



EdSignals Studio

The Untapped Potential of Conferences to Drive HQIM Adoption

April 29, 2026



THE DECISION LAB



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Objectives

1

Learn about **common conferencing frictions** when evaluating and adopting HQIM, as well as how they can be **improved**

2

Converse with **leaders in the field** to understand their perspectives on these problems and their recommendations for solutions

Introduction

01

Moderators



Maraki Kebede, PhD
Education Lead @ The Decision Lab



Anna Moskow
Education Consultant @ The Decision Lab





The EdSignals Studio works to empower the HQIM ecosystem

*By equipping key market players with support based in rigorous **research** and **behavioral science**, we shift the burden of change away from school districts while helping them more easily identify and adopt higher-quality resources.*





Panelists



Brandon Olszewski, PhD
Senior Director of Research @ ISTE+ASCD



Christine Fox
Chief Growth and Innovation Officer @
CAST



Mary Styers, PhD
Director of Evidence & Learning
Strategy @ Instructure



Natasha Rachell, Ed.D
Director of Instructional Technology @
Atlanta Public Schools

Panelists



Brandon Olszewski, PhD

Senior Director of Research @ ISTE+ASCD

Brandon Olszewski leads many of ISTE's **program evaluation and research efforts** as well as projects that focus on educational technology, product usability and design, the learning sciences and generally **how humans interact with systems**. He has a passion for making educational research and science practical.

ISTE+ASCD is a nonprofit organization that **guides and accelerates the evolution of educational technology**. Between the ISTE Standards, the ISTE Seal, ISTE Live, and Instructional Leader Certification, they are a **cornerstone of quality** in the EdTech ecosystem.



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Mary Styers, PhD

Director of Evidence &
Learning Strategy,
Instructure

Mary Styers possesses 19 years of experience in **education research and preK-16 curriculum evaluation**, and has worked in both the public and private sectors. She earned a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from North Carolina State University.

Instructure is the company behind **Canvas, Mastery, and Parchment**, creating EdTech solutions for learning and beyond. They are also host to the world's largest online community of educators.



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Chief Growth and
Innovation Officer,
CAST

Christine Fox leads **business development, sales, design, marketing and communications** to support CAST's ability to achieve its mission. She is also the Co-Project Director for the Center on Inclusive Technology & Education Systems (CITES), where she supports the **evaluation and reporting, budgeting, and leveraging of internal and external partnerships** related to this project.

CAST leads, inspires, and convenes a global community to design **equitable, inclusive learning experiences** through their Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework. They aim to put the UDL to work in learning environments everywhere and to empower others to do the same, with **quality, care, and respect for all**.



Natasha Rachell, Ed.D

Director of Educational Technology @
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Officer, CAST



Natasha Rachell, Ed.D

Director of Educational
Technology @ Atlanta
Public Schools

Natasha Rachell serves as the Director of Instructional Technology for Atlanta Public Schools, where she leads districtwide efforts to ensure technology meaningfully strengthens teaching and learning for thousands of students and educators. Her work focuses on aligning innovation with strong instructional practices, empowering teachers, expanding opportunities for students, and helping schools prepare learners for a rapidly evolving digital world.

Atlanta Public Schools is a large district serving 50,000 students. Natasha is also an ISTE community leader, a member of the Forum for Educational Leadership, an MIE Expert, a Google Innovator, and one of 30 recognized “K–12 IT Influencers to Follow”.

Discussion: *Conferencing disconnects between districts and vendors*

- 2a The Purpose Disconnect
- 2b The People Disconnect

2a



The Purpose Disconnect: *Current State*

District Leaders



Vendors

- Seek **late-stage validation** of a product
- Look for opportunities to discuss **adoption and implementation**
- Need evidence of impact in **districts with similar contexts**

- Give **wide-net pitches** for a general audience
- May focus on **surface-level information** designed to capture attention
- Present on **product features more than student impact**



The Purpose Disconnect: *Current State*

“ *I hate having to reach out or say, What schools in [our state] currently use your product?...And then they kind of look at you with a blank stare and they go, I don't know. I'll have to get back to you on that.*

— Superintendent ”

- Late-stage validation of a product
- Wide-net pitches for a general
- O al
- EY w

“ *I don't go to any sessions that are sponsored and only being presented by someone from the company. If you don't have someone with you who can talk about their usage, it just becomes a sales call and I have very rarely left one of those feeling like I used my time well.*

— Chief Academic Officer ”



The Purpose Disconnect: *Ideal State*

District Leaders

- Opportunities to explain adoption **timelines**, evaluation **criteria**, and decision-making **needs**
- Attend sessions where vendors **co-present with a district partner**
- Use tools like **HQIQ** to pre-prepare **targeted questions** for vendors



Vendors

- Frame presentations around **solving urgent problems** and de-center product features
- Arrive with **ready-to-share lists** of client schools organized by **state and region**
- **Collaborate with districts** for presentations and prioritize conferences where they have **existing partnerships**



The Purpose Disconnect: *Ideal State*

“ *A graphic of the results that they've had at certain schools probably would be something that would attract me to that vendor because I'm going to have to search for that information one way or another.*

— Director of Curriculum ”

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“ *One of the things that we started doing on the booth was listing all the schools in that region...often people will come up to us and be like, Oh, I know this school, or that is my school right there, and so building that social proof was huge.*

— Vendor, Product Experience Designer ”

— Vendor, Product Experience Designer ”



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Discussion: *Conferencing disconnects between districts and vendors*

2a The Purpose Disconnect

 2b The People Disconnect

2b



The People Disconnect: *Current State*

District Leaders



Vendors

- Often must attend conferences **without teachers present** due to time and budget constraints, or **vice versa**
- Evaluate materials through **distinct priorities** that may not reflect classroom usability
- May **make inferences about teacher needs** while collecting product information at conferences

- Often **skip teacher-heavy events** to save time and budget for district leader-focused events
- Build pitches around the audience with **purchasing power** (i.e., district leaders) rather than end users
- Notice an **implementation gap** where leaders purchase a product but teachers don't understand its value or how to use it



The People Disconnect: *Current State*

“ *It's a Tuesday in November, I can't bring a team of nine people, it's going to be me and a principal and maybe a teacher or two. So then we have to...convene in some way to share our own learnings and then bring it back to the larger group.*

— *District Administrator* ”

- Of... without teachers present due to... save time and budget for district...
tim...

“ *The rollout of it is where the disconnect happens, like [teachers] not even knowing that this is even something that they have access to...there's oftentimes that disconnect between the leadership and school-based personnel.*

— *Vendor, Academic Team* ”

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The People Disconnect: *Ideal State*

District Leaders



Vendors

- **Convene** key stakeholders **before the event** to align on instructional priorities, a shortlist of vendors to vet, and key questions to ask using **tools like MathListHub**
- Discuss learnings with their team **throughout the conference** so information sharing is fresh and carried forward
- Share insights **after conferences** with relevant audiences (e.g., teachers, instructional coaches)

- Recognize that district administrators must **“sell” ideas back to teachers** in their district
- Equip district administrators with **concise, teacher-facing materials**, implementation guides, and data that speaks directly to **ease of use and classroom impact**
- Provide teachers with **strategic, district-level materials**, costs, and use cases to **translate teacher buy-in** into adoption



The People Disconnect: *Ideal State*

“ I always appreciate things that will affect things at the classroom level, not something that is going to benefit me per se, because I always want to make sure if we are spending our money that it is going to be a return on investment and it has an impact on students in the classroom. ”

— District Administrator

“ We want exposure to the teachers so that they're aware of the curriculum because they are the ones that sit on the committees when the adoptions take place. ”

— Vendor, Chief Product Officer

- Convene key stakeholders before the event to align on instructional priorities
- District administrators must “sell” ideas to teachers with materials, data of use

- recognize that district administrators must “sell” ideas to teachers with materials, data of use



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Audience Q&A

03

Conclusion

04



Resources



[2025 Annual Report](#)

[The Evidence Uptake Framework](#)

[HQIQ / HQIQ California](#)

[MathListHub](#)



[UDL Product Certification](#)

[IDEA Title II Accessible Digital Content Updates](#)

[Accessibility and Inclusive Technology Considerations](#)

Connect (1/2)



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Connect (2/2)



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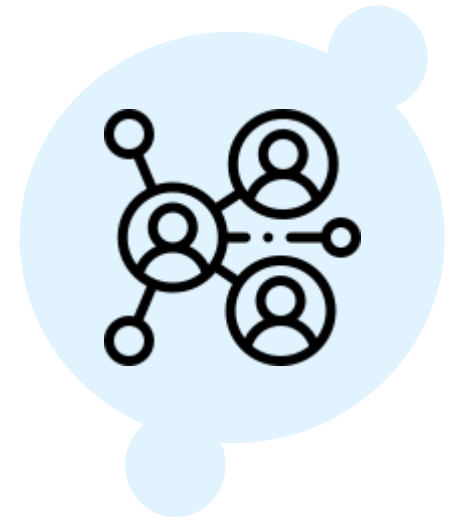
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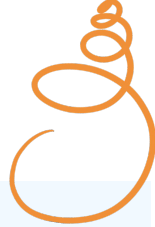


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Feedback Survey

*We'd love to hear
your thoughts!*



<https://forms.gle/o56NysEovSoc4K6A9>

Thank You!



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Appendix

05

Discussion: *Conferencing disconnects between districts and vendors*

2a The Purpose Disconnect

2b The People Disconnect

 2c The Logistics Disconnect

2c

The Logistic Disconnect: *Current State*

Attendees



- Have a need to **coordinate their schedules far in advance** to align on a plan with their team and spend limited time effectively
- Often must navigate conferences **reactively**, missing key opportunities for learning and connection

Conference Organizers

- May release critical conference information **too late** for proper use by attendees
- May share conference information that seems **incomplete** or **difficult to use** to attendees
- May **lack structured tracks**, leaving attendees to navigate overlapping topics and competing vendors without guidance



The Logistic Disconnect: *Current State*

“ I would say that I have attended conferences where I've signed up for a breakout session that were run by a vendor that I didn't know was run by a vendor. But, you know, the description fit what I thought I wanted to learn more about.

— District Administrator ”

“ Sometimes there's three very similar sessions put at the same time so people are split between them.

— Vendor, Education Director ”

The People Disconnect: *Ideal State*

Attendees

- Vendors share **tailored company/product descriptions** that speak to **regional needs**, well in advance of the conference
- Vendors and district leaders set up **individual, intentional meetings** in advance of the conference to prioritize building high-quality relationships



Conference Organizers

- Provide attendees with **comprehensive and filterable** digital guides, interactive maps, detailed company descriptions, and product categories at least two weeks before the event to better enable strategic planning
- Vendor lists and sessions are **organized not only by subject, but also by attendee goals** (e.g., “Tools for Easing Implementation”, “Solutions for English Learners”) to help leaders quickly prioritize relevant events



The People Disconnect: *Ideal State*

“

If I had all of that material at once, I could coordinate what vendors I wanted to see with what sessions I wanted to go to. Because sometimes I might choose to skip a session and go see a vendor because I know I want to talk to them for a little bit and I don't have enough time in the 10 minutes in between sessions."

— Curriculum Director

”

“

I think really intentional and well selected session. So if conferences have like a clear theme and they've done a great job of putting together sort of those strands of learning. I think overall the conferences tend to be more impactful for participants as well who are selecting a number of sessions in a similar strand.

— Vendor, Education Director

”

- Vendor companies speak to regional needs, well in advance of the conference.
- Vendor companies build

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