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Digital Learning Now! Releases Smart Series Guide to EdTech Procurement *White Paper Provides Guidance for EdTech Purchasing for District and State Leaders*

WASHINGTON (January 15, 2014) – [Digital Learning Now!](#) (DLN), a national initiative of the Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcelinEd), today released the 10th white paper in the [DLN Smart Series](#) in association with Getting Smart. Titled “Smart Series Guide to EdTech Procurement,” the paper features the expertise of John Bailey, executive director of Digital Learning Now!, Carri Schneider, director of policy and research at Getting Smart, and Tom Vander Ark, CEO at Getting Smart, as well as that of contributing authors Rob Waldron, CEO of Curriculum Associates, and Daniel Owens, partner at the Learning Accelerator.

The goal of the paper is to create a framework for EdTech purchasing by offering practical advice to guide key decisions. The authors share lessons learned from districts that have already made the digital shift, discuss the implications for blended learning, and provide examples of best practices in education policy that support smart procurement.

“Procurement policies and practices are one of the most overlooked areas needed to support innovative instructional models,” said John Bailey, executive director of Digital Learning Now! “We can’t transform our education system without transforming the way we procure services and products. Procurement needs to accelerate new approaches, not inhibit them.”

With a number of technology options available, there are countless opportunities for vendors and districts to work together. Throughout the paper, the authors describe 12 keys to smart EdTech procurement:

1. Take inventory
2. Determine the educational priorities
3. Exercise caution on customization
4. Pursue collaborative investigation and purchases
5. Demand guarantees and assurances



6. Make real comparisons
7. Conduct a pilot
8. Prioritize data sharing and interoperability
9. Remember that service matters
10. Consider total cost of ownership
11. Close the deal
12. Implement, implement, implement

“Implementation must be done well to be beneficial. Rushing the implementation process for blended and online learning often results in inefficiencies and missed opportunities to bring the best personalized learning to students,” Vander Ark said.

“Thinking strategically about EdTech purchases will ensure higher impact and ultimately benefit more teachers and students, and we hope this paper identifies the best ways to incorporate change,” added Schneider.

While collaborating with policymakers and educational leaders from across the country, the authors have made the observation that providers often market themselves in strikingly similar ways, even when their product and service offerings are very different. Frequently, the result is confusion and frustration from educational leaders who do not know where to begin.

“Our hope is that this guide will help districts make smart choices in a uniquely challenging market, allowing them to spend more time and money on the ultimate goal of improving learning outcomes,” Owens said. “As education trends move towards teaching 21st century skills, we’ve seen school districts dramatically increase EdTech purchasing. In the end, this allows educators to incorporate online learning and it helps students adapt to the ever-changing technological environment.”

The procurement process outlined in the paper was developed from lessons gleaned by the collective experience of the authors, who have worked with hundreds of school districts across the nation. These experiences have allowed each author the opportunity to address the challenges that districts will face when attempting to discern technology integration in a way that creates a better environment for teachers to teach and students to learn.

“The review and selection of an EdTech solution can be a very complicated process,” said Waldron. “Our goal is to help administrators save money, increase flexibility, get better service and improve their odds of purchasing a product that truly meets all of their needs.”

Digital Learning Now! is active on Facebook at facebook.com/DigitalLearningNow and Twitter at @DigLearningNow. Using the hashtags #SmartSeries, #EdTech and #DigLN, readers can join the discussion on Twitter and Facebook.



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To learn more or to download the full paper, go to digitallearningnow.com/dln-smart-series.

MEDIA NOTE: To schedule an interview with one of the authors, contact Carri Schneider at (206) 604-6059 or carri@gettingsmart.com.

About Digital Learning Now!

Digital Learning Now! is a national initiative under ExcelinEd, with the goal of advancing state policies that create a high-quality digital learning environment to better equip all students with the knowledge and skills to succeed in this 21st century economy. The policy framework stems from the belief that access to high-quality, customized learning experiences should be available to all students, unbounded by geography or artificial policy constraints.

About Getting Smart

Getting Smart® is an advocacy firm passionate about innovations in learning. We help education organizations construct cohesive and forward-thinking strategies for branding, awareness, advancement and communication, and public and media relations. We are advocates for better K-12 education as well as early, post-secondary and informal learning opportunities for all students. We attempt to accelerate and improve the shift to digital learning. On GettingSmart.com we cover important events, trends, products, books and reports.

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