

## New Report from *Education Week* Shows Classroom Technology Fails to Reach Full Potential in K-12 Schools

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of *Education Week's Technology Counts* reveals a digital divide among schools fueled by resource inequality, gaps in teacher training, and the uncertain future of the federal E-rate program

June 14, 2017—*Education Week* today releases [\*Classroom Technology: Where Schools Stand\*](#), a special report investigating the impact technology is having in K-12 schools as digital learning tools flood classrooms across the country. The report reveals that technology is failing to reach its full potential in K-12 schools, despite the rapid infusion of new devices and technologies into the classroom. Further, disparities in technology access and adoption, and in the ways new tools are integrated into instruction, may be fueling a new digital divide that threatens to exacerbate long-standing inequities and separate education's haves and have-nots along new fault lines. An analysis of federal data from the Education Week Research Center examines schools' access to high-speed internet, passive vs. active uses of technology, and teacher training needs.

"We live in a technology-driven world that is far different from the one that existed two decades ago, when *Education Week* first set out to map the state of educational technology in K-12 schools," said Kevin Bushweller, executive project editor of *Technology Counts*. "Technology is everywhere today but a digital divide among schools has emerged because quality and equity issues are huge and they need to be confronted."

The report—the 20th edition of *Technology Counts*, *Education Week's* annual report on the status of ed tech in K-12 schools—uncovers persistent challenges and inequities schools confront as they introduce new technology into the classroom. Access to reliable, high-speed internet connectivity, has become an essential element of many digital tools and strategies. Yet, internet access still varies widely from school to school, and district to district. Amid new leadership at the Federal Communications Commission, the future of the E-rate program been called into question, with particular concerns about impacts on rural and low-income districts.

In addition to discrepancies in resources for new technology and connectivity, there is little consistency in how teachers use these tools in their classrooms. Applications of technology run the gamut, but the report uncovers a troubling trend. Students are still largely using technology for drill and practice rather than for more complex tasks, such as creating projects, conducting simulations, or doing extensive research. Further, the sophistication with which teachers use ed tech is largely dependent on the caliber of the training, which also varies across districts.

## More Technology, Less Training

As digital devices proliferate in the classroom, teacher training has risen to the top of the ed tech to-do list. Analysis of federal data by the Education Week Research Center shows that professional development for technology integration has actually declined over time and that training lags behind in low-income schools.

- In 2015, just 61 percent of 4th graders had reading teachers who had received training on how to integrate technology into their classroom instruction—a **drop of 3 percentage points from six years earlier**.
- At the same time, **the number of laptops, tablets, netbooks, and Chromebooks shipped annually to U.S. K-12 schools grew by 363 percent**, with more than 14 million devices shipped this year compared to just over 3 million devices in 2010.
- The share of 4th graders with math teachers who had received training on integrating technology into instruction in the past two years **ranged from 59 percent for the highest-poverty schools to 69 percent for the lowest-poverty schools**.

Many experts believe these numbers may improve. But beyond providing basic access to training, schools will also have to tackle the deeper challenge of ensuring that educators receive the guidance and support needed to embed these tools fully and effectively into instruction and to align technology with students needs and learning goals.

## Not Keeping Pace With Technological Change

To illustrate the gaps that exist between how teachers are trained to use technology, and how digital learning tools are used in classrooms, *Education Week* technology reporter Benjamin Herold visited two schools in the Pittsburgh area. “There’s widespread agreement that teachers aren’t coming out of college well-prepared to navigate this new digital environment,” Herold writes in *Technology Counts*. “And for teachers already in the workforce, professional development hasn’t kept up with the pace of technological change.”

Experts say that lack of training is becoming a major barrier to effective use of ed tech in the classroom. The Education Week Research Center analysis of federal data confirms that concern. Results show that the nation’s 4th graders use classroom computers for rote activities like practicing and drilling math concepts far more frequently than for activities that require critical thinking, such as making charts and graphs. Moreover, the gap between such active and passive use has grown over time.

## FCC Uncertainty Grows

A change in leadership at the Federal Communications Commission has led to rising uncertainty about the future of efforts to boost broadband access, preserve an open Internet, and protect online privacy—all issues affecting the K-12 sector. Atop education leaders’ list of concerns is the E-rate, a \$3.9 billion federal program that helps schools and libraries pay for telecommunications services.

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