The nation’s schools have met an important technology benchmark. Virtually 100% of all public schools in the United States are now connected to the Internet according to a report released late last year by the U.S. Department of Education. That was up from 35% in 1994. Additionally, 45% are using wireless connectivity.

Though all schools are connected to the Internet, classroom connection was found to be another issue. Schools reported that only 94% of their instructional rooms were connected and that figure varied by school characteristics with urban classrooms at about 88%. Wireless connectivity existed in only about 15% of instructional rooms.

While gains in connectivity remained impressive, the nation was not quite to the “one student-one computer” stage. The ratio of students to computers was 3.8 to 1 overall. This number varied by school size, instructional level, and poverty. Curiously, it was both the schools with the lowest and highest poverty rates that had the highest number of students per computer.

Despite their increased use by adults, personal technology such as hand-held computers is provided to students in only about 8% of the schools. In another category, only ten percent reported having laptops available for students to borrow and less than a fifth of these would lend the laptop for the entire academic year. Of the 90% who did not have laptops, only 3% reported any plans to make laptops available to students in the next academic year, underscoring slow growth in this area. Indeed, individual student access to any kind of personal technology seems to be the last frontier.

That’s why it was significant when the Canton City Schools received national attention last year after completing a two-year initiative to integrate the Texas Instruments TI-Navigator™ Classroom Learning System and graphing calculators into math classrooms prompting Melendy Lovett, president of Texas Instruments Education and Productivity Solutions to say, “CCS is truly a success story when it comes to leaders’ and teachers’ commitment to improving student engagement and math performance using graphing technology.”
