Understanding and Incorporating Extension

This table lists possible instructional strategies to use when extension features are organically built into the tool. An example is software that allows students studying polar bears to synchronously connect with expert scientists in Canada doing fieldwork with polar bears. The table also lists strategies teachers can use to create extension around the use of the technology tool when extension is not present within the tool. For example, students working on an Excel spreadsheet to learn about linear and non-linear graphs could gather data for the graph from their own life experiences.

Extension Take-Away Strategies

Characteristic of Extension	Instructional Strategies for Extension Are Built into Tool	Instructional Strategies for Extension Are NOT Built into Tool
Allowing students to learn 24/7	Students can continue to collect data, reflect, and research through the tool easily outside of school (e.g., a mobile device that allows students to record interviews on-the-go).	Students use analog resources and methods to collect data and then use their technology tool back in the classroom.
Bridging everyday experiences with school learning	Use technology to synchronously connect with students or experts in another location. Use technology to help solve real-world problems.	Ask students to go out into their community and look for connections to the learning, then report back to class via oral or written work. Use tech-to-self connections. Create an authentic context.
Everyday soft skills	Technology helps students manage tasks, communicate, and collaborate with others, while expertly gathering knowledge about the world around them.	Practice modeling soft skills in person, and then try them via the technology tools.

A Look at Tools That Promote Extension

While teachers often need to create authentic contexts around technology tools, some tools make it easier to connect to everyday life because they are built for these connections. This table includes examples of tools with extension characteristics built into them.

Technology Tools with Built-in Characteristics of Extension

Name of Tool	Connection to Everyday Life	Content Area
The WildLab (thewildlab.org)	Students are invited to collect and share images and descriptions of birds in their local area in this collaborative website.	Science and Social Studies
SepiaTown (sepiatown.com)	Students are invited to locate and share vintage photos from their local area on this collaborative website.	Social Studies
Figment (figment.com)	Students are invited to write stories, provide feedback on stories (feedback is moderated!), and share their writing with a national audience.	ELA
GooseChase (goosechase.com)	Teachers (or students) can set up mobile scavenger hunts around their community (or on a field trip) for students. Students can participate in the hunts alone or with a team, documenting their hunt with images, video, and text submissions.	ALL
Klikaklu (klikaklu.com)	Students can create photo scavenger hunts around the local community (or on field trips). They can participate in the hunts via their mobile phones and share results through the app.	ALL
Lab4U (lab4u.co)	Students can download the science lab apps (chemistry, physics, and biology) to their mobile devices and use the apps to conduct real-time experiments wherever they are!	Science
Google Hangouts (google.com/hangouts) **Twitter** (twitter.com) **Skype** (skype.com)	Students can use tools like Google Hangouts, Twitter, or Skype to connect with experts, other classrooms, and leaders in educational fields.	ALL

> “In life, we don’t select a tool and then create a problem just so that we can use the tool; rather we select a tool to meet the needs of the problem.