



ARTICLE

BUILDING A SMART PRINT STRATEGY FOR K-12



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K-12 school districts continue to rely on printed documents to support classroom instruction, parent communications, student records, assessments, transportation, human resources, and countless other daily operations. Digital workflows have become more common, but print remains essential to how districts communicate, manage information, and keep schools running.

Managing today's print environment has become more complex. Districts must balance limited budgets, aging equipment, staffing shortages, rising cybersecurity expectations, and growing demands for operational efficiency. District leaders are being asked not just to maintain printers, but to help ensure print environments are optimized to support organizational goals while making the best use of limited resources.

This shift is already visible across education. Keypoint Intelligence®'s research found that 96% of education organizations use document management systems, while 88% have implemented print management software.¹ Print is increasingly treated as part of a document and workflow strategy, not a standalone function.

Districts that get the most value treat print as a strategic operational resource, not simply a technology expense. Aligned with broader objectives, print can help improve efficiency, streamline administration, support stronger security, and better assist educators. Incremental fixes help, but a defined strategy is designed to turn print management into a long-term operational advantage.

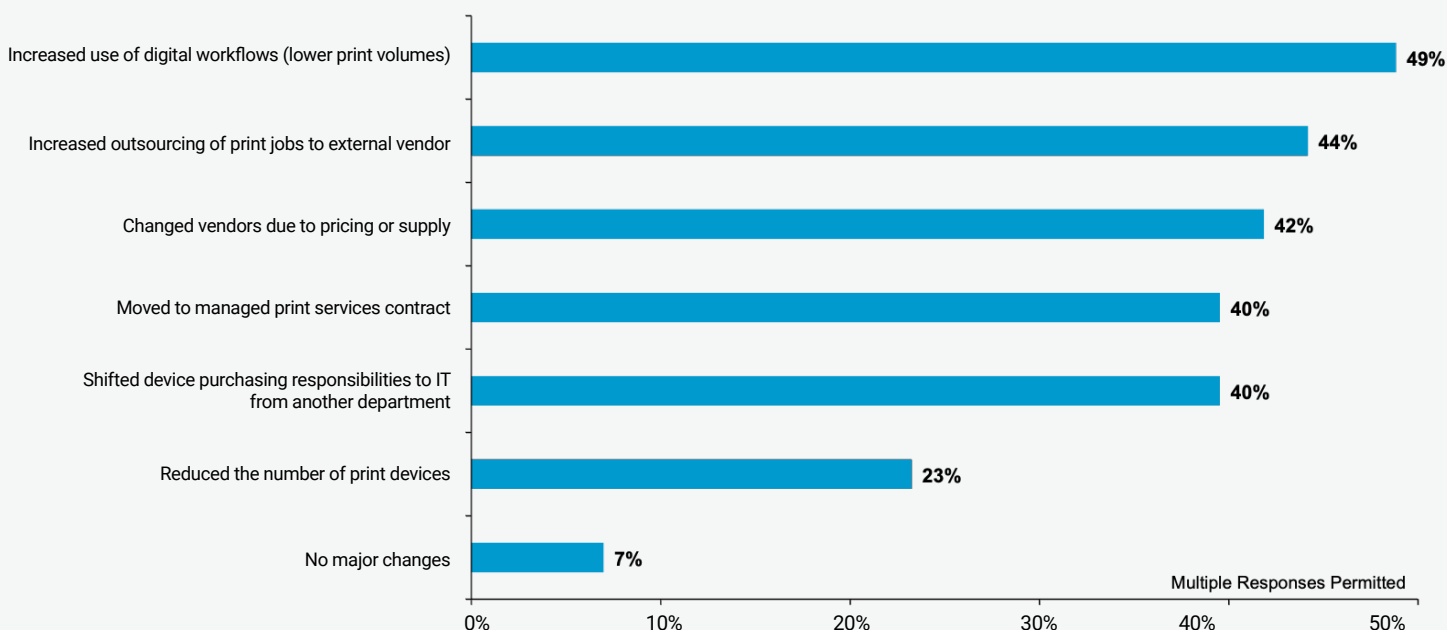
Bringing Consistency to Fleet Decisions

Print environments rarely evolve according to a long-term plan. Instead, they develop over time as individual schools replace aging devices, departments purchase equipment to meet immediate needs, and technology investments are made independently across the district. Each decision may make sense on its own, but the result is often a mix of manufacturers, service agreements, and replacement schedules that can add complexity and make the overall fleet harder to support.

Districts are already addressing this. As shown in Figure 1, education organizations are pursuing a variety of strategies to improve the efficiency and management of their print and document environments. One of the most common is print management software, now used generally in education organizations, reflecting a growing emphasis on visibility and control across print operations.

Figure 1: Printing/Scanning Strategies

Which of the following has your organization implemented to improve your printing/scanning environment in the past 12 months?



N = 43 Education Respondents in North America

Source: Impact of the Digital Transformation on Print; Keypoint Intelligence 2025

District leaders should establish district-wide standards for equipment selection, procurement, service expectations, and lifecycle planning, rather than treating print as a series of independent school-level decisions. A practical starting point is a fleet inventory across all schools, cataloging device age, manufacturer, and contract terms, which quickly surfaces where standardization would have the most impact. From there, districts can consolidate future purchases around a smaller set of preferred vendors and service agreements, with the goal of simplifying support and budgeting over time.

Technology partners can help districts evaluate existing print environments, identify opportunities to simplify device deployments, and develop long-term improvement plans that align print infrastructure with broader operational objectives. A more coordinated approach is designed to reduce unnecessary complexity while helping make the print environment easier to manage, maintain, and adapt as needs evolve.

Using Data to Your Advantage

School districts generate enormous amounts of operational data, yet decisions about print infrastructure are often based on assumptions rather than actual usage patterns. Understanding how devices are used across schools and departments can enable district leaders to make data-driven decisions about fleet optimization, equipment placement, and future investments.

Data-driven management is becoming a priority across education. Keypoint Intelligence's research found that 47% of education organizations use business intelligence and analytics platforms to support operational decision-making.¹

The same analytical approach can be applied to print environments by answering questions such as:

- Which devices consistently operate near capacity?
- Which devices are significantly underutilized?
- Where do service calls occur most frequently?
- Which locations rely most heavily on color printing?
- Which schools experience seasonal increases in print demand?
- Are production print devices being used to their full potential?

Answers to these questions often reveal opportunities that would otherwise go unnoticed. One school may benefit from consolidating several desktop printers into a single multifunction device, while another may need additional capacity to handle increased demand. In other cases, districts may find that aging or rarely used equipment can be retired with minimal impact on productivity.

Districts should regularly evaluate usage data to ensure print environments continue to align with operational needs. Periodic fleet assessments are designed to help organizations maximize value from existing investments, spot changing requirements, and support better purchasing decisions over time.

Technology Should Reduce Complexity, Not Create It

Some teachers move between schools, and administrators may support multiple locations. Mismatched interfaces, different print drivers, varying authentication methods, and inconsistent workflows create friction for everyone who must work across more than one site. Standardizing the experience is designed to benefit the whole district. For example:

- Teachers can focus more on instruction by reducing time spent on routine tasks.
- Administrative staff are enabled to move between locations with ease.
- IT teams can reduce the time allocated to troubleshooting unique device configurations.

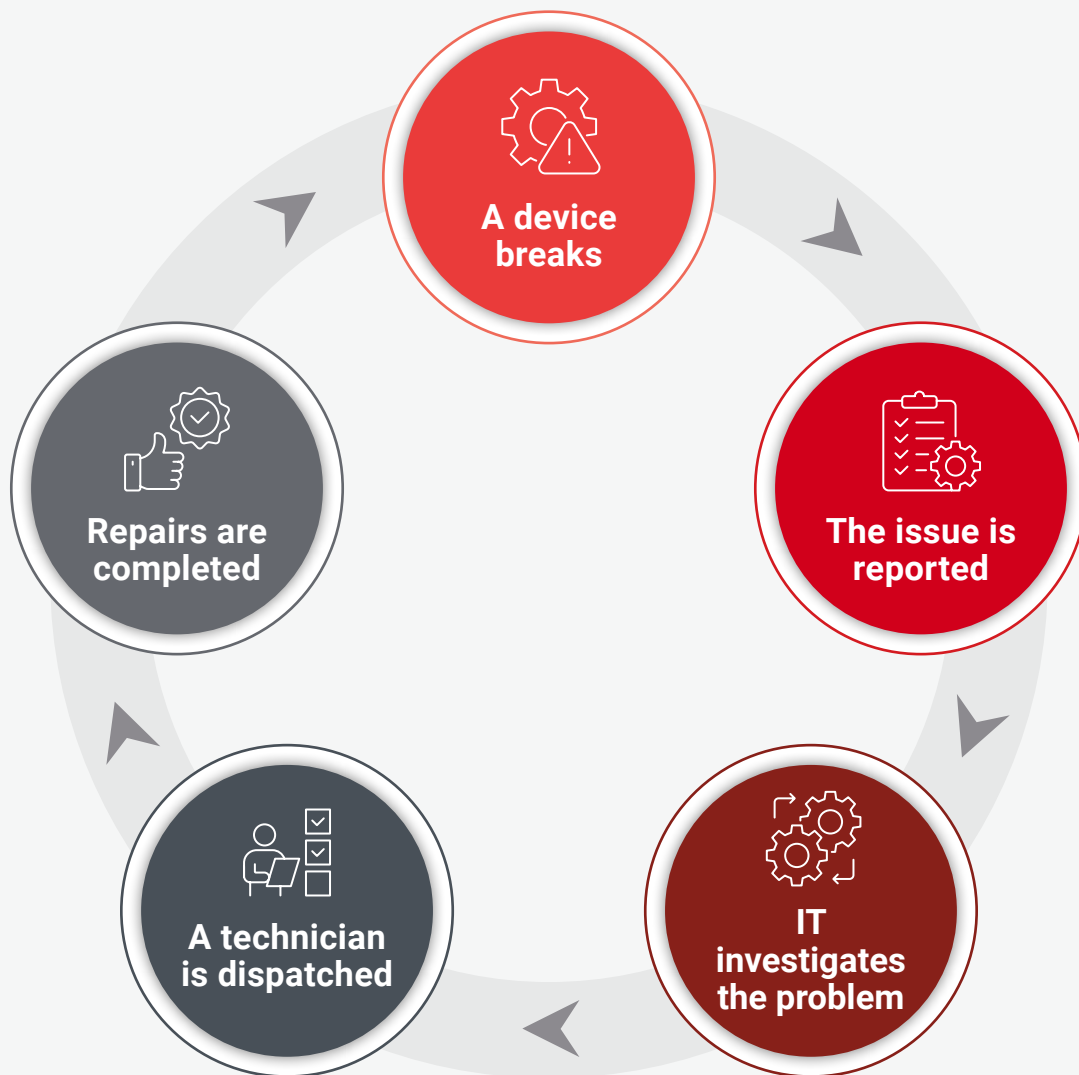
Small changes can make a meaningful difference. Common authentication methods and default print settings across schools are designed to support improved operational workflows. Whenever possible, districts should set shared standards for interfaces, print policies, authentication, and default settings.



Improving Fleet Management

As shown in the figure below, traditional printer support follows a reactive model, one that's time-consuming and disruptive. It works, but it's a never-ending cycle, since problems only get addressed after they occur.

Figure 2: The Traditional Printer Support Cycle



A better approach focuses on helping prevent service disruptions through proactive management. Remote monitoring, predictive maintenance, and automatic supply replenishment are designed to help staff identify and address issues before they can disrupt classroom instruction or administrative operations. IT departments are already stretched thin, and reducing routine printer maintenance can help free them up for higher priorities. Managed print services offer ongoing fleet monitoring, automated maintenance alerts, and proactive support that is designed to help minimize downtime and streamline fleet administration.



Print Needs Governance Too

School districts commonly establish governance policies for technology purchases, cybersecurity, software licensing, and data privacy, but print doesn't always receive the same attention. Without clear governance, individual departments or schools may acquire equipment independently, leading to fleets that are harder to manage. A formal print governance policy should address who approves new equipment purchases, when devices should be replaced, which equipment types will be approved, how service contracts are managed, what performance metrics vendors should meet, and how district-wide usage data will be reviewed.

These policies are designed to create a shared framework and help ensure purchasing decisions reflect long-term objectives, not just immediate needs. Districts should consider forming print governance committees with representation from IT, purchasing, finance, and administration. These committees are structured to evaluate performance and plan for upcoming requirements.

Strengthening Print Security

Printers handle sensitive student, employee, financial, and operational data every day, making security a district-wide responsibility, not an afterthought. Districts should apply consistent practices for authentication, secure print release, firmware management, device encryption, network segmentation, access controls, and end-of-life data sanitizing.

These practices work best when applied district-wide rather than left to individual site administrators. A good first step is auditing current authentication and print release methods across schools to identify gaps, then rolling out a single, centralized standard rather than tackling each site separately. Centralized management is designed to give IT better visibility and control, supporting efforts to strengthen security across locations. Layered security is designed to help schools protect sensitive data while supporting efforts to align with cybersecurity requirements.

Managing the Entire Device Lifecycle

Fleet management is an ongoing process, not just replacing devices once they start failing. A "wait and see" approach can postpone expenditures, but it can also raise maintenance costs, complicate budgeting, and increase the risk of unexpected downtime. With planned lifecycle management, equipment is replaced based on age, usage, maintenance history, technological capabilities, service costs, and future needs.

Predictable refresh cycles are designed to simplify budgeting, support steadier performance district-wide, and help reduce the disruptions that come with aging equipment.

Measuring What Matters

Cost is easy to track, so it's no surprise that many print initiatives focus heavily on reducing it. Cost savings matter, but there's more to the equation. Printing equipment can deliver more value when it helps improve operational performance. Beyond cost, school districts should measure the following.

- Device uptime
- Average service response times
- IT hours saved through automation
- Fleet utilization rates
- Supply availability
- User satisfaction
- Equipment standardization
- Security compliance
- Sustainability progress

These metrics can serve as more comprehensive indicators of how print management contributes to district operations. Keypoint Intelligence's research reveals that 81% of education firms are currently using print management solutions.¹ These solutions are designed to make it easier to demonstrate value to executive leaders and school boards when future investments are required.

Making a Difference with a Consultative Approach

Modern school districts can benefit significantly from partners who can evaluate their operations and analyze fleet performance, then recommend improvements as needs change. Rather than simply supplying equipment, collaborative technology partners are positioned to offer ongoing insight into usage trends, service performance, security, and future planning. Districts will always need to replace old equipment, but the right partner stays engaged well beyond the sale.

A collaborative, consultative approach means assessing a district's unique needs and supporting continuous improvement, with the goal of helping devices and printed pages support better operational performance. Service providers have an opportunity to become more than a supplier of printers and multifunction devices, serving instead as trusted advisors throughout the lifecycle of a district's print infrastructure.

Effective print management isn't determined by how many devices are in use or how many pages are printed. It's measured by whether the print environment is reliable, secure, efficient, and aligned with the district's broader operational goals. When print becomes part of an intentional operational strategy rather than simply another technology expense, it is designed to deliver value that can extend far beyond printed pages.

Transforming print from a tactical headache into an efficient operational asset requires a partner with deep education expertise—an area where Canon U.S.A.'s secure fleet solutions, predictive analytics, and consultative management are designed to help K–12 districts optimize costs while supporting efforts to protect student data.

For more information about how Canon U.S.A. can help your organization with your digital transformation goals, call **1-844-50-CANON** or visit usa.canon.com/business

¹ Source: Keypoint Intelligence, 2025 Digital Transformation Survey, U.S. Education respondents (n=49)



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