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ANALYSIS

UNPLUGGED



Schools rethink technology use in the classroom, examine student screen time

Janice Mak
Arizona State University | THE CONVERSATION

When the COVID-19 pandemic forced in-person classroom instruction to go virtual, students suddenly needed to have their own laptops or tablets in order to interact with teachers and complete assignments.

Most states used federal pandemic funding to address the digital divide. This refers to the gap between students and families who had their own tablets, computers and high-speed internet, and those who did not.

While most schools resumed in-person classes by 2021, many of them continued to rely heavily on online platforms and apps to help



Experts say students need to learn more than how to use a laptop or an artificial intelligence chatbot; they should also understand how data is collected and used, how AI and other computing systems work and how technology affects people and society. PHOTO AND ART BY GETTY IMAGES

Inaugural rural land awards presented

Role of landowners in development highlighted

Jane Imbody
Muncie Star Press
USA TODAY NETWORK

AgVocacy Coalitions has named Randolph County landowner Tom Chalfant and economic development leader Andy Fahl as the first recipients of its Champion — Rural Land and Communities Award, recognizing efforts to balance agricultural priorities with economic development opportunities.

The awards were presented during the Indiana Rural Land Use Council's "Open for Business" Roundtable on Land Use and Siting in Winchester, according to a community announce-

The award honors individuals who support rural heritage and agriculture while helping create opportunities for economic growth and long-term community development.

Cary Aubrey, president of AgVocacy Coalitions, said the two honorees demonstrated how communities can pursue development without losing sight of agricultural interests.

"Tom and Andy demonstrate that supporting agriculture and welcoming economic opportunity do not have to be competing goals," Aubrey said. "Their leadership in Randolph County shows the value of bringing landowners, local leaders, and developers together, building relationships and finding solutions that respect both rural communities and responsible progress."

Chalfant, a Randolph County landowner and former county commissioner and county councilman, helped organize roughly 75 local landowners when renewable energy development emerged as a possibility in the county. The group invited EDP Renewables to explore development opportunities in Randolph County.

According to the announcement, the effort gave landowners a more active role in development discussions rather than waiting until project plans and positions were already established.

Fahl, a past president of Randolph County United, has worked in local planning, economic development and renewable energy.

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Mobile driver's licenses are coming to Indiana, BMV says

Kayla Dwyer
Indianapolis Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

Many Hoosiers whip out their smartphones to pay for a latte or a drink at a bar. Soon, when the bartender asks for ID, that smartphone could be all they need. The Indiana Bureau of Motor Ve-

hicles has been exploring the concept of a mobile driver's license for years — since state lawmakers passed a law in 2019 allowing them to — and now the department is telling legislators that Hoosiers should be able to get these verified credentials on their phones within the next 18 months.

These are not a replacement for

physical ID cards, but an extra, no-cost option for those who just want the bartender to know they're of age and not necessarily know where they live, for example.

"We definitely think the (mobile driver's license) is a step forward for privacy for Hoosiers," BMV general counsel Matt Kestian told lawmakers on the

roads and transportation study committee that met Sept. 2.

Hoosiers will still need to carry their physical ID to drive.

The mobile license would merely be a digital extension of their license, learner's permit or state ID.

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