

2025 TRENDS IN K-12 EDUCATION



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INTRODUCTION

For K-12 education leaders, 2025 is a year of change.

At the time of this writing, federal and state policymakers are considering potentially sweeping changes that could reshape how schools are funded, receive oversight, and deliver student instruction and supports. From the possible scale back or elimination of the Department of Education to shifts in funding, the expansion of school choice, and ongoing curricular debates, 2025 brings both potential challenges and opportunities for U.S. schools.

Despite speculation about actions at the federal and state levels, one thing that's certain is that public and private K-12 professionals are not new to change or adversity. After weathering a sea change brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, they continue to face many rising difficulties, including persistent student achievement gaps, post-ESSER budget shortfalls, staff retention issues, rapid technological developments, and student well-being and safety concerns.

Amid resource challenges and policy changes, K-12 educators and leaders keenly understand how to innovate, adapt, and deliver results for students, even under pressure.

Hanover Research's 2025 Trends in K-12 Education report highlights six emerging trends that our experts believe education leaders are grappling with in 2025. From enrollment fluctuations and budget challenges, to ensuring instructional quality, student support needs, and change leadership capacity, the collection of data, recommendations, and case studies in this report is intended to help your organization achieve even greater success in this school year and beyond.



Learn more about
Hanover's K-12 insights or
read the **2024 Trends in K-12
Education** report to see how
key issues have evolved.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through our collaboration with hundreds of public school districts, private schools, regional educational agencies, state departments of education, and professional associations, we see the many ways that K-12 education leaders across the country tackle challenging issues in pursuit of positive outcomes for students. Here are six trends that are shaping K-12 education in 2025.

1

Uneven Academic Recovery Spurs K-12 Leaders to Systematically Assess Teaching and Learning

With many students still experiencing learning gaps, districts and schools are strengthening their academic systems to ensure the highest-quality curriculum, instruction, and tiered supports.

2

Education Leaders Develop Innovative Ways to Address Fluctuating Student Enrollments

Many districts and schools are facing increasingly variable enrollment environments, in which they must stabilize operations, address engagement concerns, and rebuild support for education.

3

School Systems Intensify Efforts to Use Data to Make Strategic Resource Decisions

In the wake of expended ESSER funds, K-12 leaders are implementing stronger continuous improvement practices to clarify which programs and initiatives are worth continued investment.

4

Despite Financial or Political Constraints, Schools Enhance Student Support and Engagement

As student mental and behavioral needs continue to rise, many districts and schools are focusing on building safe and supportive learning environments that prioritize well-being, belonging, and self-motivation.

5

Districts and Schools Deepen Teacher and Staff Leadership Capacity with New Skills

As workload and classroom conditions remain challenging, districts and schools are embracing multiple workforce development strategies to empower employees, fill staffing gaps, and slow attrition.

6

Literacy Research and Mandates Continue to Take Hold Across States

Efforts to align reading research and practice deepen in many districts and schools, pushing educators to adopt a new mindset around evidence-based literacy instruction.



TREND 1:

Uneven Academic Recovery Spurs K-12 Leaders to Systematically Assess Teaching And Learning

With many students still experiencing learning gaps, districts and schools are strengthening their academic systems to ensure the highest-quality curriculum, instruction, and tiered supports.



>4 months

The amount of additional schooling students across all grade levels needed to catch up to pre-COVID reading and math levels in 2023–24



The percentage of public schools reporting that students' lack of focus or inattention had a moderate or severe negative impact on learning in 2023–24



The percentage of teachers who say the current assessment model negatively impacts instructional time, compared to 37% of administrators

ASSESSING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING & LEARNING

Across the country, K-12 student achievement concerns persist and students who are the most behind need even more targeted and timely intervention to catch up.

Research shows that vulnerable groups, including low-income students, English language learners, and students with disabilities were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to face greater academic recovery hurdles than their peers.

While the temporary influx of ESSER dollars was most often used to fuel high-impact tutoring, after-school programming, and summer learning, it has not been enough to reverse the erosion of student outcomes over the last five years.

In 2025, K-12 leaders recognize that to close academic gaps, they must systematically investigate how the quality of instruction, curricula, and academic support affect student learning. At the same time, districts are bracing for possible increases in curricular oversight at local, state, or federal levels, adding new concerns to already resource-challenged schools.

INSTRUCTIONAL AUDITS & FRAMEWORKS

Evidence-based instructional strategies are essential to ensure students' learning experiences not only meet required standards but also enhance academic outcomes.

To ensure quality and consistent learning environments, some K-12 leaders are conducting instructional audits to provide a structured method of identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

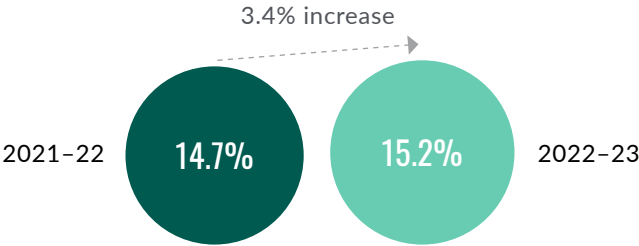
Many then use the audit results to develop a coherent, systemwide instructional framework to establish a common approach to teaching and learning, while allowing flexibility for teachers to adapt to individual classrooms' needs.

REIMAGINING ASSESSMENT MODELS

While most districts and schools rely on assessments to monitor student performance, the debate around how to measure student learning accurately and equitably is increasing. Some districts are exploring approaches such as through-year assessments, performance-based assessments, and graduation requirements beyond testing.

A GROWING DEMAND FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Percentage of U.S. students age 3-21 who received special education services





TAKE ACTION

- Inventory current curricula to evaluate alignment with standards and assess how well they incorporate differentiated instructional strategies and promote student engagement.
- Determine if current instructional methods and materials across your school or district are aligned with best practices in teaching and learning.
- Implement a classroom observation and analysis process to understand how students engage with the learning environment and what professional development support teachers and leaders need.
- Establish a diverse working group to review research-based instructional frameworks and identify components that align with organizational values and goals.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about improving teaching and learning with these Hanover resources:

- [K-12 District Instructional Audit Toolkit](#), a systematic framework for elevating teaching and learning outcomes.
- [Optimizing Instructional Audits: Empowering K-12 Leaders to Enhance Quality and Student Achievement](#), a pre-recorded webinar featuring expert advice for motivating K-12 leaders through an instructional auditing process.
- [Benchmarking Learning Loss Recovery Efforts](#), a research brief with baseline data and best practices for managing academic recovery challenges (*member-only access*).
- [Best Practices in Instructional Frameworks](#), a research brief with best practices for ensuring instructional consistency (*member-only access*).



SPOTLIGHT: Texarkana Arkansas School District

The Texarkana Arkansas School District (TASD) in Arkansas has a strategic goal to increase literacy rates for students in grades 3–10 by 12 percentage points by May 2025. To achieve this goal, the district identified targeted interventions and strategies such as job-embedded professional development, improved data processes, professional learning communities (PLCs), and instructional walkthroughs.

In particular, TASD leaders partnered with Hanover to design and implement a coordinated approach to the walkthroughs, which is one component of an instructional audit. The Hanover team established a standardized process for conducting classroom observations, analyzed the findings, and made recommendations.

Not only did this instructional audit project provide TASD leadership with a consistent, scalable method to improve teaching and learning practices across the district, but it also identified professional learning needs and assessed alignment between current practices, curricular standards, and district goals.

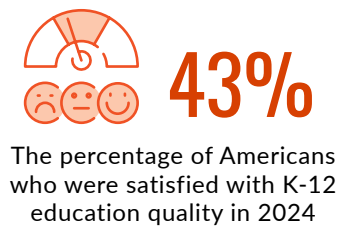
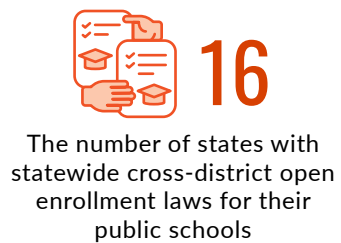
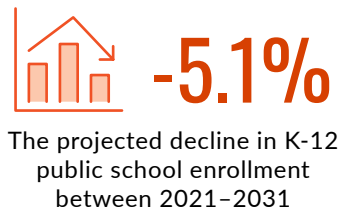
The project results will equip TASD to make data-driven decisions to increase effective classroom practices that engage students and help them achieve grade-level reading.



TREND 2:

Education Leaders Develop Innovative Ways to Address Fluctuating Student Enrollments

Many districts and schools are facing increasingly variable enrollment environments, in which they must stabilize operations, address engagement concerns, and rebuild support for education.



VARIABLE ENROLLMENTS

While some public and private schools are experiencing growth (particularly in some rural and suburban areas), others are contracting. Fluctuations in K-12 student enrollment are becoming more common, as the impacts of alternative schooling options, school choice expansion, chronic absenteeism, safety concerns, and the enrollment cliff begin to converge.

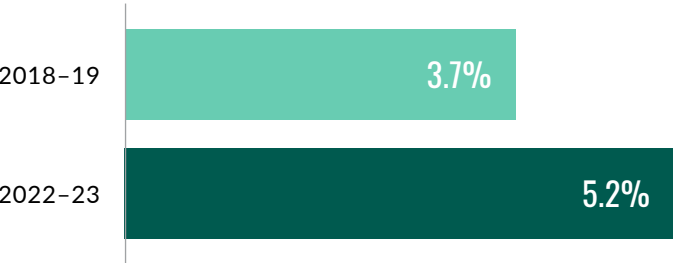
Enrollment variability and attendance concerns make it more difficult for districts and schools to appropriately predict and plan for headcount, staffing needs, and resource allocations. To adapt, many K-12 leaders are leaning into innovative strategic partnerships, data analytics, family and community engagement initiatives, and explicit promotional marketing efforts to reverse downward trends and reignite confidence in schools.

ADVOCACY & SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

Many K-12 leaders recognize that developing greater partnerships with diverse community groups, businesses, and elected representatives who champion schools can be a useful tactic to build district advocacy and valuable word-of-mouth promotion. While building partnerships takes some effort and planning, coalitions need not agree on everything; they just need at least one shared goal they can tackle together.

RISING INTEREST IN HOMESCHOOL AND ONLINE LEARNING

Percentage of U.S. students in homeschool or full-time virtual education



IMPROVING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In 2025, districts and schools must prioritize consistent connections with all educational partners, including students, families, staff, and local community members. K-12 leaders are leaning into a variety of inclusive outreach and communications to improve engagement, trust, transparency, belonging, and two-way knowledge sharing.

PROMOTIONAL STRATEGIES

Some districts are also building awareness and influencing public perception through promotional marketing campaigns that leverage consistent branding and messaging to differentiate their schools from others. This is especially true in communities that have embraced school choice and voucher systems.



TAKE ACTION

- Form a community engagement team with annual goals for improving engagement, support, and outreach.
- Conduct a brand perception survey to understand what differentiates your district or school and to assess community needs and priorities.
- Clearly articulate your organization's core values, vision, mission, strategic plan goals, and key performance indicators (KPIs) on your website (and optimize your website for user experience and accessibility).
- Reach out to former or non-enrolling families to gain insight into their experiences and why they choose to enroll elsewhere.
- Find education funding advocates and champions in your state or local legislature who could positively influence other policymakers or groups.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about addressing enrollment challenges with these Hanover resources:

- [K-12 Marketing Strategies to Increase District Enrollment](#), a guide with best practices for marketing and communications strategies for districts and schools.
- [Engaging Families and Communities in K-12 Education](#), an infographic with tips to increase engagement and partnerships within K-12 communities.
- [Strategic Planning for K-12 Districts: Effectively Constructing Plans to Drive Positive Change](#), a pre-recorded webinar with best practices for developing effective strategic goals.
- [Navigating School Choice and Student Vouchers](#), a report featuring tips for communicating with families during enrollment changes (*member-only access*).



SPOTLIGHT: Bakersfield City School District

Bakersfield City School District (BCSD) in California sought to increase community confidence in how it prepares students to reach their full potential. The district partnered with Hanover Research on a Portrait of a Graduate (POG) initiative to engage the community and build a collective vision of the skills and competencies that BCSD students should have upon graduation.

Hanover designed and launched a POG survey for middle school students, families, staff, and community members. The findings revealed key priorities such as a desire for robust social-emotional learning, college and career readiness, and practical life skills. The team then created a series of communications and infographics to share the finished framework with the community.

The initiative offered a unique opportunity to build community engagement and illustrate the district's ability to meet the needs of all learners. BCSD leaders are implementing changes that align with the POG to ensure students develop the right skills for success in high school and beyond.



TREND 3:

School Systems Intensify Efforts to Use Data to Make Strategic Resource Decisions

In the wake of expended ESSER funds, K-12 leaders are implementing stronger continuous improvement practices to clarify which programs and initiatives are worth continued investment.



75%

The percentage of school districts that believe that their strategic allocation of ESSER funds was moderately or highly effective in achieving their goals



82%

The approximate percentage of K-12 education funding that went toward teacher and staff compensation in 2021 (7.5% of which was for administrators)



1–2%

The average budget savings of schools that changed to a four-day schedule

FACING DIFFICULT FINANCIAL HEADWINDS

For many districts and schools in 2025, enrollment decline coupled with the loss of ESSER funding puts them in a particularly precarious financial situation in which every resource allocation and expenditure must be judiciously considered. Large and small districts are also bracing for potential federal or state funding changes under the Trump administration, which introduces further uncertainty into budget forecasts.

ADDRESSING BUDGET SHORTFALLS

Most K-12 leaders already embrace a two-fold approach to closing budget shortfalls: cutting costs and diversifying revenue streams. In an effort to reduce spending, many are exploring school consolidations, program closures, layoffs, and vendor negotiations. Others are creatively eyeing ways to supplement programs or services with revenue from public and private grants, corporate partnerships, and space utilization agreements.

DATA LITERACY & PROGRAM EVALUATION

To guard against a worsening financial picture, districts and schools recognize that expenditures should have clear evidence of impact and effectiveness in order to evaluate the return on investment (ROI).

As a result, K-12 leaders and educators are leveling up their data literacy skills and implementing program evaluation processes to systematically measure data against strategic plan goals. Better aligning resources with priorities and outcomes also helps prepare schools for any potential policy growth in outcome-based funding or performance-based compensation models.

Encourage evidence-based thinking across all layers of your organization with tips from our infographic, [Data Literacy Checklist](#).

TAKE ACTION

- Establish a program evaluation policy and framework to augment accountability among education partners in upholding program evaluation practices.
- Provide staff with training and support related to program evaluation and data literacy to enhance efforts to implement programs with fidelity.
- Consider adopting cycle-based budgeting (CBB) to inform program investment decisions and connect program evaluations and budgeting.
- Implement a flexible budgeting strategy aligned with district and school goals. It should include four components: planning and preparation, instructional priorities, payment for priorities, and implementation and sustainability.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about financial data best practices with these Hanover resources:

- [Step-by-Step Guide to K-12 Program Evaluation](#) a guide to navigating a successful K-12 program evaluation process.
- [Evaluating Programs to Inform Funding Decisions](#), a pre-recorded webinar to assess the ROI of district and school programs, interventions, and initiatives.
- [Best Practices for Navigating Budget Reductions](#), a research brief on mitigating the impact of K-12 budget cuts (*member-only access*).
- [Best Practices for School Mergers](#), a resource detailing best practices in navigating school reconfigurations in K-12 districts (*member-only access*).



SPOTLIGHT: Dallas Independent School District

Dallas Independent School District (Dallas ISD) in Texas aims to uphold its high standard of academic programming, even in the face of budgeting challenges. The district partnered with Hanover Research to gain data-driven insights to make key program resourcing decisions with confidence.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dallas ISD had invested in academic support initiatives such as tutoring and free after-school programming. As federal relief funds expired, Dallas ISD leaders needed to determine which programs were providing the greatest return to students. Hanover researchers designed a custom dashboard to help Dallas ISD analyze program performance data and assess academic outcomes to determine the best way to streamline resources while maximizing student success.

The partnership yielded a capstone report of vital program evaluation findings and recommendations, such as budget-friendly tutoring models and ways to preserve high-performing extended learning programs, while phasing out underperforming ones. Armed with newfound data and insights, Dallas ISD is making savvy programming decisions in an unpredictable funding landscape.



TREND 4:

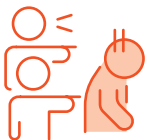
Despite Financial or Political Constraints, Schools Enhance Student Support and Engagement

As student mental and behavioral needs continue to rise, many districts and schools are focusing on building safe and supportive learning environments that prioritize well-being, belonging, and self-motivation.



17.4 million

The number of K-12 students with mental health needs, compared to the 1.1 million who can be served with schools' current capacity



19%

The percentage of K-12 students who were bullied at school in 2023, compared to 15% in 2021



72%

The percentage of high school teachers who say that students being distracted by cellphones is a major problem in their classroom

EDUCATING THE WHOLE CHILD

K-12 student concerns such as stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness, learning difficulties, chronic absenteeism, bullying, school-based violence, and adverse experiences at home can disrupt academic progress and lead to disengagement.

To educate the whole child and address students' complex needs, districts and schools are delivering innovative tiered support services, programs, and resources, even in the face of budget shortfalls, political divisions, or legislative restrictions.

SCHOOL CLIMATE & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

A positive school climate has long been linked to better academic outcomes and improved attendance. When a school community shares a sense of connection, care, safety, and belonging, student engagement increases. When students are engaged, they learn better, stay motivated, and have an easier time developing socially.

Most districts and schools already engage in Tier-1 school climate improvement practices, such as welcoming environments and positive behavior reinforcement. In 2025, they're investing even more in efforts to increase student engagement through teacher-student relationships, experiential learning, and student-led initiatives.

STUDENT WELL-BEING SUPPORT

While social-emotional learning (SEL) is controversial in some communities, the vast majority of K-12 schools use evidence-backed SEL strategies that have been proven to improve student development and outcomes. To intensify student support, many districts and schools are diligently tracking and measuring their SEL outcomes, as well as bringing in additional counselors, social workers, psychologists, wellness coaches, and safety personnel in schools — whether through partnerships or direct hiring.

LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY FOR GOOD

As the digital age continues to transform the student experience, many schools are developing learners' digital media literacy skills to navigate and think critically about artificial intelligence, social media algorithms, and screen-time safety.

Some schools are giving students access to AI-based mental health prevention tools, while others are wrestling with restricting smartphone or social media use to reduce classroom disruptions. While banning cellphones in schools altogether is highly unpopular, there is considerably more support for restrictions during class time.



TAKE ACTION

- Regularly conduct school climate surveys to identify strengths and challenges and establish shared goals for improvement.
- Review district initiatives and school policies to assess how well they align with school climate best practices.
- Consider community partnerships that could provide or augment in-school mental health services.
- Invest in professional learning that focuses on student engagement and positive classroom relationships.
- Gather community feedback regarding potential cellphone policy changes to ensure buy-in, especially from parents and students.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about improving student well-being and school climate with these Hanover resources:

- [K-12 Student Well-Being Program Evaluation Checklist](#), a guide to monitoring multiple facets of student health to improve future outcomes.
- [Supporting K-12 Student Mental Health in 2024–25](#), a blog post with tips for increasing student support to promote measurable well-being outcomes.
- [Building Inclusive School Climates: Empowering Every Student for Success](#), a pre-recorded webinar featuring best practices in fostering confident students who feel like they belong.
- [Current Issues and Challenges of Student Cell Phone Use in Schools](#), a research brief on the impact of cell phones on the learning environment (*member-only access*).



SPOTLIGHT: Bridgeport Public Schools

Bridgeport Public Schools (BPS) in Connecticut is committed to research-based continuous improvement practices. The district partnered with Hanover Research to initiate a multifaceted plan to improve student outcomes, starting with a focus on school climate. To establish a baseline, BPS wanted to first understand the current climate and culture before setting any districtwide goals.

The district held a listening tour with leaders across nearly 40 school sites to hear successes and challenges. Hanover conducted a qualitative document analysis to synthesize and code the collected observational data. This approach added capacity for the district while also ensuring the analysis was unbiased.

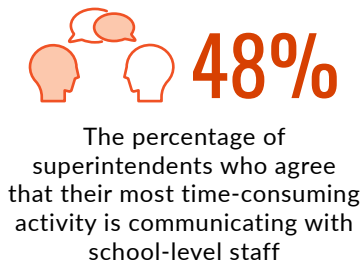
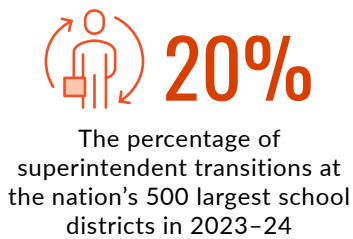
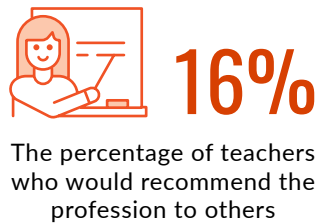
The data was categorized into themes such as communicating expectations, positive behavior, SEL, and chronic absenteeism. From these themes, Hanover shared findings and developed recommendations that will serve as a foundation for future initiatives to enhance student well-being across all schools.



TREND 5:

Districts and Schools Deepen Teacher and Staff Leadership Capacity with New Skills

As workload and classroom conditions remain challenging, districts and schools are embracing multiple workforce development strategies to empower employees, fill staffing gaps, and slow attrition.



WORKPLACE CHALLENGES INCREASE

Teachers and staff are navigating increasingly complex workplace demands, leading to high turnover and attrition rates and lowered perceptions of respect for the profession.

Staffing turnover creates upheavals that can negatively impact students, slow progress on initiatives, and tax districts' professional development and onboarding resources. To navigate a challenging educational environment and build collective resilience, districts and schools are upping their leadership development game to help everyone succeed professionally. They're also improving their succession planning to reduce disruptions when turnover does occur.

NEW LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN DEMAND

To be successful, education professionals at every level must possess a range of skills that aren't always explicitly taught in teacher preparation or leadership training programs. Collaboration, communication, relationship building, data analysis, and change leadership are essential for resolving complex organizational issues and implementing effective continuous improvement processes.

While teachers and staff are experts in their respective areas, everyone needs clarity around roles, expectations, and decision-making to work better together in the service of a common mission. Districts and schools are enlisting leadership development strategies to help more personnel

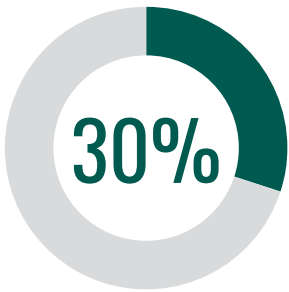
understand how to work across silos, build trust, improve team efficacy, problem solve, set goals, manage conflict, and work through change.

DIFFERENTIATED PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

A primary way districts and schools develop leadership capacity is through differentiated professional development. Providing multiple professional learning pathways to support teachers and staff at various levels builds relevant skills and knowledge effectively and improves employee engagement and satisfaction. Dedicated support for educational administrators at all levels is also growing, with executive mentoring, coaching, and leadership training tailored to their unique needs and challenges.

DISTRICTS CONTINUE TO RELY ON TEACHERS TO WORK OUTSIDE OF INTENDED DUTIES DUE TO STAFF VACANCIES

Percentage of public schools that needed teachers to provide other duties between October 2023 and 2024



TAKE ACTION

- Continually provide flexible ways for employees to participate in structured and job-embedded professional learning that's relevant to their respective needs.
- Conduct professional development needs assessments and involve teachers and staff when building districtwide professional learning plans.
- Look for appropriate ways to include teacher and staff voices into organizational decisions and include end-use staff in planning that will affect their work.
- Consider allocating resources for opportunities for teachers to represent their school at external conferences or speaking opportunities and recognize their achievements when they do.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about leadership and professional development with these Hanover resources:

- [District Leaders' Guide for Developing a K-12 Professional Learning Plan](#), a guide to creating differentiated professional learning plans that promote positive teacher and staff outcomes.
- [Empowering Teachers to Improve K-12 School Climate](#), a blog post with tips to increase agency and improve outcomes through professional learning and classroom engagement.
- [K-12 Staff Well-Being Check-In Toolkit](#), a toolkit to help teachers and staff feel supported and empowered by K-12 leadership.
- [Navigating Political Climates Literature Review](#), a resource for understanding a shifting political landscape within K-12 education (*member-only access*).



SPOTLIGHT: San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools

San Bernardino County Superintendent of Schools (SBCSS) helped to co-administer California's Community Engagement Initiative to strengthen school-community partnerships by facilitating statewide professional learning networks. SBCSS approached Hanover Research to develop professional learning resources for California educators to deepen their community engagement expertise.

The Hanover team worked closely with SBCSS to understand their vision and developed a custom resource guide to help educators understand the initiative and the comprehensive tools available. Then Hanover designed a custom suite of [Educator Learning Center](#) modules to develop community engagement skills and competencies.

The final product — a curated set of 11 online learning modules — features practical, evidence-based content and resources tailored to the needs of California educators. Through Hanover, SBCSS achieved its vision to implement a comprehensive professional learning solution that advances district community engagement efforts statewide.



TREND 6:

Literacy Research and Mandates Continue to Take Hold Across States

Efforts to align reading research and practice deepen in many districts and schools, pushing educators to adopt a new mindset around evidence-based literacy instruction.



44%

The percentage of students who always or nearly always have trouble reading written content within instructional materials across all subjects, according to teachers



40%

The percentage of teacher preparation programs that still teach multiple instructional practices that run counter to the research on effective reading instruction



Nearly 75%

The number of teachers in grades 3–8 who want access to more resources to identify and support students with reading difficulties

A NEED TO IMPROVE K-12 LITERACY OUTCOMES

Literacy continues to be a critical priority across K-12 education in 2025, with many leaders examining new literacy approaches and policies based on research and evidence. To better serve all learners, districts and schools are balancing the need to improve literacy instruction while providing the right amount of flexibility and autonomy to teachers.

EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES TO READING

The Science of Reading continues to dominate the education landscape, with 40 states passing reading instruction legislation that favors more structured and standardized approaches. Research shows many strategies based in the Science of Reading are effective, but widespread improvements in standardized test scores may take years to materialize.

At the elementary level, educators are focused on systematically teaching foundational literacy skills such as phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. They're using decoding and comprehension strategies to support independent reading and learning and using screeners to identify students who need early interventions.

At the secondary level, teachers are ensuring that students read at or above grade level and are emphasizing disciplinary literacy to infuse literacy skills into all subjects.

Across all K-12 grades, education leaders are investigating how instructional materials align with standards and grade-level content that supports college and career readiness, as well as embracing differentiated instructional approaches to meet the needs of English language learners and special education students.

MANAGING CHANGE AROUND LITERACY INSTRUCTION

The successful adoption of new instructional methods and materials requires strong teacher buy-in, along with quality training, adequate implementation time, instructional support, and family resources. Ongoing professional development is critical for implementing robust literacy instruction since one of the greatest barriers to equitable literacy intervention is variation in teacher knowledge and self-efficacy.



-2%

The decline in fourth- and eighth-grade average reading scores in 2024 compared to 2022



TAKE ACTION

- Form an internal literacy team with a cross-section of educators and staff to create a vision for literacy instruction, infuse best practices into curricula, plan professional learning, and oversee implementation.
- Review curricular and instructional materials to ensure alignment with best practices for elementary and secondary literacy interventions.
- Provide teachers with research-based materials on instructional strategies and diverse literature and texts for students.
- Increase dedicated professional learning and collaboration time to help teachers plan, deliver, and analyze interventions.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Learn more about literacy instruction best practices with these Hanover resources:

- [8 Ways to Close the Achievement Gap in Schools](#), a blog post featuring evidence-based strategies for closing achievement gaps at the classroom, school, and community level.
- [Maximizing Impact: The Link Between Teacher Engagement and Student Achievement](#), a pre-recorded webinar with tips for increasing teacher engagement to improve academic outcomes.
- [Best Practices for Literacy Intervention](#), a research brief on successful reading and language arts improvement strategies (*member-only access*).
- [The Science of Reading for Underserved Student Populations](#), a resource for providing specialized reading support (*member-only access*).



For K-12 professional learning to be effective, it must be meaningful, flexible, ongoing, and tied to real practices.

Ensure teachers in your district or school continually sharpen their skills to deliver the highest-quality instruction with Hanover's online professional learning platform, the [Educator Learning Center](#).



CONCLUSION

Times of change require innovative thinking, and educational leaders know how to persevere in shifting environments.

In 2025, we're seeing districts and schools address enrollment changes, make strategic resource decisions, improve teaching and learning quality, support student well-being, develop leadership capacity, and reinforce literacy best practices — all while navigating a new political landscape that intends to reshape decades of education governance norms.

Despite widespread academic recovery challenges, financial pressures, and political polarization, K-12 educators and leaders are using their creativity and adaptability to champion best practices and look for opportunities to improve outdated systems or methods that may no longer serve students to the greatest extent possible.

Embracing continuous improvement is never comfortable, but today's K-12 professionals are leaning into change by measuring meaningful data, assessing results, re-examining established models, and piloting new ways to surmount longtime obstacles in the service of students' ultimate success and well-being.

Learn how [Hanover Research](#) can help your organization use the power of data to thrive in 2025 and beyond.

SOURCES

TREND 1:

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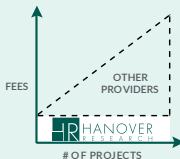
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