EDITOR’S NOTE
Academic integrity in online learning is crucial for maintaining the credibility of student achievement. This Spotlight will help you gain insights into using tech to enhance student engagement and equity; dissect the opportunities and challenges presented by laptops in schools; explore how to use AI to support students’ creativity; learn tips for creating assignments that outsmart ChatGPT; examine where Ed-Tech may fall short; and more.

Online Learning & Integrity

What’s In, What’s Out for Education Technology ........................................ 2
How Technology Should Influence Learning for This Generation ............. 4
What We’ve Learned From a Quarter Century of 1-to-1 Computing .......... 7
How to Use Artificial Intelligence To Bolster Students’ Creativity .......... 9
Outsmart ChatGPT: 8 Tips for Creating Assignments It Can’t Do .......... 10

The Most Popular Ed-Tech Products Don’t Meet Research Standards .... 12

OPINION
Three Steps to Prevent ChatGPT Misuse ............................................. 13
3 Guiding Principles for High-Quality Virtual Learning .................... 15
The past couple of years have arguably been some of the most consequential in the history of educational technology. Schools went through a massive experiment in remote and hybrid learning, they invested billions of dollars in new technology to expand 1-to-1 computing programs nationwide, and they experienced a rising number of cyber threats.

What will 2023—and beyond—have in store? Here's a look at what’s “in” (hot and relevant) and “out” (falling out of favor and or not considered good practice) when it comes to education technology.

1. Using tech to help students catch up academically

**OUT ❌**

**Remediation:** Schools invested billions of dollars in COVID relief funds to help students make up academic ground lost during the pandemic—including digital programs focusing on remediation. In fact, a significant portion of teachers—at least 50 percent who teach 8th grade reading and math, and at least 65 percent who teach 4th grade reading and math—spend at least part of every week working on remediation, according to the surveys of teachers conducted as part of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP. Remediation often entails teaching below-grade skills in order to give students a foundation for more-advanced content. But some experts argue that it does not work because students continue to fall farther behind their peers.

**IN ✔**

**Acceleration:** Acceleration gives students the minimum background knowledge and skills they’ll need to access a particular grade-level concept even if there are gaps in their learning from the previous year. This is different from remediation, in which educators try to catch students up on all of the content they may have missed learning the previous year. The goal of acceleration is to help students stay on grade level, reviewing only the concepts that are most important to learning what comes next. A 2022 study from TNTP, a nonprofit, and Zearn, a digital math program, found that students whose teachers chose to accelerate rather than remediate got through more grade-level content this school year, and that students struggled less, as measured by repeated attempts on the same problem.

2. Virtual/hybrid learning no longer a high priority

**OUT ❌**

**Full-time remote learning:** At the beginning of the pandemic, nearly every school district offered some form of virtual learning. Educators knew the arrangement wasn’t as effective for most students as in-person classes. But some students—including those with different learning styles or preferences—benefited from online learning. Still, once the pandemic began to ease and schools returned to in-person learning, districts began to quickly scale back their virtual learning offerings.

**IN ✔**

**Pinning achievement declines on virtual learning:** Many districts are now ditching virtual learning. In fact, one-third of a sample of 100 large and urban districts in the country report they are ending their remote learning programs for the 2022-23 school year, according to an analysis by the Center on Reinventing Public Education. They are doing this, in part, because of research that shows students did not do well academically in remote learning environments. In many circles, remote learning is being blamed for troubling drops in reading and math achievement scores.

3. The evolution of 1-to-1 computing

**OUT ❌**

**Rapid expansion:** When the pandemic hit, it became imperative that every student in a school district had a device to learn on, whether that be a Chromebook or an iPad. Thanks to federal funding, districts that didn’t already provide a device to every student were able to buy a lot of new devices and hand them out to students. But after students returned to school buildings, the urgency of expanding 1-to-1 computing has slowed.

**IN ✔**

**Sustaining current programs:** Now that the mad dash to provide 1-to-1 computing opportunities for students has slowed and because federal relief money will soon run out, experts say it’s time for school districts to think about how they’ll be able to continue using all the technology products they purchased during the pandemic. District leaders will need to think about the ongoing costs of repairing and...
replacing devices and of continuing to develop teachers’ skills. Some ed-tech experts say school districts are not thinking ahead about these challenges and that could put them in a difficult spot in three to five years when they have to find the money to begin replacing thousands of school-issued learning devices.

4. Tough choices on what tech to use

OUT ✗
Purchasing new products: The use of educational technology products has risen dramatically over the last two years. The average number of tech products school districts access in a given month has almost tripled over the last several years, according to a report from LearnPlatform, an education technology company that helps districts measure the use and effectiveness of their digital products. But that flurry of purchasing is slowing.

IN ✓
Culling the roster of tech tools: District leaders have realized that having a wide array of tech products can complicate professional development, student data privacy, cybersecurity, and more. Now they are thinking about which tech tools to keep. They need to understand what’s being used and how to make evidence-based decisions about which ones to keep. An increasing number of districts are being much more strategic about getting rid of the tech tools that don’t show clear evidence that they improve students’ academic performance and/or make teachers’ jobs easier.

5. Balancing innovation with burnout

OUT ✗
Requiring teachers to master new tech tools: Because of their extensive experience with remote and hybrid learning during the pandemic, teachers now have a deeper understanding of how to integrate technology into instruction. Many teachers have said that their new aptitude with technology has been highly beneficial for teaching and learning. They’ve also said that the increased focus on digital teaching skills has prompted them to try new tools and strategies. But what they want to do is put those new skills to work with the technologies they now know how to use—they do not want to be forced to pick up yet another tech skill at a time when they are feeling overwhelmed by helping students catch up on “unfinished learning,” picking up extra duties due to teacher shortages, and dealing with students’ mental health challenges.

IN ✓
Easing teacher tech fatigue: Teachers are simply getting tired of using technology constantly. They already have a lot on their plates. They don’t want to throw more tools into the mix and figure out how it works with their pedagogy. In response, some administrators are now giving their teachers some breathing room, by not mandating tech use or by providing other kinds of support. But those administrators also point out that some teachers are very excited about the new tech skills they have acquired and want to put them to use learning how to use new technologies in teaching and learning. Finding that balance will be a continuing challenge in 2023 and beyond.
There’s no one-size-fits-all approach to online education. But there is a resource that will guide you through building a program that fits your school or district’s exact needs. Whether you’re just getting started or are trying to improve your online learning program, you’ll find support and guidance at flexpointeducation.com/guide.

FlexPoint™ is a trademark of Florida Virtual School.
How Technology Should Influence Learning for This Generation

By Lauraine Langreo

Patricia Brown started her role as director of technology for the Ladue school district in Missouri in July and already has big ideas on how to effectively use technology in the classroom.

“I do believe we now have this opportunity to really look at our systems, at what we’ve been providing educationally for our students and for our teachers and for our parents—our community as a whole, all the stakeholders,” Brown said. It’s time to “challenge some of the things that have always been” and think about how schools can improve education for all kids.

Brown is not new to the ed-tech space. For 11 years, she was the instructional technology coordinator for the 4,300-student school district. And she’s currently a board member for the nonprofit International Society for Technology in Education.

In her 21-year career, she’s racked up awards for her work as a technology integration specialist: She earned the Ladue school district’s Excellence in Education award in 2021, was part of the Apple Distinguished Educators class of 2019, was one of the National School Board Association’s 20 to Watch educational technology leaders in 2016, and has been named one of the top ed-tech influencers by EdTech Digest in five different years.

Here’s what she had to say in a Zoom conversation with Education Week about what’s next for technology use in the classroom, what the biggest tech challenges are for schools, and what her priorities are in her first year as tech director for Ladue.

The following interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

What is your philosophy when it comes to using technology in the classroom?

For a long time—especially early on, when we were first adopting the use of technology—it was always about that “wow,” that cool thing you can do. I remember thinking around the time when we first adopted iPads, and it was always the whole mantra: ‘There’s an app for that.’ We were just pulling so many resources, so many tools, so many apps, where it was completely overwhelming for a teacher. So I started to think about what do we actually want students to do with the technology? What can technology do? Where can it take us? Where can we provide those opportunities for our kids to be creators and producers and critical thinkers and not just consumers of technology?

For me, when I’m using technology with my students, it is not an add-on. It’s not just a cool thing that you do. It’s integrated in the classroom, where it’s a part of the curriculum and it’s a part of the learning process. We learn with technology, we learn through technology, we allow it to provide opportunities that we wouldn’t have had before.

Equity is a big part of my philosophy. I feel like when we’re utilizing technology as just a consumption tool, we are providing inequity for our students. The real goal is to provide those opportunities where they can invent, they can create, they can produce, they can connect and communicate with people outside of the four walls of their classrooms. That’s a really powerful thing that we’ve learned through COVID. As hard as these last three years have been on the educational system, I do believe it has created opportunities for us to provide a level of engagement for our students that we haven’t had before.

I know that every student doesn’t learn the same way, but what technology allows us to do is to differentiate [and] provide those different opportunities for our students. It allows teachers to have a more efficient way for them to grade papers, for them to roll out curriculum, for them to interact with their students, for them to create more innovative projects.

Online Learning & Integrity

Published September 21, 2022

SCHOOLS continue to push technology use to the next level. What does that mean for education? Where do we go from here?

What we’re left with, as we journey through this pandemic, is we have a generation of students who are very different from the pre-COVID times, meaning their level of engagement is something that we struggle to keep in line with what we’re doing as educators. So one of the main things that is going to shift in the education format is the focus on student engagement, but also the focus on balance—how you balance the use of technology in classrooms and the amount of resources and media and “distractions” that exist now with having a student to focus.

When it comes to technology, I don’t think it’s going to be more technology. I think it’s going to be: Let’s look at what we already have. Let’s look at how we can utilize these resources to the highest potential and what we can create from what we have. Video is going to be a huge part of that, for students to be able to show what they know in more unique and creative ways.

You’re going to look at other ways that you can engage—even learning management systems and using different ways for students to turn in assignments. You’re going to have some non-traditional classrooms.
I think it’s going to be more of a customized way of providing education for our students because I do think we have different kids now, so we have to meet their needs.

What are the biggest tech challenges that schools are facing right now?

One of the biggest tech challenges that most schools are facing is still struggling with providing the resources for students and for teachers.

What we’re suffering from now is virtual burnout. I’m actually doing a study and working on my doctorate, so one of the things I wanted to know is: Teachers’ and educators’ experience in COVID, did it build confidence in their use of technology? And are they using technology more efficiently and more frequently in our classrooms because of COVID?

The answer is yes and no.

Yes, there is more confidence in their use of technology. I think teachers are more willing to take some risks. But there’s a certain group of teachers where they’re like, “I don’t want anything to do with that because these last two years were hard, so I want to take a break from technology and I really just want to go back to basics.”

So I think the challenge for education is going to be to find that balance: How do we know when to use technology and how do we know when we need to go back to basics?

How do you address tech burnout among teachers?

It’s been a challenge because as a tech person, a tech coordinator, to now a tech director, of course, technology is always at the forefront of my mind and it’s my job. However, I am very connected with my human side as well, as a teacher, as an educator, as a parent, and I always look at perspectives and different lenses. I get down to the why. Not “oh, they just don’t use technology,” and leave it at that. What is the root of the problem? Is it because they’re burnt out because everything they’ve tried to use doesn’t work that day, and it’s just frustrating?

Or is it that they’ve been using this tool nonstop and want to do something different but don’t know what to do? Just asking those right questions, asking those whys.

Of course, you’re always going to have some people who are absolutely anti-tech. But in general, getting to the root of the why is always helpful for me because then I can say, “OK, I have a recommendation. Let’s try this.”

Professional learning is so important. I’m a proponent of having unique ways that teachers receive professional learning. I love to do lunch and learn, where I just invite teachers in for a 15-minute or 20-minute drop-in where I’m going to teach them something new, but they’re bringing their lunch and they’re chit-chatting or talking and asking questions, and it’s just an informal way. Playdates: I’ve had teachers go to the Apple Store and just kind of play around with the technology and learn that way. Kids like to learn through play. Teachers do, too.

What should quality technology use look like? And what should it not look like?

I’ll start with what it doesn’t look like. It doesn’t look like kids sitting on their devices, not interacting with each other at all; working on a drilling practice app, where they’re practicing their math skills, and that’s pretty much all they do; or they’re using their technology for testing purposes only and the only time they bring out the technology is when they’re getting ready to take a test or they need to do an assignment that’s independent.

What it looks like is looking at the curriculum and finding natural ways to integrate technology. Not taking the technology and then trying to fit the curriculum in, but instead taking that curriculum and looking at a different way that I could instruct my students—I’m going to use the technology to create a really engaging slide deck to engage my kids. I’m going to embed some videos. I want to embed some GIFs into my slide deck. I want to add Nearpod. I’m going to add some interactive components as I’m instructing or lecturing my students.

Once the students are instructed and they get the information that they need from you as an instructor, how do they apply that knowledge? Are they able to take that knowledge and create a video? Are they working collaboratively with a partner or group in designing a STEM challenge that integrates with what they’re learning in science? Are they going on an array hunt because they’re learning about arrays in math class, so they’re walking around their school with their iPads taking pictures of natural arrays that they see around the building? Are they creating a stop-motion video of the change of states of matter?

How do they apply [the learning]? Are they creating, producing, developing things? Are they able to take the knowledge that they have and use it in a natural way?

How should ed-tech leaders determine which tech tools stay and which ones go?

It really depends on the demographics of your students, your budget, what you have available. It really comes down to what works for you, what works for your district, what are the challenges that you have, and what technology resources and tools can be that solution for you.

I do think it is very important to be proactive in making sure that you’re staying abreast with the new things that are created that are helping to make learning more accessible and feasible.

We in our district have Apple devices, which I absolutely love, but we also have Chromebooks that we also love, and they fit our purpose and our needs. So I just really think it comes down to evaluating what your needs are in the district, looking at your budget.

[When it comes to the budget] sometimes
districts allow their budgets to dictate the type of resources and technology that they have, when in fact I think it should be more of: Let’s evaluate what’s the best tool and the best resource for our district, and then let’s find a way to pay for it.

I think that it’s important to continue to use resources that are going to open up opportunities for our students to collaborate, to connect, to create, and share. So whatever that tool looks like for you, I say, use it.

What are your biggest priorities this school year?

One is data privacy and security, making sure that all of our data is secure. There are a lot of things going on in the world right now and not-so-honest people who are targeting different districts, so that’s number one priority.

The other priorities I have are making sure there are systems and processes in place for the use of technology throughout the district. One cool thing is, taking on this role, I had the opportunity to join the curriculum and instruction department. Technology is now a part of curriculum and instruction, which is a perfect marriage to me because it allows [technology] to be a part of the conversations that happen in curriculum, and curriculum to be a part of the conversations that happen in tech. We’re working collaboratively for the same goal, and we’re making sure that our students and our teachers are knowledgeable about the resources that are available. So my priority is making sure that this process and the seamlessness of the marriage between curriculum and technology happen as best as they can.

Innovation is also another priority, making sure that we’re pushing the needle and pushing our students and our teachers to be future ready; making sure that the training and the resources and the technology that we’re using is state of the art, up to date, available, and ready for all of our students and our teachers.
What We’ve Learned From a Quarter Century of 1-to-1 Computing

By Elizabeth Heubeck

When K-12 educators were first introduced to the concept of providing every student with access to an electronic device in the classroom a quarter century ago, the idea was met with intrigue by some and absolute horror by others.

Fast forward 25 years and “1-to-1” computing programs have become commonplace. After being introduced in K-12 schools during the late 1990s, this trend has seen steady growth ever since. In 2013 and 2014 alone, schools nationwide purchased more than 23 million digital devices—laptops, tablets, and Chromebooks—for use in the classroom.

By March of 2020, when the pandemic closed schools across the nation indefinitely, districts with pre-existing 1-to-1 programs held an advantage over those that scrambled to locate and distribute devices to students at home. But, as the lengthy pandemic school shutdown proved, simply putting devices into the hands of students doesn’t automatically translate into academic advantages.

Educators have learned that dependable infrastructure, a strong pedagogical vision regarding the educational role of devices, and relevant professional development all play key roles in forming the foundation of an effective 1-to-1 program.

Education Week recently posed a series of questions about 1-to-1 computing to Sally Adams, a technology facilitator for California’s Desert Sands Unified School District. Here’s what she had to say.

This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Take us back. When did you first see 1-to-1 computing programs emerging?

For Desert Sands Unified School District, the Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) initiative began in the fall of 2012. This was the first step toward providing a 1-to-1 [computing] environment for all students. The full implementation of the district providing a device (Chromebook or tablet) for all students was fulfilled in the 2014–2015 school year. The devices were stored in classroom charging carts for the students to use during class time, and then returned to the cart prior to moving to their next class. We then began checking out devices for students to take home at the middle and high school levels in the 2017–2018 school year, with all students issued their own device at the start of the pandemic.

Why was getting a device in every student’s hands necessary?

The rationale behind providing devices for students was to provide anytime, anywhere access to education. Schools were looking for a way to bring the wealth of the internet—research, communication, collaboration—to each student’s fingertips at any time of the day.

Has the goal of 1-to-1 computing programs changed over time?

Absolutely, the goal has changed. Initially the focus was to give students access to further their learning beyond concentrated “tech time.” As time went by, the devices became a tool that was necessary for students to access their education: textbooks, creation tools through what is now referred to as Google Workspace, collaboration with teachers and students via Google Classroom, and extended learning time.

Ideally, what does this ready access to digital devices allow teachers and students to do?

It allows students to take more ownership of their learning by having access to materials and resources outside of the traditional school day. Teachers are able to “flip” their classrooms, if they choose, to allow for more flexibility during class time.

What are the risks, or possible negative consequences, of adopting a 1-to-1 device program?

Data privacy and security are always concerns; parents require guidance on setting limits for access in the home. With possible unsupervised access, the need for web filtering that mimics in-class filtering was crucial. Email and Drive monitoring is necessary (via Gaggle for us) to help keep students safe.

What can school districts do to make 1-to-1 computing environments effective?

Through the combination of a learning management system, digital textbooks, content creation tools, and curated resources, a school district can provide robust programs for students via digital devices. It does require a philosophy...
that technology is a tool in the full spectrum of the educational toolbox. It’s not a fix or single answer for the problem of student engagement.

Training teachers in concepts such as blended learning and universal design for learning (UDL) helps transition and provide balance. Ongoing professional development in using the tools and in digital citizenship are critical.

What about concerns that students are spending too much time staring at computer screens?

I think that setting balance with anything is necessary. As we find ourselves needing to engage in a digital world for both personal and professional/school settings, creating space apart from these devices is critical. Screen time when used for the right purposes is beneficial but too much of anything can be detrimental.

Has the increasing use of devices translated into a greater awareness of how best to use them in educational settings?

In some ways, the requirements for engaging online have created communities for teachers and students to work together. However, simply using a device to engage with classroom content may not be the most effective use of classroom instruction. If anything, I think we’ve learned about the need and value of face-to-face instruction and collaboration to balance electronic engagement. We need both to facilitate well-rounded learning experiences.

Fast forward 20 years. How do you think the role of laptops, tablets, and other digital devices in education will have changed?

As we learn more about individual learning styles, I think we will see a broader spectrum of options for students with regard to their educational opportunities. I think a combination of virtual and face-to-face learning will become more common as we learn to leverage the power of these digital devices.
How to Use Artificial Intelligence To Bolster Students’ Creativity

By Lauraine Langreo

Austin, Texas -

Artificial intelligence, or AI, is becoming a bigger part of everyday tasks in K-12 education. Lately, the education community has been buzzing about the rise of ChatGPT, an AI tool that can mimic human writing.

Much of the conversation about ChatGPT has been centered around how students might use it to cheat. As a precaution, some districts, including New York City schools, have banned the tool on district-provided devices.

But some education experts say AI tools, such as ChatGPT, can also be used to change the nature of teachers’ jobs and to create better outcomes for education. For example, AI could help teachers engage kids in playful activities to develop creative and cognitive skills, according to panelists at a SXSW EDU session on March 6.

The “traditional testing paradigm” might not always work well for some students, especially younger learners, said Elizabeth Mokyr Horner, the senior program officer in early learning for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

“[A] teacher has a multiple-choice question for students, younger learners might not respond to it directly, Mokyr Horner said.

“They may respond to your question with another question, or with a totally unrelated response, and that’s actually developmentally appropriate,” she said. What AI can do is allow teachers to “capture a wider variety of skills while making the experience much more positive” for students.

Using AI-powered tools can also “contextualize” students’ learning history and make learning more personalized, said Chris Purifoy, CEO and co-founder of the nonprofit Learning Economy Foundation.

AI tools can help students figure out what their “learning superpower” is, or how they best learn, and then educators can use that data to facilitate students’ learning, Purifoy said.

AI assessment tools can also be fun, by focusing on what students are good at and asking them to demonstrate their learning through those skills, said Bo Stjerne Thomsen, chair of Learning through Play for the LEGO Foundation.

AI tools need to be ‘co-designed’ by the children, families, and educators who will use the data gathered by the tools.”

ELIZABETH MOKYR HORNER
Senior Program Officer, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

“AI tools have lots of room for improvement

But AI tools still need a lot of work, according to the panelists.

The data collected by AI tools need to be private and owned by the students, Purifoy said. The tech industry and schools need to ensure that these tools are safe and not exploitative.

In addition, there also needs to be more partnerships with the communities that are using these tools. AI tools need to be “co-designed” by the children, families, and educators who will use the data gathered by the tools, Mokyr Horner said.

More teacher training on AI and how to equip the data they receive from AI tools is also needed, she added.
When the pandemic forced schools and districts to close their doors, teachers, students, and parents were forced to adopt online options. They struggled to adjust to the long virtual days and navigate learning from home. But this wasn’t true online learning.

What most students experienced during the pandemic was emergency remote learning, a temporary and quick solution to keep students learning, with students being taught synchronously on video calls from 8am-3pm with little to no breaks. In actuality, true online learning supports students and empowers educators with evidence-based approaches, professional development for instructors, courses specifically designed for the online environment, and flexibility for students to communicate one-on-one with teachers.

In fact, 81% of parents believe online learning helps their children prepare for the future and 85% of teachers believe that teaching online increases their ability to help students succeed, confirming what we know to be true: When done right, students can thrive in the online learning environment.

Myth 1: Online courses are easier than brick-and-mortar courses.

**Fact:** Online learning is effective because it supports subject mastery and helps students learn new skills.

Students in the online learning environment develop valuable soft skills like time management, studying techniques, and effective communication. And parents agree, 73% believe their children have better communication skills, and 70% believe their children have better time management skills.

**FlexPointer:** Help students find success with online learning by implementing instructional best practices and working with an online learning provider that can customize or develop course content that aligns with state and national standards.

**Myth 2:** Online learning means students are on their own.

**Fact:** The most effective online learning options require a teacher for every course.

Teachers are an integral part of students’ success in the online learning environment, where support extends further than the virtual classroom through virtual office hours and dedicated check-ins. And this is especially true at FlexPoint Education Cloud, where 87% of teachers agree that teaching online allows them to better communicate and connect one-on-one with students!

**FlexPointer:** Skill sets and strategies vary from the traditional classroom to online or blended teaching. Make sure your staff receives the training they need to feel confident and connected to their students in their virtual classrooms.

**Myth 3:** You can’t ensure academic integrity in an online environment.

**Fact:** Whether online or in the physical classroom, there are proactive steps schools & districts can take to ensure academic integrity.

With the recent launch of AI chatbot ChatGPT, educators and school leaders have new questions about monitoring and ensuring academic integrity in the virtual and physical classroom. Concerns about academic integrity aren’t new though, and there are many tools and strategies schools and districts can implement today to ensure the authenticity of students’ work, including discussion-based assessments and proctored exams.

**FlexPointer:** Although there is no clear data showing that students who take online courses cheat more than students in face-to-face classrooms, schools and districts can work with an online learning provider to create their own safeguards.

If you’re interested in exploring how to dispel more online learning myths or how to build an online learning program at your school or district, visit flexpointeducation.com/guide.
Building connections with your teachers and staff in an online environment may seem challenging, but with the right tools and strategies, it can result in a cohesive and effective team. Here are seven ways school leaders, like you, can make meaningful ties with teachers and staff to create an online learning environment that produces successful student learning outcomes.

1. **Encourage camera time and a thoughtful tone of voice.**
   During face-to-face interactions, people will make eye contact, smile, and laugh at a joke, and not having these facial cues can be challenging in an online environment. Encourage your team to keep their cameras on to build team camaraderie and reduce miscommunication. A warm and supportive tone of voice in your emails can also show your teachers and staff that you’re available to help and that your “virtual door” is always open.

2. **Provide two-way communication channels.**
   Whether through email, instant messaging apps, or online forums, it’s crucial to communicate regularly with your teachers and staff. It’s equally important that teachers and staff have the opportunity to communicate their updates, challenges, and feedback to you. Chats, digital forums, or recurring meetings offer an opportunity for two-way communication.

3. **Send weekly updates.**
   The cadence of your communication also plays a role in creating a meaningful connection. Brief, weekly updates can provide staff with relevant information for the upcoming week.

4. **Ask for feedback.**
   Throughout the year, survey your teachers and staff requesting feedback about what is working well and what needs improvement. Suggestions from those who work regularly with students will provide you with a wealth of knowledge and can guide decision-making with the student’s best interests at heart.

5. **Host a town hall meeting.**
   Another option for teachers and staff to provide feedback in real-time is by hosting a virtual or in-person town hall meeting. During the town hall, you can discuss any pressing topics, as well as key insights or learnings.

6. **Create professional learning communities.**
   Teachers appreciate having a space where they can exchange ideas, observe lessons, and provide feedback. A professional learning community offers this space for teachers to work and learn from each other. Pairing an experienced teacher with a new teacher also allows for mentorship.

7. **Host virtual events for your teachers and staff.**
   Virtual events offer a great opportunity for teachers and staff to get to know you and their peers more personally. Options include virtual book clubs, workout classes, and events centered on hobbies and personal interests.

By following these tips, you can make meaningful connections with your teachers and staff in an online environment. Remember to be patient and flexible, as it may take some time to establish relationships in this new setting.

If you’re interested in learning more about how to build connections in the online learning environment, download our free guide here for school leaders.
In her TED talk, Saujani discusses how women gravitate toward careers they know they will be perfect in because they’re taught to avoid risk and failure, while boys are taught to take the leap, and aim high. She goes on to say we have a bravery deficit in our society and that’s why women are underrepresented in STEM, c-suites, board rooms, congress, and other high-impact positions. We would also add that when it comes to men, they tend to gravitate towards careers that represent a sense of strongness and playing tough, oftentimes avoiding roles that could be seen as “traditionally meant for women.”

Saujani’s takeaways highlight the importance of exposing K-12 students to Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses and programs of study, as well as providing younger students, in elementary and middle school, with opportunities to explore different industries and roles. Not only do CTE pathways help set up students for their future careers, but they have the power to break gender stereotypes that have been ingrained in our society for years.

For example, nationally, 79% of all software programmers are men, while only 21% are women. At Florida Virtual School (FLVS), our Web Application Development and Programming CTE program of study has 36% female students, which is a higher ratio than the percentage of women currently in the field. We believe the reason our program of study has a higher percentage of female students is because the online learning environment provides students with a judgment free zone to follow their passions.

Imagine a girl in a traditional brick-and-mortar school who wants to enroll in a welding or programming course, but she’s worried she’ll be the only female in the room. Or a boy in an in-person learning environment who is interested in taking a class about teaching or nursing but is embarrassed he may be viewed as “soft” or “unmasculine.”

For example, FLVS junior Reese Laushot was hesitant to join the FLVS eSports Club as a girl but quickly found that it’s an environment where everyone can be seen and heard. She also hopes to have a career in computer science due to her positive experience with the club. She says the eSports club has impacted her in many positive ways from being part of a community to inspiring her path forward.

The online environment removes barriers and prejudices, allowing students to explore their passions in a space where they feel comfortable and confident.

Another benefit of students taking more CTE courses in high school is that it’s the perfect time to explore various career options without financial pressures. For example, a student may be interested in working in healthcare or finance, but they’re unsure if either is really the path for them. At FLVS, a Florida resident student can take courses for free, and if they decide it’s not for them, they don’t lose money like they would on a college course.

It’s important that educators offer courses in elementary and middle school that expose students to a wide variety of careers and industries such as coding, computer science, agriculture, business, and entrepreneurship. That way, by the time students reach high school, they’ll have a better idea of a future career they want to pursue.

Overall, the more CTE courses that our K-12 students take, the more they are exposed to different career opportunities, which have the power to break traditional gender roles. Not only is it exciting to see students reach their potential and follow their dreams, but it’s also rewarding to know we are helping them enter a job feeling confident. As educators, the onus is on us to prepare our students to be productive members of the workforce.
Outsmart ChatGPT: 8 Tips for Creating Assignments It Can't Do

By Alyson Klein

Since the latest version of ChatGPT emerged late last year, educators have been puzzling over how to reconcile traditional writing instruction with tech that can churn out everything from essays to haikus with uncanny sophistication.

Some educators contend ChatGPT can be a learning tool, while others say it’s more likely to be used as a cheating tool. In fact, more than a quarter of teachers say they’ve caught students using ChatGPT to cheat, according to a survey from Study.com, an online learning platform.

That raises the question: Can educators remove students’ temptation to use ChatGPT and other so-called “large language models” to plagiarize by coming up with assignments that the ChatGPT won’t be able to handle? If yes, what might those assignments look like?

We asked educators and experts on all sides of the broader debates about ChatGPT to give us some strategies for AI-proofing assignments. Here’s what they told us:

1. Ask students to write about something deeply personal

Consider having students delve into their scariest moment, the biggest challenge they ever overcame, or even answer a quirky personal question: Would you rather be the bucket or the sand?

It’s difficult at this point for AI to fake highly personal writing, said Joshua Rosenberg, an assistant professor of STEM education at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. (For the record, Rosenberg thinks it’s valuable for teachers to incorporate AI writing tools into some assignments.)

To be sure, even with these personal essays, students “could make it up,” acknowledged Kristin Daley Conti, a 7th grade science teacher at Tantasqua Junior High School in Massachusetts. But most of her middle schoolers are too eager to share their stories to outsource the job to AI, she explained. “They like to center things around themselves,” she said.

One wrinkle: Writing only about personal heroes or big life challenges isn’t as effective as other types of assignments for teaching students the reasoning and critical thinking skills that good writers must master, said Michelle Brown, the founder and CEO of CommonLit, an online reading program.

“I cringe a little bit at the idea that we will overcorrect and make a lot of writing personal,” she said. “What makes writing instruction good is that you’re synthesizing complex information from a complex text or complex sources. So, if we’re trying to make our assignments ChatGPT-proof that could be one way, but I worry about the consequences on student learning.”

2. Center a writing assignment around an issue specific to the local community

ChatGPT doesn’t have a strong background in hyperlocal issues, though that is likely to change as the tool becomes more sophisticated, experts say. But for now, educators may be able to minimize how much help ChatGPT can be on a particular assignment by grounding it in the school community — maybe even by asking students to write about a new school rule or the student council election.

Teachers could also ask their students to connect information about the water quality in a nearby pond the class studied to global patterns in environmental conservation. “There probably just isn’t a lot of data” available online about such a small body of water, Rosenberg said.

3. Direct students to write about a very recent news event

At this point, ChatGPT can’t capture much information about things that happened just days earlier, Rosenberg said. Teachers could ask students to compare a very recent news event to a historical one, say the balloon that was reportedly sent by the Chinese government to spy on the United States with the Cuban missile crisis.

While ChatGPT may be able to spit out some sort of answer, it is likely to be muddled, Rosenberg said. “The model might generate just factually wrong things about time-sensitive events,” he said. “That can be a good cue to teachers that something’s fishy.”

4. Have students show or explain their work

In math class, students usually show how they arrived at a particular answer to get credit for solving a problem. That concept could apply to writing, Rosenberg said. For instance, teachers could prompt students to detail their brainstorming process, explaining why they choose to write about a particular topic.

Teachers could also ask questions such as: “How did you decide to structure your paper this way? Did you just start writing or did you think ‘my first paragraph is going to be on this and then my second paragraph on this?’” Rosenberg said. “That could just hold students a little bit more accountable for their process of writing.”
What makes writing instruction good is that you’re synthesizing complex information from a complex text or complex sources.”

MICHELLE BROWN
Founder and CEO, CommonLit

On a similar note, two literacy focused technology nonprofits, CommonLit and Quill, would love to see developers come up with new technology that analyzes keystrokes or various versions of a draft to decide whether a particular piece of writing was produced by a human or a robot, a more sophisticated process-based approach to discouraging cheating.

5. Ask students to give an oral presentation, along with the written work

One way to make this work: Ask students to record themselves on a video platform such as FlipGrid, talking about their essay, story, report, or other assignment, Daley Conti, the middle school science teacher, suggested.

That could deter cheaters. And it would provide students who did get help from AI in completing their assignment with an incentive to at least learn the content. “Even if they did get it from ChatGPT, they would have had to read it, digest it, and then talk about it,” Daley Conti said.

6. Return to a pre-digital age and ask students to handwrite their essays in class

This low-tech solution seems obvious. And it might be the most surefire way to make certain that students aren’t getting help from AI or even their parents or other students in the class.

Sal Khan, founder of one of the most prominent education technology tools, Khan Academy, sees value in having students do their writing the old-fashioned way, even as he thinks K-12 schools should help students learn to write using ChatGPT as well.

“One mitigation, which isn’t a bad idea, is to have students do more writing in class periods, in front of you,” Khan said in an interview. “I think it’s a good idea to do more of your actual writing and workshopping in class. The best writing classes are the ones where it’s like a real writers’ workshop, and kids are writing all the time. And the teacher and peers are giving each other feedback.”

7. Put project-based learning to work

Teachers could lean towards big, multi-disciplinary projects that an AI essay “isn’t going to be an appropriate measure of,” said Joseph South, the chief learning officer for the International Society for Technology in Education, a nonprofit.

For instance, he said, several school districts explored water quality in different parts of the country for a social studies course, looking at different policies in different states and cities. They tested the water in their own communities, looking for contaminants. Then they created graphs and charts showing the impact of local policies on local water supplies, and presented their findings.

“ChatGPT was never going to do that project for them,” South said. “It’d be impossible to cheat on that project with it. And the kids didn’t want to cheat because they were doing something really cool and interesting and relevant to their lives.”

If students are “taking pride in their work, they don’t want a robot to write it,” he said.

8. Run the assignment through ChatGPT before giving it to students

Maybe asking students for their take on a local issue—the school board election, perhaps—is one way to get around the power of ChatGPT. One hiccup: If users point ChatGPT to specific sources, it will use them in crafting a response to a prompt. So, if students put in links to a few articles in the local newspaper about the election, the tech may produce a surprisingly sophisticated take.

Teachers hoping to come up with assignments the tool can’t handle should keep that in mind, said Peter Gault, the founder and executive director of Quill, a literacy-focused technology nonprofit. “The trick is if you could say read this article, and then give a link and then do it and then see how it performs,” he said.
Only about a quarter of the 100 most-used ed-tech tools in classrooms meet Every Student Succeeds Act requirements, according to a new report from LearnPlatform, an education technology company that helps districts measure the use and effectiveness of their digital products.

The report examines how the 100 most-accessed ed-tech tools stack up across the United States based on key factors, such as data privacy, interoperability, federally aligned evidence, and other indicators.

When the pandemic hit, many companies provided their products to schools and teachers for free. And schools used them even if companies didn’t provide evidence of standards alignment, because educators needed something that would help engage their students.

The average number of technology products that school districts access in a given month has almost tripped over the last several years, but oftentimes, the efficacy of those products aren’t clearly shown.

Federal, state, and district policies are increasingly asking companies to show evidence of alignment to ESSA. Large districts, such as Los Angeles and Chicago, are now requiring evidence information from vendors during the purchasing process.

At the start of the pandemic in 2020, Congress passed Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds to help districts recover from the pandemic. The term “evidence-based” was used 17 times in the first 20 pages of the bill, which shows there’s more desire for proof that a tech tool works, said LearnPlatform co-founder Karl Rectanus during a presentation about ESSA and technology at the SXSW EDU conference this week in Austin.

“With tech-enabled learning here to stay, understanding which tools are effective, interoperable, compliant, accessible, and safe are table stakes,” Rectanus said in a statement. “While not ubiquitous, this report indicates that the use of evidence is taking flight across education.”

For the report, LearnPlatform analyzed data on more than 11,000 ed-tech products based on the engagement of 2.8 million students and more than 320,000 educators. The analysis was then cross-referenced with publicly available information on provider websites and from respected associations and organizations, including Common Sense Media, Digital Promise, and the International Society for Technology in Education, or ISTE.
The remarkable technology known as ChatGPT has recently taken social media and the chattering class by storm. By now, many have witnessed at least one incredible product created by the artificial intelligence bot, be it a technical paper on coffee bean cultivation or a song about earthquakes in the style of Taylor Swift.

However, many teachers quickly realized a downside to the amazing technology: students potentially using the app to plagiarize assignments. First remote learning, then hybrid learning, and now this?

Yet, there are steps teachers can take to prevent the misuse. First, it is important to understand what ChatGPT is and is not. ChatGPT is a word-prediction technology, not an independent wealth of knowledge. That means the program needs to make a connection between real subjects to generate a fair word prediction. The app can draft a reasonable sounding paragraph on the link between “Aristotle” and “democracy” but not on a “thing” and “democracy.”

While ChatGPT is not necessarily producing lies (intentional untruths), it is very often producing baloney. How to prevent this plain nonsense from infiltrating schoolwork? It all comes down to how you phrase your assignment questions.

Here’s what I recommend:

1. Avoid identifying terms and instead use signpost terms.

   As I mentioned, ChatGPT needs real terms to produce a decent sounding response. I currently teach high school U.S. history and assigned a reading that covered Thomas Jefferson, the Declaration of Independence, and the Revolutionary War. Had I phrased the assignment question as: “How did Thomas Jefferson write the Declaration of Independence?” The ChatGPT response is:

   “The author on page 4 wrote the document using a combination of formal and informal language. They used a structure that is clear and easy to read, while also making sure to include specific details and relevant facts related to their subject. The author incorporates both personal opinion and open-mindedness in their writing, while also relying on research and data to back up their points.”

   You can see here that ChatGPT has no idea who the author is and produced a baloney response. Hence, I encourage teachers to frame your assignment with language that requires the students to go back to the text and find the answer, such as using specific page numbers or references.

2. Require text citations in the response.

   After asking the students to return to the text to find the answer or produce the analysis, ask for text citations as well. This really sends ChatGPT on a fishing expedition.

   I asked the app, “Write one paragraph explaining how the author on Page 4 helped win the war. Use at least two citations from the text.” The response:

   “The author on page four describes how Joseph Pilsudski, the founder of modern Poland, had a major role in helping win the war. Pilsudski mobilized a Polish army and forced the Austrians to sign an armistice, formally ending their occupation of Poland in 1918 (pg.4). He also formed a multi-national Polish army and ‘fought shoulder to shoulder with his former enemies against the Bolshevik menace’ (pg.4), helping Greece, Romania and Czechoslovakia gain independence from the Bolsheviks. Without Pilsudski’s efforts, the war with the Bolsheviks would have been much more difficult and prolonged and the outcome of the war would have been far different.”

   Complete nonsense. ChatGPT has no idea who the author is and even less idea what war we are referring to, so students cannot effectively plagiarize an assignment that requires citations.

3. Ask for a modern-day connection in the analysis.

   ChatGPT is not nearly as adept at generalizing on new or developing situations. When

He then wrote a rough draft of the document that was edited and revised by Congress over a period of several weeks. Jefferson’s final draft of the document was officially released on July 4th, 1776.”

   That is a fair sounding response from ChatGPT.

   However, look at the answer when I phrased my question as, “How did the author on Page 4 write that document?” The ChatGPT response to this second question was:
the app is asked: “How is the Revolutionary War related to the crisis in Ukraine?” The response is:

“The Revolutionary War is not directly related to the crisis in Ukraine. However, certain parallels can be drawn between the motivations of the revolutionaries in the American Revolution and those initiating the revolution in Ukraine. In both cases, people have sought a more equitable distribution of political and economic power, a greater say in governance, and more freedom from external control.”

Again, boilerplate language. The app took “revolution” and generalized language that could have described the Russian Revolution, the Cuban Revolution, or most any revolution for that matter. Requiring students to apply the subject to current events, therefore, lowers the likelihood they will outsource their thinking to AI.

Spencer Burrows is a history teacher and the 11th grade dean at Pacific Ridge School, an independent middle and high school in Carlsbad, Calif. He serves as an education adjunct faculty at National University and on the board of directors of TEACH Public Schools, a charter network in South Los Angeles.
3 Guiding Principles for High-Quality Virtual Learning

By Rick Hess

A lot of folks are justifiably down on virtual learning after the half-baked, mic-muted, camera-off mess that so often passed for remote learning. After that experience, I’ve had a lot of parents, policymakers, and educators ask whether the past few years should disabuse us of our enthusiasm for the promise of technology in K-12. This is a topic I consider at some length in my forthcoming book *The Great School Rethink* (out from Harvard Ed Press next spring), which is how I wound up in an extended exchange about all this with the always-provocative Evo Popoff, a VP of Whiteboard Advisors. Evo, formerly the chief innovation officer for the New Jersey education department and a VP at EdisonLearning, retains an upbeat take on virtual learning that I thought well worth sharing. Here’s what he had to say.

—Rick

Many of us might equate virtual learning to the remote learning that occurred during the COVID-19 school closures—much of which was haphazard and unsatisfactory. Stories abound of students who wilted when their education shifted to Zoom and they were largely cut off from others, as even once-stellar pupils—many of whom began facing mental health challenges—stopped turning in work or attending class. All of this might lead us to adopt a simplistic binary that all virtual learning is bad and in-person learning is good. But reality is far more nuanced because while many students wilted, others have thrived.

In “A Human-Centered Vision for Quality Virtual Learning,” commissioned by Edmentum, we drew on research and interviews with dozens of experts and practitioners, including educators and school and district leaders, to try to better understand what separates high-quality virtual programs from unsatisfactory experiences. We heard a very different story of what virtual learning could be and do—for instance, connecting students to resources that otherwise might not be available at their schools or providing additional support in vital areas like English/language arts.

In the report, we captured this potential in a “day in the life” of a hypothetical 8th grader, Maya, who seamlessly navigates a world that is both virtual and in person to pursue learning in a way that makes sense for her—bouncing from a one-on-one prealgebra tutoring session to an online college course in environmental engineering to an in-person writing workshop.

But while Maya is hypothetical, her experience isn’t. Everything we write about in her journey is taken from what school leaders told us. It represents a future where learning is not tied to one particular time or place. As D’Andre Weaver, the chief digital equity officer of Digital Promise, said to us: “The future of learning is hybrid and ubiquitous. Kids can learn anytime and everywhere.”

So, if high-quality virtual learning is something distinct from the emergency remote learning of the pandemic, what actually is it?

—Rick Hess

3 Guiding Principles for High Quality Virtual Learning
practices but a way to level-set this view of education.

First, high-quality virtual learning is about people, not technology. Too often, we imagine virtual learning as a student sitting alone for hours at a time in front of a computer screen, isolated. While independent work has a role in virtual learning, learning experiences must be designed with human relationships at the center if all students are to succeed. The flexibility of virtual models and the technologies they use create potential opportunities for core relationships to thrive—and help make virtual learning “part of the DNA of who we are as educators and an education system,” in the words of Friendship Public Charter Schools chief of staff Ken Cherry.

What might this look like? At Odyssey Junior and Senior Charter High School in Palm Bay, Fla., every virtual student receives a “champion” who facilitates relationship-building between students and their online instructors. The Akron school district, in Ohio, which established a new online school for the 2021-22 school year, paired its virtual students with mentors who help the students navigate online platforms, stay engaged, and achieve their goals. This allowed their teachers to focus more on teaching, knowing that there was another adult whose full-time job was monitoring students’ educational progress and personal journeys.

Second, good instruction is good instruction—regardless of modality. As Zach Blattner, the senior director of teacher professional education at the Relay Graduate School of Education, observed, “At the end of it all, it just gets back to good teaching. You have to plan; you can’t just wing it.” At the same time, different modalities can require different approaches to instruction. Not surprisingly, planning lessons, customizing curricula, classroom management, and other teacher tasks can look or feel different in a virtual environment. In virtual settings, Blattner said, “Educators must be even more intentional about their norms and routines to not waste class time with what can be the distractions and disruptions of technology.” Teachers might need access to specialists who can help them adjust virtual delivery to accommodate students with different learning abilities.

Finally, a culture focused on the success of all students is nonnegotiable. Based on interviews with virtual program operators and other experts in the field, the secret to their successes lies in their focus on people and creating a culture that encompasses both in-person and virtual experiences. Districts that are growing their virtual learning programs need to adapt their systems and practices to build a culture focused on success for every student. This can be as simple as relying on one learning-management system to limit switching between platforms or offering resources to families in multiple languages, or it can be as complicated as ensuring home access to broadband internet and devices for all students. It includes embracing the more flexible approach to scheduling that virtual programming offers and rethinking roles, expanding the view of the teaching team to include outside teachers, experts, and support staff. And it can entail clearly identifying the person in the district who is responsible for overseeing virtual programs and ensuring their success.

For those of your readers with whom this resonates, we suggest referencing the “Putting It All Together” page of the report, where we present key practical points for virtual learning stakeholders to consider. For instance, we suggest district leaders who are developing a virtual program or school ask themselves questions such as “How are we measuring success? Are there measures of success or engagement that are unique to the virtual environment?” And, for families who want to enroll their child in a virtual learning experience, we suggest asking questions like “Who is the adult responsible for caring about my student and identifying what they need to succeed?”

Districts are currently facing unprecedented challenges, from teacher shortages to helping students recover from the devastating effects of the pandemic. Unless we change our way of thinking about virtual learning, it’s possible we might miss out on key ways to help solve these challenges. Our hope in this report is to begin a more nuanced discussion around virtual learning, beyond the simplistic binary that virtual instruction is bad and in-person is good. The goal is to help capture those characteristics of high-quality virtual learning to help equip school leaders, parents, policymakers, and others to more thoughtfully approach what successful virtual learning can and should entail.

Rick Hess is a resident scholar and the director of education policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute. He writes the Education Week opinion blog “Rick Hess Straight Up.”
Get the information and perspective you need on the education issues you care about most with Education Week Spotlights

The Achievement Gap  ●  Algebra  ●  Assessment  ●  Autism  ●  Bullying  ●  Charter School Leadership  ●  Classroom Management  ●  Common Standards  ●  Data-Driven Decisionmaking  ●  Differentiated Instruction  ●  Dropout Prevention  ●  E-Learning  ●  ELL Assessment and Teaching  ●  ELLs in the Classroom  ●  Flu and Schools  ●  Getting The Most From Your IT Budget  ●  Gifted Education  ●  Homework  ●  Implementing Common Standards  ●  Inclusion and Assistive Technology  ●  Math Instruction  ●  Middle and High School Literacy  ●  Motivation  ●  No Child Left Behind  ●  Pay for Performance  ●  Principals  ●  Parental Involvement  ●  Race to the Top  ●  Reading Instruction  ●  Reinventing Professional Development  ●  Response to Intervention  ●  School Uniforms and Dress Codes  ●  Special Education  ●  STEM in Schools  ●  Teacher Evaluation  ●  Teacher Tips for the New Year  ●  Technology in the Classroom  ●  Tips for New Teachers

Balanced Screen Time

SEL for School Staff - 7 Mindsets

Engaging Technology Tools

VIEW THE COMPLETE COLLECTION OF EDUCATION WEEK SPOTLIGHTS

www.edweek.org/go/spotlights