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X-ray machines aren't just in airports—they're also coming to schools.



## Panel: Make digital learning easier

Nonpartisan commission releases '10 Elements of High-Quality Digital Learning,' calls for an end to seat-time requirements

**Jenna Zwang**  
Assistant Editor

Digital and blended learning opportunities have the potential to improve U.S. education dramatically, because they can help teachers provide a more personal learning experience for their students, ac-

ording to the Digital Learning Council (DLC), a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy group led by former governors Bob Wise of West Virginia, a Democrat, and Jeb Bush of Florida, a Republican. But for this to happen, policy makers must remove barriers to digital learning such as archaic

school funding formulas and seat-time requirements, the council argues.

The DLC on Dec. 1 introduced its "Ten Elements of High-Quality Digital Learning," a blueprint for how digital learning can transform education. On Dec. 2, the Alliance for Excellent Education (All4Ed), of which Wise is president, held a webinar to discuss the DLC's blueprint.

Panel, page 28

### Black mark(ed) for public education?



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Publishing executive Cathie Black greets parents from New York City's public schools. In a striking example of the belief that public education should be run more like a business, Black has become chancellor of the nation's largest school system despite having never served in—or even attended—a public school (story, page 29).

## More public schools trying single-sex education

**Jenna Zwang**  
Assistant Editor

Single-sex education appears to be making a comeback, but with a new twist: A small but growing number of traditional public schools are experimenting with sep-

arate instruction for boys and girls to help meet each gender's needs.

No longer is single-sex education defined only by all-girl or all-boy schools, in which the entire student body consists of just one gender. Other single-sex education models have emerged as well, such as the "dual academy" format, where boys and girls are in the same building but are separated all day except for special occasions; and the single-sex classroom model, which separates the sexes only for specific courses.

In some cases, these single-sex education programs are an attempt to combat lagging test scores, especially among male students. Separating boys and girls removes a

Single-sex, page 30

## News Corp. dives into ed tech

Media giant will own 90 percent of Wireless Generation

From staff and wire reports

News Corp., which recently hired outgoing New York City Public Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, has reached a deal to buy educational technology firm Wireless Generation for \$360 million in cash in what observers see as the first of many moves into the ed-tech market for Rupert Murdoch's media giant.

News Corp., which owns the divisive Fox News cable network, is buying a 90-percent stake in Wireless Generation, while founder and CEO Larry Berger, Chief Operating Officer Josh Reibel, and Chief Product Officer Laurence Holt will split the remaining 10 percent and will continue to manage the company.

Privately held Wireless Generation, which is based in Brooklyn, N.Y., provides mobile

News Corp., page 29

## Mobile learning at a tipping point

**Meris Stansbury**  
Associate Editor

According to a recent national survey, access to mobile technology in the classroom has more than tripled among high schools students in the past three years—and parents say they are more likely to purchase a mobile technology device for their child if it's for classroom use.

The information comes from Project Tomorrow's annual Speak Up survey and was presented at a conference on mobile learning in Washington, D.C., Oct. 29.

Focusing on mobile technology in the classroom is important, said Julie Evans, CEO of Project Tomorrow, because of a confluence of positive factors: matured technology, teacher buy-in, and low price points.

"Mobile technology has been developing for years, to the point where there's now a wide variety at low prices, and each [type of mobile learning device] can provide anytime,

Mobile learning, page 30

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## Online update

# The biggest ed-tech 'pain points'—and how to solve them

Free webinar looks at solutions to common challenges

Scott Farmer, IT director for Virginia Tech, says getting campus officials who know nothing about technology to understand his department's needs was one of the key challenges keeping him up at night.

"If you really don't have the buy-in of the people who control the purse strings, and they really don't understand what's going on, you're going to get questions like, 'Well, shoot, why do we need to upgrade this?'" Farmer said during a recent webinar at eSN Online.

Farmer isn't alone. According to an analysis done by IT systems management software maker Kaseya, a lack of alignment between school business and IT departments leads to several missed ed-tech opportunities.

Communicating your needs clearly to decision makers who don't understand technology was on a list of the top 10 challenges in IT management, compiled by Kaseya as a result of its analysis.

During the eSN webinar, sponsored by Kaseya to highlight the findings of its analysis, Farmer and other speakers discussed how the top 10 ed-tech pain points as identified by Kaseya apply to them—and how they've used a combination of technology and smart policy to solve these challenges.

Translating ed-tech problems into plain English will go a long way toward improving a school IT staff's communication with decision makers, Farmer said: "When you try and explain all the various things in the IT realm, you've got to be able to put it in layman's terms. If you start talking shop, . . . you've lost them."

Another thing that helps is having a summary report of your IT system capability, panelists said—data that can help you make a case for investing in necessary upgrades.

Drew Lane, IT director for the Derby Public Schools in Kansas, said creating and distributing frequent IT summary reports has reduced the number of meetings he's had to attend to "explain the mundane." Kaseya's software has an easy-to-use tool for generating such reports, he added.

A second key ed-tech challenge is what Kaseya refers to as "IT hobbyists," or users who try to perform system-related tasks on their own—either because their school or campus IT staff are too busy to help, or because they like to maintain control over their machines.

Lane said his staff have developed a three-pronged approach to solving this challenge.

First, they've established an ed-tech policy that spells out exactly what users can and can't do on their machines. Second, they rely on a report that Kaseya's software generates automatically every day, showing what changes have been made to applications and systems. Third, they've written a script in the program to uninstall any rogue software that is detected on a system.

"If we can't figure out a fix in 15 minutes, we just go ahead and reimage the machine," Lane said.

Other top ed-tech pain points discussed during the webinar included frequent user turnover, data backup and recovery, "invisible assets" (missing laptops, unknown users), and the need to do more with less.

Readers can listen to an archived version of this webinar, and many others, free of charge. To learn more, go to:

<http://www.eschoolnews.com/events/webinars/>

# Should K-12 schools adopt engineering standards?

Jenna Zwang  
Assistant Editor

With efforts to ensure U.S. competitiveness in a global economy revolving around stronger STEM education, some policy makers are looking at whether it makes sense to include engineering standards for K-12 education. But the ability to establish a national set of standards for K-12 engineering education might still be out of reach, according to a new study from the National Academy of Sciences (NAS).

The study, "Standards for K-12 Engineering Education?" claims that "although the main ideas in K-12 engineering education are largely agreed upon, data based on rigorous research on engineering learning at the K-12 level are still not sufficient to develop learning progressions that could be reflected as standards."

Educators are split on whether establishing K-12 engineering standards is a feasible option or not.

"We have had academic K-12 engineering standards in Massachusetts since 2001; the next generation of national science standards will likely include engineering standards as well," said Jake Foster, director of science and technology/engineering with the Massachusetts Department of Education.

Elizabeth Parry, coordinator for the North Carolina State University College of Engineering, disagrees.

"Of course it is possible [to create engineering standards], but in my opinion it doesn't make sense. . . . [Engineering] skills cut across all core subjects in K-12, and separate standards would not sufficiently measure achievement," said Parry.

Elizabeth McGrath, executive director of the Center for Innovation in Engineering and Science Education (CIESE), said that while developing national standards is not a simple process, it can be accomplished.

"One approach is to encourage the infusion of engineering [education] into core courses at the K-12 level, like science and math, but also language arts, art, and other subjects. This approach has many practical benefits and has shown in some of our own research to increase student learning in core subjects like science," McGrath said.

The NAS study included infusion as a possibility while standards are revised. The study also proposed mapping, or "integrating 'big ideas' in engineering onto current standards in other disciplines." Mapping is a more retrospective activity compared with the proactive efforts of infusion, the study said.

The lack of engineering-specific standards set forward by the Common Core standards initiative also is an issue, though the National Research Council (NRC) is working to develop science standards for the Common Core project.

"If the NRC science standards with engineering are adopted, the chances of more students receiving engineering education will greatly increase," said Parry.

"The draft framework for the new science standards reflects the recent emphasis on the connections between science, technology, engineering, and math by in-

cluding engineering in a prominent position: as the fourth disciplinary domain along with life sciences, Earth and space sciences, and physical sciences," McGrath said.

"From an employment perspective, engineering is one of the highest-demand fields that will determine whether we as a state and country can compete internationally," said Foster.

According to the 2007 study "Rising Above the Gathering Storm," 85 percent of economic growth per capita is as result of technological innovation.

"If the U.S. is going to remain an affluent society that is able to provide health care, education, and all the things citizens need, then we need to find ways to steer more students into engineering and technical fields," said McGrath.

To steer those students, educators must help change the stereotype of just what, exactly, an engineer is.

"When many outside of the engineering profession think of engineers, images of white men wearing pocket protectors working in isolation with dirty machines often come to mind," McGrath said. "The engineering education community has to do a better job of communicating that an engineering degree is the pathway to students' ability to make a real difference in the world."

Parry hopes students will achieve some modicum of engineering education that will at least allow them to become part of today's technologically advanced society.

"The end goal is not to create millions of engineers, although if we were able to do that, we could more effectively compete on all playing fields with countries like China and India," she said. "And it's really more than competition—technological literacy is a national security issue. Rather, our general citizenry is fairly technologically illiterate."

Foster agreed.

"Given the prevalence of technology in our world—all the designed products we use every day—every student should have a basic understanding of how and why those products are designed and produced. Each student should have a basic literacy of the designed world they inhabit," Foster said.

The study states that there is limited experience with K-12 engineering education in the U.S. and a lack of qualified teachers. It also pointed to concern over how mathematics and science would be affected by possible reforms, and it said there are "significant barriers" to stand-alone engineering education in a curriculum that includes a variety of other learning goals in more "established domains of study."

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# JANUARY 2011

## Highlights

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Now is not the time to pull back on investing in education, writes Editor Dennis Pierce.



### 16 Best Practices

An Ohio school's unique partnership with an ed-tech firm is helping students learn essential life skills.



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### 27 A new breed of SIS is emerging

School software mergers have led to a blending of student information systems and learning management systems.

— Meris Stansbury

## > eSN Online

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**32 Grants & Funding** For the latest in school funding news, go to [www.eschoolnews.com/funding](http://www.eschoolnews.com/funding)

**33 Security Checkpoint** For more school safety news and information, see: [www.eschoolnews.com/resources/safe-center](http://www.eschoolnews.com/resources/safe-center)



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## A nation being left behind

Dennis Pierce, Editor  
dpierce@eschoolnews.com

On the morning of Oct. 5, 1957, readers of the *New York Times* woke up to a jarring three-line headline that spanned the width of the newspaper's front page in all-capital letters: "SOVIET FIRES EARTH SATELLITE INTO SPACE; IT IS CIRCLING THE GLOBE AT 18,000 M.P.H.; SPHERE TRACKED IN 4 CROSSINGS OVER U.S."

And so began the panicked reaction to the Soviet satellite Sputnik, which shocked U.S. policy makers into realizing they no longer led the world in technological development. Sputnik's launch spurred passage of the National Defense Education Act, a four-year program that poured billions of dollars into the U.S. education system. In 1953, the federal government spent \$153 million on education; by 1960, this amount had grown nearly sixfold.

Fast forward more than five decades, and there have been several events in the past few months that should have prompted a similar sense of urgency among U.S. policy makers ... and yet the collective response of the nation has been nowhere near as dramatic:

- In the latest international comparisons from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), released in December, U.S. students ranked 25th out of 65 industrialized countries in math, 14th in reading, and 17th in science. In its first year of participating in these international assessments, the province of Shanghai, China, topped the world in all three disciplines in 2009—outscored U.S. students 600 to 487, on average, in math; 575 to 502 in science; and 556 to 500 in reading. (A score of 500 is considered average.)

- For the first time ever, China also now boasts the world's fastest supercomputer, the *New York Times* reported in October. According to Jack Dongarra, a University of Tennessee computer scientist who maintains the supercomputer rankings, the Chinese machine, known as Tianhe-1A, has 1.4 times the power of the previously top-ranked computer, which sits at a national laboratory in Tennessee.

- Korea, which ranked first among OECD countries in reading and math and third in science, is "years ahead" of the United States in terms of internet connectivity, reports Blair Levin, a former chief of staff for the Federal Communications Commission during the Clinton administration and now a policy analyst for the Aspen Institute. During a meeting of the State Educational Technology Directors Association in November, Levin said Korea is closing in on its goal of delivering 100 Mbps of connectivity to *every* home in the nation.

These developments might not have registered in our nation's collective consciousness, but they haven't escaped the notice of President Barack Obama. Calling this our generation's "Sputnik moment," the president on Dec. 8 urged lawmakers to step up their spending on education and infrastructure to make sure the United States isn't left behind in the global economic race.

"We need a commitment to innovation we haven't seen since President Kennedy challenged us to go to the moon," Obama said in a speech at North Carolina's Forsyth Technical Community College. He added: "In the race for the future, America is in danger of falling behind. That's just the truth. And if you hear a politician say it's not, they're just not paying attention."

The speech was a preview of the State of the Union ad-

dress the president will give later this month as he tries to grapple with a divided Congress over the next two years, his aides told the Associated Press.

Obama is absolutely right: America can't afford to dither while other countries pass us by. But his message will be a hard sell to a House of Representatives whose new leaders say their No. 1 priority is to reduce spending, as our story on page 8 of this issue indicates.

The fear of being left behind in the struggle for global supremacy apparently was trumped during the Nov. 2 midterm elections by the fear of leaving today's students a debt they can't repay, as House Republicans swept into power on a wave of voter concerns about the nation's budget deficit. And while those concerns might, indeed, be legitimate, where were those concerns last month when the House leaders-in-waiting dug in their heels over extending the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest 2 percent of Americans who don't need them?

Reducing the deficit and investing more in education aren't mutually exclusive goals, but it will take an honest conversation about our priorities as a nation if we're to accomplish both. And that kind of frank discussion is, frankly, hard to have when cable TV's top-rated news channel, Fox News, routinely conflates news and conservative opinion.

In view of this challenge, maybe the fact that Fox News' parent company, News Corp., is getting into the ed-tech business (as we report on page 1 of this issue) will be a good thing for schools. After all, if News Corp. is to make any money from its latest venture, it will need a host of customers that are flush with cash. Perhaps the message permeating Fox News programming in the months ahead will finally align with what educators have been saying for years: If we don't spend more on our schools, our children's future will suffer.

eSN



## Your Turn

Many of the stories appearing in the pages of *eSchool News* first ran on our web site in some form or another, prompting various responses by our readers. Here, we've published the best of these responses in print, so you can see what your colleagues have to say about these issues. To keep the conversation going, go to [www.eschoolnews.com](http://www.eschoolnews.com), search for the story in question, and add your own thoughts in the comments section. —The Editors

### Engineering more standards

When Assistant Editor Jenna Zwang's story "Should K-12 schools adopt engineering standards?" (page 3) ran online Oct. 25, several readers weighed in on the need for engineering standards in K-12 education. While opinions were mixed, most readers seemed to agree that teachers already have enough standards they're trying to incorporate.

Reader Bob Bachmeier wrote: "No, we don't need any more standards, especially engineering! Why would they be needed—math, science, ELA, social science, technology, CTE, etc., standards already exist, and they measure achievement in the core [skills] that an engineer needs. This is just one reason; how about the cost? I would much rather see money spent on great assessments like those being driven [by] the Common Core State Standards, which hopefully will be driving better instruction."

Regardless of whether more standards are needed, some readers argued that engineering should be a part of the K12 curriculum.

"As an engineering educator for 20 years and a degreed engineer for 40 years, I strongly believe that engineering should be part of that thing called a 'liberal education,' because at its heart engineering is about solving societal problems by applying scientific and technological principals in an ethical, economical, sustainable, respectful, and professional manner," wrote reader Bob Pieri. And reader "patty o novak" argued that "the engineering process teaches valuable problem-solving skills children can use no matter what path life takes them on."

### Single-sex education: A good idea?

Assistant Editor Jenna Zwang's Nov. 19 story "More public schools trying single-sex education" (front page) elicited a great deal of reader feedback.

Reader "kstubblefield" wrote: "I can see benefits and downfalls of same-sex classrooms. I can see where it would be less distracting for girls and boys, but I can also see where if you have all boys ... you may have more issues. I do agree that girls need to be encouraged to participate more ... but I am not sure this is the answer."

Reader "patty o novak" said that while single-sex education might be beneficial, men and women must learn to work together: "Same-gender schools or classrooms do have their merits. But with over 50 percent of the workforce now comprised of women, it's essential for both genders to learn how to work together, stand up for themselves, calm their hormones, etc."

Intimidation might play a factor in classroom performance, reader "anbooth" said: "I am an advocate of single-sex classrooms, but I am not an advocate for single-sex schools. With my 6th graders, I see some flirting in the classroom that is distracting. There are two types. The first is the lovestruck boy who gazes into space (or at the object of his affection) and is not focused. Then there is the showoff who is not focused because he is too busy trying to be cool. I know there were times (especially in high school) when I would not speak up just because of the boys in the room. I

would have been a stronger student in math and science if I had been in a single-sex classroom."

Peter Fagan, Ph.D., pointed to research on how girls' and boys' brains differ: "I have read some pretty compelling arguments for the pre-wiring of the brain, especially for PK-3. Based on MRI scans of the brain, on average, girls had 11 percent more synapse firings than boys in the English/Language Arts area (an area where PK-3 boys are lagging, according to the numbers in ELA testing). And boys had more brain synapse firings in terms of geospatial reasoning. NCLB focuses so much on ELA in PK-3 that it puts boys at a disadvantage. Even math has become excessively filled with word problems at these grade levels. Many schools/states now require in K-6 a 90-minute uninterrupted ELA period in the school day. So I am more firmly in the camp of nature over nurture in this argument."

Reader Erika Burton, Ph.D., and founder of Stepping Stones Together, also provided a research-based perspective: "While single-sex ... options are advantageous for many students, there is evidence to suggest that we are not pre-wired, but rather our society influences our male/female experiences with subjects such as math/science and language arts. We can help our children become less stereotypical by constantly checking and being aware of our tendencies, exposing each sex equally to the joys and explorations available with typically male/female subject pursuit likelihood."

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# GOP victories could affect education funding, ed tech

As Republicans regain control of the House, educators ponder how much funding they can expect in the next few years

## From staff and wire reports

The resounding Republican victory during the Nov. 2 midterm elections has altered the balance of power in Washington, D.C., in ways that are likely to affect both federal education funding and local ed-tech programs.

As a new session of Congress convenes this month, Republicans now control the U.S. House of Representatives. The GOP also increased its strength in the Senate and quickly served notice that it intends to challenge President Barack Obama with a more conservative fiscal approach.

“We hope President Obama will now respect the will of the people, change course, and ... commit to making changes they are demanding,” Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio, told cheering partisans on election night.

Republican control of the House positions Boehner as the new House speaker, and chairmanship of the various House committees will shift to Republicans as well. That puts Minnesota Rep. John Kline in line to succeed Rep. George Miller, D-Calif., as chairman of the House Committee on Education and Labor.

Kline favors fully funding IDEA before spending on any new education programs, such as initiatives that would support early childhood education, job training, and school construction that House Democrats passed in the last session of Congress.

“While these new programs may be beneficial, we have not seen evidence of their success,” he wrote in a 2009 op-ed piece. “Challenging economic times are not

the time for new and expensive experiments that siphon funds from existing programs and impose massive, unfunded mandates on state and local school officials. Instead, we should devote our limited resources ... to those programs with which schools are already required by law to comply.”

Chairmanship of the House appropriations committee, which has enormous influence over what lawmakers ultimately agree to spend on education funding, will shift from Rep. David Obey, D-Wis., to an as-yet undisclosed Republican. Rep. Jerry Lewis of California is the ranking Republican member of the committee, but some media reports are speculating that the chairmanship could go to Rep. Hal Rogers of Kentucky instead. Georgia Rep. Jack Kingston has also entered the pool of contenders.

Obey had been a strong advocate for education funding and the need for 21st-century skills. He also defended the need for the federal stimulus package, which provided a one-time boost of more than \$100 billion for education—including \$650 million for ed tech.

Rogers, too, has spoken of the need for better education and has helped steer federal education funding to projects such as CenterNET2, an interactive video conferencing network that is being used to connect schools and educators throughout Kentucky, creating a statewide virtual education community. But, like every one of his Republican colleagues in the House, Rogers also voted against the federal stimulus package that has saved thousands of education jobs.

As House speaker, Boehner has promised to “[cut] spending instead of increasing it, [make] government smaller and more accountable, and [help] small businesses get back to creating jobs again.” His leadership could result in across-the-board cuts in the House versions of appropriations bills, including cuts to federal education funding—setting up a possible showdown over education funding with President Obama and the Democratic Senate.

Looking beyond FY11, Hilary Goldmann, director of government affairs for the International Society for Technology in Education, said ed-tech leaders are concerned about the prospects for future education funding.

“We’ve been successful in keeping bipartisan support for ed tech” in the past, she said. But the new Republican leadership in the House promises to focus on deficit reduction—and “no one has identified where these cuts are going to come from. ... At this point, everything’s on the table.”

## General technology policy

The resurgence of a Republican majority in the House could affect general technology policy, too.

The election results will alter the leadership of key technology and telecommunications committees. Rep. Rick Boucher, the Virginia Democrat who headed the House Commerce Subcommittee on Communications, Technology, and the Internet, lost his reelection bid to challenger Morgan Griffith and won’t serve in the new Congress. Boucher had been at the fore-



Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio

front of the online privacy debate and had led efforts to free up airwaves for more mobile phone and data use.

The ranking Republican member of the telecom subcommittee, Rep. Cliff Stearns of Florida, is in line to be the new chairman. Stearns collaborated with Boucher earlier this year on a bill that would protect internet users’ privacy, and so that issue might remain on the legislative agenda if he’s the new subcommittee chairman. **ESN**

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## With divided Congress, school reform faces a tough road

Observers question how much progress on federal education policy can be made

### From staff and wire reports

The Obama administration has pushed an ambitious education agenda in the last two years, sending \$100 billion to states thorough the stimulus package and spurring reform in many locations through the Race to the Top competition.

But none of the major initiatives pushed by President Barack Obama and Education Secretary Arne Duncan have been bipartisan. Most were approved through large spending bills that Republicans opposed.

Politicians and experts say the big Republican gains in Congress will serve as a roadblock to further Democrat-led education reform efforts, including a likely decrease in big-ticket spending as the GOP seeks greater fiscal restraint.

“Obama and Duncan were very lucky that they had two years of relatively little interference from the Congress, and the Congress gave them a lot of money in education,” said Jack Jennings, director of the Center for Education Policy.

The GOP takeover of the House means that Rep. John Kline of Minnesota will become the chair of the Education and Labor Committee, giving the Minnesota Republican huge clout in shaping education spending.

Kline is a deficit hawk and retired Marine pilot who said it’s time to pull Washington out of the nation’s classrooms and stop using billions in federal dollars to bail out state education budgets.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Duncan said he was optimistic the Republican election victories wouldn’t derail the administration’s plans, but conceded: “There’s no guarantee our agenda will continue to move.”

Both parties have agreed on the need to revamp No Child Left Behind, the nation’s most important—and controversial—education law. The law was passed on a bipartisan vote in 2001 when Congress was similarly divided between a Republican House and Democratic Senate.

“They’re so close on this issue, you could imagine both Democrats and Republicans saying, ‘This is something we promised our constituents, that we’d fix No Child Left Behind,’” said Mike Petrilli, executive vice president at the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, an education think tank.

But accomplishing even such a broadly held goal would require overcoming considerable divides between Democrats and Republicans on the role of the federal government in education, along with a

different set of splits among Democrats over reforms like performance pay for teachers and charter schools.

In an interview with the AP, Kline voiced opposition to a range of Obama education policies—from the Common Core academic benchmarks to the \$4.35 billion Race to the Top—primarily because he opposes federal interference with state and local decisions on education. And while Kline approves of charter schools and performance pay for teachers, he doesn’t want the federal government to be making decisions in those areas.

He said No Child Left Behind is one area with room for compromise, partly because both sides want to trim the law’s reach in various ways.

“We’re going to make changes. How we do it, how big they are, how big the bill is, all those things are to be worked out,” Kline said from his Minnesota office.

Democratic lawmakers also see reforming the law as an opportunity for the parties to work together.

“I see no reason why we can’t do this by summer,” said Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa, the Democratic chairman of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee.

Teacher unions—who heavily support Democratic candidates during elections—

have resisted ideas like performance pay and charter schools.

An outline for rewriting the law released by the Obama administration in March was designed to scale back federal involvement at most schools, asking states to develop high standards for students and teacher effectiveness. The nation’s lowest performing schools would be offered four turnaround models—including replacing the principal and a majority of the staff, and closing the schools altogether.

Republicans and Democrats have questioned the merit of the models, and the most conservative Republicans object to the federal government having any say on how a school is improved.

Although higher education is expected to take a backseat to K-12 policy during the next Congress, two significant issues loom: the fate of federal student aid programs and Democratic-led efforts to crack down on for-profit colleges.

The Pell Grant program, a lifeline for low- and middle-income families trying to afford college, has enjoyed bipartisan support over the years. But with Republicans running on a call to cut spending, federal grants and loans subsidizing higher education record could be on the table. **ESN**

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# Growth of online learning continues, though unevenly

## From staff reports

Online instruction continues to grow quickly overall, according to the latest snapshot of online education programs in grades K-12. But the shape and pace of this growth remains uneven throughout the U.S., and two states—Delaware and New York—still don't offer any opportunities for K-12 students to take classes online.

That's according to the 2010 edition of "Keeping Pace with K-12 Online Learning," an annual review of the status of online instruction in the U.S., published by Evergreen Education Group. The latest "Keeping Pace" report says tight budgets,

new policy developments, and changing technologies are accelerating the growth of online education programs in some states, while slowing their growth in others.

As of the report's publication, online education programs were available to at least some K-12 students in 48 states and the District of Columbia, its authors said—but no state provides a full range of opportunities for online instruction, which the report defines as both supplemental and full-time options for students of all grade levels.

State-led online education programs now exist in 39 states, the report says, with Vermont and Montana having opened new programs that allow students to take at least some of

their classes online in the last year. Alaska, too, has just begun the process of opening a statewide network for online instruction.

These state-led online programs had a combined 450,000 course enrollments during the 2009-10 school year, an increase of nearly 40 percent over the previous year. Yet just two states—Florida and North Carolina—combined to account for 96 percent of this growth, according to the report.

Full-time virtual schools now exist in at least 27 states and D.C., with Michigan and Massachusetts having approved virtual schools for this school year—though on a limited basis. Michigan will start with limited full-time enrollments in its two virtu-

al schools, and Massachusetts has capped full-time online enrollment at 500 students for its statewide virtual school.

The fastest-growing segment of K-12 online instruction is made up of individual school districts that operate, or offer, online education programs for their students.

Because there are few reporting requirements for single-district online education programs, the number of students in these programs is hard to quantify, the report says—but it estimates that about 50 percent of all districts now offer some form of blended or online instruction.

Many large school systems have created or expanded online education programs in the last year, the report notes. In the fall, the New York City school system piloted online Advanced Placement, credit recovery, and blended-learning courses across the city, and Los Angeles opened a full-time virtual school. In August, the Chicago Public Schools announced a pilot program to add 90 minutes to the school day at 15 elementary schools using online courses.

Other notable developments in online instruction in 2010 include:

- Connecticut passed a law that allows online teachers to be certified in any state, instead of requiring them to hold a Connecticut certification. The law also required districts with a dropout rate of 8 percent or higher to establish an online credit recovery program by July 2010.
- Alabama passed a law that lets students earn credit based on mastery of skills instead of seat time. While the law doesn't apply specifically to online education programs, it could have huge implications for online instruction, the report says.
- In Idaho, the state Board of Education approved new standards for online teachers, establishing 10 core standards for competency in online instruction.
- As of July 30, 2010, online teachers in Wisconsin must have completed 30 hours of professional development "designed to prepare a teacher for online teaching," based on the online teaching standards created by the International Association of K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL).

Despite the rapid growth of both blended and online instruction, policy and access barriers continue to hold back the creation of new online education programs in many states, the report says.

Funding, too, is an issue. For instance, the report notes that Delaware had operated a statewide virtual school for 18 months, but the project lost its funding after the 2008-09 school year, and there are no longer any major opportunities for online instruction in the state.

A separate report from the U.S. Distance Learning Association, released in early November, cited accreditation rules, teacher licensing requirements, and other policies as barriers to the continued growth of online instruction. 

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# Panel aims to turn teacher education 'upside down'

Pilot program to make teacher education more like medical training is headed to eight states

## From staff and wire reports

Eight states are beginning a national pilot program to transform teacher education and preparation to emphasize far more in-field, intensive training—as is common practice in medical schools.

“Teaching, like medicine, is a profession of practice,” said State University of New York Chancellor Nancy Zimpher, who is co-chairwoman of the expert panel that released a report on the recommended changes Nov. 16 in Washington, D.C. “Making clinical preparation the centerpiece of teacher education will transform the way we prepare teachers.”

The pilot program—developed by K-12 and higher-education officials, along with teachers unions, to improve instruction—is being rolled out in California, Colorado, Louisiana, Maryland, New York, Ohio, Oregon, and Tennessee. The states agreed to implement the recommendations of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Clinical Preparation and Partnerships for Improved Student Learning, created by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE).

Instead of exposing student teachers to varied classroom experiences at the end of their academic pursuit, the new system would put student teachers into classrooms earlier and more often. It could include rounds, similar to the system used in teaching hospitals in which mentors provide constant critiques to students in real-life situations.

U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan told the Nov. 16 gathering, which was webcast nationally, that too many colleges

stress theory with too little classroom time.

“There is little or no accountability for turning out effective teachers,” Duncan said, calling for “outcome-based” reviews of teacher education programs. “It is time to start holding teacher preparation programs far more accountable for the impact of their graduates on student learning and achievement.”

The expert panel also recommends more online and video demonstrations, as well as case-study analysis by teachers. Video evaluations of teachers-in-training already are being tested in 19 states (see below).

“This is huge, a real turning point,” Zimpher told the Associated Press.

She said the new model will “turn teacher education upside down” and could be in colleges within two years. And in states with pilot programs, the first elements likely will be in place beginning in the fall 2011 semester.

States with pilot programs will work with school districts and their regional teacher colleges, with an emphasis on improving instruction in high-need, low-income urban and rural districts.

The reform would make teacher education and continuing education a shared responsibility of schools and universities.

“NCATE’s call for prospective teachers to receive more clinical experience is a smart first step in a profession that sees nearly half of teachers exit in their first five years of teaching,” said Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers.

“The recommendation that teacher education programs work more collaboratively with school districts will help ensure

that teacher preparation and hiring are more closely aligned to the needs of communities. Other recommendations—from establishing new research standards to revamping higher-education staffing and instruction—also will help upgrade and update teacher education programs.”

In yet another sign of shakeup in the teacher education process, NCATE and the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) said they’re in the process of consolidating to form a new accrediting body: the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP).

CAEP’s goals include raising the quality of teaching in the nation’s K-12 schools, as well as creating high accountability standards for teacher colleges.

A 14-member Joint Design Team, composed of equal numbers of NCATE and TEAC leaders, met frequently during the past two years to develop the groups’ consolidation plan. During a two-year transition period, the Joint Design Team will function as the interim CAEP board of directors. The president of TEAC, Frank B. Murray, will chair this board; the president of NCATE, James G. Cibulka, will become CAEP’s president and CEO.

The interim CAEP board will select the initial CAEP board when consolidation is complete, but the chair and president will remain in office.



More mentoring of future teachers is on the way.

“We have not approached our task as merely unifying NCATE and TEAC with the least possible change to two accrediting systems that are already quite similar,” says a joint statement by Cibulka and Murray. “Rather, we have set a much more ambitious goal: to create a model unified accreditation system” for ensuring high-quality teacher education. **eSN**

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## Video to be a key part of student teacher evaluation

Reflecting a new trend, future teachers must show, not just tell, their skills

### From staff and wire reports

Standing at the edge of a pond surrounded by her class of fourth-graders, student teacher Jasmine Zeppa filled a bucket with brown water and lectured her pupils on the science of observing and recording data. Many of the children seemed more interested in nearby geese, a passing jogger, and the crunchy leaves underfoot.

Zeppa’s own professor from St. Catherine University stood nearby and recorded video of it all.

“I think it went as well as it possibly could have, given her experience,” said the professor, Susan Gibbs Goetz. Her snap review: The 25-year-old Zeppa could have done a better job holding the students’ attention, but she did well building on past lessons.

Under a new teacher evaluation system being tested in 19 states, evaluators will watch video clips of student teachers delivering lessons in their classroom, and candidates must show that they can prepare a lesson, tailor it to students of different abilities, and present it effectively.

Most states only require that student teachers pass their class work and a written test. Supporters of the new Teacher Performance Assessment system say it’s a significant improvement in teacher eval-

uation, while others are a little more cautious in their praise—warning that it’s not guaranteed to lead to more successful teachers.

The assessments also place responsibility for grading student teachers with teams of outside evaluators who have no stake in the result. Currently, teachers-in-training are evaluated by their teaching colleges, which want their student teachers to get their teaching licenses.

“It’s a big shift that the whole country is going through,” said Misty Sato, a University of Minnesota education professor who is helping to adapt the assessments for Minnesota.

Minnesota is expected to be the first state to implement the new teacher evaluation system when it adopts the system in 2012. Four other states—Massachusetts, Ohio, Tennessee, and Washington—plan to implement it within five years. Fourteen more states are running pilots.

The teacher evaluation program is a joint project by a consortium made up of Stanford University, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE), and the Council of Chief State School Officers.

Sharon P. Robinson, president of the AACTE, an umbrella group for teaching colleges that specialize in training student

teachers, said the teacher evaluation system will mean better teachers—and ultimately more successful students.

The assessment was developed at Stanford’s Center for Assessment, Learning, and Equity. Ray Pecheone, the center’s executive director, said more than 12,000 teaching candidates have gone through it in four years of testing in California.

California and Arizona are the only states that currently require performance testing to license teachers. Two of California’s three different performance tests use video review. The third California test and the one in Arizona require evaluators to sit in classrooms and observe the student teachers.

Karen Balmer, executive director of the Minnesota Board of Teaching, said the assessments will mean more accountability for teaching colleges. For the first time, she said, her agency will have independent data that show how well teaching colleges are preparing student teachers.

Balmer said the student teachers will pay some of the cost of the new program—probably around the \$70 they now pay for the written test in Minnesota. At least initially, student teachers will take both tests, but Balmer said the state might consider dropping the written test in the future.

Students that fare poorly on the teacher evaluation assessments likely would be required to retake them. If they do not test again, some student teachers still could get a Minnesota teaching license if their teaching college determines there were special circumstances—such as if the student was ill—and recommends licensure, Balmer said.

Tom Doohar, president of the Minnesota’s teachers union, said the group supports the new teacher evaluation system because of its emphasis on developing real-world teaching skills. “This is what education reform should look like, for practitioners by practitioners,” he said.

Others are taking a wait-and-see attitude about the program.

Sandi Jacobs, vice president of the non-partisan National Council on Teacher Quality, said she would support any test that could predict who will be a good teacher, but she’s not sure performance assessments are it. Too often, she said, the passing scores on such assessments are set so low that nearly everyone passes and the weakest teachers aren’t held back.

Zeppa said the process making her a better teacher, even if it can be painful.

“It’s nerve-racking, the idea that every mistake you make is on film,” she said. **eSN**

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# N.C. students offered Microsoft certification course

## From staff and wire reports

North Carolina is on track to becoming the first U.S. state to offer Microsoft certification and training in every high school.

The state's Department of Public Instruction announced Nov. 15 that the Microsoft IT Academy will give students real-world technology skills from a globally recognized brand name.

North Carolina students are able to earn certification as a Microsoft Office Specialist or a Microsoft Certified Professional by completing the academy's coursework and passing exams.

About three dozen North Carolina high

schools are using the IT Academy program now. Another 20 school districts will test the program in high schools beginning in January. State school officials expect all of the state's 628 public high schools to participate beginning next fall.

"In today's economy, providing the Microsoft IT Academy to high schools just makes sense," said state Superintendent of Public Instruction June Atkinson. "The ability to effectively use Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Access is an essential skill in most businesses and offices today."

The Microsoft IT Academy supports technology education for students, teach-

ers, and other school professionals. The program includes access to online learning content, official Microsoft course materials, instructor resources, and support materials that include lesson plans, software licenses, and professional certifications.

"The course is comprised of multiple lessons that are geared to all types of learning styles," said James Hardy, career technical educator for Leesville Road High School. "There are virtual notes, video lessons, interactive activities, lab activities, self-tests, and more."

Students can work at home, even if they do not have Microsoft Office software at home or at a library, by using their

Windows Live accounts.

There are currently 9,000 program participants in more than 100 countries, and the North Carolina school system's adoption of the Microsoft IT Academy program is the largest in the world to date.

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is recommending that all state high schools use the Microsoft IT Academy curriculum in teaching their students Computer Applications I, a course in the Career and Technical Education Standard Course of Study, by fall 2011.

Bob Gantt, director of career and technical education for North Carolina's Guilford County Schools, said feedback about the program has been very positive so far from both teachers and students.

"Wherever possible, Guilford County Schools' Career and Technical Education tries to provide our students with a learning experience that reflects current standards and practices in industry. Certainly, this partnership allows us to do just that at a time when budgets are being reduced in many areas," he said.

"We feel [the certification] gives our students an edge as they seek either part-time or full-time employment. Microsoft certification also provides benefits for our local employers, helping them identify candidates that possess proven skills and reducing the training required after employment," he explained.

Some observers, however, have questioned whether it's appropriate for a state's public education system to provide instruction and certification around a single company's technology.

"Once a precedent has been set, schools should be prepared to evaluate any proposal brought to them regarding certification options for their students with the same rubric they used when deciding if the Microsoft certification is a valuable learning option for their students," said Jim Hirsch, assistant superintendent for technology at the Plano Independent School District in Texas.

Marc Liebman, superintendent of the Berryessa Union School District in California, said North Carolina should be open to forming other partnerships with technology companies as well, but he sees nothing wrong with what the state has done so far.

"I think this is a great partnership for those students who have an interest," Liebman said. "The logic of not having Microsoft because you don't have other options is faulty. That is like saying that you could not accept a free Ford for drivers' education because you don't have a Chevy. I think getting Microsoft into the system will stimulate others to want to join in to help get more people certified in more areas. If the students are willing to put in the time, give them as many options as possible. If only Microsoft comes to the table, welcome them. If others want in, too, let them." 



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## Best Practices

# Students, ed-tech company form unique partnership

## CORE program boosts community support, teaches students essential life skills

**Meris Stansbury**  
Associate Editor

Twice a week, Randy takes the school bus to his local school. On the bus, Randy and his friends talk about what they think the day will bring, what they'll learn, and they look forward to hanging out with their other friends. Randy says he's interested in helping the school become the best it can be, and thanks to Principal William Sprankles, Ohio's Princeton High School makes it possible for Randy to be himself and make a difference.

What makes Randy Wilhelm stand out from other kids at school is that he's got kids of his own—and he's also the CEO of netTrekker, maker of an educational search tool.

Wilhelm is part of a new initiative at the Ohio high school not only to spur community support for education, but also to help kids learn critical life skills that will serve them well beyond graduation.

This group initiative is unique in that it involves every one of the 1,700 racially-diverse students at Princeton High School, and it lasts for all four years of their school experience. It also includes school staff other than teachers, such as janitors and the cafeteria crew.

The initiative began as part of Sprankles' mission to help his students and teachers better connect with one another. Even though Princeton High has a diverse student body—around 60 percent of its students are African-American, 33 percent are Caucasian, 20 percent have a disability, and 50 percent receive free or reduced-price lunches—many students said they didn't have a chance to get to know their peers of different races or backgrounds, and many teachers had never taught a diverse mix of students.

During the 2009-10 school year, Sprankles established various opportunities to let his students, whom he calls his "customers," speak freely about how they felt the school should be improved.

That's why, with the approval of the school board and staff, he created CORE (Creating Opportunities for Relationship Enrichment)—an initiative he says is built upon the values of meaningful relationships, celebrating diversity, and collective ownership.

It's also about looking beyond graduation rates and focusing on teaching kids the life skills they'll need to succeed after high school—life skills such as introspection, goal-setting, conflict resolution, and time management.

"We have the highest graduation rate for African-American males in the state [98 percent], but that's not enough," Sprankles said. "Students need skills beyond graduating. Another purpose of CORE is to figure out how we can get the other two percent to graduate. It's about every student, not just some."

"I was so impressed with the quality of leadership that was in this school after just my first meeting with Mr. Sprankles and the staff," said netTrekker's Wilhelm. "They're the kind of people who will put everything on the line for their kids; their conviction really sets them apart."

Wilhelm said his relationship with



Linda Dimarco's CORE class celebrates school Spirit Day by wearing red.

Princeton High began when he drove past the school every day and wondered why his product wasn't used in the school. One day, he decided to go and see what could be done—after all, it was "the neighborhood school," he said.

After meeting with Sprankles and his staff and hearing about their mission to help students connect with different people and learn critical life skills, Wilhelm knew he wanted to be part of their work.

When Wilhelm told his staff about the work at Princeton, asked for volunteers, and emphasized that helping the students there would be a long-term commitment, because many kids have "enough short-term commitment in their lives." Ninety-three percent of netTrekker's local staff—or 65 people—said they would volunteer twice a week.

Because the staff volunteers their time during company hours, Wilhelm estimates that the company spends roughly \$500,000 to help these students flourish—a price he says is worth it, not just to see kids succeed and receive the community support they need, but also ultimately secure America's future.

"Every business has employees, and the business is concerned with the general lack of job and career readiness of high school and college graduates. There is a direct connection between the quality of our education today and the fortitude of our economy tomorrow," Wilhelm said.

### How CORE works

To help students and teachers better get to know one another, Sprankles and his staff developed an algorithm that divided students equitably by all four grade levels, with the intent that each CORE group would stay together, and with the same adults, until students graduate.

Using the demographics on the school's report card, every teacher has about 16 students in his or her CORE class: four seniors, four juniors, four sophomores, and four freshmen. About seven to nine of these students are black, five or six are white, two or three are Hispanic, two or three have disabilities, and half come from low-income households. Most CORE classes have at least one student whose English proficiency is limited.

Altogether, there are 100 CORE classes, and Sprankles said one of the school's

biggest accomplishments is the active CORE participation of secretaries, para-professionals, and even security monitors.

The CORE classes last about 22 minutes each day, and topics and projects are based on the Effective Schools Model, which is an organizational model for schools based on 40 years of research. Princeton High uses six of the seven correlates of this model: (1) clear and focused mission, (2) frequent monitoring of student progress, (3) safe and orderly environment, (4) opportunity to learn and time-on-task, (5) high expectations, and (6) positive home-school community relations.

Because students only have a limited amount of time in CORE classes for projects or competitions, the school created a structure featuring a weekly topic that is connected to or driven by the purpose of each correlate.

CORE classes are based on a six-week cycle, with each week emphasizing a different correlate of the Effective Schools Model. The schedule looks like this:

- Week 1 (Mission): Getting to know you; relationship games and activities; team-building activities.
- Week 2 (Safe & Orderly Schools): Conflict resolution.
- Week 3 (Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress): Setting my academic goals for first semester.
- Week 4 (Opportunity to Learn, Time-On-Task): Organizational skills and time management at home and during the school week.
- Week 5 (High Expectations): Building a four-year success plan beyond high school.
- Week 6 (Positive Home-School Relations): "Where I Come From" poem; my family values.

There are six correlates and 36 weeks in a year, and each correlate is discussed about six times per year.

One activity that struck the CEO was the "Where I Come From" poem. Each student writes two lines of poetry about where he or she comes from, then all the lines are joined together to make a complete poem that represents the students in the group.

"It's heart-wrenching to read and to hear these students read...it really opens your eyes to these kids' struggles," Wilhelm said.

"You really get a sense of who your stu-

dent body is, and what they're going through," said Sprankles.

Another major project for CORE classes involves designing a smart-phone app. Each group will work together to design the app, as well as propose an action plan for marketing. Out of the 100 proposals, the school will narrow them down to the top five to 10, and then the students will vote on their favorite. The winning group, with the help of netTrekker, will have its app built and put to market for 99 cents. All proceeds from the sale of the app will go to Princeton High's "Innovation Fund."

"These kids, for the most part, have spent the last nine to 12 years of their lives in school; they probably have a better understanding of what works than we do," said Sprankles.

### Not just fluff

Already, Sprankles said, teachers have noticed an improvement in student GPAs, and they believe it's a result of the CORE classes.

While the evaluation has been informal, because CORE is only in its first year of implementation, Princeton High administrators looked at the average GPA of CORE groups (3.0) when CORE first started, and they compared the average in-progress reports and report cards since the program's inception. According to Sprankles, the average has increased slightly.

"CORE gives students the time to reflect, and that's important," he said. "Most schools have to manage time and mandates with little time for reflection. But CORE allows these students introspection and the resources to set goals."

Sprankles said student disciplinary infractions also have dropped as a result of the CORE classes.

"Some activities have not gone as well as I thought, and some have done even better than I thought," said Sprankles. "Not all students embraced CORE at first, and some are still struggling with it, but that's the whole point of doing it. Change isn't going to happen overnight, and we don't expect it to, but it will happen eventually, it's just a matter of time."

For other schools looking to create something similar, Sprankles said the key to success is to involve the students.

"So often in education, we [adults] love to talk with each other about what is best for the students," he said. "We often forget the importance and value of taking time to ask the customer [students] for their input and their perspective and what their vision is." 

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# HP agrees to \$16M settlement in e-Rate fraud case

Justice Department says HP benefited from contracts won in exchange for gifts

## From staff and wire reports

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has reached a civil settlement with Hewlett-Packard Co. (HP) for alleged e-Rate fraud, following an extensive investigation by the DOJ and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), the two agencies said Nov. 10.

Acting on tips from whistleblowers, the FCC and the DOJ investigated allegations that contractors working with HP and other companies lavished gifts on Dallas Independent School District and Houston Independent School District personnel in order to get e-Rate contracts that included some \$17 million in HP equipment.

According to the allegations, contractors working with HP provided meals and entertainment—including trips on a yacht and tickets to the 2004 Super Bowl—to school district officials to get inside information and win e-Rate contracts that were supposed to be awarded through a competitive-bidding process.

“Broadband is key to our children’s 21st-century education,” said FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski. “That’s why one of the FCC’s top priorities is making sure [the] e-Rate works to benefit students and libraries. Today’s settlement shows the extensive efforts of the FCC and DOJ to protect the e-Rate program from waste, fraud, and abuse and to deter misconduct in the future.”

As part of the settlement, HP has agreed to pay the government \$16.25 million, most of which will be returned to the e-Rate program, which provides discounts of up to 90 percent of the cost of telecommunications service and internet access to eligible schools and libraries. (Some of the money also will go to the whistleblowers in the case.) In addition, the FCC has negotiated and will oversee a compliance agreement with HP that will ensure the company plays by the e-Rate program’s rules in the future.

“The FCC’s compliance agreement with HP ensures that HP will train its employees thoroughly on the FCC’s gift [guidelines] and other e-Rate rules, and [the agreement] provides for audits of HP’s e-Rate business,” said Austin Schlick, general counsel of the FCC. “If HP fails to monitor its e-Rate activities closely and abide by e-Rate program requirements, it will face substantial penalties.”

The FCC has taken steps to guard against this kind of misconduct in the future. In September, the agency adopted an order that bolsters and clarifies its prohibition against e-Rate applicants soliciting or receiving gifts and against service providers offering or providing gifts. The FCC also articulated new rules to ensure a fair and competitive bidding process.

The investigations into alleged e-Rate fraud in the Dallas and Houston school systems go back at least five years, when the Dallas Independent School District placed Ruben Bohuchot, then its top technology administrator, on administrative leave for his frequent use of a luxury fishing vessel owned by a Houston-based contractor holding hundreds of millions of dollars in e-Rate contracts with the district.

Bohuchot was indicted in 2007 on charges of taking nearly \$950,000 in illegal gifts and cash in exchange for steering at least \$120 million in contracts to Micro System Enterprises, owned by Houston businessman Frankie Wong. Bohuchot was convicted in 2008 and received an 11-year prison sentence; Wong received a 10-year sentence.

Allegations of wrongdoing in the Houston Independent School District did not result in any criminal charges, but the district did get slapped with an \$850,000 fine and lost tens of millions of dollars in

e-Rate funding. The DOJ accused Houston ISD of violating the e-Rate’s competitive-bidding rules and in 2006 froze the district’s access to e-Rate funding. Houston ISD finally settled the case with the federal government in March.

As part of its settlement, Houston ISD agreed to implement monitoring software to ensure that district employees abide by federal e-Rate compliance rules. District e-Rate Compliance Manager Richard Patton said the district will pay almost \$8,000 a year for the service, which officials hope will keep HISD from missing

out on additional e-Rate funding as a result of program violations. **eSN**

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# Duncan: Technology can help cut education costs

Ed secretary calls budget crisis 'the new normal,' urges schools to change how they operate

**Jenna Zwang**  
Assistant Editor

Education Secretary Arne Duncan told school officials Nov. 17 to look at saving money in their districts by increasing productivity. Duncan spoke at an American Enterprise Institute event called "Bang for the Buck in Schooling," and he warned that schools will "have to face the challenge of doing more with less."

"It's time to start treating the problem of productivity as an opportunity," said

Duncan. He called the current crisis affecting school budgets "the new normal," suggesting that education leaders should get used to tighter school budgets and should adjust their practices accordingly.

"The strategy is to pare back less-than-essential costs while minimizing the effect on children," said Duncan. He suggested lowering textbook costs by using more digital or open-access materials, consolidating bus routes, and reducing office personnel as ways for districts to cut back on spending.

"My hope is that the new normal will encourage all of us to explore productive alternatives to the old way of doing things," he said.

Duncan spoke of high-cost money-wasters, such as the millions of dollars spent on remedial education. He told the crowd that ed tech can be a wise investment, saying that it "gives each person the tools they need to be successful and reduce[s] wasted time, energy, and money."

"It is important to remember that boost-



Get used to doing more with less.

ing productivity may actually cost more money [in the short term]. The government may have to spend more money now to get a return on that investment," he said.

Duncan did not rule out the possibility of class size increases, saying it might be a way for districts to save money.

"Districts could vary class size by subject matter or skill of the teacher, or through the use of part-time staff," he said.

He noted that many high-performing schools in Asia have far larger class sizes than those in the United States, and he said school districts might want to weight modest increases in class sizes against the loss of music and other arts programs.

He also discussed the pay boost that teachers who hold master's degrees receive, and he suggested a change in how schools should value these instructors.

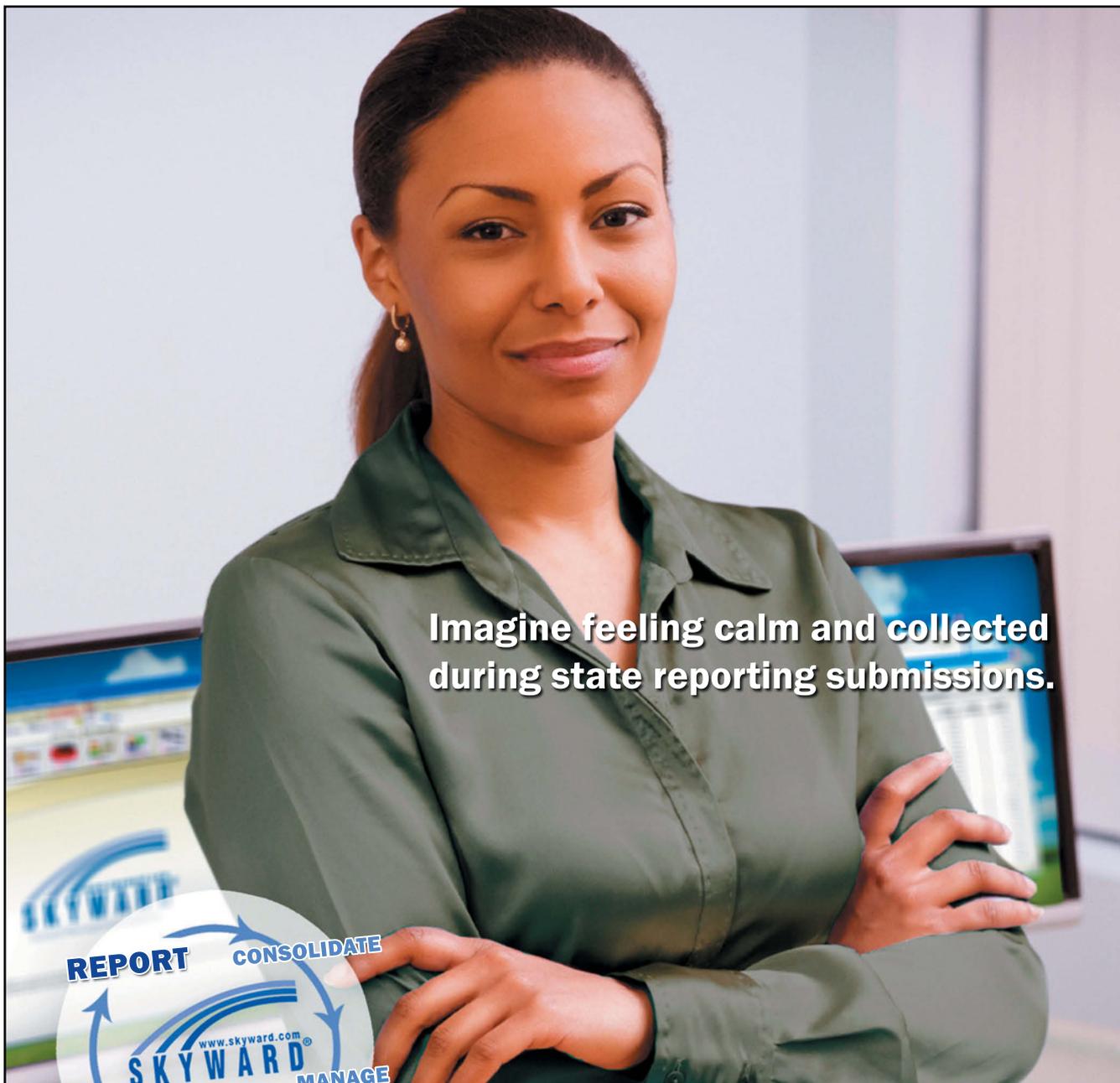
"Districts today pay \$8 billion every year to teachers because they have a master's degree, even though there's little evidence that teachers with master's degrees improve education — with the exception of those who have master's degrees in math and science," said Duncan. He suggested that schools spend the energy finding out who the best teachers are and work on rewarding and retaining them instead.

Duncan's major point was to keep the cuts in school budgets from affecting student learning.

"Keeping the cuts out of the classroom as much as possible is hugely important," Duncan said. "We're at a point where, financially, we have to put these tough issues on the table."

Duncan also said that the current model most schools are using is based on the century-old factory model of education and is obviously not working. He encouraged schools to work with students on an individual basis, with the help of ed-tech tools, to keep students who don't need them out of special-education programs and to prevent remedial education.

"The alternative is simply to do less with less, and that is fundamentally unacceptable," said Duncan. **eSN**



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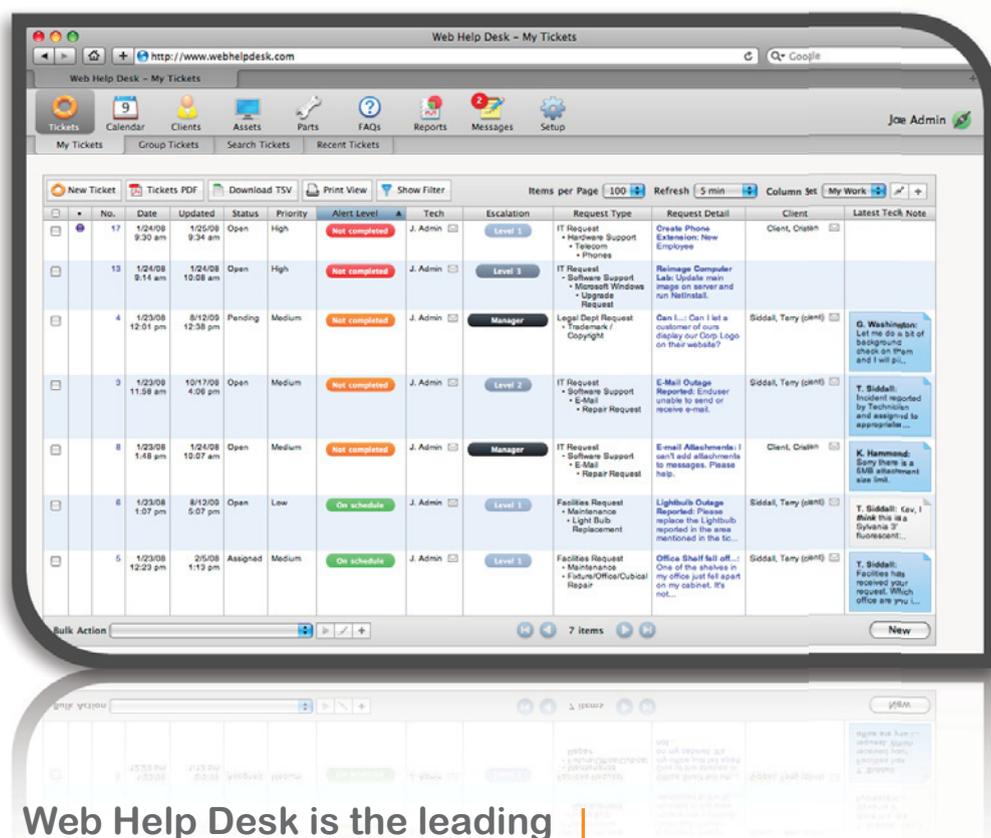




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# FCC to move ahead on net-neutrality rules

## From staff and wire reports

Net neutrality apparently isn't dead after all: Federal regulators are moving ahead with a plan to prohibit phone and cable companies from blocking or discriminating against internet traffic flowing over their broadband networks, despite Republican opposition to the plan in Congress.

Julius Genachowski, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), outlined his proposal for so-called "net neutrality" rules in a speech on Dec. 1.

Despite Republican opposition, Genachowski planned to bring his proposal to a vote by the full commission before

the end of the year; many observers thought this was unlikely to happen after Republicans seized control of the House in the November elections.

Net-neutrality rules have been among Genachowski's priorities since he took over the FCC more than a year ago.

Many big internet companies, such as search leader Google Inc. and calling service Skype, as well as public-interest groups and some education organizations, insist regulations are needed to ensure broadband companies don't use their control over internet connections to dictate where consumers can go and what they can do online.

But Genachowski has run into substan-

tial opposition from big phone and cable companies, including AT&T Inc., Verizon Communications Inc., and Comcast Corp., which argue that they should be allowed to manage their networks as they see fit.

His new proposal would "culminate recent efforts to find common ground" and create "rules of the road to preserve the freedom and openness of the internet," according to an advance copy of his remarks.

The plan—which builds on a set of FCC principles first established under the previous administration in 2005—would require that broadband providers let subscribers access all legal online content, applications, and services over their wireline networks.

But it would give broadband providers flexibility to manage their systems to deal with problems such as network congestion and unwanted traffic like spam, as long as they publicly disclose their network management practices.

The proposal also would prohibit wireless carriers from blocking access to any websites or competing applications such as internet calling services on mobile devices, and it would require them to disclose their network management practices.

But it would give wireless carriers more leeway to manage data traffic, because wireless systems have more bandwidth constraints than wired networks.

That provision is likely to draw fire from public-interest groups, which argue that wireless networks should have the same protections as wired systems, particularly as more and more Americans go online using mobile devices.

In one key victory for the phone and cable companies, Genachowski's proposal would leave in place the FCC's current regulatory framework for broadband, which treats broadband as a lightly regulated "information service."

The agency has been trying to come up with a new framework since a federal appeals court in April ruled that the FCC had overstepped its existing authority in sanctioning cable giant Comcast for discriminating against internet file-sharing traffic on its network—violating the very net-neutrality principles that Genachowski now hopes to adopt as formal rules.

Genachowski's plan is based in large part on a proposal that Rep. Henry Waxman, D-Calif., the outgoing chairman of the House Commerce Committee, tried unsuccessfully to push in Congress several months ago.

Waxman, too, ran into opposition from Republicans who warn that net-neutrality rules amount to burdensome regulation that would discourage broadband providers from investing in their networks.

Supporters argue that net-neutrality rules are critical to preserving an open internet and ensuring that phone and cable companies cannot slow or block online phone calls, web video, and other internet services that compete with their core businesses.

Indeed, the online file-sharing service blocked by Comcast was used in large part to trade movies and other video over the internet. Net-neutrality proponents also want rules to ensure that broadband companies cannot favor their own online traffic or the traffic of business partners that can pay for priority access.

But the phone and cable companies insist they need flexibility to manage network traffic so high-bandwidth applications don't hog capacity and slow down their systems. They also argue that after spending billions to upgrade their lines for broadband, they need to be able earn a healthy return by offering premium services. 

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# Multitasking, wireless printing come to iPad

New software could help make iPhones, iPads more useful classroom tools

## From staff and wire reports

Apple Inc. released new software on Nov. 22 that lets users of its iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad devices print wirelessly over Wi-Fi networks. The software addresses what has been a key complaint about the iPad to date—that users can't print their documents from the tablet—and ed-tech observers say it could help spur more widespread use of the device in schools.

Apple first described some of the new features in iOS 4.2, the latest operating sys-

tem for the Apple gadgets, at a media event in September.

The iPhone, iPod Touch, and iPad don't have ports for hooking up with printers, which makes the AirPrint feature one of the biggest advances for all of Apple's gadgets. With the new software, the gadgets can find printers on home or school networks, then send text, photos, or graphics directly to the printer over Wi-Fi. To start, iPads, iPhones, or iPods with AirPrint will only work directly with certain Hewlett-Packard Co. printers.

The software update also includes AirPlay, which lets iPhone, iPad, and iPod

Touch users send video, music, and photos directly from the gadgets to the TV screen through the company's Apple TV set-top box. Apple also said special AirPlay-enabled speakers for streaming music will be on sale in the coming months.

In addition, Apple said it is making its Find My iPhone application available without charge for owners of the iPhone 4, the iPad, and the latest iPod Touch model. The app helps people find their missing device on a map; users also can remotely lock or delete data from a lost device, which could help with data security on campus.

The update brings many features already available for iPhones and the iPod Touch to the iPad, including a form of multitasking, or the ability to keep some programs running in the background while doing other things. For example, users will be able to start up the Pandora music program and keep listening while switching to another application. The update also makes switching between programs faster.

With the new software, iPad users also can consolidate multiple eMail accounts into one inbox, play games against other Apple gadget owners, and rent TV episodes from the iTunes app.

Users can download the new software by syncing their devices with iTunes.

Ed-tech observers said the new software is a significant upgrade that could help further position the iPhone and iPad as instructional tools.

"This update is most welcome for those who have iPhones, iPod Touches, and iPads," said Ray Schroeder, professor emeritus and director of the University of Illinois at Springfield's Center for Online Learning, Research, and Service. "It will make a huge difference to those of us who teach with these tools. We had been using workarounds such as dropbox.com to shift documents to other devices for printing. With so many schools and colleges providing iPads to students, these upgrades will have an immediate impact on teaching and learning."

Schroeder said the top complaints he had heard before Apple's announcement were the iPad's lack of multitasking, lack of organizing folders, and inability to print documents.

"This puts the iPad once again at the head of the ever-growing pack of tablet slates," he said. "[The new software] addresses nearly all of the concerns of educators at this point; it really adds to the value and utility of the iPad in the classroom."

He said educators always welcome any improvements that will enhance a device's accessibility for students or instructors with disabilities—and toward that end, the new Apple software's "Braille support and voice over keyboard control option are helpful.

Jim Hirsch, associate superintendent for technology at the Plano Independent School District in Texas, was more cautious in his assessment of the new software and its potential impact.

"Printing is a critical operation, as is editing," Hirsch said. "The printing is still weak, with only support for a single HP printer included, and Apple still is not providing [the ability] to allow full editing of web-based applications. Fortunately, Google decided to modify [its] Docs apps rather than wait for Apple to include that support in the new iOS."

Still, Hirsch said, "this is a definite move in the right direction for printing and holds good promise for the future of the iPad [and] iPhone" in schools. 

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# High-tech school bus extends learning

Students from rural schools are shown math and science content on long bus rides home

## From staff and wire reports

Students in the woody, working-class Hector School District in Arkansas now can look at more than the Ozark National Forest in the two-plus hours they spend on the school bus each day.

The Pope County district is participating in a new program for rural schools that is believed to be the first of its kind: It's playing math and science content over ceiling-mounted computer screens during

the lengthy bus rides back and forth from school.

"To say we are rural is an understatement," Superintendent Karen Cushman said, noting that more than 60 percent of the 600-student district is located in the Ozark National Forest and that 75 percent of students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

The district is working with Vanderbilt University's Aspirnaut Program to turn the bus into a mobile classroom of sorts. The program, founded by Arkansas na-

tive Billy Hudson, works with rural schools in Arkansas and Maine to help educate students in science, technology, engineering, and math.

The project aims to engage students and take advantage of the fact that they're a captive audience with few



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## Long rides are chances for learning.

distractions, said Cushman, who added: "It's hard to get students excited about math and science when a teacher stands up there to lecture."

The upgraded, high-tech bus has five ceiling-mounted screens that show math and science content geared toward different age groups during the long bus rides.

Younger students sit toward the front of the bus, and older children sit in the back. Each seat is equipped with headphones for the students. The programming rotates daily and features videos from PBS, NASA, the Discovery Channel, and the Smithsonian Institution.

Officials say that showing educational programs during commutes provides 10 extra hours of learning each week—the equivalent of 12 class periods weekly.

Long bus rides are becoming more common nationwide as states force tiny school districts and rural schools to consolidate in the hopes of providing a better education for students. While more educational opportunities are available at school, more and more students spend hours on the bus each day getting to campus.

Officials with the Aspirnaut Program estimate that about 200 students in Arkansas now ride buses that can provide educational content. The program began in 2007 in the Sheridan School District, where students were given laptops and iPods for their commutes on a school bus equipped with wireless internet access.

So far, Hector officials have noticed one definite difference: The bus rides are a lot quieter.

Bus driver Kenny Bull picks up his first student at 6:42 a.m. each day and has all 50 students dropped off at the school by 8 a.m. He's used to writing up students for bad behavior on the lengthy bus rides, but since the video screens were introduced, he hasn't had to reprimand anyone for acting out.

Younger students really get into the programs, he said, although the math and science content hasn't entirely caught on with high-school students, who are allowed to use their cell phones on the bus.

"They like their iPods and mp3 players better," Bull said. 



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# Report: Troubling gaps still exist in broadband use

## From staff and wire reports

The U.S. still faces a significant gap in residential broadband use that breaks down along incomes, education levels, and other socio-economic factors, even as subscriptions among American households overall grew sevenfold between 2001 and 2009.

What's more, even when controlling for key socio-economic characteristics, the U.S. continues to confront a racial gap in residential broadband use, with non-Hispanic white Americans and Asian-Americans more likely to go online using a high-speed connection than African-Americans and Hispanics.

Those are some of the key conclusions of a new analysis of Census data being released Nov. 8 by the Commerce Department. It found that the percentage of households that connect to the internet using broadband grew to 63.5 percent in 2009 from 9.2 percent in 2001, reflecting increases across nearly all demographics.

The broadband access report—prepared by the Commerce Department's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) and the Economics and Statistics Administration—is based on a Census survey of about 54,000 households conducted in October 2009.

The report provides some of the deep-

est analysis yet of trends in broadband use within the United States. And it's likely to help guide Congress and the Federal Communications Commission as they develop policies to ensure that all Americans have access to affordable high-speed internet service.

The analysis, said Lawrence Strickling, head of the NTIA, shows that "there is no single solution" to make this happen.

Among the major findings:

- 94.1 percent of households with income exceeding \$100,000 subscribed to broadband in 2009, compared with 35.8 percent of households with income of less than \$25,000.

- 84.5 percent of households with at least one college degree subscribed to broadband last year, compared with 28.8 percent of households without a high school degree.

- 77.3 percent of Asian-American households and 68 percent of non-Hispanic white households subscribed to broadband last year, compared with 49.4 percent of African-American households and 47.9 percent of Hispanic households.

- 65.9 percent of urban households subscribed to broadband in 2009, compared with 51 percent of rural households.

Closing such gaps is a top priority for the FCC, which released a sweeping national broadband plan filled with policy proposals—including many education-related proposals—in March. The agency's top recommendations include tapping the federal program that subsidizes telephone service for poor and rural Americans to pay for broadband, and unleashing more airwaves for wireless connections.

Wireless broadband is seen as a particularly attractive option for bringing high-speed connections to rural areas that might be too sparsely populated to justify costly landline networks.

At the same time, the NTIA and the Rural Utilities Service, part of the Agriculture Department, have been handing out roughly \$7 billion in stimulus money to pay for new broadband networks and programs to get more Americans online.

Strickling stressed that one key challenge for policy makers lies in convincing Americans who are not online of the benefits of broadband use.

The Census data found that 38 percent of Americans who don't have broadband access at home say they don't subscribe because they don't need it, while 26 percent say it's too expensive and only 4 percent say it's not available where they live.

An FCC survey last year reached many of the same conclusions. It found that 35 percent of Americans do not use broadband at home, including 22 percent of adults who do not use the internet at all. Of that 35 percent, 36 percent say it is too expensive, while 19 percent do not see the internet as relevant to their lives. Another 22 percent lack what the FCC calls "digital literacy" skills.

To try to change such attitudes, the stimulus program includes \$250 million for projects to teach digital literacy skills and encourage broadband adoption, plus another \$200 million for public computer centers.

One surprising finding of the new Commerce Department report is that African-Americans and Hispanics lag behind in broadband access even when controlling for factors such as income and education. Although the data do not provide an explanation for these numbers, Rebecca Blank, under secretary for Economic Affairs, believes it could reflect limited exposure to the internet among certain racial groups. 

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# A new breed of SIS software is emerging

## Industry consolidation results in more features ... as well as fewer choices for schools

**Meris Stansbury**  
Associate Editor

The market for student information systems is undergoing tremendous change in the wake of several recent ed-tech mergers and acquisitions—and this trend has important implications for schools.

As large ed-tech companies swallow up smaller providers of student information systems, they are able to integrate new features into these programs, resulting in a new breed of school software that meets several needs of educators in a single solution. For instance, student information systems and learning management systems traditionally have been viewed as two separate software programs—but today, they are merging in ways that allow educators to track student achievement and personalize the learning process, all from the same system.

On the other hand, consolidation within the ed-tech industry is leaving educators with fewer choices for their school software providers.

One example of this consolidation is Follett Software Corp.'s acquisition in October of X2 Development Corp., maker of a web-based student information system called Aspen. And in November, global education giant Pearson bought The Administrative Assistants Ltd. (aal), maker of the eSIS web-based student information system.

"The SIS market has been consolidating for some time," said Suzanne Holmquest, product marketing manager for X2 Development Corp. "Follett Software is setting the pace in terms of the integration of [student information systems with] its other education platforms and applications. In the end, Follett's acquisition of Aspen is all about delivering the best solutions for schools. Schools want integration, access to critical data, and the tools to act on decisions they make from [those] data. Educators, meanwhile, desire a platform that drives student achievement, puts the student at the center, causes students to take more responsibility for their learning, and encourages excellent teaching."

Aspen serves about 90 school districts in the U.S. and abroad and is currently used in seven states: Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island.

Administrators in Florida's Miami-Dade County Public Schools use Aspen to make scheduling easier for 116 schools. Another component of Aspen is its Family Portal, and Massachusetts' Bedford Public Schools use the product to help with emergency notification.

"We chose to open the Aspen Family Portal to utilize contact verification workflows within the system," said Ken Lord, a network administrator for the district. "Parents loved that they were able to verify, update, and submit their students' emergency contact information electronically. In addition to the contact information, parents are viewing student schedules, assigned teachers, attendance, and more."

For administrators and teachers in Maryland's Wicomico Country School District, the simplification of grade-keeping is what drew them to Aspen.

The district, which serves more than 14,500 students in 26 schools, has students who are enrolled at one school but attend

a different school for one or more courses, making grading a hassle.

The old SIS required these teachers to maintain grades on paper and fax them to the student's primary school for input into the gradebook at the end of the term. Feeder schools couldn't plan for the upcoming year, because they couldn't access incoming students' course requests until the end of the year.

"Now, scheduling and the gradebook go hand-in-hand," said District Programmer Paul Santoni. "The ability to schedule across school has allowed our teacher to utilize the gradebook functions properly."

Aspen also offers special education/IEP management, health management, and professional development management as part of its student information system.

Follett Software has been around since 1985 and has grown from a provider of library automation systems to an ed-tech powerhouse that provides a full range of school software. Its offerings now include:

- Destiny Library Manager, which helps students find the resources they need;
- Destiny Textbook Manager, which helps districts keep track of their textbooks, potentially saving them hundreds of thousands of dollars in lost textbook costs;
- Destiny Asset Manager, which helps track the other physical items a district is responsible for;
- TetraData, a data warehousing and analysis tool that transforms a district's data into usable information, providing educators with information on how best to improve student learning; and
- Cognite, a learning management system that fosters collaboration and more personalized learning.

Follett Software said its acquisition of X2's Aspen will tie into Cognite, meaning schools will have the option of getting a student information system and a learning management system in one package.

"With the acquisition of the Aspen SIS platform, Follett Software believes it is now ahead of the market because of its integration of key applications," said Michael Campbell, director of marketing for Follett Software.

Campbell said a high-quality student information system is "flexible enough to meet the administrative needs of schools and districts and at the same time create a bridge to what is required on the academic front in the classroom and at home. In the end, districts want an effective, integrated education platform, not administration and learning systems that do not talk to each other."

Pearson provides print and digital educational content for students in prekindergarten through college, as well as student information systems, learning management systems, professional development, career certification programs, and testing and assessments products.

Pearson's student information systems already support about 11 million students, but its acquisition of aal extends its SIS market reach to more than 15 million students. aal also serves an international market: eSIS-JX is the Java version of eSIS and is currently deployed in Abu Dhabi.

Pearson's current SIS, called PowerSchool, can be purchased as a stand-alone product or can be extended with the Pearson K12 Learning Suite. The K12



Pearson owns not just PowerSchool, but also eSIS after buying its maker, aal.

Learning Suite allows Pearson customers to grow their SIS to include learning management, assessment, reporting, data analytics, and content management.

"It changed our whole culture," said Aaron Bryan, ed-tech director for New Jersey's South Brunswick Township School District, referring to using the many facets of PowerSchool.

In this 9,100-student district with 10 schools, teachers use the SIS to input grades from school or home, and administrators can keep up with evolving state and federal reporting requirements with PowerSchool's report-building tools.

The SIS also has a parent portal and online community-focused web site for support, services, downloads, and training.

"At Pearson, we are seeing the lines blur between an LMS and an SIS," said Brent Bingham, vice president of product strategy for Pearson's School Systems group. "While historically [the SIS] has included items like grades, attendance, [and] schedules, ... we are seeing that expand much further to include [Response to Intervention], links to content, online learning, and more."

Bingham said today's student information systems must "seamlessly link to all other systems in the school or district to assist the educators and administrators in making informed decisions about each student."

The line between student information systems and learning management systems will continue to blur in the future, he added. An SIS that will deliver more learning management functionality will become a requirement as educators look to harness the power of all of the systems they have implemented in their district.

"The future is all about the integration of best-of-breed applications that schools need to be successful," said X2's Holmquest. "SIS platforms may transform as schools look more and more at the total education picture, as opposed to the individual pieces. [Student information systems] started with a green screen, a database, and a few front-office users. Those days are gone; the future is about the support of all school stakeholders, administrators, support staff, teachers, parents, and students."

Student information systems have become vital tools for driving student instruction and spurring improvement. Sixty-nine percent of districts use their SIS as their primary No Child Left Behind reporting tool, said Lee Wilson, chief executive of PCI Education and author of a 2009 market report on SIS software.

"[Pearson's] purchase of aal is a major

move in the space, because aal has the most mature integration of SIS and data warehousing capabilities of any SIS in the market that I'm aware of," said Wilson. "While SIS penetration is over 98 percent, data warehousing is in less than 40 percent of the districts in the U.S. This gives Pearson a huge edge over others who have to conduct big systems integration projects to connect their SIS to a data warehouse. ... By having both systems seamlessly integrated, aal has been able to offer robust data management and data mining in one package. This is what federal guidelines are leaning toward these days."

The deal also is significant, said Wilson, because sales and marketing were not a particular strength of aal, and this limited its reach into the market.

"With Pearson's marketing muscle behind [aal], we are probably going to see significantly more of [the company] in the coming years," Wilson said. "To get a sense of what this means, 25 percent of IT directors were aware of PowerSchool, but only 5 percent were aware of aal. Even a newcomer like Infinite Campus was over 10 percent awareness. aal's awareness is, in fact, almost identical to [its] market penetration—6 percent as defined by students served."

With its acquisition of aal, Pearson now holds 34 percent of the SIS market.

"My guess, and that is all it is, is that Pearson is eyeing statewide implementations with aal," said Wilson. "It is one of the few systems out there capable of scaling to that level, as [has already been done] in North Carolina."

Wilson continued: "There have been noises coming out of the states that this is a direction they are going to head in both to save money and to create greater consistency of data. ... When every district has [its] own system, it can be a real challenge to integrate the data at the state level with any confidence that you are really seeing apples to apples. Centralizing system administration should, in theory, also reduce costs, but at the expense of local control and customization." eSN

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## Panel...

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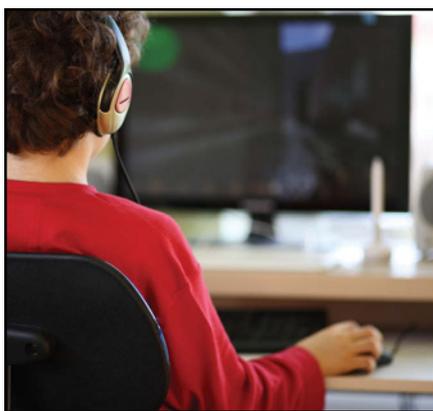
“Students today are living in a digital age, and they are learning digitally everywhere except for school,” said Wise. “If you are eligible for public school, you should be eligible for publicly-funded digital learning.”

Panelists addressed three looming challenges facing the education system: declining fiscal revenues, a mounting teacher shortage, and increased demand for skilled workers. While the demand for highly skilled workers is increasing, the webinar noted, only seven out of 10 students graduate from high school, and only half of those graduates are college and work ready. Panelists said they believe digital and blended learning can help the U.S. overcome these issues.

“When [students] sit in a classroom lined up in desks with a single textbook, a single lecture, and a single teacher trying to convey information to them, it shuts them down,” said Susan Patrick, president and CEO of the International Association for K-12 Online Learning and an executive DLC committee member.

“Every student deserves a world-class education, and we can provide that through digital learning,” said Patrick.

Patrick and fellow panelist Lisa Gillis, project director of the DLC and author of *Virtual Schooling*, believe schooling can be greatly improved through the use of blended learning that provides more personalized instruction. Blended learning com-



Seat time: An outdated concept?

bines live teaching and a variety of technological tools, including online learning, to educate students.

“One of the hardest things we see happening today is when students have those big gaps over their educational career, they get into high school and they don’t have any time to go back and fill them in,” said Patrick. “There’s no reason we can’t build those building blocks so every student can be successful and graduate with the skills they need for college. This is very hard to do without good technology, but the technology is here now, so this is the time.”

“In a digital learning environment, students can actually learn at their own pace, and the curriculum can adapt on a lesson-by-lesson basis,” said Gillis. Patrick and Gillis explained that with a digital learning program, students can be assessed as they finished each lesson and wouldn’t

progress to subsequent teachings until they had mastered the current one.

“There’s a new accountability that comes along with that. Instead of checking the dipstick in your car at the end of the year, the assessment-based learning for each individual student lets them know how they’re progressing. We’re focusing back on the instruction of the teacher in the classroom,” said Patrick.

“It’s not just a one snapshot in time, on one day, on one standardized test,” added Gillis.

Gillis said she believes access to technology must be worked into schools’ infrastructure.

“If we take a strategic approach in our schools and in our communities to identify gaps and who needs access, there are strategies for providing computers for students at home, [and] being able to fill those gaps so every student has access to some sort of computing device,” said Gillis. “Students come to school every day with computers in their pockets, so why don’t we access that as well?” she asked, referring to the widespread use of smart phones and other personal computing devices.

The DLC’s “10 Elements of High Quality Digital Learning” are as follows:

1. Student Eligibility: All students are digital learners.
2. Student Access: All students have access to high-quality digital content and online courses.
3. Personalized Learning: All students can customize their education using digital

4. Advancement: Students progress based on demonstrated competency, instead of rigid seat-time requirements.
5. Content: Digital content, instructional materials, and online and blended learning courses are high quality.
6. Instruction: Digital instruction and teachers are high quality.
7. Providers: All students have access to multiple, high-quality providers.
8. Assessment and Accountability: Student learning is the metric for evaluating quality of content and instruction.
9. Funding: Funding creates incentives for performance and innovation.
10. Delivery: Infrastructure supports digital learning.

Gillis said the DLC’s recommendations are an important step in advancing digital learning to all students.

“We want to remove the barriers of constraint of time. We want to remove the problems of funding and access and this document will do that,” she said. 

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# ED releases final version of National Ed-Tech Plan

For technology to transform education, schools must fundamentally change how they operate

**Jenna Zwang**  
Assistant Editor

The final version of the new National Educational Technology Plan includes a focus on individualized instruction and connectivity, and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said meeting the plan’s goals will help the nation’s students enter college and the workforce prepared to compete on a global level.

Duncan unveiled the final version at the State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) Education Forum on Nov. 9, about eight months after the federal Education Department (ED) issued a first draft of the plan and solicited comments from ed-tech stakeholders.

“If we accomplish all of these goals, we’ll have realized the advance potential for technology to prepare students for success in the internationally competitive, knowledge-based economy,” Duncan said.

Duncan outlined the five main goals covered in the plan:

- Using educational technology to fundamentally change the learning process by making it more engaging and tailored to individual student needs and interests;
- Using ed-tech to develop a new generation of assessments;
- Connecting teachers with their peers and experts so they are always up-to-date on the resources available to them;
- Building infrastructure that lets schools support access to technology in and out of the classroom; and
- Harnessing the power of educational technology to increase school district productivity and student achievement.

Duncan noted that the federal Race to the Top program is supporting the creation of next-generation assessments in more than 40 states. These new assessments will be aligned with the Common Core standards in English and math, and they will take advantage of technology’s power to deliver instant results that more accurately reflect students’ abilities. He expressed hope that the new assessments, which are expected to be ready by the 2014-15 school year, will let teachers develop individualized learning plans for their students.

“I am convinced these new assessments will be an absolute game changer for public education,” Duncan said. “For the first time, millions of school children, parents, and teachers will really know if students are on track for college or careers—[and] if they’re ready to enter college without the need for remedial instruction.”

Duncan said many schools have yet to realize educational technology’s true potential to transform learning into a more personalized and productive process. He also said ed tech will never replace the need for great teachers.

In the last 15 years alone, Duncan said, technology has revolutionized how we communicate and do business—but it hasn’t yet transformed education in the same way. The key lesson schools should take from the business world, he said, is that technology’s true power is unleashed only when organizations fundamentally change their processes. For the most part, we haven’t changed how our schools function, he explained, noting that education systems need to make changes such as moving from measuring seat time to competency.

Duncan set a deadline for meeting the ed-tech plan’s five goals by 2015, which he termed “ambitious.”

However, he told SETDA attendees that “this is no time to think small—the sense of urgency is too great.”

That urgency is magnified by the fact that the United States no longer leads the world in the number of college graduates as a percentage of population.

“Just one generation ago, we led the world with college graduates. But while we’ve stagnated, we’ve flatlined, other countries have simply passed us by. Today, we’ve fallen to ninth. This is unacceptable; this is not who we should be as a country,” said Duncan.

He also addressed SETDA members’ concerns about ed-tech funding in President Obama’s 2011 budget proposal, which would combine the largest single source of federal funding for educational technology equipment and training into a larger grant program.

“What we want to see is technology integrated into everything we’re doing. . . . Everything we’re doing, we want technology to be a piece of that,” Duncan said. “So it won’t be that one pot [of dedicated ed-tech funding], which makes it a little harder, but if you look at this huge opportunity we have, we’ve never had so much discretionary funding.”

Duncan also talked about the need for more access to educational technology.

“We want to focus on closing the digital divide by increasing community and home access, in addition to access at schools,” Duncan said. He said ED has been working with other agencies in

Washington, D.C., to bring broadband to schools in small towns and rural areas across the United States.

“We can only get there with technology. Together, we must work to make sure every single child in this country has access to a world-class education; one that prepares them to live, to learn, and work in our increasingly interconnected world,” Duncan said.

In an interview with *eSchool News*, ED’s director of educational technology, Karen Cator, said many ed-tech stakeholders responded to the draft version of the plan by asking: What do we actually do to meet these goals? As a result of this feedback, the department included a section in the plan’s final version called “Getting Started Now.”

One key action that ED is taking in support of the plan is to develop “Online Communities of Practice,” which aim to give educators a forum to share best practices, form relationships, and work together to improve education through the use of ed tech. The first of these communities will launch in mid-2011, ED said.

The department also is working closely with the Federal Communications Commission to implement its ed-tech plan in coordination with the FCC’s National Broadband Plan, Cator said.

The ed-tech plan, formally called “Transforming American Education: Learning Powered by Technology,” provides further details on how the administration plans to improve 21st-century education through the use of educational technology. 

## News Corp. ...

continued from page 1

and web software, data systems, and professional services that enable teachers to use data to assess student progress and deliver individualized instruction. It was launched in 2000 and reportedly counts more than 200,000 teachers and 3 million students across the country as users.

“When it comes to K through 12 education, we see a \$500 billion sector in the U.S. alone that is waiting desperately to be transformed by big breakthroughs that extend the reach of great teaching,” said Murdoch, News Corp.’s CEO, in a statement. “Wireless Generation is at the forefront of individualized, technology-based learning that is poised to revolutionize public education for a new generation of students.”

Wireless Generation also builds large-scale data systems that centralize student data, give educators and parents more visibility into the learning process, and foster professional communities of educators with social networking tools. The company is a key partner to New York City’s Department of Education on its Achievement Reporting and Innovation

System (ARIS), as well as on the city’s School of One initiative.

News Corp. said in November that it was hiring Klein to help it find education startups to invest in, particularly those that use technology to improve instruction. Klein, who starts with News Corp. in January, will occupy a newly created position as executive vice president and office of the chairman, and he will report to Murdoch directly.

The move has led some education observers to wonder if other large enterprises will turn their eyes—and open their wallets—to the educational technology industry as well.

“It’s very interesting. And in a way, not surprising,” said Kathy Mickey, a senior education analyst with Simba Information. Mickey said companies in other industries have owned parts of educational technology firms, or entire ed-tech businesses, for quite some time, although it doesn’t happen very frequently.

“I think what Mr. Murdoch is doing is going after services and tools,” she said, noting that education company Pearson has done the same on a large scale in recent years and is likely to follow the acquisition of Wireless Generation very closely.

The move is likely a signal that News Corp. will focus largely on mobile technology and the delivery platforms it offers, Mickey said.

“I think the main point is the way education will be delivered. I think the emphasis for News Corp. will probably be on tools, resources, and services rather than content,” she added.

“I would not be surprised to see Mr. Murdoch buy a content company, but I think what’s happening is that we’re looking at the way learning is done and how to help schools get to their desired level of student achievement, so you’re talking about a process. And if you’re talking about that, you’re talking about the kinds of resources that technology can help very well.”

Industry insiders have speculated that News Corp.’s purchase of a company that produces mobile technology for education also might be linked to Murdoch’s \$30 million investment in The Daily, a subscription-based digital newspaper designed specifically for tablets, including Apple’s iPad.

The *New Zealand Herald* reported that “News Corp. is creating a subscription news product for the iPad called The Daily that

will cover national general interest news, according to two sources.”

The Daily is expected to be launched in early 2011, and industry insiders and blogs are reporting that it will have a \$0.99-per-week subscription rate.

The *Financial Times* of London reported that investments in ed-tech initiatives are increasing, despite strained school budgets, and that News Corp.’s purchase will place the company on a playing field with larger, more established education publishing companies—many of which, like News Corp., are looking toward mobile solutions as alternatives to clunky school textbooks. **eSN**

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# Publishing exec to lead nation’s largest school system

## To replace long-time New York City schools chancellor Joel Klein, Mayor Michael Bloomberg taps businesswoman with no public education experience

### From staff and wire reports

In another striking example of the belief that public education should be run more like a business, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg has named a top publishing executive with no background in education to head the nation’s largest school system after announcing Nov. 9 that the city’s longtime chancellor was stepping down.

Hearst Magazines chairwoman Cathie Black will become the first female chancellor of the city’s 1.1 million-student public education system, replacing Joel I. Klein, who has served as chancellor since 2002. Klein is leaving to become an executive vice president at News Corp., the company behind Fox News.

Bloomberg praised Black, a Chicago native who spent eight years at *USA Today* as president, publisher, board member, and Gannett Co. executive vice president, as a “world-class manager.” The billionaire mayor, who often eschews traditional resumes for government posts, said Black’s business skills make her an ideal leader of educators and students.

“She understands that we have to make sure that our kids have the skill sets to partake in the great American dream,” Bloomberg said. “In the end, I picked somebody who I have confidence is the right person for this job at this time.”

The state Department of Education granted a waiver for the appointment, because Black is not a certified teacher. The mayor said Klein will stay on until the end of the year.

Black has never been involved in public education before. She attended parochial schools in Chicago and sent her own children to private boarding schools in Connecticut.

She has been on *Fortune* magazine’s “50 Most Powerful Women in Business” list and is the author of a book called *Basic Black: The Essential Guide for Getting Ahead at Work (and in Life)*. She will be the first woman to lead New York City’s public education system.

At Hearst, she oversees titles including *Esquire*; *Good Housekeeping*; *O*, the Oprah magazine; and *Popular Mechanics*.

Black’s appointment reflects Bloomberg’s view that success in business translates to similar achievements in public service.

“There is no one who knows more about the skills our children will need to succeed in the 21st-century economy,” Bloomberg said at a City Hall news conference with Klein and Black.

Klein, too, became chancellor without having worked in public education. Before he joined the Bloomberg administration, Klein was with media conglomerate Bertelsmann AG. Previously, he was an assistant attorney general in the Clinton administration. He headed the U.S. Justice Department’s antitrust division for nearly four years, where his work included launching the case to break up Microsoft Corp.

Unlike Black, however, Klein grew up in New York City and attended public schools.

As chancellor, he often clashed with unions and with parent groups that complained of being denied a role in running the schools.

“Many parents will be glad to see Joel Klein leave as chancellor, who had no respect for their views or priorities,” said Leonie Haimson, who leads a parent advocacy group called Class Size Matters.

Ernest Logan, the president of the union that represents New York City principals, said Klein “had a rocky road” as chancellor but learned on the job.

Logan said he knows little about Black. “I’m now going to read her book,” he said.

Teachers union head Michael Mulgrew said: “I look forward to working with Ms. Black. As a teacher, I will help in any way I can to improve the education for the children of New York.”

Black told reporters she has had “limited exposure to unions” in her previous jobs. She’ll have to learn quickly: Among her many challenges will be to oversee a new contract with teachers, because the city’s teachers have been working under an expired contract for months.

Klein was appointed chancellor after Bloomberg won control of the city’s public education system and disbanded the Board of Education. Bloomberg and Klein have touted the progress that students have made under their watch, but the state Education Department said last summer that rising scores on standardized tests had been overstated because the tests had become too easy.

Black will likely serve no longer than the three years remaining in Bloomberg’s term.

“She’s had a career, so maybe she can have the ability to devote the next three years to public service,” Bloomberg said.

In a Nov. 26 letter, Bloomberg said Black would appoint 38-year-old Shael Polakow-Suransky, a former teacher and a member of Klein’s administration, to serve as senior deputy chancellor and chief academic officer.

An advisory panel appointed to weigh Black’s qualifications to serve as chancellor of New York City schools had recommended that Education Commissioner David M. Steiner deny the waiver that would allow her to serve as chancellor.



Cathie Black meets city parents.

Steiner had previously suggested he might be willing to grant a waiver to Black if a second-in-command with academic experience were to be chosen.

Under Black, Polakow-Suransky will be tasked with overseeing the schools’ instructional programs and the implementation of major educational policies, the mayor said in his letter to Steiner. Polakow-Suransky will also advise the chancellor on policy issues relating to curriculum, testing, evaluation, and more.

Currently, he serves under Klein as the deputy chancellor for performance and accountability, overseeing school evaluation and capacity building.

In his new role with News Corp., Klein will advise the company on opportunities to invest in digital education initiatives, according to the *Wall Street Journal* (see story above). Education is an area of interest for News Corp. Chairman Rupert Murdoch, who believes the sector is “ripe for innovation,” a person familiar with the matter told the newspaper. **eSN**

## Mobile learning...

continued from page 1

anywhere access. Teachers are also using these devices in their everyday life and have been using technology in the classroom to the point where they feel comfortable with mobile technology for their students," Evans said.

She continued: "And we're also at the tipping point because most students already own a mobile device, meaning that administrators might not have to spend as much on initial hardware for tech initiatives."

Evans said administrators also are considering the implementation of mobile learning devices because of parent buy-in.

According to Speak Up survey results, 62 percent of responding parents report that if their child's school allowed mobile technology devices to be used for education purposes, they would likely purchase a mobile device for their child.

Even more encouraging, Evans said, is that Project Tomorrow staff found no demographic differentiation when sifting through parent responses, meaning that parents from urban, rural, and Title 1 districts all agreed that they would purchase mobile technology devices for their children's learning.

"This gives administrators a good idea at how to better invest resources in terms of instructional technology," said Evans. "It's also good for administrators, and for teachers, to know that if they decide to use mobile technology in the classroom, they'll get parental support."

Not surprisingly, students, too, support the use of mobile learning devices in school.



Students want to use mobile devices.

According to the survey, students no longer view their schools' internet filters as the primary barrier to using technology in the classroom, as they have in years past. Instead, when asked how schools could make it easier to use technology for school work, students' responses indicated that they want to use their own mobile learning devices.

Student in middle school (60 percent) and high school (64 percent) prefer using their own cell phone, smart phone, or MP3 player, compared to laptops or netbooks (46 percent).

Fifty-two percent of all middle and high school students said that in their "ultimate school," mobile technology would have the greatest positive impact on learning. Remarkably, even younger students in kindergarten through second grade indicated that they would include mobile learning devices such as cell phones or smart phones with internet access (42 percent),

MP3 players or iPods (46 percent), or laptop computers for every student (52 percent) in their ultimate school.

Students said they would use their mobile learning devices mostly to look up information on the internet, take notes, record lectures, or access online textbooks.

Students also reported a desire to use mobile technology to receive reminders or alerts about homework and tests, and to communicate with their peers for collaborative work. For example, 48 percent of high school students and 34 percent of middle school students said they use Facebook and other social networking sites to collaborate with classmates on projects.

"Students are already using a variety of technologies as part of their regular school day or to complete their homework assignments, and the use of mobile technology is a perfectly logical 'next step' for them," the report notes.

Although using mobile technology in the classroom might seem like a no-brainer to some, many classroom teachers (76 percent) continue to express high levels of concern that students will be distracted.

Another issue is digital equity, and making sure all students have access to a mobile learning device. The Project Tomorrow report details how some schools are tackling this issue—for example, some schools are "seeding" their programs by providing devices to students who might not have their own.

Infrastructure issues, such as 24/7 broadband access, also are critical for successful mobile learning programs and "will require educators to rethink a 'cookie cutter' approach to technology implementation," says the report.

School leaders also must think about which subjects are best suited for using mobile technology in the classroom, what kinds of applications will be best for mobile learning, and how theft, internet safety, and network security will be addressed.

To help educators implement mobile technology in the classroom, Project Tomorrow has included best practices from five different schools, called "Mobile Learning Explorers," that are on the leading edge of mobile technology implementation.

These schools are Xavier College Preparatory in Phoenix; Paradise Valley Unified School District in Phoenix; St. Mary's City School District in St. Mary's, Ohio; Jamestown Elementary School in Arlington, Va.; and Onslow County School District in Jacksonville, N.C.

While it's important to recognize and talk about these issues, students are already using mobile technology devices and "a whole host of other related applications and tools to implement their own vision for 21st-century learning, and they are not going to wait for the rest of us to catch up," the report concludes. **eSN**

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## Single-sex...

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potential source of distraction during class and can help them focus more on school, proponents say.

In other cases, single-sex education programs aim to bolster girls' confidence in subjects that many lose interest in later on in their schooling, such as math, science, and technology.

Whatever the reason for the approach, advocates of single-sex education say there is evidence to suggest that it can be effective—though experts caution that it might not be ideal for every student.

Imagine Southeast Public Charter School, founded two years ago, operates under the dual academy format. It is one of at least four publicly funded schools in the District of Columbia using single-sex education, while there are a few others in Maryland and Virginia.

Imagine was founded as a single-gender environment, but other schools are making the switch from coed to single-sex classrooms to help improve student achievement levels. For example, educators from Arthur F. Smith Middle Magnet School in Louisiana say they've noticed improvements in behavior and schoolwork since switching to single-sex education this year.

"I thought it was crazy, I really did," said seventh-grade English teacher Camille Shelfo. A short time into the new academic year, however, he has quickly changed his opinion.

"The first day, I saw my boys like I've never seen them before. They were focused, they seemed to be more challenged, they

take more pride in their work—it just blew me away. I've never seen anything like this," said Shelfo, who has been an educator for 23 years.

There are at least 10 other public schools in Louisiana that have adopted a single-sex education model, three of which transitioned from coeducation last fall, reports the Associated Press.

While public schools are experimenting with single-sex education as a possible fix to academic pitfalls, the debate over which form of education is actually better for students is far from resolved.

Leonard Sax, executive director of the National Association for Single Sex Public Education, cited a study in his 2005 book, *Why Gender Matters*, conducted by researchers at Virginia Tech that demonstrated how boys are developmentally years behind girls in terms of fine motor skills. Many boys become frustrated with school when they are taught reading and writing before they are developmentally ready, causing them to lag behind girls, Sax said.

"The question, 'Which is better, single sex or coeducation?' presupposes that kids are all the same—they're not," he said. "What works best for some girls may be a disaster for other girls. What works best for some boys might not work for other boys."

Sax said he believes that if single-sex education is the right choice for a particular child, that child should have the option to attend a public single-sex school rather than having to pay for private education.

David Sadker, a professor at American University and author of *Failing at Fairness: How Our Schools Cheat Girls*, said he doesn't believe that separating the genders is the right idea.

"Separating is a backwards step, whether it's by race, or gender, or religion," said Sadker. "We're doing something on gender that we'd never do on race; we're separating and segregating, and we would never do that on race—and it's because we're more sensitive to the race implications than the gender [ones], but the gender implications are very real, and they're not good."

However, Sadker said he doesn't believe the current education system is fair to female students, and that boys receive more attention and are more active in a classroom. Rather than separating classes by gender, Sadker advocates a model that re-trains teachers to ensure they're addressing all students fairly.

"Often in a coed class, girls get cut off, they may worry about harassment, the boys may take over physically and verbally, but teachers can control that," he said.

Sax disagrees: "This notion that girls are intimidated by boys in the coed classroom is certainly out of date in most American schools today. If anything, it is the other way around. It is common to find what I call the 'Hermione Granger syndrome' in American schools today, where the girls are jumping up and down to answer the questions and the boys are sitting on their hands."

In his book *Girls on the Edge*, Sax describes evidence from UCLA studies that suggest "girls who graduate from single-sex private schools do better academically when compared to girls with comparable demographics who graduate from comparable private schools." He also examines a larger study from the United Kingdom that found similar results for girls in public schools.

At Arthur F. Smith Middle Magnet School, Principal Norvella Williams said she faced some resistance from a few parents, who worried their children would lose in socialization skills. However, the cafeteria, schoolwide events, and some extracurricular activities remain coed.

As of press time, it was too early into the year to measure academic gains, but Williams and her staff reported about half the discipline problems compared to the same time the previous year. That means the school is on the right track, Williams said.

Although Sax and Sadker disagree on the wisdom of single-sex education, both agree that educators must be aware of gender differences and stereotypes.

"If you ignore gender differences, they don't go away. On the contrary, you end up reinforcing gender stereotypes," Sax said.

"As soon as you make assumptions that all boys learn one way and all girls learn the other, you start building the ruts and reducing potential," said Sadker. **eSN**

Material from the Associated Press was used in this report.

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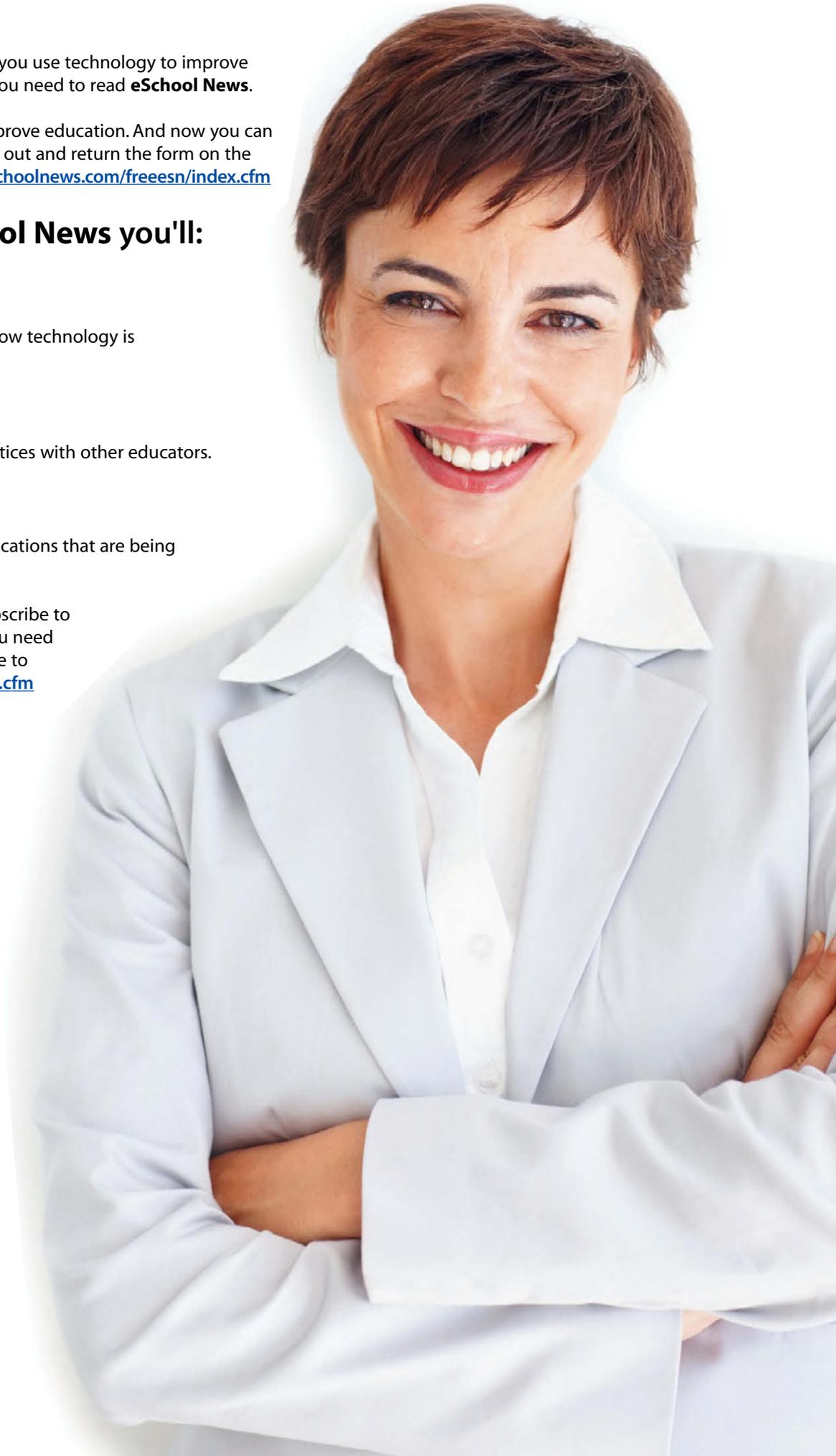
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# eSCHOOL NEWS

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## Grants & Funding

# How to find private sources of funding

By Deborah Ward

In my last column (“Where to find grants for education,” October 2010), I wrote about how to find grant opportunities from public funders, such as government agencies. This month, I’m going to focus on finding opportunities from private funders, such as foundations and corporations. However, I need to add one more source of information for federal grant opportunities.

According to its website, Grants.gov is a central storehouse for information on more than 1,000 federal grant programs and provides access to approximately \$500 billion in annual awards. If you haven’t registered yet with Grants.gov, I would encourage you to do this now, even if you’re not currently interested in applying for federal grants. The application process is free, and applications can take a few days to be processed. Registering now can help you avoid any problems with missed deadlines if you decide to apply for a federal grant in the future.

Today, applicants must use the Grants.gov system to apply for most federal grants, although there are few grant programs that still do not use this elec-

tronic system. Grant seekers can search for federal grants using Grants.gov and can receive eMail notification of grant announcements from specific federal agencies. Clicking on these announcements will provide you with the guidance needed for these programs, as well as the online grant package that must be completed and submitted, if applicable.

One of the most common ways to find information about potential private funders is to use the Foundation Center database. Go to [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org), locate the nearest Foundation Center library, and pay the library a visit in order to access its database for free.

When you access the database, you can search by funder interest, geographic location, and the dollar amount of a foundation’s assets, among other criteria. The Foundation Center libraries that I have visited also provided additional directories and books about grants and funding. In addition, you can subscribe to the Foundation Center database if you want continuous access from your own computer, instead of having to make a physical trip to the nearest library for information.

If you know the name of the foundation you’re looking for, you can find its

website by using a regular search engine—but you should note, however, that not all foundations have a website, especially if they are small and have no paid staff.

On their websites, most foundations will describe their eligibility requirements, list application deadlines and amounts of their grant awards, and provide a list of prior grantees. Many foundations also now use an online application process, so you can see what information will be needed to submit a request for funding.

Many corporate funders also include grants information on their website; however, I’ve found this information sometimes can be hard to locate. Try looking under tabs labeled “foundation,” “corporate giving,” “giving,” or “community support.” As with private foundations, you can find eligibility requirements, application requirements, giving histories, and the online application itself, if applicable.

If you’re not sure what corporate funders exist in your community, contact your local Chamber of Commerce and ask if they have a list of top employers in your community. Start researching this list to find potential funders, but don’t restrict

yourself only to the major employers in your community. You might find that smaller businesses also provide financial support, although the dollar amounts they give might be smaller than those of the major corporations.

The last type of funders to research are national or local organizations related to a specific academic discipline—such as the National Science Teachers Association, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and so on.

If there’s a national organization devoted to your academic field, do some research to see if it offers any grants you can apply for to support a classroom project. Again, the organization’s website probably will provide you with all the information you’ll need to decide if this is a viable funder for you to pursue.

*(Editor’s note: For \$35 per year, you can also receive our Grants & Funding ALERT electronic newsletter, which delivers the latest federal and private grant listings to your eMail in-box twice a month; to sign up, go to <http://www.eschoolnews.com/funding>.)* **eSN**

*Deborah Ward, CFRE, is an independent grant writing consultant. She welcomes questions at [Debor21727@aol.com](mailto:Debor21727@aol.com).*

## Grant Deadlines

### January

#### Mobile computers from Acer

Acer America’s Mobile Technology Platform Challenge gives K-12 schools the chance to win notebooks and netbooks from Acer while learning more about mobile technology platforms that will best suit their students’ needs. Applying schools must (1) provide basic school contact information, school logo image, and a YouTube video or essay with pictures explaining how the new systems will help their students acquire 21st-century skills, and (2) have school personnel take a multiple-choice quiz on the differences between notebooks and netbooks and correctly answer seven out of 10 questions. One grand-prize winner will receive a classroom setup of 20 Acer Aspire netbooks, and one second-place winner will receive a multimedia library consisting of five Acer Aspire Timeline notebooks.

**Deadline: Jan. 14**

[https://professional.us.acer.com/edu/campaign/Mobile\\_Technology\\_Platform\\_Challenge](https://professional.us.acer.com/edu/campaign/Mobile_Technology_Platform_Challenge)

#### \$1,000 for excellence in educational technology

The Alan Shepard Technology in Education Award, from the Astronauts Memorial Foundation, rewards excellence in the development and delivery of K-12 school technology programs with a \$1,000 grant. Programs that focus on aerospace and/or aeronautics will be given priority over other programs. Applicants must demonstrate how their ed-tech programs ultimately benefit their students.

**Deadline: Jan. 15**

[http://www.amfcse.org/Alan%20Shepard%20Award/alan\\_shepard\\_award.htm](http://www.amfcse.org/Alan%20Shepard%20Award/alan_shepard_award.htm)

#### \$120,000 for after-school arts and humanities programs

Over the last 13 years, the Coming Up Taller Awards (from the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services) have recognized the accomplishments of exceptional arts and humanities after-school programs across the country. The program’s new name, the National Arts and Humanities Youth Program Awards, recognizes the national significance of the award. After-school arts and humanities programs sponsored by schools, museums, libraries, performing arts organizations, arts centers, and community service organizations are eligible to apply for 12 awards of \$10,000 each.

**Deadline: Jan. 31**

<http://www.nahyp.org>

### February

#### iPods and reading software for essays on courage

The “Courage in My Community” essay competition, from Cambium Learning Technologies and the Max Warburg Courage Curriculum Inc., aims to help students find inspiration in reading and writing. The contest encourages U.S. and Canadian students in grades 5-8 to write about their experience with courage and how this experience has made an impact in their lives. Winners will receive iPod Touches and Kurzweil reading software, and their schools will receive a Kurzweil 3000 Learning Lab Pack and training.

**Deadline: Feb. 11**

<http://www.courageinmycommunity.com>

### Ongoing

#### Up to \$5,000 per award for innovative math and science projects

The Toshiba America Foundation is a nonprofit grant-making organization dedicated to supporting science and math education in the United States. The foundation contributes to the quality of science and math education by investing in innovative projects designed by classroom teachers to improve instruction for students in grades 6-12. The foundation awards grants of \$5,000 on a rolling basis. For grants of more than \$5,000, applications are due Feb. 1.

<http://www.toshiba.com/tafpub/jsp/home/default.jsp>

#### Free classroom AV solutions from Extron Electronics

The Extron Classroom A/V System Grant Program provides selected pilot classrooms with advanced audio/video solutions for mounting and controlling wall or ceiling-mounted projectors and for classroom sound amplification. The goal of the program is to demonstrate the ease of use and benefits of Extron classroom AV technology to students, teachers, and administrators. Grants include the installation of a PoleVault, WallVault, or VoiceLift system from Extron, as well as full training.

<http://www.extron.com/k12/polevaultgrant.aspx>

# Security checkpoint

## Districts install x-ray machines to boost school safety

For a growing number of schools, metal detectors aren't seen as sufficient to keep weapons and contraband out of their buildings

**Jenna Zwang**  
Assistant Editor

More school districts are turning to x-ray machines like those found in airports to strengthen and improve school security—a move that school safety experts say can improve physical safety as well as students' and teachers' emotional well-being while inside school buildings.

Patrick Fiel, public safety advisor for ADT Security Services and former executive director of school security for the Washington, D.C., public school system, said this type of technology can prevent contraband from entering schools.

"X-ray machines definitely can reduce crime and can act as a deterrent when people know they're going through them," said Fiel.

Jim Viscardi, vice president of sales for Smiths Detection, said his company has seen a huge increase in sales in the past year, and added that x-ray machines provide a level of school security that metal detectors can't.

"A metal detector certainly will alert security officers as to whether a student, teacher, or school personnel have any sort of metal on their person. What it doesn't provide is any indication as to what a stu-

dent is carrying into a school," said Viscardi.

"The x-ray system allows an officer to get an image of what's inside a student's bag to make sure there [are] no weapons, there's no contraband. The name of the game here is keeping the kids safe," Viscardi added.

In the past 12 months, Smiths Detection has installed more than 100 x-ray machines in schools in Virginia, Texas, Illinois, New York, and Tennessee. Viscardi declined to identify the school districts that have installed his company's x-ray systems, but said they are often installed in more urban school districts.

"This major uptick in sales would indicate to us that x-rays are now a required piece for school security and that [they're] being used successfully and most likely keeping threats and contraband out of the schools," said Viscardi.

Fiel agreed that the machines are an important school safety tool.

"We found everything the machine is authorized to pick up. At the entry points at these locations, we eliminated [contraband] from going any further," Fiel said of his experiences with the Washington, D.C., schools.

Viscardi said it's important for schools to work out a multi-layered security plan and not rely solely on one method.

"The use of a single piece of equipment we've never felt is the best way to provide security," said Viscardi. He suggests the use of several different technology-based components in order to provide the most secure campus possible.

"One layer is the metal detection to screen students, teachers, and other personnel. Another layer is the x-ray equipment to screen their belongings. A third layer might be integration of those systems with a closed circuit television system to provide not only comprehensive viewing of all the security checkpoints but also post-incident opportunities," Viscardi said.

Fiel agreed that using technology can make a big difference when it comes to school safety.

"We definitely saw a dramatic reduction in incidences involving weapons [after installing x-ray machines]," Fiel said. During his time with the Washington, D.C., schools, Fiel and his team reduced



More schools are using X-ray machines.

crime by 90 percent after integrating technology into the district's school safety approach. Fiel said that prevention, boosted by technology, played a major part in the reduction.

"X-ray [machines] have become a logical component; a required component in any kind of checkpoint you're going to put in any kind of building," Viscardi said.



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# Netwatch

This month's very best web sites—exceptional instructional resources, special events, and state-of-the-art research and management tools—for the K-20 decision maker

## Curriculum

Best new instructional resources on the internet

### New web site combines project-based learning, social responsibility

<http://shoutlearning.org/>

A new partnership between Microsoft Corp., the Smithsonian Institution, and TakingITGlobal will help teachers integrate project-based learning in their classrooms by having students team up with their peers around the globe to solve real-world environmental challenges. Anthony Salcito, Microsoft's vice president of education, said the project—called Shout—is a solid step in helping students and teachers around the world connect to solve common problems, and in helping teachers use technology to boost students' 21st-century skills through a project-based approach that is relevant to students' lives. Each challenge will kick off with an online event for teachers and students featuring Smithsonian scientists; the first challenge addresses the issue of deforestation. "When students and teachers are connected with one another using technology, cultural and language barriers disappear, and a space can be created for deep, meaningful [online] collaboration that helps drive positive social change," said Claudine Brown, director of education at the Smithsonian Institution. "Shout will harness the power of technology to connect the Smithsonian's vast research and education resources with education leaders."



### Babylon.com offers dictionary and translation services to schools free of charge

<http://www.babylon.com/k12-program.html>

Babylon Ltd., a provider of language learning solutions and dictionary and translation software, has announced a new donation program for K-12 schools worldwide, called "Babylon in Every School." The program makes Babylon's dictionary and translation software available to K-12 schools and their students free of charge. "Our solutions bridge the gap of languages for more than 80 million people worldwide," said Alon Carmeli, Babylon's CEO. "Our generation's mission is to leverage the internet and technology in order to make it a better world for the younger generation. Bridging the language barriers improves communication and knowledge. We believe that Babylon's project will help today's youth become tomorrow's leaders." Babylon's dictionary and translation software offers results from more than 1,500 sources in 75 different languages. It provides access to dictionaries and encyclopedias from some of the world's most distinguished publishing houses, such as Oxford, Britannica, Merriam Webster, Pons, Duden, Larousse, and more. In addition, Babylon provides full text and web page translation in 33 languages and delivers results in more than 25 languages from Wikipedia.org, the company says.



### PBS NewsHour launches student reporting website

<http://www.studentreportinglabs.com>

PBS NewsHour has launched a new student journalism project called "Student Reporting Labs," which connects students with professional mentors at their local public broadcasting station to produce original news reports on important national issues. The project's website includes a collaborative space where students can interact with professional journalists, as well as their peers from around the country who are working on the same topic. The program also includes a news literacy and digital media curriculum designed to nurture students' understanding of news, build a foundation of civic engagement, and spark a life-long interest in current events. Developed by the Media Education Lab at Temple University, this curriculum features more than a dozen lesson plans that focus on understanding the role of journalism in society; developing communication skills, such as listening, asking questions, and public speaking; and finding, analyzing, and evaluating the quality of information. "The Student Reporting Labs are a natural extension of the NewsHour's commitment to education, quality journalism, and the transformation of public media," said Leah Clapman, managing editor for education. "Each student who participates in the Lab gains information and media skills, news savvy, and curiosity about national and community issues. They experience the power of getting and telling a story to an authentic audience."



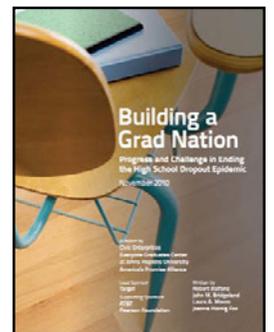
## Leadership

Research and management resources for the K-20 decision maker

### Report focuses on boosting high school graduation rate

<http://civicerprises.net/pdfs/gradnation.pdf>

Higher standards, better data use, and more parent engagement are among the strategies responsible for the first significant improvement in America's high school graduation rate in 40 years, suggests a new report that also looks at how states and schools can continue this trend. America's Promise Alliance, Civic Enterprises, and Johns Hopkins University's Everyone Graduates Center banded together to release the report, titled "Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Ending the High School Dropout Epidemic." The graduation rate of U.S. high school students increased from 72 percent in 2002 to 75 percent in 2008, according to the report. It also says there has been a decline in the number of "dropout factories," or schools in which the graduation rate is below 50 percent. However, while Asian students have a 91-percent graduation rate and white students have an 81-percent graduation rate, black, Native American, and Hispanic students disproportionately drop out, and graduation rates for students in those groups remain in the low 60s. If the U.S. was able to cut dropout rates for minority students in major cities in half, it would save \$2.3 billion in an average year, create 17,450 jobs, and increase tax revenues by \$249.7 million, the report says—all on the basis of one high school class. To ensure that the nation's high school graduation rate continues to increase, the report includes a Civic Marshall Plan that sets forth relevant strategies and benchmarks.



### Database of assistive technologies now includes science-related products

<http://www.techmatrix.org>

Assistive technology devices enable students with disabilities to express what they know, and rapid advancements in technology are helping to "redefine ability and disability," says Milton Chen, senior fellow and director emeritus at the George Lucas Educational Foundation. Chen was an opening keynote speaker at the National Center for Technology Innovation's 2010 Technology Innovators Conference in Washington, D.C., in November. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs and housed at the American Institutes for Research, NCTI advances learning opportunities for students with disabilities by fostering assistive technology innovation. One service that can help in this area is NCTI's TechMatrix, a website that provides free information about educational and assistive technology products for students with disabilities, as well as English language learners. This past fall, NCTI added science to the categories of products covered in the TechMatrix, which already included reading, math, and writing. Now, the TechMatrix features information about more than 300 educator-reviewed products, searchable by subject area and grade level, as well as case studies and other implementation guidance.



### ScholarGamers.com offers scholarships for gaming prowess ... but will it fly with parents?

<http://www.scholargamers.com>

While watching a college basketball game full of players on scholarship last year, Angelo Tartaro had an idea for an online platform that would allow superior gamers to convert their hand-eye acumen into scholarship money, just like the basketball stars had done with their physical prowess. Tartaro and his investors launched ScholarGamers.com in October, and last month thousands of middle and high school students nationwide competed for up to \$10,000 in scholarship money. Tartaro said he's providing this first round of scholarship money in hopes of attracting advertisers for future competitions. Ninety-seven percent of 12- to 17-year-olds play computer, web, or console video games, and half of teens surveyed said they played a video game "yesterday," according to research published by the Pew Research Center in 2008. But ScholarGamers has elicited mixed reaction from parents. Corinne Gregory, president and founder of SocialSmarts, which aims to develop children's social skills, said the site's competitions would require daily dedication to non-educational video games. "The only way to get good is to play lots," said Gregory, a mother of three. "I can't really condone having my kids play video games for extended periods of time. ... And I would remind students that there are lots of other ways to earn scholarship money."





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# Advertisers' Showcase



## Modular classroom AV system makes deployment a breeze

CoPilot, from Chief Manufacturing, is a modular, all-in-one classroom AV system designed and built around extensive market-driven research and direct input from customers. The system is easy to install, intuitively user-friendly, and fully upgradeable. A benefit for systems integrators, administrators, teachers, presenters, and students alike, CoPilot combines top-quality components with functionality that works with virtually any multimedia device.

Expanding and improving upon standards established by other modular classroom AV systems, CoPilot is ideally suited for K-12 schools or any room under 160 square feet. The system brings premium audio and video into an environment within a single SKU. The main differentiator with this new AV room system is that it includes wireless RF microphone technology; high-performance, 5-inch plenum speakers; professional-grade cabling; and a simple interface. CoPilot also includes assisted-listening ear buds that can be very beneficial for students with hearing loss, special needs, or for translating to a second language for ESL students.

Fast installation is aided by the system's ability to be seamlessly integrated within standard wall boxes. At the CoPilot control module, a CAT5e interface is used along with a single power supply that feeds all system modules without a need for special cabling.

CoPilot systems are outfitted with high-quality Chief mounting solutions and related accessories, offering various options for mounting suspended ceiling projectors, short-throw projectors, flat-panel TVs, and other wall-mounted multimedia equipment.

<http://www.chiefmfg.com>

## Keep your students on task with NetSupport School

What do you get when you put a group of students in front of unmonitored computers?

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But now there is a cost-effective way to take back control of the classroom while at the same time enhancing the quality of instruction delivered. Introducing NetSupport School, a complete classroom management solution providing internet and application metering, real-time screen and audio monitoring, multimedia student testing, keystroke logging, an interactive whiteboard space, and much more.

Reducing costs has never been more important, which is why printer management is included as a standard feature. And the unique Technician Console allows support staff to discretely perform remote diagnostics and troubleshooting to ensure equipment is always available when needed most, in turn maximizing your return on investment.

As well as monitoring capabilities and cost controls,

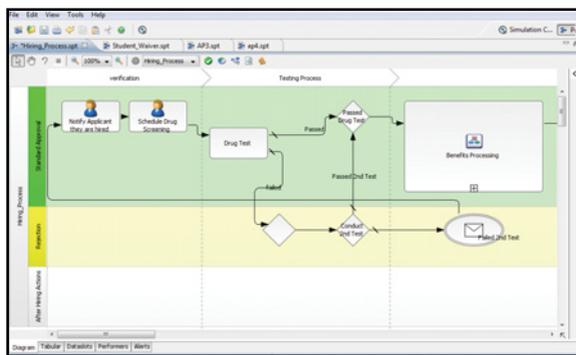


NetSupport School enriches the quality of learning by offering a reminder of vital lesson content through digital Student Journals. A free 40-user trial version of the software is available.

<http://www.netsupportschool.com>

## Skyward's Workflow Manager helps keep district leaders organized

Keeping a handle on day-to-day activities just got easier with Skyward's newest module, Workflow Manager. By enabling your district to move paper-intensive tasks to electronic processes using a built-in to-do list, Workflow Manager will keep you on top of all your activities. Whether you're managing a simple checklist or a complex process, Skyward's new module will provide you with flexible options to help you stay organized, including decision trees, automated initiation, and form management that eliminate the hassles. Workflow Manager supports decision-based responses for complex processing to manage even the most unique set of tasks.



Users can view the entire workflow process in a graphical display that includes both vertical and horizontal "swim lanes." Throughout a process, you can set up phases as to how the process should be handled and create lanes for primary and secondary steps. Workflow Manager also provides increased security and efficiency by allowing you the option to set up auto-eMails that notify staff of tasks awaiting their action. Skyward's Workflow Analyzer will also help you evaluate workflow productivity and identify bottlenecks.

Workflow Manager is an integrated system-wide component of the Skyward School Management System, which consists of Skyward's Student Management Suite and School Business Suite. When used in conjunction with Skyward's School Management System, Workflow Manager provides the capability to create processes spanning your entire district operations, including student information, finance, and human resources.

(800) 236-7274

<http://www.skyward.com/workflow>

## ViewSonic offers a full array of display technologies

Since its inception in 1987, ViewSonic has grown and evolved its business to meet customer and partner demands, by identifying ways to add more value and features to its product lines.

ViewSonic's business was primarily CRT monitors until 1997. At that point, the company began broadening its product line with LCD desktop monitors, projectors, and LCD TVs to become a "display technology" company. As visual technologies multiplied and connectivity became important, ViewSonic moved beyond the traditional display space, drawing on its 20 years of experience to make the natural progression toward other technologies such as PCs and personal media players.

Today, ViewSonic is a worldwide leader in computer, consumer electronics, and communication products, of-

fering a complete line of innovative LCD display, HDTV, projector, PC, digital signage, personal media player, and digital photo frame products, all designed to make the customer's computing, visual, and communication experience easier and more enjoyable. ViewSonic's unwavering commitment to quality, reliability, and performance has won the company more than 2,500 awards across the globe from global publications and organizations.

As an environmentally aware manufacturer, ViewSonic is committed to minimizing the use and maximizing disposal of substances and materials that may cause environmental damage. ViewSonic's Recycle+ trade-in programs also offer cost-effective ways to handle customers' recycling needs.

<http://www.viewsonic.com>

## Free IT help desk software for K-12 schools, from Web Help Desk

The Web Help Desk software suite is the leading cross-platform service desk management solution for K-12 help desks and facilities departments that seek to simplify and control their increasingly complex service environments.

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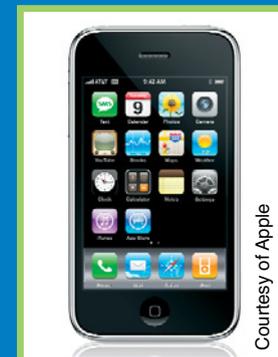
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## Highlights

### The Great Education Conversation

AASA Executive Director Dan Domenech talks about the split between school reformers and public school educators adding new perspective to the divide with a description of the 95-5 dilemma.

### Helping Students from Immigrant Families

Tim Bailey, 2009 National History Teacher of the Year, serves mostly disadvantaged students. Although most of them come from families that recently immigrated from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and other parts of the world, the children respond enthusiastically to Tim's creative approach to teaching American history and citizenship.

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### Interviews with Experts

#### Karen Cator

Cator, US DOE director of technology, discussed the new National Ed Tech Plan and its focus on learning. It's designed to transform the use of technology and student learning in classrooms nationwide and create an "engaging state-of-the-art, cradle-to-college school system."

#### Jamie Yoos

Yoos, 2010 Washington State Teacher of the Year, Bellingham High School, teaches Chemistry and bicycle maintenance. Yoos' classroom is a place of industry and experiment where every moment is precious and is often full of students long after the bell rings.

### 20 to Watch

#### Julie Carter

Carter, exec. dir. of technology for Minnetonka SD, MN., implemented a district-wide, single sign-on portal for students, staff and parents, allowing them to collaborate and share important information online with a single login and password.

#### Jeffrey McMahon

McMahon, academic technology officer, Indianapolis Public Schools, Indianapolis, Indiana, is used to leading. He was instrumental in bringing a 1:1 laptop model to the 2,500-student district. He brought CISCO Academies to Indianapolis and is spearheading virtual learning opportunities for students.

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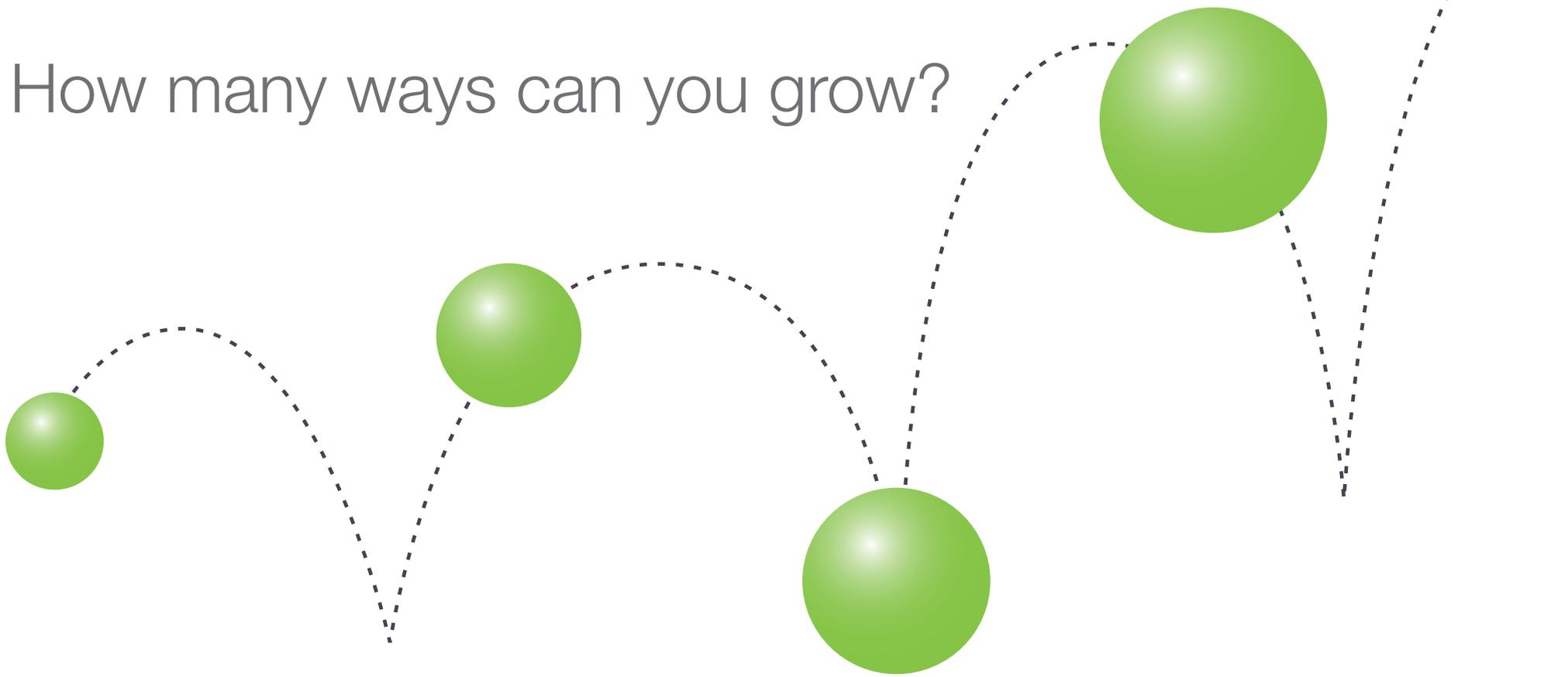


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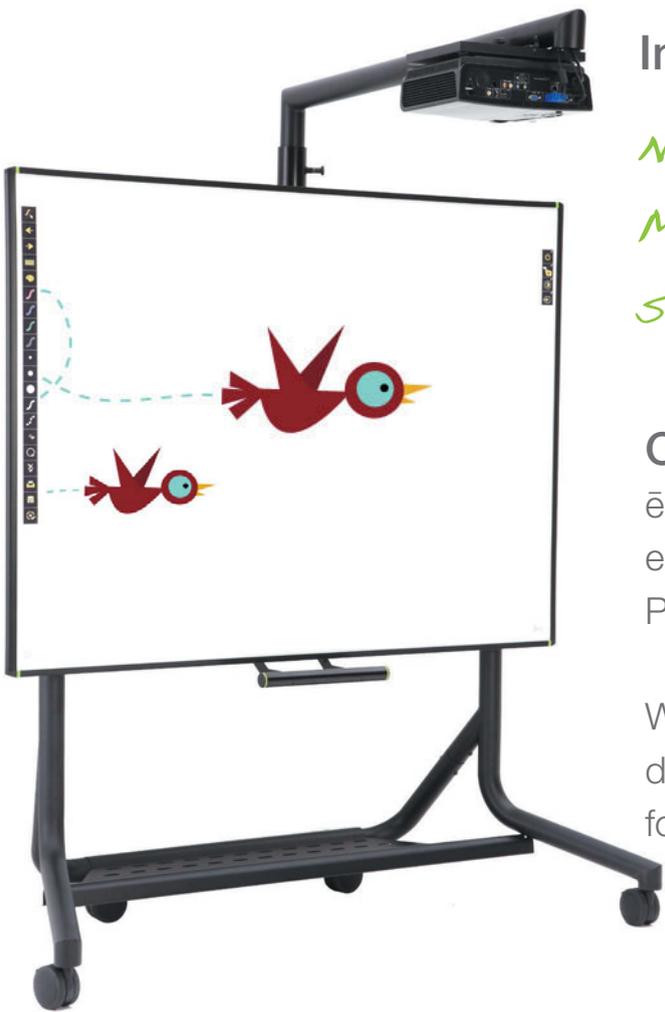
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