UNIT 1: TECHNOLOGY IN OUR SCHOOLS
GRADE LEVEL 4-5

Introduction

Themes & Ideas

Technology
Social Media
Smartphones
School Rules
Relationships
School

What Students Will Uncover

Through a range of activities, students will consider how technology has impacted their school environment and their own learning.

Lesson Overview

This lesson takes a deeper look at one of the main themes from the film: **technology in schools**. It works well for educators to run...

1. As a follow up to the Screening and Class Discussion Lesson Plan

   OR

2. Independently, if you already know this is a subject you want to explore in particular.

We recommend that students watch the film prior to (or as part of) this lesson, but relevant clips are embedded throughout the guide if students do not have time to watch the whole film, or if they need a refresher on its content.

The lesson is organized around activities that can be completed during a class period. Educators are encouraged to review the lesson activities beforehand to assess suitability for class timing and teaching style. Educators can select and arrange the

activities in a way that suits them, which can include choosing to run activities over multiple periods or setting activities as homework assignments.

Lesson Objectives

- Reflect on the use of technology in school, particularly its use before, during and "after" Covid-19
- Understand the research around how technology impacts their attention span and brain development
- Compare their own experiences with those of the subjects in the film, utilizing empathy and understanding

Vocabulary

Empathy — the ability to understand and share in the feelings of others.

Addictive Behavior — the urge to do something that is hard to control or stop, even when it's harmful.

1:1 Program — when a school or district provides every student with a digital device meant to enhance their learning.

Digital citizenship — using technology and the internet in a responsible and respectful way.

Prosocial — relating to behavior that is positive, helpful and intended to help or support others.

Away For The Day — policy that ensures that personal digital devices not provided by the school are kept out of sight during school hours.

Self-control — the ability to control how we express our emotions and act on our impulses.

Digital literacy — the ability to use digital media tools like social media and the internet to learn, create, communicate and work.

Media literacy — the ability to analyze, create and evaluate media in a variety of forms, from movies to the internet to books.

Lesson

Lesson Introduction

Opening Discussion

- Ask students to recall the film they recently watched (*Screenagers: Growing Up In The Digital Age*).
- Prompt student recall by asking some general questions to ensure they remember.

⇒ Do you remember moments from the film where technology was used in a cool way? How about moments where technology was used in a not-so-helpful way?

⇒ What were you left wondering about when it comes to technology and learning?

- Explain that in today's lesson, you will be taking a closer look at one of the main themes of the film: **technology in schools** and completing a number of activities together.

Lesson Activities

ACTIVITY 1

Heart-to-Heart (30 Mins)

Students work collaboratively.

1. Group class into two equal-sized groups.
2. Arrange them in 2 circles, one inner and one outer so that the students are facing each other one-to-one.
3. Ask your students to discuss the following discussion prompts with their partners. Allot a few minutes to each prompt and then have the outer circle move one position to the right for the next prompt.

⇒ How would you feel if all technology was removed from your school?
⇒ When do you focus best?
⇒ How does technology change learning?
⇒ What technology tools for learning do you use the most? A calculator, computer, app, etc.?

Ask your students to share some **highlights** from their conversations.

Key Learning: Students engage in honest conversations with classmates who might have different opinions from their own. They get a range of perspectives and reconsider some of their own.

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ACTIVITY 2

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Learning Plan (20 Mins)

Students work individually or collaboratively.

Pretend you are in charge of a school. Come up with a tech-in-school plan. Would you allow students to have phones during class time? How about phones during breaks and lunch? Why?

Key Learning: Students problem-solve and brainstorm ways to layout an educational environment that would facilitate learning for themselves and their fellow classmates.

More topics, discussion questions and movie clips relating to "Learning Plan":

1:1 Programs

When schools provide their students with digital devices to use in the classroom and at home, this is known as a one-to-one or 1:1 program. These programs have been increasingly gaining popularity over recent years. A 2018-2019 [Consortium for School Networking study](#) found that 40% of K-12 school technology leaders report having a 1:1 program at their school.

⇒ Does your school provide or have a plan to provide every student with a digital device to use in school and at home? If so, how has it impacted your school's environment?

Review some of [these studies](#) from "Away For The Day" for a deeper understanding of the impacts of tech in schools.

How Covid-19 Changed Tech In Schools

In 2021, [90% of high schools and middle schools](#) ended up adopting a one-to-one program, because of the Covid-19 Pandemic. When it became unsafe to be in a classroom with other students, schools had to rely on technology, whether they liked it or not.

⇒ What changed at your school during Covid? How did it affect your learning?

Should Phones Be Banned on Campuses?

In New York City, schools instituted a ban on having cell phones on campus. But it was so difficult to enforce, the ban was ended.

Now, many schools are implementing "Away For The Day" policies, where phones are either prohibited from being out during class time, or prohibited from being out anywhere on campus during school hours. Watch the clip here.

⇒ What do you think about a no-phones school environment? Explain your thoughts.

ACTIVITY 3

Creative Tech (20-25 Mins)

Students work individually or collaboratively.

With a group, try to come up with a few creative ways to use technology in a classroom space. How can technology be used in a productive way?

Key Learning: Students consider how they might customize their own learning environment, coming up with ideas for how to use tech that work for them specifically.

More topics, discussion questions and movie clips relating to "Creative Tech":

Attitudes Toward Tech and Learning

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's 2021 Educator Confidence Report found that 77% of teachers believed that tech tools would continue to make them more effective teachers after the Pandemic.

⇒ Does your school use tech in classrooms? How is it used?
⇒ When tech is used, what changes in the classroom?
⇒ Do you have any examples of teachers who use tech tools in a creative way that helps you learn?

In this clip, one teacher asks his students, "Are you using your time wisely?"

He notes that in the work world, digital distractions are everywhere. He wants his students to develop self-control and regulate themselves so that once they enter into a world dominated by technology, they'll have a better idea of what works best for their own learning and productivity.

⇒ How do you think you would function in a classroom that leaves phone rules up to the students?

Tech All Around Us (15-20 Mins)

Students begin by working individually and then discuss with classmates.

Look around your classroom. How many screens and pieces of technology can you point out?

Discuss with other students: Were there more or less screens in your classroom than you expected? Do you think always being surrounded by technology has an impact on us?

Key Learning: Students recognize how ubiquitous technology is and get to form their own opinions about how present it truly is.

More topics, discussion questions and movie clips relating to "Tech All Around Us":

No school has screens "figured out." Teachers, administrators and students all have different ideas about how to best handle personal technology in schools, and with so many different techniques and ideas, it's hard to determine which path to take when it comes to screens and education.

In [this clip](), one student from the film argues that student phone use should be up to the discretion of each student.

⇒ Do you agree with the student's quote? Do you think adults need to put rules in place about how kids use technology in school? Why or why not?
⇒ If you were allowed to choose how you would use your personal device during class, what would you do?

Storytelling (15-20 Mins)

Students work collaboratively.

- Split up into pairs. One person will be the storyteller and the other person will be the multi-tasker.
- If you have access to a computer in your classroom, have the multi-tasker use it while the storyteller speaks for a few minutes.

- If the teacher is the only one with access to a device, have a student volunteer tell them a story while the teacher uses their device.
- **Discuss**: can the multi-tasker summarize the storyteller's story? How much of it do they remember? How much of it did they forget?

Key Learning: Students develop a deeper / new understanding about how their brain functions through real life experience.

More topics, discussion questions and movie clips relating to "Storytelling":

While multitasking can feel like a great way to balance work and entertainment, data shows that it isn't as effective as we may think it is.

In [this clip](#), Delaney chats with a student from the film, who explains that her phone distracts her so much during class that she can't focus on what her teachers are saying.

In [this clip](#), Psychology professor Sherry Turkle, PhD, explains the science behind multitasking, and why it isn't as effective as we might think it is.

⇒ Do you ever try to multitask? If so, do you think you're good at it? Does it help your learning?

There have been a number of studies on the negative effects of multitasking on learning. A few have looked at how using technology in an off-topic way during a class or lecture can impact [test scores](#) and [comprehension](#).

⇒ Do students ever play on their devices during class? How does that make you feel? Does it make it easier or harder to focus?

Dimitri Christakis, MD explains in [this clip](#), the fatigue that can take place in our brain when we try to multitask.

⇒ Have you noticed whether multitasking affects your ability to focus and complete tasks?
⇒ Did the Storytelling activity change the way you think about multitasking?

Lesson Conclusion

Ask your students if they are walking away from this lesson with any new information or opinions on technology in school. Consider creating a **Pros and Cons List** for how technology impacts schools as a class.

Frameworks

CASEL® SEL Competencies

Our Curriculum & Lesson Plans are independently aligned by the Screenagers Team to the [CASEL® SEL Competencies Framework.](#)

- **Social Awareness**: Understanding influences of organizations and systems on behavior
  Recognizing situational demands and opportunities, understanding and expressing gratitude
- **Self-awareness**: Identifying one's emotions
- **Responsible Decision-making**: Learning how to make a reasoned judgement after analyzing info, data and facts

AASL Standards Framework for Learners

Our Curriculum & Lesson Plans are also informed by the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) *Standards Framework for Learners*. For additional information and resources, including a downloadable format for the *Learners Standards Framework*, for AASL's National Standards visit standards.aasl.org.

Include:

- *B. CREATE* — Interacting with learners who reflect a range of perspectives. Representing diverse perspectives during learning activities.
- *C. SHARE* — Engaging in informed conversation and active debate.

Engage:

- *A. THINK* — Responsibly applying information, technology, and media to learning.
  Understanding the ethical use of information, technology, and media.
- *D. GROW* — Personalizing their use of information and information technologies.

Inquire:

- ***D. GROW*** — Enacting new understanding through real-world connections.