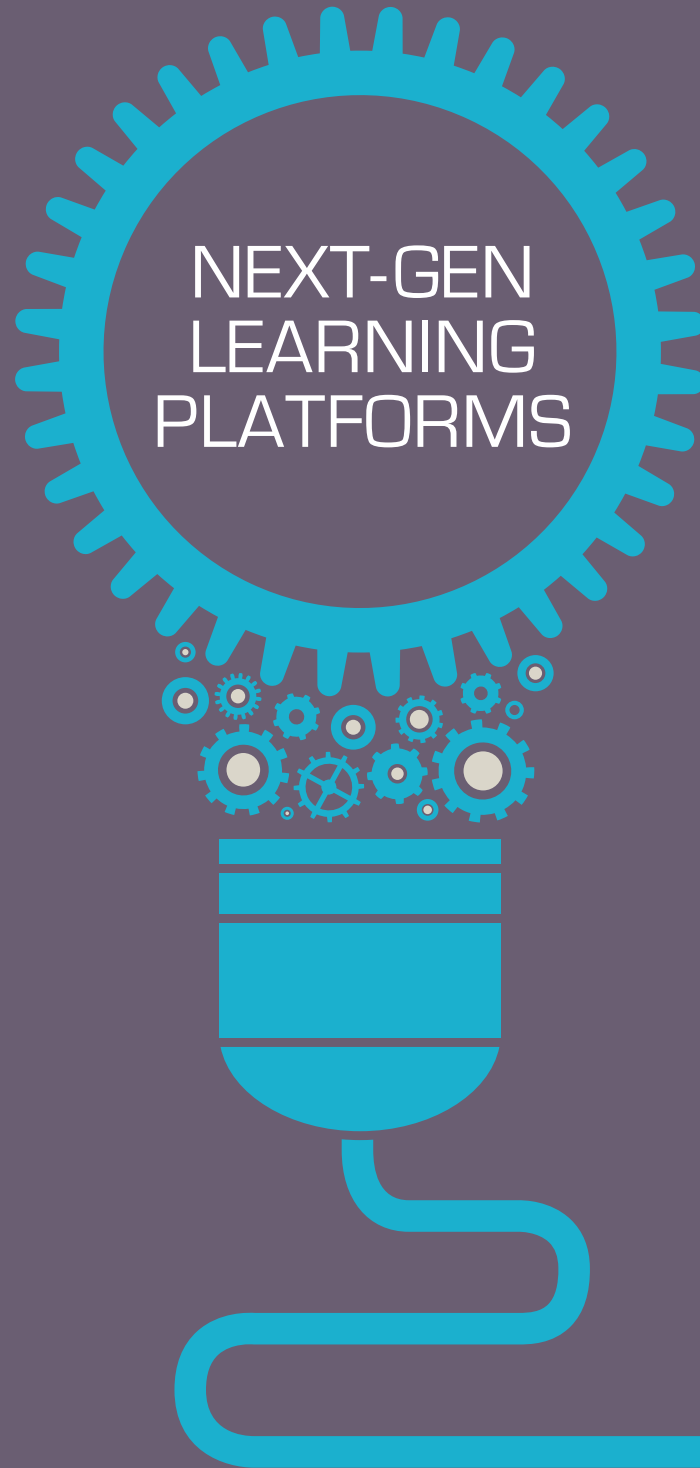


# GETTING SMART ON



PUBLISHED BY:



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# Introduction

Authored by Getting Smart Staff

With digital conversions well underway in K-12 schools, a variety of instructional tools are being adopted, including learning management systems (LMS). However, the long and varied shifts from group instruction to personalized learning—and from age cohorts to individual progressions—make it hard for EdTech entrepreneurs to match their product roadmap to emerging customer requirements.

As a result, it's harder than it should be to create an effective sequence of learning experiences in K-12. Three primary reasons exist: 1) Weak demand articulation 2) Historic underinvestment and 3) Well-intentioned federal, state and philanthropic projects have chilled investment and delayed progress.

But progress can be seen on a dozen fronts. Next generation learning grant programs like [Next Generation Learning Challenge](#) and [Race to the Top District](#) as well as collaborations like [Digital Promise](#) are building the demand for personalized learning platforms. Legacy platforms are updating, social learning platforms are adding enterprise features, and school networks are building platforms aligned with next-gen environments. Recommendation engines and learner profiles power adaptive learning.

The explosion of mobile apps suggests that it may not be a unitary platform that anchors learning ecosystems; instead, it may be an app store and a set of interoperability standards that promote a plug and play learning world.

Dashboards that sit on top of LMS and related applications promote personal growth space for developments in modular mobile learning, quantified self, peer and social supports, game-based strategies and learner analytics. Ashley Bryan, Director of Planning and Special Projects with [Dallas ISD](#) mentioned they also look for platforms that are aligned to student interests and inspiration.

Next generation schools are creating powerful learning opportunities for students. Next-gen learning platforms help to fuel personalized and blended learning, create access to rich content, support project-based learning and standards-aligned work and to connect students with parents, teachers and mentors. With increasing Internet access, less expensive mobile devices and exploding options, schools and districts have to make informed decisions about learning platforms that will help fuel powerful learning experiences for students.

Most forward-leaning districts and school developers want a platform that:

- Powers and tracks personal learning plans;
- Manages assignments and dynamic grouping;
- Supports development of standards-aligned projects;
- Makes it easy to combine proprietary, open, district and teacher-developed content;
- Combines formative assessments in a standards-based gradebook;
- Incorporates social, collaborative, productivity and presentation tools;
- Integrates with other systems, provides single sign-on for lots of apps, and
- Connect students, parents and teachers anywhere on any device.

For Dallas ISD, according to Bryan, what's important is, "Alignment to standards at the state level. On the content side, it's important that platforms are adaptive as we move towards personalized learning. Rigor, inspiration, and relevance to student interests too."

Schools need to understand the options, learn about the qualities and characteristics of platforms and best determine the fit for their students, parents and teachers. Brian Blanton Instructional Technology Coordinator for [Henry Country Schools](#) in Georgia said, "The most important step in making an informed decision about learning platforms is to determine what it is that we really need." He added, "Based on this, we look for the available learning platforms that can enable the learning experiences we value."

Well-intentioned districts like Dallas ISD have teacher feedback loops with focus groups and surveys. But lack formal processes for understanding student preferences when it comes to selecting platforms.

As schools adopt digital tools and blended strategies, most will choose a learning platform, and many will become part of a network or user group associated with a platform. With more than 200 learning platforms to choose from, making an informed decision is vital to the future success of learning.

When choosing a learning platform, schools and districts should:

- **Start with learning goals.** As noted in the [Blended Learning Implementation Guide](#), starting with a clear picture of student learning goals and desired learning experiences proves key. With student experience in mind, school teams can make informed decisions about school models and learning progressions. These decisions provide the context for an informed platform decision. Brian Blanton Instructional Technology Coordinator for [Henry Country Schools](#) in Georgia added, "The most important step in making an informed decision about learning platforms is to determine what it is that we really need. While it is important for educational leaders to be well informed about what's available in the market it is even more important that we begin the selection process knowing the instructional need this acquisition will address in terms of our vision for student learning experiences, the instructional models we are supporting, input representing all stakeholders, and data that helps inform the decision."
- **Understand the range of use.** For any large district or network, schools and groups of teachers will land at different points on the transition scale to personalized, blended and competency-based learning. A platform should be flexible enough to support several -use cases on the journey.
- **Develop a selection team.** During the selection process working with a team of stakeholders to make an informed decision for your school or district will prove useful and increase your chances of successfully choosing the correct platform. "Our goal is to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in the selection process so we develop teams that include teachers, counselors, parents, school administrators, district administrators, and other concerned parties. This team actively seeks input from the larger learning community," said Blanton.
- **Identify what services & features matter.** Data sharing, open design, device agnostic, interoperability and customer support are several of the most important features according to our interviews.
- **Develop selection criteria.** Developing selection criteria will be beneficial in order to ensure that all platforms are equally evaluated during the selection process. Here is an example of Henry County's most recent acquisition criteria:
  - Platform that is open – customizable
  - Fits our vision for student learning experiences
  - Aligns well with our competencies
  - Proven vendor track record
  - User friendly
  - Affordable

- **Consider total cost.** It's worth trying to consider and compare full lifecycle costs including devices, content, services and training.
- **Pick a partner.** As suggested in the [Smart Series Guide to EdTech Procurement](#), consider not only the features, but also the trajectory. "With hardware you get what you buy; with software you're going to get what it becomes over time," says Rob Waldron, CEO of [Curriculum Associates](#). When picking a platform, you're picking a partner for your blended learning journey. Thus, make sure they're headed in the same direction at the same speed. Get references, and establish a relationship with the platform's community manager or staff.

As technology creates more change, so will the platforms that support the most powerful learning. They will adapt to meet the needs of schools, students, teachers and families. While there may not be one learning platform that does it all, making informed decisions proves critical for schools and districts.

### Platform Overview

Based on the informal research conducted, Getting Smart has put together an overview of the companies profiled within this report. These descriptions, customer highlights and product strengths and weaknesses are based on our team's research and opinions and are not exhaustive and are meant to provide a snapshot of the platform.

Platform	Description	Customers	Product Strength/Weakness
<b>Edsby</b>	Ontario-based; K-12 designed; focus; mobile; social & personalized	US/Canada districts including Hillsborough FL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Course planning; affordable (\$4/std), Google/Office integration</li> <li>- Gradebook update in September 2015</li> </ul>
<b>itslearning</b>	Norway-based; started in HigherEd; designed for blended learning	US district users include Forsyth GA, Houston TX, Minneapolis MN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Course planning; automatic reporting and grading; strong parent view</li> <li>- Reporting update and Microsoft OneNote integration planned</li> </ul>
<b>Realizeit</b>	Dublin-based; adaptive learning platform ; usually augments an LMS	HigherEd CTE programs including UT system, UCF, Indiana University and high school pilots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Ingests content, creates adaptive competency-based sequence, improves over time</li> <li>- Less flexible for teacher-led units, complements an LMS</li> </ul>

Platform	Description	Customers	Product Strength/Weakness
<b>Milepost, Silverback Learning</b>	Boise-based; instructional improvement system leveraging Gooru content	Widely used in Idaho and Intermountain West; newer adoptions in West Allis WI, Santa Ana CA, El Paso TX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Launched by superintendent and powers personalization with or without RTI; big OER library</li> <li>- Not full feature LMS but leverages NWEA and Gooru</li> </ul>
<b>PEAK, Fuel Education</b>	Personalized Learning Platform that updates LMS/SIS	Specialized use in US Districts. Examples include: <a href="#">Evergreen WA</a> and <a href="#">Poudre CO</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Big content library including OER and teacher created content; Learn Bop 5-9 math tutoring, integrates with existing district system</li> <li>- Complements a full LMS</li> </ul>
<b>Fishtree</b>	Dublin-based learner relationship management and learning platform	Initial focus was K-12, growing in HigherEd. Solution for educators in blended, flipped, and project-based classrooms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Ingests content, creates adaptive sequence, improves over time</li> <li>- Less flexible for teacher-led units, complements a full LMS</li> </ul>
<b>Alma</b>	Portland-based K-12 holistic student engagement platform including SIS. Main goal is to reclaim admin and instructional time	Independent, charter, and parochial schools; ECO Charter School in NJ, Creative Minds International Public Charter in DC, Howard Street Charter School in OR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Course planning, standards tracking; communication; has elem/secondary modules</li> <li>- No mobile version yet, student submissions not yet implemented</li> </ul>
<b>Edmodo</b>	K-12 focused free teacher-centered social learning platform with premium enterprise features including sign-on, assessment, and apps	51 million users. 39% of districts in CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Easy to make/manage assignments and share libraries; premium assessment and mastery tracking</li> <li>- Not a full LMS</li> </ul>
<b>Edgenuity</b>	LMS and robust content	Widely used in credit recovery; well know blended use in Carpe Diem network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Comprehensive secondary platform</li> <li>- Less flexible but beginning to accept outside content</li> </ul>
<b>Buzz, Agilix</b>	Personalized K-12 learning platform, updated in July	Districts focused on personalized learning, example: Michigan Education Achievement Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Support for project-based and competency-based learning</li> <li>- New product</li> </ul>

Platform	Description	Customers	Product Strength/Weakness
<b>Canvas, Instructure</b>	Salt Lake-based LMS with mastery view, mobile features & object repository	Fastest growing in HigherEd; as many K-12 customers; NC K-12 adoption	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Canvas.net for mini-MOOC; Canvas App Center</li> <li>- Well suited for high school, fewer elementary users</li> </ul>
<b>Schoology</b>	Full LMS; focus on communication, collaboration, engagement, and instruction	US K-12 focus; adopted by Delaware and Palo Alto CA; growing HigherEd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Easy integrations; mastery tracking; PBL and portfolio support; single sign-on</li> <li>- Doesn't come with OER</li> </ul>
<b>Gaggle</b>	Launched as safe email in '99, now full LMS with safety and privacy features	Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools in TN, Mountain Brook School System in AL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Safe Classroom filtering</li> <li>- Less mature blended solution; new gradebook and assignment management planned</li> </ul>
<b>Highlight, Education Elements</b>	Cloud based personalized learning platform	100 US K-12 schools serving more than 60,000 students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ Supports new instruction models with multiple digital content sources</li> <li>- Not a full LMS</li> </ul>

We welcome feedback on the information within this table. Please email suggestions or comments to [info@gettingsmart.com](mailto:info@gettingsmart.com) with Learning Platforms in the subject line.

# K-12 LMS Edsby, Designed For Scale, Aimed At EdTech Holy Grail

Authored by Getting Smart Staff

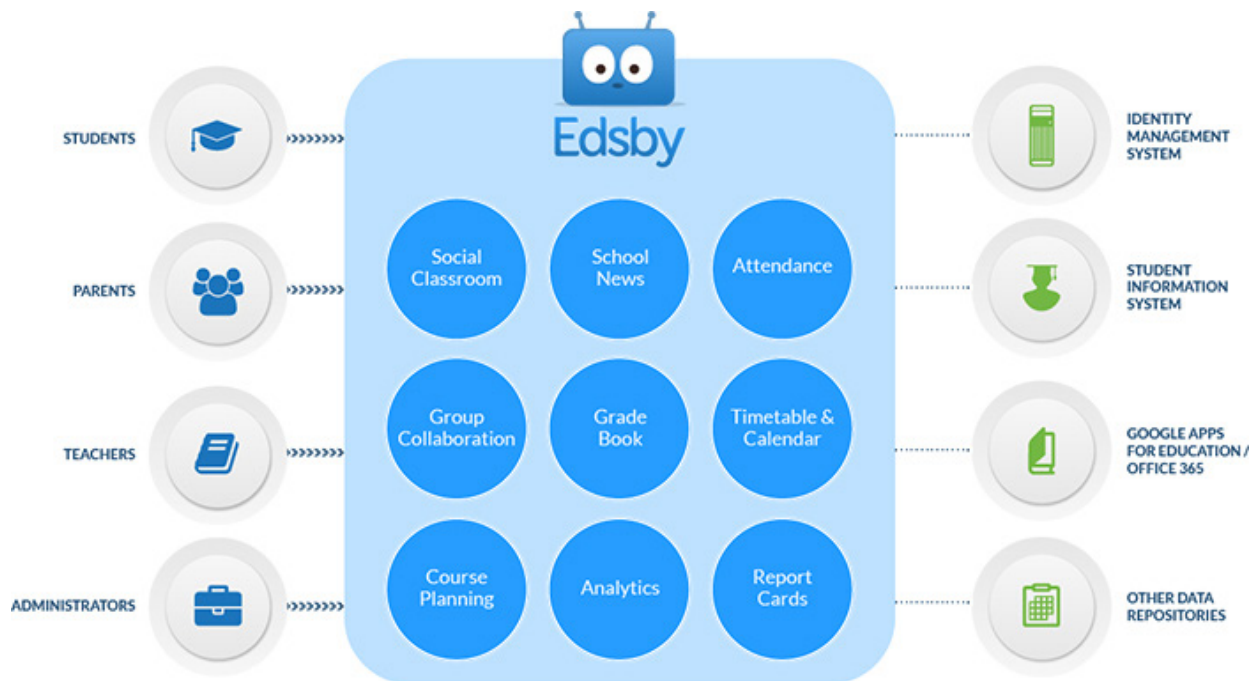
How many district-wide learning management systems (LMS) are purchased and rolled out with fanfare only to later go greatly unused?

Launched in Ontario in 2010, Edsby aims at the EdTech holy grail—a great learning platform for K-12 schools that has become popular with students and parents yet lets districts enforce policies and regional educational standards. Built by the enterprise technologists that developed the FirstClass email and groupware system still popular in K-12, the founders know scalable, reliable, backend systems.

According to Scott Welch, VP Sales, the core premise of Edsby (or the CoreFour platform) is “mobile and personalized,” because that’s what students and parents demand these days. “Teachers can’t be expected to be technology integrators,” said Welch. Edsby has been designed for school-wide and district-wide use, and it supports all the integrations necessary to support high utilization rates.

The nine core features include: social classroom, school news, attendance, group collaboration, gradebook, report cards, timetable and calendar, course planning and analytics.

Last January, the company announced it had concluded a round of funding, led by MindAngler Capital and supported by Nancy Knowlton and David Martin, co-founders of SMART Technologies. Formed in 2010, the company has about 20 employees. Renowned educational researcher Michael Fullan recently joined the board—another signal that these guys are serious about learning.





Not a higher education retrofit, Edsby was designed for K-12 schools. Users include U.S. and Canadian public and private schools. Hillsborough Florida, the largest district customer, adopted Edsby in 2013 for its more than a quarter of a million users. [More than 80 percent of staff members use the platform.](#) Almost two-thirds of students logged in last month.

Even though the platform was designed for mobile use, Welch finds recent use stats surprising. In Hillsborough, 47 percent of usage is mobile only; only 9 percent use the web app primarily. Parental use proves almost exclusively mobile.

The student view resembles the familiar Facebook feed. Parents can log in and see the same view as students do.

Course planning makes it easy for teachers to build standards-aligned tasks and projects as well as to make and manage assignments.

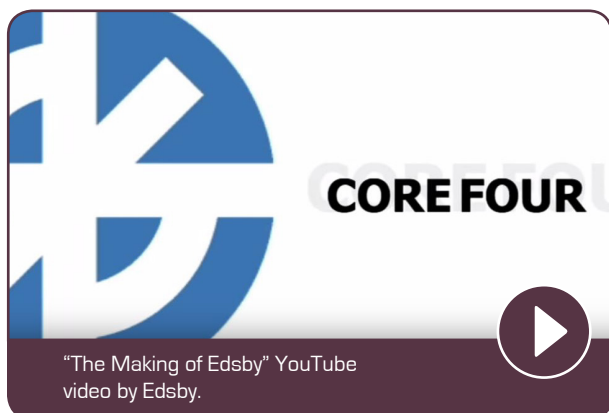
With an update in the fall of 2015, the Edsby gradebook will be more standards-based. In addition to content knowledge, it currently allows teachers to assess work skills such as initiative, collaboration and self-regulation.

Welch said that priorities include “building capacity and collaboration.” Edsby auto populates groups from districts’ existing systems and makes it easy for educators to build professional learning communities.

Teachers can capture private observations and selectively share those with other teachers. Students can also add artifacts to their portfolio to be shared privately with their teachers and parents.

After initial integration, the platform is priced from \$4 per student and staff account per year. Parent accounts are free.

Edsby demonstrates strong integration with Google Drive, Office 365 and existing district-wide user authentication and student information systems.



# Euro-favorite itslearning Powers Growing Number of U.S. Districts

Authored by Getting Smart Staff

Class of 1998 students at [Bergen University College](#) on the western coast of Norway were puzzled that teachers rarely used digital tools and the Internet. So they built a learning platform for their final project; consequently, the university became the first customer of [itslearning](#).

Our team really started paying attention to itslearning when [Forsyth County Georgia](#) picked up the platform. Then [Houston ISD](#) selected it after a [thoughtful procurement process](#).

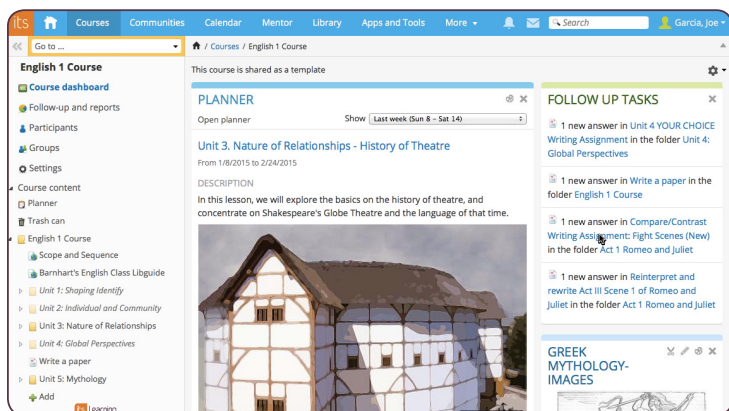
Travis Willard, President of U.S. operations for itslearning, is based in Newton, Massachusetts. Lisa Dubernard, Director of Education Strategy, works in the Atlanta office. They both proved helpful in our exploration of the popular European platform.

**Standard-linked resources.** itslearning comes pre-loaded with learning objectives from [Academic Benchmarks](#). Schools can create and upload localized learning or professional development standards of their choice.

With a [library](#) of internal and published content, itslearning promotes reuse. The customizable [course planner](#) allows a curriculum department to align lessons, resources and assessments to multiple standards. Teachers can use [course templates](#) to find and modify courses. They gain insight using a [learning objectives progress report](#).

The coolest feature? Dubernard thinks it's the curriculum planner that allows teachers (and students) to create content.

**Personal learning plans.** Individual Learning Plans (ILP) can be used for students or for faculty members to keep track of progress towards goals, and they can be used outside of the context of an individual course. Users with mentor permissions can create individual learning plans. The user in the mentor role manages the ILP, but course teachers and parents can view these plans. ILP can be saved as templates and shared as templates with a school—or the entire district. (For more on ILP, [see this video](#).)



Teacher assignments drive the platform. Resources for the student come from the library through a [recommendation engine](#). Teachers can select which resource to assign to which student and also assign a follow-up task to see if they can now meet the objective. But the platform does not set up individualized playlists of digital content.

Dubernard calls it “a blended learning platform” because of the ability to

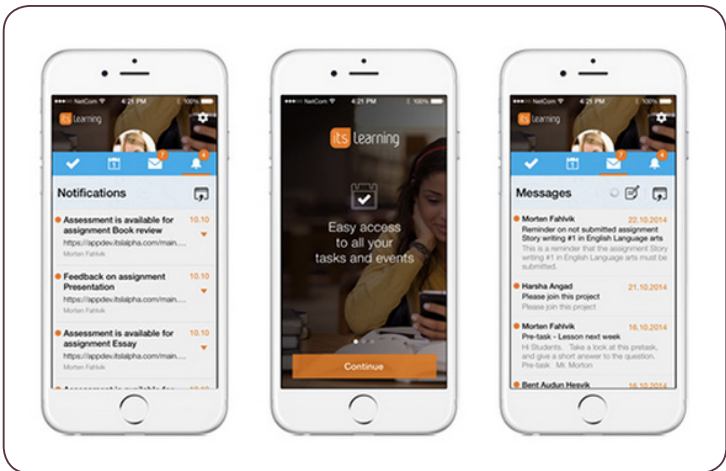
create and manage many different kinds of learning experiences for groups and individual students. “There is a focus on collaborating and creating rather than just consuming,” she says. The platform supports online course delivery, but that is not a focus.

**Manages assessments.** itslearning gives an assessment author the ability to map an item to a standard or to multiple standards. An assessment (test, assignment with rubric or custom activity) can also be related to a specific unit and lesson in the course planner.

Assessment results feed into the course’s Learning Objectives Progress Report. As students are assessed using standards-aligned rubrics and test questions, teachers can see in the learning objective progress report who has—and who hasn’t—mastered objectives. Teachers can assign a personalized task to students who have not yet mastered a standard.

For written and project-based work, students can submit content as a Google or Office 365 doc. Students and teachers can also attach files to the assessment record and the working portfolio.

**Standards-based gradebook.** A standards mastery report presents each student’s progression towards mastery, but that is not linked to the gradebook; that functionality typically becomes part of the integration between itslearning and the district’s SIS.



Parents can log in and see learning objectives, tasks, resources and portfolio. To protect privacy, they cannot access the discussion boards.

The Houston ISD deployment include importing curriculum for 220 courses (see [more on the HUB](#) built on itslearning). Many districts also use the platform for PD.

The product roadmap shows further integration of web apps including Microsoft OneNote. Reporting systems will continue to evolve.

# Realizelt Can Make Your Program Adaptive

Authored by Getting Smart Staff

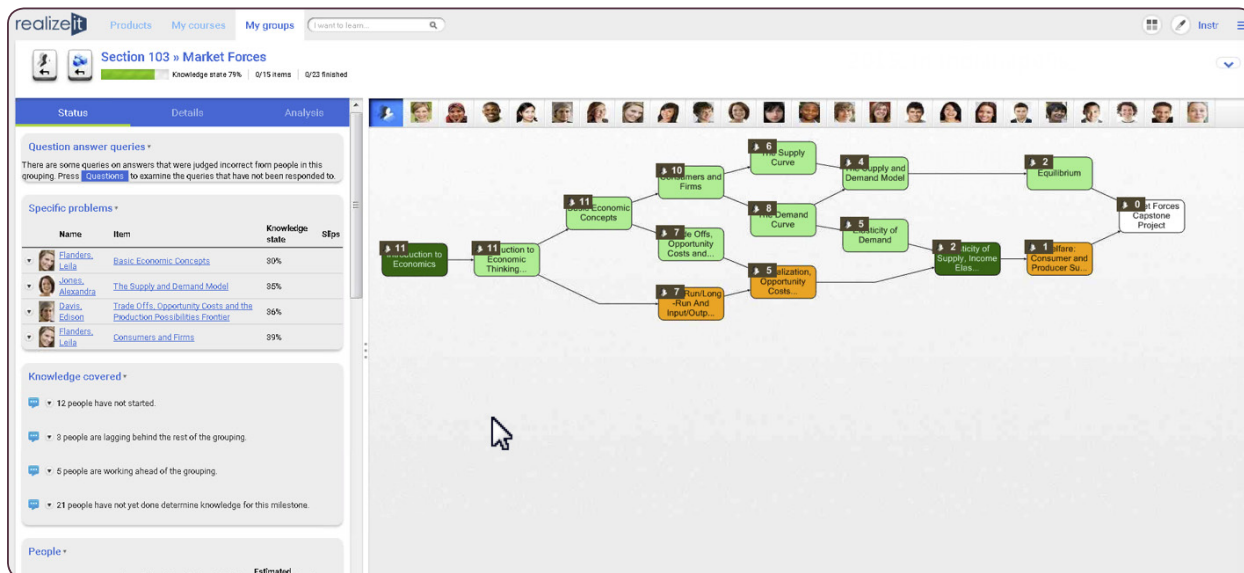
Imagine a platform that would turn static content into an adaptive sequence, and one that would get smarter with increased use.

Realizelt, based in Dublin, Ireland, and Chicago, can semi-automatically ingest almost any form of learning content and can, with a little coaching, identify prerequisite relationships and build a competency-based sequence of granular learning nodes with assessment gateways.

David Collery, Founder of Realizelt, spent 14 years teaching mathematics in inner-city Dublin schools. His first startup provides scheduling software still used by all schools in Ireland. Eight years ago, he co-founded CCKF, the company behind Realizelt, with Frank Claffey, another teacher and software developer, and John Keane, Chief Technology Officer.

CEO Manoj Kulkarni was the CTO at Career Education Corporation, the first big customer of the adaptive platform, implementing the system in schools including CTU and AIU.

The platform has been designed to provide a personalized learning experience. The platform aims to deliver learning at an appropriate time, using appropriate material. The platform learns about each learner with use, and it also provides analytics to support faculty and the institution.



Each module of content has associated assessment items. Many forms of content come with assessment (e.g., questions at the end of a chapter), but Realizelt also assesses at the individual node level. Instructors can also create assessment items from a variety of templates, including multiple choice, fill in the blank, manipulation and constructed response, building question templates that can generate multiple versions of each question. Project-Based Learning and authentic assessment receive support from rubric templates. After initial setup, the system searches for the most effective questions to ask.

The platform calculates a probability distribution for each content module from zero to 100 percent assurance of knowledge. The system navigates students through the content, based on the probabilities to serve precise learning at the point of need. Data from each student who interacts with the system provides the instructor with an understanding of how the course runs and the effectiveness of the content.

Chief Product Officer Claffey declares the platform content agnostic, saying it works in any subject domain. Having been piloted in sequential subjects like math, it is now successfully used in over 100 courses including English composition, sociology and psychology.

Realizelt has course-building tools for the intrepid instructor who wants to develop content. Instructors and students can add content, worked examples and questions.

Student and educator dashboards track competencies. Both benefit from learning analytics in real time. Realizelt is a cloud-based platform that provides the user with both mobile and browser base experiences.

Realizelt can run on top of a legacy learning management system. For a new program, it could take the place of an LMS. Realizelt can export to a gradebook, ePortfolios and business intelligence systems through LTI integration, an API or a data export.

More than 50,000 students are enrolled in 300,000-plus courses on Realizelt. The UT System will soon pilot the platform in a competency-based health care degree in one of their schools.. In addition to UT, Colorado Technical Institute and American InterContinental University, Realizelt has been rolled out in Bay Path University and is involved in pilot programs at Indiana, Central Florida and Western universities. Soon, the system will also pilot at the K-12 level.

# Mileposts from Silverback Learning Powers Personalization

Authored by Getting Smart Staff

Work over time equals power. Dr. Jim Lewis, CEO of Silverback Learning Solutions, taught students this basic equation as a high school physics teacher. Later, as superintendent of Idaho's Blaine County Schools, that equation would help Dr. Lewis create a next generation learning platform, Mileposts.

"Like so many districts," Lewis says, "our demographics were changing from five percent English Language Learners to over 30 percent, and we had to figure out a way to maintain a high-performing district without leaving these new kids and their parents behind." Dr. Lewis and his team wanted to make sure every student had a personalized plan of action, every teacher had a quick way to access all available data to make critical decisions and every parent had the opportunity to become part of the process. The team enlisted software engineers to encapsulate the process into cloud-based portfolios that could follow each student through their K-12 learning journey. The plan worked, and achievement soared—for all students.

"Now everyone calls it next generation learning, but we were just doing whatever we could as educators to help every student reach [his or her] full potential every day, to see that work over time could equal power," says Marcia Rausch, Director of Client Services at Silverback and a 30-year educator who proved integral to the team at Blaine.

Dr. Lewis retired from Blaine and arranged a technology transfer arrangement with the school district to launch Silverback Learning Solutions. Educators joined the Silverback team and guided new features like progress monitoring with growth projections. Silverback worked with nonprofit partners NWEA and Gooru to give teachers a quick way to use assessment results to drive standards-based Open Educational Resources. They created a behavior management module to integrate socio-emotional elements into student plans and interventions.

The screenshot displays the Mileposts software interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Reports', 'Manage', 'Tools', 'Resources', and 'Admin'. Below this is a breadcrumb trail: 'Reports Home > Reports > NWEA Math Class Summary'. The main content area shows a table titled 'NWEA Math Summary' with columns for 'Action', 'Firstname', 'Lastname', 'Grade', 'RIT', and 'Percentile'. A modal window is open over the table, showing a detailed view for a student with a score of 240. The modal is titled 'Mathematics' and 'Goal: Data Analysis and Probability'. It lists 'Skills and Concepts to Develop (50% Probability)' with an 'RIT Score Range: 231 - 240'. The skills listed include 'Data Collection, Display, and Analysis' (with sub-points: 'Determines appropriate intervals and/or scale for a bar graph', 'Interprets data given in horizontal and vertical bar graphs to solve problems', 'Interprets data given in tables to solve problems', 'Organizes data using tables') and 'Probability' (with sub-points: 'Determines sample space given probability of all possible outcomes', 'Determines the possible outcomes for a simple probability experiment using dart boards', 'Uses the results of probability experiments or events to predict future events'). To the right of the modal, there is a 'Data Analysis / Probability' table with columns for 'RIT' and 'Goal Descriptor', showing a range from 240 to 221.

Firstname	Lastname	Grade	RIT	Percentile	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Jerold	Schmid	4	237	96
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Wesley	Goodrow	4	225	81
<input type="checkbox"/>	Emmie	Aaron	4	236	95
<input type="checkbox"/>	Anja	Mearns	4	214	54
<input type="checkbox"/>	Modesto	Seidel	4	219	68
<input type="checkbox"/>	Emerson	Richards	4	219	68
<input type="checkbox"/>	Millard	Hatton	4	217	63
<input type="checkbox"/>	Omer	Lyke	4	217	63
<input type="checkbox"/>	Julius	McFalls	4	215	57
<input type="checkbox"/>	Felipe	Garces	4	221	73

Mileposts, according to Lewis, answers the question, "Now that you have data, what are you going to do about it?" It helps teachers create individualized assignments and group interventions.

More than 100 districts in 19 states use Mileposts, including districts supporting 45 percent of Idaho's students.

The screenshot shows the Mileposts software interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'Reports', 'Manage', 'Tools', 'Resources', and 'Admin'. Below this is a sub-menu with 'Reports Home', 'Student Information', 'RTI / Educational Support', 'State Assessments Results', and 'District Assessments / Benchmarks'. The main content area is titled 'Interventions By School > School Intervention Listing' and 'School Intervention Listing at City Side Elementary'. There are radio buttons for 'All', 'Open', and 'Closed', and checkboxes for 'Tier 1', 'Tier 2', and 'Tier 3'. A table lists student intervention records with columns for Firstname, Lastname, Author, Grade, Plan, Area, Intervention, Strategies, Tier, and Start.

Firstname	Lastname	Author	Grade	Plan	Area	Intervention	Strategies	Tier	Start
Tawnya	Arbogast	Sales Demo	K	ELP	Language Acquisition	Language Acquisition support provided by classroom teachers	Parapro assistance in the classroom	1	9/14/2014
Mauro	Arno	Sales Demo	K	ELP	Language Acquisition	Language Acquisition support provided by classroom teachers	Parapro assistance in the classroom	1	9/14/2014
Lee	Becker	Sales Demo	2	GES	Reading	Instructional Strategies	Differentiated instruction	1	9/17/2014
Dion	Bentley	Sales Demo	1	GES	Reading	Instructional Strategies	Computer assisted instructional programs	1	9/21/2014
Avery	Brinker	Sales Demo	K	ELP	Social / Emotional / Behavior, Language Acquisition	Language Acquisition support provided by classroom teachers	Parapro assistance in the classroom	1	9/14/2014
Deidra	Brunetti	Sales Demo	1	GES	Reading	Instructional Strategies	Computer assisted instructional programs	1	9/18/2014
Aliza	Cormack	Sales Demo	4	GES	Other	Differentiated Grouping	Individual or small group assistance with a paraprofessional	1	9/9/2014

Silverback’s approach from its genesis—as student portfolios built to foster achievement by revealing relevant data to stakeholders, including parents—proves different than many systems that have evolved from school and classroom tools in the learning management and gradebook space. “We call it longitudinal learning,” says Lewis, “It’s the focus from day to day, month to month, year to year that brings the achievement gains.”

Schools use Mileposts to create personalized learning plans, manage interventions, monitor achievement and gain insights to improve instruction targeting groups and individual students. Mileposts relies on external interfaces for assessments, assignments and attendance. They integrate with most leading student information systems.

Notable district adopters include Santa Ana California, West Allis Wisconsin, Great Falls Montana and Connecticut’s Capitol Region Education Council.

Bonneville Joint School District in Idaho uses Mileposts to support teachers in identifying middle school low-growth students on district benchmark measures. Through the intervention function in Mileposts, they served low-growth students with differentiated instruction; 77 percent of students progressed to proficiency.

Converse County School District in Wyoming used Mileposts as an early literacy booster. The district cites an improvement of more than 200 percent in K-2 student proficiency in 2014 curriculum-based measures of reading from winter to spring. West-Allis West-Milwaukee Wisconsin contracted with Silverback to bring the embodiment of the district-wide vision of personalized student-led learning.

Roscoe ISD in Texas collaborates with Silverback on an innovative Project-Based Learning portfolio for their Early College High School students. Dr. Kim Alexander, Superintendent, says, “For higher expectations to become a reality, teachers need more than data; they need to know where students are in relation to objectives and how to customize learning for each student. I think Silverback came along in the right place at the right time to become a game changer.”

# PEAK by Fuel Education

Authored by Getting Smart Staff

Fuel Education (FuelEd) supports blended learning partnerships with school districts. The organization offers a big library of online courses and the PEAK personalized learning platform. Staff members can train your teachers or provide online teachers for any subject.

We took a look at PEAK as part of our series on #LearningPlatforms. Rather than being a full learning management system (LMS), PEAK exists as a dashboard that provides an up-to-date and personalized experience for administrators, teachers and students. FuelEd uses PEAK with Blackboard, but it integrates with other LMS and SIS.

Mike DePalma, Senior Director of Product Management, calls PEAK a “productivity platform” because it give learners more control and makes it easier for teachers to administer. A personalization engine makes it simple to modify courses with content and assessments to differentiate instruction. Interactive dashboards record progress and provide quick access to student and teacher tools.

With a built-in response to a big increase in district-delivered online learning, PEAK allows teachers to choose from an extensive library of proprietary content as well as open education resources, including Khan Academy, Britannica School and YouTube. Content authoring tools make it easy for teachers to build courses from scratch.

An assessment builder allows teachers to construct a quiz by subject, level and standards.

New modules and assessments also can be easily incorporated into existing courses.

All of the middle school content has been updated using mobile-friendly responsive design elements. Middle school content also includes LearnBop, a math tutoring system for grades five through nine. High school content has also been updated; it will soon include LearnBop and be mobile-friendly.

Teachers can monitor learning activity (e.g., when a student starts a module, watches a video) and easily monitor academic health including pace, progress, performance and mastery.

Interventions can be planned based on students who show signs of speeding up, being idle, falling behind, struggling, underperforming, acting disengaged and failing. Teachers can develop program-specific rules to address specific challenges (e.g., disengaged students who may drop out).

Assessment results yield mastery dashboards by subskill. Most districts will translate results to a traditional gradebook, but the progress monitoring tools appear to be a good step toward a competency-based learning solution.

**District partners.** FuelEd works with more than 2,000 school districts including:

- Evergreen Public Schools in Vancouver, Washington uses FuelEd for credit recovery, world language and blended learning.
- Middle School 385 in New York uses LearnBop as a personalized in-class online tutoring program to help students master mathematics concepts, resulting in dramatically improved state math exam scores.



- [Poudre School District Global Academy](#) is a blended K-12 school that has achieved one of the top growth scores in the state of Colorado.
- [St. Louis Public Schools](#) partners with FuelEd on credit recovery and dropout prevention.
- [Trigg County High School](#) uses FuelEd to extend learning opportunities during the year and throughout the summer. The state of Kentucky named the school a District of Innovation.

**Other fronts.** FuelEd partner [Middlebury Interactive](#) has seen strong growth in world language enrollment. This month Middlebury released [digital curriculum](#) and professional development resources for English Language Learners, which will be available to FuelEd district partners through PEAK.

FuelEd enjoys a strong relationship with online special needs provider [PresenceLearning](#), a Getting Smart Advocacy Partner.

The partnership supports live online speech therapy, online occupational therapy and other special education-related services. Soon, PresenceLearning will also be accessible through PEAK.

Last month FuelEd released a white paper, [How to Successfully Scale Personalized Learning: Six Key Lessons from Effective Programs](#), exploring how schools and districts not only implement online and blended learning programs to address students' individual needs, but how they also successfully scale the personalized learning experience delivered through those programs. In addition to the paper, an infographic [Powerful Partnerships to Boost Personalized Learning](#) illustrates key benefits of personalized learning and of working with partners to build those programs.



# Fishtree: Learner Profiles Drive Adaptive Learning

Authored by Getting Smart Staff

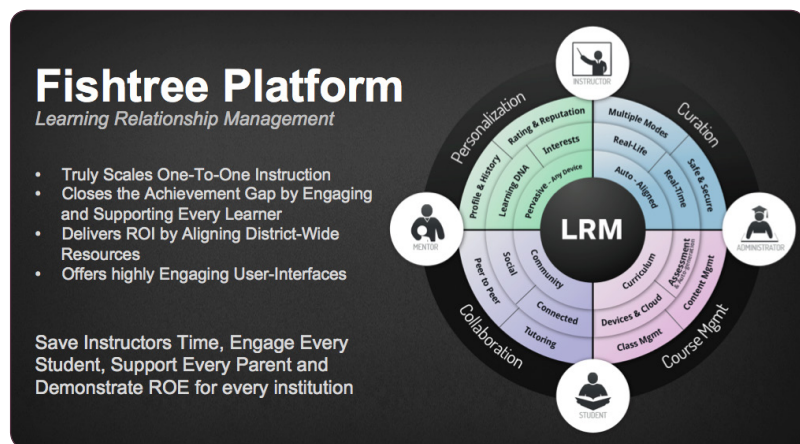
After years as a publishing, EdTech and software executive Terry Nealon had a vision that learning could be better for students and teachers. He believed a smart platform would make it easier for teachers to create compelling experiences, and a student profile could help individualize learning.

In 2012, with former colleague Jim Butler, Nealon co-founded [Fishtree](#), the first learning relationship management (LRM) platform. It combines content from any source and type mode, automatically aligns to standards, and delivers it on any device in ways unique to each learner, based on his or her learning preferences.

Like [Realizeit](#), another innovative adaptive platform, Fishtree was founded in Dublin. The company focused on the market and impact opportunity in the U.S., and based on this, Nealon relocated the three-year-old company to Washington, D.C. Nealon says:

*“We scale 1:1 instruction with adaptive instruction driven by learner profiles. Fishtree brings together resources for every subject, aligns them to any standard or competency and then personalizes the experience based on specific learning profiles, while keeping in mind the user experience of the educator and administrator.”*

He realizes that an adaptive LRM involves a new approach. The platform can be used as a stand-alone learning environment or as a way to make a legacy platform adaptive.



A lesson-building module makes it easy to develop units by combining content from digital texts, user developed content and open resources. Teachers report 50 percent time savings on lesson preparation. Students see gains of more than 10 percent after three months.

Teachers can build their own assessments, draw from other assessments and auto-build assessments from content.

Nealon recognizes that implementation is key to improved outcomes. He says:

*“The standard of implementation across the industry is poor and is hampering the belief of educators that technology can deliver on its promises. Fishtree insists on minimum implementation requirements to support educators and does so on an ongoing basis to build partnerships with users.”*

While the initial focus has been K-12, Nealon says, "HigherEd is outpacing all our expectations." Programs associated with competency-based professional certifications have been particularly interested. Nealon continues, "Scaling personalized learning to support thousands of individual students simultaneously means every learner can learn at [his or her] own time and pass, according to [individual] needs and lifestyles."

Fishtree offers a highly engaging user interface. The teacher and student view both give notifications in the left column, while assignments and content appear in the right column. Content and functionality automatically adjust for any screen size, and data is presented in real-time. The interactive gradebook allows teachers to identify gaps and remediate directly.

The recommendation engine, driven by a learner profile, queues resources that power performance, creating a unique learning pathway for every student.

Admins can see what works across the institution in terms of resources and content, and they can assess at the student level who appears to be on-track, off-track or advanced, helping to answer the question: "What's next?" Fishtree can integrate with pre-existing technology infrastructures including SIS, LMS, gradebooks, as well as reporting and analytic tools.



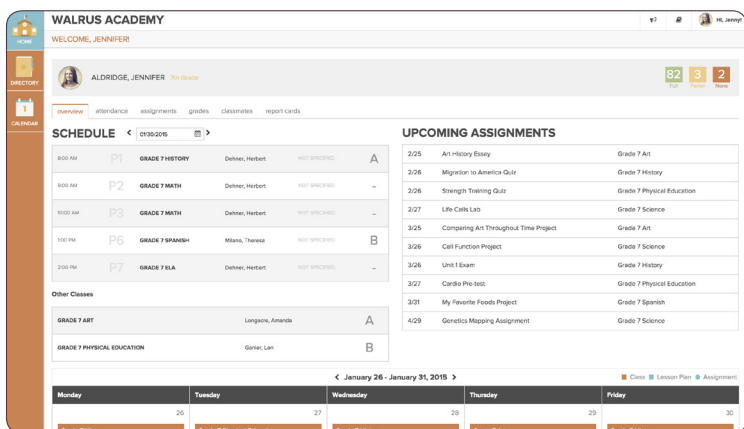
# Alma: A Holistic Student Engagement Platform

Authored by Tyler Nakatsu, Creative Content Coordinator + Managing Editor, Getting Smart

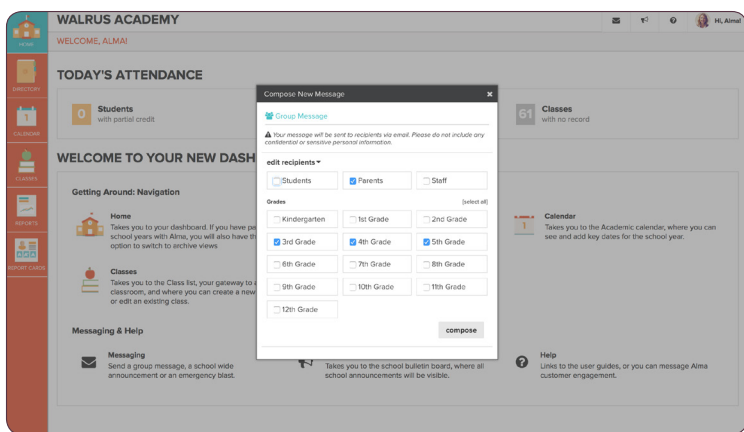
How do you handle a student’s data from registration through reporting, from the beginning of the academic journey in kindergarten all the way through graduation? And is it possible to combine this solution with student learning? These questions drove a group of former educators to create [Alma](#).

As a student information system (SIS) mixed with a learning management system (LMS), Alma mainly aims to reclaim administrative and instructional time for schools and districts balancing multiple systems.

Launched in early 2014 and headquartered in Portland, Oregon, Alma dubs itself “K-12’s first holistic student engagement platform.” It uses “holistic” because of its comprehensive approach to student learning and data that provides users with access, as well as its ability to create a myriad of student data and information sets. The platform has been built around a core communication component.



**Social.** As Alma bridges the gap between an SIS and LMS, a ubiquitous communication system becomes available in every view for students, teachers, parents and administrators alike. Users can communicate directly while logged into Alma and can also choose their preferred method for real-time notifications: email or SMS and voice for emergency alerts. The “Notes” feature allows staff members to create qualitative and anecdotal information to share between colleagues. Messages typically reserved for a school newsletter can quickly be posted on the “Bulletin Board,” and “Reminders” are linked to a shared calendar, allowing for synced organization of assignments. This social and collaborative function proves one essential [next-gen element for learning platforms](#).



**Gradebook.** Alma combines multiple modalities and sources of formative assessment, from traditional to competency-based, and achievement analytics feature data visualization. For student reporting, templates are

Student	% of final grade	12/15	01/27	03/25	03/25	04/28	05/25	06/04	Category Totals		
		Place Value - Introduction	Time of Year	Place Value Assessment	Indices or Cardinality?	Measure Around the Room	What's the Time?	Time Assessment	Classwork	Test	Final
Bhargava, Elijah	12%	4 (92%)	4 (92%)	4 (92%)	4 (92%)	-	-	-	4 (92%)	4 (92%)	4 (92%)
Chadha, Nico	30%	3 (90%)	3 (90%)	3 (90%)	3 (90%)	-	-	-	3 (90%)	3 (90%)	3 (90%)
Heller-Sanchez, Eris	48%	3 (88%)	4 (91%)	4 (91%)	3 (88%)	-	-	-	4 (91%)	3 (88%)	4 (91%)
Jacku, Dean	84%	3 (84%)	4 (91%)	3 (84%)	4 (91%)	-	-	-	3 (84%)	3 (84%)	4 (91%)
Kamat, Hayley	88%	3 (88%)	3 (88%)	3 (88%)	-	-	-	-	3 (88%)	3 (88%)	3 (88%)
McKee, Michael	30%	4 (92%)	3 (88%)	4 (92%)	4 (92%)	-	-	-	3 (88%)	4 (92%)	4 (92%)
Salazar, Rose	88%	4 (92%)	3 (88%)	3 (88%)	4 (92%)	-	-	-	4 (92%)	3 (88%)	4 (92%)

provided, as well as a custom report designing tool. Alma's visual learner profiles mainly stem from information submitted in the gradebook.

The platform offers four different user portals: admins, students, teachers and parents. The key difference between them is content access, maintaining a consistent user experience throughout.

The teacher has the freedom to curate content. The Scope & Sequence curriculum designer allows teachers to

embed content and to link to third-party sources. Assignments can be competency-based and aligned to Common Core State Standards. Curriculum, assignments and gradebooks remain flexible for traditional and standards.

Parents have access to student learner profiles that include calendars, classes, attendance records, assignments and statuses.

Admins who are generally district-level staff can access school reports plus a directory of students and guardians. Admins have access to state reporting, report cards and student learner profiles.

Teachers, admins and parents have access to snapshots of student performance and information. Alma's breadth of student data remains vast, from individual learning plans to health information.

**Price.** Depending on the school or district's needs, pricing can range from \$6-12 per student. In many cases, this provides a net savings by enabling the elimination of separate fees for LMS and niche communication tools. Alma provide discounts to financially-challenged schools for a year.

**Roadmap.** While the current platform is mobile-responsive, in the near future, users will be able to engage with the platform through an Alma app. The submission of students' work has not yet been

implemented, but the platform does enable students to access assignments via Google docs. Alma staff pinned this on the importance of students working with industry-relevant tools for discipline-specific work. Alma's near future plans also include services for teachers, including PD opportunities.



# Edmodo: A Platform Redefining Learning

Authored by Greg Garner, Instructional Technology Facilitator, Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools

In the upstart social learning space, many know one name better than most other long-established players: [Edmodo](#).

This platform has seen rapid growth and viral sharing amongst educators in a way that still warrants comparison by other startups. In their own words, Edmodo was “founded in Chicago, Illinois, when two school district employees set out to bridge the gap between how students live their lives and how they learn in school.”

Today, Edmodo is based in San Mateo, California. Thanks to the guidance and support of users from the beginning, many consider Edmodo the most preferred K-12 social learning network in the world, dedicated to connecting all learners with the people and resources they need to reach full potential. Edmodo has seen a meteoric rise in the first few years of the 21st century, but will it be able to build on its past success?

Here’s why I think the future of Edmodo looks bright:

**Learning Tool.** Edmodo stands out for its creativity and emphasis on social learning. Learning should not be done in isolation nor in silo, and Edmodo leverages real-time communication and collaboration to give students the support they need to master difficult concepts, complete assignments from their teachers and more. Students have a “one-stop shop” option for their learning needs, making for happier, more productive learners, maximizing efficiency and thus, increasing time spent actually learning.

**Relationships.** The true power of an educator doesn’t revolve around how well they deliver a lesson or how much



technology they use—or even how much they know about their content area. Great educators know how to contextualize to make meaning for their learners. They connect with students and deliver exactly what they need, when they need it. They build relationships and provide feedback.

In this regard, then, Edmodo really shines. Edmodo puts all of these opportunities at educators’ (and parents’!) fingertips. Through a social learning platform, Edmodo gives students the support required (not just as learners, but as developing children) to fully realize their potential. Educators can connect with



students via Edmodo and leverage the social nature of the platform to act as an advisory or homeroom, help with scheduling and overall guidance for decision-making and to provide relevant information to colleges or other services. And because parents have a place, too, an opportunity presents itself to close the conversation gap between home and school.

**Content.** Educators are inherently creative. They're also great at sharing what they've learned. Edmodo provides a platform for teachers and other content creators to share their best work. First-year teachers and seasoned veterans alike can use the open and tagged libraries to find just what they're looking for, then easily organizing their courses with everything they need being just a click away.

**Assessment.** Lest you think Edmodo is just a digital water cooler, be sure to check out the ways the services leverage assessment tools to provide options for educators looking to give or receive feedback related to their students' learning. Additionally, the platform has integrated quiz and test builders as well as a database of performance tasks and rubrics (including Common Core alignment). See? Data can be this easy to come by.

**Gradebook.** Edmodo has an integrated gradebook, allowing students, educators and parents to stay on the same page when it comes to student progress. To be sure, however, a gradebook is not just a static repository in which to collect scores of assignments gone by. With Edmodo, the gradebook is dynamic and changes as the students' performances do. It not only utilizes multiple sources of formative assessment, but it provides real-time achievement analytics and data visualization to help everyone really grasp how students perform.

**Profile & Portfolio.** Far too many tools in EdTech seem to focus on only the school year at hand. Edmodo, from the very beginning, wanted the service to be timely and relevant to the student's year-to-year progress. As such, they have made sure that the service provides a digital portfolio of student work, no matter if dealing with one class or 10, one semester or all of high school. This kind of comprehensive learner profile will become increasingly important as we begin to think about education not just in terms of what students know, but also what they can do.

**Personalization.** There is nothing quite so personal as learning. It is unique to each individual. Edmodo's flexibility and adaptability give students and educators alike the ability to quickly pivot based on the individual needs of a learner. Moving forward, we will see the answer to questions like, "What if a student could have a digital playlist of recommended learning experiences based on their learner profile?"

**Learning Management Tools.** Edmodo (quite famously) has positioned itself as something other than a learning management system (LMS). In her 2013 open letter to superintendents, Crystal Hutter, CEO, [notes](#) that even referring to the company's service as an LMS goes against its core values.

That being said, Edmodo gives many school districts pause and the opportunity to ask, "What do we want from our LMS? What should we want?" It may not be a learning management system in the traditional sense, but with its emphasis on badging/micro-credentialing, dynamic grouping, assignment management and a data visualization-driven gradebook, maybe it's time we all reframed our understanding of what learning management should be.

Edmodo is quietly, consistently positioning itself not only as the glue to hold your technology-enhanced learning initiatives together, but also as the rocket fuel needed to redefine what learning looks like now and in the future. Conferences like the [Florida Educational Technology Conference \(FETC\)](#) use Edmodo to connect presenters with their participants. School counselors also use Edmodo to connect with students and to provide timely information and services. Teachers and trainers use Edmodo within their

professional learning communities, in addition to their classrooms. Principals use Edmodo to create a shared workspace for their campuses. Central offices use it to keep their employees connected and productive. Edmodo represents what school productivity should be. It's what learning should look like.

**Price.** Edmodo recently announced a [new assessment feature, Snapshot](#). It remains free but there are new premium features.

**Edmodo Premium.** A new suite of premium tools includes:

- OpenMinds games, a suite of premium practice tools for students;
- Premium instructional tools, including unlimited Snapshot with progress monitoring;
- Instant PLCs makes it easy to create and manage professional learning networks;
- Insights for admins, and
- Prioritized support.

Premium services cost \$2,500 per school per year.

**Edmodo Sync.** Provides seamless integration into the district's user directories for single sign-on (SSO) and account management and into the district's Student Information System (SIS) for rostering and groups. Sync costs \$500 per school per year with volume discounts available.

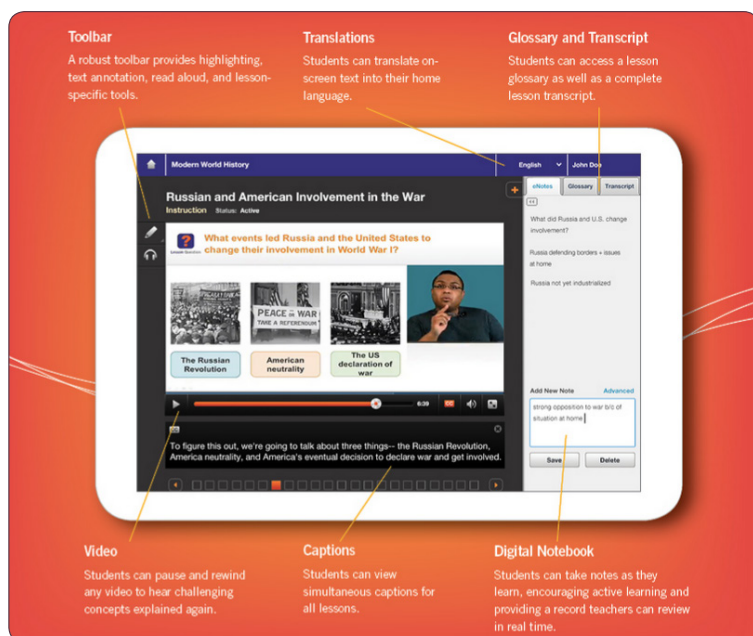
**Edmodo PD.** Want to learn what Edmodo has to offer? You can attend three live, virtual meetings and learn about the features available in both teacher and student accounts. Want more? Arrange a full day of in-person professional development with an Edmodo Certified Trainer for \$2,500.



# Edgenuity Provides Rich Student, Teacher Experience

Authored by Bonnie Lathram, Learner Experience Manager  
+ Contributing Author, Getting Smart

We recently had the opportunity to learn more about Edgenuity, an online content provider for middle and high school coursework. Edgenuity provides digital media rich content including videos, onscreen teachers and interactive learning tools (i.e. digital Post-its!) so that students can learn, capture, chat, share and discover.



Edgenuity proves a robust content platform that offers full credit-bearing courses based on state standards, and it has already developed custom courses in 30 different states to align with specific state standards. They also offer professional development and onsite coaching for teachers, including PD on best practices in blended learning environments.

**Student user experience.** Students can view courses and break down work in their assignment calendars; they can also take notes while doing their coursework. Teachers can then see students’ notes to assess understanding of the material. The coursework also contains a “CloseReader,” a digitally-enhanced reading tool. In our World History

demo, we saw how a student might interact with a primary history resource (Woodrow Wilson’s speech about America’s involvement in World War I, for example)—taking notes, using the glossary to look up words and highlighting text. Students can also learn more by watching videos or reading an explanation written by one of the expert teacher contributors. Edgenuity also has chat options so students can interact with one another or their teacher. The online discussion board is called “Collaboration Corner”—a spot for students to post questions and answers. And file this under “super cool to know”: the platform supports 17 different languages which translate on-screen text!

**Teacher user experience.** Teachers often start and end their day at the dashboard, where they have access to all their students and can sort by any number of criteria. Alerts populate and let a teacher know if a student needs help or might need some extra review time; teachers can then pull students into specific groupings for meeting times if extra support is warranted. Edgenuity software provides teachers with aggregate data for all students and offers percentage grading. Although they’re not specifically using a competency-based reporting system, teachers can turn platform percentages into mastery levels for a competency-based assessment if they desire. Teachers are able to run student reports based on focused standards

**Dictionary**  
Students can look up any word.

**Digital Sticky Notes**  
Text annotation encourages students to read actively.

**Highlighter**  
Students can highlight text in four different colors and collect their highlights by color.

**Read-Aloud**  
An optional read-aloud feature can be enabled for students who struggle with grade-level text.

**Translation**  
Students can translate on-screen text into 17 different languages.

**Teacher's Notes**  
Underlined text indicates places for students to click to access background knowledge, supportive explanations, and additional scaffolds.

**Comprehension Questions**  
Embedded questions allow students to monitor their understanding.

Other teacher highlights:

- Teachers can customize lessons by adding their own.
- Teachers can customize project assignments and writing prompts.
- Teachers can share courses they have created with other teachers.

Finally, we love that Edgenuity offers coursework related to college and future careers. Students can choose electives to learn about career options, and test prep courses are also available. A student working on writing his or her resume or college essay might even earn dual credit options through Edgenuity's partnership with Sophia, an online course provider that offers college credit.

With professional development services plus user-friendly teacher and student experience, Edgenuity proves a good partner for providing online standards-based coursework—a win-win for students and teachers.

**Dashboard**

FILTERS COURSE GROUP STUDENT OPTIONS DISPLAY

[School: ALTADENA HIGH SCHOOL ] [Student Status: Enabled X ] [Course Status: Active X ]

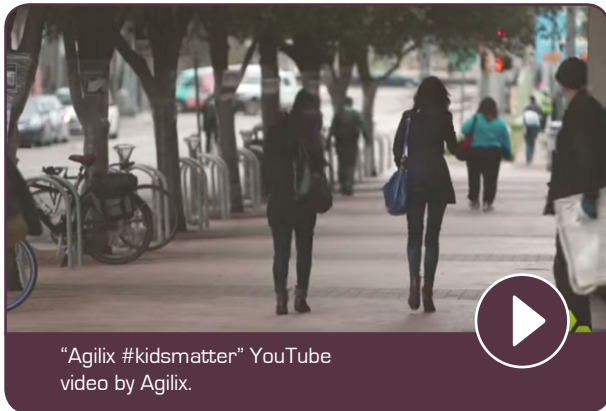
Alert	ID	Last Name	First Name	Course	Grade	Start Date	Target Date	First Grade	Last Grade	Days Since Last Action	Target Completion	Progress
🔔	68832	Goetter	George	Biology - SC3209	87.3%	5/5/2015	11/14/2015	3/17/2015	5/10/2015	0	2.6%	6.6%
🔔	68837	Overachiever	Oley	Algebra I - MA2003	94.7%	5/1/2015	1/8/2016	5/1/2015	5/9/2015	1	3.6%	4%
🔔	68830	Reader	BeaLo	Language Arts 8 - ELA3008	69.7%	4/14/2015	6/10/2015	3/14/2015	5/10/2015	0	45.6%	42.8%
🔔	68835	Struggler	Sarah	Survey of U.S. History - SS...	87.5%	3/20/2015	7/10/2015	3/20/2015	5/10/2015	0	45.5%	41.4%
📝	68833	Atrisk	Amanda	Language Arts 10 - ELA2065	65.5%	3/17/2015	6/20/2015	3/17/2015	5/10/2015	0	56.8%	53.5%
	68836	Artz	Langrid	Language Arts 11 - ELA3011 ...	87.2%	4/16/2015	7/28/2015	3/17/2015	5/10/2015	0	23.3%	25.9%
	68827	Bulle	John	Mathematics 8 - MA3108	90.8%	5/2/2015	11/20/2015	3/20/2015	4/23/2015	16	4%	0.8%
	68827	Bulle	John	MS Civics, Government, and ...	53.7%	4/14/2015	8/27/2015	3/14/2015	5/2/2015	8	19.3%	0.7%
	68828	Edge	Col	ACT Mathematics I	83.7%	5/4/2015	3/13/2016	3/14/2015	5/8/2015	1	1.9%	11.5%
	68834	Engagement	Nona	Algebra II - MA3111 A CR	83.7%	3/18/2015	7/27/2015	3/18/2015	5/10/2015	0	40.5%	49.8%
	68831	Toolittle	Tommy	Environmental Science - SC2028	70.9%	3/15/2015	7/19/2015	3/18/2015	5/3/2015	7	44.4%	1.5%
	68829	Zee	Art	3D Art II - Animation - EL5718	0%	3/14/2015	7/18/2015	3/15/2015	5/9/2015	1	45.2%	52.9%

# Personalize Learning with Buzz from Agilix

Authored by Megan Mead, Growth Services Manager, Getting Smart

“The Time is Now. The Agent for Change is Agilix.” Since 2001 Getting Smart advocacy partner Agilix has been working to inspire education by developing innovative solutions that support a more personalized approach to education. This means more than merely developing and iterating products that support teachers. This means being a champion for change in education.

**The Change.** Education shouldn’t look the same way it did nearly 100 years ago. In reality, education shouldn’t look the same way it did 10 years ago—or even last year. Technology changes too quickly for us to be satisfied with a system that doesn’t progress accordingly.



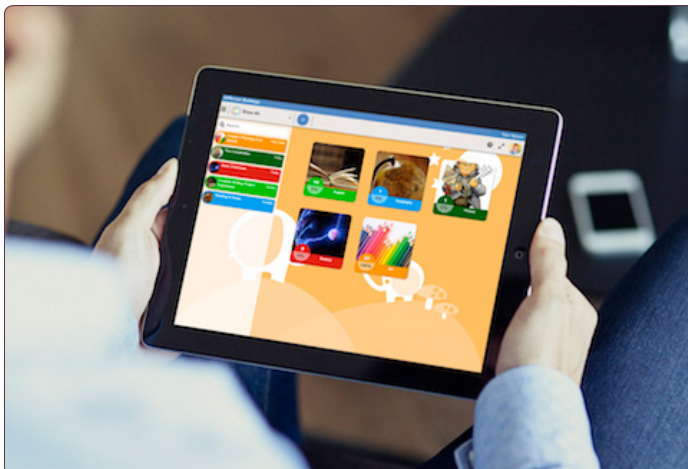
“A learning management system (LMS) is a software application for the administration, documentation, tracking, reporting and delivery of educational technology courses or training,” according to Wikipedia. And that’s a good place to start. But learning management systems were developed to support that classroom model from 100 years ago, when one curriculum existed for everyone.

So, what happens when it’s not enough to *manage* and *administer* learning? What happens when you want to affect real change? What happens when you want to really move the needle and accomplish truly personalized learning?

Enter Agilix Buzz.

**The Tools.** Agilix’s Buzz™ platform empowers personalized learning using unique tools:

- 1. Built for K-12 Learners.** Buzz is the first platform built from the ground up for the specific needs of K-12 students and teachers, by using bright colors, customizable themes and the option to brand with your school’s colors and logo. The interface is crisp, modern and easy to use.







**2. Student Ownership.** Students thrive when they are empowered to make choices in their own learning journey. Using Buzz, students can assign themselves content or a task from a library of resources mapped to specific learning objectives and aligned standards, allowing for multiple learning options—and choices—for students. Students can provide multiple forms of evidence for their work. Of course, teachers can curate and prompt students to choose content resources from the Buzz Digital Library, too.



**3. Self-Evaluation.** Students can self-assess their interests, effort level and understanding to let the teacher know at any time if they comprehend and remain interested in the current curriculum, as well as their current applied effort to the learning process. Buzz has a dashboard that allows students, educators and parents to see student progress based on their chosen learning paths and teacher-assigned material.



**4. Teacher Guidance.** Using the Buzz Clipboard, teachers can take immediate action to individualize learning for a specific student or group of students by sending a note, awarding a badge or starting a discussion. All actions are easily viewable from the clipboard.



**5. Multiple Models.** Buzz facilitates many different learning models, including Competency, Proficiency/ Mastery, Blended and Project-based. Buzz saves time by providing project templates that can be used as-is or adapted to individual students, groups or the whole classroom. Project templates support performance tasks.

“Our core purpose is to deliver exceptional personalized learning solutions that really work and can scale as needed,” says Curt Allen, CEO of Agilix. “Buzz motivates students with learning choices and real-time feedback. It provides teachers with tools to view progress for each student and provides guidance based on individual needs.”

Buzz for the 2015-2016 School Year. After seeing the next generation of Buzz in action this month, we fell in love with it all over again. It will be available in summer 2015 for districts looking for a personalized learning solution for the 2015-2016 school year and will launch at PLS2015. This enhanced version will be customizable and scalable with deeper assessment capabilities, including test analytics, the ability to map to specific curriculum standards and an expanded digital content library. This application has been designed for use on personal computers and mobile devices, including Apple iPad, Google Chromebook and Android Tablet.

# Canvas: A Learning Management System Built for Educators

Authored by Getting Smart Staff

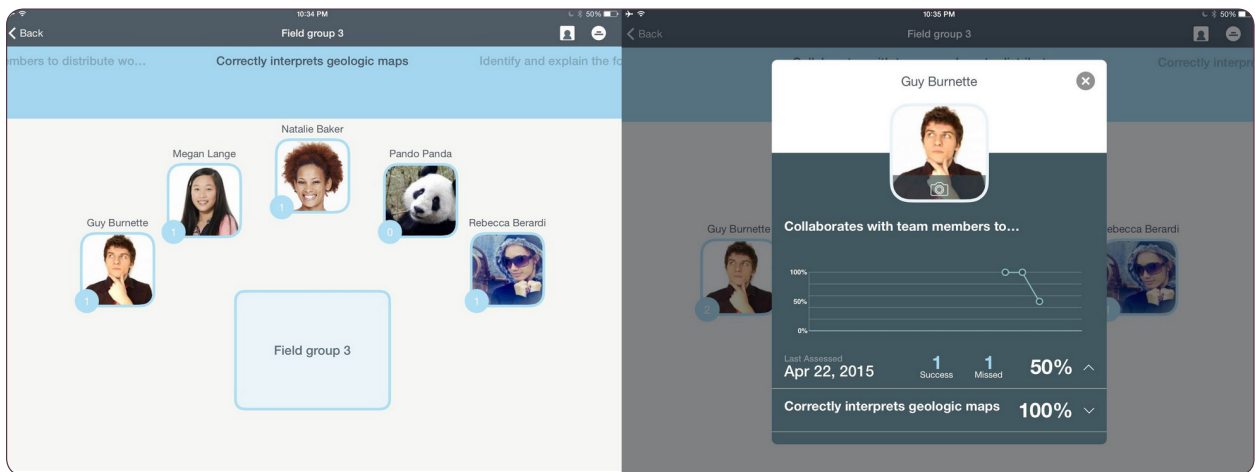
*“Occasionally, things are not ‘too good to be true.’ Think of a product that is seemingly flawless and nearly perfect. Chances are that same product is supported by an immediately perceptible and unmistakable foundation of brilliant forward thinkers and creators who are undeniably in-touch with the customers who swear by their product.”*

*- John Hardison, from his post [Canvas by Instructure: The Perfect LMS? Quite Possibly](#)*

Instructure started in 2011 with the development of Canvas and continues to iterate and design in order to make teaching and learning much easier. The company's most recent project, Bridge, will transition into the corporate world to support employee engagement and training. Instructure takes the business of learning very seriously, and with Canvas, staff members dedicate themselves to a learning management solution that meets the specific needs of educators. This means developing a suite of resources that are seamlessly integrated into one effective and efficient solution.

## Magic Marker

Gone are the days of walking around with a clipboard, checking off students for participation and understanding. The next generation of instant teacher assessment utilizes the Magic Marker app. Using touch technology, teachers can build groups of students, link to learning objectives and turn any activity into an opportunity for instant feedback. The kicker here: This data has direct input to the gradebook.



## Learning Mastery View

The Canvas gradebook has two views. In addition to a more traditional view, users can also access a mastery-based gradebook view that supports educators' assessment of student understanding and a more progress-based measure. Schools can customize the calculation method as to how mastery is reflected.

The screenshot shows the Canvas Learning Mastery interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Courses', 'Grades', 'Calendar', and 'Commons'. Below this, the course 'Intro Psychology' is selected, and the 'Grades' section is set to 'Learning Mastery'. A table displays course averages and student scores for various learning outcomes. A popup window provides a detailed view for the outcome 'Psychological Science > Summarize the uses of correlational research and describe why correlational research cannot be used to infer causality'. It includes a pie chart showing the distribution of student performance: 50% Exceeds Expectations (green), 40% Meets Expectations (yellow), and 10% Does Not Meet Expectations (red). The mastery set is 3, and the calculation method is 'Highest Score'. An example explains that the mastery score is the highest score from graded assignments or quizzes, with item scores of 5, 3, 4, 2 and a final score of 5.

Course average	3.65 / 3	3.5 / 3	3.95 / 3	3.2 / 3	2.55 / 3	3.35 / 3	3.7 / 3	
Learning Outcome	Positive Psychol...	Social Behavior ...	Brain and Nervo...	Describe the pri...	Differentiate law...	Summarize the ...	Emotions and M...	Explain why usi...
Natalie Baker	5 / 3	5 / 3	5 / 3					
Annie Bern	5 / 3	5 / 3	5 / 3					
Bill Blend	3 / 3	3 / 3	3 / 3					
Guy Burnette	0 / 3	3 / 3	3 / 3					
Erin Cartwright	5 / 3	5 / 3	3 / 3					
James Casey	3 / 3	3 / 3	5 / 3					
Stephanie Charles	5 / 3	0 / 3	5 / 3					
Thiago Fernandes	3 / 3	3 / 3	5 / 3					
Taylor Hazzard	2.5 / 3	3 / 3	2.5 / 3					
Aaron Jurel								
Jin Kwon	5 / 3	5 / 3	3 / 3					
Grea McCully								

## SpeedGrader

Students' work can be uploaded through the LMS and teachers can view, assess, provide feedback and grade—all in one place.

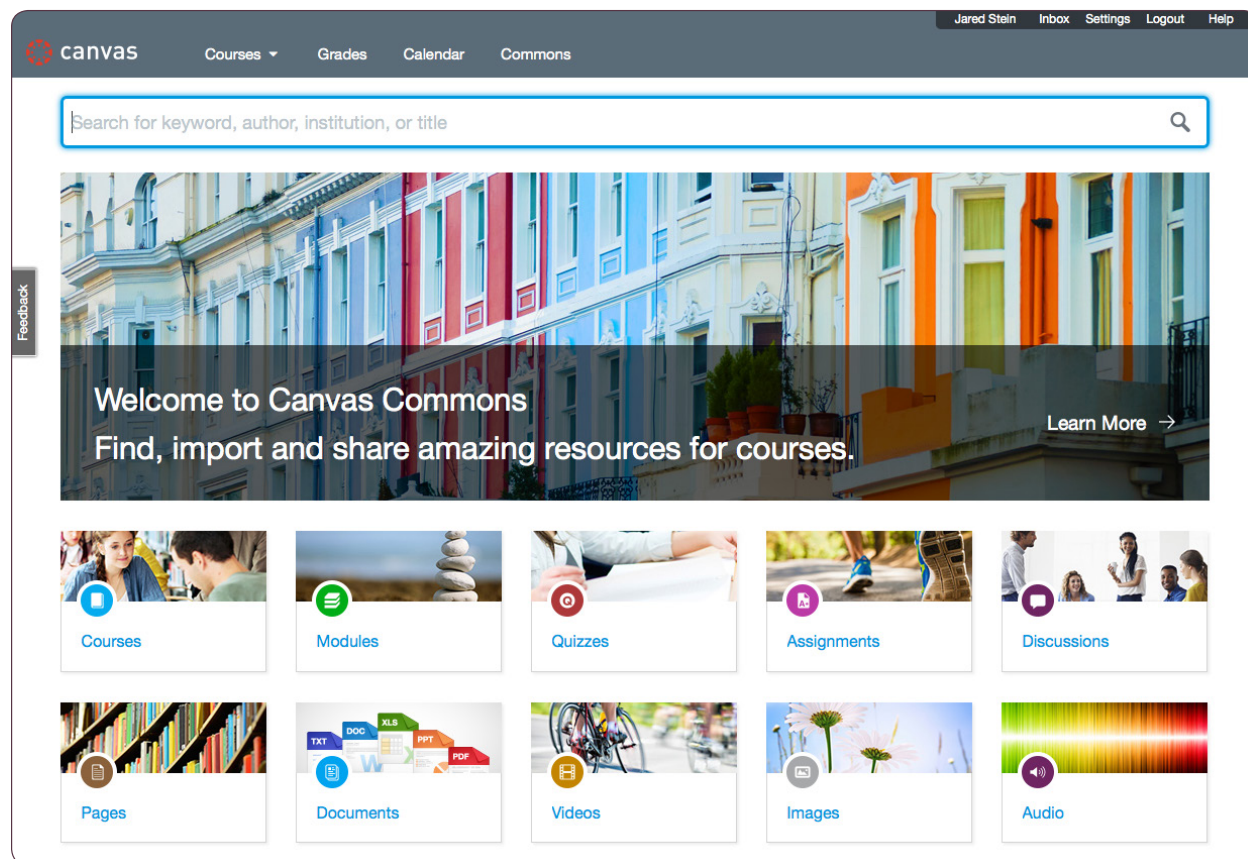
The screenshot shows the SpeedGrader interface for an assignment titled 'Assignment 1: Concept Map - Earth Formation (Intro Geology)'. The student's work is displayed on the left, featuring a concept map about Earth's formation. The map starts with 'The Earth' and branches into 'formed' (4.5 billion years ago, evidenced by radioactive decay) and 'developed an' (atmosphere). The atmosphere branch further divides into 'outgassing' (including water vapor and volcanic activity) and 'asteroids' (added to clouds of dust, which coalesced into space). The right side of the interface shows a 'Grading' section with a 'Concept Map Rubric' table. A 'Jared Steil Information' popup is visible over the student's work.

Criteria	Ratings			Pts
A node for each term	All nodes present 3 pts	Most nodes present 2 pts	Critical nodes missing 1 pts	3 / 3 pts
Appropriate connectors view longer description	Full array of connectors show relationships 3 pts	Missing a few connecions 2 pts	Missing significant connections 1 pts	2 / 3 pts
Connector labels	All connectors labeled appropriately 3 pts	Some missing or inaccurate labels 2 pts	Critical labels missing 1 pts	2 / 3 pts
Mastery of Earth system processes view longer description threshold: 3 pts	Exceeds Expectations 5 pts	Meets Expectations 3 pts	Does Not Meet Expectations 0 pts	5 / 5 pts
Applies scientific information view longer description threshold: 3 pts	Exceeds Expectations 5 pts	Meets Expectations 3 pts	Does Not Meet Expectations 0 pts	3 / 5 pts



## Canvas Commons

This learning object repository design creates a place where best practices, unique ideas, courses and curriculum can be freely shared—all seamlessly integrated into the Canvas LMS environment. The Commons has the ability to create a virtual PLC that connects teachers across the world and makes sharing lessons and resources effective and efficient.



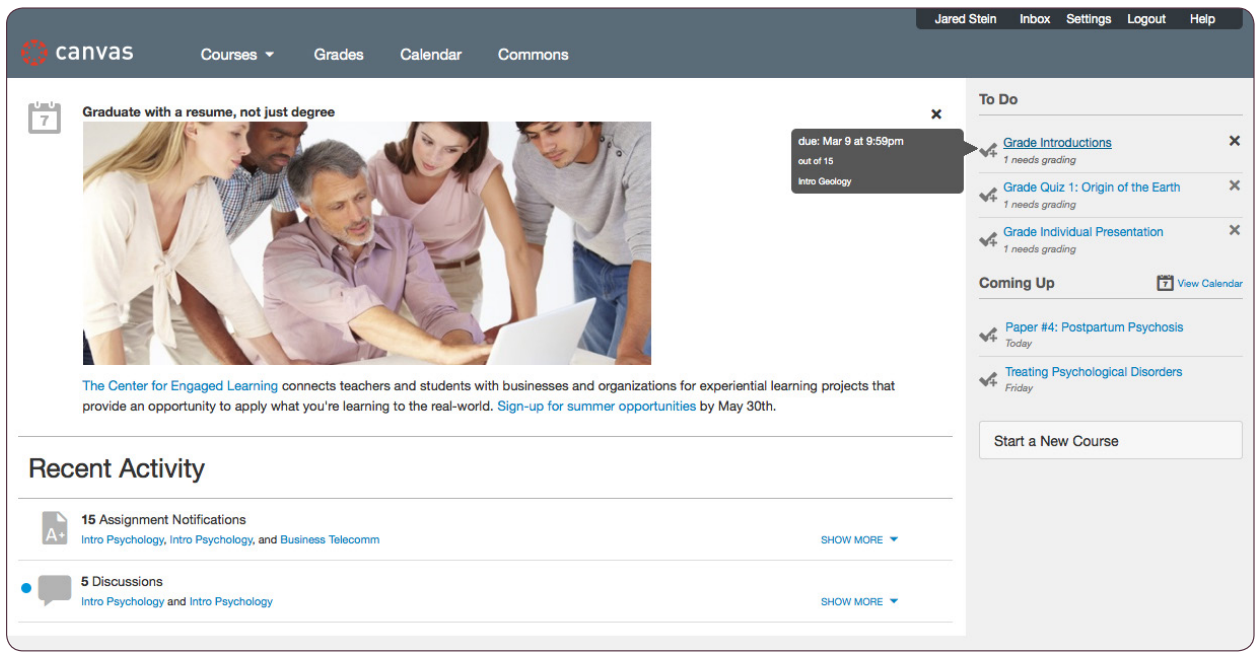
## Attention to User Experience

A unique approach to the user experience has been built into each feature. A direct connection exists between teacher efficiency and student productivity. To name a few:

**Video Tutorials:** In order to make sure that you get the most out of the Canvas LMS, a tutorial video addresses just about anything you may need to know.

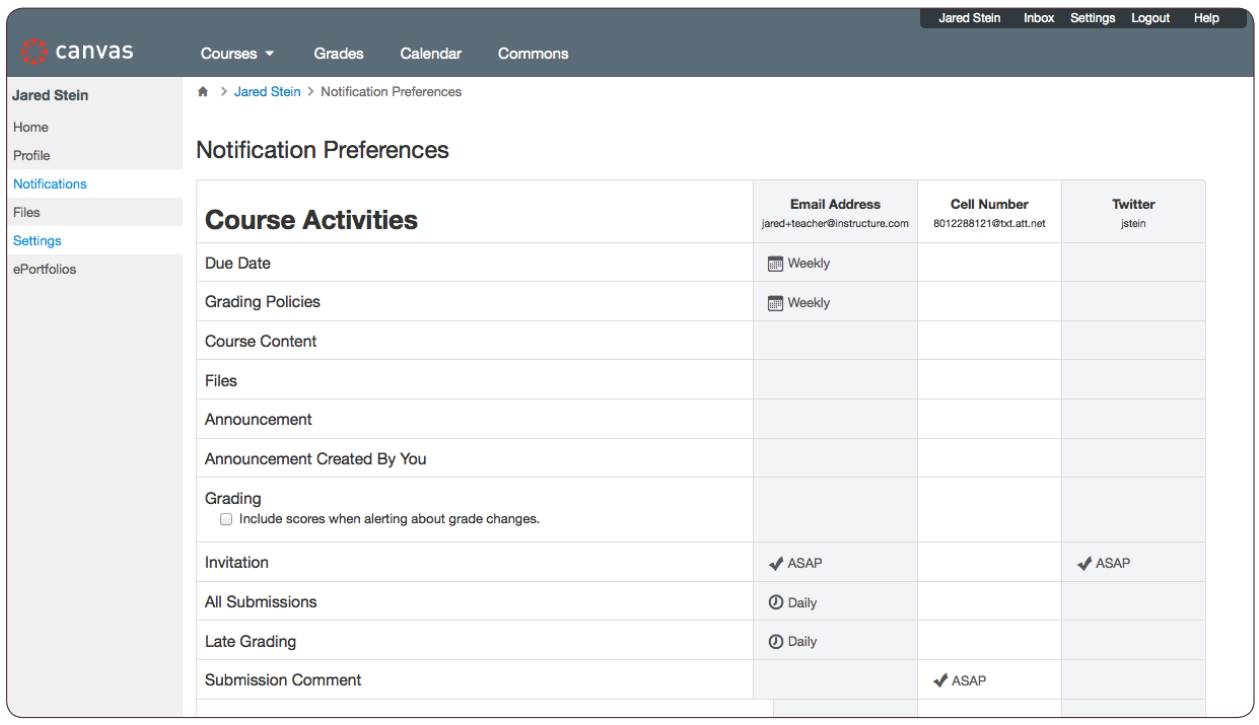
**To-do Lists:** Canvas has digitized the go-to organization strategy of the “to-do” list. When users (teachers or students) log on, they can easily see and prioritize what needs to be done with the personalized to-do list.





**Mobile Capabilities:** The Canvas Mobile App allows for a user experience completed all within the palm of your hand. Canvas for Android 4.0 was released in early 2015 and focused on an increased ability to customize for greater functionality.

**Personal Notification Options:** If you want people to be responsive, you should probably make sure others receive information in a format that works best for the individual. Communication between teachers and students can happen in a variety of ways (text messages, emails, Twitter), and the user has control over how frequently and on which channel he or she wishes to be contacted.



**Integration and Interoperability:** Canvas integrates with hundreds of apps and makes finding the right app easy with the [Edu-App Center](#). This includes SIS integration. As noted in the [announcement of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction having selected Canvas](#) as its learning management system, a new feature within Canvas integrates with Pearson's PowerSchool, allowing the student information system and the LMS to work together with a single sign-in, creating more efficiency for educators.

When broken down by features, you can see how the learning management system has led educators to ask: [Is Canvas, Quite Possibly, the Perfect LMS?](#)

In addition to the LMS, the Canvas line-up includes [Canvas.net](#) and [Canvas Catalog](#)—a white-label platform that enables any institution, government entity, university or K-12 school to create a branded index of online courses.

# Schoology: Instructional Operating System Empowers Learning

Authored by Getting Smart Staff

Co-founders Jeremy Friedman, Ryan Hwang and Tim Trinidad at Washington University in St. Louis and Bill Kindler at Colgate University began discussing a better learning platform during the 2007-2008 school year.

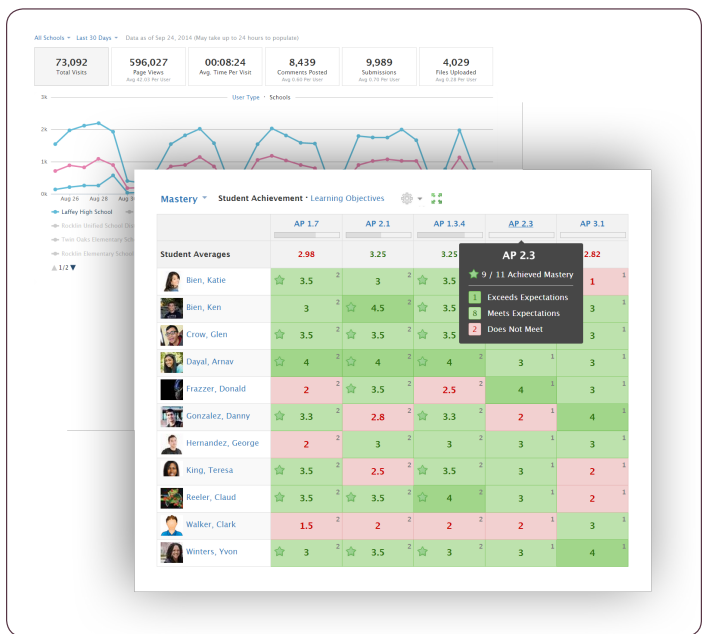
Launched as a simple, free social learning platform in 2009, Schoology quickly added enterprise features that make it easier to create engaging content, design lessons and assess student understanding.

Jeremy Friedman, CEO, doesn't mind calling Schoology a learning management system, but he thinks of it as an "instructional operating system" with four feature sets:

- Communication: connects students, teachers, administrators and parents;
- Collaboration: makes it easy to connect and share resources;
- Engagement: helps improve outcomes with intuitive technology; and
- Instruction: simplifies teaching and learning.

Jeremy believes Schoology is defining a new genre. "LMS' have to do a better job of empowering students and faculty to grow and learn together," he says.

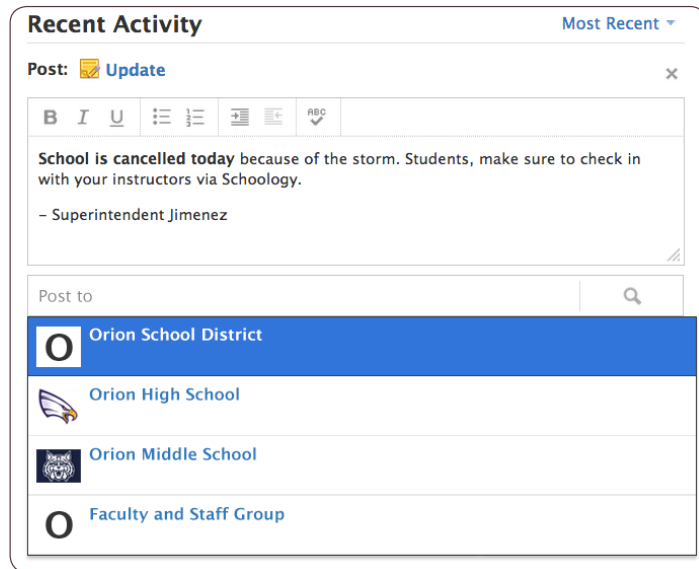
Schoology originally focused on U.S. K-12 with adoption by Delaware and hundreds of districts. But, countrywide adoption has also been seen in Uruguay, plus a growing number of higher education and corporate users.



Schoology integrates with all popular student information systems as well as Google Drive, OneDrive and content from Discovery, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Pearson and YouTube. Teachers and parents can track performance with student mastery reporting. The mastery dashboard tracks progress by standard, by student and by class. Other applications can pull out data with an API. Advisors can easily gain a full overview of student progress in every class. Parents can access information on multiple students with a single login.

Rubrics for project-based assignments include a rich text editor and the ability to tag content to standards.

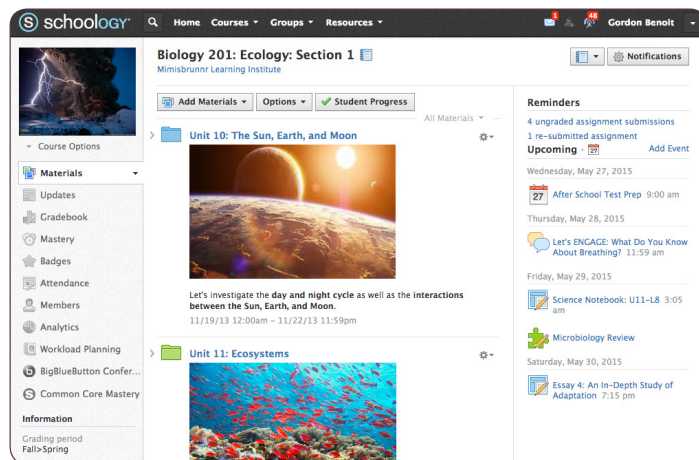
Instructors can pace and track students individually; connect them in collaborative groups; and differentiate, flip or blend instruction. Instructors and administrators can even monitor student workload across all their classes to ensure students never get overloaded.



Districts have the power to turn the portfolio feature on or off. Portfolio portability will improve in future versions.

Tools for communication and sharing also have been woven into nearly every aspect of the platform. This enables the platform to not only act as the vehicle for teaching and learning but also as the main pipeline for communication and collaboration across an institution.

The center of the three-column user interface includes a familiar communication thread. Like the student view, navigation aids appear on the left, while upcoming events can be found in the right column.



Schoology has a robust mobile app available on iOS, Android and Kindle Fire. Although the Schoology app is the most popular, Android is gaining ground.

A deep integration between Turnitin and Schoology is available in the Schoology App Center along with Khan Academy, Google Drive, Dropbox and Evernote.

Schoology raised \$15 million last year in a round led by Intel Capital.

# Gaggle: A Safe LMS for the K-12 Classroom

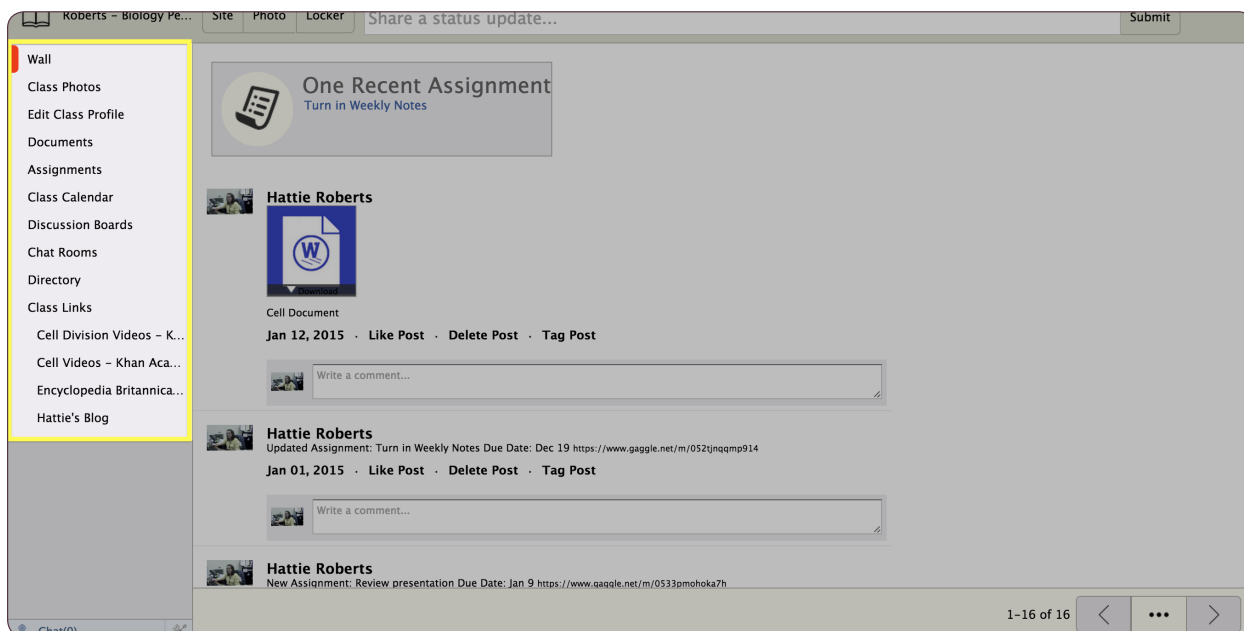
Authored by Getting Smart Staff

While many learning management systems struggle to fit the needs of K-12, one company—with a 15-year history in education—continues its mission to inspire creativity and ingenuity in today’s students.

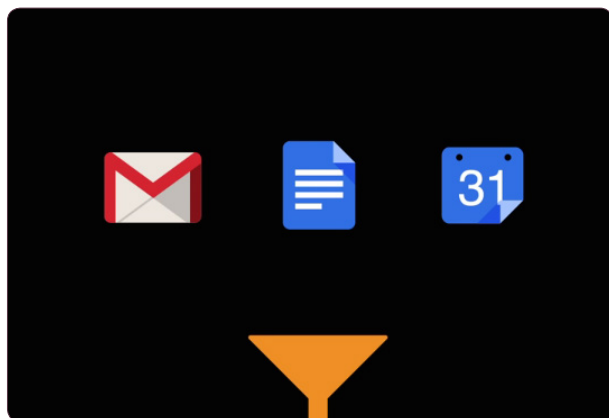
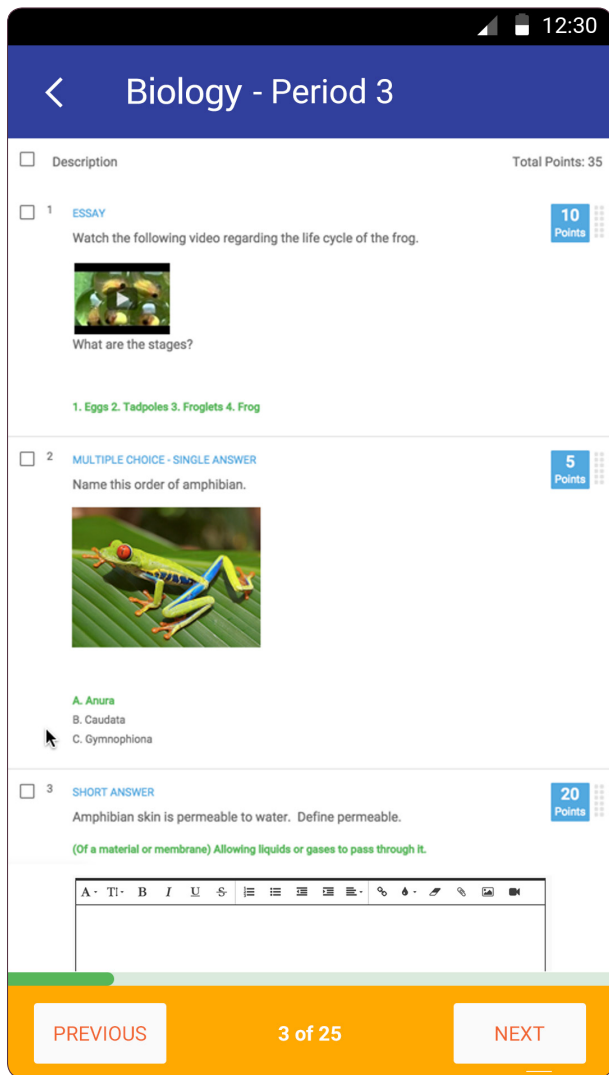
Launched as safe student email in 1999, the [Gaggle Safe Classroom LMS](#) now includes blogs, calendars, class pages, digital file storage, discussion boards, text notifications and much more.

Watch: *“Reeds Springs School District: Communicate, Collaborate and Stay Organized”*

Gaggle has a unique focus on student safety. Gaggle Safety Management provides real-time content and image analysis through customizable blocked words and blocked domains lists as well as a proprietary Anti-Pornography Scanner. Everything inside the [Safe Classroom LMS](#) is filtered and monitored to assure schools are compliant with the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA), which requires technology measures to protect students against visual depictions that are obscene or pornographic.



Gaggle Safety Management also includes an expert team of Student Safety Representatives who review content for violations of schools’ Internet safety policies, which is also a requirement of CIPA. More serious questionable content, such as cyberbullying, mentions of drugs or alcohol or pornography, is forwarded to school or district emergency contacts. If the pornography appears to involve a student, it also gets reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children’s Cyber Tipline.



Lastly, Gaggle will alert designated district or school contacts, or even law enforcement, immediately for possible student situations, including self-harm, harm to others and harmful family situations.

*Watch: "A Day in the Life of a Gaggle Teacher"*

With the addition of "Workspaces" and a gradebook during summer 2015, teachers can easily create, assign, collect and score digital worksheets, such as assessments, assignments, tests and quizzes while tracking student performance.

### Safety Management for Google Apps or Office 365

Schools can integrate the digital file storage inside the Gaggle Safe Classroom LMS with Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive. When this occurs, schools receive the same Safety Management features for content and files stored there.

Gaggle also offers Safety Management to schools that use free products, such as Google Apps for Education or Office 365, but need a way to apply consistent, district-approved policies. School districts, like [Mountain Brook School System](#) in suburban Birmingham, AL, consider Gaggle Safety Management for Google Apps an invaluable resource for everyone involved in education, from teachers and administrators to students and parents.

"Everybody who's had dealings with Gaggle thinks it's awesome; from teachers and student services, all the way up to our superintendent," says Donna Williamson, the district's technology director. "Gaggle has helped our students become better digital citizens and better learners."

The Google Apps for Education environment at Mountain Brook Schools receives enhanced CIPA compliance by applying Gaggle's 24/7 monitoring and filtering.

*Read the Case Study: "Mountain Brook School System: Much More Than Filtering and Monitoring Students"*

Similarly, in districts like [Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools](#), every student who receives a Microsoft Office 365 email address has their inbox monitored and filtered, assuring the district meets important compliance provisions and fulfills safety expectations of administrators and parents.

*Watch: "Gaggle Has Your Back"*

### **Unity Partner Program**

The Gaggle Unity Partner Program provides free data integration services for all educational technology vendors. As a unified data integration point for any technology platform, Gaggle provides safe and secure account provisioning and single sign-on, resulting in reduced costs and fewer delays to overburdened school district technology resources.

Gaggle believes in integrating with all of the solutions that school districts use and want to use. "We should be making products that work with each other," says Jeff Patterson, Gaggle's founder and CEO. "It's time for vendors to stop trying control everything. I believe we should be sharing the ball."

# Personalized Learning for Every Student with Highlight

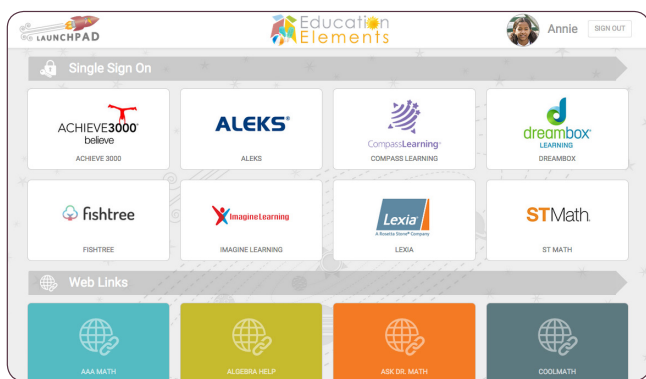
Authored by Caroline Vander Ark, COO at Getting Smart

Highlight from Education Elements is a cloud based personalized learning platform (PLP) being used in over 100 schools across the country serving more than 60,000 students.

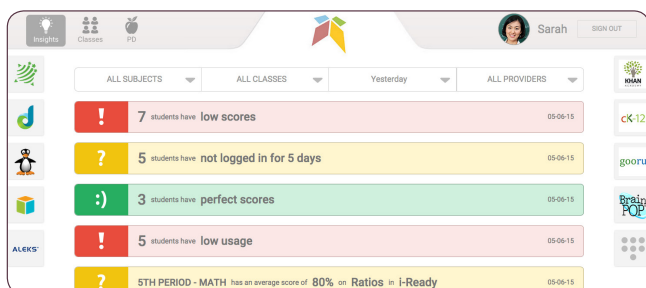
So what makes a PLP different than an LMS? Anthony Kim had this to say on the Education Elements blog about the job of the PLP: "a) to help students access & discover learning resources from a variety of different sources; b) to support teachers in collecting and analyzing the significant amount of information required to personalize learning for students every day." Ed Elements has set out to help make data actionable for educators and unlock the potential of any teacher to personalize learning for every student.

Highlight solves three problems for school districts:

1. Students and teachers can now log in to multiple digital content providers from one place with one username and password. All rosters are managed through the Highlight identity management application to ensure clean and unique identities.
2. Teachers no longer have to access multiple reports from different systems to get basic information about activity in their class. In fact, teachers no longer need to analyze the data themselves. Highlight automatically analyzes key data elements and identifies recurring patterns in the data, and delivers those Insights to teachers in plain language.
3. Administrators can see across schools which products are working well, with detailed information information the quality of implementation.



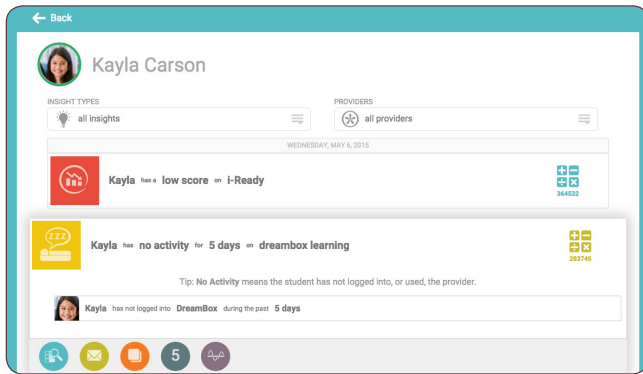
Teachers appreciate the ability to manage multiple digital content resources and introduce new content to students through the Launchpad. Students will see the changes to their available digital resources when they log in.



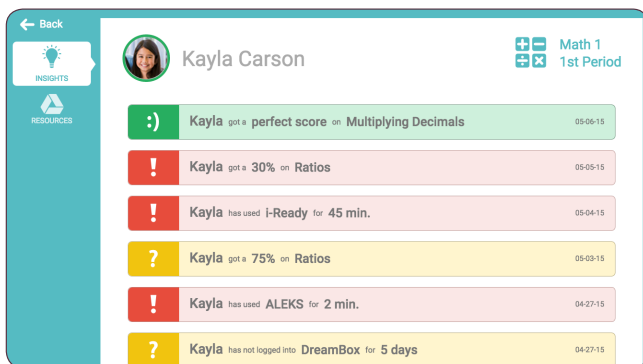
The teacher experience of Highlight recently got a complete re-design, making it easier for teachers to view student and class progress in a feed format. In addition, data patterns are represented in natural language so it's easy for any teacher to act on.

It's a simple way to consume data points and get a pulse check on their classrooms. The insights feed does not aim to replace reporting from other programs, but complement those detailed reports with a quick overview. Insights are powered by custom algorithms that automatically recognize patterns in student performance.

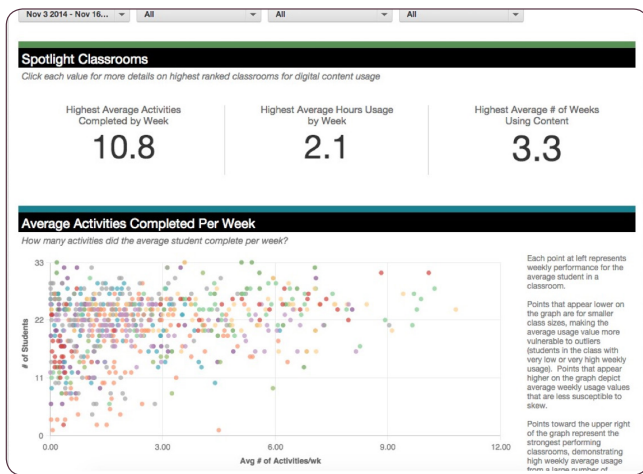




The insights feed has been built for daily use by teachers, whereas the classes tab is something a teacher may access weekly to plan and assess their classrooms.

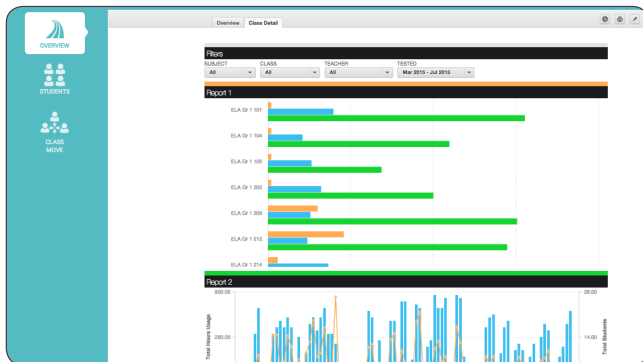


In addition to viewing class progress overall, teachers are able to drill down and see an individual student view. From each insight, teachers are able to: assign content, email the student, adjust the algorithm thresholds, and view historical trends, with just one click.



In working with hundreds of schools and administrators, Education Elements has also identified that in many districts leaders do not know which products are being utilized, how they are being utilized and what is working. So for this back-to-school, Highlight has some completely new features which address this problem.

The administrator view provides key data points across multiple content providers by school or teacher. This allows an administrator to observe what has been implemented and how frequently the products are being utilized.



Teachers also have access to these level of data across their courses to understand patterns and trends between their courses and content providers.

Highlight is currently partnered with digital content providers such as DreamBox Learning, ST Math, Achieve 3000 and Power School. For a complete list of the partners see their site, which also lists the available integrations such as OpenEd and LearnZillion.

# Beyond the LMS: What Next-Gen Learning Platforms Should Do

Authored by Tom Vander Ark, CEO + Partner, Getting Smart

	Students				Teachers				Parents	School Administration
	K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12	K-2	3-5	6-8	9-12		
Accommodations	V	V	V	V	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	VE
Assess Tasks	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	V
Assignments	V	V	V	V	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	VE
Attendance	V	V	V	V	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	VE
Behavior	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	V
Blog	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	V
Calendar	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	V
Cancellations/ Delays	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	VE
Class Rank	—	—	—	V	—	—	—	VE	V	VE
Common Core Standards	—	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	V
Community Service	—	—	—	V	—	—	—	VE	V	VE
Dashboard	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Export	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Extracurriculars	—	—	—	V	—	—	—	VE	V	VE
Filter Content	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Financial Aid	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	E	VE
Foreign Language Recording	—	—	—	VE	—	—	—	VE	V	V
"Fun" Widget	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	VE
Goals	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	V
GPA	—	—	—	V	—	—	—	VE	V	VE
Grades	—	V	V	V	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	V
Graduation Tracking	—	—	—	VE	—	—	—	VE	VE	VE
Health Issues	—	—	—	—	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE
Help	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	VE
List of students	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	VE
Login/logout	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Multilingual	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	VE
Notes	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	V
Past Information	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	VE
Playlist	V	V	V	V	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	VE
Photo	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	VE
Portfolio	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	VE	V
Recommended Resources	—	—	—	—	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	VE
Record Management	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	VE
Report Card	V	V	V	V	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	VE
Retention Notes	—	—	—	—	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	VE
Schedule	—	V	V	V	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	VE
Schedule Conference	E	E	E	E	VE	VE	VE	VE	E	V
Standardized test scores	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	VE
Today's learning objectives	V	V	V	V	VE	VE	VE	VE	V	VE
Transcript	—	—	—	E	—	—	—	—	E	VE

V = View; E = Edit/Create or Perform Task; — Not applicable

At the height of the Great Recession, states like North Carolina received a *Race to the Top* (RTTT) grant and launched efforts to build an Instructional Improvement System (IIS). Like other RTTT state grantees, efforts to build IIS have been slow and disappointing. North Carolina uses Pearson's PowerSchools and SchoolNet as the foundation for its school information system, *Home Base*. North Carolina is considering adding a learning management system (LMS) that should provide state districts with an affordable integrated learning platform. But it will still fall short of what some forward-leaning districts seek.

After 10 productive years as superintendent in two South Carolina counties, Valerie Truesdale joined the *Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools* (CMS) to lead the innovation agenda. The strategic plan calls for CMS to transform classrooms into "personalized 21st-century learning environments for every child to graduate career- and college-ready." In 2012, none of the 165 schools were 100 percent wireless, and the entire school system was still running XP. Lacking the budget for a fast digital conversion, the district launched a personalized learning initiative to build teaching capacity in advance of issuing devices for students. Seeded by a \$100,000 grant, and led by Jill Thompson, a pilot group of student-centered schools are systematically building *personalized learning*






environments with an emphasis on student ownership of their learning (see Jill's *blog on misconceptions*). Thought partners in groups such as the League of Innovative Schools and Consortium of School Networking (CoSN) help by sharing strategies that fuel personalized learning efforts.

The experience has allowed Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools to develop a clear vision of a personalized learning toolset. Teams in pilot personalized learning schools outlined specific use cases and more than 40 specific tasks.

Beyond functionality available in many traditional LMS, CMS is looking for 10 capabilities:

1. **Single sign:** portal where students can gain access to apps, view assignments and schedules; parents can view student work in order to better help them at home.
2. **Mobile:** device agnostic (laptop, smartphone, tablet) and 508-compliant. Allow voice-to-text and text-to-voice capabilities.
3. **Playlists:** easy construction of ordered digital learning experiences from a large, tagged learning object repository.
4. **Pathways:** allow students to co-construct learning sequences based on learning preferences.

5.NF.1 & 2 - I can add and subtract fractions and mixed numbers with unlike denominators.  
 Select 2 choices for your pathway and have your teacher sign off before moving to the next step!

Teacher Checkpoint	I learn better by listening.	I learn better by seeing.	I learn better by writing/creating.
<p>Small Group</p> <p>Conference</p>	 <p>Watch the following video on adding fractions with different denominators using fraction bar models. Complete a graphic organizer!</p> <p>Create and solve your own sample problem!</p>	<p>Solve the three problems below using the Virtual Manipulatives app, fraction bars, or fraction magnets to prove your answers!</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you know that <math>2\frac{1}{2} + 3\frac{2}{3} &gt; 6</math>?</li> <li>2. Emily says the answer to <math>7/9 - 2/6</math> is <math>5/3</math>. Is Emily correct? If not, help her understand her mistake?</li> <li>3. Show the sum of <math>\frac{3}{4} + \frac{1}{4}</math> using a number line?</li> </ol>	<p><i>What do you know about grizzly bears?</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Solve the following: if a large grizzly named Leroy ate <math>15\frac{3}{4}</math> pounds of blackberries along with <math>11\frac{7}{8}</math> pounds of green plants, and he was preparing to hibernate, how many more pounds should he try to eat in that day to be ready when winter comes?</li> <li>2. Research and watch the video and based on what you know, create and solve two addition/subtraction fraction problems!</li> </ol> 
<p>Small Group</p> <p>Conference</p>	 <p>Watch the video on adding mixed numbers and complete a graphic organizer.</p> <p>Retell the strategy in your own words.</p>	<p>When adding <math>7/12 + 3/12</math>, why do you add the numerators but keep the denominator the same?</p> <p>When adding <math>\frac{3}{4} + \frac{1}{4}</math>, why can you not add the numerators but keep the denominators the same?</p> <p>Explain your thinking in pictures!</p>	<p>Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus are transporting their circus animals by train. However, they have encountered a problem and cannot proceed as planned. They can put most of their animals in trucks. They have rented 10 ton trucks for the elephants.</p>  <p>Which elephants can travel together? How many trucks would be needed to take all the elephants?</p> <p><b>BONUS:</b> After researching, the circus found alternate trucks to use. Use the chart to determine the least expensive way to transport the elephants!</p>
<p>Small Group</p> <p>Conference</p>	 <p>Select any of the videos from the list that you would like to review more. Complete a graphic organizer and write a reflection on what you learned. Read your reflection to a friend!</p>	<p>Create a visual poster or presentation to explain how to add and subtract fractions! Be sure to include examples and have a partner view it and solve your practice problems!</p>	<p>Write a letter to your relative preparing a holiday meal. Explain how you would add fractional measurements together for their recipes in order to prepare enough for the family. (ex. combine all the butter for different recipes, how would you add them together?)</p>



This work by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. Based on a work at [pl.cmslearns.org](http://pl.cmslearns.org).



5. **Map:** visual roadmap of learning goals and an achievement recognition system (e.g., badging) that allows students to demonstrate competence.
6. **Portfolio:** a portable digital portfolio system section that follows the child through his or her schooling.
7. **Notes:** individual and collaborative note-taking feature in a virtual binder.
8. **Goals:** a visual learning goal tracker that captures each student's aspirations for career and college to spur self-evaluation, self-regulation and self-motivation.
9. **Co-lead:** support addition of a co-teacher to a class or an assignment.
10. **Groups:** create learning groups quickly and easily (like Edmodo does).

"It is already hard for parents to understand the instructional shift taking place in classrooms," says Thompson. She thinks including parents as key system users proves important: "Allowing access to their students portfolio, notes etc. will help them to be able to 'see' what their child is learning."

According to Thompson, another valuable feature would be college and career awareness and guidance features. (See [Core & More: Guiding and Personalizing College & Career Readiness](#) for a list of 12 features.)

Truesdale believes that a student-centered digital system that requires each learner to self-monitor and provides affirmation of personal effort and learning will be a game changer for building a student's cognitive and emotional confidence—essential skills for success in career and college.

### Platform Desired Features

Through interviews and discussions with educators, schools and districts, the Getting Smart team identified desired characteristics of next-generation platforms. Using this list, the team ranked each learning platform featured in this report using the rating key shown in the graphic below. This information is based on informal research, is not exhaustive and is ever changing due to the continuous updates platforms make to meet market demand.

Platform	CMS	AM	IIS	BL	PBL	SBA	AA	SBG	PM	SS	DA	CS
Edsby												
itslearning												
Realizeit												
Milepost												
PEAK												
Fishtree												
Alma												
Edmodo												
Edgenuity												
Buzz												
Canvas												
Schoology												
Gaggle												
Highlight												

**Desired feature set:**

CMS: content management system; multiple sources, playlists

AM: assignment management; communication tools; groups

IIS: instructional improvement system, RTI, achievement analytics

BL: blended learning support; scheduling, grouping

PBL: project based learning support, rubric-based grading

SBA: standards-based assessment, quiz builder, item bank

AA: adaptive assessment, recommendations, machine learning

SBG: standards-based gradebook; mastery tracker

PM: progress monitoring; goal tracking; student portfolio

SS: single sign-on, interoperability, extensibility

DA: device agnostic, mobile optimized

CS: comprehensive solution; robust parent communication

**Rating key** (assuming full use of premium product)

- Not present/not applicable
- Rudimentary/limited functionality
- Basic
- Optimal
- Exemplary
- ★ update scheduled

We welcome feedback on the information within this table. Please email suggestions or comments to [info@gettingsmart.com](mailto:info@gettingsmart.com) with Learning Platforms in the subject line.

# Conclusion

Authored by Getting Smart Staff

Getting Smart on Next-Gen Platforms was intended to share highlights of learning platforms in the field and point towards progress.

Students deserve personal learning plans, standards-aligned projects and relevant content. They have a right to fair and formative assessments, learner profiles as well as learning and relationship tools. Teachers deserve tools for professional development and lesson sharing plus innovative classroom management systems. With the reality of how learning works in the 21st century, students and teachers need platforms that not only meet the learning needs of today, but that also address the learning needs of tomorrow.

To review, as discussed in the introduction schools and districts should consider the following when choosing a learning platform:

- ✓ **Start with learning goals**
- ✓ **Understand the range of use**
- ✓ **Develop a selection team**
- ✓ **Identify what services & features matter**
- ✓ **Develop selection criteria**
- ✓ **Consider total cost**
- ✓ **Pick a partner**

Some platforms meet the needs of traditional schools moderately well. However, no platform currently meets all the needs of schools attempting personalized and competency-based models. The good news? Most are quickly improving. More than a thousand people powered by more than a billion dollars of investment are hard at work, improving the next generation learning toolset.

For districts like Dallas ISD and Henry County Schools, this is really great news for educators and students who are using even the most basic trail and error, testing and demoing several products, when selecting platforms.

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