

How to Prepare Teachers for a Digital Classroom

With the onslaught of new technological tools finding their way into the field of education, classrooms are becoming increasingly digital. While these tools can boost student comprehension and give educators access to critical data that can help shape their curriculums, those spearheading this drive—administrators or even teachers themselves—can have mixed feelings about the new implementations. [We've discussed what educators want and need from digital tools](#), but are they truly comfortable with all the advancements? **What is the best way to prepare teachers for a digital classroom? Let's explore.**

The Trick to a Winning Digital Classroom: Educate the Educators

Although districts are recognizing the value of implementing new technologies into their curriculums, many teachers have not received adequate training on these new tools for their classrooms. [One survey found a whopping two-thirds of teachers polled](#) were unsure about their ability to nurture "digitally literate" students, and only 15 percent said they were "totally computer-savvy." Some studies, in fact, have found that teachers are often learning *alongside* their students and [would actually have more self-confidence if they felt the professional development training they received were more effective](#). The following are ways school systems can meet this reasonable expectation, helping to ensure teacher readiness for their own digital classrooms:

- **Run simulations for teachers using different technologies.** Simulation training for educators isn't a new tool. In fact, colleges like the [University of Virginia's Curry School of Education have been using the strategy](#) to train the next generation of teachers in classroom management techniques for some time now. The same practice that works to help upcoming teachers learn how to handle classroom situations can work to teach veteran educators how to navigate their increasingly digital classrooms.
- **Offer STEM training with new techniques.** While the use of new classroom technologies affects teachers of all disciplines, those in the STEM departments are hit particularly hard. To make sure STEM teachers are as prepared as can be, special attention must be paid to their professional development. [Programs like Woodrow Wilson Teaching Fellowships](#) are doing just that, focusing on high-need areas and expanding training beyond standard coursework.
- **Use hands-on learning techniques.** For teachers to fully understand what students will be learning, they must have hands-on access to those tools themselves. If simulations (addressed above) are not available or do not do the trick, simply experimenting with new technologies before class is in session can be helpful. Hands-on trainings should ideally be conducted by experts or seasoned users of the technology who can offer support both during the session and after if questions arise during practical application.

As we briefly touched on earlier, the issue of preparing teachers for digital classrooms does not only apply to existing teachers—it also (and perhaps especially) applies to those studying to become educators. As Ronald Thorpe from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards [quipped in a panel discussion on teacher preparation in the digital age](#), programs today can be "spotty . . . with no connection to—nor responsibility for—what happens to their recently graduated students who enter the treacherous period of induction." To remedy this, universities are implementing personalized learning and data analytic teaching strategies into their curriculums so the next generation of educators is ready to do the same.

The digital classroom is here to stay, a place where traditional teaching techniques are enhanced with the tools and technology to produce digitally literate students. Finding new approaches to professional development for educators, then, is necessary on the path to success.