

ben kahn: Welcome to UP TechTalk. This is Ben Kahn. I'm the instructional design and technology specialist at the University of Portland. My co-host, Maria is out sick today with a sore throat. Feel better Maria. We're thinking of you. Today I'm joined in the studio by Doctor Rebecca Smith, who's an instructor in our school of education here at the University of Portland. Thanks for coming out Rebecca. It's good to have you.

rebecca smith: Thanks for having me.

ben kahn: I wanted to have you on to talk about, sort of a classroom initiative. I don't know exactly what to call it. It's just a thing that you're doing, right?

rebecca smith: Yes.

ben kahn: This is in your class where you're teaching assessment and evaluation in inclusive classrooms in the Master of Arts program here, right?

rebecca smith: Master of Arts and Teaching. Yup.

ben kahn: Yes.

rebecca smith: MIT program.

ben kahn: Okay. This is called the Appy Hour. Can you just, briefly kind of sum up what's the big idea behind the Appy Hour.

rebecca smith: Sure. In our assessment class, we really focus on three main types of assessments. We do pre-assessment, formative assessment, and [inaudible 00:01:11] assessment, and teach these teacher candidates how to assess student learning in their classrooms, in a variety of ways.

My idea was that, I wanted to make it fun and exciting and a little more interactive with the formative technology tools, because those are very prevalent in education today. They have a lot of benefits for making learning fun, and engaging students. I created this Appy Hour tool, I guess, for my students to do, where they work together in groups, small groups. They have to teach our class a certain formative assessment, technology tool, or app, so to speak.

I model it the first time, and I do Socrative, which is an app, and a website for doing quizzes, or exit slips, or you can also play in class, games, where there's teams and you can compete. It has, kind of a variety of formats. The way that Appy Hour goes, is that the person teaching, first engages the class as students. The students take a quiz, as [crosstalk 00:02:35] if they are my students.

ben kahn: The peers become the students.

rebecca smith: Exactly.

ben kahn: Right.

rebecca smith: The class takes the quiz and it's just for fun and it's short. It allows them to feel what it's like to be a student using the app.

ben kahn: Sure.

rebecca smith: And then, we switch roles. I teach them how to create a quiz in the app, as a teacher, that then they can use, and hopefully they're creating something relevant and useful that they can use the next day, or the next week.

ben kahn: Right.

rebecca smith: It can be content based, or it can also just be community building, fun thing, or review, or an exit slip. There's a variety of intentions behind the formative assessments.

ben kahn: Sure. Yeah. Thinking about the different kinds of assessment, then, would you say these kind of technologies and apps, they're mostly, really tailored for that formative assessment?

rebecca smith: Yes. The majority of 'em are for sure. There are tools and books out there that really push that this is the formative way to [crosstalk 00:03:40] assess students. However, they can be used as a pre-assessment very easily. Some of the apps are more catered towards data ...

ben kahn: Sure.

rebecca smith: You can track your students, especially if you upgrade to the paid version, or your [crosstalk 00:03:54] school upgrades. Yes. Most of these are free apps that are more used in the formative assessment realm.

ben kahn: Gotcha. Seems like the tech tools, sort of lend themselves especially well to that, just because formative assessment is usually done, when you're kind of like, in the mix of the classroom and doing activities. Maybe there's a lot going on. This way you get a chance for students to be able to chime in and show what they know in a fun, sort of way.

rebecca smith: Yes. It's kind of a check-in. It can also be used as a review for students. Review games are really fun to do. It can be hard to get the individual feedback, so that's why it's not always ... It can't be the only way. We talk a lot about balanced assessment ...

ben kahn: For sure. Yeah.

rebecca smith: using multiple forms. It's a great way to promote, you know, collaborative learning, in a fun environment.

ben kahn: Gotcha. And so normally, if you're thinking about taking these things into a K12 classroom, or whatever, these aren't graded activities. They're not assignments, or anything like that.

rebecca smith: Right. For me, I give my student a participation grade for the class, for participating. That's what I encourage them to do for their own students, no matter what level. And then, of course, in my class, the students, when they present they get ... That's an assignment grade.

ben kahn: Sure. Well yes. Right.

rebecca smith: That's a homework grade, and a presentation and all that. Right. In their classrooms, it's definitely more of a check-in, to see how they're learning, and to reinforce concepts, or maybe to introduce new ones.

ben kahn: Sure. For your students, as they're approaching this project, do you think that they're going out and researching a bunch of tools, or do they have one in mind, that they want to share maybe? Is it just kind of a mix?

rebecca smith: Right. Great question. At the beginning of the semester, when I start my course, I do Socrative for them, and we experience that. And then, I provide a list of, I don't know, maybe 20 ...

ben kahn: Okay.

rebecca smith: Different apps, that they can choose from. They choose their groups based on the date they wanna present and that kind of thing. Then, they can bring new apps to me. I tell them, "If you have another idea, something you use in your classroom that would be great for us to learn, just pitch it to me." I'm totally open to that. My list has grown. You know, it started pretty small, based on my own resources and knowledge, and then ... They're always learning new apps too [crosstalk 00:06:26] from their students, or from their own experience.

ben kahn: I see. You've grown, kind of your roster ...

rebecca smith: Yes.

ben kahn: Just from contributions of different students.

rebecca smith: I have too many now. I'm like, [crosstalk 00:06:37] good. I could have Appy Hour every day for the whole year.

ben kahn: There's a lot of them out there. I know, right? Your learning new tools as well, that are brought in.

rebecca smith: Yes.

ben kahn: In terms of ... This is sort of an interesting question, from a technology perspective. I'm just wondering, in a lot of these K12 classrooms, there's one-to-one programs, or iPads, or Chrome books, or things like that.

rebecca smith: Yes.

ben kahn: How do you deal with that here at the university level? We don't necessarily have a policy around that, where we're issuing iPads to every student or everything. Are you finding that students are always bringing their devices, and that you can count on that, or are you checking out laptop carts, or things like that?

rebecca smith: Yes. That's a great question. I find that all my students do have their own, mainly laptops. Some use iPads, but the majority bring a laptop to class. That is a requirement to bring some type of device. I make that clear the first day of class, and on the syllabus. I always write in the syllabus and tell them that, if that's a financial difficulty for them ...

ben kahn: Sure.

rebecca smith: that the help desk checks out computers for free for students. This idea of technology in the classroom is definitely an equity issue.

ben kahn: Sure.

rebecca smith: We address that in class. Some of their schools are one-to-one. A lot of Chrome books, a lot of iPad school. Most of the K12 schools don't do laptops.

ben kahn: Sure.

rebecca smith: Usually they're, you know, tablets of some sort.

ben kahn: Yeah.

rebecca smith: Some schools don't have that access, and so that was a feedback criticism, or critique I got [crosstalk 00:08:10] from my summer class, saying, "You know, my school doesn't have access to technology. It's a big effort for me to check out the cart, or go to the computer lab." This Appy Hour technology based apps, felt like it was taking too much time. She said she would rather have ...

ben kahn: She wanted to focus elsewhere.

rebecca smith: Yeah. Focus [crosstalk 00:08:34] elsewhere, or also broaden it to non-technology formative assessments ...

ben kahn: Yeah.

rebecca smith: Which, I thought was a great criticism. However, I think this semester then, I have reconsidered the way that I run it in my class. We don't do it quite as much. I've ...

ben kahn: Sure.

rebecca smith: pulled back on the time I gave to it. I do think that you have to accept that we're in the technology world.

ben kahn: Right.

rebecca smith: And that kids are on their phones, or computers, or video games all the time. Inside/outside the classroom. I really believe that in education, we have to say, "These tools can be used for learning also."

ben kahn: Right.

rebecca smith: And not just for entertainment, or social networking, or [crosstalk 00:09:19] whatever.

ben kahn: Yeah. Right. You don't want to be the one that's kind of like, putting your head in the sand and saying, [crosstalk 00:09:25] "Well, there's no place for technology in the classroom."

rebecca smith: Exactly.

ben kahn: You might feel like you're getting a little bit left behind there.

rebecca smith: Right. I kind of want to push my students to say, even if it's not maybe, as convenient, they don't have one-to-one in their classroom, that then maybe you just need to plan once a month that you're gonna have this cahoot, you know ...

ben kahn: Yeah.

rebecca smith: game to [crosstalk 00:09:45] review. I know. Students love it.

ben kahn: I know. Actually, adults love it too. I've done it.

rebecca smith: Yes. I know. I've played it too, [crosstalk 00:09:51] whenever we do it. It's really fun.

ben kahn: Cool. Okay. Well, what, if any kind of takeaway is ... You did this for the first time over the summer. It actually sounds like that was a good takeaway. Was there anything else that you, kind of learned by seeing students, kind of participate in this model?

rebecca smith: Yes. I think it's an inclination in our higher ed classes, to ... Students were very comfortable presenting on it, but it was hard for them to remember, or to incorporate the actual doing it, as far as having the students be the learners first. That happened just this semester too. The first group presented on Quizlet, and they jumped right into, showing us how to use it, from a teacher's perspective.

ben kahn: Gotcha.

rebecca smith: Here's all the things you can do. And so, it's fine. That was fine for, you know, a learning, but I had to come back and say, "You know, I really want us to do it as students first.

ben kahn: Yeah.

rebecca smith: We have to feel it, so we know what it's like to be a student learner ..."

ben kahn: Right.

rebecca smith: before we just use it as a teacher."

ben kahn: You're, kind of emphasizing the use of the tool should be student centered, and we should consider that experience first, and make sure that's good ...

rebecca smith: Yes.

ben kahn: before we learn how to use the [crosstalk 00:11:08] tool, right?

rebecca smith: Yeah.

ben kahn: That's a great point.

rebecca smith: The next group that just did last week, they did ... It's called Factile. It's basically Jeopardy.

ben kahn: Okay.

rebecca smith: And so, it was really fun. They created a Jeopardy game, based on our class content, so it was all about assessment. They used our textbook for their questions. We had teams. It was just fun. We did it as students first.

ben kahn: Cool.

rebecca smith: That's really important I think, so that we can see both sides [crosstalk 00:11:38] and make sure that the learning is really happening.

ben kahn: Awesome. In general, you would say that the reaction from the students was positive about learning about these tools?

rebecca smith: I think so. In the summer I gathered a lot of feedback throughout the summer about Appy Hour, and made adjustments as I went along. And then, for this semester, we do it about every other week, instead of every class. The semester's also longer.

ben kahn: Yeah. Yeah.

rebecca smith: I've also ... Yeah. I feel like the students, they get excited about it. In the summer class, I think it might have been the timing of the class, but they actually brought in Apps, or, I'm sorry ... yeah apps, like appetizers.

ben kahn: Oh.

rebecca smith: I was like, if you [crosstalk 00:12:27] want ...

ben kahn: I misunderstood the assignments.

rebecca smith: Right. I'm like, it's not happy hour. We're not gonna be drinking, but if you wanna bring snacks that's fine. And then someone was like, "Let's bring apps." They were super excited.

ben kahn: Yeah.

rebecca smith: They would bring in food ...

ben kahn: Yeah. Yeah.

rebecca smith: It was a really fun, festive environment. During the school year, it's a little different. My students come from teaching all morning.

ben kahn: Right.

rebecca smith: They already ate lunch, so they come at one. They're tired, and ... They get engaged. It's fun. We do it at the beginning of class. In the summer, I tried out, you beginning of class, end of class, middle of class. I got feedback on that too. People liked it at the beginning, as [crosstalk 00:13:12] kind of a starter.

ben kahn: Think that makes sense.

rebecca smith: Yeah.

ben kahn: Cause it is fun. It kind of forces everyone to come out of their shell a little bit, and you know, they're kind of inherently social [crosstalk 00:13:21] experiences.

rebecca smith: It's super nice for me. I love when I can turn my classroom over to my students, especially because my students are all teachers.

ben kahn: Sure. Yeah.

rebecca smith: It's really fun to see them teaching. They kind of transform into their teacher voice ...

ben kahn: Cool.

rebecca smith: and their teacher ... They wear appropriate teacher clothing, and it's just ... You know, you kind of see 'em in a different way and you're [crosstalk 00:13:43] like, "Oh. Now I know how it feels to be a student in your class."

ben kahn: Wow.

rebecca smith: I can give them that feedback and be like, "it's really fun to listen to you. You're really engaging. Your voice is really ..." Whatever their strengths are, they kind of come out ...

ben kahn: I see.

rebecca smith: in their own teaching. That's really fun to see.

ben kahn: Awesome. Well, you have to admit, since I have [inaudible 00:14:04] access, I was lurking in your class a little bit. I looked at some of the forums, where people were sharing what they'd done and they'd had some really great contributions. They were actually making guides about how to use the different apps. It was just really cool to see. I think, great job with Appy Hour.

rebecca smith: Oh. Thanks.

ben kahn: I hope to see it continue, and for other people to help, kind of learn from what you're doing as well.

rebecca smith: Thanks.

ben kahn: Okay. I think we're gonna move on to the next segment of the show. We normally do, what I call, the app pick of the week, where we just choose a smart phone app, or a gadget, or whatever that has been fun for us over the last weeks, or months. Since we're talking all about assessment apps today, I thought we could do an assessment app of the week. Did you have one that you learned about, that you especially liked, or you have one that stands out to you as your favorite?

rebecca smith: Sure. Last week, my students did Quizlet. They also did it in the summer. This seems like a really great, formative app for teachers. It has a lot of variety in it. You can do movies, maps. You can do matching. It's really great for foreign language classes, because they have flashcards.

ben kahn: Sure.

rebecca smith: You can do a lot of the drilling with the flashcards. You can also do ... They presented a picture of maybe a dining room, and so, then you can label, in another language, label all of the parts of the dining room.

ben kahn: Yeah.

rebecca smith: It's kind of like practicing vocabulary. You can create quizzes and then you can also use quizzes that other users have created.

ben kahn: Right.

rebecca smith: You can sort of search in there.

ben kahn: You don't have to start from scratch with ...

rebecca smith: No.

ben kahn: Yeah.

rebecca smith: You can edit those as well. And so, yeah. There was just a lot of variety. It can be a little overwhelming. I guess, that could be one of the criticisms of it, but I think it allows teachers to have, you know, to diversify their assessments in a creative way for students.

ben kahn: Sure. I think students just even use that on their own too, just as a more efficient way, rather [crosstalk 00:16:11] than writing out 500 note cards.

rebecca smith: Yes.

ben kahn: I know in our school of nursing, that ones pretty popular.

rebecca smith: Oh okay. That makes sense.

ben kahn: There's some pretty brutal classes, where there's remembering a lot of ... I don't even know the terminology. I'm gonna mess it up, if I try. In the pharma class, I know that's a popular one.

rebecca smith: I bet. That makes sense.

ben kahn: Cool. That's a great pick. I think I am going to pick Cahoot. I've probably done that one in the past, but it's just so much fun. I've even used it for workshops, as kind of an icebreaker, and things like that, with adults, just ... If anyone doesn't know, Cahoot is basically a little quiz kind of a game, where people can answer questions from their smart phones, or their computers. It keeps track of how quickly you answer. It gives you points for the right answer, and how fast you answer. It becomes, kind of this competition. You'll see people get really mad that they fall behind a little bit in their time, and they're like, "Next time I'm gonna answer faster than you."

rebecca smith: Yes. [crosstalk 00:17:05] It gets pretty intense.

ben kahn: It gets intense. That's one to be careful with.

rebecca smith: Yes.

ben kahn: It is a lot of fun.

rebecca smith: But, it is fun.

ben kahn: Yeah.

rebecca smith: Yes.

ben kahn: All right. Well that's pretty much gonna do it for UP Tech Talk Podcast. The podcast where we explore the use of technology in the classroom, one conversation at a time. You can visit our website at sites.up.edu/techtalk. If you're on social media, you can find me @thebenkahn. That's t,h,e,b,e,n,k,a,h,n, on Twitter. You can also follow Maria @erbfarm. That's e,r,b,f,a,r,m. Rebecca, I know you're on Twitter as well.

rebecca smith: Yeah.

ben kahn: Would you like to share your handle?

rebecca smith: Sure. It's Rebeccadsmith.

ben kahn: Awesome. Well, thanks so much again for coming on.

rebecca smith: Thanks for having me.

ben kahn: It was a lot of fun talking to you.

rebecca smith: Yeah. It's great.

ben kahn: And, for listeners, thanks for tuning in. We'll see you next time.

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