



Classroom News

Technology News for Today's Teacher



Obama makes history; what's next?

Educators ponder what the election's results will mean for their schools

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With the whole world watching, Illinois Sen. Barack Obama made history Nov. 4 by becoming the first African-American elected as president of the United States. Now, as he prepares to take office Jan. 20 amid a host of steep challenges, school leaders will be watching to see how education fits in with his priorities.

Facing all these challenges won't be easy, Obama acknowledged in his victory speech. But it had to be encouraging for educators to hear him mention college affordability and new school construction as he listed some of these key hurdles.

"Even as we celebrate tonight, we know the challenges that tomorrow will bring are the greatest of our

lifetime—two wars, a planet in peril, the worst financial crisis in a century," Obama said before a huge crowd of nearly a quarter-million supporters in Chicago. "Even as we stand here tonight, we know there are brave Americans waking up in the deserts of Iraq and the mountains of Afghanistan to risk their lives for us. There are mothers and fathers who will lie awake after their children fall asleep and wonder how they'll make the mortgage, or pay their doctor's bills, or save enough for college. There is new energy to harness and new jobs to be created; new schools to build and threats to meet and alliances to repair."

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Education was a key theme for Obama on the campaign trail, joining health care and energy independence as the centerpieces of his domestic agenda. He has called for better pay for teachers, more funding for early childhood education, and a \$4,000 tax credit for college tuition, among other proposals.

Citing the need to meet rising global challenges, Obama also says he wants more investment in educational technology.

"While technology has transformed just about every aspect of our lives—from the way we travel, to the way we communicate, to the way we look after our health—one of the places where we've failed to seize its full potential is in the classroom," he said in a speech earlier this year. He has proposed creating a \$500 million matching Technology Investment Fund that would build on existing federal ed-tech programs to help ensure that technology is fully integrated throughout U.S. schools. (See "Obama calls for ed-tech investment": <http://www.eschoolnews.com/news/top-news/index.cfm?i=55253>.)

But whether he'll be able to meet these goals early on in his presidency, if at all, remains to be seen. The country faces a \$10 trillion national debt, the worst economy since the Great Depression, and several other priorities to tackle.

Still, Obama will enter the White House with a solid mandate for change—and a Democratic Congress to support his agenda.

Obama won 52 percent of the popular vote, with his Republican challenger, Sen. John McCain, tallying 47 percent. The margin in the Electoral College wasn't nearly as close; as of press time, Obama had 364 electoral votes and McCain had 162, with Missouri still too close to call.

By comparison, President Bush won the White House twice—and never tallied more than 286 electoral votes.

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Classroom News

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Although Democrats solidified their majority in both the House and the Senate, they fell a few seats short of the 60 required to make a filibuster-proof majority in the Senate.

Ed-tech advocacy groups said they look forward to working with Obama to improve the nation's schools and lead instruction into the 21st century.

"We thank President-elect Obama for supporting online learning, virtual schools, and educational technology during the campaign ... and look forward to working with him on implementing them," said Susan Patrick, chief executive of the North American Council for Online Learning.

"CoSN congratulates President-elect Obama on his historic victory," said Keith Krueger, CEO of the Consortium for School Networking. "Over the past eight years, the United States has unfortunately had a very narrow perspective on the role technological tools can play in improving education and maximizing student achievement, and [federal officials] have foolishly slashed federal funding for education technology. Today, we welcome a new direction."

Krueger continued: "Throughout this campaign, candidate Obama has demonstrated a fundamental grasp of the importance of technology and 21st-century skills to transforming education. In addition, he has committed to supporting the e-Rate program, and particularly the

importance of broadband connections in schools. We look forward to working with his incoming administration to develop U.S. education policies that will enhance teaching and learning and provide our children with the skills required for success in the 21st century."

"Everyone expects the new administration to focus on our economic crisis," said Ken Kay, president of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills. "However, this cannot be adequately done without focusing on America's competitiveness. Central to this important work is the ability of Americans to effectively compete in the new global economy. While the country's education system must focus on infusing 21st-century skills into K-12 education, the new administration must help every American obtain the ... skills they need to be successful 21st-century citizens."

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Partnership for 21st Century Skills
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Schools soon required to teach web safety

Schools receiving federal e-Rate discounts on their internet access soon will have to educate their students about online safety, sexual predators, and cyber bullying, thanks to a new law signed by President Bush Oct. 10.

Lawmakers added the online-safety mandate to the Broadband Data Improvement Act (S.1492), which aims to speed the deployment of broadband internet service throughout the United States, when it became clear the original web-safety bill—the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act, sponsored by Republican Sen. Ted Stevens of Alaska—would not see final action. Stevens was found guilty last month of failing to report gifts.

Supported by several educational technology advocacy groups, the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act included language requiring e-Rate recipients to teach students about appropriate behavior on social networking and chat room web sites, as well as the dangers of cyber bullying.

The Senate Commerce Committee merged the language in Stevens' bill into the Broadband Data Improvement Act, sponsored by committee Chairman Daniel Inouye, D-Hawaii, which focuses on establishing new studies to track the penetration of U.S. broadband internet access.

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The new law requires the Federal Trade Commission to carry out a national public awareness program focused on educating children how to use the internet in safe and responsible ways. The legislation also establishes an "Online Safety and Technology Working Group" charged with evaluating online safety education efforts, parental control technologies, filtering and blocking software, and more.

The law reflects the concerns of parents, teachers, and others that children might meet sexual predators while on social networking sites or talking online in chat rooms. Increased media attention on cyber bullying—including several cases where students have suffered severe emotional problems or have committed suicide as a result of online taunts—also influenced the law.

Legislation introduced in 2006, the Deleting Online Predators Act, would have required schools and libraries to block access to social networking sites and chat rooms. But many K-12 groups opposed that bill, citing federal intrusion on school districts' rights to control content and arguing that education about safe and appropriate online behavior was a better approach.

Ed-tech advocacy groups say they're happy with the newly passed version of the legislation.

"The internet contains valuable content, collaboration, and communication opportunities that can, and do, materially contribute to a student's academic growth and preparation for the workforce," said representatives from the Consortium for School Networking and the International Society for Technology in Education in a joint statement.

"However, we recognize that students need to learn how to avoid inappropriate content and unwanted contacts from strangers while online. ... Educating students on how to keep themselves safe while online is the best line of defense, because no technological silver bullet has yet been devised that will guarantee that students are effectively protected. Therefore, we embrace wholeheartedly the thoughtful approach that S.1492 takes, particularly the flexibility that it affords districts on deter-

mining how best to educate students about staying safe online."

Inouye said passing the legislation, which also requires the government to keep closer tabs on who has high-speed internet access and who does not, is the first step toward nationwide broadband access.

Such an analysis might provide some insight into why the United States—the birthplace of the internet—lags behind other developed countries in broadband usage. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development ranks the U.S. 15th in terms of broadband penetration.

"If the United States is to remain a world leader in technology, we need a national broadband network that is second to none," Inouye said. "The federal government has a responsibility to ensure the continued rollout of broadband access, as well as the successful deployment of the next generation of broadband technology."

In other legislative news, President Bush on Oct. 13 signed into law a controversial bill that would stiffen penalties for movie and music piracy at the federal level. The law creates an intellectual-property czar who will report directly to the president on how to protect copyrights more effectively both domestically and internationally. The Justice Department had argued that the creation of this position would undermine its authority.

The law also toughens criminal laws against piracy and counterfeiting, although critics have argued that the measure goes too far and risks punishing people who have not infringed. The Recording Industry Association of America and Motion Picture Association of America backed the bill, as did the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Child predators will be easier to track online because of two other new laws that President Bush signed on Oct. 13. The Protect Our Children Act requires internet companies to report child pornography. It also authorizes more than \$320 million for the Justice Department over the next five years for, among other things, the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force. The president also signed the Keeping the Internet Devoid of Sexual

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Predators (KIDS) Act, which requires sex offenders to give the National Sex Offender Registry all of their internet identifiers, such as eMail addresses.

While the KIDS Act does not allow sex offenders' internet identifiers to be made public, it does require the attorney general to share the information with social-networking web sites, so the sites can compare the information with that of their users.

Congress also approved a continuing resolution for FY09 appropriations that will fund all federal education programs—including the Enhancing Education Through Technology (EETT) block-grant program—at last year's lev-

els until March 6. President Bush signed the appropriations measure on Sept. 30, the last day of the previous fiscal year.

The legislation means no final decision on FY09 education spending levels will be made until the new Congress takes office. Though Democrats expanded their majorities in both the Senate and the House, observers say the continuing financial crisis—coupled with wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—will make it hard for lawmakers to push for additional education funds in FY09 and beyond.

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Google settles book-scanning lawsuit

Agreement gives students and other library users full-text access to many works

Internet search giant Google Inc., the Authors Guild, and the Association of American Publishers have settled a class-action lawsuit over Google's ambitious book-scanning project in a deal that represents a huge win for libraries and their users.

Under the deal, Google will pay \$125 million to resolve copyright claims by authors and publishers and to pay legal fees. Authors and publishers will have new opportunities to make money from the sale of out-of-print books online, and public and academic libraries will be able to expand their reach by offering full-text views of books in some cases.

The settlement ends a three-year legal challenge of Google's plan to make many of the world's books searchable online. The lawsuit charged that Google's efforts to scan books without permission from the copyright holders infringed on copyright protections. The settlement is subject to federal court approval.

"We're trying to create a new structure where there will be more access to out-of-print books, with benefits both to readers and researchers and to the rights holders of those books—authors and publishers," Richard Sarnoff, chairman of the publishers association, said in an interview.

"This is an extraordinary accomplishment," Paul N. Courant, university librarian for the University of Michigan, said in a statement. "It will now be possible, even easy, for anyone to access these great collections from anywhere in the United States."

Under the Google Print Library Project, snippets from millions of out-of-print, but copyright-protected, books have been indexed online by Michigan and other participating libraries. Google has called the project, which also scans the full text of public-domain works, an invaluable chance for books to receive increased exposure.

But in a class-action suit filed in 2005, the Authors Guild alleged that Google was "engaging in massive copyright infringement." A year later, publishers also sued, citing the "continuing, irreparable, and imminent harm publishers are suffering ... due to Google's willful [copyright] infringement to further its own commercial purposes."

The settlement expands the amount of text to be scanned, makes it available for free online at "designated" libraries, makes it available for subscription by colleges and universities, and allows readers to pay for full

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online access of copyrighted works.

Google's \$125 million contribution includes about \$34.5 million for a nonprofit Book Rights Registry that will store copyright information and coordinate payments. Google also will pay for the millions of copyrighted books already scanned—\$60 per complete work to the rights holder—and for the legal fees of the Authors Guild and publishing association. Any sales, subscription, and advertisement revenue that occur through the search program will be divided 63 percent and 37 percent, respectively, between the copyright holders and Google.

"This may be the biggest book deal in publishing history," guild executive director Paul Aiken said.

If approved by the U.S. District Court in Manhattan, the settlement will end a conflict that had been closely followed by the publishing industry as it examines how copyright law should work on the internet and whether sales are hurt or harmed by access to digital text.

Authors and publishers once strongly resisted free online books, but over the past year, they have softened. During the year, entire works have been made viewable and even downloadable for free, including Charles Bock's novel *Beautiful Children* and works by Paulo Coelho and Neil Gaiman.

The court is expected to rule on the agreement by next summer.

Since emerging as the internet's most influential and profitable company, Google has fended off a variety of claims alleging that some of its success has been on built the legally protected work of others.

News organizations have either filed lawsuits or threatened legal action against Google for including snippets of copyrighted stories on its site. Companies also have sued Google for selling the right to show advertisements tied to a trademarked term entered into its search engine. In 2005, The Associated Press and Google disagreed on intellectual property issues, but were able to reach an amicable business solution in January 2006.

Google still faces an even bigger copyright battle over its popular video-sharing site, YouTube. Viacom Inc. is seeking at least \$1 billion in damages in a lawsuit alleging that YouTube has illegally profited by tens of thousands of pirated clips from copyrighted shows such as *South Park* and *The Daily Show with John Stewart*.

Google, which bought YouTube for \$1.76 billion two years ago, has adamantly denied the allegations and blasted Viacom for threatening to stifle free expression on the internet. A trial date in that New York federal court case still hasn't been scheduled.

Publishers are increasingly counting on the internet to help increase sales, and the Oct. 28 book-scanning settlement comes as the industry wonders, and worries, how badly it will be hurt by the shrinking economy.

Opening up a new market for out-of-print books might help.

"With this agreement, in-copyright, out-of-print books will now be available for readers in the U.S. to search, preview, and buy online—something that was simply unavailable to date," Google said in a blog posting about the settlement. "Most of these books are difficult, if not impossible, to find. They are not sold through bookstores or held on most library shelves, yet they make up the vast majority of books in existence. Today, Google only shows snippets of text from the books where we don't have copyright holder permission. This agreement enables people to preview up to 20 percent of these books."

The company added: "What makes this settlement so powerful is that in addition to being able to find and preview books more easily, users will also be able to read them. And when people read them, authors and publishers of in-copyright works will be compensated. If a reader in the U.S. finds an in-copyright book through Google Book Search, he or she will be able to pay to see the entire book online. Also, academic, library, corporate, and government organizations will be able to purchase institutional subscriptions to make these books available to their members. For out-of-print books that in most cases do not have a commercial market, this

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opens a new revenue opportunity that didn't exist before."

Google said it would continue to scan in-print books through its Library Project and make the full texts searchable, "but we won't show any portion of the book," it said. "As for books in the public domain, this agreement doesn't change how we display them: We'll make out-of-copyright works freely available on Google Book Search for people to read and download."

To make sure the agreement advances libraries' efforts to preserve, maintain, and provide access to books for students and researchers, Google said it will "give public and

university libraries across the U.S. free, full-text viewing of books at a designated computer in each of their facilities. That means local libraries across the U.S. will be able to offer their patrons access to the incredible collections of our library partners—a huge benefit to the public."

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Nation's first tech literacy exam coming soon

Technological proficiency to be added to Nation's Report Card beginning in 2012

For the first time ever, technological literacy will become part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card, the test's governing board has announced.

Beginning in 2012, the test will measure students' proficiency with technology in addition to reading, math, science, history, writing, and other subjects. The new test will mark the first time students' technology literacy has been assessed on a national level.

The National Assessment Governing Board has awarded a \$1.86 million contract to WestEd—a nonprofit educational research, development, and service agency based in San Francisco—to develop the 2012 NAEP Technological Literacy Framework.

Under this new contract, awarded through a competitive bidding process, WestEd will recommend the framework and specifications for the 2012 NAEP Technological Literacy Assessment. Ultimately, WestEd's work will lead to ways to define and measure students' knowledge and skills in understanding important technological tools, the Governing Board said. Board members then will decide which grade level—fourth, eighth, or 12th—will be tested in 2012.

"We are delighted to have WestEd help us lay the groundwork for an assessment in such an important area," said Darwin Winick, chairman of the Governing Board, which sets policy for NAEP. "Technology is changing and moving very fast, so accurate evaluation of student achievement in this area is essential."

NAEP's Technological Literacy Assessment comes at a time when there are no nationwide requirements or common definitions for technological literacy.

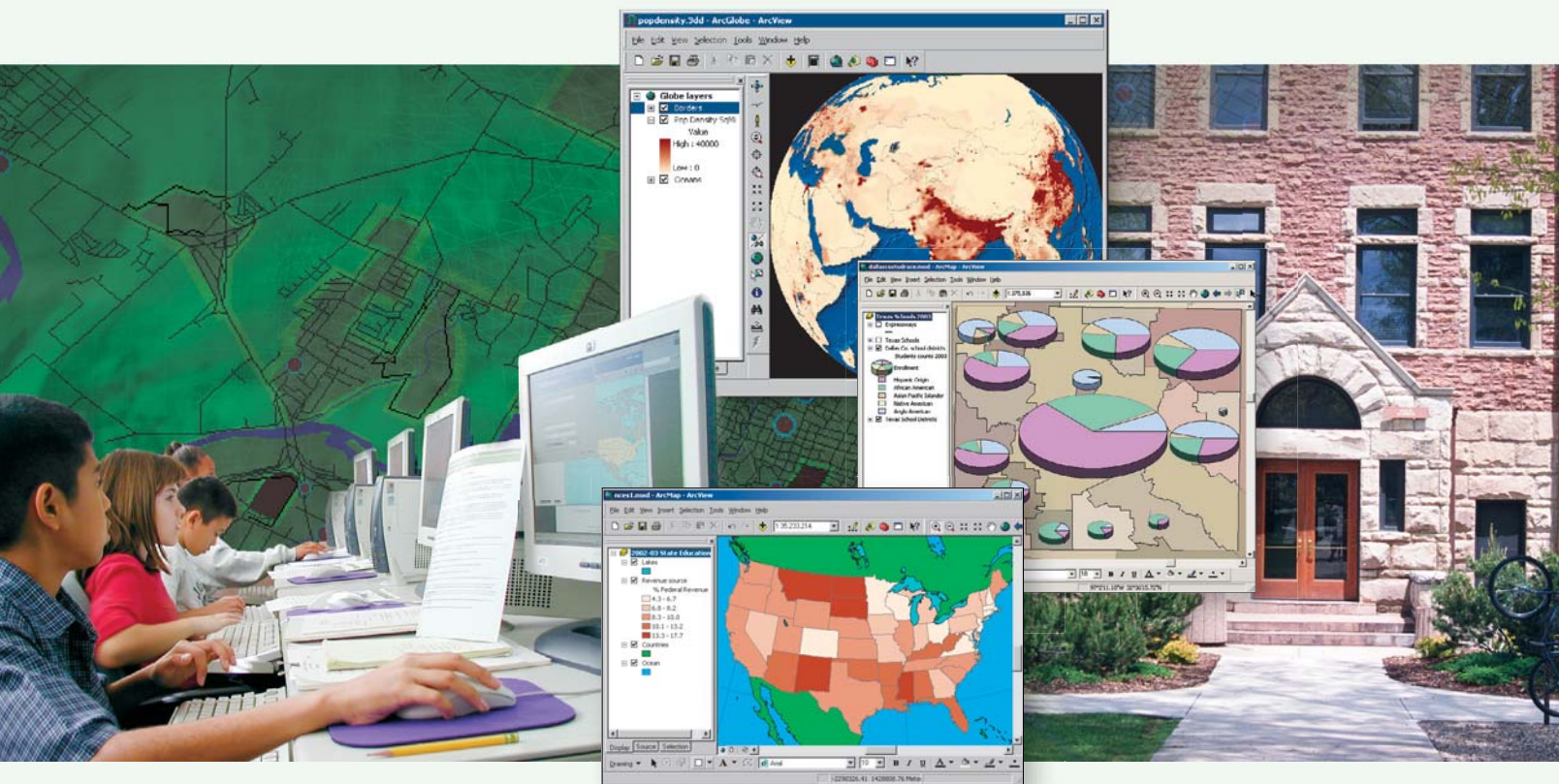
The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has developed a set of National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) for students, and the No Child Left Behind Act requires that students demonstrate technological literacy by the end of the eighth grade.

Yet only a handful of states have adopted separate tests in this area, even as a growing chorus of business representatives and policy makers voice concern about the ability of American students to compete in a global marketplace and keep up with quickly evolving technology.

Several groups will help WestEd on this 18-month project, including ISTE, the Council of Chief State School Officers,

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GIS Matters in Education: Addressing Challenges, Providing Solutions



Geographic information system (GIS) technology and processes are more commonplace every day. Their application to planning and decision making is evident in numerous fields and industries as they address challenges and provide solutions. This includes education.

Instruction

Challenge: To be globally competitive and live and work in the 21st century, students must be strong problem solvers and geographic thinkers.

Solution: A new report from the National Research Council¹ and a new campaign led by the National Geographic Society² show the importance of geographic literacy and GIS in preparing students for the future. GIS helps students tackle robust classroom content in diverse subject areas, integrating and analyzing information to solve real-world problems from a local to global scale. The President's High-Growth Job Training Initiative³ shows that workers skilled in GIS and other geospatial tools and methods are in high demand and are valuable assets to our economy and communities.

1. <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/11019.html>
2. www.mywonderfulworld.org
3. www.doleta.gov/BRG/JobTrainInitiative

Administration

Challenge: To manage schools and districts effectively, administrators need tools and approaches that aid in planning, decision making, and communication.

Solution: All aspects of a school district have a geography. Some are mobile such as students and buses; others are fixed such as buildings or fire exits. All have locations, characteristics, and relationships, from the community at large to the

microenvironments within a school. GIS technology helps integrate operations and improve efficiency in areas such as demographic analysis, student transportation, school safety, facilities mapping, logistics, and data dissemination.

Research and Policy

Challenge: To ensure excellence in education, researchers and policy makers must have tools and strategies to visualize and analyze critical data about needs, expenditures, compliance, and success.

Solution: The No Child Left Behind Act has made data-driven decision making a standard within local, state, and national education programs. GIS offers a geographic way to visualize and analyze education data—district progress, per-pupil spending, distribution of federal funds, community demographics and performance, and countless other variables—in a way that tables and charts alone cannot. GIS tools and methods support an integrated analysis of factors affecting education and, ultimately, students themselves.

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the International Technology Education Association, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills, and the State Educational Technology Directors Association.

With this assistance, WestEd plans to convene two committees that will include technology experts, engineers, teachers, scientists, business representatives, state and local policy makers, and employers from across the country. The committees will advise WestEd on the content and design of the national tech literacy assessment.


In addition, hundreds of experts in various fields—as well as the general public—will be able to participate in hearings or provide reviews of the framework document as it is developed. Ultimately, the collaboration will reflect the perspectives of a diverse array of individuals and groups, the Governing Board said.

“WestEd has assembled a highly qualified team comprised of exceptional organizations and knowledgeable individuals that bring a broad perspective on what students should know and be able to do in the area of technological literacy,” said Steve Schneider, senior program director of WestEd’s Mathematics, Science, and

Technology Program. “We look forward to this opportunity to develop a framework that will guide the nation to a high-quality assessment of how our students meet the demands in this important international domain.”

The Governing Board is slated to review and approve the technological literacy framework in late 2009.

“We all know that engineering and technologies in all forms—including computers, communications, energy usage, agriculture, medicine, and transportation—affect everything we hear, see, touch, and eat,” said Alan J. Friedman, a physicist and member of the National Assessment Governing Board’s Executive Committee. “With this new framework and the tests it will guide, we’ll discover how well students today are learning to understand and use these immensely powerful tools.”

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‘Digital disconnect’ divides kids, educators

Students and educators disagree on whether their schools are preparing graduates adequately for the jobs of the 21st century, speakers at an Oct. 15 webcast said.

Two-thirds of principals in a recent survey said they believe their school is preparing students to be competitive in the global workforce. But most tech-savvy students didn’t share that view, said Julie Evans, CEO of Project Tomorrow (formerly known as NetDay).

Project Tomorrow surveyed more than 350,000 students, teachers, parents, and administrators about their views on technology and education during its Speak Up 2007 research. Of the nearly 320,000 students surveyed, 24 percent considered themselves to be “advanced tech users.”

“Of these advanced tech users, less than a quarter of them think their school is preparing them for jobs in the future,” said Evans, speaking at a webcast sponsored by

the Consortium for School Networking.

“The ‘digital disconnect’ is alive and well,” Evans added. “Kids tell us they power down to come to school.”

Students who took the survey said the major obstacles to their use of technology at school include filters that block the web sites they need and administrators who impose rules that limit their technology use.

Contrary to what some people might believe, students say they’ve noticed more limits to their use of technology at school in recent years, not less—a finding that Evans attributed partly to training that teachers and administrators have undergone.

“Now that teachers know more, they’re more skittish, so to speak, about using the internet in the classroom,” she

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said. "Students say things were better [for them] a few years ago."

In the Speak Up survey, students said they generally use technology for online and computer gaming, downloading music, communicating through eMail, instant messaging and texting, or maintaining a personal web site, such as a Facebook or MySpace page. They said their technology use for schoolwork usually includes researching online, checking assignments or grades online, creating multimedia projects, or communicating with classmates about assignments.

Project Tomorrow found that mobile devices, online learning, and gaming are three areas where schools can use emerging technologies to teach students if they aren't already.

Many of the students surveyed said they have access to mobile devices such as cell phones, laptop computers, MP3 players, or smart phones and PDAs (personal digital assistants). They said they'd like to use these mobile devices to communicate, collaborate, create and share documents, and increase their productivity.

Nearly one in four high school students has had experience with online learning, according to the survey—and a significant percentage of younger students said they were interested in taking a course online.

While the majority of high school students who are interested in taking online courses would like to do so to earn college credit, students in third through eighth grade said they were interested in online classes primarily because these classes would give them extra help.

The study found that 64 percent of K-12 students play online and computer games, and the average time spent playing is eight to 10 hours. Of the students surveyed, 51 percent said they would like to include gaming in school because it's easier for them to understand difficult concepts, 50 percent said they would be more engaged in learning the material, and 46 percent said they would be able to learn more in general.

"Students often ask: Why can't science be taught as a game?" Evans said. She added that gaming teaches students to change the way they look at failure. "Students see failure as a step in the process to competency with gaming. We need to look, as educators, at how we're defining failure," she noted.

Half of the teachers surveyed said they would be interested in learning more about using gaming technology in their classroom, with 11 percent already using some form of gaming in their curriculum. Teachers said they see gaming as a way to increase student engagement and help address different learning styles.

When survey participants were asked what technology they would include if they could design a perfect school, a majority of students and teachers said they believed every student should have a laptop for his or her own personal use. Other than that, students and teachers have differing opinions on how best to use technology in schools.

For example, about 35 percent of students said they would like to include Web 2.0 technologies in their ultimate school, while only 10 percent of teachers said they would like to include these.

Project Tomorrow is now accepting registration for its Speak Up 2008 survey, which will run online until Dec. 19. The survey gives participants the chance to share their views about key ed-tech issues. Each year, the survey's findings are summarized and shared with national and state policy makers. Participating schools and districts also can access their own data online, free of charge.

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Speak Up 2008 survey
<http://www.netdayspeakup.org/speakup2008>

Schools grapple with teachers' Facebook use

Administrators wonder: Should teachers 'befriend' their students online?

As social networking web sites such as Facebook and MySpace become increasingly popular channels for student communication, schools are struggling to define the rules for whether, and how, it's appropriate for teachers to interact with their students through these media.

Proponents of using online social networks to reach students say it makes sense to go where students are already spending much of their time online. But others fear that educators' use of these sites encroaches on students' online "turf" and could cross the boundary of acceptable social behavior between teachers and their students.

Online social networks are still too new for many schools to have considered an appropriate policy. But so far, it appears the guidelines at the collegiate level, if any, are typically more lenient than the ones suggested at K-12 schools.

"We're seeing, culturally, a shift of formal structure" in the academic hierarchy, said Jared Stein, director of instructional design services at Utah Valley University. "A lot of students call teachers by their first name."

Stein said social networking sites could be seen as a good platform for teachers to communicate with students, but there's a limit to which teachers should engage.

He said there is no formal policy governing whether Utah Valley employees can interact with students on social networking sites, but the university discourages relationships that could cause bias when the instructor gives his or her students a grade. Stein said some of his students use the same tools that he does for social networking online.

"I believe that educators should keep a clear line separating educational relationships from social relationships," he said. "As long as the use of the tool is related to learning, education, or professional development, I don't see it as being a problem."

Alec Couros, a professor of educational technology and media at the University of Regina in Canada, said he uses online social networks in his teaching by creating a page on Facebook where current and former students have a space to network with each other.

"It's a space that's peripheral to the course [and] allows people to connect in different ways," he said.

He acknowledges that there needs to be a shared agreement between teachers and their students as soon as a social network is established.

"There should be a list of things that are OK. You can exchange messages about course assignments, but if you see that I'm signed on, don't send me a message making small talk," he said.

Couros also said students who are "friends" with their professors online shouldn't assume they gain favoritism with their teacher.

"Just because I'm your Facebook friend doesn't mean I'm going to give preferential treatment," he said. "Sometimes there is a casualness that students get into, like asking for permission to extend assignment deadlines. Things like that need to be done in a formal way and not on Facebook."

Although Couros and Stein communicate with their students through social networking sites, both agree there is a difference between K-12 and higher education.

Stein said that in higher education, teachers and students usually have more of a peer-to-peer relationship.

"It's easier for a professor to befriend a student within higher education. In K-12 schools, the line between student and teacher is more distinct," Couros said.

To define that line, the Ohio Education Association sent a memo to its teachers last year warning them to be mindful of what they posted online.

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"MySpace and Facebook present a unique set of problems for education employees," the memo said. "The OEA strongly encourages members to avoid MySpace and Facebook. OEA advises members not to join and for existing users to complete the steps involved in removing their profiles."

Michelle Prater, OEA media relations consultant, said the fact that online pages can be used in possible investigations was one reason the group encouraged teachers to avoid social networking sites.

"We saw that teachers were finding themselves in these types of situations, so we came up with a policy to keep teachers out of trouble," she said. "Things like that can be very damaging to a teacher, so we felt we needed to take action."

Some school districts have taken similar steps, such as Lamar County in Mississippi. The school board approved a policy in July that prohibits teachers from sending text messages or communicating with students through social networking sites.

Lamar Superintendent Ben Burnett said the policy wouldn't keep teachers or students from creating profiles on sites such as MySpace or Facebook; it just doesn't allow them to communicate socially through these sites.

The board approved the policy when it became concerned that casual contact between teachers and students would be unprofessional, though it said the policy was enacted at the suggestion of the district's attorney and not as the result of a specific incident.

Information from the Associated Press was used in this report.

Rethinking research in the Google era

Educators ponder the web's effect on students' reading, search habits

As the internet replaces library databases as students' primary research option, a new discussion is emerging in academic circles: Is the vast amount of information at students' fingertips changing the way they gather and process information for the better—or for worse?

In a recent Atlantic Monthly article titled "Is Google Making Us Stupid," author Nicholas Carr asserts that technology has changed the way we think, making our minds a "high-speed data-processing" machine under the influence of internet search engines. But he questions whether this development has led to a focus on surface-level skimming at the expense of deeper reading.

Carr believes his extensive use of online search engines has caused him to become bored with traditional reading, saying that his concentration "often starts to drift after two or three pages. I get fidgety, lose the thread, begin looking for something else to do. ... The deep reading that used to come naturally has become a struggle."

He refers to a study, called "Information Behavior of the Researchers of the Future," commissioned by the British

Library and the Joint Information Systems Committee, which seeks to identify how students are likely to access and interact with digital resources in from five to 10 years.

Like Carr, the study says people who use the internet for research have very specific and identifiable habits. For example, they tend to seek information horizontally—meaning they skim, or bounce from page to page, without reading in depth and rarely return to a previous source. About 60 percent of electronic journal users view no more than three pages, the study found, and 65 percent never return.

The study also reveals students' preference for web researching.

For instance, 89 percent of college students use search engines to begin an information search, the study found—while only 2 percent start from a library web site.

Ninety-three percent of college students are satisfied with their overall experience in using a search engine, and they

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still use the library, according to the study—but they are using it less (and reading less) since they first began using internet research tools.

Although the study notes that horizontal searching isn't confined to young internet users, its findings—and general observations about students' internet behavior—have led to some serious reflection by educators.

Carla Wade, technology education specialist at the Oregon Department of Education, believes skimming and scanning are important study skills that students learned even before the Google era. "Textbooks, periodicals, and even phone books are designed to allow for skimming and scanning to help point readers to the information they seek. Once we identify the valid source, we do the in-depth reading," she said.

Wade believes that by bouncing from one article to another and then comparing them, students are using critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making, and analysis skills.

Jim Bosco, professor emeritus at Western Michigan University, says there "has always been the concern that with new technology comes hell. It began with Socrates being concerned that writing had a horrible effect on learning, because up until that point all learning was done through oral tradition. It's continued with printing and then television. It's a reoccurring trend throughout history."

Though he admits there's some truth to the idea that with newer traditions, something is lost from the old traditions, "that's just the way progress works," he said.

Bosco agrees that scanning and skimming are nothing new for students.

"If people think it's only the students now [who] skim over information and write papers that are just a collage of quotes and material pulled from other articles, they're wrong," he said. "As a teacher who's old enough to have reviewed papers both before and after the internet, let me tell you: Students in the past used to write papers in the

same way. There will always be students who write papers where it's obvious they have no deep understanding of the material. It's not a new phenomenon—it's just better automated now."

For many educators, skimming and scanning are not bad habits—unless they're the only habits students are using when researching.

According to the British Library's report, a common misconception of the "Google generation" is that they are naturally information literate.

Says the study: "The information literacy of young people has not improved with the widening access to technology. ... Young people sometimes have a poor understanding of their information needs and thus find it difficult to develop effective search strategies. Faced with a long list of search hits, young people find it hard to assess the relevance of the materials presented and often print off pages with no more than a perfunctory glance."

To help students learn how to search the internet successfully, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) has developed "Standards for the 21st Century Learner." And the State Educational Technology Directors Association has a media literacy toolkit that aligns with state standards.

To help students learn not only how to navigate the internet successfully, but also to read in depth, experts say educators must design helpful homework assignments and projects.

"Librarians and teachers working as a collaborative team can design lessons that require and encourage in-depth reading and learning," said Linda Corey, library media coordinator for the Blue Valley Schools in Overland Park, Kan.

Corey believes students are motivated and challenged to read and make deeper connections when they are provided with engaging topics, guided to ask relevant questions, informed of expectations and learning targets, given access to authoritative resources, provided timely and relevant feedback, allowed time for reflection and opportunity

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nities to collaborate with others, and presented with an authentic audience for their work.

"I don't think skimming and in-depth reading have to be mutually exclusive—especially in the context of education," said Susan Patrick, president and chief executive officer of the North American Council for Online Learning. "If [students are] asked the right questions, [are] engaged and driven to work rigorously, they will process

a broader depth of information online, because they have access to a broader perspective of viewpoints, primary resources, recorded interviews with authors, and many more learning materials than the limited amount of reading materials in most school libraries.

Said Karen Greenwood Henke, managing director for Nimble Press: "What [students] need to make rich mental connections is quiet, unscheduled time to think and write about what [they] have learned."

Educators give publishers their wish lists

AAP forum explores how textbook publishing must change to adapt to 21st-century instructional needs

To engage today's students and get them to learn, information must be more than just words on a page, educators told publishers at a recent forum: Instead, students need relevant and interactive material, as well as resources and activities that can provide real-life experiences.

That was the key message at the event, which gave educators a chance to tell publishers what their needs and objectives are for 21st-century instruction. Organized by the Association of American Publishers (AAP) and held Oct. 2 at the Ritz-Carlton in Arlington, Va., the forum explored why the textbook publishing industry needs to change—and how publishers can adapt to serve the needs of a tech-savvy student population.

"Students aren't motivated because they're not interested in what they're learning in school—it seems irrelevant to them," said one audience member. "They need real-world experiences to make it worthwhile."

Joe Hairston, superintendent of the Baltimore County, Md., Public Schools, said a textbook cannot be the only curriculum resource, because most books are outdated by two to five years by the time schools can replace them.

"Students need interactive materials and supplemental materials," he said. "[Baltimore County] is currently working with publishers, such as the National Science Foundation, to provide web simulations across many subjects."

Another suggestion to publishers was to provide resources that will connect to multiple technologies.

Curricular materials "need to connect to student information systems and data-mining systems, as well as cell phones," said Tom Greaves, president of The Greaves Group LLC.

Mary Ann Wolf, executive director of the State Educational Technology Directors Association, expressed the same concern. She said curriculum materials should come with a full technology toolkit for every classroom.

"[Teachers] need streamlined assessments and material that corresponds to those assessments," she said—and educators with interactive whiteboards need corresponding lessons and materials for these devices, too.

Deborah Baker, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction at Brighton Central School District in New York, described what she considers the ideal digital content delivery system.

"Resources need to be personal, portable, and practical," Baker explained. "Students need something to mark in, take notes in, and add to. It needs to be on-the-go for busy schedules, and it can't be on the computer all the time, [because] most districts can't afford one-to-one solutions."

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Christopher Curran, managing director for Berkery, Noyes & Co., said publishers should “build, buy, and redeploy technology platforms to beat out the competition.”

“They need to act immediately on future opportunities, license effectively and often, address current students’ needs and weaknesses, and ... branch into alternative learning devices,” said Curran.

He went on to explain that publishers could adapt to a digital world by creating more web-based formative and summative assessments offered through a subscription-based model; creating applications for interactive whiteboards and student response systems; organizing third-party content to align with state standards; branch into four-year, accredited, fully online university curricula; and work with companies like Elluminate and CourseSmart to provide social platforms with educational applications and digital college textbooks.

One point that educators made sure to stress to publishers was that just because it’s digital doesn’t mean it will be a good fit for schools.

“The bottom line is that textbooks are still ahead of technology in most U.S. classrooms,” said Gene Wilhoit, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers. “Students are demanding new learning models and districts will follow these needs, but schools and publishers can’t just grasp at the latest idea; there needs to be structure and accountability.”

Michael Ross, senior vice president of worldwide product development and general manager of education for Encyclopedia Britannica, agreed. Although materials can, and should, be created by students and educators, Ross added, there still needs to be quality control.

“We still need to value experts,” he said. “There’s a difference between Pixar and YouTube; there’s a difference between an expert and an amateur. We need to look at sources behind the information. User-generated material needs to be held accountable.”

Said Greaves: “Schools will still want content from trust-

ed providers, who they know have high standards. They also know that publishers will make content compatible with future software platforms, like Vista and new Mac software.”

eLearning consultant Liz Glowa said the Southern Regional Education Board’s State Virtual Schools Alliance did a study on textbooks and digital resources in virtual schools and found that digital resources aren’t always a success.

“Virtual schools said that copyright and licensing issues were the biggest drawbacks [to using] digital resources,” she said. “Also, standards are critical. Digital publishers really need to rethink how to license material for online resources—for anytime, anywhere access, and because states like to share each other’s copyrighted content—and [they] need to rethink the meaning of digital ethics [owing] to the creation of open-source materials.”

Not just publishing, but practice

Educators and publishers also agreed: To fully leverage technology’s potential to transform education, it’s not just the publishing industry that must change—instructional practices must change as well.

Michael Horn, the conference’s keynote speaker and co-author of the book *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns*, argued that for new innovations in schools to truly make a difference, they will have to cater to individual students’ needs—and software and digital curriculum materials can help educators do this.

“Just like Apple’s model Ii—a cheaper, less functional innovation than the desktop computer—sank [Digital Equipment Corp.] in the 1980s, uncomplicated, affordable technology and software could revolutionize education,” Horn said.

Curran agreed, saying that publishers need to deliver a student-centric model, one that caters to the individual.

Said Greaves: “Digital is the future, because it has the

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ability to teach to diverse learners. It can also cater to distance learners."

"The power of technology is to personalize, and publishing needs to keep up," echoed Steve Dowling, senior vice president of corporate development for Pearson PLC and president of Pearson Inc. "It takes some hard work—time, intelligence, and money. But it can be done."

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Microsoft, universities team up on gaming research

New 'Games for Learning Institute' to study how computer games can boost student interest, achievement in math and science

Microsoft's research arm is leading a new effort to study the use of computer games as tools to help middle school students learn science and math.

The Games for Learning Institute (G4LI) aims to identify which qualities of computer games engage students and help develop relevant, personalized teaching strategies that can be applied to the learning process, its organizers said. The G4LI is a joint research endeavor by Microsoft Research, New York University (NYU), and a consortium of universities. Partners include Columbia University, the City University of New York (CUNY), Dartmouth College, Parsons, Polytechnic Institute of NYU, the Rochester Institute of Technology, and Columbia Teachers College.

Speaking to NYU faculty and students, Craig Mundie, chief research and strategy officer for Microsoft Corp., announced this new multidisciplinary, multi-institutional gaming research alliance on Oct. 9.

"Technology has the potential to help reinvent the education process and excite and inspire young learners to embrace science, math, and technology," Mundie said. "The Games for Learning Institute at NYU is a great example of how technology can change how students learn, making it far more natural and intuitive."

Microsoft Research is providing \$1.5 million to the institute. NYU and its consortium of partners are matching Microsoft's investment, for a combined \$3 million.

Funding covers the first three years of research, which will focus on evaluating computer games as potential learning tools for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects during the middle-school years (grades 6–8). The institute will work with a range of student populations yet will focus on underrepresented middle-school students, such as girls and minorities, in particular.

"Middle school is a critical stage for students, a time when many are introduced to advanced math and science concepts," said Ken Perlin, professor of computer science at NYU's Courant Institute of Mathematical Sciences and founding director of NYU's Media Research Laboratory. Perlin will direct the G4LI, which will be located at NYU.

"Many students become discouraged or uninterested and pour their time at home into gaming," Perlin added. "Ironically, we think gaming is our starting point to draw them into math, science, and technology-based programs."

Video games, with their popularity and ability to engage young people, are showing promise as a way to excite and prepare the "net generation," according to a G4LI press release. This generation of students, though well-versed in using technology for social networking and internet research, is continuing a decline in proficiency and interest in math and sciences, G4LI says—the very

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skills needed to prepare them for the new demands and requirements of the 21st century.

“While educational games are commonplace, little is known about how, why, or even if they are effective,” said John Nordlinger, senior research manager for Microsoft Research’s gaming efforts. “Microsoft Research, together with NYU and the consortium of academic partners, will address these questions from a multidisciplinary angle, exploring what makes certain games compelling and playable and what elements make them effective, providing critically important information to researchers, game developers, and educators to support a new era of using games for educational purposes.”

Jan Plass, associate professor of educational communication and technology at NYU’s Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development,

will co-direct the G4LI with Perlin.

The institute also will evaluate prototypes of new learning games, introducing them—along with accompanying curricula—to a network of 19 New York City area schools and then tracking the results.

Based on the findings of its initial research, the institute’s goal is to expand its research and game development to all K-12 grades. Resulting scientific evidence will be shared broadly with researchers, game developers, and educators, organizers said.

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Netwatch— Curriculum- *Best new instructional resources on the internet*

InfoSource offers free tech-literacy assessment

<http://www.simplassessment.com>

InfoSource Learning recently launched a free, online technology literacy assessment that tests K-12 students to determine their technological proficiency. The assessment is available free of charge to all school districts, state education departments, and educational organizations. “It is extremely important for all schools to measure and improve their students’ use of technology,” said Michael Werner, chief executive officer of InfoSource Learning, in a press release. “In fact, we believe it is so important that we want to make our assessment available to all states and school districts free of charge—for all of their students.” The assessment began as a promotion at the 2008 National Educational Computer Conference to help school districts determine if their students are technologically literate by the eighth grade in accordance with the No Child Left Behind Act. InfoSource originally intended to charge a flat fee of \$10 per student for access to the site, the company says.

Worldwide study community helps students master math and science

<http://www.cramster.com>

Cramster, a global math and science study community that launched in 2003, is a place where students can interact online with teachers and their peers to help solve problems based on subjects such as physics, calculus, and chemistry. The mostly-free online community features a number of study materials, such as textbook solutions and practice exams, as well as an interactive question-and-answer board that is monitored by Cramster “Subject Matter Experts.” Students can post questions, and registered teachers post guidance in response. Earlier this year, Cramster launched a Facebook application called Courses 2.0, where Facebook members can find and communicate with one another on the Cramster web site outside of the classroom. Cramster is based in Pasadena, Calif.

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Online social network targets those interested in global education projects

<http://gloaleducation.ning.com>

The Global Education Collaborative is an online community for teachers and students who are interested in joining global education projects. With more than 800 members, the site encourages users to post media, blogs, and ideas for advancing collaborative education worldwide. The site operates similar to an online social network, allowing members to search for each other, post pictures and videos, and join groups around a common theme or project. Groups such as "Global Awareness Curriculum," "Student-Driven Podcasts," and "Primary Teachers Collaborating" allow a space for teachers and students to interact and discuss their initiatives.

Leadership

'College.gov' is a one-stop shop for college planning information

<http://www.college.gov>

The U.S. Department of Education recently launched a new web site that is intended to be the go-to source for information and resources to help students and their families plan, prepare, and pay for college. The site gives reasons why students should go to college, explains the necessary steps to be accepted and enroll at a two- or four-year institution, gives financial aid advice, and has sections devoted to parents/family and teachers/counselors. It also features inspirational stories of students who are already attending college. "Why go?" the site asks. "It can make a huge difference in your life—and your family's. More education can open doors of opportunity, financially and personally."

'Campus Explorer': Like Matchmaker.com for college applicants

<http://www.campusexplorer.com>

"Campus Explorer" is a new college search engine that aims to help students determine which college is the best match for them. Students enter information such as their SAT or ACT scores and grade-point average, and the site determines which schools they are eligible for. The site then matches students with specific schools on this list, based on the preferences they indicate on topics such as distance from home, academic interests, and their financial situation. The site lists both two- and four-year institutions, as well as trade schools and career education options, with more than 6,000 schools included in its database. The site's creators say they wanted to help students determine which college fits them the best in an education system where the student-to-counselor ratio is often 250 to 1.

New blog helps educators teach

writing skills to students

<http://www.thewritingteacher.org>

LearningExpress has created a new blog, called The Writing Teacher, for sharing ideas and expertise on helping students become better writers. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 33 percent of eighth grade students in the United States are writing at a proficient level. To help change that, The Writing Teacher includes writing input, content, and feedback—all encouraging participation by those who teach writing every day. The blog's debut article, "Research-Based Best Practices for Teaching Writing: A Discussion with Steve Graham," features advice from a literacy professor at Vanderbilt University. "We are a knowledge-based society. Knowing how to effectively plan, draft, edit, and revise your communications and then self-regulate the whole process are fundamental skills necessary for success in school and the world of work," said Graham. "Too many students progress through school without becoming proficient in these skills. We can do better."