Project One

Group Three: Elizabeth Greer, John Lucente,

Julia Elizabeth Lukes, Demario Malone, Reginald Matthews

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The current generation spends more time looking at their phones and computer screens than reading books, actively socializing with friends, or engaging in traditional learning activities. Secondary education teachers are sure to feel the brunt of this trend, losing their students’ interests more quickly than before, and struggling to engage their classes for extended periods of time. Teachers, however, don’t have to struggle; instead, they can exploit their students’ focus on media and technology to integrate new forms of instruction, assessment, and engagement into the classroom that their predecessors had never thought of.

The following study outlines a variety of existing synchronous and asynchronous tools that teachers can use to engage their students in new ways. Tools such as Twitter and Instagram, for instance, can be used for a variety of in-class and planning activities. Because of the platforms’ multifunctional interfaces, they are useful in many ways, making them perfect for bridging the gap between traditional form of instruction and contemporary technological advances. Alternatively, Google Hangout and Remind offer teachers ways to communicate with their classes that are more familiar to current generations. Finally, applications such as Socrative present new forms of assessment, and similar to the other applications, this application also innovates the way contemporary students access their learning. It is time for the secondary classroom to integrate new forms of instruction, communication, and assessment, bridging the gap between traditional teaching methods and contemporary technological advances to reach students in ways more familiar to their everyday lives.
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Socrative

Teachers in the secondary classroom are evolving past using the more traditional forms of assessment. Rather, teachers in those classrooms use technology to better inform, interact, engage, and assess their tech-savvy students. These tools are wide-ranging and have many uses, but one of the easiest to integrate is a tool to help assess the comprehension level of students in the classroom. Socrative is such a tool that aims to assist classroom teachers in their content delivery through the use of informal, online assessment.

Socrative allows teachers to create and implement a wide range of assessments for their classrooms—no matter the subject. Teachers can create different forms of assessments and save them to their dashboard. These assessments can include formative assessments like quizzes, group quiz competitive games, short-answer questions, and exit tickets. Teachers can also give summative assessments like chapter tests. Additionally, they can select different comprehension leveled questions including multiple choice, short answer, and true/false questions. Finally, with this tool, instructors can create their own formative assessments, choose from over 3800 shared assessments, and align assessments to state and national standards. Every quiz selected—or created—can then be saved to a dashboard for later use.

For the purposes of this project, two types of quizzes were created for group members to complete: a brief quiz and a Space Race. The quiz consisted of multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions to show the versatility of quiz construction. The Space Race consisted of a different, multiple-format set of questions. Students received immediate feedback from Socrative when they answered a question, so they found out immediately if they got the question right or wrong. Students could see which group had the most correct answers on the Space Race Leaderboard. It was fun and funny to see how many we got correct! Through the Space Race, teachers can encourage friendly competition among peers during group study sessions. The
teacher can group students or allow Socrative to group them, and as students answer their Space Race quiz correctly, their groups’ rocket moves to the finish line. Following the completion of each quiz or Space Race, teachers can download quiz reports for each quiz to be used for grading and progress monitoring.

Socrative is easy to use and versatile. Teachers can use Socrative during whole group discussion or small group exercises to assess student knowledge as well as assess teaching strategies. Socrative does not require a unique application to operate—just log in at the Socrative website. It is usable on any device that has a web browser which means students can use personal phones, an iPad, laptops, or e-readers to access the Socrative classroom via the internet. Socrative does have an app that can be downloaded, but it is not necessary to successfully participate in classroom assessments. Additionally, Socrative is not just for quizzes. Teachers can conduct many forms of assessment. It offers multiple question types: multiple choice, true/false, and short answer, so it can work for any type of test. It also allows the teacher to determine quiz time, set length students may take on each question, allow students can scroll back and forth among test questions or only allow students to move forward in an assessment and receive immediate feedback for their answer choices. Teachers can create multiple quizzes and keep them on a teacher dashboard to use at any time, so there is no need to recreate quizzes every year.

The dashboard offers folders to organize assessments as needed. In addition, Socrative offers access to over 3800 shared quizzes, so teachers can download and learn from other Socrative teachers. Socrative can provide a great bell-ringer activity to pre-assess knowledge. It can be used for study games with the class before a test or for final unit testing to allow students and teachers to see immediately what needs to be re-taught or reviewed. While Socrative is often used synchronously in active classrooms, it can be synchronous or asynchronous. Students can
access their Socrative classroom from anywhere by entering the classroom code at login. This can enable teachers to provide a quiz for classwork or homework, to provide study quizzes for homework before an exam, or even help remote students stay connected to their classroom studies while absent.

Like any other tool—whether traditional or innovative—Socrative does come with its own set of difficulties. It requires that every student in the classroom have an internet-connected device to use in the classroom and at home. Additionally, Socrative provides limited tutorial information and instead requires users to sort through a “Frequently Asked Questions” section to learn how to use the program. The existing IT648 instructional video was helpful as it thoroughly explained how deliver the quiz to students. Every other aspect of Socrative is intuitive and easy to use. A free account only allows one public class with a max of 50 students, so if teachers taught multiple courses, they might want to pay for a pro account if they want to use it for formal assessment. The free account only offers one public classroom. Anyone can log into your public quiz if they have the class name, which makes it not secure. Students must enter their own names, and everything is public. With the free account, you can only run one quiz at a time, so teachers must restart the assessment with each class period. Socrative does record quiz responses, so teachers can download a report for each class’s responses. With a pro account, you can track each student’s individual responses and progress over time. You can also run multiple quizzes with a pro account.

As previously stated, Socrative can easily be integrated into the secondary education classroom with just a few adjustments to the existing structure. It can be used for short quizzes, class polls, or chapter tests. Also, it can be used to answer questions in a classroom discussion; teachers can have students answer through Socrative for a think-pair-share activity. Instead of asking students to raise their hands, the teacher simply sends a question to the students to answer
Through Socrative. This might benefit students who do not like to speak out in class. Socrative can be used during whole group discussion or small group exercises so teachers can gauge student learning and adjust teaching methods. Teachers can also create different types of small groupings based on assessment results.

In short, Socrative is an exciting, versatile assessment tool that can be used in any classroom for many assessment activities. It connects students to online assessment classrooms and helps teachers track student and class learning progress. Teachers are not limited to one form of assessment. Through a user-friendly dashboard, teachers can create quizzes, classroom quiz games, exit tickets, formal assessments, or ask task-oriented questions to monitor the learning progress of all students.

**Google Hangouts**

Technology tools for assessment is a growing, but not new, field. However, teachers are beginning to use more and more online communication and collaboration tools in the classroom. Not only are these tools useful for teachers to use in their own personal collaboration with other teachers, these tools can easily be used for peer-to-peer interaction by students in the classroom. One of these tools is an application residing in the Google family: Google Hangouts. This tool is a rather straightforward tool which allows the user to quickly send bodies of text, photographs, and videos to other users with Gmail accounts. There are distinct advantages—and few disadvantages—to using these types of tools in the secondary setting.

Google Hangouts is a free application used to communicate by text or video with other users possessing a Google account. It is free and readily available on every major platform such as Android, Windows, various web browsers, and iOS. These sessions can be recorded and held offline by multiple people. Having the ability to communicate in groups is very beneficial in a
classroom setting. It allows for group projects and files to be shared with peers and instructors. Being a portion of GSuite for Education, Google’s group of apps tailor-made for the classroom, users are able to retrieve files to present to other users very quickly. Additionally, with Google Hangouts, you can make free calls within the continental United States. YouTube videos and links to Google Docs and can be shared out to the students for quick and easy access. These various methods of online communication allow for ease of collaboration and integration into the secondary classroom. In a typical, technology-rich K-12 classroom, teachers have some type of mobile device—either a tablet or laptop. Google Hangout is an effective way for teachers to communicate quickly without fully disrupting their class environment. While it works well for student group communication as well in a college setting, the app is turned off by default for all GFE (Google for Education) users ages 13 and under.

One of the few disadvantages encountered during the course of this project was difficulty reaching out to teammates who did not have a Google associated account. This is easily remedied by making the creation of a Gmail account mandatory for educators and students for the purposes of communication and collaboration. Beyond this small difficulty, the communication was relatively seamless. Because of this, it is recommended by this group that educators use this type of tool in the secondary classroom. However, though well-reviewed, Google announced that “Classic” Google Hangouts will be coming to an end in Fall 2019, and will be replaced with a new version called Hangouts Chat and Meet. It remains to be seen whether or not all of the above advantages will apply to the newest iteration of Google Hangouts.

Instagram

Social media as a teaching tool can be an educator’s best friend--and biggest pain if not mitigated. Instagram—or any other social media tool, like Twitter—is not inherently good or bad
in the secondary classroom. Much like any other tool, it depends entirely upon the intention—and follow through—of its use. Most students in secondary education are unquestionably plugged in to smart phones and laptop computers for significant portions of their days and spending hours on social media sites, including Instagram. These platforms open the door to uncontrolled use, cyberbullying, sexual content, and the list goes on. Banning phones and social media from the classroom is one method teachers use to control their class but this does nothing in the face of an ever-mounting wave of online communication and connection. Rather than banning their use, it may be better for teachers to weigh the pros and cons of utilizing technology and social media in the classroom in order to control their use and harness their power in a positive and constructive way.

Much like any internet-based communication tool there are opportunities for negative and dangerous use and interactions. Teenagers' and "their still-developing experiential systems are particularly susceptible to social and emotional factors (e.g., peer pressure, romantic attachment), and their capacity for behavioral self-regulation is incomplete" (Costello, McNiel, and Binder, 2016). Neuroscience has demonstrated that until the mid-20s, adolescent brains [are] in a continuous state of maturation, demonstrating changes in myelination, synaptic pruning, and development of the pre-frontal cortex" (Costello, McNiel, and Binder, 2016). Especially due to these reasons, students are at risk for engaging in addictive and risky online behavior that includes cyberbullying.

Instagram is a photo and video-sharing platform connected to Facebook. This application allows users to easily share tagged photos to either personal or business accounts. Its most important aspect is the ability for users to tag posts with keywords, making every post easily searchable for either personal use or for other users. This allows users to type in a “hashtag” in the search bar and the platform will generate groups of photos and videos that are both popular
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and recent. This type of system can be likened to a traditional library catalog in which users are self-cataloging content in an effort to have their content seen by like-minded peers. It is for this reason that Instagram can be a valuable tool for educators even in light of the aforementioned potential social media risk factors for young minds. Because it is such an easy tool to use--for people of all levels of technological efficiency--there is a very small skill barrier to use.

Additionally, and perhaps because of this, there are a large number of users on the Facebook-connected site. These users are from all walks of life and provide an extremely wide audience for collaboration and connection on any topic or project. Finally, it is widely accessible from different devices lowering the socioeconomic barrier for use. In all, this tool is an aesthetically pleasing platform with plenty of room for creative utilization.

There are several strategies for which Instagram can be used. These include brainstorming for inspiration, creating plans for instruction, and engaging students and families in an online platform. For the purposes of Project 1 in IT 648, I created three small asynchronous activities meant for my classmates to flex different aspects and strengths of the tool. Group members were first instructed to search for inspiration relevant to their subject or specialty in the search bar. They were given the examples of: #socialstudiesteacher, #historyteacher, and #biologyteacher. After this they were asked to explore these tags narrowing their search parameters to find a specific topic in their specialty to yield various topic ideas and tools. The second activity instructed group members to utilize that inspiration they found in the previous and search specifically for instructional tools. Different tools found included units and activities on the Civil War, frog dissection, comparison essays, and physical education units. The last activity for the members asked that they search for #classroominstagram, #classinstagram, and #mrgatesrocks. This activity was meant to show the group members how some teachers create a
classroom Instagram that is meant to showcase student work, activities, field trips, and generally keep parents and students apprised of deadlines and other communications.

The feedback for these activities was generally positive but did demonstrate some weaknesses and disadvantages in using Instagram as a classroom tool. Demario Malone is an English teacher and searched for #englishteachers which yielded 840k results! Some of these were quippy posts from non-English teachers discussing grammar but others led him to some possible posts from English teachers discussing literature and grammar instruction. Elizabeth Lukes found that a majority of the posts tagged #teacher were from elementary instructors. Though helpful to an extent, a majority of these posts do not apply to the secondary classroom. Without further tweaking, these short activities can be integrated in the classroom in three general ways. It can be used for instruction design, can be used to create a classroom Instagram account, and can be used to inspire your classroom design, approach to a topic, or really any aspect of teaching secondary students. This tool can certainly be used for inspiration and help develop instructional units and activities, but the secondary educator would be well-served to demonstrate caution before thoughtlessly using the tool.

**Twitter**

Twitter is another free social media tool where users post and interact with messages known as tweets. Registered users can post, like, and retweet tweets, but unregistered users can only read them. Users access Twitter through its website interface, through Short Message Service (SMS), or its mobile-device application software, also known as the app. Twitter is a major social platform which allows for various forms of communication, interaction, and collaboration between individuals from all across the world. Also, this application grants people the chance to share and obtain any type of information, including sports, news, music, politics,
and an abundance of other categories. For example, some ways that information is shared on Twitter include live broadcasting, direct messaging, and accounts interaction.

There are many advantages that come with using Twitter. Firstly, it is free; there are no fees associated with creating a Twitter account. Another advantage is that Twitter comes in various forms, which are application form, text message form, and mobile internet form. This allows for people to have several different ways of access to the program. The tool allows numerous forms of communication, which contributes to an outstanding collaboration process between individuals and groups. Also, Twitter is available on all platforms. Examples of these platforms include cell phones (iPhones, Android, Windows), computers, iPads, iPods, video game consoles, and any other platform that has internet connection. Another advantage that comes with Twitter is anything on the application is viewable to anyone, regardless if they have a registered account or not. For example, anyone can go to the Twitter website and view information that has been posted by registered accounts.

Just as there are advantages that are associated with Twitter, there are also disadvantages as well. The first disadvantage is the requirement of an internet connection. In order to access Twitter in any form, for any reason, one must have internet connection, which is not always a possibility for all students. According to the Wireless Broadband Alliance research (2017), millions of people have no access to internet connection. Even if one has internet connection, the connection might not be strong enough to effectively use this tool. For example, poor connection could affect the quality of live broadcasts, the loading time different links and articles, or the accessibility of any desired information. Though little connection is better than no connection, the strength of the connection is important.

Also, Twitter can come off as “confusing”, especially to those who are not familiar with using the tool. The site has multiple different widgets, some with no label that could seem
foreign to new users. Next, being that Twitter runs through the internet, there is always the possibility of cyber bullying. In addition, the tool comes with many distractions that might be disruptive to the classroom experience, as such as ads, games, music, and other miscellaneous distractions. A possible solution to those who do not have internet access, or a solid internet connection, is to go to a place that has free Wi-Fi, which is wireless internet, available to everyone. Some of those places include stores, some fast food restaurants as such as McDonalds, school libraries, and public libraries. To address the confusing issue of the tool, one could be granted access to tutorials that explain how to navigate through the different widgets on the application.

To address cyber bullying, teachers and parents could make sure that their children/students are not partaking in this behavior by checking the site and accounts daily. Lastly, to address any types of distractions, teachers could monitor each student while he or she is in the classroom. If the session is being conducted online, there are programs that allow the web conference leader to resist viewers from viewing other sites while they are logged into the web conference; this would be an efficient way to cut down on distractions. If the session is online, there could be blocks on certain websites that would restrict the students from browsing any other sites than the ones the teacher allows.

Twitter can be used in the secondary classroom and the following activities were conducted for the purposes of this class. A live video broadcast was conducted and group members were invited to join. During this broadcast, group members commented different thoughts and opinions on certain topics, including Twitter itself. Secondly, the Direct Message feature was used to message all group members, and all users were placed in the same group chat. Here, all members contributed information to the chat, which sparked a discussion that
included various topics. Lastly, an IT648 Twitter account was created and all group members were followed so they could view the posted miscellaneous information.

The aforementioned strategies can be used by secondary educators to conduct a variety of activities and assessments with and for their students. The live broadcasts can be used to conduct a class session, to conduct a group session, or to simply just conduct a discussion session, with or without a teacher. With this feature, teachers or students can invite others to tune in to the broadcast, or allow them to voluntarily join. Also, others are allowed to comment on the broadcast (through text box provided on broadcast). In regards to direct messaging, students can privately discuss assignments, due dates, upcoming school events, or any other important class information that needs to be discussed, individually, or in a group chat. Pictures, videos, and other types of media can be shared. There is a 10,000-character limit in Twitter’s direct messages, so there is plenty of room to thoroughly discuss any topic. Finally, a teacher can create a twitter account for the classroom. On this account, all information including homework, upcoming assignments and due dates, and important announcements can be announced publicly. By doing so, students and parents can have easy access to this information at the click of a few buttons on a platform many students already use. With this tool, there is great potential to expand the learning experience in an out of the classroom. Like everything else in this world, there are some hindering characteristics that come along with Twitter, but certainly, with this tool, the positive outweighs the negative by a large amount.

**Remind App**

The Remind App is a web-based application that is primarily used for teachers to communicate with students and parents. According to the Remind website, there are currently over 31 million users, 80% of United States Public Schools, and 60% of United States Teachers
use Remind. The highlight of this application is that it provides a free, fast, secure, and efficient way to reach students and parents with information. I have been using Remind for my students and parents for the past 5 years and have found this communication tool to be very effective.

For this project, a Remind App class called IT 648 was created and then a link to the class was sent to group members. Once everyone joined the class, notifications and assignments were sent out in which the group members responded. Two group members signed up as students of the class and one group member as a “parent” of a student of the class, this was done to get sampling of students and a parent being part of the class. To review some of the uses of the Remind App, I sent out an assignment, notification, and a video as the teacher of our class. Each member received the message instantly in which each member responded in a timely manner.

What we found about this app was that each method used, message, notification, assignment, and video, was received by the intended person in the same manner as a text on a phone without the phone number attached to it. This showed how effective and quick messages and information would be received by students and or parents. Secondly, from the teacher perspective, a “read” notification would show up when a person read the message after it was sent by the teacher. This notification is similar to iPhone users that send text messages to other iPhone users and the notification on their phones show when someone has opened the text message. This ability is important for a teacher because when a teacher sends out an assignment and the parent or student says they did not receive the message the notification “read” button will dictate that it was opened on their part. After using the Remind communication tool, I have found advantages, disadvantages, and various functions that Remind displayed.

There are several advantages to using Remind App. The application provides real-time messaging to the user, school, group, class, or individual. For teachers, it makes it easy to reach their class with one push of a button. A computer is not needed, just a phone is required. This
application also translates messages into more than 88 languages. This is an important feature because it allows English Language Learners and parents of different languages the ability to understand the messages. Students and Parents can be reached anywhere and away from school. There are features that allow the user to see who read the message, and who missed the message. The teacher can read receipt of messages sent and check to see why the student or parent did not receive the message. Teachers can upload videos, photos, and messages. It is private- no phone numbers are revealed when messages are sent. Remind App can send messages instantly to the whole class. Some reasons for instant messaging could include: when school is getting out early due to bad weather or when a change involving a test, or assignment, or even for a field trip change that requires immediate attention.

The Remind App does have a few disadvantages. Parents and Students have to opt-in to receive messages. The text message feature is only good for short announcements, not for long messages over 140 characters. Because it involves texts on a phone, not everyone has unlimited text messages so data and texts may be costly for some due to the numerous messages that a teacher may send. Also, the teacher cannot put the whole class in an editable calendar format.

The Remind App has numerous advantages for teachers to use with their students and parents. Features like instant messaging, file attachments, and privacy are just a few of the many benefits that Remind has to offer. Operating the Remind App was easy, and the ability to send and receive information in a timely manner was convenient. Teachers can use many different strategies with the Remind App. Teachers can post homework assignments for students, and parents can also view them so they can be aware of their child’s work. Teachers can send out motivation and other encouragement. Teachers can attach files of each student similar to a journal set-up for each student. Notifications of future school events or class projects can be sent to the class. Teachers can set up assignments and questions through the Remind App. One
example that can be used is for students to find what the “S” stands for in Ulysses S Grant; then make it a fun activity- first one to get it right will win a prize. Teachers can upload how-to videos or informative videos so students can learn from. One project I used for my students was a video of me discussing how to make an invention project for my Industrial Revolution Lesson. This aids visual learners as well. Another strategy a teacher can use instead of messaging assignments is to upload an audio of themselves giving a lesson or someone else; this would aid the audio learners.

**Conclusion**

Members of group three each chose a communication tool to research and share with each other. Demario Malone chose Twitter. Elizabeth Greer chose Instagram. Reginald Matthews chose Google Hangouts. John Lucente chose Remind App. Julia Elizabeth Lukes chose Socrative. Each group member found relevant ways to use these tools in the classroom. Socrative is an easy way to formatively assess students during and outside of the classroom. Twitter can be a great way to remind students about upcoming tests or deadlines, and offers a place for students and teachers to connect synchronously through live group feeds or asynchronously through group tweets and direct messaging. While Instagram should be cautiously used to share photos and class happenings with parents, it can be a great resource for classroom design and instruction inspiration. Google Hangout allows teachers to work synchronously or asynchronously with students and colleagues. Teachers can share photos and files, send videos, and send text messages to individuals or groups. The Remind App offers a way to text students and parents and maintain communication through texts without giving up the privacy of your personal number.
Group members chose tools with predetermined ideas regarding its use and ability. We learned that many of these tools can be used both synchronously and asynchronously. Twitter, Socrative, Google Hangouts and the Remind App both offer real-time collaboration aspects as well as the ability to asynchronously connect with others. Instagram as a social media platform is mostly asynchronous, but when using it simultaneously in class as a tool for research inspiration, it becomes synchronous. Tools for learning, whether synchronous or asynchronous, offer numerous benefits for a classroom’s learning experience. Whether it is conducting a live broadcast on Twitter or live video on Google Hangouts, texting a parent, taking a quiz via Socrative, or searching a hashtag on Instagram, these tools present a variety of ways for effective classroom collaboration between students, teachers, and even parents.

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