



Executive  
Summary

 PowerSchool

# 2023 Education Focus Report

Challenges, Priorities, and  
Innovating Toward the Possible

# Introduction

**K-12 education is in a time of tension, caught between the urgent, the important, and the possible.**

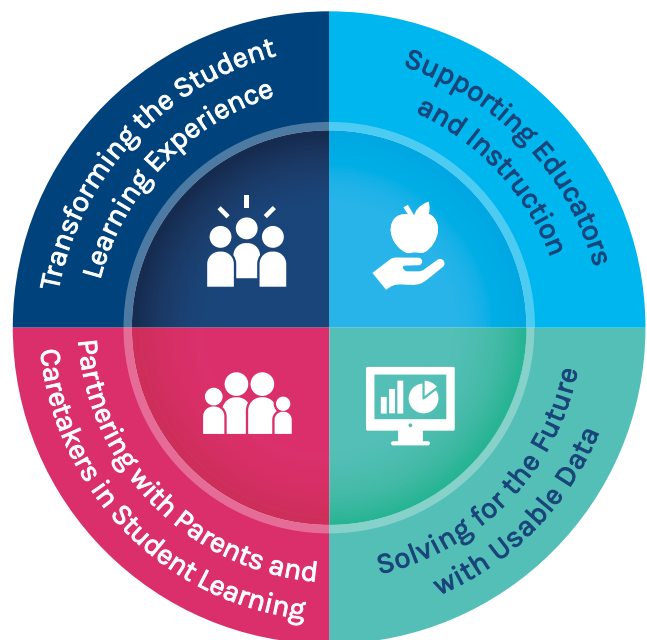
Student learning and wellness recovery is both urgent and important. We recognize that school and district leaders are under public pressure and scrutiny to maximize the influx of federal and state resources to get students back on their pre-pandemic paths.

There is always a balance to be struck—in education as in any other sector—between urgency and importance. But we also know that existing practices leave opportunities to enhance the educational experience, so there is the project of innovating toward the possible.

**OVER**  
**7 in 10**  
**school- and district-level leaders say**  
**they are optimistic about the changing roles of teachers, especially with regards to the increased use of technology & data.**

Speaking with dozens of education leaders and receiving over 1,700 responses through our annual national survey, we heard a collective sense that personalized learning, actionable data, and artificial intelligence (AI) hold promise to shape the future trajectory of education.

**Recognizing these current dynamics in education, our 2023 Education Focus Report focuses on four key areas:**



**Throughout this year’s report, we elevate educators’ voices, believing the future of education should be informed by their input today.**

We are listening to educators as they balance the urgent and important while innovating to achieve the possible.

# Transforming the Student Learning Experience

For many education stakeholders—families, students, policymakers, and educators—the rapid adoption of technology during COVID fueled expectations of fast and transformative change. Schools and districts are now moving through the opportunities and challenges inherent to the quick adaptation and learning of new technologies.

In the full report, we consider both school and district leaders’ top edtech challenges and priorities in the context of pandemic learning recovery.

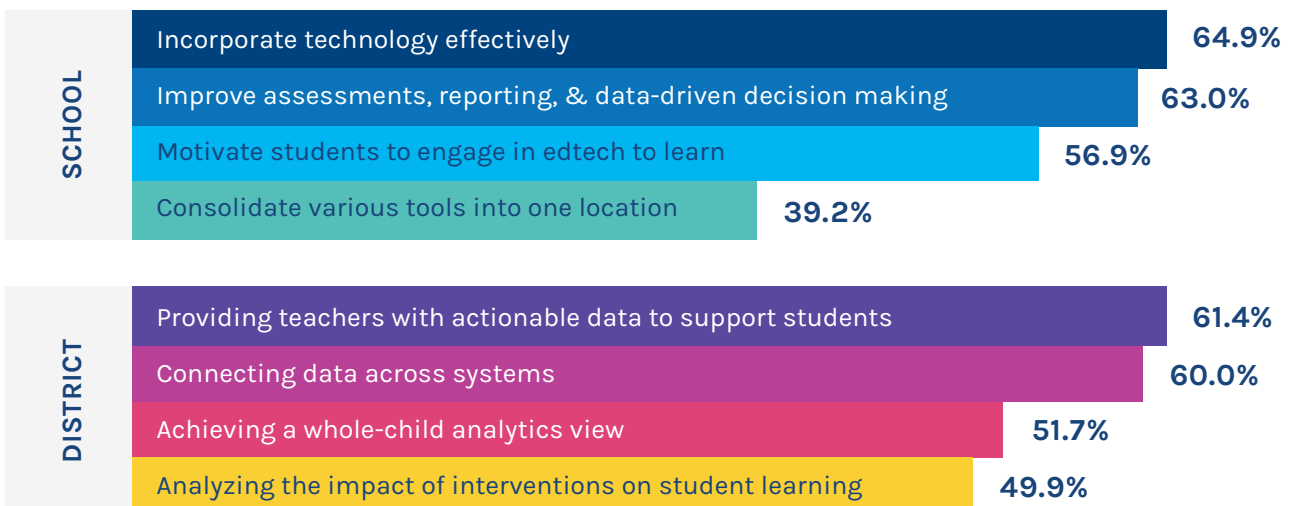
**83%** of school educators agree **When technology systems work together well, I get important time back in my day to get things done.**

**FIGURE 1** Top Four Edtech Challenges in School Year 2022-23

	SCHOOL	DISTRICT
1	Keeping students on task	Connecting data across systems
2	Incorporating technology effectively	Prioritizing professional development for teachers & staff
3	Juggling multiple digital tools for teaching/learning	Achieving a whole child data analytics view
4	Providing effective edtech professional development	Providing teachers with actionable data to support students

School challenges reflect the practical issues that come with relying more heavily on technology in the classroom. District challenges include achieving overarching data initiatives while providing sufficient professional development for educators to learn new technologies.

**FIGURE 2** Educators’ Top Edtech Priorities in 2023 and Beyond



We also look deeply into educators' edtech priorities to understand needs and uncover strategies that work.

At the school level, incorporating technology into teaching remains top of list, along with data, assessments, and reporting. Schools are in the midst of a tech revolution that is the story of the current time.

Change does not come easily. Unanticipated problems and priorities arise, such as motivating students to learn both classroom skills and content (abilities beyond rote fact memorization) when their phones can find the answer to anything.

For district leaders, connecting and integrating the pixelated data of each child into a crisp and full picture that tells a story is the central priority. Moreover, understanding which pandemic response efforts are truly effective and which are not is finally becoming possible for many district technology and research offices.

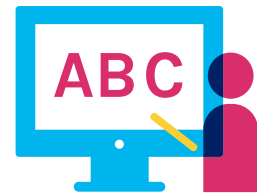
**"We need learning experiences to be ruthlessly relevant to our students and their future. If we don't have the right tools and edtech partners, we can try, but we will hit big challenges. Personalized learning must be ruthlessly relevant for it to become 'the work' of schools."**

**BILL BASS**

Innovation Coordinator:  
Instructional Technology, Information,  
Library Media, and Federal Programs  
Parkway Schools, MO

**53%** of district level leaders agree in

seeing value of AI for teaching and learning, compared to 44% of school-level educators.



In addition, we revisited the state of personalized learning. Some district leaders point out a fundamental hurdle: personalized learning suffers from an optics problem. It is often seen as "extra" work rather than the "core" work of teaching and learning.

In the full report, we dig into how system leaders are fusing personalization and existing practice to become "the work."

**We also asked educators for their perspectives on the potential of AI to enhance teaching and learning.**

**We found that school-level educators exhibit cautious intrigue, while district leaders are more optimistic and hopeful.**

## **Supporting Educators and Instruction**

Educators see and appreciate the value that tech tools and innovation bring to their classrooms. Educators identify innovations like AI-based content prompts and instructional suggestions as having most potential to positively impact student learning. If the content is standards-aligned, all the better.

However, the practice of rapidly adopting tech tools without fully training those who need to use them leaves educators feeling overwhelmed.

Having technology and using technology with purpose and intention are two different things.

Educators indicate that the race to adopt technology has in some cases strayed from its central purpose: to create a better learning experience for the student. Purposeful professional learning merging new technologies and strategies to support every learner remains a top need.

We also heard from educators that computer-guided learning content and career exploration innovations hold great potential to help students.

Speaking with education leaders in K-12 and postsecondary, we heard a growing need to incorporate career readiness skills into K-12 instructional best practices.

**"Education has not adequately embraced the narrative that we are preparing young people for lifelong career success where they will spend significantly more time working than they will in formalized education. To prepare them to best manage their path to success, we must equip them with career navigation skills."**

**DANA RYAN**

VP, Academic and Student Affairs  
Western Nevada College, NV

We explore emerging strategies to support this work through technology in the full report.

**ONLY**  
**2 in 10**  
**educators** **said they absolutely can say what interventions are working and have data to back it up.**

## Solving for the Future with Usable Data

In the effort to better understand student progress to address pandemic impacts, educators have looked to data to inform their practice more than ever before.

According to our national survey, 7 in 10 school-based educators agree with the statement, "I have usable data at my fingertips to help improve the quality of instruction." In the full report, we consider what is meant by usable data and explore how data managers are architecting tools and platforms to support teachers.

We also discuss how multi-tiered systems of supports (MTSS)—and similar practices—are evolving as result of the pandemic.

"Sometimes you need a facilitator for change. COVID was it," reflects Tessie Bailey, Director of MTSS at the American Institutes for Research (AIR) about MTSS and how educators are taking a more pragmatic approach to streamline supports rather than maintaining perfect fidelity to a given model.

"We need to step back and prioritize the things that produce the biggest effects. To do that, we need to edit, and in some cases,

subtract in order to simplify the [MTSS] work. Less can be WAY more. Giving kids the opportunity to learn using well-designed instruction and supporting their growth—that’s what matters most," shared Bailey.

In addition to MTSS, this section highlights an emerging innovation in data in education with data as a service (DaaS) solutions.

We speak with Tim Clark, VP of K-12 Programs at 1EdTech, about a range of topics, from interoperability to innovation and the latest insights on effective data governance. He discusses the promises and perils of increasingly popular cloud-based approaches to data governance through DaaS tools like data lakes, warehouses, and exchanges.

**"The promise of DaaS is big: data is accessible from anywhere. You don't need an extended data team to maintain it. There's flexibility, ease of use, and it's ready to be updated at any time."**

**TIM CLARK**

VP of K-12 Programs, 1EdTech

In the full report, we consider how data governance practices are enabling new technologies like DaaS and how leaders are navigating collaboration and security.

## Partnering with Parents and Caretakers in Student Learning

Lastly, we look at how parents and caretakers can become even stronger learning partners. We consider strategies and systems that promote student attendance and home engagement. We explore parent preferences versus reality in how schools communicate and share updates about student learning.

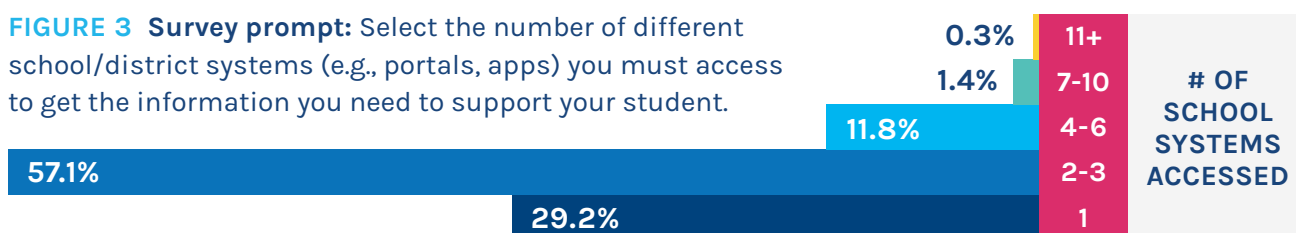
**Most educators say tech is streamlined to communicate with parents, while 7 in 10 parents say they must navigate 2-6 systems to access the information they need to understand how their student is learning.**

The proliferation of technology has moved districts to consolidate tools or source partners who offer multiple solutions in one tool.

Many districts have too many tools with too specific use cases. For example, they need tools that handle learning updates, communication at home, and track attendance all in one. It is not unordinary for districts to use multiple technology platforms across grade spans (elementary, middle, high) and communicate with families through all three, depending on the ages of the families' children.

The use of multiple platforms often results in a deluge of information for parents, which causes them to feel frustrated and overwhelmed, or even shut off the school "information spigot" entirely.

**FIGURE 3 Survey prompt:** Select the number of different school/district systems (e.g., portals, apps) you must access to get the information you need to support your student.



# How PowerSchool Can Help

The future of education starts with listening to educators today.

## Our conversations with educators, administrators, and families have surfaced four key actions that PowerSchool is committed to addressing.

If we build and support systems that personalize education to deliver a richer student learning experience, we believe we can help educators and students get what they need from technology:



**Personalized.** Technology should meet the user, regardless of their role in the district or school, where they are, and take them where they need and want to go.



**Simple.** The user's experience with any technology should be intuitive and simple.



**Easy.** Technology tools should integrate seamlessly, be standards aligned, and deliver powerful insights without the user needing to execute complicated processes.



**Secure.** As districts increasingly rely on cloud technology, edtech vendors play a key role in being diligent defenders of student data.

At PowerSchool, we remain committed to empowering educators to help each student find success in the way that's right for them.

As the leading cloud-based software provider in North America, we know this means innovating to deliver education technology that offers an intuitive, user-friendly experience for all education stakeholders. Soon, for example, PowerSchool will launch single sign-on (SSO) capabilities that deliver convenience and insight to families to strengthen school-parent partnerships.

Additionally, in 2023 we launched our PowerSchool Clouds, marking the first time an edtech company packaged best-in-class technologies intentionally designed to meet the evolving needs of schools and district leaders.

And knowing that data is only useful when it is secure, connected, and accessible, we are using AI to support educators and state agencies toward data-driven planning to meet the workforce needs of today and tomorrow with Connected Intelligence.

**We will continue to listen, innovate, and deliver technology that empowers district and school leaders to support students' success.**



# PowerSchool

Powering Brighter Futures

**Thanks To Our Education Insights Advisors.** This report was shaped in partnership with 15 education leaders—representing technology, teaching and learning, data, talent, and more—who comprise our Education Insights Advisors

Group. We extend a heartfelt thank you to these thoughtful and inspiring leaders. The education community benefits from their expertise to better help students learn and develop. Learn more about these leaders in the full report.



**Read more in our full report**

about what we've heard from educators and what the future holds.

Available July 2023.

[www.PowerSchool.com](http://www.PowerSchool.com)