

Why your students need a podcast: How to do it fast and free

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Why your students need a **PODCAST**

HOW TO DO IT
FAST AND FREE



Podcasts are growing in popularity. By letting your students create one, they get an authentic audience and get a voice in a big way. It's easy and free.

Podcasts can serve a crucial role in preparing your students for the future and helping their learning to be meaningful.

Sound like things you're looking for? You're in the right place.

Plus, you (and your students) can create them for FREE in very little time.

A podcast is kind of like a radio show in your pocket. Podcasts are audio recordings that can be downloaded to a phone, played on a computer or streamed on a device.

Many of them come out on a set schedule: weekly, daily, once every two weeks, etc.

The biggest power of podcasts, in my opinion:

They buy you time.

You can learn while driving, cleaning the house, gardening, jogging, etc. Video is very popular, but it can't make that claim, and neither can text reading. They both require your undivided attention.

And as smart speakers — Amazon Echo (Alexa), Google Home and Apple HomePod — grow in popularity, there are more access points for podcasts and other audio mediums.

Why is all of this important for the classroom?

Because it all leads to meaningful learning.

Reason 1: Students do assignments for teachers every day. They turn them in for teachers to see.

If they're creating for that audience of one (the teacher), do we always get their best work?

Not always.

What if we gave their work a greater reach? What if they knew that people they knew — and people they'd never meet — were benefitting from their work?

We're more likely to get students' best work when they have an audience that's important to them.

Reason 2: Our world is craving smart, responsible problem solvers and critical thinkers.

But all of that problem solving and critical thinking doesn't matter if our leaders can't articulate their vision.

If we want our students to be great speakers and communicators, we have to invest classroom minutes in it NOW. If they're going to advocate for change or help others envision an idea, our students — now and in the future — need good communication skills.

They need to develop their voice. And now is the time to do it.

How a podcast can help students develop their voice

Even if you aren't a podcast fanatic (and statistically, you probably aren't), you can still help your students develop their voices for an authentic audience with a podcast.

For free. In just a few minutes each day.

Imagine a class podcast ...

- Students synthesize what they're learning into short, bite-sized audio segments.
- They record it in their own voices (maybe with a little rehearsing).
- They organize the content, add an intro/outro and some transitional sound effects.
- They publish the podcast for anyone to hear.

Imagine a student podcast for special projects or Genius Hour ...

- Students gather information and prepare for completion of their project.
- They chronicle what they're learning with regular audio segments.
- They pull it together into episodes of a podcast.
- They reflect back over the progress of their project after it's done — and help others learn about the same topic.

Creating a podcast with Anchor



Anchor (anchor.fm) is a FREE podcast platform.

- Record audio with your phone, a tablet or a laptop/desktop computer.
- Take “call ins” — record interviews with others for your podcast.
- Arrange all of your audio content into an episode.
- Add audio effects and music from Anchor's library.
- Publish it to multiple platforms, including iTunes, Google Play, Spotify and more.

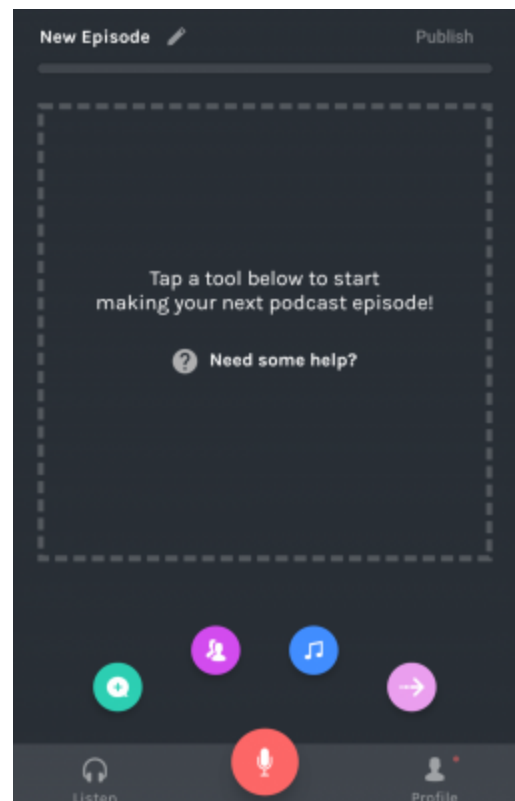
The terms of use for Anchor are 13+, so classes with students younger than that could create a class podcast that's supervised and moderated by the teacher who IS 13+.

There's some one-time set-up to do before the podcast is ready to go ...

1. Create an account, which can be used on the mobile app for iTunes (iPhone/iPad) and/or for Google Play (Android).
2. Set up the details for your podcast (name, description, cover art, category, etc.). Your students might really enjoy helping with all of these details!
3. Figure out what you want to record with.
 1. MICROPHONE: You can use a special microphone (I use the Rode SmartLav with my phone and the ATR-2100 USB mic with my computer). However, I'd recommend using whatever you have OR the embedded mic in your device to get started. My advice: don't invest money before getting started. If you decide later that you'd like something nicer, then upgrade.
 2. DEVICE: Having a tablet or deactivated smart phone could be a nice, portable option for recording with the mobile app. Or students could record from a laptop/desktop computer or a Chromebook. Experiment until you find the best fit.

Once your podcast is all set up, here's what you'll do to record:

1. **Start recording some audio!** Have students plan out what they'd like to say. I recommend *Well Spoken*, a book by Erik Palmer, to teach students the basics of communicating their message effectively.
2. **Record as many audio clips as you need for the episode.** They're all saved in Anchor, either in a new episode or in drafts.
3. **Produce the podcast** episode by putting audio clips in order and adding any music and transition sound effects.
4. **Give the episode a title and a summary** so listeners will know what to expect.
5. **Publish it!** The first time you publish, you can decide what podcast platforms to publish to.



Some things to consider when using Anchor:

1. Decide ahead of time what kind of identifying information you want students to share. Your school or district may have a policy on this. Address, phone number, information on their personal digital accounts, etc. shouldn't be shared on the podcast. Decide if they'll go by their first name, their initials, or something else when speaking.
2. You can also listen to podcasts with the Anchor app. There's a WIDE variety of content on Anchor and some includes language and themes that aren't appropriate for the classroom. It's easy to record without listening to other shows on Anchor, but if students start exploring the app, they could find something inappropriate.

From the Anchor app (pictured), you can record audio, take call-in interviews, add music, insert sound effects and more. (Anchor.fm screenshot)

So ... who's going to listen to this podcast?

Parents. So often, parents are craving a connection to the classroom. They want to know what their kids are learning. They want some "insider information" when they ask their child, "What did you do in school today?" And when their kids do something cool, they LOVE to brag about it and share it with others. (I know this because I do it with my kids, too!)

Grandparents and other relatives. These relatives might not see their little loved ones that often. Knowing what they're up to and hearing their voices might delight them.

Other classes. You know that teachers love getting inspiration from other teachers. Plus, other classes may listen to your class's podcast to learn from others their age.

Anyone in the world. This is possible when your podcast is available on these popular podcast platforms. Podcasts let you help and connect with people you'll never meet in countries you'll never visit.

With the [Google Teacher Tribe podcast](#) I create with [Kasey Bell](#), we get contacted regularly from people all over the United States and in other countries with questions and comments about the podcast. We're CONSTANTLY blown away by the reach of our podcast.

Now's the time ... get started!

Producing a podcast on Anchor is FREE and doesn't take much time to set up.

It can give your students' learning an authentic audience. Plus, it can give them an opportunity to reflect on and think about what they're learning on a different level.

When they teach others, it gives the student a new, deeper perspective on their learning.

You have the tools. You have the know-how.

Give your students a big voice!

Note: I have no relationship with Anchor. I receive no compensation — monetary or otherwise — for mentioning Anchor in this post. It's just a service I use and love and think could be a great asset to teachers and their students!

How could you use a podcast in the classroom? If you've done some classroom podcasting, what has been your experience? Share in a comment below!

For notifications of new Ditch That Textbook content and helpful links:

Interested in having Matt present at your event or school? Contact him by e-mail!

Matt is scheduled to present at the following upcoming events:

[getnoticed-event-table scope="upcoming" max="15" expanding="false"]



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