

# America, Land of Opportunity?

When viewed from the outside as a single entity, the US education market looks huge. There are 116,000 schools in the country, with a combined market value of over \$1 trillion – and growing. However, a key thing to remember is that the US market functions more like a continent than a country: every state is a very different market, and to some extent the same is true at district level. And there are other challenges that might not be obvious, too. Here is a run-through of some of the potential difficulties you might want to consider before getting started.

## Language

It's said that the UK and US are 'two countries separated by a common language' and, although the origin of the phrase is disputed, the sentiment is exactly right. UK companies entering the US may find that their products and services will require quite significant modification, and no, it is not just a matter of changing spellings such as 'organise' to 'organize'! Changes to context and phrasing, and localisation of vocabulary, will all be required.

Do not forget, either, that over 42 million US citizens have Spanish as their first language – so be prepared for your content to be at least bilingual if you are planning to sell into the southern states! It's also worth remembering that there are massive cultural differences between US states that need to be taken into account.

## Curricula and culture

There are state standards to adhere to, as well as national standards, and it is usually necessary to correlate and edit content to meet multiple different requirements. Don't forget cultural differences, either: what is acceptable in the UK may not be in the US, and vice versa.

## Market structure

The US education structure is very different from the UK! To begin with, there are the obvious differences in terminology: elementary instead of primary, high school instead of secondary school, principals instead of headteachers, and so on. But more importantly, the underlying control and financial structures are also very different. Schools have much less autonomy than we are used to here in the UK, both in terms of purchasing decisions and decision-making at school level.

**Steve Whitley** has spent over 40 years working in the education sector. He has travelled extensively, selling EdTech products and services into schools and governments all around the world. As the founder of EdTech Consulting, he helps education companies create and implement their international growth strategies. Please feel free to contact him directly to discuss any aspect of your plans for international growth ([edtechconsulting.co.uk](http://edtechconsulting.co.uk), [steve@edtechconsulting.co.uk](mailto:steve@edtechconsulting.co.uk), +44 (0)7710 460 392).



## Summary

- The US is one of the most difficult countries in the world to sell into, so this is not usually where a company should begin its

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