

## Top Story...

### Will Virtual Reality Drive Deeper Learning?

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Though no hard numbers are available yet on how many classrooms are using virtual or augmented reality, new estimates suggest the technology could reach [15 million students by 2025](#). Many people, though, still aren't sure exactly what virtual reality (VR) is, and the definition is continually evolving.

For VR advocates, the technology is rapidly changing the way we see and experience the world. Proponents of the technology can point to real success stories: Here are some of the more promising uses of VR and other immersive technologies already underway across the country.

#### Bringing Science to Life

Like doctors who have been using VR to [assist in surgeries and pinpoint ailments](#)—by generating 3D models of real patient tumors from MRI scans, for example—science teachers are saying VR can help deepen understanding of subjects such as biology and anatomy, which require students to grasp the inner workings of cells and organs that are not visible to the human eye. [Platforms such as Peer](#) have developed mixed reality content for students that provides compelling visual models of complex physical science concepts like gravity, molecular bonds, and force.

#### Experience Campus Life from Home

Touring colleges is costly and time-consuming, not to mention impossible for many potential college students. Companies like [Campus Tours](#) and [YouVisit](#) are now offering 360-degree virtual reality tours for hundreds of campuses, from the Georgia Institute of Technology to the University of Minnesota. Using any device (no fancy headset needed), prospective students can “walk” on the paths around campus and “see” themselves among other college students, headed to class or back to the dorms. By clicking on campus buildings, users can get inside and access more than 1,000 college experiences like exploring [Geisel Library](#) at the University of California, San Diego, or an electrical engineering lab at Princeton University.

#### Building Empathy

This year, the nonprofit [Global Nomads](#) piloted the [One World, Many Stories](#) program, which used virtual reality to build connections between 20 classrooms in the United States and the Middle East. Through the program's VR simulations, students are able to walk the streets with a teen in [Jordan](#) or rural [Kentucky](#) and be immersed in their day-to-day life, gaining understanding of other cultures and viewpoints along the way.

Also showing promise: [Embodied Labs](#) is providing training for students to become better caregivers for the elderly by letting them experience the medical challenges seniors face, like macular degeneration and hearing loss. In the simulation “We are Alfred,” users experience the impact of vision impairment during a family birthday party. The platform was selected as one of five winners in the U.S. Department of Education's [EdSim Challenge](#) for “immersive simulations that will prepare students for the globally competitive workforce of the 21st century.”

#### Shop Class, Revived

Career Technical Education (CTE) may get a revival through new virtual reality experiences that train students how to repair cars and allow them to complete safety training in 3D. [Used by the Hong Kong Institute of Vocational Education](#) to teach aircraft engineering and building maintenance skills, the U.S.-based VR platform zSpace launched vocational simulations in partnership with Shenzhen GTA Education Tech Ltd. in China. Students disassemble and reassemble systems like the transmission or engine, free of risk or material waste.

Although there is no replacement for an actual field trip or live experience, virtual reality does provide an opportunity for a new level of immersion to a place students would otherwise be unable to go or in an activity students would otherwise be unable to do.

Source: [Edutopia](#)

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