

"It's harder to do the negative behaviors when the phones are out and the teacher is walking around," he says.

### Use smartphones to stay organized and assess learning

A great app for keeping students on top of their work is Remind101, where students voluntarily sign up to receive a text reminder when they have an upcoming assignment due. Not only does it help students better organize their assignments, but it's also engaging parents. Halla says many parents sign up for the app to keep track of their children's homework.

"I was stunned by how many more kids started doing the homework," he says. "I just thought they didn't want to do the work, but it was more that they were unorganized and had forgotten to do it."

Aside from the education-friendly apps now available, Halla has found online resources that can help support classroom productivity and be easily accessed via smartphone.

Halla recommends polleverywhere.com to test students' knowledge of their subject material before an upcoming test. Teachers can set up a question or questions based on what the students are currently learning in class, and then provide them with a text number. Students see the question with several potential answers—usually an A, B, C, D, or E template—and then they'll text in the answer. As the students' answers are compiled, the site creates a graph showing their responses. Polleverywhere.com also costs nothing to use for a survey of 40 or fewer participants.

"It's a good way to see how the students are comprehending the material," Halla says. "For example, if a lot of students are picking option C and B is really the answer, then I can go back and review the material again."

### Apps for the social sciences

Halla recommends a number of apps that are perfect for teaching social science courses. There's World Wiki, an app that provides demographic information for almost 250 countries around the world; iAmerica, an app with information about each U.S. President and the history of the White House; U.S. Constitution, so students can have easy access to one of the most important American documents; and many others that are designed to provide students with further classroom support.

Halla has created a list of some of the most useful apps he's found for the classroom, which is available on his blog. While not all apps are available on Android devices, the large majority of them can be accessed on iPhones, iPads, and iPods. Also, before implementing smartphones or iPads into your own classroom, find out which apps are approved for classroom use in your district; and, if you find one you like that isn't on the approved list, consult with your school and district administrators before proceeding.

### Let fun foster productivity

As a final tip, Halla suggests being open to letting students have some fun with their devices. He was surprised to discover that his students are quieter and more focused on their assignments when they are allowed to listen to their music during individual classwork—provided they use headphones and the music is not too loud.