



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# EDUCATION INNOVATION

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# EDUCATION INNOVATION

Innovation in education involves leveraging technology to enhance learning experiences and create more personalized and accessible educational opportunities. Innovation and education go hand in hand – they empower individuals to navigate the rapidly changing world and push the boundaries of progress by constantly expanding their knowledge and skills.

Technology has revolutionized learning in the classroom, and its use has opened up new avenues for personalized and adaptive learning. With digital textbooks, educational apps, and online platforms, students have access to educational resources 24/7.

To keep pace in our ever-changing world, educational practices must continue to evolve. The educational system must innovate. This Brief gives an overview of the latest innovative practices in education and demonstrates the types of policies and practices that can encourage more of it.

## FACTS TO KNOW

- According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), between fall 2019 and fall 2020, total public elementary and secondary school enrollment dropped from 50.8 million to 49.4 million students. This three percent drop erased a decade of steady growth.
- The National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as the Nation's Report Card, released earlier this year that math and reading scores in the United States hit some of the lowest levels in decades.
- Data from recent polling reflects that while only 1 in 3 Americans believes K-12 education is going in the right direction in the United States, support for school choice policies from parents and the general public continues to climb.
- According to recent 2023 data, there are 65.9 million VR users in the U.S., which is 15% of the U.S. population.
- Within weeks of adoption and release for public consumption, ChatGPT was already utilized by 30% of college students as recent research revealed.
- As of October 2022, after the school year had already begun, 45% of U.S. public schools had at least one teacher vacancy.
- U.S. education technology companies raised \$5.2 billion of investment capital in 2022, down from \$8.2 billion in 2021.

# SCHOOLS - TOOLS - TALENT

Through the examination of potential options within schools, tools, and talent, innovative opportunities are plentiful and provide an optimistic look at the future of education:

## SCHOOLS

### Micro-schools

While a micro-school is not a new idea, it is increasingly gaining popularity. Micro-schools “sometimes referred to as learning pods, is the reimagining of the one-room schoolhouse, where class sizes are usually fewer than 15 students of varying ages, and the schedule and curriculum is tailored to fit the needs of each class.”

### Hybrid Homeschools

According to EdChoice’s polling, over 40% of Parents, Teachers, and Teenagers would prefer a school schedule that involved some days learning from home and some days learning from school.

### School Choice

What is school choice? According to EdChoice, school choice “is a term that represents the many ways students access their K-12 education. Many still choose their schools by buying a home in their desired district, but today’s parents engage in school choice in more diverse and ever-evolving ways.”

## TOOLS

### Artificial Intelligence & ChatGPT

Artificial Intelligence (AI), according to IBM, is a “field, which combines computer science and robust datasets, to enable problem-solving.” ChatGPT, a new tool leveraging Artificial Intelligence, allows users to search and create prompts for desired outcomes.

### Virtual Reality

Virtual reality (VR) has the potential to revolutionize education by creating immersive and interactive learning experiences for students.

### Online & Adaptive Curricula

Adaptive curricula refer to educational programs that are designed to adjust and personalize the learning experience for individual students based on their progress, strengths, and weaknesses.

# TALENT

While the “teacher shortage” is more complicated and nuanced than headlines might display, there is a current challenge in recruiting the number of quality teachers the U.S. needs to fill all of its classrooms.

The recruitment of teachers has always been historically challenging, but with the challenges presented to the education system during COVID-19, recruitment and retention became even more difficult.

## ROLE OF GOVERNMENT



### FEDERAL

The U.S. Constitution doesn't mention education directly. Instead, it delegates power to the states in the 10th Amendment, meaning that anything not explicitly stated in the Constitution as a federal government power is left up to the states to decide. The U.S. Department of Education was established on May 4, 1980, under the Department of Education Organization Act, which was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter. The U.S. Department of Education promotes “educational excellence and equal access,” and the federal government provides monetary support to states through grants to help fill funding gaps.



### STATE AND LOCAL

Innovation and technological advancements can take place in any frame of traditional public, private, charter, or homeschool systems. The key is to make space for entrepreneurial educators and innovative practices within state and local education policies.

Education Savings Accounts, Charter Schools, Magnet Schools, and Open Enrollment are all ways that states and local school districts can promote school choice. Another less well known type of school choice policy is “course access.” Course access programs, also known as course choice, “subdivide the funding that a student receives into smaller units and allows that student to take some of that funding to outside course providers.” This mechanism offers students many more options for courses than what might be available solely at their school.



### PRIVATE SECTOR

Private companies are investing in research and development, creating innovative education products and solutions, and bringing their expertise and resources to drive education innovation. As of February 2022, there were 16.6K+ EdTech startups that provide online courses, educational resources, learning platforms, management solutions, teaching resources, and other services for K-12 students, teachers, parents and administrators.

# AREAS FOR REFORM

One of the key areas of reform at the state level is the need for flexible legislation as described by EdChoice:

**“School choice legislation written today needs to be flexible and thoughtful enough to facilitate new models of schooling that have not yet been widely implemented, especially those that rely on technology to leverage learning.”**

Here are some examples of legislative reforms that can foster innovation in education:

1. School choice: “The Biggest Education Innovation Is Growing Use of School Choice” – Legislative reforms that expand school choice options for families, such as education savings accounts, vouchers, and tax-credit scholarships, can encourage the development of innovative education models that better meet the needs of students.
2. Competency-based learning: Legislative reforms that allow for more flexibility in how students earn credit, such as competency-based learning, can enable students to learn at their own pace and focus on their individual strengths and interests.
3. Technology-Focused professional development for teachers: Legislative reforms can play a critical role in ensuring that teachers are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to effectively integrate technology and innovative teaching methods into their classrooms.
4. Public-private partnerships: Legislative reforms that encourage partnerships between public schools and private companies can foster innovation by leveraging the expertise and resources of the private sector. In addition, by partnering with local businesses to understand their workforce needs, school districts can foster the development of classrooms-to-careers initiatives.
5. Research and Development: The United States only invests around 0.2% of the education budget on research. Investment in education-focused research and startups can be incentivized with grants and rewards.
6. Flexible funding: Legislative reforms that provide more flexibility in how education funds are allocated can enable schools and districts to invest in innovative approaches to teaching and learning, such as technology integration and project-based learning.

# WHAT YOU CAN DO

**01. MEASURE** Find out what your state and district are doing about K-12 education and innovation.

- Do you know the state of K-12 education in your community or state?
  - Do you know how your district's public school ranks? Are there private or vocational options?
- Do you know your school district's budget?
- What are your state's laws on school choice?
  - Does your state offer tax credit or similar scholarships?
    - Look up in EdChoice's State Index what your state currently offers in relationship to vouchers and ESAs.
- How is technology integrated in your local school?

**02. IDENTIFY** Who are the influencers in your state, county, or community? Learn about their priorities and consider how to contact them, including elected officials, attorneys general, law enforcement, boards of education, city councils, journalists, media outlets, community organizations, and local businesses.

- Who are the members of the school board in your community? Who is your state's superintendent of schools?
- Who is your school district's superintendent, and who are the principals?
- What steps have your state's or community's elected or appointed officials taken in terms of education?

**03. REACH OUT** You are a catalyst. Finding a common cause is a great opportunity to develop relationships with people who may be outside of your immediate network. The Policy Circle is your platform to convene with experts you want to hear from.

- Find allies in your community or in nearby towns and elsewhere in the state regarding education such as school choice or teacher licensing, teacher training in technology etc..
- Foster collaborative relationships with local businesses and schools – is there a pathway from classrooms to careers in your community?

**04. PLAN** Set milestones based on your state's legislative calendar or local community calendar.

**05. EXECUTE** Give it your best shot and show up. Working with others, you may create something great for your community. Here are some tools to learn how to contact your representatives and write an op-ed.