on textbooks and materials.

Improving STEM skills

The use of apps and gaming techniques in the classroom can aid understanding of complex concepts and the development of science, technology, engineering and maths skills (STEM). According to the Department for Education, two of the largest studies in the UK looking at ICT’s impact on attainment have found there are statistically significant positive relationships between the use of ICT and achievement in these core areas.

Engaging the hard to reach

Technology is seen as increasing students’ confidence and motivation by making school work more enjoyable. A student’s attitude and involvement in learning changes as it is considered as fun and not regular education.

Preparing students for the workplace

The ability to confidently use technology in the 21st century is a necessary skill in most workplaces. Using digital tools on a daily basis in schools will further develop the learners’ abilities to use the technology they are likely to encounter in their future careers.

The cons of using tablets in schools:

Breaking expensive technology

Subjected to the daily rigours of school, tablets are more vulnerable to breaking due to their lightweight design. In fact, the most common damage caused to a tablet is a cracked screen. However, this risk can
be minimised by simply investing in a robust case and providing students with guidelines on how to look after their device.

Online safety and security

Understandably one of the biggest concerns is regarding online safety and students accessing unsuitable material. This is why many search engines now provide filtering facilities to remove unsuitable sites for search results. The majority of tablets allow parents to activate controls for security and privacy too. Schools embarking on digital learning should develop an e-safety policy to make students aware of the potential risks and encourage responsible online behaviour.

An unnecessary distraction

Some teachers and parents are of the opinion that tablets will simply be a distraction in the classroom. However, many schools have found that introducing tablets have actually helped increase student engagement because of the multi-media experience they offer.

Battery limitations

The battery life of a tablet is a concern as it needs to last the school day. However, if you charge your battery each night most will last throughout the day. For example, some mobile devices like the Google Nexus 7 benefit from a 10 hour battery life.

For more details on introducing mobile devices into your school, download your free Essential Guide to Digital Learning, or call the WestWon Education team on Tel: 01494 611 456.