

iPods in the Classroom

It is obvious that the iPod is an impressive device that can hold many hours of music and is very convenient to have. One aspect that is not so obvious, or for some reason forgotten is the clear usefulness that an iPod could have in a classroom setting.

The first school that implemented iPod's into the classroom was Duke University when they approved a grant that gave each and every incoming freshman a sleek 20-gigabyte iPod. There was research conducted by the university and the idea as a whole received mixed reviews from professors and students alike. Yes, Professors had a plan on what to do with the iPods, they would upload class notes online and make them available for students to download to their iPod, making it easier for them to study on the go. Class lectures and other presentations were also made available for every student.

While many of the students took this opportunity and used the iPod as a tool to facilitate their learning, a few of them decided to do their own thing with it and even went as far as to use it as a distraction in the classroom.

Something with a good intention and great potential had somewhere gone wrong and the University was forced to reduce the iPod fund this year. As a result, only freshmen that are enrolled in music and language intensive majors will be receiving their iPods.

A noble and useful idea spoiled by a few bad apples. The question still remains though; can iPods be used as an efficient learning method?

The answer in short, yes they absolutely can. During the first year at Duke the students who did use the iPod as a learning tool found it easier to study and actually studied more often because of the convenience factor of having their iPod anywhere they went. Other potential benefits of the iPod in the classroom include the ability to record lectures and take oral notes while studying. Electronic flash cards are not out of the question either. Imagine a University that implemented all of these methods successfully. The impact it would have on its students and faculty will be tremendous.

If we look a bit deeper, we can also conclude that this will have a positive change in the environment, as paper waste will be reduced because of this. In other words, the potential to learn with the iPod and the ability for it to be beneficial is absolutely astronomical. The only question is if anyone or any facility can implement it correctly allowing the students to benefit from all of the above mentioned features without having to suffer from the abuse of using the iPod the wrong way in the classroom setting.

There is nothing wrong with using the iPod for its primary purpose of entertainment, but clearly this is the main problem in using it in the classroom, it is a distraction. If someone created something clever to eliminate that distraction while in an academic setting, then the iPod could become a truly groundbreaking tool for students all over the world.