

EdTech Evaluation Rubric

Use this tool to evaluate edtech provider claims about their product effectiveness research.

DIMENSION	GUIDING QUESTION	GOOD ★	BETTER ★★	BEST ★★★
Product Design 	Does the provider use evidence to inform its product design?	☐ Usability and classroom feasibility studies.	☐ Regularly conducts both study types.	☐ Regularly conducts codesign studies.
Efficacy Research 	Does the product show evidence of impact through independent research?	☐ Efficacy study shows significant effect size.	☐ Study uses high-quality RCT or QED design.	☐ Reproduced the RCT or QED findings.
Effectiveness 	Does the product have research showing effectiveness at scale and "in the wild?"	☐ Study with >15% of the student population shows significant gains.	☐ District-wide study with >50% of the population shows significant gains.	☐ Reproduced the gains at a large scale.
Implementation 	Does the provider have a strong track record with product implementation ?	☐ Offers case studies that show successful prior implementations.	☐ Shares implementation process details prior to product purchase.	☐ Refers you to leaders at a similar district to have a candid Q&A.
R&D Safety 	Does the provider do adequate research before releasing new technologies like AI?	☐ Has a protocol for Safe R&D before releasing AI to students.	☐ Is transparent about its safety principles in public statements.	☐ Able to provide evidence that it follows the safety protocols.
Leadership 	Is the provider educator-led or do hedge funds call the shots?	☐ Run mainly by educators with K-12 teaching experience.	☐ Founded by teachers with a vision for how to impact K-12 outcomes.	☐ 100% controlled by educators, not by private equity or hedge funds.

How to Use This Rubric

- Use it to winnow down prospective edtech providers to those who exhibit a *culture of research*, as opposed to those who see research as a *sales tool*.
- Use it to differentiate competing research claims that *sound similar*.
- Follow the links below for our series of short podcast episodes you can listen to on your drive to work!

Glossary of Research Terms

Codesign is a process wherein users (administrators, teachers, students, etc.) collaborate with product designers.

 [Listen to an explanation here](#) →

Educator-led means that the edtech provider is operated and controlled by people with K-12 teaching experience, rather than by investors or hedge funds.

 [Listen to an explanation here](#) →

Effectiveness examines a product's impact at scale across educational contexts and with real-world levels of fidelity. "At scale" means that all or most students are in the treatment group, as opposed to only the highest-fidelity 5%.

→ Exceeding the **15%** threshold shows efficacy scaling beyond *early adopters*.

→ Exceeding the **50%** threshold shows that it scales to *mainstream* adoption.

Efficacy examines a product's impact under ideal conditions. This is typically limited to 5% of those students who are given product access during the study.

Feasibility studies observe how teachers or students use a product in a real-world classroom, with the goal of identifying barriers and overcoming them.

Implementation is a process ensuring that all users have the access, training, and support they need in order to use the product with fidelity. Implementations may fail due to avoidable logistical issues.

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Independent studies are funded by a sponsor unaffiliated with the provider. The sponsor also has control over use of funds. And, external researchers, not the provider, control all data analyses and all decisions about the study conclusions.

QED means Quasi Experimental Design. This method can allow users to decide their level of usage and therefore can be used to study behavior "in the wild."

RCT means Randomized Controlled Trial. Students are randomly assigned to a study's treatment or control group.

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Reproducing a study means to repeat the research under the same conditions or to change a variable such as the student population or curriculum materials to see if the results hold up in a different context.

Safe R&D involves creating a system of guardrails that protect student data and learning. This is particularly critical with products that embed generative AI.

 [Listen to an explanation here](#) →

Usability studies test whether a product is easy to use as intended by its designers.



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