

# 2024 TRENDS IN K-12 EDUCATION



---

# 2024 TRENDS IN K-12 EDUCATION

- 3/ INTRODUCTION
- 4/ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
- 5/ TREND 1: DISTRICTS TURN TO MARKETING AND ADVOCACY IN A COMPETITIVE ENROLLMENT ENVIRONMENT
- 8/ TREND 2: THE EXPIRATION OF ESSER FUNDING SPURS A MOVE TOWARD CONSISTENT PROGRAM MEASUREMENT
- 11/ TREND 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPROVES SCHOOL CLIMATE AND DRIVES INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING
- 14/ TREND 4: LEADERS LEVERAGE CHANGE MANAGEMENT TO BUILD CAPACITY AND CONSENSUS IN AN ERA OF UNCERTAINTY
- 17/ TREND 5: TEACHERS RECEIVE MORE SUPPORT TO DEVELOP AGENCY, EFFICACY, AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH
- 20/ TREND 6: DISTRICTS SEEK FRAMEWORKS TO INCORPORATE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INTO SCHOOLS
- 23/ CONCLUSION
- 24/ SOURCES
- 26/ ABOUT HANOVER



---

# INTRODUCTION

The last four years in education have undoubtedly been atypical. School districts have grappled with myriad challenges, from facilitating learning during a pandemic to transitioning toward academic recovery initiatives in the face of staff shortages, political divides, and budgetary limitations. Yet through it all, district leaders and educators have relentlessly pressed forward, meeting significant challenges with grit, new tools, technologies, best practices, and a steadfast focus on the well-being of students.

In 2024, educators across the U.S. continue to display adaptability and resilience. Despite both new and ongoing challenges, districts are applying lessons from the past and gaining momentum on new strategic goals. Notably, we're seeing a refreshed focus on measuring high-quality learning and teaching to propel improved student and teacher outcomes. As academic recovery efforts continue, districts are increasingly leveraging quantitative and qualitative data and best practices research to inform their operations, navigate controversies, and deepen their relationships with all members of their learning communities, including families and the general public.

Hanover's **2024 Trends in K-12 Education** report highlights six trends our K-12 experts believe reflect key issues that district leaders are grappling with in 2024. Based on our collaboration with hundreds of K-12 districts, agencies, and associations across the nation, our hope is that this collection of data, recommendations, and case studies will help prepare your district to achieve even greater success in the next school year.

**Sincerely,**

*Leila Nuland, PhD, Senior Managing Content Director, K12 Research and Professional Services*  
*Marriam Ewaida, PhD, Managing Director, K12 Professional Services*



To read about last year's trends, download the report, **2023 Trends in K-12 Education** or visit **Hanover's resources page** for additional K-12 insights.

---

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From public school districts to state and regional education agencies, and professional organizations, Hanover Research partners closely with myriad K-12 organizations. Through our research, advisory work, and professional learning support, we see a cross-section of the ways in which hundreds of districts serve their communities and seize opportunities.

## HERE ARE SIX TRENDS THAT WILL SHAPE K-12 EDUCATION IN 2024

### **TREND 1:** Districts Turn to Marketing and Advocacy in a Competitive Enrollment Environment

The enrollment cliff, the loss of ESSER funds, and increased competition are pushing K-12 leaders to develop creative ways to market and advocate for their district to stabilize financial turmoil.

---

### **TREND 2:** The Expiration of ESSER Funding Spurs a Move Toward Consistent Program Measurement

Academic recovery progress has been inconsistent across the U.S. K-12 leaders need to pinpoint which program investments in their district accelerate student achievement and make difficult budget reductions without jeopardizing support for their most vulnerable students.

### **TREND 3:** Community Engagement Improves School Climate and Drives Inclusive Decision-Making

Many districts are learning that strengthening community engagement not only improves their understanding of the communities they serve, but also positively impacts school climates by fostering decisions that meet the needs of more students, staff, and families.

---

### **TREND 4:** Leaders Leverage Change Management to Build Capacity and Consensus in an Era of Uncertainty

As K-12 leaders face increasing budget, staffing, and political pressures, they are building key skills for resiliency and turning to capacity building and change management to propel their districts and schools forward.

---

### **TREND 5:** Teachers Receive More Support to Develop Agency, Efficacy, and Professional Growth

Teachers need additional support and professional learning resources not only to accelerate student achievement, but also to feel more valued and effective in their professional roles.

---

### **TREND 6:** Districts Seek Frameworks to Incorporate Artificial Intelligence into Schools

Rapid advancements — and potential threats — in artificial intelligence (AI) are redefining the role of technology in the K-12 learning environment, prompting the need for guidance.



# TREND 1: DISTRICTS TURN TO MARKETING AND ADVOCACY IN A COMPETITIVE ENROLLMENT ENVIRONMENT

The enrollment cliff, the loss of ESSER funds, and increased competition are pushing K-12 leaders to develop creative ways to market and advocate for their district to stabilize financial turmoil.

# TREND 1: DISTRICTS TURN TO MARKETING AND ADVOCACY IN A COMPETITIVE ENROLLMENT ENVIRONMENT



The number of states projected to have lower public school enrollment in 2030 than 2020



-\$45,568

The average amount of funding U.S. schools lose every time four students leave a district, equivalent to one teacher's annual salary



The percentage of increased enrollment at U.S. private schools for students in grades K-4 between 2019-2022

## SHIFTING ENROLLMENT PATTERNS

As ESSER funds run dry, district budgets are returning to a reliance on primarily state and local funds, based on enrollment counts. However, costs are rising and declining birth rates are leading to an **enrollment cliff**, coupled with more families choosing alternative schooling models, such as charter schools, private schools, and homeschooling.

While some districts used their ESSER funds to invest in new operational efficiencies, many district leaders in 2024-25 must reduce operating expenses, freeze hiring, or increase class sizes due to budget shortfalls. Although all districts will need to adjust to the loss of ESSER funds, districts in high-poverty communities will be forced to make even deeper cuts because the federal funds were structured to benefit high-need schools more.

To counter shrinking budgets, research shows that enhancing family engagement and community awareness can improve student enrollment.

## A NEED FOR INCREASED MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

In 2024, more districts are working to attract families to public schools through promotional messaging, advertising, targeted outreach, and even home visits. They are developing marketing and communications plans that identify target audiences, key messages, and marketing channels to engage more prospective families or encourage formerly enrolled students to return. Many are also leveraging branding to express their values and build a consistent public image.

## CULTIVATING ADVOCATES

Additionally, some school districts recognize that developing greater partnerships with community groups, businesses, or legislators who champion public schools is a tactic that builds district advocacy and valuable word-of-mouth promotion.



Strengthen your district's reputation with tips from our **Engaging Families and Communities infographic**.

# TREND 1: DISTRICTS TURN TO MARKETING AND ADVOCACY IN A COMPETITIVE ENROLLMENT ENVIRONMENT

## TAKE ACTION

To mitigate enrollment losses, your district can assemble an internal or external team to build a cohesive marketing and advocacy plan, including the following steps:

- Build a district brand identity that highlights a unique value proposition to differentiate your schools from others in the area.
- Use surveys and focus groups to gather community feedback about perceptions of the district, what sets it apart, and what programs or services people want. When possible, include prospective, current, and former families in your research for a more holistic assessment.
- Highlight student success stories and wraparound support services in district communications.
- Assemble an enrollment team to provide outreach, home visits, or case management for prospective or former students, and concierges to welcome and help new families navigate enrollment.
- Look for additional ways to build district relationships with community groups, businesses, and elected representatives.

## RELATED READING

Learn more about district marketing and advocacy with these Hanover resources:

- **Engaging Families and Communities in K-12 Education**, an infographic with tips to build stronger partnerships within your K-12 district or school community
- **District Marketing for a Competitive Enrollment Environment**, a guide to branding and marketing best practices for districts (*member-only access*)
- **Best Practices for Raising Community Program Awareness**, a resource for branding and communication strategies and ways to measure community perceptions (*member-only access*)



### SPOTLIGHT: Prince George's County Public Schools

Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) in Maryland was interested in promoting awareness and participation in its career and technical education (CTE) programs. To build an effective marketing strategy, the district partnered with Hanover Research to better understand community members' preferences and perceptions related to CTE.

In the fall of 2023, Hanover conducted a needs and interests survey with students, families, staff, and other community members to measure CTE awareness and inform the program's branding. The survey findings included recommendations to refine CTE messaging and initiate relevant marketing tactics to increase brand awareness.

As a result of this work, PGCPS has a strategy and resources in place to raise the visibility of CTE in the community and connect more students and families with programs that match their skills and interests.



## TREND 2: THE EXPIRATION OF ESSER FUNDING SPURS A MOVE TOWARD CONSISTENT PROGRAM MEASUREMENT

Academic recovery progress has been inconsistent across the U.S. As a result, K-12 leaders need to pinpoint which investments in their district are accelerating student achievement and make budget decisions that avoid jeopardizing support for their most vulnerable students.



## TREND 2: THE EXPIRATION OF ESSER FUNDING SPURS A MOVE TOWARD CONSISTENT PROGRAM MEASUREMENT



The average percentage of ESSER funds spent as of September 2023



The percentage of district leaders who planned to spend remaining ESSER funds on curriculum materials as of August 2023



The percentage of educators who agreed their current curricula was high quality and well aligned to learning standards



The average dollar amount districts will need to cut per student in 2024–25 budgets, due to the loss of ESSER funds

### ASSESSING THE RETURN ON INVESTMENT

In 2024–25, more school districts are looking for systematic ways to plan and implement continuous improvement and ensure every investment in their operations, programs, and practices positively impacts student outcomes.

### EVIDENCE-BASED MATH AND LITERACY INTERVENTIONS

While there is some division regarding the best way to teach K–12 math and literacy, districts can look for evidence-based, student-centered interventions that benefit all learners and follow best practices for evaluating the effectiveness of various curricular approaches.

When it comes to approaches to academic recovery, research finds that acceleration strategies are more effective than remediation at helping students reach grade level and stay engaged in instruction. Accelerated instruction should focus on using grade-level content while providing in-the-moment supplemental instruction in concepts students have not yet mastered, with tiered systems of supports and interventions.

### A PROGRAM EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

As more districts experiment with various programs and interventions to fuel academic recovery, the need to consistently assess program impact and effectiveness increases at all levels of the organization.

Program evaluation is a systematic assessment of the operation and outcomes of a program or initiative that identifies factors that contribute to success and tracks how well programs meet district or school goals. Quality program evaluations can improve educational practices by enabling a district to:

- Assess fidelity of program implementation
- Assess program results
- Highlight methods for program improvement
- Make informed decisions about the operation or expansion of its programs

Conducting a program evaluation requires identifying a program or initiative to evaluate, planning the evaluation, collecting and analyzing data, sharing the results, and changing or improving the program. When implemented correctly, the process allows district and school leaders to quickly uncover barriers to program success and pinpoint factors that maximize favorable outcomes for all students.



Demystify the stages of program evaluation — from planning to execution — with our infographic, [Step-by-Step Guide to K-12 Program Evaluations](#).

## TREND 2: THE EXPIRATION OF ESSER FUNDING SPURS A MOVE TOWARD CONSISTENT PROGRAM MEASUREMENT

### TAKE ACTION

To successfully close learning gaps for students, districts can consider the following practices:

- Establish a program evaluation team with a team leader who can serve as the point person for all evaluation-related inquiries. The team can also hire an external evaluator who works with staff to evaluate programs.
- To initiate a program evaluation, first determine the type of evaluation that needs to be conducted (formative or summative), the availability of quantitative and qualitative data, and the internal timelines and capacity for program evaluation efforts.
- Develop a logic model to document the relationships between a program's inputs and expected outcomes, establish a shared language among the team members, and set goals.
- Provide professional learning support in grade- and subject-specific acceleration strategies so educators have the knowledge and tools needed to effectively propel student learning.

### RELATED READING

To learn more about program evaluation, be sure to check out the following:

- **K-12 Instructional Audit Roadmap**, a guide to evaluating the efficacy of instructional practices to highlight a path toward improvement
- **Step-by-Step Guide to K-12 Program Evaluations**, a guide featuring tips on how to measure your programs' efficacy, while setting future programs up for success
- **Enhance Your Program Evaluation Efficacy by Developing Logic Models**, a resource exploring the process and benefits of a logic model to get the most out of your programs
- **K-12 Student Well-Being Program Evaluation Checklist**, a resource for measuring the effectiveness of programs that support student health
- **Successful K-12 Program Implementation Toolkit**, a guide with tips for planning, establishing, and sustaining new programs



### SPOTLIGHT: San Lorenzo Unified School District

San Lorenzo Unified School District (SLzUSD) in California aims to improve its English Learner (EL) program. To identify key strengths and weaknesses within the program and identify a path to improvement, the district partnered with Hanover Research to launch a series of program evaluation research projects, including:

- ▶ **Custom Secondary Research:** A research brief outlining the most up-to-date best practices for supporting English learners within core instruction
- ▶ **Professional Needs Assessment:** An anonymous survey to identify educators' perceptions on the strengths, challenges, and needs for professional learning within the EL program
- ▶ **Qualitative Analysis of Needs Assessment:** Vital takeaways and a set of recommendations based on the professional needs assessment responses

With a clear understanding of the EL program's current efficacy level, SLzUSD leaders are now poised to adjust their strategy and allocate resources to improve support for EL educators based on research-backed findings.



# TREND 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPROVES SCHOOL CLIMATE AND DRIVES INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING

Many districts are coming to understand that strengthening community engagement not only improves their understanding of the communities they serve, but also positively impacts school climates by fostering decisions that meet the needs of more students, staff, and families.

# TREND 3: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IMPROVES SCHOOL CLIMATE AND DRIVES INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING



50%

The percentage of students, staff, and families who agree their district engages the community



67% vs 81%

The percentage of parents who agree their child's school makes families feel valued, compared to staff who believe it does



45%

The percentage of students, staff, and families who agree their district responds to community members' questions or concerns

## IMPORTANCE OF CLIMATE

School climate touches everything from bullying, discipline, student voice, belonging, motivation to learn, to safety and security, and overall well-being.

As climate challenges persist, many districts are focusing on family and community engagement in 2024 because research shows that family involvement is essential to student success. Specifically, **family and community engagement** is associated with improved academic achievement, attendance, and graduation rates. Additionally, schools that are involved in their communities are better suited to help students with personal or local problems, contribute to civic life, and respond to social or economic trends.

## INCLUSION AND BELONGING CONCERNS

School districts are increasingly working to build a sense of belonging among students, teachers, parents, and caregivers to improve community engagement and school climate. When students experience a sense of belonging at school, they demonstrate myriad improved social, emotional, and academic outcomes.

Inclusive district policies and practices combined with quality social-emotional learning (SEL) can help students feel more rooted to their schools, regulate their emotions and stress, express their identities more fully, and be ready to learn in all academic subjects.

## BUILD AND MEASURE ENGAGEMENT

To create more welcoming, supportive, and connected schools for all community members, education leaders must first understand how to leverage data and best practices to identify shared values across schools and communities.

Family and community involvement efforts should not be conducted ad hoc. Rather, for programs to have true and lasting effects, districts need to build systematic plans based on their communities' data and feedback. Climate and community surveys, listening tours, or home visits are important ways to learn what's most important to communities.

Once a district understands community perceptions and needs, it can establish climate goals and metrics to measure progress over time. Goals may include sustaining stronger relationships with community groups, offering relevant programs and events that foster belonging, increasing consistent and transparent communications, or bringing more perspectives into key district decisions.

### TAKE ACTION

To increase strategic community engagement efforts in your district, consider these best practices:

- Form a community engagement team to set annual engagement and outreach goals and ensure sustainable and effective engagement initiatives.
- Identify and address barriers to engagement and consider what discourages people from becoming involved (e.g., logistical barriers, lack of trust, lack of knowledge about the district).
- Host events that build relationships and fill outreach gaps, including activities focused on SEL, cultural sharing, safety, mental health, sports, movies, or community forums.
- Leverage new or expanded partnerships with respected business, civic, social, religious, and cultural organizations. Focus on conversations that highlight shared values and emphasize the connections between climate and student outcomes.
- Expand avenues for two-way communication and transparency using communication plans. After community conversations, follow up with information about the next steps. Make data accessible to families to allow them to advocate for their students more effectively.

### RELATED READING

- **Engaging Families and Communities in K-12 Education**, an infographic featuring tips to strengthen and measure the health of family-community-school partnerships
- **Top Benefits of Family & Community Engagement**, our blog exploring how and why family and community inclusivity is key to academic success
- **The Why and How of a Positive School Climate**, an infographic with data and tips for conducting climate surveys
- **Best Practices for Community Engagement**, an analysis of community engagement methods to incorporate into district outreach (*member-only access*)



#### SPOTLIGHT: Dallas Independent School District

Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) in Texas is working to create a healthier, supportive school climate for teachers and administrators that will lead to improved student outcomes.

Partnering with Hanover Research, administrators annually study the state of their campus and district climate, starting with staff perceptions and concerns. A climate survey was conducted in late 2023 to collect and analyze teachers' and administrators' thoughts and concerns regarding culture, beliefs, relationships, responsibilities, and student preparation.

Dallas ISD received data-rich reporting on the anonymized survey results. The deliverables provide crucial insight into the state of the district and school climate and will be used to inform key next steps, providing a sound foundation for climate improvement work in 2024.



# TREND 4: LEADERS LEVERAGE CHANGE MANAGEMENT TO BUILD CAPACITY AND CONSENSUS IN AN ERA OF UNCERTAINTY

As K-12 leaders face increasing budget, staffing, and political pressures, they are building key skills for resiliency and turning to capacity building and change management to propel their districts and schools forward.

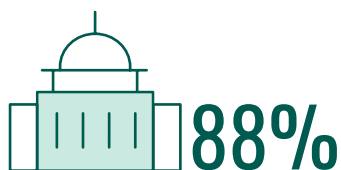
## TREND 4: LEADERS LEVERAGE CHANGE MANAGEMENT TO BUILD CAPACITY AND CONSENSUS IN AN ERA OF UNCERTAINTY



The rate of superintendent turnover among the 500 largest school districts in 2022-23, compared to a historical average of 14-16%



The percentage of teachers who think their district leaders demonstrate empathy, compared to 79% of district leaders who believe they do



The percentage of superintendents who cite “the intrusion of political issues and opinions into schooling” as a source of stress in their job

### LEADERSHIP RETENTION CHALLENGES

District leadership turnover continues to persist at high rates compared to pre-pandemic numbers. Many of those who remain on the job in 2024 are wrestling with declining enrollments, budget shortfalls, and school climate challenges, all of which are leading to continued stress and burnout.

For district leaders to succeed and remain effective in their roles, they must be resilient and adopt a nimble leadership approach. Hanover defines *nimble leadership* as the ability of leaders to effectively guide their organization through changes and challenging times with agility, open and transparent communication, and collaboration with community.

### RAPID ORGANIZATIONAL SHIFTS

In addition to managing their own personal stressors, education leaders must understand how change affects others. In a post-pandemic environment, district staff continue to face an overwhelming amount of change. From new technology, to turnover, budget reductions, new operational practices and shifting job expectations, employees may feel stressed, scared, or resistant to many ongoing waves of change.

Many leaders understand that communicating clearly, regularly, and transparently with employees and other community members about challenging

situations and providing the “why” behind a change helps more people accept it. When employees aren’t sufficiently informed about what is happening in the organization, they often fill the gap with their own fears and anxieties.

### CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Successful leaders champion change management principles to build buy-in and help others embrace a growth mindset and a continuous improvement perspective. Whether engaging in strategic planning or integrating new programs or practices, leaders must help others in the district community prepare for change by building a process to establish a guiding vision, specify the purpose of the change, set goals, and identify who’s involved. Including key partners in this process encourages others to feel empowered and help own the change. Celebrating successes and accomplishments along the way also fuels momentum and acceptance.

To build employees’ skills and increase their ability to thrive, leaders are turning to professional learning opportunities that empower educators and help everyone take the organization to the next level of success through the development of new skills and knowledge.

## TREND 4: LEADERS LEVERAGE CHANGE MANAGEMENT TO BUILD CAPACITY AND CONSENSUS IN AN ERA OF UNCERTAINTY

### TAKE ACTION

To successfully lead through major changes or strategic planning in your district, consider the following practices:

- Follow a structured framework to develop a vision of the desired future state, engage people and collaborate to build a plan, and communicate effectively throughout the change process.
- Gather benchmark data to understand how your district compares to others and to learn what successful models, challenges, or factors may exist for the type of change you are leading.
- Develop a theory of action to ensure that a schools-focused mission leads any change efforts. This ensures changes are based on what will benefit students, teachers, and principals, using reflection and evidence to answer key questions.
- Develop flexible, responsive budgets that can effectively address evolving needs and challenging disruptions when they occur.

### RELATED READING

- **New Superintendent Transition Toolkit**, a resource to help superintendents adjust more efficiently to a new district with new areas for improvement
- **Navigating K-12 Superintendent Transitions: Strategies for Success**, a prerecorded webinar discussing the challenges faced by incoming superintendents and how to overcome them
- **K-12 Staff Well-Being Check-In Toolkit**, a guide to better understanding your staff and educators while managing hard conversations surrounding well-being and uncertainty
- **Beyond the Trends: Finding Opportunity Amid the Challenges in K-12 Education**, our blog with takeaways on how to navigate uncertainty



### SPOTLIGHT: Montgomery Public Schools

Montgomery Public Schools (MPS) in Alabama is currently prioritizing strategic planning with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. In 2023, the district partnered with Hanover Research to collect and analyze the following research to help build their trajectory toward a more equitable future:

- ▶ **Student Outcomes Data Analysis:** A quantitative analysis of gaps in performance and access to programs by student demographics
- ▶ **Benchmarking Analysis:** A visualization of public data from comparable peer schools to compare student outcomes, teacher outcomes, and district operations with MPS's current state
- ▶ **Survey Research:** A district survey to gauge current community perceptions around engagement and support, as well as administrator priorities to pinpoint prime areas of improvement

These insights have prepared MPS to launch an evidence-based strategic plan that reflects the priorities and concerns of students, families, and staff to promote positive outcomes for all, regardless of ability, background, or identity.





## TREND 5: TEACHERS RECEIVE MORE SUPPORT TO DEVELOP AGENCY, EFFICACY, AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

Teachers need more support and professional learning resources to accelerate student achievement and feel more valued and effective in their professional roles.

## TREND 5: TEACHERS RECEIVE MORE SUPPORT TO DEVELOP AGENCY, EFFICACY, AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH



The percentage of teachers who felt very satisfied with their jobs in 2023, compared to just 12% in 2022



The percentage of teachers who report experiencing burnout in 2023, compared to 45% of other working adults



The annual spend on K-12 teacher professional learning in the U.S., with the 50 largest school districts spending about \$8 billion collectively

### EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

Amid a shrinking teacher pipeline, employee burnout, and high turnover, districts are turning their attention to helping teachers stay engaged, motivated, and connected in 2024 by fostering more positive teaching and learning experiences.

Research indicates that there are several factors that increase teachers' job satisfaction, such as encouraging their sense of autonomy, agency, and voice. Schools that promote these qualities in teachers tend to embrace innovation and become more focused on centering student needs. Additionally, one of the best predictors of teacher attrition is the level of support they receive from school leaders.

### TEACHER EFFICACY AND RETENTION

There is a strong correlation between efficacy (the belief you can make a difference) and willingness to stay in a position (retention). The more district leaders help teachers feel empowered to improve student outcomes, the more likely teachers will want to remain in the profession. Indeed, when teachers feel involved in key school decisions, they have higher retention rates.

Leaders can promote individual and collective efficacy in teachers by communicating a belief in their ability to accomplish specific tasks that lead to improved outcomes and by involving them in school or district discussions or decisions. It's also important for leaders to care for teachers' well-being and provide supports that encourage their professional growth, including activities such as coaching, mentorship opportunities, and residency programs.

### PROFESSIONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Professional development opportunities are an important way to fuel teachers' sense of satisfaction, efficacy, and agency. Although districts have made significant investments in professional development in the past decade, these efforts didn't always result in improved student outcomes or staff retention rates.

To provide professional learning that positively impacts educators – and ultimately students – it must be meaningful, ongoing, and tied to real practices. Increasing autonomy in professional learning choices has also been associated with greater job satisfaction levels. Consider giving teachers and staff some aspects of choice in deciding how to fulfill some of their professional development requirements.



Learn best practices for retaining teachers in our webinar, **Maximizing Impact: The Link Between Teacher Engagement and Student Achievement.**

## TAKE ACTION

To develop more support for teachers in your district, consider the following:

- Survey employees about their learning needs to inform a districtwide professional development plan. Maximize employee choice by asking about learning format preferences to gauge interest in in-person, online, and interactive experiences (such as coaching or professional learning communities).
- Promote a culture of innovation by implementing cycles of continuous improvement and communicating regularly with employees to exchange ideas and hear their input on various initiatives.
- Provide teachers with ample opportunities to communicate and collaborate with one another and consider employing structures such as action research to increase collective accountability.

## RELATED READING

- **5 Teacher Engagement Strategies to Foster a Collaborative Culture**, our blog with tips to revitalize teacher agency, collective efficacy, and retention
- **District Leaders' Guide for Developing a K-12 Professional Learning Plan**, a resource to help leadership provide accessible and effective professional learning resources
- **Solving K-12 Professional Learning Challenges**, a resource outlining common struggles in professional learning with takeaways on how to navigate them
- **How to Promote Collective K-12 Staff Well-Being in 2024**, our blog highlighting the warning signs of professional burnout and the importance of collective teacher efficacy
- **Supporting Teacher Wellness and Retention**, a prerecorded webinar featuring discussions of how to build a more supportive workplace culture



### SPOTLIGHT: San Luis Coastal Unified School District

San Luis Coastal Unified School District (SLCUSD) in California seeks to recruit and retain top educators after reporting higher than average rates of turnover. With a goal to recruit high-quality candidates, bolster employee retention, and ensure diversity in their staff, the district partnered with Hanover Research to understand what motivates staff to stay and identify more opportunities for professional growth.

Through a teacher retention survey, the district gathered key insights on the following questions:

- ▶ How do teachers and certificated staff perceive the environment within the district and its schools?
- ▶ What, if any, are the specific factors or conditions that influence a teacher staying with the district?
- ▶ What, if any, are the specific factors or conditions that influence a teacher leaving the district?

In 2024, Hanover is delivering an analysis of the survey results along with a comprehensive set of recommendations to increase SLCUSD's ability to accommodate, recruit, and retain quality educators.



## TREND 6: DISTRICTS SEEK FRAMEWORKS TO INCORPORATE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INTO SCHOOLS

Rapid advancements — and potential threats — in artificial intelligence (AI) are redefining the role of technology in the K-12 learning environment, and districts are looking for guidance.

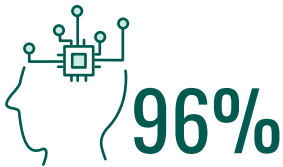
## TREND 6: DISTRICTS SEEK FRAMEWORKS TO INCORPORATE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE INTO SCHOOLS



The number of states that either have or are in the process of developing AI guidance for schools



The percentage of teachers who say they've used ChatGPT on the job, compared to 42% of students



The percentage of teachers who say they haven't received any professional development on using AI for learning

### ACCELERATED CHANGE IN TECHNOLOGY

Introducing new technology in schools can create opportunities for innovative teaching, learning, and skill development. However, it can also create a potential for disrupting current district, school, and classroom practices. The availability of AI-enabled technology in 2024 presents uncharted territory for districts. As with other technological shifts, such as one-to-one technology, district leaders have expressed concerns about AI's potential to disrupt instruction, academic honesty, and data privacy.

### AI GUIDANCE AND STANDARDS

Technological tools are most effective when they're used intentionally to enhance student learning, rather than to replace traditional pedagogy. Adapting to new technology requires districts to provide strategic guidance to school leaders, employees, and students. While some districts previously sought to ban tools like ChatGPT, many are now seeking data and creating frameworks to integrate and develop policies that will incrementally introduce AI into classrooms.

### A FUTURE-PROOF APPROACH

Successful technology integration initiatives require strategic planning and clearly defined standards. As district leaders look to leverage AI resources ethically and sustainably, some are struggling to generate policies that will keep pace with rapid technological developments.

If policies are too complex or heavy-handed, they can be challenging to revise or reverse in the future. Therefore, many districts are establishing basic principles, beliefs, or general guidance regarding what they do or do not want AI to be used for in schools, providing opportunities to layer in additional policies over time.

### TECHNOLOGY PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NEEDS

To pave the way for AI in schools, leaders should bring teachers into early conversations to help identify use cases, exchange knowledge, and gauge their learning needs. While most districts have not yet developed AI-specific professional learning, some are encouraging exploration by giving teachers time to discuss and investigate AI tools. Consistent and ongoing professional learning in technology integration is crucial for supporting teachers, and districts can also integrate AI topics into existing technology training.

Sources: Center for Reinventing Public Education, Walton Family Foundation, State Educational Technology Directors Association

### TAKE ACTION

To mitigate the challenges of integrating new AI technology into schools, consider these best practices:

- Survey employees, students, and families about their perceptions, needs, and current use of AI tools to inform a districtwide needs assessment that can serve as a foundation for planning, resource allocation, and policy development.
- Develop an AI framework or guiding principles that clarify how the district would and would not like AI to be used in schools. Identify what criteria will be used in the future to measure the success of any AI initiatives.
- Provide ongoing technology-focused professional development to ensure teachers and administrators stay updated on technological trends, new educational tools, and methods of engaging students through technology.

### RELATED READING

- **K-12 Data Literacy Checklist**, a resource with tips on how to promote the districtwide use of data
- **Best Practices for Technology in the Classroom**, a collection of research-based tools and resources to build capacity for using classroom technology
- **Using AI Tools in K-12 Instruction**, an analysis of current data and opinions regarding the use of AI technology in the classroom (*member-only access*)
- **Effective Integration of Technology: Policies and Practices**, a collection of best practices for integrating new technology into classrooms (*member-only access*)



### SPOTLIGHT: Bay City Public Schools

Bay City Public Schools in Michigan was chosen to participate in the Google GSV Innovation Fellowship, a program for top-level instructional district leaders who aim to implement technology to complement and enhance K-12 instruction. The district partnered with Hanover Research to help inform their generative AI (GAI) pilot program through several projects, including:

- ▶ **Secondary Research:** A research brief highlighting available best practices and expert opinions
- ▶ **Perception Survey:** A survey of attitudes from school community members to inform an in-depth interview process
- ▶ **In-Depth Interview Guide:** Guidance and prompts for interviewing participants one-on-one to understand their experience with the GAI program
- ▶ **In-Depth Interview Analysis:** A comprehensive analysis of 30-minute interviews with various school community members

Bay City leaders will present the findings of this research at the Google GSV Conference in April 2024 to highlight the best uses for generative AI in the K-12 classroom and identify ways to potentially overcome educator or student challenges.



# CONCLUSION

In the face of funding reductions, shrinking enrollments, academic achievement concerns, external criticism, and internal pressures, 2024 is the year for schools and districts to champion systematic approaches to data collection, analysis, and organizational best practices.

Strengthening the quality of K-12 education should be at the forefront of every education leader's mind this year. And while it's true that schools and districts continue to juggle many concerns and challenges, education leaders are also leaning into new and improved ways to do their work. They're leveraging improved practices in marketing, program evaluation, community engagement, change management, professional learning, and technology integration to improve school climate and create quality learning experiences for all students.

Ultimately, in the face of great challenges, K-12 educators and leaders in 2024 are demonstrating even greater resilience, particularly when their decisions are guided by data and research.



**How will today's challenges affect your district's tomorrow?**

**Learn how** Hanover Research can help education leaders make future-focused decisions with tailored research and data analysis.

---

# SOURCES

## TREND 1:

Ferrarin, E. "6 ways districts can embrace marketing as an enrollment strategy." K-12 Dive, March 22, 2023. <https://www.k12dive.com/news/6-ways-districts-can-embrace-marketing-as-enrollment-strategy/645648/>

Seltzer, R. "K-12 enrollment lagged projections by 2% in 2021, revealing college pipeline cracks." Higher Ed Dive, March 1, 2023. <https://www.highereddive.com/news/WICHE-K12-enrollment-lagged-pandemic-college-pipeline/643899/>

Adams, B. "Here's what school districts can do to address K-12 enrollment declines." District Administration, June 14, 2022. <https://districtadministration.com/heres-what-school-districts-can-do-to-address-k-12-enrollment-declines/>

Rock, A. "Public School Enrollment Decline: Why Students Are Leaving, Where They're Going, and Why It Matters." Campus Safety, May 17, 2023. <https://www.campussafetymagazine.com/safety/public-school-enrollment-decline-why-students-are-leaving/>

Merod, A. "School closures on the table as districts navigate enrollment declines." K-12 Dive, September 20, 2023. <https://www.k12dive.com/news/school-closures-amid-enrollment-decline/694209/>

Ellerson Ng, N. "Superintendents in their Role as Advocates." AASA, December 2023. <https://www.pageturnpro.com/AASA/110339-December-2023/sdefault.html#page/21>

"Promoting Quality Customer Service," Hanover Research, October 4, 2023. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0rHs00000sim0eIAA&active=Research>

## TREND 2:

"Progress in Spending Federal K-12 Covid Aid: State by State." Future Ed, Updated November 28, 2023. <https://www.future-ed.org/progress-in-spending-federal-k-12-covid-aid-state-by-state/>

Lumpkin, L. "Schools brace for challenges as once-in-a-lifetime cash runs out." The Washington Post, April 18, 2023. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/04/18/schools-covid-relief-spending-aftermath/>

Roza, M., Silberstein, K. "The ESSER fiscal cliff will have serious implications for student equity." The Brookings Institution, September 12, 2023. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-esser-fiscal-cliff-will-have-serious-implications-for-student-equity/>

"Benchmarking Learning Loss Recovery Efforts." Hanover Research, June 7, 2023. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0r1T00000qn5LqQAi&active=Research>

"Research Brief: Engaging in Program Evaluation." Hanover Research, April 19, 2023. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0rHs00000qn5rXIAQ&active=Research>

## TREND 3:

"Strategies for Fostering Safe School Communities." Hanover Research Superintendents Leadership Council Webinar, May 24, 2023. [https://3409306.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/3409306/May2023\\_SuperintendentsLeadershipCouncil\\_Recap%20-%20HANOVER\\_email.pdf](https://3409306.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/3409306/May2023_SuperintendentsLeadershipCouncil_Recap%20-%20HANOVER_email.pdf)

"Best Practices for Increasing Student Engagement." Hanover Research, May 19, 2023. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0r1T00000fJGeRQAW&active=Research>

"Research Brief and Discussion Guide: Building a Sense of Belonging in Your District." Hanover Research, January 25, 2023. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0r1T00000qmzuoQAA&active=Research>

"Bullying Prevention, Tracking, and Messaging." Hanover Research, March 9, 2023. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0r1T00000qn2vqQAA&active=Research>

"Best Practices in Supporting Newcomer Students." Hanover Research, July 15, 2022. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0r1T00000qAOQVQA4&active=Research>

"Best Practices for Raising Community Program Awareness." Hanover Research, October 12, 2023. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0r1T00000qmygQQAQ&active=Research>

"Effective Family and Community Engagement Strategies." Hanover Research, June 3, 2014. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0r5000000BGitEAAAT&active=Research>

## TREND 4:

"Best Practices for School District Finance Departments." Hanover Research, October 20, 2023. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0rHs00000s7msVIAQ&active=Research>

"Best Practices for Central Office Recruiting." Hanover Research, November 2, 2022. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0r1T00000qmumIQAAQ&active=Research>

Budget Processes and Reductions." Hanover Research, February 5, 2021. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0r1T00000piTQvQAO&active=Research>

Blad, E. "High Pace Superintendent Turnover Continues, Data Show." Education Week, September 19, 2023. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/high-pace-of-superintendent-turnover-continues-data-show/2023/09>



White, R. "Superintendent turnover is increasing and gender gaps are barely budging." The Conversation, May 15, 2023. <https://theconversation.com/superintendent-turnover-is-increasing-and-gender-gaps-are-barely-budging-but-accurately-assessing-the-consequences-remains-a-challenge-200693>

Schwartz, H.L., Diliberti, M.K. "Politics Is the Top Reason Superintendents Are Stressed." RAND Corporation, 2023. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA956-17.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA956-17.html)

Blad, E., Solis, V. "How Emotionally Intelligent Are School and District Leaders? We Asked Teachers." Education Week, November 6, 2023. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/how-emotionally-intelligent-are-school-and-district-leaders-we-asked-teachers/2023/11>

"Developing Resonant and Resilient Nimble Leaders." Hanover Research, September 28, 2022. <https://www.hanoverresearch.com/reports-and-briefs/aasa-developing-resonant-resilient-nimble-leaders/?org=k-12-education>

## TREND 5:

"Supporting Educational Leaders' Self-Efficacy and Agency." Hanover Research, September 24, 2020. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0r1T00000pI0TeQAK&active=Research>

"Best Practices for Retaining Diverse Staff." Hanover Research, November 18, 2021. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0r1T00000q9mvBQAQ&active=Research>

"Best Practices for Using Teacher Voice to Foster Innovation." Hanover Research, May 17, 2023. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0rHs00000qnZ1ilAE&active=Research>

"2nd Annual Merrimack College Teacher Survey." Merrimack College, 2023. <https://www.merrimack.edu/academics/education-and-social-policy/about/merrimack-college-teacher-survey/>

Heubeck, E. "Teacher Autonomy Isn't Dead. Here's How to Achieve It." Education Week, September 20, 2023. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/teacher-autonomy-isnt-dead-heres-how-to-achieve-it/2023/09>

Worth, J., Van Den Brande, J. "Teacher Autonomy: How Does It Relate to Job Satisfaction and Retention?" National Foundation for Education Research, January 2020. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED604418>

Doan, S., Steiner, E.D., Pandey, R., Woo, A. "Teacher Well-Being and Intentions to Leave." RAND Corporation, 2023. [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RRA1108-8.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1108-8.html)

Salas-Rodríguez, F., Lara, S. "Unpacking collective teacher efficacy in primary schools: student achievement and professional development." Educational Research for Policy and Practice, Volume 22, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10671-022-09326-z>

"Solving K-12 Professional Learning Challenges." Hanover Research, July 5, 2023. <https://www.hanoverresearch.com/reports-and-briefs/solving-k-12-professional-learning-challenges-in-2023/?org=k-12-education>

## TREND 6:

"Effective Integration of Technology: Policies and Practices." Hanover Research, November 16, 2023. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?active=myReports&documentId=a0rHs00000s8AZ5IAM&Redirect=MyReports>

"Best Practices for Technology in the Classroom." Hanover Research, November 10, 2022. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0r1T00000qmvMwQAI&active=Research>

"Using AI Tools in K-12 Instruction." Hanover Research, November 16, 2023. <https://hanoverresearch.my.salesforce-sites.com/customerportal/reportDetail?Redirect=Research&documentId=a0rHs00000s8AhrIAE&active=Research>

Ward, M. "These are the only 2 states that have offered guidance on AI in education." District Administration, November 3, 2023. <https://districtadministration.com/these-are-the-only-2-states-that-have-offered-guidance-on-ai-in-education/>

Dusseault, B., Lee, J. "AI is already disrupting education, but only 13 states are offering guidance for schools." CRPE, October 2023. <https://crpe.org/ai-disrupt-ed-13-states/>

"Teachers and Parents Report Positive Impact of ChatGPT on Teaching and Learning." Walton Family Foundation, July 18, 2023. <https://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org/learning/teachers-parents-report-positive-impact-of-chatgpt-on-teaching-and-learning>

Langreo, L. "Teachers Need PD on Artificial Intelligence. What It Should Look Like." Education Week, May 10, 2023. <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/teachers-need-pd-on-artificial-intelligence-what-it-should-look-like/2023/04>

Ta, R., West, M.D., "Should Schools Ban or Integrate Generative AI in the Classroom?" The Brookings Institution, August 7, 2023. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/should-schools-ban-or-integrate-generative-ai-in-the-classroom/>

Fernandez Reyes, E., Poppoff, E. "2023 State EdTech Trends Report." State Educational Technology Directors Association, August 2023. <https://www.setda.org/priorities/state-trends/>



# ABOUT HANOVER RESEARCH

Hanover guides K-12 leaders in tackling academic and administrative challenges to ensure that students, parents, and staff have the tools they need to ensure all students succeed.

## OUR BENEFITS



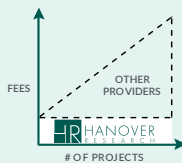
**EXPERT**  
200+ analysts with advanced multiple methodology research expertise



**FLEXIBLE**  
Ongoing custom research agenda adapts with organizations' needs



**DEDICATED**  
Exclusive account and research teams ensure strategic partnership



**EFFICIENT**  
Annual, fixed-fee model shares costs and benefits

## OUR K-12 EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

### CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION

Provide high-quality, research-based curriculum and instructional practices.

### DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Maximize your equitable outcomes by understanding and meeting the needs of your students.

### ACADEMIC PROGRAM PLANNING & IMPACT

Thoughtfully plan for and evaluate your district's instructional practices, policy,

### DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLANNING

Take clear steps to build and monitor your district's strategic plan.

### TEACHER RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Support your students by ensuring you recruit, engage, and retain great teachers.

### OPERATIONAL PLANNING

Discover how effective your district operations truly are and identify opportunities to improve.

### CULTURE, CLIMATE & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Data-backed insights to create a positive learning environment where students thrive.

**LEARN MORE:** [hanoverresearch.com/contact-us](https://hanoverresearch.com/contact-us)



---

**Headquarters**

4401 Wilson Blvd.  
Arlington, VA 22203  
(202) 559-0050

