

2017

EDUCATOR
CONFIDENCE
REPORT

SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE DIGITAL AGE

OVERVIEW

The *2017 Educator Confidence Report: Setting the Stage for the Digital Age*, commissioned by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt® and conducted by research firm MDR, was designed to give educators a forum to identify opportunities for improved educational outcomes as well as the challenges they face to that end. This was the third administration of the survey to a diverse national cross section of 1,217 educators, and the findings reveal that overall confidence has improved in the past year. For example, more than half the educators surveyed (53%) reported positive feelings about the state of the teaching profession, an increase of 11 percentage points from 2016.

While there are still opportunities for improvement—lack of funding continues to be a major concern among educators (58% in 2017)—teachers, overall, reported fewer barriers and concerns. For example, concern by educators about teacher accountability requirements continues to decrease, dropping another 6 percentage points year over year (from 50% to 44%). Concern about meeting the requirements of Common Core/state standards assessments dropped 11 percentage points (from 47% to 36%).

Some of these decreases might be attributed to increased confidence. Educator

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confidence in using digital technology rose 7 percentage points from last year (from 58% to 65%) indicating teachers have become more comfortable using digital resources in their classrooms. There is still room for improvement, however, as educators also indicated they would like more resources to aid in the successful implementation of educational technology. Along with professional services, educators indicated a need for more online tutorials and example lesson plans to effectively implement educational technology.

While these new technologies allow teachers to provide more personalized learning and differentiated instruction these digital tools are only one piece of the puzzle. To aid students in gaining 21st century skills, teachers reported using approaches such as high-level questioning and student-focused collaboration. While digital resources do not replace these teaching strategies, they provide a means for teachers to use a variety of a methods and approaches in the classroom.

In this report, we focus on the overarching themes drawn from the survey results and share data analysis that helped identify opportunities for productive change.

THE SURVEY

The online survey of 1,217 educators reached respondents from all 50 states and all geographic regions equally. Of those surveyed, 79% were classroom teachers and 21% were administrators. The administrative group included school principals, superintendents, curriculum heads, and chief technology and chief information officers.

The independent survey was conducted by the market research agency MDR on behalf of HMMH® and included educators with a wide range of experience in the field. Math, science, social studies, English language arts and literacy, and general classroom teachers were represented in approximately equal numbers. Of teachers surveyed, 33% had from less than one year to 10 years of experience, 35% had between 11 and 20 years of experience, and 32% had more than 20 years of experience.

Top 5 Points of Educator Optimism

43%

1. Collaborating with colleagues to develop engaging/effective instruction for students

37%

4. Actually using data to inform/improve instruction instead of just collecting data

39%

2. A shift in standards toward requiring more critical thinking from students

37%

5. More opportunities for real-world application in curriculum and assessment

38%

3. Access to new open-source curriculum materials (e.g., Khan Academy, TED Talks, TeacherTube, etc.)

DIGITAL READINESS

Similar to the 2016 survey, this year 98% of educators reported using digital materials in their work. Digital tools are helping educators communicate and collaborate with one another, instruct and interact with students, and communicate with families.

Data analysis indicated that use of digital resources varied based on how long educators have been in the classroom. Relative to their colleagues with 10 years or less of experience, teachers with 11 or more years of experience are, in general, using digital tools with greater frequency in the classroom for a variety of purposes. Among the digital resources used with greatest frequency among senior educators were videos from instructional resources and open sources. Sixty-two percent of educators with 11 or more years of experience reported employing these technologies in the classroom, compared to only 43% of teachers with 10 years or less of experience. Other tools being employed by more experienced teachers included digital versions of print materials, online assessments, and digital communication tools to engage parents and families.

While these patterns are similar to last year's survey, further examination revealed changes in the types of technologies employed by all educators. In fact, in 2017 teachers at all experience levels reported using social media at similar rates to engage students and to interact with families. This is a change from 2016, when teachers with few years of experience reported a greater tendency to utilize social media. This might suggest that educators at all experience levels are growing increasingly comfortable in implementing these new forms of communication in their classroom.

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Although, teacher confidence does vary based on years of experience. Teachers with the most years of experience (20+) reported being the least confident to use digital technology (54%) whereas over 76% of educators with 10 years or less of experience indicated feeling confident to use digital technology. While confidence overall remains high, teachers with more years of experience are also more likely to report wanting additional support and training to help them more effectively use educational technology in the classroom.

DIGITAL READINESS

The paradoxical pattern among teacher confidence and use of digital resources was also evident in this year's data. While teachers with 10 years or less of experience use digital resources less often than more-senior educators, these less-seasoned educators report the highest confidence. Three-quarters (76%) of educators with less experience report being confident in using digital resources, whereas only 59% of teachers with more experience have the same level of confidence in their ability to use technology in the classroom. So, while it is evident that teachers are gaining skills they need to use new technology, there is still room for improvement. Educators themselves are the first ones to indicate that they would benefit from additional support and professional development around educational technology.

Professional Learning for Effective Digital Instruction

Educators are committed to providing more-effective instruction. In 2017, 86% of educators reported spending their own money on professional development. Over a third of teachers (34%) reported spending \$500 or more on a variety of different professional services. While this might be of concern to many educators,

it does show that educators feel a strong commitment to and need for professional learning in general—and more specifically now, a need for professional learning focused on effective technology implementation.

Nearly half of the teachers surveyed (48%) reported classroom coaching to be one of the services most beneficial for helping them use educational technology more effectively.

Second only to informal discussions with colleagues, educators rely on professional development to learn how to use technology impactfully. There is an opportunity for improvement here to provide educators with the training

they need and desire. Nearly a third of teachers (31%) reported that a lack of professional development focused on integrating technology into classroom instruction effectively was a major concern. While over 63% of educators find professional development and trainings from providers like HMH helpful, there is still room for improvement, specifically in providing effective strategies and updates for employing the newest educational technologies in their classrooms. To that end, job-embedded coaching ranks among the professional services most desired by educators. Nearly half of the teachers surveyed (48%) reported classroom coaching to be one of the services most beneficial for helping them use educational technology more effectively.

DIGITAL READINESS

Teachers with more than 20 years of experience continue to express the strongest desire for professional learning specifically focused on effective use of technology. Similar to 2016, 60% of teachers in this segment also cite a lack of time to plan for digital integration into lesson plans as a great concern (compared to 50% of teachers with 11 to 20 years of experience and 38% of those with 10 years or less of experience). While these veteran teachers are using technology, they desire additional help and support to ensure what they are doing is effective and benefiting students.




Top 3 Ways Educators Learn About Using Technology Effectively in the Classroom:

<p>1</p> <p>Informal discussions with fellow teachers & colleagues</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Formal professional development provided by schools & districts</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Teacher support resources included within instructional programs (e.g., point-of-use tutorials, Teacher's Editions, etc.)</p>
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While the survey assesses teachers' reports of using technology, exactly how and why they are using it in the classroom warrants further investigation. For example, could some patterns be explained by the depth to which certain digital resources are being used? Are more seasoned educators using more digital resources in the classroom simply because they are "testing out" different approaches? Or, are teachers with fewer years of experience using fewer digital resources, but employing them with greater efficiency and in a more robust manner? How does the use of digital resources complement the other approaches, lessons, and instructional activities occurring in and out of the classroom?

DIGITAL READINESS

Top 3 Ways Educators Want to Learn New Technology for Instruction:

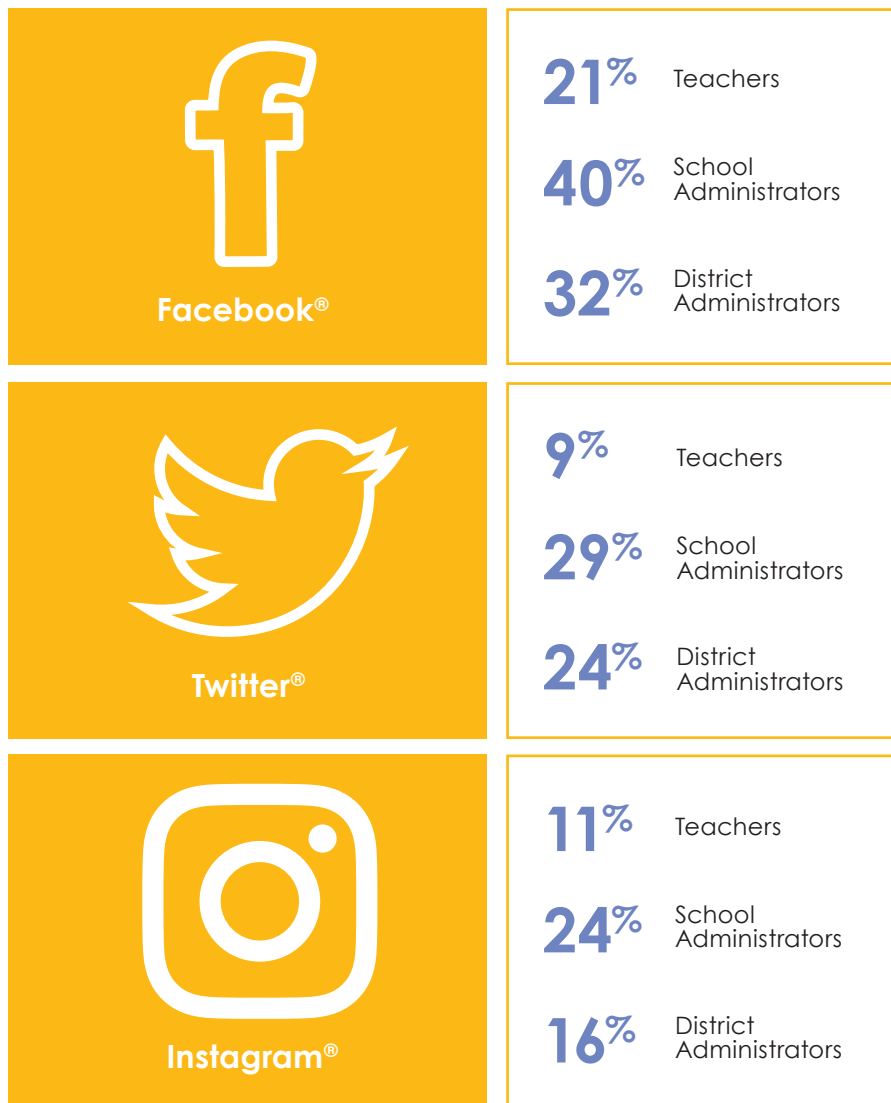
Example Lesson Plans	Online Tutorials	Classroom Coaching
		

Educators are open to using digital resources in their classrooms, as evidenced by the encouraging rate of adoption among educators of all levels of experience, grade levels, and disciplines. Diving deeper into this trend to examine the ways technology fosters student and teacher interaction in the classroom can help inform the development of professional services that will encourage even more effective use of digital resources.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Family and parental involvement in schools remains a top concern among all educators, with 55% of teachers reporting a desire for more family engagement, compared to 39% of school administrators and 41% of district administrators. Digital communication tools—particularly social media—play a vital role in communication, with 55% of educators indicating using these tools to engage with parents and families. Among all educators surveyed, about one in four educators (24%) use social media as a way to connect with students’ families outside of the classroom.

Educators Preferred Social Media Platforms to Communicate with Families



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Each school and district is unique, which means educators need to work with local communities to find the best channels to engage with families. Given the different roles that teachers and administrators have with students, the above patterns suggest certain social media platforms are better than others for different types of announcements and communications. However, getting feedback from parents and families about how they would like to engage on social media is vital to ensure the proper platforms are being utilized by all educators. Social media does not replace other forms of outreach with the community but can enhance and strengthen the connections that already exist. Social media also has the potential to connect school officials and teachers to underrepresented and hard-to-reach populations as these digital resources become more common and prevalent in society.

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Technology's impact on K-12 classrooms continues to accelerate. Although educators have **increased confidence** in their ability to implement digital resources and tools, the *HMH 2017 Educator Confidence Report* reveals they are still searching for opportunities to **deepen their competencies**, especially around the **use of formative data**, to enhance blended teaching and learning.

Now more than ever, it is critical that we listen to America's teachers — and partner with them to support **professional learning experiences** that are collaborative, personalized, and can actually make a difference in student learning. ”

—Rose Else-Mitchell
Executive Vice President
HMH Professional Services

INNOVATION IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teachers are optimistic about the power of technology to enable collaboration and communication. In addition, teachers see that digital resources will provide a means to support other advances in teaching and learning. Digital technology has already changed most aspects of education—from the classroom setup, teacher practices, student work, and assessment, to the school-day schedule. Education in the U.S. looks very different today due to the adoption and implementation of digital resources and educators understand that this metamorphosis is ongoing.

When asked to describe what the next big innovation in education would include, about one-third of teachers (32%) indicated that the classroom learning environment would be further impacted by digital technology. While teachers made several predictions as to what these changes would entail, about one in six educators made a reference to **“personalized learning.”** As digital technologies become more advanced and teachers become more comfortable using data to inform instruction, educators see a day when each student will have customized learning solutions. Ideally, technologies and student data would seamlessly blend together to support all students in meeting common standards, along with personal learning goals.

Technological advances will eventually lead to more changes in teachers’ roles, and to education in general. New and different forms of training and professional support will be necessary to enable these new technologies to take root and be successful. Planning for the future can ensure districts and their teachers are ready to adopt and use new technology with confidence.

How is your school or district preparing for the next innovation in digital education?

ABOUT THIS REPORT

About HMH

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (NASDAQ: HMHC) is a global learning company dedicated to changing people's lives by fostering passionate, curious learners. As a leading provider of Pre-K–12 education content, services, and cutting-edge technology solutions across a variety of media, HMH enables learning in a changing landscape. HMH is uniquely positioned to create engaging and effective educational content and experiences from early childhood to beyond the classroom. HMH serves more than 50 million students in over 150 countries worldwide, while its award-winning children's books, novels, non-fiction, and reference titles are enjoyed by readers throughout the world. For more information, visit www.hmhco.com.

About MDR

MDR is an integrated marketing services agency with unique digital, creative, and branding capabilities. For 46 years, MDR has led the industry in helping clients achieve their business goals by connecting with targeted audiences through research and market intelligence, a world-class school database, and multi-channel digital communities including WeAreTeachers, WeAreParents, Schooldata.com, and EdNET.

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt would like to thank the 1,217 educators in all 50 states who responded to the survey and who instill confidence in students, families, communities, and our nation every day.

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