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By Jon Sapper

The Digital Learner

Kids now-a-days are certainly growing up in a different world. I'm sure every generation says that, but this one is profoundly different. I've told stories about my 3 yr. old grandson and how he uses a smart phone for flipping through pictures and using Skype for video phone calls. He started pre-school last week and his teacher said he sure is a little talker. In fact, she said he didn't stop talking.....His mom will have to work on that. But this got me thinking about what his schooling is going to look like.

I've been in the education business for almost forty years and we've seen trends come and go and sometimes change doesn't happen quickly enough. But this technology thing.....is going to revolutionize education and it's already started. We adults can learn from the kids. During the last several years over 2.5 million students nationwide gave their thoughts and ideas about the use of technology in schools. Sixty-five percent of students in middle school are smartphone users. Eighty percent of high school students use smartphones. This national report stated that even with few teachers in middle and high schools assigning Internet homework on a weekly basis, 69% of high school seniors, 61% of freshmen and 47% of 6th graders use the Internet weekly to support their homework. Only half of the high school students with smartphones say they are allowed to use their device at school. Here's the kicker.....75% of kindergarten through 2nd grade students use computers and mobile devices to play educational games on a regular basis.

Teachers and administrators are using these devices much more frequently and just might catch up with the kids one day. There are many local teachers who are bringing these technology resources into the classroom. Technology is just a tool. The wave is just beginning....and it's a big wave. Nine first and second grade teachers throughout Humboldt County were part of a pilot program using E-readers, electronic devices to encourage and support children learning how to read. The Humboldt County Office of Education and the Humboldt County Library launched this program. The results were very exciting with increased motivation of young readers and improved reading ability reported. The devices do not replace books. They are used to help children learn how to read. Most schools

throughout the County are exploring and finding ways to bring new technologies into the classroom to help students achieve. This is the future and the future is now. My guess is that in ten years, all textbooks will be in electronic form. No more carrying 30 lbs. of books.

In the meantime, I'll get my grandson some toys where he can go out and play in the dirt.

This has been Jon Sapper for Community Comment.