

How to Drive Compliance and Save Money With Full Tech Oversight for District Leaders



PRODUCTS

 GoGuardian Discover

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Executive Summary

K-12 districts face unprecedented financial pressure. With ESSER funding expiring and operational costs rising, superintendents and technology leaders must justify every dollar spent, particularly on edtech. In fact, 32% of district leaders now list funding as their number one unmet need.

And yet, 70% of software licenses purchased never get used by students or teachers.

The average district uses nearly 3,000 distinct edtech tools annually, yet most lack visibility into:

- ▶ Which tools are actively used
- ▶ Who is using them
- ▶ Whether usage aligns with purchased licenses
- ▶ How investments impact teaching and learning

Without this clarity, districts risk overspending on underutilized licenses, missing compliance vulnerabilities, and struggling to demonstrate a measurable ROI to school boards and community stakeholders.

GoGuardian Discover is designed to close this visibility gap. Powered by AI, the platform automatically analyzes application usage, licensing agreements, and district activity data to surface insights that would otherwise require hours of manual analysis.

By connecting a district's application inventory, cost data, and granular usage insights, our tool enables district leaders to:

- ▶ Quantify edtech utilization
- ▶ Identify cost savings opportunities
- ▶ Strengthen compliance and data governance
- ▶ Make renewal and procurement decisions based on evidence
- ▶ Confidently report ROI to school boards

This white paper outlines the financial risks of limited edtech visibility and presents a practical framework for transforming technology oversight into a strategic advantage.

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The Financial Reality Facing K-12 Districts

The expiration of federal relief funding has shifted districts from expansion to evaluation.

Investments made during emergency funding cycles must now withstand increased scrutiny.

Now, school boards are asking:

- ▶ How do we know this tool is working?
- ▶ Are we paying for unused licenses?
- ▶ Can we prove this investment improves outcomes?

District leaders are no longer evaluated solely on innovation, but on accountability and responsible spending. When a district cannot clearly connect licensing costs to measurable usage and impact, it weakens budget justification efforts and erodes stakeholder confidence.

The Visibility Gap in Today's Edtech Ecosystem

Districts may know what they purchased, but often do not know what is actually being used. This gap between procurement and usage creates several challenges, including:

- ▶ Unused or underused licenses
Redundant applications performing similar functions
- ▶ Incomplete understanding of teacher and student engagement
- ▶ Inability to calculate cost-per-active-user

Many districts rely on surveys, anecdotal feedback, or vendor-reported dashboards. These approaches are fragmented, time-consuming, and often incomplete. AI-powered analysis can bridge this gap by continuously overseeing district environments, identifying active applications, and connecting usage with licensing and procurement needs.

Without application-level usage data tied to cost, calculating ROI becomes nearly impossible. This results in decisions made on assumptions instead of hard, data-backed evidence.

The Hidden Cost of Shadow IT and Tool Sprawl

Beyond underutilization lies another risk: Unapproved applications operating outside official procurement processes. "Shadow IT," or tools adopted without IT admin visibility or approval, introduces both financial and compliance risks, such as:

- ▶ Student data may be shared outside FERPA or COPPA-aligned systems
- ▶ Browser extensions or locally installed apps may bypass network filters
- ▶ Redundant tools increase licensing waste
- ▶ Security vulnerabilities go undetected

Traditional monitoring systems like firewalls and web filters do not provide full application visibility, particularly when tools operate at the browser or device level. Without comprehensive insight, districts may unknowingly carry risk exposure that could impact compliance, cybersecurity, and public trust. Full visibility transforms this blind spot into an opportunity to:

- ▶ Reduce application sprawl
- ▶ Improve data governance
- ▶ Standardize vetted tools
- ▶ Reinforce digital safety policies

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From Data Overload to Actionable Insight

Districts are not lacking data. In fact, they are swimming in it. The issue is that they are lacking connected data. Licensing systems are often separate from usage analytics. Procurement lives in one system, while engagement lives in another. Disconnected systems lead to disconnected decisions.

Powerful AI helps unify these data streams by automatically interpreting contracts, extracting licensing details, and correlating them with real-world usage patterns across devices and users.

To get to the bottom of things, leaders need answers to four foundational questions:

1. What applications are in use across the district?
2. What do they cost?
3. Who is using them, and how often?
4. Are they delivering measurable value?

Without this integration, ROI conversations remain incomplete. AI solutions can synthesize this information and present clear, actionable answers. Products that excel allow district leaders to use natural-language queries to get actionable insights for their specific needs.

A Four-Step Framework for Demonstrating ROI

To move from reactive oversight to strategic edtech management, districts can adopt the following framework.

Step 1: Centralize application inventory and cost tracking

Create a comprehensive inventory of all applications in use (both approved and unapproved), alongside licensing terms and associated costs. This establishes fiscal transparency and ensures every subscription is accounted for.

Step 2: Collect granular usage data

Track real usage across devices and operating systems.

Key metrics may include:

- ▶ Active users vs. licensed users
- ▶ Frequency of access
- ▶ Department or campus-level adoption
- ▶ Usage trends over time

Granular insight distinguishes between purchased access and meaningful engagement.

Step 3: Calculate utilization and ROI

When cost data and usage data intersect, ROI becomes measurable.

- ▶ Examples of board-ready metrics:
- ▶ Cost per active user
- ▶ Percentage of unused licenses
- ▶ Applications with declining engagement
- ▶ Savings opportunities through license reallocation

Identifying underutilized tools may uncover significant budget reallocation opportunities, becoming funds that can be redirected toward instructional priorities or staffing needs.

Step 4: Leverage insights for strategic decisions

With clear evidence, districts can:

- ▶ Make informed renewal decisions
- ▶ Negotiate contracts based on actual usage
- ▶ Guide future procurement toward high-impact tools
- ▶ Target professional development to improve adoption
- ▶ Justify budget requests with defensible ROI data

This transforms edtech management from a reactive cost center into a proactive strategy for improvement.

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Turning Technology into a Strategic Asset

IT teams are often stuck in “react mode,” constantly responding to license renewals, troubleshooting app conflicts, and chasing visibility gaps. AI-powered automation reduces this manual workload by continuously overseeing application usage, contract terms, and policy compliance in the background.

With comprehensive insight, they can shift from reactive oversight to strategic leadership. Instead of asking, “What are we paying for?” They can instead report, “Here is how our technology investments are driving measurable engagement, supporting educators, and protecting student data.”

For superintendents and CTOs, this shift enables:

- ▶ Stronger board presentations
- ▶ Clearer community communication
- ▶ Greater trust in budget allocations
- ▶ Long-term sustainability of digital learning initiatives

When technology investments are supported by evidence, they become defensible, repeatable, and scalable.

Conclusion

District leaders are being held accountable like never before. Purchasing technology is an important part of their job, but it cannot be a “one and done” transaction. Administrators must prove the value of the tools they buy. Without full visibility into application usage, licensing alignment, and safety compliance, districts risk budget inefficiencies and diminished stakeholder confidence.

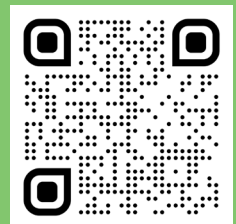
GoGuardian Discover provides the visibility and actionable intelligence districts need to address these challenges. With a centralized dashboard, granular usage tracking, AI-powered license management, and intuitive reporting, districts can:

- ▶ See where money is being spent and where to save: Track licenses, usage, and investments across users, classrooms, and schools to identify underused applications and optimize budgets.
- ▶ Prevent compliance and privacy risks before they happen: Review app privacy policies, block unapproved tools, and ensure alignment with SDPC and 1EdTech standards and local privacy rules.
- ▶ Understand what’s happening across your district: Oversee adoption, engagement, and ROI for every application and easily generate reports. New AI-powered search features allow leaders to type in specific questions (such as “Which OUs are using this app the most this month?”) and receive instant insights, making data actionable.

When both financial scrutiny and expectations rise, clarity is power. GoGuardian Discover moves districts beyond guesswork, transforming scattered data into evidence-based insights. Now, leaders can make informed decisions, demonstrate fiscal responsibility, and confidently lead their schools into the future.

Want to see how GoGuardian Discover can help you save money and drive compliance with full tech oversight?

Request a demo today.



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About GoGuardian

With over a decade of experience, including pioneering the use of AI in K-12 education, GoGuardian delivers best-in-class solutions built with educators, not just for them. Our suite of products, powered by purpose-driven, customizable AI and actionable insights, enables what matters most: safer schools, empowered teachers, and thriving students. Trusted by over 2 million educators and more than 10,000 schools, GoGuardian supports 25 million students nationwide—representing 50% of all public and private K-12 learners in the U.S.

GoGuardian's curriculum and instruction suite, Pear Deck Learning, is the only platform that offers teachers support for every instructional step in any topic—all in one place. From lesson planning to state testing, Pear Deck Learning helps teachers deliver engaging instruction, personalized learning tailored to each student's needs, and meaningful assessment, all with ease.



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