Individualized Learning Project Reflection

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The piece of technology that I used is [Polleverywhere](https://www.polleverywhere.com/).com. Polleverywhere was created to collect accurate audience feedback during presentations. In the introductory video, a professor stands in front of his students and asks for a “show of hands” which he tries to count from his podium. It proves to be confusing and inaccurate. In contrast, Polleverywhere allows students to “raise their hands” by using a web interface that can be accessed with cellphones or other computers. In the video, a phone number appears on the professor’s overhead projection with options: A) yes or B) no. The students then take out their phones and text A or B to the number, and a numbered bar graph appears on the projection. This is a much better result than the “show of hands.”

Polleverywhere can be used for answering questions like the one in the video, as well as for voting, and there is also a feature that allows students to write short responses in the feature called “Open Ended Text Wall.” In that feature students’ texts will show up on the board in backwards chronological order. There is a Q&A/Brainstorm interface where students can text their ideas or questions, and then other students can vote on those texts. There is also a clickable image feature where the teacher can upload an image (map, graph, anatomical diagram) and students will have to click on a section of it. This feature can’t be used with a text message. Everything is anonymous.

For my trial with Polleverywhere, I created a [lesson plan](Polleverywhere%20LOTF%20Lesson%20Plan.docx) for a unit on *Lord of the Flies* that involved a debate of the question: “Is Ralph guilty for Simon’s death?” We divided into two teams: the defense and the prosecution, and each team had a spokesperson give a two-minute opening statement and a one-minute rebuttal. During the opening statements and rebuttals, audience members could participate in the Open Ended Text Wall projected on the classroom Promethean Board. After the final rebuttal, the teams dispersed and voted as individuals on whether Ralph was innocent or guilty. Two out of three classes condemned him.

Overall, the lesson was a blast. The kids loved it and many said it was their favorite class so far. All were very much engaged during the parts involving technology, and some wanted to remain afterward to continue the discussion. It encouraged critical thinking and assimilation of textual knowledge. However, there were many aspects that could have been improved.

The only guideline that I had for the Open Ended Text Wall was to keep comments school appropriate—which was enforceable by the consequence of shutting off the live feed—and to keep it related to what the spokesperson was saying. That last guideline was very hard to enforce and many students only commented to get laughs. It kept everyone focused on the Promethean board, but the board often had nothing to do with what the spokesperson was saying. Next time I will have to have stricter guidelines for commenting. As the creator of the poll, I have access to a list of the texts, so perhaps I should have announced that I would pick one comment at the close of the texting session to award for its relevance. This would be incentive for the students to text only relevant and thoughtful comments. Also, the groups were too big, so I could have chosen a debate that offered more than two opposing viewpoints.

All in all this activity was highly engaging. Students jumped at the change to use their technology, and the discussion really encouraged deep thinking. I only used one aspect of the technology, and I could use it in the future for different applications.