

A photograph of a teacher and a student in a classroom, both wearing face masks. The teacher is a woman with curly hair, and the student is a young boy. They are looking at a laptop on a desk. The background shows a classroom with a whiteboard and a rainbow drawing.

Rethinking K-12, Part 2: 5 Opportunities to Improve K-12 Education

for the 2021/22 School Year

Find out how to make the most impact ahead of the 2021/22 school year as you continue your digital transformation.

Continue your digital transformation and emerge stronger.

We put together this series as a guide to help you prepare in advance of the 2021/22 school year.

In the first part of this guide, we outlined why now is the time to transform K-12 education. With time ahead of the coming school year to move education forward using federal relief funds, we'll now look at how to make the most impact as you continue your digital transformation.

In this part, you'll learn how to:

- Ensure learning continuity
- Help educators personalize instruction
- Accelerate learning gains and address educational inequities
- Enhance operational flexibility and resiliency
- Recruit, hire, retain, and support teachers

PowerSchool is enabling this transformation by investing in technology, innovation, people, and processes.

We are partnering with other industry leaders to make sure we provide the best guidance and support to make our customers successful. Because we believe that overcoming challenges makes us stronger, and the past year has prepared the entire ecosystem of K-12 education to make a quantum leap forward.

The next few years will be transformative, and **PowerSchool is here to help you overcome today's challenges with technology you can build on for tomorrow.** Our unified solutions work together to address learning loss, empower teachers, personalize learning, and keep districts running during COVID and beyond.

Introduction

While preparing for the coming school year, we have a unique chance to move education forward. Schools and districts now have access to federal relief funds with time to implement improvements that will benefit their organizations for years to come.

Meeting the challenges of the past 12+ months increased the use of technology in K-12 education like never before. Many schools and districts are selecting and accelerating the implementation of technological solutions to address long-standing (i.e., pre-COVID) problems. This includes offering easier and more secure online enrollment and student data management, the convenience of anytime, anywhere professional learning, and personalized education using digital tools.

Now's the time to use what we've learned over the past year to improve K-12 education for everyone. In speaking with our customers and understanding the broader education ecosystem, it's clear we are at an inflection point in the role of technology in education.

The combination of digital transformation needs, incoming federal relief funds, and adequate preparation time before the new school year presents a unique opportunity. We can meet today's continuing challenges while strategically making the most positive impact on building a brighter future in education.

Here's what we are hearing is top of mind for schools and districts heading into the 2021/22 school year.

#1

Ensure learning continuity

Many challenges of the past 12+ months linger. But districts can take advantage of what's been learned to achieve a digital transformation that provides a more flexible and stable approach to teaching and learning for all students.

A recent survey found 53% of students now learn entirely remotely, while only 28% learn completely in the classroom, and 19% reported a hybrid model.¹ Even as the number of schools that provide live instruction and operations continues to increase, the vast majority now see digital learning tools and flexible operations management as critical components in the evolution of K-12 education.

Enhancing digital learning and teaching capabilities also takes the sting out of potential future disruptions. Paired with enhanced **remote operations capabilities, a well-developed means of keeping students engaged through virtual learning means schools can adapt faster to closures or other in-person learning disruptions.** This ensures student learning continues no matter the circumstances.

Transforming education through technology to benefit student learning and teacher success depends on:

- Remote operations and hybrid digital learning capabilities
- Online, connected tools for more accurate, accessible data
- Industry-leading cybersecurity to keep data safe and systems up and running

In Fall 2020:



53% of students were learning entirely remotely¹



Only 28% of students were learning completely in the classroom¹



19% of school districts reported a hybrid model¹

#2

Help educators personalize instruction

Leveraging flexible digital learning tools has emerged as a way for educators to support individual students better and keep the learning going, regardless of circumstances.

Digital learning tools open new doors to support individual student needs. Teachers can provide students personalized digital learning content and more easily connect with students for one-on-one instruction around busy schedules. These options give teachers more tools to address learning gaps that widened over the past year of disruptions, paving the way for better student outcomes in the future.

Student assessment and analytics platforms further enable teachers to gauge where students are, offer support where and how it's needed, and accelerate learning. A digital solution means teachers can administer assessments whether they're in the same room with students or not. Online access to student performance analytics means both teachers and administrators can easily see when individual students need support or spot wider trends.

Many districts have already committed to hybrid and virtual learning long term:



1 in 5 districts are considering, planning to adopt, or have already adopted, **fully online schooling**²



As far back as 2010, the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) described online learning as "**one of the fastest-growing trends in educational uses of technology**"³

#3

Accelerate learning gains and address educational inequities

Summer programs won't entirely address and eliminate unfinished learning. Establishing an effective digital learning environment is critical to closing learning gaps and working toward educational equity.

The sudden switch to a virtual environment upended student learning in 2020. Some schools had flexible solutions in place to keep students and teachers connected, and they were better positioned to mitigate learning loss as everyone adjusted.

However, many districts found themselves quickly adopting solutions to get them through the end of the school year. Piecing together disparate systems and focusing on short-term needs meant these districts spent the rest of the year just trying to make it all work. Meanwhile, their students lost weeks, and even months, of instructional time.

Schools lost around two-thirds of an academic year in 2020. Here's what that means worldwide:



24 million children and youth are at risk of dropping out of school⁴



Students were two months behind learning milestones in November 2020⁵



1.6 billion students missed in-class instruction by mid-April 2020⁴

Educational inequities also worsened. McKinsey & Company research shows that in the U.S., students of color started the 2020/21 school year three to five months behind in math, while white students were one to three months behind, on average.⁶

Accelerating student learning out of the past year's disruptions requires addressing both learning loss and educational inequities.

Now's the time to learn from what worked for the most remote-capable districts and implement unified edtech for virtual learning to support a more resilient model in the future. Summer programs are one step toward accelerating learning gains, giving students more time and options to reconnect to school and prepare them for grade-level work. Digital learning tools can help with this over the summer, in addition to enhancing teachers' ability to keep students engaged during the school year.

Studies such as The Education Trust's "Strategies to Solving Unfinished Learning"⁷ emphasize the need to address obstacles to students participating in distance learning opportunities. The right technology solution can help your district recognize and address equity barriers to support the needs of every student.

For schools and districts that had more advanced solutions in place for learning and school operations, many saw positive outcomes and a more seamless transition to remote learning:

Perrysburg Schools in Ohio

Kept students engaged virtually with Unified Classroom™ Schoology Learning

“Schoology Learning allows me to raise the bar in terms of what I’m giving [students]...I don’t have to limit myself, and I don’t have to limit them.”

DELTA KIMMEL

Teacher, Perrysburg Schools, OH

Boerne ISD in Texas

Smoothly transitioned to remote HR management with Unified Talent, keeping hiring and onboarding on track

“We actually stayed a little ahead of our hiring goals throughout the transition.”

DR. ELAINE HOWARD

Chief Human Resources Officer,
Boerne ISD, TX

#4

Enhance operational flexibility and resiliency

To adapt to changing circumstances in an increasingly digital world, schools need technology that enhances flexibility and resiliency.

A recent survey of K-12 curriculum leaders and IT decision makers found that 46% of schools reported plans to implement an asset management technology solution soon.⁸ This can help them manage their growing use of mobile devices and digital tools, while also providing valuable holistic operations data and analytics.

To enhance flexibility and resiliency, schools and districts need to make sure any new technology they're adopting simplifies operations. Seamless integration brings it all together. Completing tasks and managing personnel quickly and easily across multiple devices, as well as accessing meaningful data anytime, anywhere, helps everyone get work done when and where they need to.

A few ways districts can get more done, faster with integrated technology tools:

- Connected systems ease workflows across departments, like HR and finance
- Access to real-time, accurate data enables more informed K-12 decision making
- Online, self-service enrollment is easier for families to complete year-round

Of course, data security takes top priority. The consequences of a breach aren't worth the risk, **so schools and districts need to thoroughly vet every tool to ensure it's a secure, seamless component of their edtech ecosystem.**

Quick-fix technology created cybersecurity vulnerabilities in 2020:



408 cybersecurity incidents hit K-12 institutions in 2020, an 18% increase⁹



57% of ransomware attacks reported to MS-ISAC involved K-12 schools in August and September 2020, up from 28% over the first half of the year¹⁰

#5

Recruit, hire, retain, and support teachers

Teachers took the brunt of many 2020 disruptions, worsening the nationwide teacher shortage. K-12 HR teams will focus even more on recruiting, hiring, retaining, and supporting teachers this year.

In 2020, 28% of teachers polled by the National Education Association said the pandemic made them more likely to retire early or leave the profession. This indicates an acceleration of a troubling nationwide trend. Long-time teachers are retiring, while too few of those entering the profession stay longer than a few years.

Now, it looks like the nationwide teacher pool may keep shrinking:



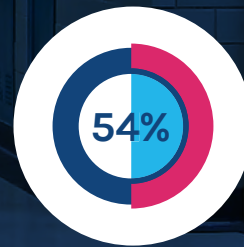
Teach for America recently reported fewer applicants for fall 2021¹¹



Almost half of the teachers who voluntarily left since March 2020 did so because of the pandemic¹²



Stress was the most commonly cited reason for leaving public school teaching last year¹²



And finding substitutes is getting harder, too: Schools filled only 54% of 250,000 daily teacher vacancies before the pandemic¹³

Because the contributors to the teacher shortage tend to be complex, keeping teachers in classrooms calls for a multi-pronged approach. Adaptable tools and processes for recruiting, hiring, and development are essential to supporting the needs of teachers so that they, in turn, can focus more time on their students' needs.

As many teachers found themselves strained and under-equipped for the demands of virtual and hybrid classrooms, providing the necessary training and personalized support for teachers can significantly impact retention. Recognizing the need for Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) support as part of their PD program can help teachers develop coping skills to reduce stress and enable them to stay in the profession long-term.

Ultimately, supporting teachers with flexible, intuitive teaching tools helps them find fulfillment in their careers. Passionate, effective educators are imperative to student success. **Implementing better tools and resources to support them every step of the way shows educators they matter. That can lead to more teachers staying in the profession, and in your school or district, in the long run.**

With some uncertainty ahead, and many opportunities to advance education, knowing where to start can be overwhelming. However, solutions exist to make this the moment K-12 education moves forward to serve teachers, administrators, students, and families better. The key is acting now.

Find answers to your questions about meeting these challenges in Part 3:

[PowerSchool.com/moving-education-forward](https://www.PowerSchool.com/moving-education-forward)

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PowerSchool is your trusted advisor that offers:



Best-in-class, unified edtech solutions for your entire school or district



Largest peer community for best practices and collaboration



Highest investment in product R&D in the industry



Unmatched expertise in supporting schools and districts of all sizes



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