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Publications

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ARTICLES

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Exploring Pedagogically Sound Practices for the Use of Smartphones

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We, the Adaptech Research Network (https://www.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/adaptech)   , are looking at pedagogically-sound ways to use students' smartphones in post-secondary teaching. Thanks to funding from the *Entente Canada-Québec* (http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/le-ministere/programmes-de-soutien-financier/entente-canada-quebec-relative-a-lenseignement-dans-la-langue-de-la-minorite-et-a-lenseignement-des-langues-secondes/)   , we have had the last 2 terms to learn more about this topic. The first step in our research was to observe, so it was back to school for Laura King as she entered Anick Legault's *Introductory Psychology* class to see how she was using this technology with her students.

Laura assures us that times have changed for the better. Anick's students are exposed to the same traditional lecture format that Laura had become accustomed to many moons ago as a student. However, Anick's students have the additional opportunity to use their smartphones to routinely check their comprehension through pop-quizzes, accessing videos about how the brain works, consulting their teacher's PowerPoint slides and they can respond to surveys - all of this is live and with instant feedback.

Fascinated by how engaging the modern-day, college classroom has become, Laura decided to interview Anick about how and why she has her students use their smartphones. It was a true pleasure for Laura to see how Anick works her magic with the smartphones in her classroom!

Q. Can you tell us about yourself Anick?

Anick Legault (AL): I have been teaching for over 10 years, in Canada and the United States. I'm very passionate about my work. I became excited when I learned about smartphone pedagogy as it can be used as part of an inclusive approach. I don't like the idea of accommodating students; I prefer the universal design (UD) approach to learning (https://www.profweb.ca/en/publications/featured-reports/icts-tools-for-universal-design-for-instruction).

Q. When did you start using students' smartphones in your teaching?

AL: It all began 5 years ago. I wanted to do some polling but found that clickers are not very practical. I started with the Poll Everywhere (https://www.polleverywhere.com/)   app. App polling has the advantage of providing anonymous responses which means the whole class answers the questions instead of just a few students raising their hands. It became so popular with my students that I started to bring my old cell phones to class for those students who did not have one (I still do this), although I really don't see this much anymore. I also discovered that anonymous smartphone polling is very practical when discussing sensitive topics like the ones I cover in my human sexual behaviour course.
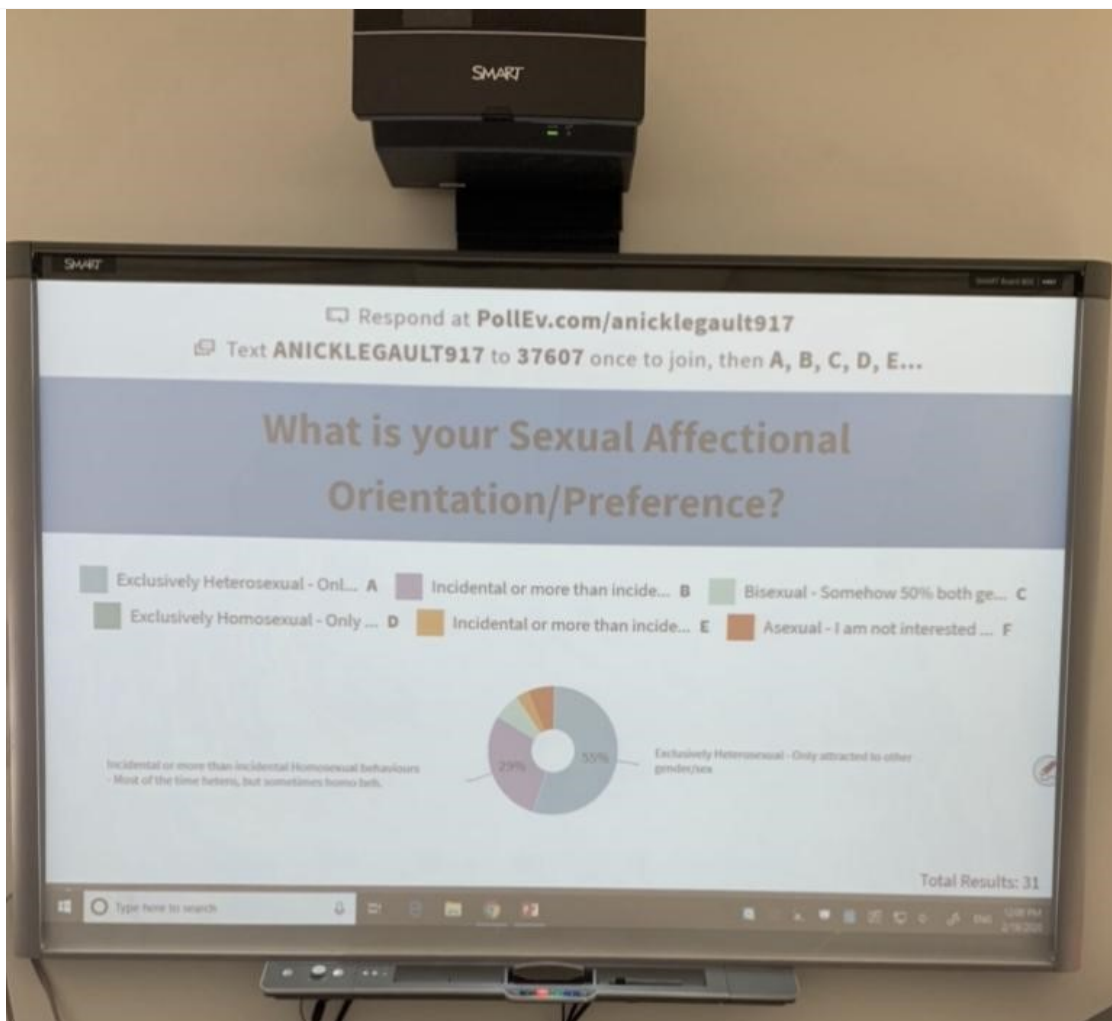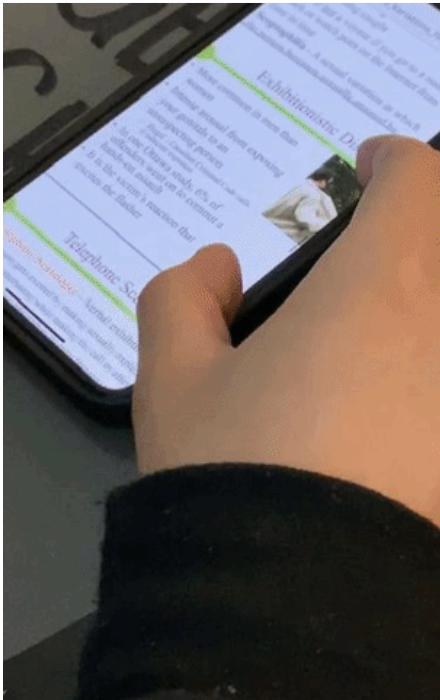

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An example of a sensitive question asked in class during a *Human Sexual Behaviour* course using smartphones with Poll Everywhere. (Courtesy: Anick Legault)

Q. What other types of activities do your students do with their smartphones?

AL: Besides polling, I offer opportunities for students to do practice quizzes that provide feedback. For example, I have students watch a video and take notes, and right after that the students take a quiz using the Moodle app (https://moodle.com/app/)   on their phones. They should have all the information necessary for the answers in their notes. If they don't, it's a good way for them to realize that they should add to their notes. Some of my other activities include students producing an information video, as well as creating collaborative case studies, where they use their phones to consult their textbooks and to take photos of each team member's case study. In class I sometimes use a formula: 20 minutes of lecture, 10 minutes of smartphone activities, 20 minutes more of lecture time, and then I return to 10 minutes of smartphone tasks. I also use some of the phone activities as homework (for example, students may take a self-test on a topic like jealousy and then send me a write-up telling me what they think about it).

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Using smartphones for various activities in the *Introduction to Psychology* and *Human Sexual Behaviour* courses: Referring to the teacher's slide deck on [Moodle (https://decclic.qc.ca/?lang=en)](https://decclic.qc.ca/?lang=en) to complete an in-class activity, using the [free Psychology e-textbook (https://openstax.org/details/books/psychology)](https://openstax.org/details/books/psychology) from [OpenStax (https://openstax.org/)](https://openstax.org/) and surveying students with Poll Everywhere. (Courtesy: Anick Legault)

Q. Why do you allow students to use this technology in class?

AL: I allow students to use this technology because it's a way for them to access information and receive immediate feedback, as well as to increase and improve participation. As for me, I can assess my own teaching and modify it immediately as needed. However, I do set guidelines.

Q. How do you manage smartphone use?

AL: During the first class, I explain that students can use their phones only when they are asked to do so, such as when taking notes, looking at my slide decks or completing quizzes and surveys. I establish a basic rule at the start of the term: students must stay on academic tasks while on their phones. If they don't, I usually make eye contact with the offender. Occasionally when I have told students to stop texting, they have shown me that they were in fact on task. Often fellow students act as overseers: they'll remind their friends to stay on task.

Q: How has the incorporation of this technology enhanced your teaching and your students' learning?

AL: I have increased student participation and it's more inclusive: shy students will answer questions using their phones but will rarely raise their hands to answer a question. Answering pop-quizzes after viewing a video engages them more than just watching a video on its own. Plus, I can see their answers, so it helps me to see what they are struggling with versus what they understand well.

Using students' phones helps me to increase the use of active learning because I can integrate more hands-on activities. It's a time-saver too, because I don't have to waste time distributing paper copies. Instead, students just open the link to the quiz. A phone quiz has an environmental advantage too, of course. It's very practical for me, I even use my cell phone during my commute to review the day's material and grade assignments.

I would be pleased to invite any teacher who is curious to see how to effectively integrate these enriching technological tools into their own teaching to visit me in my classroom to see its pedagogical impact in action.

About the Authors

Laura King She works as a teacher-researcher at Cégep André-Laurendeau where she has taught English as a second language for over 20 years. She offers workshops on student success, screening and accommodation, and ICTs for students with reading problems, learning disabilities and other disabilities. She is currently managing a project on using students' smartphones in postsecondary teaching that is financially supported by the Entente Canada-Québec.

Anick Legault She has been working as a Psychology teacher at Dawson College since 2010. She has done educational research both here in Québec and in the United States. While her doctoral research centered on Effective Teaching Methods, her true passion is teaching using Information and Communication Technologies in an inclusive way, and more particularly using smartphones in the classroom as a pedagogical tool.

Alex Lussier She has just completed her undergraduate degree in International Studies from the University of Montréal. She has been a research assistant at the Adaptech Research Network and Cégep André-Laurendeau since January 2015. She is currently involved in an ECQ-funded project which aims to offer college professors lesson plans on how to use their students' smartphones in their teaching.

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