College doesn't teach real-world skills

I

Just a college grad, I know the
world won't open its doors to me
in a snap. I need a degree to
find a job, but even then it's tough.

The world of business is
competitive, and it takes a
lot of skills to succeed. Just
because I have a degree,
I'm not guaranteed a job.

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Some experts say a college
diploma is no guarantee
of success. They argue
that the real-world
skills are what
really count.

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I think they're right. It's
not just about what you
know, but how you use
it. I've had to learn
on my own, and it's
been tough. But
I'm determined to
succeed.
Too Cool for School Disruptive tech is changing how kids learn

BY VICTOR LUCKERSON

In a few weeks, the halls of a school in Nanuet, N.Y., will teem with mini race cars. The vehicles will sport custom-designed wheels, each set carefully tuned in diameter and thickness to achieve maximum speed.

But the cars’ makers aren’t college-level engineers; they’re middle-school students attempting to learn about physics and technology by using a device that combines both—the school’s 3-D printer.

“It’s rewriting what’s possible” in education, says Vinny Garrison, the teacher who organizes the races.

It’s not the only innovation doing so. Nearly three-fourths of U.S. teachers use technology to motivate students to learn, according to a survey by PBS LearningMedia. And that tech is getting smarter: students can now virtually tour ancient worlds to learn history, take quizzes via smartphone and more.

Most of the changes are designed to better prepare U.S. students for careers in fast-growing fields like science and engineering. But they can come at a cost—and not just financially. A $500 million plan to supply Los Angeles students with iPads was recently suspended after students bypassed content filters and some parents complained that the initiative was pulling focus from much-needed building repairs.

So far, however, research shows that using next-gen tech in the right ways can make students smarter, more engaged and more creative. Here is a look at six new technologies that are shaping the classrooms of the future.

Printers that redefine hands-on learning

MakerBot has already placed more than 5,000 3-D printers in U.S. schools that are designed to help students create model cars (to learn about physics), model frogs (to learn about biology) and more.

Textbooks that learn about students

Publishing giant McGraw-Hill’s line of digital SmartBooks quizzizes students after every chapter and highlights the material they need to review; teachers can mine that data for classwide insights.

Touchscreen chalkboards that beam notes

The futuristic displays that Hewlett-Packard is testing in a model classroom in Taipei are synched with students’ individual computers, allowing them to copy notes and view multimedia.

Desks that foster collaboration

Some classrooms at the University of North Carolina feature rolling desks, which allow students to easily switch from listening to a teacher to organizing into small groups.

Cell phones that teachers ask kids to turn on

Instead of purchasing pricey new tech, Schools in Katy, Texas, ask kids to bring their own smartphones—so they can conduct research, answer quizzes via text and more. (There are myriad restrictions on the Wi-Fi network.)

Toys that teach empathy

In order to help kids understand teamwork and trust, the Kickstarter-funded Empathy Toy—already used in roughly 400 schools globally—requires them to collaborate on assembling a Lego-like structure of blocks while they are blindfolded.

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