

5 EdTech opportunities that will emerge in 2022

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There is a certain perspective that comes from being in the edtech industry for over 30 years, and while I thought I had seen it all, nothing could have prepared me (or anyone else) for a global pandemic. Not only did the pandemic upend our lives, it looks like we will be managing and battling surges and outbreaks of COVID variants for a lifetime or more.

There are significant positives about how we as a society have learned to deal with COVID. Much as the problems in our medical systems, for example, have given rise to better and more efficient care, so can education benefit from rethinking its model.

The problems we've experienced educating students who are learning at home, either full time or in a part time model, spotlight needed improvements (particularly with equity of access) and spark new ways of thinking.

An interesting study was just released by [Kuato Studios](#) last month to ground what I think are the [opportunities and challenges we face in 2022](#).

Kuato is an edtech gaming company that [surveyed 1,000 parents and 600 teachers in the U.K. and the U.S. about how they had adapted to learning, teaching, and technology in general since the pandemic started](#). Twelve percent of U.S. parents and 11 percent of U.K. parents felt they did not have the critical tools in place (like laptops, internet connections, and tables) before the pandemic. Additionally, roughly 30 percent of U.S. educators and 20 percent of U.K. teachers felt they did not have the supportive infrastructure to conduct online classes before the pandemic. This lapse was even more glaring among historically excluded groups. Information like that, which Kuato unearthed in its survey, is not unexpected. We've known that a glaring gap in our system is equal access to

technology, and thus the learning resources delivered via technology. Given that, the following are my thoughts about changes and opportunities in our field through 2022, as well as thoughts about where we need to be.

Emerging edtech products of 2022 will need to stay simple to succeed.

Complicated products in an already complex environment prove problematic for educators and their families. In a post-pandemic era, the future of edtech solutions is in the swift and stress-free solutions – not platforms bogged down by inaccessible design and inconvenient or overwhelming implementation requiring hours of training.

Technical planning must fit into and be part of existing programs and policies.

Technology is not an add-on. It is as important to the overall instructional plan as the instructional component of that plan. As such, planning for the hardware, software, and training needed to operate the tech starts at the beginning of the planning phase. For more on this process, here's an expanded [article about digital strategy](#).

Cloud is not always the answer.

Cloud-based and local-area network/wide-area networks (LAN/WAN) are not interchangeable. While tech-savvy administrators and IT leaders have always understood this, the rest of the market is beginning to understand the difference. It is not quite so difficult for IT experts to explain that the cloud isn't always the best fit for the need and that means they can do a better job recommending the right solution for the educational need. It also means more tech solutions will offer both cloud and network-hosted options. We will also see a merging of capabilities between the two. Cloud solutions will have increasingly more functionality

and won't always be considered the "light" version of their network-hosted counterparts.

The tinker-to-teach approach is expected.

By now, teachers expect edtech to be easy to figure out and usable right out of the box. Tech needs to be simple to initiate and manage and not require complex training for teachers to use it in their classrooms. Of course training is the ideal, but most people expect that they should be able to tinker around, and click on a few tutorials to get up and running with at least the basic operations. Anything requiring hours of training will go unused. It is important to separate training needed for pedagogical understanding from simple technological operation. Professional development for curriculum or instructional planning, even those within technology, still needs significant training, but not the tech itself. That should be easy enough to figure out on one's own.

We will emphasize teaching students about their digital citizenship and being responsible for their own safety.

The [International Society for Technology and Education](#) recommends embedding the importance of digital skills into everyday lesson plans, enlightening children and teens on topics like digital commerce and communication, literacy and law, right and responsibilities, and more. The onus to make sure tech is secure and that a student's privacy is protected still resides with tech developers and school IT personnel to secure their networks. However, students spend just as many if not more hours on non-school devices and networks. Our responsibility and attention to teaching them how to protect themselves cannot be overstated.