

| Preview |

School District Purchasing Priorities | 2026-27



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EdWeek
Market Brief®

School District Purchasing Priorities 2025-26

| About This Report

Tight economic conditions and funding uncertainty are looming large over the shoulders of district leaders as they piece together their budgets for 2026-27. Some products and services that K-12 school districts have invested in for years will fall under that shadow and face decreased demand, contract renegotiations, and shorter agreements, new *EdWeek Market Brief* data shows. But there are other areas where top administrators are still optimistic.

For the fifth consecutive year, *EdWeek Market Brief* is offering an inside look at school districts' purchasing priorities – according to the K-12 officials holding the purse strings – as well as the external pressures that shape them. The report reveals where top administrators expect to spend more money in the coming year, the financial challenges they're preparing to face, and the expectations vendors will need to meet to adequately support teachers and students.

This special report largely draws from two nationally representative surveys by the EdWeek Research Center, one run online between May and July 2025 and another run between August and October 2025, with comparisons in spending by product category drawn from the results of the prior year's report.

The report offers not only original data but also insights from *EdWeek Market Brief*'s editorial team on how to interpret the findings. Key context for the research

includes the ongoing uncertainty around federal- and state-level K-12 funding and the quickly evolving needs of school and district officials.

Among the report's key findings:

- Professional development is expected to be a key area of investment for many school districts in 2026-27, with spending on in this category expected to not only hold steady, but in some cases increase. A notable percentage of district leaders pointed to PD for teachers as an area where they expect their system to allocate more dollars compared to the year prior, despite ongoing concerns about the future of key federal grants that are often used to cover the cost of training.
- Survey responses showed great uncertainty when it comes to school districts' capacity to make purchases. The majority of administrators are bracing for spending changes, whether it is an increase or decrease—with the portion saying they expect conditions to remain the same dropping compared to last year.
- Top administrators' perceptions around both diversity, equity, and inclusion and artificial intelligence are shifting—and the change has business implications for vendors because it appears to influence district and school leaders' purchasing decisions.

Readers of the report will come away with research taken from nationally representative surveys of K-12 officials on the following:

- The key product categories—ranging from core elementary curriculum to summative assessments to learning management systems—in which district leaders expect their system to spend more, less, or about the same as last year.
- The extent to which school districts across the country are delaying high-priority purchases due to budget constraints or uncertainty and limiting the maximum length of its contracts.
- How optimistic—or pessimistic—K-12 officials generally feel about spending, compared to how they've felt each year since the height of the pandemic and federal stimulus aid funding

- The **help that school and district leaders say they will need** from existing vendor partners if their federal funding is cut or delayed.
- How prevalent contract renegotiations have become in the market, **and how much money administrators are hoping to save** when they reopen these conversations with providers.
- The **messaging strategies that help potential new company partners** break through the noise and attract school or district leaders' attention—and how these have changed from a year ago.
- How **attitudes among administrators are evolving** when it comes to products that incorporate artificial intelligence, and how the knowledge that a tool uses AI impacts whether they would recommend its use in their classrooms.
- What **features a product that uses AI must have**—which aren't expected of non-AI tools—in order to ease the concerns of school and district leaders.

The data and insights in the report offer a critical bird's-eye view of what's to come in the education market, equipping education companies to more efficiently build products and navigate funding challenges, and ultimately better serve the needs of the country's K-12 students and educators.

For information on how to access the report, [go here](#).

See the next two pages for a snapshot of some of the findings this report.

Join our team at EdWeek Market Brief's in-person Fall Summit, scheduled for Nov. 11-13 in Nashville.

Now in its 5th year, the *EdWeek Market Brief* summit is where the K-12 business community comes together to learn and network. Join us to hear directly from school district leaders, learn how the K-12 market is changing, and identify opportunities to drive growth. Mark your calendar and be sure to include the summit in your team's professional development budget. [Learn more](#).

About EdWeek Market Brief

EdWeek Market Brief is a membership service that provides essential intelligence on the needs and priorities of school districts to companies and other organizations focused on the K-12 market. Its members include some of the most prominent organizations in the industry, located in the U.S. and internationally, as well as medium-sized companies and startups, nonprofit and research organizations, consulting firms, and higher education institutions.

Week after week, our service provides enterprise members with in-depth journalism, original data from surveys of district officials, interviews with K-12 decisionmakers and industry insiders, and news of lucrative bidding opportunities. *EdWeek Market Brief* enterprise members also have unlimited access to an extensive library of on-demand webinars, on topics such as the state of K-12

budgets; effective sales strategies and mistakes to avoid; keys to working successfully in foreign education markets; district demands for social-emotional learning products; and shifts in school buyers' needs.

In addition, enterprise members have exclusive access to in-depth research reports on the K-12 market as well as quarterly briefings on key trends in district purchasing, budgets, and challenges facing vendors.

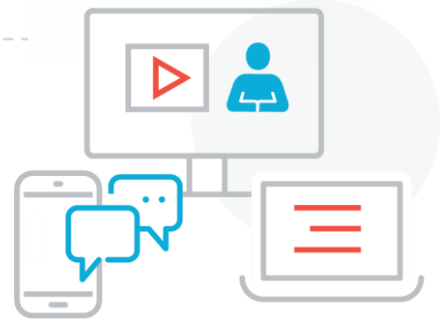
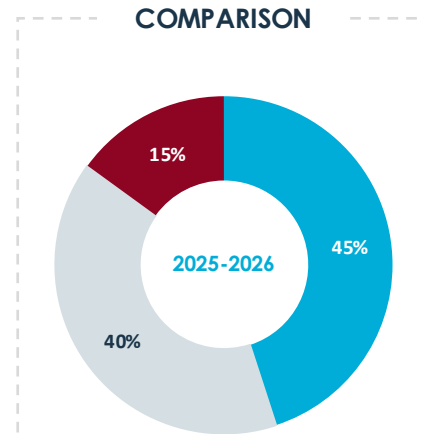
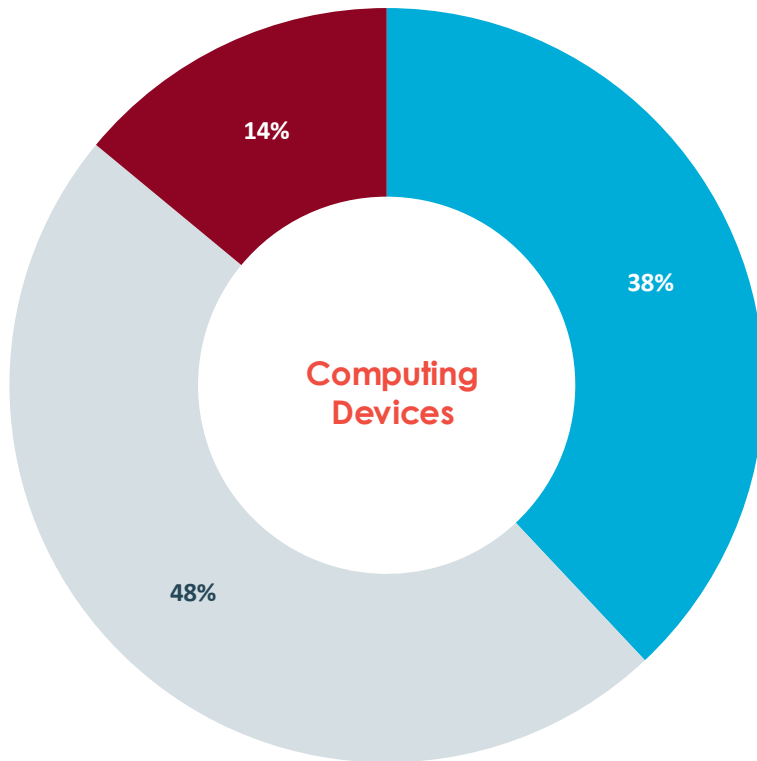
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For information on becoming an EdWeek Market Brief member, please contact Maurice Bakley at mbakley@educationweek.org.

SPENDING BY PRODUCT CATEGORY

Portion of Administrators Earmarking More For Devices Falls

■ More in 2026-27 ■ No change ■ Less in 2026-27



INSIGHT:

Districts' investment in devices such as Chromebooks and iPads are once again expected to remain relatively stable, although the percentage of districts expecting to spend more money on this line item has dipped each of the last few years. The fact that many district leaders project no change is likely indicative that districts continue to see the value in maintaining their 1-to-1 device programs, but no longer have the funding or desire to expand those purchases.

Survey Question:

When it comes to the following technology-related expenses, how do you anticipate your spending for NEXT YEAR'S budget (2026-27) will compare to the spending in the CURRENT (2025-26) budget?

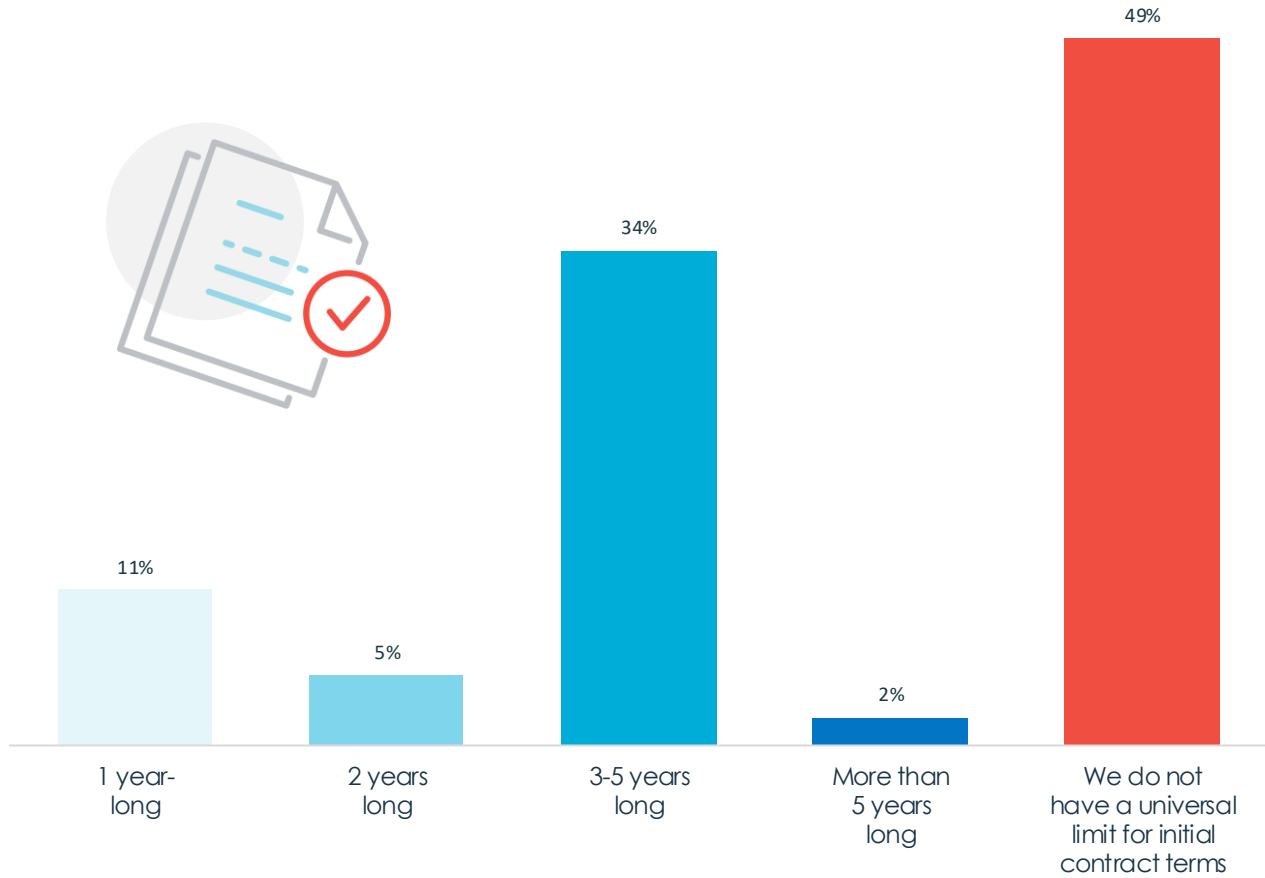
Link to relevant story:

- [School Boards' Role in Purchasing Is Poised to Grow. These Products Are Drawing Their Scrutiny](#)

DATA SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center nationally representative May-July 2025 survey of 179 district leaders

BUYING PROCESS AND FUNDING STREAMS

Are Districts Limiting the Length of Vendor Contracts?



INSIGHT:

More than 1 in 10 principals and district leaders say their system is limiting new vendor contracts to a maximum of one year—a relatively extreme limit for an industry with a long sales cycle and fairly stable funding. As districts face tighter budgets and financial uncertainty, more school systems may consider these types of limitations in an effort to stay nimble when it comes to where they put their dollars.

Survey Question:

New vendor contracts signed by my district or school are permitted to be a maximum of:

Link to relevant story:

- [Are School Districts Shortening Contracts Amid Financial Uncertainty?](#)

DATA SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center nationally representative September-November 2025 survey of 140 district leaders and 89 school leaders

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About EdWeek Market Brief



This is the fifth consecutive year that *EdWeek Market Brief* has published its Purchasing Priorities special report, an

exploration of emerging school district spending, and changes in policy and classroom practice affecting the education market. **Past editions of those analyses can be found here:**

- [School District Purchasing Priorities, 2025-26](#)
- [School District Purchasing Priorities, 2024-25](#)
- [School District Purchasing Priorities, 2023-24](#)
- [School District Purchasing Priorities, 2022-23](#)