

# DA

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October 2023

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the school year

5 edtech trends  
that will modernize  
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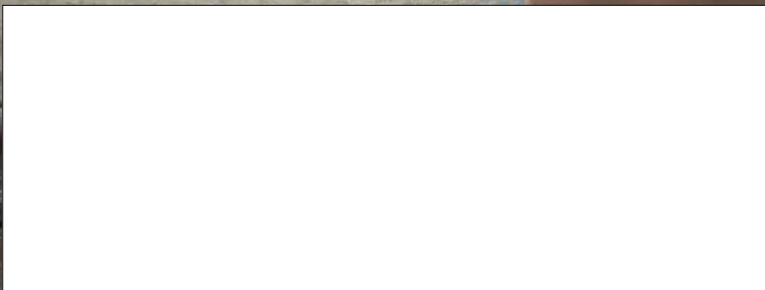
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#### DR. JACQUELYN MARTIN

Superintendent, Keystone Central School District

Source: [www.lockhaven.com/news/local-news/2023/05/kc-takes-safety-steps/](http://www.lockhaven.com/news/local-news/2023/05/kc-takes-safety-steps/)

"It has been a deterrent to possession and use in the school and it's given a sense of comfort to other kids that don't want to be involved or around it. **Students have told me they finally feel comfortable using the school bathroom again.** That's really our heart and goal in the issue, is to prevent vaping, not to try and catch more kids making poor choices."

#### JASON FERGUSON

School Resource Officer, Eaton Rapids High School, Eaton Rapids, Michigan

Source: [www.wilx.com/2023/03/14/vape-detectors-installed-eaton-rapids-school-bathrooms-address-problem/](http://www.wilx.com/2023/03/14/vape-detectors-installed-eaton-rapids-school-bathrooms-address-problem/)





**Publisher** Tim Hart

**EDITORIAL**

**Executive Editor** Lori Capullo

**Senior Writer** Matt Zalaznick

**Education Staff Writers**

Alicino Donadel, Micah Ward

**ART**

**Art Direction** Xavier Marañón

**Graphic Designers**

Brendan Lawn

Matthew Ali

**ADVERTISING, EVENTS AND CUSTOM MEDIA**

**Vice President, Event and Media Sales, Education Group**

Jim Callan, james.callan@etcnetwork.com (404) 353-5276

**Sales Manager (East), Rachel Davis**

rachel.davis@etcnetwork.com (678) 521-7584

**Sales Manager (West), Paul Milnamow**

paul.milnamow@etcnetwork.com (847) 648-0416

**Content Marketing Editor**

Kurt Eisele-Dyrli

**CIRCULATION AND OPERATIONS**

**Vice President,**

**Marketing/Audience Development**

Rennette Fortune

**REPRINTS/PERMISSIONS**

For more information, [districtadministration.com/contact-us](http://districtadministration.com/contact-us)

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Send email address changes to: Rennette Fortune [rennette.fortune@etcnetwork.com](mailto:rennette.fortune@etcnetwork.com)

**HOW TO REACH US**

222 Lakeview Avenue, Suite 800  
West Palm Beach, FL 33410  
Website: [DistrictAdministration.com](http://DistrictAdministration.com)

## Looking ahead

Amidst the insanity swirling around K12—political interference, a COVID resurgence, issues around the protection of LGBTQ students—there are many exciting things happening this year. *District Administration* exists for several reasons: first and foremost, to address, inform and identify solutions to the problems the illustrious education leaders across the country are facing every single day (and that means weekends, too). But as education becomes more complicated, from the methods of learning to incorporating new technology (hello, AI) and the outside pressures of what to teach (and what is allowed to be taught), our mission evolves as well, to ensure we're delivering what you want to receive.

In that vein, we will be sending a survey via email (look for the link in our DA Daily newsletters as well) with the objective of discovering what it is that would interest you most right now, as we delve into the 2023-24 school year and going forward into the next calendar year. Please keep an eye out for it and take a moment to fill it out and help us tailor our content for you.

In addition, we have brought back our *District Administration* National Awards Program—which we are extremely excited about—recognizing outstanding K12 districts and visionary leaders across the country who have demonstrated exceptional leadership skills in the education field, from inspiring others to spearheading transformative initiatives that lead to improved student outcomes and increased graduation rates. Winners will be recognized at the DA Leadership Superintendents Summit at the Naples Grande Beach Resort this December and at ETC's Future of Education Technology Conference (FETC) 2024 January 23-26, 2024, in Orlando. We hope you'll come celebrate with us and your colleagues and enjoy what is also a wonderful opportunity to mingle with your cohorts, share experiences and celebrate all that is good and positive about education right now.

Lori Capullo, Executive Editor

**“It’s not just having the options at graduation time, but it’s also the options later on in the career that allow for students to go back to school, because they have all the prerequisites and information they need.”**

-Dr. Melvin J. Brown  
Montgomery Alabama  
Public Schools

**“I accept every challenge in public education as an opportunity. I’ve gained a newfound appreciation for the term ‘calling in’ as opposed to calling people ‘out.’”**

-Dr. Calvin Watts, Superintendent,  
Gwinnett County  
Public Schools



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# BEYOND the news

## ChatGPT costs \$700,000 daily to maintain. Is it sustainable?

*Citing a significant drop in users in July, OpenAI, the maker of ChatGPT, is likely to go bankrupt by 2024 if something doesn't change, according to a new report.*

ChatGPT, the artificially intelligent chatbot that forever shook the world of K12 education when it launched in November of last year, costs roughly \$700,000 a day to operate, according to a recent report published in *Analytics India Magazine*. Its maker, OpenAI, could face a world of trouble if it doesn't turn a profit soon.

The company could face bankruptcy by 2024, the analysis suggests. For now, it's able to sustain itself with the help of investors like Microsoft.

"Microsoft's \$10 billion investment in OpenAI is possibly keeping the company afloat at the moment," the report reads. "But on the other hand, OpenAI projected an annual revenue of \$200 million in 2023 and expects to reach \$1 billion in 2024, which seems to be a long shot since the losses are only mounting."

The report also notes that as of May, OpenAI's losses reached \$540 million ever since its development of ChatGPT.

One of the more dominant red flags uncovered in the analysis points to ChatGPT's steady decline in user visits to the website. Data collected by SimilarWeb indicates



that the site reached a record-high number of visits in May this year at 1.9 billion. In July, the website only attracted 1.5 billion. However, this could be due to the fact that many organizations, including higher ed institutions and K12 school districts, are banning the chatbot's use in the workplace.

The research also cites an ongoing GPU (gross processing unit) shortage, which is necessary for the company to train further language models and improve them. As a result, ChatGPT's output quality is declining.

"So, if OpenAI does not get more funding soon, the company might have to file by the end of 2024 to acquire more NVIDIA GPUs that are coming in the second quarter of the year, and start training their models," the report reads. "Till then, competitions are coming up, losses are increasing, users are declining, lawsuits are piling up, and the quality is going down as well. Good luck, there!"

Most people, including the researchers, would assume that this drop in users can be attributed to the fact that a large number of the userbase are probably students, who wouldn't need to leverage the technology during summer break. However, they address the fact that a number of companies are starting to develop their own generative chatbots and steering away from ChatGPT.

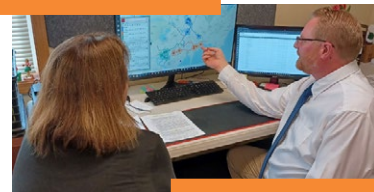
Several leading edtech companies and education providers, including Khan Academy, are leveraging ChatGPT specifically to enhance student learning. For instance, the company announced in March its pilot for Khanmigo, a tutoring aide powered by GPT-4.

Chegg, an education support service provider, announced its version of a tutoring aide called CheggMate, also powered by GPT-4.

The next question is, how will OpenAI's financial troubles impact the world of edtech moving forward?

*By Micah Ward*

# The secret to finding and eliminating hidden costs in school transportation



## Learn ways to maximize efficiency while increasing safety

When it comes to school transportation and bus routing, failure to understand and maximize resources is leading to significant hidden costs for many schools and an increased strain on operations, says an experienced transportation professional.

“Many schools and districts essentially still use pen and paper or office productivity software for bus routing and logistics because that’s what they know and how they’ve always done it,” says Michael Howes, a data management specialist for Healey Bus in Lynn, Massachusetts. “They don’t realize the potential to streamline, automate and dramatically improve efficiency by using web-based applications designed specifically for school transportation.”

Imagine tools that reduce thousands of miles traveled a year or that free up thousands of staff hours so they can focus on more critical tasks.

Enter: Transfinder technology and hardware.

### The right tools make the difference

Howes has 12-plus years’ experience in school transportation, as a bus driver and a transportation director and manager for multiple school districts before joining Healey Bus, a contractor that services many area districts.

In his work with so many school systems, Howes says the use of Transfinder’s transportation applications is critical to success. Transfinder provides intelligent routing, scheduling and fleet maintenance solutions that optimize school transportation logistics.

**“Many district leaders don’t realize what their transportation is costing them, and how much time and money could be saved.”**

“We use Transfinder for everything from reporting to forms, building bus routes and much more,” Howes says. “The Routefinder PLUS solution is particularly useful for reducing hidden costs by building more efficient bus routes. For example, for one of our client school districts, I used Routefinder PLUS to reduce their bus routes by about 20 miles per day. That added up to thousands of miles annually, saving the district thousands of dollars in annual fuel costs.

To do that without the software would be next to impossible.”

The industry has noticed. Transfinder’s solutions, including Routefinder PLUS, driver app Wayfinder, parent app Stopfinder and fleet and asset management tool Servicefinder and its tablets and card readers just won the 2023 STN Innovation Choice Awards for both Best Software and Hardware.

### Automating administrative tasks

The automation of administrative tasks makes a significant difference. “Routefinder PLUS includes a powerful reporting tool and database, which we use to automate the bus driver’s license renewal process. It automatically alerts us when any driver documentation will be expiring within the next 30 days, which is very important for compliance. Any regular task that you can automate can potentially save thousands of hours of work in a school year.”

Howes believes using the Transfinder technology platform is becoming more important. “Many transportation costs continue to increase exponentially, driver shortages are becoming more of a problem, and the regulatory environment is becoming more complex,” he says. “After working with many different school systems, it’s clear that many district leaders don’t realize what their transportation is costing them, and how much time and money could be saved. You can offset the costs of investing in the software by improving efficiency.”

### Ensuring student safety

But it’s about more than efficiency and savings. Howes highlights safety and how using tools like Routefinder PLUS ensures bus routes are as safe as possible.

“The safety of students is of paramount importance to everyone,” he says. “What many district leaders may not realize is that by improving the efficiency of bus routes with the platform, you can also improve safety by reducing ride times for students, getting them to school and home more quickly, and ensuring bus stops are always made on the safe side of the road.”

transfinder



## How an Iowa district used AI to ban 19 books from its libraries

*Mason City schools has so far banned 19 books from its grade 7-12 libraries, with an administrator saying that the size of its collection was too large for staff to read every title.*

As educators experiment and innovate with AI across K12, Mason City Community Schools in Iowa has deployed the technology to reduce the number of books in its libraries. The small district this summer completed a review of its collections in which AI was used to scan for books that violate a new state law that restricts sexual content in K12.

So far, Mason City schools has banned 19 books from its grade 7-12 libraries, with an administrator saying that the size of its collection was too large for staff to read every title that has been “purchased, donated and found.”

“We are using what we believe is a defensible process to identify books that should be removed from collections at the start of the ’23-24 school year,” Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction Bridgette Exman said in a statement to the *Gazette*. “After this, we will continue to rely on our long-established process that allows parents to have books reconsidered. Parents will always have a voice in their students’ education.”

Under the new law, Iowa’s school libraries can stock only “age-appropriate materials,” which means books and other materials cannot contain “descriptions or visual depictions of a sex act.” Districts



must also list on their websites every book available to students in their libraries.

Exman also told the *Gazette* that many teachers feel uncertain and nervous because the state has not provided clear guidance on which books should be restricted and why. She also noted that no parent had challenged a book in the district in at least the last 20 years.

In an even more frank response, Exman told a website called PopSci that Mason City educators “have more important things to do than spend a lot of time trying to figure out how to protect kids from books.”

These are the books removed by Mason City schools so far (as listed by the *Mason City Globe Gazette*):

School libraries can stock only “age-appropriate materials,” which means books and other materials cannot contain “descriptions or visual depictions of a sex act.”

- **Killing Mr. Griffin** by Lois Duncan
- **Sold** by Patricia McCormick
- **A Court of Mist and Fury (series)** by Sarah J. Maas
- **Monday’s Not Coming** by Tiffany D. Jackson
- **Tricks** by Ellen Hopkins
- **Nineteen Minutes** by Jodi Picoult
- **The Handmaid’s Tale** by Margaret Atwood
- **Beloved** by Toni Morrison
- **Looking for Alaska** by John Green
- **The Kite Runner** by Khaled Hosseini
- **Crank** by Ellen Hopkins
- **Thirteen Reasons Why** by Jay Asher
- **The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian** by Sherman Alexie
- **An American Tragedy** by Theodore Dreiser
- **The Color Purple** by Alice Walker
- **Feed** by M.T. Anderson
- **Friday Night Lights** by Buzz Bissinger
- **Gossip Girl** by Cecily von Ziegesar
- **I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings** by Maya Angelou

The new law, signed by Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds in March, also prohibits instruction related to gender identity and sexual orientation.

*By Matt Zalaznick*

## What does the Saturn app do and why are schools warning against it?

*“There are many features on this app that have the potential to expose children to unsafe situations online,” Florida district leaders warn.*

An increasingly popular shared calendar app called Saturn purports to help high school students organize their busy academic, extracurricular and social lives. But a growing chorus of school districts is now urgently

warning parents that the app may put personal information at risk.

On Apple’s App Store, Saturn Technologies tells users that its free product—which supports only 9th-12th-grade students—is “the first calendar built around your classes, clubs, teams and friends’ schedules.”

“Saturn helps you manage your time so you can spend it doing things you love with the people who matter most,” Saturn Technologies Inc., declares on the App Store. “See what friends are doing in real time, chat with them, organize events, and share schedules all in one place.”

But a wave of school districts has issued warnings recently, telling parents that anyone else who uses the app can see the photos of class schedules that students upload. Those photos can expose students’ names and grade levels to the public.

“This app is VERY concerning, as

it is a scheduling app that allows a student to upload their class schedule, and it tells other users who is in the student’s class,” Santa Rosa County District Schools in Florida posted on its Facebook page.

Students log in using cell phone numbers, Snapchat accounts or student email addresses and can join any school on the network, the district says. “Kids can then friend each other, but there is no guarantee that the student sending the friend request is actually a student,” Santa Rosa County says. “There are many, many other features on this app that have the potential to expose children to unsafe situations while online.”

West Baton Rouge Schools in Louisiana warned the Saturn app lacks security features that would protect high school students from predators, cyberbullying and inappropriate content. “If your child



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installed the Saturn App on their iPhone, you may want to delete it," the district advises on Facebook.


Administrators in Bay District Schools, also in Florida, simply called Saturn "dangerous" and sent out mass calls, emails and texts alerting parents to talk to their children about uploading personal information to the app. "This setup is ripe for misuse by those with bad intentions," Bay District Schools posted on Facebook. "We plan to do a deep dive into this app ASAP but wanted you to know today that it's out there and is dangerous. We are taking all of the steps necessary to ensure this app is blocked on our network and devices but need all parents/guardians to do the same as soon as possible."

Mobile County Public Schools in Alabama suggested parents learn more about the app's vulnerabilities.


*By Matt Zalaznick*



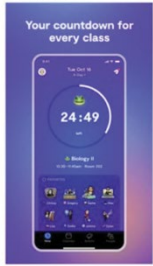
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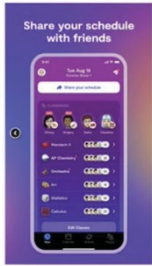
ATTENTION PARENTS: We have become aware of an app that students are using that parents may want to be aware of. The Saturn app uses students' phone numbers, Snapchat accounts or school emails to create accounts. Once they have an account, they can upload their class schedules and connect with other students in the school. Anyone who signs up for an account can see all the information for everyone else in that school. Please talk to your students about the importance of keeping personal information private.



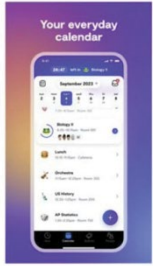
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# OKLAHOMA DISTRICT'S RIGOROUS BLENDED LEARNING PROGRAM GROWS EXPONENTIALLY

## Union Virtual Learning Academy has been successfully meeting student needs for over 10 years, through its partnership with FlexPoint

For more than 10 years, Oklahoma's Union Public Schools District has relied on FlexPoint to provide the right mix of online and face-to-face instruction for Union Virtual Learning Academy (UVLA), the district's blended learning option for over 800 students in grades 10-12.

### Engaging with students

It all started in 2012 when Union Public Schools district leaders were looking for an innovative way to engage students and meet them where they were. At the time, students were starting to take advantage of online resources to search for information, entertainment, and to socialize with friends. With all of that in mind, district leaders knew they wanted to have virtual components to evolve with the way their students were experiencing the world. Before deciding which learning model worked best for their students, district leadership attended an online learning leadership event hosted by FlexPoint. At the event, they heard from other school and district leaders from across the nation about the successes and challenges they experienced with their online, blended, or hybrid programs.

### Complementary learning model

After discussing best practices with other online learning leaders, UVLA decided the best learning model for their students was blended learning because it combined the best of both worlds—comprehensive digital courses and face-to-face instruction. That way, students supplemented what they were doing in the classroom with online courses, while teachers continued to do what they do best: help their students achieve success.

Once UVLA decided on a blended learning program, their next step was deciding which curriculum provider

would be the best fit for their school. After doing research on different providers, FlexPoint really stood out to them.

### Rigorous, standards-aligned curriculum

"Not only was FlexPoint's curriculum aligned to our state standards, but it was also the most engaging and interactive, while still being rigorous and preparing students for college and beyond," said Gart Morris, Executive Director of Instructional Technology with Union Public Schools. "My three children all took online classes in their junior and senior years of high school, and when they went to college, they received A's because of the level of rigor they experienced with the FlexPoint courses."

UVLA also found that the support they received from the FlexPoint team was what they needed to achieve success. "Launching a new program can be a little nerve racking," said Todd Borland, Executive Director of Information Technology at Union Public Schools. "But, with FlexPoint, we've always been able to call or email someone with questions about issues we're experiencing, and we hear back quickly. They also consistently email us about course updates and new features, so that we can continue to innovate for our students."

### Success and significant growth

After 10 years of successfully teaching students in a blended learning environment, the leadership of UVLA



is most proud of the longevity of the program and how it has grown over the years, as well as how all the teachers, staff, and students wholeheartedly embraced this new learning opportunity.

On average, UVLA receives 1,100 full-year course enrollments per year, and since launching, has averaged 800 students each year. To highlight how much the program has grown, they started with close to 75 students enrolled the year the program launched.

Additionally, in the 2021-22 school year, 50% of all seniors in the district took at least one blended course, with the passing rate for all blended learning courses never falling below 93%. "My mantra has always been to help teachers and students be more efficient," said Morris. "By partnering with FlexPoint, we've been able to do just that due to the team's support and high-quality curriculum."

To learn more, go to [FlexPointEducation.com](https://www.flexpointeducation.com)

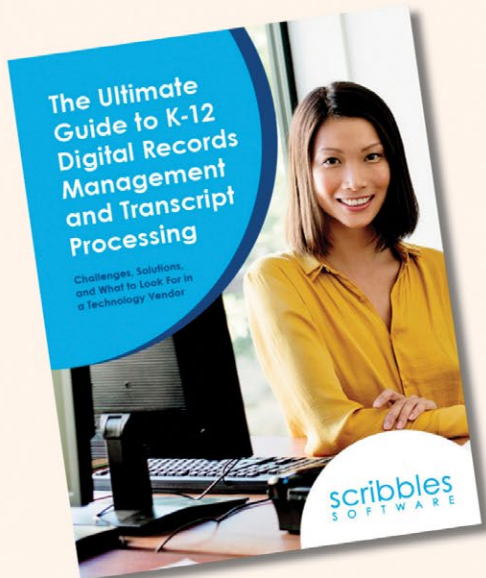


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## Looking for a ride to school

*In some districts, the bus driver shortage is “worse than ever,” but why? From retirements to a lack of funding, administrators are in over their heads looking for a solution to the crisis.*

Every school district experienced its own share of challenges during the pandemic. Some fared worse than others, but to say that every district is still experiencing some sort of pandemic-related impact would be an understatement. For many administrators, one key area essential to the daily operations of a school district continues to top their list of challenges: finding and maintaining a full school bus fleet.

### **Chatham County School District, GA**

As of July 12, the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System had only 154 official bus drivers, compared to last year’s tally of 222. Even worse, in 2019, the district had 328 drivers, Georgia Public Broadcasting reports. Unfortunately, leaders don’t see an easy fix to the issue.

“We want to acknowledge that we know we have some challenges,” said newly hired SCCPSS Superintendent Denise Watts. “I have not been here long enough to truly unpack that... I’m not prepared to speak today to what those challenges or impacts are.”

Education Director at the Georgia Budget and Policy Institute Stephen Owens told GPB that the issue stems from the state’s outdated budget policies. Schools rely on supplemental help to operate transportation budgets, but the system was set in 2000. Without proper adjustments to funding to



meet current transportation costs, schools in the district inevitably run into problems.

### **Ector County ISD, TX**

Administrators across Ector County ISD are working on finding new and innovative ways to incentivize drivers to join their fleets. Like school districts across the country, Ector County is also experiencing its share of shortages. As a result, it’s promising drivers a competitive salary, benefits and other appreciative efforts, CBS 7 reports.

“We are very proud that we implemented a pay increase for all of our employees across the board,” Associate Superintendent Anthony J. Sorola said. “A 3% raise classification.”

“Our starting salary is very competitive,” he added. “We also have flexible scheduling for our bus drivers. A lot of times they choose to work part-time as a bus driver because they require that. We offer that benefit, as well as medical benefits.”

### **Shenendehowa Central School District, NY**

“We take that time to kind of take a breath and start to prepare for fall,” Assistant Director of Transporta-

tion Belinda Govich told News10 regarding the district’s plans this past summer. “Unfortunately, because we are short drivers, we have not had that breath.”

Many of the district’s former bus drivers reached retirement age since the pandemic, and now there aren’t enough applicants to fill in the gaps.

“We lost about 19 drivers this year, and we only have about 10 in training so far, so we are already going into the fall short again,” said Govich in July.

They’ve also been unable to provide students with transportation to various summer camps and field trips as they could in the past because summer school alone is occupying all their drivers.

“A lot of my colleagues who are directors and transportation supervisors are out on the road driving every day,” Govich explained. “Basically, anyone with a CDL is out on the roads.”

Govich’s message to parents this year, according to News10, is “Be patient. We most likely will be facing some delays as we did last year, as we have very similar challenges to those we did last year.”

*By Micah Ward*

# Blending K12

# + Higher ed

Building student pipelines between K12 and higher education is easier said than done, but worth the effort to create diverse student bodies.

BY ALCINO DONADEL

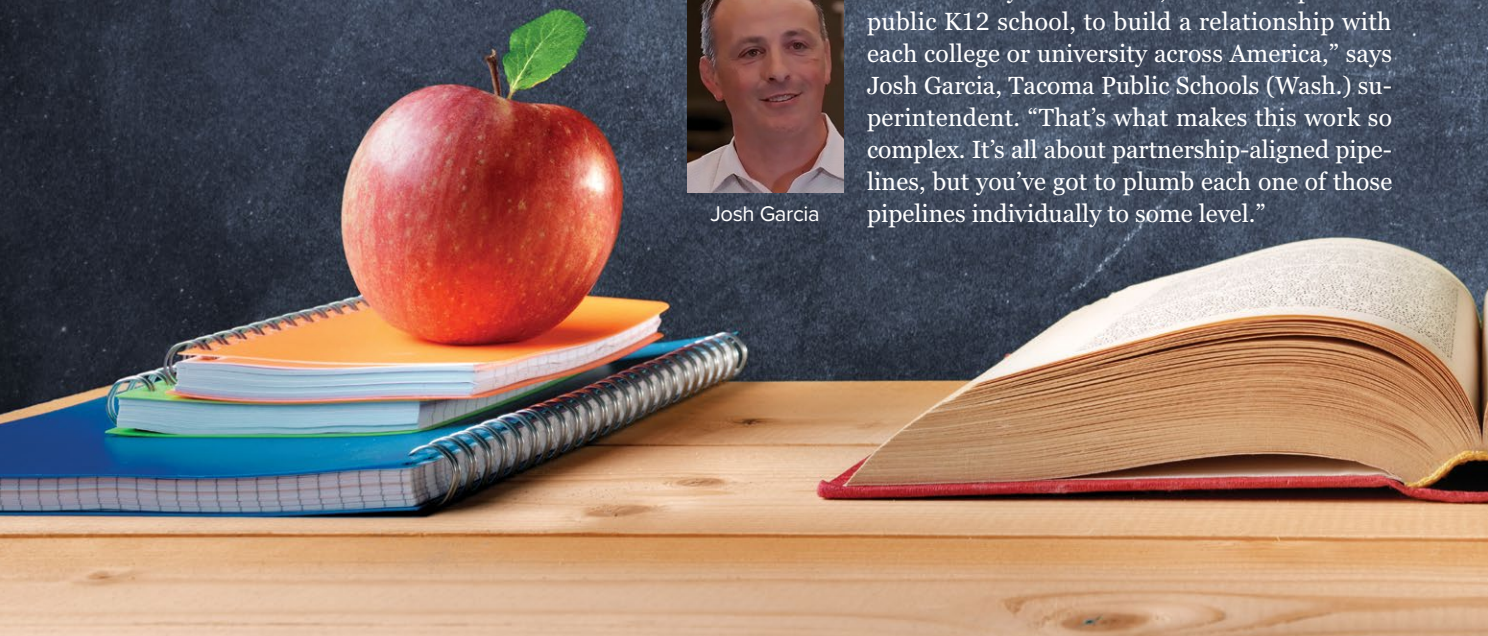
K12 and higher education have long attempted to forge partnerships to make higher education attainable for more students, especially those from under-resourced backgrounds. With the Supreme Court striking down affirmative action this past summer, blurring the line between both entities seems more critical than ever; colleges and universities need assurance the student bodies they are receiving are as diverse as they are prepared.

But building student pipelines between K12 and colleges is easier said than done. For one, creating partnerships can be extremely overwhelming: Consider the thousands of colleges and universities and the tens of thousands of K12 schools nationwide.



Josh Garcia

“It’s really hard for us, as an independent public K12 school, to build a relationship with each college or university across America,” says Josh Garcia, Tacoma Public Schools (Wash.) superintendent. “That’s what makes this work so complex. It’s all about partnership-aligned pipelines, but you’ve got to plumb each one of those pipelines individually to some level.”





= improved  
student  
equity





## Taking a holistic approach to professional development creates a culture of excellence

### Northern Los Angeles County school district seeing benefits from long-term partnership with Catapult Learning

The school district, located in northern Los Angeles County, California, enrolls about 23,000 students from the cities of Palmdale, Lancaster, and the surrounding area, and includes eight traditional and three alternative high schools, an early college high school, a charter junior high academy, and an online education program, and offers a diversity of programs to prepare students for college and careers.

#### A holistic approach to PD

Seeking to mitigate high teacher turnover and establish a culture of leadership through high-quality professional development and coaching, in 2013, the district selected Catapult Learning to administer Core Instructional Model training followed by coaching for teachers and school-level coaches/instructional partners in seven schools.

Catapult Learning takes a holistic approach to PD, offering a variety of resources to train educators in areas such as instructional excellence, classroom management, and positive leadership.

Jessica Petersen is a former educator and the General Manager of Professional Development Services at Catapult Learning. "We provide our partner districts with PD across three modalities; in-person workshops, job-embedded coaching, and PDNow, our new asynchronous training platform, which provides just-in-time support."

#### Creating a culture of excellence

"The leadership had a vision to bring consistency to teaching across the district, and to get everyone excited about adopting a teaching framework that would create optimal learning environments that drive academic achievement," Petersen continues.

Over the next 10 years, nearly 900 of the district's teachers participated in this training. In 2023, the superintendent mandated that Catapult Learning's Core Instructional Model serve as the district's instructional framework. By the start of the 2023-24 school year, 12 out of the district's 13 schools will have completed this training, creating a district-wide culture of instructional excellence

#### Taking steps to improve equity

The district's leadership also requested help from Catapult with instilling a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion. During the 2022-23 school year, it partnered with Catapult to expand the scope and implementation of the district's equity efforts with its newly created position of Director of Equity.

"While the partnership started with the core instructional framework, our collaborative work with the district has also expanded into other key areas that are vital to the district's success, including equitable practices," Petersen says.

Catapult delivered ongoing support, coaching, and assistance as the new Director of Equity developed a district-wide equity initiative. Catapult's experts in equity and inclusion emboldened and encouraged district leadership as well as "Equity Champions" who were placed strategically throughout the district.

According to a district representative, Catapult's PD specialist "embodied and modeled the district's mission to provide an equitable environment for every student, parent, staff, and community member." Catapult's support of the district's equity efforts will continue over the next two school years.

#### One of the keys to success

"Schools and districts around the country are grappling with finding ways to meet the unique needs of teachers and students simultaneously, both academically and with their overall wellbeing," Petersen says. "Many teachers are being asked to do more today, and often with less training and support."

"PD has a significant impact on teacher retention," she continues. "As a result, district leaders and administrators are being more intentional and thoughtful about the way they approach PD and coaching partnerships, because they understand that the right partnerships will empower their teachers to be successful."

To learn more, go to [catapultlearning.com/pd](https://catapultlearning.com/pd)

# Blending K12 + higher ed = improved student equity



And pipelines are only as good as the effort that goes into them. If there is no active intention behind them, they are destined to wilt.

“In some of my research, I’ll sometimes talk to leaders in other districts outside of Maryland who will say, ‘Well, we had a university partnership, but it just sort of fizzled out because we just didn’t feel like the university was preparing our students for what we need,’” says Christine Neumerski, faculty specialist at the University of Maryland (UMD) and associate director for its doctoral program in school system leadership.

However, educators in Maryland, California and Washington are leveraging several strategies to close the delta between K12 and higher education as the need for equitable student outcomes reaches its crescendo.

## Formalized agreements create stronger K12 partnerships

The key to creating a diverse array of K12-higher education pipelines is a solid legal framework, says Garcia, who has been Tacoma’s superintendent since 2021. “That formalized agreement is really important to build trust and credibility with the students we’re trying to serve,” he says. “This is not just a ‘wink, wink.’ This is an actual, legitimized partnership.”

Tacoma shares a guaranteed admissions program with the University of Washington, Tacoma, which partners with its guidance counselors to clarify admissions requirements and provides community resources that students



Christine Neumerski

can use to ensure their success. Additionally, the University of Puget Sound has committed to grant 30 Tacoma district students a financial aid package that meets their total demonstrated financial need.

“If you’re going to create generational impact, it’s going to take 10 to 12 years,” Garcia says. “That can’t be dependent on a new leader’s vision; rather, it takes a sustained community vision. That’s why those formalized partnerships are so critical. It’s not just higher ed or K12 or leadership changes, but the promise has to sustain itself despite leadership changes.”

Outside of ensuring the success of Tacoma students, Garcia recognizes that binding legal frameworks must be broad enough to be replicated. This way, higher education institutions can easily partner with more districts. For example, the University of Washington, Tacoma’s guaranteed admissions program extends to 10 other districts.

Garcia’s focus on formalized agreements that are replicable and grounded in long-term change seems to be working. In the 2021-22 academic year, nine out of 10 of Tacoma’s high school students graduated in four years, which is 8% higher than the Washington state average, according to data from the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. And in the past nine years, its graduation rate increased by 23% for Black students, 33% for Hispanic students and 27% for low-income students. Along with Tacoma’s impressive graduation rates, more than 80% of its students have attained dual enrollment credits for higher education since the 2017-18 academic year, which applies to its Black, Hispanic and low-income students as well.



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# Blending K12 + higher ed = improved student equity



## Community college pipelines

This year, the California State University (CSU) System unveiled a guaranteed admission program across its 23 campuses, beginning with the class of 2023. It's different from Tacoma's pathway in that first-time freshmen must start in the California Community College System, and it is specifically geared toward high school graduates whose personal or financial situation inhibited them from applying to a CSU institution directly.

In addition to offering under-resourced students a secure stepladder to a major state university, the Transfer Success Pathway provides them personalized support and resources from CSU, such as additional academic counseling and access to a transfer planner to stay on track with what they need to accomplish.

"We are excited about the opportunity to work with them earlier in their journey," said April Grommo, CSU's assistant vice chancellor of Strategic Enrollment Management, according to Sacramento State. "The Transfer Success Pathway is the CSU's promise and commitment to those who don't take a direct route to a four-year degree, particularly those who face academic, geographic, or financial barriers."

The University of California system may also be embarking on a similar mission. In March, UC introduced to state lawmakers its mission to enroll one community college transfer for every two first-year undergraduates, EdSource reports.

## Preparing the new generation of superintendents

The job of the K12 school district superintendency is mired in political, logistical and administrative challenges

that can often strain and overwhelm. Just ask the state of Maryland: Last year, about a third of its superintendent positions were up for grabs.

The University of Maryland's practice-based doctoral program provides its students with real-world experience to prepare them for the complex political environment and performance objectives that have continued to change since the pandemic. One of those challenges UMD is preparing the next wave of superintendents for is ensuring success for the state's changing student demographics.

"We pay attention to the needs of all learners in the state of Maryland, and more specifically, those students and populations of color, given that the research trends are showing us that the schools are becoming more heavily populated with the students of color," says Pamela Shetley, associate director of UMD's Education in School System Leadership, "Our workforce is not equally catching up to that change."

Thanks to UMD's partnership with state school districts, its doctoral school leadership program challenges students in its capstone project to take on a district's real-time wicked problem that they've identified, diagnose its root causes and alleviate it under the guidance of the program.



Pamela Shetley

While students are already experienced Maryland K12 educators and administrators, they receive a state-approved superintendent certification upon program completion.

"Our goal is to build a pipeline of system-level thinkers that are change agents that have a disposition for change, for equity, for students in a way that maybe hasn't been as intentionally focused in other programs," says Doug Anthony, the program's director.

One of the guideposts UMD's program uses when teaching instructional leadership is the Maryland Blueprint, an equity-based legislative framework that prioritizes college and career readiness. It also intends to raise state funding for education by \$3.8 billion annually over 10 years.



Doug Anthony

While the onus falls on the student-turned-superintendent to effect relevant change in his or her school district, it's up to administrators in higher education to help equip them with the tools. Some of these lessons may require reckoning with uncomfortable truths.

"It takes courage at the university level to make sure that the curriculum, for instance, isn't watered down or history isn't erased when we talk about institutional barriers within the context of an educational setting," Anthony says. "Problems exist because there are problems before it, and there are institutional barriers that exist. Many things exist in school systems that the superintendent has to be willing to unpack if they're going to make a difference." DA

# Solving Uncharged Student Devices with At-the-Desk Charging

*How Modesto City Schools increased educational time in the classroom without modifying infrastructure.*

## **Navigating the Challenges of Scaling Technology District-Wide**

One of the biggest challenges that the district faced was transitioning towards a technological and digital world in the classrooms. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, they rapidly expanded to a fully 1:1 mobile device model across the entire district. As in-person instruction resumed, finding ways to keep students' devices charged and ready for learning was difficult. Prior to mobile devices becoming integrated into lesson plans there was less demand for outlets in

classrooms but now, there were not enough to go around. Students frequently came to school with uncharged devices, preventing them from participating in lessons. This resulted in wires and extension cords being strung across the classroom floors, creating potential trip and fire hazards, and disruptions to instructional time.

## **Finding a Quick Solution to Address Charging Needs**

Modesto City Schools needed a solution that could be used immediately to

charge students' devices, so they could participate in daily lessons. The technology team first turned to an easy DIY solution that could charge and store multiple devices simultaneously. It consisted of surge protectors and AC adapters wrapped up and zip-tied to file organizers. While this DIY solution did help the district address the basic charging need, the solution was not scalable and came with additional challenges. AC adapters were often removed so they could actively charge their devices while they were working

*"If you design technology in a classroom correctly, it just works, and the teacher does not have to think about it. That's exactly what JAR Systems did for our teachers."* - Russ Selken, Director of Technology

**WATCH THE VIDEO**

[www.JAR-Systems.com/MCS](http://www.JAR-Systems.com/MCS)



Reduce classroom disruptions, get Active Charge: [JAR-Systems.com/MCS](http://JAR-Systems.com/MCS)

instead of leaving the device at the back of the classroom to passively charge. The team quickly realized that they needed a solution that could charge students' devices while they were in use.

**Exploring Alternative Solutions**

The team researched all available options that would be adaptive without creating safety hazards or changing classroom infrastructure. Throughout the exploration of many different options and companies, JAR Systems stood out from the crowd. The team consulted with their trusted partners, Justin Davenport and Pat Hein at CDW, to lean on their industry knowledge and gain insight into other customers' experiences with JAR Systems' solutions. With CDW's recommendation, they set their eyes on JAR Systems' Active Charge Solutions. While other solutions solved the issue of charging, they were stationary and not able to travel with students to the next class. Active Charge Power Banks met the districts' specific charging needs while allowing for the adaptability of ever-evolving technology.

**Implementing Active Charge Solutions**

The technology team at Modesto City Schools along with JAR Systems and



Adapt4 with Active Charge Upgrade

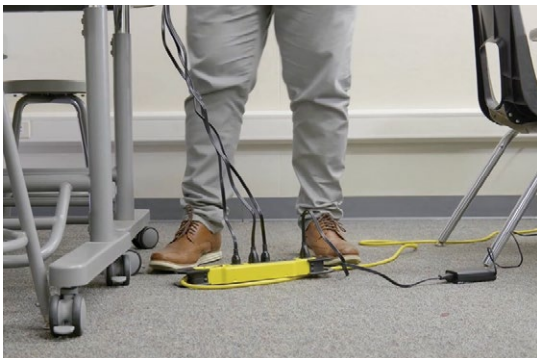
CDW worked together to plan a smooth deployment. They implemented JAR Systems' [Universal USB-C Charging Docks](#) to Kindergarten through 6th grade classrooms, [Adapt4 USB-C Charging Stations](#) to 7th through 12th grade classrooms, [Library Check-Out Charging Solutions](#) to technology rooms, and 8 Active Charge Power Banks to each classroom in the district. The [Active Charge Power Banks'](#) scannable barcodes enable the district to easily track them as assets in their system. The school bus yellow color of the power banks allows staff to differentiate them from other technology items.

of administrators?' The entire district saw the value in these solutions immediately." Misty Roton, Help Desk Manager.

**Achieving a Seamless Classroom Charging Environment**

After implementing the solutions in the district, the teachers recognized an immediate increase in instructional time in the classrooms. "Without JAR Systems, the use and integration of 21st-century tools in the classroom would be minimal to non-existent. The value I have recognized that JAR has brought to our district is higher educational minutes in each classroom and the ability for the teachers to set their curriculum structure without interruptions." Russ Selken, Chief Technology Officer.

Not only were teachers recognizing the benefits of these solutions, but the impact was even discussed in school board meetings. The district observed the positive impact that the solutions were having throughout their classrooms and decided to increase their investment in the power banks.



Power Strips Across Classeom Floors Before JAR

Soon after, the district also implemented Library Check-Out Charging Solutions for substitute teacher devices. This allows them to charge power banks, loaner devices, and USB-C devices side-by-side with ease. "Once we had a few solutions in place, one of the first requests we got was 'How do we get them into the hands

**See the power bank check-out solutions! Watch the Video: [JAR-Systems.com/MCS](https://JAR-Systems.com/MCS)**



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## One of this year's top priorities: attendance

These three superintendents talk about tackling chronic absenteeism that continues to linger long after the pandemic. But they can't do it alone.

BY MICAH WARD

**W**hen a student misses a day of school, they've missed out on an entire day of learning. District leaders learned the importance of attendance and how it impacts academic achievement the hard way during the pandemic. And, it continues to be a problem in some of the larger districts in the country. But this school year is going to be different, declare these three superintendents.

As the 2023-24 academic year gets underway, leaders are taking the time to communicate what they want to achieve for their communities. Across the nation, superintendents are set to tackle a variety of issues specific to their districts, including mental health, student discipline and other complexities. At the nation's second-largest district in the country, Los Angeles Unified, Superintendent Alberto Carvalho has made it his personal mission to boost student attendance.

### LAUSD

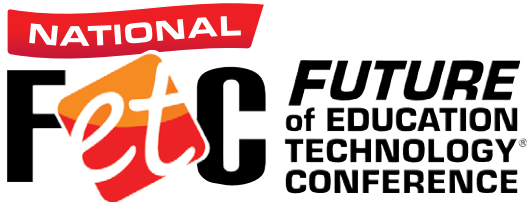
Carvalho took some time last week to stop by the homes of students across the district and encourage them to consistently attend class as part of his annual iAttend campaign in hopes of boosting average daily attendance by 5%.

"We had two days of iAttend this year," he told ABC 7. "We have about three additional days over the next weeks and months. It's critically important.

"A year and a half ago when I first arrived here, chronic absenteeism was about 50%," he added. "That means 50% of our kids were absent from school 10 or more days."

The district's Chief Medical Director Dr. Smita Malhotra also issued a statement on the district's website directed to students' families advising them to prioritize their child's learning over minor illnesses.

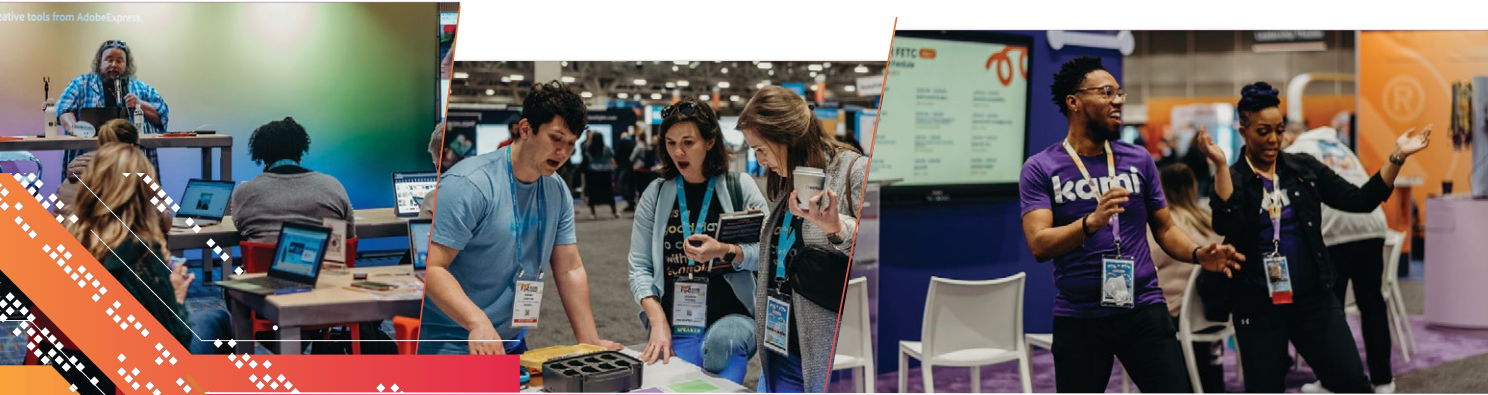
"It is not practical for working parents to keep children home from school for every runny nose, nor is it in



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the best interest of children to continue to miss school after pandemic school closures," she wrote. "If your child has a mild runny nose or cold symptoms that are not bothering them, and they test negative for COVID-19, send them to school. Your child can wear a mask at school when they have these mild symptoms."

### **Fort Worth ISD**

Over the years, students at Fort Worth ISD have been struggling to meet expectations academically, particularly in reading, as many students are English learners, NBC 5 Dallas Fort Worth reports. So keeping students in the classroom is essential, according to Superintendent Angélica Ramsey.

"A sense of urgency we have, but we also are going to do it with joy," she told NBC 5. "We need to make sure that our schools are places where children want to come to increase our attendance rates, right? Not because of dollars, but because if you're not in your seat, you're not learning."

Last year, the district saw a 25% improvement in the number of chronically absent students, the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reports. However, absenteeism rates are still "atrocious", she told the *Star-Telegram* earlier this year.

"It's very difficult to get parents and students to understand you have to come to school five days [a week]," she said.

**"We need to make sure our schools are places where children want to come, because if you're not in your seat, you're not learning."**

—SUPERINTENDENT ANGÉLICA RAMSEY, FORT WORTH ISD

### **Howard County**

Howard County Public Schools in Michigan will be opening its doors to its nearly 60,000 students come August 28. As such, Superintendent Michael Martirano hopes to see every seat filled on the first day and beyond.

"I am really focused this year on attendance and making sure all of our students are in school ready to learn, and I need the assistance from our parents," he told CBS News.

He said leveraging student data has been crucial to helping him understand how serious the issue is and how to solve it.

"I always look at our data to make decisions. I am extremely data-driven; I am a math and science teacher and I look at the evidentiary-based work we are doing and in the last several years we have seen a regression in students showing up to our schools," he said. **DA**



## 5 edtech trends that will modernize your classrooms

Clever's recent "Classroom of the Future Report" identifies the most dominant factors shaping K12 education this school year.

BY MICAH WARD

The pandemic created a greater dependence on edtech tools among educators and students than we've ever seen before. Sure, there were headaches and resistance from students and teachers alike who felt forced to adapt to these new technologies. However, edtech is here to stay, and it's evolving.

Time and time again in previous interviews with *District Administration*, K12 technology experts tell us that they depend on edtech tools to support and enhance learning without replacing the role of the classroom teacher. And that's exactly what teachers and administrators now recognize, according to a recent report from learning edtech company Clever.

The researchers surveyed 1,500 teachers and administrators to gain a better understanding of the latest trends surrounding edtech use in schools while also capturing their thoughts and feelings toward certain tools.

The findings may serve as a blueprint for administrators looking to modernize their classrooms in 2023 and beyond. Here are the five most impactful trends shaping K12 education and technology that you need to know.

### 1 Teachers and administrators cherish edtech

Despite initial resistance against edtech during the pandemic, such technology continues to play an integral role in classroom instruction. For instance, 65% of administrators report an increase in the number of edtech tools being leveraged in their district.

"What started as a solution for virtual learning has become an indispensable element of classroom instruction," the report reads. "As the use of edtech continues to rise, these tools are playing an evergreen role in shaping teaching and learning."

Additionally, nearly 90% of administrators report

## Edtech tools that promote self-paced and skill-based learning are among the most valued among educators for their ability to enhance student learning experiences.

“sustained or more positive” attitudes among students toward edtech over the past year. And according to teachers, gamified applications emerged as the top tool for student engagement.

### 2 Artificial intelligence

Similar to the previous finding, there was substantial pushback from educators against AI as they considered whether such technology has a place in the classroom. But despite fears surrounding academic dishonesty and plagiarism, the consensus is that AI will have a significant impact on K12 education.

Seventy-eight percent of administrators said ChatGPT will have a moderate or significant impact on teaching and learning compared to 89% of teachers. Most notably, administrators (77%) are more familiar with the tool than teachers (40%). As such, administrators (41%) say they're less worried about AI's impact on K12 education than teachers (55%).

### 3 Barriers to AI adoption

Although administrators and educators have recognized AI's impact on education, districts have been slow to welcome the technology in their schools.

The vast majority of administrators have yet to offer any sort of AI-related training for teachers. For instance, 89% of districts aren't offering professional development and 96% of teachers haven't received any training.

Similarly, edtech vendors are approaching the adoption of such technology with caution while 39% of vendors say AI is shaping their product roadmap.

“We are taking a careful approach to classroom AI, with student safety being the priority,” said Tommy Day, senior product manager at Khan Academy, in the report. “Thoughtful integration requires guardrails to minimize risks and maintain trust—core to our brand as we explore new technologies like AI.”

### 4 Leveraging edtech to reduce workloads

The findings point to an increased potential in edtech to reduce burnout and provide teachers with time to focus on their primary task: student learning.

Sixty-eight percent of teachers believe that edtech makes them more efficient. Furthermore, 74% of administrators

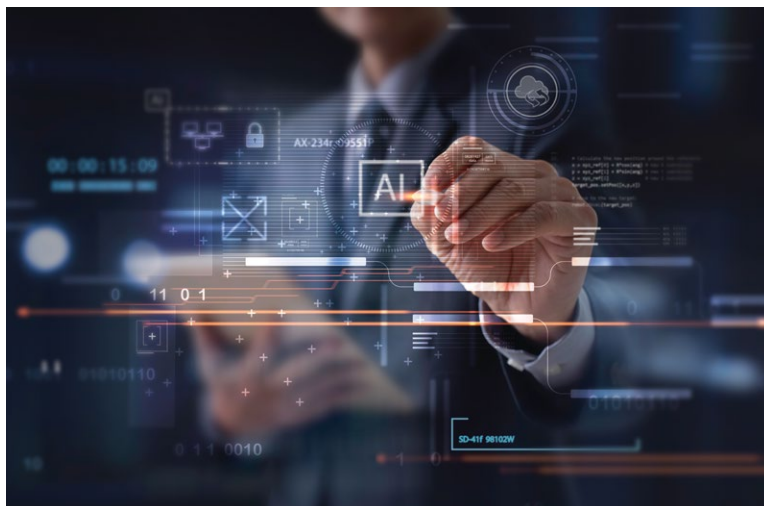
think this is what drives edtech use among educators.

“Teachers and administrators largely agree that edtech has significantly streamlined their work and made their jobs more manageable, allowing them to focus on what's most impactful—learning in the classroom,” the report reads. “This supports existing data demonstrating that edtech has the potential to increase what teachers are able to accomplish with their students.”

### 5 Supporting diverse learners

Both teachers and administrators understand the need to support students with IEPs or 504 plans through edtech. However, there's concern among both groups surrounding their ability to do so.

For instance, 70% of teachers and 51% of administrators said they want more edtech support for diverse learners. Additionally, 56% of teachers and 59% of administrators said they're more concerned about the availability of products that can adequately support such students.



Similarly, respondents reported a growing need for accessible and personalized education. Edtech tools that promote self-paced and skill-based learning are among the most valued among educators for their ability to enhance student learning experiences.

“Teachers are the pilots of the classroom,” said Matthew Feldmann, VP of product at MIND Research Institute in the report. “Right now, we're asking them to both build the plane and fly it—an immense task. Our job is to make their lives easier by co-designing and building the tools they want to help students learn more effectively.” DA

# A passion for spelling

April McAdams, the Scripps National Spelling Bee's 2022 Educator of the Year, says the best reward has been helping students discover their passion for spelling.

For nearly a century, the Scripps National Spelling Bee has inspired a love of learning in millions of students. The Bee gives students the words they need to shine their light on the world, beginning in classrooms in every state and culminating on the national stage in Washington, D.C. However, none of this work would be possible without the passionate, dedicated educators who bring the spelling bee program into their schools every year. As part of our recognition of these teachers, the Bee selects an Educator of the Year who represents the program's values – like integrity and celebration in their work – to provide the spelling bee experience to their students.

In 2022, the Bee chose April McAdams, a third-grade teacher at South Bosque Elementary School, which is part of the Midway Independent School District in Waco, Texas. During her year as Educator of the Year, Mrs. McAdams represented the Bee at SXSW EDU Conference in Austin and attended the 2023 National Competition where she witnessed Dev Shah correctly spell “psammophile” to become the champion. Here's what Mrs. McAdams had to say about her experiences with the Bee!

**Q. How long have you been involved with the Scripps National Spelling Bee at your school, and what is your role?** I have been involved with the Scripps National Spelling Bee for seven years at my school. I serve as our spelling bee campus coordinator. I help to coordinate our classroom bees as well as our schoolwide bee that is held in January each year.

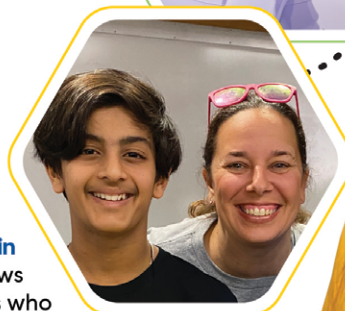
**Q. What would you consider to be the main benefit for students of participating in the Bee program?** I think the main benefit for students is that the Bee allows them the unique opportunity to interact with and compete against others who share their same passion for spelling. I helped my student, Vihaan, discover his passion in my third-grade class. He competed in the Bee for five years, while qualifying for nationals four of those years, and earning third place in his final year of competition.

**It has been the greatest reward knowing that I helped him to discover his passion.** We have now both formed lifelong friendships across the country all because of the opportunities that the Bee has allowed us!

**Q. What would you say to someone who is considering bringing the spelling bee to their district's schools?** I would share with them all of the positive impacts that the Bee has, not only on the participating students, but also teachers and the community. It really starts with a passionate educator or administrator.

At my school, it's a big deal! I love spelling, so I enjoy sharing my passion for spelling with our school community. We watch YouTube videos and news clips of previous champions. The spellers all have such inspirational stories!

Our entire school and community get behind it and support it. We even had a community parade for Vihaan when he came home from D.C. after winning third place in 2022. We had interviews in front of his house and news stations were present! **It's a great way to connect your school with the community.**



**Q. What is your favorite memory from being the Bee's 2022 Educator of the Year?** My favorite memory from being the Educator of the Year was getting to attend the national competition in D.C. this past May. I was a speller myself growing up, so being surrounded by so many others who love spelling was incredible!

I had been five years ago to watch my student, but this trip was surreal and a dream come true! Having the opportunity to connect with Bee staff, regional partners and spellers, and participate in so many fun activities was definitely a highlight of my entire career. Lifelong friendships have been made for which I am eternally grateful!

**Q. What advice would you give to an educator looking to start a school spelling bee program?** My advice is to dive on in and don't be afraid to ask questions! The Scripps National Spelling Bee website is super user friendly. It provides all of the resources that you need to get your school spelling bee up and running.

**The Bee has a community of people including school coordinators, regional partners, and Scripps National Spelling Bee staff who are connected and willing to help!**

I love our network that spans the country! I can't imagine not being involved.

“ It really starts with a passionate educator or administrator... I love spelling, so I enjoy sharing my passion for spelling with our school community. ”



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## A transformative journey

Embracing the power of generative AI in K12 education

BY PETE JUST

In the realm of educational technology, a groundbreaking innovation has emerged that promises to revolutionize the landscape of K12 education: generative artificial intelligence (AI). Unlike Alexa, Siri and recommendation engines, generative AI is a type of artificial intelligence that excels at creating original content, simulating human-like behavior, and generating unique responses to complex prompts.

Unlike these other AIs, which rely on predefined rules and data, generative AI leverages large datasets and neural networks to learn patterns and generate novel output. One of the most noteworthy applications of generative AI is the use of language models, such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, which have shown remarkable capabilities in generating text that is coherent, contextually relevant, and, in some cases, virtually indistinguishable from human writing.

### The promise of generative AI for K12 classrooms

In schools, generative AI has the ability to profoundly impact early literacy and numeracy skills among other opportunities. AI-powered interactive learning platforms can personalize lessons, adapt content based on individual student needs, and provide real-time feedback. By engaging in interactive AI-driven activities, young learners can foster creativity, critical thinking and communication skills while developing a love for learning. Furthermore, generative AI already offers virtual tutors that can support

struggling students by providing additional practice, explanations and remediation.

These AI-driven tutors can complement the efforts of teachers and help ensure that each child receives the attention they need to thrive academically. For students in higher grades, Generative AI can serve as a valuable aid in research and project work. By accessing vast repositories of information and generating relevant content, AI can support students in crafting well-informed essays, reports, and presentations.

### Addressing concerns

With the advent of generative AI, some concerns should arise about its potential misuse or students' dependency on technology. It is essential to strike a balance between AI integration and maintaining a human-centered approach to learning.

Generative AI should complement the teacher-student relationship, not replace it. Transparency in the use of AI and ethical considerations must also be emphasized and taught with standards put in place for appropriate use and citation. Students should be taught that when they are interacting with AI systems, transparency of the AI use is critical and data privacy must be safeguarded at all times.

Technology leaders can pave the way for student data privacy by reviewing terms of use and details about the capture of PII and providing recommendations prior to any adoption.

### Leading and protecting

As educational technology leaders, it is our responsibility to explore the potential of generative AI, harness its benefits and navigate the challenges it poses. By doing so, we can help to equip the next generation with the skills, knowledge, and creativity they need to thrive in an increasingly AI-driven world.

Educational institutions must ensure that any data shared with AI platforms are anonymized and stripped of any personally identifiable information. Clear agreements should be in place to protect student data from unauthorized access, use, or sharing.

It is also essential to obtain informed consent from parents or guardians. Transparently communicating the purpose and scope of AI integration will foster trust within the school community. Prioritizing data security, transparency, and ethical considerations will ensure that student data privacy remains protected, and the integration of AI enhances, rather than compromises, the educational journey.

Embracing generative AI in K12 education represents a transformational journey that promises to enrich the learning experiences of our students. By harnessing the power of AI, we can create dynamic, adaptive, and personalized educational environments that cater to the diverse needs and interests of every learner. **DA**



*Pete Just, CETL, serves as the executive director, Indiana CTO Council. He served as CTO & COO MSD of*

*Wayne for over two decades. He is past chair of CoSN, leads the Indiana DOE Cyber Security Task Force and is CoSN's SME on Generative AI.*

## Building a culture of no excuses

The mind of a school leader can be a busy place. So, let me offer some advice.

BY MICHAEL MEECHIN

This is the year. This is the year we stop the excuses. The start of a new school year is a great time to align who you want to be... as a school. What is the cultural DNA that runs through every system in your building? I encourage you to take a stand this year. Begin to build a culture of no excuses. In our profession, we accept too many excuses. When I took over as the leader of one of the lowest-performing high schools in Central Florida, I was tired of allowing our school to accept excuses. So we stopped. Here's how.

We were transparent with every stakeholder that we were going to stop making excuses and we, as a school community, would stop accepting them. On day one, I started with my staff coming back from summer break. I listed every excuse that had been thrown our way—and said, “No more.” It did not matter what the circumstances were; they were *our* circumstances. We were going to move forward and overcome them. Each barrier we would disassemble as a team. This had never been spoken out loud in our building. I could see the spark that would ignite our culture of no excuses.

Next up: our students. At the time, we had barriers in the big three: academics, attendance and behaviors. So we stopped accepting excuses in all three phases. With academics, we set goals with our collective student body that we were going to push them to their academic limits—and support them as

much as we could along the way. Our promise as a school is that we would eliminate busy work and only ask them to engage in lessons and learning that was purposeful—no excuses.

Our students with attendance issues we went after. We knocked on doors, we had our call-out system give them wake-up calls if they could not get to school on time—we stopped accepting excuses. From parents who brought their students in late—we

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**Our messaging to parents was that we would hold our students accountable; however, this meant that we wanted them to hold us accountable.**

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stopped accepting excuses. We shared with them our commitment to bring purpose to our school, to the learning, to our community. They slowly began to understand—no excuses.

For behaviors, we needed to back our teachers up and ensure that we provided restorative practices that would return students to the learning, but also discourage poor behaviors. We worked with our staff to build engaging lessons with little downtime. We also had a conversation with every student when they came to the dean's office—and we accepted no excuses.

Our messaging to parents was that we would hold our students accountable; however, this meant that we wanted them to hold us accountable. Our school community began to understand that this was a partnership. When we asked for parents to attend our PTSO, or our school advisory council, or our college information nights, we expected them to be there—no excuses.

You would be surprised how, when people say it enough, they begin to believe it.

I would encourage you to choose right now to begin building your own culture of no excuses in your school or district. Set the tone for an incredible school year. The work we have ahead of us is urgent. Now go do it—no excuses! **DA**



*Michael Meechin is an award-winning principal, selected as the 2019 State of Florida Innovative*

*Principal of the Year and 2021 School District of Osceola County Principal of the Year, and led one of the highest-performing public schools in the state of Florida.*

*Meechin is the Florida state director for the National Center on Education and the Economy. He speaks, writes, and advocates for school culture transformation, effective school leadership, and high-impact instruction.*

*Meechin is a proud product of diverse public educational systems. He has spent most of his career working with underserved populations and at-risk schools. He is a fellow on the Florida Department of Education's Commissioner Leadership Academy and teaches at the School of Teacher Education at the University of Central Florida.*

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