

THE MEDIA AND THE DIGITAL LEARNING REVOLUTION

**DATA AND ANALYSIS
FOR THE PUBLIC
AND GUIDANCE
FOR “DIGIFORMERS”**

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the
CENTER FOR EDUCATION REFORM



INTRODUCTION

There is no question that digital learning in all its various forms is here to stay.¹ Its popularity and practice is obvious to anyone involved in the education arena, be they educators, advocates or policymakers. Yet while this “grasstops” array of people understand and embrace digital learning, it is the general public whose zest and zeal for the notions embedded in digital learning are most critical to the advancement and sustainability of this new innovation in public education. The support and knowledge of ordinary people is pivotal to sound policy making as is the reduction of barriers that stand in the way of more and better advances with technology and technology-aided learning. Providing access, tools and information to educators is the key to implementing that which the market allows.

However, to achieve that access and to ensure that policymakers join the effort requires that they hear and see news of digital learning on a regular basis. Without public discourse and public notice of the wide spread benefits of and success stories about digital learning, the movement will begin to sputter and may even encounter the kind of opposition that every other innovation has encountered once it reaches a critical mass.

Public discourse requires public understanding. Research on public opinion leading into 2013 demonstrated that the public lacked a fundamental understanding of the potential for and uses of technology in K-12 learning.

According to a November 2010 poll commissioned by the International Association for K-12 Online Learning, 38 percent of respondents viewed online learning unfavorably, and 11 percent had no opinion at all. Another plurality (34 percent) either had never heard of or had no opinion of the term, ‘digital learning,’ and less than half (45 percent) viewed the term favorably.² And even today, as our 2013 *America’s Attitudes Towards Education Reform* survey indicates, there is much work to be done to bring Americans into the mainstream conversation about new practices, approaches, and full alternatives to conventional education. Only 30 percent of Americans believe classroom technology to be one of the most promising innovations in education.³

If understanding is low, and at the same time, the legislative or education leader appetite for digital learning is still small, it likely has something to do with the media. Thus the Center for Education Reform (CER) set out to determine how the media’s activity might impact opinions about digital learning. CER simultaneously undertook an aggressive media outreach effort in its five target states to test some ideas about securing balanced and fair media coverage of digital learning, as well as conducting its own survey research after the project period was over to determine if media coverage impacts public understanding. Not surprisingly, it does. Communicating in certain ways yields more coverage of the issues.

That is probably one reason that the media has been called the “Fourth Estate” in public life — because of its power to make mainstream that which was once considered radical or even insane.

The media is key to proliferating innovation in education. And despite growing political and tri-partisan support, digital learning is still considered controversial and misinformation and misconstruction on digital learning are prevalent. The future success of digital learning will depend on massive outreach efforts to the local media and proactive engagement of local advocates as spokespeople.

The premise of The Center’s media efforts has been that small, local and non-politicized communities are better repositories for, and harbingers of, popular trends and substantive reforms.

The premise of this media analysis was that the same would be demonstrated about digital learning and all forms of online education, namely, that by ensuring understanding by local media outlets, coverage would grow and the public’s knowledge base would become strong.

This report looked at just over 1,600 articles on digital learning⁴ published in print or online news throughout the nation in the first nine months of 2013. Data was mined and analyzed to yield answers to the following questions:

Who is covering digital learning? What mediums (online, print, broadcast) are giving the issue the most attention? What are the size and frequency of articles? Do small regional papers and weeklies pay more attention to the issue than large national outlets? Are there geographical trends? Who “gets” digital learning, who does not, and why?

What, if any, are the media biases? Does the media understand digital learning, and is it being covered in a substantive way using accurate facts and data? How is digital learning being covered from an objectivity standpoint? Is coverage positive or negative?

What are the trends and the causes behind those trends? How can both positive and negative trends be best exploited?

What can advocates in the field do more strategically to engage the media? What tools and tactics will best ensure the growth of objective media coverage and thus acceptance and implementation of digital learning with a much larger footprint?

Armed with the only comprehensive media aggregator for education news, The Media Bullpen®, analysts applied these questions to the 1,600 article data set which is the basis for this report. We hope that this not only makes the path for accelerating the pace of this innovation clear, but also serves as a road map for those engaged at every level.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A leading premise this study sought to validate is that local media — news outlets that reach between 5,000 and 50,000 people and view their purpose as serving their community — are more likely purveyors of accurate, clear and often new information that their larger peers are less likely to cover. Put in a different way, local papers know their audiences and look to inform. Larger statewide and national papers look to please groups and gain market share.

It is a premise that is as old as the nation itself. The earliest news media were leading entrepreneurs who valued the nation's democratic principles and saw as their mission the unity of their community and an effort to make it better by informing and educating people about the issues. Through the 20th century, the news media was about local interest. It was the news media that told the first stories about public schooling and told the stories that made people want to be a part of that new invention.

As the trends of a growing and more complex nation evolved, so did the media. Any reader of this report understands the impact of media and how it has evolved into policymaking itself. News organizations that dwarf the average-sized national corporation dominate the numbers and the high level discourse that occurs. Pundits, proliferators of ideas, and “experts,” dominate the papers, the magazines, the news programs, and they can often determine who wins and who loses.

That is, except when local media gets in and stays in the game. The data suggest that local and smaller media outlets not only cover digital learning issues in non-politicized and non-judgmental ways, but actually, because of their links to hundreds of other media outlets, can reach more people than bigger, national newspapers. This connection from local and small to larger supply chains of audience will be explained in detail later in this report. For the purposes of this executive summary, however, it is important to understand that local media not only is more likely to be trusted by its target audience, but its connection to the community is inevitably and always stronger than a big city, marquis newspaper. The editor of a local paper is likely to be a member of the local chamber of commerce, a contributor to its leading foundation, and most certainly a current or former local school parent.

This is validated in research by the Pew Foundation, which validates a strategy for the digital reform movement or “digiformers” as this report will adopt as its new vernacular.⁵ According to Pew, “the believability ratings for major news organizations have suffered broad-based declines... positive believability ratings have fallen significantly for nine of 13 categories of news organizations tested...to 56 percent.”⁶

But when it comes to community news, that number increases to more than 70 percent. Even some 60 percent of typically only-digital-technology-driven college students say they read their local paper – on paper – rather than national news.

The public is skeptical of the news. Every day some 1.28 million people watch “Fox & Friends” – for some period of time — which is almost four times the viewership of “Morning Joe,” though most people believe that because of the household name-brand of NBC, it would be the opposite.⁷ Most national papers barely reach 400,000 readers a day. But every day, many times more than that pick up their local paper, and often do so more than once throughout the course of the day.

The combined readership of the 808 local newspapers that reach between 5,000 and 50,000 people circulation daily is in excess of **14.2 million people** (raw number is 14,224,485). Those local papers may include their statewide paper but that is not where the real traction is. While the *San Jose Mercury News*, a large regional paper with statewide impact, may get more than 500,000 estimated readers a day, it is the *Saratoga News* or *San Leandro Times* that serve segments of that same larger community that are more likely to follow a story day after day. This gives the *Mercury News* a reason to cover a story to begin with, particularly if a local paper is affiliated with a larger company of papers that centralizes the news gathering and distribution process.

It has been CER’s guiding premise, and the reason for the organization’s success in the media throughout the last two decades, that focusing locally creates relationships, and provides keen insights into how people view their community and the issues that face that community. By doing so, we gain valuable friends and allies that are responsive to what we say in their local media. Local experiences help transfer stories and ideas to the national press.

Education informed by the local voices is more substantive and more lasting than the fleeting reform efforts that get touted and advanced nationally. Education reform advanced in the local press is education reform that is more likely to stick and be understood.

The data from this report bear this out.

ANALYSIS

METHODOLOGY

In 2011, The Center for Education Reform launched The Media Bullpen®. It is the nation's largest and only aggregator of education news. This news aggregator is not the Bullpen's obvious feature, but the technology behind The Media Bullpen® was the main source of data for this analysis.

We started with over 1,600 articles that came through The Media Bullpen® “firehose”, which accumulates more than 1,000 articles daily from a proprietary connection to a media database. Through 2013, Bullpen reporters mined those articles for reform-related stories and analyzed, summarized and scored for reliability (whether the coverage provides the full context of an issue, is sound and comprehensive) ten percent of those articles for daily, public consumption. Meanwhile, the Bullpen stores the remaining news reports, which are used to inform our work.

To get the dataset for this project using the Bullpen, we isolated six major search terms (and dozens of combinations of those terms) that have been proven to yield the most accurate representation of online and all forms of digital learning and instruction. Those were reviewed to ensure that the coverage applied to K-12 were substantive and not just an announcement by a company or group.

With those exercises we arrived at a total of 887 articles representing a total of 491 unique news outlets, through our cut-off date of September 2013. Of the full subset of articles, a highly representative sample of 105, or 12 percent of articles, fully 20 percent of all media outlets, had been scored for reliability (and for favorability)⁸ by The Media Bullpen® analysts, allowing us to not only look at sheer volume but make judgments about the media's treatment of the issues.

Circulation numbers for media outlets cited in this report were crosschecked against individual media outlet data and by third party media services.

STATE AND NATIONAL NEWS

While some websites and media resources usually call the top 100 papers those that have the leading circulation numbers, our top 100 list is the definition we give to the top papers in each state, and the most prominent and potentially second largest paper for that state. A few are also national in scope.

The top 100 are a natural starting point for most people seeking to activate and engage the media with a substantial issue or idea. These papers – like the *Kansas City Star*, the *Boston Globe*, *The Baltimore Sun*, the *Chicago Tribune*, etc. (see Appendix A) are the leaders, the ones among which it is assumed that if issues there are covered, it would translate into big benefits. We looked at

the trends among these largest statewide papers and their next mid-size competitor or largest regional paper of prominence. The articles on digital learning in the top 100 and their outlets were examined for content, favorability, and circulation.

With a major issue like online learning it would be assumed that the big state papers would be more likely to cover it. The data suggest that they do indeed cover digital learning when it is a big story. For the big papers, a big story is usually political in nature, with some element of controversy, at least two combatants and often bad news.

Take this example of negative and misleading coverage from the *Palm Beach Post*, circulation 87,699:

“Charter school, voucher and online education companies poured more than \$2 million into this fall’s political campaigns, primarily those of Republicans who are again demanding more alternatives to traditional public schools.

“Florida’s relentless drive to privatize public education scored another victory on the final day of the Legislature’s session ...”⁹

Or this very biased one against online charters from the *News & Observer*, circulation 115,037:

“North Carolina children as young as 5 may soon be able to receive their public school education online from for-profit companies.

“The state board still has concerns about the funding of online charters that it did not address. Virtual charters will receive money according to the same formula that funds all charter schools, even though the virtual schools don’t have to open and maintain buildings. Charter schools receive public money for students, but not for buildings.”¹⁰

Contrast that with these human-interest stories from smaller papers that have a decidedly positive tone.

From the *Highlands Today*, circulation 3,166, connected with the larger *Tampa Tribune* (not to be confused with the *Tampa Bay Times*, the state’s largest newspaper):

“When Lake Placid mom Katie Wilson’s daughter Madison came home crying day after day from her first-grade class, Wilson wasn’t sure what to do.

“We just had some issues with her teacher,” Wilson said. A counselor recommended that Wilson “remove (Madison) from the whole situation.”

“I panicked,” Wilson recalled, thinking “I don’t know how to home school her. I don’t want her to fall behind.”

“A friend recommended Florida Virtual School, and after looking into it, Wilson signed her daughter up for the spring semester.

“Online options for education are becoming more and more well-known in the digital age. While most higher learning institutions offer online classes and even fully online degrees, there are options for the K-12 segment as well.”¹¹

And this one lead from a Mt Airy, North Carolina newspaper story, circulation roughly 9,800:

“Surry County Schools adds virtual classes – Education has changed and continues to change...”¹²

While the *News & Observer* and the *Tampa Bay Times* have written accurate, neutral or more favorable stories about various forms of digital learning, there is no question that such occurrences have taken lots of effort by advocates and are also balanced out by the negatives. And the Surry County story was posted in full for several months on the paper’s Facebook page with some 2,321 likes, a far more powerful show of acceptance than what the large papers get for most stories.

These are just a few examples of coverage irregularities. There is indeed significant coverage of digital learning in nearly every state. Many stories get placed in fairly high-circulation media outlets. In the abstract, that means parents are therefore likely to have at least some exposure to digital learning topics. But their frequency and sticking power is less reliable – and less widespread — than the local papers.

LESSONS ABOUT THE TOP 100

- Of the 50 major state and national papers in the United States, only 27 of those, or 54 percent, covered the news on digital learning.
- When viewing the next largest regional or mid-size statewide papers, 28 or 56 percent had stories (at least one but on average two stories) on digital learning.
- The 55 of the 100 largest papers that covered digital learning in the nine-month period of this study represent only 16 percent of the universe of articles on digital learning. The remaining stories were covered by numerous and varied other outlets. Thus, of the 491 unique outlets that cover digital learning, only 11 percent are from among the bigger actors in the field.

It is also clear that the major papers in the states where digital learning is more prevalent not only cover the issue but do so with mixed reliability. In one sense, it is encouraging that the *Tampa Bay Times* or *News & Observer* are almost as likely to print a positive or neutral story as a negative one. However, their negative stories tend to border on innuendo about shady dealings and the negatives tend to outweigh any positive ever read.

The good news is that those larger outlets do not dominate the field and the relative value of coverage does vary by region. Looking at the whole universe of news stories, the South actually rises in comparison to the rest of the nation.

- Of the five major regions (Northeast, West, South, Midwest, and National), coverage tends to be focused in Southern and Midwestern states. Forty-nine and a half percent of stories came from these regions.
- Stories from Southern news outlets are particularly likely to be highly-rated for context and accuracy. Fully 36.2 percent of the highest rated articles are from Southern outlets, about seven percentage points greater than the Midwest, which had the next highest proportion of top rated stories.
- Florida was one of the top states (along with Pennsylvania and Tennessee) for both highly rated and poorly rated stories. This is not a contradiction; it simply means that media coverage of online learning is more polarized, with many good and many bad stories coming out in the state.
- Small circulation outlets in the South and large circulation outlets in the Midwest and Northeast are running the most stories on online learning. In particular, there are an unusually high number of stories out of small and large outlets in Pennsylvania, and large outlets in California and Illinois. These states make up the majority of stories from their region, so while coverage is high in small outlets in the South it appears to be diffused across many states.
- Highly-rated stories tend to come from the South and Midwest (Florida, Georgia, and Illinois are tied for most articles at five each), and poorly rated stories tend to come from the Northeast and South. This may be due to the large number of stories coming from southern states in general; controversial issues with strong opinions on either side tend to get the most media coverage.

We know that strong media engagement bears fruit. In 2012-2013, CER was focused on engaging the media in five target states, (Florida, Pennsylvania, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee) and those states had “more” coverage of online learning in terms of sheer number of stories. The median number of stories per state was 18, and outlets in each target state ran a greater number of stories than the median in each case.

That means that strategies to cultivate the media and use national exposure to highlight state stories have an impact on increasing state-focused media. Each of these states had substantial policy activity regarding the greater issue of digital learning. By directing more attention to those stories and those states, it is possible to elevate media attention and in return, boost the policy activity. That is not to say that the media is always going to be positive, however... yet there are strategies that can get “digiformers” there.

UNDERSTANDING THE MARKET – THE IMPORTANCE OF GETTING PERSONAL

As stated in the early part of this report, it has been our premise always that small, local and non-politicized communities are better repositories for and harbingers of trends in reform, and that the same would be demonstrated by a review of stories written about digital, online and blended learning.

From the research, we know that the trend in the 100 major circulation dailies, means that digital learning stories are less prevalent, and more likely to be negative. We also know that hard work and effort pay off in making those papers more receptive to covering, but what is not clear is that it has the intended result that is needed – more exposure and more public information to breed more public acceptance of digital learning.

But the more we parsed the data it became evident that the one exception to the single big statewide paper when it comes to size is a different kind of outlet — the big publishing companies that may own dozens or even hundreds of additional papers. These organizations often provide centralized support and resources for the smaller outlets and have less of an ideology about why they are in business. They are looking to drive customers, not politics. However, most advocates tend to believe their success is made by one citation or an ongoing Twitter relationship with a reporter at the larger regional and national outlets.

While large newspapers cover the issue more, they tend to cover the political and policy deals. Smaller papers just cover the issues and do not have the bandwidth – or the cynicism – to go negative. The papers with the highest circulations – like the *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune* — may indeed impress, but they skew the data and trends on national stories even when their coverage stays in their geographic boundary of record. Those papers cover digital learning only where it is a prominent, political or controversial issue, or tied to part of the education reform debate that is most rejected by the establishment. In the absence of a catalyzing issue, this media type does not cover digital learning. That rule is an exception for the small outlets, those below a 30,000 daily circulation. It is these organizations that “digiformers” most need to understand.

Remember that there are 808 daily outlets, which have a circulation between 5,000 and 50,000, and have the potential to reach a total of 14.2 million people daily. Many of these small to mid-size papers are home to the majority of stories about digital learning with the lion’s share hosted in papers under 30,000.

One small Texas paper called the *Brenham Banner Press* with a circulation of 6,095 had five articles relating to online learning in 2013.¹³ Contrast that to the largest Florida newspaper, the *Tampa Bay Times* with 37 articles on online learning in 2013 alone, of which most were negative. It is easier to build on positive treatment with a local audience than negative treatment for a disparate and wider

audience whose loyalty is simply to the news and not the paper. It can be argued that it is better to have five reliable articles about online learning to a local and loyal audience than 30 negative articles that simply leave a fleeting, but lasting impression.¹⁴

The midsize papers are often better than the larger ones in terms of reliability and frequency of coverage, but this next illustration shows that a paper is more likely to pick up a story that hits home, and that has some local impact on people than simply write about reports, policies and trends. The *Scranton Times-Tribune*, with a circulation of 46,689, had zero stories in 2013 on digital, online, virtual or blended learning but did have one thorough and very substantial article on a local alternative school using technology and blended approaches for kids who needed another or last chance.

Stories about solutions for helping those in need appear to get the most ink and are approached with the least bias.

Take Maine's *Bangor Daily News*, the second largest in the state with a circulation of 41,458. Most of its coverage about digital learning is restricted to higher education, except for coverage when Governor Paul LePage introduced his plans to expand digital learning — including for-profit companies — in 2013 to a shocked and angry education establishment. While the *Portland Press-Herald* was printing everything opponents had to say and misleading the public, the *Bangor Daily News* had this very even-handed and factual story line for its readers:

“Virtual charter schools, in which students study nearly exclusively online, do not yet exist in Maine, although a law passed by the Republican-led legislature in 2011 allows them. While supporters view virtual schools as a cost-effective option that could work best for some students, others see them as too far afield from traditional schools where students and teacher interact in person.”¹⁵

Despite increased activity in Michigan, the *Lansing State Journal*, (circulation 37,965) which feeds the policymakers, had no articles on any issues relating to digital learning in 2013, except for one about a virtual school. Clearly they did not see it as a valued proposition, not to mention the fact that the *Lansing State Journal* may rely on professionals they know for their expertise, which cuts their reporters off from any need to dig or solicit new ideas, or look to other local papers to see what to cover.

The smaller the papers, the more likely the coverage is to be fair and relatively frequent given the outlet. The daily *Post-Bulletin*, serving Rochester, Mason City, and Austin in Iowa and Minnesota (circulation 35,126) hosted eight pieces on online and digital learning.

Online learning was a fairly prevalent topic in the *Quad City Times*, which serves Davenport, Bettendorf, Rock Island, and Moline in Iowa and Illinois with a daily audience estimated at 37,730. Ten articles about online learning appeared in 2013, almost as many in 2012 and 2011, and one on blended two years prior — before the idea was fully understood beyond a few pockets of policy enclaves and quiet practitioners. While the Midwest leads in terms of higher and more reliable coverage of digital learning, the coverage by these smaller papers dwarfed their big city, statewide counterparts.

The same happens in Georgia. The Macon, Georgia *Telegraph* has a circulation of 33,622 daily and 52,514 on Sunday. Despite the newness of the idea, it covered digital learning four times in each of 2013 and 2012. Online learning came up eight times in 2013 and featured more than ten articles in the past two years on schools using virtual tools in whole or part. No such claim can be made about the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. Meanwhile, Florida's *Gainesville Sun* boasts 25,172 average daily readers and was home to at least five relatively strong articles on online learning in 2013 while larger Florida newspapers continued to beat the story as if digital learning was a political axe that someone was grinding.

While examples of both positive and negative reporting are featured in the Appendix E and F, the following from *The Californian* of Salinas (circulation 7,489) is a great illustration of the quality of the local reporter and community newspaper:

“By all rights, Wendy Chaves’ Algebra II class should be a zoo. She’s charged with teaching nearly 50 teenagers at a time at the Alliance Tennenbaum Family Technology High School in Los Angeles. Yet Chaves has never felt more effective.

“I don’t have to worry about classroom management,” she reports. “The kids are engaged.”

“Why? Her 48 students are all on laptops, working through lessons in Compass Learning, Virtual Nerd and Revolution Prep that Chaves has assigned. Their lessons differ based on what each child has mastered, and the programs spit out data that the fifth-year teacher analyzes so that she knows - long before tests would tell her - when to swoop in and help.

“This “blended learning” model - combining in-person teaching and online learning - is being tried in a small but growing number of innovative schools nationwide, such as those in the Mooresville School District in North Carolina, Carpe Diem charter schools in Arizona and Indianapolis, and several district schools in Oakland. Says Chaves: “We’re having an impact we couldn’t have in a traditional model school.”¹⁶

This positive, informative story is a model in many ways. It tells a story, provides information with first-hand accounts of the issue, provides names of some services that actually power digital learning, and leave the reader generally knowing more than when she started.

This is not uncommon for smaller regionally-based newspapers because they do not have the people or the bandwidth to conduct endless interviews or feel compelled to seek out opposition. Their storyline is human interest and something that is happening in their community. To be negative is being critical of their community and thus contrary to their mission.

The Californian also happens to belong to a major newspaper network called Gannett, most known for having created *USA Today*. Where once *The Californian* was independent, because of the economic hardships of many papers, they have begun to affiliate with larger news organizations over time that gives them a connection across community and state barriers. While this story did not appear in other papers, because of Gannett it had the potential to appear elsewhere, as did this article about a problem online school around York, Pennsylvania, which showed up in a very small local paper in South Carolina:

“PA. DISTRICT ONLINE OPTIONS VIE WITH CYBER-SCHOOLS

“YORK, Pa. — School districts across York County are combating fund-draining cyber harter schools with online programs of their own, a move that allows schools to keep money inside the district.

“In York County, 11 school districts have an in-house cyber school program, with another to start in January. School officials say the programs allow the districts to make sure students have proper accountability and say the students’ diplomas carry the same weight no matter the medium of learning.

“It’s also an effort to keep taxpayer dollars in the district, as thousands of dollars per child leave when a student is enrolled in a cyber-school. School officials say their own programs can decrease their expenses to about half of what it costs to pay cyber school tuition, because they can operate the programs efficiently while keeping pension and salary costs inside the district.”¹⁷

That paper, the *Beaufort Gazette*, has a daily circulation of 8,014, but anything printed there is also often printed in its family of papers – and others. The article about a Pennsylvania-based online school, which highlights how school districts are working to compete with cyber charter schools, is relatively neutral with some negative commentary on school funding. Someone who knew nothing about online learning would be led to believe that it could be a drain on public school funding if administered outside of a district. That would not be too bad of an impact if it were only in the York paper and a few other small papers, but it turns out that the article was also published the same day in several other South Carolina papers, including the *Island Packet*, the *Beaufort Gazette* and the *Lowcountry Current*. It also appeared in at least a dozen other papers throughout the country, including in Macon, Georgia.

Yet, this article was actually written by a local Pennsylvania reporter and first appeared in the *York Dispatch* in December 2013. It turns out that this paper and the South Carolina-based papers are all part of another family of papers that is connected to a much larger company, and one that has a significant footprint on the public's information stream. The *York Dispatch* is owned by the Media News Group or (MNG) but connected to dozens of other papers through Digital First Media (www.digitalfirstmedia.com). And the Macon paper is owned by another company, the McClatchy Company. So, by the time the *York Dispatch* printed its review of cyber schools and the impact on a district, it had the potential to be picked up by dozens more outlets!

In addition to this extensive network that one relatively small regional paper has, and because there was some input from the *Associated Press (AP)* in the article, the *AP* posted the story on its wire and was subsequently picked up by additional outlets. This occurred as well with another *York Dispatch* report, "Pa. cybers still falling short of York County schools on state standards," a negative overview of cyber school achievement, that too was widely picked up by some bigger newspapers as well as tweeted by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).¹⁸

The article also appeared in both the *Miami Herald* and the *Charlotte Observer*. So why would Miami and Charlotte pick up on an article about York, Pennsylvania? One reason is because the issue of digital learning has been elevated in both of those states. States where the issue is prominent get the attention of the big guys. The smaller papers don't need a compelling political or policy issue to cover the news.

Another, equally compelling cause, is because The McClatchy Company owns both of those papers. Here is how they describe their reach and services:

"McClatchyDC's 40 journalists are part of the wider McClatchy family of news men and women who work in 15 states, 30 communities and on four continents.

"Our work appears on a variety of McClatchy's news products, from websites like this one, to mobile and tablet apps and on the printed pages of 31 separate newspapers. In all, more than 40 million people read McClatchy journalism each month. In addition, McClatchy's news is circulated to about 1,200 media clients worldwide by McClatchy-Tribune Information Services.

"The McClatchy Company has a long and storied history, beginning with its first newspapers founded during the gold rush days in California in the mid-19th Century. In 2006, McClatchy acquired the Knight Ridder Co., extending its reach across the United States and around the world.

The journalists in the Washington Bureau are a blend of those two companies."¹⁹

McClatchy also can feed to other papers because of another business it has – and that is selling to other papers. As described on its website:

“MCT Direct is the one-stop shop for all your content needs. We offer a complete lineup of news and feature stories, commentary, photos, graphics and illustrations for your print and electronic publication.”²⁰

That would explain why an article that began in a local journal, the *York Dispatch*, could make it not only into a family of newspapers it aligns with but also nationally.

McClatchy, however, is even bigger than that.

The McClatchy papers feed the Tribune papers, and the Tribune papers feed their own communities and services.²¹

“The Tribune-Review is based in Greensburg, Pennsylvania (circulation 54,538). This publication covers the news to the east of Pittsburgh. Whereas its sister publication, the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, covers Pittsburgh and its environs to the west. This newspaper focuses on Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset and Westmoreland counties in Western Pennsylvania.

“The Tribune-Review officially began publication of the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review on Dec. 17, 1992 from offices located in the historic Express House in Station Square...Trib Total Media is the largest source of news and information in Western Pennsylvania. Our multimedia network of daily and weekly newspapers, weekly shoppers, niche magazines, websites, and targeted direct mail delivers news, information and advertising to over 1.2 million readers across Western Pennsylvania every week.”²²

The McClatchy-Tribune Information Service aggregates the news and sells it, so that a newspaper need not cover all of the various issue areas and instead – for a subscription fee – can choose from a treasure trove of articles and features and create their own paper with their own level of human resources – or not – to sell papers and cover the news. Contrary to popular belief, newspapers are not starving – they are simply scaling back and moving into new businesses. They might fire or downsize the position of Susie Smith as local beat reporter, but that is because they can take advantage of all of the reporters and news outlets they gain by creating new affiliates and company services.

These organizations are not only buying or servicing other newspapers that are not in their “family” of ownership, but they are affiliating with one another to ensure even a larger reach of their services, from advertising to news to daily fee-based news feeds and pooled reporting, or sharing.

An organization called the Local Media Consortium announced that it would now add the *The Boston Globe*, *Boston Herald*, *The Star Tribune* in Minneapolis-St. Paul, the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* in Little Rock and *The Frederick News-Post* in Maryland to its coalition, ensuring, in their words that,

“We’re thrilled to welcome these prominent media companies into our partnership,” said Christian A. Hendricks, vice president, interactive media for The McClatchy Company and the Consortium’s executive committee chairman. ‘These companies operate in terrific markets, they further strengthen the collective reach and impact of the Consortium and they make the Consortium just that much more appealing as we negotiate partnerships with technology companies and other service providers to grow revenue and audience.’

“The Local Media Consortium now represents nearly 40 member companies with additional companies expected to join in the coming weeks. Local Media Consortium members attract 1.8 billion monthly page views from 240 million monthly unique users. They offer almost 10 billion advertising impressions.”²³

Gannett has a large footprint, which is important because Gannett papers often share news. In addition to owning *USA Today* and 35 local papers nationwide, it acquired a broadcast firm called Belo, which increased the number of stations Gannett owns, to 43 from 23. It boasts that,

“This will provide consumers with expanded national coverage while enabling local editorial staff to provide more of their own unique, high-quality local news and information.

“As the largest local media company in the U.S. with unparalleled access to consumers in more than 100 local markets nationwide, Gannett continues to innovate and re-imagine its products. Other recent company innovations include the creation of the National News Desk, which enables seamless sharing of its rich content to provide the best local and national news across all its markets.”²⁴

Despite its claims of innovation, Gannett tends not to be an affirming host to digital news stories. However, there is another set of related newspapers whose papers are smaller, more local, and provide the potential for maximum impact and high density across typical geographic boundaries.

The daily *Herald & Review* technically serves 26,154 in Champaign, Springfield and Decatur, Illinois, but the articles it publishes have the potential to reach millions more. While this paper had a few stories about online learning in 2013 and one that focused mostly on blended learning, it is part of part of the *Herald-Review* family of papers and owned by a much larger organization. Thus, the

article below appeared in numerous outlets. Its byline was simply, “Stateline.org,” a service that is used frequently by newspapers and where news is syndicated across their own and other newspapers.

“FEBRUARY 22, 2013 9:00 AM • STATELINE.ORG

“WASHINGTON - Online classes have exploded in popularity, with more than six times as many students enrolled in electronic K-12 courses now compared with a decade ago, according to the U.S. Department of Education.

“Advocates say online classes offer a more flexible and personalized form of education, allowing students to progress at their own pace and on their own time. Supporters also tout online education as a way to dramatically expand course offerings, particularly at rural schools.

“But the rapid growth of online education is raising concerns - especially as more for-profit companies launch online programs. While unscrupulous or incompetent online educators may be rare, there are enough of them that many states are considering ratcheting up their oversight...”²⁵

So what are the *Herald-Review* papers and why would this article have appeared in more than 20 outlets? The history provides some context but also knowing the foundation of a major, but relatively unknown newspaper company is a key to understanding what and how to pitch them. It also illuminates the big connection to even larger exposure:

“The Herald & Review papers dates to 1873 when the Review was founded by the Rev. Alfred Wuensch. The Herald was founded six years later as a Saturday publication by C.N. Walls.

“In 1931, Lindsay-Schaub Newspapers Inc. combined the ownership of the two newspapers. The papers remained competitive and separate, but Lindsay-Schaub sold the newspapers to Lee Enterprises Inc. in 1979.

“Lee Enterprises, which acquired Pulitzer Newspapers Inc., in June of 2005, is the fourth largest U.S. newspaper publisher in terms of daily newspapers with 58 dailies in 23 states. Lee is the seventh largest publisher as far as circulation with a total of 1.7 million daily and with a 2.0 million person circulation on Sunday. Lee also has more than 300 weekly newspapers, shoppers and specialty publications. Lee Enterprises is a publicly traded company on the NYSE.”²⁶

The reason it is important to understand Lee Enterprises is because its business model requires success, which translates to viewership online and readership in print. Through its model of uniting many disparate and small papers, Lee has acquired dozens of small, family-owned media conglomerates. Many of these organizations belong to other networks that augment their exposure.

According to the National Newspaper Network (NNN), which is described as “...the sales and marketing arm for the newspaper industry and the one stop for scalable media solutions... to maximize the local market connection,” homes with a more educated head of household were watching 50 percent less television in the morning than their lower educated counterparts. “Overall, the [Nielsen] report shows that higher education and income levels were correlated with less TV usage, particularly at the early and late parts of the day.” Adds the NNN, “Intuitively it makes sense no? If you are an advertiser looking to reach an engaged, educated and affluent audience that acts on your messaging, *look no further than your local newspaper.*”²⁷ In other words, according to the leading representative of the newspaper industry, people are reading local papers, not big national or regional ones.

Again, while the *San Jose Mercury News*, a large regional paper with statewide impact may get more than 500,000 estimated readers a day, it is the *Saratoga News* or *San Leandro Times* that serve segments of that same larger community that are more likely to follow a story day after day and give the *Mercury News* a reason to cover a story to begin with, particularly if a local paper is affiliated with a larger company of papers that centralizes the news gathering and distribution process, as discussed above.

That’s why the bigger conglomerates that represent or own the smaller papers are solid targets for outreach. First, reporters for large statewide papers are typically full-time employees, who report to editors and are responsible for usually more than one beat (the exception is the largest national outlets, such as the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, etc.) These reporters are supposed to be experts and cultivate relationships with those who can serve their needs. It is often much harder to reach these reporters given their numerous responsibilities and the fact that they often have too many portals of information coming in and therefore rely just on the few they think work the best.

Contrast that to the structure of a local community newspaper that is tied into a larger network of papers. While there is an editor and many “reporters,” they draw for news and stories from a larger pool of resources – wire, network-based and often subscription-based. Saving them time and money by providing stories to those papers directly or even to the larger subscription companies that create that information may yield a bigger payoff in terms of effort, given the evidence.

A key strategy then, for “digiformers,” is to understand their market and who is actually writing the stories or potentially receptive to ideas. It often has as much to do with becoming familiar and friendly with people at the large media companies as it does with the editor down the block.

It also behooves the digital learning community to focus on weekly papers, those such as the six belonging to the California based Herald Publications, which need human interest feature stories for each week that affect their community.

Dailies with additional community papers and a combination of state and local news are also examples of these hybrid entities that are worth pitching. For example, Bergen County, New

Jersey's *The Record* also has several smaller community-focused versions of the paper. Its online focus is huge, often covering stories of interest and about the need of expanding online learning.

When it comes to the subject of digital learning, the research and analysis exposed another phenomenon — dozens of online-only outlets and business “publications” are quite prolific on digital learning. Let us start with the general “online” publication, which has no print companion. Its only existence is online but it is done in the same vein as traditional media, e.g. news format, multi-tiered, but more narrowly focused.

For example, *Tech&Learning* reaches tens of thousands of educators, business people, and policymakers and is described as having served:

“the K-12 education community with practical resources and expert strategies for transforming education through integration of digital technologies. Our audience includes all job roles within the district community, with district-level technology coordinators the primary recipients. Beyond that, our magazine is often used as a professional development tool to help educators across the board get up to speed with the newest technologies and products in order to best prepare students for the global digital workforce.”²⁸

Tech&Learning is one of approximately 50 tech-related sites our search revealed and it appears from the media resources in our proprietary media database that hundreds more exist.

BellaOnline is about and specifically for women. Knowing of the need and demand for information to fit women's own needs or that of their family has dozens of articles in its specialized “distance learning” section. Then there are the literally hundreds of business focused journals like *HispanicBusiness.com* which is the top online source for career and business news for Hispanics, or the *Mississippi Business Journal*, of which almost every state and city has its equivalent. Finally, there are the specialized wire services that serve the business community, such as *Business Wire* and *GlobeNewswire*.

Because these outlets are based solely online, it is not surprising they are open and more likely to cover stories about other enterprises that go online, making it a very big market for “digiformers.”

But even as the newspapers move more of their content and resources online, there is evidence that the news-**paper** is also far from dead, even among young people. *Re:fuel* magazine recently released a study challenging conventional thought on media consumption. Their findings indicate 60 percent of all college students regularly read their college newspaper. Moreover, 60 percent prefer the printed version while *only 16 percent* prefer to receive their college news online or through other platforms like mobile. This stunning piece of research goes against so much of what major markets think about the 18-24 year old consumer. In fact, it warrants repeating: **60 percent of all consumers of college newspaper media prefer the printed version!**²⁹

Finally, what is covered is just as important as how one approaches it. The research made clear that there are some go-to terms and other terms to stay away from, despite polls to the contrary. The media often has not caught up with public opinion and it is important to provide them the context they need so as not to lose the potential for greater coverage, even while educating them about the public's widespread understanding and acceptance.

The terms we found that were most likely to appear in positive articles are:

- Blended Learning
- Online Program(s)
- Online Charter School
- Online Learning Environment(s)
- Online Instruction

Those found most likely to appear in negative articles:

- Online methods/courses
- Cyber anything
- Online Public School/Online Charter School
- For-profit

Those that were frequent and cut both ways:

- Virtual or Virtual School (with a name/state) or Virtual Option or Virtual Learning
- Technology
- Course Content

Rare:

- Digital Learning
- Interactive Learning

Terms are important, but it is the context and the pitch that matters most. When the *New York Times* in the mid-2000s consistently described charter schools as privately managed, many advocates, with CER often charging in front, pleaded with the authors to correct their definition.³⁰ They did not do so despite repeated attempts, and the assumption was they were being deliberately misleading. It turns out that no one really had considered any other definition and editors kept signing off on reporters providing factually incorrect descriptors – until we sat down, in person, and explained why their definition was actually harmful – and wrong. It changed after that.

CONCLUSIONS & STRATEGIES

Looking at the data in the context of what papers cover digital learning in its many forms and many definitions provides a number of essential conclusions and action steps that “Digiformers” can and should take to improve and increase coverage of online learning modalities, grow public appreciation and policymaker acceptance. With a focus on reaching a larger number of smaller-reach papers, going non-traditional in approaching the media and discovering new media outlets, a critical mass of coverage can elevate the stature and the likelihood of coverage in the major more influential publications and broadcast news portals.

The following eight conclusions represent strategies as well, and each have their own set of unique approaches and paths to help one achieve the end goal. Here are just a few tactics and strategies to follow.

GO BIG TO GO SMALL

Identify and get to know the syndicated and larger networked newspaper companies to help you reach the more fruitful, local papers. See if there are patterns for your issue, your focus areas, or your ideas. Find strategies to dig into these larger organizations, like ensuring that all of your materials are reaching their key personnel and getting to know their executives. Does anyone you know have connections to the stockholders or owners? Many smaller conglomerates want your story. For example, the target audience of the *Herald & Review* is Decatur, Illinois and 20 counties in Central Illinois that are the heart of rich farmland of the Midwestern prairie. They invite “News tips, story ideas and press releases [which] can be sent to hrnews@herald-review.com or call (217) 429-5151.”³¹ But you would not know that unless you traced your local paper to its owner. Also, once you learn something, do not stop at go. These organizations are changing and buying and selling their properties all the time.

COMMUNICATE TO INNOVATORS

Despite the prevalence of online learning tools around K-12 and higher education, few entrepreneurs comprehend or know the scope and reach of K-12 online and digital learning. Sure, they understand the business jargon and know the leaders of the new startups that deal with Ed Tech issues and people. They also often know the players delivering online and blended learning. But that is a universe of a few compared to the innovation market. The innovators of every industry rely on technology, and they are natural allies whose own work is often covered by the same people who cover education. The more the innovators and technologists of any learning related enterprise know about digital learning, the more likely the issue is going to find favor with the media.

COMMUNICATE WITH BUSINESS JOURNALS

While innovators do not necessarily have a clearly defined set of news outlets that cover their issues, business people do. They are natural allies and their publications are written widely by business and technical people who have an influence on policymakers, schools and general sentiment. For example, the *Mississippi Business Journal* covered the state's charter battle in the spring of 2013 which included a discussion of online learning, in a more pronounced and even handed way than the traditional papers. Some business news often covers, by a larger percentage, the big hitter influencers. Think *Forbes*, from which the little guys often draw their ideas.

DIGITAL LEARNING INSTRUCTION

The BLOB is talking about it – particularly the media that serves the administrators who are studying in earnest the best ways to engage with technology. More importantly, any effective busy administrator will concede that he is enormously challenged by the definitions and is not exposed to the vast array of resources and ideas that can be delivered online. Engage them first. Talk to them through their trusted news outlets, like *District Administration* and others.

STORIES NEED TO BE ABOUT SOLUTIONS

The kind of substance that gets the best and most ink locally and which can wet the media's and the public's appetite for more are stories of triumph, courage, second chances, new ideas, and concrete use of technology, not amorphous stories of digital learning or blended learning. These stories also tend to inhibit any biases. Who can have a bias against a second chance program or a child who has access to their first tablet ever?! More people have a bias in their writing about a new company or policy.

DATA AND FACTS ABOUT TECHNOLOGY DRIVE COVERAGE

“Digiformers” should find opportunities to discuss technology, the Internet, bandwidth, access and equity. The more the conversation can drive toward the real and most important focus of digital learning – how and what it does – the more likely reporters are to pick up on it. Also, announcements about company offerings, new degrees and school/school district purchases are more likely to be considered newsworthy and covered than policy matters.

ONLINE SELLS ONLINE

Not surprisingly, digital news and newsletters cover the issues at a much higher rate than traditional media. While that is shifting, media outlets with no boundaries and whose resources have a much longer shelf life online have the potential to reach a larger potential circulation and ensure more long-term access than traditional media.

PAPER STILL MATTERS

Whether it is the fact that the public still likes its paper or that reporters like to see their names **literally** in print, real papers are still delivering the news, and for the most part have a huge role in communities nationwide. On top of that, what starts out as paper ends up online. Every paper no matter what size has an online component. The print is the first introduction it makes every day, despite the shelf life of online, newspapers like to know that their hard work is a tangible read, so don't ignore the local paper editor or his publisher. Do not forget to **Go Big to Go Small**.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jeanne Allen founded The Center for Education Reform in 1993 and served as its president through 2013. Prior to founding the Center, Jeanne served in prominent roles at the US Department of Education, The Heritage Foundation and on Capitol Hill. Jeanne is now senior fellow, president-emeritus, and a member of CER's Board of Directors. In addition, Jeanne is vice president for business development of HotChalk, a California-based education technology company.

Jeanne has been a frequent commentator in the media, and has appeared on NBC, ABC, MSNBC, Fox News and CNN, as well as NPR and national and local talk radio. A prolific writer, she has published hundreds of articles and commentaries in newspapers and journals. Jeanne is a regular contributor to the *National Journal* Education Experts forum, and her honesty and linear thinking on issues such as reform, choice for parents, and teacher accountability has made her articles in outlets such as *The Huffington Post* essential reading. Her book, "The School Reform Handbook: How to Improve Your Schools," ignited parent-led efforts for education reform. She is currently working on a book about her experiences in education reform.

Jeanne has been a trusted advisor to presidential administrations, governors, and lawmakers, and continues to provide valuable counsel to policymakers, philanthropists and colleagues in education.

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“virtual charter”

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“use laptop”

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APPENDIX A

STATE	LARGEST NEWSPAPER	CITY	CIRCULATION	LARGEST MID-SIZE	CITY	CIRCULATION
Alabama	Birmingham News	Birmingham	93,071	Press-Register	Mobile	68,341
Alaska	Anchorage Daily News	Anchorage	43,698	Fairbanks Daily News Miner	Fairbanks	13,375
Arizona	Arizona Republic	Phoenix	292,975	Arizona Daily Star	Tucson	113,000
Arkansas	Arkansas Democrat-Gazette	Little Rock	158,090	Times-Record	Fort Smith	26,091
California	Los Angeles Times	Los Angeles	610,592	San Jose Mercury News	San Jose	516,700
Colorado	Denver Post	Denver	406,635	The Gazette	Colorado Springs	63,129
Connecticut	Hartford Courant	Hartford	128,302	New Haven Register	New Haven	45,775
Delaware	The News Journal	New Castle	80,918	Delaware State News	Dover	12,159
District of Columbia	Washington Post	Washington	473,462	Washington Times	Washington	53,240
Florida	Tampa Bay Times	St. Petersburg	258,121	Miami Herald	Miami	199,717
Georgia	Atlanta Journal Constitution	Atlanta	156,227	Gwinnett Daily Post	Lawrenceville	61,693
Hawaii	Honolulu Star-Advertiser	Honolulu	188,256	The Maui News	Wailuku	15,777
Idaho	Idaho Statesman	Boise	42,127	Post Register	Idaho Falls	23,368
Illinois	Chicago Tribune**	Chicago	414,930	Chicago Sun-Times	Chicago	262,461
Indiana	Indianapolis Star	Indianapolis	194,000	Times of Northwest Indiana	Munster	87,904
Iowa	Des Moines Register	Des Moines	89,685	The Gazette	Cedar Rapids	42,931
Kansas	Wichita Eagle	Wichita	88,502	Topeka Capital-Journal	Topeka	30,845
Kentucky	Louisville Courier-Journal	Louisville	124,828	Lexington Herald-Leader	Lexington	75,265
Louisiana	Times-Picayune	New Orleans	144,302	The Advocate	Baton Rouge	103,990
Maine	Portland Press-Herald	Portland	52,323	Bangor Daily News	Bangor	41,458
Maryland	Baltimore Sun	Baltimore	163,760	Cumberland Times-News	Cumberland	32,173
Massachusetts	Boston Globe	Boston	245,572	Boston Herald	Boston	88,052
Michigan	Detroit News	Detroit	251,104	Grand Rapids Press	Grand Rapids	95,996
Minnesota	Star-Tribune	Minneapolis	300,495	St. Paul Pioneer Press	St. Paul	208,280

STATE	LARGEST NEWSPAPER	CITY	CIRCULATION	LARGEST MID-SIZE	CITY	CIRCULATION
Mississippi	Clarion-Ledger	Jackson	119,377	Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal	Tupelo	30,590
Missouri	Kansas City Star	Kansas City	189,283	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	St. Louis	161,343
Montana	Billings Gazette	Billings	37,436	The Missoulian	Missoula	23,730
Nebraska	Omaha World-Herald	Omaha	192,607	Lincoln Journal Star	Lincoln	51,004
Nevada	Las Vegas Review-Journal	Las Vegas	175,000	Reno Gazette-Journal	Reno	37,235
New Hampshire	Union Leader	Manchester	39,621	Conway Daily Sun	North Conway	17,100
New Jersey	Star Ledger	Newark	340,778	The Record	Woodland Park	146,834
New Mexico	Albuquerque Journal	Albuquerque	84,506	Las Cruces Sun-News	Las Cruces	27,717
New York	New York Times	New York	1,897,890	New York Post	New York	500,521
North Carolina	Charlotte News & Observer	Charlotte	137,379	News & Observer	Raleigh	115,017
North Dakota	The Forum	Fargo	51,000	Bismarck Tribune	Bismarck	23,636
Ohio	Plain Dealer	Cleveland	311,404	Columbus Dispatch	Columbus	131,276
Oklahoma	The Oklahoman	Oklahoma City	124,667	Tulsa World	Tulsa	95,063
Oregon	Oregonian	Portland	210,292	Register-Guard	Eugene	48,818
Pennsylvania	Philadelphia Inquirer	Philadelphia	354,081	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	Pittsburgh	153,078
Rhode Island	Providence Journal	Providence	78,254	Westerly Sun	Westerly	6,022
South Carolina	The Post and Courier	Charleston	83,483	The State	Columbia	57,268
South Dakota	Argus Leader	Sioux Falls	30,165	Rapid City Journal	Rapid City	23,004
Tennessee	Tennessean	Nashville	94,263	Commercial Appeal	Memphis	88,453
Texas	Houston Chronicle	Houston	333,574	Dallas Morning News	Dallas	256,525
Utah	Salt Lake Tribune	Salt Lake City	131,711	Deseret News	Salt Lake City	63,505
Vermont	Burlington Free Press	Burlington	25,174	Valley News	White River Junction	15,459
Virginia	Virginian Pilot	Norfolk	124,381	Richmond Times-Dispatch	Richmond	99,373
Washington	Seattle Times	Seattle	263,000	News Tribune	Tacoma	102,503
West Virginia	Charleston Gazette	Charleston	74,939	The Intelligencer	Wheeling	29,368
Wisconsin	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	Milwaukee	196,458	Wisconsin State Journal	Madison	81,228
Wyoming	Casper Star-Tribune	Casper	23,219	Wyoming Tribune-Eagle	Cheyenne	13,864

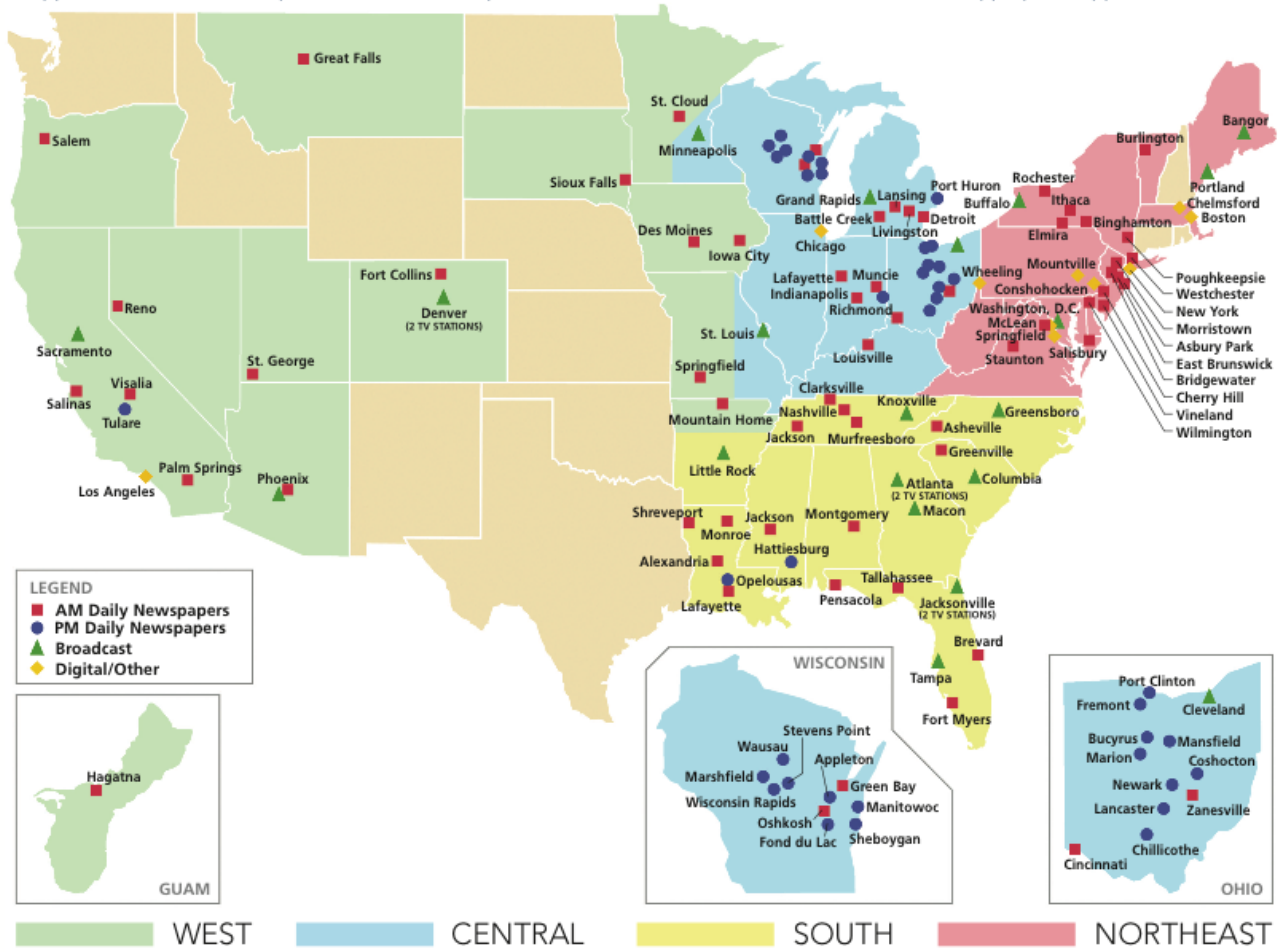
Note: Bolded newspapers gave coverage to online learning at least once between January and September 2013.

APPENDIX B

GANNETT LOCATIONS

GANNETT

To apply for the Talent Development Intern Program please click on your region below to be taken to the appropriate application.



APPENDIX C

Lee Enterprises Daily Newspapers

				DAILY CIRC.	SUNDAY CIRC.	MONTHLY UNIQUE VISITORS	MONTHLY PAGE VIEWS
AZ	Flagstaff	<i>Arizona Daily Sun*</i>	azdailysun.com	9,511	9,849	261,063	1,426,916
AZ	Tucson	<i>Arizona Daily Star</i>	azstamet.com	77,547	123,162	1,033,800	9,903,654
CA	California Central Coast						
	Santa Maria	<i>Santa Maria Times</i>	santamariatimes.com	10,748	15,857	193,792	931,045
	Lompoc	<i>The Lompoc Record**</i>	lompocrecord.com	3,373	3,456	76,600	396,683
CA	Hanford	<i>The Sentinel</i>	hanfordsentinel.com	7,273	-	476,941	2,025,035
CA	Napa	<i>Napa Valley Register</i>	napavalleyregister.com	11,602	11,924	320,694	2,644,958
ID/NV	Twin Falls Group						
	Twin Falls, ID	<i>The Times-News*</i>	magicvalley.com	16,533	17,807	278,881	2,126,472
	Elko, NV	<i>Elko Daily Free Press</i>	elkodaily.com	5,269	-	96,858	719,950
IL	Carbondale	<i>The Southern Illinoisan</i>	thesouthern.com	23,458	28,661	314,894	2,187,568
IL	Central Illinois Group						
	Bloomington	<i>The Pantagraph</i>	pantagraph.com	32,683	37,735	527,647	5,170,621
	Decatur	<i>Herald & Review*</i>	herald-review.com	26,154	40,143	311,735	1,805,570
	Mattoon/Charleston	<i>Journal Gazette & Times-Courier</i>	jg-tc.com	11,642	-	154,070	999,715
IN	Munster	<i>The Times of NW Indiana</i>	nwitimes.com	86,549	91,102	1,073,179	8,708,809
IA	Mason City	<i>Globe Gazette*</i>	globegazette.com	13,228	17,072	257,058	2,282,127
IA	Quad-Cities Group						
	Davenport	<i>Quad-City Times</i>	qctimes.com	40,499	52,173	618,913	4,942,782
	Muscatine	<i>Muscatine Journal</i>	muscatinejournal.com	5,477	-	112,505	805,883
IA	Sioux City	<i>Sioux City Journal*</i>	siouxcityjournal.com	29,370	32,611	411,177	3,011,696
IA	Waterloo	<i>The Courier</i>	wfcourier.com	39,470	42,239	387,403	3,019,227
KY	Maysville	<i>The Ledger Independent*****</i>	maysville-online.com	5,442	-	112,211	867,978
MO	Park Hills	<i>Daily Journal</i>	dailyjournalonline.com	5,160	-	209,625	2,204,417
MO	St. Louis	<i>St. Louis Post Dispatch</i>	stltoday.com	161,343	461,259	4,781,029	64,621,405
MT	Billings	<i>Billings Gazette*</i>	billingsgazette.com	37,436	42,396	893,285	11,082,113
MT	Butte	<i>The Montana Standard*</i>	mtstandard.com	11,927	11,973	208,042	1,658,611
MT	Helena	<i>Independent Record</i>	helenair.com	13,145	13,547	285,302	2,101,247
MT	Missoula Group						
	Missoula	<i>Missoulian*</i>	missoulian.com	23,730	28,236	725,283	4,317,891
	Hamilton	<i>Ravalli Republic</i>	ravallirepublic.com	2,107	3,414	79,704	361,175
ND	Bismarck	<i>The Bismarck Tribune</i>	bismarcktribune.com	23,636	26,454	445,542	4,899,592
NE	Lincoln Group						
	Lincoln	<i>Lincoln Journal Star</i>	journalstar.com	51,004	62,380	1,422,342	13,071,196
	Beatrice	<i>Beatrice Daily Sun</i>	beatricedailysun.com	4,515	-	100,867	635,162
	Columbus	<i>Columbus Telegram</i>	columbustelegram.com	6,893	7,947	124,303	956,625
	Fremont	<i>Fremont Tribune</i>	fremonttribune.com	6,481	-	135,315	995,088
NY	Auburn	<i>The Citizen</i>	auburnpub.com	6,807	8,537	303,346	1,609,959
NY	Glens Falls	<i>The Post-Star</i>	poststar.com	25,316	29,508	457,817	4,045,774
OR	Coos Bay	<i>The World****</i>	theworldlink.com	7,501	-	133,668	681,060
OR	Mid-Valley Group						
	Albany	<i>Albany Democrat-Herald*</i>	democratherald.com	12,728	13,476	155,044	820,586
	Corvallis	<i>Corvallis Gazette-Times*</i>	gazettetimes.com	9,903	9,881	226,906	1,071,126
PA	Carlisle	<i>The Sentinel*</i>	cumberlink.com	15,387	13,576	268,027	2,006,108
SC	Orangeburg	<i>The Times and Democrat*</i>	thetandd.com	10,809	11,511	235,608	1,877,101
SD	Rapid City	<i>Rapid City Journal</i>	rapidcityjournal.com	23,004	27,166	511,344	4,226,215
UT	Provo	<i>The Daily Herald</i>	heraldextra.com	20,453	26,885	581,889	3,546,766
WA	Longview	<i>The Daily News*</i>	tdn.com	20,701	17,877	243,197	1,859,996
WI	Madison Newspapers Inc.						
	Madison	<i>Wisconsin State Journal</i>	madison.com	81,103	107,288	1,458,893	11,201,542
	Beaver Dam	<i>Daily Citizen</i>	wiscnews.com/bdc	7,735	-	270,020	1,828,251
	Baraboo	<i>Baraboo News Republic</i>	baraboonewsrepublic.com	3,414	-	(included above)	
	Portage	<i>Portage Daily Register</i>	portagedailyregister.com	3,955	-	(included above)	
WI	Racine	<i>The Journal Times*</i>	journaltimes.com	22,562	25,582	330,471	2,124,705
WI/MN	River Valley Group						
	La Crosse, WI	<i>La Crosse Tribune</i>	lacrossetribune.com	23,515	32,864	508,520	4,829,566
	Winona, MN	<i>Winona Daily News</i>	winonadailynews.com	8,315	9,531	210,381	1,897,167
	Chippewa Falls, WI	<i>The Chippewa Herald***</i>	chippewa.com	4,731	4,641	168,450	1,105,280
WY	Casper	<i>Casper Star-Tribune</i>	trib.com	24,940	21,729	589,568	2,905,168
				1,136,084	1,541,449	23,083,209	208,517,581

9/30/2013 Alliance for Audited Media and company records; Monday-Friday and Sunday six-month total average circulation; Adobe SiteCatalyst September 2013
 *Mon-Sat; **Tue, Thu & Fri; ***Mon-Thu & Sat; ****Mon-Thu; *****Mon, Wed-Fri

APPENDIX D

AMERICA'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS EDUCATION REFORM 2013 DATA

Technology + Tradition = Blended Learning

Americans are split on a more “blended” learning environment, described as where a portion of learning is done using digital technologies, and the rest through face-to-face instruction. In fact, 42% said they’d be more likely and 42% said they’d be less likely to send their children to a school that uses it. Still, both terms, “blended learning” and “digital learning,” are viewed positively by over 60% of adults.

- There is no generational gap in support for blended learning, as 43% of those over the age of 55 say they’d be more likely to send their child to a school with blended learning, compared to 44% of those under the age of 35.
- African-Americans (54%) are more likely to want to send their child to a blended school than whites (41%) or Hispanics (38%).
- The higher annual household income is, the less likely they are to embrace blended learning: those earning under \$25,000 are 54%-to-33% more likely to send their child to such a school, compared to 36%-to-47% for those earning over \$100,000.
- Democrats are slightly more likely to send their child to a blended learning school than Republicans, though there is no difference between conservatives, moderates, and liberals.

[Click here for more findings](#)

APPENDIX E & F

STATE SAMPLING, POORLY AND HIGHLY RATED ARTICLES

[Click Here for Link to Articles](#)



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