

As several areas of American society are slowly reshaped by technology, education is one of those already seeing its influence. Though classroom learning is not likely to be replaced, the walls between localized and distance learning may one day disappear.

West Central Learning Academy Tech Coordinator Bob Green believes a cultural shift has begun. In education, it may involve various electronic devices becoming more integrated with curriculum to the point of even replacing the traditional textbook.

“In the future, I think we’ll see more interactive video distance learning and Web-based learning taking shape in schools and it comes down to costs. We can get a group of students from various high schools and a teacher to cover those five or six students and offer things like Mandarin Chinese and American Sign Language. The role of technology in general, especially the Internet, will become more prevalent and more integrated; it will become common for students to come to school with a laptop, iPod Touch or another device for the day and use that as part of their learning. I can see it replacing pen and paper. Some notebooks cost around \$300 and we can store all of their textbooks on them. They can do their homework on them and use Google Docs for collaboration projects. Once the digital generation of those born after 1980 begins to take a greater hold, we’ll see more and more online collaboration efforts,” he said.

Eventually, students in Ohio may be able to take courses from highly-specialized universities that rank higher than any in Ohio but Green can see the state government standing in the way.

“By Ohio having some community colleges and universities within 40 miles of each other, there can be collaboration between colleges and high schools to get kids college-ready. The state is talking about more college-prep courses and the only way for some districts to offer them without hiring more teachers and pay them benefits on top of everything else is to do it through distance learning in collaboration with colleges and universities. Our government in Ohio will probably encourage collaboration with colleges in Ohio but there will be standards so it may be possible if someone wants something from MIT, they can get that,” he said.

The over-arching challenge may be that many middle-aged and elderly people resist becoming culturally-current. Green says as younger people enter key positions, the digital age will saturate various facets of American life, including education.

“The problem we have is the people in office now didn’t grow up with the technology we have;

they didn't grow up in the digital world. They can't wrap their heads around the idea of a student in Lima or Delphos taking a class from someone in California and getting high school and college credit for it. That's hard for them because they grew up thinking 'this is my high school; these classes are what I have to take and I can't take anything else,' he said. "So, as those born after 1980 take hold of the business world, politics and education, we'll see the change but it will take time."

Source:By Mike Ford, The Delphos Herald