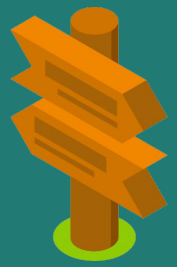


EdTech Purchasers
Comprehensive Journey Map

THE DECISION LAB

Overview of EdTech Selection Journey Map

EdTech products have been rapidly adopted by school districts but little is known about how districts choose edtech products. This research focused on uncovering the steps in the purchasing process to increase understanding around how decisions with significant consequences for students are made.
This resource focuses on identifying an exhaustive process of the steps a district may go through in identifying, evaluating and choosing edtech products. This is not meant to describe any particular district's process but instead increase understanding of the processes districts engage in.

Read this to:

- Understand the processes districts may engage in when choosing edtech products
- Learn about barriers and drivers to evidence ue in decision making.

SAMPLE & METHOD

01 | 200+ EdTech purchasers at the district level interviewed and surveyed.

02 | Mapping of the steps in the edtech selection process.
Behavioral analysis of the drivers and barriers to evidence use in edtech selection.

TIME TO READ
10 minutes

MAIN AUDIENCE
EdTech

Reading guide: Evidence-exhaustive journey map

The journey map outlines **key touchpoints** and **substeps** of **decision-making** in the EdTech purchasing process, from recognizing a market or district signal, all the way to purchase and scaling. The map captures an exhaustive list of **all consulted sources of evidence** at a given substep.

A deep dive into the barriers and drivers per substep is conducted.

Decision Points

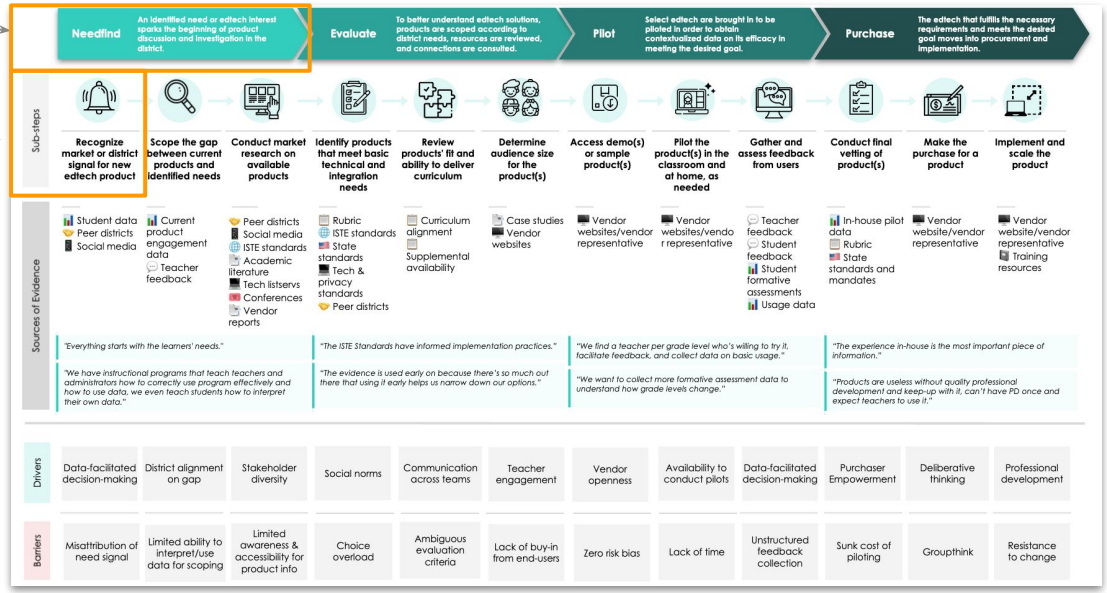
Touchpoint
A key step that edtech purchasers would experience along the journey of bringing a product to the district.

Substep
Specific decisions made or actions taken by the purchaser that are associated with a given touchpoint.

Substep Elements

Sources of evidence
Evidence that is engaged at a substep touchpoint, denoted by an icon.

Barriers & drivers
Structural and psychological determinants that influence a particular substep.



Sub-steps

Recognize market or district signal for new edtech product	Scope the gap between current products and identified needs	Conduct market research on available products	Identify products that meet basic technical and integration needs	Review products' fit and ability to deliver curriculum	Determine audience size for the product(s)	Test products through demo(s) or sample(s)	Pilot the product(s) in the classroom and at home, as needed	Gather and assess feedback from users	Conduct final vetting of product(s)	Make the purchase for a product	Implement and scale the product

Sources of Evidence

Student data Peer districts Social media	Current product engagement data Teacher feedback	Peer districts Social media ISTE standards Academic literature Tech listservs Conferences Vendor reports	Rubric ISTE standards State standards Tech & privacy standards Peer districts	Curriculum alignment Supplemental availability	Case studies Vendor websites	Vendor websites / vendor representative	Vendor websites / vendor representative	Teacher feedback Student feedback Student formative assessments Usage data	In-house pilot data Rubric State standards and mandates	Vendor website / vendor representative	Vendor website / vendor representative Training resources

"Everything starts with the learners' needs."

"We have instructional programs that teach teachers and administrators how to correctly use program effectively and how to use data, we even teach students how to interpret their own data."

"The ISTE Standards have informed implementation practices."

"The evidence is used early on because there's so much out there that using it early helps us narrow down our options."

"We find a teacher per grade level who's willing to try it, facilitate feedback, and collect data on basic usage."

"We want to collect more formative assessment data to understand how grade levels change."

"The experience in-house is the most important piece of information."

"Products are useless without quality professional development and keep-up with it, can't have PD once and expect teachers to use it."

Drivers

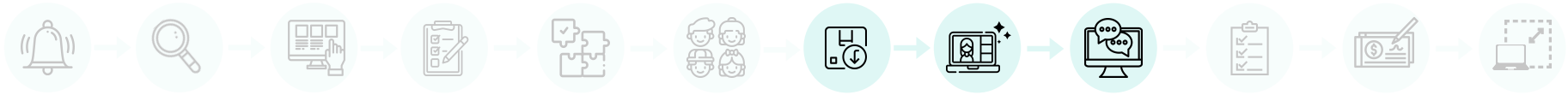
Data-facilitated decision-making	District alignment on gap	Stakeholder diversity	Social norms	Communication across teams	Teacher engagement	Vendor openness	Availability to conduct pilots	Data-facilitated decision-making	Purchaser Empowerment	Deliberative thinking	Professional development

Barriers

Misattribution of need signal	Limited ability to interpret/use data for scoping	Limited awareness & accessibility for product info	Choice overload	Ambiguous evaluation criteria	Lack of buy-in from end-users	Zero risk bias	Lack of time	Unstructured feedback collection	Sunk cost of piloting	Groupthink	Resistance to change

	Recognize market or district signal for new edtech product	Scope the gap between current products and identified needs	Conduct market research on available products
DRIVERS	**Data-facilitated decision-making** can help inform signal detection by enabling reliance on a greater number of diverse sources of information, thus facilitating a more accurate identification of what products are needed in the district	**District alignment** around edtech need across decision-makers helps with scoping the challenge or gap to be addressed in a given adoption	**Stakeholder diversity** during the process of scoping for available products facilitates the likelihood of finding products that address the edtech gap or need, by gathering diverse perspectives
	"We look into areas of concern: the data from previous years and teacher's individual concerns."	*"When the core curricula and tech teams are in line, they are the most successful."* ***56%*** *of respondents indicate directors of curriculum play a decision-making role in product adoptions.*	*Only **47%** of edtech respondents agree that a single decision-maker should have the final say on which edtech to purchase* *Technology directors, teachers, and principals are **most-cited stakeholders** in edtech decision-making.*
BARRIERS	**Misattribution** of identifying where the exact need or market signal for a new edtech product comes from can be reinforced where structures/key individuals are absent, which can skew signal recognition	**Limited ability to interpret/use data for scoping** inhibits the accuracy of finding the exact edtech problem or need to be addressed, making it difficult to objectively inform market research`	**Limited awareness and accessibility of product information** is compounded by the multitude of market signals, making it difficult for individuals to parse the information that they need for adoption
	"Never relate results to a specific product - you can't discount the classroom teacher in that process. The teachers that are instructing that class are different so can't compare across products."	*"We have instructional programs that teach teachers and administrators how to correctly use program effectively and how to use data, we even teach students how to interpret their own data."*	*"Depending on the product, we have different places to get information. We cast a wide net for feedback."* *Limited awareness information/evidence availability cited as **biggest challenge** to using information/evidence.*
STAKEHOLDERS	Technology/I.T. Director Teachers Instructional leaders/coaches Curriculum leader/teams	Technology/I.T. Director Teachers Instructional leaders/coaches Curriculum leader/teams	Technology/I.T. Director Technology team

	Identify potential products that meet basic technical and integration needs	Review products' fit and ability to deliver curriculum	Determine audience size for the product (i.e., a few classes, a whole grade level, a school)
DRIVERS	**Social norms** of seeking peer district's review and experiences with products provides confidence in the products potential fit with the decision-maker's own district context, expedites product identification	**Open and regular communication** across teams results in a more accurate understanding of the district's existing instructional materials landscape to ensure compatibility and seamless integration	**Teacher engagement** for testing edtech increases the likelihood of the pilot being conducted to completion, contributing to more accurate and full feedback on edtech efficacy and ability to close gaps
	"One of our biggest assets is that we meet with seven of the largest districts in North Carolina once per month to discuss edtech." *"We take word of mouth on whether it works."*	*"The curricula team serves as a gatekeeper for any proposed edtech products; they make sure it actually aligns with curriculum."*	*"We usually pilot with a department or group of grade teachers, get their feedback, and then make decisions."* *"We discuss it as a team and pilot with teachers and also involve the principal and superintendent when it's tech decisions."*
BARRIERS	**Choice overload** from interacting with many products that perform similar functions can impact the preliminary cut of edtech products because the magnitude of options blurs the original gap or need to be addressed	**Ambiguous evaluation criteria** prevents deliberate assessment; further, the lack of a formal rubric with established criteria reduces the potential for alignment between the adopted product, established standards of quality, and district needs	**Lack of buy-in from end users** makes it more challenging to gather the required feedback in later stages of edtech adoption, which is critical for final decision-making
	"There are just so many products out there." *"We also don't know what exists and sometimes, don't make the effort to find the research needed."*	*"There's no rubric - we want to develop more of those rubrics now as we start to get bigger."* *"No formal rubric, probably should."*	*"Getting everybody on board is hard; if you can achieve 85-90% of people on board, you're doing a good job."* *Only **25%** of respondents agreed that students are sufficiently engaged in the edtech selection process.*
STAKEHOLDERS	Technology/I.T. Director Technology team	Technology/I.T. Director Curriculum instruction team Special education dept./team External consultants	Technology/I.T. Director Superintendents



	Test products through demo(s) or sample(s)	Pilot the product(s) in the classroom and at home, as needed	Gather and assess feedback from users
DRIVERS	**Vendor openness** to providing information about products, demos, and professional development are viewed as more valuable partners because they demonstrate an interest in the district's unique setting	**Conducting pilots** serves as a valuable step in adoption because the district is able to obtain in-house, highly contextualized data on the effectiveness and fit of the product in their own district	**Data-facilitated decision-making** by engaging stakeholders facilitates the necessary buy-in for implementation through context-specific data
	*Relationship with vendor was the **2nd most popular choice** for the most important information source on edtech quality.*	*"We don't buy anything unless we use it; we pilot products to understand feasibility and it serves as a proof of concept."* ***84%** of EdTech respondents agreed that their district should piloting an edtech product before purchasing.*	***77%** of edtech respondents agreed that districts should consult externally provided information, data and/or evidence to inform edtech product selection.*
BARRIERS	**Zero risk bias,** which circulates around new or unestablished products, generates reluctance among districts to pilot it for purchase since it's a product by which there are no experiential reviews; this can result in districts inadvertently missing high-quality products	**Lack of time** results in a rushed pilot process and reduces the potential of collecting feedback on the longer term efficacy of the product	**Unstructured feedback collection,** such as anecdotal conversations, do not provide robust insights compared to systematic collections, which can inadvertently skew adoption toward certain stakeholder preferences
	"We are not adopters if we are the first ones using it." *Peer recommendations was cited as the **1st choice** among survey respondents for most important information source on quality.*	*"Time is the biggest barrier to gathering relevant information on an edtech product."* *Time was cited as the **2nd biggest challenge** to using information/evidence during edtech adoption.*	*"Feedback from parents, teachers, and students; they're given surveys to provide feedback and there's no challenges."* *"If options are very few more focus groups are done with teachers and potentially students."*
STAKEHOLDERS	Technology/I.T. Director Teachers Technology team	Teachers Students	Technology/I.T. Director Teachers Technology Team Students

Conduct final vetting of products

Make the purchase for a product

Implement and scale the product

DRIVERS

Purchaser empowerment, the feeling of confidence in one's interpretation of edtech products, supports the act of choosing the product to be purchased and implemented, that addresses the need or gap in the district

"We ask what students think of the product; it gives them autonomy and lets them know there's weight to their opinion."

"The product needs to work for the majority of people. Everybody has their own opinion on how things should work."

Deliberative thinking that's scaffolded through formalized procedures helps districts make the purchase with confidence and under clear terms, arriving at a balanced and objective determination

"Faculty and staff get asked for feedback usually with the pilot by rating ease of use, which then helps us make the final decision."

Professional development such as training teachers and staff on the how-tos and the capabilities of edtech, helps to facilitate scaling of all magnitudes across a district

"We give the volunteer teachers training and give them support for the implementation."

*Teacher usability (e.g. professional development) ranked **2nd** in edtech feature prioritization.*

BARRIERS

Sunk costs concerns the high probability that piloted products end up being purchased because unless there are glaring issues with the product, districts may still move forward with purchasing, even if the product isn't the best fit

"If we're going to pilot, we're already at the point where we're ready to make a purchase and looking for final piece"

***One in two edtech respondents** agreed that piloting usually leads to a purchase.*

Groupthink, the desire to make decisions under the terms of achieving group harmony/avoid conflict rather than product's efficacy in addressing challenges or needs, can severely impact the quality of adoption

"I'm the final decision-maker if it's under $25,000. If more, then the Board has to approve it but they practically accept what I recommend."

"If there's no major disagreement on a product, we move forward."

Resistance to change among teachers who strongly prefer familiar products, and thus are reluctant to adopt a new method of teaching due to subjective, personal switching costs, inhibiting the scaling of teaching

"Teachers are used to doing things a certain way, even new teachers are used to certain technology for personal use. It's hard moving from personal use to professional use to classroom use to students."

STAKEHOLDERS

Technology/I.T. Director	Teachers
Superintendents	

Technology/I.T. Director	Chief Financial Officer
Superintendents (of Business)	School board

Technology/I.T. Director	Teachers
Technology Team	Students