

THE CLASSROOM GUIDE TO THE APPLE WATCH



*The Next Big Thing To Cause Classroom Disruptions
Coming To Your Students Wrist This Month*

PASSING NOTES 2015-STYLE

It has been happening as long as there have been students in classrooms. Surreptitious notes and communications passed in the classroom, subtle hand signals, text messages covertly typed, students are going to attempt to communicate, there is no way around it.

Now it is important to understand that students communicating and interacting is a good thing, when it is an intended part of the classroom instruction. But when it isn't part of the lesson plan, it is a distraction that can have a detrimental effect on the student's attention and the overall classroom environment.

Teachers know that it happens, but for every one that they catch, there are surely several more that go unnoticed. Up until now there have been the telltale clues that gave the student's ruse away. Whether it's the teacher seeing the note being passed, or the subtle signal being passed between students, the teacher's eye is always watching.

However, in a classroom with 30 or more students, it is impossible for the teacher's two eyes to see all that is happening in the classroom. Besides, there are lessons to be taught. Even in today's day and age of constant texting, teachers know how to spot the students that are texting, it's usually the kids spending an inordinate amount of time looking into their lap and smiling.

But it isn't always easy, there's the blonde kid in 3rd period with a minor case of Tourette's that fidgets around quite a bit, or the girl in 5th period with a hyperactivity disorder that just can't seem to sit still. Couple that with all of the kids that had too much sugar and caffeine at lunch and you have a classroom that is full of tapping pens or pencils, nervous ticks, and every other possible bit of movement a student can muster.

But there is new technology that really has the potential to be a game changer in the classroom, and I am going to guess that you never even thought of the potential implications this device had in the classroom. The Apple Watch launches April 24th and if early estimates by Piper Jaffray analyst Gene Munster are correct, there will be over one million of them on the wrists of consumers very quickly.

CLASSROOM IMPLICATIONS

So what does this have to do with the classroom? Potentially, it could have a lot to do with the classroom. There are two specific features on the watch that could revolutionize classroom shenanigans and cheating. These two features are called 'Tap' and 'Sketch.'



Let's start with **"Tap."** Tap will allow an Apple Watch user to get the attention of another Apple Watch user by tapping on the face of their watch. When the sender taps, the recipient will feel two very subtle haptic taps on their wrist. You shouldn't think of this as being similar to a vibrating phone that can be heard by several in a quiet environment. This haptic feedback has been designed such that it won't be missed by the user, but also won't be noticed by anyone else. That's right each distinctive tap is felt. While we assume that most students don't know Morse code, it isn't unreasonable to imagine students "tapping" each other across the classroom. Apple even says it on their website. "You can even customize taps for different people.

Now, let's look at **"Sketch."** Like Tap, Sketch allows the user to send something to another user's watch. The watch face becomes a digital whiteboard, where the sender can sketch a picture or word out on the watch face with their finger, and it appears on the other user's watch and then, get this, it fades away. So if a teacher or another student were to look at the watch face, it would appear blank unless they were receiving a sketch message at that exact moment. (Examples of these two apps can be seen at <http://www.apple.com/watch/new-ways-to-connect/>)



Maybe the classroom implications of this aren't obvious at first. However, teachers, ever mindful of potential nefarious uses for anything, see the downside potential. In fact the very first teacher we brought this to said "That is so wrong. That is just infuriating! Do they have any idea how much that is going to be used by the students to pass notes and worse, to cheat on their tests? I hope my school

bans them in the classroom so I don't have to."

We wondered if the concerns were genuine, or just fear of what is possible. We have all seen technology adapt over the years, and it's not hard to see how there might be a genuine potential for this to be a distraction in the classroom.

So we talked to a few more teachers about the idea, sharing the Apple keynote with them and asking for their thoughts. The first thing that they all wanted to convey was that they want more technology in the classroom. They find that it offers a great way for them to connect with the students and for the students to connect with each other. But they did see the potential for misuse of the Apple Watch in their classroom.

Roland VanSlyke a teacher in Southern California said "Technology has many uses in education, and has really changed the way kids connect with new information. But any device that has the ability to allow students to surreptitiously communicate outside of the teachers view has the potential for distraction or cheating in a classroom."

Seeing the potential for distraction was a common theme. "Any time students encounter a technology that allows them to communicate outside the teachers view, they will use it." Lisa Causey, a teacher in Nevada articulated.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR

So how exactly could this be used? Imagine for a moment that students are sitting down, taking a test. One male student "Taps" a female student to get her attention. He then taps 3 times on

“ *Technology has many uses in education, and has really changed the way kids connect with new information. But any device that has the ability to allow students to surreptitiously communicate outside of the teachers view has the potential for distraction or cheating in a classroom.* ”

Roland VanSlyke
Teacher

“ *Any time students encounter a technology that allows them to communicate outside the teachers view, they will use it.* ”

Lisa Causey
Teacher

the watch. She writes the answer on her watch and sends it. He receives back via a “Sketch” an image of the word “true” that slowly fades away. The answer to true or false question number three has been given.

Now he sends to her another sketch of the number 15, she sends back the letter C, indicating that the answer to the multiple choice question 15 is C. Could this be seen by a teacher? Sure, it’s possible. But now stop and think about the math class. How many students are tapping out numbers during a math test? Nearly all of them, so trying to determine which ones are tapping their fingers on their wrist for a count are different than the ones tapping on their watch.

Now take it a step further, it is possible to send a text message to more than one recipient. It isn’t a stretch to see multiple students joining a sketch group sketch session before the class starts so they could share the answers, or maybe just simply have some fun instead of listening to another lecture. So yes, the potential for abuse of this technology in the classroom does exist. There are also tons of positives as well, but that is how technology in the classroom is.

When we first got computers in the classroom we weren’t worried about games or viruses. When we got the Internet in the classroom, we weren’t worried about adult content, and we certainly hadn’t even considered the idea of cyber bullying. We weren’t worried about mobile phone just a few short years ago, now most middle and high school students have a mobile device, and many of them have a tablet as well. So these wearable devices like the Apple Watch are sure to make their way to student fashion. Whether or not they will catch on as a device that interrupts or interferes with classroom instruction remains to be seen. We have already seen wearable tech geared towards fitness and business, but the Apple Watch combines in consumer level features geared towards the mainstream rather than just a niche set of features, and all indications show that people are ready to wear their tech.

NOW THAT YOU'RE AWARE, WHAT CAN YOU DO?

So how to best handle this risk in the classroom? Apple Watch pairs with the phone in the student's pocket, so any network controls of the communications assume they would be on the school network. Most students will easily bypass this by using the connection offered by their mobile provider side-stepping any controls on the school network. For those devices that are owned by the school, ensure that you filter their web usage will help since that will handle all connections made both on and off network unlike on-premise security devices. But this won't cover everything, especially if the student owns the device.

It's likely that this all really boils down to your Acceptable Use Policy and how you enforce it. Most schools have an AUP in place, but they really don't know what is in it, nor do they use it to curb student misuse as often as they should. How will this new wearable technology be handled by your AUP? If you needed to discipline a student for its misuse, does your AUP cover it? What if you wanted to ban certain technologies in the classroom, does your AUP give you the ability to do that?

Our recommendation is that now that you are aware of the risks of the Apple Watch, take the time to review your AUP with this new technology in mind. If you need to make changes, make them now. It is always better to be ready for a problem, than to be reacting to the problem as it happens.

ABOUT ISHERIFF

iSheriff is the leading provider of content and endpoint security from the cloud. We keep organizations and individuals safe from cybercrime, malware and digital threats. Thousands of businesses across a wide array of industries have deployed our solutions, including some of the most sophisticated buyers of security technology worldwide. iSheriff has operations in New York, California, Ireland and Asia.