

# What's Here to Stay: Remote Learning Trends for 2021 and Beyond



## Is the digital classroom here to stay?

After a turbulent year and an extensive quarantine changing our daily habits and routines, it is no surprise that COVID-19 has changed education for years to come.

As we look ahead, what can educators and administrators alike learn from this experience and nation-wide experiment? As education continues to evolve towards a more just and equitable system, organizations continue to ask themselves what remote learning trends we can bring into a post-COVID world and which ones can be left behind.

This piece will discuss seven of the most salient educational trends for both K-12 and higher education. These trends will continue to define education in 2021 and beyond as the system works to level the playing field and adjust programs to meet a changing world.



# Seven trends defining the future of education

## 1. Blended learning

Blended learning, or the mixture of traditional in-person classrooms and online teaching, proved to be an efficient and flexible instructional system. Mixing digital and distanced learning proved to be especially helpful while students and instructors faced reduced in-person class time, and it is a trend we expect to continue.

Studies funded by the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) found that student achievement was higher in blended learning experiences than fully online or in-person learning environments.

Stay-at-home orders allowed the testing of blended learning at a mass scale. The need to make rapid changes resulted in a more significant investment in the technology needed for blended learning to be a feasible future option.

## 2. Microlearning

Blended learning has also opened the gates for microlearning, also known as stackable learning. In microlearning, lessons are broken out into digestible 30 to 40-minute chunks to improve student engagement (Amy-Vogt, [Silicon Angle](#)). Microlearning's flexibility and customization enables educators to provide more powerful lessons without losing students' interest.

By splitting up projects, lessons, and learning materials, students can see more significant and faster retention. Educators can augment their studies by leveraging traditional lectures, videos, readable text, and interactive activities.

Breaking lessons into more manageable chunks also allows for adaptive learning, tailoring projects and assignments to individual needs. Rather than relying on a teachers' arbitrary selection, algorithms can determine what content to feed the student and when. ([ViewSonic](#))

## 3. Cloud-based applications

As students learned from home and instructors were teaching remotely, many organizations rapidly migrated systems to the cloud.

The cloud provides flexibility and 24/7 access to instructional materials, textbooks, and solutions that improve accessibility. The cloud ensures data is consolidated at institutional levels, enabling administrators to see where students need more support (Marr, [Forbes](#)). Increased visibility is critical, while educators manage a remote student body.

## 4. Increased focus on staff and student experience

Schools and universities are increasingly relying on cloud-based Customer Relationship Software (CRM) tools like Zendesk to support their students, staff, and instructors. With more questions than ever before, teams find a CRM tool necessary to remain in control of operations and maintain efficiency across a remote workforce and student population.

By streamlining questions from email, phone, and even social media, schools and universities can keep educators, students, and parents at ease with open and transparent communication. An emphasis on maintaining excellent customer service and quickly responding to inquiries will be a trend we expect to see well into the future.

[Learn more about how Zendesk supports schools and universities](#)

## 5. Artificial intelligence

In education, artificial intelligence (AI) helps personalize students and educators' learning experiences. In the upcoming years, AI will be one of the most disruptive technologies for education. Artificial intelligence will continue to fill gaps in teaching and supporting students.

According to Research and Markets, "The analysts forecast the Artificial Intelligence Market in the US Education Sector to grow at a CAGR of 47.77% during the period 2018-2022." ([eLearning Industry](#))

Artificial intelligence can guide students through courses based on their individual needs. Algorithms inform how material is personalized and how data is visualized, based on the individual student and different learning curves.

There is also a considerable time-saving aspect associated with artificial intelligence as educators may increasingly rely on AI to grade, assess, and reply to student or parent inquiries. ([eLearning Industry](#)) AI provides more efficient

support for students who ask basic questions. By offloading repetitive tasks, instructors can offer more targeted assistance to students who may require additional support.

## 6. Mobile learning

Mobile learning, or mLearning, provides information to students' fingertips and the continuity to learn on-the-go. Instructors can make materials more accessible with customization for students by converting text to audio or changing the font size and contrast to improve readability. ([e-Learning Centre](#))

Students can use devices to capture video, sound, GPS coordinates, and stay in touch with classmates. With limitless possibilities on today's mobile devices, students can easily leverage a different medium to enhance their learning.

As mobile learning takes ground, educational institutions must ensure mLearning is not adding unnecessary distraction or creating exclusivity of opportunities for students to succeed.

## 7. Virtual and augmented reality

Stay-at-home orders restricted many students from taking field trips, working in labs, participating in research, and other in-person activities. However, technologies like augmented reality and virtual reality (AR and VR, respectively) allowed students to immerse themselves in whichever subject matter they were learning -- whether it be for language, mathematics, science, history, or literature ([ViewSonic](#)).

Students can operate in a world outside of their classrooms, whether through language immersion or a museum visit.

Technology will continue to play a large role in the evolution of education. If used wisely, it can unlock impactful and innovative ways of connecting students to the world around them. As government organizations and educators work to improve our educational system, it remains clear that technological advancements sit at the center of closing opportunity gaps and uncovering opportunities for generations to come.

## Show up for students and staff

### Zendesk for Education

Technology is the key to unlocking educational opportunities to support students and faculty alike. With education looking a lot different from what it did a year ago, schools worldwide are abruptly changing to a new normal.

Providing students with the best education comes first, but remote learning, budget cuts, and rising demands are a lot to balance at once. At Zendesk, we provide schools—big and small—with the right solution to support students, parents, and faculty under any circumstance.

[Learn more about Zendesk for Education.](#)

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