



The Digital Learning Landscape

A POEM BY JGO GORDON,
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We have to close our doors, they said
But don't worry, we have a solution
This institution
Has all the needed parts
To keep the learning going
Remember all those ipad and chromebook carts?
We ordered them years ago
Mind-blowing at the time
A little dusty, I admit but through the grime
Is a virtual world that is yearning to be revealed
We'll call it "Digital Learning"
Tell the students they'll be returning

Excuse us, we said
Need any help over there?
Some responded, but most continued
Pulling out their hair
We mostly didn't care
Cause we were changing the trajectory
All the while increasing our student directories
We offered flexibility and customization
Surely there'd be no hesitation
To our well established digital model
Not just teaching whatever
Or lessons cobbled together
But robust, differentiated instruction
It's clearly time for education disruption

But could things really change?
The pandemic eased
And schools arranged
To put students back in seats, and quick
It's time to restore the mortar and brick
Parents are going back to their jobs
And how sustainable really are learning pods
Or microschools or hybrid schools
It's time to get back to traditional tools

We argued it's time for a paradigm shift
Time to link academic endeavors with unique personal interests
Time to embrace student agency
Flexibility adjacency
Community partnership nascency
But we still need to build the blueprint
And learn from the observations as we go through this

We saw a debate around ESA policy
Solidly surveying and audibly scrutinizing
School choice

We saw sticklers on testing
Requesting a return away from options virtual
Even though distances
And dollars
And destinations
Diversity and downright decency
For many, make this unworkable

We have begun to realize that our methods for accountability
Are in desperate need of rethinking
We've been drinking from a fountain
That's created a rigid, test-driven mountain
Made of distrusting educators
Inaccurate indicators
And stifled creativity from would be participators

At least we can all agree
That online methods are cheaper...

Sorry, that was a joke
Please don't bum rush the speaker

Look, maybe the point is that it's an exciting time
As I stand here making rhymes
Children are accessing technology
Without apology
To take control of their learning
Accessing their burning desire
To do what all minds require
As a simple fact of being human

We'll continue to ruminate
Over synchronous vs asynchronous
Over AI and whatever it does
To facilitate education
Or simply change the narration
As we debate appropriate ages
And justify insufficient wages
Will we have enough teachers come September?
Or will they go work for an online vendor
Who builds courses to target
The dynamic needs of a changing market
But the kids...

The kids may think it's all a big bag of carpet
So as we figure out what we are building
And how much change we are actually willing
To bring to the table
If we want to be able
To truly care for our students
Prepare them,
Fulfill them,
Let's just not forget to consult the children.