2016

EDUCATOR
CONFIDENCE
REPORT

OVERVIEW

The 2016 Educator Confidence Report: A National Survey, 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 and understand the challenges they face to that end. This was the second administration of the survey to a diverse national cross section of 1,047 educators, and the findings reveal that overall confidence remained relatively unchanged. For example, less than half of educators surveyed report positive feelings about the state of the teaching profession, consistent with last year's results.

That said, there also seem to be areas of change that could signal improved conditions and put forth plausible solutions to the problems educators are confronting. As an example, concern by educators about teacher accountability requirements dropped by 13 percentage points year over year (from 63% to 50%), while concern about meeting the requirements of Common Core/state standards assessments dropped 11 percentage points (from 58% to 47%). And this year's survey shows more momentum toward using digital tools to enhance instruction and as a mechanism for deeper engagement. There is recognition, most markedly at the district level, that educators would benefit from more professional learning to ensure effective technology use.

While the shifts may seem more subtle than seismic, they do hold out the possibility for better communication and more collaboration in service of teaching and learning. This may be why educators continue to demonstrate optimism. In this report, we focus on overarching themes drawn from the survey results and analyze the data to identify opportunities for productive change. We seek to understand educator concerns and consider solutions that speak directly to their needs in the ultimate goal of boosting student outcomes and, hopefully, overall educator confidence.
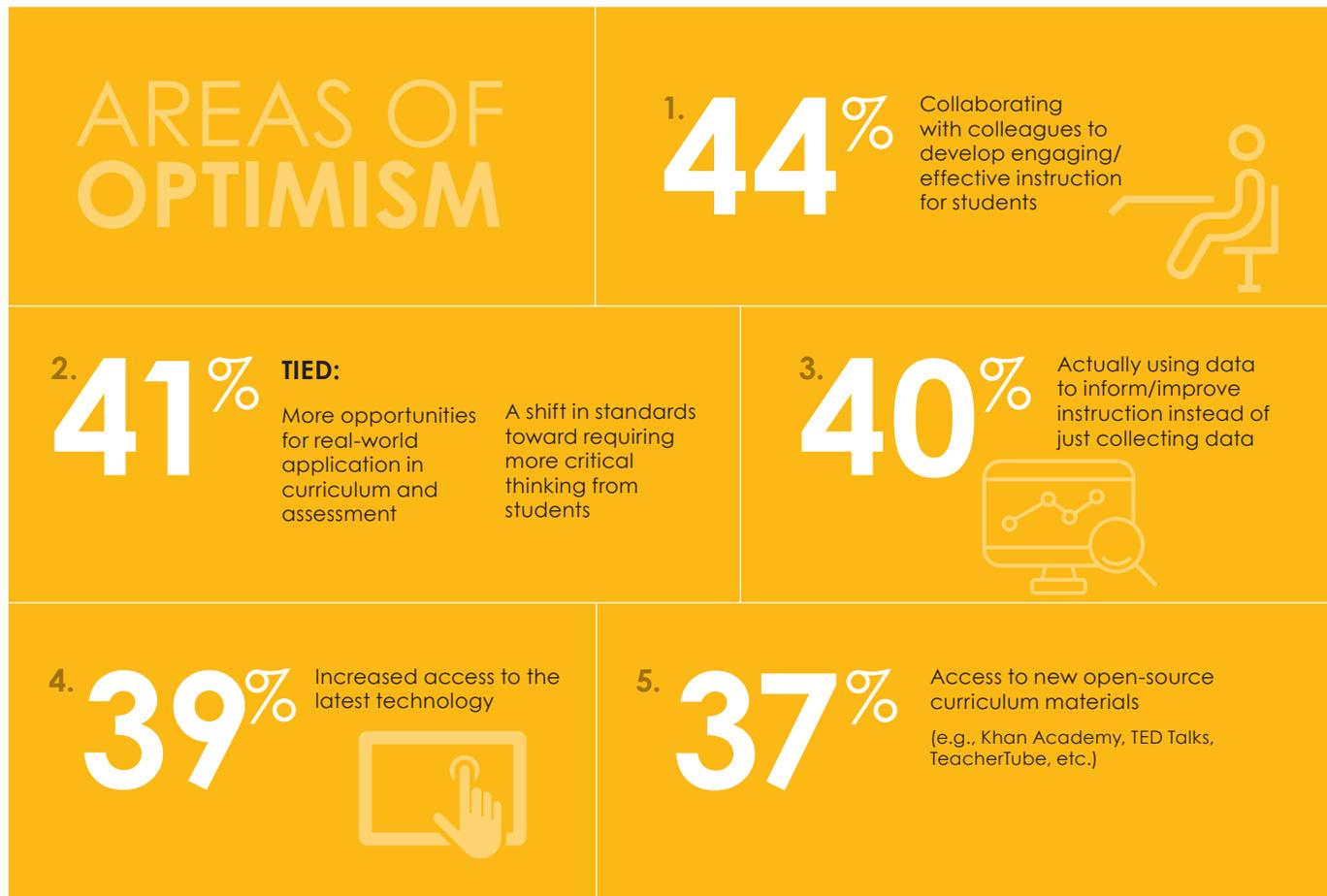
The online survey of 1,047 educators reached respondents from all 50 states and all geographic regions equally. Of those surveyed, 80% were classroom teachers and 20% were administrators. The administrative group included school principals, superintendents, curriculum heads, and chief technology and chief information officers.

The independent survey was conducted by the market research agency MDR on behalf of 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 of teachers from the K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and high school levels (325, 357, 328, 372, respectively). Math, science, social studies, English language arts and literacy, and general classroom teachers were represented in approximately equal numbers. Of teachers surveyed, 30% had from less than one year to 10 years of experience; 33% had between 11 and 20 years of experience; 37% had 20 or more years of experience.

Top 5 Points Of Educator Optimism

AREAS OF
OPTIMISM

1. **44%** Collaborating with colleagues to develop engaging/ effective instruction for students

2. **41%** **TIED:**
More opportunities for real-world application in curriculum and assessment

A shift in standards toward requiring more critical thinking from students

3. **40%** Actually using data to inform/improve instruction instead of just collecting data

4. **39%** Increased access to the latest technology

5. **37%** Access to new open-source curriculum materials

(e.g., Khan Academy, TED Talks, TeacherTube, etc.)

On par with last year, 97% of educators report using some sort of digital material in their work. Digital tools are helping educators advance collaboration and communication with each other, instruction and interaction with students, and communication with families. Analysis of data reveals some insightful and unexpected paradoxes around teachers' use of technology that amount to opportunities to address educators' digital readiness.

How Educators Use Digital Tools to Communicate

Digital Communication With Students

• To improve student engagement, teachers with 10 or fewer years of experience are using social media and online tools more often than those with 11 or more years of experience.

Digital Communication With Colleagues

• Teachers of Grades 9 through 12 (compared to teachers of other grades) and both school and district administrators are far more active on Twitter to engage with each other.

• Teachers in general favor Facebook for communication with colleagues. Administrators use Facebook and Twitter equally often to interact with colleagues. This stands to reason, as they are communicating more broadly, where teachers are more likely communicating in groups.

• In general, teachers with 10 or fewer years of experience are using more online social media to communicate with each other.

Teachers with 10 or fewer years of experience consistently use social media more often to engage with students. Given that these teachers likely skew younger, this aligns with behavioral and age trends around social media use. However, relative to their colleagues with less experience, teachers with 11 or more years of experience are, in general, using all other digital tools with greater frequency in the classroom for a variety of purposes.

With the exception of social media to engage with students during school hours, there were no other instances in the survey results where teachers with 10 or fewer years of experience use a digital tool with more regularity than do teachers with 11 or more years of experience. There are even a few cases where teachers with more than 11 years of experience use digital tools with more frequency, and those are: interactive whiteboard lessons and activities; online assessments; digital communication tools to engage with students specifically outside of school hours.

What is interesting is that teachers with 10 or fewer years of experience report the most confidence when it comes to using technology resources in an instructionally effective way. That these less experienced teachers are both the most confident and least frequent users of digital classroom tools suggests an opportunity to capitalize on their confidence and guide them toward increased incorporation of digital tools in instruction and engagement.

There is an opportunity to support teachers in the meaningful integration of digital tools. Digital tools are a means to an end, and that end is always improving learner outcomes. Through professional learning or support from and collaboration with colleagues, teachers need to recognize and focus on the most pedagogically effective uses of technology in the classroom.

DIGITAL ASSESSMENTS

A near majority of educators is using digital assessments, but comfort applying them is a different story. Thirty-nine percent of educators are using mostly or completely digital assessments, while 14% use a mix, and 42% still rely almost entirely on print assessments. Only half of respondents feel well prepared for administering end-of-year digital assessments. Administrators feel more prepared than teachers do, which highlights an opportunity to increase teacher comfort using digital assessments. Worth noting: teachers with 10 or fewer years of experience are less likely than teachers with more experience to use digital assessments.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR EFFECTIVE DIGITAL INSTRUCTION

A stunning 84% of educators reported spending their own money on professional development. Among teachers, 82% reach into their own pockets each school year to fund their professional development. 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. There is, specifically, a strong desire for more professional learning around effective technology implementation. 48% of district administrators stated this as their top need, and it's an important priority for all educators. Second only to informal discussions with colleagues, educators rely on professional development to learn how to use technology with impact.

Among teachers, the desire for professional learning around effective use of technology is strongest for teachers with more than 20 years of experience. This is not surprising, as these teachers likely skew older and may have less experience with technology. Sixty-three percent 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 49% of teachers with 11 to 20 years of experience and 40% of those with

Support for Effective Technology Use

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

1

Informal discussions with fellow teachers & colleagues

2

Formal professional development provided by schools & districts

3

Teacher support resources included within instructional programs (e.g., point-of-use tutorials, Teacher's Editions, etc.)

10 or fewer years of experience). This suggests that among the most experienced teachers, they would likely benefit from increasing their comfort level with select digital tools that can improve students' learning and make lessons more engaging.

As mentioned, the teachers with the least experience express the most comfort using digital tools, but use them with less frequency than do more experienced teachers. This paradox suggests educators could benefit from a full audit of technology use across their school or district.

▸ *Why are more experienced teachers using digital tools with more frequency, while reporting less comfort with these tools?*

▸ *Does their increased use imply it is more cursory than effective, or do they have a firmer grasp on the importance of using a range of digital tools?*

▶ *Are less experienced and more digitally savvy teachers using tools more effectively or efficiently, if even with less regularity?*

▶ *Or could they benefit from stronger alignment between lesson objectives and digital tools in the service of those goals?*

▶ *How can support and resources be applied for more strategic, systematic, and impactful technology implementation for all educators?*

In seeking answers to these questions, district and school leaders can better understand how digital tools are being used in their schools, why, when, and to what effect. Only then can districts and schools provide professional learning that is aligned to each school's unique needs, goals, and infrastructure and that aims, ultimately, to improve student outcomes.
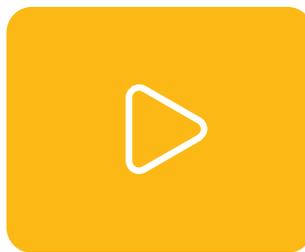
Resources for Effective Technology Use

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

| Example Lesson Plans	Classroom Videos	Online Tutorials

Above all, educators cite a need for more engagement from parents and families as a top concern. This was the top desire for teachers across all grade and experience levels, with 61% of teachers reporting a desire for more family engagement, compared to 51% of school administrators and 46% of district administrators. Interestingly, both school and district administrators use social media to engage families far more often than teachers do.

Social Media and Family Engagement

Number of Educators Engaging With Families on Social Platforms:

Facebook

33% Teachers

60% School Administrators

67% District Administrators

Twitter

16% Teachers

43% School Administrators

71% District Administrators

Blogs

14% Teachers

29% School Administrators

46% District Administrators
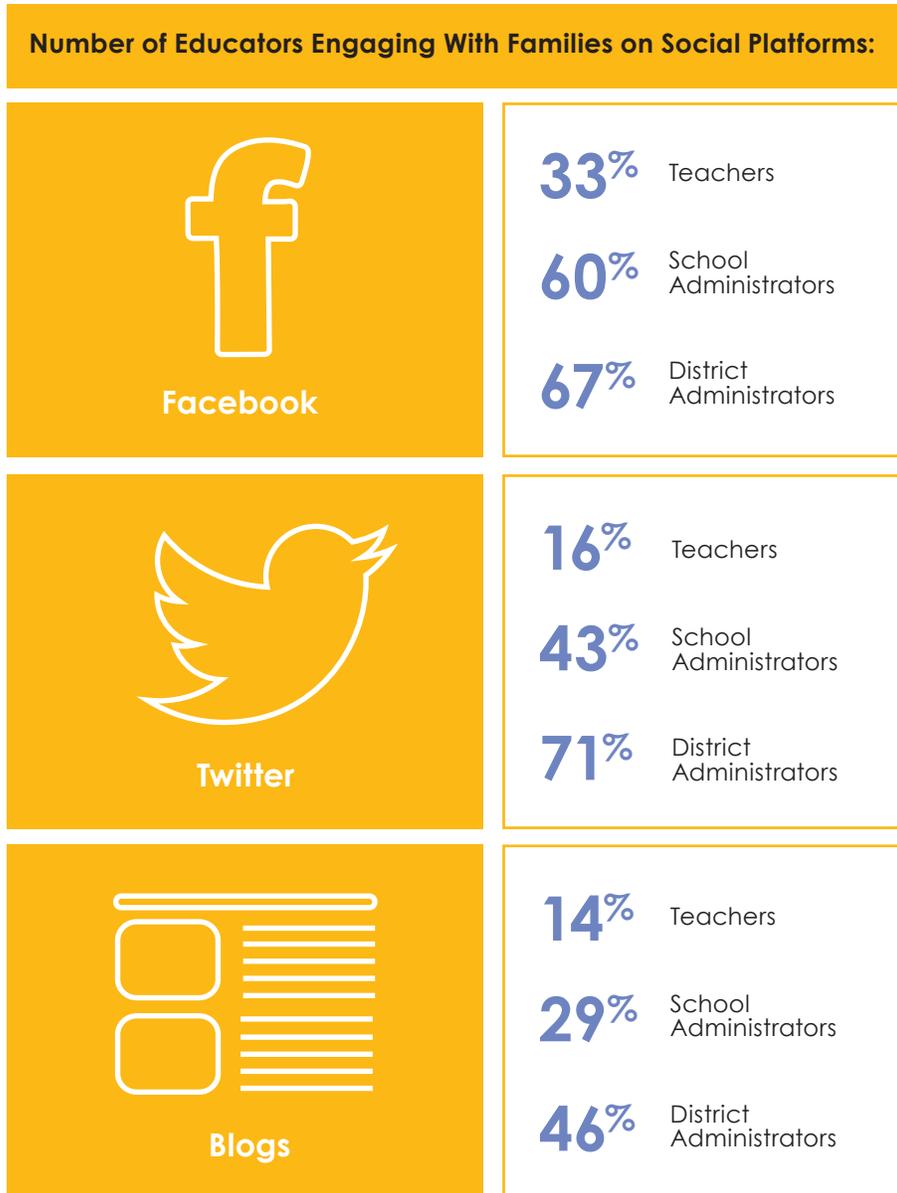
There is logic to administrators using social media with more frequency, as they tend to be more isolated than teachers. It's also plausible that teachers are more likely to seek and want more consistent in-person engagement with parents. When it comes to how to elicit more frequent and consistent engagement from parents, communication attempts would benefit from being more strategic.

▶ *What might discourage or prohibit parents from regular interaction with teachers? How can it be delivered on their terms?*

▶ *Can routinely asking parents for feedback show them that educators value their insights, thus nurturing a mutually respectful, open relationship based on honest dialogue?*

Considerations like comfort speaking English or two working parents with less available time will help inform deliberate decisions around family engagement. There is opportunity to work with educators to increase the level of strategy behind their family engagement efforts, as they actively desire improvement to this end.

> " The **Educator Confidence Report** gives us a clear snapshot into the needs of K-12 teachers in the U.S. today. This report shows that teachers' **appetite for technology in classrooms** is matched by their desire for targeted solutions to support meaningful implementation of that **technology to truly drive learning gains**.
>
> **HMH partners with thousands of school districts across the US** and this data aligns with what we hear from customers. It is critical that we listen to teachers, so we can provide them with the **effective**, **collaborative** and **personalized** professional learning opportunities they want. "
>
> – Rose Else-Mitchell,
> Executive Vice President,
> HMH Professional Services

The survey revealed that 21% of educators plan to leave the industry in the next five years, and 28% have not ruled it out. Half of the teachers considering leaving are closer to retirement age. Yet a third of teachers with less than 20 years of experience are considering leaving the field in five years. Given the age breakdown of survey respondents, which follows, this data cannot be ignored, as it indicates a shortage of younger educators.

Educators and the Future

Educators Planning to Leave the Industry in the Next Five Years:

7%

Under
Age
30

33%

Under
Age
40

57%

Under
Age
50

67%

Over
Age
50
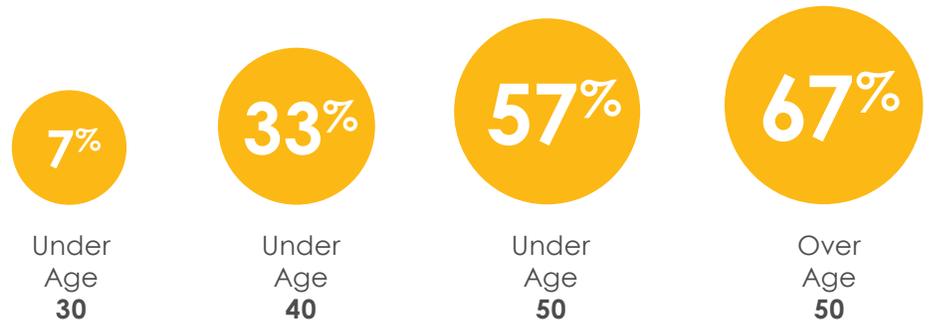
Educator confidence largely remains low and stagnant. When taken in consideration with the possibility that there are more educators considering leaving the industry than there are younger educators in the field, listening to them is of utmost urgency. If we are to increase educator confidence and encourage more educators to remain in the industry, we would be wise to hear their concerns and address them directly.

Educators are voicing their concerns and it is imperative that we address them in order to retain a population of highly engaged and well-qualified educators in our country.

How do you plan to build educator confidence and create a more positive environment in your district?

Connect with us:

learn.hmhco.com/ECR2016

A division of **Houghton Mifflin Harcourt**

HMH