

# 2026 Texas Education Focus Report



# Introduction

## We are excited to share our Texas Education Focus Report!

As a proud Texan, former superintendent of schools, and lifelong advocate for public education, I can attest to PowerSchool's commitment to serving the students, staff, and families of our great state.

This report shares insights and perspectives from across the state during rapid change and challenge.

### Here's what we heard from Texas education leaders:

- District data needs to be connected, easy to use, and actionable
- Technology can enhance true personalized learning if used effectively
- College, career, and life readiness depends on equitable access to tools and opportunities
- Families expect school communication to be as fast and seamless as social media

It is my honor to work for a company that recognizes the significant impact of Texas K-12 education and continues to invest with a service-first approach. I hope you will find this report insightful, and know that we are here to support you as education continues to evolve.

Sincerely,



**Dr. Rick Fernandez, Director of Executive Engagement, PowerSchool**  
Former K-12 Superintendent in Texas

## Message from PowerSchool and Project Tomorrow®

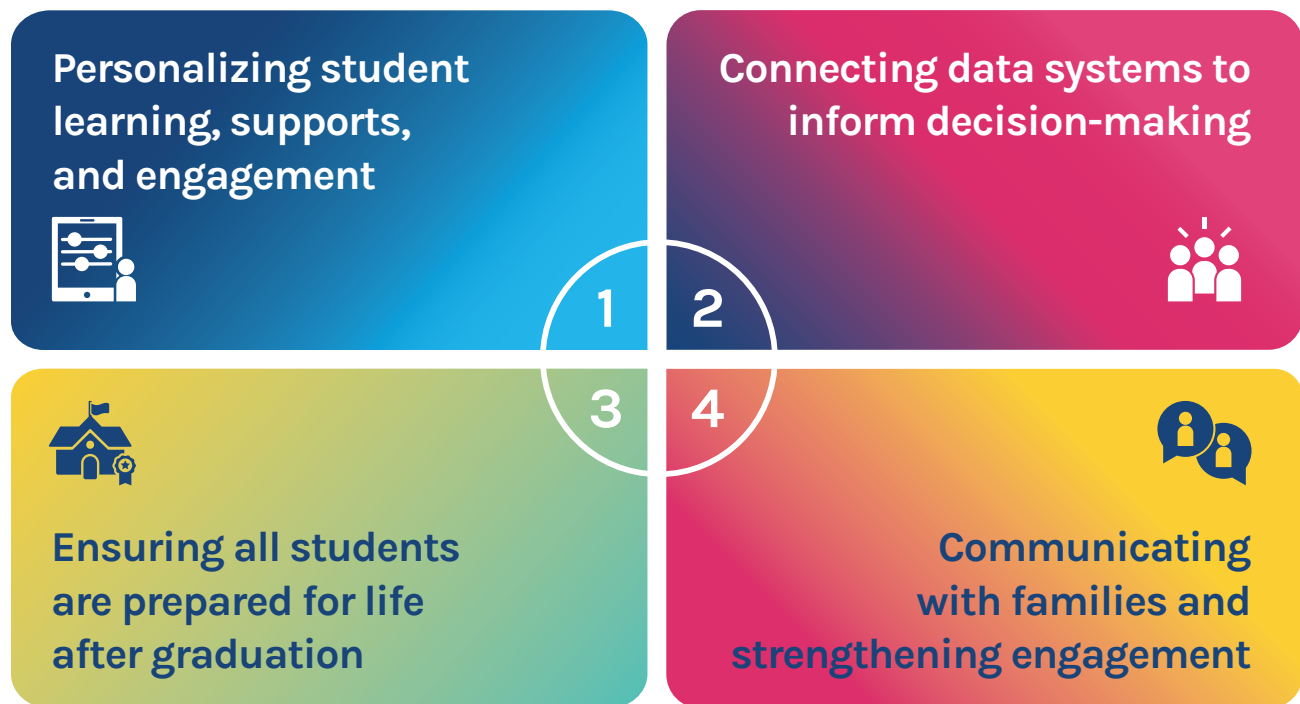
Project Tomorrow's vision is to ensure that today's students are well prepared to be tomorrow's innovators, leaders, and engaged citizens. We believe that authentic learning experiences enable all students to develop the skills and mindsets needed for future success. Our work spans efficacy studies and research that measure the real-world impact of educational innovations, the nationally recognized Speak Up Research Project® that amplifies the authentic voices of millions of K-12 stakeholders, and New Learning Model Programs that support schools in designing future-ready teaching and learning. For over two decades, we have provided education leaders, classroom teachers, and parents with research-based insights that drive data-informed decisions, improve student outcomes, and create more effective learning experiences for all. Project Tomorrow is pleased to partner with PowerSchool to develop this 2026 Texas Education Focus Report.

# The state of education in Texas: Priorities for the 2025-26 school year

Our goal is to highlight the incredible work being done by Texas educators and administrators to ensure all students have what they need to succeed now and in the future, and highlight key challenges they face in these efforts. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative feedback collected in 2025, this report aims to:

- Identify key priorities for the next school year
- Highlight the innovative work underway across Texas
- Surface persistent challenges that schools and districts continue to face

Informed by the voices of Texas educators and administrators, this report explores **four critical areas** shaping the future of K-12 education across the state:



Across each of these topics, we explore promising strategies, tools, and technology-driven innovations—including insights into the role of AI—to empower educators, engage students and families, and support academic achievement.

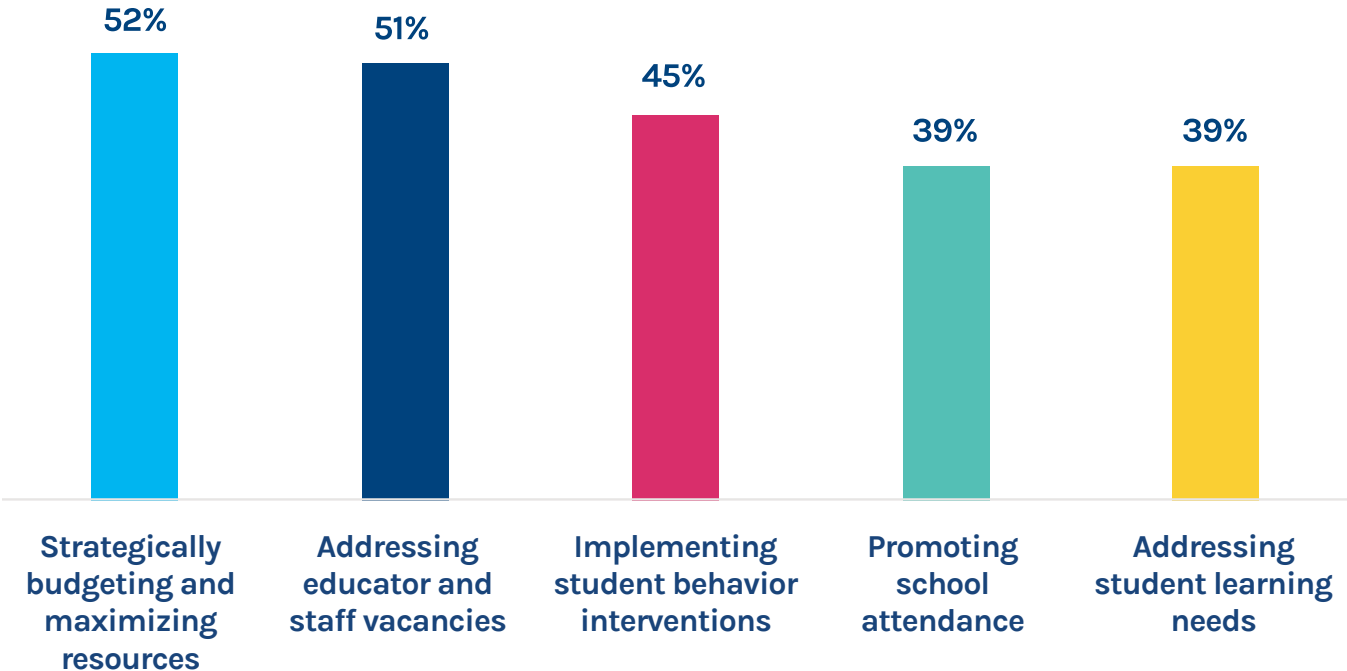
Based on this research, we acknowledge that these key topics are driving critical discussions in school district administration offices nationwide. While finding solutions to these challenges is undoubtedly important for the 2025-26 school year, it is also evident that schools and districts must do more with less.

Earlier this year, more than 150 Texas educators and administrators shared their views on the state of education with us, noting a growing focus on ensuring students are engaged in classroom learning activities and receiving high-quality, personalized instruction to fill critical learning gaps.

However, at the same time, they identified critical shortages of available resources—in both staffing and funding—as their most pressing obstacles to achieving those student-centered goals.

Most Texas educators and administrators pointed to the need for more strategic budgeting and addressing educator vacancies as their top two challenges for this upcoming school year (Chart A).

**Chart A: Top challenges facing Texas schools and districts**



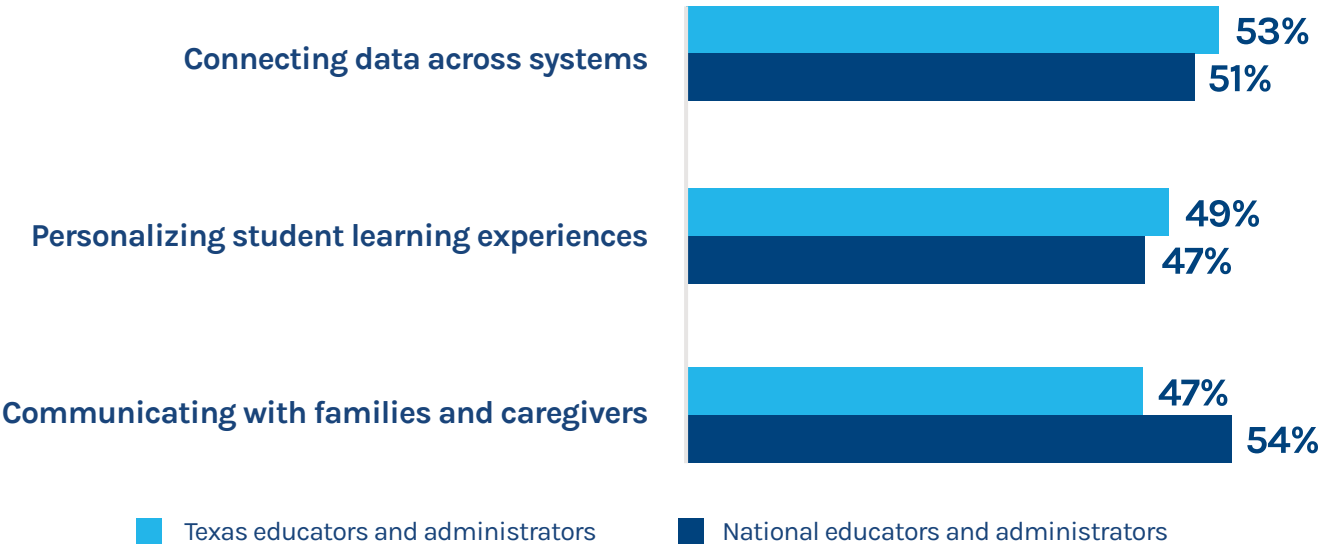
Totals do not sum to 100 percent because respondents could select multiple options.

Texas educators and administrators also see tremendous promise and potential in new technology solutions for addressing these needs.

When asked what could significantly impact district goals, 53% of the Texas respondents noted that connecting data across systems is a top priority, citing the need for greater visibility, shared workflows, and stronger accountability (Chart B).

Texas respondents want access to powerful data that can empower teachers to identify individual student needs, personalize instruction, and collaborate with families to maximize outcomes.

**Chart B: Top priorities for schools and districts (Texas and comparative national data)**



Totals do not sum to 100 percent because respondents could select multiple options.

Texas educators and administrators aren't alone in their views. Eighty-six percent—compared to 79% nationally—said that using technology effectively is critical to student success.

## Key takeaways

As district leaders and policymakers work to improve educational outcomes, it is critical to listen to educators doing the work every day. **Their input highlights key areas where technology can have a meaningful impact:**

- **Personalized learning and improving student outcomes**

Texas educators and administrators increasingly view tools, including AI, as essential for identifying learning gaps, personalizing instruction, increasing attendance, and improving outcomes.

- **College, career, and life readiness**

Educators and administrators emphasize the need for tools and programs to prepare students for all postsecondary pathways—including college, career, and military—through access to planning resources, career exploration, and real-world skill development.

- **Data access and usability**

Leaders want connected systems and dashboards that make data easier to access, understand, and act on, primarily to support students more effectively.

- **Family engagement and student attendance**

Texas educators and administrators recognize the importance of engaging families and caregivers, and see technology, such as unified apps, as a key tool to overcome communication barriers, attract families, and improve attendance.

## Next steps

**“Sometimes we don’t change unless there’s a catalyst. And sometimes those catalysts feel negative to start with. But there’s an opportunity for us to, in some ways, reinvent ourselves, and fix some things that we would’ve designed differently if we were starting from scratch now.”**

**JEREMY THOMPSON**

Deputy Superintendent of Business,  
Denton ISD (TX)

Technology is evolving fast, with new opportunities to support student success. Today’s tools can:

- Identify learning gaps earlier
- Individualize instruction based on a student’s unique profile
- Connect students with real-world careers
- Meet families when and where they are
- Prepare students for life after high school graduation

District leaders and policymakers are examining what steps they need to take now to stay ready. This report concludes with questions to guide reflection and planning that lead to meaningful impact.

# Personalizing student learning, supports, and engagement

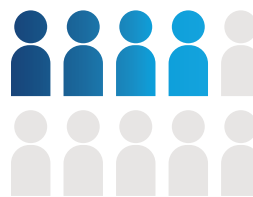
## Big questions:

- What are districts' most urgent challenges in effectively supporting student success?
- How can technology identify learning gaps and personalize instruction to meet the needs of all students?
- How can technology increase attendance and enrollment?

## Key insights

Nearly 40% of Texas respondents said one of their top challenges is “addressing fundamental student learning needs.” This speaks to the growing need for targeted academic support, tiered instruction, and scalable strategies to close learning gaps.

Over half (51%) of Texas respondents identified educator and support vacancies as a top challenge. The Texas Education Agency (TEA) reports ongoing teacher shortages, and these trends are expected to continue through the next school year.



**Nearly 40% of Texas respondents said one of their top challenges is “addressing fundamental student learning needs.”**



### Critical teaching shortage areas in Texas

- Bilingual/English as a Second Language
- Career and Technical Education (secondary level only)
- Computer Science/Technology Applications
- English Language Arts and Reading (secondary level only)
- Mathematics (secondary level only)
- Special Education

Source: Texas Education Agency (TEA), 2025

## Personalizing learning with technology

Texas educators see technology as a key mechanism to meeting student needs at scale, allowing them to identify learning gaps and provide targeted interventions.

- Nearly half (49%) of Texas respondents say tech is the most effective way to personalize learning
- 96% report that it's already improved academic outcomes for their students

Most also agree that tech tools increase teacher effectiveness.



**61% of educators** say tech helps them personalize instruction



**90% of educators** feel comfortable using tech to differentiate instruction



**81% of administrators** feel confident in their teachers' ability to leverage edtech



**69% of administrators** see teachers using tech to differentiate every week

Source: Speak Up Research Project, Project Tomorrow (2025)

## Using AI to personalize learning and improve achievement

Texas administrators and educators overwhelmingly believe in the potential of AI to support student learning experiences.

- 94% say AI could positively impact K-12 schools
- 58% name AI tools as the tech with the biggest potential to improve student outcomes—the top response by a wide margin
- 35% believe AI is especially useful in identifying nuanced learning gaps and suggesting next steps

One district administrator shared that “AI could be a huge help for teachers in planning fabulous lessons that would meet all kids at their levels.” But they also point out that current gaps in technology infrastructure—student information systems and behavior and learning analytics to name a few—limit their ability to create flexible, student-centered learning experiences.

“Each student would have an AI-driven learning assistant that customizes lessons based on their interests, strengths, and learning pace. This system would provide real-time feedback, adaptive challenges, and interactive, gamified experiences to keep students engaged. AI tutors could also assist in skill-building, from coding to creative writing, ensuring mastery of concepts before progressing.”

**TEXAS DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR**

## Supporting MTSS at scale

Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) frameworks help schools deliver the right supports to each student, but it takes time, data, and expertise. Many Texas educators are excited about the potential for AI to amplify their ability to provide this kind of personalized intervention support at scale.

Over one-third (34%) of respondents said they see an opportunity for AI to improve and support their ability to differentiate their instructional strategies based on current and previous academic performance.

Used well, AI can help teachers make smarter decisions faster.



## Increasing attendance and student engagement

**“I think attendance is directly connected to your engagement. Any human being is going to invest their time and effort into any activity they find value in, that they want to do. If kids enjoy being at school, they’re going to want to be there.”**

**DR. CELINA ESTRADA THOMAS**

Executive Director, Texas Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (TX)

Chronic absenteeism remains a significant challenge in Texas and across the country. According to the U.S. Department of Education, 28% of K-12 students were chronically absent during the 2022-23 school year. Reporting in Texas follows a similar trend, at 20% during the 2022-23 school year.

Most educators and administrators link school attendance to student engagement. Students not engaged in the classroom learning experience are less likely to come to school. Tech tools help educators create learning experiences that trigger a positive feedback loop of engagement, effort, support, and achievement.

## The need for AI-specific professional learning and leadership

Effective teaching is also critical to engagement, and it can be enhanced through AI assistance to alleviate administrative tasks, save time, personalize learning, and better understand students. But despite strong interest, many educators say they don't feel ready to use AI in their daily practice. There's a clear need for professional learning, policy guidance, and thoughtful leadership.

Districts want support in navigating privacy, security, ethics, and using AI responsibly. Sixty percent of respondents oppose outright bans on generative AI, but many still feel unsure about what implementation should look like.

To unlock the full benefits of AI, state and district leaders will need to invest in training, policy development, and clear expectations that prioritize student safety and educator impact.



To effectively guide the use of AI in our district, we must start by acknowledging a simple truth: AI is already here. Our professional learning and leadership support can't be about a future rollout; it must be about strategically supporting and shaping the organic adoption happening right now. Our goal should be to move from scattered, individual use to a **coordinated, effective, and equitable district-wide strategy**. This requires a **differentiated, teacher-centric approach that meets everyone where they are**. The one-size-fits-all professional development model won't work.

**MICHELLE DUNAWAY**

Coordinator of Ed Tech Support, Prosper ISD (TX)

# Connecting data systems to inform decision-making

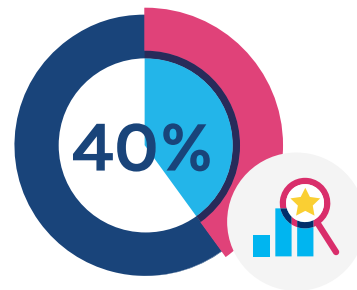
## Big questions:

- What are the top data priorities for Texas K-12 leaders?
- What challenges limit educators from using data effectively?
- How accessible is student data to educators?
- How are districts using data to detect early warning signs and intervene before issues become critical?

## Key insights

Texas educators and administrators navigate overwhelming volumes of data across different systems covering students (attendance, discipline, achievement), staff (certifications, attendance, evaluations), facilities (usage, capacity, scheduling), and resources (availability, utilization, budget status).

Despite the fragmentation, nearly all Texas respondents see data as essential to supporting student success. Nearly all (99%) percent say having readily available data helps them make better decisions about instructional practices.



**Nearly 40%** say that using student data from digital products to inform classroom teaching strategies will have the most significant impact on student learning outcomes in the next 2-4 years.

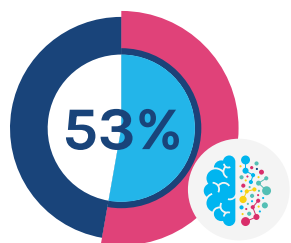
“A major challenge when connecting data systems is balancing the time and budget required to connect multiple systems, since integration often demands both financial investment and staff time for setup, maintenance, and training. When systems connect well, they can save time, reduce duplicate work, and provide timely insights to guide decisions and resources where they’re needed most.”

**HOLLY LANDEZ**

Director of Digital Learning and Innovation,  
Copperas Cove Independent School District (TX)

## A call for connected data

Disparate systems—student information, learning management, enterprise planning, and HR—create barriers. Texas educators and administrators stress the need for integrated systems that combine data from all sources into a single dashboard. These connections improve accessibility and enable analytics to track progress, identify gaps, and guide instructional decision-making at scale.



**53% of those surveyed say connecting data is a priority technology could address.**

## Making processes more efficient with AI

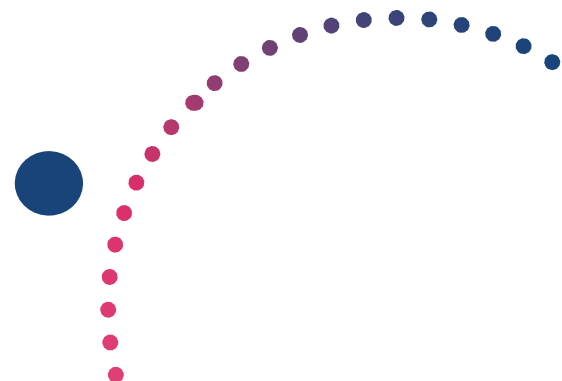
As school and district leaders strive to continuously improve student learning despite persistent operational challenges—including staff shortages, budget constraints, and increasing administrative demands—they see AI as a powerful tool to support their work.

### Districts are beginning to use AI to:

- Track and analyze resource management
- Monitor progress on organizational goals and performance indicators
- Automate routine tasks like scheduling and report generation
- Summarize documents and take notes during meetings

AI tools can also transcribe and translate records, making information more accessible for families. Together, these uses can ease compliance, free up staff time, and help schools run more smoothly.

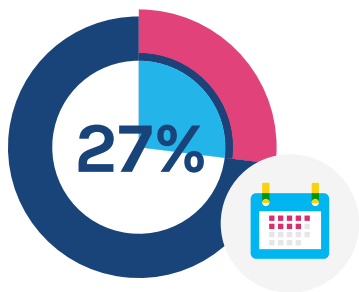
Overall, according to our review of national practice and data from Texas educators, K-12 leaders are navigating the broad implementation of AI with a cautious, measured approach.



## Identify early warning signs to drive timely, targeted interventions

Texas educators and administrators see powerful potential in using integrated data systems to flag academic, behavioral, and attendance issues early.

Nearly all Texas educators administrators say early warning systems (EWS) or notifications would be valuable across a variety of domains, including academics, mental health, behavior, graduation readiness, and attendance.



**27% of respondents** list early warning monitoring systems as a key strategy for increasing student attendance

These views echo national trends: early intervention helps reduce chronic absenteeism, prevent learning disruptions, and deliver more effective support.

“

We are using AI to design marketing materials for all clubs and school activities. We also use it to generate forms or to edit existing forms. **The possibilities are endless as far as gathering and disaggregating student achievement data along with most central office duties.** I believe AI and the growth of the agents it has produced will fundamentally alter the nature of public education. Much of it will add efficiency and reduce redundancy of jobs.

**BLAKE THORNTON**

High School Principal, Latexo ISD (TX)

# Ensuring all students are ready for life after graduation

## Big questions:

### How are schools and districts:

- Ensuring students are prepared for life after high school?
- Effectively supporting all postsecondary pathways, including college, career, and military?
- Leveraging technology to expand work-based learning opportunities?

## Key insights

One of the core purposes of K-12 education is preparing students for life beyond graduation, whether through college, trade school, the military, or the workforce. A majority of Texas educators and administrators reported offering traditional supports for postsecondary planning, including:

- College counseling staff to support college applications (61%)
- College fair and representative visits (58%)
- Access to college and career centers (58%)
- Career and technical education (CTE) staff (57%)

Technology plays a critical role in this process. A strong majority (86%) of Texas respondents say technology is very important to support students' long-term success. Nearly half (48%) now offer college and career readiness software to automate planning tasks and help students explore options directly.



### Tech helps students develop life-long skills

- 71% of administrators agree
- 61% of educators agree



### Tech can help prepare students for college or workplace success

- 62% of administrators agree
- 47% of educators agree

Source: Speak Up Research Project, Project Tomorrow (2025)

## Connecting students to career-centered learning

Career exploration that aligns with a student's unique strengths and passions is essential. Additionally, educators and administrators recognize the tremendous, unmatched value of hands-on experiences. But these experiences require significant coordination and collaboration, which is difficult given staff shortages and funding reductions. Many districts around the country and within Texas have found it challenging to accomplish this at scale.

- Only 35% of Texas respondents reported currently offering work-based learning opportunities, especially in fast-growing STEM fields

When asked to describe an ideal school of the future, one Texas district administrator envisioned a school that would utilize technology to create **“dynamic ‘learning hubs’ designed for hands-on experiences. These hubs would include simulated business incubators, robotics labs, and immersive VR environments for real-world problem-solving. Students could intern with companies, launch startups, or engage in global collaborations, allowing them to graduate with practical experience and a portfolio of accomplishments.”**

**TEXAS DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR**

**“We just finished our first year having opened the Future Ready Complex. It’s a CTE center that our comprehensive high schools go to for advanced CTE courses. This facility provides space for CTE program offerings to grow. Through collaboration with local businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, Workforce Solutions, and the nearby manufacturing center, we can ensure that we’re providing learning opportunities that align with internship opportunities and future workforce demands.”**

**KIM GARCIA**

Executive Director of Technology,  
Georgetown Independent School District (TX)

To expand career learning options, several Texas educators and administrators want to leverage technology:

- 26% view technology as vital for building students' work-based skills
- 10% have begun using AI-driven tools to support students' work-based learning plans

This area is still emerging, but it has the potential to scale career-centered learning opportunities and better align with workforce development needs.

# Communicating with families and strengthening family engagement

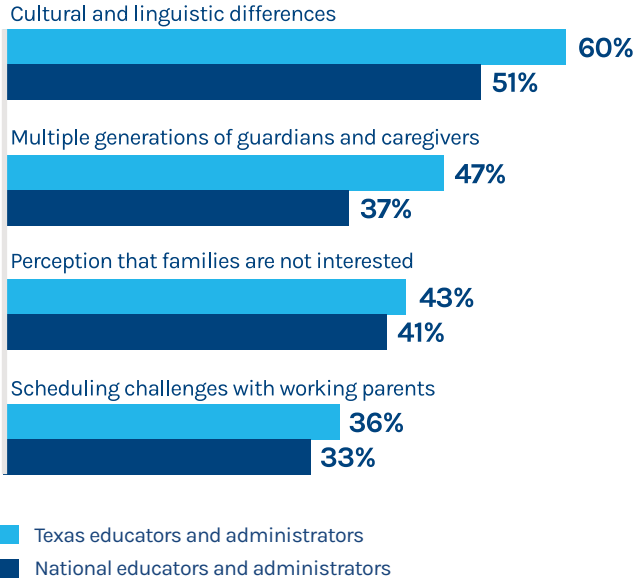
## Big questions:

- In what ways can districts adapt communication strategies to overcome linguistic, logistical, and generational barriers?
- How can technology strengthen communication channels to support student attendance?
- How can streamlined access to information help attract and retain families?

Texas educators and administrators recognize that engaging families is essential to student success, and increasingly, they also see parent engagement as a primary tool for improving attendance. When asked to identify their top two strategies for improving school attendance:

- 54% say “creating a positive school climate”
- 37% say “engaging parents in their children’s learning lives”

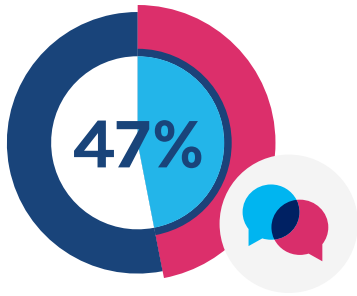
**Chart C: District-identified obstacles to engaging with parents and families**



Totals do not sum to 100 percent because respondents could select multiple options.

Some family engagement challenges appear more acute in Texas than nationwide. Nearly half (47%) of Texas respondents cited generational differences requiring multimodal outreach as a major obstacle, compared to 37% nationwide. Six out of 10 (60%) cited cultural and linguistic differences as a challenge, compared to 51% nationwide. At the same time, Texas educators acknowledge challenges in reaching all families.

Fortunately, tools that automate translation, support virtual meetings, and provide multimodal communication can extend the reach of district engagement.



**Nearly half (47%) of Texas respondents say family communication is the district priority most effectively addressed through technology.**

### Tools for extending engagement

Districts are leaning on technology to bridge these gaps. Here’s what administrators told us were the most effective ways to communicate generalized information to families:

- School or district social media accounts (74%)
- General email blasts (69%)
- Text messages (60%)

Generative AI is also beginning to play a role.

- 45% of Texas administrators and 32% of educators say they are already using AI to communicate with families
- 30% of Texas administrators and 26% of educators are considering using AI

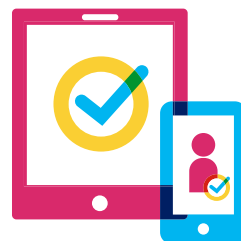


### Engaging families to increase enrollment and improve attendance

Texas educators see better engagement with families as a powerful lever for student achievement and enrollment growth. When asked which technology strategy would best help differentiate a school or district in attracting families, the top response was a unified parent app consolidating grades, events, and messaging into a single platform.

Educators and administrators also view stronger family relationships as a key strategy for reducing chronic absenteeism and fostering regular student attendance.

Nearly four in 10 (38%) of Texas respondents say that having a single platform for all forms of communication would be the most impactful use of technology to improve attendance rates.



**The most impactful use of tech to improve attendance: a single platform for family communications.**

# Guiding questions for further discussion

Technology is changing how we live and learn, including in Texas classrooms. With new demands and daily challenges, school leaders are looking to technology to support teaching and operations.

To help guide those choices, PowerSchool and Project Tomorrow have collaborated on this report to share what Texas educators say they need most: ways to make learning more personal, connect data across systems, prepare students for life after graduation, and engage families meaningfully.

We hope this report serves as a starting point for discussions in your community about how to best support today's students and plan for tomorrow.

## Questions for district leaders to consider:



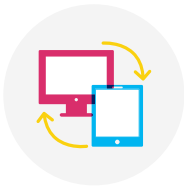
### Data integration

- What systems do we have now, and how can we connect them to serve students, families, and staff better?



### AI readiness

- How ready is our district to use AI in schools, and what would we need to make it work?



### Professional learning and communication tools

- How do we ensure teachers get the training to use technology well?
- What extra support do they need for newer tools, especially AI?



### Stronger family engagement

- What makes it hard for families to engage with schools, and how can technology help?
- What tools do we already use, and how could we improve or add more?

## Questions for policymakers to consider:



### **Educator recruitment**

- What data and technology systems can Texas implement or enhance to better identify, recruit, and retain high-quality educators—especially in high-need areas?
- How can a statewide platform streamline the educator pipeline, from preparation to placement, while reducing barriers to entry and increasing diversity?



### **Supporting MTSS statewide**

- How can Texas provide consistent guidance and infrastructure for MTSS implementation across districts to support early literacy and numeracy?
- What role can state-level data systems play in helping schools identify and respond to student needs more effectively?



### **AI policy**

- What guardrails, guidance, and supports should Texas provide to ensure the ethical, equitable, and effective use of AI in education?
- How can state leadership encourage innovation with AI while protecting student data, promoting transparency, and addressing bias?



### **College, Career & Life Readiness policy and incentives for Career Technical Education and Work-Based Learning**

- How can the state align CTE, WBL, and CCLR policies to expand student access to meaningful career exploration and credentialing?
- How can Texas ensure all students—especially those in underserved communities—have access to high-quality tools and experiences that prepare them for postsecondary success?

# How PowerSchool Can Help

PowerSchool helps Texas schools and districts empower their students, support their educators, modernize their operations, and engage their families.

- **To empower students**, we help you boost student engagement and outcomes with [curriculum and instruction](#), [student success](#), and [career counseling solutions](#).
- **To support educators**, we help you build an effective and passionate workforce with [HR and PD solutions](#).
- **To assist administrators**, we help your teams modernize operations, securely manage information, and coordinate resources with [data management](#) and [resource planning solutions](#).
- **To engage families**, we help you connect and communicate with students and their families through streamlined [communications products](#).
- **Plus**, we can help you make truly informed decisions with [analytics solutions](#), [data tools](#), and [AI-based innovations](#) you need.

For nearly three decades, PowerSchool has innovated to meet the needs of education. We started as a student information system (SIS) company. As needs changed, PowerSchool evolved to serve everyone in K-12 education. From the central office to the classroom to the home, we have a solution to help your students and staff thrive.

## About the research methodology

This report is based on a Spring 2025 statewide survey of more than 150 Texas educators and administrators, as well as dozens of interviews and focus group sessions with Texas educators and leaders conducted by PowerSchool and Project Tomorrow. Responses from Texas K-12 educators and administrators were analyzed alongside national data to identify key trends, challenges, and priorities shaping the future of education in Texas.



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