

Increasing Knowledge and Skills in this Digital, Global Era with Scott McLeod



Dreaming big at Iowa BIG

Do you know about Iowa BIG? Co-located with a corporate startup accelerator at a former brownfield site of Iowa Steel, Iowa BIG is a project-based learning option for Cedar Rapids area high school students. Local businesses, nonprofits, and city agencies pitch proposed projects to the students, hoping that talented youth will take up their challenges. Students pick from the project pool and then work with school and community mentors to accomplish the work, achieving curricular standards and other learning outcomes — like 21st century skills and Iowa’s Universal Constructs — along the way.

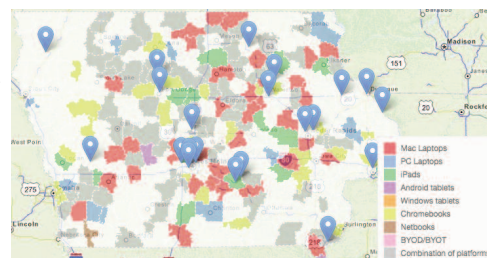
The work done by Iowa BIG students is quite impressive. Example student projects include transforming the Bever Park Zoo into an interactive and educational urban farm, co-researching the evolution of grapes with the University of Northern Iowa, creating a one-handed keyboard for amputees, and redesigning Johnson Elementary into a STEAM magnet school. Other examples include development of a waterborne drone that measures plastic waste in oceans, designing arthritis-friendly utensils, creating a documentary of Linn County’s first medical examiner, designing and testing an aquaponics system in North Africa, developing a recycling bin that tweets to the Internet what gets recycled, and initiating a young women’s entrepreneurship community and conference.

Iowa BIG is up to nearly 100 high school students this year and its approach is expanding to other schools in the Cedar Rapids area. Recent data confirm what we would imagine: students are much more engaged in their learning and seem to be doing better academically than comparable peers. When students are voluntarily working on their projects over the summer and talking about coming back to the city to ‘keep doing this kind of work after we graduate from college,’ you know something is going right. (Are your students saying this about their school work?)

Want to learn more? Visit IowaBIG.org and facebook.com/IowaBIG and twitter.com/IowaBIG. The faculty at Iowa BIG are gearing up for another great year. Visit if you can!

Are you on the Iowa 1:1 map?

AEA 267 is maintaining the map of all of our state’s 1:1 initiatives. See if your district’s information is correct at <http://bit.ly/1to1mapiowa>. If it’s not, have your technology coordinator update your information at <http://bit.ly/1to1mapiowaupdate>.



What does this say about us as learners?

A 2nd grade teacher told me — without any chagrin — that her students knew more about their iPads than she did. (I thought in my head, ‘Really? They’re 7...’) As educators, shouldn’t we be embarrassed if we’re getting outlearned by 7-year-olds?

If the kids know more than we educators do about learning technologies, what does this say about us as learners?

Some resources from over the summer

AASA: Principles for school districts’ social media policies, <http://bit.ly/aasaprinciples>
3 minutes with the ISTE board [VIDEO], <http://bit.ly/3minutesisteboard>
4Q: The quadruple win, <http://bit.ly/quadruplewin>

As always, stay in touch at dr.scott.mcleod@gmail.com, 707-722-7853, or @mcleod!

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