The market is ripe for a mobile learning revolution in the K-12 classroom. Although there is hesitation to deploy full-scale mobile learning initiatives, there are some incredible examples of schools and districts that are paving the way into mobile learning in K-12.

One such example is Arlington Public Schools (APS), in Arlington, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, DC. APS is a diverse and inclusive school community with 21,000 students who come from 126 different countries. The Strategic Goals for the school system are to eliminate the achievement gap, build effective relationships between all constituent groups, raise student achievement for all students, and deliver a responsive education. During the 2010-2011 school year, Arlington was selected by the state of Virginia to be part of the Learning Without Boundaries: Beyond Textbooks pilot program. The program was designed by the state “to explore the technical, social, and policy implications of digital textbooks on mobile devices such as the iPad.”

Currently, APS has deployed over 700 iPads within the school system, ranging from elementary to high schools. Each school has implemented the mobile devices in a way that addresses their targeted instructional need. One school is using mobile devices to support math instruction; another, to support reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Additionally, The Department of Instruction in collaboration with the Department of Information Services has deployed iPads to School Administrators,
Curtis Richardson, from the Office of Instructional Technology Supervisors and Specialists, and School Board members. Teachers are starting to notice their peers using mobile devices in the classroom and are beginning to generate ideas of how they too can integrate the mobile devices into their classroom instruction. Since the beginning of the school year, there has been an increase in the number of teachers interested in integrating the mobile devices into their classrooms.

Jeanine Richardson, from the Office of Instructional Technology, believes in pushing the boundaries of mobile devices in K-12. Through the Blackboard Mobile Learn application, students can access course content, digital textbooks, and class discussions and blogs, among other things. A great benefit of the app is that teachers can upload documents as well as instructional videos to their Blackboard classes and whenever students log into Blackboard Mobile Learn, they can pull any file down to their mobile device. In addition students can work within other applications on the mobile device and save their finished work back to Blackboard to their mobile device. In addition students can pull any file down to their mobile device. In addition students can work within other applications on the mobile device and save their finished work back to Blackboard to their own devices to school.

While Arlington Public Schools is piloting mobile learning for learners as young as eight years old, Erica Beasley, CIO and Systems Manager of Briarcliff Manor UFSD in Briarcliff Manor, NY, is focused on her 1,750 students from grades K-12. Erica’s goal is to take the entire Learning Management System experience to the kids’ handheld devices while keeping parents engaged too. “Mobile appeals to all ages with the multi-media experience and encourages parent’s collaboration with their kids for the younger students”.

Also a Blackboard Connect client, Briarcliff Manor UFSD noticed that their targeted emails were receiving the most responses during rush hour, due to the large number of parents who commute into New York City. As an innovative school with a focus on advanced learning and participatory in their own educational process.  “Brick and mortar schools tend to ban cell phones, but it’s getting to a critical point where we have to decide if it’s a distraction or if it’s a way of life and we should use it for the learning opportunities it affords.” Jay sees the importance in allowing learners to carry devices that are less heavy and cumbersome, while providing the same level of access. AOS plans to utilize mobile learning even further in the future, after collecting feedback this summer.

Arlington Public Schools, Briarcliff High School, and Amarillo Online School are only a few schools examples out of the hundreds that have proactively adopted mobile learning initiatives with the understanding that the current teaching and learning model must change to account for the way 21st century students are connecting to and accessing information beyond the classroom walls. For these schools, mobile learning is bridging the gap between the way students live and the way they learn. The benefits are clear: students involved in mobile learning pilots have shown improvement not only in test scores, but also in student engagement and attitudes towards learning.

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Learning experiences are built around individual relationships, group collaborations, and deep connections across affinity groups. A strategic approach to mobile and mobile apps can help provide improved interactivity.

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Mobile Agility and the Anytime, Anywhere Impact on IT

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