Digital Transformation
Success in Education
How digital transformation is supporting K-12 and Higher Education during a period of change
The days of in-person lectures in packed classrooms, with students moving physically from one class to another, are history – at least for the time being. Currently, remote learning is at the center of the education experience.

In 2020, educational institutions at both K-12 and Higher Education levels are rapidly pivoting their IT strategies to meet the needs of today, while also ensuring long-term continuity.

Subject matter experts from Dell Technologies had a discussion with Spiceworks experts about digital transformation and IT modernization across K-12 and Higher Education. Here is a look at what was discussed, including trends, findings from a recent Spiceworks education survey, and details on how Dell Technologies can help educational institutions with their goals.

Prefer to listen? Hear the full conversation.
THE 2020 SPICEWORKS EDUCATION SURVEY

In March and April, 2020, Spiceworks, in association with Dell Technologies and VMware, asked a mix of 150+ Higher Education and K-12 IT decision makers (from IT and non-IT roles) about their technology needs and priorities for digital transformation. This brand-agnostic survey took place just at the beginning of the COVID-19 spread, when schools were first beginning to respond to the crisis.

One of the questions on the survey was specifically about the effect of COVID-19 on investment in IT infrastructure solutions in the next year.

• Over half (52%) of respondents said they were more likely to invest in infrastructure solutions due to COVID-19

• More than one third (36%) of K-12 organizations responded that they most needed modernization of their cloud strategy, while for Higher Education it was closer to half (44%)

THREE AREAS OF FOCUS FOR EDUCATION MODERNIZATION EMERGED FROM THE SURVEY

ACCESS IS CRITICAL

Nearly half of each group said that “anytime access” was a high priority for them.

WHAT DOES ACCESS SIGNIFY IN THE CONTEXT OF EDUCATION?

Access can only be enabled by robust back-end infrastructure or digital transformation.
ACCESS = FLEXIBILITY

Dell Technologies’ Higher Education customers’ continuity plans revolve around HyFlex (hybrid online and face-to-face) instruction, where students get to choose to attend class in person or continue to study remotely – synchronously or asynchronously.

A recent study by Dell Technologies backs up this need for flexibility, with upwards of 74% of Higher Education students exhibiting non-traditional characteristics.

THIS MEANS THEY:

- Work part-time or full-time while attending school
- Are parents
- Are enrolled in a four-year program but also take additional online classes

It is more important than ever that students have 24/7 access to academic resources, anytime, anywhere they are needed. More people with more access (and more remote access) is a resounding positive for the academic community.
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND MODERNIZATION IN EDUCATION

Today’s students are digital natives and expect their education to be supported through digital channels. They do not want to be limited exclusively to the classroom or to classroom hours.

Recent events have pushed educational institutions to find new and better ways to support remote students, faculty and administration. If users are not on the school grounds, the services will need to come to them. But to achieve this objective, educational institutions must enable or upgrade their existing IT systems or invest in new solutions that will provide the required level of service. This includes future-proof tools and enhanced capabilities for handling data security and management.

Protecting data is paramount. From the personal information of students and faculty to sensitive institutional documents on research or finances, all data must be managed and secured so access is strictly authorized and enforced.

Colleges and universities also need digital storage solutions that streamline data management and compliance while providing institutional needs for efficiency, performance and scalability.

End-to-end transformation is needed in the education sector in the form of providing the right technology to students, teachers, faculty, and staff. Much like the digital transformation taking place in business, education is also undergoing digitization – providing autonomy and personalization to students in how and when they learn.
DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN EDUCATION GOING FORWARD

Digital transformation in education will be about applying technology solutions to existing workflows to increase the benefits of that technology to users and IT staff alike.

It is about taking workflows and digitizing them to tap into the benefits of digital. There is tremendous value to be derived from applying technology to existing workflows, chief among them – enabling users to work, lecture or learn at a time that works for them.

While “online courses” have been available for many years, in today’s environment all educational institutions are working furiously to expand their options and effectiveness.

Schools and universities have moved to accelerate and expand the use of modern Learning Management Systems, Web-Conferencing and -Collaboration tools, along with online resources such as eBooks and virtualized labs. This has led to emerging and experimental teaching and learning technologies, like HyFlex models.

CHALLENGES OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN EDUCATION

Shared responsibility:
Educational organizations tend not to factor in how much work has to be done in-house, especially when deploying public cloud solutions

Preparedness for remote learning:
Many faculty members were not prepared for remote teaching, from having obsolete equipment to inadequate internet speeds for sharing audio and visual materials. There is also a distinct lack of training for faculty in how to teach an interesting, interactive and effective online course

Ensuring security:
This is especially a challenge in protecting confidential or proprietary information with limited budgets and talent constraints. In some cases, new emerging technologies have resulted in new security challenges and a need to protect even more data in a diversity of locations
THE MODERNIZATION OF EDUCATION CLOUD STRATEGY

Cloud is in great demand right now as it gives educational institutions the ability to deploy and share data and services quickly and easily. New capabilities can be put into production in as short a time frame as a couple of months.

Even with budget constraints, cloud enables IT staff and users to do more with less: from balancing risk and budget while innovating quickly, to providing institutions with the flexibility required to leverage the right mix of public cloud and private cloud services to best accomplish their objectives.

While many Dell Technologies customers moved to the public cloud when the pandemic first hit, many are now reevaluating that strategy, and considering moving to an overarching cloud strategy that can ensure long-term security, productivity and cost-efficiency.

A multi-cloud strategy can provide IT with freedom to run, manage, connect, and secure their applications across clouds and devices within a common operating environment. Dell Technologies’ expert support and deployment services can help develop a scalable multi-cloud strategy that allows higher educational institutions to cut costs and secure applications with a consistent cloud experience.
CHALLENGES OF MIGRATING WORKLOADS TO AND FROM THE CLOUD

Whether you’re just beginning a migration to the cloud or already have thousands of applications and large data stores deployed, cloud migration can still be complex, with challenges that include:

• Re-platforming costs that can be expensive and difficult to implement, especially when it involves a high number of applications

• Hiring and training the level of talent that enables smooth cloud-native development

• Moving from on-premises to public cloud, and the format challenges that accompany the migration

BRINGING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO EDUCATION

To ensure your success in deploying new and better technologies in an academic environment, make sure to consider the following:

• Evaluate your existing processes, technologies, and skillsets

• Partner with systems integrators or technology companies like Dell Technologies to fill in the gaps

• Work with your partner to fulfill your organizational goals after accessing the situation

• Do not be obsessed with the technology – match the technology to the goal

• Choose partners who have multiple and flexible partnerships, like Dell Technologies

• Buy only the infrastructure that is determined by your strategy

• Remember it is a long journey; appreciate the small wins

• Work according to your long-term strategy, and correct course as needed

DELL TECHNOLOGIES IS AT THE FOREFRONT OF HELPING EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ACHIEVE SUCCESS WITH DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Dell Technologies is creating technology that drives human progress, and there is no more critical area than education to prepare students for future success. Dell Technologies provides an innovative portfolio of products and services that help empower educational institutions to propel digital learning, develop long-term educational continuity plans, and prepare students to succeed in a digital world.

Dell Technologies has focused on education for the last 25 years and continues to invest, providing tailored support through Dell Technologies K-12 and Higher Education Strategists that have extensive backgrounds in implementation of learning technology for institutions of all sizes. These individuals work with customers and Dell Technologies account teams to drive transformational journeys.

Our survey contained a mix of Dell Technologies customers and prospects. Many respondents felt that Dell Technologies was a credible player for IT infrastructure in the education space.
KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SURVEY

- Decision makers are focusing on digital transformation and modernization with a focus on the end user – to increase productivity, success and satisfaction for both students and staff
- Education IT decision makers must do more with less, within their budget and refresh cycles, even when they are trying to future-proof their institutions
- 75% of educational institutions use third-party vendors for modernization consulting services when refreshing IT infrastructure
- What educational institutions are looking for is a trusted provider, with a solid brand reputation, and good experience. They need a collaborative partner who really understands their unique needs

DIRECT QUOTES FROM RESPONDENTS

“[Dell Technologies] a proven track record and provides an all-in-one solution. We have used their services and products for 20 years.”

“Dell Technologies provide end-to-end solutions that work well and are reasonably priced for us. They have consulting services that help us build what we need, no more and no less.”

“Our support is outstanding—and that’s huge for us. Also, our account team is rock-solid, gives us consistently good pricing and outstanding implementation support, too.”

Catch the whole conversation! Watch Dell Technologies experts share their thoughts on the evolving technology needs of colleges and universities, specifically in response to COVID-19.

Watch Webinar

About the survey
Dell Technologies commissioned Spiceworks Ziff Davis to conduct a survey in April-May, 2020. This survey targeted 153 IT professionals and business decision makers in diverse educational organizations, including both K-12 and higher education. Respondents included IT directors/managers, network/systems administrators, school officials and others who influence IT infrastructure decisions in organizations of all sizes. The objective of the survey was to gain insight into the challenges in educational organizations’ infrastructure, perceptions, and practices around IT infrastructure, as well as future plans. Survey results reflect responses from 81 respondents in higher education, and 72 respondents in K-12 education, all located in the U.S.