

Mobile Apps for Education

MAS 490: Theory and Practice of Mobile Applications

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What Teachers Want: Customization

- Teachers want apps that allow them to input their own “curriculum” into the app in some fashion.
- The majority of apps are locked down with regard to content and function, and they cannot be manipulated to meet the teacher’s specific needs.
- This is a programming task that would require some pretty sophisticated code modules. Quality control would be a major issue.

What Teachers Want: Data Output

- Teachers want the ability to pull “data” from their apps in some fashion.
- They want to see progress, chart trends, and identify areas of need that their students may demonstrate.
- The trick is to make sure that the data that gets pulled is readily manipulated by well known tools already in existence so they don't have a new format to convert in some fashion.

What Teachers Want: Creativity

- Educational apps in general are too focused on “drill and practice.”
- There should be a greater emphasis on constructive and creative types of activities.
- There should be a convenient way to port over content that is created on mobile devices to other devices.

What Teachers Want: Programming

- The greatest area of need for a creative app is what we loosely call “programming.”
- For reasons about which we can only speculate, Apple has disallowed apps that have functionality like MIT’s application “Scratch.”
- Apps like “Scratch” allow students to learn the foundations of programming by scaffolding (or layering) the ideas and techniques in grade appropriate ways.

What Teachers Want: Integration and Connectivity

- There is a growing trend for apps to allow multiple mobile learning devices to work in conjunction with each other. This is an area that needs further development.
- For example, teachers should be able to use a central app on their mobile devices (iPads, for instance) that allows them to connect with students individually and collectively on their mobile learning devices.
- The trick is that these applications need to connect seamlessly without worrying about troubleshooting the connection regularly.

What Teachers Want: The Cloud

- There should be further development of apps that allow students and teachers to access their cloud computing resources.
- Google Education Apps are having a significant impact in schools, yet mobile learning devices struggle with accessing that information effectively and efficiently.
- As new initiatives come online, they need to work well with multiple platforms.

What Teachers Want: Better Management

- Teachers and technology coordinators need better systems in place to control school owned mobile learning technology from a management standpoint.
- LanSchool offers a number of management applications and an Edapp certification initiative but it is still too early to gauge its success.
- Apple is streamlining its educational volume licensing with the MacApp store and the diskless cloud approach, but there are more questions than answers at this point.

Just For Fun

- Here are 10 free iPhone apps to learn a new skill in 10 minutes (or less).
- Learn an Origami figure with Dollar Origami Lite
- Learn how to save a life - CPR & Choking
- Learn how to tie a necktie with vTie - Necktie Guide
- Learn a magic trick at the Magic Shop
- Learn how to type - fast - on your iPhone with iTextSpeed Lite

Just For Fun, pt.2

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