

Top 10 Takeaways for Ed Tech Innovators

1 Ed tech is everywhere and it's here to stay.

2 Middle schoolers want more fun!

3 High schoolers want more interesting tools with practical features.

4 Educators need to see proof the ed tech product is working early on.

5 Teachers, principals and administrators have different but overlapping priorities when selecting which tools to use.

6 Districts and schools mostly pay for purchased ed tech tools.

7 Teacher selection priorities vary based on their core subject area.

8 One-to-one student to device environments are not the norm.

9 Teachers are the most trusted referral source.

10 Many district administrators and principals also trust evidence-based reports when deciding which tools to use.



We Heard From...

3,210 Pre-K–12th grade U.S. public school teachers

1,163 Public school principals

1,219 District level administrators

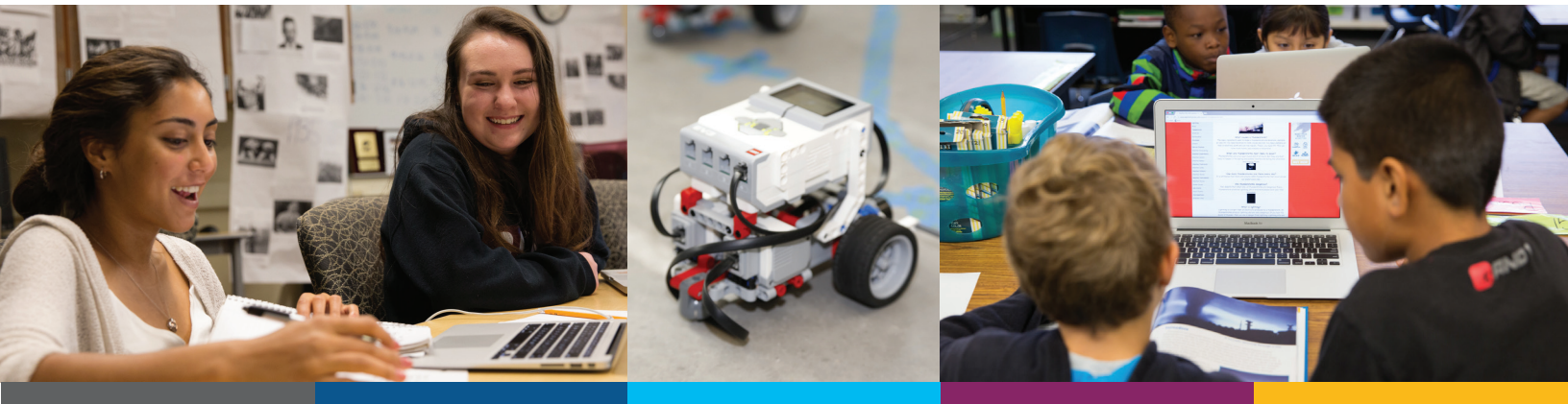
2,696 Public school students in 3rd–12th grade

This companion document explores 10 key takeaways for ed tech innovators that were extracted from a comprehensive report released by [NewSchools and Gallup, "Education Technology Use in Schools"](#). The goal of the full report was to better understand perceptions and usage of ed tech in schools. Based on nationally representative surveys, the report reflects the views of students, teachers, principals and district administrators on digital learning tools. Exploring the perspectives of those most familiar with the impact of these tools in schools can lend important clarity for those working to develop them.

1

Ed tech is everywhere and it's here to stay.

Most students (57%) and teachers (65%) use ed tech tools daily and many teachers (53%) want to use it more often. About nine in 10 students report they use ed tech tools at least a few days each week during school, and seven in 10 students report using ed tech tools outside of school for schoolwork at least a few days a week. Also, teachers (81%), principals (88%) and administrators (92%) see great value in using ed tech tools now, and they are even more optimistic about its value in the future.



2

Middle schoolers want more fun!

When we asked middle school students “What do you wish ed tech tools could do better?” the top choices for middle schoolers were “be more fun” and “be more interesting.” Playing games and rewarding them for good work also appeared at the top of their wish list. When asked to select their favorite ways to use ed tech tools in school, middle school students’ top choices were “learning new information” and “creating something.” Just three out of 10 middle schoolers agree that their school work makes them want to learn more, so there’s definitely an opportunity for innovators to make schoolwork more engaging. **How does your product engage middle school students in a fun, impactful way?**

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

I wish ed tech did this better..

- 57%** Be more fun
- 56%** Be more interesting
- 50%** Allow me to play games
- 47%** Reward me for good work

(Top responses out of 17 options)

3 High schoolers want more interesting tools with practical features.



For high schoolers, fun is less important. Instead of games and rewards, they wish ed tech would allow them to save and organize their work better and to interact more effectively with their teachers. They also want to be able to track their learning progress. Like middle schoolers, just three in 10 high schoolers agree that their schoolwork makes them want to learn more. Only 44% of high school students say they can connect what they're learning in school to life outside the classroom, compared to 85% of elementary students. **How does your product engage high schoolers' interests and give them the tools they need to support their own learning?**

44% OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

85% OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

say they can connect what they're learning in school to life outside the classroom

4 Educators need to see proof the ed tech product is working early on.



Seven out of 10 administrators say their district stopped using an ed tech tool that was piloted or adopted. The top reason they reported is the tool did not improve student learning outcomes. This matches district administrators' highest selection criteria – improving student learning outcomes. Once you lose a district customer, there's usually no turning back, so it's imperative that educators using your product are clear from the beginning on what outcomes to look for and how to measure success along the way. Oftentimes, this includes built-in educator dashboards that allow monitoring of product usage and student outcomes by administrators, principals and teachers. It's amazing how many companies forget to make this a top priority.

How easy is it for educators to determine whether or not using your product is contributing to positive student outcomes?



5 Teachers, principals and administrators have *different but overlapping* priorities when selecting which tools to use.

The most important factor for selecting ed tech tools depends on the educator's role. Overall, most teachers want to know whether ed tech allows for personalized instruction, while principals look for whether or not the tool provides immediate and actionable data on student progress. District administrators want to know that it improves student learning outcomes. As you think about your product's value proposition for teachers, principals and administrators, consider each of their perspectives when assessing how they might experience your product or product messaging for

the first time. Oftentimes, these different stakeholders will all have some level of influence on purchasing decisions and implementation, so your likelihood of winning a new customer improves when your product experience and messaging satisfies the needs of multiple stakeholders. **How does your product experience address various stakeholder needs and does your messaging to each educator subgroup speak to them in a way that resonates with their top priorities?**

Top Three Extremely Important Factors for Ed Tech Selection

| | TEACHERS | PRINCIPALS | DISTRICT ADMINISTRATORS |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Allows for personalized instruction based on students' skill levels | Provides immediate and actionable data on students' progress | Improves student learning outcomes |
| 2 | Provides immediate and actionable data on students' progress | Supports content that aligns with state standards or district initiatives | Supports content that aligns with state standards or district initiatives |
| 3 | Engages students with school and learning AND is easy to use | Improves student learning outcomes | Easy to use |

6 Districts and schools mostly pay for purchased ed tech tools.

About three in 10 teachers use only free tools while the remaining teachers mostly use a combination of both purchased and free tools. Sixty eight percent of teachers say their district purchases the tools they use while 60% say schools do the purchasing. Four in 10 teachers say they purchase ed tech tools with their own money. Special education teachers are more likely to purchase tools using their own money when compared with other teachers. English Language Arts and math teachers are least likely to use free tools relative to peers from other subject areas. Also, many principals (61%) and administrators (75%) say they apply for grants to purchase tools.

How does your sales strategy reach these distinctive purchasers?



We Asked Educators Who They Believe Pays for Ed Tech Tools

| FUNDING SOURCE | TEACHERS | PRINCIPALS | ADMINISTRATORS |
|----------------------------------|----------|------------|----------------|
| District purchases | 68% | 81% | 89% |
| School purchases | 60% | 81% | 81% |
| Teachers purchase with own money | 43% | 36% | 33% |
| Apply for grants to purchase | 19% | 61% | 75% |

7 Teacher selection priorities vary based on their core subject area.

When reviewing teachers' top selection priority by subject, student engagement is most important for science and history/social studies teachers, while personalized instruction and actionable data are most important for teachers from other core subjects such as English Language Arts, math and reading. How do your subject-specific tools address teachers' top selection factors? **Does your messaging reflect how your product addresses these teacher priorities?**



SUBJECT-SPECIFIC TEACHER PRIORITIES

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

- Provides immediate and actionable data on students' progress
- Allows for personalized instruction based on students' skill levels
- Engages students with school and learning

HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES

- Engages students with school and learning
- Easy to use
- Cost effective

MATH

- Allows for personalized instruction based on students' skill levels
- Provides immediate and actionable data on students' progress
- Supports content aligned to state standards and district initiatives

READING

- Allows for personalized instruction based on students' skill levels
- Provides immediate and actionable data on students' progress
- Easy to use

SCIENCE

- Engages students with school and learning
- Easy to use
- Supports content aligned to state standards and district initiatives

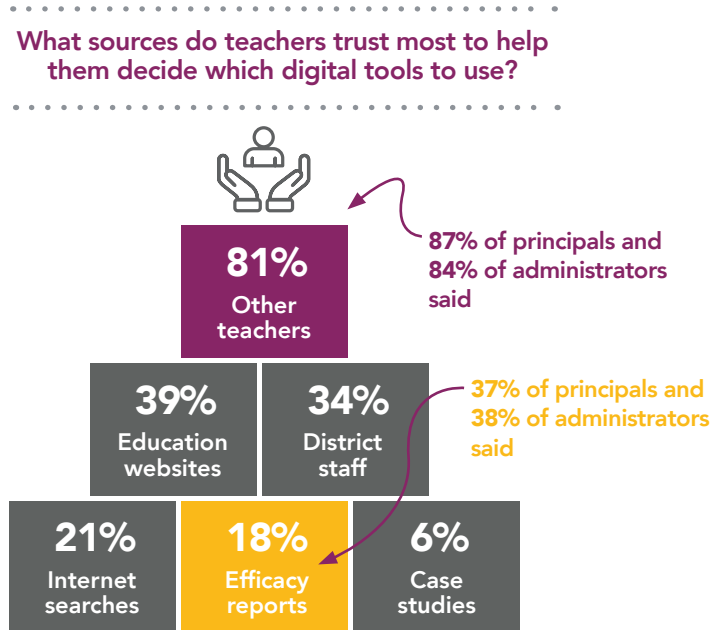
8 One-to-one student to device environments are not the norm.

Student access to devices at school is still about evenly split among using devices in a library or other room, giving students their own devices, or accessing devices from carts shared across classrooms. This variability makes scaling in multiple schools/districts more challenging if your product doesn't flex well to different models of access. As you engage in conversations with prospective districts, you want

to understand what the implementation will look like before you get too far down the path. What are the district's policies around devices, what devices do they use, and how old are the devices? **Thinking ahead to customer success, do you know which device access modes work best for your product to achieve impact?**

9 Teachers are the *most trusted referral source*.

Teachers, principals and district administrators overwhelmingly ranked “teachers” as the most trusted source for helping them decide what ed tech tools to use in schools. This is a shift from the 2014 *Teachers Know Best* survey which reported that teacher ed tech product selections were driven primarily by district administrators (59%), with online searches (53%) and other teachers (47%) coming in second and third. Even secondary students ranked teachers (66%) highest as a resource for deciding which tools to use outside of school above parents (60%) and friends (46%). Do you know who your teacher power-users are and would they recommend your tool to others? Do you have a word-of-mouth strategy that leverages your teacher power-users? **Have you identified and connected with teacher influencers from your ed tech niche?**



10 Many district administrators and principals also trust evidence-based reports when deciding which tools to use.



For district administrators, evidence-based reports rank third behind referrals from other teachers (1st) and other school administrators (2nd). For principals, it ranks 4th behind the teachers, school administrators and district staff referrals. If you already have a report that shows how your ed tech tool can make a positive impact, make sure readers don't need a research doctoral degree to interpret the results. Choose a format and communication style that resonates with district administrators and principals with accessible language that covers the key results from the study. What evidence do you have to share on how your product supports student learning? **Is the language you use accessible to principals and district administrators?** *If you're looking for additional support on research impact messaging, check out our [Ed Tech Research Guide](#).*

For more insights, [check out the full NewSchools-Gallup survey](#).