Microsoft

A 3-Step Guide for Choosing the Right Technology for Your School

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Assess, plan, and act

Bringing new devices and software to your school is imperative. Technology enables better learning outcomes and makes it possible to bring personalized learning to every student.[1] In addition, technology can help teachers reallocate up to 30 percent of their time so they can focus more on student-centric activities.[1]

Even so, getting there can seem daunting. In this e-book we'll walk you through the important considerations from start to finish. As it turns out, the most critical elements in introducing technology to your school have little to do with the features of a laptop.

Let's take a look at what really matters as you choose technology for your school.

Need a little help?

Step 01

Assess

In the assessment phase of your new education technology acquisition, there are three considerations:

Defining the need and clarifying goals

Establishing stakeholders

Identifying obstacles

01

Defining the need and clarifying goals

How will this technology help teachers ensure better learning outcomes? It's not enough to want a tablet for every student. It's not enough to ask teachers to integrate technology into the classroom. You must be clear about the problems the technology will solve.

Carefully consider the people that the technology will touch, and thoroughly define the benefit to your staff and students. By creating a goal statement that's shared by leaders and other stakeholders, you can create the momentum for long-term impact.

As part of your goal statement, you'll be clarifying your goals and defining your measure of success. This crisp statement can become the foundation for your initiative and fuel conversations with stakeholders.

Examples of well-considered goal statements

We want to improve grade-level math skills year over year, as measured with standardized testing. We will support our goals with devices that have inking and touch.

We want to protect our students and staff from cybersecurity risk. We'll measure success by the reduction in attacks. We will invest in technology that can proactively monitor and identify risks and attacks.

Template for a goal statement

Goal _____

_____

Measurement of success _____

_____

How technology will support _____

_____

Establishing stakeholders

Bringing technology to your school is a group effort, and you'll have plenty of help. Identify the people who can help you and ask for their support.

Core stakeholders are likely to be:

- ✓ Tech-savvy educators

- ✓ Instructional technologists

- ✓ Technology decision-makers

- ✓ School leaders

Other stakeholders who may be involved:

- ✓ Teachers and staff who will use the technology

- ✓ Students

- ✓ Parent teacher association

- ✓ School board members

- ✓ Teachers union

Put your stakeholders to work

Educators should have a clear sense of the reasons for change, what the change is, and how to proceed. They should also have ample opportunity to voice their needs and offer insight about the technology that works and doesn't work for them. (If you want them to eagerly adopt the new tech, it's critical to bring them in early so you know what matters most to them.) Once they're empowered with this, their job is to report on their firsthand experiences with any existing technology, detail a wish list, and share frequent updates on the initiative with fellow staffers.

School leadership is responsible for getting critical statewide or district-wide buy-in, which will help the new technology program find success. In small and large meetings, school leadership is tasked with being the voice for your initiative, providing clear answers to questions and generating support for the project.

Students can be your strongest allies. Since they'll be the ones using the technology you select, getting a handful of student representatives involved early will go a long way toward creating the right environment for tech adoption later on.

Technology leaders are charged with the most important elements of your program: evaluating the new technology, driving the device and software deployment, and putting together a training plan for educators.

Identifying obstacles

Hurdles in your journey can take many forms. Some are mind-set hurdles—do your educators share your vision? Some are financial hurdles. And some are hurdles you might not even know you need to leap. These are the most common:

Shortsightedness
Implementing a technology initiative to solve a short-term problem may prevent the program from growing and adapting to future requirements.

Tip: Having a clear needs statement will help keep you on track.

Teacher support
Involving teachers early is important. Disrupting their plans or having no training program for them will surely derail your initiative.

Tip: Tap tech-savvy educators as subject-matter experts on different technologies to help train fellow teachers.

Tech tunnel vision
Focus on the goals that the technology will help you accomplish, rather than on the technology itself. True technology transformation is a new way of teaching, engaging, and collaborating.

Tip: Study your goal statement to be sure you're aiming for the right thing.

Step 02

Plan

In the planning phase of your new education technology acquisition, there are two things to consider:

Developing criteria for the technology

Creating a budget and timeline

Developing criteria for the technology

Starting with guidelines will help narrow the options. Some questions to consider:

Need	Criteria	Microsoft Tools
Does the technology support rich assessment and feedback?	Assessments must provide multiple opportunities for the creation of artifacts. When this occurs, assessment becomes more than just a process of learning.	Microsoft Teams and OneNote Class Notebook provide opportunities for feedback from teachers and others, which can promote knowledge construction, knowledge integration, higher-order thinking, and self-regulatory behavior.
Does the digital tool or curriculum support constructivist learning through communication and collaboration?	Look for technology that encourages collaboration. There is a big difference between a file-sharing service and a full collaboration suite that allows face-to-face communication and the fluid exchange of myriad file types.	Available as part of Office 365, Microsoft Teams provides a digital hub that brings together content, conversations, apps, chat, voice, video, even OneNote, into a single continuous experience.
Does your technology plan support accessibility so that every student can achieve improved learning outcomes?	Accessibility built into the device and software means supporting every student with ease.	Accessibility and assistive technology solutions are standard in Windows 10 and Office 365, making the tools easy for students to use and can be scaled out to all students.

Need	Criteria	Microsoft Tools
Does the technology need to go beyond the classroom, to support teacher collaboration across the school?	Ensure teachers can support their own ongoing professional development with access to training and peer networking.	Available as part of Office 365, Microsoft Teams supports teachers with Professional Learning Communities. Teachers can get the support they need with free training and Professional Development online and at Microsoft Stores.
Are you looking to empower students to learn in the way that's most engaging for them?	Look for technology that supports different interfaces—touch, type, digital pen, and voice.	Windows 10 devices support all types of learners and help schools address equity with 1:1 initiatives and more STEM instruction.
Will you need a solution that supports media, gaming, advanced coding, or peripherals like cameras and microscopes?	Look for devices built for high performance, with high processing speeds and plenty of memory.	Educators can deliver lessons using 3D applications and other advanced STEM programs on Windows 10 devices with the latest generation Intel processors that help drive superior performance.
Will you need to deploy and manage this solution across multiple classrooms or an entire school?	Most schools find it difficult to manage student and staff devices. In today's classrooms, more than 90 percent of students use shared devices and educators face more demands than ever before, with nearly 50 percent of teachers serving as their own tech support in their classrooms.	Intune for Education is specially designed for schools that want to put devices in classrooms and not touch them again for the rest of the school year. IT admins or teachers can easily use this service to manage shared Windows 10 devices in the classroom.

Need	Criteria	Microsoft Tools
Will this technology prepare students for the future with the skills most in demand by employers?	Researchers agree that collaboration is an important factor in increasing student interest and building their critical thinking through communities of practice where they can try out ideas and challenge each other.	Of the top 20 essential employment skills, only two technical proficiencies are specifically requested: Microsoft Office and Microsoft PowerPoint.[2]
Are you meeting the highest levels of privacy and security requirements to ensure your students' safety?	Make sure any solution you choose meets FERPA and GDPR standards.	Microsoft has extensive expertise in protecting data and championing privacy, and is committed to GDPR compliance across our cloud services.

All Microsoft Stores have an Education Expert and education sales team on site to help answer questions.

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Creating a budget and timeline

How much and when? These will be the frequently asked questions of your technology initiative. A lot of factors influence budget and timeline. The considerations below can help you get sharp on these details.

Budget

- Evaluate whether the expense fits into the existing annual budget.

- Evaluate whether ongoing maintenance is considered in future annual budgets.

- Assess whether outside funding is needed.

Timeline

- Enlisting support can take weeks; be sure to factor this into the timeline.

- Identify any specific and significant launch dates to target.

- Give stakeholders ample time to review and discuss the plans.

- Confirm with your technology services provider how much time the full deployment will take.

- Work with your instructional technologist and educators to make sure the training date fits into the timeline.

Step 03

Act

In the action phase of your new education technology acquisition, there are three considerations:

Researching education technology

Getting buy-in on your final decision

Deploying your new technology

03

Researching education technology

Modern technology lets you deliver curriculum and assessment that are more engaging, equitable, and personalized than ever before. There is a dizzying array of choices from educational software, apps, simulations, videos, computer games, podcasts, webisodes, robotic kits, and augmented reality, plus the devices. How do you know what's best? Here are some tips to keep you on track as you begin your research.

✓ **Reference your goal statement**
It's important to remember the problem you're solving.

✓ **Keep your criteria close**
It's the best framework for ensuring you're making the right choices.

✓ Talk to peers who have undertaken a similar initiative
They'll alert you to red flags and best practices.

✓ **Get your hands on some of the tech you're interested in**
Nothing can replace in-person interaction with devices and software.

✓ **Talk to some technology experts**
An expert can anticipate issues you aren't even aware of and point you in the right direction.

✓ **Invite students, staff, and teachers to trial the tech**
Then get their open opinions about their experience.

Getting buy-in on your final decision

You've done the groundwork and arrived at a decision on the best technology for your school. It might seem that engaging stakeholders and your school community early was enough. They were enthusiastic, and support for the initiative remains strong. Now follow through with engagement on the final decision. Keeping your stakeholders involved right through to the purchase decision keeps the plan active and top of mind, which drives anticipation and enthusiasm.

Tying your goal statement to your technology recommendations can give your plan justification and momentum.

This resource can help you bring your idea, justification, and detailed planning to people like board members or other stakeholders.
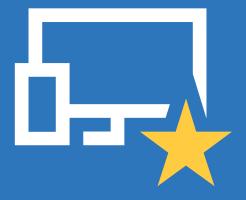
Deploying your new technology

Once the decision is made, you can move forward with confidence and set up the technology that will help you achieve your goals to transform outcomes for your students and support your educators. As you work through deployment, remember there are some key actions ahead to make it easier for teachers, staff, and students to adopt the technology and get the most out of it:

- ✓ Focus on your learning objectives, tying the technology to them to help achieve those goals.
- ✓ Support teachers, staff, and students with training on the devices and apps.
- ✓ Create an environment for curious students to explore safely by emphasizing the importance of respecting school security policies around technology use.

Unsure about the technology that's right for your goals?

Partnering with Microsoft Education means you'll have help every step of the way. We'd like to hear from you.

1 Microsoft Class of 2030 Report
2 Anderson, Cushing, and John F. Gantz. "Keys to the Future: Worldwide Readiness Skills to Ensure Student Success—International," IDC, sponsored by Microsoft, June 2016.