

Details

How EdTech Can Help Students Make Healthy Choices - Bonus Episode with Responsibility.org

In this episode, Education Consultant Leticia Barr joins for a conversation all about empowering kids to say yes to a healthy lifestyle and no to underage drinking. April is Alcohol Responsibility Month and you'll hear about engaging digital resources that teach students the impact of alcohol on the developing brain while incorporating social-emotional learning in lessons, games, and activities.

Show notes: <https://classtechtips.com/2023/03/26/make-healthy-choices-bonus/>

***Make Healthy Choices**

Introduction

Hello there and welcome to today's episode of the Easy EdTech Podcast! If we haven't met before, my name is Monica Burns. I'm a former NYC public school teacher and I've been out of the classroom for a few years leading professional development for teachers, and writing about all things EdTech on my blog [ClassTechTips.com](https://classtechtips.com)

You might be used to joining me on Tuesdays for new episodes of the podcast, and today is a special bonus episode in partnership with Responsibility. I'm excited to bring you another special bonus episode on a Sunday.

Before we jump into today's episode, a quick reminder — you can head to my website classtechtips.com/podcast for all of the show notes and resources from today's episode, and if you're listening to this episode on a podcast player like Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or Google Podcasts, you should see a link in the description that you can click on as you listen today and it will take you to all of the resources I mention.

Promotion/Reminder

This episode is brought to you by the Ask, Listen, Learn underage drinking program. April is alcohol responsibility month—are you and your students ready? Ask, Listen, Learn offers free, evidence-based digital resources to empower kids to say YES to a healthy lifestyle and NO to underage drinking by teaching them about the science behind how alcohol affects the developing brain. Visit asklistenlearn.org to access the videos, lesson plans, parent resources, and more.

Today's Intro

Today's episode is titled "How EdTech Can Help Students Make Healthy Choices - Bonus Episode with Responsibility.org" and it was so much fun chatting with Leticia Barr, a former classroom teacher, and founder of the website, TechSavvyMama.com. We talk about the ways that teachers can use multimedia resources to connect students with information on how to make healthy choices. I can't wait for you to hear about these free resources for students and teachers and Leticia's classroom and family stories!

Episode Transcript

Monica Burns:

Welcome to the podcast. Today I am so excited to chat about this topic of using EdTech to help students make better choices and just really how information empowers kids to make healthy choices. So before we jump into this conversation, would love for listeners to hear a little bit about your role in education. What does your day-to-day look like?

Leticia Barr:

Absolutely. Well, thank you so much, Monica, for having me. My name is Leticia Barr and my background is in elementary and middle education, but I spent most of my career in the school system training teachers on best practices for integrating technology in their classrooms. Most recently I taught middle school computer science and engineering. But in addition to that, I'm the founder of the website, techsavvymama.com. I started that back in 2008. And you know, back in 2008 there weren't smartphones, there weren't apps. Software still came in boxes, I think back to my first grade classroom and trying to evaluate, you know, what software and websites were good for my students. Back then, it was a completely different landscape and at the time I started my blog, my kids were six and four. Now I'm a mom of a daughter in college and a son who's a junior in high school. I also do some education consulting for responsibility.org, and I serve on their education advisory board.

Monica Burns:

Awesome. Well, you know, Leticia, as you were talking, I was thinking about like floppy disks and like trying to set up right. Different types of programs on personal and school computers. And it's wild goodness, my goodness, right? <Laugh> about how much has changed, right. And the 16 or so years since you started blogging. Right. And just the way we think about technology in the classroom and all the information that's out there, right? Just even this

increased access to information. So, you know, today we're talking about how information empowers kids to make healthy choices. So I'd love to hear a little bit from you about, you know, what role does information play in helping kids make healthy choices throughout their day?

Leticia Barr:

Well, that's a great question, Monica. And we know that when kids know the facts, they can make better decisions. So I think back to the fact that when my daughter was nine, right? We're talking about healthy choices and healthy decisions. When my daughter was nine, we were at a Washington Nationals baseball game and we were just walking through the stadium before the ballgame started and going through our seats and we walked past the stadium's beer garden and you know, with the big signage, and it looked like a lot of fun. There was music playing. She just casually turned to me and said, she asked me if she could have a beer. And you know, I tried not to have my jaw hit the floor <laugh>. But, you know, it was a really teachable moment. As a mom and a teacher, I am a big fan of seizing the teachable moment. So instead of just saying no and that she wasn't of legal drinking age, I knew it was really important to tell her the reason why alcohol isn't healthy and explain how it, it affects different parts of the brain. And the reason behind that is that we know kids are curious. So including accurate and factual information is a really essential part of any conversation.

Monica Burns:

I think that's, you know, just such a great point for so many aspects of our lives. When we are answering questions, when we think about that, you know, supporting evidence might not be the term that we're using right, in our own conversations with someone, but presenting those facts, that information that goes side by side with a response is just so useful for helping kids of all ages really wrap their head around these, these choices that they have. So, you know, you were in that story, which I love cause it paints such a great picture of the kind of interactions kids have. So organically <laugh> with all the things out in the world, you know, we're able to respond and, and provide information to your, your daughter. You know, how can educators provide kids with, with access to this accurate and reliable health information, maybe they don't have that background right themselves to, to really grab a fact on the go. Right? Where can they go to provide, you know, kids with access to accurate and reliable information?

Leticia Barr:

Sure. Well, when I was in the classroom, you know, teaching computer science and engineering, I had a brand new engineering course that I was teaching. So I was always

looking for factual content for my lessons. And so when it comes to health information, we know science is key. Kids need to understand the science behind the why, though Ask, Listen, Learn, which is a program of responsibility.org, Ask, Listen, Learn provides free science and evidence-based resources that teach students the impact of alcohol on the developing brain. So in my conversation with my daughter about the why can't I have beer <laugh> when I'm nine, I talk to her about how it hurts our developing brains and bodies. So the same lesson is important for kids to understand the impact of alcohol on the developing brain. This is really important because when they understand the why, they have the ability to make better choices. And this also helps build their confidence in the knowledge and tools to say yes to a healthy lifestyle and no, to underage drinking. So what I love about Ask, Listen, Learn lesson plans, not only are they free, but they're correlated to ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards, and they really teach kids how alcohol and cannabis impact developing brains and bodies so they understand why these things aren't safe for them when they're underage and the real science behind, you know, what, what happens to their body when they use these substances.

Monica Burns:

Yeah. And just that the science component, right, and anchoring it in that factual information is one of the reasons that I've shared the Ask, Listen, Learn resources on my blog a few times over the past few years because they just think they're so engaging and really rooted in that knowledge base. That I think comes back to just what you mentioned about anchoring our responses to students' questions or anchoring, you know, the way that we share a kind of a yes or no almost style conversation, you know, in that factual information. So, you know, just like you mentioned, that's something that really stands out for me too, and, you know, it, it kind of comes to this next question I wanna ask you or, or connects to this question of, you know, how does Ed tech, our education technology really promote student engagement and motivation in this learning process? Are there certain types of media like video for example that can make an impact here?

Leticia Barr:

Yeah, absolutely. I mean, I think we've seen the rise of ed tech in the classrooms and when done really well and when the right resources are used, the power of it as a teaching resource has incredible potential for students in their learning. And that's also because students learn differently. And the beauty of it is how engaging it can be. So when we think about those audio, visual, inter and interactive components, they really have the power to make lessons more meaningful and memorable for today's students. And Ask, Listen, Learn, it features seven videos about how alcohol affects different parts of the developing brain, and one additional video about how cannabis affects growing brains and bodies we've seen with

different states changing legislation that this is something that students are curious about and they've heard about, but they don't necessarily know about cannabis. And it's interesting because I was recently at a middle school speaking at career day speaking as a blogger and an influencer, and I was sharing what I was doing.

Leticia Barr:

And when given the chance to view some of the lesson plans and videos I gave students the choice of seeing an alcohol video or a cannabis video. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> and students were six out of seven of the classes wanted to see the cannabis video because they were curious about it mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. And so what I loved, and, you know, watching, I, I don't teach health myself, so in watching students reactions, like they were really attentive to the video, and I think that they felt they walked away with having a little bit more knowledge than when they walked into that room for career day. And that's what we're seeing with students who use our content, the animated, the animated content, it really captures their attention. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative>, it teaches important fact the vocabulary and each video teaches about a different part of the brain and how it's affected by alcohol. And since we know all students learn differently, there's a wide variety of extension activities like word searches mm-hmm. <Affirmative> movement activities, writing activities, and more that can be used by teachers to reinforce the content in the video itself.

Monica Burns:

Yeah. That emphasis on video for me is just one of the, the reasons why this content, you know, grabbed my attention, you know, in the first place. And just the idea of using these explainer videos, right. Presenting information in an engaging visual format for students, really easy to share and display, and then have them watch all together, right? Or, or in a blended learning rotation, you know, in addition to those supplementary resources that you mentioned, right. The, let's respond in writing, right? Let's do these movement activities or these games and, you know, I guess it makes sense now that you're saying it because of just the, the emphasis or the attention perhaps around cannabis, right? With all the different laws and changes and things in the news that that would be something that jumps out in terms of kids asking questions or wanting to know a little bit more.

Monica Burns:

So I'm so glad that you mentioned that observation from your work with students in schools and with that career day component, because it really is an opportunity to lean into student curiosity, right? If they feel like they don't know much about something or everyone's talking about it, or they've heard it in other places, it's such a fantastic opportunity to lean in and

have these conversations and, and use these resources. So, you know, I'm curious, you know, with your experience and, and the work that you do now, you know, what should educators take into consideration when they're looking for resources that are age appropriate around healthy choices and these sort of topics when they're looking for content to share with their students?

Leticia Barr:

Well, you mentioned age appropriate, and that's key. That first and foremost, the teachers, we know that that's key. And not all content is age appropriate. It might be on, you know, on the website that you're looking for on the document that you're looking at. But as teachers, you know your students best. So you have to gauge your audience, you know, for that particular year, what is right for them. So age appropriate, it doesn't always fall within that right age span that lessons are slated for. So know your kids, that's important. But in addition to that, look for cross-curricular activities that really incorporates social and emotional learning that are from trusted organizations. We know that social emotional learning teaches children of all ages, self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. These are fundamental skills that include many of the same skills that are PR involved in prevention education. Because when we teach kids how to advocate for themselves and make good decisions, they're setting goals, they're preg prioritizing their own mental health. These things alone can empower them to say yes to a healthy lifestyle and no to underage drinking and cannabis use.

Monica Burns:

Yeah. And you know, as you're talking there, you know, we think about, I love just, I mean, I love the SEL connection of course, right? And just the way that these resources or the ones that we're talking about today, right? Make that connection to science standards, to what teachers are teaching in a class where they might not think, right, that SEL is important for what they're doing. Or I shouldn't say that they don't think it's important, but that they don't think it's maybe connected to their daily activities. So, you know, your point about the age appropriateness and knowing your students, right? Every year, I know as a classroom teacher, <laugh>, every year was a little bit different, even different times of year felt different with different groups of students, right? Really vetting those resources, knowing that they come from a great place, right? In addition to that engagement component, you know, like the, like the video pieces that we already talked about, I think are just such a crucial reminder. So I really appreciate that. And you know, we've, we've mentioned these Ask, Listen, Learn resources from responsibility.org. Can you tell us a little bit more about what a teacher would find when they open them up or they get to that landing page and, and really how these resources can help kids make those healthy choices?

Leticia Barr:

Sure. Well, when you go to asklistenlearn.org, it's a free digital platform for parents and educators. There's materials on there for school counselors as well, and the materials are really geared for kids. And grades four through eight though, you'll find videos, lesson plans, games and activities, all things that empower kids to say yes to a healthy lifestyle and no, to underage drinking. And what the materials do through the videos and the lesson plans and the supplemental activities is that it takes kids on a journey through the developing brain to teach them what the brain does, what alcohol does to it, and what that does to them. So together, this is a really robust set of materials. The first video kind of serves as an overview video mm-hmm. <Affirmative> about the brain and how it works. And then there are different videos and each video is about a different part of the brain.

Leticia Barr:

So kids are learning, you know, really important vocabulary terms like hippocampus, medulla. Mm-Hmm. You know, about their a about all these different parts of the brain, which is so fascinating to them. Like they'll learn which part of the brain is responsible for speech and which part of the brain controls gross motor movements. So, you know, when they're, when they're out in, they're observing whether they're at a restaurant or a party mm-hmm. Or with their parents and things like that, if they see somebody maybe slurring their words or having trouble, you know, that maybe they're stumbling a little bit, maybe they'll think about the fact like, oh, this part of the brain controls that and they've been drinking mm-hmm. <Affirmative> and you know, they'll make some connections there Yeah. To possibly some, some real world activities and, and what's what's in in their environment. Hopefully all that together will help them make good decisions. Mm-Hmm.

Monica Burns:

<Affirmative>. Yeah. And just the, that vocabulary building piece, especially with some of these areas that might not come up naturally in conversation, right? Just because we're talking about things, right. But then providing students with that opportunity to interact with different content, see vocabulary in action through these interactive resources, I think is just a really, a really great point. So I'm glad you brought in that that content area, you know, specific vocabulary because it is something that, you know, can be a struggle. I know as an upper elementary school teacher who taught variety of subject areas, right, including science, right? It could sometimes be a challenge to really get kids to wrap their head around a big concept that maybe didn't feel tangible or like a science experiment, <laugh> type of, of topic,

you know? So I'm so glad that you mentioned, you know, those particular resources now, you know, in addition to, you know, just finding that vetted content, right?

Monica Burns:

These great videos are ones that we're spotlighting an art conversation today. You know, I'm wondering if you have any, you know, tips for teachers who may wanna dive into this, right? Who want to, to get started, right? Introducing this connection between information access and healthy choices to their students. Is there, you know, one place you would go or recommend that they go to, to check out first? Or is there maybe a family connection you would recommend them making before they jump in? Any kind of like getting started tips before we talk a little bit about where to go to find the resources?

Leticia Barr:

Yeah, well absolutely. If you go to asklistenlearn.org, all of our materials are there and teachers can get started by just going to the upper right corner. You'll see a teacher's tab. There's also a tab for parents. You can certainly look through any of those materials, they're all free. But under the teacher tab, you'll find a letter that you can print and send home to parents if you're including these lessons as part of your curriculum. And that letter will introduce the content to parents, talk about what these lessons are, how you're planning to teach the content through the lesson plan that are provided. And it, what I love about it is that it makes a really, really great homeschool connection and it's all there for you to just print out and send home, or you can copy paste it and send it in an email home as well.

Leticia Barr:

There's links that are there that you can use as well to point parents in the direction of our parents' tab so they can access information and they can continue that conversation at home. I mean, we know with teachers, we only spend so much of our time with our students, especially middle school. I only had about 50 minutes a day with students. Mm-Hmm. <Affirmative> Elementary teachers, you have a little bit more of course, but you know, we can only teach so much. And at home it's really important for parents to reinforce the conversations we're having in the learning that's being done in the classroom. So we make it really easy for parents as well. If you note school counselors, we also have a letter for your school counselor to send home as well in case they're plugging into classrooms and teaching these lessons too. So feel free to share those materials.

Monica Burns:

Yeah. Those homeschool home to school connections are so crucial and you, and so much of the work that, that I do and things that I try and share both on the podcast and on the blog are really about making educators' lives easier. So having Right, ready to go materials to send home to families or in addition to the ready to go or adaptable resources that you all offer. It's just, it's just so powerful. So, you know, before we officially finish up here, and I will make sure that anyone who is listening knows exactly where to go, all the links, links to click will be, wherever you're listening to this episode, your, your podcast player of choice. Can you share with someone who maybe they're kind of on the go today or, or listening in or not quite in a place where they can click on their podcast app, you know, where can people go to find these resources? Where can they go to learn more about your work?

Leticia Barr:

Yeah, absolutely. Well asklistenlearn.org is where you can go to find all the materials. And since you've been so great about sharing these materials with your audience before if you've seen the Ask, Listen, Learn website, there are some new additions of lessons created in partnership with Discovery Education, the digital aspect we've been talking about ed tech. So the digital aspect of Discovery Ed is why we've partnered with them on our new developing brain body and behavior activities. So those are there on the website as well. They have a really great SEL L connection mm-hmm. <Affirmative>. And I think, you know, talking about SEL I it feels like something else teachers have to integrate in their day. But honestly, it's something that teachers have been doing naturally all along. So it's not an add-on, keep doing what you're doing, but just be mindful of the fact that when you use the Ask Lesson and learn resources, you're automatically integrating SEL I as well because nobody's job in the education space needs to be harder right now.

Leticia Barr:

So we make everything readily accessible and easy for teachers. And some things to, some things to keep in mind since it's almost April be on the lookout for our Take 20 for Kids campaign. It's Ask, Listen, Learn's 20th anniversary. So we're encouraging parents and educators to take 20 minutes to have a conversation with kids, 20 seconds to validate feelings, maybe 20 deep breaths to make a good decision, just take 20 as part of our 20th anniversary. In addition, April is alcohol responsibility month. So it's a great time to dedicate some energy to these resources, which also contains foundations for social and emotional wellness. So that's a little bit about apps with and learn actually a lot about apps with and learn. So we appreciate you sharing these materials and you can find me techsavvymama.com and Instagram a social, I'm just at @TechSavvyMama everywhere. <Laugh>.

Monica Burns:

That's awesome. Well, Leticia, I'm just so excited about not only our conversation, right, and all of these resources, but even that take 20 challenge I think is just such a great way for listeners to wrap their head around, right, what it looks like to take action with all of these <laugh> big ideas right away. So thank you so much for your time today.

Leticia Barr:

You are so welcome. Thanks so much for having me and sharing these resources with your audience. I appreciate it.

So let's make this EdTech easy with some key points from the episode...

Review resources to make sure they are the right fit.

Help students see the “why” in your answers to their questions.

Embrace multimedia resources to engage students.

Remember, you can find the shownotes and the full list of resources from this episode on classtechtips.com/podcast including all of the ways to connect with the team at Responsibility.org.

Promotion/Reminder

Be sure to check out the Alcohol Responsibility Month resources from Ask, Listen, Learn. Prevention education works and underage drinking rates are down. Arm your students with the tools they need to stay substance free. Visit asklistenlearn.org to access all of the free resources.

Outro

If you are listening to this podcast on Apple Podcasts or Spotify, or another favorite app, don't forget to hit the “Follow” button. When you follow along with the podcast each new episode will download for you automatically so you don't miss a thing. And if you have a moment and are feeling extra helpful today, please leave a rating or review for the podcast.

It helps other educators find this podcast when they are searching for topics like EdTech in their podcast app. Have a great week and check back on Tuesday morning for next week's new episode.

Episode Resources

- Follow Leticia Barr on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), & [Facebook](#)
- [Responsibility.org](#) (Free alcohol prevention resources)
- [Ask, Listen, Learn](#) (Free alcohol prevention resources)
- [How Alcohol Affects the Brain](#) (Free activity)
- [TechSavvyMama.com](#)
- [ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards](#)
- [April is Alcohol #Responsibility Month!](#) (YouTube video)
- [Social-Emotional Learning is Prevention Education](#) (YouTube video)
- [Resources to Help Students Practice Saying NO](#) (Blog post)
- [Lessons on How Marijuana Affects the Developing Brain](#) (Blog post)
- [Teacher Lesson Plans for Red Ribbon Week](#) (Blog post)