
Five Trends for Successful EdTech Deployments in 2018

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In the coming year, a shortlist of what's likely to impact the field.

GUEST COLUMN | by Charles Duarte



While students are looking forward to an extended holiday break, chances are administrators are knee deep in budgeting and planning for the next school year. Technology will make up a good portion of this planning, so it's appropriate to look at some trends for 2018 that are likely to impact edtech purchases.

For schools, there are some positive trends that promise to deliver a better edtech learning environment at a more affordable and sustainable cost.

1. The cost of devices will stay the same or decrease, even as technology continues to improve (also known as Moore's Law). Introduced just seven years ago, the original iPad had 16 GB of memory and sold at retail for \$629. Compare that to today's latest generation of iPads, which contain double the memory in the base configuration, are lighter and faster, and retail for about \$329, with education pricing falling far below the retail price point. We will continue to see edtech devices improve in computing ability while prices hold or decrease. This will enable school districts to put more devices into the hands of students and teachers, something that is expected in progressive schools.

2. 1-to-1 technology deployments in K-12 have reached the tipping point. A 2016 report from Front Row Education showed that the number of schools with 1:1 student to device ratios rose 10 percent from the previous year to more than 50 percent of schools. At this rate, more than 60 percent of schools will have implemented 1:1 technology programs in 2018. Already, 75 percent of teachers report using technology daily with their students. Considering how tech savvy students are, it's no wonder. According to Pew Research, 22 percent of kids aged six to nine own a cell phone and this rises to 84 percent of kids aged 15 to 18. With 73 percent of American households having broadband connectivity and half the public owning a tablet computer, according to Pew, schools deploying 1:1 technology are simply playing catch-up. Soon technology will be viewed as a necessity, just as books and pencils once were.

3. Schools will begin thinking about technology as an operational expense. With edtech becoming ubiquitous in schools, it's time for administrators to stop thinking about technology as a capital expense and instead consider it as necessary to education as electricity and heat. To do this, schools will move toward sustainability plans that include device financing options that deliver more predictable e The best way to do this is to purchase quality devices that will maintain their residual value, which can be used to buy down the next technology purchase. This will require schools to use sustainable financing options. Dollar Buyout leases allow schools to purchase the equipment for a dollar at the end of the lease, use the residual value to reduce the cost of the next technology purchase, and realize predictable costs for edtech.

4. Schools will adopt Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) principles. As parents and students voice their desire for schools to employ the latest technology in the classroom, schools will need to consider both the cost of devices and the learning experience that the devices enable. When making edtech purchases, many schools focus only on initial costs, leading them to purchase what appear to be lower cost devices. When schools make decisions based purely on initial cost, they often neglect to factor in future repair costs and residual value, which can end up costing the school district more in the long run. At the same time, inferior equipment results in lost instructional time and a poor educational experience for students. Using TCO principles, devices are evaluated on their cost and value over their lifecycle, ensuring that the student benefits from the best learning experience.

5. Streamlined edtech programs will enable schools to trade up technology at any time. Summer traditionally has been the time when schools change technology. Without the hustle and bustle of students, administrators feel they have more time to trade in, purchase and activate devices. This leads to the saturation of the secondary market, and downward pressure on residual value of equipment. However, the turnaround time to trade up equipment has compressed over the years to where this can easily happen over breaks in the fall, winter and spring. In fact, IBM deploys an average of 1,300 Macs a week among its staff—almost 70,000 a year—and is supported by a team of just 50 people enterprise-wide.

A new year is exciting because it always holds the promise of fresh approaches and better ways of tackling challenges.

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