



# 2024 State EdTech Trends Report

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**By Keith Lee and Evo Popoff**

**Preface by Chris Reykdal,**  
State Superintendent, Washington State Office  
of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

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**SETDA**

# PREFACE

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By: Chris Reykdal, *State Superintendent, Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction*

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“ Today, every successful state and district superintendent needs to be part Chief Technology Officer, considering the role of information and educational technology in every facet of their work. ”

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The world was a very different place in 2017, my first year as State Superintendent in Washington. While the use of technology in classrooms had increased over the previous decade, edtech was still mostly seen as a novelty, or something not necessarily related to direct instruction. Sure, some districts with forward-thinking leaders had embraced technology and were doing amazing things, but, in most districts, education technology was siloed, often isolated from the instruction that was considered the core work of schools.

So much has changed in the intervening years! A global pandemic, cyber threats to K-12 systems, and the emergence of new, powerful — and potentially impactful — technologies like artificial intelligence have thrust educational technology to the forefront for education leaders, not as an add-on to instruction, but as a core service. Today, every successful state and district superintendent needs to be part Chief Technology Officer, considering the role of information and educational technology in every facet of their work.

Our state agency, the Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), has worked hard to ensure technology is woven into the fabric of our efforts to support, not just student learning and success but also equitable student access to technology-enabled learning experiences.

The pandemic was a critical factor in driving this shift. As school buildings closed, districts launched virtual learning systems to ensure their students could continue to learn from home. While we remain proud that Washington’s districts were able to transition quickly to virtual learning, we also acknowledge that the pandemic shed a light on the disparities prevalent across our state. There was great variability in the quality of virtual learning programs. While some students thrived, others struggled, and many lacked adequate resources.

OSPI responded rapidly to address that digital divide — providing devices and funding to help every district go one-to-one and working hard to expand broadband access, particularly for our rural communities — but

as students returned to their classrooms, we understood that we could not go back to the way we had operated before the pandemic.

Technology is critical to student achievement, and it is an incredible tool for delivering materials to educators and students, regardless of geography. Moreover, as technology shapes and reshapes the world of work, all of Washington's students must have access to technology as part of their K-12 journey. This is why, as we refresh the state's learning standards in subject areas like English Language Arts and Math, we are engaging with industry experts and edtech experts within OSPI to integrate critical technology skills like media literacy into those standards.

As we integrate technology into the state's efforts to support teaching and learning, we also know that those efforts should stay grounded in our human-centered purpose:

educators and students. Our human-centered approach to edtech integration is most notable in the development of our guidance on Artificial Intelligence for K-12, which is highlighted in this report, but it touches every aspect of what we do.

The real work of State Education Agencies nationwide to support digital equity is only just beginning and, in fact, will never end. Today we are all working on artificial intelligence, by next year we will no doubt embrace something not even on our radar today. Our job as state leaders is to build dynamic organizations that expect, and even invite, change so that our local education agencies build confidence in transformative technologies. Our state education agency will continue to evolve in step with the world around us, but as we do, we will be certain to stay focused on what matters most: the human development mission that is at the heart of our K-12 system.

# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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“ As state and district leaders settle into a new school year and the challenges it will bring, they must continue to explore ways to modernize their education systems. ”

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On January 22, 2024, the United States Department of Education released the [National Educational Technology Plan \(NETP\): A Call to Action for Closing the Digital Access, Design, and Use Divides](#). This year’s NETP issued a challenge to education leaders — including those at the state level — to take the steps necessary to ensure that every student has the opportunity to engage in enriching and engaging learning experiences powered by technology.

It was an honor for the SETDA to lead the coalition of organizations that supported the Department’s development of this NETP in particular. As the first NETP released post-pandemic, it is also the first to address a nation where educational technology has become commonplace in the classroom and vital for connecting educators with families. Technology touches every aspect of the K-12 system and supports stakeholders ranging from back office staff to English language learners, homebound students, and students with disabilities. Now more than ever, the NETP’s audience is truly every educator and every leader.

This NETP also landed at a period of transition in K-12 education, with policymakers, educators, and families increasingly

embracing the value of learning experiences beyond (but still connected to) the physical school building. States are creating greater flexibility for students to earn credit outside the classroom. School and district leaders are expanding work-based learning opportunities for students. Educators are building connected learning environments that enable students to collaborate with their peers and subject-matter experts regardless of location, while also fostering stronger connection with families. It’s a brave new interconnected world powered by emerging technologies, most notably artificial intelligence. But, to achieve the promise of anywhere, anytime learning, these technologies must be safe and secure, and, returning to the themes of the NETP, equally available to all learners.

As state and district leaders settle into a new school year and the challenges that it will bring, they must continue to explore ways to modernize their education systems. In many ways, K-12 education is playing catch-up, as other sectors, both public and private, have been leveraging technology to modernize business practices for decades. States are leading this work, as the spotlights in this report demonstrate, but more remains to be done, particularly as new technologies and challenges emerge. Beyond the moral — and

potentially legal — imperative of maintaining a safe, secure, and equitable education system in a digital, and increasingly AI-powered, age, system modernization may also address other challenges leaders face. For example, modernizing education systems can create more efficient and accessible learning experiences and lead to higher rates of student engagement and teacher satisfaction. We need to rethink and

transform educational practices to better prepare students for the demands of the digital age.

The spotlights in this report provide good examples of steps state leaders have taken to modernize their education systems.

***Julia Fallon, SETDA***

*August 2024*

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## About Whiteboard Advisors

For more than 20 years, Whiteboard Advisors has collaborated with the most transformative organizations, individuals, and investors in education. Our diverse team of educators, wonks, and storytellers brings in-depth understanding of policy, technology, and practice to bear on cutting-edge research, powerful writing, and the design of communications and advocacy campaigns that challenge the status quo. Whether we're working with startups or the most established organizations in education, we're passionate about taking breakthrough ideas to scale.

## About SETDA

Founded by state education agency leaders in 2001, [SETDA](#) is the principal nonprofit membership association representing U.S. state and territorial educational technology and digital learning leaders. For over 20 years, we have provided well-established forums for advocacy on policy and practice, professional learning, inter-state collaboration, and public-private partnerships centered around digital learning and equity. SETDA members are known for leading the charge within their SEAs for proper uses of technology in schools, including supporting district leaders and their state colleagues in federal education programs, IDEA, assessment, curriculum, and data collection to ensure that technology is leveraged appropriately throughout the educational system.

# INTRODUCTION

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The 2023-24 school year was a big year for educational technology. In January, the United States Department of Education released the [2024 National Educational Technology Plan](#) with a call to action for education leaders to close the critical divides of access, design, and use. The 2023-24 school year also marked the dawn of the age of Artificial Intelligence in education as state and district leaders began to reckon with this powerful (and potentially risky) new application in their midst. The final weeks of the school year also saw a state [governor banning the use of cell phones in school](#), perhaps a sign of things to come as leaders respond to the United States Surgeon General's warning about the role of social media in the national youth mental health crisis (which may also help explain the increase in the percentage of respondents who identified student mental health as a top education priority in this year's survey).

As the world of educational technology has evolved, so has SETDA's [State EdTech Trends Survey](#). This year's survey and report feature new questions (which will likely become recurring questions) and some changes to old questions to reflect the mainstreaming of AI in K-12 education. Not surprisingly, the responses to these questions spotlighted the heightened interest in AI among policymakers and educators last year.

Also, as a nod to the NETP, the 2024 survey is, for the first time, exploring the extent to which edtech planning takes place at the state and local level, while also asking state

leaders about their efforts to adopt and promote the [Universal Design for Learning Framework](#) in their state — one of the key NETP recommendations for state leaders.

While aspects of the survey and this report have changed, much has remained the same in terms of exploring longitudinal trends. Like its predecessors, this report seeks to catalog the ways state education agencies (SEAs) are adjusting to a world where technology is ubiquitous and where new and emerging innovations create never-before-seen opportunities and risks. To that end, this report captures the perspectives of state education leaders — including state chiefs, chief information officers, and edtech directors, to name a few — on issues relating to education technology. To be more precise, the report provides an analysis of the feedback collected from state leaders through surveys administered in May and June 2024.

Those familiar with past SETDA State EdTech Trends Reports will find some familiar topics in this year's report. Once again, cybersecurity and home access are top priorities for state leaders. The survey also reintroduced questions from the 2022 survey on state investments in their own capacity to support edtech, including the extent to which state education agencies have offices of edtech. As those survey responses — and the state spotlights in this report — demonstrate, states continue to evolve and reinvent themselves to address today's challenges.

This year's report presents 4 key findings:



**KEY FINDING 1:** State agencies are stepping up to meet the demand for more support on the responsible adoption of AI in education.

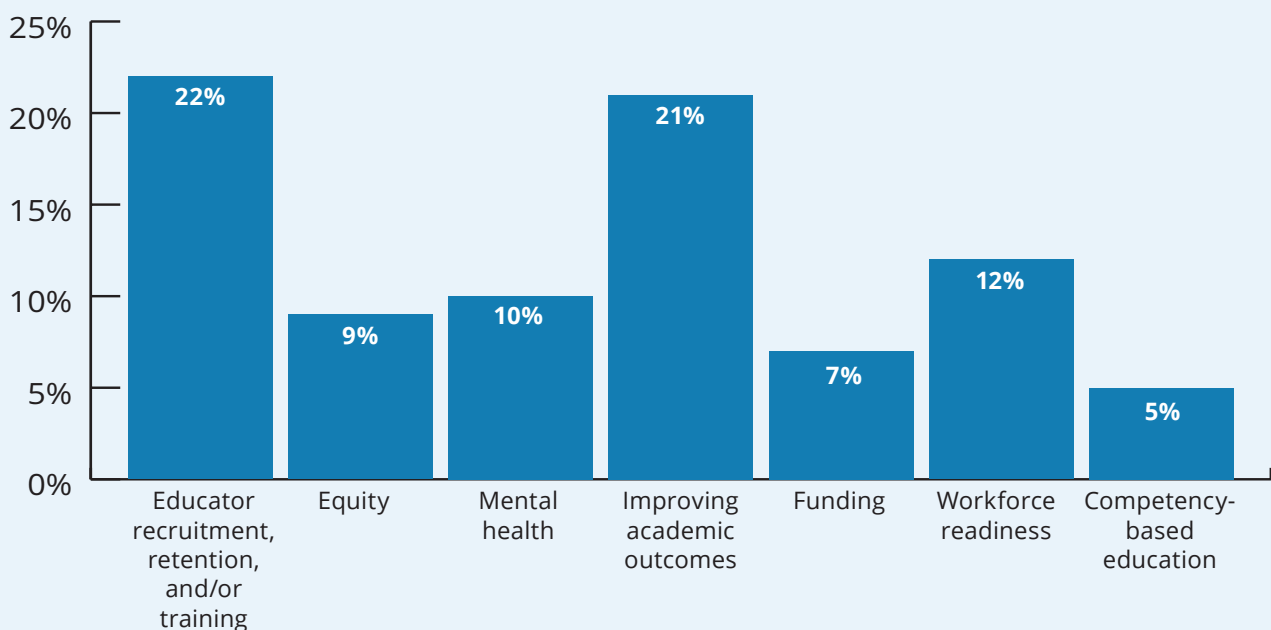
**KEY FINDING 2:** For the second year in a row, cybersecurity is the top edtech priority among state leaders, but fewer state leaders believe their state is providing sufficient funding to support cybersecurity.

**KEY FINDING 3:** Anxiety about funding appears to increase as federal pandemic funds expire this fall, while home connectivity and access remain the top unmet need across states.

**KEY FINDING 4:** New survey questions reveal opportunities for state education leaders to support the effective and equitable use of edtech as states appear to invest more in their own capacity.

As with each SETDA State Edtech Trends Report, this report spotlights the work taking place in a handful of states that can serve as exemplars to other state leaders. In sharing these, we also want to acknowledge that incredible work is taking place in every state, and we hope to spotlight that work in future reports. We look forward to administering the next survey in 2025, when we expect to learn more about how states are handling cybersecurity, home access, AI, and the new issues — like social media and more cell phone bans — that the new school year might bring.

#### WHAT ARE YOUR STATE AGENCY'S TOP PRIORITIES FOR EDUCATION FOR THE COMING YEAR?



## Spotlight on Virginia: Celebrating 40 Years of State EdTech Support



This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) commitment to educational technology through the establishment of an office of educational technology. As noted by Calypso Gilstrap, the Associate Director of Educational Technology and Classroom Innovation at VDOE, that sustained commitment has enabled the state to achieve some notable firsts like becoming, in 2004, one of the first states to have one-to-one laptops in a school division, as well as one of the first to move to online state assessments.

These achievements were made possible, in part, by state policies that have created the necessary infrastructure and systems — and established reasonable expectations around the use of edtech in the classroom — to support equitable access to edtech and local innovation. “Having an established office of educational technology with a seat at the table, both within our education department and across state agencies, means that policymakers are confident school divisions will receive the support they need when they enact new requirements,” stated Gilstrap.

One such mandate is the state's Standards of Quality, which, in 2005, were amended to require school divisions to employ an Instructional Technology Resource Teacher (ITRTs) — licensed teachers who assist other teachers with the integration of technology in the classroom, train teachers to use technology effectively, and assist with curriculum support related to edtech — for every 1,000 students. “What makes our ITRTs special is that it is not a ‘nice to have’ position; ITRT's play established, pivotal roles in their school divisions,” continued Gilstrap.

Creating this infrastructure, with consistent support from the state leaders, has enabled the state to invest in systems like the state's virtual learning system, Virtual Virginia, and in ensuring all students have access to high-quality educational experiences empowered by technology.

## KEY FINDING 1:

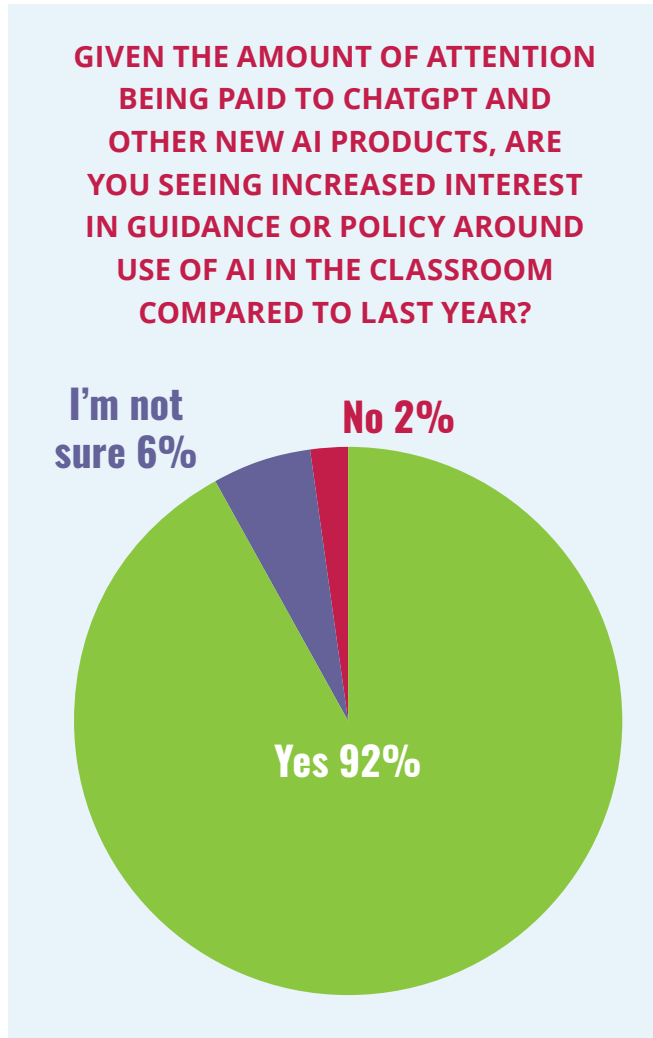
### State agencies are stepping up to meet the demand for more support on the responsible adoption of AI in education.

When the 2023 SETDA Survey was administered, educators and policymakers were still in the early stages of deciding what to do with new AI-driven technologies. It perhaps wasn't surprising that, while 55% of last year's respondents indicated that district and school leaders had expressed increased interest in receiving guidance on AI policy development, only 2% of respondents reported that their state had an AI initiative in place.

Much has changed in the intervening months between survey administrations. In May 2023, The United States Department of Education [issued guidance to educators and developers on the responsible use of AI in teaching and learning](#), and states started to follow suit. Accordingly, this year's survey responses reflect a sector coming to grips with the role of state education agencies in a new, AI-powered normal. 90% of respondents reported receiving increased interest in guidance related to AI, and 59% indicated that their state has developed guidance on AI in education. Similarly, the percentage of respondents who indicated that they now had an AI initiative in place increased (from 2% in 2023 to 14% in 2024), behind only broadband initiatives (19%) and cybersecurity initiatives (15%).

The 2024 SETDA survey also marked the first time that AI was on the list of possible responses survey takers could select as their

state's top priority. The topic emerged as the second-biggest priority for state leaders, behind perennial priority cybersecurity. This is not happening in response to state legislation, however: only 4% of the respondents whose states have developed AI guidance say they did so because they were compelled by state law.



## DOES YOUR STATE HAVE ANY EXISTING INITIATIVES OR EFFORTS RELATED TO ANY OF THE FOLLOWING EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY TOPICS?

Respondents whose states have AI initiatives underway:

2023

2%



2024

14%

### Spotlight on Washington: Putting People at the Center of AI



As evidenced by this year's SETDA State EdTech Trends survey, artificial intelligence is a top priority for state and district leaders across the country who are struggling with how to safely integrate the new technology in their classrooms. State leaders in Washington appreciate the challenge. "70% of Washington school districts are rural, with a large number of districts where tech personnel serve multiple roles," noted Bre Urness-Straight, the Director of Educational Technology at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. "To support them, we know the state needs to develop practical guidance on difficult topics like AI."

In December 2023, the state launched an effort to develop AI guidance for K-12 leaders and educators, and, in just six months, published the Comprehensive Human-Centered AI Guidance for K-12 Public Schools. Now in its third revision as the state keeps pace with the rapidly evolving emerging technology, the guide, as demonstrated by its title, embodies the state's human-centered vision of AI as a tool to empower, not replace, educators and the rich instructional practices already in place.

Keeping their AI work focused on the people rather than technology requires intentional collaboration between state leaders and educators. From the outset, state leaders engaged a broad group of stakeholders — teachers, superintendents, and students — to ensure that the guide and resources the state developed incorporated stakeholder input and addressed their needs. Additionally, state leaders at OSPI worked with a number of professional member organizations, like the Washington Association of School Administrators, and across state agencies to ensure widespread dissemination and implementation of the guide's recommendations. The Agency has also partnered with Microsoft to develop training modules aimed at helping educators use AI for supporting classroom instruction.

"Artificial intelligence is an evolving field, so our work collaborating with local leaders and educators will continue and evolve as well," continued Urness-Straight. "That is the only way we can ensure that the resources we develop remain relevant and useful, and that humans — teachers and students, in particular — remain at the forefront of discussions around AI."

## KEY FINDING 2:

**For the second year in a row, cybersecurity is the top edtech priority among state leaders, but fewer state leaders believe their state is providing sufficient funding to support cybersecurity.**

Cybersecurity once again tops the list of state leader’s edtech priorities — and for good reason. According to a [January 2024 report](#), K-12 districts surpassed hospitals, government offices, and other public-sector targets to become the most frequent targets of cyber attacks. In fact, the number of cyber attacks on schools nearly doubled in the two-year period between 2023 and 2022.

As districts have become more reliant on technology, the number of cyber attacks on schools has only [continued to rise](#). And [many education leaders fear](#) that AI, with its reliance on datasets that sometimes include personally identifiable information, may pose new threats to already-vulnerable systems.

But, as demonstrated by the Spotlight on Indiana’s cybersecurity efforts, state and district leaders are stepping up to protect personal data from an ever-evolving array of cyber threats. From firewalls and double-firewalls to multi-factor authentication, school systems are deploying strategies (often demanded by insurance companies) to shore up their vulnerabilities.

Many leaders in other states, too, are playing a critical role in helping prevent and mitigate cyber attacks. Across all survey respondents, cybersecurity initiatives were the second-most-common state edtech initiatives, behind only broadband initiatives.

While cybersecurity’s priority position in the survey results remains unchanged from last year, state leaders’ perception of the amount of state funding supporting cybersecurity

efforts has changed significantly. Specifically, the number of state leaders who believe that their state provides “sufficient” funds to support cybersecurity efforts dropped from 19% of respondents last year to 8% this year, while the number of respondents who indicated that their state provides only a small amount of funding for cybersecurity more than doubled from 15% of respondents last year to 33% of respondents this year. While this result may mean that states are not funding cybersecurity efforts in 2024 at the same levels they were in 2023, it may simply reflect shifting perceptions of how much it costs to keep up with the escalating threats school systems face. In other words, last year’s “ample funding” might be this year’s insufficient funding.

### WHAT ARE YOUR STATE’S TOP TECHNOLOGY PRIORITIES?

2024

1. **Cybersecurity : 21%** ↓
2. **Artificial Intelligence : 18%** ↑
3. **Equity (Access to Internet) : 14%** ↓

2023

1. **Cybersecurity : 24%**
2. **Equity (Access to Internet) : 20%**
3. **Technology for Instruction : 19%**

## Spotlight on Indiana: Strengthening Cyber Security through Collaboration



As technology becomes an integral part of K-12 school systems and classrooms, state leaders have been empowered to help district leaders — particularly those in small and resource challenged communities — secure those systems from cyber attacks. The state of Indiana has been tackling this work since 2018, when the state launched a cybersecurity task force through a partnership with the Indiana Consortium for School Networking chapter. For the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE), collaboration across school systems and with other state leaders has been central to this work.

For Director of Educational Technology at IDOE, Brad Hagg, “It all begins with building good relationships and establishing trust to create an environment where people are vulnerable enough to share where their current challenges lie and are also willing to work with colleagues to get better.” In 2021, IDOE established a secure online community for verified school personnel. Built on the cybersecurity task force’s earlier efforts, the online community provides a platform for local tech directors to post alerts, discuss strategies, and distribute educational materials statewide.

Importantly, IDOE collaborated with state leaders, the cybersecurity task force, and the Indiana Office of Technology (IOT), in launching several impactful initiatives to support the state’s K-12 community:

- Providing a cybersecurity awareness platform to all schools to provide training for their employees on key cybersecurity concepts.
- Bringing together over 1000 city officials and district tech directors from all 92 counties to explore opportunities to collaborate and share services to lower costs and provide quicker access to offline data backups.
- Partnering with Purdue University and Indiana University to offer school systems training and free cybersecurity assessments.
- Ensuring that K-12 education received the necessary funding and programmatic support through the federally funded State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program

Acknowledging the impact of the work of IOT and IDOE on improving overall cybersecurity in the state, including K-12 schools, Governor Holcomb awarded the team the Governor’s Public Service Achievement Award last October. As noted by Tracy Barnes, the Chief Information Officer at the Indiana Office of Technology: “The Indiana Office of Technology has been fortunate to collaborate with the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE), and together, we have completed transformative cybersecurity initiatives across our state’s educational landscape, forging partnerships with and between city officials and district tech directors that have spawned an innovative culture of collaboration and shared resources, leading to both cost savings and enhanced security measures.”

In Indiana, K-12 cybersecurity really has been a team sport, which has been critical to ensuring that the state’s efforts benefit every community. “Our partnership with IDOE has been instrumental in fortifying the cybersecurity landscape across K-12 schools in our state,” said Pete Just, the executive director of the Indiana Chief Technology Officer Council and the chair of the Cybersecurity Task Force, “By bringing together resources, expertise, and a shared commitment to protecting our educational institutions, we’ve been able to extend critical support to districts that might otherwise struggle to implement robust security measures.”

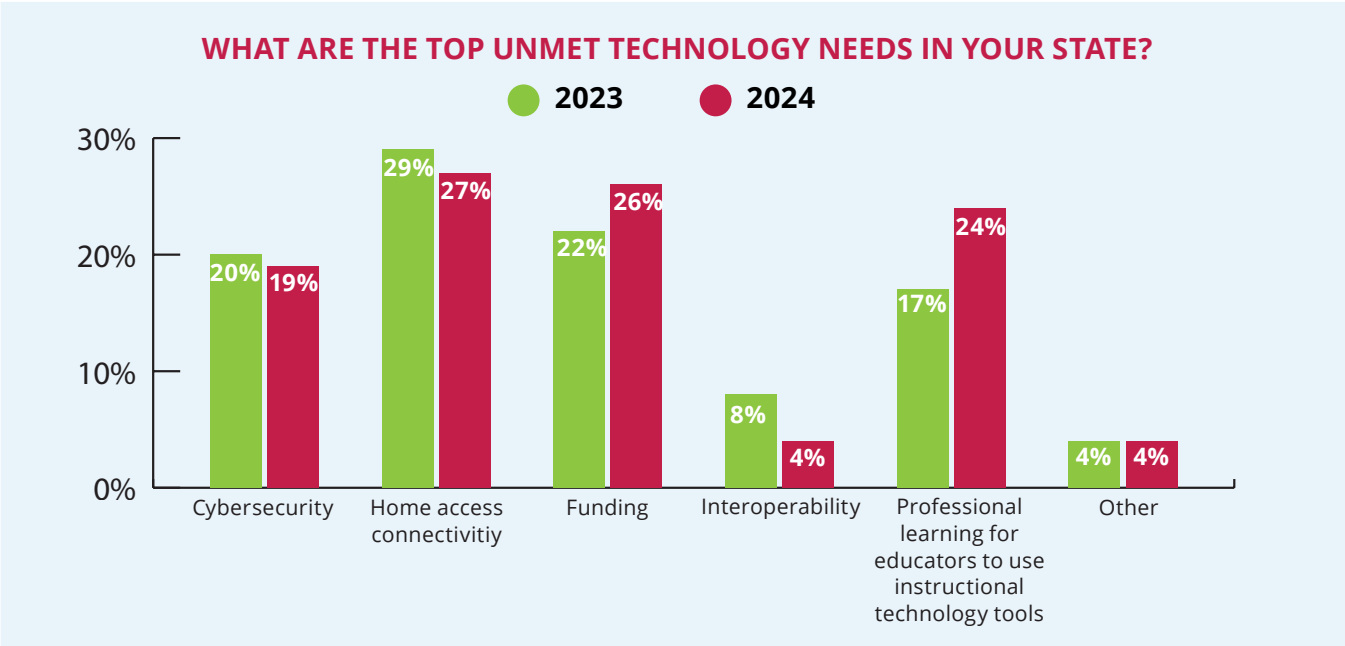
## KEY FINDING 3:

### Anxiety about funding appears to increase as federal pandemic funds expire this fall, while home connectivity and access remains the top unmet need across states.

In October 2024, ESSER funds will expire, with unused funds returning to the federal government. With an estimated 92% of local education agencies using ESSER funds to purchase edtech tools and solutions — and many also relying on the Emergency Connectivity Fund and the Affordable Connectivity Program, which also sunsetted this year — it should come as no surprise that state leaders might be anxious about an impending fiscal cliff. Indeed, the percentage of state leaders identifying funding as a top unmet need increased from 22% to 26%, almost completely closing the gap with the top unmet need of home access to broadband. And with the normal shelf life of 3-4 years for a student’s device, one of the first challenges district leaders might face following the expiration of ESSER funds is maintaining, replacing, and updating student devices purchased.

In addition, the number of state leaders who indicated that they would be discontinuing edtech initiatives increased from 16% in 2023 to 27% in this year’s survey. With regard to the development of a plan for sustainable funding for devices and connectivity after ESSER funds expire, state leaders were evenly split, with approximately 37% indicating they have a plan in place and another 37% stating that they do not have a plan in place. Developing sustainability plans can be handy: the number of state leaders who indicated that they “need more edtech in their state” increased for the first time since this survey was administered (from 7% to 11% of respondents).

As noted above, in this year’s survey, concerns about funding were second only to concerns about addressing home access and connectivity. Fortunately, a significant majority of state leaders — approximately 85%





of survey respondents — indicated that their states have a broadband initiative in place. Of those, 14% stated that their broadband initiative launched in the 2023-24 school year, with 71% continuing an existing broadband initiative. These efforts to bridge the digital

access divide will likely continue in 2025 and beyond with the implementation of the federal Broadband, Equity, Access, and Deployment Program and the digital equity programs under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, along with new E-Rate program flexibilities.

### Spotlight on Maine: Digital Equity and Teacher Voice



Maine has a long, proud tradition of digital equity dating back to 2000, when then-governor Angus King “predicted the future” and decided to invest in the state’s K-12 technology infrastructure. The state launched the Maine Learning Technology Initiative, the nation’s first statewide, one-to-one laptop program, which built on the success of the Maine School and Library Network, a collaborative that was established in 1996 between the Maine Department of Education, the University of Maine, and the state’s Library Network to ensure that, at the very least, every school, library, and community had broadband access. With both these programs in place, the Maine Department of Education ensured that Maine students entered the new millennium equipped with devices and access to the internet, something that, at the time, was innovative and cutting edge.

These programs are still operating today, and while providing access to devices and broadband have become standard approaches to addressing the digital divide, state leaders credit a less common factor — teacher voice — for the advances the state has made in supporting the equitable and effective use of technology in classrooms. “In Maine, teacher voice is powerful,” noted Emma Banks, Coordinator of Learning Through Technology at the Maine Department of Education, “so knowing that the majority of our students have access, we are able to engage our educators to better understand how these tools could help them be more effective. Their feedback, which always prioritizes student needs, has been incredibly valuable to us and serves as the basis for a lot of the state’s work and our critical initiatives.”

For instance, Maine teachers wanted to be able to incorporate new technologies, like 3D printing, virtual reality and robotics, into their classrooms, knowing that students would need to interact with these tools in the “real world.” In response, in 2022, the state launched the #MaineTeachesCS initiative, which provided universal access to computer science and EdTech resources, providing every public school with a free mobile computer science lab, paired with professional learning so they could effectively integrate these technologies into their classrooms.

As a result, more teachers have indicated that they are interested in learning how to incorporate cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and other emerging technologies into their classrooms to help prepare students for success in a technology-driven world. To address this need, the Department introduced a supplemental technology grant program, #TeachWithTech, which equips classrooms with emerging technologies paired with professional learning for teachers.

“In Maine, the state Motto is *Dirigo*, or ‘I lead.’ And that’s exactly what educators in Maine are doing,” Chief Teaching and Learning Officer, Beth Lambert, explained. “Their leadership, along with two decades of investment in infrastructure, digital equity, and guidance from the department, are what allow local districts to innovate and respond to each student’s needs.”



## KEY FINDING 4

### New survey questions reveal opportunities for state education leaders to support the effective and equitable use of edtech as states appear to invest

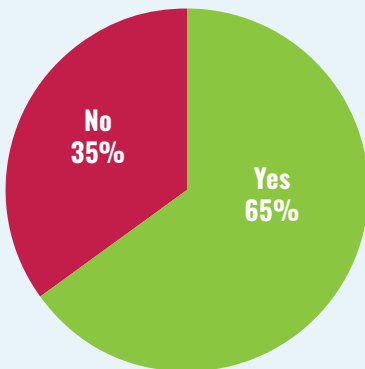
#### more in their own capacity.

The NETP recommends that every state education agency staff an office of educational technology to ensure that progress is made toward closing digital divides. To see if state education agencies are adapting to a digital world, this survey includes questions on edtech capacity within a state's education agency every other year: Is there an office of edtech? Where does it reside in the organizational chart? How many dedicated staff are focused on this work? The good news: the percentage of state leaders who reported that their state has an office of educational technology increased by 10 percentage points over the past two years

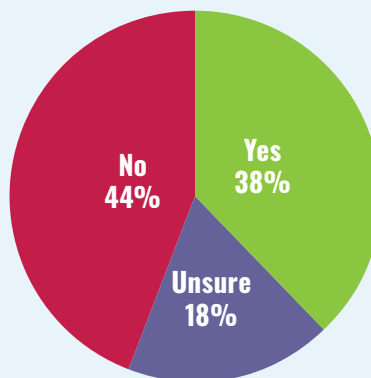
(from 55% to 65%) with that office most likely appearing in the SEA's academic/learning department in the organization chart.

The release of the NETP also inspired questions to better understand the use of edtech plans across the country. According to survey respondents, this, too, is an area where state leaders could be more proactive. For instance, only 11% of respondents indicated that their state requires local districts to develop edtech plans. At the state level, more than half of state leaders (57%) responded that their state has not developed a state edtech plan. At a time when edtech is prevalent in classrooms (and nearly

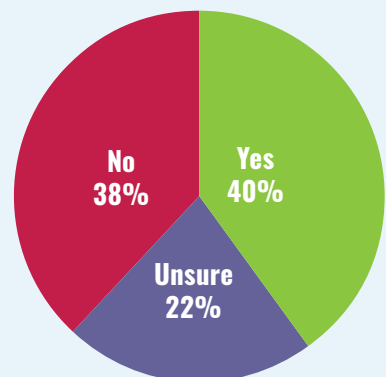
#### DOES YOUR SEA HAVE AN OFFICE THAT COORDINATES EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY?



#### DOES YOUR OFFICE PROVIDE GUIDANCE TO DISTRICTS AND EDUCATORS TO ENSURE THE EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY TOOLS AND RESOURCES THAT SCHOOLS USE ARE ALIGNED WITH UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL) PRINCIPLES?



#### DOES YOUR OFFICE OFFER EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL LEADERS OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN ABOUT UDL AND HOW TO INTEGRATE IT INTO THEIR TEACHING PRACTICES EFFECTIVELY?



ubiquitous in some districts) as budgets are tightening, these plans are vital to ensuring that these tools are used effectively and equitably and that states and districts adopt strategies to sustain their use.

Edtech offices could also provide some additional support to school and district leaders in other areas. Take, for instance, [Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#), a framework to optimize teaching and learning for all people, based on learning science with a focus on the role of inclusive technology. Given the NETP's recommendation to adopt the UDL framework, this year's survey introduced questions to explore how state agencies are — or are not — supporting UDL

adoption. According to this year's responses, there is more work to be done. Only 38% of respondents indicated that they provide guidance to schools to ensure that edtech tools adhere to UDL principles, while 44% reported that they do not provide this type of guidance at all. The numbers are slightly better when it comes to providing UDL training and offering leaders and educators opportunities to learn about UDL. 40% of respondents report providing these opportunities, while 38% indicate that they do not. There is an opportunity here for more states to help educators and leaders incorporate UDL principles into their practices, especially considering the importance of closing the digital design divide.

## Spotlight on Kentucky: The Benefits of Consistent State Leadership



The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 transformed the state's K-12 education system, relaunching the state's Department of Education (KDE) and increasing its responsibilities and influence in the process. KERA also served as the jumping-off point for the modernization of the state's education system by establishing the Kentucky Education Technology System (KETS) under the leadership of the Department's Office of Education Technology (OET) and David Couch, the Department's Chief Information Officer and the Kentucky K-12 EdTech Leader.

Over three decades, that work has helped Kentucky become a national leader in the equitable and effective use of technology. In the process, the Department has often taken on responsibilities, like statewide procurement of edtech solutions, that are the province of local education agencies in many other states. "K-12 education in Kentucky is grounded in local control – as it is in most states – but the Department also appreciates the important role it must play when it comes to education technology," Couch explained. "A strong, centralized shared services approach to edtech helps level the playing field between districts that have internal technology capacity and those that don't, and has yielded incredible benefits, from significantly reducing costs to consistency in technology enabled systems across all districts that are used by all students, teachers and staff to increasing equity and efficacy."

Kentucky was the first state to adopt common, off-the-shelf, statewide student information and financial management systems that every school district is required to use. In 1995, the state was also the first to provide internet access to every school district across the state and the first in the 2010's to migrate all KDE's major technology shared services (e.g., e-mail, financial management, school information, digital content delivery, phone service, etc.) to the cloud for all school districts and all Department agencies. These two moves paid dividends when the state had to respond rapidly to the pandemic. Couch estimates that centralized purchasing of these systems by the KDE has helped reduce the cost to districts by approximately 40-60%. These cost reductions help district budgets, and they also help bridge the digital divide.

"Because our office touches all aspects of edtech from virtual learning to data and infrastructure, we can ensure that all of these systems work together to benefit teachers and make a difference for student learning," continued Couch. "It also means that when the Department develops the state's six-year edtech plan — [the Kentucky Education Technology System Master Plan](#) — it is also able to take a leadership role in implementing it because each district is required by law to have a KDE approved technology plan."

As a result, OET works across the Department, bringing attention to the role education technology can make in the work of other offices. They also collaborate closely with district leaders to support on-the-ground edtech implementation. In fact, beginning in 1992, the Office has hosted a bi-directional, fully collaborative monthly meeting as well as an annual summit with district and school edtech leaders.

Three decades of consistent state edtech leadership has provided direct benefits to the state's educators and students. With this strong foundation in place, KDE's Office of Education Technology is poised to tackle whatever new opportunities and challenges the future — and emerging technologies — may hold.

# CONCLUSION

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A new school year has started, and we eagerly await the next administration of the State Edtech Trends survey. We anticipate that many of the challenges state leaders faced during the 2022-2023 school year will remain — cybersecurity certainly isn't going anywhere — but we also imagine that new opportunities (and issues) will arise this year.

States have a pivotal role in developing the policies and implementing the programs that foster innovation, ensure equitable access and readiness, and protect the rights of students and educators. As demonstrated in this report, state edtech offices and leaders continue to foster collaboration among educators, policymakers, technology developers, and stakeholders to ensure that educational technology meets the needs of education systems. By working together, state offices are helping educators and leaders identify

and sustain best practices, share insights, and address challenges — collectively.

The findings presented in this report are only part of what we learned in the survey. We encourage you to explore the full results, available here, where, among other findings, you will find responses to more open-ended questions. Likewise, the spotlights presented in the report are just a small sample of the amazing work that educators and state and district administrators are doing across the country. We encourage you to learn more about the work taking place in your state. We also encourage you to continue asking important questions of state leaders about educational and technological priorities, how those priorities are supported with resources, and how we can work together to create technology-rich schools and districts for all students.