

# Bring Your Own Learning

Transform Instruction  
with Any Device

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PART TWO

**Overview of Each Strategic Initiative by School Year**

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## CHAPTER 1

# It's Not If, It's When

It's time to start changing the focus of our conversations related to mobile learning from theory or concepts to implementation strategies.

As our district's chief information officer, responsible for all district technology as well as instructional technology, I participated in many panels and gave numerous webinars and presentations devoted to mobile learning or "bring your own device" (BYOD) programs. From 2009–12, most of the questions from participants stayed the same, focusing on two key areas: mobile learning concepts and barriers to implementation.

I spent very little time talking about implementation-related strategies or steps. At a recent education conference, I was on a mobile learning panel and was asked this as my final question: "Next year at this time, what are you hoping the conversation regarding mobile learning will look like?"

My response was simple: "I want the conversation to be focused on implementation strategies and steps, *not* mobile learning theory." Let me explain why I believe we are ready to move from theory to implementation.

Three recent leading indicators have provided data supporting the transition from theory to implementation. These three indicators are research, resources, and implementations.

## Research

The New Media Consortium's yearly *Horizon Report* ([www.nmc.org/horizon-project](http://www.nmc.org/horizon-project)) lists the emerging technologies likely to have significant effects on education and a time frame its advisory board anticipates for widespread adoption. The *2009 Horizon Report: K-12 Edition* listed mobiles as one of the technologies to watch with an adoption time frame of two to three years.

Use of mobiles was picking up steam as smartphone technologies became mainstream. The functionality of these devices had moved beyond phone and text to having the ability to connect to Wi-Fi networks, provide GPS functionality, and run applications. However, even though the power of the smartphone and its expanded functionality was gaining recognition in the private sector and higher education, most K-12 systems didn't even consider incorporating mobile devices into learning.

Mobiles, particularly cell phones, were still predominately banned in K-12 schools and were widely viewed as inhibitors to education rather than enablers. For those few K-12 systems looking into the potential of mobile devices, educators were uncertain how the functionality of these devices could be incorporated into classrooms. Beyond the negative stigma mobile devices had in the K-12 space, one of the biggest issues in 2009 was availability of educational resources capable of operating on these mobile devices. As a result, the power of smartphones was changing the landscape for the private sector and higher education, but not affecting K-12 classrooms.

The *2010 Horizon Report: K-12 Edition* again listed mobile devices as a technology to watch, but with a one-year or less mainstream adoption window. The depth and breath of mobile device use continued to expand in 2010, extending to users younger than those in 2009.

We also saw the introduction of tablet devices, which provide a middle ground between the smartphone and laptop. Tablets offer the same functionality, feature sets, and applications as smartphones, but with bigger displays. The continued need for users to have more and more information and functionality anytime, anywhere was driving market penetration.

However, while the number and age ranges of users were on the rise, very little had changed when it came to K-12 educators' perceptions of these devices in the classroom. The mobile device was still predominantly banned from all K-12 buildings, and there still was not a clear understanding of exactly how to integrate these devices into the classroom.

## Barriers

The good news was that more conversations took place in K-12 education about mobile devices and their potential impacts and roles in the classroom. During those early conversations, many barriers to implementation were identified, especially existing philosophical paradigms that did not recognize the value or impact these devices could have on education. Also, policy issues and basic cultural readiness concerns needed to be addressed before districts could introduce mobile devices as educational tools. A lot of work remained beyond just device functionality, inhibiting device adoption in classrooms. None of these organizational issues were insurmountable, but they would take time to overcome.

In 2010, a few K-12 school systems, including KISD, were going beyond ideas and concepts and dipping their toes into implementation. Those of us using mobile devices in the classroom were getting lots of attention. The attention came from education stakeholder groups, such as researchers, administrators, vendors, and school board members from all over the country. The conversations were focused on organizational barriers and how we were addressing them.

In most cases when we were contacted by a school system, we spoke with one individual who was trying to figure out how to introduce the concept of mobile learning to the whole system. Rarely were the conversations with a leadership team ready to begin the mobile journey. Even though the *2010 Horizon Report: K–12 Edition* had the expectation of one year or less for mainstream adoption, I just didn't feel the philosophical change was occurring with enough breadth and depth in the K–12 space to see such a radical change in less than a year. The good news for 2010 was that some districts were implementing mobile devices in the classroom, and conversations about mobile possibilities in the K–12 space were starting to occur on a broader scale.

### Cloud Computing

The *2011 Horizon Report: K–12 Edition* again listed mobile devices as a technology to watch with a one-year or less time frame for mainstream adoption. It also listed cloud computing as a technology to watch with an adoption time frame of one year or less. I believe industry experts were now making the connection between these two technologies. The power of mobile devices, whether smartphones or tablets, is their ability to have access anytime, anywhere. The real question—and one of the main barriers for mobiles in the K–12 space—was access anytime, anywhere *to what?* That is where cloud computing became a significant player when discussing mobiles.

Cloud computing began providing answers to the question of *access to what* for the K–12 space. The introduction and integration of cloud solutions—particularly those solutions that teachers and students could leverage—created the value proposition for mobiles in the classroom. Now mobiles had relevance for K–12 education.

I don't believe that mobiles are a year or less away from mainstream adoption, as predicted by the *Horizon Report*; rather, I believe a two- to three-year adoption period is more realistic. My reason is simple. The majority of conversations related to mobile learning are still at the “Do we or don't we?” philosophical level. If mobiles are going to go mainstream in the K–12 space, the conversation must be “How do we?”