



2021 Top 3 Hurdles

1. DIGITAL EQUITY

Digital Equity includes three, inter-related components: digital foundations, conditions for learning, and meaningful learning opportunities. This nuanced hurdle encompasses more than just equitable access to quality digital technologies such as high-speed internet and powerful computing devices both inside and outside of school. It also includes ensuring that students have the knowledge and skills to use technology in the service of learning; that they interact with robust and accessible content and programs; that students and their identities are represented with and by the technologies themselves; and that they experience meaningful opportunities that empower them as learners.

2. SCALING AND SUSTAINING INNOVATION

Whether it be practices for effective teaching and learning, organizational business processes, or technology usage, schools are challenged to engage in and effectively scale innovation. Major challenges include: supporting risk-taking projects and identifying value-adding innovations; building ongoing investment support for integration; adapting what is working well at a small scale and scaling it out across a school, district, or state/country; and embracing the transformation of practices and culture ushered in by innovations.

**These two topics received the same number of votes from the Advisory Board and are tied for second place.*

Tie*

2. EVOLUTION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The teaching and learning landscape is changing, opening up the opportunity to move toward a better balance of teacher facilitation and student learning. As teaching, learning, and learning outcomes are constantly being redefined, schools are tasked with ensuring that teaching practices and pedagogies intentionally integrate advances in technology and learning sciences. Professional development is essential in this evolution.

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2021 Top 3 Accelerators

1. PERSONALIZATION

As the consumer sector has exploded with new ways to customize user experiences and products, schools are also finding ways to provide customized learning and support at the individual level. Personalized learning happens when all aspects of learning are directed by the needs of the learner. This includes teachers shaping the teaching and learners directing the learning in ways that honor the variability of learners needs and strengths including pace, pathways, strategies and demonstrating knowledge/skills.

2. SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

A core function of education is building skills and understanding for mental, social, and emotional well-being, including empathy, grit, persistence, flexibility, and adaptability. These capabilities shape mindsets and enhance successful learning, collaboration, problem-solving, and civic responsibility. In the face of remote learning and the adaptations necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, many learners, families, and educators are experiencing tremendous anxiety, loneliness, mental stress, trauma, and grief. In this moment educators are challenged to think about how Social Emotional needs are enhanced or diminished with varying uses of technology, and to reimagine school norms to better enable the wellbeing of staff, learners, and parents/guardians.

3. LEARNER AUTONOMY

Learner Autonomy is all about student agency, encompassing anything from letting students choose how they access content, to how they organize their learning, to how they exhibit their learning. Productive struggle informed choice, freedom, and flexibility are growing values in K-12, especially as students learn to form decision-making and time management habits that set them up for life success. Schools play a major role in scaffolding learner autonomy and cultivating intentional development of student capacities to make effective use of their autonomy to help them harness the power of their own agency.

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Top 3 Tech Enablers

1. DIGITAL COLLABORATION ENVIRONMENTS

Digital systems, tools, technologies, connectivity, and pedagogy that enable high levels of collaboration and support online and in person learning. Digital Collaboration Environments include both synchronous and asynchronous communication tools—platforms that allow multi-user, virtual communications, whether across the room or across the globe.

2. UNTETHERED BROADBAND AND CONNECTIVITY

Ubiquitous broadband Internet and the underlying technologies that enable robust connected learning—without requiring devices to be physically connected (via cables, for example). These technologies enable mobility and learning anytime, anywhere.

3. BLENDED LEARNING TOOLS

Digital tools, technologies, and pedagogy that enable learning experiences through a mix of face-to-face and online interactions. These tools can be used to strategically integrate online and in-person activities to enhance student learning.