eSchool Media's
Annual Trends Report

25 Trends for 2018

Contents

Introduction

Dear Reader,

Year after year, educators and those invested in education love to speculate about what will take off in the near future. And as far as riveting news goes, nothing quite peaks the interest like new technologies and methodologies that have the potential to fundamentally change learning.

But (and I say this with love in my heart) it's been a little slow-going over the last decade when it comes to true innovation. Yes, devices were big; but when you swap a laptop for a tablet, or a flip phone for a smartphone, it's different, but not exactly new.

For the first time in almost 10 years, the emergence of one trend in 2017 has got this been-there-seen-it editor practically giddy for education in 2018. Never before has learning moved into the future like it is now thanks to immersive reality. The explosion of augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) for practical classroom use and higher ed research have implications for learning that haven't been seen since the birth of the internet.

Imagine being able to hold a beating, 3D digital heart in your hand for biology? Be able to watch the digital representation of words jump in your face as you learn English? Stand inside of an **immersive reality cave** to experience ancient historical battles as a virtual witness? Not only could this inspire learners in ways we can't possibly imagine, but what new neural networks must be firing in the brain when it's able to learn through the activation of multiple senses?

In almost all of the commentary from both educators and industry, the mention of AR and VR for 2018's big trends were ubiquitous. So much so, we could only include just a few AR/VR pieces here in our inaugural eSchool Media's Annual Trends Report, which compiles some of the most practical, forward-looking predictions from educators and industry on what will trend for the upcoming year in both K-12 and higher education.

Of course, setting my "tech nerd" hat aside, there are a lot of other notable education trends described in this report that show incredible promise for 2018. For example, libraries in both K-12 and higher ed are taking a more aggressive role as a hub for makerspaces, digital tools and expertise for digital literacy. Concerning curriculum, both K-12 and higher education are witnessing the explosion of interest for computer and data science, with some schools beginning to offer coding as a language requirement, as well as for designing Internet of Things (IoT) projects. Career pathways for students, beginning in high school and maturing in undergraduate studies, will see additional support this year from businesses and organizations. And teachers and faculty are becoming much more experienced as curators of learning (rather than sages), their tools a personalizing mix of open, online and digital materials.

2018 promises to be a year that epitomizes the term "transformational." Are you ready? It's going to be a wild, wonderful ride.

Best, Meris Stansbury, Editorial Director, **eSchool Media**

Comparing Predictions in K-12: 2017 vs. 2018

Looking at **eSchool News' trends piece from 2017**, it seems education was ripe for the explosion in AR/VR learning it witnessed that year. Many predictions mentioned the surge in high-quality virtual materials to become available in 2017; as well as an overall greater interest in visual technologies, like video for new classroom learning strategies.

Many stakeholders also believed teacher collaboration would blossom on digital platforms (they did!), and school culture would improve thanks to localized data sets.

Looking back at the predictions from last year, there seems to be a much more humanizing aspect to K-12 for 2018.

For example, the massive focus on social-emotional learning (SEL) for this year speaks to more than just individual data sets; and creative allowances for new student interests, like computer science and the arts in STEM, as well as engagement with AR/VR, reveal that schools are truly shifting the focus back on students' passions in learning.

Outside of the explosion of AR/VR, the transition of libraries from helpful classroom sidekicks in 2017 to digital literacy and makerspace powerhouses in 2018 will truly make this year unique.

Comparing Predictions in Higher Ed: 2017 vs. 2018

Comparing **eCampus News' trends prediction piece from 2017** to this year, an even greater focus can be seen in catering to student needs — thanks to a better understanding of what students really need from technology, institutional communications, and their courses.

A sharper, clearer focus on what students truly need, instead of guess-timating, has revealed a more practical side to higher ed innovation for 2018. Instead of predicting that AI will merge with campus apps in 2017, stakeholders are saying that finally providing good Wi-Fi across campus will happen for 2018. Micro-credentials and badging for 2017? How about determining what makes good digital and/or open resources for today's students in 2018?

That's not to say, of course, that AI for apps or innovative credentialing won't happen, but before real innovation in learning can happen, the basics have to be there first — and institutions are aiming to make these basics happen this year!

Another big change over the past year has been the much-needed acceptance of "non-traditional" learners as the new normal in higher ed. Instead of focusing on small alternatives to appease non-traditional learners, like incorporating a small amount of online courses for non-credentialed learning, institutions across the board are fundamentally altering their programs — and how they're delivered — as they've come to realize that non-traditional learners are all learners today.

K-12 Predictions for 2018

Say Goodbye to the Quiet Library

By Robin Glugatch

The library is a place for all students to feel safe and welcome. As we enter 2018, I believe libraries will become more collaborative spaces for students. The transformation of libraries into makerspaces will provide a space for hands-on exploration and creativity. Modern media specialists will play a critical role in diversifying the materials in the library and promoting inclusion and kindness. We will be looked upon as facilitators for these programs, and will continue to embrace new books, technology, and learning styles.

As a New Year's resolution, I encourage librarians to embrace the concept that libraries are changing. They are no longer quiet rooms with books. Challenge yourself by asking what you can do to promote 21st-century learning in your library. Create a personal learning network, via Twitter or other groups, to continue to learn how to transform your library and make it a place students want to be.

*Robin Glugatch is the librarian and makerspace facilitator at Mountain View Elementary School in the Simi Valley School District (CA). Follow her on twitter **@rglugatch** or email her at **robin.glugatch@simivalleyusd.org**.*
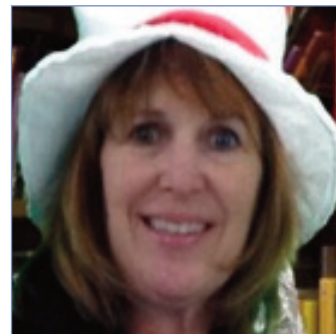
Vendor, Classroom Creativity Will Thrive

By Ricky Ye, PhD.

Firstly, the edtech industry will move from selling physical products to selling services. While teachers already understand the importance of branching out from the traditional textbook, regulatory roadblocks make it difficult to get approval from administrators to purchase physical edtech products to incorporate into lesson plans. Considering this, edtech companies will likely move away from developing physical products, towards selling services (think: content, curriculum ideas) that can make even the driest subjects fun and interesting.

Secondly, the new age of STEAM is upon us. While many lesson plans emphasize either "technical" subjects like math or science, or "liberal arts" subjects like reading and language, technology can—and should—be an important component to all lesson plans. To keep creativity at the forefront of the educational spectrum, while also fostering "hard skills" like STEM, it is important to emphasize the arts—the "A" in STEAM education. Whether students have an affinity for the arts or not, incorporating elements of creativity into STEM education has undeniable benefits, including making STEM more approachable and understandable. The STEAM model will continue to take shape in the coming year.

*Ricky Ye, PhD. is the CEO of **DFRobot**.*

Social-Emotional Support Systems Will Be Data-Driven

BY Michael Keller, ED.D. and Alysia Odipo, ED.D.

In 2018, the education industry anticipates a greater focus than ever before on making actionable sense of student-level and aggregate data in the area of achievement, social-emotional learning, health, school climate, and stakeholder engagement. Data-analytics tools, such as the Early Warning System (EWS) within student information systems, will be used to enhance the ability to identify students in immediate need of academic, attendance, and behavioral support. In K-12 schools in the U.S., using comprehensive climate snapshots at multiple points within the school year can provide educators with the opportunity to generate prescriptive and timely student support. These insights have the power to shape thinking around student-level response needs; they will also influence system-wide goals, curriculum, professional development, and overall program evaluation.

Over time, focused efforts to seamlessly integrate best-practice instruction, social-emotional learning, health, and school climate will increase desired outcomes for students within school districts. Through the implementation of data-informed systems of prevention and support, students will be best equipped with the academic knowledge, sense of confidence, and independence to pursue and accomplish their dreams as they grow into contributing global citizens.

In anticipation of this growing need for social-emotional support systems within school districts, the Laguna Beach Unified School District has placed additional emphasis on educating the whole child and effectively utilizing metrics and indicators to achieve this end. Our data reflects unprecedented rates of students with emotional barriers that impact school attendance, engagement, and achievement. To address this need, we are building and implementing a K-12 social-emotional learning framework and prevention and intervention system to enable all students to thrive in school and life.

Michael Keller, Ed.D. is the director of social and emotional support at Laguna Beach Unified School District. Dr. Keller is an experienced district-level administrator who has served in several administrative roles related to student support services. He has experience as both a school counselor and a nationally-certified school psychologist.

Alysia Odipo, Ed.D. is the assistant superintendent of instructional services at Laguna Beach Unified School District. Odipo is an experienced educator who has previously held roles as director of elementary education, elementary principal, middle school assistant principal, literacy coach, and elementary teacher.

STEM Will Evolve Thanks to More Effective Teacher Education

By Joachim Horn

Students will become more fluent in coding in 2018. To prepare students for careers in growing STEM fields, schools will increase the importance of programming literacy, or fluency in computer science and coding, in the same way that we did for reading and writing in the **mid 20th Century**.

However, it's difficult to achieve this kind of widespread programming literacy when it hasn't already been a part of most teachers' schooling. School districts, particularly administrators, will commit to providing the resources necessary to train teachers on STEM subjects that they may not have had the opportunity to learn before. Supporting teachers' personal education in this way will allow them to further integrate coding and computer science into the classroom curriculum, furthering the development of programming literacy.

Also, entertainment and education will converge in STEM. Today's kids are "digital natives," having grown up around computers and other technologies. Yet, teachers are finding that this familiarity is actually breeding a sense of apathy among their students. It's ironically becoming increasingly difficult to present STEM lessons in a way that maintains student interest.

To generate excitement around STEM lessons, more teacher training will be provided in order to effectively bake educational value into areas of technology that students are already engaging with on a daily basis, such as smartphones, tablets, video game consoles, and other devices. In the next five years, we will see a convergence of entertainment and education to occupy students' interest. For example, integrating educational content into mobile gaming will allow students to stay engaged and feel as though they are playing (when they are actually learning). With this kind of assimilation, mobile gaming and coding education can become one.

*Joachim Horn is the founder of **SAM Labs**. A mechanical engineering graduate from the Imperial College London and co-founder of the **Imperial College Design Collective**, he fused his passion for education, design and tech to develop SAM Labs.*
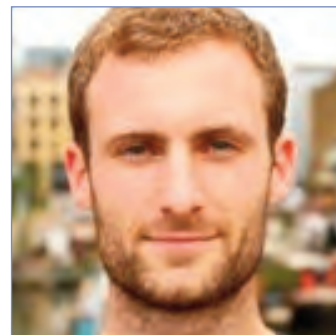
AR Will Expand Beyond STEM to ELL and Title I Programs

By Lisa Dunnigan

In the **Douglas County School System**, we are always trying to close the achievement gaps that exist for our ELLs and other struggling learners—while at the same time making lessons fun.

To accomplish these two goals at the same time, we use a lot of hands-on manipulatives and, because our students are digital natives, we are always looking for tech-based

instructional tools. So, when I was attending the most recent National Title I Conference and saw Letters alive in action, I knew that it would be a great learning tool for all of our struggling learners. **Letters alive** is a full supplemental curriculum that uses augmented reality for student engagement

We now use Letters alive in all nine Title I kindergarten classes during ELA instruction. Seeing animals jumping out at them gets students focused, attentive, and ready to learn! Augmented reality is especially helpful for ELL students because it is so hands-on and interactive.

Lisa Dunnigan is the executive Title I director of the Douglas County School System in Douglasville, GA.

An Even Bigger Focus on Equity, Adaptivity

By Heath Morrison

In 2018, I think we'll see growing interest and focus in three critical areas across our schools: advancing equity in education, more fully incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) in the classroom and improving learning outcomes using adaptive learning technology.

First, focusing on equity in education — providing each child with the resources that they need to learn, regardless of income or other factors — will be top-of-mind next year. School leaders will continue to prioritize creating the conditions that lead to equitable learning outcomes for all students. As part of these efforts, administrators are examining how to: ensure adequate distribution of funding and resources, support teachers with high-quality professional learning and develop effective strategies to remove barriers and improve struggling schools. Critically, we'll see more multifaceted approaches to improving equity in schools and districts across the country.

Second, we'll see greater adoption of social-emotional learning in the classroom as educators look at how to integrate more aspects of SEL into their teaching activities. In addition, there will be more discussion and research into how SEL principles, standards and measures can be embedded into schools' core curricula. At the same time, school leaders are looking at how to further support teachers who are incorporating SEL in their classrooms.

Finally, adaptive learning technology and resources, which already have proven effective in helping teachers address students' individual learning gaps, will continue to play a growing role in classrooms. As the infrastructure to support these types of tools becomes more widespread, we'll see a heightened focus on what happens after the technology is in place: introducing blended learning programs, creating student-centered spaces in the classroom and offering training and professional development to teachers.

*Heath Morrison is president of the School Group at **MHE**.*

More IoT and New Paradigms

By Dan Rivera

IoT-enabled learning and operational deployments will continue accelerating this year. For example, today's students are learning to write computer code for projects ranging from game consoles to robots. Each of those creations then becomes a "thing" on your network, along with those 3D printers and lawn sprinkler monitors, with all requiring secure, segmented connections for managing traffic and keeping learning safe.

Also, new learning paradigms that emerged in the wakes of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita a decade ago, as districts rebuilt from the ground up, continue to impact K-12 today. In 2018 we'll see a similar – but more widespread – phenomenon as districts hit by hurricanes or consumed by wildfires begin showing us new ways forward.

*Dan Rivera is the product marketing manager and e-rate expert for **Aruba**, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company.*

Competency-Based Education Expands to Reach All Learners

By Terry Boyle

In 2018 and beyond, we'll continue to see increased interest and investment in competency-based education (CBE) for all grade levels, and a growing use of micro-credentials.

To date, CBE has largely provided online tools to help students complete coursework requirements to improve class completion and graduation rates. Now, its role is expanding, as competency-based learning bursts the boundaries of the online and virtual learning spaces and moves directly into the classroom where it is becoming the foundation of, as opposed to a supplement to, broader learning.

Why the change? It has been reported that CBE is directly improving student outcomes. It allows teachers to shift the focus away from standardized test preparation towards true learning and concept mastery. With its focus on concepts, competency-based learning lets teachers troubleshoot critical areas where a student needs help, identify strengths and weaknesses, and act accordingly to address learning barriers.

CBE in K-12 will also lead to the increased use of micro-credentialing to capture evidence of learning. Schools and districts can then issue, track, maintain and update credentials associated with each discrete piece of learning and concept mastery. Micro-credentialing breaks down long-held silos around classes and grades, providing opportunities for natural cross-teaching. It also incorporates concepts like badging and credentials, part of evolving student social orientations.

CBE is catching on because schools increasingly understand that it's a way to empower students, including non-traditional learners, helping them identify areas where they need more work and ultimately improving student outcomes. CBE is also an exciting tool in student hands because it acts as a building block in the concept of lifelong learning. That concept, once ingrained, can follow students through college and into their careers and lifelong professional development.

*Terry Boyle is the **D2L** director of K-12 Product Management.*

Schools Will Invest in Formal Digital Citizenship Programs, Digitizing Curriculum

By Kellie Ady

It should be no surprise to anyone that K-12 students largely communicate with their peers via social media—this alone could make **Digital citizenship** an important initiative for schools to invest in. Additionally with the growth of BYOD, 1:1 initiatives and pervasive tech in schools the need for digital citizenship is only increasing.

The number two priority for teachers in our recent **Global State of Digital Learning** survey is digitizing curriculum. But the time and effort it takes to digitize curriculum continues to be a challenge. Expect investments in publisher content (especially as LMSs increase partnership integrations), expect the use of OERs to increase (CK-12, MERLOT, etc.), and expect the use of paper and other static, physical resources to diminish.

*Kellie Ady is the director of Instructional Strategy for **Schoology**. Ady spent 25 years in public education, first as a high school English teacher in Denver Public Schools and then as a technology coordinator at both the school and district levels in the Cherry Creek School District. As the former District Instructional Technology Coordinator for Cherry Creek Schools in Colorado, she led the successful district wide implementation of Chromebooks and the adoption of various instructional technology and curriculum tools, including a new learning management system. Kellie joined Schoology in the fall of 2016 as the Director of Instructional Strategy and is based in Denver, CO.*

Technology Will Reduce E-Rate's Application Barriers

By Peter Kaplan

While the White House and the FCC welcomed new leadership in 2017, Funds For Learning believes that the E-rate program will remain a dependable funding resource for K-12 districts in 2018 for years to come. We predict that the FCC will undoubtedly revisit the 2014 Modernization Order over the next year or two after the committee examines the impact of available funding and overall program efficiency.

It is our hope that the application and application review process will modernize — as the funding cap modernized to meet digital learning demands — and offer complete access to district education technology through this flagship federal education program.

E-rate offers more than a stable funding mechanism for school districts to make necessary internet bandwidth affordable. School budgets are extremely tight and many technology directors use the reimbursements from the E-rate program to purchase technology solutions that are not E-rate eligible. As we look toward technology advancements in virtual and augmented reality, coding programs and more in 2018, our goal is to reduce barriers to the application process to ensure E-rate can best support modern digital learning in all U.S. schools.

*Peter Kaplan is director of regulatory affairs at **Funds For Learning**.*

Student Choice and Responsibility Hits Blended Learning

By Julia Freeland Fisher

As teachers and students grow accustomed to a given model, they may find opportunities to take the learning experience another level deeper. We're seeing teachers who have been doing blended learning for a while starting to crave elbow room from strict, structured classroom choreography.

As we recently profiled in our **playbook on emerging teacher "moves,"** a teacher who starts off "managing" a blended model may, over time, start to release more responsibilities to the students, such as determining their own pace or path through a curriculum unit. When teachers are more confident with their blended practice, they often realize they're ready to take personalization in the learning process to the next level.

But only with circumstance-driven solutions will schools reap real benefits from online and blended learning that deliver on the promise to personalize instruction for each individual student.

*Julia Freeland Fisher is the director of Education at the **Clayton Christensen Institute**, where she leads a team researching the effects of disruptive innovation on the public and private education landscape. She has published and spoken extensively on topics including the edtech market, new school models, and competency-based education policies and practices. Most recently, her research focuses on emerging tools and practices that leverage technology to expand students' social capital by enhancing their access to new networks and their ability to navigate those networks.*

SaaS for Early Education Management

By Fran Simon, M.Ed.

SaaS Early Education management systems. This sector includes SaaS systems and apps for family communications, operations management (including tuition and financial, HR, child/student and family information management), family engagement or involvement, volunteer management, assessment, curriculum delivery, professional development, emergency messaging, and learning portfolios. The number of products in this vertical has quadrupled in size over the past 10 years, yet there is almost no coverage by [the media]. Early education is an industry with billions spent in four different institutional sectors, but there's very little interest from a media or advertising perspective. I find that baffling.

Fran Simon, M.Ed. is chief engagement officer, Engagement Strategies, and consultant to non-profit organizations and companies that serve and sell products to the early childhood education industry.

Greater Solidarity from District-Wide Solutions

By Jennifer Wilson

While we saw schools creating larger budgets and initiatives for electronic storage of employee and student records, many of these discussions were about focusing in on a single process rather than a district-wide approach. This was especially the case for many large school districts where departments operate essentially as separate entities. They may have started looking for solutions to help automate teacher contracts or AP approval, but rarely both.

As we roll into 2018, we expect to see a change in this mindset. While initial document management goals may have been specific to a certain process like onboarding, employee self-service, expense reporting and purchasing, districts will now start exploring expanding that implementation to include additional departments and processes. Key decision-makers will now have the ability to work with a single solution versus various vendors.

With increased use of electronic forms for capturing information and initiating approval processes, traditional 'paperless' solutions can not only be leveraged as a storage repository for records, but also as an automation engine to help create more efficient processes throughout every department.

The end result, districts will be looking for ways to do more with less by creating more cohesive solutions at a much more appealing price point.

*Jennifer Wilson is director of Marketing and Communications for **Softdocs**.*

New Developments for 1:1 Devices

By Natasha Rachell

I think the 2018 trend that is going to lead in regard to edtech is a larger push with 1:1 devices in classrooms. I think we have just scratched the surface of this across the nation. With this is going to be a ton of new web 2.0 resources, apps and extensions. I can't wait to see the excitement in 2018!

Natasha Rachell is an edtech consultant and digital learning specialist-science with Atlanta Public Schools.

Higher Ed Predictions for 2018

A More Serious Approach to Change

By Laurel Stiller

1. Security will be approached creatively. **Security, security, security**. I can't say it enough. At EDUCAUSE 2017, nearly unanimous is the conclusion that it's not "if" an attack will hit your campus, it's "when." In the U.S. across industries, Bloomberg cites a 40 percent year-over year increase in **data breaches in 2016**, which exposed everything from social security numbers to user account log-in information. Institutions will creatively approach security with shared CISO resources that cross institutions, vendors, institution type and state lines. We must harness our power across higher ed with collaboration on a scale we have not seen before.

2. Digital disruption will be mandated. We have made significant progress in digital transformation across higher ed with multiple generations of ERPs, CRMs, mobile apps, portals, websites, etc. We've embraced the cloud and improved student service. Now CIOs will hold each other accountable to bring **disruptive innovation** to the tradition of higher ed. Institutions must find a new norm to live comfortably with constant change to stay adaptable to external pressures.

3. The student experience will be truly holistic. We serve the student lifecycle infinitely better than before. **Completion** is improving and is our guiding light. But we must be thinking about the student experience outside the boundaries of our walls and portals. Transitions from high school to 2-year to 4-year must be seamless. Artificial Intelligence to advise how each student learns best and adapts materials for them will transition us for the future and lead to the careers that students depend on higher ed to open up.

Laurel Stiller is the solution marketing manager for Higher Education at **Hyland**.

Colleges and Universities Will Encourage More Employer Sponsorship

By Matthew Cooper

Employers require maximum return from their investment. Programs that, in reality, provided very little in terms of real world 'industry up-skilling' are of no attraction to the increasingly savvy employer base.

To remain attractive, education providers will create and offer genuinely useful programs that are relevant to the needs of industry, are not one-size-fits-all, and that can be delivered in innovative and flexible ways—allowing employers to keep staff at their posts for as long as possible.

*Matthew Cooper is director of postgraduates programs at **Arden University**. He has a long experience in international business, and a wide knowledge of the Far East culture and markets.*

Student Communications Will Evolve in New Ways

By Brian Kathman

There Will Be an Increased Need for FAFSA Reminders: For the 2017-2018 school year, the US Department of Education **permanently changed** FAFSA submission dates to allow early **financial aid** submissions. While the hope is that this move will increase the number of students who submit FAFSA applications, it could potentially cause confusion or procrastination around FAFSA deadlines and lead to fewer submissions. To minimize confusion and maximize submissions, higher ed institutions will be proactive and use technology like text messaging platforms to communicate with students about submission dates and informative resources.

Student Engagement Will Take a New Shape: The ever-changing ways higher ed institutions engage with students continues to advance as student preferences evolve. There is a downward trend in student engagement with institutions on social media channels, as many students prefer to not mix social and academic realms. In 2018, there will be a spike in higher ed institutions using **blended messaging**™ — the ability to combine automated mass messages with personal one-on-one conversations all in one conversation thread — to engage with students at scale in a more human way.

*Brian Kathman is CEO of **Signal Vine**, an enterprise text messaging platform transforms the way higher education institutions reach and engage students. The company serves more than 200 higher education organizations, including the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, University of New Mexico, and Austin Community College.*

Immersive Learning Experiences Will Explode

By Matt Seeley

Employer demand for career-ready candidates will drive the continued growth of immersive learning experiences like virtual and augmented reality to provide real world practice at scale. This will be helped by continued decline in hardware costs and software that enables these experiences on devices readily available like the phone. Markets that could benefit from the scaling of augmented or virtual reality include training for the skilled building trades where labor demands are high, especially in the wake of this past hurricane season."
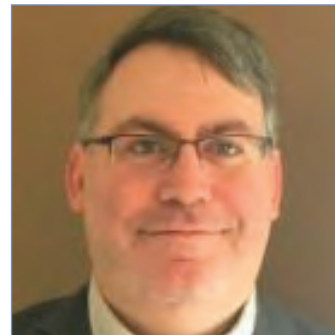
*Matt Seeley is product director, Career Education for **Cengage**.*

Physical Activities Will Go Online, Thanks to IoT

By Brian Stefanchuk

With the increasing importance of Industry 4.0 and the Internet of Things in the workplace, much technology will fall out of that interactivity which can be applied in an educational setting. I'm thinking of distance education, which has always had to deal with the difficulty of running laboratories remotely. With industrial networking and connectivity between laboratory equipment, the instructor and remote locations, students will be able to configure lab equipment and perform experiments and demonstrations at a distance. That removes the biggest obstacle to technical education at a distance and will be a game changer for STEM courses.
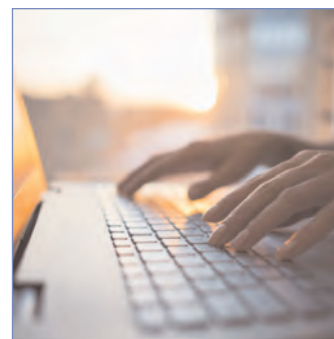
Brian Stefanchuk is professor and coordinator, Computer Engineering Technology, at Mohawk College of Applied Arts and Technology.

The Instant-Access Model Will Replicate

By Dr. Keri Cole

Hinds (Miss.) Community College is now a world without lost backpacks, forgotten textbooks, or misplaced notes, fostering a culture that encourages constant learning, even when class isn't in session.

Four years ago, our president encouraged us to identify potential solutions for two initiatives we identified as strategic goals. First, creating a "first-day ready" concept for our students, and second, lowering the cost of educational resources to our students. In addition, the need to streamline the distribution of education tools to our growing online population was becoming more evident.

These needed improvements led to the adoption of the "Instant Access" model at Hinds.

By preloading all learning materials into our course shells through our LMS before a term begins, we ensure all students are provided equal opportunities to be successful in their coursework. They are ready to hit the ground running on the first day of class, without the worry of the administrative processes that seem to overwhelm students before they can even begin their programs of study.

Convenience and access to our learning materials should be seamless. Hinds' Instant Access is bringing that to our students and is helping to break down the walls of our classrooms to ensure learning can occur anywhere, anytime.

Dr. Keri Cole is the dean of eLearning for Hinds Community College in Clinton, Miss., a role she has held for the past decade. During her time in this role, she has led the institution's digital transformation that includes the growth of distance learning through online classes, instructional technology and design and media services, and the implementation of new technologies including a new learning management system.

Hyperconvergence...But First, Basic Wi-Fi Connections
By David Doucette

This year, three key areas of overlap between institutions and industry stand out as trends for 2018.

First is security. EDUCAUSE's list of key IT issues for 2018 included cybersecurity as the top item. In talking with our customers and looking at other analyses, we think it's critical to include both physical security and cybersecurity. Institutions often wait until after a breach to update their security measures, which can cost significantly more than it would have to implement them proactively.

Connected campus is another area of priority. Students are higher institutions' customers and they want to be connected everywhere—from the dorms to the classrooms to the basketball court. Potential students touring a campus will take out their phones; if they cannot connect to Wi-Fi, they are not going to that school. In fact, a few years ago, a **university surveyed** students who had been accepted into the college but chose not to enroll. The top reason students cited for not attending was the lack of wireless access in the university's residence halls.

Finally, we're hearing a lot of chatter around hyperconverged infrastructure. This solution integrates everything—compute, storage, network, etc.—making it easier for the institution to facilitate, manage and maintain its technology. The joining of multiple solutions into one may also save institutions money. We anticipate this will be an area a lot of higher education institutions consider in the coming year.

*David Doucette is director of **higher education for CDW-G**, where he helps address institutions' most pressing technology challenges. He has worked in the IT industry for more than 20 years, with a focus on higher education for the past eight years.*

A Sharper Focus on Technologies for Student Satisfaction

By Jennifer Wilson

In 2017, students' needs largely drove technology buying decisions for colleges and universities. The student essentially became a 'customer' and it was recognized more than ever that providing technology implementations to support student demand is key. In 2018, this will hold true with a sharper focus on taking technologies to the next level, specifically in three areas:

Mobility and Efficiency: The days of filling out paper forms and waiting in line at the registrar's office are over. Students want the ability to quickly complete and access financial aid applications, change of major requests and other common processes immediately. This means institutions must not only support the ability to easily access content and forms from any device, but they also must be ready to quickly turn around requests through a more automated fashion with the ability for the student or parent to access status information at any time.

Cloud: Consideration for cloud technology is nothing new; however, most wariness around it is diminishing while more institutions look at this approach more closely. With security breaches creating a greater burden on IT staff, the mindset of owning data ensures the security of information has shifted. The realization that Amazon, Microsoft and other large players may be better suited to manage these implementations and create a more secure environment is encouraging institutions to explore cloud initiatives.

Integration: Silos of information, as well as disconnected departments and campuses reduce operational efficiencies and also increase data inconsistencies. The idea of streamlining, integrating and moving from one-off solutions is more effective and easier to manage. This includes integrating ERP solutions closely with other applications, expanding implementations across departments to gain greater return on investment and moving away from a piecemealed approach to individual department and process solutions.

*Jennifer Wilson is director of Marketing and Communications for **Softdocs**.*

Non-Traditional Learners Will Lead a Digital Disruption

By Ken Chapman

Non-traditional learners are causing a massive digital disruption that is forcing colleges and universities to urgently address shifting technology priorities. Often, institutions simply aren't prepared to move teaching and learning to digital platforms that take advantage of the ways these

students expect. Institutions feel a sense of panic as they struggle to modernize their offerings quickly in order to attract and retain students.

In 2018 and beyond, institutions will need significant assistance to quickly move to high-quality student experiences delivered by digital programs, while providing the PD necessary to set up successful implementation and adoption by educators. Institutions that partner with technology experts to bring together pedagogy, technology and change to meet student needs will survive and thrive in this new model.

Non-traditional learners will drive the increased use of methods such as competency-based education (CBE) that embraces a student's work experience and existing concept acumen. With an eye towards workforce preparation, schools will be prioritizing digital platforms and programs that directly demonstrate they address the skills gap reported by employees and better prepare students for today's and tomorrow's careers.

*Ken Chapman is the **D2L** Vice President of Market Research.*

More Institutions Will Look to Configurable and Cloud-Based Systems

By Liz Dietz

Higher education institutions face **growing pressure** from policy makers and funding agencies — as well as parents, students, and faculty—to demonstrate their accountability. To help measure student success, these institutions will increasingly leverage cloud-based technologies to not only create engaging student experiences, but also uncover insights to help determine whether they have the resources required to meet student needs and demands; and to successfully help students progress from education to occupation.

Also, the face of higher education has changed. As today's students are starting to think and act more like customers — whether it's shopping around to find the right courses to meet their needs outside of their primary institutions, or going back to school to learn new skills that will make them more employable — organizations need an agile technology framework to help them become more "customer-focused." In 2018, more higher education institutions will look to configurable systems that can appeal to a wide demographic of students and support a flexible curriculum, shorter course durations, and stackable, more modular courses.

*Liz Dietz is vice president of student strategy and product management at **Workday**.*

Data Integration that Drives Learning Analytics Will Be a Core Theme

By Geoff Irvine

Consider the enterprising instructor seeking to augment if not transform the classroom environment for her students. She utilizes a video platform to create and post video assignments. Class discussions and Q&A sessions are conducted online using another service. She administers her course using an LMS. Three technology solutions, three vendors, three potential sources of data.
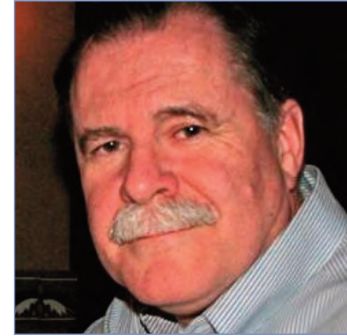
Analyzing the viewing behavior of her students for the questions they pose about her course content is vital to understanding student comprehension and performance. Exploring such relationships is often a challenging exercise. Is the data required for analysis collected? If it exists, who owns it? If ownership is not an issue what about privacy concerns? If privacy protocols are in place, is the data accessible to retrieve? If retrievable, how difficult is it to combine data sourced from multiple platforms to gain new insights?

Data integration that drives learning analytics is a core theme for 2018. Providers will be unfavorably regarded by campuses, if either by design or by omission, they make it hard to bring data together or to share it seamlessly.

The IMS Global Caliper Analytics® specification seeks to address a number of these issues by providing a structured approach to describing, collecting and exchanging learning activity data. Establishing a common vocabulary for describing learning interactions is a central objective. Promoting data interoperability, data sharing and data-informed decision making are also important goals.

Therefore, it will fall to owners and developers to consider the fundamental question: "Just whose data is it anyway?" The correct answer is NOT "the vendor." Those who make their platforms Caliper-ready as a source of transferable data or as a unique platform for visualizing interrelated data sets will have a decided advantage.

*Geoff Irvine is the CEO of **Chalk & Wire**.*

Conclusion: Predictions from the Editors

A Digital, Open World with a CS Language Will Emerge

By Laura Ascione

I think digital resources--actual engaging, interactive resources; not simply a paper textbook duplicated online or in PDF--will continue to expand in classrooms as mobile technologies such as laptops and tablets become more prevalent. Much of this depends on increased access to high-speed internet. I believe we're seeing more dedication from state government and school leaders, as well as a push from policymakers, to ensure students have the access they need to close opportunity gaps and build next-generation workforce skills. That push for high-speed access will continue and strengthen in 2018.

By now, we're all familiar with the push for computer science and coding skills. That isn't exactly new. But I think we'll see increased acceptance for computer science courses counting toward science and math requirements, and in some cases, districts are contemplating computer science as a language course as well.

Open educational resources, or OER, will experience less push-back in 2018. We've seen some educators, districts and states tackle OER, but many educators still worry about finding the time to curate resources and have concerns about the quality of OER. As the desire for free and adaptable materials grows, so too will OER.

*Laura Ascione is the managing editor for **eSchool Media**.*

These Won't Be Your Parents' Majors

By Meris Stansbury

For the past two years, Hanover Research (which studies the impact of improvement trends across 800 research projects commissioned by over 300 higher education clients) **has shown that** program creation and diversification are top-of-mind across institutions big and small, community or Ivy. From incorporating new courses and programs, like those for **data science** or for **AR/VR programming**, to diversifying how completion is obtained (i.e. badges, certifications, etc.); and from a growing need to partner with industry to create program/graduation pipelines, to becoming increasingly accountable for a student's postsecondary ROI, the days of spending four years for an English degree may be going the way of the dinosaurs in 2018.
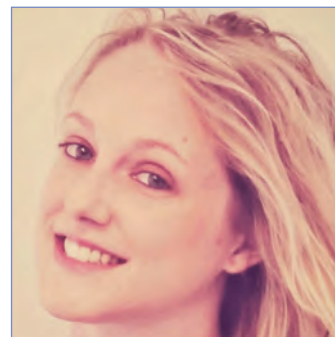
Instead, I think institutions will begin blending degrees with badges and CBE certifications to strengthen student soft skills—communication, creative problem solving—toward an actionable degree for the job market. English/Computer Science degree, anyone? How about a Political Science/Communications degree? [Formal names TBD, of course]. And for the record, I am an older Millennial with a classical English undergrad degree. I believe I will be a relic shortly!

*Meris Stansbury is the editorial director for **eSchool Media**.*