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The three Rs and three Ps

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Apps
The 3 Rs and the 3 Ps

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As with any new instructional technology, there are those who claim the new tool or idea is going to revolutionize education, and smartphone and tablet applications ("apps") are new. However, a review of the thousands of apps available indicates that there are currently three viable categories for education. Let's call these categories the 3 Rs.

Remediation is the first category of smartphone applications. These apps are

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designed to reinforce skills or knowledge learned previously, but that need some refreshing or practice. Excellent examples of remediation apps are *Flashcards+* and *Cram*.
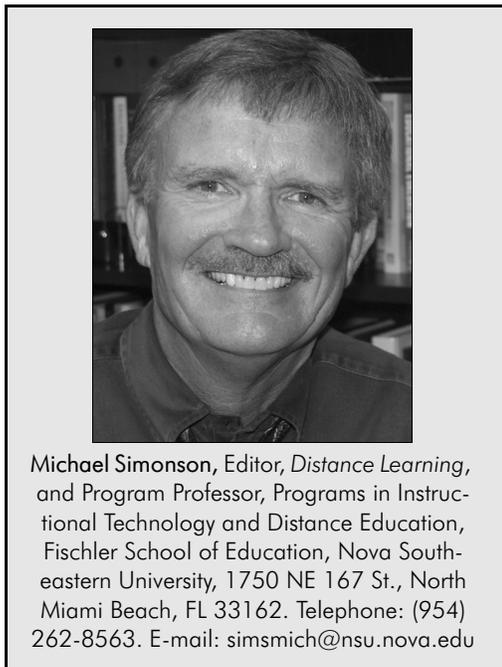
Reference applications allow the learner to look up basic information, like the definition of a word, or a date, or a fact. *National Geographic's World Atlas* and the *Miriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary* are "must have" reference apps.

Reminders are the "to do"-type applications, such as meeting reminders, homework dates, and locators. *Find iPhone* is a great reminder app because it reminds us of the location of an iPhone. Parents love this app because if you find the iPhone you usually will find the iPhone user.

Many distance educators are asked by colleagues and friends about the educational appropriateness of using smartphone apps. The 3 Ps help answer these types of questions.

The first P relates to Parental Control. Young children often benefit from educational apps, but for pre-teens it is recommended that parents install and supervise the apps that are on a smartphone. The second P, Parental Review, is aimed at learners in middle and high school. If a student has a smartphone it should be subject to periodic parental review. The final P,

Parental Trust, means that the parent trusts the child to use the smartphone correctly.

Apps are tremendous resources, and like any resource there is a set of skills involved in their use. In schools, media specialists are experts in application appropriateness and use. Parents can ask them for app advice. Another way to identify educationally appropriate content is to seek apps that are linked to traditional, long-standing educational tools. For example, *Curious George* has been around a long time, and the *Curious George* app supports the program and is excellent.

For distance educators, the thoughtful use of apps is a great way to improve instruction and expand access—the course syllabus, e-learning lesson, and webinar session should have an app list to accompany the traditional reference list. However, we should not expect too much from apps; they are not replacements for teachers, nor should they be.

And finally, the fourth app R is Recreation—certainly an exciting use of the smartphone, *after* homework is finished.

3 Rs = Remediation, Reference, and Reminders
3 Ps = Parental Control, Parental Review, and Parental Trust