K-12 BLUEPRINT

Teaching in the Age of BYOD

Every year, new tools provide educators with dynamic ways of engaging students in the classroom. These tools are poised to further teacher professional development, BYOD integration, and blended learning

· Thanks to social media tools like Twitter, professional development for teachers is booming. Ed-Chats are attracting teachers due to the relevance of the conversations. EdCamps—in-person opportunities for teachers get together and propose topics to discuss in breakout rooms—are also increasingly popular. Topics with the most votes get covered: empowering teachers to steer the professional development narrative.

· While BYOD is not without its challenges, schools and districts understand the benefits compared to adopting just one device, especially as cloud-based apps become more robust as learning tools. BYOD schools allow teachers to use formative assessment tools more often: giving them a record of what students understand, so they can adjust instruction accordingly. Students, meanwhile, receive real-time feedback about their level of understanding.

Google Apps Scripts—programs that automate spreadsheets after information is collected from a Google Forms—are helping to automate school processes. Autocrat Script, for example, sends email notifications to counselors and teachers after a student fills out Google Forms when signing in for detention while FormEmailer can quickly create a mail merge when information needs to be sent to parents.

· The use of videos in instruction has become an essential part of a teacher's blended learning curriculum. Modern tools allow teachers to tweak existing videos to better meet the needs of their classes. Some of these video editing tools—such as EDpuzzle—can incorporate formative assessment, helping teachers to better check

for understanding. Apps such as Kodable are becoming more popular due to the rise of the "need to code" and MakerSpace movements.

· Google Apps for Education and Chromebooks are easy to scale, and easy to customize. Students have a customized learning environment no matter what device they log into, which makes an especially big difference for students who aren't in a 1:1 environment. Google Apps also focus on how students are thinking and learning, rather than teaching them to use a specific device or system. Google deployments also tend to be relatively simple for educators and administrator alike, with free, comprehensive professional development available online.

· While technology has caught up with the changing face of special education, it could do better—and is uniquely positioned—in meeting the needs of special education students. Many special education apps are geared toward students that are 1-2 grade levels below their peers. Some are for students with decoding issues that need a reader, some help with learning phonics sounds while others are for students that need a visual representation of Biology concepts, for example. Most of these apps and programs are, more often than not, aimed at elementary students. Common Core has spawned new educational technology, but the language that is used in these tools may be too complicated for some special education students. There is a need for apps written at a lower elementary level with content that high school students need to know.

· BYOD, with its combination of platforms and systems, is well suited in equipping students with the diverse technology skills they'll need to succeed in the future. With BYOD, the issue is equity, and making sure schools have the devices necessary for meeting the learning needs of

children. Every child is different, and schools need to ensure that all students can utilize the same level of accessibility features.

A broad shift in overall attitudes towards technology, driven by a renewed emphasis on providing teachers proper training and preparation, has put BYOD at the front of the class. And as younger teachers enter the workforce, it will only become more popular.