

Success Story

Twin Rivers Unified School District

SACRAMENTO, CA

Grades: 7–12

Reach: 450 students enrolled
each year

Model: Independent study
school

Goal: Provide students a 1:1
learning experience

Help Get Teachers On-Board with EdTech

Technology is becoming commonplace in the classroom, but implementing it successfully is difficult without teacher support. Teachers are the lifeblood of a school, and without their buy-in, any new policy or product will likely fall flat. In fact, teacher buy-in for a classroom tool may also affect how students perceive it, which will impact learning outcomes. With stakes this high, how can administrators get teachers on-board with edtech?

1. DEFINE THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER.

Many teachers struggle with finding their place in the classroom when edtech is introduced, and this can lead to a negative emotional reaction to the change. As a result, teachers may withdraw too much from the students and use the computer as a crutch says Keema High School Teacher Laura Rodman. “I noticed teachers were in front of a computer and students were in front of a computer, and there was no interaction.” Keema High School is an independent study school in California that focuses on students who are credit deficient. “By the time they get here, they’re pretty beaten up,” Rodman says, so it’s the teacher’s job to build relationships. “We sit with students and have conversations about what they’re learning,” says Rodman. “We’re supportive and tell the students we’re glad they’re here.”



Technology allows the Keema teaching staff to personalize learning to fit the needs of each particular student. “It’s not one size fits all,” says Rodman, who uses MyPath™ to create shorter, individualized learning paths to bring struggling students up to grade level. And edtech allows her to customize instruction and work one-on-one with students, neither of which would be possible in a traditional setting.

““ The goal is to give students more of an interactive online experience

2. EMPHASIZE THE POWER OF DATA-DRIVEN TEACHING.

The faculty at Keema High School is experienced, and many are retired classroom teachers so adjusting to this new style of teaching can be difficult. “It was a challenge to switch our curriculum from textbooks to online,” says Rodman, but the level of data available and customization tools has made technology invaluable.

“I can be in the gradebook, and it’s like having the teachers’ manual in front of you,” says Rodman, who uses the gradebook to check students’ productivity, course progress, and grades in real time. “It takes time to see progress,” she says, but the tools within Edgenuity can help teachers and students set and achieve attainable learning goals throughout the year.

3. HELP TEACHERS LEARN THE CURRICULUM.

In a traditional classroom, teachers present the information via daily lectures. But edtech takes the brunt of instruction out of the hands of the teacher, and frees them up to answer questions, work one-on-one or in small groups, and offer enrichment with individualized activities. For the teachers at Keema, offering instructional support can be especially difficult because one teacher will support students with all of their coursework. Rodman has a background in English, but she is often fielding questions on math and science, and she believes that it is essential for teachers to have background knowledge to help students with all of their coursework.

In the 2018–2019 school year, the teachers at Keema broke into small groups and went through different lessons as if they were students. They took notes and created a one-page reference sheet for other educators to use in the future. Using these reference sheets, the teachers will create a binder to give other educators an overview of each lesson including background information, context, vocabulary, and lesson objectives. That way, when a student has a question, teachers can quickly provide help even if it’s not in their area of expertise. “The goal is to give students more of an interactive online experience,” says Rodman, and that interaction will be facilitated by the background information available in the binders.

By building relationships, empowering teachers, and personalizing instruction, technology can have a powerful impact on students. And at Keema High School, students are recovering credits, learning about career possibilities, and graduating with the help of cutting-edge teachers who have embraced the power of edtech in their classrooms.

