Details

4 Key Factors for Selecting "Just Right" Content for Students - 193
In this episode, we'll tackle the often overwhelming process of curating "just right" resources for students. You'll also hear tips for collecting content in one place to make it easier to get into the hands of students.

Link to live show notes: https://classtechtips.com/2022/12/13/content-for-students-193/

Introduction

Happy New Year (if you're listening to this when it goes live) and welcome back to another new episode of the Easy EdTech Podcast!

And if this is your first time listening in, I'm so glad you're here!

My name is Monica Burns – I'm a former NYC public school teacher and started the Easy EdTech Podcast in 2019 to share my tips, tricks and strategies for technology integration. You'll hear stories from my time in the classroom, the work I do now with schools and districts, and my travels to different EdTech events.

Each episode of the podcast is designed to give you ideas you can try yourself, share with a colleague, or bookmark for later in the school year — and my website classtechtips.com/podcast has all of the show notes and resources from today's episode. If you're listening to this episode on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or Google Podcasts, or another podcast player you'll see the show notes link in the description, too.

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Today's Intro

Today I have a short solo episode for you titled *4 Key Factors for Selecting "Just Right" Content for Students* in Digital Spaces. It can be easy to feel overwhelmed with all of the options for content to share with kids. A YouTube search for a math tutorial could generate thousands of results. A search on Google podcasts for student friendly podcasts could offer many different options to sort through. So what should you keep in mind when selecting

content to share with students? Well, as you get ready to kick off a new unit of study, it's a really great time to pause and think about what resources are going to be the very best to share with students.

So in today's episode, I'm going to share a modified excerpt from my book *EdTech Essentials, the Top 10 Technology Strategies For All Learning Environments*. I published it with ASCD last year.I've got a free study guide that goes along with it too that you can find in the books section of my website. So we're going to talk about four factors that can impact your decisions when choosing content to share with students.

And if you're listening today and you are in more of a coaching or advisory role, maybe you are not leading a new lesson or unit of study with students, but you're supporting educators and colleagues in your community as they sort through lots of digital resources. Well this episode is for you too, you can use these tips, these questions in your own planning with your colleagues to help them really think about how to sort through all of the stuff that is out there. And this really falls underneath the curate or curation essential. It's a topic I talk about a lot.

Just a few weeks ago I was in, or I should say just last month I was in Springfield, Illinois, key noting a conference where, you know, curation is typically how I start that conversation on *EdTech Essentials*. So these four tips or these four categories of questions for factors if you will are all about selecting “just right” content for students. And we're going to go ahead and jump into these four. I've got a few guiding questions that go along with each one for you to consider.

Episode Transcript

So selecting "just right" content for students requires consideration of four key factors. The first is learning goals, the second is background knowledge. The third is extension opportunities. And the fourth we'll talk about today is student Interest. Now these four factors can really help you sort through all the noise or all the search results when you are looking for great content to share with students. And you might review these four areas as you plan for an upcoming unit just to decide what's going to be the best fit. There's great videos on YouTube that just might not, might not be the best fit for a particular unit of study for whatever reason, they just don't address some of these four areas.

So that first area of learning goals you might ask yourself or your colleagues or your teammate if you're planning together. What do you want students to know and be able to do? Now the answer to this question might come straight from an objective might come straight from a curriculum that you're working with. These are your objectives of what you're hoping students will know and be able to do.

The next question you might ask around learning goals is what has formative assessment data told you about the areas in which students need additional support? So that first question is more general for the whole class. This is more about small group or individual students and there may be some whole class trends in your formative assessment data that have you think about this piece too. The next question underneath learning goals is what are your different needs and how might you differentiate resources? So even before reviewing formative assessment data or as part of that process, you might identify different needs that students have. So this is less to do with mastery or where students are growing, which we're measuring in our formative assessment data. And more to do with individual needs that may not even connect to the content area. This might be more about do the resources you've chosen include captions? Is there a transcript for audio content that you've picked and chosen? So all of these are underneath that learning goals umbrella, that first category.

Our second category is background knowledge. What will students need so they can make meaning of your course content. So what is something that they really need to know in order to make sense of all the things that you're going to talk about? This could be for everyone or it could be just a couple students that need something in order to make meaning of course content. And it goes along with this second question, what differences and past experiences do your students have? So there may be kids who were all on the same field trip last year and they've got a lot of context for what you're talking about. Or you might have students who are on one side of town that has a different type of connection.

Maybe they're really close to the public library. So those students tend to go there a lot more often. And then you have other students who are really close to a community garden. So they might have a little bit more context about things around the community garden, right? There's lots of things that could influence students' past experiences.

And the third question, what have your observations and conversations with students shown you? So if kids are asking specific questions it might tell you something about what they do or don't know in terms of their background knowledge. So great way to really listen in before you're even kicking off a unit, maybe planting a couple questions and casual conversations that will give you a window into what kids already know about a topic. Our third category is extension opportunities. What areas may you not get a chance to cover in your traditional

lessons that you want to come back to or you wanna provide kids with information on so that they can dig in a little bit deeper on their own time?

Or what cross-curricular connections would you like students to see? So underneath this extension opportunities category, you might find that there's some really great math or social studies or science connections. You may not have time to go deep into it, but you might come across this when you're looking for some of the core content you wanna share with students. And then you might put this in its own collection for them to investigate on their own. And the third question, what content can students explore after a unit or lesson is finished? This may be something that relates to independent study or just making sure kids feel like they can be a lifelong learner around a particular topic.

Now the fourth area or the fourth piece to consider as you're selecting "just right" content for students is student interest. What are they excited about? So what did students show an interest in during the unit or lesson? You might pause halfway and say, everyone was really excited about this thing. I didn't really expect for them to get excited about. So you might decide you're going to pivot and create some, a collection of resources with some great examples that address a subtopic or, or something like that.

When you are planning for the second half of the unit or what additional video clips or podcast episodes would grab their attention, this might be an opportunity to really reflect on student engagement and say, okay, I'm going to find an expert interview that connects to this subtopic cuz this seems to be something kids were asking a lot of questions about. Or what subtopics can you gather resources on to help students dive deeper? This again, could come back to a connection to independent study, right? Or something where kids might do some of their own research or exploration.

So these four areas to consider learning goals, background knowledge, extension opportunities, and student interests are factors that can come into play as you're selecting "just right" content for students. And after you've considered these questions and located "just right" resources for your students, it's time to get them in their hands. And I recently put together a blog post, it's “7 Tools to Help You Build Collections for Students.” I'll link it in the show notes here. And there's lots of ways to create collections. You might already have a learning management system and LMS you use to distribute content to students. I'm pretty sure on that list I put Google Classroom and the materials section. And if you're not sure where to start, that blog post has a bunch of ideas and you may want to use a free tool like Wakelet to gather the resources you'd like to share. And if you haven't used Wakelet before, you can set up a free account. You can make a collection on a topic and add links and

websites. It's just one example. You could also build a website with Google Sites or Adobe Express. So lots of ways to create collections and I'll link out to some ideas for that.

The most important part here is to focus in on the four key factors to help you make decisions on resources or to spark conversations among colleagues on what really is going to be best when there is an overwhelming amount of digital content out there for your students. So to learn more about my book *Ed Tech Essential*s just click the link in the show notes for today. I also have a free study guide. You can get that from classtechtips.com/studyguide. I'll put that in the show notes for you.

But let's finish up this episode like we always do with some tips for making this EdTech easy. So our four factors for selecting "just right" content for students are taking the learning goals into consideration, reviewing student background knowledge, exploring extension opportunities, and taking student interest into consideration. Remember, you can find the show notes and the full list of resources from this episode at classtechtips.com/podcast and looking for episode 193.

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

Consider your learning goals.

Review student background knowledge.

Explore extension opportunities.

Think about student interests.

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priorities each day. These planner pages are totally free, and you can find them at classtechtips.com/planner

Outro

Thank you for tuning into another Tuesday episode of the Easy EdTech Podcast. If you are listening on Apple Podcasts or Spotify, or another favorite app, don't forget to hit the "Follow" button – this way next week's episode will be waiting for you first thing next Tuesday morning.

And if you want to share an idea from the episode with a friend or colleague, text, tweet or post the link on your favorite social media platform – and of course you can tag me @ClassTechTips with any questions!

Episode Resources

- *EdTech Essentials: The Top 10 Technology Strategies for All Learning Environments*
- *EdTech Essentials* FREE study guide
- Google Classroom (Learning management system)
- Wakelet (Content Management and Collaboration tool)
- Adobe Express for Education (Free creation tools)
- Google Sites (Free website builder)
- 7 Tools to Help You Build Collections for Students (Blog Post)
- The Google Classroom Adobe Express Add-On is Now Live! (Blog Post)
- How to Curate and Share Curriculum Resources (Podcast Episode)
- Curate Resources and Create Portfolios with a Free bulb+ Account (Blog Post)
- How to Make Collections of Photos for Students to Use (Podcast Episode)
- Why You Should Add Wakelet to Your Tool Belt with Rachel Coathup (Podcast Episode)
- 3 Types of Audience for Student Work [EdTech Essentials Spotlight] (Podcast Episode)
- How to Help Students Better Navigate Digital Spaces [EdTech Essentials Spotlight] (Podcast Episode)
- 5 Tips for Picking the Best Resources for Your Students [EdTech Essentials Spotlight] (Podcast Episode)
- Exploring the World With Virtual Field Trips [EdTech Essentials Spotlight] (Podcast Episode)