

As I contemplate a new year of resolutions, I'm interested in what the experts in education see in the year ahead. Here is an interesting...yet not far-fetched...article on Technology Trends for 2010 by Bridget McCrea (The Journal, December 2009). You will see that Hereford ISD is in the midst of some of these trends and wrestling with the implementation of others and similar inclusions of the future. ~Kelli Moulton~

With technology evolving at the speed of light, and everyone looking to benefit from the latest, greatest hardware and software, keeping up can be challenging for educators, administrators, and school districts themselves. To help, *THE Journal* spoke with a handful of technology experts and came up with a short list of top tech trends you'll want to watch in the new year. Here they are:

1. eBooks Will Continue to Proliferate

eBook readers aren't going to replace traditional math and English textbooks anytime soon, but J. Gerry Purdy, chief analyst, mobile and wireless, for business research and consulting firm [Frost & Sullivan](#) in Atlanta, said the devices will gain traction in the K-12 arena this year.

"The eBook phenomenon is gaining ground in the consumer space, where people are using them to read both fiction and non-fiction," said Purdy. "The way the stars are aligned, it won't be long before someone adapts eBooks out of the consumer space and makes textbooks available on these portable devices."

While eBooks would literally lessen the load that students have to carry around with them in backpacks all day, Purdy said, the devices aren't "quite there yet" when it comes to color, graphics, and symbols. "The eBook readers are mostly black-and-white right now," he added, "but when the technology advances to the point where color and animation can be integrated, it will become much more viable for the textbook market."

2. Netbook Functionality Will Grow

One-to-one computer initiatives are proliferating throughout United States schools and are expected to become even more popular in 2010 as netbooks become even more affordable. Priced at \$200 to \$300, these small, inexpensive computers are helping to bridge the technology divide that exists at those schools where individual students don't have access to their own laptops.

Netbooks, Purdy said, are opening the door for students to tap the Web as a learning tool, along with general computing--which will eliminate the need for multiple devices (one for computing, another for Web browsing, and so forth) by students, said Purdy, and will help streamline technology initiatives at the district level. "I know that if were administration, I wouldn't want to issue two to three devices to each student," he said. "I'd want one device that would fulfill multiple needs."

3. More Teachers Will Use Interactive Whiteboards

Large, interactive display systems that allow teachers and students to work together in ways that traditional blackboards could not are gaining ground in the K-12 environment. Expect the trend to continue this year, said Sheryl Abshire, chief technology officer for [Calcasieu Parish Public Schools](#) in Lake Charles, LA.

"These tools have been around for a while, but the educational landscape wasn't ready to use them 10 years ago," said Abshire.

Abshire said she credits federal economic stimulus funds for helping to advance the use of whiteboards, many of which are just now being installed and used in the nation's K-12 schools. "We're seeing a big resurgence in their use, and I expect that to continue in 2010," she said. "The buzzword for the 21st century is 'engaged learning,' and the whiteboards will serve as a catalyst for getting students out of their seats and up to the board to learn."

4. Personal Devices Will Infiltrate the Classroom

Sometimes barred from the classroom owing to perceptions of security risks and student "distractions," smart phones and iPods are now making their way into the K-12 space, and with teachers' and administrators' blessings. "We're definitely on the cusp of seeing more of these personal devices in the classroom," Abshire predicted.

The fact that most smart phones come with wireless capabilities and larger screens makes them particularly relevant in the K-12 space, where "after the stimulus money runs out, we're going to be in trouble in terms

of federal money for technology," said Abshire. "The next logical step is for the devices to come into school."

Purdy concurred and said the fact that some students are getting their own wireless devices by second or third grade will accelerate the trend. "We used to think this was a 'teen' phenomenon," said Purdy. "But its now culturally acceptable for someone as young as seven or eight years old to have a cell phone. It won't be long before every student will have access to one or more wireless, portable devices in the classroom."

5. Technology Will Enable Tailored Curricula

On educators' and administrators' wish lists right now is an easier, tech-based way to assess, record and track individual student performance in the classroom. David Stienes, principal with private equity fund [LLR Partners](#) in Philadelphia, said those wishes could come true this year, courtesy of several emerging companies that are working on new student assessment tools.

Once ready for prime time, the programs will allow teachers to track a child's progression through the K-12 years on a weekly basis to ensure that "things are going according to plan," said Stienes. The programs will also integrate benchmarking data for measuring a student's progress against other children, thus paving the way for more individualized, customized curriculum options.

"Historically, schools have given specialized attention to students who 'fall out of the system,' but not when it comes to applying individual curriculum to a broader population," said Stienes. "Look for technology to change that in the near future."