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## COMMENTARY

## Five Predictions for Education in 2017

Here is what's ahead for school choice, ed tech, and more

By Anthony Kim

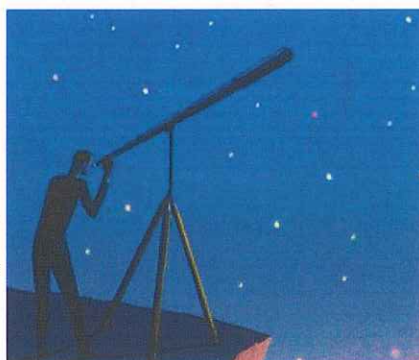
February 28, 2017

As we reboot, rethink, and reassess our values in the first couple of months of 2017, I'd like to reflect on what this year will mean for education. In the months to come, we will face substantial shifts resulting from the elections of the past year, which not only brought us new politicians, but also demonstrated a deep division between the perceptions of the coastal cities and the rest of the country. As the CEO of a personalized-learning company, Education Elements, I use this time of reflection to consider what changes and shifts are afoot for our districts partners. For education as a whole, there are five major changes that I predict 2017 will bring:

**1. School districts are going to face a lot more competition from charters, vouchers, and the internet.** The confirmation of Betsy DeVos as U.S. secretary of education makes this prediction a near certainty. How new policies will get implemented is less certain, but it will be important for school districts to prepare. For the first time, in many cases, districts will actually need to market themselves and compete for enrollment. This will require every district to think more like a customer-centric organization. While it's going to be a painful change in mindset for some, districts that are focused on personalized learning already see increased enrollment, higher teacher satisfaction, and greater student engagement, according to an Education Elements survey of school district clients.

**2. We will continue to struggle to address the needs of different generations working and learning in schools today if we don't make significant changes to "the system."**

There is a fundamental difference between the analog generations (which include the baby boomers and Generation Xers) and the digital generations (millennials and Generation Zero). The analog generations, of which I am a member, grew up with limited information, a greater appreciation for hierarchy, and an acceptance of being managed. Those in the digital generations are different. They grew up in a high-speed, connected world with access to immediate



—Jon Krause for Education Week

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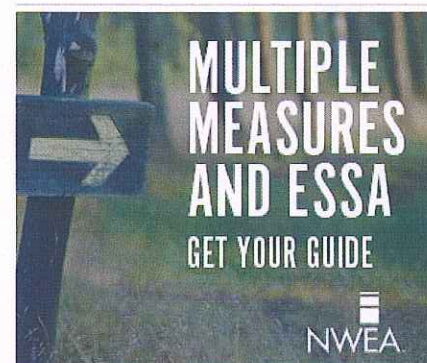
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information every day. They therefore don't feel as bound or limited as older generations. Right now, the systems we put in place—including the school day, the bell schedule, the teaching process, the work environment, and the organizational culture of schools and school districts—all go against the grain of the younger generations and will have to be changed to better suit today's learners.

### 3. Measures of success will center on equity, diversity, and stewardship.

Increased competition from vouchers and choice will likely result in increasing equity gaps. We already know that simply providing students with equal access to technology and the internet doesn't ensure equity. We must do more. I recently worked with a district in Idaho to determine its measures of success. The three tenets that the district's leadership team arrived at were particularly valuable:

- **Equity:** Every child and every school in the district needs equal opportunities and resources to reach their full potential. It requires constant work to fill opportunity gaps within each district.

- **Diversity:** There are many reasons we need diversity in the classroom, and it's not just about racial, socioeconomic, or academic diversity for its own sake. Students also need to learn to work collaboratively—a practice that is critical for preparing them for the workforce.

**"Increased competition from vouchers and choice will likely result in increasing equity gaps."**

- **Stewardship:** This comes in multiple levels, including stewardship of the children and stewardship of the community's funds. The community needs to feel that every child is well cared for and that budgets are used effectively.

### 4. We will continue to see consolidation of companies in the ed-tech marketplace, as well as some companies that break through and provide tremendous value to school districts.

Ed-tech companies need to figure out how to provide value to school districts, not just to teachers and classrooms. They also need to help districts figure out how to support the change needed to implement products well. This is going to happen only when companies start integrating value-added services into their product offerings, such as helping school leaders understand how a reading-comprehension program can be used with a writing program.

### 5. School systems will focus more on districtwide change, realignment of resources, and organizational design.

Implementing change quickly and sustainably is a challenge most organizations face, and school districts are no different. District leaders need to focus on learning and growing while doing the implementation work, rather than spending so much time on planning and evaluating.

There is no doubt that 2017 has the potential to be an exciting year, but it will also bring deep challenges, as districts prepare for the Every Student Succeeds Act and work with a new secretary of education. My five predicted changes and others will demand new partnerships and conversations for us to embrace what lies ahead.

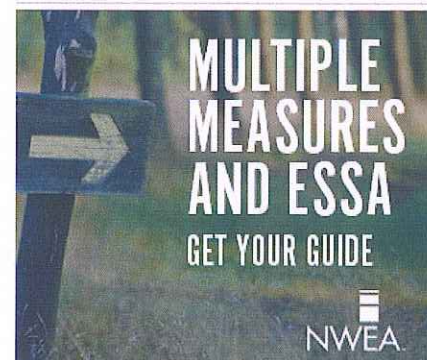
*Anthony Kim is the founder and CEO of Education Elements, a consulting firm that partners with school districts to plan and implement personalized-learning strategies.*

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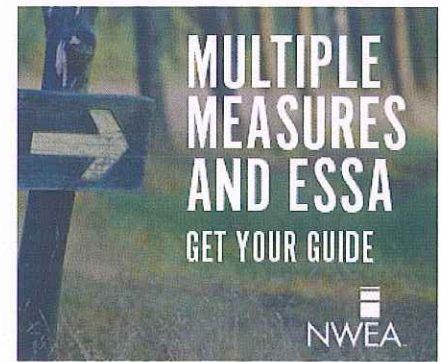
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3:27 PM on March 2, 2017

I think we need a new term because "charter schools" covers too many options. There are district-led charters that do not "siphon away" any money from the local school district, they are coming from the same pot and under the same oversight, with additional independence. Then there are charter schools run by charter school organizations that serve as LEAs within a state. Those also are public schools, and follow most or all of the state's practices in public education. Then you have privately run and authorized schools, and as a subset of those, charter schools run by for-profit companies. These can be radically different from one another, and lumping them all together as "charter schools" makes no sense at all.



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