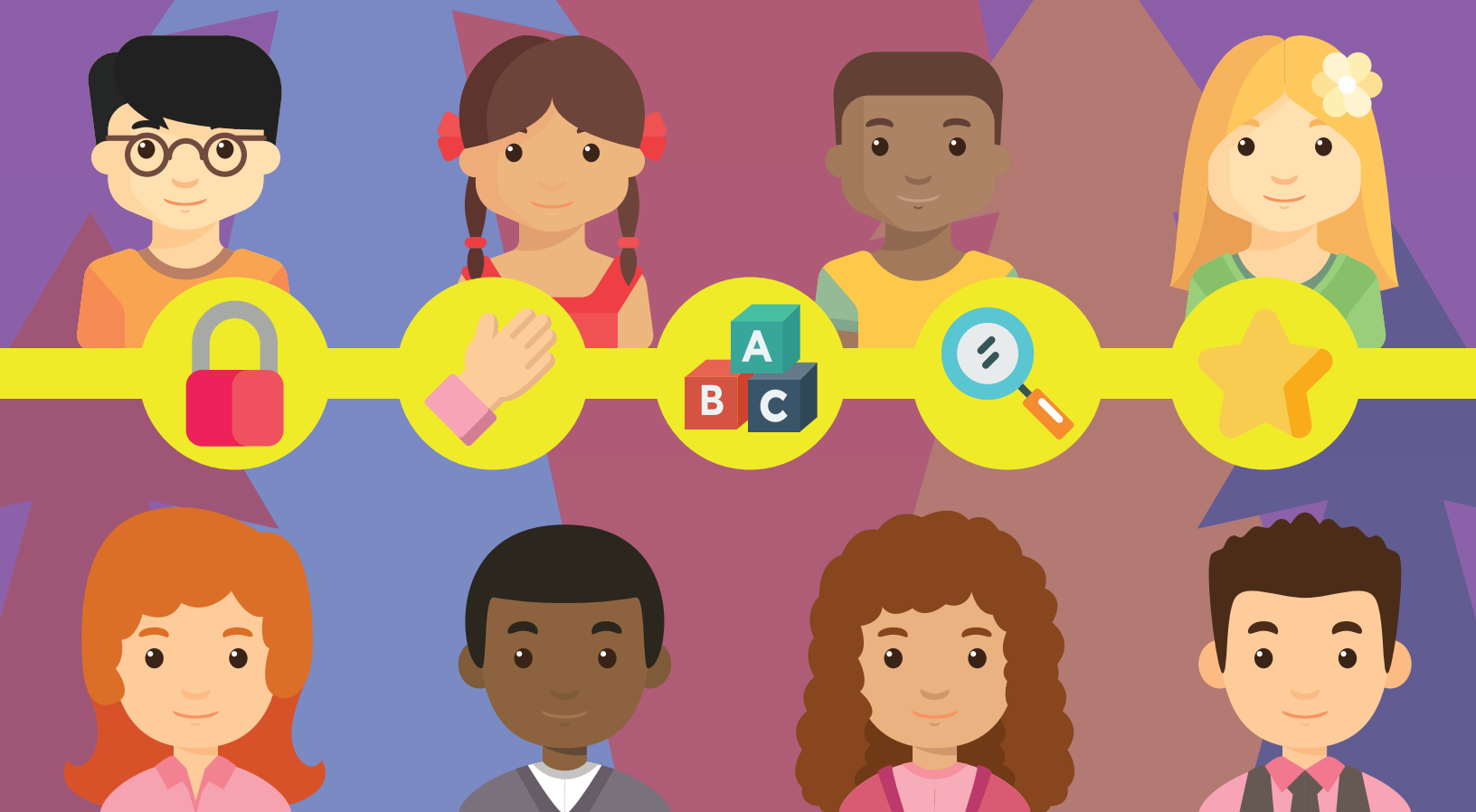# The evolution of monitoring

Educators share how their use of monitoring has shifted over time to positively impact learning.

Hāpara

The evolution of monitoring: Educator stories

Introduction

As more and more learning is moving online, educators are searching for the perfect balance between keeping learners safe and on task, and opening them up to the infinite resources and connections available via the internet. How can they support students as they learn to live and work in a digitally connected world without micromanaging or policing their online activity?

To answer this question, we reached out to our network of educators and asked them to reflect on their own use of monitoring when learners work online and how it has evolved over time. We've collected their answers in this e-book.

As with most things in education, we found there isn't one correct approach to monitoring. How you engage with learners online depends on many different factors including the students themselves and their familiarity with computers, your own comfort level working online, as well as the expectations and guidelines set by your school or district. However, we did uncover some patterns in when and how monitoring is used.

One of the biggest lessons we took away from this collection of articles was that as educators shift in their pedagogical approaches to teaching with technology, the purpose of monitoring in their classrooms shifts as well. When technology is used for the sake of technology, monitoring is necessary for shutting down bad behavior and keeping learners on task. As educators make the shift to using technology to support specific learning goals, a lot of that off-task behavior drops away. At this point, monitoring becomes a tool for engaging learners at a deeper level, allowing you to offer specific feedback and identify teachable moments.

We are always grateful to the educators who share their stories with us. We hope that these reflections on the use of monitoring over time — what's worked, what didn't work at all, and what's been learned along the way — will help you reflect on your own evolution of using technology in the classroom.

Many thanks to Blair Mishleau, Rona Mulligan, Lenva Shearing and Amy Downs for sharing their stories with us.

The line between Gotcha! and giving guidance

By Blair Mishleau

Initially, web monitoring was framed to myself and other teachers as a "Gotcha!" tool. As the technology specialist for my school, I had access to all classes in Hāpara. Sometimes, while waiting on copies or if I had a spare moment, I would look at Highlights to see what kiddos were up to in a random class upstairs.

Justice would come swiftly, with me closing their tab in vindication.

I almost felt like a hunter, just looking for a student to mess up. Justice would come swiftly, with me closing their tab in vindication. Rarely, if at all, did I talk with said students about their choices or the mystery behind their closed tab(s). This led to, at best, confusion on their part (the phrase "There's a ghost in my computer!" was yelled more than once), but at worst it led to an environment of students going to outlandish websites *just to see* if Mr. Mishleau was watching.

After some support from the Instructional Technology Coach for my school, and some training via Hāpara and Common Sense Education, I shifted course. The most salient thing I got from these experiences was that our goal is to *support* students to be competent decision-makers even when nobody's watching. Without teaching that skill, we are doing our students a disservice when they get into college and the workplace.

Gone was *Gotcha*! Mr. Mishleau, replaced more often than not with *Inquisitive* Mr. Mishleau. Through a brief discussion, a chat box message or another intervention, I was better able to support students in thinking through what is appropriate, and when.

> "Mr. Mishleau won't always be here to support you in choosing the right website at the right time — you need to develop those skills so you'll be able to support yourself."

I would sometimes tell students who struggled to stay on the right website. Playing Roblox while on the job won't end well, after all.

I realized that I needed to help students understand that, most of the time, there wasn't something inherently *wrong* with the website they were trying to go to (more often than not, it was innocuous, if off-topic). It just wasn't the best choice for right *now*. This built a skill — instead of feeling like they had gone somewhere "bad" by trying to play a video game instead of a quiz.

Of course, there will always be students who need additional guidance and parameters. Focused browsing and some occasional tab-closing for persistently off-task students makes sense. For this small subset of kiddos, the focus is always on having those parameters opened up, once the students show they are ready.

The line between giving helpful parameters, going into Gotcha! mode and offering too much freedom is always tough — but it's so important to discuss if we want our students to be able to handle high school, college and adulthood with grace.

About Blair

Blair Mishleau is the Director of Personalized Learning at Western School of Science and Technology. Previously, he has taught elementary school technology in Washington, D.C. and middle school reading in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is passionate about EdTech, logistics, and travel!

Naku te rourou nau te rourou ka ora ai te iwi (With your basket and my basket the people will live)

By Rona Mulligan

New Zealand Māori proverb that refers to working together by combining our resources to move forward.

When students first began working online in my classroom, I found monitoring their work daunting and extremely overwhelming. I would ask myself what if my learners don't follow my instructions? How can I be sure they do? I had devices lined up in rows all facing out so I could walk alongside and see that students were on task and logged into the correct sites. There was no collaboration and differentiated learning was virtually impossible — each time I tried, my learners and I were met with absolute frustration due to the need for me to be everywhere at once.
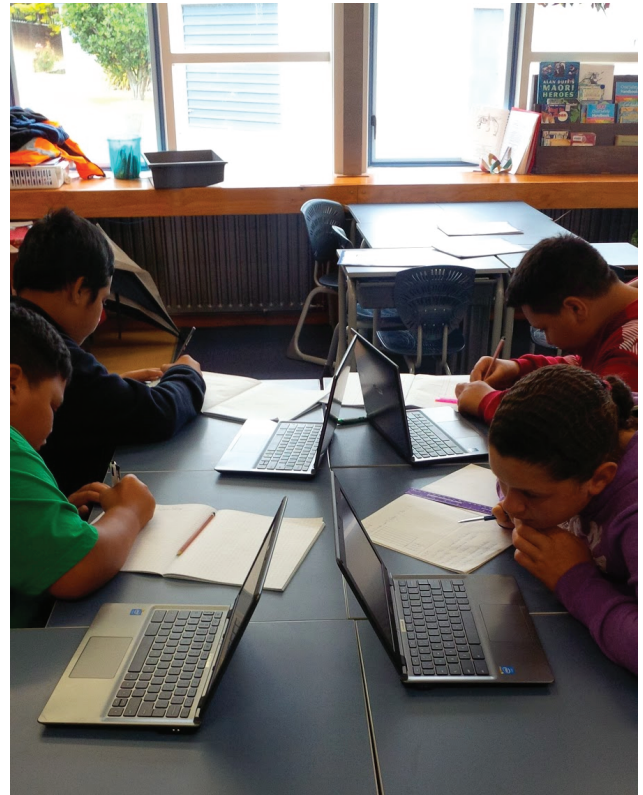

In 2014 our school started to use the Hāpara student management system. Since then, I have found myself re-evaluating how I present tasks to learners, monitor and provide feedback as well. My journey demonstrates a progression I've made in my pedagogical approach to monitoring my learners.

When I started using Hāpara, I provided tasks for students to access through the Share links feature by pushing out Google Docs to the whole class. This allowed me to send bulk documents to my class, knowing they were going to receive these tasks instantly.

Initially, I used Highlights to look in and "police" students to ensure they were on task. At the time I thought this is how I was supposed to use this feature and that it was the only way to monitor my students. But this became time-consuming to do. I felt trapped to my computer, as all I was doing was seeking opportunities to catch learners doing the wrong thing. I also used Workspace to differentiate learning tasks at a very basic level.

Soon, I began enquiring about how I could improve my knowledge of how to use the tools in Hāpara more effectively.
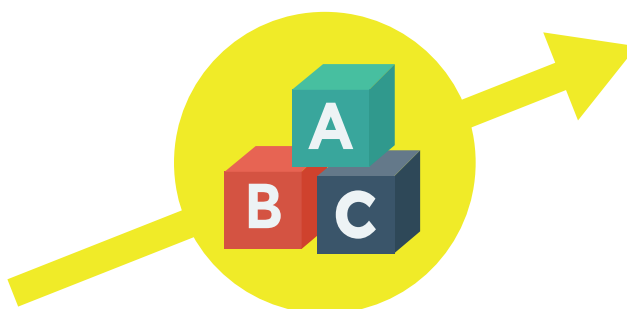
As time progressed, I became interested in using Workspace more to set up differentiated instruction as opposed to just differentiated learning tasks in reading, maths and other topics. My learners became increasingly engaged.

I received emails from them after school asking if they could complete a reading task at home. I learned to monitor my students by joining them in an active Google document and providing feedback based on what they were working on at the time.

Instead of policing learner browsing, I started using Highlights to support my learners by capturing snapshots of what they were doing in the moment and using the Snapshots as discussion points during individual student conferencing. I had more opportunities to provide feedback for students, which enabled them to move forward at their own pace, while still being able to meet deadlines.

Currently, 80% of instructional learning in my classroom is done through Workspace. It has become the norm for my learners to log into Hāpara and get on with their learning. I am able to provide specific feedback to learners and rove around freely to support individuals in every possible way.

I continue to find ways to improve how I provide instruction, offer feedback and monitor my learners through Hāpara, and so my journey continues.

About Rona

Rona Mulligan is a senior syndicate leader/teacher who works with Year 7-8 students at Tairangi School in Porirua, Wellington, New Zealand. Rona is passionate about teaching and learning. She has a love and natural flair for technology; this she brings to the classroom.

Bridging the digital divide with student-centered learning

By Amy Downs

> Before I integrated technology in my classroom, I was a stand and deliver teacher. All eyes on me.

When I first introduced computers into my teaching, my lessons were digitized versions of this same model. I used computers as digital worksheets and my learners used them like really expensive pencils. To make matters worse, my learners were so underwhelmed with my use of technology, and my reliance on low-level tasks that stalled at Depth of Knowledge Level 1 (recall) and the SAMR level of substitution. They quickly wandered off task, onto the wrong website. Or they were talking to each other via shared docs and chats, which I didn't even know they knew how to do! Honestly, I was a pretty boring teacher and the kids in my class naturally found ways to fill in the gaps.

A traditional classroom depends heavily on teacher control and pace. I quickly realized that these dynamics change once computers are infused into a lesson, and that this new dynamic meant I really needed to shift how I monitor and engage learners online. Introducing technology into my teaching has led to me stepping away from teaching at the front of the room — a shift from the way I was taught, the way I taught and the way I was measured in formal evaluations.

Soon after introducing computers in my classroom, I learned about the visibility tools in Hāpara. The first time I saw my class on Teacher Dashboard, I was amazed. Having visibility into my learners' online assignments was insightful in these early days. I realized that my learners finished their work quickly, and just as quickly, had nothing to do.

Hāpara Highlights also gave me the ability to see what my class was doing, while they worked online. At first, I used Highlights to quickly quash distractions. If a learner was off-task, I would remotely close the inappropriate tab without following up with a conversation on having a digital footprint.

My use of monitoring shifted after learning how to use Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS). I now take off-task behavior online and turn it into a teaching moment. I've also realized that learners sometimes get a bit lost or confused. Many of my learners come from low socioeconomic homes and have little to no access to computers outside the classroom. They need a lot of additional support.

Sometimes what looks like off-task behavior, is really a student who ended up on the wrong page or document due to the lack of experience and digital knowledge.

Sometimes what looks like off task behavior, is really a student who ended up on the wrong page or document due to the lack of experience and digital knowledge. Being able to see this with Hāpara Highlights allows me to step in and provide these students with support at the moment they need it.

My second shift in teaching with technology came after learning more about the pedagogies of student-centered classrooms and student voice and choice. I learned more about how to use Google Workspace for Education and found new, creative uses for it. Teaching with computers shifted from mere substitution, to students creating their own products of learning. Embedding digital literacy skills into my teaching was a huge game changer.

These two shifts in pedagogy — using monitoring to encourage positive

> "My kids are now on-task, and take ownership of their learning as they use technology to create, learn and share with each other."

About Amy

Amy Downs is a 5th / 6th multiage teacher at Global Learning Charter School, Visalia, CA.

She is the 2017 Visalia Teacher of the Year & Tulare County Teacher of the Year Nominee, as well as a Hāpara Certified Trainer, Google Certified Level 1 & 2017 LeRoy Finkel Fellowship Finalist.

behaviors and support struggling learners, and moving beyond substitution to create more engaging lessons — have led to amazing changes in my classroom. My kids are now on-task and take ownership of their learning as they use technology to create, learn and share with each other. Together, we are working on closing the gap in digital skills, which is just as important as building reading levels and math skills.

Doing the right thing

By Lenva Shearing

It's 9 a.m. and in a New Zealand High School in the city, the learners greet the teacher and each other, and then settle into their first class of the day .

It all sounds very ordinary, but this is no ordinary school. It is a school with a difference, making a difference.

Visibility is the key to learning here. Visibility is everything and everything is visible. All teacher planning, all learning activities, all student created learning is online, and is visible and accessible to teachers, learners, parents, the world. The learners are used to working like this. Everything they do is visible. Not visible so that they can be checked up on and monitored, but visible so that they can celebrate and reflect on their learning and share it with the world.

In the Year 9 English class, the learners are reading, writing and critiquing poetry. They choose and write their own poetry and devise their own learning pathways to achieve the Learning Intentions for the unit of work. Learners quickly settle and go online to check up on what they are working towards today, or check back on anything that they might have missed from previous lessons. They sit around in small groups, some at desks or tables, some on the floor and some gather on the high stools at the back of the room. They work in groups, collaborating, discussing and sharing their ideas. The teacher, Ms. G, works intensively with a small group gathered around a table, motivating them with new learning, but she also keeps a roving eye on what is happening elsewhere, as there are another five or six groups all working independently somewhere in the class. From time to time, she gets up and moves around the classroom giving advice, giving feedback and help to learners as needed. These conversations have a tone of positivity and enthusiasm.

Ms. G has Hāpara Highlights available to her, but does not use it to monitor learners, and in this class there are no learners off-task. Instead, she uses it to communicate and give feedback/feedforward to her learners. She periodically checks their progress to see if they need any help. It is her belief that learners who are engaged will be on-task.

However, there was a time when Ms. G did use Hāpara Highlights to change the behaviour of off-task learners. She found herself spending more and more time on her computer checking up on learners and closing tabs. She began to ask herself what was happening to cause so many learners to be off-task. And so began her inquiry into her own teacher practice. This inquiry led to the discovery that her learners were not engaged and motivated in class. They felt there was no partnership between the teacher and learner and felt they were being force-fed their learning. So Ms. G started putting all her teaching and her students' learning online so it was visible to the world. This empowered the learners as they garnered interest and discussions on their learning from peers, family and the world.

And so began a period of change where Ms. G started relinquishing control and empowering her learners. As well as the teacher, members of the class, parents and others began giving feedback on the work of their peers. From this feedback, and with the help of Ms. G, learners were able to develop their own personal learning pathways. Each learner knew what they had learnt and what they needed to do next. Learners were empowered to choose their own books to read and to write in a genre on a topic all of their own choosing. They were encouraged to collaborate wherever possible, even writing together. Ms. G will often pop into a piece of student writing and start writing with the student. Once the learners experienced choice and voice in their learning, things began to change and the learning partnership commenced.

Now there is a feeling of mutual trust and respect in the classroom. Ms. G believes that if a learner is off-task and needs monitoring, changes need to take place. But the change needs to be with the teacher's practice, not with the learner. Therefore, learner empower-ment and engagement become the priorities, not monitoring (like the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff).

When questioned, Ms. G spoke about the value of using Hāpara Highlights Focused Browsing for school exams and class tests. She stated that she now never needs to use it to change learner online behaviour. Ms. G said she was busy teaching and didn't need to use Focused Browsing or monitoring during class learning time. She says, "When I want their attention, I ask them to close their devices and look at me. That seems to do the trick!"

"My learners have learned to self manage. With all my learners working independently in differentiated groups, I would expect there to be a vast number of tabs open at any one time, and so I trust my learners to be

doing the right thing". I now use Hāpara Highlights to help them when they need it, by suggesting resources and giving feedforward. They respond with mutual respect. That leads to high levels of engagement and achievement."

"My learners have learned to self manage."

About Lenva

Lenva Shearing has a wealth of experience in education in various roles: teacher, school leader, facilitator and educator.

She collaborates with educators to inquire into their practice, to investigate how effective teaching and learning can raise student achievement. Lenva is passionate about helping teachers become future focussed and gain the confidence and expertise to leverage new technologies to create teaching and learning opportunities. Lenva is a Google Certified Innovator (Syd 13) and an Apple Distinguished Educator (2009).