



IMS GLOBALTM
Learning Consortium

Article Series on Learning Impact

Revolutionizing Education through Innovative Technology

Many revolutions begin with a single incident that defines the need for change. Travis Allen's event occurred four years ago when, as a high school senior, a teacher confiscated the iPhone he was using to take notes in class.

"I had to call my parents to come pick up my phone," he said. "I went home that day extremely frustrated and asked the question: why? Why did it have to be this way? Could there be a better way? I spent the next four months creating a YouTube video, the only way I knew how to share a message with the world. This video showed how mobile learning would be the future of education. This was before tablets so mobile learning really wasn't a big concept in education yet. That video went viral and I was getting e-mails from all over the world. People were saying: 'I want my school to look like this.' That's when I decided to create a non-profit called the **iSchool Initiative**, which is solely dedicated to revolutionizing education through the use of innovative technology."

During his four years as a student at Kennesaw State University, Allen and his team of volunteers have traveled to more than 26 states and three continents, presented to more than 120,000 teachers, administrators, and students, and are slowly changing the way teachers teach and students learn.

"We believe it really takes a student perspective sometimes to see where things are. Most students just expect education to be un-interesting. They expect school to be boring. They expect to go to class, not talk, listen to the teacher, and do their homework and get good grades. That's where we're really coming from. What has to change within the classroom? It's not just about the technology. In fact, technology can be a problem if not done correctly. Technology for the sake of technology is a terrible idea. What we really focus on is: what is the pedagogy? What has to change for education to improve?"

“I decided to create a non-profit called the iSchool Initiative, which is solely dedicated to revolutionizing education through the use of innovative technology.”

– Travis Allen, CEO and President of
iSchool Initiative

“One really popular concept out there today is about flipping the classroom. It’s the idea of going home and listening to top-level lectures and professors using technology. Then, when you go to the classroom, you do your homework as peer to peer with your teacher. You collaborate, you experience, and you apply what you’ve learned to real-life experience.

Technology is simply a gateway to allow some of that learning to occur. That’s the really important piece. Let’s make sure that we understand that (technology) is a great learning tool, but we don’t need to focus too much effort, money, and time on it.”

Allen will give a plenary presentation on his experiences at IMS Global Learning Consortium’s [Learning Impact 2013](#) in San Diego next month.

Ninety percent of iSchool Initiative’s efforts have been at the K-12 level although their message is applicable to higher education as well. The majority of their work has been conducted through keynote speeches and professional development.

“We’re all about making learning fun and bringing excitement to education, especially around mobile learning, he said. “One of the big things we did last year, rather than hold a big conference for people to come to us, why not be a conference on wheels? That’s when we launched the Digital Learning Revolution Tour. We raised \$150,000 through sponsors and traveled to 21 cities over 45 days. Nine guys and one girl on the bus. We traveled cross country, from Georgia to California, from California to New York, and back to Georgia. We put on mini-conferences at every stop and also attended existing conferences along the way. It was so successful, we’re launching a six-month, cross-country tour beginning this June. We’ve had so many companies wanting to get onboard. We’re going to have a huge tour bus that transforms into a mobile classroom, enabling us to put on displays at conferences and schools, creating excitement about reforming education.”

The iSchool Initiative team is comprised of nine full-time employees and four interns with plans to expand soon. The college senior said about 70 students

“We’re all about making learning fun and bringing excitement to education, especially around mobile learning.”

– Travis Allen, CEO and President of
iSchool Initiative

have served as volunteers during the past four years, but that the organization now looks for volunteers with specific core values like passion, being coachable, and being respectful to others. The organization now shares space with one of its key sponsors, [Promethean](#).

Allen said his organization was doing a good job of answering the “why” it was important to embrace mobile learning in the educational process, but that what was missing was the “how” to go about it. Six months ago, they created a for-profit

company called isi mobile to provide toolkits schools and institutions can use to optimize the use of technology in the classroom.

“The problem today is schools are just buying iPads and expecting results,” he said. “The reality is you need a complete solution. You need professional development, learning management systems, Wifi upgrades. You need constant tech support. You need constant training for each department of your team. You need mobile device management and online assessment tools. These are all essential components that we now provide. If a school wants to deploy several hundred of our mobile tool kits for the tablet they want and the training they want in order to make it a learning tool, we can provide that support.”

Something Allen said they realized early on was the need for interoperability so that content could flow seamlessly to all devices. “I was on a panel at a conference in Spain and the last closing question to me was: ‘If you could have one wish that mobile technology could do or mobile companies would start working toward, what would it be?’ My one wish was for complete cross-platform application software, that the device would not matter. That the devices and software would work on anything, anywhere, anytime. We have more than 30 different companies partnering with us and being part of our tool kit. And part of our vetting process is that the device must not matter.

“I was on a panel at a conference in Spain and the last closing question to me was: ‘If you could have one wish that mobile technology could do or mobile companies would start working toward, what would it be?’ My one wish was for complete cross-platform application software, that the device would not matter. That the devices and software would work on anything, anywhere, anytime.”

– *Travis Allen, CEO and President of iSchool Initiative*

“I love what IMS is doing and look forward to working with them to establish standards that all of our partners can align with,” added Allen. “We’re not interested in building standards when they’ve already been established. We are more interested in putting all the components together, then have it meet IMS standards so we can say, ‘Here’s a viable product that’s ready to go.’”

And what will the learning landscape look like in 10 years?

“You know, that’s really hard to say because we’re living in exponential times,” he replied. “I can tell you that in 5 to 10 years, education is in for some major changes. If education doesn’t change quickly, it will become irrelevant and it will become obsolete. If it remains on the track it is right now, students will no longer be going to school. I’m less worried about what education is going to look like in 10 years and more concerned about what we can do to change it today. I think we have five years left to fix it, and if we don’t fix it by then, it’s obsolete. We’re going to have to find alternative ways to educate our kids.”

About IMS Global Learning Consortium

IMS Global is a nonprofit organization that advances technology that can affordably scale and improve educational participation and attainment. IMS members are leading suppliers, institutions and government organizations that are enabling the future of education by collaborating on interoperability and adoption initiatives. IMS sponsors Learning Impact: A global awards program and conference to recognize the impact of innovative technology on educational access, affordability, and quality. For more information visit www.imsglobal.org or contact info@imglobal.org.

Twitter: [@LearningImpact](https://twitter.com/LearningImpact)

Learning Impact Blog: www.imsglobal.org/blog/

tel: +1 407.362.7783

fax: +1 407.333.1365

Citation To reference this article please cite: Humes, L. R. (2013). *Revolutionizing Education through Innovative Technology*. IMS Global Learning Consortium Series on Learning Impact. April 2013 from

<http://www.imsglobal.org/articles/SLI03-042013.pdf>

Copyright © 2013 by IMS Global Learning Consortium, Inc.
All Rights Reserved.

The IMS Logo is a registered trademark
of IMS Global Learning Consortium.

