Digital Tools for Diverse Learners

Quality digital tools support diverse learners and build student agency through interactive personalized learning experiences.

Quality digital tools are innovative resources that are mindful and proactive to student safety, while providing enriching learning experiences that allow student voice, choice, continued growth, diversity, equity, personalization, and transformation of learning.

Expanding Student Access and Achievement

Many digital transformation initiatives use digital tools that have adaptive platforms to cater to the individual needs of students and increase student motivation and engagement. Years ago, students relied primarily on the knowledge of their educators and the content contained within their textbooks. Students now have access to a plethora of digital tools to support their personalized learning paths in technology-enhanced learning environments. Quality digital tools empower students to make choices about their learning and to receive immediate feedback to help them meet or exceed their established student outcomes.

> " Technology has the potential to expand access to learning materials, deliver content in ways that increase student engagement and adjust dynamically to each child's level and rate of learning, and provide feedback to target the misconceptions underlying student errors."
>
> — Alejandro Ganimian, Assistant Professor at New York University

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Digital Transformation: Choosing the Right Tools for Diverse Learners

With heightened sensitivity to student needs and digital transformation, decision-makers are often strategic in their purchases of digital tools to support diversity in meaningful ways. Incorporating digital tools into a school-wide culture while recognizing that students from varying backgrounds bring diverse experiences, skills, and digital identities to their schooling is sometimes a difficult task to make happen. One of the most empowering uses of digital tools occurs when educators possess the skills to identify, develop and apply technology to recognize and validate the culturally diverse needs of their students.

When deciding what tools to use, educators must first make sure the tools can enhance student experiences to increasingly maximize learning through varied learning experiences and student agency. High-quality online experiences, interaction, engagement and feedback are key indicators in quality online tools.

The Online Learning Journal explored the use of digital technologies by diverse learners in online learning environments and how digital technology impacted their experiences with positive outcomes in learning content, writing, and collaboration. The findings show that culturally diverse learners experience academic achievement via the use of digital technologies, in particular:

- Video lectures, voice thread, blogs, wikis, and Google Hangouts;

- Multimedia presentations including Powerpoints and Prezi; and,

- Social networking tools.

In addition, multicultural content resources and readings were noted as a need, as well as instructor support for the how-to and ongoing use of the digital tools. Participants struggle to find cultural connections to the resources and readings to support their individual knowledge building experience. If students cannot find themselves–identity, choice, voice, and agency–in the learning experience, motivation for persisting with and mastering of content will be impacted. Learning preferences and user needs are paramount for students to access and make meaningful connections in the online learning space.

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>
> **— Kumi-Yeboah**

Collaborative Tailored Learning Experiences for Diverse Learners

In response to the need to address diverse learners and student engagement, many companies are now collaborating to tailor learning experiences that support user confidence, recognize emerging reader needs, and integrate tools for second language learners. For example, Pear Deck and Google have partnered to create a digital learning experience on good digital citizenship essentials called **Be Internet Awesome**. Pear Deck has also partnered with Immersive Reader (a service developed by Microsoft) to help readers of all ages and abilities improve comprehension and build confidence in their reading skills. **Pear Deck + Immersive Reader** (beta) is available in Pear Deck Slides and works with lessons created in Google Slides or PowerPoint Online.