

Teachers/Schools Embrace Snapchat to Engage Students in Learning



Are you familiar with SnapChat and how it's used not only by your students but the colleges and universities in the U.S. Given the photo-sharing app's enormously popularity, you should be.

People digest visual information up to 60,000 times faster than written information. This might be one reason for the meteoric rise of SnapChat among teens and young adults. SnapChat, a social media app, lets users send images and videos to followers that then disappear after a short amount of time (no longer than 10 seconds).

According to a recent study, **77%** of college students use the app at least once a day. In the past several years, young adults have left Facebook for other social media platforms, SnapChat being just one example. Seeing images rather than reading them are **good for our visual learners**, who learn much better by seeing what the subject is rather than having to learn about it with ears.

Here are a few examples of Snapchat uses in the classroom that I have found:

NPR spoke with one New York teacher, Michael Britt, who uses Snapchat to help students while studying for exams.

"Since last fall, Britt has built Snapchat videos into his introductory psychology class. He takes 'snaps' of real-life examples of what he's teaching in class, and posts it to the app. He does this right before exams, so his students will look at them when they're studying," NPR said.

Since students are already constantly checking Facebook, Snapchat and the like, it takes little additional effort for them to check out what their teacher has posted.

Britt's students have said the effort may significantly help them perform better on exams.

"Salma Metwally, a freshman in Britt's class last semester, thinks that helped raise her grades. She recalls a specific snap of Britt's when she was learning about the biology of the brain. The snap featured Britt's niece in her ballerina tutu, standing on one leg. Britt used the snap as an example of how the cerebellum in the brain controls balance," NPR said.

More Snapchat ideas in the classroom:

- This opens up an opportunity for teachers to have a discussion with students about digital citizenship, responsibility, and the future effects of the things we do online. One teacher in London took a screenshot of a private snap of herself (safe for work) and then posted it on Facebook for everyone to see (a common and likely occurrence for snaps). In the caption, she asked for everyone to like it and share it so she could show her students how far her “private” photo’s reach could be. 19,000 liked it and 25,000 shared it.
- Collaboration – It does have chat and video functions, even though the transcripts go away. But if everyone is using Snapchat already, it might be the best option for students to work together. And because there won’t be adults around, they might be more honest.
- Flashcards – There are some examples of ELL students using Snapchat as a way to visually practice their language skills. The teacher might give them a list of vocabulary words and they have to find pictures. Or, in reverse, the student is shown a picture and only has 10 seconds to identify it in the target language.
- Stories – The stories function obviously allows students to create a visual narrative on the topic of their choice. They only last 24 hours, but it might work as some form of assessment using a rubric.
- Create a scavenger hunt for prospective students attending an orientation. One school showed its followers images of its mascot at various spots on campus.
- Along the same vein, TWC has used the account to entertain students. This year, to coincide with Valentine’s Day, the school made five homemade valentines, hid them throughout campus, and then sent followers a “Snap” of the locations.
- **Another example** of community building comes from **Eastern Washington University** (EWU). EWU set out to use SnapChat to portray the student fan experience from the perspective of the fans themselves. The school used the app during a football playoff season in conjunction with SnapChat’s “Stories” feature, which strings together snaps from events into one central location.
- The **University of Houston** has used SnapChat to keep students updated on campus news. Last year, the campuses shut down because of icy roads. Followers of the University’s account received a Snap. Other schools have used it to send out reminders for important deadlines for class registration and scholarships.
- Recently, some universities have begun using SnapChat as another way to reach prospective athletes. In August of this year, the rules governing whether athletic recruiters could use SnapChat to communicate with student-athletes changed. Coaches of all Division I sports, including football, track & field, and swimming & diving, now have the ability to use SnapChat to communicate with prospects.

- At Denver High School in Iowa, Snapchat was used for Foreign Languages purposes when a teacher named Ms. Huff decided to use it to teach her students new vocabulary words. Those 10 second clips come in handy when you have to try to guess a word in another language quickly. "It stimulates your brain," said one student in Huff's class.

Ms. Huff's students had to take real-life examples of these vocabulary words and caption the photo with a word in Spanish. Then, the photos were saved into the Snapchat story allowing students to view it for a full 24 hours; this allowed students to see the word and try to remember it better. To get in touch and see how her students with doing, she created a classroom account and discussed the words they posted in their Snapchat story. It is a great way to get students to remember their vocabulary words!"