

Wearable Tech

Students, faculty drawn to activity trackers, watches

Ben Appel
Reporter

In the past few years, wearable tech products like the Apple Watch, Fitbit, Jawbone UP and Pebble have exploded into a multi-million dollar industry. While technology items that can be worn seem to follow the same path to success that smartphones and computers have, they're not mainstream yet. Devices that are also phones and can receive texts are still expensive, and they mostly do the same things phones do. Eighth grader Keeton Darden has a Samsung Watch.

"It's essentially a phone on your wrist," Darden said. In

fact, a survey by Cnet (www.cnet.com) finds that making and receiving calls is the main reason people buy smart watches.

While smart watches can be great for students, teachers have some reservations about letting them into the classroom.

"If we don't let you have your phones during school, we shouldn't let you have smart watches at school," P.E. teacher and coach Juan Molina said.

And there may be a legitimate reason to be concerned. Increasingly, smart watches are expected to share data with smartphones (www.techinfographics.com/wear-



able-wearable). And with smart watches gaining the ability to access Instagram and send text messages, there is increasing potential for rule-breaking. But while teachers may be worried, students seem to have a different outlook.

"I think it would be really cool to have one," seventh grader Emma Castro-Rodriguez said.

And this is to say nothing of fitness trackers, which can't send text messages or access social media. Fitness trackers generally count steps, number of calories burned, average heart rate and other related statistics.

So while fitness trackers and smart watches aren't mainstream yet, their market is quickly growing. Head Tech (www.headtech.net) predicts that by 2018 the wearable technology market will be valued at more than \$12.6 billion.

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