



The Ed-Tech Leadership & Innovation Summit

Cutting through the hype, learning valuable lessons

Online Summit Takeaways

On Wednesday, June 5, 2019, *Education Week* will be hosting its first virtual summit with a dedicated focus on education technology and innovation. During this online event, *Education Week* journalists and guests staffed “discussion rooms” that delve into a set of issues that are very much top-of-mind for ed-tech specialists in schools and districts, entrepreneurs developing new education tools and solutions, and administrators and educators working with these technologies in schools and districts across the country. Some key themes and guiding questions:

Education Week's newsroom offers you an opportunity to probe and better understand the challenges facing ed-tech leaders and innovators. In this Online Summit, *Education Week* journalists and guests will staff online “discussion” rooms on a host of topics, including:

- Why technology is not transforming teaching, with a special look at a nationally representative survey that examines the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of K-12 teachers as they relate to technology-driven innovation.
- How teachers are using technology to engage students, differentiate instruction, assess learning, and communicate with parents.
- What principals are saying are the biggest lessons they have learned about using technology more effectively to improve student learning.
- How cybersecurity nightmares are forcing schools to develop better and more innovative strategies and tactics for protecting against those threats, including exclusive data from a nationally representative survey of district ed-tech leaders.
- How school district leaders are balancing the desire to innovate with the need to effectively maintain the educational technologies already in place.

Here are takeaways we’ve distilled from those discussions with you, the *Education Week* readers.



Why Technology Is Not Transforming Teaching

Intro: Using the results of a nationally representative survey of teachers released this year as a starting point, *EdWeek Market Brief* Executive Editor **Kevin Bushweller** examined teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and practices related to the use of technology. The discussion will reveal the extent to which technology-based tools and processes have changed teachers' day-to-day work, for what purposes teachers are most likely to try new technology tools, and the barriers associated with experimenting with new technologies.

🗉 **Guests:** **Danielle Johnson**, Dynamic Learning Project Coaching Fellow, Barbara Bush Middle Schools, Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District, Texas; **Matt Warnock**, Principal, Barbara Bush Middle Schools, Carrollton-Farmers Branch Independent School District, Texas

Key Takeaways:

1. Despite the expanded use of technology in schools, teachers still tend to layer digital learning tools on top of their current (and often traditional) teaching practices. They are not using it to transform how they teach—for instance, by using it to do meaningful individualized learning or more project-based approaches. But changing that dynamic may require transforming how teachers and students are evaluated first.
2. Progress is being made in the types of professional development around technology that educators now receive. But, unfortunately, there is still a tendency in many schools to offer so-called “sit and get” PD—basically one-time sessions with no ongoing support or helpful follow up. That approach has proven not to be effective.
3. Usage of educational technology products tends to be very low, with one study showing that 60 percent of software licenses in schools go unused. That return on investment raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of digital learning tools. The best approach to improve those usage rates is to develop more thoughtful strategies about how a certain technology will be used before purchasing it and to build more effective, ongoing training for educators about how to use specific technologies.
4. Don't just purchase devices, drop them in classrooms, and hope for the best. Before making big purchases of hardware or software, make sure the people who will be using the new technologies (especially teachers) understand why they will be asked to integrate the devices into learning and provide them with clear instructions for how to get started. Then give them the freedom to experiment, innovate, and share lessons learned with their peers.
5. Many educators embrace the idea of personalized learning. But they have concerns about the unintended consequences of digitally driven personalized learning, such as the possibility of

students spending too much time learning in isolation. District leaders need to address those concerns if they are making personalized learning a districtwide priority.

6. Researchers have identified some key reasons why technology is not transforming teaching, such as teachers' beliefs about what constitutes good instruction, educators' lack of tech expertise, erratic training and support from administrators, and federal, state, and local policies that offer teachers neither the time nor the incentives to explore and experiment.



How to Better Engage Students, Differentiate Instruction, Assess Learning, and Communicate With Parents

Intro: How are teachers using new technologies and processes to raise student engagement, differentiate instruction in sophisticated ways, use more meaningful assessments, and put in place better tools to communicate with parents? Led by **Staff Writer Sarah Schwarz**, this discussion addressed the difficulties teachers are having putting these strategies and tactics in place and what it will take to help teachers overcome those barriers.

🗉 **Guests:** **Sophia Garcia-Smith**, 2nd Grade Teacher, Orchard Place Elementary School, Des Plaines, Ill.; **Robyn Williams**, Personalized Learning Lead, Eagle's Landing High School, Henry County, Ga.

Key Takeaways:

- **Even with technology's help, teachers still struggle to differentiate instruction.** Several teachers expressed frustration that the platforms they use aren't actually changing instruction or reducing their workload. Designing different assignments for different students remains a logistical challenge.
- **It can be difficult for teachers to enlist parents as partners.** Some teachers said parents were skeptical of personalized learning programs, worried that their kids would just be sitting in front of a screen all day. And others said parents were concerned about data privacy—they didn't want to sign up for communication apps, because they didn't want to provide their contact details or personal information to companies.
- **Teachers want more tech resources to differentiate learning for students with disabilities.** They also are looking for tools with easy-to-use accessibility features.
- **Some teachers still struggle to get devices into the classroom.** Especially in nontraditional educational settings, like juvenile detention facilities, teachers don't have the money or clearance to purchase technology. Other educators suggested establishing communication with leadership and making the case directly to those who have the power to allocate resources.

- **Even within one building, teachers can have vastly differing opinions about tech’s role.** Several teachers asked how to get their more-hesitant colleagues to experiment with devices. The solution? Ask teachers what they’re having problems with, said one of our guests, Robyn Williams, a tech coach, and demonstrate how tech can be a problem-solver.



Why Principals Are the Lynchpins for Ed-Tech Success

Intro: Principals build the culture within their schools. Is that a culture of experimentation and innovation or a more cautious environment? As the pace of technological change quickens in schools, the type of culture a school embraces is becoming increasingly important for the success of technology-driven teaching and learning initiatives, professional development, and the use of data. Led by **Senior Contributing Writer Michelle R. Davis**, this discussion discussed the steps principals are taking to manage all this change.

🗉 **Guest: Sarah Guerrero**, Principal, Northbrook Middle School, Houston, Texas

Key Takeaways:

Principals set the tone and culture around ed-tech initiatives in schools. Here are some of the issues they’re thinking about as they push for innovation and entrepreneurial thinking to improve the use of technology in their schools.

- Many ed-tech products, particularly software, go unused after being purchased. Principals need to pay attention to usage data and achievement data to make sure students get the benefit of financial investments in ed tech.
- For ed-tech products to be used regularly in classrooms, principals say there must be a low barrier of entry for teachers and students to use the tool; it must integrate easily with other digital tools and platforms; and the process for teachers to align the resource to student and curricula needs must be smooth.
- To get parents, teachers, and students on board with a new tech initiative, principals should engage with their school community and communicate clearly and often. Principals should act as the “chief communicator.”

- If used correctly, ed tech can be a powerful force for learning. It can provide students with access, collaboration, and feedback, giving the teacher increased flexibility to provide direct instruction, or one-on-one or small group interaction. Students get to access their teachers in more personalized ways appropriate to their needs.
- Principals should support teachers who want to innovate and be aware that this may create risk. Encourage early adopters to fail small and often and engage in the design thinking process with them.
- Principal Sarah Guerrero of Northbrook Middle School in Houston, Texas, said she has used the change management process outlined in this Harvard Business Review article for her entire career as a leader.
<https://hbr.org/1995/05/leading-change-why-transformation-efforts-fail-2>



Big Threat to Ed-Tech Innovation: Cybersecurity

Intro: How cybersecurity nightmares are forcing schools to develop better and more sophisticated strategies and tactics for protecting against those threats. **Staff Writer Benjamin B. Herold** discussed exclusive data from a nationally representative survey of district ed-tech leaders conducted by the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) and the Education Week Research Center.

🗉 **Guest: Douglas A. Levin**, President, EdTech Strategies, LLC

Key Takeaways:

Cybersecurity is top of mind for technology leaders across K-12, with a twin focus on prevention and effective response in the event of a breach.

- From hacks to phishing scams to ransomware cyber attacks of all stripes are increasing in K-12.
- Experts say districts should focus first on low-hanging fruit, such as improving password management and staff training.
- Cybersecurity insurance is an important part of a comprehensive strategy, but K-12 technology leaders shouldn't see it as a silver bullet or a pass that gets them out of the hard work of protecting data and networks.

- The worst effects of ransomware attacks and other disruptive breaches can be mitigated by taking care of the basics--such as having good backup systems and segmenting your networks effectively—up front.
- If (and when) a breach happens, full transparency and regular communication across multiple platforms are key to preserving public trust.



How Companies Need to Support Ed-Tech Implementation

Intro: *EdWeek Market Brief* Managing Editor **Sean Cavanagh** spoke with **Pete Just**, the chief technology officer of the Metropolitan School District of Wayne Township, in Indiana, and **Jin-Soo Huh**, the executive director of academic innovation at the charter school network Distinctive Schools about why products that look great when they're purchased fall short when it come to their actual usage in classrooms.

Key Takeaways:

- One of the biggest mistakes ed-tech companies make in implementation is not understanding the tech landscape of the district they're serving. Has that district had experiences implementing ambitious ed-tech products in the past? How much training have their teachers needed? Do they have a group of teachers capable of providing peer-to-peer training? These factors will impact the amount of time a company should be expected to devote to implementation.
- Support with implementation is not the same as professional development. PD tends to focus on building teachers' capacity to use technology, in the service of instructional goals. Support for implementation is broader, and includes making sure that many key players in the district – from tech support to principals to teachers – are ready to use a product effectively.
- One of the biggest problems with implementing ed-tech products is that teachers look for features they can master right away. That means large portions of the ed-tech product's capability are wasted.
- If teachers who are normally trailblazers with ed-tech are struggling to implement a product, that is often a sign that other educators are struggling, too, or not using it.
- Establishing peer-to-peer training among teachers is essential to effective implementation. Teachers are experts in how to use products and the practical barriers that stand in the way. Companies and districts should work together in making sure this training can occur.

- Data that companies provide on usage of their ed-tech products are important – but imperfect – measures of how effectively those products are being implemented in districts. That information can provide companies and district leaders with information on whether teachers and students are logging into programs. But it’s also important to know that educators may not be inclined to answer those questions accurately, if they feel they will get in trouble for not using a product often enough.
- Some vendors don’t stage “kick-off” meetings in districts that are slated to use their products, and that’s a problem. Kick-off meetings bring key district staff together to understand the goals of using a product, keys to successful implementation, and important steps that should be met along the way.
- Either on-site or virtual training can be effective in helping a district implement a vendor’s product. But both approaches should include some kind of on-site support delivered by a district employee, because that person will understand the challenges of making sure the product works in that environment.

Original date of online summit: Wednesday, June 5, 2019 ▪ 1-3 p.m. ET

<http://www.edweek.org/go/EdTechSummit>