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# THE EDUCATOR'S TECHNOLOGY TOOLKIT

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TUNING UP FOR EFFICIENCY AND SAVINGS

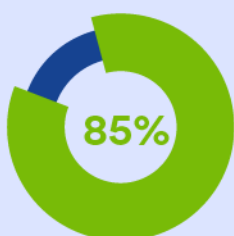


In the past few years, school administrators have had to quickly pivot to digital solutions for virtual learning and administration. Most had little time to plan, strategize, or integrate new programs with their legacy tools. Now, with a moment to breathe, administrators have an opportunity to include more cohesive and efficient education technology tools in their existing systems.

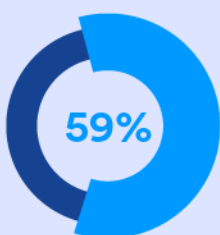
According to a survey by RAND Corporation, [85 percent of principals](#) experience stress related to their work, and 59 percent of teachers feel burned out. Drained teachers

are ready to leave the profession in droves, with the National Education Association finding that [more than half](#) say they plan on quitting or retiring earlier than expected. What can administrators do to minimize burnout, support school staff, and ultimately improve the student experience? Deploy robust educator technology toolkits that automate administrative tasks, secure data, and improve teacher collaboration. Such tools reduce energy-sapping tasks, so school staff can dedicate more time to students.

This guide will give an overview of how administrators like you can build these toolkits. We'll also explore how these technology solutions for education streamline processes, protect data, and improve productivity, creating a better experience for students, educators, and administrators.



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# What administrators need in a technology toolkit

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An educator's technology toolkit contains the digital solutions and applications needed to manage and deliver a successful learning experience.

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While each toolkit will vary based on each school's size, purpose, budget, and overall goals, the most successful schools and districts will have a nice variety of the following education technology tools in their kits. This list of technology solutions for education can be overwhelming, but the more you know about each available system, the better you'll be able to manage your schools, teachers, and students.

We'll break down an ideal educators technology toolkit into three primary categories — school management, education, and student-facing — and provide a brief overview of each system.



# School management

## Enterprise resource planning (ERP) system

An ERP manages and integrates your school's day-to-day activities and processes, like accounting, resource management, and compliance regulations. It helps you run your school and allows all departments to access information from anywhere to strengthen collaboration. ERPs can also automate repetitive processes, help administrators spend less time maintaining physical records, and bridge external and internal communication gaps.

## School accounting software

With school accounting software, administrators can pay bills, send invoices, electronically sign documents, generate financial reports, and manage payroll — helping them comply with relevant regulations while taking tasks off their plates. Some policymakers even use school accounting software to assess program needs (music, art, language, etc.), ensure adequate funding, and make budget decisions in school districts.

## Student information system (SIS)

An SIS (also referred to as a “student management system”) acts as a hub for all student information, including grades and

transcripts, behavioral notes, and attendance records. Without one, tracking, analyzing, and reporting on student performance — such as during a parent-teacher conference — is nearly impossible.

## Faculty/staff management system

With faculty and staff management systems, school administrators are better equipped to track and manage their employees, including teachers, nurses, cafeteria workers, and custodians. By helping administrators organize personal employee information (like address, qualifications, references, and salaries), in addition to performance, onboarding, and time-off requests in one place, they'll be able to easily access their records if and when they need to administer annual reviews, promotions, or disciplinary action.

## Special education management software

To manage the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) of special needs students, many teachers, parents, and administrators use special education management software. These education technology tools, which frequently integrate with student information systems, help develop IEPs by addressing the

specific educational needs, goals, and learning objectives of each special needs student. These solutions even help facilitate compliance checks, evaluations, and other state mandates, and track and report student data related to disabilities to improve outcomes, promote inclusivity, expand services, and close the achievement gap.

## Event management system

A powerful event management system helps administrators plan and market school events, execute them smoothly, and measure their success. This tool is especially useful when schools need to boost event awareness and attendance to generate funds — perhaps to buy new equipment for the school or send a class on a field trip.

## Athletics management system

Sports plays a huge role in many schools, which is why a comprehensive athletics management system can be particularly helpful in running day-to-day operations. These solutions help track and manage student eligibility, signed permission slips, sports equipment and merchandise, financial aid, recruitment, and schedules — across all seasons and sports.

## Customer relationship management (CRM) system

To personalize and manage relationships with both current and prospective students, your toolkit needs a CRM. This educator's technology solution will not only help you get a clearer understanding of how your staff is communicating with students and parents, but it will also help you streamline your admission and enrollment process, schedule touchpoints with specific prospects, and collect and manage tuition payments. Most importantly, a CRM can help you visualize demographics and identify enrollment gaps to optimize your recruitment efforts.

## Content management system (CMS)

Highly personalized, engaging web pages and content aren't just for affluent enterprises, thanks to content management systems. These education technology tools help administrators and teachers build and manage school websites that are engaging, accessible, streamlined, and secure — for parents and students alike.

Sports staff and students' needs vary from the rest of your faculty and learners. By having a separate tool designed for them — preferably one that integrates with the other education

technology tools you have in place — you'll be able to help your athletics department stay organized and communicative when coordinating with the rest of the school.

## Email marketing system

Including an email marketing system in your educator's technology toolkit comes with a wide variety of benefits. It's cost-effective, allows you to reach your entire school or district quickly and efficiently, and improves email open rates. Independent or private schools can especially benefit from email marketing tools, as their administrators can build engaging, personalized marketing campaigns to set them apart from competitors and fill their admissions pipeline.



# Education

## Learning management system (LMS)

Used to create, administer, and manage educational courses and report on outcomes, an LMS works for face-to-face, virtual, or hybrid learning environments. The best ones have all the tools you need to run a classroom — creating quizzes, monitoring student participation, engaging learners, and automating the grading process.

## Professional development software

No matter how long you've been in the education field, there's always more to learn and better ways to optimize your existing methods. Professional development software, particularly programs with some form of built-in professional learning community

(PLC), can help your faculty enhance their techniques and effectiveness. These online platforms help administrators ensure high-quality classroom instruction, encourage peer-to-peer coaching and collaboration, identify areas of interest for future professional development programs and seminars, and onboard new teachers and personnel.

## Curriculum management system

Manually brainstorming, developing, and launching curriculum is time-consuming for teachers. They have to cull the internet for relevant resources and ensure their instructional materials align with their district and state standards. However, curriculum management software helps combat these challenges by automating curriculum approval processes and mapping, measuring outcomes, and facilitating collaboration between teachers and administrators.

# Student-facing

## Student engagement system

If you're looking to boost student engagement, capture and analyze student data, and deliver a more customized student experience, then you need some type of student engagement platform. These education technology solutions help administrators and teachers make better decisions about programming, create and conduct polls and quizzes, improve retention, and even introduce gaming to incentivize participation.

## Counseling management

Upgrade your school's counseling services with a powerful, comprehensive counseling management platform. This educator's technology tool helps your guidance counselors work individually with students and provide assistance in both their current and future educational endeavors. They can track and view safety incidents, provide career coaching, collect scholarship applications, and conduct behavior assessments — all from one secure, standardized solution.

## Student portal

Often housed on a school's website, a student portal allows enrolled students to access their class schedule, course materials, school calendar, and attendance records with a simple login. These portals are personalized to each student and can help them stay engaged with what's happening at their school and district.

# Audit your tech toolkit

As you can see, there is a wide variety of technology solutions for education. Although you may want to adopt them all, not only is it expensive, it's a bit unrealistic. While you may have started using a few solutions years ago as you quickly adapted to providing remote learning, with more time now to do proper research, you can focus on building an educator's technology toolkit that meets your school's specific needs.

Ready to get started?

Begin by auditing your existing tech toolkit to find out what's working, what's not, and what can be improved before you make any decisions about which new educator technology capabilities to invest in next.



## Assemble a tech audit task force

To provide the right resources for your staff, you need to gather the right team — teachers, departmental stakeholders, and others who engage daily with different education technology tools. Set up a meeting with some of your school's teachers, department heads, guidance counselors, office staff, nurses, and athletic directors, and ask them to provide their opinions — positive and negative — on your existing educator's technology toolkit.

If you're feeling especially ambitious, you can even distribute a survey beforehand to better prepare for the meeting. This act of shared leadership makes your faculty feel seen, heard, and valued.

## Gather feedback about each existing solution

Once your tech audit task force has been assembled, ask each member to tell you the positive aspects, challenges, and shortcomings of every solution they use on a regular basis. List each tool and ask your staff the following:

Survey stakeholders to identify technology gaps and opportunities

- Who uses this tool?
- What are its pros and cons?
- What are some specific features you wish it had or wish worked better?
- Is it comparable to another tool in our toolkit? If so, is it better or worse?
- Does it work well with other solutions in our current toolkit? If so, how? If not, how?
- What would happen if you got rid of this tool? What would its removal look like for you, students, their parents, and the school overall?

Asking your staff what they need instead of making assumptions about what you think they need encourages real, honest feedback. Allowing your team to share their impartial opinions in a safe space will improve the chances you cut ineffectual tools from the tech toolkit to make room for software they actually want, need, and will use. Ideally, the more efficiently more tech is used, the more productive and effective your operations will become.

## Identify operational overlaps and inefficiencies between different platforms

After your tech toolkit roundtable, it's important to do some basic research about what each tool you're using does. Learn about its most popular features, what it's supposed to do for you, and how it's supposed to communicate and work with other software.

Then, referencing your notes from your task force meeting, assess each tool. Does it unnecessarily complicate everyday processes? Does it overlap with the functionality of other tools? Does it integrate with other systems? If a tool duplicates work, uses excessive resources (labor, money, or time), or increases human error, it's inefficient and needs to go.

## Analyze performance metrics and costs

Another important aspect of auditing your tech toolkit is analyzing each solution's performance metrics and costs, and comparing it to similar education technology tools on the market. Are you paying too much for limited features? Is it scalable? At what point does it experience issues and fail? What is each tool's average response time?

To answer these questions, run some performance tests, like [load or stress tests](#), with a [performance-testing tool](#).

### LOAD TESTING

measures the tool's performance as the workload increases (e.g., downloading many internet files at once or sending a large amount of jobs to a printer's queue). Does the response time lag, improve, or stay the same as normal working conditions are pushed?

### STRESS TESTING

or fatigue testing, measures the software's performance beyond normal working conditions (e.g., when a large number of users try to log into a program at once). By testing the program's robustness and capacity for error handling, you can measure its stability, how it might fail, and how well it can recover.

Once you decide which performance-testing tool to use, it's best to run it about once a year to ensure all solutions are operating smoothly. Perform these tests on weekends or days when the least amount of people are working to limit tech interruptions.

These performance tests help you better understand your existing toolkit — each application's speed, accuracy, stability, and inconsistencies across different operating systems — so you can remove education technology tools that are impractical.

## Research more integrative solutions

After you've surveyed your team about your existing toolkit, identified challenges and inefficiencies, and run performance tests, it's time to start looking for the best solutions for your school.

### TECHNICAL DEBT

The implied cost of additional rework caused by choosing an easy (limited) solution now instead of using a better approach that would take longer.

# Find the right education technology tools for your toolkit

While price is an important factor when choosing the right solution for your school, it's not the only component to take into consideration. After all, cost doesn't equate to value. If two seemingly comparable solutions differ significantly in price, one might be more comprehensive than the other, offering more features, security, and scalability. Investing in one robust system that includes more features and functionality than other smaller ones could ultimately save you money in the long run.

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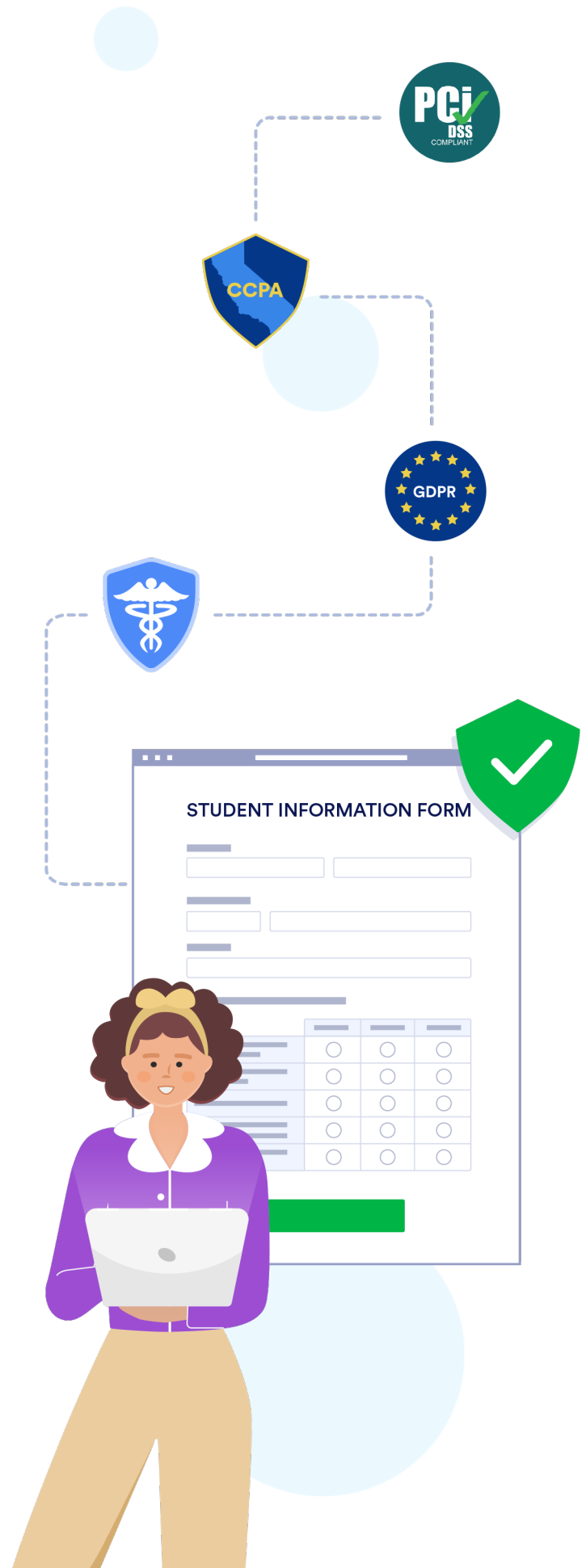
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To add the right education technology tools to your toolkit, look for ones that accomplish the following:

## Maintain data privacy and security

Managing the data privacy and security of your school's faculty and students is non-negotiable, which is why you need software that makes data collection safe and secure. Look for education technology tools that

- **Store data on dedicated servers**
- **Encrypt your forms**
- **Offer password protection and Google reCAPTCHA**
- **Meet compliance standards, including**
  - **HIPAA** (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act)
  - **PCI-DSS** (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard)
  - **CCPA** (California Consumer Privacy Act)
  - **GDPR** (General Data Protection Regulation)



Without proper security measures in place, you put your school at [greater risk for data breaches](#) that may include leaked personal and confidential student information, such as names, birthdays, races, and behaviors (e.g., “unhoused” or “excessive talking”). Ask prospective technology providers if their products and services are routinely tested or audited for security. Ideally, your technology suppliers should be able to provide a [SOC 2](#) report (or similar audit) that details security measures and protocols.

In addition to ensuring your digital solutions include powerful cybersecurity technologies, [prioritize digital literacy and wellness](#). Create a digital safety plan about how to follow safety and privacy laws in your school — especially the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#) — and review it regularly with staff, students, and parents. The more everyone knows how to prevent cyberattacks, the safer your learning community will be.

That being said, don’t rush to put a solution in place. Take the time to find tools that can automate your everyday processes without simultaneously [putting some students at a disadvantage](#). As an administrator, it’s imperative for you to choose software that considers the long-term effects on children, education, and society, and does its best to prioritize human choice (i.e., lets students opt out of certain data collection without compromising their ability to be included in the system or use the software).

## Integrate with other technology solutions for education

Remember the tech audit you performed, where you learned which tools play well in the sandbox together? Your new education technology tools need to speak to and work with each other too. If they can’t integrate with other tools and share valuable data seamlessly, then they shouldn’t be part of your educator’s technology toolkit. Integrated systems help you save time and money, improve work culture, and boost productivity. They also help provide more actionable, accurate, accessible, and secure data.

[Consider a professional learning community](#), or PLC, for example. With integrated systems, your teachers can use different education technology tools to set up communication channels — shareable forms and surveys, email, text chats, or video calls — to share best practices and advice, stay informed about new research, and collaborate in real time.

## Are user-friendly

While finding a safe, secure education platform for your toolkit is essential, so is ease of use. If faculty members, students, and teachers can’t use the software — or have to undergo hours of training to get the hang of it — your toolkit will prove useless, no matter

how good it is. While researching various solutions, read reviews about usability and even take advantage of free trial periods to give the software a test run.

## Are scalable and innovative

Running a school is similar to running a business. You have to answer to customers (staff, students, and parents) and bosses, provide value, and be productive — all while keeping costs to a minimum. You also have to be continually adaptable and flexible, prepared for whatever life — and the district — throws at you.

To best handle these challenges, it's smart to choose software that scales up or down to meet your school's ever-changing budget, staff, enrollment, and technological needs. Find technology that's customizable, expansive, innovative, and can support increased workloads, users, and data. Scalable, innovative software drives creativity, engagement, morale, and productivity school-wide, helping staff and students use technology to optimize the way they teach and learn.



# Build a better educator's toolkit for your school

Tech-driven transformation doesn't have to be an expensive or nerve-racking endeavor, especially now that you have some time to do it right. Talk to your team, audit your existing toolkit, and do some research to figure out which tools to optimize and remove to enhance your school's teaching and learning community.

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Most importantly, remember that no education toolkit is built overnight. While it's exciting to imagine all the different ways technology can streamline your processes, protect your data, and create a better experience school-wide, these changes can't be rushed. Start small with one or two departments and build gradually over time. Introducing education technology tools takes patience, staff communication, and consistent check-ins and tweaks to reflect the changing needs of both your school and the education sector at large.

Here are some ways to build an effective toolkit for your school.

## Set new performance goals

It's important to set performance goals with your staff based on a pre-and post-technology toolkit mindset. Learning and adopting new tech takes time, so give your faculty and yourself some grace as you attempt to meet or exceed old performance goals and make new ones. Set goals with your team, not for them, and explain clear expectations regarding how you're going to measure progress so you're on the same page.

## Identify a solution that connects with all other platforms

When optimizing existing solutions and finding new ones, consolidation is the name of the game. To save time and money, centralize all standalone platforms into one solution whenever possible. This cohesive environment ensures better control, security, data sharing, and collaboration.

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## Continue collecting and analyzing user feedback

Ultimately, the success of your education technology tools relies on whether or not they're being used. If your staff, students, and parents think your software is too complicated, limited, slow, or downright inconvenient, you need to know. This could mean you're paying for something that's ineffectual and maybe even problematic, which is the opposite of what you're hoping to provide for your school.

Continue sending out surveys, meeting with your tech audit task force (even if its members fluctuate), and popping into classrooms from time to time to remind staff and students that their opinions matter. Consider doing these check-ins once or twice a year and a few weeks after you introduce any type of new technology.

Schedule time with your tech task force — perhaps at the end of the school year — to review your existing toolkit, survey results and overall feedback, and make iterative improvements. By continually checking in and collecting feedback throughout the school year, you'll avoid large fires and will only have to make minor improvements to existing tools. Your staff won't have to hastily learn new tech, you won't have to overspend, and everyone will be able to get more out of the toolkit year after year.

# **Educator's technology — the key to a prosperous, more engaging teaching and learning environment**

A few years ago, when remote education became necessary, you did all you could to create a virtual learning environment. You put systems in place to help faculty, students, and parents navigate a new, constantly changing digital classroom. You made some mistakes, you experienced some successes, and you learned a lot.

Now you have both the time and know-how to create a stronger, more versatile education toolkit — one that gives you the flexibility to handle unexpected situations, the security to protect your data, and the scalability to grow and thrive.