

Technology, collaboration can personalize education for American students

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Harnessing technology to personalize education for all students has the potential to transform education and prepare students to live and work in a global society. In 2014, more than 100 experts from the fields of education, research, academics and technology, as well as policy makers, gathered to discuss the future of education and ways to personalize it for each student. This week the group released a report detailing challenges and offering solutions for a new approach to education. A University of Kansas professor was a leading contributor to the work.

James Basham, associate professor of [special education](#), co-authored a report, "Technology-Enabled Personalized Learning," issued by the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University.

"Personalized learning is a way we can engage and reach each student at his or her level as well as his or her own pace," Basham said. "And it allows them to take several pathways through the educational process and express what they learn in multiple ways."

The report is focused on five themes to reach desired goals:

- Data
- Content and curriculum
- Technology and architecture
- Research and development
- Human capacity.

The time is right to explore how technology can help improve personalized learning, not only because investment in educational technology development is at a record, but because those rapidly evolving developments can help educators reach students and learn more about them, Basham said.

"The thing we overlook with technology in [education](#) too often is the amount of data it can give us on each individual student," Basham said. "It can bring the know-how of the educator and the power of technology together to produce that personalized piece, a plan that focuses on a student's strengths, how they learn, their motivations and how best to reach them."

The report shares several case studies of schools that have begun adding [technology](#)-based personalized learning as well as their successes and challenges. One of the goals of the report is to detail how [policy makers](#), researchers, educators, the private sector, parents and others can work together to "break down silos" for spreading the approach to more schools. The Friday Institute event was unique in that it brought equal representation from the respective fields to identify challenges and foster collaboration to offer solutions.

Specifically, the conference participants determined the major collective concerns to be addressed:

- The development and adoption of technical standards for tagging content, defining and exchanging data, and easing integration of the myriad components of the Technology Enhanced Personalized Learning ecosystem needed to support educators, recommendation engines and related pedagogical research.
- Data policies, agreements and research protocols needed to scale research and development across data silos about what works with which types of students under what conditions.

- Redefining educator roles and supporting professional development to ensure that the human capacity needed to shift from a traditional teaching model to a student-centered TEPL model.

Based on the success of the first summit, stakeholders will convene again in late 2015. Collaborators for the 2014 event were the Friday Institute, Digital Promise, the Software & Information Industry Association and the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators.

"If we don't move forward, we won't thrive," Basham said. "We need to produce students, learners and educators that can operate and thrive in a global society."

More information: The report is available online:
www.fi.ncsu.edu/wp-content/upl...ort-FINAL-051415.pdf

Provided by University of Kansas

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