Technology Helps to Prepare Students for College and Career

BY SOCIAL TEAM ON OCTOBER 2, 2015 ·

ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGY, AP & COLLEGE READINESS, DIGITAL SOLUTIONS, PREK-12 SUBJECTS

In the 21st century, technology permeates much of our lives. It has become essential in day-to-day activities, as well as one of the greatest driving forces for change. Many of the digital devices we currently use did not exist even ten years ago. It's apparent that skills colleges and careers look for in students are changing to keep up with the pace of technology. Students are required to know different skills by the time they graduate high school compared to just fifteen years ago. We are now not only training people to work locally, but globally. The question becomes, how do we adequately prepare students for the future?

Educational technology is essential to rising to 21st century expectations of students. Today's generation of students are expected to be digitally literate in order to thrive in a workforce where digital technology is often utilized. The most pressing question for many educators is how educational technology impacts education and improves students' readiness for college and the workforce. Improving learning outcomes and high school graduation rates are important in terms of college and career readiness, but how does educational technology improve these outcomes?

Today, educational technology allows students to learn more than ever before. They can use educational games to learn how to read, use technology for research, complete distance education, and more.

According to ACT's report, *College and Career Readiness: The Importance of Early Learning*, learning gaps appear most often in early childhood. Some students begin elementary school behind in early reading and math skills, which leads to the question of how to close this learning gap. Identifying learning gaps is important because early learning facilitates later learning. Because learning is cumulative, a student who has problems with learning early will most likely have problems later on, and will have trouble being prepared for college or the workforce. ACT's report also shows the difficulty of catching students up on learning concepts in middle school and high school.

Educational technology helps close these learning gaps in several different ways. While we can't always predict educational outcomes, educational technology and its corresponding data can help us understand how to prepare students for the future in several ways. It allows us to use data to identify that need interventions in certain subjects. This is especially important because data allows information to be a and easily communicated back to teachers, parents, and other parties involved quickly. The sooner they can take correct these issues, keeping students within the educational timeframe. Throughout each step in a student's pr earning, educational technology allows us to detect signs of students learning gaps in ways that were not prev ssible.

We've already examined how it helps identify lear , but as those learning gaps are identified and addressed, data also helps educators identify if the student is responding to intervention and their progress. Digital curriculum and its data help us identify how much time is spent on homework, what types of questions students struggle with, and how often a student is reading a digital textbook. These can be predictors of later success.

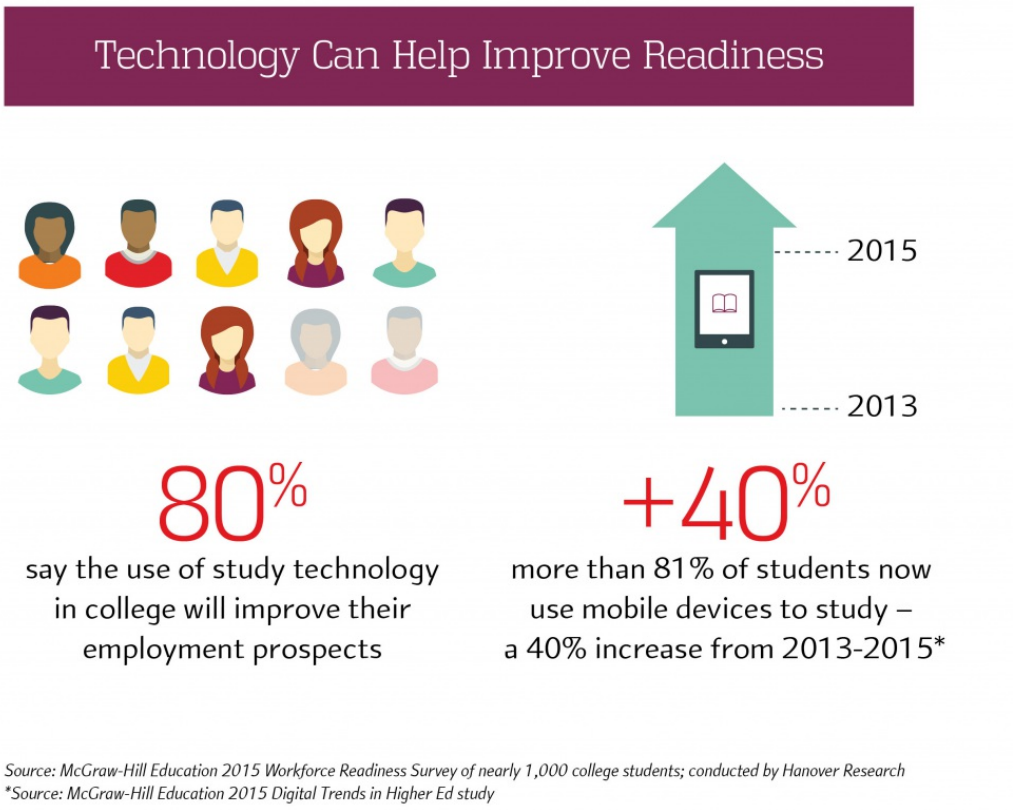
Now that we've thoroughly looked at how educational technology identifies and addresses learning gaps, we can look at the

third aspect of how it prepares students for college and the workforce: digital literacy and student engagement. Here we define digital literacy as the ability to use digital technology and perform tasks effectively in a digital environment. It also includes learning how to use the wide variety of technological tools available to us today, which is growing year by year.

In Heidi Hayes Jacobs' book *Curriculum 21: Essential Education for a Changing World*, the author asks an intriguing question: "What year are you preparing your students for?" She conducted an analysis of schools across the United States to answer this very question. The year that she found most schools were preparing students for? 1990. The lack of educational technology and lack of emphasis on digital literacy in many schools' curriculums was apparent in the analysis.

Why is digital literacy so important? Digital literacy helps students navigate the workforce, college, and use creative thinking in their problem solving. With the integration of educational technology in school curriculum, students not only navigate through the educational timeline with a knowledge of technology, but also how to use it, which translates to more success in the workforce.

A study we conducted of nearly 1,000 college students shows that students feel technology use helps prepare them for the future.



As our world becomes increasingly globalized and as technology becomes a bigger part of societal framework, it becomes more apparent that in order to be successful after school, educational technology is greatly needed in school curriculum.

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