

3 tips from Harvard professor on implementing technology in class



Harvard Kennedy School professor Dan Levy shared strategies for implementing technology in the classroom and improving learning.

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According to [Harvard Kennedy School](#) professor [Dan Levy](#), **one of the everyday challenges** faced by **professors** is that they don't know how much each student learns during class. This happens because teachers **don't know about the personal learning** of each student.

*"In an ideal world, **we'd know what's in the mind** of each **student** and we'd realize what they're learning. This is one **goal where technology** can help to **improve learning in classes.**"*

Through **using technology** and **thinking about this issue**, the Harvard professor shares **some practices** that will help **educators to teach** and **students to learn**

more and thus improve their academic performance.

“In an ideal world, we’d know what’s in the mind of each student and we’d realize what they’re learning.”

1.- Technology to improve understanding in class

Levy says that one of the **first steps** for implementing **technology in the classroom** is **identifying needs** and distinguishing between tools that help to understand each student’s **individual learning** and **tools** that allow what is happening in the classroom to be integrated **collectively**.

***“The technology** that allows us to know **what our students are thinking** one at a time often gives us a different impression of the classroom to what they’re really thinking,” he says.*

This specialist explains that **a class can sometimes give the impression of being effective**, in terms of understanding the content, thanks to a **select group** of students **leading discussion of the content**.

***“The problem with this discussion** is that we **don’t know what the other 40 students** who didn’t speak **were thinking**,”* explains the professor.

Making this **distinction and identifying the problem** can help to choose **technology that adapts** to students’ **learning needs**.



2.- Asking invites dialog

In response to the above problem, Professor Dan Levy proposes the **polling** or survey strategy as a solution.

Polling consists of teachers using an application such as [PollLev](#) or [Menti](#) to ask the class about **a topic presented during the session** and students **anonymously answering the question**.

*“Besides knowing how many students answered correctly, this **encourages students to participate**. If I were to ask the class openly, only a few people would answer,”* suggests Levy.

This strategy serves to know **which concepts are well understood** by each student and **enables any doubts to be cleared up** without fear of making mistakes, as only the teacher has access to the individual answers.

*“The act of **answering individually** sparks an interest in knowing what the answer is based on how others answered, the teacher will know whether to **review the topic or go on to the next question**, and this **will give rise to discussion***

between students and teachers,” he adds.

“The technology allows us to know what our students are thinking, giving us an impression of how they really think.”

3.- Teamwork with shared documents

Finally, the Harvard expert suggests implementing the **use of collaborative tools** such as **shared documents** to encourage **teamwork, start discussion** in class, and ensure that **everyone participates**.

*“Sometimes, I’m on a Zoom call and see that a group hasn’t even written their names. **The document is a way to monitor that,**”* he says.

According to the professor, one of the **advantages** of using **shared and collaborative documents** is that they enable **students to take responsibility** for their participation in class during team activities.

*“You expect that **they can present what they wrote**, whereas if you say, ‘Discuss this and we’ll talk about it afterwards,’ who knows if they can. This **obliges students to do something** because they know that **they may be called upon to present after this activity,**”* he explains.



Harvard professor Dan Levy at the School of Government and Public Transformation.

For this expert, the **greatest advantage of these tools** is that they are **accessible and easy to use** by the students, so they don't require extra effort or training to learn to use them.

*"These techniques **help us to find out** what **our students are thinking** and not to trust our telepathic powers to tell us," Levy concludes.*

About Dan Levy

Dan Levy is a renowned professor from the **John F. Kennedy School of Government** at **Harvard University**.

He is currently a Senior Lecturer in **Public Policy** and the faculty director of the [**Public Leadership Credential**](#).

In addition, **he teaches courses in quantitative methods, policy analysis, and program evaluation** to **improve learning** and teaching techniques in the classroom.

Over the course of two days, **Dan Levy** gave a workshop on Technology and Teaching organized by professors at the **School of Government and Public Transformation** in **Mexico City**.

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