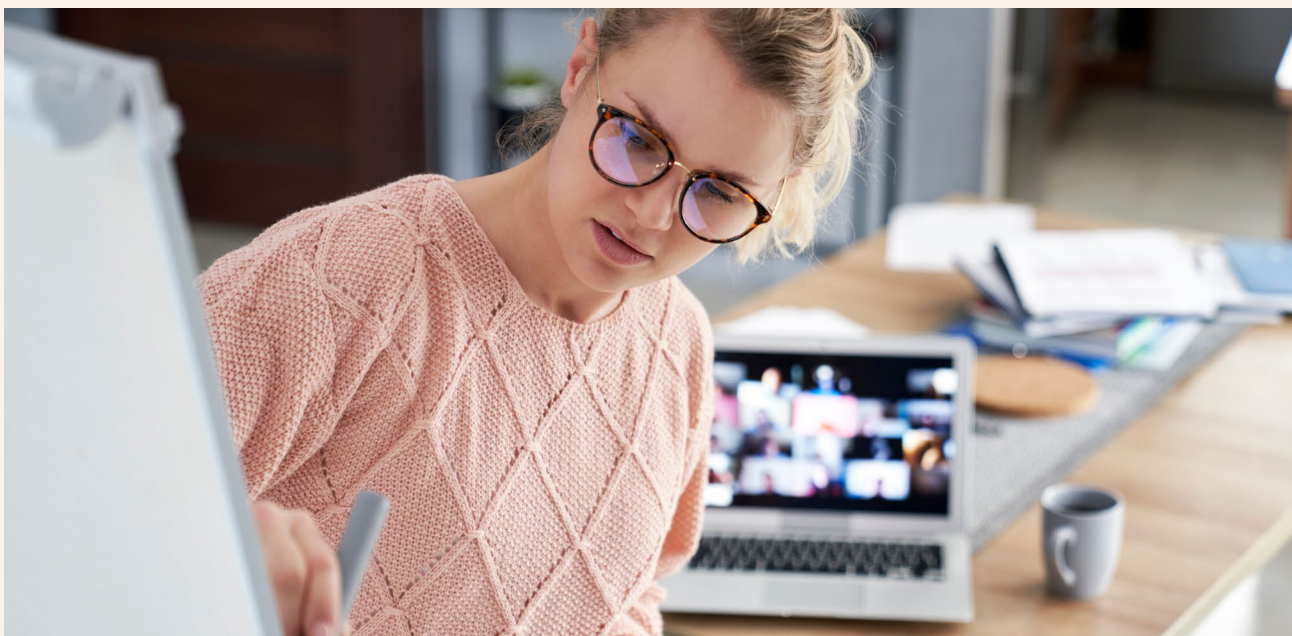


Return to the Classroom Guidebook





All of us at CDW recognize that all educators have been asked to do more than ever before.

Teachers everywhere had to adapt to the role of online educator: having to lead classes remotely with widely varying tools, creating engaging content and resources in an environment that is ever changing. Likewise, school administrators and IT professionals had to make equally significant changes to support faculty, staff, students, and parents. As technology industry leaders, CDW and Intel have developed this guide to help you better leverage education technology as we return to the classroom.

Some of you have school systems that converted to an entirely online model of instruction while many others adopted a hybrid approach that blended at-home learning with in-person instruction. Regardless of which approach your school system took, the fall school year promises to continue to bring changes, challenges, and opportunities.

My sincere wish is that this guidebook can help you to adjust to this “new normal,” if only just a bit.

I am hopeful that with your help your students will have time to identify personal passions, and have the opportunity to turn those passions into skills that will be beneficial to their futures. CDW and Intel have hired some of the top ed-tech specialists in the U.S. to help bring these recommendations and resources to you. I hope you find them helpful to your students’ learning journeys.



Tony Vitale
CDW-G Customer Enablement Director

Return to the Classroom Guidebook

Planning and Preparing for the Future

Schools of today are **student-centered**, **collaborative environments** that support a wide range of abilities and learning activities. Those in leadership, IT, and in the classroom play a pivotal role in providing support and creating the conditions necessary for these collaborative environments to thrive.

This guidebook highlights insights learned from conducting school under the constraints of a global pandemic, as well as wins and accomplishments of pivoting to new ways of teaching and learning. Also included are ideas and opportunities for considering what is possible as we return to in-person learning. You will find curated resources and tools to leverage to create equitable learning experiences and spaces conducive to active engagement and inspiration.

Leadership and Administration

Digital equity

Student learning paths

Professional learning

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IT Departments

Security and privacy

Infrastructure

Teaching and learning

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K-12 Educators

Student well-being

Schooling loss

Instructional approaches

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Leadership and Administration

New Year, New Possibilities

As you are planning for the opening of the 2021-22 school year and beyond, figuring out where to start can be hard. Everything feels like a possibility as we venture into new ways of both teaching and learning. Digital transformation efforts continue to strive for authentic learning experiences that are relevant, valuable, and help build tangible skills for an unpredictable world. However, putting a device in the hands of students is not enough. The key is to be critical of processes in order to provide [digital equity](#) and enhance learner outcomes. In their [Guiding Principles for Reentry Planning](#), ERS, a national nonprofit that partners with education leaders to transform how they use resources, recommends starting with people--getting input from students, families, and educators--when refining and implementing plans. And in designing those plans, consider both:

“Do-ability”, avoiding adding unnecessary complexity, and

Adaptability, planning for change

This section of the guidebook uses these concepts to focus on four areas for the future, specific to the needs of district- and school-level leadership.



Providing Digital Equity

Teaching and learning happens anytime, anywhere.



Providing Student Learning Paths

Supporting student agency and choice through multiple modalities of learning.



Supporting Connected Professional Learning

Building time for connecting for peer-to-peer professional learning.



What Digital Transformation Looks Like for Leadership

Digital transformation is about changing attitudes and enabling students, educators, and families to fully realize the benefits of digital technologies. Districts and schools benefitting most from digital transformation are open to change; they have systems and structures in place that foster innovation while committing to digital equity and ensuring that technology use is relevant to the learning context.

Providing Digital Equity

Overview

The constraints of schooling during the pandemic revealed huge equity gaps in device access and connectivity. The numbers surrounding digital equity—the equal access and ability to use technology for all students and educators—were staggering, with [a reported](#) 15 to 16 million children lacking access to reliable internet for remote and virtual learning. And while the issues appeared insurmountable to many, districts and schools dove into providing digital equity through an array of innovative solutions. The [2021 Edtech Leadership Survey](#) from CoSN reports efforts to expand broadband access outside of school have increased from 49% of respondents in 2020 not providing off campus broadband services, compared to just 5% in 2021.

This means in less than one year, 95% of respondents are providing off-campus services of some kind, and the most popular strategy for access outside of school is the deployment of district-owned hotspots.



“ I want [my daughter] to be supported socially. I want her to be supported academically. I want her to be supported emotionally. And I want to know that there is cultural competency or cultural humility in the staff, that there is an awareness that they know the demographics that they’re dealing with.”

— Parent surveyed for [The Center for American Progress \(CAP\) Community Conversation](#)

Insights

- **Students are mobile and rely on wi-fi.** The need for online, remote access for K-12 teaching and learning (including instruction and resources) is now integral to the US education system. The flexibility that these options provide help districts and schools avoid the loss of instructional time in emergencies and support equitable access for students and families.
- **Connected learning goes beyond knowledge growth.** Students need reliable connectivity to participate in classroom instructional activities, including those that support collaborative learning and development of SEL skills, use digital tools and apps to complete assignments outside of the school day, and require conferencing with educators and working in small group settings.
- **Families want transparent communication.** This includes how districts and schools are meeting their children’s physical, mental, and academic needs, including those related to cultural relevance and how they, as caregivers, can support technology needs at home. With many pivots and changes to what schooling looks like, parents and caregivers need accessible and actionable data and information to be fully engaged in their child’s learning and to advocate for individual needs their child may have.

Opportunities

Engage in digital inclusion efforts

Digital inclusion is what
we do to work towards
digital equity.

- [San Francisco Digital Equity Strategic Plan](#)
- [Washington State's Digital Equity Initiative](#)
- [North Carolina State Broadband Efforts](#)
- [New York State Education Department Digital Equity Plan](#)
Explore what other states are doing in pursuit of providing digital equity for all students and families.
- [Without Digital Equity, Students Lose the Opportunity to Learn](#)
Learn more about how a lack of adequate devices or access cause students to miss the chance to innovate with their peers.
- [Working Toward Digital Equity in K-12 Education](#)
Explore how technology access with the right planning and support, helps schools make a difference for students.
- [National Association of Secondary School Principals Policy Statements on Digital Equity](#)
Consider the importance of providing access to and understanding of how to properly use technology to open doors for each student, making learning more inclusive.
- [Digital Equity Bill of Rights](#)
Explore the California Emerging Technology Fund's Equity Bill of Rights.

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Reconsider device and infrastructure solutions

Purchase devices and services (care of devices) as an all-in-one solution.

- [CDW Configuration Services](#)
Unbox your tech and go with simplified technology deployment.
- [Streamlining One-to-One Computing Deployments in the Era of Remote Learning](#)
Spend time helping educators and students thrive, rather than unpacking and setting up devices.
- [Post-Pandemic Classrooms: What Will They Look Like and How Will They Be Different?](#)
Prepare for the technology differences following changes brought on by virtual and hybrid learning.

Provide interoperability

Create environments where technology tools work together safely and seamlessly so educators can teach.

- [Empowering Teaching and Learning with Interoperability](#)
Create the conditions for programs to communicate with each other and securely share important data.

Improve communication with families

Assess parents' and caregivers' communication needs for considerations in building a communication plan and choosing a communication platform.

- [How K-12 School Districts Can Best Use Technology to Communicate with Parents](#)
Leverage technology to reach parents and learn practices for developing communication strategies.
- [Broward County Public Schools Distance Learning and Wellness Surveys](#)
Solicit feedback from key stakeholders to assist in designing and building plans.
- [Cleveland Metro School District Outreach Survey](#)
Solicit feedback from key stakeholders to assist in designing and building plans.

Providing Student Learning Paths

Overview

Even with the challenges that learning remotely during the pandemic presented to districts, schools, and families, expanding the idea of where teaching and learning can happen has allowed for a level of flexibility that most students had not previously experienced. Districts and schools embraced the challenges of providing equitable education and designed creative solutions to support students' agency and ownership of their own learning. According to findings in the [Student Home Connectivity Study](#) from CoSN, some students have thrived in the remote learning environment, accelerating academically even more so than they did in traditional classroom settings. In addition, many parents and caregivers prefer the option of flexible learning modalities, such as hybrid and virtual learning, and may want to continue their child's education using online methods.

Insights

- **Most districts and schools will continue to offer various modalities for learning.** Virtual learning options are likely to continue to be provided for families. Offering flexible options for learning helps districts and schools protect against the loss of instructional time due to emergencies and inclement weather, and also supports the needs of all stakeholders, including families who have schedules that don't currently fit into a typical 8am-3pm school day.
- **Students value agency and autonomy.** As the lines between in-person and virtual learning continue to blur, students are embracing the idea of learning happening anytime, anywhere. Designing to support student agency and autonomy begins with understanding [learner variability](#) - a recognition that all students differ, and that these differences matter for learning. If you start with the assumption that there is variability

among each learner, different decisions are made on how to create optimal environments and opportunities to support their learning.

“One reason we are stuck in outdated classrooms is that too many school systems are frozen in sameness – the same books, the same lessons, the same pace, the same treatment of each learner. Yet, if there is one takeaway from the burgeoning learning sciences research, it is that no two of us learn in exactly the same way.”

— Barbara Pape,
[Learner Variability Is the Rule,
Not the Exception](#)

- **Many students will need some form of intervention, acceleration, and support.** Supports are needed to meet all learners where they are and to create conditions for their continued growth physically, mentally, and academically. These wraparound services include both attention to social and emotional learning and using trauma-informed practices in the classroom. Options will look different based on students' needs, and will call for intentionally designed learning paths (some that are content focused and some that are focused on other things like well being and social emotional skills) that provide both students and their families' choice.

Opportunities

Consider learning beyond just content

Identify what other things
help learners grow, including
tools and resources that
support their agency
and autonomy.

- [Managing Remote Learning](#)
Initiate strategies that help keep all student instruction consistent and minimize disruptions.
- [Connect Students and Teachers to Productive Learning](#)
Reimagine what education looks like, with empowered teachers and inspired students.
- [Post-Pandemic Classrooms: What Will They Look Like and How Will They Be Different?](#)
Prepare for the technology differences following changes brought on by virtual and hybrid learning.
- [CASEL Program Guide for SEL](#)
With hundreds of social and emotional learning (SEL) programs available to schools and districts, learn more about where and how to begin.
- [5 Steps Toward a Trauma-Skilled School](#)
Explore this snapshot from NASEP to learn more about what trauma-skilled schools look like.
- [Focus Forward: Teaching and Leading in a Post-Pandemic World](#)
Use this NASEP guide to help you have conversations with stakeholders and decision makers on incorporating SEL and trauma-informed practices into daily school life.
- [Wraparound Services](#)
Explore how to build connections, foster partnerships, and educate the whole child.

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Listen to students

Make students a part of the process of how, when, where, and what they learn.

- [Learning Without Limits: Increasing Tech Accessibility in the K-12 Classroom](#)
Ensure continuing availability of accessible technologies to meet students' needs.
 - [Imagining September Project](#)
Learn from students about COVID-19 schooling to plan for a better future.
-

Supporting Connected Professional Learning



Overview

As technology-infused learning environments become the new normal, there is an increasing need for educators to connect with each other. While many educators have felt exhaustion with designing and providing learning experiences in various modalities, the move back to the classroom can provide so many new possibilities for connection. Change can be invigorating, especially when leadership prioritizes educators learning from each other. High quality professional learning is ongoing and job-embedded. Leadership must provide time, resources, and choice in how, what, and when educators learn, helping them feel freedom and space to take risks and consider, very intentionally, how they leverage technology to support pedagogy.

Insights

- **Educators need time, resources, and tools.**
Adapting to all the pivots that have happened during the pandemic left many educators mentally and physically exhausted. Educators will meet more changes as in-person learning (and possibly other learning modalities) begins. To help them feel invigorated and inspired in adopting these changes while at the same time leveraging the technology that has become so vital for teaching and learning, provide intentionally designed opportunities for connection. Rather than simply telling them that they should work together, show them that this is a priority by providing built-in time, as well as resources and tools, that give them the space to learn from each other. Also be open to what this might look like; ranging from discussing data informed practices in PLCs to engaging in self-care and wellness activities.
- **Distributed leadership opportunities help promote peer-to-peer learning.**
Consider distributing leadership opportunities among your team(s) when possible. [Distributed leadership](#) moves beyond simply dividing tasks and responsibilities among people. Instead, it's concerned with how leaders and those whom they lead interact to drive instructional change and improved student outcomes developing a culture where all students can thrive. Considering [the types of leaders](#) a learning organization should have helps to support the assumption that everyone has valuable contributions and that there is the opportunity to learn with and from each other.

“From online discussion forums and Google Classrooms to YouTube videos and social media, there’s no doubt that technology has taken up permanent residence in K-12 classrooms. Knowing this, it’s critical that we implement tech-forward professional development programs to help educators feel more comfortable navigating the virtual classroom.”

— Jennifer Brown,
[Closing the Professional Development Gap for K-12 Teachers](#)

Opportunities

Provide opportunities for connection

Consider ways that educators throughout the district and school buildings can learn from and with others, both in-person and virtually.

- [4 Tips for Effective Virtual Professional Development](#)
Consider the strategic planning and execution it takes to deliver professional development online.
- [Foster the Four C's of Learning in Professional Development with Technology](#)
Integrate critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity into teacher training.
- [These Educators Embrace the Opportunities of Online Learning](#)
Use social media channels to share advice, tutorials, and examples of ingenuity.
- [Tapping Into the Expertise in the Building](#)
Use coaching models to take advantage of a powerful professional learning resource available to teachers—their colleagues.
- [Teachers Learning From Each Other](#)
Support educators to open up their classrooms to their peers.

Ensure educators are empowered to make decisions about teaching and learning

Set educators up for success by providing opportunities for them to learn, grow, and share, including choice, agency, and multiple access points for professional development.

- [The Case for Increasing Investments in Technology Professional Development](#)
Honor educators' time and drive toward the goal of creating more effective learning environments.
- [Closing the Professional Development Gap for K–12 Teachers](#)
Help teachers navigate the virtual classroom and the challenges of the emerging digital world.
- [Microsoft for Education](#)
Access on-demand webinars to support teachers in intentional use of tools for teaching and learning.
- [Google for Education OnAir](#)
Hear from Google for Education experts, partners and your peers, here will help you get the most from Google for Education tools.

Reflection and Planning

What? So What? Now What?

As you consider your priorities for the 2021-22 school year and beyond, use this protocol and set of questions to help guide your reflections, conversations, and planning.

What?

Reflect on what happened the previous year. What unexpected wins did we experience? What moments of insight exist?

So What?

Reflect on what to do differently. How might we scale wins and lessons learned? What challenges were faced that could have been prevented?

Now What?

Reflect on what is needed to get there. How can we leverage opportunities that exist for change? How might we push against educational boundaries? What are the “what ifs” we want to tackle?



Questions to Ask

Use these questions to engage in conversations with stakeholders when planning for the 2021-22 school year and beyond.

Providing Digital Equity

Will access become a barrier to teaching and learning?

Will lack of access disproportionately impact students from low/middle income families, rural areas, or marginalized communities?

What did the pandemic reveal about equity and accessibility in our district or school?

How will we support equity and access for all learners? What policies and practices do we need to revise to reflect our beliefs about equity?

Are there foundational investments we can make now that will create enabling conditions for strategic practices in schools (e.g. configuration services or all-in-one investments)?

How can we evolve our underlying cost structures to enable these investments and promote equity?

Does our web content filtering protect devices when they're being used remotely? Is it set up on every device?

Is antivirus/antimalware software installed on each device?

How can we leverage the combined efforts of leadership and IT in order to support access and connectivity?

Providing Student Learning Paths

What assumptions are we making about unenrolled students- including their choices for the upcoming school year and their likelihood to return?

How will we support equity and access for all learners? What policies and practices do we need to revise to reflect our beliefs about equity?

How are we prioritizing our investments in early learning, social-emotional support, and academic recovery for the students who need it most?

How can we include students' voices in decision making in order to promote equity, agency, and choice?

How will we promote equity and ensure that more resources are allocated to the students and school communities who have been most impacted by COVID-19?

How can we use real data to understand student needs at a more granular level?

How can we optimize existing time to meet student and educator needs?

Supporting Connected Professional Learning

How do we continue to support teachers who are excited to build upon their integration of technology with teaching?

How do we build the capacity of the teachers with such variable experiences and comfort with technology?

How do we support those teachers who had a terrible experience with technology and guide them to seeing themselves as effective teachers with technology?

How can we reorganize time for collaboration and connection, rather than one-off professional development opportunities and isolated work?

How can we optimize existing time to meet teacher needs?

How can we create systems of distributed leadership to support peer-to-peer learning?



IT Departments

Leveraging Security Now and for the Future

School IT departments—around the US and across the globe—faced unprecedented challenges in supporting teaching and learning during the pandemic.

In response to rapid shutdowns, IT staff had to provide devices, address internet access gaps, and support students and teachers in a completely new remote learning environment. According to [a 2021 survey of edtech leadership](#), over 61% of IT departments were not prepared to provide technical support at the scale required; however, in spite of these challenges and IT staff's hard work and creativity, schools made tremendous progress in supporting more equitable and meaningful uses of technology. Now, they have the opportunity to build on these successes and be a catalyst for digital transformation, helping others realize technology's true potential to positively change education. IT departments are well-positioned to take advantage of their recent progress and continue transitioning IT resources from support to a more integral and seamless role in the teaching and learning process.

This section of the guidebook uses these concepts to focus on three areas for the future – specific to the needs of district and school IT departments.



Providing Security and Data Privacy

Cybersecurity risks continue to be a top priority.



Updating Connectivity and Infrastructure

Designing solutions for the future of teaching and learning.



Supporting Teaching and Learning with Technology

Setting students and educators up for success.



What Digital Transformation Looks Like for IT Departments

IT departments are a key component of digital transformation, working to modernize legacy systems that deliver digital solutions. They strive to meet the needs of all students, and help educators work productively on any device they choose, anytime, anywhere. IT departments also provide robust cybersecurity enforcement which protects educators' and students' personal data, and minimizes vulnerabilities to district and school networks.

Security and Data Privacy

Overview

Cybersecurity risks, including privacy and security of student data, continue to be a top priority for district and school IT departments. With a move to teaching and learning remotely, many districts and schools prioritized conversations around these risks, ranking attacks like phishing as possible threats, but failed to design strategic and specific cybersecurity plans. As increasing attention is paid to protecting students and educators against threats, and keeping data secure, IT departments are catalyzing their efforts towards network security. In moving away from more ad hoc approaches to security, many districts and schools are even considering staffing full-time positions dedicated to network security and providing all stakeholders with training on cybersecurity practices.

Since 2016, U.S. K-12 school districts have experienced more than two cyber incidents per week on average. Hacks and unauthorized data breaches continue to be the most common type of incident in K-12 schools, while successful phishing attacks are the fastest growing.

“With increasing threats to data and infrastructure, schools are faced with significant increases in cyber and ransomware insurance.

— Schools Hit with Cyber Price Hikes

Insights

Many districts and schools do not have a dedicated and strategic cybersecurity plan in place. Less than half of edtech leadership reported that they had an official cybersecurity plan in place in 2020. As a response to the pandemic, students and educators had to engage in teaching and learning outside of managed networks. The FBI reports that in 2020 alone, there were over 240,000 complaints of phishing schemes. With a rise in vulnerabilities, IT departments were forced to reconsider things like technical hardware refreshes, patches needed for both software and operating systems, and application reviews and updates. Long term plans can help IT departments mobilize the people and resources needed in order to prioritize network and data security.

Short-term investments should pay off now, and in the long run. As they found creative solutions to provide reliable devices and connectivity for all students and educators, IT departments addressed asset management in new ways. The need for organized management systems to assess requirements, device stability, and both data and data recovery processes became top priority. Investing in both hardware and software solutions, as well as training, needs to be more than a circumstantial solution. Guaranteeing absolute security is impossible; however, IT departments can help with budgeting and planning to manage risks appropriately alongside other pressing needs. This investment needs to support network security and stability now, and evolve and grow as vulnerabilities and threats change over time.



Opportunities

Revisiting and updating data and security protections

Ensure that the district, schools, and data are protected against cyber attacks and other vulnerabilities.

- [How to Protect School Systems from Ransomware Attacks](#)
Consider the significant impact cyber attacks have on districts and schools and preventive measures to ensure security.
- [School Cybersecurity: 5 Tips for Post-COVID-19 K-12 Operations](#)
Bolster cybersecurity efforts to ensure systems, data, and privacy are safer.
- [Protecting K-12 Data from Cyberattacks](#)
Protect data with a resilient cyber security strategy that includes defense and recovery.
- [Making the Most of Chromebook Security Features](#)
- [Detecting Malicious Activity in Microsoft Environments](#)
- [CDW Cybersecurity Services](#)
Prioritize safety by using strong protocols, built-in tools, and cybersecurity services.
- [3 Ways to Support Understaffed IT Departments](#)
Consider how to invest wisely in people and technologies to ease the burden on IT departments.
- [Center for Internet Security - CIS Controls](#)
- [CCSESA Cybersecurity Framework](#)
- [NIST Cybersecurity Framework](#)
Explore example frameworks for prioritized actions to protect against known cybersecurity threats.

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Training all stakeholders in cybersecurity practices

Provide students, families, and educators training on important security and privacy measures.

- [Protect Students' Data and Privacy](#)
Explore ways educators can better protect their students' online privacy.
- [The Importance of Teaching Cybersecurity to a 5-Year-Old](#)
Proactively support students in staying safe while engaging with technology.
- [Privacy and Internet Safety for Parents](#)
Help families maximize the Internet's benefits while minimizing risks.
- [12 Cybersecurity Tips For Students At Home And In School](#)
Provide helpful tips so students can stay cyber-safe both at school and at home.

Connectivity and Infrastructure

Overview

As they raced to provide emergency assistance to students, families, and educators during remote learning, IT departments faced huge gaps within their communities in device access and connectivity. The numbers were staggering, with [a reported](#) 15 to 16 million children lacking access to reliable internet for remote and virtual learning. And while students, families, and educators had a multitude of varied and specific needs, IT departments worked tirelessly to provide digital equity through an array of innovative solutions. The [2021 Edtech Leadership Survey](#) from CoSN reports efforts to expand broadband access outside of school have increased to 95% in 2021. As students and educators across the country prepare to return to school for the 2021-22 school year, most will come back to buildings that are largely, if not completely, operating with 1:1 devices for students, and some continuing to offer optional modalities for learning, whether it be hybrid or even fully remote. IT departments must consider how current infrastructure can and will support device numbers, digital instructional needs, and the access needs of students learning off-campus, and design solutions that envision the future of teaching and learning.

As [a SETDA report](#) asserts,

“There is not a one size fits all for digital learning implementation and districts and schools should determine their digital learning pedagogical goals and administrative bandwidth needs, and then design the capacity of their network to anticipate future growth and utilization, ensuring that schools are not under-provisioning bandwidth that is necessary for digital learning approaches.”

Insights

- **Districts and schools need sustained, seamless access.** The need for online, remote access for K-12 teaching and learning (including instruction and resources) is now integral to the US education system. The flexibility that these options provide help districts and schools avoid the loss of instructional time in emergencies and support equitable access for students and families. As [SETDA recommends](#), districts should provide anywhere from 2.8 Mbps per user in small districts to at least 1.4 Mbps per user in large districts, using these numbers as guidelines for solution implementation and sustainable scalability. When planning upgrades to infrastructure, districts and schools must consider how they can implement the architecture and provision bandwidth to ensure that all users have excellent experiences, especially during peak utilization times.
- **Infrastructure as a service (IaaS) is a cost-effective and efficient way of managing IT infrastructure.** With the pivot to remote teaching, learning, and operations, districts and schools became quickly aware of their need to manage things from the cloud. [IaaS](#) assures that teaching, learning, and day-to-day operations of districts and schools can happen anytime and anywhere. This cost-efficient method helps shift the payment model to one based on accumulated use and makes data accessible wherever there's an internet connection, eliminating the need for complex hardware and full data centers.

Opportunities

Providing device maintenance and management

Ensure students and educators have access to a device that keeps up the demands of modern learning environments.

- [Accessibility: Empowering All Students to Become Expert Learners](#)
Beyond guaranteeing that all students can access course content and tools, districts and schools also need to ensure that all information provided is accessible from any device.
- [Amplified IT](#)
Consider all-in-one services for Google ecosystems that provide consultancy, technical, and professional learning services to help create a customized transformation roadmap.
- [Monitoring Mobile Devices in a Virtual Environment](#)
Think beyond just getting devices into people's hands--consider the importance of device management.

Providing access and connectivity

Ensure students and educators, whether on or off campus, have access to reliable internet with the necessary bandwidth to meet their teaching and learning needs.

- [School Districts Upgrade to Wi-Fi 6 for Increased Connectivity](#)
Future proof schools, meet the demands of an influx of devices, and increase security with a move to Wi-Fi 6.
- [Providing Secure Remote Access for Students](#)
Consider the security implications when choosing which path to take to provide connectivity to students, educators, and families.
- [Closing the K-12 Digital Divide in the Age of Distance Learning](#)
Explore technology requirements, cost, and opportunities for providing access and connectivity to all.

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Conducting infrastructure modernization

Leverage IaaS and learning analytics to better inform instructional decisions and ensure that districts and schools are setting the stage for long-term success.

- [Why Cloud Infrastructure Matters to K-12](#)
Learn how Infrastructure as a Service is a cost-efficient and secure solution for districts managing hybrid learning.
- [IaaS Offers Critical Agility, Scale and Innovation for School Districts](#)
Prepare your district and school(s) to respond and innovate in the new normal with Infrastructure as a Service.
- [Cloud IaaS Solutions](#)
Explore how all-in-one services can help act as a guide to the cloud marketplace, provide sustainable cloud transitions, and build custom solutions for growth.

Supporting Teaching and Learning with Technology

Overview

Although the majority of schools are planning to return to in-person instruction for the 2021-22 school year, the need to be able to flexibly support remote and hybrid learning environments will not go away. Additionally, now that technology has assumed a more prominent role in teaching and learning, it is unlikely to return to its pre-pandemic integration levels. The Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) issued a [Student Home Connectivity Study](#) in which they outline how “remote learning has increased our reliance on the internet”. Students, families, and educators need a simple way to access tools, information, and assistance for their technology needs. Processes for procurement and support of software, hardware, and digital tools and resources have to be evaluated, documented, and shared with decision makers. And probably, most importantly, expectations for all facets of technology use have to be set and communicated with district and school leadership, families, and educators. IT departments will continue to be instrumental in evaluating, documenting, and communicating technology integration processes, procedures, and resources.



Insights

Teaching and learning can happen anywhere, anytime. IT departments must be equipped and prepared to support teaching and learning whenever and wherever it happens. Students and educators have become more mobile, more reliant on connectivity like Wi-Fi, and more accustomed to integrating technology tools into learning experiences, like the use of video conferencing and game-based learning. All of these shifts require bandwidth, access to powerful devices, reliable connectivity, as well as, simple access to assistance and training. IT departments need skills, human capacity, and time and resources in order to design and provide solutions that keep students, families, and educators teaching and learning.

Communication is key. Having strategic plans, offering powerful devices, and providing reliable accessibility are all very important, and all users need to understand how to use these tools safely and effectively. Whether it's providing internal usage, procedural, or troubleshooting guidelines to educators, or providing families technology tips for effectively using devices at home, IT departments have to find innovative and clear ways to document technology integration processes, procedures, and resources to support effective teaching and learning. And, since learning modalities are becoming increasingly fluid, with the ability to pivot anytime, it's equally important that this documentation can be updated in real-time, quickly and simply.

“Success will require stakeholders to break down silos; partnering across public, private, and social sectors is needed to assess student-level needs and inform responses, develop and execute a broadband strategy, run effective procurement of affordable solutions, and offer IT support and digital inclusion support.”

— [CoSN EdTech Leadership Survey Report](#)

Opportunities

Providing interoperability

Create environments where technology tools work together safely and seamlessly so students and educators have a common set of tools for teaching and learning.

- [Empowering Teaching and Learning with Interoperability](#)
Create the conditions for programs to communicate with each other and securely share important data.
- [What Does It Take to Make Interoperability Work in K-12 Education?](#)
Explore diverse perspectives on what it takes to make data interoperability work in K-12 education, including company profiles and case studies of school districts and networks.

Evaluating, documenting, and communicating

Invest time, capacity, and capital into evaluating, documenting, and communicating technology integration processes, procedures, and resources.

- [School District of Oconee County](#)
- [Technology Resources Guide](#)
- [Information Technology Division Page - Los Angeles Unified School District](#)
Check out how both a small, rural district, and a large metro district approach documenting and communicating technology information.
- [Transformative Digital Learning Implementation Guide - Operations](#)
Explore SETDA's operational considerations for transforming to a digital learning environment and implementing digital learning.

Reconsidering device solutions

Purchase devices and services (care of devices) as an all-in-one solution.

- [CDW Configuration Services](#)
Unbox your tech and go with simplified technology deployment.
- [Streamlining One-to-One Computing Deployments in the Era of Remote Learning](#)
Spend time helping educators and students thrive, rather than unpacking and setting up devices.
- [Post-Pandemic Classrooms: What Will They Look Like and How Will They Be Different?](#)
Prepare for the technology differences following changes brought on by virtual and hybrid learning.

Reflection and Planning

What? So What? Now What?

As you consider your priorities for the 2021-22 school year and beyond, use this protocol and set of questions to help guide your reflections, conversations, and planning.

What?

What are you most proud of from the past school year? What were the biggest challenges you faced and how were they overcome?

So What?

Why do your achievements and growth matter? What will be the lasting impacts on the ways that your IT department manages school infrastructure in the future?

Now What?

What are the opportunities for modernizing your IT infrastructure and processes to positively impact teaching and learning? What steps can you take to build on your successes?



Questions to Ask and Tips and Tricks

Use these questions to engage in conversations with stakeholders when planning for the 2021-22 school year and beyond.

Security and Data Privacy

Questions to Ask

Which older hardware, software, and systems are most vulnerable to cyber attacks? How can these be upgraded, phased out, or replaced?

Are devices running the latest operating systems with up-to-date anti-virus software?

Do you have built-in firewalls and disk encryption enabled?

What steps has your district taken to help educate students, teachers, and families about data security and privacy?

When was your Acceptable Use Policy last updated? Does it take into consideration extended use of devices and digital tools in and outside of school?

Protecting Valuable Data from Cyberattacks



Read this article in EdTech Magazine for sound advice on addressing the rising threat of cyber attacks in the K-12 environment with three components of a reliable cyber recovery solution: isolation, immutability, and intelligence.

Tips and Tricks

Take advantage of opportunities to reduce complexity. For example, consolidating and reducing the number of servers and management tools may reduce exposure to cyber threats.

Train teachers about best practices for protecting student data. Encourage teachers to use resources such as [these](#) from Common Sense Media to improve student digital citizenship.

Be as transparent as possible with your community about how your school or district collects and uses student data. Issue an up-to-date list of approved digital tools to ensure FERPA compliance.

Refer to other best practices outlined in the Department of Education's guidance, [Protecting Student Privacy While Using Online Educational Services: Requirements and Best Practices](#).

Connectivity and Infrastructure

Questions to Ask

Was your district able to increase internet access for students outside of school in the 2020-21 school year? If so, how? How can you continue to make gains in access?

How is Wi-Fi coverage in your district's classrooms and learning spaces? Is your network bandwidth and throughput sufficient for increased devices and increased device use? Are there dead spots that need to be addressed before reopening?

Is your network infrastructure up-to-date and sufficient to handle potential increased load?

What is the state of your school's devices? How many are in good condition ready for use by students? How many need maintenance? How many should be end-of-lived?

When were devices last updated?

Which types of device maintenance can be done by students and teachers? Which types of maintenance can be done remotely by IT staff? Which types of maintenance require devices to be collected from students?

How many students were using personal devices for remote learning? Will you continue to allow personal device use on campus?

What is your plan for keeping up with power charging demands?

Tips and Tricks

Work with local governments to increase connectivity off your school campus. [Wi-Fi hotspots](#) can be a part of the solution to improving access to learning resources.

Ensure new device purchases include [Intel® Wi-Fi 6](#), which supports a four fold increase in throughput, essential for demand-heavy environments.

Think capacity over coverage when assessing your school network. Use a wireless LAN management console to monitor use. Then ensure throughput speeds can accommodate periods of peak demand.

Lack of connectivity is a potential cause for learning loss. Use federal dollars, like those in the American Rescue Plan (ARP), to fund your efforts to address connectivity gaps.

Plan for a charging and sanitations station in spaces students will use devices so devices are prepared for student use.

Request that students charge devices outside of school.

Communicate with families about the basics of keeping learning devices in good shape.

Ensure devices have warranty coverage to protect your district from inevitable damage. Consider charging an annual "tech fee" to help cover warranty costs.

Look into programs like the [FCC's Emergency Connectivity Fund](#) to be reimbursed for previous technology expenditures.

4 Tips to Plan a K-12 Network Switch Upgrade



Are you looking to upgrade your district networks to prepare for post-pandemic demands and the future of learning? Refer to this CDW-G article for strategies that can set your district up for success.

Supporting Teaching and Learning with Technology

Questions to Ask

Which digital tools did teachers and students depend on in 2020-21? Which tools will become part of the permanent toolkit and which will be let go?

Which single sign on service will you use to grant students and teachers access to all of their technology resources?

Which questions does IT routinely field from teachers? Students? Families?

Which steps did you take last school year to scale up tech support for students and teachers? How can you build upon and improve those efforts next school year?

How can you simplify technology processes and remove obstacles for students and teachers so they can focus on learning?

What is the IT staff role in educator professional learning?

Tips and Tricks

Conduct a digital tool inventory. Ask teachers what technology resources and support they need to be successful. Investigate ways to create a consolidated common list used across grade levels and schools.

Create a resource site for teachers and another for students to answer frequently asked questions and advocate for best practices with quick tutorials, how-to videos, and other resources.

Empower digitally savvy teachers and students to help train others. Teachers can take the lead on introducing tools to their colleagues and students can run a school help-desk to troubleshoot common problems.

Empowering Teaching and Learning with Interoperability



Douglas Konopelko (CDW-G) and Tim Clark (IMS Global) discuss the importance of interoperability in bringing teaching and learning to the forefront and technology to fade into a support role.



K-12 Educators

Introduction and Overview

With an improved safety outlook and increasing vaccination rates throughout the U.S., educators are being called back into schools for a return to full in-person learning this Fall. And while many support the decision, planning for a return to the classroom undoubtedly brings new challenges and considerations, as well as new opportunities to continue the momentum with technology integration and enhanced digital learning.

“We must do more than physically return to schools, as important as that is to create the normalcy we crave. We must also put in place the supports to help students recover—socially, emotionally and academically. And we must reimagine teaching and learning to focus on what sparks students' passion, builds confidence, nurtures critical thinking and brings learning to life.”

— American Federation of Teachers President
[Randi Weingarten](#)

Following the once-in-a-generation disruption to school caused by the global pandemic, the future of education is seeing multiple opportunities for growth. Along with reopening in the Fall, schools are using this moment to reconsider traditional ways of testing students, decreasing class sizes and hiring more teachers, counselors and school nurses, and rethinking the role of technology to enhance learning. There's also a renewed emphasis on school as an important institution for children to grow emotionally and socially.

This section of the guidebook uses these concepts to focus on four areas of opportunity for the future, specific to the needs of educators:



Supporting Student Mental Health and Well-Being

Knowing what to look for and finding ways to support students in crisis.



Implementing Health and Safety Protocols

Planning for the safety of students across all learning spaces.



Adapting Instructional Approaches

Reflecting on lessons learned and how they can be applied for enhanced instruction.



Addressing Schooling Loss

Planning for the upcoming school year while acknowledging the past.

Throughout the guide you'll also find resources for reflective practice as you begin planning for your school's reopening, including:

- **Reflective questions**
- **Self-assessments**
- **Planning checklists**



What Digital Transformation Looks Like for Educators

With innovative and engaging technology tools, educators have begun transforming their instruction and assessment—and pushing the traditional boundaries of the classroom. Digital transformation solutions empower teachers to be increasingly innovative in their teaching methods to improve student success and engage them like never before. And new technologies are poised to push this transformative wave even further.

Safe, secure, scalable technology supports human connection, skill building, and access to information by:

- Empowering collaborative online environments
- Providing analytics and feedback tools
- Integrating inclusive learning tools and immersive experiences

Source: [Microsoft Education](#)

Supporting Student Mental Health and Well-Being

Overview

Even if every safeguard and protocol is properly planned and executed, teaching and learning can't just pick up where educators and students left off when the school doors closed for the pandemic.

It's not just about academics and "catching up." Schools must first rebuild safe spaces for students that will help them navigate the trauma they've experienced.

While parents and educators agree on schools reopening, levels of anxiety and stress may be exacerbated, making it essential to implement stronger systems to meet the social and emotional needs of students and educators. Additionally, signs of anxiety may manifest in different ways than educators were used to previously seeing. Although students crave the community and stability that schools provide, they may not be aware of how difficult the transition is going to be.

“We have to make them feel safe again. They'll want that structure and sense of normalcy, but we have to understand how challenging it will be given what they've been through, what we've all been through.”

—K-4 School Counselor



Insights

- **The pandemic has increased the incidence of trauma experienced by children.** Before the pandemic, federal data suggested nearly half of all U.S. children had been exposed to at least one [traumatic event](#), and more than 20 percent had been exposed to several. Recent data reveals that number to be [significantly higher](#) now. Studies from across health and education fields have found that students who experience sustained traumatic stress, known as "[adverse childhood experiences](#)," are more likely to have academic and behavioral problems in school and cognitive and emotional difficulties outside of it.
- **Students are returning to the classroom with increased anxiety.** Recent reports indicate that some students coming back to school may not be prepared to handle the transition. A [statewide survey](#) of students regarding their emotional wellbeing and mental health revealed that 32% of students who were not receiving services feel they may now need services. And less than 40% of students rated their current mental wellness at the same pre-pandemic level. Some of the most frequent words used by students to describe their mental state were lonely, overwhelmed,

and anxious. School counselors are warning that [student trauma won't just disappear](#) in the Fall, and student progress will depend on how we support their emotional and mental health.

- **It's not just students who are feeling the mental strain.** [In January 2021, 40 percent of adults](#) reported experiencing symptoms of depression and anxiety—three times more than the rate in the first half of 2019. This means that the adults around your students—parents, caregivers, and maybe even yourself as an educator—have been feeling less well. And we [know](#) that “there is no child health without adult caregiver health.” Yet this trend persists throughout the education sector. Early childhood educators’ rates of depression symptoms nearly [doubled](#) last year. Among government employees, teachers are [feeling](#) the most burnout.
- **Educators are prioritizing social-emotional health and well-being.** This includes taking time during classroom instruction to connect everyone and make them feel safe and secure before getting into academics. When planning a return to in-person learning, educators are understanding that social-emotional learning is [even a higher priority](#) than before. In addition, they are finding that [SEL skills play a critical role](#) in determining how well-equipped their students are to meet the demands of the classroom.



[EdTech Roundtable Discussion: Focusing on Social and Emotional Learning for K-12 Students](#)



Experts discuss the pandemic's impact on social and emotional learning, and best practices for offering SEL-focused instruction as educators return to the classroom.

Opportunities

Supporting students through the transition

Plan to help anxious students handle their fears and gain independence.

- [How to Reopen Schools in a Trauma-Sensitive Way](#)
Explore key principles for developing a supportive environment as students return to in-person learning.
- [Child Mind Institute: Back-to-School Anxiety During COVID](#)
Get practical ideas to help ease anxiety as students return to school.
- [Anxiety Canada: Tips for Educators Returning to School During COVID-19](#)
Learn ways to lessen anxiety and create a safe space for in-person learning during the pandemic.

Taking time to focus on social-emotional learning

Find out how educators are incorporating SEL into their daily practices and establishing safe communities as they return to the classroom.

- [CASEL: Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: Social and Emotional Learning Roadmap for Reopening School](#)
Use this roadmap for school communities to embed social and emotional competencies and foster more equitable learning environments.
- [CDE: Social and Emotional Learning](#)
Explore guidance and resources for supporting social and emotional learning.
- [Child Mind Institute: Supporting Students' Mental Health During COVID](#)
Consider strategies that support students' mental health when returning to the classroom from remote or hybrid learning.

Table continues on next page

Learning the signs

Know how to identify potential signs of anxiety and other mental health struggles in students returning to the classroom.

- [Triaging for Trauma During COVID-19](#)
Learn what to expect when students return to in-person instruction.
- [CDE: Supporting Resilience in Schools](#)
Understand trauma and ideas for supporting resilience in schools.

Helping students in crisis

Get to know resources that can help if you see a student in crisis.

- [CDE: Help for Students in Crisis](#)
Learn where you can go if you have a student who needs help.

Practicing Self-Care

Understand the importance of taking care of yourself and knowing your limits.

- [Child Mind Institute: How to Set Priorities This School Year](#)
Learn what to do when you can't do it all.

Implementing Health and Safety Protocols

Overview

As an educator, you play a vital role in creating supportive and healthy environments in which your students can learn and thrive. As your school resumes in-person learning—whether for the first time or following an outbreak—these resources can help you identify ways to protect your own health, as well as the health of students in your classroom.

“Nobody wants to return to in-person learning more than our NEA members. But we must do it safely, and equitably for all students.”

—National Education Association (NEA)
President Becky Pringle

Source: [American Academy of Pediatrics Shares Strategies for Safe In-Person Instruction](#)

Insights

- **Student safety remains the top reopening concern.** Families want schools to reopen—but only if they can do so safely. By [large margins](#), California voters (72 percent) and parents (75 percent) believe that the more important consideration in reopening schools should be keeping students, staff and families as safe as possible, as opposed to getting students back into the classroom as soon as possible.
- **Families of color are more unsure about reopening plans.** Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put many racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19. People who identify as American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, and Hispanic are [disproportionately affected by COVID-19](#), and these disparities have also

emerged among children. While a majority of white parents say they are comfortable sending their children to school for in-person instruction, fewer than half of parents of color feel that way. Parents of color are more likely to be cautious about schools opening too quickly, not too slowly, and with more outward safety concerns.

- **Families want transparent communication.** This includes how cleaning and safety protocols are being implemented, changes in the classroom setup, and provision plans for how educators will respond if an exposure is reported. Consistent with health equity considerations, schools and school districts should conduct active and specific outreach to [underserved families](#) – including parents/guardians of students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, English learners, students experiencing homelessness, and students in foster care. This communication should be conducted in families’ home languages and in alternate formats as needed to facilitate effective communication.

[Safe and Healthy School Operations, Contingency Plans, and Communications Plans](#)



Guidelines to follow when your school is returning to in-person instruction.

Opportunities

Setting up the classroom

With some creative reconfiguration, make your existing space work for you while keeping your students protected.

- [CDC: How Do I Set Up My Classroom? A quick guide for teachers](#)
Explore a comprehensive guide to modify the classroom. Includes sample layout plans.
- [CDC: Classroom Posters](#)
Print illustrated safety posters to hang in the classroom, in both Spanish and English.

Reducing exposure in shared spaces

Plan for ways to reduce exposure when a shared learning space is unavoidable.

- [Wall Street Journal: How Risky Is the Classroom with Covid-10 Controls in Place?](#)
Watch this video to explore the impact of reducing exposure in shared learning spaces.
- [CDC: Teachers and Staff Resuming In-Person Learning](#)
Use this checklist of steps to take when preparing for a return to in-person learning.

Implementing cleaning and safety protocols

Become informed about current cleaning guidelines and recommendations.

- [CDC: Essential Elements of Safe K-12 School Operations for In-Person Learning](#)
Consider recommendations for safe classroom reopenings.
- [NEA: American Academy of Pediatrics Shares Strategies for Safe In-Person Instruction](#)
Read as a leading pediatrician outlines health and equity issues for schools.
- [EPA: 6 Steps for Safe and Effective Disinfectant Use](#)
Print this poster to ensure safety and effectiveness when cleaning your classroom.

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**Communicating
with families**

Learn how to communicate with families and provide assurances to smooth the transition back to the classroom.

- [How Schools are Opening Safely](#)
Consider talking points to share with parents about what schools are doing to keep their children safe.
- [Vaccinations for Students](#)
Explore vaccine information and how to schedule an appointment for young people (ages 12+).
- [Family Guide for Return to School](#)
Hear one example of how a school district is preparing its families for a return to the classroom.

Planning for basic needs

Find solutions for providing school meals, water breaks, and movement breaks.

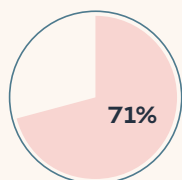
- [DOE: Creating Safe and Healthy Learning Environments](#)
Use this roadmap to meet basic needs safely when schools reopen.

Adapting Instructional Approaches

Overview

Lessons discovered throughout the pandemic about our school system will arguably have a consequential impact for years to come. One truth has already been made clear—*learning doesn't just happen in the classroom*. Although this has always been true, never before have educators been confronted with an opportunity to improve and leverage school/home communication to enhance learning opportunities. Looking to the future, educators have an opportunity to continue to build upon the partnerships that were forged during the pandemic, as teachers and parents worked in greater unity on behalf of their students and children.

In addition to this home-school partnership, educators have a unique opportunity to continue using technologies that gather analytics and provide insight into student learning behaviors. Consider this—your students, whether they were ready or not, have likely become ambassadors of learning. They have had the opportunity to learn and teach themselves effectively on their own schedule, in their own way, at their own pace.



The percentage of educators who say technology has helped empower them in ways that elevate their instruction and capacity as a teacher.

Source: [educationblog.microsoft.com, "Teachers: Thank you for inspiring students in their learning"](https://educationblog.microsoft.com/teachers-thank-you-for-inspiring-students-in-their-learning)

Teachers and students alike have learned new skills that shouldn't be forgotten when everyone is together again. No matter your starting point, you likely experimented with new technologies outside your comfort zone during the pandemic and, in the process, developed new skills that you plan to keep using in the classroom during the next school year and beyond.

Student Feedback

Students were asked what they liked and what could be improved about remote learning.

Students liked

48% — Flexibility around time to get schoolwork done

Ways to improve

41% — More 1:1 time with teachers

Source: [Survey of 1500 K-12 teachers and 1500 K-12 students in the US, the UK and India, conducted by YouGov and Microsoft Education.](#)

New Tools Support Teachers Returning to the Classroom



New Microsoft products and updates to support educators' return to in-person teaching in the Fall.





Is Virtual Learning Here to Stay for K–12?



As students return to classrooms, many are wondering if remote learning will remain an option—and to what extent its impact will be felt.

Insights

- **Digital technologies are transforming learning in the classroom.** Educators experimented with a number of new technology tools and resources as they switched to remote learning, and the tools they found success with will continue to be used. More teachers have embraced learning management systems than ever before, and their use will likely continue. Additionally, teachers surveyed by Microsoft and YouGov believe that resources with a gaming component increase engagement, while 81 percent say that [games with built-in instruction and assessment](#) improve student engagement and learning.
- **Personalized digital learning allows for individual progress.** One of the benefits of the shift to remote learning was the way it allowed educators to personalize learning for the students in their classes. Student data, fueled by technology tools, has helped educators support personalized learning. For example—[Reading Progress](#), a new application from Microsoft, provides data to educators and allows them to distribute reading assignments to individual students for reading fluency. The app also helps educators see exactly where students are struggling when reading.
- **Not all students are ready for a return to pre-pandemic instruction.** A recent [survey of district leaders](#) found that 1 in 5 schools have already adopted or plan to adopt virtual schooling, even after the pandemic. [Tom Ryan](#), chief information and strategy officer for Santa Fe Public Schools, is one district leader who understands the need for continued virtual education—“There were lots of kids who weren’t successful in the face-to-face model, and all of a sudden we figured out how to personalize instruction.”
- **Digital equity remains a concern, even when students return to the classroom.** The pandemic has illuminated [gaps and deficits in accessibility of tools](#) and connectivity for underserved populations of students, leading educators to reevaluate some of the technology tools they use. During the pandemic, technology functioned as a way to receive students’ responses and nurture their creativity. Educators can and should continue to incorporate technology in their pedagogy and lesson plans they already have, but this only works when everyone can access these materials.

Opportunities

Planning for a digital transformation

Hold on to those tools and technologies you used for remote and hybrid learning, and plan for integrating digital learning into your return to the classroom.

- [EdTech: Increasing Tech Accessibility in the K-12 Classroom](#)
Learn how to ensure the continued availability of accessible technologies with a return to in-person learning.
- [EdTech: Virtual Reality Considerations in the Post-Pandemic World](#)
Learn how K-12 schools can get the most out of augmented and virtual reality technology in the classroom.
- [K-12 Blueprint: Digital Transformation Toolkit](#)
Explore resources and planning documents for a digitalization of the classroom learning experience.
- [EdTech Essentials: 3 Language Teachers Share Their Top Tools](#)
Hear from real teachers who share their journey towards digital transformation, and the tools they can't live without.
- [Technology Planning: Creating a Digital K-12 Environment](#)
Explore ways to take a comprehensive approach toward ensuring the right infrastructure, technology, and training components are in place to support enhanced digital learning environments.

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Ensuring digital equity for all students

Find ways to ensure that your classroom is preparing all students with equitable resources and opportunities for digital learning.

- [EdTech: Without Digital Equity, Students Lose the Opportunity to Learn](#)
Dive into digital equity and what it means for students who lack adequate devices or access.
- [EdTech: Working Toward Digital Equity in K-12 Education](#)
Use planning and supporting resources for achieving digital equity in the classroom.

Considering the virtues of virtual learning

Learn how to accommodate students with virtual, personalized instruction aligned with the work you're planning in the classroom.

- [EdTech Magazine: Is Virtual Learning Here to Stay for K-12?](#)
Consider perspectives about students returning to the classroom, and the many who are wondering if remote learning will remain an option.
-

Addressing Schooling Loss

Overview

The term “learning loss” takes up a lot of air space these days, but it is important to think about the term in the context of larger disruptions to the lives of children during the pandemic.

- Learning loss is just one disruption among many other disruptions students are experiencing during the pandemic. It cannot be addressed in isolation.
- Every student has their own unique experience and some have thrived in virtual and remote learning environments.
- Various education stakeholders have different perspectives on the term learning loss. However, everyone agrees that extra care will be needed to help all students recover from the negative impacts of the pandemic.

Many leaders point out that academic learning is not the only thing that has been lost. Students have lost out on time with their classmates and teachers, extracurricular activities, and the whole child support that schools provide.

The term “[schooling loss](#)” shifts the narrative to better reflect these realities than the more widely used term “learning loss.” Schooling loss better suggests a whole-child approach and includes multiple stakeholders, making it less likely that any one person or group will be singled out. Schooling loss includes learning as well as social and emotional support, extracurricular activities, athletics, and nutrition services—all things that many students have lost to some extent in the last year.



“ALL kids learned last year, we just need to know what they learned, meet them where they are at, and differentiate.”

—[Doug Fisher, co-author of Rebound, Grades K-12: A Playbook for Rebuilding Agency, Accelerating Learning Recovery, and Rethinking Schools](#)



Insights

- **Evidence indicates that the pandemic has negatively impacted learning for the majority of students.** A national study of students from [Policy Analysis for California Education](#) found that second graders were 26 percent behind where they would have been, absent the pandemic, in their ability to read aloud accurately and quickly. Third graders were 33 percent behind. Another study by [Curriculum Associates](#) found that there were reductions of up to 16 percent in the number of elementary school students performing at grade level in math, and up to 10 percent in the number of students performing at grade level in reading.
- **Acceleration, not remediation, is a key distinction.** When helping students catch up on lost learning experiences, it's critical for educators to keep them immersed in grade-level content. While it may seem counterintuitive, recent research from the [New Teacher Project](#) suggests that well-intentioned approaches that pull students out of grade-level instruction to "reteach" earlier-grade content can reinforce low expectations and create vicious cycles of underachievement. The better approach is for educators to [provide exposure to grade-level content](#), while scaffolding students with "just-in-time-support" so they can access such content.
- **Disparities continue to grow for students of color.** While there are deficits across all demographic groups, the gaps are larger in schools that serve predominantly Black, Hispanic, or low-income students. A report by McKinsey & Company sounded an early alarm that students from traditionally underserved school communities [were more impacted by schooling loss](#), achieving only 59% of the expected math and 77% of the expected reading gains.
- **Experts warn that a focus on learning loss data in isolation will do more harm than good.** While it's perfectly reasonable to worry about academic setbacks during the pandemic, experts are encouraging a whole-child approach when welcoming students back to the classroom. This includes understanding students' needs not directly related to academics or data from diagnostic exams. It also requires educators to look more closely at what students have *gained* from their experiences with remote learning and build upon those strengths, rather than solely focusing on deficits or losses. When data is used, it should be to [guide an educator's response to individual student needs](#), and create an asset-based culture where everyone belongs.

Opportunities

Accelerating learning opportunities

Address lost instructional time through teaching approaches, tutoring, and expanded learning time.

- [A Systems-Level Approach to Addressing Schooling Loss](#)
Consider a three-part approach to addressing schooling loss in the upcoming year and beyond.
- [DOE Covid-19 Handbook: Addressing Lost Instructional Time](#) (page 21)
Read recommendations for accelerating learning through instructional approaches, tutoring, and expanded instructional time.
- [High-Dosage Tutoring: Can Technology Help Curb Learning Loss?](#)
Review online and in-person high-dosage tutoring, and the results of its effectiveness.
- [Reinvesting and Rebounding: Where the Evidence Points for Accelerating Learning](#)
Explore a comprehensive summary of research about accelerated learning programs.

Supporting equitable access

Understand the real issues facing students from low-income families and students of color, and how these issues are fueling learning loss.

- [COVID-19 and Learning Loss—Disparities Grow and Students Need Help](#)
Learn about inequities related to learning loss, and evidence-based acceleration approaches that can help.
- [McKinsey&Company: Reimagining a More Equitable and Resilient K-12 Education System](#)
Look ahead to what students will need to curb learning loss when they return in the Fall.

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**Using data to inform
instruction**

Leverage data about your students' opportunity to learn to help target resources and support.

- [No Longer a Prediction: What New Data Tell Us About the Effects of 2020 Learning Disruptions](#)
Explore research data and analysis about learning loss, and recommendations for achieving catch-up growth.

**Stepping back and looking
at the bigger picture**

Rethink the way you approach schooling loss in order to meet your students where they are, instill learning confidence, and ensure their well-being.

- [Too Much Focus on 'Learning Loss' Will Be a Historic Mistake](#)
Consider the best way to address learning loss while caring for students' overall health and well-being.
 - [Students Respond to Adults' Fixation on 'Learning Loss'](#)
Read a conversation with educators about the term 'learning loss', and what they think a return to the classroom should look like.
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Reflection and Planning for Educators

What? So What? Now What?

As you prepare for a return to the classroom in the 2021-22 school year, use this set of questions to help guide your reflections, conversations, and planning.

What?

Reflect on what happened the previous year. What unexpected wins did you experience? What moments of insight exist?

So What?

Reflect on what to do differently. How might you incorporate your wins and lessons learned? What challenges were faced that could have been prevented?

Now What?

Reflect on what is needed to get there. How can you leverage opportunities that exist for change? What are the “what ifs” you want to tackle? What support do you need, and where can you go to find it?



Questions to Ask

Use these questions to help you with planning for a return to the classroom.

Supporting Student Mental Health and Well-Being

How could you build social emotional learning into the daily classroom routines, like morning attendance?

Where in your daily schedule could you build in bits of time for direct social emotional education?

Where could you build in time for mindfulness and relaxation?

Do you have a physical space in your classroom that could be designated for mindfulness or self-calming?

What opportunities have you planned for students to get to know one another and bond?

How will students know they are safe in your classroom?

How will students know they can go to you if they're having a hard time?

Have you reviewed the potential signs of anxiety and depression in students returning to the classroom after remote learning?

Who in your building could be a go-to resource for any questions you have about supporting mental health in your classroom?

Adapting Instructional Approaches

Which digital tools used during remote learning have increased student engagement?

Which tools have demonstrated positive learning gains?

Which digital tools allowed for more personalized learning?

How could you incorporate these digital tools into your existing curriculum when you return to the classroom?

Do all students have the devices, connectivity, and access required to engage in digital learning? If not, how could you ensure a more equitable learning environment?

How is your school prepared to accommodate students who wish to remain in a remote learning environment?

Addressing Schooling Loss

What data are available to you, and how do you plan to use them to shape or inform your instructional practices when you return to the classroom?

What opportunities currently exist in your school for intervention and accelerated learning?

How will you identify at-risk students who could benefit from additional tutoring programs?

How will you communicate with families and gain their input regarding intervention supports?

How will you respond to equity disparities and seek to level the playing field when it comes to schooling loss? What are your students' individual needs?

How could you address a whole-person approach to schooling loss, rather than focusing primarily on academics and test scores?

Implementing Health and Safety Protocols

Are you familiar with your district's back to school health and safety protocols and restrictions?

How will you adjust your classroom setup for social distancing and safety guidelines?

What procedures will you follow to limit the number of people in the classroom?

How could you use outdoor spaces to reduce the risk of exposure?

How will you adjust your daily classroom routine to abide by safety protocols and procedures?

How do you plan to communicate with families about safety protocols and back to school information?

Do you understand the school's contingency plan if a student tests positive for COVID?

Do you understand your rights as an educator if you feel unsafe?

Appendices

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B. The K-12 Blueprint Website

K-12 BLUEPRINT

The K-12 Blueprint provides teachers, administrators and education decision-makers with the latest tools, research data, device information, best practices, and success stories. Whether it's launching a large-scale technology program, transforming the classroom with digital resources, or revamping curriculum to improve STEM learning, the K-12 Blueprint supports education leaders with the information and strategies needed to bring 21st century learning practices to today's classrooms.

The K-12 Blueprint includes robust toolkits with resources, tools, and other materials on topics including:

- [Learning Analytics](#)
- [Digital Equity](#)
- [Security](#)
- [CTE and Innovation Spaces](#)
- [Computational Thinking](#)
- And many more!

C. Acknowledgements

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D. About the Authors

Tavia Clark

Tavia has nearly two decades of invaluable experience in coaching, leading, creating and developing learning experiences using innovative pedagogical methods, and in fostering powerful face-to-face and online learning opportunities. Tavia comes to Clarity from Evergreen Public Schools in Vancouver, Washington where she served as an Edtech TOSA (Teacher On Special Assignment): helping educators across the district intentionally integrate technology into pedagogically sound learning experiences. Before that, she worked at The Friday Institute for Educational Innovation, where she created innovative professional learning experiences and coaching for K-12 educators. Previously, Tavia served as a school librarian and a high school English teacher. Though she has worn many hats during her career, the constant that links all of her work is an unwavering commitment to giving educators the tools they need to engage students in both local and global communities.

Lisa Fisher

With a background in early childhood education and instructional technology, Lisa brings a diverse wealth of knowledge to her position as an instructional designer. In her 10 years of experience as a classroom teacher, Lisa knows first-hand how technology can be used to develop early literacy, math, and science skills. She was a leader in her district for educational technology, writing grants and piloting technology programs in her school. Lisa often invited other educators to observe and participate in her lessons, inspiring a school-wide technology integration plan that included mobile carts and interactive whiteboard technologies. Her classroom was featured on the district's website as a model for best practices in technology integration.

Dale Basye

Dale is an award-winning writer, author, and content developer with twenty years of professional experience in journalism, advertising, marketing, publishing, technology and education. He's gifted at providing creative, authoritative content and strategy that spans a diverse range of needs, circumstances, formats and audiences. He's excellent at synthesizing complex information into actionable, easy-to-understand content and enjoys employing his extensive skills to create powerful experiences that engage, inspire and exceed expectations.

Tod Johnston

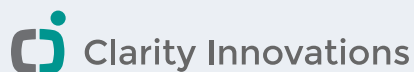
Tod's decade of classroom teaching gives him vital, in-the-trenches education expertise. In his most recent teaching assignment, he piloted a 1:1 classroom and saw first-hand the true potential of technology in the hands of students. Now, Tod draws on his teaching experience to create content that helps schools and educators effectively use technology to enhance learning. Tod uses his strengths as a writer to author instructional materials: including both online and face-to-face professional learning courses for educators and student-facing curriculum.

Jake Green

Jake views the creative challenges facing Clarity clients as exciting opportunities to employ his formidable visual communication and problem-solving skills. He treats the design process as a deeply collaborative blend of unique consideration and careful planning, so that his graphic design solutions are always the perfect match for a client's objectives.

Steve Burt

Steve has worked for Clarity Innovations since 2002 and is currently the Director of Strategy. He oversees the development of new solutions for Clarity's clients. This process typically involves blending research-based practices with emerging technologies. He's paying a lot of attention right now to the education potential of emerging ecosystems as well as how changes in digital publishing are affecting teaching and learning. Having worked with educators and students for over two decades, Steve is skilled in understanding a wide variety of technologies and their application.



Clarity Innovations is a professional services firm based in Portland, Oregon with a staff of nearly 30 education-technology professionals. Our goal is to help our clients match promising technologies with the needs of education. Learn more at www.clarity-innovations.com.