Liz Kolb. Cell Phones in the Classroom. A Practical Guide for Educators.

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It is a book for all those who still don't think that there is a place for cell phones in education and educational institutions as it may change their attitude towards a more positive stance. It is also for administrators, who, on a personal level, do appreciate the learning potential of mobile technologies but officially are bound by rules and regulations of their national and regional boards of education. But primarily this publication will be valuable for those teachers and administrators, who realize that cell phones are the most accessible technology for their students and can be used as valuable learning tools.

The purpose of Liz Kolb's book is to show many different practical ways to use cell phones in learning, from classroom group and individual projects to homework assignments, as well as communication tools for teachers, students, and parents. The book is designed for secondary school teachers, that is why it addresses some specific regulatory issues, such as dealing with school policies and securing parents' permission and support. Still, in its most part, it can be applicable for any educational setting and provides a lot of insights, tips, and resources for any educator interested in engaging the most popular tool of the 21st century.

The book comprises 6 chapters, detailed references, and two appendices with documents, which guide learning with technology in the United States: National Educational Technology Standards for Students (NETS*S) and National Educational Technology Standards for Teachers (NETS* T). The first two chapters are dedicated to case studies, which are definitely the highlights of the book, as each study shows practical experience of teachers, who have integrated mobile phones into teaching and learning. Kolb introduces 16 teachers' cases about their activities with using cell phones in different courses and with students from a wide variety of social and economic strata in the United States and 5 other countries. Chapter One deals with six case studies from Language Arts and Social Sciences classroom, the other six case studies in Chapter Two are from Math and Science classrooms. Each case study explains the reasons, which motivated the teacher to start using cell phones, school demographics with indication of the percentage of students who own cell phones, economic status of student population, and enrollment data by race and ethnicity. Then follows the explanation of the project, school policies with regards to cell phones on the campus and teacher's way to deal with those policies. A case study concludes with the description of the outcomes of the project, such as student and parent reactions, hints and tips derived from the experience, as well as future lessons that the teachers have planned. Built in a similar way, all case

studies summarize the researcher's findings on a number of issues, connected with the educational use of cell phones. Some of these issues are quite crucial for the ongoing debate about cell phone technology application, such as: 1) whether there were any discipline problems with students using cell phones inside of classroom learning; 2) if using cell phones contributed to increased motivation or engagement in classroom instruction; 3) how the cell phones contributed to increased student learning; 4) how to deal with the fact that some students may not own a cell phone; and 5) if using cell phones actually contributed to an increase in the level and quality of instruction.

While some parts of the case studies can qualify as specific for the USA or applicable only for the high school environment (such as securing parent permission for a project), in general they provide a lot of innovative insights and useful guidance for any teacher interested in harnessing the mobile technology. Besides teachers, school administration can also benefit from the *Cell Phones in the Classroom* book as Chapter Three describes eight web-cell-phone-paired applications useful for information dissemination, effective communication between various school constituencies, photo or video sharing and as such. It also has three Administrator Lesson Plans, showing how to create cross-posting announcements via *Pixelpipe*, text alerting with *Joopz*, and mass text messaging alert system via *Celly*.

Chapter Four goes back again to the practical needs of the teachers and presents fourteen specific lesson plans and tutorials for using cell phones in classroom learning. These activities couple cell phones and free (or low-cost) web resources to create powerful learning activities in various subject areas, focusing on using phone calls, text messages, or cell phone cameras. It is not worthwhile going into detail about any of these lessons, but it should be noted here that all of them provide sufficient information not only to replicate a particular sample lesson, but also to adjust the approach to any other subject area or learning environment.

While the forte of the book is in its practical application, no less significant is Chapter Five, which builds up the rationale for using cell phones in the classroom - the issue, which still needs a lot of advocacy in educational circles. Indeed, with the majority of schools in the United States and other countries banning student cell phones in the classroom and even on campuses, the educators, who want to use this mobile technology, need to come up with a specific proposal and supportive research to overcome all administrative barriers. Furthermore, drawing from the experience of all her teacher contributors and her own, Liz Kolb emphasizes that any activity with cell phones is jeopardized with potential pitfalls, such as inappropriate behavior or incomplete access to the tools. With these matters, mindful planning and careful education of students about cell phone safety and ethics are imperative. The chapter provides samples of permission forms, social contracts (rules of cell phone use) agreed upon with the students, project feedback templates and other useful materials.

The final Chapter Six covers various Web 2.0 resources coupled with cell phones, in addition to a variety of them, described in Chapter Four. These are grouped into audio, images and video, text messaging, interactive online screens and polling tools, avatars, mobile quizzes and surveys.

To conclude, *Cell Phones in the Classroom* is a smart, thoughtful introduction to a still virgin and vastly mistrusted area of educational technology, the introduction endorsed by the International

Society for Technology in Education (ISTE), a trusted source for professional development, knowledge generation, advocacy, and leadership for innovation. To urge my readers to have a closer look at Liz Kolb's book and the issues it addresses I'd like to finish with some of the arguments she offers teachers to help them build their advocacy of cell phones. First, cell phones now are the most ubiquitous mobile tools with a readily available access point for important school information, lessons, and activities. Next, cell phones have introduced a fundamental shift in citizenship practices, such as information dissemination, mass media, voting, etc., and this will not change in the near future. Third, they are part of new technologies, which have produced a fundamental shift in the workforce, requiring now new skills in the majority of jobs. Thus, finally, using cell phones in education we, teachers, do not only make learning more effective and motivating, but also help students learn the new digital technology better and develop their digital skills, which are becoming increasingly vital in the society and in future workplace.