
Preface

Potential Within Reach

It is just common sense. All around, the evidence is undeniable and abundant: We live in a world that depends on digital content and resources as the primary tools for learning and work. A new era is upon us, and the concurrent demands of 21st century learning grow by the year. In such an environment, one would think that public schools, the institution with the greatest burden of preparing students for this reality, would aggressively shift resources to get every learner a digital device. This vision is known as *1:1 learning*. Instead of forty-pound backpacks stuffed with books, students would carry a laptop, netbook, tablet, or some other mobile device that allows them to access the information they need to construct knowledge from anywhere at any time. How better to acclimate the student to the conditions that will be required for their success?

Unfortunately, this inevitable transition has been so slow in its development. At least a decade after it was practically possible, just a small fraction of public schools have the 1:1 technology access that is required to make it happen. Even in communities where there is a will to change, a few stubborn barriers have consistently blocked progress. Among the most prominent are an economic climate that seems to preclude even the consideration of buying every student a capable electronic device and a dearth of practical strategies for how to guide a school system through the transition from print to digital learning.

The negative power of these obstacles and a growing sense of urgency for breakthrough solutions are the driving forces behind the creation of *Digital Learning for All, Now*. I have spent the last twenty-five years working with educators and innovators who are dedicated

to crafting a learning environment that appropriately prepares students for their future. The lessons learned from these experiences and recent technology advances have finally opened the lock. The time to act is now; the future is truly within our grasp.

Why *Digital Learning for All, Now* Is Different From Other Books on the Market

Digital Learning for All, Now provides superintendents, assistant superintendents, district-level instructional supervisors, technology directors, teacher leaders, as well as other interested stakeholders and policy makers with more than just platitudes and exhortations. This resource has integrated the “why” with the strategies and solutions needed to overcome the affordability and systems-change problems that have heretofore prevented the public school instructional transformation to 1:1 learning. It is designed to be a comprehensive and flexible read that recognizes the importance of 21st century learning, demonstrates how to acquire and pay for the required equipment, and then maps out how to change the instructional system and culture to maximize the benefit to students.

The result is that *Digital Learning for All, Now* takes *purpose-driven* systems thinking and directly connects it to *practical and cost-effective* processes to make it work. To accomplish this, *Digital Learning for All, Now* guides readers through three content domains that will give them equal doses of vision, motivation, and practical support for purposeful guided action. In addition, it gives readers access to online resources and a community of educators who share the same goals.

Part I: Why We Need *Digital Learning for All, Now*

To help educators build momentum and make the case for change, Part I of *Digital Learning for All, Now* revisits and reinforces the need for the transformation of public school instruction. It begins by emphatically stating that the center of gravity in the debate has shifted from a discussion over whether or not a move to 1:1 makes sense to deciding what is the best way to get there and what you should do once your school arrives. To demonstrate this, the narrative

will explore how those of us who are responsible for the leadership of public schools are increasingly frustrated by the obvious lack of alignment between what needs to be and what currently is. We are more than a decade into the 21st century, the world around us is being constantly redefined by emerging digital processes, and yet, the vast majority of public schools grind away in a learning model defined by print. How can public schools meet the challenges of the modern learner when they are consistently using tools unchanged since Gutenberg?

The truth is they can't. We understand that without 1:1 technology access, the full potential of information age instructional opportunity is stunted. We know equally well that with current school financing constraints, few districts can afford to buy every student an appropriate device, which is the first critical step of this journey. Finally, and most distressingly, we know that without a 1:1 device's empowering impact on learners, engaging instructional practices that support appropriate preparation for 21st century learning will remain the exception, not the rule.

Achieving 1:1 status is critical because it is the pathway to access. In a 21st century 1:1 classroom, all students have an Internet-capable device that they use to own their learning. This access and sense of ownership is what enables the shift in focus of the classroom process from the teacher to the learner. So important and mainstream is this topic, it has been recognized as critical by national policy makers as well. The U.S. Department of Education's National Technology Plan (2010) states that the nation's educational priorities should be "to engage and empower students, measure what matters, prepare and connect everyone, and enable these changes through redesign and transformation of the public school system."

Part II: Getting to 1:1

With the need for 1:1 illustrated, Part II of *Digital Learning for All, Now* describes in three chapters what I call the *open path*: a series of open-source and crowd-sourcing supply options that will allow every school district to affordably accomplish the move to 1:1 learning. In addition to a reasoned and logical theoretical structure, this entire section is loaded with information, tools, and strategies that make 1:1 possible. And most importantly, they show how, in most cases, 1:1 can be achieved given only a school or district's existing budget. In just Chapters 2–4, you will find

- exclusive access information for the *Digital Learning for All, Now* online user community;
- strategies for advocating for bring your own device (BYOD) throughout your learning community;
- comprehensive examinations of the key barriers that block progress and strategies for making the change to 1:1 happen;
- complete BYOD preplanning templates to make the transition happen;
- links to open-source operating systems, back-office applications, and productivity software that are free and functional;
- software migration and change strategies to help integrate these resources effectively;
- print spending analysis tools for determining actual per pupil print instructional costs and identifying how much money can be saved;
- links to free digital textbook alternatives to reduce dependence on print textbooks;
- links to hundreds of instructional resource pages in every content area;
- links to entire user communities dedicated to open-source resources in education;
- strategies that support an organizational transition to open-source instructional materials;
- strategies for improving instructional and technology integration;
- strategies for supporting differentiated and customized instruction through technology;
- sample acceptable use policies and strategies for supporting 1:1 implementations across a district; and
- strategies for managing risk and ensuring long-term 1:1 success.

Part III: Building the System

The last section of the book recognizes that putting a device in the hands of every student is a good start, but it is only the first step of many. Experience demonstrates that building a truly engaging and rigorous 21st century learning environment takes more than just molded plastic and silicone chips. Additional and important shifts are needed in instructional design, delivery, and assessment to transform teaching and learning from a print to a digital learning orientation. Chapters 5 and 6 serve as a guidebook for making those difficult but critical changes. The resources and strategies in this section include

- foundational assumptions of 1:1 digital learning environments;
- explanations of the support systems for 21st century learning;
- priority 21st century skills and assessment guidance;
- samples of district mission statement and support documents;
- authentic 21st century task instructional design templates;
- sample 21st century skill assessment rubrics;
- leadership for 21st century skills self-reflection grids;
- sample change process maps;
- an information literacy reliable resources research grid; and
- a comprehensive three-phase implementation framework for BYOD and 1:1.

The impact of this third section of the book extends beyond digital learning and 21st century skills. By following the systems alignment and improvement strategies in *Digital Learning for All, Now*, districts will find their ability to systemically improve instruction and rigor on any goal for learning increase. This will assist in any district's concurrent efforts to prepare for the implementation of Common Core State Standards and its associated new generation of assessments.

***Digital Learning for All, Now:* More Than Just a Book**

There is an accepted irony that in some ways, *Digital Learning for All, Now* is a textbook about the end of textbooks. That would be hard to defend if the available resources started and ended with the just the book; they don't. *Digital Learning for All, Now* has a robust and significant online presence that will provide educational leaders with access to numerous electronic resources that support the implementation of the strategies outlined in the book. All of the aforementioned tools have downloadable versions available to readers through the *Digital Learning for All, Now* user site. So not only can you learn about how to use the tools through the book, but you will also be able to go the web, download them, and actually use them in your own district-change process. Additionally, through the user community blogs and postings, you will be able to learn real-time lessons from others who are on the same journey.

Additionally, throughout the entire text, there are regularly placed reflection and study questions. These provocative questions are designed to give readers discussion points from which to engage their peers and constituents on the key issues that underlie the book.

Through these interactions, school leaders and change agents will gain insight regarding their own thinking and the mindsets of others. This information can then be used to build understanding and improve the chances of successful change. From the first printed page through all of the numerous electronic resources, *Digital Learning for All, Now* helps you put your own theory into practice.

Every Journey Begins With One Step

Digital Learning for All, Now is a narrative that combines the motivation to realign public schooling with the practical strategies that are required for bridging the equipment, policy, and cultural gaps that have usually blocked systems change. When applied with constancy of purpose and adapted to a local context, the processes defined in *Digital Learning for All, Now* will facilitate the transition from print to 21st century digital learning on a districtwide scale, effectively creating an instructional setting that prepares every student for life, learning, and work in the 21st century.

So, if you are ready for schools that more effectively prepare students for the future while saving money over time, then you are ready to take the journey. Let's get started!