DISTRICTS

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to benefit teachers and students? One example: tutoring.

"If I'm the student and I'm struggling and I've missed this question, on the platform it would allow you, the student, to talk to the AI computer and say no, I did not understand this. Yes, I did understand this," Shidal said. "That way, if the teacher is still giving the lessons, if one student needs to have a little extra help, they're able to get that in real time, in classroom. And then the teacher is able to have that software on the back end, and she can, or he can, see that their class is excelling in this area and that they need help in another."

Shidal said that gives teachers a much clearer picture of how to build lessons day to day. "They are taking the standards and assessing what the students need to know. The technology is doing that for the teachers, and they are able to, in real time, plan better lessons and allow students to be able to learn at their own pace."

"The real-time feedback is going to be a game changer for kids," Ceglinski said.

It's a more customized approach to

needs in mind. Teachers, meanwhile, can better utilize their time.

"As a teacher in the classroom for 19 years, I would spend many hours taking things home and designing and saying, OK, my students know this. They don't know this. And if a computer can do that for me, and it'd be accurate, I'm going to use that for benefit and for me to be able to put more time into just helping students," Shidal said.

In Vienna, discussions about AI and how it's utilized are very public and ongoing, "Can we utilize the tool to let it do things that it can do, so that we can do only the things that we can do? Absolutely. If I can maximize the minutes of our professionals that are in classrooms every single day, that's a win for kids.'

These educators agree: AI is a powerful tool, but only a tool. It may be new, but their goal remains the same.

"I think that the thing that we're emphasizing in our setting is it's a spoke in the wheel. It's not the hub. Teaching and learning is the hub. It's the main thing," Stafford said.

"It can help us with the lesson, but it doesn't determine whether or not the student learns," Ceglinski explained. "That's what we're there for. So, it really causes us to rethink how we do things to leverage it. But student learning is what learning, with the individual student's our goal is, and it doesn't do that for you."



Franklin and Dan Adams, a Makerspace teacher, show off The Hub's plasma table, which allows students to design and cut different materials.

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STUDENTS

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the more than 50-year-old Marshall County Technical Center is nearing the completion of its \$10 million renovation.

"We took the teachers and let them go see different facilities," said MCTC Principal Brian Harper of how the center determined what its campus needed to have to bring it into the 21st century. That included a visit to The Hub. Both environments are designed around the idea of individualized learning in a collaborative setting.

size fits all.'

Harper's Hub counterpart, Principal Steve Ybarzabal, is proud that the campus he oversees serves as an example of what a modern K-12 education looks and feels like: modular classrooms; technology; hands-on learning; connection to and collaboration with local industry.

"With the Area Technology Center that's part of The Hub, our students, when they become seniors, are getting the chance to visit job sites and get co-op opportunities and internships," Assistant Principal Andre Meadows said. "Now, a lot of those students, after they graduate, are getting hired."

return on their educational investment. Teachers say keeping them engaged is key.

'Student engagement is directly equivalent to motivation," said Jourdan Palmeri, an agriculture teacher at industry or technology changes to MCTC.

When students understand why they're learning something, motivation isn't far behind. That concept lends itself to a more modern teaching approach.

"We do a lot of projects, and they Istudents | want to see a project that has meaning," Harper said of MCTC's approach to teaching. "Students today are very in tune to the purpose behind their learning.

It's no different at The Hub, where Ybarzabal said student success is linked to teachers' ability to "connect the content they're teaching to something that is relevant to students' lives.

"Everything is a project. Every-"It can look very different in each thing has some kind of end goal classroom," Harper said. "It's not one in mind," said MCTC engineering teacher BJ Hayden. There may be many ways of getting to that singular goal. That means lesson plans aren't as likely to follow a straight line through the year, as teachers encourage students to work toward solutions.

"It's a wavy line all the way down, but I think the kids enjoy it more because it feels more like real life to them than saying or listening to somebody talk at them," Hayden

'We have a starting point, and we have an ending point where we want to get in the class, but that's constantly changing for me," Palmeri said. "We want to teach critical Parents and students want a good thinking, we want to teach situational analysis, we want to develop soft skills, responsibility, responsive-

Skills necessary for a modern career in any field, no matter the come beyond 2025.

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well. However, he said he wished the state had asked for more input from school leaders at the local level.

Examples Hunt cited as areas where perhaps lawmakers didn't think the entire process through surround communication between students and coaches or other adults and teachers who lead extracurricular activities. Regardless, Hunt thinks everyone in the district will be pleased with how things develop over the school

"I think our parents are happy. I think our staff is happy that we're moving towards...one communication system. It's obviously easier to keep up with instead of you getting five, six different messages on your phone every day from different teachers and from different programs," Hunt

Informing people of the recent changes in law can be a hurdle. Trigg Countv Schools Superintendent Rex Booth has been posting short videos of himself on the district's public Facebook page explaining the changes.

"It's been really received well. A lot of folks have talked about how they're appreciative that we're not just sending out big, long text messages through our messaging system or making long Facebook posts. We're trying to keep them as quick and short and concise as possible but also making sure that we get that information out," Booth said.

Trigg County Schools will use ParentSuite and Google Suite which

includes Gmail and Google allows students to have Classroom.

CELLPHONE BAN

House Bill 208 requires local school boards to adopt a policy prohibiting students from using phones during the school

Many school districts in western Kentucky already have some kind of cellphone policy in place in the school-based decision making, or SBDM, handbook.

Districts like McCracken County Schools will have students keep their phones in their lockers, bookbags or pants pockets whereas other districts will require students keep their phones specifically in lockers or protective pouches, which are located in the classroom.

Hunt wants to see how things unfold before tweaking the district's policy regarding cellphones.

"As a board we've talked about it and our plan is to just kind of see, hear some feedback and just remind our students that we have procedures in place and these aren't to be out in class except for instructional time that is indicated by your teacher," riuni said.

Hunt believes limiting students' cellphone use in the classroom is ultimately a good thing.

this many years removed it got to them in a timefrom the creation of the cellphone — it's now part back to the way things of our everyday lives. I think that there's no doubt that they create a huge distraction," Hunt said.

"I'm sure we'll have a student or two that would think they can't live withwork through that with and we'll allow that contact them," Shively said.

Booth said the ban

more of a presence in the classroom and focus more on learning.

"The attention spans of students are seemingly decreasing every year. I think a lot of that is because we are in a society that tends to scroll and if we don't like what we see, you know, we'll swipe up. And that's the TikTok age, the Facebook, the Twitter," Booth said.

He added, "If you don't like what you're hearing or you're not automatically engaged then obviously, subconsciously, you're just ready to move on to the next thing. I feel like that has a lot to do with why these cellphones are kind of being taken away during instructional time — trying to improve attention spans of our youth."

Not every parent or guardian was fully onboard with the changes — specifically, the cellphone ban.

"I know how attached they are to [cellphones], and I know sometimes, as a parent, it's a safety blanket. But student safety is one of our top priorities every day," Hunt said.

School leaders encourage parents to reflect on their own time in school when students didn't have cellphones.

Yet, when a message "I think one thing with needed to be relayed, ly fashion. It's just going used to be when a simple phone call to the office will suffice. And if it's an emergency and a parent or, you know, a guardian needs to speak with a student immediately, we'll obviout a cellphone, but we'll ously go get that student to continue to happen," Booth said.





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