

Chapter 7


Technology Engagement in the Social Studies: What's Happening in Kentucky

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ABSTRACT

This study compares 2025 social studies teacher technology use with that of same school district social studies teacher technology use in 2015 (Lennex & Perrin, 2016). The study provides data ascertaining how technology is being used to 1) actively engage students in Kentucky social studies classrooms and 2) the technology's perceived effects. The survey results indicated that teachers most often used videos, case studies and demonstrations/ displays to engage students. The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) was concerning for teachers. Many of the respondents either used AI sparingly (61%) or did not use it at all. Instructional technology presentation skills appeared acceptable with a majority of teachers (80%) stating they felt comfortable using technology in the classroom. Teachers responding (90%) indicated they engaged students in learning activities at least twice per week. This paper presents many of kinds of engaging technologies used by Kentucky teachers and current concerns.

DOI: 10.4018/979-8-3373-6603-6.ch007

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INTRODUCTION

Between 2015 and 2025, public schools have been in constant evolution toward more fluent use of technologies in the classroom. During this time, Google Apps for Education (GAPE) such as Google Classroom, have become a primary method for sharing content and delivering assignments to 5-12 students (Lennex, 2022). To what extent is technology being used to actively engage learners with content? Two SurveyMonkey surveys were conducted with Kentucky social studies teachers, grades 5, 8, and 11 with one survey in 2015 (Lennex and Perrin, 2016) and the other in 2025 (see Figure 1). The research questions in both studies were: 1) What kinds of technology are being used, and 2) To what extent is technology being used to engage learners.

In 2025, teachers in grades 5, 8, and 11, in 33 (N=37; response rate 57%) of the same school districts were asked to describe their use of technologies toward student engagement in active learning. Respondents (57%) reported using videos, case studies, and demonstrations or displays. There were many engaging technologies identified from the survey. This paper describes the kinds of technology teachers are using, their levels of engagement in active learning, and concerns for teaching social studies with technology.

LITERATURE REVIEW FOR ENGAGING TECHNOLOGY

Technology use in social studies in many ways parallels its use in other disciplines. The consistent use in today's classroom of learning management systems, such as Google Classroom and associated apps, can be seen in P-12. Technology is a tool that should be used to support the curriculum and meaningfully within a student's life (Torchia, 2022). This translates to active engagement in learning. Hodges (2018) asks, "To put it simply, engagement is a measurement of how involved, enthusiastic and committed one is to an organization. Whether you're a student, a teacher or a parent, this simple definition holds true. What is your psychological relationship with the school?" (para. 3). The literature review explores instructional technologies that actively engage learners.

Our students exist in a culture of technology. If we can find ways to harness the gifts of this culture, it will enable us to teach social studies to our students in a more exciting manner and will make our jobs just a little easier in turning our classrooms into student-centered instructional places. In addition to turning our classrooms towards student-centered instruction, incorporating technology also readies them for many aspects that they will encounter in the electronic world (Wilson et al., 2011; 71). Heafner (2004) found that technology made a vast difference in attention to

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