Advantages, Issues, and Troubleshooting with Response System Technology

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Some of the advantages of using software response systems or student polling systems include, but are not limited to: increased student engagement during lectures, heightened student awareness of their own learning strengths and needs, and more specific and timely feedback to instructors regarding student's comprehension of course content (Voekel & Bennet, 2013; Barnett, 2014; Mayer, et al., 2008). Because of these reasons, I am utilizing this technology in the classes I am teaching this semester, and I plan to continue using them as long as the technology remains relevant and the evidence continues to support this practice. The only reason for not utilizing it at this point, in my opinion, is if newer and better technology were developed that resulted in significantly increased academic performance in addition to the benefits I cited. I am basing this consideration on the fact that while the evidence shows gains in student performance, they were fairly small and less significant than the other factors that make the technology desirable (Mayer, et al. 2008, Voekel & Bennet, 2013).

A number of issues could become apparent when incorporating this technology in designing classroom activities: the software may not be accessible due to network issues, the classroom may not be equipped with a way to view the poll, students may lack access to phones or computers that have internet access, or the fit between the content covered and the way in which the technology is utilized is poor. As Janice Fernheimer recommended in her statement on teaching with technology, having a contingency plan when working with technology is essential. It is important to have an alternative way to deliver the lesson content if the technology is disabled. In the event that the system was down or the room I was using was not set up for internet, I could make paper copies of the poll questions and have the students complete them that way. As was suggested last night, I make certain that I have extra laptops and iPads available, in the event that students don't have access to one of their own. As for the last issue, I go back to Fernheimer's advice again, "Be flexible and open to experiment, play, and change". Practicing with the software ahead of when I need to use it, offering new approaches with technology during lower-impact lessons, and planning lessons carefully to align learning objectives with the selected technology are all ways I can resolve those issues.