

# Tech Trends in the Classroom that May Outlive Pandemic

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Since the dawn of public education here in the US, school has evolved and changed in amazing ways! Ever since the internet made its way into our homes, it has also crept into the classroom over the past few decades. And due to recent technological advances in education, there has been an explosion of new apps, tools, and methods for teaching.

And of course, this was all before the Covid-19 pandemic swept the globe, shutting down businesses and schools, and stopping what we know as normal life in its tracks. With the sudden switch to online learning just last spring, school districts around the nation were forced to invest more in technology than ever before.

While most of us yearn to go back to the way things were before the pandemic, many educators have learned new ways to teach that hold the potential to revolutionize education in America, even when the coronavirus is long gone. Some experts in education even believe that the system has been long overdue for a transformation, and

that perhaps this is just the beginning of something great when it comes to the way that teachers teach, and children learn and grow.

## Classroom Tech Trends to Watch

For teachers who have been in the classroom for twenty or more years, it's easy to see the evolution of educational technology. Veteran educators have slowly switched from using overhead projectors to document cameras, and manual grade books have quickly become digital and housed online. Parents and students now have access to email to communicate with instructors, and grades can be viewed in real time! While all these online education trends have been in place before the pandemic, they have become even more essential in the age of virtual learning.

Let's take a look at some digital trends in education that are likely to survive the coronavirus:

### Learning Management Systems as an Online Space for Classroom Activities

In just the past few years, learning management systems (LMS) have revolutionized the way teachers manage their courses. These platforms allow educators an online space to host the digital components of their classes. They allow instructors to communicate with kids via messaging, and offer unique capabilities such as discussion boards, media galleries, and document storage.

Most importantly, a district's LMS acts as a teacher's virtual classroom where students can go after school hours to find and complete homework assignments. Even before the pandemic, teachers have been learning how to use these sites with children to reduce the need for paper copies and facilitate new methods of teaching that provide students with easier collaboration.

Since the coronavirus shut down schools, districts have been turning even more to their LMS to manage classwork and even conduct class through a suite of online tools, such as the discussion boards mentioned above. This trend is likely to continue, as kids have continued access to technology both at home and in the classroom. Even when kids head back to campus, it is likely they will simply bring their devices with them and engage in many of the same activities.

### Class Games and Study Apps

Playing a whole-class game is a great way to connect with students and review content before a quiz or test. For generations, students have been playing games that get kids up and out of their seats, often writing on the board or calling out information. But what if a teacher could make the game process easier to set up and more interactive to play?

Online apps such as Kids Academy Talented and Gifted app can serve as a highly engaging way to review information while having a little competitive fun! It also allows students a way to access it outside of the classroom, and on their own time to encourage individual study skills. Whole class options include playing in collaborative teams, or individually using student devices.

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## The Paperless Classroom

Even before 2020, many educators have already been working to make their classes paperless. Let's be honest: schools waste literal tons of paper each school year printing handouts that are quickly lost! Students are now unable to use the tired old excuse that the "dog ate my homework"! In addition, teachers can keep assignments organized by having them all submitted in one spot, eliminating the need for buckets or bins in the classroom, where papers inevitably are misplaced.

By moving classwork and homework online, teachers can cut out all the time they spend organizing their room and keeping track of paper-based assignments. Students have 24/7 access to all course documents, and making extra copies never becomes an issue. This saves instructors time, and the school money, all by setting up assignments online!

## Teleconferencing Apps May Spell the End of Weather Days as We Know Them

Think back to your childhood; do you remember waking up and excitedly checking the news to see if school was cancelled? If so, you probably lived in an area that experienced weather delays and cancellations thanks to the snow or extreme temperatures. Particularly in the northern states, snow days are a treasured past time where kids get to head outdoors to build snowmen or go sledding. But thanks to apps like Zoom, even snow days might soon be a thing of the past!

Unlike how it was during the spring's sudden pivot to virtual learning, this fall has brought many changes to classes, with teleconferencing apps being one of them. Many districts are now offering online courses that deliver live sessions with the teacher. With the introduction of teleconferencing apps, districts now have the means to conduct classes remotely when needed. This could mean that districts will turn to remote-only days where students and teachers log online when they have a school closure due to the weather.

## Online Interactive Notebooks

Traditional notebooks and binders could be a source of frustration for both students and teachers alike! Since kids aren't particularly known for their organizational skills, notebooks often wind up lost, left at home, or buried in a locker. One tool that could eliminate hard copy notebooks entirely is a digital notebook. Thanks to an app like Microsoft OneNote, all classwork and notes can be kept virtually in the cloud while teachers have instant access to all work in real time!

For districts who have access to Microsoft 365, teachers simply set up digital notebooks for their students using the OneNote app. They create tabs and pages where content is kept, and teachers can distribute assignments straight to student notebooks without making a single paper copy! To check if kids are working, instructors click on that student's notebook and is able to see everything that is being added while the child is typing. With notebook checks just a few clicks away, expect online interactive notebooks to keep trending for years to come.

## Blended Learning and Student-Led Instruction

For years, experts in education have been leading instructors away from teacher-centered instruction to engage with children more as guides or coaches. One modern method to encourage student-centered instruction is to incorporate blended learning into the curriculum, which is a concept that has been making its way into schools before the pandemic struck.

In blended learning, teachers lead students to direct their own learning by facilitating inquiry-based activities utilizing online tools. While some of this is happening out of necessity due to the coronavirus, we can confidently expect that educators will continue to hone the practice of blended learning after the virus is gone.

Due to the pandemic, many schools have been forced to quickly endorse online learning and products that have already been slowly filtering into our classrooms over the past few years. In fact, it's very possible that the coronavirus has simply hastened the introduction of these tools, bringing on a transformation of the way kids are educated in our country today. Expect these trends to continue even after the pandemic is over and get excited for the new and innovative ways that technology has evolved to help our children learn!

