CoSN

Leading Education Innovation

2025 State of EdTech District Leadership

CoSN
Leading Education Innovation

2025 State of EdTech District Leadership

This report was made possible by the generosity of our partners:

CDW

Lightspeed Systems®

AASA
THE SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ASSOCIATION

sogolytics

MCH Strategic Data

Contents

Introduction	3
Key Findings	7
Artificial Intelligence	10
Cybersecurity	16
Digital Connectivity	20
Strategic Initiatives	23
EdTech Leader Profiles	28
Staffing	34
Devices	37
Interoperability	41
Summary	42
About the Survey	43

Introduction

Results from this year's survey were compiled from 645 surveys. With the help of our partners CDW Education, LightSpeed Systems, AASA, Sogolytics, and MCH, the 41-question survey was emailed to EdTech Leaders in U.S. school systems and data collected January 14 through March 2, 2025. Findings for each item in the report exclude participants who did not answer a specific question. Percentages in graphs may not total 100 due to rounding. For details about the demographic breakdown of survey respondents see "About the Survey" on page 43.

CoSN conducts an annual survey to learn more about how the roles of K-12 EdTech Leaders are evolving. As districts continue to modernize their digital infrastructure, their role and importance expand. EdTech Leaders are integral to ensuring the safety of technology used for curriculum as well as technology used for building security. They help shape the learning environments intended to support all students, teachers, admins, and parents.

Now in its 12th year, the survey report provides important benchmarks on emerging AI technologies and evolving cybersecurity measures. It also provides valuable insights that can help inform the decisions of other education stakeholders —superintendents, school boards, and business officers—on priorities and budgets. Additionally, the survey findings guide CoSN's resource and program development. Understanding districts' needs enables CoSN to provide the support and the professional development that EdTech Leaders and their teams require to cultivate engaging learning environments.

Existing CoSN resources include:

- **Framework for Essential Skills (www.cosn.org/framework)—** The Framework of Essential Skills of the K-12 CTO comprises three primary professional categories in the education technology field: Leadership and Vision, Educational Environment, and Managing Technology and Business. Each of these categories includes 10 essential skill areas, outlining the responsibilities and knowledge needed to be a viable educational technology leader. Each of these skills, and the knowledge needed to demonstrate them, are included in CoSN's Certified Education Technology Leader (CETL) certification exam.

- **The Digital Leap Success Matrix—(www.cosn.org/successmatrix)** School system leaders need guidance to advance their technology goals and to overcome challenges, both unexpected and expected. The Digital Leap Success Matrix outlines the practices needed to create a successful

digital school system. The Matrix is aligned to CoSN's Framework of Essential Skills of the K-12 CTO.

- **Peer Reviews (www.cosn.org/peer-review)**—A rigorous process for assessing a school system's digital readiness is based on CoSN's Digital Leap Success Matrix.

- **Cybersecurity Resources (www.cosn.org/cybersecurity)**—A suite of resources that address cybersecurity in K-12 organizations around planning, prevention & preparation, implementation, responses and more.

- **CoSN's NIST Cybersecurity Framework Resource Alignment for K-12 v2.0 (www.cosn.org/Cybersecurityframework)**— Seamlessly aligns the NIST Cybersecurity Framework with a wealth of free and CoSN member resources, empowering school districts to fortify their cyber programs and safeguard their educational environments against evolving digital threats. Use this site to find the resources you need to build and expand your cybersecurity program.

- **Trusted Learning Environment (TLE) (www.cosn.org/Trusted)** — A program designed to help K-12 schools and districts build strong, effective privacy programs and a culture of trust and transparency with 25 essential privacy practices. Districts can apply for a mini seal in each TLE practice area, a step-by-step approach, or apply for the full TLE at once.

- **Student Data Privacy (www.cosn.org/privacy)**—Resources to help you understand student data privacy requirements and create and improve your student data privacy program while building trust across your community.

- **CoSN Digital Access Dashboard—(www.cosn.org/digitalaccess)** The Digital Access Dashboard, an innovative and practical tool designed to help school districts and communities leverage data to close digital access gaps.

- **Gen AI Readiness and Maturity Tool (www.cosn.org/ai)**—To empower school districts to assess their preparedness for responsible integration of Generative AI, CoSN and the Council of Great City Schools (CGCS) collaborated to develop the online K-12 Generative AI Maturity Tool, which expands upon the K-12 Generative AI Readiness Checklist.

- **K-12CVAT (www.cosn.org/K-12CVAT)** — CoSN K-12 Community Vendor Assessment Tool that measures vendor risk for K-12 schools, districts, and education service districts. To ensure that your school system information and constituents' Personal Identifiable Information (PII) are protected, the K-12CVAT should be used as part of procurement processes, including RFP processes and purchase evaluations.

- **Interoperability Toolkit (www.cosn.org/interoperability)**— Resources to help districts increase the interoperability of their academic and operational systems.

- **Network & Systems Design (www.cosn.org/networkdesign)** — A suite of resources to help schools and districts design and implement resilient technology infrastructure that adapts to shifting and sustainable technologies which support the increasing demands of teaching and learning.

- **EmpowerED Superintendent Resources (www.cosn.org/superintendents)** —Leadership strategies based on imperatives for technology leadership and action steps for strengthening the technology leadership team (created in partnership with AASA, The Superintendents Association). Resources include One-Pagers on critical focus areas:
  - Self-Assessments for Superintendent, CTO, District Leadership Team
  - Financing Technology Innovations: Strategies and Tools for Determining 1) Total Cost of Ownership and 2) Value of Investments

- **Driving K-12 Innovation (www.cosn.org/k12innovation)** — Annual report on key trends around emerging technologies to transform learning, organized around Hurdles, Accelerators, and Tech Enablers.

- **What is K-12 Technology Environmental Sustainability? (www.cosn.org/sustainability)**—Resources to help school leaders implement environmentally sustainable practices in educational technology, including guidance on procurement, energy efficiency, and responsible device management.

- **Accessibility (www.cosn.org/accessibility)**—CoSN offers the AI & Accessibility in Education Blaschke Report, guidance, and policy support to help school leaders ensure educational technology is accessible, inclusive, and compliant with legal standards.

In addition to these public resources, CoSN provides members with extensive member-only resources (such the ASBO/CoSN Toolkit for collaboration between the school business official and CTO) as well as a collaborative resource by CASEL/CoSN on technology and social emotional learning (SEL). Plus, CoSN issues Member Exclusive Briefs that provide guidance on key emerging technologies such as the report on generative AI, "ChatGPT—Above the Noise" as well as EdTechNext reports such as "Low-Cost, High-Impact Technologies to Address Digital Equity." CoSN also provides Member Exclusive Briefs offering guidance on emerging technologies, such as "The EdTech Debate: A Call for Balance," which explores the growing debate around educational technology in K-12 classrooms and addresses concerns about screen time and academic impact—often based on limited or anecdotal evidence.

Key Findings

Digital Connectivity

If the Supreme Court finds that the administrative structure of the E-Rate program is unconstitutional, it will have a major and catastrophic impact on the vast majority of districts (74%) and will affect students in all areas—rural, town, suburban, and urban. Nearly half of respondents (48%) in cities describe the impact to be catastrophic. Only 2% of respondents reported the loss would not have any impact on their district. Support for off-campus broadband access is decreasing post-pandemic, with two-thirds (66%) of districts providing support, down from three-quarters (74%) in 2023. Alarmingly, only 7% of districts report all their students have access to adequate bandwidth at home; support for ensuring home broadband for learning should instead be *increasing*, enabling every student to have the same access to learning opportunities.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The overwhelming majority (94%) of EdTech Leaders see AI's potential for positive impact in education, with productivity the highest rated area. Generative AI (Gen AI) was ranked the top tech priority, with the vast majority (80%) of respondents working in districts with Gen AI initiatives.

Initiatives are proceeding with caution, as EdTech Leaders also have concerns about AI— primarily with how it can be used to create new types of cybersecurity threats and new risks to student data privacy. However, only 1% have taken the drastic measure to completely ban its use. It is more common for districts to allow or disallow AI based on use case. A majority (57%) of districts use or are exploring the use of tools to detect AI-generated answers in student work. A real challenge in education may not be policing the use of AI but creating assessments that enable students to demonstrate their preparedness to use AI.

Cybersecurity

Most school districts do not have dedicated funding to keep their networks and data secure. Districts typically use general funds to pay for their cybersecurity efforts (61%). The vast majority (78%) are spending cybersecurity dollars on monitoring, detection, and response tactics. For many districts (44%) cybersecurity monitoring is being outsourced. It is the most commonly outsourced IT function, likely due to the cost and difficulty of acquiring and maintaining in-house expertise. Perhaps because of these investments, EdTech Leaders overall do not perceive their districts to be at high risk for any of the threats listed on the survey. The biggest concern is phishing, with 27% assessing it as high risk to their network. The next-highest categories, each with just 13%, are the unauthorized disclosure of student data and ransomware attacks. These risk assessments do not appear take into account the value of K-12 student data to cyber criminals.[1] While districts may be spending more money and focused on securing their systems, the risks are still high and higher than in the better-funded, better-resourced business sector. With current federal policy changes and federal funding cuts to the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC), which had provided cybersecurity training at no cost, cybersecurity risks are likely to increase.

Interoperability

The number one barrier to improving interoperability is not the lack of agreed-upon standards—which survey respondents ranked the least problematic—but a lack of understanding by leaders. The chaotic Covid period and ESSR funding resulted, as one respondent lamented, in “the purchase of software licenses with little thought and effort to integrate with other systems.” While there are procedures around the purchase of digital tools, free tools that are downloaded in an ad hoc manner put district data at risk. Increasingly, districts are adopting processes to vet free tools before they are integrated in their digital ecosystems. The most significant improvements are the practices

[1] https://www.cisecurity.org/insights/white-papers/2025-k12-cybersecurity-report

for an “approved” apps list now used by 59%, compared to 42% two years ago. As districts modernize their infrastructure, interoperability of their digital tools becomes a critical consideration linked to data privacy and essential for operational efficiencies.

EdTech Leaders

While the demographic makeup of EdTech leadership remains relatively unchanged in many respects, this year’s data shows a shift in gender representation. The percentage of female respondents declined to 29%, compared to 37% in the previous year. This drop is notable, though it may be influenced by changes in survey participation, including fewer responses from leaders in rural districts and towns—groups that have historically shown more variability in representation. This degree of year-over-year change in the respondent pool is unusual and should be monitored moving forward.

Longitudinal data reveals another important shift: In 2015, a majority of EdTech leaders (58%) reported coming from an education background. In contrast, the majority (52%) in 2025 report a background in technology. This shift may reflect evolving job expectations, as the scope of EdTech leadership increasingly includes infrastructure, cybersecurity, and systems integration in addition to instructional support. Age data also points to changing dynamics in the field: 61% of female respondents are 50 or older, while 52% of male respondents are under 50.

Artificial Intelligence

Since ChatGPT's introduction into the digital landscape in 2022, the use of generative AI has proliferated at breathtaking speed. Gartner predicts that "by 2026, more than 80% of enterprises will have used generative AI APIs or models." [2] Districts have struggled to determine how best to address generative AI in the school setting. Year-over-year survey results indicate that districts are making progress in sorting out AI strategy. There was a significant drop in districts without a defined approach, from 40% to 27%. More districts are embracing generative AI this year, at 30% versus 22% last year. Defining the approach based on use case—a best practice—had a positive uptick, from 31% to 41%. Total bans are a bit rarer, down from 3% last year to only 1% this year.

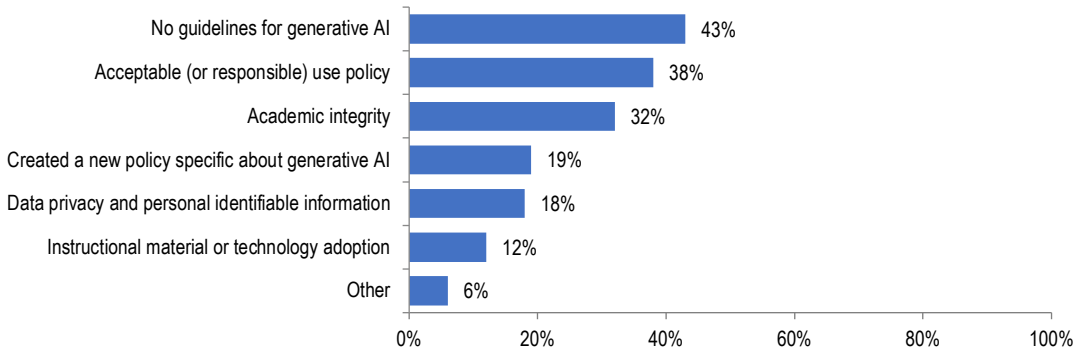
Year-over-Year Comparison of Districts' Generative AI Usage

Approach	2025	2024
Ban it	1%	3%
Embrace it	30%	22%
Depends on the use case	41%	31%
Not yet defined	27%	40%
Not sure	1%	3%

For the first time, we have asked about school districts' guidelines for generative AI. Forty-three percent (43%) of districts do not have guidelines for the use of generative AI. However, the majority of districts (57%) have integrated guidelines about generative AI into board-approved policies. By far the most common are updating policies for Acceptable/Responsible Use (38%) and Academic Integrity (32%). Nineteen percent (19%) have created a new policy specific to generative AI; 18% address generative AI in their policies about Data Privacy and Personally Identifiable Information (PII); 12% incorporated updates into their Instructional Material/Technology Adoption policies; and 6% indicated policies not listed on the survey.

[2] https://www.gartner.com/en/articles/hype-cycle-for-genai

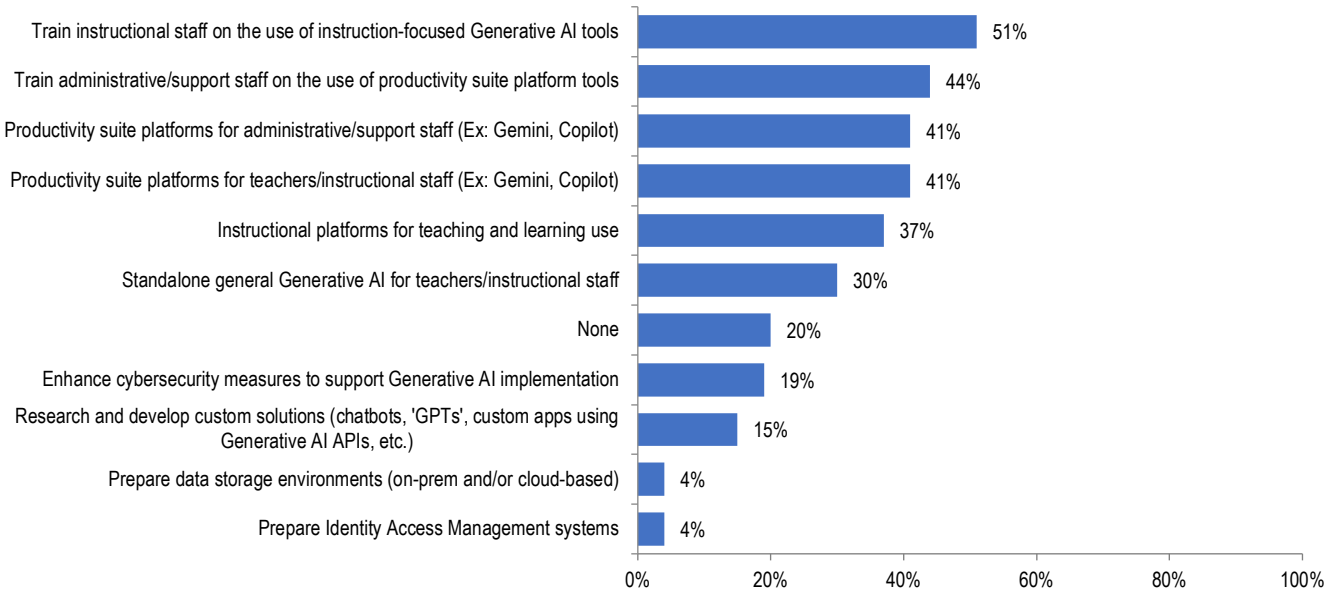
Guidelines for Generative AI Use



AI Today in K-12

The vast majority (80%) of respondents reported that their districts have generative AI initiatives underway, or plan to in the current school year. More than half (51%) have efforts for training admin and support staff on the use of instruction-focused generative AI tools. The next most popular initiatives are centered on productivity: training for administrative/support staff to use the productivity suite platform tools (44%), productivity suite platforms for administrative/support staff (41%), and productivity suite platforms for teachers/instructional staff (41%). More than a third (37%) of districts are implementing initiatives for instructional platforms for teaching and learning, and 30% a standalone general generative AI for teachers/instructional staff. Nineteen percent (19%) of districts are enhancing cybersecurity measures to support their generative AI implementation, and 15% have initiatives to support their custom development of generative AI solutions. A small percentage of districts (4%) are using generative AI either to prepare data storage environments or to prepare identity access management systems.

Current Generative AI Initiatives



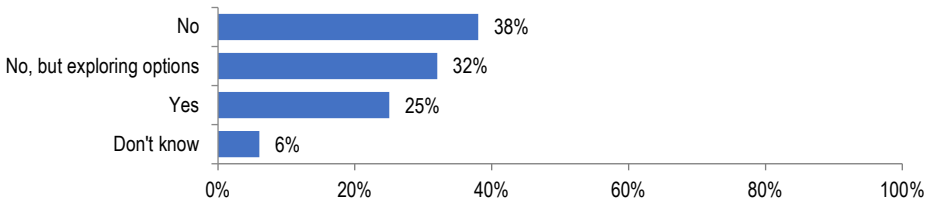
AI & Cheating

Combating cheating and plagiarism has always been a challenge for teachers. Generative AI poses unique challenges for assessing student work and 25% of districts are turning to AI-detector tools for help. Another 32% are exploring using those AI tools. However, 38% are neither using nor exploring their use. Research has shown these tools can be biased: "GPT detectors frequently misclassify non-native English writing as AI-generated."[3] The use of AI-detectors is complicated further by the application of tools designed to make AI content undetectable. With mixed efficacy results from either type of tool (to detect or make undetectable) and the breakneck pace of AI advancements, technology solutions for checking student work for authenticity are not foolproof. It is important to note that Gartner predicts "By 2028, over 70% of teaching, research and student-submitted content at all levels of education will

[3] https://www.cell.com/patterns/fulltext/S2666-3899(23)00130-7?_returnURL=https%3A%2F%2Flinkinghub.elsevier.com%2Fretrieve%2Fpii%2FS2666389923001307%3Fshowall%3Dtrue

be developed with support from generative AI."[4] A real challenge in education may not be policing the use of AI but creating assessments that enable students to demonstrate their preparedness to use AI.

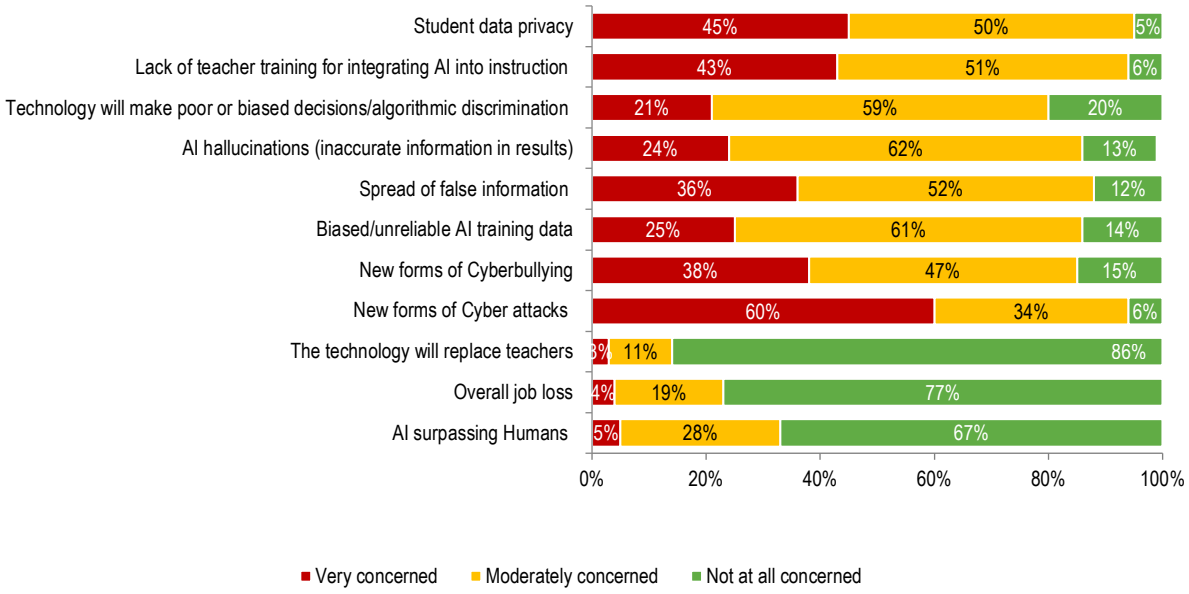
Use of Tools to Detect AI-Generated Answers in Student Work



By far, the biggest concern regarding the use of AI in education is that it can enable new forms of cyberattacks, with 60% of respondents indicating they are very concerned about it. Other top concerns are AI's potential impact on student data privacy (45%), and 43% very concerned about the lack of teacher training for integrating AI into instruction. More than a third are very concerned about new forms of cyberbullying (38%) and the spread of false information (36%). The veracity of AI responses was a major concern for a fifth of respondents, with 25% citing biased/unreliable AI training data, 24% AI hallucinations, and 21% biased/algorithmic discrimination as very concerning. EdTech Leaders expressed the least amount of concern about AI replacing teachers, with 86% indicating they were not at all concerned. Large majorities of respondents have no concerns about AI's impact on overall job loss (77%) or AI's ability to surpass humans (67%).

[4] https://www.gartner.com/doc/reprints?id=1-2KFHHRJZ&ct=250304&st=sb

Degree of Concern Regarding the Use of AI in School Districts



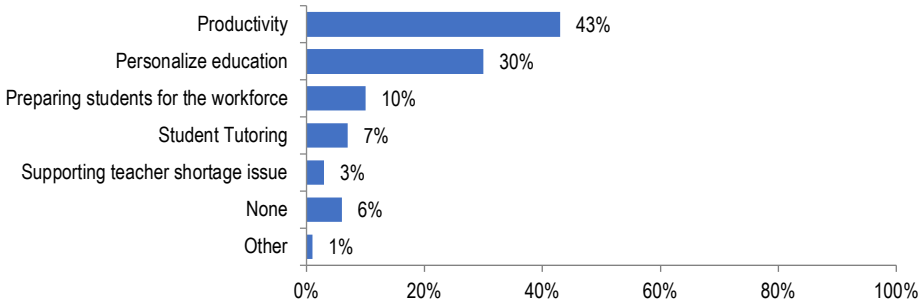
Perceptions About AI

The overwhelming majority (94%) of EdTech Leaders see AI's potential for positive impact in education. Results are virtually unchanged from last year. According to 43% of respondents, AI's greatest potential is in productivity. Its potential positive impact on personalized education is seen by 30%. Fewer see AI's potential impact in other areas; only 10% see AI potential for preparing students for the workforce. This response is curious, as AI is already integrated into workforce habits: "75% of knowledge workers use AI at work."[5] The low response rate might reflect how the question was interpreted, but AI skills are needed to prepare students for the workforce along with reading, math, and collaboration skills. Only 7% see AI's potential for student tutoring. It is expected this perception will change if, as early

[5] https://assets-c4akfrf5b4d3f4b7.z01.azurefd.net/assets/2024/05/2024_Work_Trend_Index_Annual_Report_6_7_24_666b2e2fafceb.pdf

research such as a recent Harvard study[6] indicates, that AI-powered tutors can provide significant learning gains beyond traditional methods. Only 3% see AI's potential to help with teacher shortages and 1% for areas not listed in the survey.

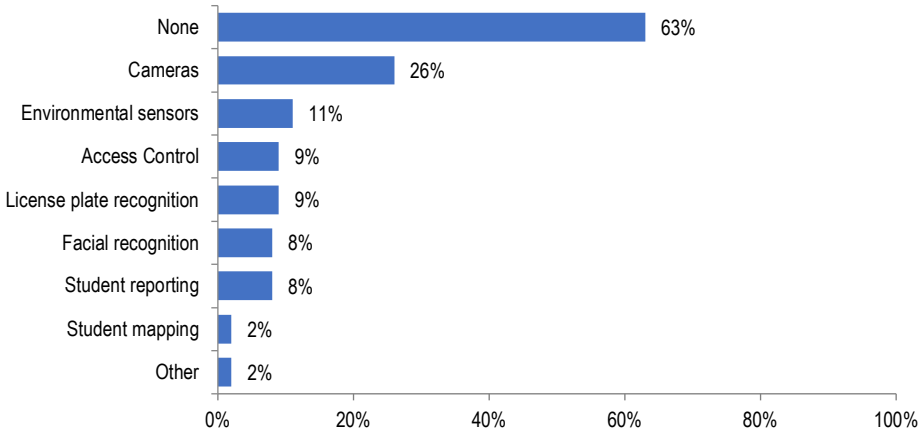
AI Potential for Positive Impact in Education



Most districts (63%) do not use AI as a tool to enhance school safety. AI is leveraged the most with cameras, at 26%. The only other category to hit double-digit usage is environmental sensors, at 11%. Four categories are used at similar rates: access control (9%), license plate recognition (9%), facial recognition (8%), and student reporting (8%). At 2%, student mapping was the least-employed use case, along with other uses not listed on the survey at 2%.

[6] https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2024/09/professor-tailored-ai-tutor-to-physics-course-engagement-doubled/

Use of AI to Enhance School Safety

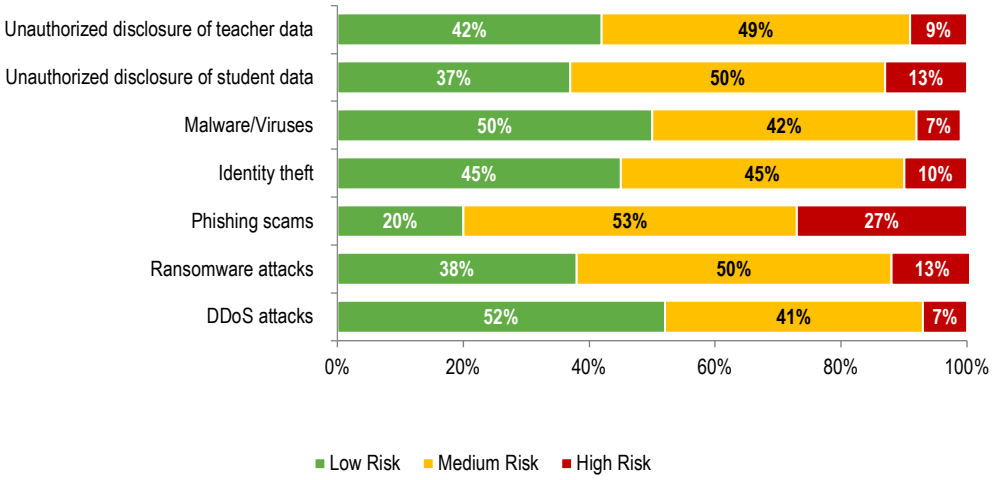


Cybersecurity

Year over year, the perceived risk level of the various cyber threats has been consistent and surprisingly low. None of the cyber threats listed on the survey are perceived as high risk by most respondents. Only one threat type—phishing scams—was rated as high risk by more than a quarter (27%) of respondents. The second-highest threat assessments are given to unauthorized disclosure of student data and ransomware attacks, with 13% perceiving each of them to be high risk threats. Only a tenth (10%) rate identity theft as high risk. Even fewer, only 7%, consider their network security to be at risk from malware and 7% from DDoS attacks. The majority of respondents (52%) rated DDoS attacks as low risk, making it the threat EdTech Leaders are least worried about. These risk assessments do not appear take into account the value of K-12 student data to cyber criminals.[7] Risks are very high considering the data security incidents experienced by better-funded, better-resourced public and business sector organizations. With current federal policy changes and the funding cuts to the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC) which had provided cybersecurity training at no cost, cybersecurity risks for districts are poised to increase.

[7] https://www.cisecurity.org/insights/white-papers/2025-k12-cybersecurity-report

Perception of Network Security Risks



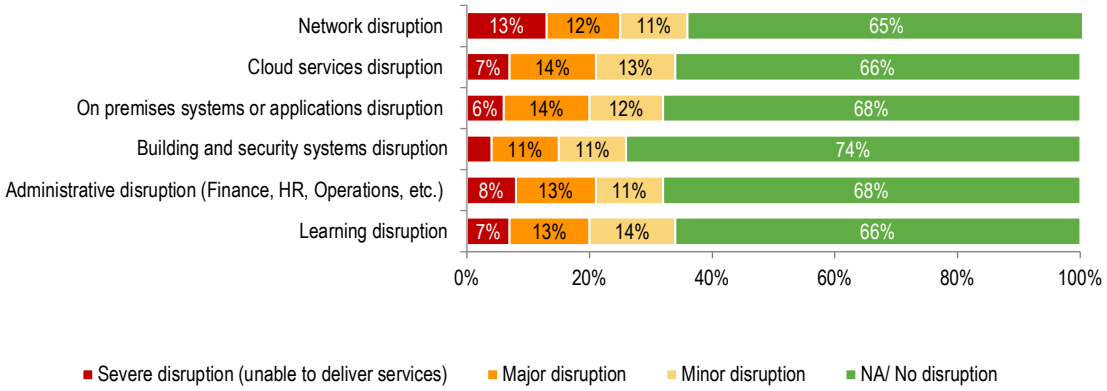
Respondents were asked about cyberattacks—full-blown successful attacks that disrupt district operations or damage district systems. The large majority of respondents report their districts did not experience a disruption in any of the specified areas. However, that doesn't rule out impact by cyberattacks. Building and security systems were the least affected by cyberattacks yet 26% of districts experienced a disruption, including 4% that categorized them as severe. Roughly a third of districts experienced disruptions in the other categories: network disruption 36%, cloud service 34%, on-premises Systems/Application 32%, Administrative (Finance, HR, Operations, etc.) 32%, Learning Disruption 34%. Of those, network disruptions were the most harmful, with 12% describing them as major disruptions and 13% as severe, halting the delivery of services. Note that the Multi-State Information Sharing & Analysis Center (MS-ISAC) survey reported that 82% of schools and districts have experienced some kind of "cyber incident."[8] The MS-ISAC survey uses the NIST definition[9] of a cybersecurity incident that encompasses a much broader range of detrimental or potentially detrimental actions than a cyberattack as defined on this survey.

---

[8] https://learn.cisecurity.org/2025-k12-cybersecurity-report-download

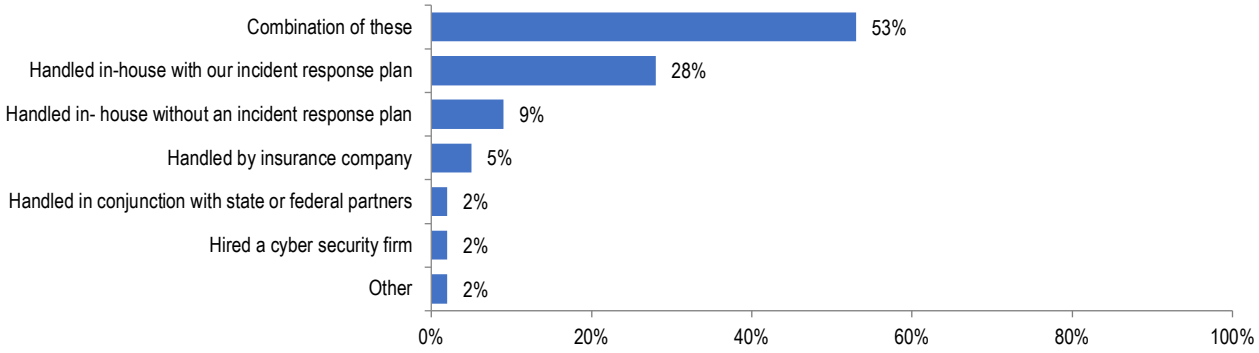
[9] https://csrc.nist.gov/glossary/term/cyber_incident

Disruptions Caused by Cyberattacks



More than half (53%) of districts use a combination of methods to manage disruptions, with 28% indicating that an in-house response plan was the most common strategy used. Another 9% of incidents are handled internally without a response plan. Management by insurance companies accounted for 5%, partnering with state or federal agencies to manage incidents (2%), hiring a cyber security firm to manage (2%), and 2% citing other methods not listed on the survey.

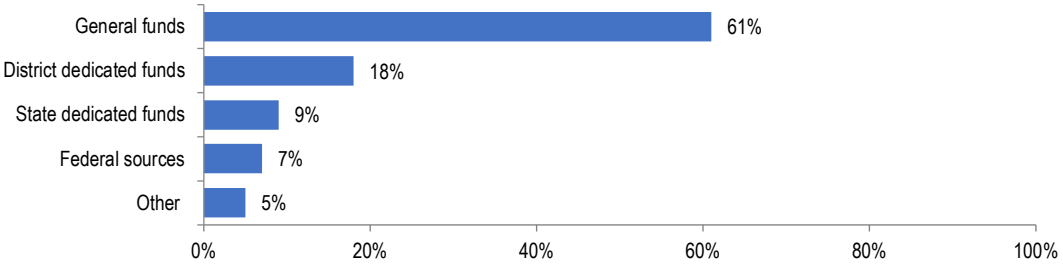
Management of Disruptions Caused by a Cyberattack



Most districts do not have dedicated cybersecurity funding (61%) and use general funds to support most of their cybersecurity efforts. The next largest

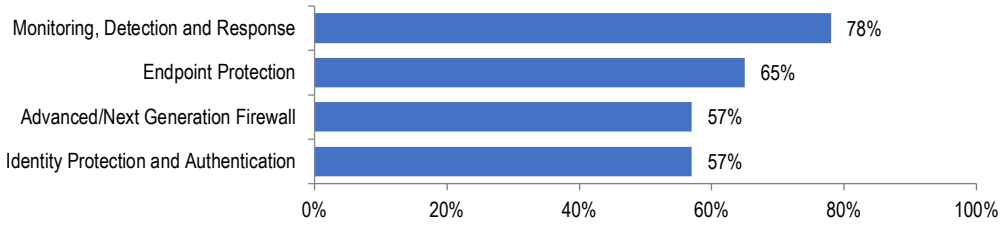
source of cybersecurity funding comes from district dedicated funds (13%). To a much lesser extent, state-dedicated funds (9%) federal sources (7%) or other sources (5%) are used to pay for district cybersecurity measures.

How the Majority of Cybersecurity Efforts are Funded



The majority of districts are investing in cybersecurity solutions. More than three-quarters (78%) invest in cybersecurity monitoring, detection, and response. Sixty-five percent (65%) incorporate endpoint protection, 57% use identity protection and authentication, and another 57% an advanced/next-generation firewall.

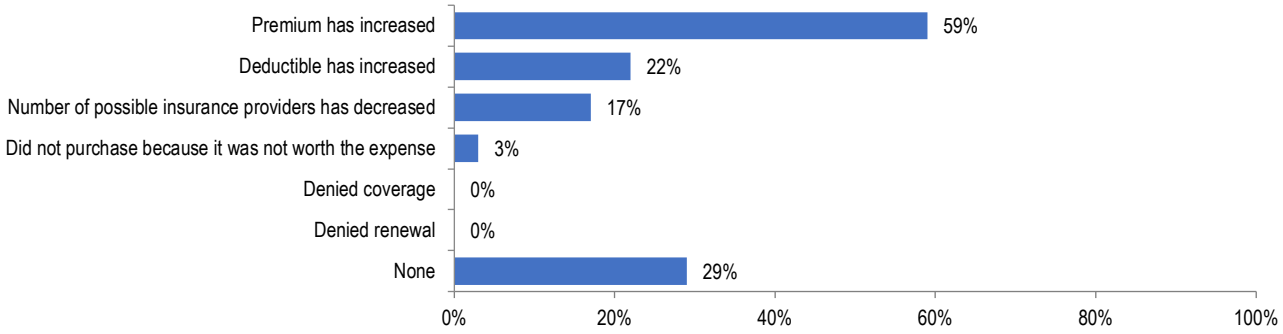
Cybersecurity Investments



Over two-thirds of districts (71%) experienced changes to their cyber insurance policy this year. Of those with changes, 59% report increases in their premiums and 22% an increase in their deductible. The number of possible cybersecurity insurance providers has decreased for 17% of respondents. Fewer insurance carriers can lead to higher costs. The high

cost of cyber insurance led 3% of districts to not purchase coverage. Districts denied coverage or coverage renewal account for less than .5% each. (*Note that responses are reported in whole numbers and response rates less than .5% are rounded down to zero*)

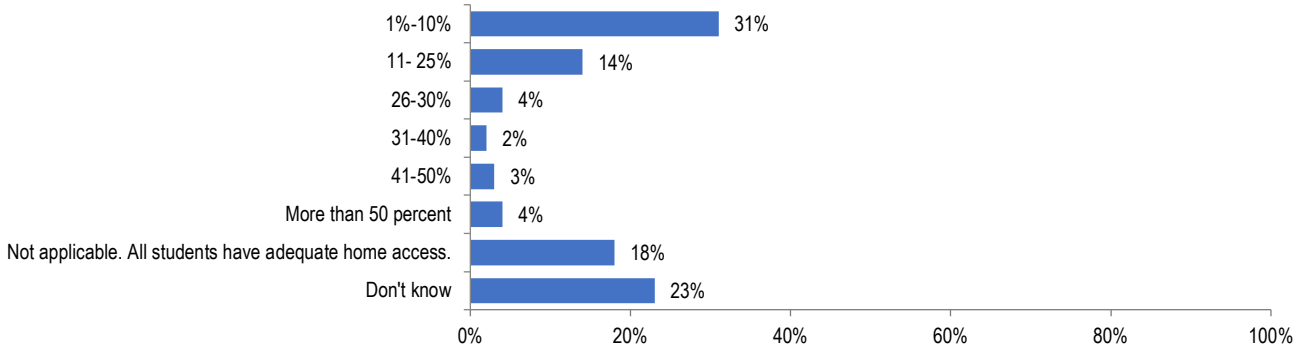
Changes to Cyber Insurance Policy



Digital Connectivity

Less than a fifth (18%) of districts report all their students have access to devices at home. However, the majority of respondents (54%) work in districts where 50% or fewer of students lack devices—including 31% in districts where 10% or less of students don't have access to devices. Only 4% of respondents report that more than half of their students do not have access to devices at home, and 23% do not know.

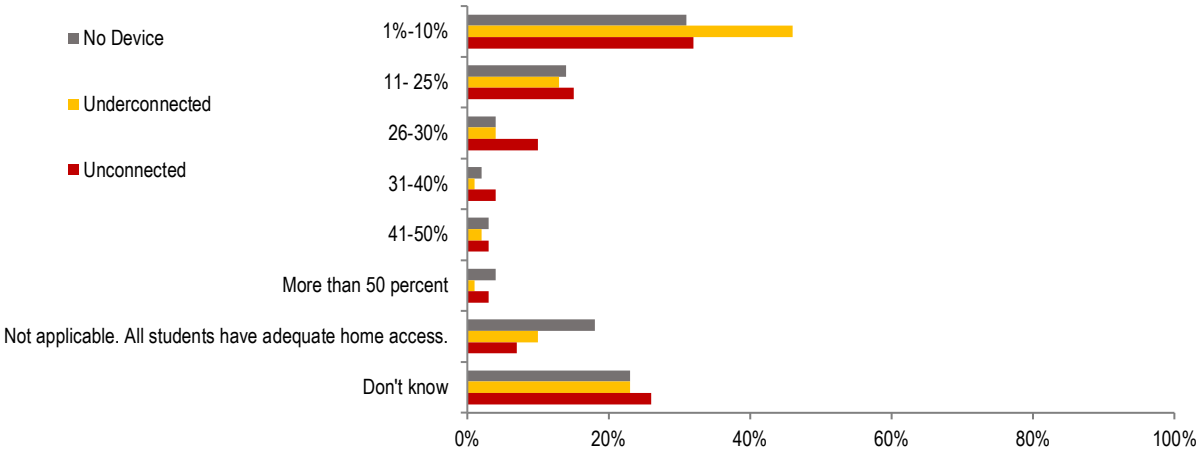
Percentage of Students without Access to Devices at Home



Access to a device is only one requirement for off-campus learning. Students also need access to high-speed internet. The following chart shows district percentages of students without devices, without home broadband access (unconnected), and

those without access to sufficient broadband to deliver standard video conferencing (under connected). These three factors together provide a clearer picture of home digital access. While (18%) of districts report all their students have access to devices, only 7% report all their students have internet access at home, and only 10% report all their students have internet access that is adequate. The positive news is that for almost a third (31%) of districts, students without home devices account for 10% or less of their student body. However, 46% of districts report that up to 10% of their students lack sufficient connectivity at home. Another significant data point is that roughly a quarter of respondents do not know the status of their students' home digital access (23% don't know if their broadband has sufficient bandwidth, and 26% don't know if students have broadband at all). Until these unknowns are known, an understanding of home digital access will be incomplete.

Percentage of Students Without Adequate Home Access



Support for off-campus broadband access is decreasing. Two-thirds (66%) provide support, down from three-quarters (74%) in 2023. District-owned hot spots for students is the most common strategy but less than half (49%) provide them, compared with 58% two years ago. Across the board, dwindling support to address home access is an apparent trend. Thirty percent (30%) promote federal broadband benefit program compared to 35% in 2023. Promotion of provider-sponsored service is down to 22% from 25%. Free/subsidized home internet service is offered by 8% of districts versus 15%. While the percentage of

districts providing Wi-Fi on school buses has been the same 9% year over year, it is down from 14% in 2023. Less than half of districts who provided free/subsidized district-sponsored wireless in 2023 are doing so today, down to 4% from 10%. Those partnering with libraries for loaner hotspots have been consistent over the three years, at 7% and 8%. Those using other strategies not listed on the survey have been consistent as well, at 3% and 4%. With the end of the Emergency Connectivity Fund Program and diminishing federal funding, there are limited options to support home connectivity. At the time of this writing, the Lifeline program, which provides discounts for communication services, remains one of the dwindling resources available to help low-income families overcome the digital divide.

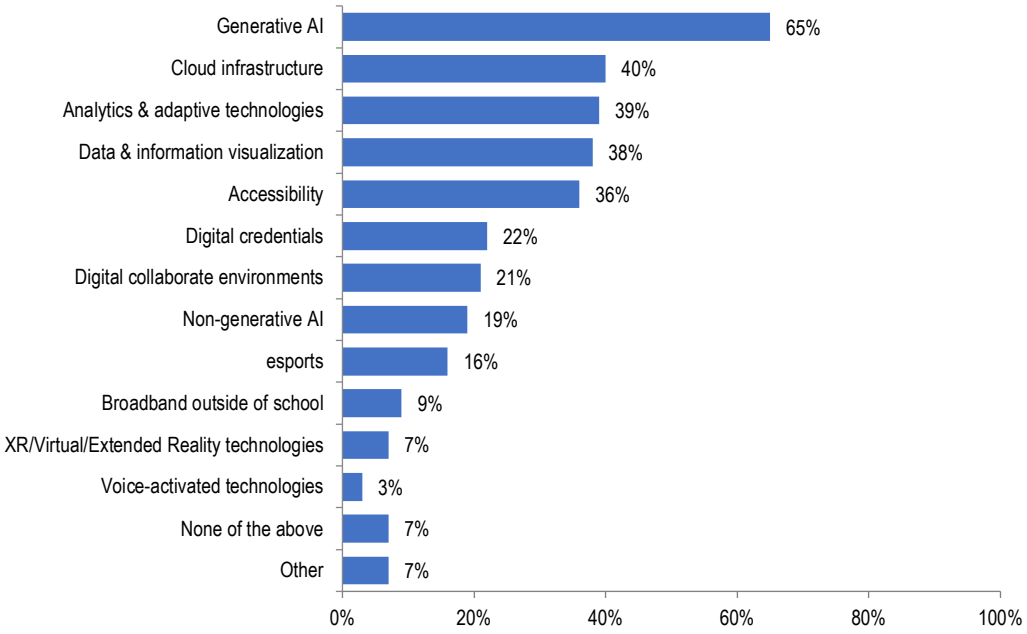
Off-campus strategies for broadband access	2025	2024	2023
Do not provide any off-campus services	34%	31%	26%
Provide district-owned hot spots for students	49%	49%	58%
Promote federal broadband benefit programs for low-income families	30%	36%	35%
Promote provider-sponsored services	22%	27%	25%
Provide free/subsidized home Internet access for low-income families	8%	7%	15%
Provide Wi-Fi on school buses	9%	9%	13%
Provide free/subsidized district sponsored wireless access to the community	4%	10%	10%
Partner with library providing loaner hotspots	7%	8%	8%
Other	3%	4%	4%

Strategic Initiatives

When asked to indicate their top 5 tech enablers—tools that will help drive innovation for the year ahead—the majority (65%) ranked Generative AI (Gen AI) as number one. This is not surprising considering Gen AI's impact across all sectors, including education. The same result was found by CoSN's international Driving K-12 Innovation[10] Advisory Board—Gen AI is the top tech enabler. The other top-ranked enablers are cloud infrastructure (40%), analytics and adaptive technologies (39%), data and information visualizations (38%), and accessibility (36%). Digital credentials follow, with more than a fifth (22%) rating them a top priority. As progress is made to make digital credentials more portable and more easily verifiable, they are likely to become a bigger priority for districts. The only other initiative with more than a fifth is digital collaborative environments (21%). Non-generative AI was ranked a top initiative by 19%. At only 16%, eSports was surprisingly low on the priority list. Last year 39% of EdTech Leaders said their school had an eSports initiative; perhaps this year's lower ranking indicates that eSports is firmly established in many districts and is no longer on an initiative list. With less than a tenth of respondents considering them a top priority are broadband outside of school (9%), extended reality technologies (7%), voice-activated technologies (3%), and other initiatives not listed on the survey (7%).

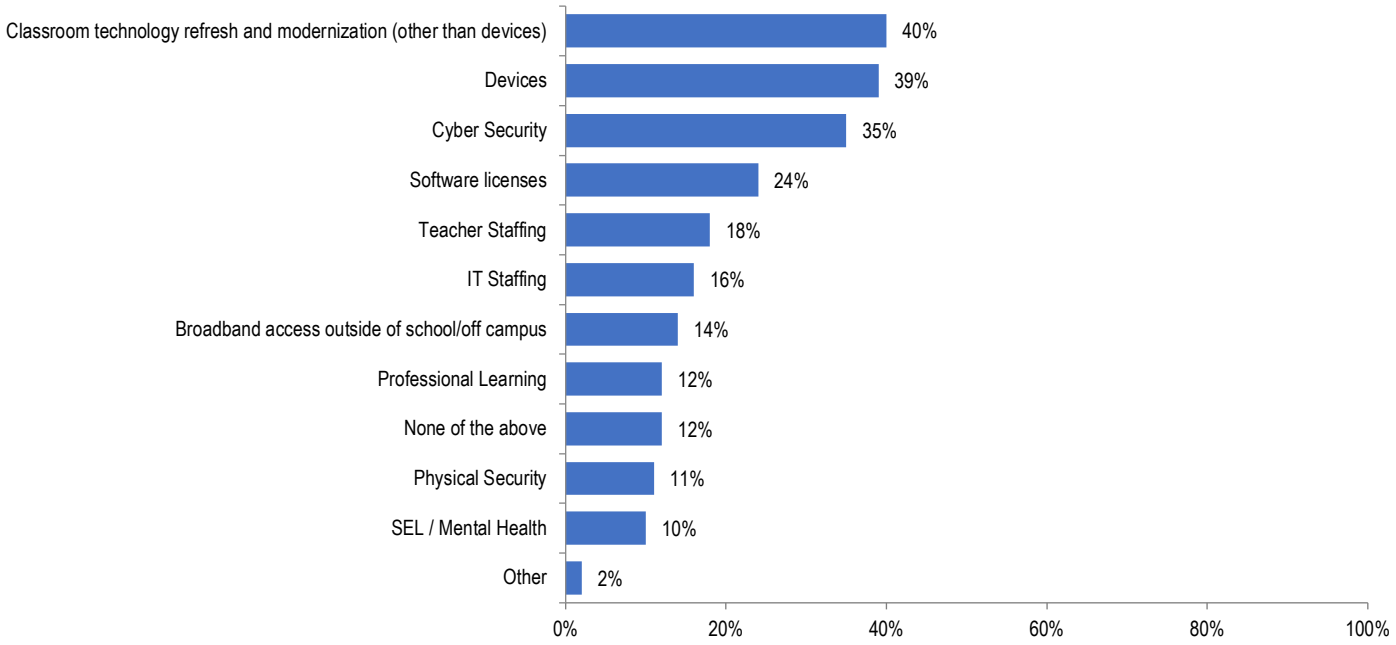
[10] https://www.cosn.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/2025_CoSN-Driving-K12-Innovation-Report-V15.pdf

District Tech Enabler Priorities



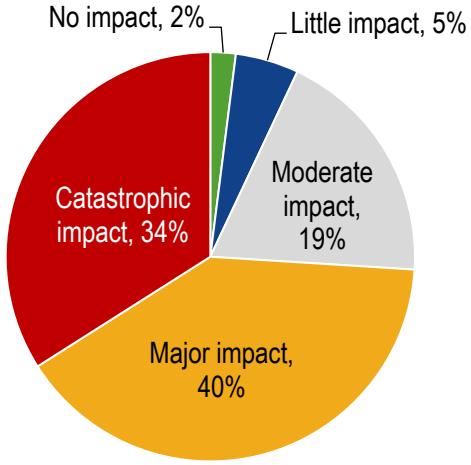
With the end of federal emergency funding, classroom technology refresh and modernization (other than devices) is the area at the greatest risk of projected reduced funding, at 40%. Devices (39%) and cybersecurity (35%) are the next-highest areas of lost funding. Beyond these major likely reductions, respondents reported many other areas which may see reduced funding. Of those, software licenses has the most concern at 24%, followed by teacher staffing (18%) IT staffing (16%), off campus broadband (14%), professional learning (12%), physical security (11%), SEL/mental health (10%) and other areas not listed on the survey (2%). These low-risk assessments suggest that districts put sustainability planning in place, had not relied on emergency funds to support these areas, or perhaps (in the case of off-campus broadband) did not provide the service.

Areas at Risk as Federal Emergency Funding Ends



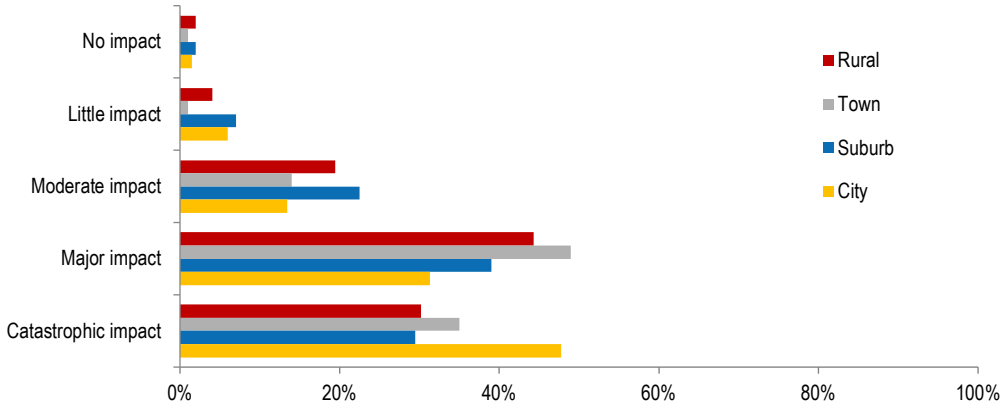
Survey respondents were highly concerned if E-Rate funding under the Universal Service Fund was eliminated. Such an action would have significant negative impact, according to the vast majority (74%) of districts. In fact, 40% categorized such a loss as major and 34% as catastrophic.

Impact of the Termination of E-Rate's Universal Service Fund



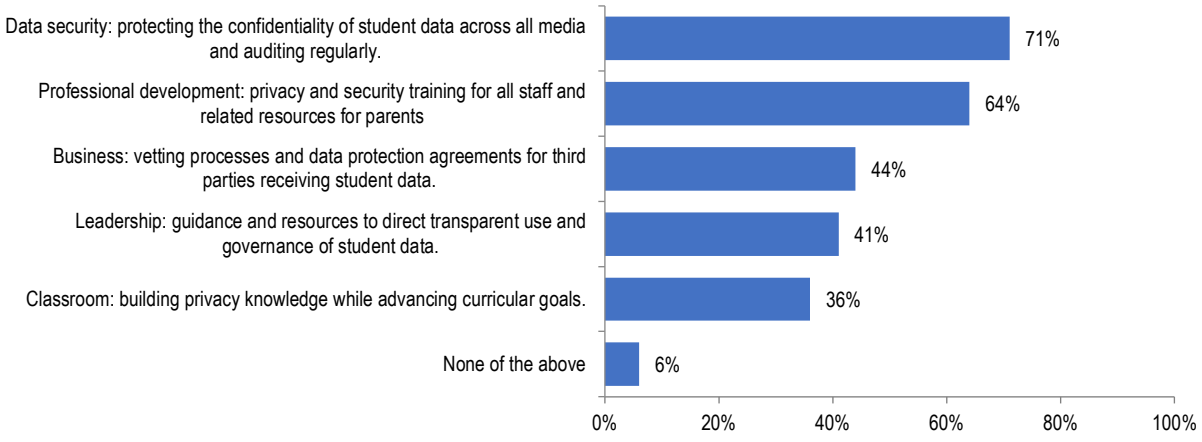
All districts would be negatively impacted if E-Rate was eliminated. Nearly half of respondents (48%) in cities describe the impact to be catastrophic. Rural districts combined major/catastrophic assessment is 74% (44% as major and 30% rating the impact as catastrophic). The suburbs are expected to fare the best, as they have the lowest combined major/catastrophic assessment 69% (39% major impact and 30% catastrophic).

Impact of the Termination of E-Rate's Universal Service Fund Segmented by Metro Status



The overwhelming majority of districts (94%) have plans to improve or focus on their privacy practices. Data security—protecting the confidentiality of student data—is the practice most districts (71%) are focusing on, with 64% on training for staff and parents. Forty-four percent (44%) are adjusting their business practices for vetting agreements of third parties that receive student data; 41% are improving their guidance and governance practices for student data. More than a third (36%) are improving their classroom practices by building privacy knowledge while advancing curricular goals.

Planned Privacy Practice Improvements



There is progress on procurement practices. Increasingly, districts are adopting processes to vet free tools before they are integrated in their digital ecosystems. Review by IT is now required by 69%, up from 60% in 2023. The most significant improvements are the practices of an "approved" apps list, now used by 59% compared to 42% two years ago, and its logical companion—an established process for adding to the "approved" list—is now in place for a majority (56%) of districts, up from 40%. More than a third (39%) have designated a person who is authorized to approve free apps, compared to 30% in 2023. License renewal review at the school level is the only process that has not garnered more uptake over the past two years, currently at 23% versus 22%. Hopefully, the 12% of respondents without a process (an improvement from 20% without 2 years ago) will adopt a strategy soon. Free apps can put district systems and student data at risk.[11]

[11] Note: With resources like Common Sense's Privacy Program, iKeepSafe Certified Products, Project Unicorns Interoperability Certified Edtech Products, and 1EdTech's TrustEd Apps Directory, districts have ready access to information that will help them keep their data safe.

Process to Vet Free Tools	2025	2024	2023
Require review by IT	69%	68%	60%
Have a list of "approved" apps	59%	54%	42%
Have an established process for adding to "approved" list	56%	48%	40%
Have a designated person with authority to approve	39%	35%	30%
Review all license renewals at the school level	23%	21%	22%
Do not have a process	12%	14%	20%
Other	4%	3%	2%

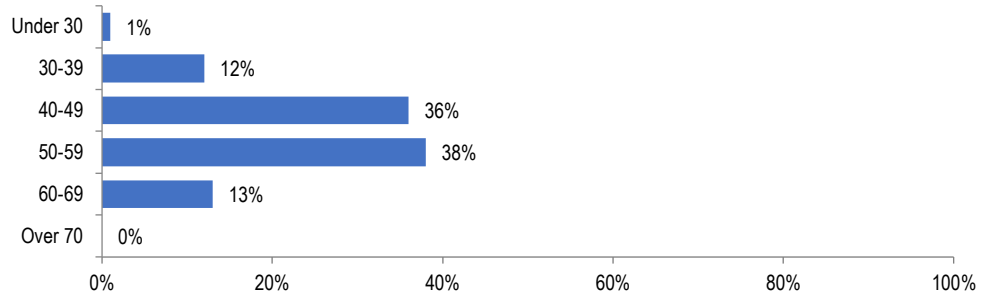
EdTech Leader Profiles

This year's data shows a shift in gender representation. The percentage of female respondents declined to 29%, compared to 37% in the previous year. This drop is notable, though it may be influenced by changes in survey participation—including fewer responses from leaders in rural districts and towns, groups that historically have shown more variability in representation. This degree of year-over-year change in the respondent pool is unusual and should be monitored moving forward.

EdTech Leadership	2025	2024
Female	29%	37%
Male	69%	62%
Prefer Not to Answer	1%	1%
Prefer to Self-Identify	0%	0%

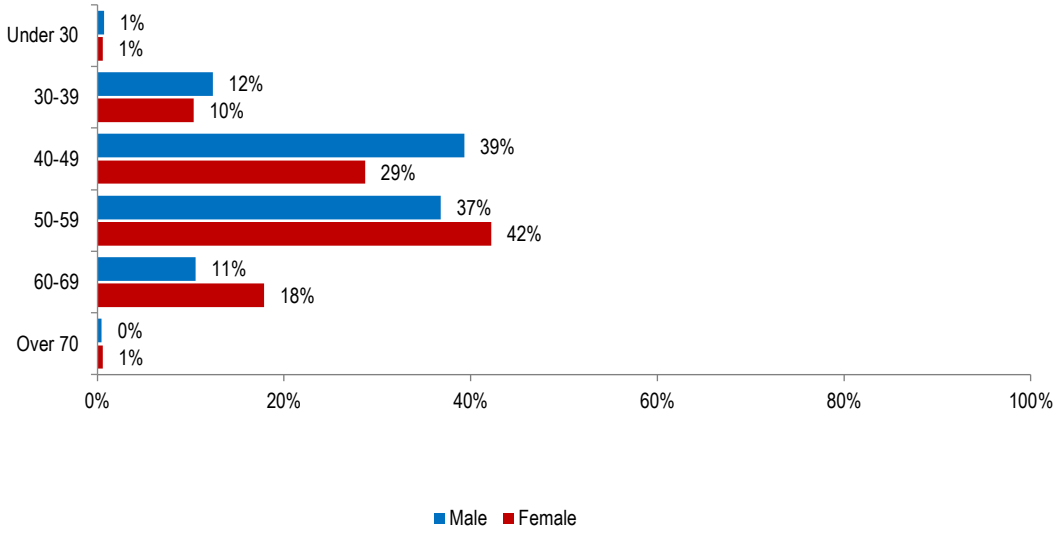
The relative ages of EdTech Leaders is as expected, with 74% mid-career—with the largest group (38%) in their 50s, and those in their 40s accounting for 36%. EdTech Leaders over 59 account for 13%, with those under 40 (13%) making up the balance (including 1% under 30).

Ages of EdTech Leaders



When looking at the ages of EdTech Leaders broken down by male/female, the data show that men in the position tend to be younger than women. More than half (52%) of men are under 50; the majority of women (61%) are 50 and older.

EdTech Leader Ages segmented by Male/Female



Note: Since participants aged 70+ made up less than 0.5% of the total sample, the percentage was rounded down to zero. However, this proportion exceeded 0.5% among women when disaggregated by gender identity and was rounded up to 1%.

EdTech Leadership is overwhelmingly White and has been so consistently for the past decade. The percentage is essentially the same as it was 10 years ago: 88% in 2015 and 89% this year.

Racial/Ethnic Make-up of EdTech Leadership

EdTech Leadership	2025	2015
White, Caucasian, or European	89%	88%

Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx account for the next-largest category of respondents at 4%. Those identifying as Black, African American, or Sub-Saharan African account for 2%. Those identifying as Asian account for another 2%. The remaining two categories—American Indian or Alaska Native and Multiracial/Multiple races—each account for 1% of respondents. Three percent (3%) chose not to answer the question.

EdTech Leadership by Race & Ethnicity

Race & Ethnicity	Percentage
White, Caucasian, or European	89%
Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx	4%
Black, African American, or Sub-Saharan African	2%
Asian (East, Central, South)	2%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1%
Multiracial/Multiple races	1%
Other	0%
Prefer not to answer	3%

The sum may exceed 100% since participants could select more than one answer.

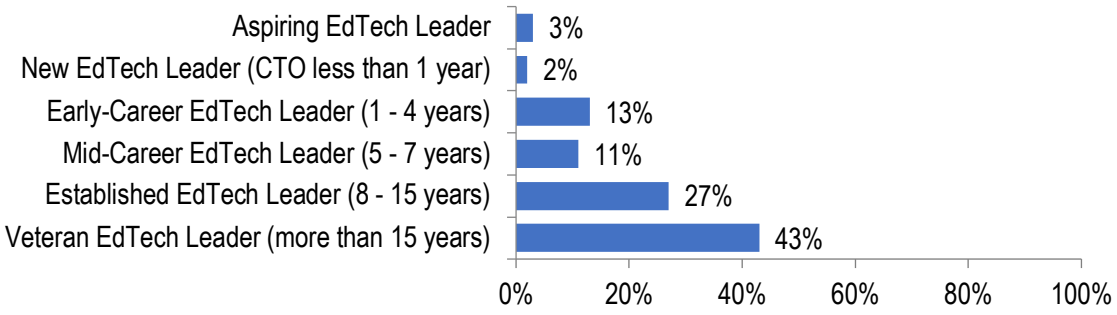
Over the past ten years there has been a noticeable change in EdTech Leaders' professional backgrounds. In 2015, a majority of EdTech leaders (58%) reported coming from an education background. In contrast, the majority (52%) in 2025 report a background in technology. This shift may reflect evolving job expectations, as the scope of EdTech leadership increasingly includes infrastructure, cybersecurity, and systems integration in addition to instructional support. The percentage of EdTech Leaders with a business/management background also decreased from 7% to 4% in 10 years.

Comparison of EdTech Leadership by Professional Background

Primary Professional Background	2025	2015
Education / Instruction	43%	58%
Technology / Technical	52%	31%
Business / Management	4%	7%
Other	2%	3%

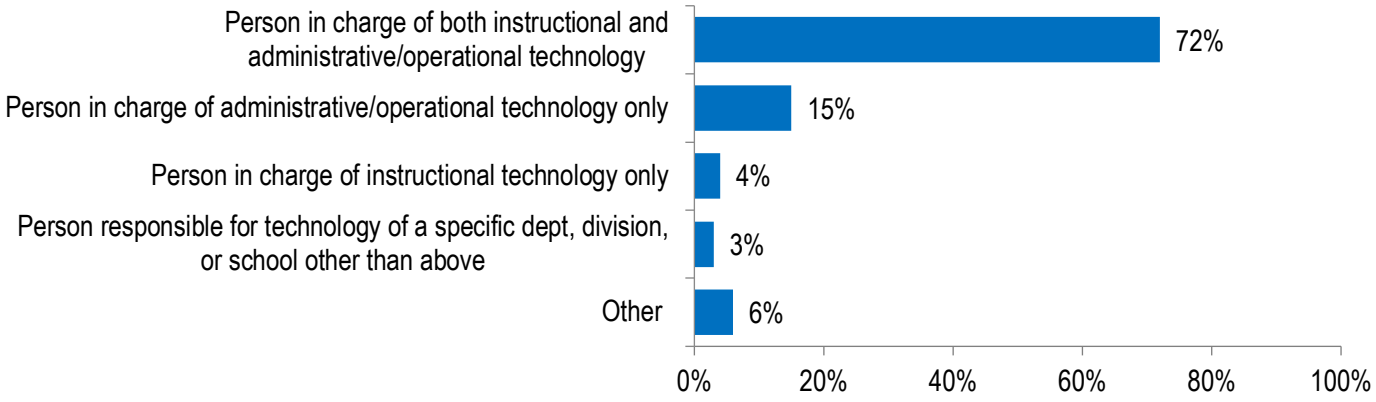
Not surprisingly, the vast majority (70%) of EdTech Leaders have many years of experience, with veteran leaders (more than 15 years of experience) accounting for 43% and those with 8-15 years of experience accounting for 27%. Mid-career EdTech Leaders (5-7 years) account for 11% and early-career 13%. EdTech Leaders with less than a year's experience and those aspiring to become EdTech Leaders combine for 5% of respondents.

Career Stages of EdTech Leaders



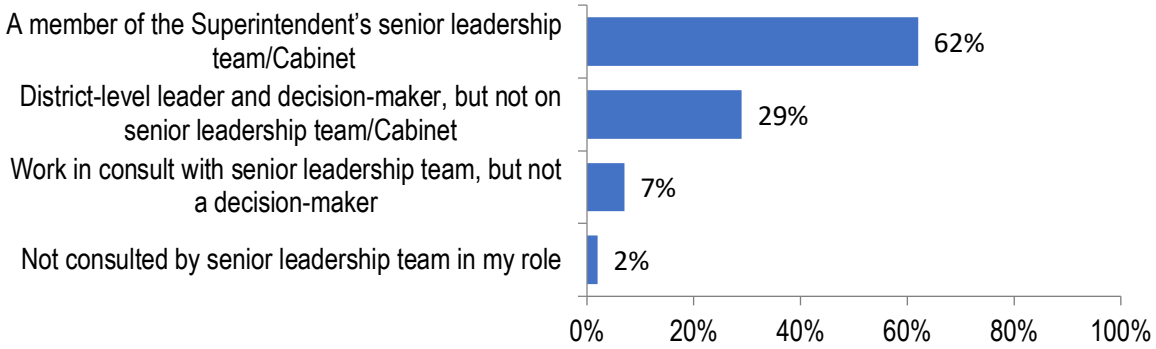
A large majority (72%) of EdTech Leaders oversee both instructional and administrative technology, with the next largest segment (15%) overseeing administrative technology only. Only 4% have responsibilities limited to instructional technology. Three percent (3%) report responsibilities that are not district-wide and 6% report responsibilities not outlined as a survey response options.

EdTech Leaders' Primary Job Responsibilities



The overwhelming majority (91%) of EdTech Leaders are also district-level leaders, including 62% who serve as a member of their superintendent's cabinet. Another 7% work in consult with their senior leadership team though they are not decision-makers. Only 2% report they are not consulted by their senior leadership on decisions. As virtually all district decisions intersect with technology considerations in some way, it is encouraging to see this high degree of EdTech Leader engagement. As one respondent put it, "as long as IT is involved from the start, we are much better off."

EdTech Leaders' Involvement on District-Level Decisions



A trend towards higher salaries is apparent when looking at EdTech Leader compensation over the past three years. Nearly half (49%) earned less than $100K in 2023 compared to 30% in 2025. The percentage of EdTech Leaders earning $130K or more has more than doubled, from 18% in 2023 to 37% this year. More than half of respondents (53%) now report salaries of $100-159,999K versus a 43% two years ago. There are also more EdTech Leaders in the higher salary brackets, more than twice as many in the $160-200K range (14%, up from 6%). Those earning more than $200K increased to 3% from 1% over the same period.

3-Year Salary Comparison

Salary Range	2025	2024	2023
Less than $70K	9%	18%	21%
$70 - 99,999K	21%	25%	28%
$100-129,999K	33%	27%	23%
$130-159,999K	20%	12%	11%
$160-200K	14%	7%	6%
More than $200K	3%	2%	1%
Did not provide	1%	8%	10%

Segmenting the salary data by metro status, a divide becomes evident. EdTech Leaders working in rural areas and towns are paid less than their counterparts in the suburbs and cities. More than half (57%) of EdTech Leaders in rural districts and 44% in towns do not earn a six-figure salary, compared to 16% in cities and 9% in suburbs. Suburban districts have the most earning $100,000 or more at 91%. At 30%, suburbs also have the largest percentage of EdTech Leaders earning $160,000 more, including 8% who are paid more the $200,000.

Top EdTech Leader Salary by Metro Status

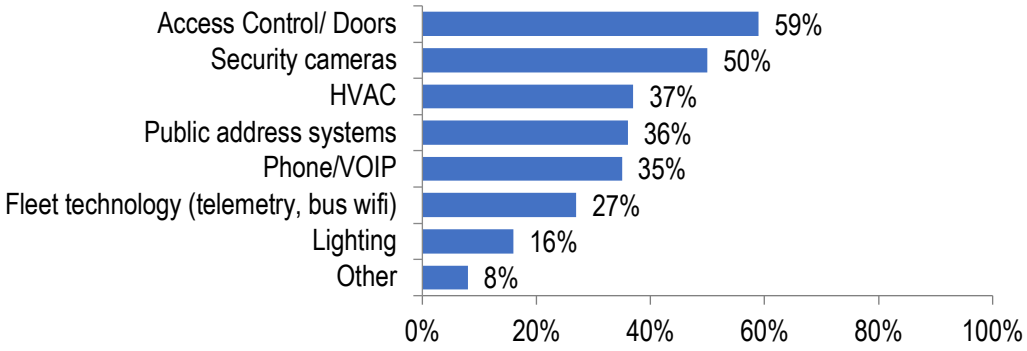
Salary Range	Rural	Town	Suburb	City
Less than $70K	26%	8%	0%	2%
$70 - 99,999K	31%	34%	9%	14%
$100-129,999K	26%	43%	33%	25%
$130-159,999K	7%	12%	28%	37%
$160-200K	9%	2%	22%	20%
More than $200K	0%	0%	8%	3%

Staffing

Scope of Technology

Respondents were asked what new devices/technologies they now support that were not supported three years ago. The majority (59%) report that access control for physical spaces was a new addition to their workload and half (50%) cite security cameras. At lower rates, HVAC (37%), public address systems (36%), and phone/VOIP (35%) are also new responsibilities. As these are not new technologies for schools, it is likely that the majority of districts already had these integrated into the workloads of EdTech teams. Less than a third (27%) report the addition of fleet technology support and only 16% lighting. Another 8% report technology not listed on the survey.

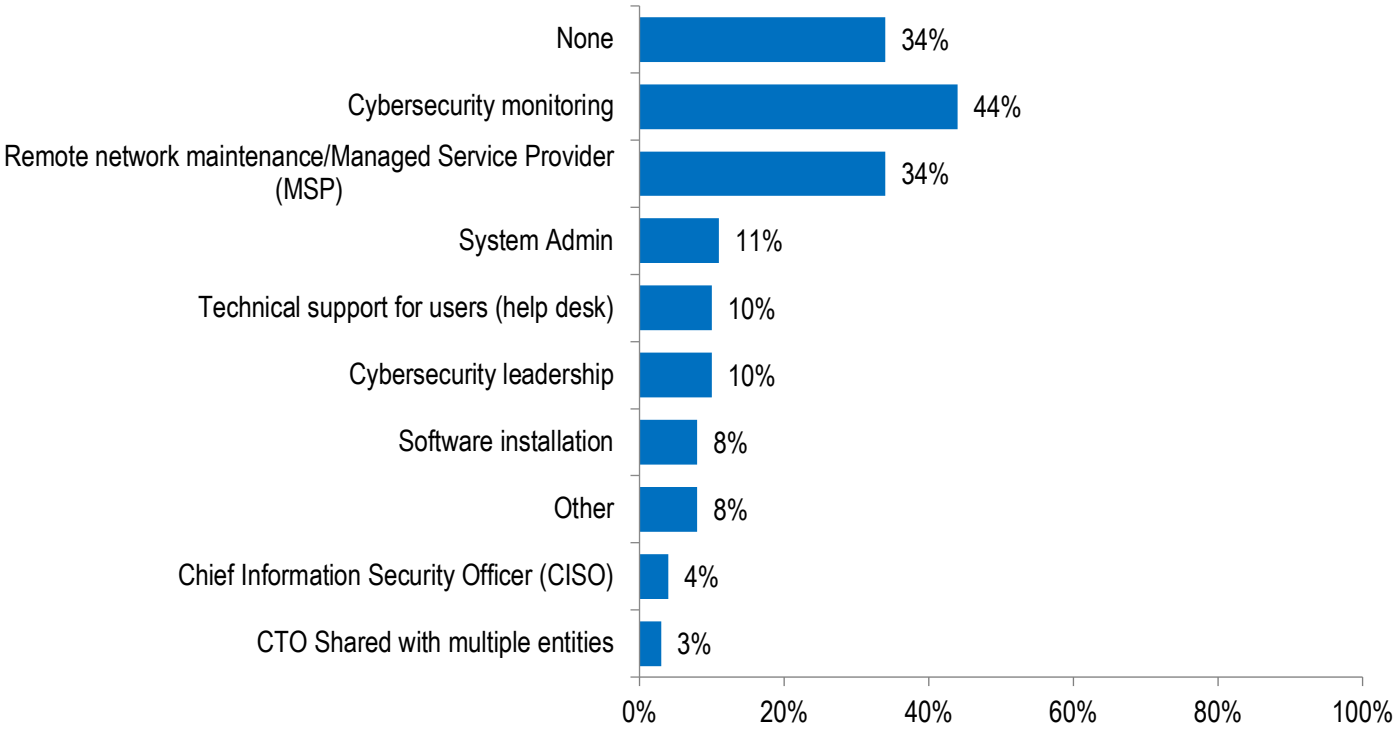
New Devices/Technologies Supported



Outsourcing

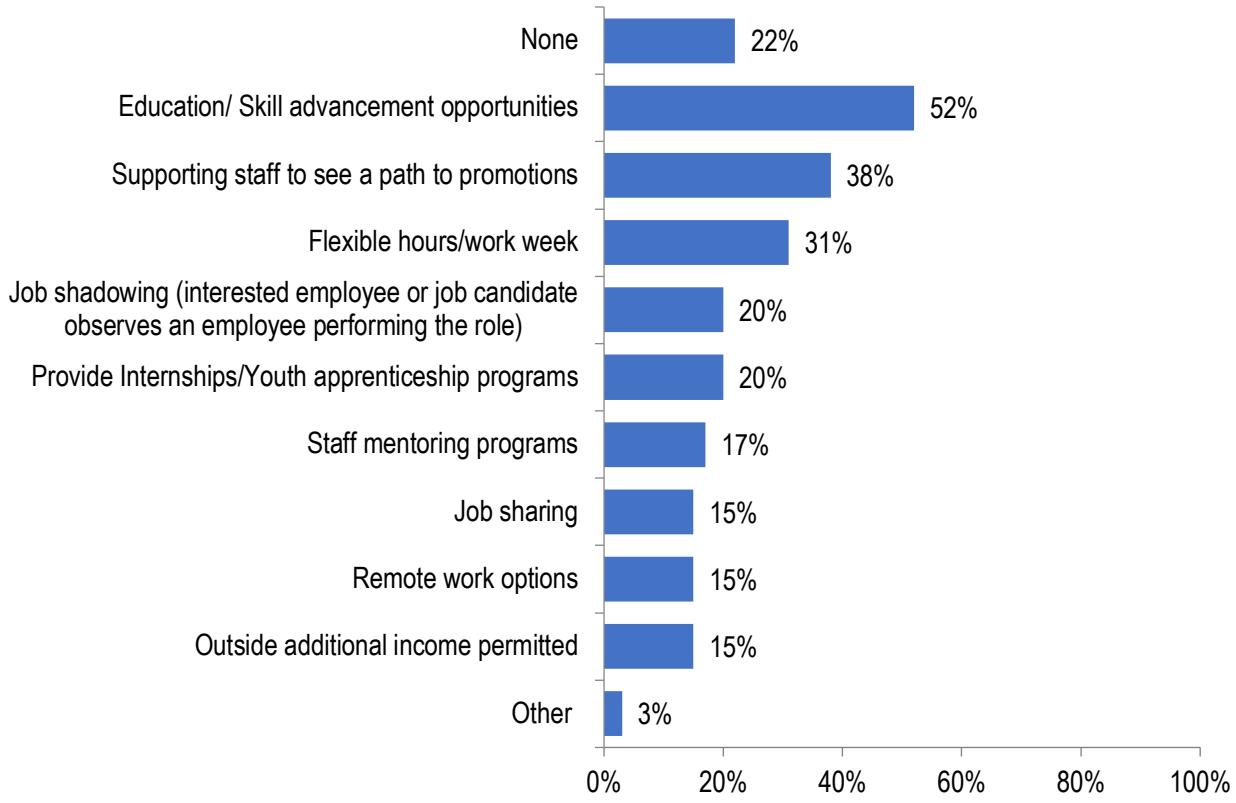
While the most of districts (66%) use outsourcing strategies for IT functions, the specific functions that are outsourced vary. No single function was outsourced by a majority of respondents. Cybersecurity monitoring is the most common function to be outsourced at 44%, followed by remote network maintenance at 34%. Other functions with usage in the double digits are system admin (11%), help desk (10%) and cybersecurity leadership (also 10%). Software installation is outsourced by 7% of districts. The functions outsourced the least are the CISO position (4%) and a shared CTO position (3%). Eight percent (8%) of districts are also outsourcing other functions not included on the survey.

Outsourcing Strategies for Key IT Functions



Hiring and retaining staff is a challenge across all functional areas and levels. However, more than a fifth of respondents (22%) report that their district doesn't employ any strategies for keeping or attracting IT staff. For those that do provide incentives, about half (52%) promote the education/skill advancement opportunities their district provides. The next most popular strategy is supporting their staff's path for promotion, at 38%. Nearly a third (31%) offer flexible hours/work weeks. Job shadowing and youth apprentice programs are used in equal measure at 20% each. Staff mentoring is used by 17% of districts. The least-common methods are remote work, job sharing, and permitting outside additional income, each used by 15% of districts. Other strategies not listed on the survey are used by 3%.

Strategies to Incentivize Recruitment and Retention of IT Staff

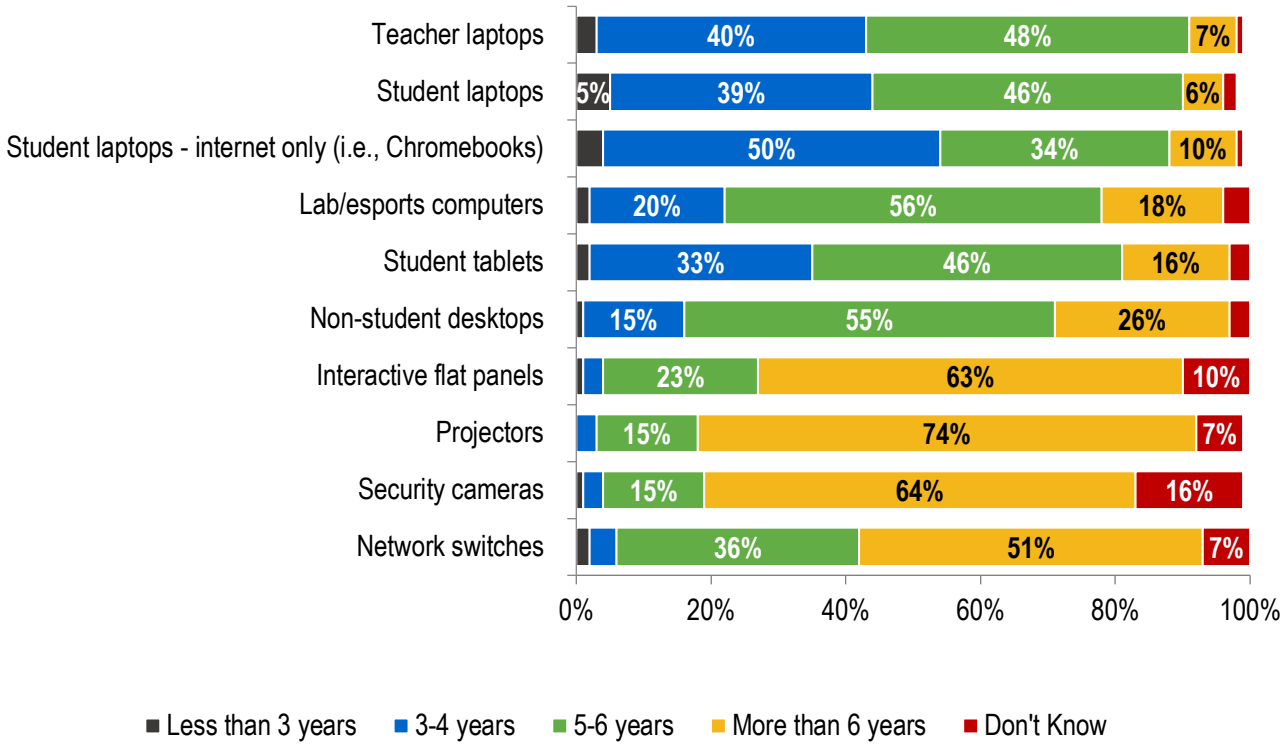


Devices

Refresh cycles vary by device type. The device with the longest shelf life is the projector, with nearly three-quarters (74%) of districts waiting more than six years before replacement. The majority also extend replacement beyond six years for security cameras (64%), interactive flat panels (63%) and network switches (51%). Student internet-only laptops have the shortest shelf life, with 54% replacing them in less than five years. This cycle is noticeably shorter compared to standard student laptops, with 44% replacing them in less than five years. Districts replacing teacher laptops in less than five years has a similar rate of 43%. The majority replace lab/esports equipment and non-student desktops in a 5–6-year period, at 56% and 55% respectively.

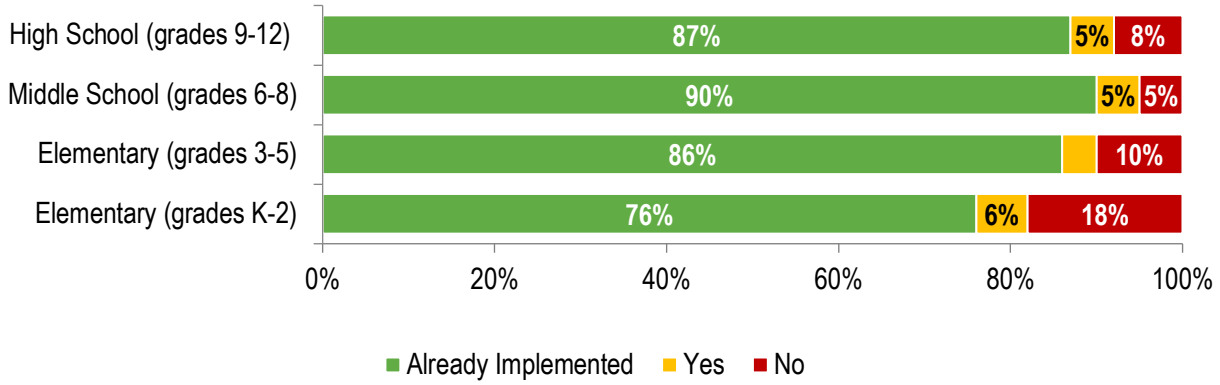
The most common refresh cycle for student tablets is also 5-6 years, with 46% following that schedule.

Refresh Cycle by Device Type



1:1 initiatives have largely been implemented across all grade levels. The overwhelming majority (90%) of districts have provided devices or have a BYOD policy in their middle school, 87% for high school, and 86% for elementary grades 3-5. More than three-quarters (76%) have implemented in grades K-2. Over the past 5 years, the degree of 1:1 implementation has been most marked in the younger grades. Although the earlier survey did not break down elementary grade levels, in 2020 only 43% had 1:1 programs for elementary students. Five years ago, middle school was the most implemented at 69%, with high schools at 66%.

1:1 Implementation Goals by Grade Level

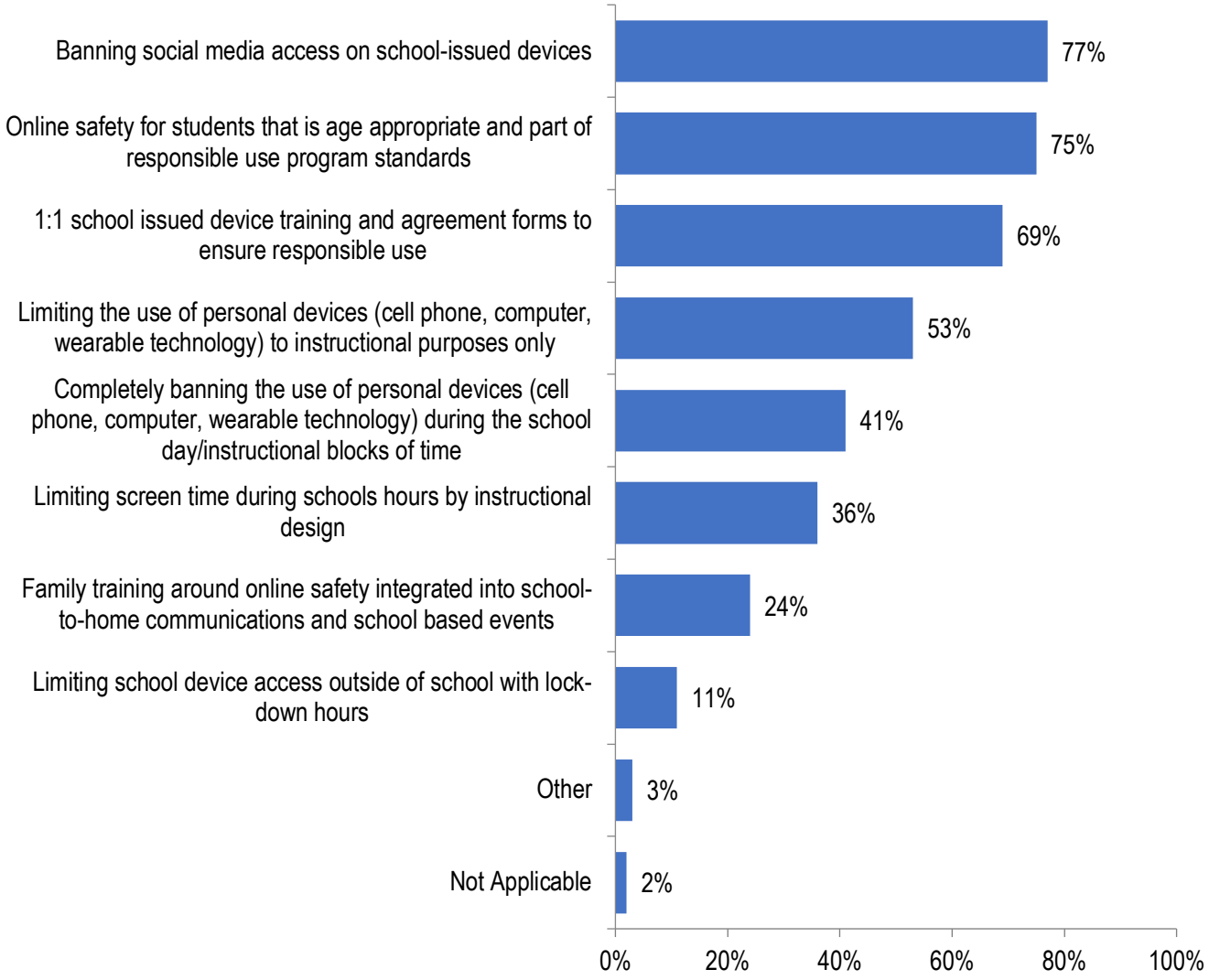


Screen Time & Wellness

With the pervasiveness of devices and the concern about their potential impact on student well-being, 98% of respondents work in districts that have policies or initiatives designed to help students make healthy choices. The most common practice is banning social media access on school-issued devices, with 77% of districts doing so. Three quarters (75%) have age-appropriate responsible use programs and 69% have training and agreement forms to ensure responsible use on school issued devices. More than half (53%) limit the use of personal devices (including wearables) to instructional purposes. A complete ban on the use of personal devices during school or during instructional time is a policy used by 41% of districts, with more than a

third (36%) limiting screen time during school hours by instructional design. Nearly a quarter (24%) integrate family training around online safety into school-to-home communications and school-based events. About a tenth (11%) limit school device access outside of school with lock-down hours. Another 3% have other practices that were not listed on the survey.

Support for Healthy Technology and Online Choices



Interoperability

Respondents were asked to rank six common barriers to improving data interoperability in their districts. The results show that the lack of common technical standard (ranked last at number 6) posed the least problems while a human factor—lack of understanding by instructional leaders—posed the most, ranking it as the top barrier. This was summed up by one respondent: "The biggest obstacle is not the technology, but the staff pushback to adopt these new systems." Not surprisingly, budget is also a top barrier at number two. As another respondent commented, "Much depends on the operational budget of the technology department…if we had more money, we'd be able to move forward much quicker." Complexity of the work rounded out the top three barriers, followed by procurement practices that don't involve IT at fourth and lack of staff expertise at fifth.

Barriers to Improving Data Interoperability

Rank	Interoperability Barrier
# 1	Lack of Awareness/Understanding by Instructional Leaders
# 2	Budget Constraints
# 3	Complexity of the Work
# 4	Procurement without IT Involvement/Alignment
# 5	Lack of Staff Expertise
# 6	Lack of Wildly Agreed Upon Technical Standards

Summary

One of the most critical survey findings is the major and catastrophic impact that the loss of E-Rate funding would have on the vast majority of districts. The impact would be felt by students across all district types—rural, town, suburban, and urban. “In today’s world, internet access isn’t a luxury—it’s a necessity for learning and opportunity.”[12] The negative repercussions of cutting off access to instructional digital tools and online resources cannot be overstated. AI, which is tied to E-Rate as students need online access to leverage its use, is another key area to watch. While its potential negative impacts—cyber-attacks, cyberbullying, and misinformation—cannot be ignored, neither can its potential to transform educational strategies for individualized instruction and empowering learners. Recognized as a top enabler, more districts are embracing AI and implementing it for various use cases.

On the operational side of EdTech, the Internet of Things (IoT) continues to bring more responsibilities under the purview of EdTech Leaders. Building security, cybersecurity, HVAC systems, and even lighting systems have been added to their list of responsibilities. Managing the complexities of a modernized infrastructure, maintaining the privacy of student data, and integrating technological innovations have given EdTech Leaders unique and robust perspectives on K-12 digital ecosystems. As their role expands, it is encouraging to see that most serve as members of their superintendent's cabinet. District Leadership and EdTech Leadership increasingly will need to rely on each other to address the needs of ever-evolving educational environments.

.

[12] Kelly May-Vollmar, Ed.D, Superintendent, Desert Sands USD, https://www.cosn.org/cosn-news/cosn-advocates-for-e-rate-a-proven-success-story-in-american-education/

About the Survey

The 41-question survey was emailed to U.S. school district EdTech leadership on January 14, 2025, with periodic reminders sent to non-respondents until the survey's close on March 2, 2025. Respondents could also participate via a public link. There were 645 district responses. Only one response per district was included. The responses of the most senior EdTech Leader, as defined by title, was included in results in instances when more than one response per district was submitted. The survey has a 4% margin of error at the 95% confidence level.

District Type

Nearly all respondents (98%) work in public school districts. Religious and charter school districts accounted for 1% each. Participation of private schools was less than 1%.

Metropolitan Status

As is prior years, suburban districts comprise the largest segment of respondents, this year at 38% of the total. Rural districts comprise the next largest segment (29%), followed by towns (19%) and cities (13%). For 1% of districts the metro status is unknown. Survey responses were received from 46 states; there were no respondents from Delaware, Hawaii, New Mexico, or South Dakota.

Enrollments

Respondents from very small (less than 1,750 students) districts and from districts with student populations of 1,750-5,999) account for 39% and 38% of respondents, respectively. Medium districts (6,000-24,999 students) account for 18% of respondents, with 4% working in large districts (25,000 or more students). Enrollments for 1% of districts are unknown.

CoSN, the world-class professional association for K-12 EdTech leaders, is driven by a mission to equip current and aspiring K-12 education technology leaders, their teams, and school districts with the community, knowledge, and professional development they need to cultivate engaging learning environments. Visit cosn.org or email membership@cosn.org to find out more about CoSN's focus areas, annual conference and events, advocacy and policy, membership, and the CETL® certification exam.

CDW Education makes technology work so students can do great things. We are a trusted partner to schools, districts, and institutions of all sizes. CDW Education leverages a unique combination of decades of boots-on-the-ground education experience and best-in-class partners, solutions, and services to help you drive the education outcomes that are most important to you.

With more than 25 years of serving education, Lightspeed Systems delivers the most in-depth visibility and control to power exceptional schools where students are safe and engaged; technology is compliant and easily managed; and resources are secure and optimized. Purpose-built for schools, Lightspeed's cloud-managed solutions include the most effective web filtering, student safety monitoring, analytics, classroom management, and device management software available. Headquartered in Austin, Texas, Lightspeed serves over 23 million students across 31,000 schools in 43 countries, utilizing 15 million devices.

AASA, The School Superintendents Association, founded in 1865, is the professional organization for more than 10,000 educational leaders in the United States and throughout the world. AASA's mission is to support and develop effective school system leaders who are dedicated to equitable access for all students to the highest-quality public education. For more information, visit www.aasa.org.

Sogolytics helps organizations transform feedback into action through an easy-to-use experience management platform that unites powerful survey tools, managed research, automated analytics, and real-time reporting. Whether measuring customer satisfaction, employee engagement, or market sentiments, Sogolytics simplifies data collection and turns insights into impact.

With customizable solutions, enterprise-grade security, and expert support, organizations of all sizes can make smarter decisions, improve performance, and build stronger partnerships. From credit unions to K12 institutions, Sogolytics makes it easy to listen deeply, respond effectively, and drive meaningful change.

MCH Strategic Data is a pioneer and innovator in educational marketing data. For nearly a century MCH has helped businesses reach administrators and educators within school districts nationwide and of all sizes. Trusted by the CDC, National Institutes of Health, and Harvard to provide the most up-to-date school district data during the pandemic, they offer national data coverage, invaluable expert insights, and top-tier personal service to help clients reach their customers with pinpoint accuracy.

About the Survey Report Author

Paula Maylahn is an education consultant with 40 years' experience across K-20. She is a project director for CoSN's interoperability initiatives, contributing author on "The Experts' Guide to the K-12 Market" and "The Experts' Guide to the Postsecondary Market," and the author of the paper "Interoperability: Definitions, Expectations, and Implications." Paula is a council member of the Women's Education Project, a twice-elected board member of the Software & Information Industry Association Education Division, former executive council member of the PreK-12 Learning Group of the Association of American Publishers, and former board member of the United Design Guild where she chaired the education council.