

eSCHOOL MEDIA presents...

2012
READERS'
CHOICE
AWARDS

**Fifty ed-tech products and services
that are making a difference in schools**





A note from the editor

This issue marks the return (after a few years' absence) of our ever-popular Readers' Choice Awards series, which recognizes the ed-tech products and services our readers have enjoyed the most success with.

Last fall, we asked readers to give us their top picks for school hardware, software, websites, and services. Nearly 1,400 readers responded via one of our three websites: eSchoolNews.com, eCampusNews.com, and eClassroomNews.com.



In nominating their favorite products, we asked readers to tell us how they're using these products to improve teaching, learning, or school administration—and to what effect. We then chose the 50 best responses, which appear alphabetically by product name and grouped into two categories: K-12 and higher education.

The result is a list of ed-tech products and services that have proven to be effective, as vouchsafed by our readers—your colleagues—in schools and colleges nationwide.

We hope you'll find this information useful as you consider how technology can help transform education in your own schools. And watch for our call for nominations for the 2013 Readers' Choice Awards in print and online later this spring.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Pierce".

Dennis Pierce
Editor
eSchool Media



K-12 winners

Acuity (CTB/McGraw-Hill)

CTB's Acuity InFormative Assessment software helps educators diagnose, predict, and report on student progress toward state or Common Core standards, so they can deliver targeted instruction to help students meet those standards. Solutions are available for grades 3-8 (aligned with either state or Common Core standards) and high school (aligned with Common Core standards only).



HELP THE TEACHER HELP THE CHILD

Missouri's University Academy uses Acuity to diagnose students' algebra deficiencies, which then become the starting point for instruction and remediation. "Over the last two years, Acuity has enabled us to raise the percentage of our students scoring Advanced and Proficient in the Missouri end-of-course exams for Algebra I—from 42 percent to 74 percent," said Principal Clem Ukaoma.

<http://www.ctb.com>

Ascend Math (Ascend Education)

Ascend Math is a web-based program that identifies students' learning gaps and then guides students through differentiated instruction, interactive activities, and practice in order to fill in these skill gaps and bring students back to grade level.



"Ascend Math has helped our students be successful in Algebra 1 as freshmen in high school," said Jeremy Hendrix, a math intervention specialist at Moon Valley High School in Glendale, Ariz. "In Algebra 1 alone, we went from a 30-percent failure rate down to about 4 percent for the entire year. ... With the use of Ascend Math interwoven throughout our instruction, our students have produced results beyond our expectations."

<http://ascendmath.com>

Bookshare (Benetech)

An initiative of the nonprofit organization Benetech, Bookshare is an online library of digital books for people with print disabilities. It operates under an exception to U.S. copyright law that allows copyrighted digital books to be made available to people with disabilities. Bookshare mem-



bers can download books, textbooks, and newspapers in a compressed, encrypted file, then read the material using adaptive technology. Through an award from the federal Education Department, Bookshare offers free memberships to U.S. schools and qualifying U.S. students.

"I am a teacher for the blind and visually impaired, and quite often my students do not have access to new novels or chapter books," said Karen Meyers of Spotsylvania, Va. "The lending libraries in our area (and even the Library of Congress) have limited, outdated novels and ones that just aren't interesting to today's youth. With Bookshare, I can download just about any title I am looking for and emboss [it] for my students' reading pleasure. This is an incredible service, and the vision community is lucky to have [it]!"

<http://www.bookshare.org>

BrainPOP

BrainPOP offers short, animated, curriculum-based videos that aim to engage students from kindergarten through 12th grade. BrainPOP content can be used in many ways, from introducing a new lesson or illustrating a complex topic to reviewing before a test. All BrainPOP content is mapped to state and Common Core standards and is searchable by topic or standard.



"We know that all students ... benefit from highly visual content delivery that utilizes key concepts and academic vocabulary within context," said Anne Scatchell, a bilingual resource teacher at Glenn Westlake Middle School in Illinois. "I have seen first-hand the dramatic impact that these tools have for my students. The BrainPOP family of products ... uses a sense of humor [that] captivates viewers and helps them to relax, making them more open to learning and grasping some challenging material." Another reader wrote: "This product has made my students excited to take the quiz after the video. How many teachers can say that about their students?"

<http://www.brainpop.com>

BuildYourOwnCurriculum (School Software Group)

BuildYourOwnCurriculum is a web-based solution for constructing and sharing curriculum resources throughout a school community. Students can see the standards they're expected to master, view class activities, and retrieve the resources they'll need to complete their work. Parents can view curriculum, assignments, and standards from home, work, or the library. Teachers can update and customize their lesson plans in alignment with district standards, and administrators can get instant access to the learning paths for



each school, grade, and classroom.

"BuildYourOwnCurriculum has provided the framework to produce a fully articulated curriculum in all areas of study for our district," said John Whitsett, coordinator of curriculum, instruction, and assessment for Wisconsin's Fond du Lac School District. "It has allowed us to discard the old three-ring binders [that] were hardly ever used and replace them with an online tool that is dynamic, easy to use, and provides a way of managing curriculum. ... We are now able to make better decisions pertaining to resources and methods of instruction. Since we have a well-designed set of expectations, we are able to design effective assessments. This product has provided a way to think about curriculum in an entirely new way."

<http://www.schoolsoftwaregroup.com>



DimensionU (Tabula Digita)

DimensionU is a video game-based learning resource for K-12 students. In

DimensionU, students can access 3D multiplayer educational video games that help them hone their math and literacy skills, connect with friends, and compete and collaborate while learning.

"We had a campus where lower-level students hung out at a nearby park before school started each day. Most days the police had to be called, and some [students] were carted off in handcuffs," said Hedwig Pettinger, coordinator of middle school technology for the Garland Independent School District in Texas. "Several of our teachers opened a computer lab and invited these students in to play [DimensionU]. Since these students didn't have access to this type of program at home, a few decided to try it. Word spread quickly. They went from a handful of students to 30, to 60, to 90 ... with additional students waiting in line for a seat. Yes—they were playing a video game. But, they couldn't win unless they did the math correctly. It was a winning combination!"

<http://www.dimensionu.com>



eBOARD (eBOARDsolutions)

eBOARD is a modular system of governance software that enables school districts to centralize, communicate, and align their strategic plans, board policies, meeting agendas, rules and regulations, and other important documents online.

"eBOARD makes online board governance easy and stress-free," said Denise Berkhalter, director of public relations for the Alabama Association of School Boards. "With eBOARD, [we've] realized a true cost savings in preparing agendas, recording votes, and taking minutes at our Board of Directors meetings. Reams of paper at board meetings are a thing of the past, and board meetings run a lot more smoothly. So much more information is available on demand to our members. ... We've used eBOARD for nearly four years now and have seen a notable increase in member satisfaction."

<http://www.eboardsolutions.com>



e-Mentoring for Student Success

In October 2002, the National Science Foundation awarded a five-year grant to the National Science Teachers

Association, the New Teacher Center at the University of California Santa Cruz, and Montana State University's Science/Math Resource Center to develop the e-Mentoring for Student Success (eMSS) project, which pairs beginning secondary science teachers with online mentors. The project now involves more than a dozen states and has expanded to include mentoring for math and special-education teachers as well.

"I have been involved with the eMSS program for the last four years," said Marc Dembowski, a library media specialist for the Paradise Valley Unified School District in Arizona. "The collaboration among other teachers nationwide has truly been remarkable. Districts do not provide enough time for teachers to work together and collaborate on lessons, ideas, concepts, etc. This program matches new teachers ... with experienced teachers to mentor them. There are dialogues and conversations that take place about pedagogy, lesson planning, task analysis, classroom management, and much more. ... The eMSS program is head and shoulders above any other mentoring program that I have experienced and seen in person or online!"

<http://newteachercenter.org/services/emss>





Espresso Elementary (Espresso Education)

Espresso Elementary is a cross-disciplinary, interactive teaching and learning site for pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students, filled with thousands of videos and interactive materials designed to inspire children to learn.

"There are many resources that make learning fun for the students," said Joyce Rosales, a teacher for Florida's Miami-Dade County schools. "The students really enjoy learning with this product, and I can tell their skills and abilities have grown. ... The students log in on the computers in school and at home, using the specific code created for their class. I can make quizzes that the students can participate in online, and I can view the results from my own computer."

<http://www.espressoeducation.com>

espresso
elementary

FLRT (MindPlay Educational Software)

FLRT (which stands for "Fluent Reading Trainer") is a reading fluency tool that has been designed to increase reading speed systematically while ensuring proficient reading comprehension. It includes a library of more than 700 content-rich stories; measures and improves silent reading speed, reading fluency, retention, and comprehension; and reports on reading comprehension skills by class, student, and 18 specific skills, including main idea, context clues, inference, and author's purpose.

"I am using FLRT with a group of ninth grade students in a reading intervention class," said Barbara Marsh, district literacy specialist for Ohio's Bay Village City Schools. "Students were selected for this class based on five years' worth of poor performance on state test scores. We use FLRT three times a week for about 15 to 20 minutes at a time throughout the school year. The results are phenomenal. We have [seen] 100 percent passing on the state reading test and three years' growth on the Comprehension Section on the Woodcock-Johnson Achievement Test."

<http://www.mindplay.com>

FluidMath (Fluidity Software)

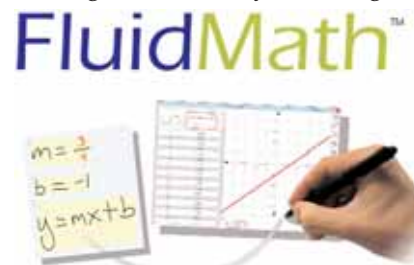
FluidMath is a teaching and learning tool designed for users of pen-centric platforms such as tablet PCs and interactive whiteboards. It features accurate recognition of handwritten math symbols, allowing teachers and students to share concepts and explore ideas electronically.

"Our Math Department has a cart of tablet slates ... that are used by students with this program (and others)," said Arline Pique, director of technology for Ohio's Indian Hill Exempted Village School District. "Teachers are using this software to bring math to life and truly explore how math

works. In the words of one of our teachers using this, 'With FluidMath, students who understand a concept well can move forward and explore the concept in greater depth, while students who are having more difficulty mastering the concept can continue to practice and explore at a pace more suitable to their individual ability and comprehension level. In addition, FluidMath provides immediate

results and feedback for each of its individual users, which ensures that students are not reinforcing incorrect ideas and practices. With the help of this technology, I ... can make learning even more meaningful to each and every student.'"

<http://fluiditysoftware.com>

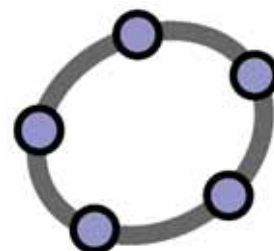


GeoGebra

GeoGebra is a free, multiplatform program for teaching and learning math at all levels of education. It covers geometry, algebra, tables, graphing, statistics, and calculus in one easy-to-use software package that has received several awards in the United States and Europe.

"GeoGebra [gives] students a visual understanding of abstract concepts," said Susan Russo, a math teacher at Holy Name High School in Worcester, Mass. "I use GeoGebra almost daily to demonstrate such topics as curve fitting, linear equations, polygon concepts, symmetry, variables, systems of equations—almost any topic we address can be visually represented by the software. In combination with an interactive whiteboard, students are able to see the answers to the 'What if...' questions we pose." She added: "I am able to give online homework assignments, and many of my students have downloaded GeoGebra at home to investigate on their own. They ask every day if we can 'GeoGebra' (yes, it has become a verb in our school)—and students from junior high through calculus have come to think more mathematically because of this incredible software."

<http://www.geogebra.org>



Google Apps for Education

This free collaborative software suite for schools includes eMail, calendar, and word processing programs that allow students to work together on the same document online. Sean Beaverson, secondary technology coordinator,



dinator for the Bloomington Public Schools in Minnesota, called the software “transformational.”

“I have used it to support the writing process by leveraging the collaborative nature of a document,” he said. “I have helped teachers work to create cooperative assignments in ways that just weren’t possible before. Students create collaborative maps to show the journey of Walk Two Moons or [use] Picasa to share images and get critique from fellow classmates in digital photography class. ... It’s—quite simply—great.”



<http://www.google.com/apps/intl/en/edu>

Haiku LMS (Haiku Learning Systems)

Haiku LMS is a cloud-based learning management system for K-12 schools. It’s available for schools, districts, or individual teachers, and its hallmark is simplicity. “We believe that Haiku LMS should require little to no training,” its creators say. “Users familiar with web interfaces should be able to use Haiku LMS within minutes of signing up. Our goal is to make it possible for teachers to maintain a vibrant classroom website in less than 10 minutes of work per week.”

“Haiku LMS has provided our school with a central management device for online learning and online classes,” said Jon Jarc, educational technologist for St. Ignatius High School in Ohio. “Haiku is easy to use, integrates with Google Apps, and is very flexible and feature-rich. It is so easy, we have about 90-percent participation from teachers in our building within three months of starting the school year. It is an amazing product with great support and leadership. It has changed our school. We have 1,500 students, 110 teachers, and 20 staff (along with 200 parents) using it now, and it performs beautifully.”



<http://www.haikulearning.com>

HealthOffice (Healthmaster Holdings)

HealthOffice helps schools computerize and streamline their health records; track, report, and analyze student health and demographic information; document screenings and deliver better medical care; and manage the Medicaid billing process.

The software allows school nurses “to provide a continuity of care for the students across the county,” said Cheryl Elliot, a school nurse for Horry County Schools in South Carolina. “Having accurate documentation is a lifesaver for the students, as it contains all health alerts related to each student. This [information] transfers with the

students as they progress from elementary to high school.”

<http://www.healthmaster.com>

Kineo (Brainchild Corp.)

The Kineo is a tablet computer designed for elementary and middle school students. Built on Google’s

Android operating system, the Kineo acts as an eBook reader with internet access and Flash capability. Its replaceable battery reportedly lasts for up to 12 hours on single charge, and at \$299 it costs far less than Apple’s iPad. It also comes with Brainchild’s Achiever! software for practicing math and reading skills either offline or online. Perhaps best of all for educators, the Kineo enables school leaders to specify the applications that students can use on the device by “locking down” the apps they don’t want young children to use.

“We were looking for a tablet that would allow our students to work on skills in areas of need as indicated by assessments,” said Beth Curtis, principal of Verner Elementary School in Tuscaloosa, Ala. “Most tablets lack strong educational content that follows the core standards. I chose Kineo because it is a tablet built for schools with integrated standards-based content, assessment reporting, and prescriptive teaching. My school purchased 60 Kineos, and we are currently using them in our third and fourth grade classes. [The Achiever! software] provides animated lessons and a study mode for self-paced or guided learning. This approach has been a fun and engaging experience for our students, and they can’t wait to use the Kineo. ... In just a short time this year, we have already seen tremendous classroom improvement on many of the Alabama Course of Study standards.”

<http://www.brainchild.com>



B R A I N C H I L D

LanSchool (LanSchool Technologies)

LanSchool is a classroom management and monitoring program that supports PCs, Macs, Linux-based devices, and thin clients from companies such as NComputing,



Citrix, and more. Using the software, teachers can limit applications or web browsing on student computers; view students’ computer screens and broadcast a screen to the class; and poll students during a lecture with true/false or multiple choice questions. In addition, students can use the software to request help from their teacher discretely.



"I use LanSchool to manage an instructional computer lab in an elementary library," said Maureen Staple, elementary library media teacher for the Auburn School District in Washington state. "It affords me the ability to boot all 35 computers from a single console and have the lab ready in much less time than before, as well as shut down the lab at the end of the school day. This lab does not have an LCD projector or document camera, but that is no longer an issue [because] I can broadcast my teacher screen to each individual student computer and provide visual modeling. Students can also easily share their work with the entire class without having to relocate to each other's computers."

She added: "LanSchool saves me a great deal of precious time, since I can send files and messages, blank screens during direction-giving, and limit website access from my teacher machine. It has saved us money that might have been spent on student response systems, because 'voting' is built into the program. This affordable product ... greatly enhances my resourcefulness in the lab setting." <http://www.lanschool.com>

Lexia Reading (Lexia Learning Systems)

Lexia Reading is a technology-based system of differentiated practice, embedded assessment, and targeted reading instruction. It's designed to advance foundational reading skills for students in pre-kindergarten through grade 4 and accelerate reading development for at-risk students in grades 4-12. Because its embedded assessment correlates closely with other reading tests (such as DIBELS), the software provides educators with actionable, norm-referenced performance data without interrupting the flow of instruction to administer a test. By reducing the need for traditional reading tests, districts can reclaim a considerable amount of instructional time and can achieve significant cost savings, Lexia says.



"This is an excellent product to increase success in reading," said Beth DePasquale, instructional technology specialist for the Southborough Public Schools in Massachusetts. "I have some kindergarten teachers who use it on a regular basis and some who haven't yet been able to add it to their routine. I have seen a significant difference between those two groups when they arrive in grade one." <http://www.lexialearning.com>

Livescribe Echo Smartpen (Livescribe Inc.)

Livescribe's smart pens record everything you write and hear, so you can replay a lecture from any spot simply by tapping your notes at that point. Teachers are using Livescribe pens to record and post "pencasts" for their stu-

dents to review online, showing the teacher's notes as they are being written—and playing the corresponding audio that explains their notes. The latest version of the company's smart pen, called the Echo, adds more digital storage capability, and it can stream all notes taken in real time to a computer—turning special dotted paper into an inexpensive digital tablet.

"This has proved to be a wonderful tool for me to help my students," said Mathew McClenahan, a teacher at High Tech Los Angeles Charter School. "I teach both economics and math. I have been able to show and explain the various graphs ... to my students while recording my explanations. Students can then go back over the recording at their leisure." He added: "It has made a significant difference in how I am able to teach."

<http://www.livescribe.com>



Mangahigh (Blue Duck Education)

Founded by a team of mathematicians and game specialists in the United Kingdom, Mangahigh is a free, games-based K-12 math teaching resource, where students can learn and practice math skills via "purpose-built ... games that balance fun and learning," according to the website. Each game covers certain learning topics and is designed to adapt in difficulty to the ability of each student. The site is intended for students ages 7-16, and its games are based on the Common Core standards. Educators receive their own login, where they can track the progress of their students.

"Mangahigh is a great way to shake up our math classroom while injecting it with a big dose of fun, discovery, and challenge," said Pierre Renaud, a teacher for the Ottawa-Carleton District in Ontario. "It's easy for students to work at their own pace and for us to track progress. ... We also use the built-in analytics to help inform decisions about where to go next with our students, [and] many students who have computers at home continue their learning there."

<http://www.mangahigh.com>



My Big Campus (Lightspeed Systems)

My Big Campus offers a safe, monitored environment for students to blog, hold discussions, and collaborate on group projects online. A standalone version is available for individual teachers or professional networks, while a district-wide version integrates with Lightspeed's Web Filter to offer cross-district sharing of resources and additional manage-



ment and reporting features.

"My Big Campus condenses the digital world into a one-stop shop for the teacher," said Page Kessler, instructional technology teacher for Indian Trail High School in Wisconsin.

"The teacher can maintain blogs, wikis, assignments, correspondence, and instructional tools—all from one [secure] space they have developed in My Big Campus. We cannot say enough good things about this product."

<http://www.lightspeedsystems.com>

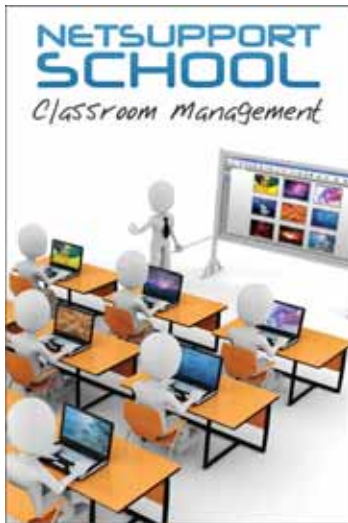
my Big Campus

NetSupport School (NetSupport Inc.)

NetSupport School is a classroom-management solution for Windows machines that gives teachers the ability to instruct, monitor, and interact with their students either individually, as a pre-defined group, or as an entire class. It includes PC monitoring, real-time presentation and annotation tools, a customized testing suite, internet and application control, real-time audio monitoring, desktop security, and print management capabilities. (A corresponding program, NetSupport Assist, can do the same for Mac and Linux-based devices.)

"I've been using this product for five years, and I still think it is the best tool in a computer lab situation that money can buy," said Tim Craig, computer applications teacher for the School District of Manatee County in Florida. "It allows the teacher full control of the student computers in the lab, as if the teacher were sitting at the computer. The capabilities are almost endless as to what can be done."

<http://www.netsupport-inc.com>



Pixton Comics

Pixton gives users the ability to create professional-looking comics, regardless of their artistic ability. From fully posable characters to dynamic panels, props, and speech bubbles, every aspect of a comic can be controlled in an intuitive, click-and-drag motion—and teachers are using this resource to engage their students in several ways.

"I use this product with my middle school students to aid in literacy and subject comprehension," said Jennifer Fenner, a history and geography teacher at Harbor Day School in California. "I reinforce the concepts with projects like comic books and posters we produce on Pixton.com. The work looks professional, and all children can produce a top-quality product they are proud of. When students use this product, they are engaged—they will actually work on [a project] at home when not required. The technology does not require special training, students pick it up quickly, and if they have a question the tutorial videos are accessible and easy to view. As a teacher, I can easily grade the projects online, and we can share and view them with the class." She concluded: "Students are learning and are excited to learn. ... Great product!"

<http://www.pixton.com>



PTC Wizard (Computer Creation Systems)

PTC Wizard aims to simplify the scheduling of parent-teacher conferences with an easy-to-use online interface. Teachers or administrators can set conference dates and times, specify schedules and locations, and block out specified time slots. From there, they no longer need to be directly involved in scheduling meetings, as parents can choose the times that are most convenient for them.

"Before using this product, we scheduled parents for conferences by manual labor, and by the time the schedule got to the parent, often [the parent's availability had] changed," said Lana Geselbracht, engaged learning coordinator for Illinois' Oak Park and River Forest High School. "Now, parents can choose times that are convenient for them with this intuitive, online program. The teachers can see who is signing up ... and can contact parents they really wish to see who haven't signed up yet. Those who administer the program can set up break times for teachers [and] help those who don't have internet access. The statistics report is also helpful in informing administrators of signup progress or final tallies of those





signed up. We have been using this product for our 3,000 students' parents at our high school since 2007, and it gets better every year."

<http://www.ptcwizard.com>

Raptivity (Harbinger Knowledge Products)

Raptivity, an online "interactivity builder," enables users to easily create activities such as learning games, branching simulations, brainteasers, interactive diagrams, and virtual worlds. Users can embed these interactions in their online courses to improve student engagement and retention.

"Raptivity Packs have been a tremendous help in the development of an eLearning resource to supplement math instruction for fourth graders in our district," said Doug Bennett, director of instruction for Whitley County Schools in Kentucky. "The Raptivity Packs are by far the most user-friendly and engaging interactive eLearning programs on the market. Moreover, the Raptivity Packs have helped ensure I will meet my 'go live' date for the program." He added that the company's tech support team "has proven to be very responsive, timely, and effective in answering questions and providing great support. The technicians seem to thoroughly understand their product."

<http://www.harbingerknowledge.com>



Read 180 (Scholastic Inc.)

READ 180 is a comprehensive system of curriculum, instruction, assessment, and professional development that has been proven to raise reading achievement for struggling readers in grades 4-12.

"I have taught grade 7 reading with the Read 180 program for seven years and have ... seen each and every student improve their reading skills and raise their reading Lexile [score] by at least 150 points," said Christopher Ienello, a teacher for the Lawrence Public Schools in Massachusetts. "I had a student in 2008 who, using the Read 180 program, turned her life around—to the point that she was selected as a National Read 180 All-Star. She ... is [now] consistently making As and Bs in all her courses. She credits Read 180 as having given her the tools she needed to succeed."

<http://www.scholastic.com>



SAFARI Montage

SAFARI Montage provides a comprehensive solution for digital media distribution and visual learning. It gives educators a single interface for accessing all visual resources from inside their network or from home. SAFARI Montage servers come preloaded with educational video titles tied to curriculum standards, from content publishers such as PBS, The History Channel, National Geographic, Scholastic, Disney Education, the BBC, and more. In addition, with SAFARI Montage CreationStation, educators can upload and manage their own digital video assets and disseminate these to classrooms. A new Pathways SM module allows users to control, manage, and schedule classroom and district devices.

"We have experienced tremendous success using SAFARI Montage with our ELL students," said Sharron Bills, director of curriculum and federal programs for the Dimmitt Independent School District in Texas. "The streaming videos cover a huge array of topics, but what is so unique and useful is the ability to let our students hear the material in Spanish, but read [the closed captioning] in English at the same time. There is also the option to embed the video clips, make them permanent links that can be saved in each teacher's favorite 'playlist,' and [share playlists] with other teachers across the district. ... Without a doubt, my teachers agree that if budget cuts are necessary, SAFARI Montage is not one of the items they are willing to give up."

<http://safari montage.com>



SAS Curriculum Pathways (SAS Institute)

This free online curriculum resource for students in grades 6-12 provides web-based lessons and activities in the core subjects of English, math, social studies, science, and Spanish. Lessons take an inquiry-based approach that is intended to develop students' higher-order thinking skills, and they are correlated with the Common Core standards.

"With SAS Curriculum Pathways, my students pace themselves when researching, understanding, and learning," said Kathryn Higgins, an English teacher for Mooresville Graded School District in North Carolina. "Each student can choose how many times to review an activity and when to move on. Inquiries teach students to perform and evaluate their own research, rather than my telling them what they need to know."

She added that the Writing Reviser module "is especially useful. Not just a spelling and grammar checker, it takes a student's written work and gives them suggestions for possible improvement in areas such as wordiness, overuse of





prepositional phrases, or clichés. ... I've used it for whole-group instruction, peer editing, and revising in small groups. Writing Reviser and an interactive punctuation program, Punctuation Rules, have increased my students' willingness to look over their work and have markedly improved their writing."

<http://www.sascurriculumpathways.com>

Shakespeare In Bits (Mindconnex Learning)

Shakespeare In Bits brings the Bard's most popular plays to life through animated visualizations, full audio soundtracks, and unabridged text in a single package. Handy translations for antiquated words and phrases are just a touch away, along with study notes, analyses, plot summaries, and other information to help students understand and appreciate the material. Versions are available for Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth, and A Midsummer Night's Dream via an iPad, iPhone, Mac, or PC.

"I'm using the Romeo and Juliet app to help my eighth graders—many of whom have documented learning differences—read with far greater comprehension than they would've had reading the traditional paper text," said Anna Melville, a middle school English teacher at Harford Day School in Maryland. "The difference in their understanding, enjoyment, and ability to analyze is tremendous. It is a wonderful example of how technology isn't a distraction but a real, powerful force to help students understand and engage with material." Another teacher wrote: "In my 14 years of teaching, this is by far the best resource to use with students for teaching Shakespeare. I have had great feedback from my students."

<http://www.mindconnex.com>



SimpleK12 (InfoSource Inc.)

SimpleK12 is a subscription-based professional learning network in which teachers can share ideas, collaborate, watch live and recorded webinars and how-to videos, and learn from one another as they strive to integrate technology effectively into their instruction.

Melissa Earnest, a technology resource teacher for Kentucky's Caldwell County Schools, said she's "constantly looking for ways to help teachers [use] the technology in their classrooms—not only to help make their lives easier, but to help their students learn. SimpleK12 has many webi-



nars that are only 30 minutes to an hour long, so they don't take much time to watch. I have yet to watch one where I didn't learn at least one new skill!" Another reader said she is "learning something every day, which means my students learn new programs, Web2.0 tools, and technologies long before their peers. I truly believe this is ... worth every dollar I spent."

<http://simplek12.com>

SPARKscience (PASCO Scientific)

SPARKscience is an inquiry-based platform for students to learn science. It includes probe and sensor technologies for students to capture data, as well as software to help them visualize and analyze their results.

Peggy Lubchenco, teacher education program lecturer for the University of California, Santa Barbara, said she used the SPARKscience products as part of a research team in Antarctica last year. "As a secondary science teacher, my role was to provide outreach to schools, sharing with them the amazing science that takes place in Antarctica," she said. "I can confirm that the PASCO instruments worked without fail at minus-40 degrees Celsius! The PASCO SPARKscience solution is intuitive, rugged, and versatile."

John Simpson, an eighth grade science teacher in Round Rock, Texas, credits the products with helping to raise student achievement in his classes: "More hands-on labs, plus increased engagement and relevance through technology, have resulted in greater success and growth in ... test scores—40 percent in 2010-11, in fact."

<http://pasco.com>



Special Education Administrative Software (Computer Automation Systems)

SEAS is a web-based suite of software modules for managing special-education tasks, including Individualized Education Program (IEP) creation and compliance, Medicaid billing, and administrative reporting. Numerous readers cited the time they've saved by using the software to automate these tasks.

"SEAS sends reminders to special-education teachers and administrators when a student's IEP or reevaluation is due. [It] provides a back-up system of all forms in case confidential files are damaged or lost. SEAS forms can be accessed from home or from anywhere internet access is available. [The software] has greatly reduced the time it





takes to complete special-education paperwork,” said Deborah Johnson, school psychologist for the Jenks Public Schools in Oklahoma. Another reader said the software’s IEP creation module has saved “numerous hours of work” for educators in her school.

<http://computerautomation.com>

ST Math (MIND Research Institute)

ST Math is a supplemental program that takes a visual approach to learning. The software taps into the brain’s innate “spatial temporal” reasoning ability to visualize and solve math concepts and problems, its makers say. Through a carefully engineered sequence of visual puzzles, students work at their own pace to solve increasingly difficult problems that eventually require them to think multiple steps ahead in space and time—and they receive instant feedback about why a solution works or doesn’t.

Chris Liang-Vergara, director of blended learning for Louisiana’s FirstLine Schools, is using the software with kindergarten through ninth graders and said it provides “outstanding access to math concepts and number sense in ways the students have never experienced them before.” As a result, students are exhibiting “high motivation and renewed energy around math.”

<http://www.mindresearch.net>



Study Island (Archipelago Learning)

Study Island is a web-based system designed to help students master their content standards. It includes academic content that is designed to be fun and engaging, and it consists of practice, assessment, and reporting tools built around each state’s standards. Because it’s web-based, students can use the system at school or at home.

“We first began using Study Island with just the low-achieving readers at our junior high setting,” said Listena Prickett, a reading specialist with Oklahoma’s Altus Public Schools. “We were amazed at the end results, which were [that] every single student who completed every standard [earned] a ‘blue ribbon’ to show mastery of that particular reading skill — [and] all passed their state standardized reading test at the end of that year.” As a result of this pilot project, she said, the school has purchased all subject areas for the entire student body to use.

<http://www.studyisland.com>



Study Island



SuccessMaker (Pearson Digital Learning)

SuccessMaker is software that differentiates and personalizes reading and math instruction for students in grades K-8. Designed to accommodate a full array of different learning styles, SuccessMaker provides instruction, practice, and assessment that is correlated to the Common Core standards.

Bruce Ferko, a third-grade teacher in the Dallas Independent School District, said his students “have shown significant gains in achievement scores” on the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills exams as a result of using the software. He added that students’ self-esteem “skyrocketed” as they proceeded through the program’s scaffolded learning sections.

Madalyn Romano, coordinator of the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center in New York, said the software is used in more than 20 districts in the region to differentiate instruction. She called it “the best program on the market.”

<http://www.pearsonschool.com>

TAP-it (SmartEd Services)

TAP-it is an ADA-compliant, touch-sensitive, interactive learning station designed specifically for students with disabilities. Its motorized adjustments provide easy accommodations for students using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility devices, and its platform is counter-balanced, so that even if a student leans his or her full body weight against it, the system will not tip over. Its locking wheels allow users to roll the system from room to room, so it can be used where needed.

“TAP-it is a unique, portable [workstation] that uses the power of hydraulics to bring a 42-inch ... interactive LCD panel to the exact height or angle needed by each student,” said Kathy Bastow, quality assurance coordinator for the Barber National Institute. “This flexibility makes the TAP-it much more accessible and functional for students with disabilities than wall-mounted [interactive whiteboards]. ... Since the integration of the TAP-it into their classroom, our students with significant disabilities are attending longer and are motivated to persist at more challenging lessons.”

<http://www.teachsmart.org/Tapit/index.htm>



www.teachsmart.org/tapit



TurningPoint (Turning Technologies)

TurningPoint is a student response system that integrates with Microsoft PowerPoint and allows students to participate in presentations or lectures by submitting responses to interactive questions using a special keypad ("clicker") or other handheld device or computer.



"We are using the TurningPoint student response system ... throughout our district from grades K-8 in all subject areas. Teachers use [the system] to engage students in learning and monitor progress or introduce a topic," said Jodi Obenstine, director of technology services for the Liberty Elementary School District in Arizona. "One of our sixth-grade math teachers at Rainbow Valley Elementary reported over 40 percent of [her] students [met] the highest level of achievement that can be earned on the Arizona Instrument to Measure Success. She was able to help her students achieve these results by implementing a five-question-a-day technique and adjusting her instruction to meet the needs of her students, based on the information received via the student response systems. We plan to implement these strategies much more deeply during the 2011-12 school year."

<http://www.turningtechnologies.com>

WatchKnowLearn

Developed by Wikipedia co-founder Larry Sanger, WatchKnowLearn is a free online collection of educational videos for students ages 3 to 18. The site includes more than 20,000 videos across 3,000 categories on subjects such as math, science, and history. It also features software, developed by Sanger, that allows wiki-style collaboration among users. "Think of it as YouTube meets Wikipedia, filtering out everything but high-quality educational videos," Sanger said.

Stacey Allen uses the site in teaching first grade for the DeSoto County Schools in Mississippi. "There are endless videos that were, until now, unavailable for me to use in my classroom, because our school system blocked their use," she said. "WatchKnowLearn not only approves them, but filters them to make sure they are appropriate for my students and indexes them so that I can find what I need. Above all, I can contribute to the site myself. I can help give suggestions for videos ... and I can even edit the index to make it more teacher-friendly. I love this resource."

<http://www.watchknowlearn.org>

Web Help Desk (MacsDesign Studio)

Web Help Desk is an online help-desk solution for delivering IT support, managing assets, tracking software performance, and more. Users say it has saved them time and improved their IT efficiency.



"The two major things that Web Help Desk has improved for us are communication and organization," said Ben Bollard, technology systems manager for Iowa's Pella Community School District. "We implemented this tool at the beginning of the 2010-11 school year as a way to organize and track all of our technology requests. Before we implemented the [software], a staff member would call or eMail [the technology team] and hope they got to the request. Many times, eMails would get buried in an inbox and go unnoticed. This created an atmosphere where students and staff felt like their technology issues were not important."

Bollard said Web Help Desk "now provides immediate feedback ... to let [users] know that their issue is on our radar. This system also provides us with ways to assign the issues to appropriate personnel, as well as prioritize them to get the most important issues addressed first." He said the software has been so successful that "the maintenance department has started using the same application" to track and communicate its work around the district as well.

<http://webhelpdesk.com>

Wyse Xenith (Wyse Technology)

This "zero client" technology differs from thin clients by not having any software installed on the device at all. Instead, it's a small piece of hardware that connects the user to the network and his or her virtual desktop. Because it's truly stateless, the Wyse Xenith is extremely secure and easy to maintain, its maker says.

"As network administrator for a school district that has more than 11,500 students spread out across 17 schools, having a computer infrastructure that is easy to maintain and sustainable is key," said Steve Bradley of the Rocklin Unified School District in California. "We use Wyse Xenith zero clients instead of PCs because they don't have hard drives that will inevitably fail. Before installing the Xenith zero clients in our labs and classrooms, I typically paid about \$1,500 for a full-featured desktop computer. The Xenith zero clients cost less than \$400, will last us longer than PCs, and provide our students and teachers with the enterprise-caliber performance they need. As we continue to update our computer infrastructure across the district, we will be turning to Wyse Xenith to replace our PCs."

<http://www.wyse.com>



Higher-education winners

2tor Inc.

2tor supplies universities with the tools, expertise, and capital needed to operate successful online-learning programs. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School is one of many institutions that have partnered with 2tor to create an online MBA program.



"2tor developed a virtual campus using a state-of-the-art learning management platform that allows students around the country to learn from UNC Kenan-Flagler faculty in synchronous and asynchronous modules. Social features are built into the platform to encourage interaction and virtual networking," said Allison Adams, media relations director for the program.

"Through our partnership with 2tor, we've extended the reach of our residential MBA program beyond Chapel Hill around the U.S., and we plan to extend it around the world. We are beginning to see great progress ... and are gratified by the overwhelmingly positive responses from our students in the program. 2tor has been critical in our success."

<http://2tor.com>

Avaya web.alive (Avaya Inc.)

This feature-rich web conferencing software is delivered as an online service, so there is no need to worry about software patching. Schools can sign up in minutes and be meeting online the same day. And web.alive's 3D graphics provide a real sense of presence that engages participants.



"Web.alive is a virtual space that we are in the early stages of adopting as a collaborative learning opportunity on our campus," said Terri Johnson, director of Carroll University's for Educational Technology & Innovation. "Virtual environments seem to come and go, but there are three things that really make web.alive stand out: (1) the easy use for both students and faculty; (2) rich and robust analytics; and (3) excellent support staff at Avaya. They have been willing to take our suggestions, and their speedy and attentive response is just outstanding."

Johnson added: "Web.alive can allow instructors and students to do just about everything they can do in a typical face-to-face classroom. ... I cannot recommend this product enough."

<http://avayalive.com>

Canvas (Instructure Inc.)

Canvas is a simple but powerful learning management system that is offered as either an open-source version that schools manage themselves or a cloud-based model hosted by the company. Instructure plans to release a version in early 2012 that includes predictive analytics as well: On their course roster, instructors will see green, yellow, or red dots next to students' names, indicating how at risk they are of failing or dropping the course. Clicking on a student's name will take instructors to a page where they can see more detailed reports based on that student's grades, class participation, assignment completion, and outcomes (whether he or she has mastered the content).



Canvas is "enterprise quality, yet the company has released the source code to the public," said Greg Combs, an adjunct professor at the University of Texas at Dallas. "I'm using Instructure's free hosted service to handle my classes (one class has 300 students). We use the discussion boards, the online quizzes, the grade book, the messaging system, assignment submissions, blogs, and various other features. I can't get over how easy it is to use."

<http://www.instructure.com>

Inspired Signage Xpress Player (AMX)

Inspired XPress is a digital signage solution for organizations that want to manage all aspects of their digital signage, including content creation. It features a simple, intuitive software interface that allows users to create templates and content, then publish this content to players that are small enough to mount behind any display.



"The Inspired Signage XPress Player has allowed us to send digital content to display monitors around the campus," said Casey Foulds, instructional operations system administrator for Texas Woman's University. "For example, during summer orientation, we contour the messages for the incoming students, but during the fall semester, we update the information to keep our current students aware of missions, deadlines, hours of operations, and campus news."

The video tutorials that AMX provides on its website "made the management of this player efficient and easy,"



Foulds added. "Whether they are waiting for an elevator or collaborating with classmates, the Inspired Signage XPress Player allows us to communicate with our students minute by minute."

<http://www.amx.com/products/IS-SPX-1000.asp>

isaac (Enterasys Networks)

Enterasys describes isaac, short for Intelligent Socially Aware Automated Communications, as "the industry's first social media interface that connects your IT network with your social network." It's perhaps best explained by one of its users, who calls it the "best use of innovative technology in higher ed that I have seen in years."

"It's noon and our technician is enjoying lunch with a vendor," writes Phil Komarny, vice president of information technology and CIO at Seton Hill University. "An alarm sounds on the network management console; a wireless access point is dropping connections. The ringing phones match the alarm on the management console, as end users start reporting connectivity issues. One user is a vice president preparing for a meeting."

"In a traditional model, our Solutions Center staffer would text one of our network admins ... and generally lunch is forgotten, as our technician will spend the rest of his time trying to create a VPN connection back to the office or head back to troubleshoot this issue from his desk."

"With Isaac, we have a new workflow. It is still noon, and the technician is enjoying lunch with a vendor. His iPhone beeps, and he sees a post to the Network Ops Twitter Account from isaac; a wireless access point has failed. The next tweet is from a Solutions Center technician—a vice president is having issues connecting and needs network access ASAP. He sends a Tweet to isaac "#find Johnson," the name of the vice president. A moment [later] and isaac has located the vice president—and he happens to be in the same area as the failed access point. Another tweet, "#rebootAP 10.0.0.1," to isaac and the wireless access point is rebooted. The Solutions Center posts that the vice president now is on the network—confirmed by a follow-up message on Twitter. Lunch is saved in a matter of moments."

<http://www.enterasys.com/products/isaac.aspx>

Network Sentry (Bradford Networks)

This network security platform enables users to manage their security policies and prevent unauthorized network access. Bryant University is using the product to provide secure but convenient network access to students using

mobile devices throughout the campus.

"Network Sentry automatically detects and registers all devices, authenticates users, scans for policy compliance, and provisions network access accordingly," said Jon Domen, network manager for the university. "This provides our IT staff with significant savings in both time and resources and has made the beginning-of-semester onboarding process a non-event for students, faculty, and IT. In fact, users can log on from off campus to have their devices registered and remediated, so that when they arrive at our school, they are ready to use."

http://www.bradfordnetworks.com/network_sentry

Sapling Learning

Sapling Learning publishes e-textbooks in science and math that include online tutorials, graphics, interactive animations, scientific simulations, audio and video, online assessments, and more—creating interactive digital content for the most complex subject areas. It also offers online homework and practice solutions.

"I'm using the Sapling Learning Online Homework for my Fundamentals of Organic Chemistry Class. It's an excellent tool for encouraging students to keep up with the material presented in the course by working on homework problems on a weekly basis, and for them to get credit for their efforts," said Patty Somers, an assistant professor at Colorado State University. "The enrollment in the course is



about 250 students, so traditional graded homework is not an option. Online homework for organic chemistry presents unique challenges, because students must draw molecules to be able to answer many of the questions. Sapling Learning has come up with an intuitive drawing module for the homework that students find fairly easy to use. The best part about Sapling is that they will customize the homework questions to suit your course; it's not tied to any particular textbook."

<http://www.saplinglearning.com>

Tegrity Campus (Tegrity Inc.)

Tegrity Campus is a fully automated lecture-capture solution used to record lectures as well as supplementary course content. Its cloud-based model scales affordably, and students can search the content, collaborate with their instructors and classmates, take notes, set their own bookmarks, and more.

"I am now using Tegrity lecture capture for the 10th con-



secutive semester, dating back to fall 2008. It has absolutely revolutionized the way I teach, the number of students I can reach, and the efficiency and comprehensiveness with which I can provide ... instructional content," said Christopher Mizell, a math professor at Northwest Florida State College. "I collected data from nine face-to-face college algebra courses I taught prior to using Tegrity and eight college algebra courses I have taught with Tegrity. Students in the eight courses I taught using Tegrity demonstrated a higher C-or-better success rate in their next sequential math class. ... Furthermore, Tegrity has enabled our mathematics department to increase its distance-learning offerings from three courses to seven and to provide two additional blended course offerings during the same time span, while simultaneously elevating the level at which the instructional content is being provided."

<http://www.tegrity.com>

Total Course Solution (McGraw-Hill/Blackboard)

This integrated technology combines interactive learning exercises and online testing from McGraw-Hill with the Blackboard Learn course management system, so Blackboard users have access to McGraw-Hill's digital content and assessment tools right from within the Blackboard environment.

"I returned to the classroom after having served the past 12 years as provost and vice president for academic affairs at Murray State University," said Regents Professor Emeritus Gary Brockway. "I discovered that if I were to connect with

today's students in their very connected world, I would have to develop an engaging learning environment utilizing the latest in technology. [The McGraw-Hill/Blackboard Total Course Solution] has allowed me to design [a] basic marketing course with many incentives for students to participate. I have been able to design a very dynamic learning environment with a user-friendly course management system utilizing a single sign-on for students. Students come to class prepared, and as a result, I am able to utilize class time more productively for class discussion and participation."

<http://www.mhhe.com/domore>

Turnitin (iParadigms LLC)

Turnitin improves the student writing cycle by preventing plagiarism and providing rich feedback to students. Its OriginalityCheck feature ensures original work by checking submitted papers against 14 billion web pages, 150 million student papers, and leading library databases and publications, and it also includes online grading and peer-review features.

"As a part-time adjunct instructor with a 60-hour-a-week full-time work schedule, I have come to rely on and appreciate the invaluable time savings the turnitin.com plagiarism detection system provides," said Anderson University's Daryl Iverson. "Not only does it help me to grade the 17 manuscripts per student that are part of the Senior Seminar that I teach, but it give my students a chance to see if they have properly used their sources in their writing and provides us with a time-stamp of their submission. I would not have time to check for plagiarism ... without this system."

<http://www.turnitin.com>



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 Flat World Knowledge open e-textbooks
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 iSupport help-desk software
 Kindle wireless eReader (Amazon.com Inc.)
 Lenovo N5901 Mini Wireless Keyboard
 Lumens enrollment management software
 (Augusoft Inc.)
 Mediasite lecture capture platform
 (Sonic Foundry)
 Mobi mobile interactive whiteboard
 (eInstruction Corp.)
 Moodlerooms

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 MyLearningPlan
 Naiku Formative Assessment System
 (Naiku Inc.)
 NovaNet (Pearson Digital Learning)
 NSTA LearningCenter (National Science
 Teachers Association)
 Panopto lecture capture system
 Quia (IXL Learning)
 QWERTYTown (Second Nature Learning)
 Read&Write GOLD (Texthelp Systems)
 Schoology
 SMART Notebook software (SMART
 Technologies)
 Sokikom math social learning game
 SpellingCity
 Stationery Studio (FableVision Learning)
 Stop Motion Pro/Tool Factory Mobile Labs
 (Tool Factory Inc.)
 Student Advisor (Avenue100 Media
 Solutions Inc.)
 Student Health Force (InnerLink Inc.)
 StudyStack.com
 Tandem for Schools (Intand Corp.)
 ThinkCentral (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)
 Time To Know digital teaching platform
 Timez Attack (Big Brainz Inc.)
 TKOEDucation
 VariQuest Visual Learning Tools (Varitronics)
 Watch Me Learn
 Waterford Early Learning (Waterford Institute)
 webNetwork private cloud solution
 (Stoneware Inc.)
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