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edbizbuzz

Public education's core functions are teaching and learning, an endeavor in which private enterprise plays a growing role. Edbizbuzz offers perspective on this emerging school improvement industry. (For entries prior to September 2007, visit the [archives](#).)

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A Belated Friday Guest Column - Redefining Tech Support

Edward Fields is the CEO of online teacher community [HotChalk](#), offered free to public schools through corporate sponsorships and advertising.

The Friday Guest Column The American education system is in crisis. Teachers are scrambling to stay on top of their workload and drive the best possible learning outcomes. Meanwhile, administrators, parents, legislators and Corporate America are on the sidelines calling plays that don't stand a chance of changing the outcome of the game.

Education is the only path to ensuring America will continue to lead the global economy. Educators need our support in every way. A new game plan based on three fundamental changes is the way to approach teaching; a strategy that helps teachers overcome obstacles they face in their day-to-day practice.

First, school administrators must choose education tools that are teacher approved and proven. Second, accountability is a two-way street, with teachers given the opportunity to choose proven resources to meet succinct national standards and expectations (a radical departure from the cryptic state standards teachers are struggling to follow). Finally, the private sector must



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become actively involved in education by providing resources and funding programs that improve teachers' lives—not just voice their concerns.

The right technology is available, and teachers need access to these tools. Since teachers do not make software purchasing decisions, companies sell to school administrators who buy products, without support from teachers that go unused and sit on the bench. Teachers need easy-to-use products that are compatible with their curriculum – they need in-classroom software that saves time. Every educator has heard the million dollar horror stories about whiz bang products that over-promised, under delivered and ended up in use by fewer than 5% of the targeted teacher community. It is time to blow the whistle and call a foul on the current practice; and empower educators (administrators together with teachers) with resources that deliver measurable results. For example, open source tools are easily deployed with nothing more than an Internet connection and browser.

Accountability is important. US teachers need autonomy to select the proper resources that will work in their classroom to meet national/state standards instead of the industrialized assembly line approach currently driven by No Child Left Behind legislation. Even though America's education system landed a man on the moon, created the personal computer, and inspired the iPod, we are now going backward and imposing an outmoded methodology that simply doesn't make sense.

Meanwhile, education systems in China, Japan and India are racing to break away from the mind-numbing, creativity-killing teach-to-the-test methodology America is trying to implement.

Corporate America needs to start providing actionable solutions to today's educational challenges. Businesses must assist by sharing their expertise and investing hard dollars to support programs with a proven track record for helping teachers succeed. Banks must help teach financial literacy with information about personal finances and the economy, rather than pushing their marketing materials into schools for profit. Technology companies can donate time, services and new computing models based on the needs of the education

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market so schools are at the forefront with technology essential to building 21st century skills.

With corporate support as the gasoline, technology is the ultimate vehicle to support scaleable quality education for our kids. The popularity of open source software has produced quality tools such as learning management systems, online lesson plans, community developed curriculum, and electronic communication platforms that are user-friendly, readily accessible and proven.

With the support of corporations in the classrooms, practical approaches to accountability and administrators acquiring the best software to meet teacher's day-to-day (urgent) needs, our teachers will be equipped to prepare today's youth to become productive citizens in the world's most vibrant democracy and become tomorrow's leaders.



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