

Requiring Wearables in The Classroom: Too Far or Acceptable Now?

We've recently discussed the [pros and cons of the bring-your-own-device \(BYOD\) trend in education](#)—what about **wear** your own device? Perhaps we just coined that term, but you get the picture—the **deployment of wearables in the classroom (albeit often school-provided) is a trend in a serious growth phase.** Precisely how are these wearables being used for educational purposes, and have the resulting policies gone too far? Let's break down the available data and provide some insight.

A Trend on the Rise

A [recent report by Research and Markets](#) indicates good things are coming for the wearable tech industry. In fact, the report points to a projected 45.52 percent surge between 2016 and 2020 in classroom growth alone. Driving the market growth is the accessibility and affordability of many wearable devices—two factors especially enticing for districts on a budget. Many wearables can be quickly synchronized with existing technologies, like tablets, smartphones, or laptops to make them more useful in classroom situations. The report cited several usual suspects leading the charge—like Apple, Google, Microsoft, and Samsung—as well as ASUS, Fitbit, and Garmin, among others.

Examples of Wearables in the Classroom

When you think of wearables in the classroom, you probably think of fitness trackers. There's a good reason for that, [as national headlines of late have reflected colleges requiring incoming freshman to don the ever-popular Fitbits](#). For now, let's explore a few other applications for wearables in schools besides Fitbits:

- [Adidas Fitness Tracker](#). As its name implies, this fitness tracker's concept is *similar* to that of a Fitbit, but yet very different. Rather than worn continuously, this Adidas product is worn only during K-12 fitness classes. The readings allow gym teachers to modify athletic activities to best suit particular students. When class is over, students hand off the devices back to the teacher for use by the next class.
- [Google Expeditions](#). Using [Google Cardboard](#) technology, these cost-effective contraptions are significantly lighter, cheaper, and more accessible than large, traditional virtual reality headsets. Using VR technology, students can take field trips (VR), conduct science experiments, or participate in a variety of other activities without leaving their desks.
- [Muse](#). Muse is a brain-sensing device that looks similar to a headband. It can detect which students understood lessons in real time and can also tell when students are stressed or upset.

To Use Wearables or Not to Use Wearables, That is the Question

After discussing all the above uses for wearables in educational settings, we don't believe using these tools in classrooms is a harmful practice—*theoretically*. Students can gain exposure to new technologies while enjoying unparalleled access to information about their health, their assignments, and the world around them. *Practically*, though, we know there are two sides to every story. There are privacy and security issues to contend with, to start. Opponents to the fitness tracker requirements in particular [point to the potential for negative, unintended consequences](#) like obsessive eating or exercising patterns in those at an already-impressionable age. Students with a history of compulsive behaviors, for instance, may find certain wearables doing more harm than good.

Overall, [the place of technology in classrooms](#) isn't a new discussion. And, like it or not, we're already walking down the path of [using data to analyze students' emotions](#). The success of mass deployments of wearables in the classroom remains to be seen—and it looks like we'll be seeing soon, if the projected market growth we mentioned above materializes. Stay tuned.