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Top K12 tech trends to follow in 2023

The 2023 school year is now upon us, and with a new calendar comes a whole new set of technological trends that are set to shape the world of K12 education. From artificial intelligence (AI) to virtual reality, there's no doubt that technology is transforming how students learn and educators teach in schools.

In this blog post, we'll break down the top K12 tech trends for the year ahead, so that educators can stay current on what's happening in their field.

K12 tech trends to follow in 2023

6 major K12 tech trends to follow in 2023

In the ever-evolving landscape of technology in K12 education, there are six major trends to follow in 2023:

1. Personalization via artificial intelligence (AI) & machine learning
2. Bracing for the expiration of ESSER funding
3. Emphasis by teachers on learner agency
4. Immersive learning with virtual reality (VR) & augmented reality (AR)
5. Focus on data privacy and cybersecurity
6. Efforts to increase digital equity

With these six transformational trends at play, K12 education is sure to take a huge leap forward in its digital transformation journey.

Personalization via artificial intelligence (AI) & machine learning

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning are two technologies that are rapidly transforming the way we learn and teach. A recent report by P&S Intelligence predicts that from 2022 to 2030, AI spending by educational institutions will increase from $2.13 billion to $25.77 billion.

Teachers can use AI for a variety of tasks, such as grading essays, providing personalized feedback to students, predicting student performance, customizing lesson plans, and identifying areas where students may need extra support.

Schools are also using AI to automate administrative tasks and create more personalized learning experiences for students. AI tools are increasingly being deployed to analyze large data sets to identify trends and provide insights that can be used to inform instructional decisions and optimize teaching strategies.

In addition, machine learning algorithms can help improve student engagement by analyzing data collected from activities such as classroom discussions or online quizzes. As these technologies become more advanced, they will play an increasingly important role in K12 education.

Bracing for the expiration of ESSER funding

K12 teachers and school administrators are bracing for the final budgeting deadline that comes with ESSER funding in 2024, which could significantly impact student access to technology. The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) program was enacted by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), and it has been a major force in enabling K12 schools to purchase tech resources such as laptops, tablets, software licenses, broadband access, and more.

Schools used these resources to equip students with the learning tools they needed to be successful during COVID-19 lockdowns and distance learning. However, while the ESSER fund enables K12 schools to purchase vital technology resources now, there is a looming deadline for school administrators to commit their funds to a concrete spending budget before the final September 30, 2024 deadline hits.

This means that come 2024, not only do schools need to have a plan for future spending in play, these schools may also not have the same level of funding available to them going forward as they had in recent COVID-era years.

As a result of these impending changes, school administrators are taking steps now to ensure that their technology infrastructure can be sustained past 2023 so that their students have continued access to technology after ESSER funds run out.

For instance, administrators are investing in technology plans that emphasize sustainability so that their schools can remain adequately equipped even after the expiration of ESSER funds. Additionally, many districts are creating new strategies for securing future grants or other forms of long-term funding for tech infrastructure projects long after ESSER has expired.

Emphasis by teachers on learner agency

In 2023, K12 teachers are increasingly emphasizing the importance of "learner agency" in their classrooms. According to a report by Consortium for School Network (CoSN), one of the top "mega-trends" of 2023 that is shaping K12 innovation is this concept of learner agency.

The shift acknowledges that students need to be empowered to take ownership of their learning and make meaningful decisions about how they want to interact with course material. Educators have come to understand that providing learners with more control over the learning environment results in more engaged and motivated students.

To facilitate this growing emphasis on learner agency, K12 teachers are leveraging various technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, adaptive learning software, and artificial intelligence (AI). As discussed above, these tools provide students with a greater range of opportunities to explore content on their own terms and at their own pace. With AI-powered tools, teachers can also customize lesson plans according to the specific needs of each learner.

Additionally, teachers are using collaboration tools such as forums and discussion boards to create engaging online communities where learners can share ideas and work together as they develop new skills.

By 2023, these initiatives will become commonplace in most K12 educational environments and will help foster greater student engagement, curiosity, motivation, and independence.

Immersive learning with virtual reality (VR) & augmented reality (AR)

Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) go hand-in-hand to create a unique learning experience that has become mainstream in K12 education. VR is often used to create immersive learning experiences, while AR can be used to provide contextual information and visual aids.

According to a recent report, the adoption of these similar technologies in online education is forecasted to show an 18.2% CAGR up until 2027.

Virtual reality (VR) offers an immersive experience for K12 students that allows them to explore new environments without ever leaving the classroom, including simulations of experiments, historical sites, or even virtual field trips at interactive museums around the world!

Augmented reality (AR) offers similar technologies that are also being used more frequently in education. As technology advances and becomes more accessible, both VR and AR have great potential for increased use in K12 education settings.

Focus on data privacy and cybersecurity

Data privacy has become increasingly important in K12 tech education, as students, teachers, and administrators rely more on digital EdTech tools for learning. Student data is being collected through websites, apps, and other technologies — including biometric data such as fingerprints and facial recognition.

With this trend, there is a growing need for better data privacy protections. In order to protect this information from being misused or stolen, strong data privacy policies need to be in place.

In 2023, we will likely see more schools implementing policies and technologies to safeguard student data.

Released by Clever in January, the "Cybersecure 2023: The State of Data Security and Privacy in K–12 Schools" report says that three out of four school districts expect to boost their security and privacy spending over the next few years.

Additionally, there may be more legislation passed at the state and federal levels to regulate how student data can be collected and used.

Efforts to increase digital equity

To keep up with today's quickly adapting technology, K12 schools are increasingly focused on addressing "digital equity" in 2023. According to the CoSN report mentioned above, digital inequity is one of the top hurdles shaping K12 innovation in 2023.

This term means unequal access to technology. Students from low-income backgrounds often lack access to high-speed internet and cutting-edge devices, which leaves them at a disadvantage when it comes to completing their coursework.

To help address this issue and ensure that all students have equal opportunities for educational success, many schools are turning to strategies such as providing free or discounted Wi-Fi access and equipping students with laptops or tablets. Additionally, some districts are helping teachers become more tech-savvy by offering professional development workshops on using digital tools in the classroom.

Other measures include setting aside funds specifically for digital equipment purchases, as well as instituting policies that emphasize greater integration of technology into student learning experiences.

Ultimately, these initiatives aim to bridge the gap between students who have access to technology and those who don't, so that all students can benefit from 21st-century skills, no matter their socio-economic background.

Stay ahead of the curve by following K12 tech trends

2023 is sure to be an exciting year for educational technology! From virtual reality adventures to learner agency initiatives, there's no doubt that educators will have plenty of tools at their disposal when it's time to engage students with new materials over the next year.

But in this ever-changing world of K12 tech, we know it can be hard to stay on top of the latest trends. With HiLink's cutting-edge virtual classroom, online teachers can break out of the traditional mold and keep up with K12 tech trends for 2023.

HiLink offers a collaborative platform, allowing students to engage in real-time activities that build camaraderie and a sense of belonging. Online teachers can use the virtual classroom this year to reap the many benefits K12 tech provides.

By staying current on these tech trends, educators can be sure they are prepared when these innovative tools become even more widespread!