



## **Panel Summary: Schools, Tools & Tech: How Online Engagement is Changing Education**

*Moderator: Ann Flynn, National School Boards Association*

*Panelists: Soraya Shockley, Student at Harvard University; Chip Slaven, Alliance for Excellent Education; Tim Sparapani, SPQR Strategies; Tammy Wincup, EverFi*

Overview: A discussion about educational technology and its growing role in schools.

Ann Flynn opened the discussion asking if educators are automating or innovating, and if educators are using technology in ways to do something that they didn't do previously. Soraya discussed her experience with technology and the lack of proper integration. She mentioned how the high school had planned for the implementation of technology, but teachers were not adequately trained. She made a point to note that improper implementation stunts growth within the educational environment and can cause stagnant learning.

Chip spoke about digital learning day and how it focuses on the teacher and pushes to find innovative ways for educators to use technology in their classrooms. He acknowledged that technology can be a distraction, however, if students are engaged and teachers use blended learning strategies, teachers can fine tune how they teach and how they approach helping those who need individualized attention. Chip expressed how important it is to allow teachers many different opportunities for learning how to use technology within the classroom.

Tammy noted that within education, technology is typically defined as one item. However, she said, when building technology for education, it should be divided into multiple areas (hardware, process tools, content and audience.) She spoke about how organizations should be held accountable that the fidelity of implementation is easy and shouldn't require professional development to the point that it hampers the educational process. Tim noted that the challenge becomes if technology can be built to be more intuitive and said that tools for schools are still in their early years.

Soraya said that it's deeper than user interface. Even if teachers learn to use technology, it's important for teachers to use technology to embrace and further learning. She mentioned how interaction is key and that teachers cannot just learn to use technology within the classroom, and that they need to learn how to teach with technology. Soraya expressed the question becomes how do you become an innovator with technology and teach something that students will want to learn.

Chip explained that a culture change is needed within the school system in order to really embrace technology. He mentioned that the teachers who recognize the shift in technology are open minded and question what the students use and recognize that they may be able to use those applications and games to teach the students accordingly. Soraya expanded on this by stating that traditional note taking is becoming less important because the information is easily accessible and that teachers now have the challenge of teaching students how to interact with the information that they can access. She noted that system is changing from lecturing to interacting with information.

Tammy agreed that the classrooms where interaction is most visible, the role of the teacher is changing. Teachers now have the ability to take on the role as a facilitator of great conversation about content that is being delivered in a different medium. She pointed out that experimentation for new ways of learning and teaching is not driven top down but rather bottom up and that to gain sustainability, teachers, districts and developers must work to meet in the middle. Chip agreed that top down culture change does not work and that it's important now is for school districts to contemplate what should be done in order to plan accordingly. Chip talked about a district in Arizona that has set up a program to help facilitate learning through technology and experimentation of new methods as an example of how districts can further educational technology development.

Ann brought up the topic of data breaches and data privacy. Tim mentioned that schools are still a primary target. However, he said, students bring their own devices into the learning environment and will continue to do so and that the conversation about data privacy needs to change. Soraya agreed that the conversation isn't if education technology should be in the classroom but rather how do you use it. Tammy said that if personalized learning is desired, then conversations need to address what teachers require in order to formulate plans.

Chip discussed the digital divide and "Bring Your Own Device" implementation within different districts. Soraya expanded by discussing her own background with how students handled not having technology and how it became a community issue.