DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN K–12 EDUCATION:

Modernize Document Workflows for Resilience and Agility

Document digitization and electronic signatures modernize workflows to deliver more accurate, secure, and convenient services for parents, students, teachers, and staff.

Drivers of Digital Document Workflows in K–12 Education

Permanent changes to student engagement and remote work
50% of educational institutions are expecting permanent changes.

Growth in remote and hybrid learning
As of fall 2020, 50% of U.S. schools are fully remote, 20% in hybrid models.

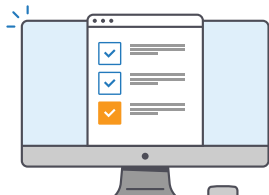**Need for continuity of services and operations**
70% of schools are currently focused on business continuity and cost optimization in response to budget restrictions and COVID-19.

Elementary and secondary schools have experienced massive disruption from COVID-19 and the move to remote and hybrid learning, as well as online, contactless school operations. While K–12 schools have been working to become less paper based and to improve digital content workflows, the pandemic exposed gaps in digital capabilities, especially in operational resilience and technology parity.

Schools were not ready nor able to respond quickly to the COVID-19 crisis, as activities moved from in person and manual to remote and contactless. Teachers, administrators, and staff were not fully able to do their jobs in a remote setting. This created issues with compliance, contracting, and services delivery. It also highlighted the need for schools to work aggressively to modernize form and workflow management.

As a result, many schools are looking for ways to ensure that their workflows are fully paperless — for example, using PDF-based workflows to eliminate the need to print, get wet signatures, scan and/or mail student-facing forms like individualized education programs (IEPs), as well as operational forms like staff onboarding packets or vendor contracts.

Digital Document Workflows Are Required for K–12 Resiliency

The uncertain trajectory of the pandemic impacts the ability of school districts to return to regular, onsite operations, creating an immediate and longer-term need for more digital, online, and contactless workflows. In a recent IDC survey of 836 U.S. parents, 63% of parents of school-aged children reported being "concerned or very concerned" about the safety of returning to school, and teachers and unions have expressed concern as well.

Beyond the immediate crisis, document digitization and digital document workflows are a means to modernize and support existing operations, be more resilient and flexible responding to change, and prepare for future expectations of students, parents, and teachers.

Current document workflows are interrupted by paper-based and manual processes, often to get multiple wet signatures. Even if documents are created in digital formats, or converted to PDFs, they still must be printed, mailed, signed in person, scanned and/or re-entered back into digital systems, such as student portals, learning management systems (LMSs), contract databases, and human resources systems. This slows essential processes such as onboarding teachers, paraprofessionals, substitute teachers, and others; as well as getting IEP services in place in a compliant timeframe and contracts signed for facilities management. Printing documents for signatures slows approvals and is inconvenient for both parents and staff.

The Benefits of E-signature Technology

E-signature technology supports a wide range of functions within schools and provides multiple concrete benefits, such as:

Supports compliance: E-signatures work in support of regulations, such as Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Children's Online Privacy and Protection Act (COPPA) and Section 508 U.S. regulations, and can be used in IEPs, health forms, and legally binding documents.

Reduces errors and improves productivity: A fully digital document workflow eliminates manual reentry, which is a source of errors. It improves productivity with faster turnaround times for forms and documents from parents, teachers, and outside contractors, enabling staff to focus on other more important tasks.

Ensures technology parity: Technology parity is the requirement that all workers have secure access to the resources required to do their jobs, no matter their preferred device or location—whether onsite, remote, or in the field.. In an IDC survey conducted in August 2020, 40% of schools are looking to invest in e-signature software, and 30% in electronic forms to ensure technology parity for their workforce.

Enables resilience: E-signatures help ensure a digital workflow for remote and contactless services. This enables schools to respond quickly to changing conditions such as a weather-related event or public health emergency, which may close schools and require remote work.

Ultimately, the key benefit of e-signature technology is the creation of a smooth and seamless digital workflow that provides an improved experience for parents, students, teachers, and staff. For example, in a digital IEP process, the prior written notice, evaluations, classroom observations, report cards, and progress notes can be emailed, signed, and managed without paper. These processes may be new or unfamiliar to teachers and staff. E-signature solutions should be supported by a partner ecosystem that can help school districts with implementation and change management support. E-signature solutions provide maximum benefits when they work with existing forms, such as PDF-based forms, and when they are integrated with systems across schools, and with state education departments and other institutions.

Message from the Sponsor

Adobe Acrobat and Adobe Sign are trusted solutions for educational institutions that want to go paperless with e-signatures and PDF-based workflows that are seamless, secure, and compliant.

Learn more about how your school can reduce the administrative burden on faculty and staff and free up more time for creating a nurturing educational environment.