

Technology is Advancing Personalized Learning

Technology has forever changed how we live, work, and learn. Tools like mobile devices and videoconferencing systems have added flexibility and collaborative potential to office spaces and classrooms, and the advancements keep coming. In fact, we've written at length about students' unparalleled access to technology—including [why you should be teaching them the importance of digital citizenship](#)—but there's a hot topic we haven't yet touched on: **Technology is advancing personalized learning, and we're seeing more and more examples of how it positively impacts both students and teachers.** Here's what you need to know.

Personalized Learning: A Tech Trend Worth Watching

Personalized learning is a strategy that uses learning analytics tools to examine study habits and determine how individual students best engage with coursework. Armed with that knowledge, educators can then tailor lesson plans or provide the tools to offer self-guided suggestions—whichever is most conducive to the student's success.

This innovative method is gaining traction. In fact, [a recent Technavio's market research study](#) projected the value of the higher education learning analytics market in the US to be around \$322 million by 2020, boasting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 26 percent. Why the surge? We know that collegiate distance education isn't possible without technology—that's a given. Incorporating learning analytics tools into these virtual 'anywhere' classrooms, though, adds a personalized learning component to the experience. Today, universities across the country are beginning to offer more online classes that are equipped with technologies that monitor student progress.

It's important to note here that personalized learning isn't reserved for college and university students alone. Consider the following examples below:

- [IBM has partnered with Sesame Street to develop a preschool-g geared interface for Watson, IBM's cognitive computing platform.](#) Rooted in storytelling and dubbed the "great equalizer" to early education access by Sesame Workshop CEO Jeff Dunn, the goal of the project is to help young students learn and grow.
- [Vista High School in California instituted Vista's Personalized Learning Academy,](#) a class of 165 juniors who use laptops or tablets to complete individualized coursework. This year, the students in the program, who primarily come from low-income households, recorded half as many absences than the year prior and had 99 percent fewer disciplinary incidents. In addition, approximately two-thirds of the class raised their grades. Due to its success, Vista plans to expand the program to include multiple grade levels in the coming years.
- [At West Belden, a Chicago International Charter School,](#) teachers use data to track student progress in real time so they can better reach students who are struggling.

What's Next?

The examples above show how technology is revolutionizing personalized learning and distance education. Just how well is it working, though? The answer is very well, according to a recent survey by RAND Corporation ([Continued Progress: Promising Evidence on Personalized Learning](#)). Data from the report shows that students exposed to personalized learning programs achieved more, especially in the areas of reading and math. Schools most effective at implementing these programs reported being responsive to student needs, allowing pupils to participate in discussions about their data, and arranging learning spaces to best support their strategies. In short, they give students ownership over their education using innovative teaching techniques and real-world technologies—the heart of effective personalized learning.