



The EdTech Debate: A Call for Balance | Member Brief Summary

This is a public summary of a Member Brief designed exclusively for CoSN members and their teams. [The complete 9-page Brief can be accessed by CoSN members here](#). To learn more about the value of CoSN membership, visit <https://www.cosn.org/membership-overview/>.

Issue Recap

The role of educational technology in K-12 classrooms has sparked significant debate. Critics often cite concerns such as stagnant test scores, increased screen time, and inconsistent results from digital tools. These critiques, frequently based on narrow studies, have led to calls for reduced investment in EdTech.

However, data and real-world experiences tell a more nuanced story. When thoughtfully implemented and paired with effective teacher training, EdTech has proven capable of fostering personalized learning, improving accessibility, and promoting educational equity. In a digital-first world, preparing students for success requires integrating technology to enhance, not hinder, teaching and learning.

The full brief on which this summary is based equips CoSN members with evidence-based responses to common criticisms, highlights strategies for successful integration, and emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to EdTech adoption.

Clarifying the Core Debate

Critics argue that EdTech fails to deliver clear returns on investment, often pointing to studies showing minimal impact on standardized test scores. Yet such evaluations typically ignore critical factors such as implementation quality, teacher preparedness, and the specific needs addressed by EdTech, particularly for students with disabilities.

Research highlights the importance of intentionality:

- **Skill-Specific Tools:** Software targeting specific skills can boost outcomes, particularly in math.
- **Blended Learning:** Combining online and in-person instruction enhances engagement and provides cost-effective alternatives.
- **Assistive Technologies:** Tools like text-to-speech and closed captioning improve access and equity for students with disabilities.

Purposeful EdTech Integration

Effective EdTech use hinges on aligning tools with instructional goals. Frameworks like the **Value Add of Technology on Teaching (VATT)** help evaluate whether tools enhance teaching and learning

outcomes. Features like immediate feedback, personalized pathways, and data-driven insights empower teachers while fostering student engagement.

John Hattie's research underscores that technology should complement—not replace—high-quality teaching. Adaptive platforms and connected classroom technologies can enhance differentiated instruction, formative assessments, and student agency, improving both outcomes and engagement.

Beyond Test Scores: Redefining Success

EdTech's value extends beyond traditional metrics. Preparing students for a technology-driven economy requires fostering skills like digital literacy, collaboration, and critical thinking. Tools such as augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and flipped classroom models encourage active, experiential learning, enabling students to explore complex concepts and develop 21st-century competencies.

Challenges and Solutions

1. **Teacher Training:** Many educators lack the preparation needed to integrate EdTech effectively. Comprehensive, ongoing professional development is essential.
2. **Implementation Strategy:** Without thoughtful planning, even the best tools can fail. Frameworks and validated assessment methods can help educators evaluate and refine EdTech use.
3. **Equity and Access:** Ensuring all students benefit from EdTech requires addressing infrastructure gaps and fostering digital literacy skills.

Moving Forward

EdTech should be viewed as a tool to support educational goals, not a standalone solution. Effective integration requires:

- Strategic planning and evidence-based frameworks.
- High-quality teacher training and professional development.
- Continuous improvement in tool selection and implementation.

For CoSN members, addressing skepticism involves emphasizing that EdTech's value lies in its intentional use. By promoting balanced, research-backed strategies, stakeholders can advocate for technology that enhances teaching and learning while preparing students for a digitally connected future.

[Click here to access the complete Member Brief:](#) Exclusive to CoSN members only.