

# Education Company Executives Weigh In: Trends to Watch for the 2023-24 School Year

*New Technologies and External Pressures Will Shape Spending in the Market*



**David Saleh Rauf**

Contributing Writer



A new school year is underway, and that means education companies are trying to understand how school district demands for products and services are shifting, and what's ahead.

Districts face a landscape full of challenges: Federal emergency funding is expiring soon, pandemic-era [academy recovery efforts](#) are lagging, [cyberattacks](#) are growing in quantity and scope, and [staff shortages](#) are causing disruptions.

*EdWeek Market Brief* recently spoke with eight executives from different education organizations about what they see playing out in the K-12 marketplace and how it will affect what school districts want in the near future.

The company leaders agree that schools are still stabilizing, a few years after the period of intense remote learning during COVID, and in the process getting choosier about what ed-tech applications and curriculum products they are using.

Here's what they see as some of the biggest district needs and trends in the new school year:

## 1. Shifting Needs for Core vs. Supplemental Materials

One key shift in demand in the K-12 marketplace currently taking place is that districts are deciding to drop various investments in supplemental offerings, said Lynn Munson, CEO of curriculum provider [Great Minds](#).

That's something that Great Minds' sales team and implementation specialists are hearing from districts, and also seeing play out on the ground, said Munson.

That's something that Great Minds' sales team and implementation specialists are hearing from districts, and also seeing play out on the ground, said Munson.

Part of that, Munson said, can be attributed to districts developing a "deepened appreciation" for core curriculum versus supplemental materials over the last couple of years of intense academic recovery. Many district officials have told *EdWeek Market Brief* that their [need for supplemental resources surged](#) during the pandemic, as teachers scrambled to fill dire academic needs. (Great Minds produces core materials for English/language arts, math and science. It also offers supplemental resources that either stand on their own or are aligned with the organization's core curriculum.)

Another factor could be the tightening of budgets as school systems prepare for federal emergency aid to go away after next year.

"Perhaps districts are seeing a day soon when they won't be able to afford as much," she said.

Ahsan Rizvi, the CEO of digital curriculum platform [Kiddom](#), said he's also seeing districts paring down supplemental materials.

A lot of districts leaned on supplemental products for remediation following remote learning, and those offerings "were not the entire roadmap for learning that teachers needed," he said.

"The interventions we put together in the pandemic did not have the requisite impact," Rizvi said, "and so school districts are now, in our opinion, going back to doing what they believe is going to have the biggest impact."

## 2. New AI Experimentation Taking Hold

Many education companies have for years been incorporating artificial intelligence in some manner in their products. But conversations around AI's place in K-12 intensified last year when [ChatGPT started receiving national attention](#), drawing equal parts praise for its potential to reshape classroom learning and concern for potential risks related to academic integrity, bias, and other concerns.

To that extent, education companies are focusing on what they perceive as expected district demand for more products with AI.

Martin McKay, CEO of [Texthelp](#), an assistive technology company with offices in the U.K., Australia, and the United States, said districts are looking for AI-based ed-tech tools that can address everyday academic issues facing teachers and students.



There's a real opportunity for ed-tech providers to use AI to create tools that can save teachers time during this teacher shortage.

*Martin McKay, CEO, Texthelp*

### Join Us at EdWeek Market Brief's Fall Summit

Don't miss *EdWeek Market Brief's* in-person summit, Oct. 25-27 in Phoenix. Education companies will hear directly about the needs and priorities of school districts, and what they want — and don't want — from the companies they work with. Our speakers include district officials from many states, including California, Colorado, New Mexico, North Carolina, Georgia, Washington, Arizona, and Delaware, with titles such as superintendent, chief academic officer, chief budget officer, and director of research. You can learn more about attending [here](#).

Texthelp has been using “good old-fashioned AI” for about five years, McKay said, but it’s only been in the last 18 months or so that the company has started testing large-language models, and generative AI that can create something new from data.

The company is focusing on helping students who struggle with reading by using AI to simplify and customize content for specific reading abilities.

“There’s a real opportunity for ed-tech providers to use AI to create tools that can save teachers time during this teacher shortage,” he said.

Over the last 18 months [Khan Academy](#), a nonprofit organization that provides an array of free online educational resources, has been piloting an AI-based chatbot program called [Khanmigo](#) that’s designed to be a tutor for students and an assistant for teachers.

Big urban districts in New Jersey and Indiana tested Khan Academy’s AI application last school year, said Chief Learning Officer Kristen DiCerbo. But the nonprofit does not have a firm timeline for how long its AI tutor and teacher assistant will remain in beta.

For now, districts are moving cautiously with Khan Academy’s AI product DiCerbo said.

“We are seeing schools that want to try it out in some of their classrooms, and some of their grades to see how it works,” she said. “It is a completely rational approach.”

### 3. Cybersecurity Spending Continues to Climb

School districts are more focused than ever on protecting against cyberattacks. The issue has been [generating conversation at high levels in the federal government recently and could result in new money](#) being allocated to K-12 schools to beef up cyberdefenses in the near future.

Just this week, the Prince George’s County School District, a major school system outside of Washington, D.C., announced that a cyberattack had [disrupted its server network](#) and there was a risk that hackers could release at least some personal information online.

Trish Sparks, CEO of [Clever](#), a single-sign-on platform widely used in K-12, said her organization surveyed 1,500 district administrators and teachers on ed-tech spending.

One of the areas where the survey showed that spending is expected to rise during the next school year is on digital security.

“Cybersecurity threats remain a huge risk for districts,” Sparks said. “And so as it relates to increases in spending, that’s the area where most people see that happening.”

### 4. Districts Rightsizing Their Tech Ecosystems

During the remote-learning era, school districts’ tech ecosystems swelled with new ed-tech apps, as teachers scrambled to adjust and school systems were waiting with open arms to try out new products to meet new virtual learning demands.

That led district tech officials in many cases to either [purge under-utilized apps by the dozens](#), or put in place stricter requirements for when teachers could use ed-tech products without prior district approval.

That trend will continue in the new school year, and partly as a result of the ed-tech app deluge in recent years, districts are now “demanding” high-quality products with proven efficacy, said Barry Malkin, CEO of curriculum provider [Carnegie Learning](#).

Funding is going to get tighter for districts in the near future. Academic recovery has been lacking. And educators are already overwhelmed with the plethora of options available.

“You’ll see a rationalization of the number of products and services that districts are acquiring and implementing,” he said.

Brett Woudenberg, CEO of the [MIND Research Institute](#), which created the visual math instructional program ST Math, said his organization has noticed districts are paying closer attention to efficacy and fidelity of implementation in ed-tech programs they’re purchasing.

School systems narrowed down what they were using, and got rid of tools that were ineffective.

“We saw districts being a bit reticent to actually bring in new programs until they had gone through that exercise.” Woudenberg said. This year we’re seeing the results of that. We’re seeing a lot more demand related to filling gaps where they really didn’t have the right programs.”

“That will probably drive demand over these next couple of years as they try to get that formula right.”

## 5. Federal Stimulus Funds: “What Stays and What Goes?”

The window for spending federal stimulus money winds to a close over the next year, and school district leaders face a lot of important questions.

Among those questions are what other funding is available to replace the one-time federal emergency dollars.

The 2023-2024 school year will be characterized, in part, by district buyers “taking a really hard look and evaluating at what stays and goes,” said Jess Gartner, the CEO of Allovue, a provider of budget and financial analysis tools for school districts.

Gartner — *who is a member of Education Week’s board* — described the expiration of ESSER funding as the “elephant in the room for districts” during the new school year. It is likely to impact districts disproportionately, given that school systems are receiving varying levels of funding.

The challenge will be for school systems to “figure out what is sustainable for the next academic year and beyond,” she said.

## 6. State Adoption Timeline Compressed

COVID did more than just upend classroom learning — it also reset the timetable for many states’ curriculum adoption processes.

Rizvi, the CEO of digital curriculum platform Kiddom, predicted that state curriculum adoption cycles for core subjects delayed by the pandemic will be approved in the next three years.

He said what amounts to a compressed timeline for some of those state adoptions could create problems for curriculum companies.

Among the states set to adopt some type of core curriculum in the next three years are Texas, Florida and California — the three largest K-12 marketplaces in the country, Rizvi said.



*One of the many unexpected consequences of the pandemic was it knocked state curriculum adoptions off course. States are refocusing on them now.*

In a normal cycle, Rizvi said, state adoptions of core curriculum might happen every two years in a given state, he said. But COVID created a gap, and now those states have their own state-level adoption processes that will play out in 2023, 2024 and 2025.

In fact, some education companies might have to skip state cycles that they'd normally take part in because of a lack of resources related to tending to multiple state adoption processes at the same time, said Rizvi.

"That means that there are spaces for other companies to come in and work on these adoptions with states," he said, "because the bigger incumbents might choose to not participate."

Follow *EdWeek Market Brief* on Twitter @EdMarketBrief or connect with us on LinkedIn.

See more:

- Education CEOs Weigh In: Where Do Their Organizations Get Their Best Ideas?
- The Books That Helped These 10 CEOs Become Better Leaders
- In Their Own Words: How School Districts Are Preparing for the Loss of Stimulus Money

Tags: Curriculum, Standardized Testing/Assessments



David Saleh Rauf is a contributing writer with EdWeek Market Brief.

✉ [drauf@educationweek.org](mailto:drauf@educationweek.org)

**David Saleh Rauf**  
Contributing Writer

Share     

### Most Popular

**M&A in Education Industry Drops in First Half of 2023**

Sept. 20, 2023

**Arizona District to Buy K-5 Digital Resources; Colo. System Shops History Curriculum**

Sept. 19, 2023

### Related Posts

**Where Venture Capitalists Are Investing as Districts Shift to In-Person Education**

Feb. 19, 2021

**Memo to Education Companies: These Are the 10 Most Influential Books Among K-12 Leaders**

Dec. 20, 2022

**How to Get a Five-Star Rating on Graphite**

Feb. 5, 2016

EDWEEK  
**Market Brief**

K-12 Intel for Business Leaders

[SCHEDULE A TOUR](#)

[Join Now](#)

✉ Sign up for our Market Brief Alerts

[Sign Up](#)