

IT Management

# Game CHANGER

RETHINKING HOW TECHNOLOGY IS USED IN EDUCATION



## TRANSFORMATION IN EDUCATION

# Improving the Education Experience

Digital transformation can support hybrid working and learning while enhancing productivity.

**THE PANDEMIC HAS FOREVER ALTERED THE NATURE** of learning and working, as well as the expectations that students and employees bring to their experience.

The shift to remote and hybrid workflows during COVID proved that a new paradigm was possible within both K–12 and higher education. Many students and staff members appreciated the flexibility that having remote access to resources and materials allowed for. With the right approach,

moving workflows online can also streamline key processes and enhance productivity.

Since in-person learning has returned, students and employees have continued to expect secure, remote access to documents and processes from wherever they are. In response, schools and colleges need permanent, well thought-out solutions that support and enable remote and hybrid workflows.

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## A New World

"The world has changed," says Keith Krueger, CEO of the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN).

Before the pandemic, 7% of all jobs were fully remote, **according to Pew Research Center**. Today, 35% of workers are fully remote. Overall, nearly three in five Americans (58%) still have the option to work from home at least one day per week, **says the global research firm McKinsey & Company** — and when given the opportunity to work flexibly, 87% of employees take it.

Although education is different in nature from many work environments, working remotely remains an option for many education employees as well.

A CoSN podcast called "**The Future of Hybrid Work in School Districts**" interviewed the IT leaders of three large school systems about this topic. They confirmed that IT departments have always had some hybrid or remote employees, but it's become more common now. One of the podcast speakers noted that every person he interviewed for three open positions asked for the ability to work remotely.

"If you want to be competitive in staffing, you need to think of ways to give your employees flexibility," Krueger says.

## Leaders Must be Strategic

Although educational institutions have moved key processes to the cloud, more work in this area remains.

"Education is one of the last sectors to experience industry-wide digital transformation," says Julia Fallon, executive director of the State Educational technology Directors Association (SETDA). "Strides have been made, but more needs to happen on the business operations side and — more importantly — on the teaching and learning side."

Schools and colleges need a more strategic, long-term approach that builds on the emergency plans they have enacted recent years. "With a more thought-out process and strategic mindset, districts can make sure to onboard properly and build a proper culture" around the use of technology, Fallon says.

She adds: "We need to be thinking beyond the school campus and out to the entire community. IT needs to support learners doing homework with school-issued devices and educators and employees with family engagement, for instance."



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## TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

# Doing More with Less

In education, this has become the norm — and digital workflows can help.

**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION NOT ONLY SUPPORTS NEW** hybrid learning and working environments. It also simplifies key workflows and helps employees do more with less. If done well, it can result in a better experience for students and employees alike.

This is critical as a growing number of education employees are feeling stressed and overburdened and are leaving the profession as a result. Doing more with less is also essential for helping public schools and colleges stretch their limited budgets.

## **Boosting Productivity**

“Technology can automate mundane or routine tasks, as we have seen with online gradebooks and learning management systems that have helped teachers do parts of their jobs more efficiently,” says SETDA Executive Director Julia Fallon.

Digitizing workflows eliminates the need to keep track of paper-based assets, while making document storage and retrieval faster and more efficient. For instance, optical character recognition (OCR) technology can help employees file documents and populate informational

databases as quickly as they can take a picture of a document with their phone.

Digital transformation can save schools money as well. **According to one estimate**, school systems spend an average of \$50,000 per year on paper and printing costs alone — costs that can be reduced or eliminated altogether by moving to digital workflows.

With automated translation technology, school systems can translate digital documents into multiple languages instantly. This helps them connect with families and meet the needs of non-English speaking students more effectively, while making education more equitable for everyone. It also reduces the need for human translators.

What's more, artificial intelligence (AI) technology is becoming more powerful every year, as evidenced by the emergence of platforms like ChatGPT. Digital tools that leverage built-in AI to perform routine tasks can save schools and colleges thousands of hours of staff time. One study found that using generative AI **raised worker productivity by 14%**.

## A 'Huge Opportunity'

Boosting efficiency, simplifying complex processes and improving the employee experience are powerful advantages in a profession where many employees are feeling overwhelmed by the demands of the job. "In general, education is more understaffed than other sectors," says CoSN CEO Keith Krueger.

The pressures of meeting students' rising mental health needs and making up for lost learning time have taken their toll on educators, causing **many teachers to reach a breaking point**.

According to a **National Education Association survey**, 55% of teachers said they were thinking about leaving the profession earlier than they'd planned. This mass exodus has led to staffing shortages in many school districts.

It's not only educators who are feeling overwhelmed. IT staff are also stretched thin.

In CoSN's latest "State of EdTech Leadership" survey, 56% of IT leaders said their departments lack the staffing to support classroom technology use adequately — and 45% said they don't have enough staff to plan for and implement new technology well.

"There is a huge opportunity to help education personnel do more with less" through digital automation, Krueger says.



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## AUTOMATION IN EDUCATION

# Achieving Success with Digital Transformation

Developing a comprehensive migration strategy that addresses training, support, and securing stakeholder buy-in is key.

**AUTOMATING WORKFLOWS HOLDS PROMISE FOR** improving the experience of staff and students. However, there are many challenges involved in doing this successfully. One of the biggest challenges is moving processes to the cloud securely and at scale.

### Putting Security Front and Center

Ensuring that data and documents remain secure can be an impediment to digital transformation.

According to CoSN's 2023 "**State of EdTech Leadership**" survey, cybersecurity ranked as the No. 1 concern for K–12 IT leaders for the sixth year in a row. And with good reason: Since 2016, the K–12 Security Information Exchange (K12 SIX) **has identified** more than 1,300 publicly disclosed cybersecurity breaches affecting U.S. school districts.

Educational institutions make very attractive targets for cyber criminals. As schools and colleges have moved their processes and documents online, this has increased the

attack surface available to hackers. At the same time, schools are generally underresourced when it comes to data security.

Only one-third of school districts have a full-time equivalent employee dedicated to network security, CoSN's survey revealed. Two-thirds of K–12 IT leaders believe their district has insufficient resources to deal with cybersecurity issues.

"Security needs to be front and center," CoSN CEO Keith Krueger says. Although digital transformation makes information much more easily accessible to stakeholders, he observes, it also puts data at risk — unless schools have a well-designed plan for securing this information.

## Other Challenges

Aside from data security, other key challenges involved in moving documents and workflows to the cloud include developing a comprehensive migration strategy that addresses training, support and securing stakeholder buy-in.

Education leaders "need to understand the importance of change management," says SETDA Executive Director Julia Fallon. Change is difficult for many people initially, she explains. Getting employees to accept the changes and adopt new ways of doing things requires leaders to communicate the value they'll realize in doing so. It also requires ongoing training and support to ensure that employees (and students) know how to use the technology effectively.

"Start with what will stay the same," Fallon advises, "and then speak to what will be different, so that everyone feels positive about taking a new path."

## Ensuring a Smooth Transition

Although digital transformation involves many challenges, choosing the right service providers can help schools successfully navigate these hurdles.

It's essential for districts to partner with experienced service providers who take data privacy and security seriously. Leaders should invest in solutions that provide a fully secure environment for all data and applications in the cloud.

The right service provider can also help with implementation, training and support, ensuring the success of digital transformation initiatives.

"Vendors should offer training and guidance so that districts can ensure a smooth transition and realize an immediate return on their investment," Fallon says.



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## COLLABORATION IN EDUCATION

# How Xerox Helps Schools Save Money and Enhance Productivity

The value of a strong partner, one who approaches challenges from the client's point of view rather than just drawing from a set of standard technology solutions, can't be overstated.

**MOVING DOCUMENTS TO THE CLOUD AND AUTOMATING** key workflows effectively supports hybrid learning and working environments. It also makes education employees more productive and leads to a better experience for students and staff.

Xerox has extensive experience in helping schools and

colleges make this transition effectively. With the help of Xerox and their technology, solutions and services, schools worldwide are transforming their practices and seeing many benefits as a result.

Here are a few examples:

Niagara Catholic School District in Ontario, Canada,

implemented **Xerox DocuShare** to boost its environmental sustainability and make staff more productive. Storage space was at a premium because of a requirement to keep student records for 55 years.

By digitizing more than 800,000 documents and moving to automated document management processes, the district has saved \$38,000 per year on the printing and postage needed to produce its monthly newsletter alone. Staff, students, and families now have easier access to documents and learning resources, and approval processes for administrative documents now take minutes instead of days.

“There is not one person in our department who would ever want to go back to paper again,” says Human Resource Coordinator Lana Pasto.

Buena Park School District in California is using **Xerox® Workflow Central** to improve how staff and students work and communicate. Built-in tools within this cloud-based platform automatically...

- **Convert handwritten documents to text-based files.**
- **Convert documents into audio files, so users can listen to them from anywhere.**
- **Summarize key information from public reports and other documents.**
- **Redact personally identifiable information using AI technology, saving hours of manual processing time on public records archiving.**
- **Translate text into multiple languages, which helps the district communicate with families who don't speak English. This is critical in a district where 94% of the student body are students of color, and many languages are spoken — including Spanish, Korean, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Arabic.**

“Communication between parents and the district is very important,” says district Secretary Letty Zaragoza. “We want to have our kids safe at all times, and we want to send the correct information to parents in their correct language.” Xerox Workflow Central helps district staff do this without adding more work.

A large Virginia school district is using Xerox IT Services to supply students and teachers with continuous access to Chromebooks and Windows laptops, with no repair downtime

As part of its mission to provide equitable access to meaningful

learning experiences and technology, each student receives a school-issued laptop for use at school and home. However, the district's Windows device service provider was not keeping pace with the day-to-day repair and replacement demands posed by its 70 schools. All too often, students with malfunctioning devices were being sent back to class without a laptop while awaiting repairs, leaving them unable to participate in learning.

**By digitizing more than 800,000 documents and moving to automated document management processes, the district has saved \$38,000 per year on the printing and postage needed to produce its monthly newsletter alone.**

The district needed a laptop provider who could ensure that no student would have to be without a device during the school year. **Xerox IT Services**, in partnership with two device manufacturers, created a custom plan to provide Chromebooks to some 50,000 students as well as Windows laptops to 3,000 teachers districtwide.

A key capability for meeting the district's device repair needs was Xerox's extensive image and break fix center, which provided district IT officials with a firsthand view of repair technicians in action. To further ensure continuous service, Xerox also created a 5 percent stockpile of spare parts at its warehouse on day one and provided each school with 60 backup devices for immediate swap-outs as needed.

“Thanks to Xerox IT Services' delivery team, no student has gone back to his or her class without a Chromebook in five years,” says the school district's IT director.

## **Insist on a Tailored Approach**

In achieving digital transformation, leaders should choose reliable service providers with a proven track record in serving the needs of education customers. The value of a strong partner, one who approaches challenges from the client's point of view rather than just drawing from a set of standard technology solutions, can't be overstated. This allows the provider to develop a customized approach tailored to a school or district's specific needs, rather than a one-size-fits-all solution.