



DIGITAL
LANDSCAPES
IN AUSTRALIAN
SCHOOLS
Research Report

2023

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INTRODUCTION

As part of Champion Education's commitment to supporting schools, we have invested in research to examine how leaders are planning and implementing technology strategies in Australian schools.

With decades of working with schools across all sectors in Australia, the speed of digital change continues to astound me. I remain incredibly impressed with the clear strategies, effective implementation and insightful, entrepreneurial school leaders I see in many schools.

These research results show significant variation across schools, with cost efficacy and funding for both families and schools a strong theme. We know technology brings both opportunity and challenge. Concerns around technical skills, implementation processes and teaching efficacy are reflected here.

We hope that this research report will help you understand how your school benchmarks against other Australian schools and be directly relevant and useful to digital decision makers.

Thank you for your interest and support for this research, particularly those senior school staff who took time out of their busy days to complete this survey. We hope to repeat this research regularly to build on the baseline understanding we have here.



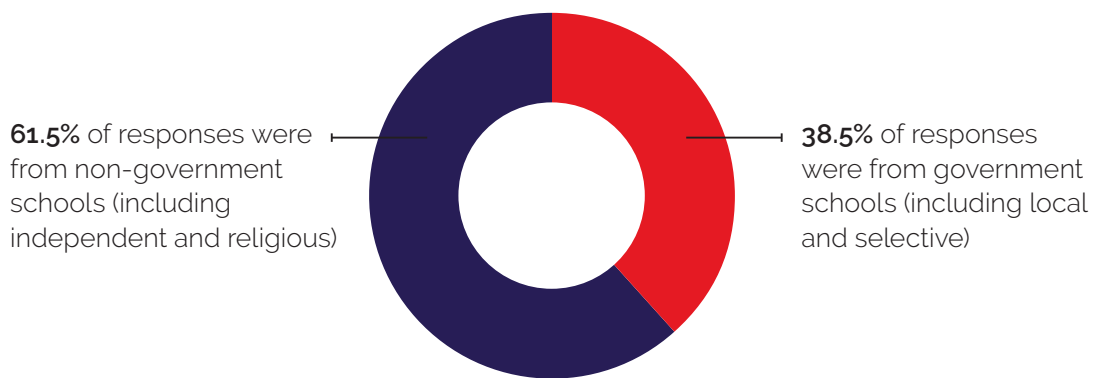
James Cathro
Managing Director, Champion Education

METHODOLOGY AND RESPONDENTS

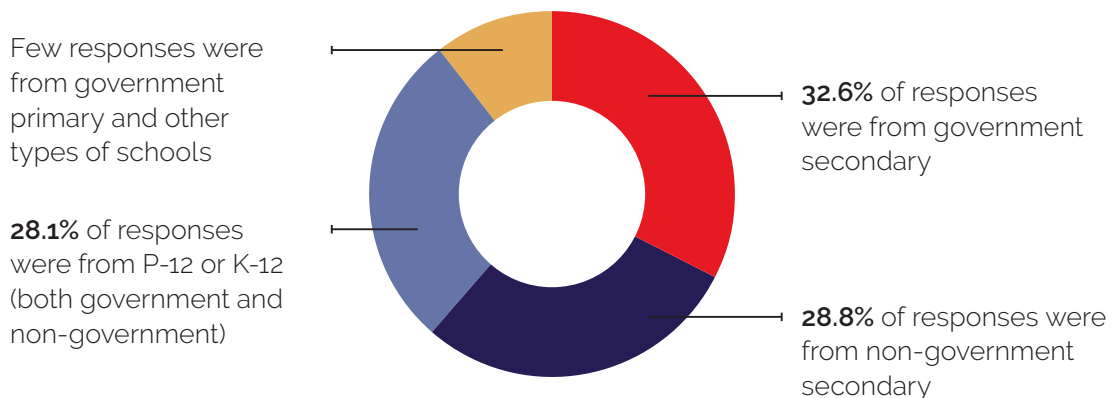
This research project ran during August to November 2022 as an in-depth survey by personal invitation. Specific senior staff from Australian schools who were invited to participate included Principals, Assistant Principals, eLearning and Innovation Heads, ICT Managers, Heads of Department and selected library and teaching staff.

The 135 responses demonstrated significant consistency and repetition in themes. This commonality is reassuring that the data provides an accurate reflection of schools in Australia. As questions were not compulsory, respondent numbers may vary.

Respondents identified the type of school where they currently work:



And the category of school:



Respondent information has been kept private and stored only for the purposes of analysis and sharing consolidated research outcomes. This report was prepared in November 2022. Survey questions are available on request from research@campion.com.au.

To register for Digital Landscape Survey 2023 or media enquiries please contact: research@campion.com.au

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DIGITAL LANDSCAPES IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS: KEY FINDINGS

This research project ran during 2022 as an in-depth survey. Specific senior staff from Australian schools were invited to participate:

32.6% of responses were from government secondary	28.8% of responses were from non-government secondary	28.1% of responses were from P-12 or K-12 (both government and non-government)	Few responses were from government primary and other types of schools	38.5% of responses were from government schools (including local and selective)	61.5% of responses were from non-government schools (including independent and religious)
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The most **significant digital technology strategy decision** makers in schools are Director of Innovation/eLearning and Assistant Principal for Teaching and Learning, closely followed by IT/ICT Manager and Principal.

Heads of Department were rarely lead decision makers but were often rated as significantly involved.



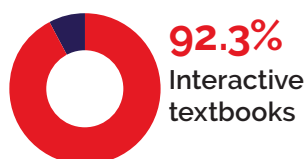
> 1/2 of schools were nominated as dual learning, utilising both digital and print tools and resources.

Non-government schools were more likely to be more tech-enabled than government schools.

> 1/3 of schools are **looking to deepen their digital commitment** and become highly tech enabled in the short to medium term future, with active plans including roadmaps, steering committees, implementation plan.



Respondents are experienced users of varying technologies. Most popular technologies in use:



Most common motivations in determining digital strategy are **potential learning outcomes and benefits, connectivity and accessibility for students.**



Cost of hardware and software for students, clarity of information available and funding capacity are critical commercial considerations. Staff technical skills commonly proved more challenging than expected.



Key factors in seeking commercial partners include affordability for families, provision of quality curated content, cost efficacy for school, data management and adherence to privacy policies.

ANALYSIS

1 Positions in the school with involvement in digital technology strategy



The most significant digital technology strategy decision makers in schools are Director of Innovation/eLearning and Assistant Principal for Teaching and Learning, closely followed by IT/ICT Manager and Principal.

Who drives the decisions around digital strategies in schools?

Roles and positions nominated as the digital decision makers were consistent across all types of schools from research respondents.

The most common lead decision maker was **Director of Innovation/eLearning** (nominated as lead decision maker by 32.7% of respondents).¹

The next most selected lead decision makers were:

29.5%
Assistant Principal for Teaching and Learning or Assistant Principal for Curriculum

20.8%
ICT and IT Managers and staff²

16.7%
Principal

Heads of Department were rarely lead decision makers (3.7%) but are often rated as significantly involved (22.4%).

So in the vast majority of schools, the four roles most commonly considered lead decision makers or significantly involved were:

- Director of Innovation/eLearning.
- Assistant Principal for Teaching and Learning or Assistant Principal for Curriculum.
- ICT and IT Managers and staff.
- Principal

School Council, Head of Library and **Business Manager** were nominated as least likely to be involved in digital strategy decision making.

1. Director of Innovation or Director of eLearning is typically a senior academic role with a focus on learning pedagogy and implementing digital technologies across the curriculum. This role does not exist in every school.

2. ICT/IT Manager is typically a technical role, responsible for the operations and management of information and communications technology in schools.

2

The digital journey



- More than half of respondents identified their school as dual learning, utilising both digital and print tools and resources.
- More than a third of schools are looking to deepen their digital commitment and become highly tech enabled in the short to medium term future.
- Close to 40% of schools are looking to accelerate their technology strategy and become highly tech enabled in the short to medium term

The majority of respondents identified their school as currently **dual learning, utilising both digital and print tools and resources** (61.5%).

- *We have a wide variety of digital technologies and a leadership team that is supporting developing staff confidence and familiarity with using these digital technologies.*
- *Digital technologies are extremely important in the learning of students. We have seen a huge shift in the way teaching and learning is done through the evolution of technology.*

Respondents from these schools reported they anticipate deepening their digital journey, with more than one third (37.5%) seeking to become highly tech enabled – some quickly (one year) and others at a measured pace (three+ years). A very small minority of these schools are looking to retract their digital strategies and become less digital (3.8%).

A low number of respondents consider their school to be **early in the digital journey**, with low use of tools and resources (15.4%). Of these schools, around two thirds of respondents were content to remain early in their digital journey, and approx one third (35.7%) were looking to accelerate, with the most common pathway being looking to move to dual learning within one year, and highly tech enabled in three+ years.

Around a quarter of respondents identified their school as **highly tech enabled** with almost entirely digital tools and resources (23.1%). None of these schools reported interest in reducing their tech engagement, though a number are reviewing their strategies.

- *We don't have specific technology goals. We use technology where it provides a clear benefit (e.g. improved learning, engagement, efficiency).*
- *We are currently reviewing the platforms at admin and school levels and what suits the school's needs.*

Schools are moving quickly. Looking to the future, close to 20% of schools were looking to become **highly tech enabled** within 12 months (18.7% of all respondents), and an additional similar sized cohort targeting becoming highly tech enabled in three or more years (21.6%). Only a small number of schools listed desired their future state in one or three years to be either low use of digital tools and resources (8.9%), or dual learning (16.4%).

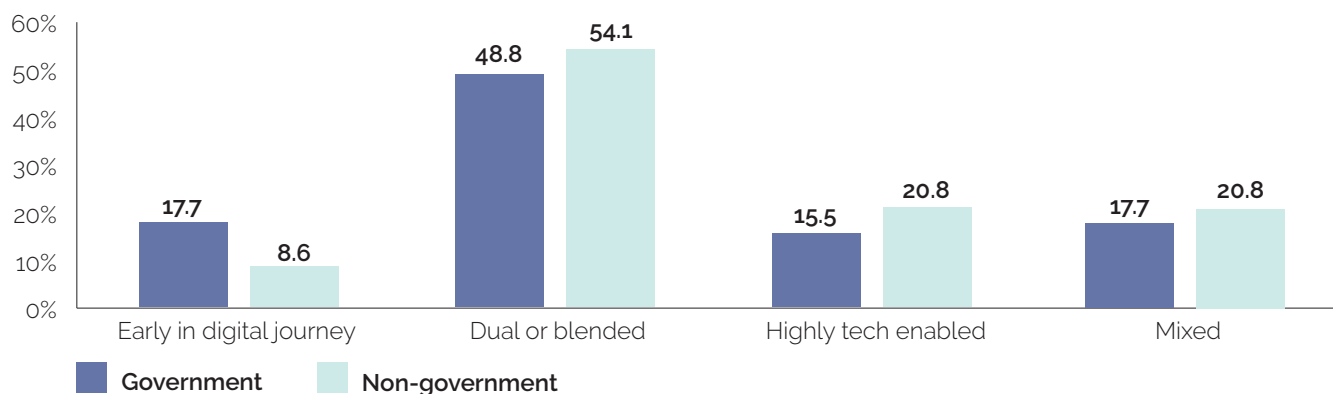


- Non-government schools were more likely to be more tech-enabled than government schools.
- Marginally more non-government schools were dual/blended learning.
- More non-government schools were highly tech enabled.
- Fewer non-government schools were early in their digital journey.

Government schools were most likely to identify as dual/blended learning (48.8% of all government schools) with under 20% being early in their journey (17.7%) and highly tech enabled (15.5%). Some government schools have mixed or uncertain levels of implementation (17.7%).

Non-government schools were even more likely to identify as dual blended learning (54.1%), with a number identifying as highly tech enabled (20.8%) and mixed/uncertain levels of implementation (20.8%). Few non-government schools are early in their digital journey (8.6%).

Technology implementation in government/non-government schools



Many respondents reported **active plans** to enhance their school's digital capability:

- *Implementation of 1-1 programs.*
 - *ICT Steering Committee Inception in 2022 ICT Roadmap Development.*
 - *When you say "what changes are being made..." I am always changing practices as technology and the use of it changes all the time. I do not think of teaching as 'digital' or 'live' but "teaching".*
 - *Full LMS system in place as well as online assessment and reporting. Reduction in paper.*
-

A number have implemented plans or roadmaps, with key factors being **platforms and systems, efficacy of learning** and **classroom management**:

- *We are currently reviewing the platforms at admin and school levels and what suits the school's needs.*
 - *New SMS and LMS need to talk to each other with our Timetabling program. Improved processes is top of list for me.*
 - *Reviewing use of digital learning versus print resources to determine best outcomes for students.*
 - *Our biggest concern that is yet to be properly met is student safety online/monitoring student work and how they use the devices during any screen time.*
 - *Need to ensure good balance between digital and non digital formats e.g. books and writing.*
-

Professional development/upskilling for teachers was a theme:

- *Ongoing professional development to enhance staff skills with varied curriculum augmentation rates to primarily digital resourcing/use.*
 - *Introducing a Technologies Support staff member to work with staff to build confidence as well as upskill.*
 - *Professional Development needs to be provided to staff in a variety of formats, online/on demand face-to-face instructional videos, in-school demonstrations. If the teachers are not upskilled, they won't embed it into their lessons or they will implement it in a limited.*
-

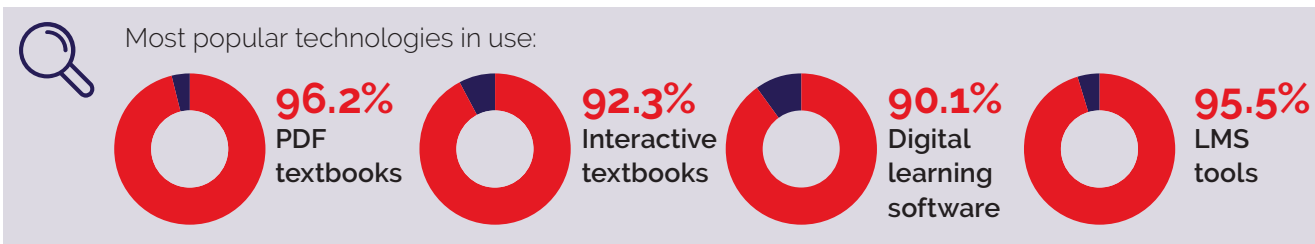
Some schools have the desire to deepen digital engagement but are struggling with **implementation**:

- *Student uptake and regular bringing to school and classes for their own digital device is still a struggle in our low socio-economic community.*
 - *These [plans] have been on hold for sometime. There is currently no person in charge of elearning at my school and there is no committee.*
-

And **cost of access** is critical in ensuring technology is accessible across communities:

- *There is a huge gap between those who can afford digital access and those who cannot and until this is addressed we will continue to have unequitable access to resources.*
-

3 What are digital technologies?



Respondents to this research were themselves highly technologically enabled. The majority of respondents have experienced multiple and varied technologies at their school (used a little, use regularly, would like to use more):

- PDF textbooks (96.2%).
- Interactive textbooks (92.3%).
- Digital learning software (90.1%).
- LMS tools (95.5%).

Respondents reported low use of technologies including:



Most popular technology partners for schools, in use by many respondents:

Technology platforms: Adobe, Apple, Campion MyConnect, Canvas, Compass, Connect, Edval, Google Suite/Google Classroom/Google Drive, Microsoft 365 /OneNote/Sharepoint/Teams, Moodle, Schoolbox, SEQTA.

Learning tools: Atomi, Cambridge, Edrolo, Education Perfect, Jac Online, Manga High, Mathletics, Maths Pathways, MathSpace, Minecraft, NelsonNet, Oxford, STILE, Synergetic/TASS.

Technology platforms and learning tools that are in use by smaller numbers of respondents:

Blooket, Box of Books, Canva, Click View, Daymap, Desmos, Edumate, Firefly, GeoGebra, Gimkit, ManageBac, Nearpod, ORIGO, ReviseOnline, SIMON, Softlink Oliver, TinkerCAD, VIVI, WeVideo, Wheelers, XUNO.

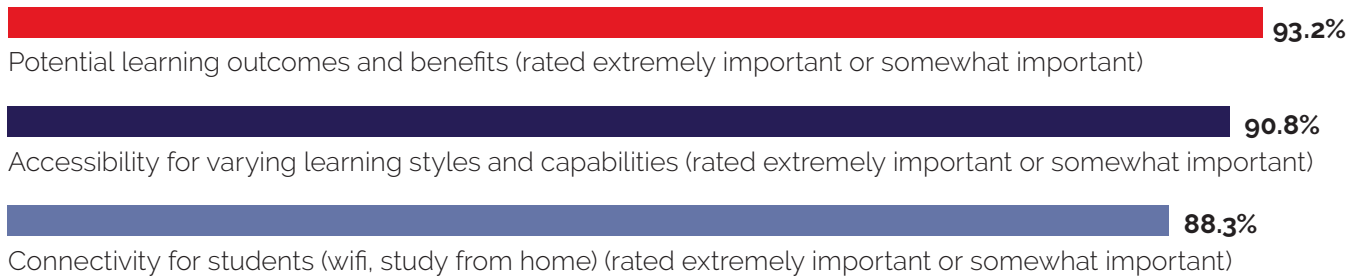
4 Motivations driving digital strategy



Key in driving digital strategy:

- Potential learning outcomes and benefits.
- Connectivity.
- Accessibility for students.

Factors nominated as key motivations in driving digital strategy included:



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Benefits from digital technology strategies

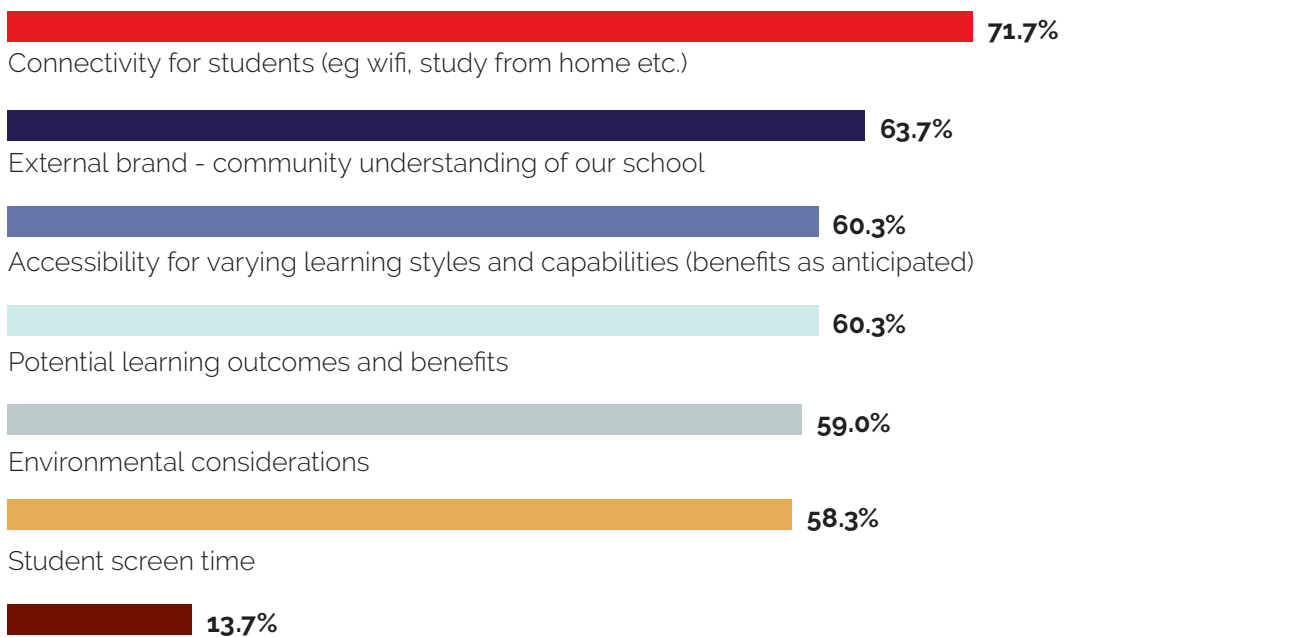


Critical commercial considerations:

- Cost of hardware and software for students.
- Clarity of information available.
- Funding capacity.

Staff technical skills commonly proved more challenging than expected

Almost two-thirds of respondents reported that the benefits their school had gained from investment in digital strategies were as anticipated:



A slim number of respondents reported benefits greater than anticipated, particularly around connectivity

Most disappointing digital strategies (where benefits proved slower than anticipated) were nominated as accessibility for varying learning styles and capabilities (23.7%), and student screen time (27.5%).

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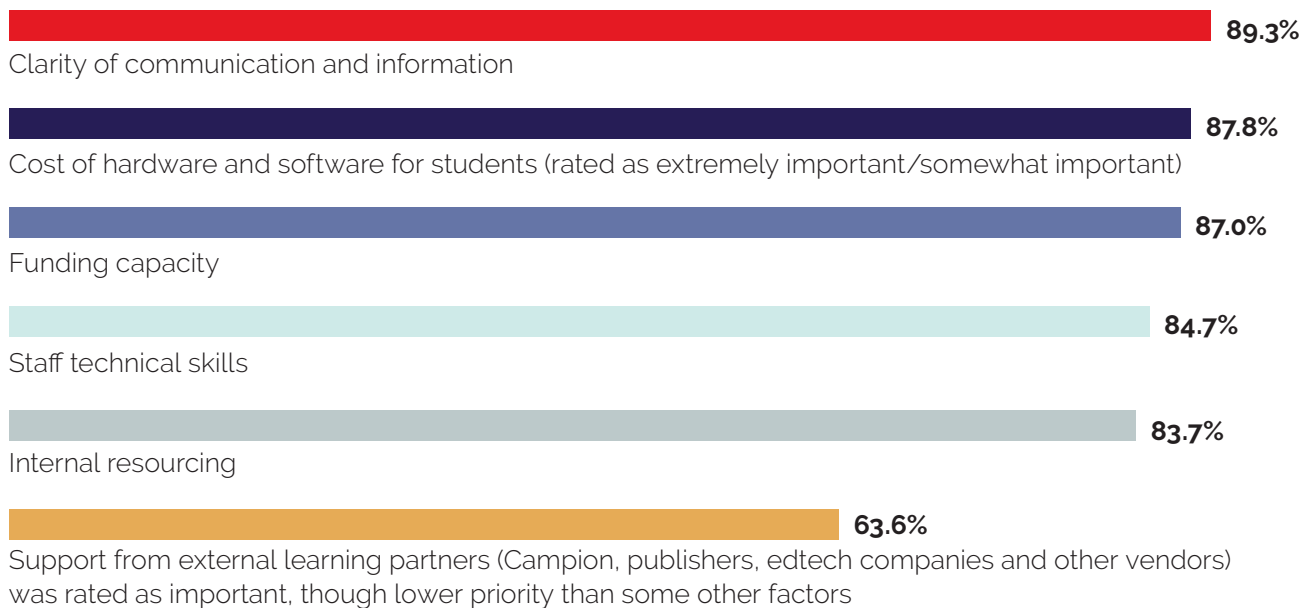
Commercial considerations



Critical commercial considerations:

- Cost of hardware and software for students.
- Clarity of information available.
- Funding capacity.

Critical commercial considerations in developing digital strategy were nominated as:



- *We'd be keen to hear about like schools that are doing digital technologies well. Our status as a small government school with low SES makes funding technologies a challenge to navigate.*

7

Commercial realisations



Staff technical skills were rated as both critically important and also an area of significant challenge..

The majority of respondents reported that commercial considerations relating to digital strategy change unfolded as expected. Where commercial realisations proved more challenging than expected, the standout factor was in **staff technical skills**. Staff technical skills were seen as a critical commercial consideration but in 35.8% of respondents reported technical capability of school staff proved to be more challenging than expected.

- *The fast moving pace of digital technologies means staff struggle to keep up-to-date.*

No commercial realisations were widely reported to be less challenging than expected.

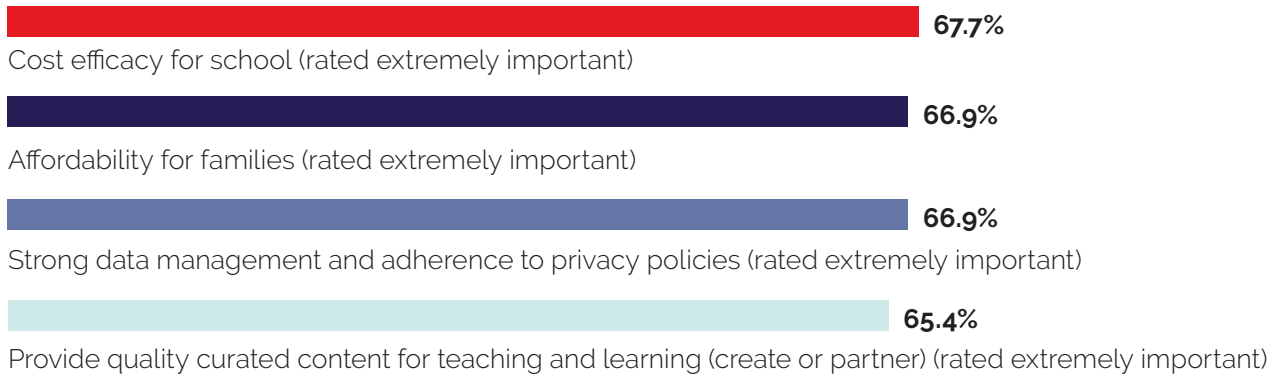
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Priorities in seeking commercial partners



Key factors in seeking commercial partners include affordability for families, provision of quality curated content, cost efficacy for school, data management and adherence to privacy policies.

In seeking partners, there was a resounding coherency in the attributes schools seek. These factors pulled ahead as extremely important:



CONCLUSIONS

This research demonstrates schools have **significant variation in their digital implementation**. The majority of respondents consider their school to currently have a blended approach and critically, around a third are looking to deepen digital technology implementation in the short-medium term. It's obvious that schools are investing in digital tech. It's here for the foreseeable. The challenge now is to maximise benefits and manage commercial considerations.

Some **schools are well resourced** with clear strategy, effective implementation and supported staff. Key concerns include cost efficacy and funding; staff technical skills and training is a repeated theme in implementation; and processes and teaching efficacy are universal challenges.

- *We use a lot of tech in our teaching. Trying to find solutions which work well together, and streamlining processes for staff, students and parents has been hugely difficult. Each product may be great on its own, but putting them together is where most of our challenges are.*
- *I wish it was affordable and given priority and the school supported the implementation entirely and not piece meal.*

Schools are moving quickly. More than a third of schools are seeking to become highly tech enabled within three years and a significant slice are looking to reach that goal within 12 months. These respondents report active plans to achieve this enhanced digital capability.

The strongest benefit realised from investment in digital strategy was reported around connectivity – students access learning via wifi, from home, from different locations. Other benefits are learning outcomes, external brand, accessibility and environmental considerations.

It's clear that schools can and must navigate through the challenges of implementation and invest to reach the benefits of digital acceleration.

APPENDIX: TOOL FOR DEVELOPING YOUR DIGITAL STRATEGY

Based on the trends in responses, these key points form an effective pathway to developing digital strategies.

1

Alignment with school agenda and strategic masterplan

Review digital strategy alignment with your three to five year plan, thinking specifically about

- Community – demographic, student and parent engagement
 - Drive for innovation and brand
 - Teachers – engagement, objectives in day to day teaching, capability
 - Teaching and learning goals.
-

2

Leadership

The leaders tasked with driving the digital and technology strategy need the experience, resources and time to evaluate, plan and implement change across the school.

Do they have the deep understanding of the school's medium to long term plans, to ensure coherence between school strategy and digital implementation?

3

People and training

Best practice includes planning to build skills and knowledge for all staff (teaching and non-teaching) – to learn, innovate and implement. There is often benefit in allocating an internal product champion for each platform or technology, who is willing and able to go deep with the technology and drive implementation, personalised to the school's needs.

Can your technology partners offer training or professional development that you can harness for the wider staff and student community?

4

Data management

Your data management plans will include storage, data transfer, privacy and data breach policies. As digital strategy changes, your data management plan must also evolve.

Are your suppliers working to certification and compliance to your required standards? Have you built regular reviews of data management planning into your implementation process?

5

Cost efficacy and investment

The use of digital resources and systems can bring progression, innovation and position your school to lead, but investment in digital comes at cost (both financial and resource/time).

Scoping is likely to include both implementation costs, and regular and realistic analysis of the return on investment, including sustainability of the investment over time, and your school community's ability to meet those costs in exchange for the benefits you seek.
