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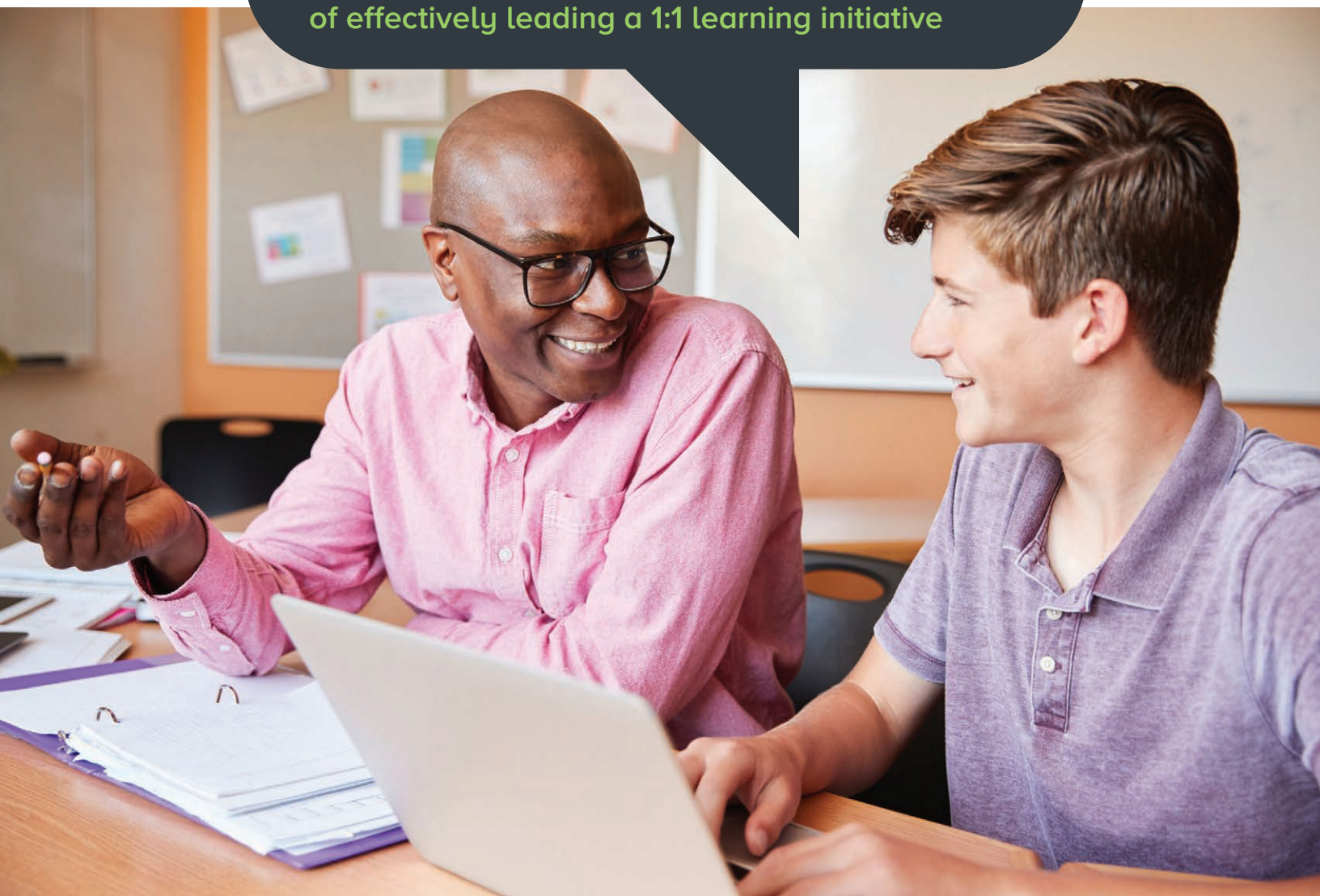📄 **Voices**
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Empowering Students— and Teachers—with Successful 1:1 Learning

Three experts discuss the benefits and challenges of effectively leading a 1:1 learning initiative

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Three experts discuss the benefits and challenges of effectively leading a 1:1 learning initiative

Like a growing number of K-12 school systems nationwide, New York's Elmira City School District is connecting students with the outside world and expanding their opportunities for learning by providing computers for every student.

The program began two years ago with students in seventh grade. Last year, it expanded to grades 6-8, and this year fifth and ninth graders also received devices. In an interview, three experts who are involved in the program reveal how they define 1:1 learning, what outcomes they're looking for, some of the key concerns they've heard from stakeholders about giving every student a device, and how they're overcoming these concerns through smart classroom management practices.
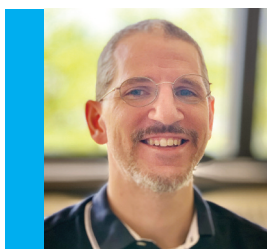
Joshua Miller is director of technology for the Elmira City School District, where he is responsible for planning, managing, and implementing the district's technology initiatives.
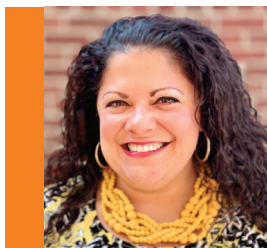
Kelley Bacalles is the principal at Beecher Elementary School in Elmira, which serves just over 400 students in grades 3-6. Before becoming the school's principal, she helped launch Elmira's 1:1 learning program and led teacher training as an instructional technology leader for the district.

Coby Gurr is the director of product management for Lenovo Software, whose LanSchool classroom management solution is helping teachers in Elmira manage 1:1 learning more effectively.

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? How do you define 1:1 learning? What does this concept mean to you, and why is it important?

J.M. For us, 1:1 learning means opening up a world of possibilities for every student. We're doing that by putting a device in every student's hands. But our expectation isn't that students will use a device from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. every day. They're not coming into the classroom and sitting in front of a screen all day. They're using the technology when it's a useful resource. We want to make sure that our students are prepared for a tech-centric world, while still getting a well-rounded education.

KB: To me, it's about leveling the playing field for all students, so they all have equal access to learning opportunities. We want our students to be inquisitive. We don't just want them memorizing facts. We want to prepare them for when they go out into the real world, so they know how to solve problems, find and evaluate information, and innovate and create as needed. We also want them to learn how to be good digital citizens. One thing that's a big priority for me is making sure that students know what kind of power they have in their hands when they're sitting in front of a computer, and how they can use this power effectively.

> **We want to prepare them for when they go out into the real world, so they know how to solve problems, find and evaluate information, and innovate and create as needed. We also want them to learn how to be good digital citizens.**

CG: Research suggests that everyone learns differently. Teachers need to provide different avenues for this learning to occur. 1:1 learning is about personalizing the learning experience for every student. Too often, K-12 educators and administrators focus more on the device itself, and not the learning that it enables. Ultimately, 1:1 learning is about changing instructional practices to meet every student's needs.

eSchool News
📄 **Voices**
from the **Field**

Empowering Students—and Teachers—
with Successful 1:1 Learning

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❓ What are the main outcomes you're looking for? How do you characterize successful 1:1 learning?

J.M. When we put technology in the classroom, we want teachers to be able to use it—so we need to make sure we're providing the training and support that's necessary for technology to make a difference. If we put a cart of laptops into a classroom and the teacher isn't leveraging them for instruction, then we're not getting a good return on our investment. On the other hand, if students are using the devices and they're more engaged—and able to do things they couldn't do with paper and pencil—that signifies success.

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KB: One thing I'm looking for when I walk into a classroom is what the technology is used for. Is it being used as a powerful instructional tool that is transforming teaching and learning? Or is it being used as a substitute for traditional learning? Also, are students making good choices in how they interact with each other online? When you don't see someone face to face, it can be easier to act inappropriately—but the consequences are often more serious. And finally, are students learning how to learn, so they're prepared for whatever comes at them? Are they learning *how* to solve problems more effectively? These outcomes are hard to measure, but they're the things we're aiming for.

CG: A lot of vendors talk about speeds and feeds. Ultimately, we're focused on how we can change the lives of teachers and students with our software. We want to know: Does providing technology in a school change outcomes? Are students performing better? Just because we give all students a device doesn't necessarily mean they're going to have better outcomes. In fact, without the right tools and processes in place, students are often distracted by technology—and teachers then push back against it.

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📄 **Voices**
from the **Field**

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? **What does putting technology into every student's hands enable that you can't do in a traditional classroom?**

J.M. Collaboration becomes easier. When students are working together in groups to complete a project or a presentation, they don't always have to get together physically—they can also collaborate online. Each student can be working on a different piece of the project, all within the same document. We're using Office 365 as a collaboration platform, and students can set up virtual spaces where they can work on projects together.

Technology also allows for differentiated learning. Students can be working at different levels, and no one is even aware of this. That's important for all students, but especially for special education. We're focused on inclusion in our district, and technology can help provide extra assistance to students who need it without anyone knowing who's receiving special education services—because every student is using a laptop.

KB: We're trying to meet each student's unique learning needs. The reading and math intervention programs that we use, Read 180 and Math 180, are adaptive learning tools that deliver instruction at the precise level that students require. This helps create individualized learning paths for students.

Technology also helps teachers give students immediate and personalized feedback. Before, students would take an assessment and the teacher would go home, grade it, then hand it back to the student the next day. Now, we're able to provide much more immediate feedback in multiple ways. We use a few different programs for this. One is Classkick, which allows teachers to interact with students and give them instant feedback on their work. Another tool we use is LanSchool. Teachers can look at students' screens to see if they're on track with an assignment and can give personalized feedback to each child.

CG: When you give a device to students, they're able to progress at their own pace. Students who are ready to advance can do so, and they're no longer held back by the pace of instruction. In a traditional learning environment, the teacher has to keep everybody at the same pace.

Technology also allows students to learn differently. If they learn better by watching videos or seeing examples, they can do that instead of just reading a textbook or listening to a lecture. Students can also take virtual field trips to places they might never be able to visit, such as Africa or even another planet. Technology broadens what is possible for students.

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from the **Field**

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❓ What are the biggest concerns you have about 1:1 learning, or that you've heard from stakeholders?

J.M. We don't want to put the cart before the horse. Students need to learn basic skills before they can become technology whizzes. We want to make sure technology isn't eroding away the one-on-one time that students get with their teacher or other instructional staff.

I've got two kids who are now elementary-age. I have to admit, they've spent a lot of time in front of a screen since they were about three years old. We don't want students in front of a screen all the time. We want them to use the devices as an instructional resource when it's appropriate. But, there are times when it's appropriate to say, "Let's shut the devices off and get out our scissors and markers and do an art project," because that's just as important as the technology skills.

KB: One thing we definitely had to do was make sure our network access was as smooth as possible before we asked teachers to change their instructional practice. And obviously, we wanted to make sure teachers felt prepared to adopt the technology. We identified some early adopters and asked them to try it out first, then showcased their experiences. I made sure to include a wide variety of experience and ability levels, so teachers would say, "I can do that, too." We had to get teachers to take a risk in their classrooms, knowing they wouldn't be doing this by themselves, but they would have others in the building they could go to for help.

We heard from many teachers who were concerned they might fall behind in their curriculum if they were trying new techniques. I would tell them to start slowly by making just a small change. And if a lesson didn't go as planned, I would advise them to use that as an example for students of how to react when something goes wrong by modeling effective problem solving. Once they're more comfortable in teaching with technology, they find that it actually saves them a lot of time because they can easily push out assignments to students, poll the entire class, and give and receive feedback more efficiently.

CG: How to keep students on task is always a big concern among teachers. If we just give students a device, they're going to start navigating to things that interest them. Teachers are thinking, "How in the world am I going to get my class to listen to me?" There's no way to guide students' learning without some form of classroom management. Technology can be very powerful, but without those boundaries in place, it can become a hindrance.

eSchool News

Voices
from the **Field**

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with Successful 1:1 Learning

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How are you addressing these concerns?
How does Lenovo's LanSchool software help?

J.M. It really comes down to effective classroom management. Our teachers went through training on classroom management techniques, such as having students tilt their screens at a 45-degree angle when the teacher is giving instructions—and putting the devices back into the cart when they're not being used.

LanSchool plays a key role as well. With LanSchool on the devices, teachers can control what students are doing. They can blank students' screens and keep them on task much more effectively. This can be done for the entire class or even for individual students. If there are 20 kids in a class and 18 are on task but two aren't doing what they should be, the teacher can blank their screens or send them a personalized, discrete message without stopping the flow of class or embarrassing those students in front of their peers. Students get the message really quickly that the teacher is watching what they're doing, so they should probably stay on task.

KB: When we were rolling out our 1:1 learning program, our pilot teachers said they needed a way to keep students focused on their lessons. We used LanSchool, because we were already using it in our computer lab—and it gave teachers everything they were asking for.

Knowing that in just a few clicks they could see what students had on their screen, focus them if they were getting off track, put limits on where students were allowed to go, or message individual students as needed made teaching with the technology a much more comfortable experience for teachers. We were also able to show them some new things they didn't realize they could do with LanSchool, like screencasting a student's screen to the entire class.

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CG: With LanSchool, teachers can guide students through their learning journey together. Imagine having to get younger students whose keyboarding skills aren't well developed to type in a long URL string when you want everyone on the same page. It's very difficult. This might seem like a small thing, but it's actually a big deal. Being able to push out a website to students allows teachers to reclaim valuable teaching time.

One of the scariest moments for students today is raising their hand in front of their peers to say, "I don't understand." They're going to be seen as lacking knowledge, and so they avoid asking questions and often end up falling farther behind. LanSchool takes the peer pressure out of that situation; instead of embarrassing themselves, students can send a direct message to the teacher during a lesson, and the teacher can provide assistance behind the scenes.

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Keys to Success

As Elmira's example makes clear, 1:1 learning is about much more than putting a device in every student's hands. To achieve real success, teachers must change their approach to instruction by leveraging the technology to do things they couldn't do before.

When integrated well, 1:1 learning can drive student achievement by enabling powerful collaboration, personalized learning, and real-time feedback. But these changes are only possible if teachers can guide students' learning effectively.

A classroom management tool such as LanSchool facilitates high-quality instruction by helping teachers keep students on task, track their progress, provide real-time feedback, share screens, and push out digital resources. With a tool like LanSchool, teachers feel more comfortable teaching with technology—and students are able to thrive as a result.

"LanSchool helps teachers guide their students' learning, enhance collaboration, save time—and ultimately prepare students for the future" Gurr concludes.

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About LanSchool

LanSchool, an award-winning software, is a an effective complement to 1:1 and student led learning in connected classrooms. With over 30 years' experience in education, LanSchool allows teachers to manage multiple classroom activities within a secure and safer online environment.   Available for use in single classrooms and entire school districts, the software eliminates digital distractions, keeps students focused, and increases real-time collaboration in the classroom to improve student success.

LanSchool has two flexible solutions, locally-hosted or in the cloud, to suit the needs for all types of environments. The software is compatible with Windows, Mac and Chromebook devices and integrates with both Google Classroom, a free service that streamlines the process of sharing files between teachers and students, and Clever, the most widely used rostering portal in K–12 schools.

For more information, to start a trial, or receive a personalized 1:1 demo, visit www.lanschool.com.

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