

## Attention Hijacked Educator Guide

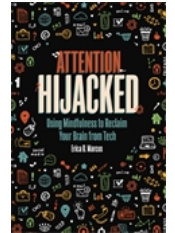
### Lesson Plan

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*SLC's Educator Guides bring you a go-to set of curated resources, lesson plans, and author insights to help you introduce and share quality literature with your students and teachers. Books are selected by SLC's editing team based on advanced copies of the titles and reviews from their school librarian reviewers.*

To help you make the most of *Attention Hijacked: Using Mindfulness to Reclaim Your Brain from Tech* by Erica B. Marcus (Lerner 2022), School Library Connection is sharing these resources:

- Curriculum connections and recommended book pairings by school librarian Wendy DeGroat, below
- [Author Q&A](#) with author Erica B. Marcus
- Lesson, "[Mindful News Consumption](#)," by Wendy DeGroat



### Curriculum Connections & Resource Pairings by Wendy DeGroat

**M**indfulness teacher Erica B. Marcus's *Attention Hijacked: Using Mindfulness to Reclaim Your Brain from Tech* provides readers with a practical DIY guide for evaluating their technology use and aligning it with their personal values by applying mindfulness strategies. Refreshingly, she does so without fear tactics or shaming readers about how long they spend on their screens. She further builds trust by affirming technology's benefits before sharing concerns about its potential drawbacks. Her compassionate, student-centered approach is informed by years of practicing mindfulness with young people, whose insights are woven throughout the text. While *Attention Hijacked* is designed for students to read and apply independently or with friends or family, there are several ways to enrich students' experience of the book by connecting to concepts and practices in a variety of classes across the curriculum.

### Social Studies/Government

**Technology and public policy:** Marcus asserts that while personal choices are essential in shaping technology use, public policy also plays an important role (90–91). Deepen students' understanding of technology and public policy by having them evaluate new/proposed local, state, or federal legislation related to a tech issue like consumer privacy, or new/proposed tech regulations. To foster discussion/debate and expand students' awareness of the complexity of such issues, have students read and assess contrasting points of view by industry groups, consumer advocacy organizations, think tanks, and other stakeholders.

Resources:

- GovTrack.us - Science, Technology, and Communications: narrow search by selecting one of 28 subcategories and/or searching for a keyword of interest ([https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/subjects/science\\_technology\\_communications/6293](https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/subjects/science_technology_communications/6293))
- National Conference of State Legislatures: 2022 Consumer Privacy Legislation (<https://www.ncsl.org/research/telecommunications-and-information-technology/2022-consumer-privacy-legislation.aspx>). You may also find their main page useful, State Laws Related to Digital Privacy (<https://www.ncsl.org/research/telecommunications-and-information-technology/state-laws-related-to-internet-privacy.aspx>)
- Think Tank Search from the Harvard Kennedy School ([https://guides.library.harvard.edu/hks/think\\_tank\\_search](https://guides.library.harvard.edu/hks/think_tank_search))

**Mindful civic engagement:** Emotions often run high and compassion low when folks on different sides of the political aisle discuss public policy. The next time you prepare students to engage in a potentially contentious debate or discussion about public policy, consider setting the tone with a mindfulness practice that centers compassion and promotes a sense of common humanity like the one Marcus describes in "Giving Time" (178–180). If you're uncomfortable guiding students through the practice yourself, play the recording provided.

### Health/Wellness

**Tech use self-assessment:** Have students complete the Technology Use Survey (101–103). Lerner Books also provides a print-friendly edition of the survey in their eSource for *Attention Hijacked* ([https://lernerbooks.com/teaching\\_guides/664](https://lernerbooks.com/teaching_guides/664)). Then ask students to reflect on their results in writing or through another form of creative expression, and/or have a class discussion about their reactions to the survey. To reinforce that these concerns apply to adults too, consider completing the survey yourself and sharing your results and reflections.

**Mindfulness and sports:** Integrate mindfulness practices such as visualization into sports teaching or coaching. Perhaps play the two-minute "Mastery Time" recording (168) to introduce the power of visualization before or after breaking down a skill that a student is striving to master, whether it's a tennis serve, foul shot, pole vault, or getting a strong start in the 100-meter backstroke.

## Biology/Psychology/Biopsychology

**Your brain on autoplay:** When studying neuroplasticity and myelination, brain chemistry, and/or brain development, consider connecting to technology use and mindfulness by integrating one or more of the following content strands:

- Brain chemistry and five features that contribute to technology's ability to keep us glued to our screens: notifications, variable rewards, autoplay, streaks and punishments, and social affirmation facilitated by likes, comments, etc. (38–39).
- The relationship between adolescent brain development, dopamine, and the increased susceptibility to addiction among adolescents vs. adults (73).
- The difference between the colloquial use of feeling "addicted" to tech and signs that tech use may have reached a level that requires intervention (69–72).
- Myelination and the connection between mindfulness and the formation or disruption of habits of mind (104–108).

**Scientific research in the news:** In her discussion about whether technology use causes depression, anxiety, and stress (55–62), Marcus illustrates how the media often oversimplifies research findings. After clarifying the difference between correlation and causation, and reviewing concepts like statistical significance and sample size, have students apply these evaluation criteria to a primary research study focused on technology use. Alternatively, provide students with news articles reporting on scientific research about technology use, along with the associated studies. Have them assess whether the news headlines accurately represent the studies' findings, perhaps inviting them to improve headlines they find misleading or inaccurate.

**Mindful observation of nature:** Using the "360 Senses" practice (162), guide students through an outdoor mindfulness practice in which they focus their awareness on each of their senses, noticing the sights, sounds, textures, scents, and perhaps even tastes of a natural environment on campus or in a nearby park or similar setting. If you'd prefer not to lead the practice yourself, play Marcus's recording.

## English/Language Arts

**Mindful awareness of language:** Words embedded in headlines or slipped into blog posts, articles, or essays, can shape a person's response to a story or situation. After listening to all or part of the 40-minute podcast "The Invisible Influence of Language with Lera Boroditsky," episode 48 of *Your Undivided Attention* (<https://www.humanetech.com/podcast/48-the-invisible-influence-of-language>), have students work in pairs or teams to examine articles from a newspaper, news site, or other sources, looking for examples of opinion-swaying word choices. Ask them to create a visual, in physical or digital format, identifying what associations each selected word evokes, and to what extent they might evoke different associations for people with different experiences. (Editor's Note: The lesson, "What Is My Bias?" by Jacquelyn Whiting and Michelle Luthala provides an exercise to further explore this concept.)

## Engineering/Computer Science/Programming

**Behind the screen:** Many types of tech engineers and other tech professionals collaborate to design applications, games, and other tech tools, developing features that keep users engaged (36–38). Expand students' understanding of this collaborative process by organizing a virtual or in-person panel of tech professionals with different roles in app/game development. Ask students to reflect on what they've read and bring questions for the panelists about what they're wondering.

## Any Class

**Tech intentions and screen breaks:** When students engage in research or long stretches of schoolwork online, ask them to set an intention before they place their hands on the keyboard, such as the intention-setting in Marcus's "Slow Your Roll" practice (109). Then every 20 minutes, ask them to stretch their eyes and body using some or all of the techniques in the "Screen Fatigue" (110) or "Body Breaks" (123) sections. Encourage students to continue these practices at home, perhaps using the "Hit the Pause Button," "Locate Yourself in Space," or "Check Your Internal Weather" practices (109–112).

**Brain cross-training:** Technology use can improve some types of mental performance. Gaming, for instance, can make people "better at screening for important information and ignoring distractions in fast-paced environments" (62). On the other hand, Nicholas Carr, author of the essay "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" in *The Atlantic* (<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/07/is-google-making-us-stupid/306868/>) and a subsequent book asserts that other mental habits we develop when glued to our screens make it harder for us to think deeply or engage in sustained reading (63). He quotes developmental psychologist Maryanne Wolf: "We are not only *what* we read. We are *how* we read." Thus, it's essential to provide students with opportunities to practice maintaining their focus on reading and complex tasks, and

to engage in contemplative thinking. Designing such activities so that students can complete them screen-free may help reduce distractions.

MLA CITATION

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