



Be Buyer Aware: K-12 Education Buying Cycle

Meet the influencers and
decision-makers that drive
education purchasing



Ebook

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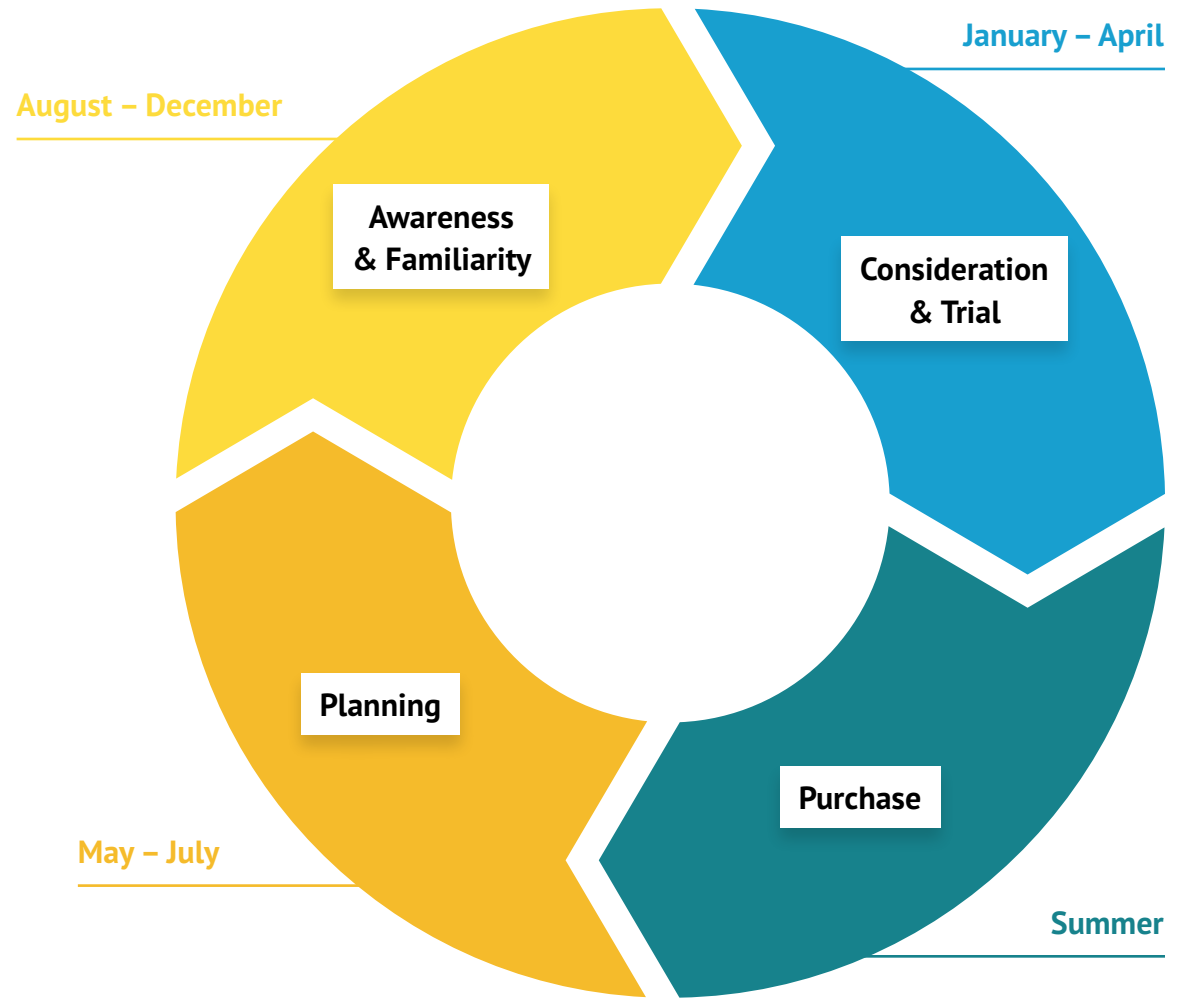
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The Path to Purchasing

K-12 education purchasing is a cycle. The bulk of buying decisions are made over the summer, particularly in May and June. For the rest of the year, marketers must focus efforts on leading educators through the path to purchase. The key is to tailor your outreach to the specific buying stage educators are in and provide the information they're seeking at that moment.

The K-12 Buying Cycle



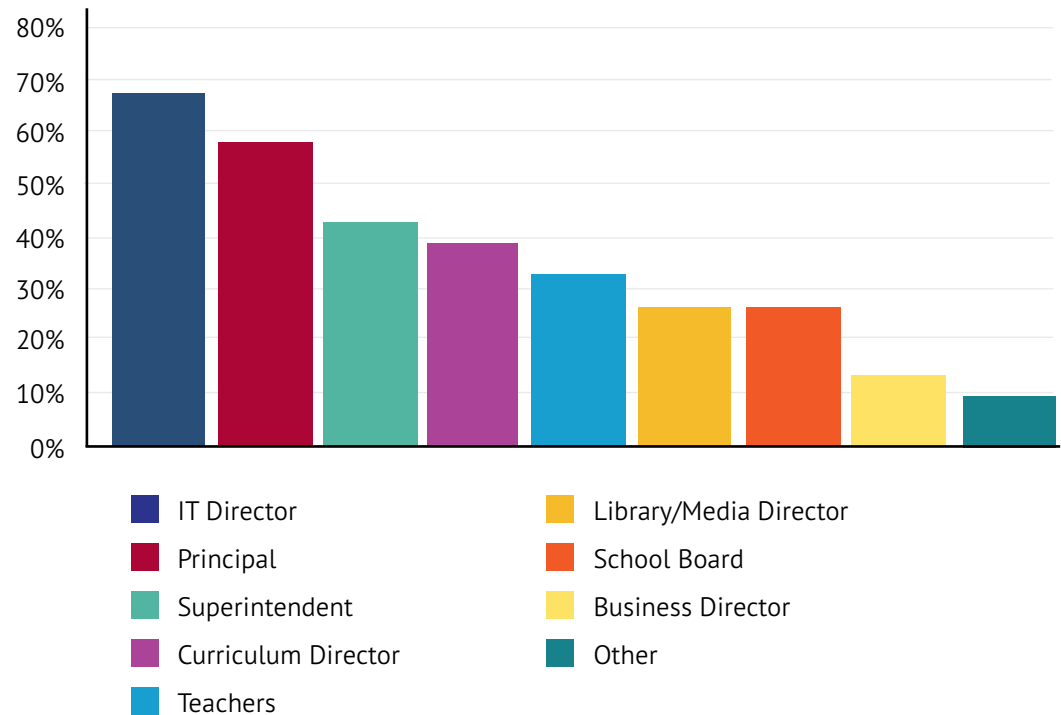
Who You'll Meet Along the Way

Between the initial planning and final purchase stages, you'll encounter educators whose names won't appear on the contract. That's why it's not enough to simply target final decision-makers. You also need to engage those who recommend and review purchase options. Education purchasing is a collaborative effort, involving influencers and decision-makers at the school and district levels. The more educators you reach, the better your chances of making an impression.

Meet the educators you'll likely see along the purchase path, and learn their roles and responsibilities.

All Hands on Deck

When asked who plays a key role in buying edtech, educators identified multiple roles.



Who's Who in the District?

Districts operate and manage every public school located in a defined area. They handle decisions on curriculum, instructional materials, hardware and software, security, facilities, and even food. When marketing to educators at the district level, don't forget these key roles:



Superintendent:

Often referred to as the Chief Executive Officer or Chief School Administrator, the superintendent ensures the smooth operation of both educational and business functions across the district. Their involvement in purchasing decisions varies with the district's size, but they ultimately oversee all major purchases.



Assistant Superintendent:

This position supports the superintendent, helping with general district operations and record keeping. Some districts have several assistant superintendents who specialize in specific areas like administration or curriculum.



Director of Information/Instructional Technology:

This person manages the use of technology across the district. They may recommend and purchase EdTech and coordinate educational content and instructional tools to integrate technology into classrooms district-wide.



Director of Instruction/Curriculum:

The director of instruction or curriculum ensures a district meets set standards and education goals. They lead the development and implementation of the curriculum, supervise its use in schools, and evaluate its effectiveness throughout the district.



Purchasing Agent:

This individual supports education purchasing, ensuring all purchases comply with district requirements, adhere to budgets, and align with educational objectives.

Who's Who in the School?

Districts don't have all of the purchasing power; schools make purchase decisions, too. If you're marketing to educators at the school level, here are some key individuals you'll likely need to connect with:



Principal:

Also known as the Head of School in private institutions, the principal oversees the daily operations of the school, including managing staff and students. They ensure a safe, productive, and enriching environment for everyone.



Assistant Principal:

Often called the vice principal, this role handles day-to-day management tasks like class scheduling, textbook orders, and student discipline. Depending on the school, this position may have even greater responsibilities, such as evaluating teachers and curriculum.



Curriculum Coordinator:

This person develops instructional materials, coaches teachers on new curricula and lesson plans, and assesses the effectiveness of teaching strategies through student testing and teacher observations.



Lead Teacher:

Sometimes referred to as a Head Teacher, the lead teacher acts as a liaison between school leaders and staff. They mentor other educators and assist in curriculum planning and organizing school programs.



Computer and Instructional Technology Coordinator:

Responsible for purchasing software, managing technology, and training educators on using EdTech, this role ensures effective technology integration in the classroom.

Meet Two Surprising Players

Teachers

Let's zero in on teachers:

- On average, teachers make 26.4% less than other similarly educated professionals—the lowest level since 1960.¹
- As of 2024, the average salary for a high school teacher is \$66,500; The average for elementary teachers is \$65,627.³

Despite lower salaries, teachers commit to spending a considerable amount of money out-of-pocket for job-related expenses. Today, more than 90% of teachers spend their own money on school needs.⁴ Much of this funding goes to basic classroom supplies, which is a big concern for many teachers. In fact, about 34% of them say these essential items are the least funded by schools.⁵

Many teachers value companies that help them keep their hard-earned dollars in their pockets. According to an Agile survey, 95% of respondents said they're more loyal to brands that offer teacher discounts.⁶

Teachers also can have a strong bottom-up influence over the purchases made by school leaders. Often, ideas for new products or services originate with teachers who identify needs in their classrooms and propose solutions to school or district leaders. They might also review and recommend the best options for their students and classrooms. While teachers spend most of their time in the classroom, their purchasing power goes far beyond it.

Try Email and Social!

Up to 83.6% of teachers like to learn about discounts and special offers from colleagues, and 52.6% prefer email for direct communication from brands.⁷

“I spend roughly \$700-\$800 a year of my own money for supplies for my classroom. Any company that recognizes what we do and provides discounts to us I always try to shop from.”

64% of educators feel valued when offered teacher discounts.⁶

Meet Two Surprising Players

Proof of Parents' Purchasing Power

Parental involvement has long been a priority for school leaders, and research consistently shows that it improves student outcomes. But, how much influence do parents have over education purchasing?

Simply put, a lot!

How much influence do parents have?

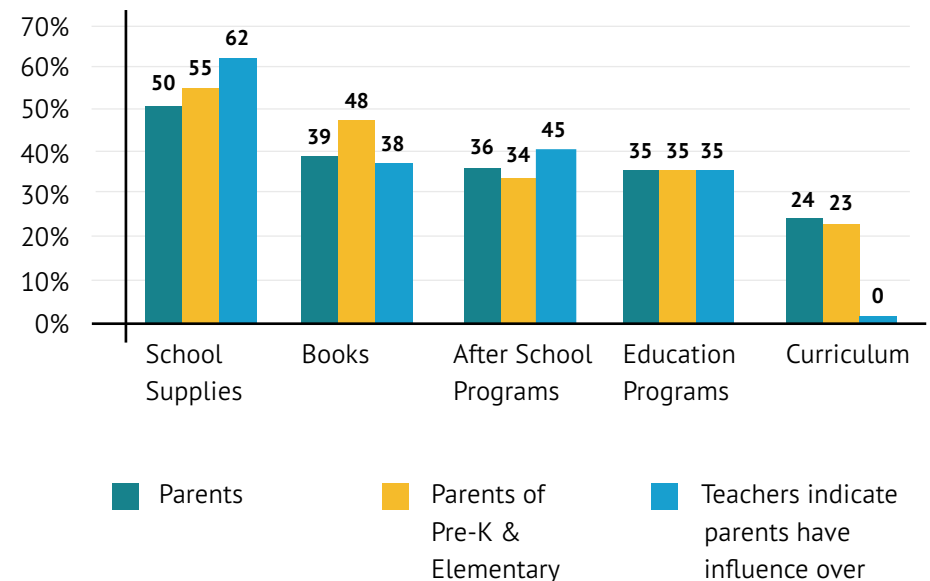
- 41% of parents
- 47% of parents with pre-K and elementary students
- 58% of teachers⁶

(*Those who believe parents have some to a significant influence.)

Have you been asked for input by school admins and teachers?

- 31% of parents
- 47% of parents with pre-K and elementary students elementary⁶

On what products/services do parents give input?



Making the Final Decision

Purchase approvals are made at both the school and district levels. When creating your messaging, ensure each piece targets the final decision-makers. Agile data reveals which purchases schools and districts are more likely to make—and the products and programs they tend to share responsibility for.

Districts:

- Core curriculum
- EdTech
- Professional development
- Infrastructure investments

Schools:

- Non-digital supplemental materials
- Classroom supplies

Shared:

- Digital supplemental materials
- Professional development materials
- Student assessment tools
- Curriculum enhancement resources⁶

Dual Decision-Making

In schools, buying responsibilities are often shared between teachers and administrators. Teachers typically make the final decisions on supplemental materials and classroom supplies. Principals, however, usually have the final say on curriculum materials and computer hardware and software, unless those decisions are handled by the district.

In which specific areas do teachers and principals typically have the final say?

Teachers:

- 75% said purchasing supplemental materials
- 89% said purchasing classroom supplies

Principals:

- 77% said purchasing core curriculum materials
- 78% said purchasing computer hardware
- 76% said purchasing software⁶

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