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LEARNING

Bulletin Board

A collection of views, news and more from the Learning section.

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Technology Bridges the Language Gaps



About five million K-12 students in the United States do not speak English fluently, and their numbers are growing fast. While these children currently make up 10 percent of the total student population, researchers estimate that they could make up as much as 40 percent by 2030.

Schools across the country are turning to technology to help them better serve these students — whose success will increasingly drive graduation rates, test scores and other school-quality metrics — and to help connect with their families.

“Any time there’s an opportunity to quickly connect with a parent and not have the language be in the way, that’s a win for me and for the student,” said Tasia Fields, a technology administrator and former teacher in Waukegan Public Schools in Illinois.

ClassDojo is among the most widely used home-to-school communication apps, and its automatic translation feature has created a way for teachers to develop relationships with parents despite language barriers. Ms. Fields said the app enabled regular contact with all parents — to discuss grades or attendance issues, for example — not just those who speak English.

In the classroom, computer-based programs can give students additional support as they work to master the vocabulary and mechanics of English. ELLoquence, **Istation** and PreK12Plaza are among those that let students move through lessons at their own pace.

Many more schools serve immigrants now than ever before, and digital technology can offer effective ways to reach them. — *Tara García Mathewson*