

The next decade or so is going to be key for the path of technology in education. It will pave the way for significant advancement, or it will prove that education can never catch up to the rest of the world when it comes to technology. The Horizon report sets out a very ambitious set of technologies to be adopted over the next five years. I think all 6 technologies offer significant benefits and significant challenges. However, by simply identifying what's on the horizon, the report puts a pathway in front of administrators and sets goals and benchmarks for where they should be at certain times.

In my opinion there is one trend that the Horizon report doesn't specifically point out, but that is a major trend in every technology space: Big Data. Big Data is what feeds just about all of the trends and technologies in the report. Big Data and Cloud Computing are the center of growth in any industry and education just happens to be one of the slowest to adopt it. Many schools are going with Google Apps which is just the beginning of adopting cloud computing. Once you bring Big Data into the equation, it makes all of the other technologies actually plausible.

For example, the MOOC movement is only possible with a Big Data component. You need massive amounts of storage to host the courses, keep up with the bandwidth, stream video and audio, and more. If schools want to move forward with this method, or even corporations like Kaplan or Phoenix, want to get in on this trend, they have to adopt Big Data and make it an important part of their plan.

Learning Analytics is another area where Big Data will play a big role. Big Data is needed to process the analytics and store all of the data. In addition, in order to make it available to people and process it enough to make it usable, Big Data will need to play a major role. As Kelle pointed out as a response to my post, data means nothing if teachers can't interpret it. So Big Data will need to be involved to provide reporting engines and computing cores to display the data in readable and understandable formats.

But Alissa made the best point of all. Without Professional Development or training all of this goes nowhere. If we don't teach teachers how to use technology appropriately and effectively it will go nowhere. If we don't teach administrators how to decide on what technology to buy and put in the classrooms it will go nowhere. We have a responsibility as teachers to make sure that our students are served the best possible education. It's not about what makes our job easier or more difficult. It's about what allows the students to understand complex problem solving more easily. Technology has endless possibilities, but we need to make sure we don't get ahead of ourselves and get the teachers on board first.