Education thought leaders forecast 2015 trends

Superintendents and other education experts look ahead on technology, the Common Core and college & career readiness

By: District Administration
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Kaya Henderson

_Chancellor, District of Columbia Public Schools_

**Topic:** College & career readiness

**Trend:** Preparing our children for the high expectations of college and the future workforce requires us to completely re-imagine high school. The old model is not going to cut it anymore. Through a competency-based approach to learning, students will graduate high school with a mastery of core subjects, deep experience solving real-world problems, and ready to succeed throughout life.

Steven Webb

_Superintendent, Vancouver Public Schools, Wash._

**Topic:** Testing & assessment

**Trend:** State and federal accountability policy discussions will shift to focus less on single-event, high-stakes assessments and increasingly on multiple measures that demonstrate a broader and more balanced view of student, school and district achievement.

**Topic:** Blended and online learning

**Trend:** Public schools will continue to engage in digital transformations utilizing a whole-systems perspective to accelerate student achievement and personalized learning.
Michael Horn

Co-founder and executive director, Education at the Clayton Christensen Institute

Topic: Blended and online learning

Trend: Online and blended learning in schools has grown rapidly over the last several years. Momentum is only building as schools seek ways to boost achievement through the personalization of learning, increase access and equity, and control costs.

Leighangela Brady

Assistant superintendent for educational services, Encinitas USD, Calif.

Topic: Stress management and self regulation

Trend: As technology advances, the speed of life accelerates dramatically. This pace, however, is difficult to keep up with. Therefore, it is critical that schools explicitly teach students how to manage stress and self regulate. Innovative districts are looking to yoga and "screen free" hours as just a few ways to do this. I predict many more are on the way.

Keith Krueger

CEO, CoSN

Topic: Safety & security

Trend: Over the past 20 years, internet safety concerns have driven education technology. Privacy is becoming the new "safety." Parents and policymakers increasingly expect transparency about what data we collect and why. Educators must comply with privacy laws and demonstrate aspirational practices. Educators will need to better communicate with the community around privacy and become a trusted partner on privacy.
Josh Isaacson

Assistant superintendent, De Soto #73 Public Schools, Mo.

**Topic:** Blended and online learning

**Trend:** Online classes for high school students will increase as the number of schools offering 1:1 expands. Traditional classrooms will morph into more of an online structure, increasing the need for open, online instructional spaces within current high schools. Instructors with a technology background will be in high demand as students begin taking online classes from other high schools and universities.

Susan Patrick

*President & CEO, International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL)*

**Topic:** Blended and online learning

**Trend:** The field of online and blended learning holds tremendous potential for improving the learning and achievement of all students. Digital learning helps to address many critical challenges facing today's education system, including redesigning instructional models around student learning (vs. time), increasing access to courses, overcoming teacher shortages, connecting out-of-school learning, and addressing the gaps in student learning through targeted interventions.

Ron Reed

*Executive Producer, SXSWedu*

**Topic:** International models for teaching and learning

**Trend:** As schools embrace the internet and experiment with blended learning and flipped classrooms, interest is growing in international models and approaches. Collaboration beyond borders will fuel fresh perspectives as global issues in education reveal that different nations share much in common in addressing the fundamental issues faced by teachers and students.
Kemi Jona

Professor of learning sciences and computer science, Northwestern University

**Topic:** Design Thinking and STEAM

**Trend:** In 2015, we will see a growing movement to incorporate design thinking and STEAM (integrating arts and design into STEM) into the curriculum. Districts and schools will launch efforts both large and small, from simple design projects in early elementary to after-school and summer school offerings. Visionary schools will transform their career and technical education programs into STEAM labs.

Tres Tyvand
Student services coordinator, Bend-La Pine School District’s Online Plus program, Ore.

**Topic:** Blended and online learning

**Trend:** As schools continue to grapple with space and overcrowding issues—and recognize the dire need to make learning the constant and time the variable—we will see a significant spike in a variety of blended learning models. Leveraging technology—and using time and space in new ways—is likely the single best solution to increased student achievement and teacher efficiency.

Meghan Reilly Michaud

Fine arts teacher, Andover Public Schools, Mass.; trustee, Rhode Island School of Design

**Topic:** STEAM

**Trend:** The STEAM education movement will continue to gain momentum. This is largely due to the sharing of knowledge by educators as it relates to their own best practices in creating cross-disciplinary activities. As students explore creative thinking, problem solving and other strengths that the arts offer, communities will view the arts as a necessary compliment and support to STEM.
George Couros

Principal of innovative teaching and learning, Parkland School Division, near Edmonton (Canada)

**Topic:** Blended and online learning

**Trend:** Digital portfolios are becoming less "innovative" and more a standard practice in schools because of how they can share student learning in so many ways, while also building strong digital footprints for students that will all be Googled in one form or another during their lives. It is important not only for learning, but life.

Kathy Schrock

Educational technologist

**Topic:** Blended and online learning

**Trend:** Software developers and app designers will be creating online versions of their apps and app versions of their online tools. This will be done to address the combination of devices in BYOT initiatives and in district purchases. The ability to use the tool from any device, and access files and projects across devices, will help the students in their creation process.

Elizabeth Fagen

Superintendent, Douglas County School District, Colorado

**Topic:** Common Core

**Trend:** The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) was a step forward in some states and districts, but CCSS is not comprehensive, requires too little higher order thinking, and is not built as the brain learns. Some districts are already creating district curriculum that is better. This demonstrated improvement will only add to the fading of the CCSS across the country.
Michael Casserly

*Executive director, Council of the Great City Schools*

**Topic:** Common core standards

**Trend:** The Common Core will survive the main assaults on it because of how effectively it is being implemented in many districts—not the opposite.

Ashley Mutschler

*8th grade language arts teacher, Quaker Valley Middle School, Pa. (Leetsdale, near Pittsburgh)*

**Topic:** Blended and online learning

**Trend:** Recently, school districts across the country have ditched expensive systems like Microsoft Office and Blackboard. Many of these institutions have opted for Google Drive—which offers a suite of spiffy Office-type products that are inherently collaborative. And Google has done it again—with its slick Google Classroom. This easy-to-use system gives educators all the bells-and-whistles of an expensive product, without the cost.

Kari Arfstrom

*Executive director, HVACR Workforce Development Foundation*

**Topic:** College & career readiness

**Trend:** With 30 million employees set to retire in the next decade and 100,000 skilled jobs going unfilled, educators must lead an awareness effort for career and technical education. With eight out of the 10 hardest-to-fill jobs requiring a certificate or two-year degree, educators, parents and business leaders must offer sound advice on workforce needs in the U.S.
Jim Larimore

*Chief officer for the advancement of underserved learners, ACT*

**Topic:** Testing & assessment

**Trend:** The increasing diversity of students and communities will lead organizations like ACT to work with schools and districts to disaggregate data by more specific sub-groups. This will help educators to derive more useful and precise insights about which students need what types of attention and support (and when), and will help educators focus their time to personalize interventions and support.

Aoife Dempsey

*Chief Technology Officer, Triumph Learning*

**Topic:** Blended and online learning

**Trend:** We had a wave of first-generation adaptive solutions and now, we’re seeing growth in programs that analyze psycho-metrics, data science and other information to offer a whole new level of personalization for students and teachers. Students will find these personalized solutions more engaging, and teachers can access powerful information around students’ strengths and weaknesses to inform instruction.

Tom Piche

*Product manager for K12 interactive projectors, Epson America, Inc.*

**Topic:** Making Cloud-Based Devices Integrate with Classroom Projectors

**Trend:** The explosion in cloud-based devices means that students do not lose their work when hardware fails. However, without the ability to download utilities to devices, they pose a unique challenge for creating interactive classrooms. The interactive projector industry is working to solve this challenge so students can annotate with these devices and save their work to the cloud.
Scott Noon

Executive director for business development, Institute for Student Achievement, a division of ETS

**Topic:** College & career readiness

**Trend:** As industry seeks to find more qualified job candidates and schools work to improve graduation rates, career and technical education (CTE) programs will flourish. CTE provides opportunities to contextualize learning and provide real-world application for coursework. As educators, however, we need to be vigilant that CTE programs don't regress to the voc-tech programs of the 70s and 80s.

Eric Sheningar

Senior fellow, International Center For Leadership in Education and Scholastic Achievement Partners

**Topic:** Makerspaces

**Trend:** Makerspaces represent a cost-effective approach to creating relevant and meaningful learning experiences for students. They are the wood and metal shops of the digital age that allow students to explore their learning passions. Driven by the desire to tinker and invent, students acquire and apply real-world skills using technology to create something.

Kenneth Tam

Executive director of personalized learning, Curriculum Associates

**Topic:** Testing and Assessment

**Trend:** As more schools adopt a personalized learning model, there will be an increased use of adaptive diagnostic assessments to drive and personalize instruction. Adaptive diagnostics are more effective in determining the appropriate placement of students, compared to fixed form assessments. Without data, there isn’t a way to truly personalize learning and monitor progress.
Vibhu Mittal

*Chief technology officer, Edmodo*

**Topic:** Personalized Learning

**Trend:** 2014 was a breakthrough year for collecting and analyzing learning signals. 2015 will be the year where personalized learning and predictive analytics start becoming real. These data-driven insights will enable users to navigate the learning landscape with tools that adapt to their needs and guide them safely past pitfalls—ultimately leading to better outcomes, greater engagement and a fuller realization of every learner’s potential.