

2015 HMH EDUCATOR CONFIDENCE REPORT



TAKING A CLOSER LOOK

The inaugural Houghton Mifflin Harcourt™ Confidence Report, a survey of more than 1,000 classroom teachers, school administrators and district administrators from across the nation, suggests that the teaching profession in the United States is at a critical juncture. On one hand, the results show that educators are optimistic about using new technology tools to find better and more creative ways to teach students, perform differentiated instruction, and meet ambitious new academic standards. The survey suggests that the vast majority (97%) is using some form of digital technology in the classroom, and many are already experiencing benefits in their classrooms, including increasing student engagement and achievement.

“**Technologies are exploding.** What was new last month is replaced by some other new technology the next month. I find it exhausting trying to keep up. I have to have time to practice, I have to know what I’m doing in order to present it to students in a meaningful way[...] Help me find a way to control a lesson, where I can get students to focus on actually learning information long-term, and I’m sold.” —Survey Respondent

On the other hand, the survey indicates a growing sense of anxiety and frustration among educators when it comes to the challenges of meeting new academic standards in an atmosphere of tight budgets and limited financial support for professional development and new teaching tools. Educators are feeling strapped for time and resources, and are worried about the implications of new teacher accountability requirements. Anecdotal evidence from open-ended questions on the survey suggests that many teachers feel that policy makers overlook the common obstacles that teachers face on a day-to-day basis. More than half of the educators surveyed said they were feeling more negative about the teaching profession today than they did five years ago.

THE SURVEY

The online survey of 1,008 educators included respondents from all 50 states, and contained roughly equal representation from the East, West, South and Midwest. Of the respondents, 82% were classroom teachers and 18% were administrators. The administrative group included school principals, superintendents, curriculum heads and chief technology and chief information officers (CTOs/CIOs).

The independent survey was conducted by the market research agency MDR on behalf of HMH® and included educators with a wide range of experience in the field (from less than one year to more than 20 years). It was answered by roughly equal numbers from the Grade K–2, 3–5, and 6–8 levels (about 300 respondents from each category) and a slightly higher number of high school educators (about 400). Math, science, social studies, English language arts and literacy teachers were represented in approximately equal numbers.




1,008 classroom teachers, school administrators and district administrators from across the nation

POSITIVE TRENDS

When asked what they were most excited about in the next few years, nearly half of the educators surveyed said they were looking forward to collaborating with their colleagues to develop more effective and engaging instructional techniques for students.

Roughly 40% of respondents were looking forward to developing real-world applications for new curriculum and assessment standards, and a similar number were also excited about gaining more access to technology and online learning tools.



48%

Collaborating with colleagues to develop effective instruction for students

What are educators most excited about for the future?

More opportunities for real-world application in curriculum and assessment	42%
A shift in standards toward requiring more critical thinking from students	41%
Increased access to the latest technology	41%
More access to online learning tools	38%

Technology solutions seemed to be a particular point of optimism in a time of increasing demands for accountability and high standards for student achievement. Of the educators surveyed, 60% reported observing increased student engagement when utilizing technology such as videos, digital content, interactive whiteboard lessons and online applications and games.

Top benefits of technology use in classrooms seen by educators:

Improved ability for students to access instructional content anytime and anywhere	55%
Ability to deliver differentiated/individualized instruction	48%
Improved student achievement	34%
More student collaboration opportunities	33%
Improved parent/family engagement	31%
Improved completion rates for assignments/homework	27%



60%

Improved student engagement

58%



Expressed concern about risks associated with collection and use of student data

Educator Concern Over Student Data Privacy

Very concerned	17%
Somewhat concerned	41%
Not very concerned	33%
Not at all concerned	9%

Moreover, there was no gap evidenced between more experienced and less experienced educators in terms of the frequency of technology usage, indicating that age plays little role in teachers’ adoption of digital tools. A gap, however, was revealed between teachers and district administrators in the reported use of digitally enhanced instruction. For example, 77% of administrators said interactive whiteboards were used compared to 52% of classroom teachers, a difference of 25 percentage points. A similar disparity exists when it comes to the use of open educational resources (87% vs. 70%), online assessments (66% vs. 42%), learning management systems (64% vs. 36%), and adaptive learning content (49% vs. 35%). The results also suggest a distinct technological gender gap in terms of roles: 80% of CTOs/CIOs in the survey were male, compared to 20% female.

The report also suggests that educators are coming to terms with issues regarding student data privacy: 41% said they were “very aware” of the privacy policies used by students, with 48% being “somewhat aware.” Nearly 60% of the educators surveyed expressed some concerns about the risks associated with the collection and use of student data.

How often do students in your classroom/district use the following digital tools for school-related activities?	Watch videos	Turn in an assignment online	Take assessment online	Engage with students online for learning purposes	Use laptop/desktop to do classwork	Use a tablet to do classwork	Engage with a teacher online for learning purposes	Use learning management system	Participate in small group instruction online
Daily	8%	8%	3%	6%	23%	9%	8%	12%	3%
Often	17%	10%	10%	9%	18%	13%	10%	13%	7%
Sometimes	40%	19%	22%	17%	23%	17%	18%	18%	12%
Rarely	30%	23%	42%	23%	20%	20%	24%	16%	28%
Never	5%	40%	23%	45%	16%	41%	40%	40%	50%

While digital technology is being used to some extent in nearly every classroom, plenty of room for growth remains. The vast majority of educators surveyed described the amount of technology use in their schools as “somewhat” regular (1–2 times per week), or “rarely” (1–2 times per month).

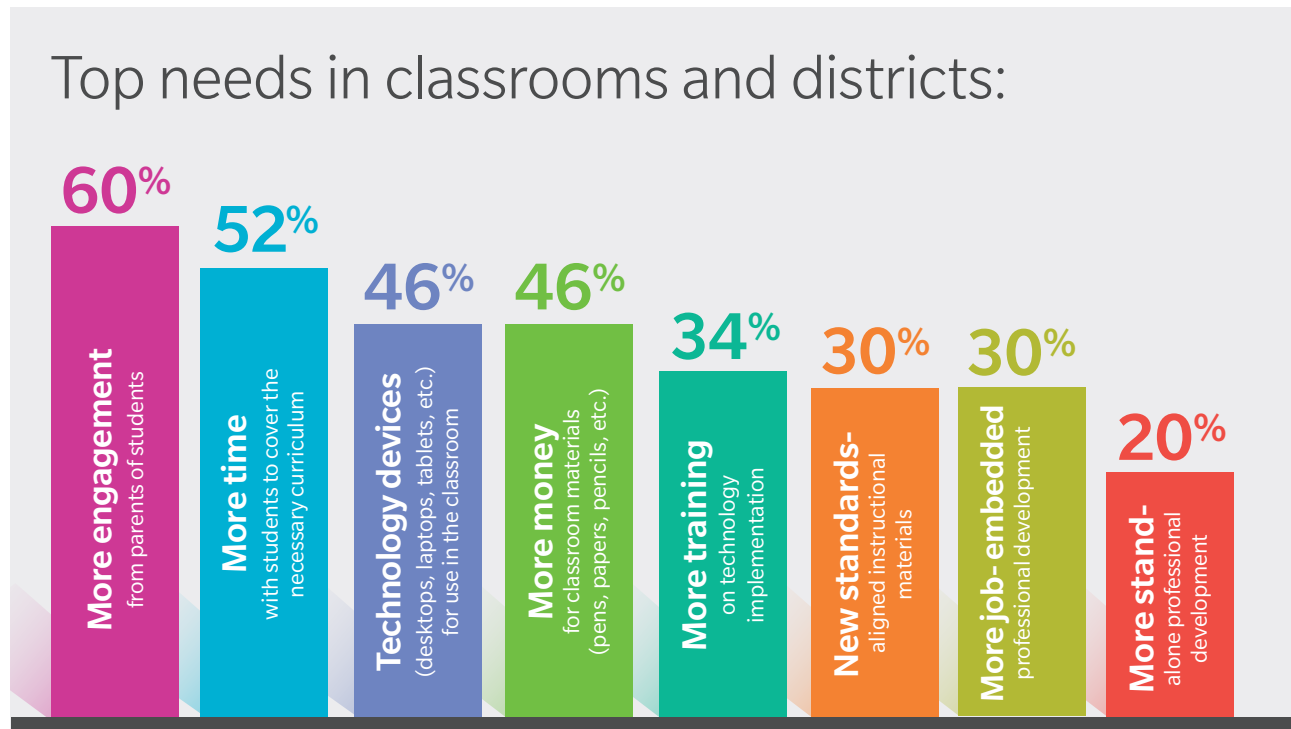
Some noted that a lack of training was limiting ability to effectively implement technology in the classroom. “We do not have enough professional development to use the technology we are being asked to use,” said one respondent.

CHALLENGES

The survey also showed that teachers and administrators are having a difficult time coping with an education environment that is asking them to do more in terms of student achievement, technology implementation, and data reporting with less resources and support. Two-thirds of respondents said they were concerned about a lack of funding, while 63% expressed worry about the impact of new teacher accountability requirements on their ability to teach students in the classroom.

Additionally, most educators (58%) are concerned about meeting new assessment requirements, and over one third (36%) are worried by a lack of technology devices in classrooms, lack of classroom autonomy, and a lack of differentiated lessons for students in need of intervention.

The survey found that educators are frequently covering funding shortfalls by spending their own money on professional development and classroom supplies. Nearly half of the respondents reported spending up to \$250 per year on professional development tools such as training materials (books, white papers and reports), in-person training sessions, tickets to conferences, and online webinars.



Educators are also using their own funds to cover the cost of classroom materials. Among those surveyed, 83% said they have used their own funds for school supplies (such as paper, pens and notebooks), while 64% have provided food and snacks for students, and many have purchased their own instructional materials (46%) and supplemental digital content (37%). The majority of educators spend between \$250 and \$500 per year on classroom supplies. Said one respondent, “The most frustrating thing about being an educator is not having the supplies needed to do engaging lessons.”

While funding and resources are clear subjects of concern from respondents, the number-one need identified was increased engagement from parents, suggesting that a growing trend to strengthen the home-school connection in some circles would be welcomed by educators more broadly.

One striking concern expressed within the results was that only 6% of the educators surveyed reported feeling “very positive” about their profession. Negative feelings were much more common, with 43% of respondents saying they felt “somewhat negative” and 16% feeling “very negative.” Overall, 64% of educators said they felt more negative about the teaching profession today than they did five years ago.

When asked about their future career plans, 35% of educators said they are likely to leave teaching within the next five years. This figure includes a sizable portion of educators with 20+ years’ experience, and is therefore likely to include retirement plans. However, nearly a quarter (23%) of educators with less than 10 years’ experience also indicated high interest in leaving the field. Another 29% said that while they had no specific plans to leave the profession, they hadn’t ruled it out as a possibility.

CONCLUSION

At a time when educators are feeling optimistic about the potential for technology to help students achieve, and yet pessimistic about a lack of resources and support, it appears that providing more opportunities for teachers to collaborate and share best practices, stronger technological support in the classroom, and more resources for training and professional development could be powerful, cost-effective strategies for improving student achievement and boosting educator morale.

“**I’m often frustrated by the lack of** communication, the lack of follow-up, and the lack of unification between school and home (or more accurately, between the parents and the teachers). —Survey Respondent”



For more information about this survey, go to lead.hmhco.com/ECR2015

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