





## ONLINE EXTRA

For more information about NSBA's technology site visits, go to [www.nsba.org/events/education-technology-site-visits](http://www.nsba.org/events/education-technology-site-visits).

technology learning strategies being demonstrated by students, and how students use technology in and out of the classroom to enhance their learning," he says.

Despite the recent recession, the expo has proven so popular that sponsorships have "almost doubled every year," Nguyen says. Local businesses support it even though Kent officials say the expo is "unlikely to generate significant sales leads," because it is a good way to demonstrate the connection between what happens in the classroom and future careers.

"That kind of commitment and stability allowed us to dream big and really expand," he says, noting the venue's size is the only thing preventing future growth.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORT IS KEY

In addition to Kent, this year's visits will be to Virginia's Prince William County Schools and to Ohio's Mentor Public Schools.

"This is a unique set of visits because they are all bunched so closely together, but also because they showcase three very different school districts that have incorporated technology in ways that meet the needs of their communities while being forward-thinking about the bigger picture," Flynn says.

In Prince William County, which will host visiting school leaders from April 22 to 24, technology teams can see how programs are implemented on a large scale in an 86,000-student district, the second largest in the state. From April 26 to 28, Mentor will

## Technology helps break through language and economic barriers that would otherwise hamper achievement.

showcase its blended learning model, which uses technology to individualize instruction for its 7,000 students. The district, located in a far eastern suburb of Cleveland, also will provide visitors with a look at its state-of-the-art school for students with autism.

The final visit is to Kent, which was a Magna Award Grand Prize recipient in 2014 for its Individualized Graduation and Diploma Program. Known as iGrad, the program is a partnership with Green River Community College that helps 16- to 21-year-old dropouts earn high school diplomas, GEDs, college credits, or professional certification.

Each iGrad student has a customized plan that includes classroom instruction, coursework taught through the district's online high school, and individualized instruction. Students receive wireless-enabled laptops so they can access content according to their schedules.

Laptops have been a big part of Kent's overall technology program for the past decade. The district started a one-to-one initiative in 2005 for students in grades seven to 12 and is expanding it to include all elementary students as well within the next four years.

Nguyen says the one-to-one program

is directly tied to increases in student achievement and has helped lower the number of dropouts and discipline referrals. In a district that bills itself as the most diverse in Washington state, he believes technology helps break through language and economic barriers that would otherwise hamper achievement.

Kent would not be able to fund programs such as iGrad and the Student Technology, Access, and Resources (STAR) initiative, which has helped more than 5,000 families gain access to digital learning tools and resources, without significant community support. Over the past 15 years, voters have approved tax levies four times to fund the district's classroom technology efforts.

Flynn says events such as the expo are key to the community support Kent receives.

"Here you have a huge, annual, open-to-the-public event that features every school and every grade level demonstrating what they do with technology and how they use it to enhance instruction," she says. "It's a great way to engage the public and the business community in a forward-thinking way. When you're doing something like this, you don't have to sit around and wait for the next bond issue and wonder why it fails."



**Glenn Cook**

Glenn Cook ([glenncook117@gmail.com](mailto:glenncook117@gmail.com)) is a freelance writer and photographer and former executive editor of American School Board Journal.