How to Accelerate Digital Transformation **for K-12 Education**

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Most K-12 schools and districts have embraced digital workflows, with nearly two-thirds saying key processes are now mostly or fully paperless.

However, they still face long-standing challenges due to staff shortages and budget constraints that could be positively impacted with digital transformation initiatives.

Intelligent document management and managed services can address these challenges and accelerate workflow automation and digitization in both the back office and the classroom. These initiatives promote a healthy work environment and keep the focus on education.

BARRIERS TO DIGITIZATION

Digital transformation is well underway in K-12 schools. Only 7% of respondents to a national survey of K-12 leaders conducted by the Center for Digital Education remain fully or mostly paper-based.[1] Some 17% say their workflows and processes are now fully digital, with another 44% reporting that most of their processes are paperless.
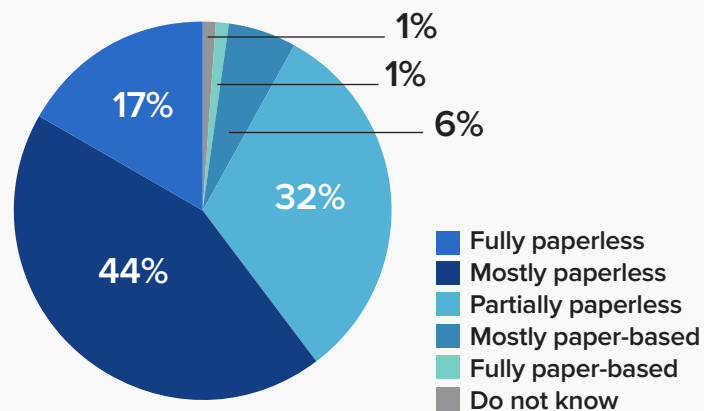
Attendance tracking and reporting were most likely to be completely paperless, with 73% of survey respondents reporting digital workflows. But a wide range of processes have already been digitized by at least half of respondents, including financial and budgeting (64%), grade reporting and transcripts (64%), inventory and asset management (63%), student enrollment and registration (63%), communication with parents and guardians (60%), disciplinary records and reporting (58%), student assessments and testing (58%), staff recruitment and onboarding (57%), special education documentation (53%), and curriculum planning and lesson plans (52%).

The most common digitized workflows focus on back-office and administrative functions. However, K-12 schools and districts plan to automate both administrative and academic functions over the next 12 to 18 months. These initiatives include payroll, inventory/asset management and building access, as well as special education documentation/reporting and disciplinary action and incident tracking, according to survey respondents.

The pain points driving digitization include the increasing cost of printing, storage and supplies, the risk of document loss and damage, and the administrative time and difficulties involved in managing and tracking paper records, all cited by at least one-third of survey respondents.

At the same time, K-12 schools and districts face barriers to going paperless. Tight budgets, high volumes of documents, staffing and time constraints, difficulties identifying suitable tools and software, the complexity of integrating legacy systems, and regulatory and compliance issues were all cited by significant numbers of survey respondents.

To what extent are your school/district's workflows or processes conducted paperless?

- 1%
- 1%
- 6%
- 32%
- 17%
- 44%

- ■ Fully paperless
- ■ Mostly paperless
- ■ Partially paperless
- ■ Mostly paper-based
- ■ Fully paper-based
- ■ Do not know

EXPERTISE AND AUTOMATION

By leveraging third-party expertise to address these barriers, K-12 schools and districts can accelerate digital transformation. Many schools and districts are already outsourcing in some way, especially in IT.

One-third or more of survey respondents say their schools and districts receive third-party support with cybersecurity (37%), cloud solutions and processes (37%), help desk services (35%), and IT infrastructure management (34%).

However, the survey demonstrates opportunities to digitize and outsource functions closer to teaching and learning. Payroll and human resources, oversight of learning management systems and student information systems, data analysis and reporting, financial management and auditing, classroom technology integration, managed print services, and website development and maintenance are among functions currently outsourced by 20% or more of respondents. Automating and outsourcing more of the work close to the classroom and key administrative positions can help address challenges of burnout as well.

"Schools are struggling with staffing and retention," says Mark Sinanian, vice president of marketing for Canon U.S.A. "Automation can help teachers avoid doing administrative tasks when they could be working with students."
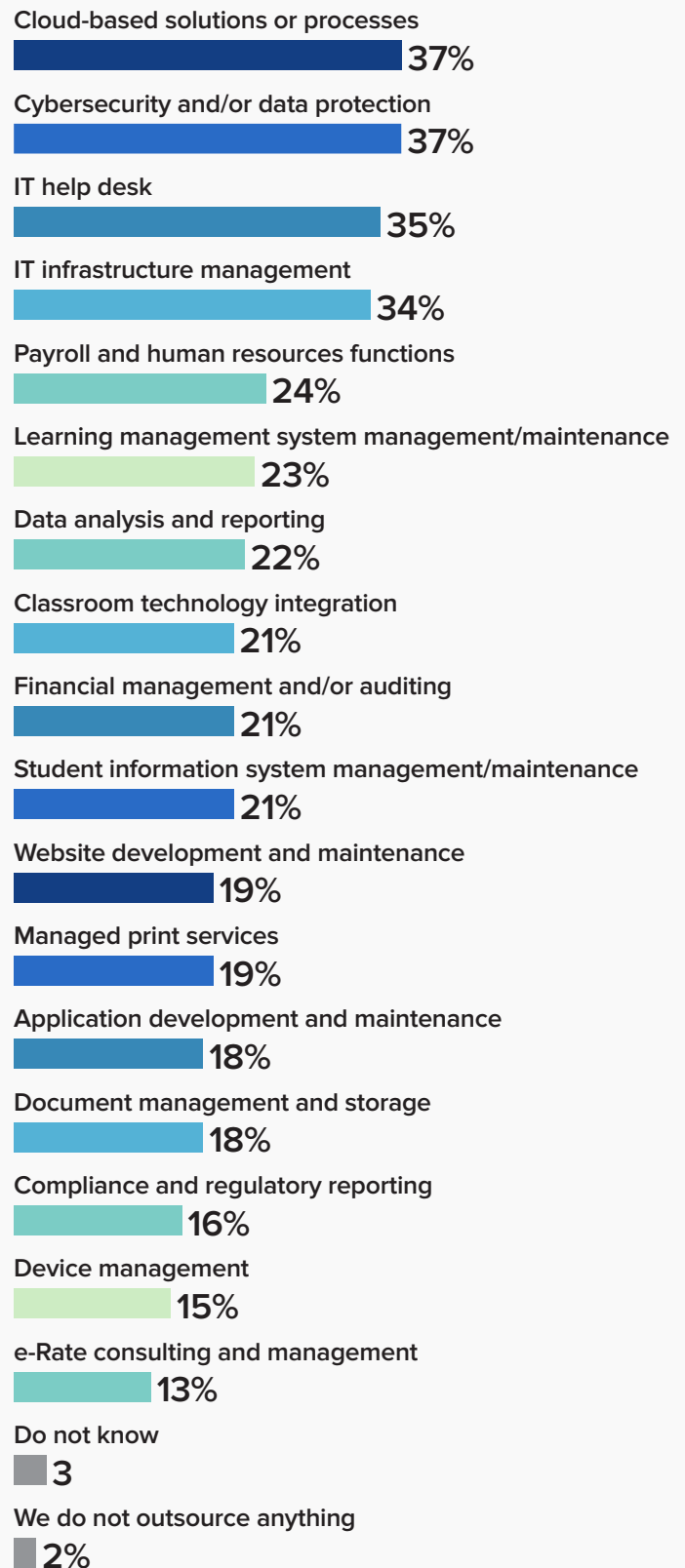
MANAGED SERVICES

Managed print services and document management services are essential to digitizing workflows. Together, these services can leverage intelligent data processing to automate document scanning, routing and storage.

They can also include authentication and controls to manage the access, printing and digital sharing of sensitive documents, helping schools safeguard student data.

Finding the right managed services partner is particularly critical in school settings. Key criteria include reliability and consistency, cost-effectiveness and sustainability, innovative technology, customer support and user experience, and alignment with education needs. All these priorities should be embedded in service level agreements.

Which of the following services does your school/district currently outsource to a third party? Select all that apply.

Cloud-based solutions or processes
37%

Cybersecurity and/or data protection
37%

IT help desk
35%

IT infrastructure management
34%

Payroll and human resources functions
24%

Learning management system management/maintenance
23%

Data analysis and reporting
22%

Classroom technology integration
21%

Financial management and/or auditing
21%

Student information system management/maintenance
21%

Website development and maintenance
19%

Managed print services
19%

Application development and maintenance
18%

Document management and storage
18%

Compliance and regulatory reporting
16%

Device management
15%

e-Rate consulting and management
13%

Do not know
3

We do not outsource anything
2%

"The vendor should support the culture," Sinanian says.

Supporting school culture includes careful change management during digital transformation. School leaders must implement data governance structures to establish rules for document access, storage and retention to ensure security and compliance, all while ensuring staff still have access to information.

School leaders and their partners must also support staff as their roles and processes change.

"Staff is often wary of making a digital paradigm shift," Sinanian says. "People are creatures of habit, and digital transformation is scary for some."

Managed services partners can support change management with impact assessments and roadmaps to guide implementation, marketing and training. They should collect feedback from end users to drive ongoing improvements in digitized workflows and services.

LOOKING AHEAD TO AI

As digital transformation continues to accelerate, artificial intelligence (AI) will play a growing role in K-12 schools.

From creating lesson plans to tracking attendance, AI has many implications in the classroom and behind the scenes.

Survey respondents highlighted a range of ways in which they believe AI will help their organizations, including improved staff efficiency, reduced manual tasks and faster response times.

To leverage the benefits of AI, digitization and intelligent document management, school leaders will have to collaborate with partners to ensure data sources fit the use cases they plan to use to benefit students and staff.

By embracing the emerging technology and support available specifically for K-12 education, schools and districts can provide enhanced learning experiences while supporting their staff and preparing for a bright future.

What benefits do you believe your school/district could realize by using AI to help enhance your digitized workflows and processes? Select all that apply.

Improved staff efficiency
46%

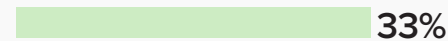**Reduction in manual, repetitive tasks**
41%
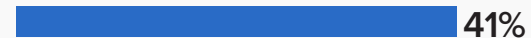
Faster response times to inquiries
38%

Streamlined document management and retrieval
34%

Improved insights into student performance
34%

Reduced operational costs
33%

Enhanced data security and privacy protection
31%

Improved student achievement/learning
31%

Ability to personalize student learning
26%

Ability to predict and address student needs
23%

Do not know
4%

My school/district would not see any benefits
4%

Other
1%

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