Digital technology has taken the world by storm—particularly in the past decade. It makes sense that this trend would have an impact on K-12 learning because there is nothing in modern American society that digital technology has not touched. While the names of the mobile applications and computer programs may change, there are some foundational ways that technology has already changed the face of education forever. Take a look:

**Collaboration:** Students can now work together on basic assignments and larger projects without having to meet at the library after school. Email and Cloud applications make it simple for students to collaborate with each other remotely. Even in person, the information the students find can instantly be saved to a shared location and then accessed later on without waiting on each other to move forward. The digital collaboration that is going on in K-12 classrooms is indicative of the way the workplace is shifting to more remote access of information - and global working relationships that operate with ease.

**Information gathering:** Along with easy sharing of information, K-12 students today can access research in ways that were unheard of when their parents were in school. Electronic academic databases provide all of the information a student needs to research an assignment or write a term paper, but with much less of the manpower needed. The way that information is obtained is certainly different today than in past K-12 generations, but the need to vet that data still exists - if not more so. With so much information at their fingertips, sorting through it to find the right, best answers becomes a lesson in itself. Educators must teach students how to research to cut through to the most accurate information. When all else fails, students should still have a grasp of "old fashioned" research that entails physically searching for, obtaining and reading material from a library shelf.

**Remote learning:** Due to access to online learning programs, 2012 was the first year that one-third of the nation's 25 to 29 year olds had earned at least a bachelor's degree. The prevalence of online learning trickles down to K-12 settings too. In the 2011 - 2012 school year, there were 275,000 full-time online K-12 students, and a total of 1.8 million distance education enrollments. Remote learning is no longer an all-or-nothing option for K-12 students. Many can choose just a few online courses, particularly in subject areas that interest them but may not receive enough coverage at their physical schools. States like Florida require that all high school students take at least one virtual class before graduation in order to prepare them for the "real world" of college learning, and the workplace after that. Online learning is also viewed as less of a threat to traditional classroom settings than when it first hit the K-12 scene. Educators now see the benefits of the two learning styles operating together to build well-rounded learners.

**Teacher prep:** The ways that educators get ready for lessons, and are being taught to get ready for future lessons, have changed along with the technology times. Nearly 73 percent of teachers use mobile applications for classroom activities and many reach out to their peers all over the world through social media sites. Online places like Pinterest are full of ideas for everything from Kindergarten holiday crafts to science experiments. Like students, teachers have access to a world of ideas, lessons and information at their fingertips - and like students, teachers must sort through the bulk of the data to find the best options for their classroom activities.

What other ways do you think that technology has changed the face of learning?

**Dr. Matthew Lynch** is the author of the recently released book, *The Call to Teach: An Introduction to Teaching*. To order it via Pearson, please click on the following [link](http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/education_futures/2014/01/4_ways_digital_technology_has_changed_k-12_learning.html?print=1).

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