



# Promoting equity in education:

## How to empower every learner

Guide for education leaders

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# The shifting landscape of education

Classrooms across the globe have fundamentally changed in the past few years. Continuity of learning became the top priority as students, educators, and school administrators quickly pivoted to remote and hybrid learning. With finite time and resources, this meant many students were unable to receive personalized support for their unique learning needs.

One analysis found that the pandemic left students on average five months behind in mathematics and four months behind in reading by the end of the school year.<sup>1</sup> Though the pandemic undoubtedly impacted all learners, not every student was affected equally.

Disadvantaged students and students with different learning abilities are not always given the resources they need to excel in the classroom. While equity in education has been a long-standing issue, the pandemic has highlighted and intensified existing inequities.

As we look towards the future of education, it is more urgent than ever for schools to create environments where every student has a fair opportunity to learn, regardless of their background or learning abilities.

The educational landscape is rapidly evolving. To ensure students are given the best experience, schools need to thoughtfully consider what learning tools are best for their students. With the right technology, educators can create equitable and accessible learning environments that empower every student to unlock their full potential.



At TD SYNEX, we are committed to delivering the most innovative technology solutions. We want to take a closer look at equity in education and how technology can help schools create an equitable experience for all learners.

# What is equity in education?

Equity in education is achieved when every student is given a fair opportunity to succeed at school, no matter their background, primary language, race, financial circumstances, gender, or learning abilities.

This means equipping every student with resources and support that fit their unique needs and circumstances. In turn, this helps them develop the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the future.

In today's classroom, a "typical" student does not exist. As classrooms become more diverse, we are seeing students from all backgrounds with a full continuum of vision, hearing, neurodiversity, and mobility needs, as well as learning styles.

If we look at the composition of learners, it is evident that tailored learning environments are crucial to support their varied needs.

- 2.5 million students in the U.S. have a learning disability such as dyslexia.<sup>2</sup>
- 52% of teachers in the U.S. have English language learners in their classrooms.<sup>3</sup>

One-size-fits-all tools cannot support the many needs of today's learners. To achieve true equity in education, schools need to shift from standardized lesson plans to personalized learning experiences.



# How technology can promote equity

Providing students with devices that allow them to learn online or offline means that students can access learning materials outside of school and continue their learning at home, with or without an Internet connection.

In a classroom with a breadth of student needs, the right technology also gives students more control over how they learn. At the same time, it enables educators to create personalized learning experiences and optimize classroom time.

The types of tools students use matters. To achieve educational equity, schools need tools that can be adjusted to individual learning needs and preferences. Built-in accessibility and inclusivity features make it possible for every student to learn their own way while still learning alongside their peers. For example, one student may benefit from a tool that translates content to a more familiar language, whereas another student might appreciate the option to listen to a narrator read on-screen text. These tools can encourage students to better connect with learning materials and more enthusiastically participate in the classroom.

By committing to increasing access to learning tools and equipping teachers with knowledge and skills to help students use these tools, schools can move towards better learning outcomes for all students.



The digital divide continues to affect a significant portion of students. Research has found 15 percent of U.S. households with school-age children do not have high speed internet at home, with students in lower-income households particularly affected.<sup>4</sup>

# Envisioning the new digital classroom

To help students of all backgrounds and abilities, classrooms would benefit from technology with greater accessibility, more built-in learning tools, and simplified user controls. Windows 11 education devices open new possibilities for all students to engage and participate.

These low-cost cloud-first devices work with or without an internet connection, are simple to deploy and manage, and safeguard against online threats.

Windows 11 is the most inclusively designed Windows ever. Here are a few examples of available tools that support equity in education:

## Vision

- Narrator is a screen-reading tool that provides simplified navigation and audio descriptions. Students who are blind or have low vision can interact with everything on their screen with their keyboard or Braille device.
- Colour filters include six built-in options to increase visibility for students with vision loss or colour blindness. Colour filters change the colour palette on the screen and can help students distinguish between things that differ only by colour.



## Hearing

- Real-time closed captions on Microsoft Teams detects what is being said in a meeting. It presents real-time captions to help students who are hard of hearing or who need support focusing.

## Neurodiversity

- Immersive Reader can help students with dyslexia or those who need extra help with reading by breaking down syllables and increasing spacing between lines and letters.
- Reader Mode on the Edge browser reduces cognitive loads by removing distracting ads and excess information. Webpages are simplified and students only see important textual and visual content.

## Mobility

- Dictate enables students with limited mobility to use their computer microphone to create documents, emails, notes, and presentations.

## All learners

- High-definition video conferencing enables students to learn from anywhere.
- Extended battery life means students have devices that last the entire school day.
- Accessibility settings allow students and educators to configure devices to meet their specific needs.
- A more adaptive touchscreen and added digital pen functionality helps students write, draw, and navigate with ease.



# The impact of equitable learning environments

## Impact on students

- Innovative and accessible technology gives students the experiences they are seeking. Seventy-five percent of K-12 students say their ideal school offers digital tools for individualized learning, such as a laptop for every student.<sup>5</sup>
- Inclusive technology enables students who need extra support to learn alongside their peers. It removes the stigma that students may feel from being treated differently in the classroom so they can feel more comfortable participating fully.

## Impact on educators

- A survey found that 67 percent of teachers agree that learning ought to be personalized. However, about 30 percent of teachers who say they are “highly motivated” to personalize their lessons do not feel they have the time, curriculum and assessment resources, or flexibility to do so.<sup>6</sup> Accessible devices built for education make it easier to support the diverse learning needs of students without adding extra work for educators.
- With reliable and easy-to-use tools, educators can spend less time on routine tasks. This allows them to optimize classroom time and focus on the individual needs of students, rather than troubleshooting. Impact on school administrators
- High-quality and affordable devices priced for education means administrators can balance budgets without compromising on quality. Schools can provide technology access to more students with a range of options to meet every budget.
- With simplified management and powerful built-in always-on security, administrators can focus on providing the best learning experience to students without worrying about unsafe content and downloads.

Technology can be an invaluable tool to promote equity in education, but it requires buy in from all levels. When students, educators, and school administrators embrace the digital classroom, everyone benefits.



# Educational experiences designed for all

Schools and educators have shown their creativity and resilience in the most trying times—all towards the goal of helping their students have the best learning experience. For schools that have already seen how digital tools can enhance learning, now is the time to look towards creating lasting change that will benefit every student.

With classrooms becoming more diverse, equity in education needs to become a top priority going forward. This requires schools to thoughtfully consider what technologies will allow students to learn in a way that respects and supports their unique backgrounds and learning abilities.

Schools need to innovate if they want to help all students unlock their full potential. High-quality educational devices need to be available to all students to equip them with future-ready skills.

These devices also need to be designed with students' needs in mind: greater accessibility, simplified user controls, and customizable settings. Finding the right tools means better learner outcomes and more engaged classrooms. By removing barriers to learning and leveraging the power of devices built for education, schools can provide the support and resources that every student deserves.



# Solutions for every classroom and every learner

To put educational equity into practice, schools need innovative and reliable technology that enables every student to fully participate in their learning.

TD SYNnex is a leading IT distributor and solutions aggregator for the IT ecosystem. We have a range of technology products, services, and solutions that can help every institution deliver a high-quality learning experience for all students.

**For more information, please contact Alfred Ng, TD SYNnex Business Development Manager.**



<sup>1</sup> COVID-19 and education: The lingering effects of unfinished learning, McKinsey & Company, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> NACDD on Learning Disabilities Awareness Month, National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> America's Teachers on Teaching in an Era of Change, Scholastic, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Nearly one-in-five teens can't always finish their homework because of the digital divide, Pew Research Center, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Ten Things Everyone Should Know about K-12 Students & Digital Learning, 2019, Speak Up Research Initiative, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> The class of 2030 and life-ready learning: The technology imperative, Microsoft and McKinsey & Company, 2018.

