

# BACK TO SCHOOL



**3**  
TIPS

## THE 21st CENTURY CLASSROOM

Taking traditional education **far beyond** the classroom walls



**Charles Bolden**  
NASA Administrator

“NASA uses the inherent excitement of our missions to capture the attention of students.”

PHOTO: NASA

**NASA scientists**  
Fusing fun with math and science



PHOTO: NASA

**The future is digital**  
Making creative use of new technologies



**We can, we will**  
One school district bridges the digital divide



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## CHALLENGES

While every back to school season calls for preparing for the new school year, it is also a **call to action** for families.

# We all have a responsibility

**T**his school year is like no other for American schools, families and children. As we've said before, education is in crisis. We must recognize this and take action on behalf of our children.

Congress is set to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act which, among other things, will decide the level of funding for education for years to come. Congress will also consider the Family Engagement in Education Act (HR 5211) which will provide schools with the tools and resources to partner with families to raise student achievement. The reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act could affect the type of nourishment millions of children nationwide receive every day. And a set of Common Core State Standards that will raise the bar and appropriately prepare children for college and their careers is being adopted by states across the country.

## Why should this matter to you?

We all have a responsibility during the back to school season. Just as children have the responsibility to show up to school, pay attention to their teachers, listen to their parents, grandparents and other adults, and put in the hard work it takes to succeed; the rest of us have a responsibility to do our part to pull American education out of this crisis situation.

To start, we need to make our voice stronger, so join your local Parent Teacher Association or National PTA. Find out about the issues affecting the state of education at your school, in your district, state and nationally. Then, find out what you can do to take action. There are tens of thousands of PTAs nationwide already taking action. Join them. If you need help identifying the issues or are still unsure of what to do, use this list as a guide to get started.

- Demand your Congressman or Senator to increase education funding.
- Ask your Congressman to sup-



Charles J. "Chuck" Saylor  
National PTA President

port the Family Engagement in Education Act (H.R. 5211).

- Visit [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org) and find out how you can help your state adopt the Common Core State Standards.

- Visit National PTA's website at [www.pta.org](http://www.pta.org) for the latest parenting and education news and great back to school resources.

- Sign up to receive the free PTA Parent e-newsletter and get important updates, tips and special offers.

- Sign up for the PTA Takes Action Network, to receive newsletters and alerts to engage your elected officials on issues vital to children.

This list is just the beginning. Children aren't the only ones

this back to school season that have to do their part to become the best students they can be. Whether you're a parent or just a concerned citizen, we all must do our part and it starts by joining the PTA.

## Taking action for the future

From the school board meeting to Capitol Hill, the PTA is advocating every day and representing millions of families and children. That's why we're happy to introduce another special section on education that focuses on the latest in professional development for teachers, interactive classrooms, and mobile technology in the classroom.

As you read through this special section, think of ways you can do your part, join the PTA and check off the bullet list. This back to school season is about more than preparing for a busy school year, it's about taking action for the future of the state of education but most importantly, it's about the future of our children and our country.



## WE RECOMMEND



**Julie LaChance** uses social media to help bring one classroom into the 21st century.

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"We need to seize any opportunity that comes our way."

**Hey, I'm special too!** p. 4

Bringing special education technologies to the general education classroom.

# MEDIA PLANET

BACK TO SCHOOL  
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**Country Manager:** Jon Silverman  
[jon.silverman@mediaplanet.com](mailto:jon.silverman@mediaplanet.com)

**Editorial Manager:** Jackie McDermott  
[jackie.mcdermott@mediaplanet.com](mailto:jackie.mcdermott@mediaplanet.com)

**Responsible for this issue:**

**Publisher:** Bobby Huebner  
[bobby.huebner@mediaplanet.com](mailto:bobby.huebner@mediaplanet.com)

**Business Developer:** Ondriona Monty  
[ondriona.monty@mediaplanet.com](mailto:ondriona.monty@mediaplanet.com)

**Designer:** Mariel Fitzgerald  
[mariel.fitzgerald@mediaplanet.com](mailto:mariel.fitzgerald@mediaplanet.com)

**Contributors:**

Dr. Cheryl Atkinson, Charles Bolden, John Caulfield, CDW Government LLC and the CDW-G 21st-Century Classroom Report, Avery Hurt, Don Knezek, Julie LaChance, Will Menaker, Robert Moss, Charles J. "Chuck" Saylor

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# Child fitness must be a group effort

**America's youth is getting healthier, and weaning kids off of technology and fast food is only part of the solution to a situation where one in three children are now either overweight or obese.**

A campaign to combat obesity called Let's Move!, led by First

Lady Michelle Obama, advocates a holistic approach to stem this crisis that involves parents, schools and communities. Any effort starts at home, and Let's Move! urges parents to balance their children's time with TV, video games, texting and Facebook by scheduling regular family activities, setting goals and measuring results.

Parents can also work with schools to increase opportunities for students to become more active. A good start would be supporting Physical Education programs which are withering at many school districts, says Debra Sensation-Hall, a PE and health teacher in Missoula, Mont., who chairs the Lifelong Recreational Sports Council for the American

Association of Physical Activity & Recreation. She speaks enthusiastically about combining exercise with technology through such methods as "Dance Dance Revolution," a music video game that prompts players to hit colored arrows.

"We need to make exercise fun, not drudgery," says Linda Cornman, a retired PE teacher in Flor-

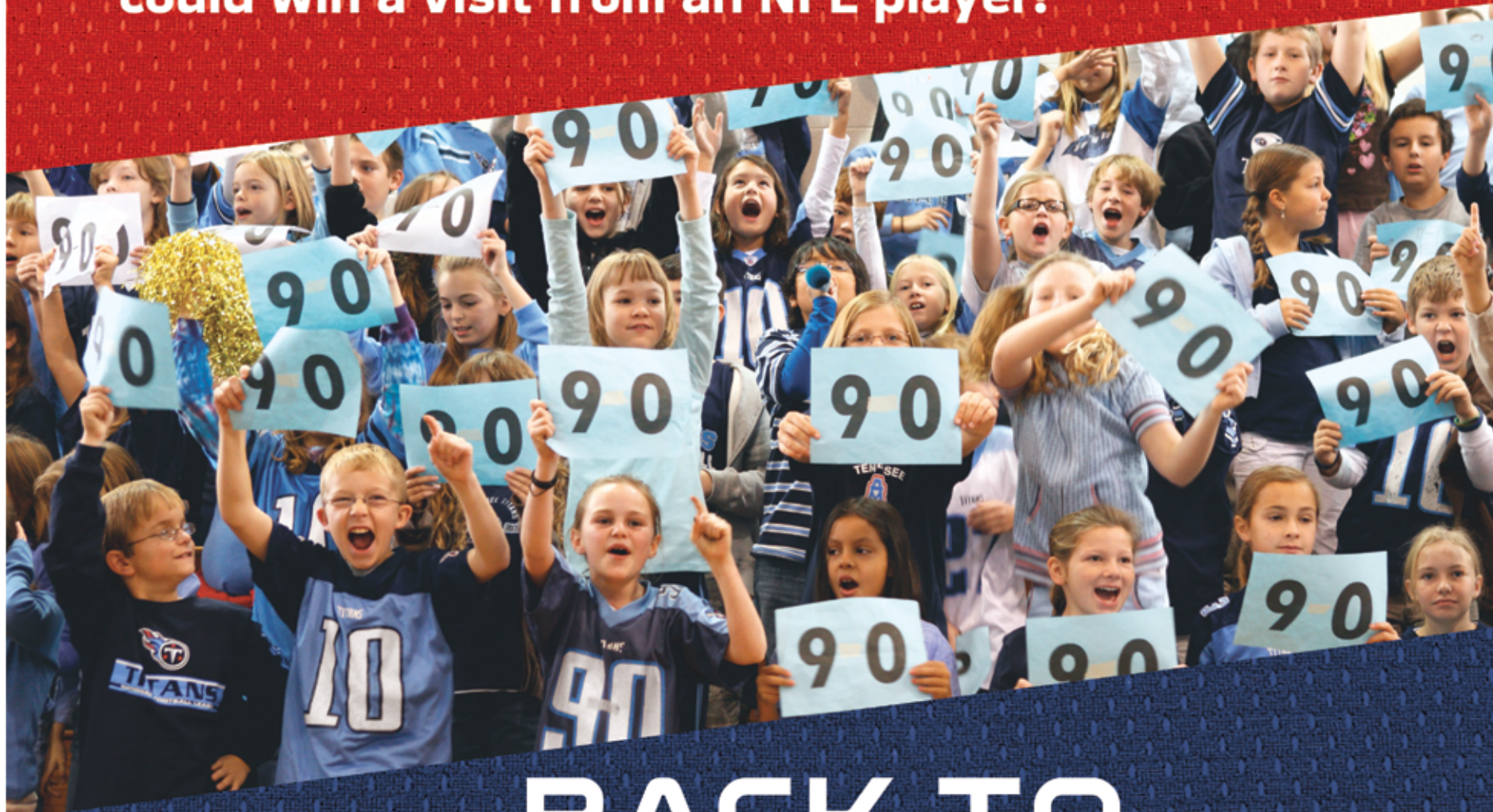
ida, who chairs the Children, Youth and Families Council of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. She thinks school websites could do better at providing families with wellness information and alerts about community fitness events.

**JOHN CAULFIELD**

[editorial@mediaplanet.com](mailto:editorial@mediaplanet.com)



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## NEWS

**Question:** How can teachers meet the individual needs of vastly different students?

**Answer:** Integrate some ideas from special education.

## HEY, I'M SPECIAL TOO!

The idea of adapting the curriculum to suit the abilities and interests of each child, often called Personalized Education, has been around for a while but has been hard to put into practice. There is one place, however, where the idea has worked spectacularly well: Special education. "Special educators do this all the time," says Ann Myer, vice president of curriculum and software for AbleNet. Adapting the techniques and technologies of special education for the general education classroom might be the trick that makes personalized education work.

### Collaboration

"General educators have knowledge in specific content areas (math, language arts, social studies) with a focus on how to teach it," says Myer, "while special educators are skilled in differentiated instruction based on the view that all students can learn in a manner unique to their abilities and learning styles. Together these two views bring about the ideal educational system."

According to Nancy Frey, PhD, professor of teacher education at San Diego State University, when special education teachers and general education teachers work together, they help each other create this ideal system.

**Techies at the blackboard**  
Special education has long used



There is one place, however, where the idea has worked spectacularly well: Special education.

communications technologies, such as keypads and electronic devices, to break down barriers for special education students. Now that these technologies are available in most classrooms, teachers can use them to encourage all children to pursue their best learning styles and interests. Teachers make use of high-tech solutions behind the scenes as well. Uplift Education, a Dallas, Texas network of public charter schools, uses iShine software to tailor individualized learning plans. "The teacher can slice and dice the data in multiple ways to get a detailed picture of each student. What would have taken hours on a spreadsheet program is done in minutes on iShine," says Yasmin Bhatia, CEO of Uplift.

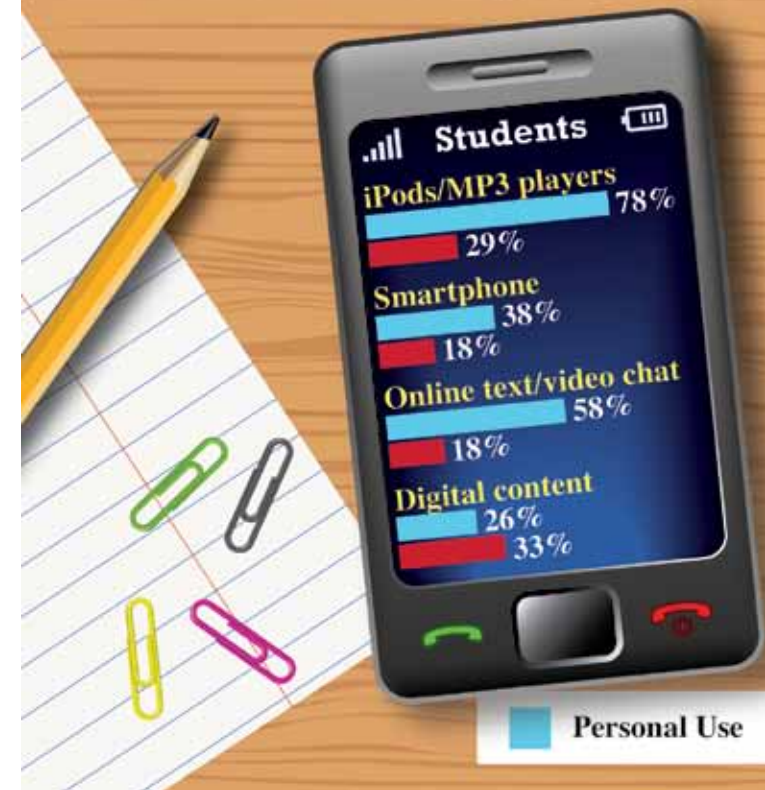
Bringing the techniques and technologies of special education to the general education classroom can make everyone special.

AVERY HURT

editorial@mediaplanet.com

## Which of these technologies you using in your personal and for educational use

From the 2010 CDW-G 21st-Century Classroom Report



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Technologies are  
integral life  
?



■ Educational Use

## 21st century students need 21st century tools

TIP

1

DIVE INTO DIGITAL

**“Today’s kids are digital natives,” explains Billie McConnell, EdD, professor of teacher education at Abilene Christian University and director of ACU’s K-12 Digital Learning Institute. That might seem like an obstacle to those of us who aren’t digital natives, but in fact it is an opportunity.**

### Not just texting

If the words “mobile technology” evoke images of phone calls, text messages, and games—but nothing more—then you are behind the curve. Video conferencing, file sharing, and handheld libraries are just a few of the ways that the 21st century classroom makes use of mobile technologies.

### All day and then some

Teachers are already making creative use of mobile technology. “A teacher might take a poll of students to see what they

already know and instantly adapt the lesson to suit their needs,” explains Kevin Carmen, education segment manager for AT&T. Mobile technologies can expand the school day, too. Once kids are engaged by a topic, they can continue to explore it long after class is over. “Waiting for the bus, they can organize information for a school project; when they get home, they can see it on a bigger screen,” explains Al Browne, vice president of Verizon Foundation. Thinkfinity, Verizon Foundation’s free digital learning portal, provides opportunities for information and connectivity beyond the classroom.

The future is digital and our kids are already there. The right use of these technologies will make sure that future is bright.

AVERY HURT

editorial@mediaplanet.com



DON'T MISS!

### Using technology to customize education

Teachers today use social networking and Web 2.0 tools in the classroom to engage students and help meet curriculum goals. We’ve also seen a recent surge in teachers using tools like Nings, Twitter, and blogs to customize a personal learning network—often with teachers in other states or countries. This emerging culture of co-learning holds great promise, providing teachers a practical way to stay on the cutting edge of digital-age learning, teaching, and school leadership. These networks open up a global treasure trove of education ideas, strategies and resources. Where can you find these networks? Follow #isteconnects or #edchat on Twitter, or go to [www.iste.org](http://www.iste.org) for a gateway into global learning communities.

DON KNEZEK

CEO, ITSE

editorial@mediaplanet.com



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INSPIRATION

# Transforming the traditional classroom

**Question:** How can a school use technology and social media to redefine the way students learn?

**Answer:** With the help of one young educator, who is helping bring the classroom into the 21st century.

When Julie LaChance started as a technology facilitator at Northwest Cabarrus High School in Concord, NC, the highest level of technology this 44-year-old school had was a handful of overhead projectors. In just three years, LaChance has helped transform a school with almost no modern equipment into a state of the art learning environment that is setting the pace for integrating technology and education.

According to LaChance, 2010 ISTE Outstanding Young Educa-



**Julie LaChance**  
ISTE Outstanding Young Educator of the Year

tor of the Year, technology can make learning more fun and more intense for the student. "To get kids excited about learning," she says, "we need to seize any opportunity that comes our way."

**Can Facebook be educational?**

Social media platforms like Twit-

ter, Second Life, and Facebook are already major parts of students' lives, so the challenge is not to teach them how to use them, but rather how to relate to them as tools to complete a task or achieve a goal. LaChance says she sees the "lightbulb" go on when she explains how professionals use these same tools to increase their marketability, get jobs, and share ideas.

"Kids understand how these technologies can be used, they just don't have a lot of people around them using these technologies for this purpose," says LaChance. "It is my responsibility to raise the awareness of this with teachers so they can share that with their students." As a graduation project, one student used Second Life to collaborate with experts from around the world to create a virtual proto-



type of a four-story green house.

Transforming the traditional classroom into one featuring interactive touch screen projectors and sound systems as well as a computer lab featuring 3-D animation, pod-casting stations, and iPod docks requires changing the way both students and teachers think about learning. The most effective way to implement change, LaChance says, is to "grab the hands of the willing, and the rest will follow."

**WILL MENAKER**  
editorial@mediaplanet.com

**GREEN CLASSROOM**

**Using mobile technology**

Utilizing interactive whiteboards, projectors and document cameras can reduce the reliance on paper handouts, all while increasing retention by providing a hands-on multimedia experience. Increasing student engagement through educational technology has been shown to improve student motivation and promote enthusiasm for learning—in addition to reducing the school's carbon footprint. Interactive whiteboard notes can be saved and electronically distributed to students, keeping the students engaged with the lesson and reducing the need for handwritten notes.

**ROBERT MOSS**  
editorial@mediaplanet.com



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## INSPIRATION



**RELAXING AND LEARNING**  
NASA Administrator Charles Bolden and students from the Better Educated Students for Tomorrow After School Enrichment Program, Los Angeles.

PHOTO: NASA

## If they love it they will learn it

■ **Question:** How do we improve students' performance in science and math?

■ **Answer:** Let them see how these skills can be applied to real-life, fun professions.

In the most recent ranking of developed nations, Americans ranked 21 out of 30 in science literacy. In math, we did worse. President Obama responded with the "Educate to Innovate" campaign, an initiative to improve scores in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

### It isn't rocket science (yet)

No one denies that science and math are hard, but according to Jim Stofan, assistant administra-

tor for education for NASA, lack of ability is not the problem. "Huge numbers of kids are proficient in science and engineering, they are just not interested," Stofan says. Jo Ellen Roseman, director of Project 2061, a science literacy initiative of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, agrees that lack of talent is not the problem: "Our assessments show that even our most capable students aren't learning as much as they could."

### Scientists having fun

The fix may be easier than we think, however. According to Stofan, children will rise to the challenges of science and math if they are allowed to engage with

the material. "Scientists and engineers do professionally what kids do naturally," Stofan explains. "Scientists ask questions and try to find the answers. Engineers try to build things that haven't been built before." At a recent NASA-sponsored event, kids worked with real scientists to make working robots, rockets, and hot air balloons. "We're letting kids see grown-ups doing things kids like to do," Stofan says. What child wouldn't be willing to learn a little math and science to get to have fun for the rest of their lives?

AVERY HURT

editorial@mediaplanet.com



### QUESTION & ANSWER

#### Who or what inspired you to pursue a career as an astronaut?

! I was inspired to apply for the Astronaut Program when, serving as a test pilot in Patuxent River, Maryland, I met the "late, great" Dr. Ron McNair, a member of the first class of astronauts selected specifically for the Space Shuttle in 1978. We both grew up as blacks living in segregated South Carolina. Both our parents were school teachers who had instilled in us at a very young age the belief that with hard work and determination, we could do anything that we could imagine. When asked by Ron if I was going to apply for the space program, I told him, "No!" He asked me why not and answered that I didn't think I'd be selected to which he responded, "That's the dumbest thing I ever heard! How do you know you won't be selected unless you apply?" With that challenge, I decided to submit my application to NASA and the rest is history.

#### What does NASA do to help educate our innovators of tomorrow, today?

! NASA uses the inherent excitement of our missions to capture the attention of students. First, we expose them to the exciting things we do through NASA TV, school visits by astronauts, interactive exhibits, hands-on exercises,



**Charles Bolden**  
NASA  
Administrator

and one-on-one conversations. Once we have their attention, it's easier to show them that they, too, can become a scientist, engineer, or astronaut and be part of this cutting-edge exploration and discovery.

NASA's broad education program focuses on students and teachers at all levels, kindergarten through post-graduate. This summer, we rolled out a new program—Summer of Innovation—that focuses on attracting middle school students and their teachers to programs built around science, technology, engineering and math—or STEM. We've found that if we can keep these students engaged, they are less likely to fall victim to "summer slide," or the loss of academic skills during the summer break. It's our hope that these summer experiences will increase students' desire and enthusiasm to pursue STEM studies. Those that do increase their chances of securing exciting scientific and technical careers that will be personally fulfilling, as well as feed a critical pipeline of skilled technical workers that will benefit NASA and the nation.

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## It's hard to teach with technology that belongs in a history book.

Technology can be a great tool in the classroom, but if it's outdated, it mostly just gets in the way. CDW•G can help you get the technology you need to bring the 21st Century Classroom to your schools. The right solution can not only improve student/teacher collaboration, but also keep students focused and engaged. We have one of the largest teams of K-12 account managers in the country, and all are backed by a team of industry-certified specialists. Our experience working with schools like yours means that we understand your environment and the budgeting requirements and time constraints that impact your school's technology decisions. Together, we'll upgrade your technology to current events.



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## PROFESSIONAL INSIGHT

Three years ago, I became the superintendent of Lorain City Schools near Cleveland. And sadly, the urban district profile was **all too familiar.**

# We can. We will.

**T**he district's 8,600 students were full of talent, intelligence and a willingness to learn. However, due to a \$14 million deficit and with 80 percent of students being eligible for free or reduced lunches, they lacked the proper resources they needed to succeed.

The primary source of instructional content came from outdated print textbooks. It was clear that students were not being properly prepared for the technology they would need for college and the workplace. They needed hands-on access to technology, something most were not getting at home or at school. And the majority of students were not performing at grade level.

### The journey begins

Having identified the problems and keeping in mind our lim-



**Dr. Cheryl Atkinson**  
Superintendent, Lorain City Schools

ited resources, we decided that a one-to-one computer program using netbooks, with a focus on replacing textbooks with digital content, was the right path for our students.

The program began in August 2008, and now includes 5,500 students in the district's middle and high schools. With the use of

grant funding and targeted application across grades and subject areas, we have created sustainable change with measurable benefits.

Technology is one of the smartest investments we have made for our students. Digital content coupled with the netbooks provide our students with a much more interactive learning environment. It has allowed us not only to be financially prudent, but has helped to bridge the digital divide.

### Measuring success

One measurement of student growth is Ohio's Value-added Growth rating, which calculates the progress a student makes on academic tests from year to year. Before the implementation of the one-to-one initiative in the 2008-2009 school year, only one district school had met a year's worth of growth. At the end of the 2008-2009 school year, every school in the district met a year's worth of

growth and, with the exception of three, all were above a year's worth of growth. In addition to this remarkable student achievement, the graduation rate is at an all time high.

At Lorain City Schools, our motto, "We can. We will." is proving true. Our students interact more with each other, their teachers and the curriculum. Parental involvement has expanded to a level that I have not seen at an inner city school district. Our teachers are preparing our students to compete in a global market. You see, we can educate all children at high levels. We can prepare our students to compete in a global economy. We can provide opportunities for every child to realize his or her potential. We can have the best educational institution in the city, state and nation. We can and we will!

TIP

3

IT TAKES A  
VILLAGE TO  
RAISE A CHILD.  
GET INVOLVED!

### DIGITAL CLASSROOM

#### Keeping up with technology

It can be a challenge for even the most tech-savvy teachers. Fortunately, resources for professional development abound.

Skillful use of technology in the classroom is less about the technology itself than about how to use it, explains Billie McConnell, EdD, director of Abilene Christian University's K-12 Digital Learning Institute (DLI). This does not, however, require teachers to know more than their students—just to be able to guide them in wise choices and safe use of technologies, McConnell says.

Programs such as the Professional Development Institute (a part of ACU's DLI) trains teachers to navigate these technological waters. Online sources, such as Verizon's Thinkfinity, allow teachers to network, share ideas, and find lesson plans and other content to use in the classroom. "The idea," says Verizon Foundation Vice President, Al Browne, "is to improve achievement by providing teachers with the resources they need."

**AVERY HURT**

editorial@mediaplanet.com



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For parents, Thinkfinity.org supports classroom instruction and offers ideas to build your child's basic math and reading skills, along with cool parent-friendly tools to help accelerate learning and achievement.

Got homework? Go to [Thinkfinity.org](http://Thinkfinity.org). It's one amazing, this-is-exactly-what-you've-been-looking-for website.

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