

OLTD 508

App Evaluation

March 2014

Created by:

Tracy Cameron
Michelle Kennedy
Michael Moynihan

Selection of Mobile Apps

The impetus for selecting an app is directly related to emphasizing competencies like self-reliance, problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. As educators we also hope to provide authentic learning experiences that help to connect students to the world beyond school. While there are many different criteria to consider when choosing an educational app, we focused on the premise that as students differ significantly in their needs, learning styles, abilities and experiences, then an educational app must be responsive and flexible to match this diversity, while also engaging and motivating students.

Our initial considerations for selection are based on meeting the learning outcome(s) and reinforcing the skills and content. As we all work with varying levels of learners, differentiation is key—we sought to have our criteria evaluate how well an app met the needs of our learners. This component fits well with the inclusionary practice where the unique learning needs of all students must be supported and valued in the classroom. Overall, we chose to rate apps on seven key indicators of sound educational performance, which were based on the following set of questions:

1. *Are the skills reinforced in the app strongly connected to the learning outcome and key concepts?*
2. *Does the app meet the needs of all students, while also addressing variations in learning needs and learning style?*
3. *Is the app easy to use? How much direct teacher instruction is required? Can students use the app independently?*
4. *Is the app entertaining, motivating and engaging?*
5. *Are skills practiced in an authentic format/problem-based environment?*

The bigger picture when selecting technology for learning is to look beyond the devices and apps; instead, educators must look at evidence-based pedagogy, such as UDL, differentiation, inclusion, personalization, and self-regulation. When considering the “big picture” regardless of the type of device or operating system, we think professionals should consider the following:

1. *How the technology can be used to accelerate conventional learning.*
2. *How the technology can contribute to the acquisition of information and skills.*
3. *How the technology can enable students to demonstrate their performance.*
4. *What role the technology plays in education (Zaied, 2007).*

Educators would be remiss not to see the educational value of apps as tools for learning in the classroom, and as Professor R.H. (Bob) Fryer states we must, “Start from where learners are, with their interests” (Fryer, 2013). Many students are already using and are comfortable with this technology;” it is “where they already are” (Tarte, 2013). What educators must do is find purposeful ways to integrate it into practice. Purposeful, good educational practice for using technology must fit some of the following principles as set out by Arthur Chickering and Zelda Gamson (1987): (1) Encouraging contact between students and faculty (2) Developing reciprocity and cooperation among students (3) Encouraging active learning (4) Providing prompt feedback (5) Emphasizing time on task (6) Communicating high expectations (7) Respecting diverse talents and ways of learning. Our hope is to be able to articulate a clear and solid understanding of the use of apps in the classroom, as this form of technology is not a *one-off*, but will one day be considered common practice in our education system.

References

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Fryer, B. (2013). Future classroom lab interview series 4. Retrieved from http://fcl.eun.org/fcl-interview-series/-/blogs/111650?utm_source=European+Schoolnet+News&utm_campaign=ca94e238de-European+Schoolnet+Newsletter+May+2013+27+2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1113b32100-ca94e238de-34987121

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Tarte, J. (2013, July 30). [Web log message]. Retrieved from <http://www.justintarte.com/2013/07/10-reasons-we-need-social-media-in.html>

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Zaied, A. N. (2007). A framework for evaluating and selecting learning technologies. *The International Arab Journal of Information Technology*, 4(2), 141-147. Retrieved from <http://www.ccis2k.org/iajit/PDF/vol.4,no.2/8-Zaied.pdf>

APP EVALUATION

Evaluator: *Tracy Cameron*

Title: [Book Creator](#)

Subject/Content Area(s): *Writing and Representing*

Target Age Group: *Grade One through Twelve*

Operating System: IOS Android

Cost: \$4.99



Higher Order Thinking Skill(s) Addressed	Creating
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CONTENT	1	2	3	4
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS	Skill(s) reinforced in the app are not clearly connected to the learning outcome.	Skill(s) reinforced in the app are somewhat connected to the learning outcome.	Skill(s) reinforced in the app are connected to the learning outcome.	Skill(s) reinforced in the app are strongly connected to the learning outcome.
VARIATIONS <i>(Single or multiplayer)</i>	Single player use only.	Two players.	Three players.	Four plus players.
DIFFERENTIATION <i>(Ability Levels)</i>	No flexibility to alter settings to meet student needs.	Limited flexibility to alter settings to meet student needs.	Some flexibility to alter settings to meet student needs.	Maximum flexibility to alter settings to meet student needs.
USER FRIENDLY	Teacher needs to give students several reminders of how to use the app.	Teacher needs to give students some reminders of how to use the app.	Teacher needs to give students one reminder of how to use the app.	Students are able to independently use the app.
AUTHENTICITY	Skills are practiced in repetition form.	Skills are practiced in replication form.	Skills are mostly practiced in a realistic learning environment.	Skills are practiced in a realistic and authentic environment.
STUDENT MOTIVATION (Engagement)	Very little student engagement. Students are not interested in using this app.	Students are somewhat engaged. Students are not keen to use this app.	Students are engaged. Students are keen to use this app.	Students are highly engaged. Students are very keen to use this app.
INSTRUCTIONS	Instructions are very brief or non-existent with no examples provided.	Instructions are not very clear and minimal examples are provided.	Instructions are clear, with some examples provided.	Instructions are very clear, easy to follow and many examples are provided

Total 23/28points

Based on the score from the above rubric this app is:

<input type="checkbox"/> <18points Not Recommended	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> >18points Recommended
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<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - amount of help required will be dependent on the age of the students using the app - students may decide to work in groups to create an eBook (amount of users will be dependent on this choice) - younger students may require more assistance in creating their eBook

APP EVALUATION

Evaluator: Tracy Cameron

Title: [Memory for Kids - Numbers](#)

Subject/Content Area(s): Numeracy – Number Identification

Target Age Group: Pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten

Operating System: IOS Android

Cost: \$0.99



Higher Order Thinking Skill(s) Addressed	Remembering
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CONTENT	1	2	3	4
CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS	Skill(s) reinforced in the app are not clearly connected to the learning outcome.	Skill(s) reinforced in the app are somewhat connected to the learning outcome.	Skill(s) reinforced in the app are connected to the learning outcome.	Skill(s) reinforced in the app are strongly connected to the learning outcome.
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<p>Considerations:</p> <p>- can accommodate multiple players even though the specific number of players is not chosen</p>
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APP EVALUATION

Evaluator: Michael Moynihan

Title: [Motion Math HD](#)

Subject/Content Area(s): Math - Fractions

Target Age Group: Kindergarten to Grade 5

Operating System: IOS Android

Cost: \$1.99



Higher Order Thinking Skill(s) Addressed	Understanding
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Considerations:

- students are required to “physically” manipulate an iPod, iPad or iPhone while attempting to solve fraction problems
- does not store or save student progress
- if students exit the game they are required to start over from the beginning

APP EVALUATION

Evaluator: Michael Moynihan

Title: [Lemonade Tycoon](#)

Subject/Content Area(s): Math and Business

Target Age Group: Grade 9+

Operating System: IOS Android

Cost: \$1.99



Higher Order Thinking Skill(s) Addressed	Evaluating
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<input type="checkbox"/> <18points Not Recommended	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> >18points Recommended
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Considerations:

- takes a while for students to get the hang of the game, but it can be a very enjoyable way to learn to manage a business

APP EVALUATION

Evaluator: Michelle Kennedy

Title: [Mindomo](#)

Subject/Content Area(s): Social Studies/English/Science

Target Age Group: Grade 6 +

Operating System: IOS Android

Cost: \$FREE (1 mind map project) or [Educational Pricing \(25 users\)](#)



Higher Order Thinking Skill(s) Addressed	Analyzing
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Considerations:

- Mindomo is a mind mapping tool that may be used to outline, categorize, make inferences and analyze relationships among concepts
- this tool has sharing capabilities such that multiple users are able to edit a mind map

APP EVALUATION

Evaluator: Michelle Kennedy

Title: [Animoto \(Android\)](#) / [Animoto \(IOS\)](#)

Subject/Content Area(s): Social Studies/English/Science

Target Age Group: Grade 6 +

Operating System: IOS Android

Cost: \$Free [Educational Plus](#) or [Educational Pro](#)



Higher Order Thinking Skill(s) Addressed	Applying
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Considerations:

- Animoto is a video presentation tool, which could be applied to illustrate/demonstrate a student's knowledge of a story, show their depth of understanding of a concept/idea/theory, etc.
- Students could use this tool to answer the following: How would the story change if...? How/in what ways is this information useful? What further questions do you have?