



Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.  
The Learning Company™

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# 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Educator Confidence Report

# Executive Summary

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) is pleased to release the results of the fourth annual Educator Confidence Report that was conducted during the summer of 2018. Over 1,200 educators from across the country participated in the study that examined how educators perceive the state of education and are employing educational technology in the classroom. Over the past four years, optimism has gradually been increasing and there has been a steady rise in teachers' reports of implementing educational technologies. In fact, in 2018 nearly all teachers (99%) reported using digital technology in their classrooms.

While reviewing this year's data, it became apparent that there are both shining bright spots, as well as some key areas that warranted more attention and improvement. Reviewing these patterns, **three key themes** emerged that were used to organize this year's report:

## 1. Points of Optimism and Areas of Concern

Educators are feeling more optimistic (53%) about the state of the profession in 2018. Among the key factors driving this outlook are the renewed focus on critical thinking in the classroom and the use of data to inform teacher instruction. Still, there are several issues that concern educators. While in 2018 there was a slight decrease in teachers' worry about the availability of technological devices and associated professional learning in the classroom, these are still top of mind concerns. Further, this year there were increased concerns among educators on how to successfully differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all learners.

## 2. The Use and Impact of Technology

When compared to previous reports, in 2018 there was a steady increase in the different number of educational technologies being used in the nation's classrooms. In fact, 9 of the 13 technologies (69%) witnessed a significant increase in the number of teachers reporting using the tool during the previous school year. It shouldn't be a surprise that 96% of educators report that educational technology has benefited their students. In fact, eight out of ten educators agree that educational technology has empowered them to strengthen their classroom instruction.

## 3. Professional Learning and Educational Technology

Most teachers (95%) are continuously looking for support to help them improve their practice. Among the most utilized and effective resources teachers rely on to effectively implement educational technology are peer collaborations and district-/school-run formal professional learning. Still, we do find some disparities among educators with different years of experience, with more veteran teachers reporting they would like more planning time and more formal professional learning opportunities than more novice teachers.

# Executive Summary

(continued)

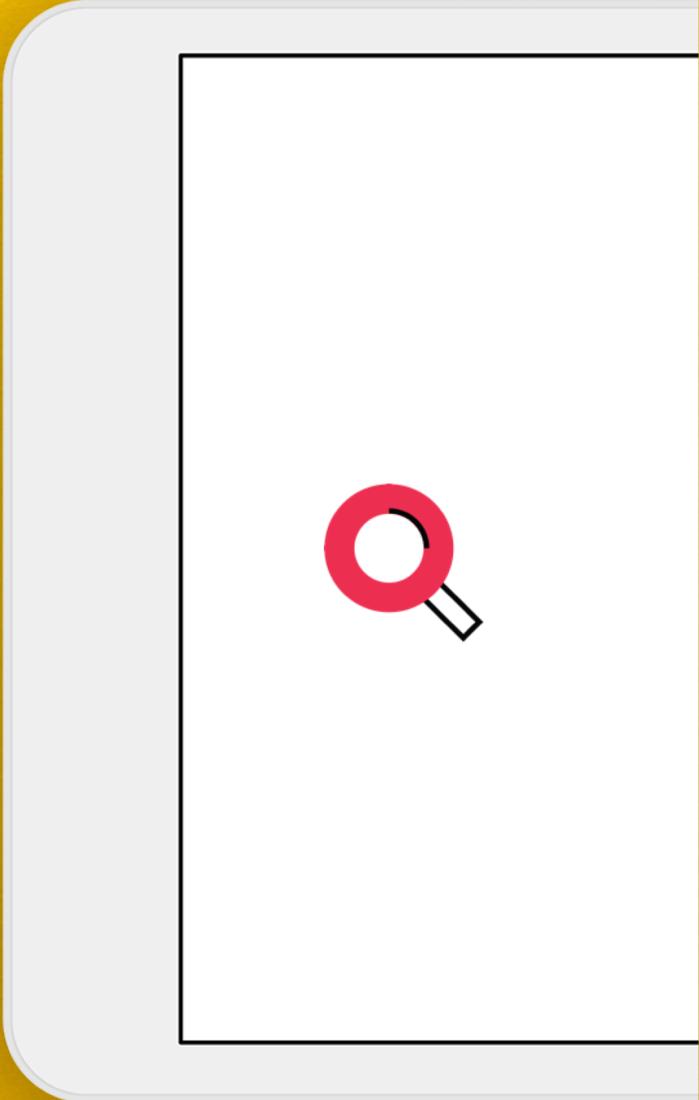
New this year is a special focus on Equity in the Classroom. HMH is committed to serving all students, with special attention to supporting districts close historic achievement gaps. Comparing educators serving predominately lower socio-economic status (SES) students to their peers in other schools, it became evident that there are stark differences in how these educators use technology in the classroom.

With many educators feeling educational technology could have a greater impact on student success in lower-SES schools it is vital that practitioners, researchers, and service providers like HMH work intently with educators in these schools to harness the power of educational technology to improve academic outcomes for all students.



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# The Survey

The 2018 Educator Confidence Report (ECR) survey was conducted online between July 20 and August 6, 2018, and included 1,281 educators from across the nation.

Survey results were analyzed across several key subgroups, including years of teaching experience and poverty level, based on the percentage of students eligible for the federal free and reduced-price lunch program (FRPL).

About 75% of the survey instrument was replicated from 2017, with about 25% of the survey being new content intended to explore current trends in education and expand upon findings from prior years.

The survey content was crafted and analyzed by HMH, in collaboration with YouGov. Survey programming, sample recruitment and data-collection monitoring was directed by MDR.

See Appendix A for more information on the methodology and how High- and Low-Poverty schools were defined.

## 2018 ECR BY THE NUMBERS

**1,281**  
TOTAL  
EDUCATORS



### YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

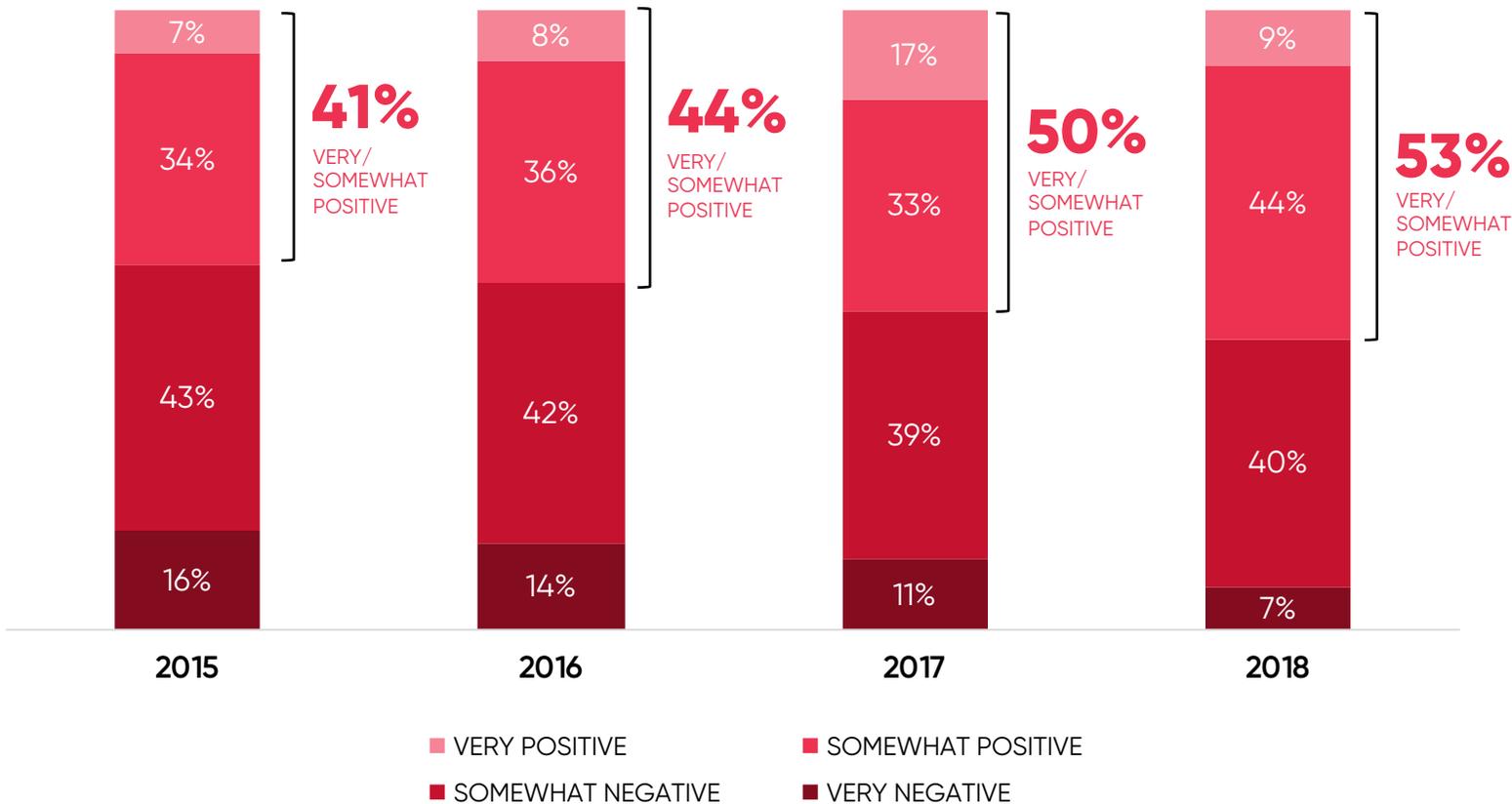




# Points of Optimism, Areas of Concern

**Overall optimism holds.** Optimism regarding the state of the teaching profession is holding steady from 2017, remaining over 25% higher than it was in 2015.

Still, about half of educators surveyed feel negatively towards the profession.



“There has been an increase of ideas and solutions to problems in my current district. Collaboration between colleagues and with the community has increased as well.”

– ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER, OHIO



## A CLOSER LOOK

Administrators are more optimistic about the state of the teaching profession than teachers.

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I am very / somewhat optimistic about the state of the teaching profession.

ADMINISTRATORS:

67%  
AGREE

vs.

TEACHERS:

50%  
AGREE

# All Three Top Points of Optimism Are Up, Yet Concerns Are Plentiful

Top bright spots include teacher collaboration on student instruction, shifts towards critical thinking, and real-world curriculum relevancy.

While keeping schools safe from intruders ranks among the top three concerns at 42% (tied with a need to differentiate instruction), the majority of educators—69%—said teacher salaries is their main concern, followed by lack of funding at 60%.



## TOP POINTS OF OPTIMISM

54% Collaborating with colleagues on student instruction (↑11 pts.)

46% A shift in standards toward critical thinking (↑7 pts.)

45% Using data (not just collecting data) to inform instruction (↑8 pts.)

## TOP CONCERNS

69% Teachers' salaries being too low

60% Lack of funding

42% Keeping schools safe from intruders\*

\* Tie for 3<sup>rd</sup> place with differentiating instruction for Special Education and other student populations

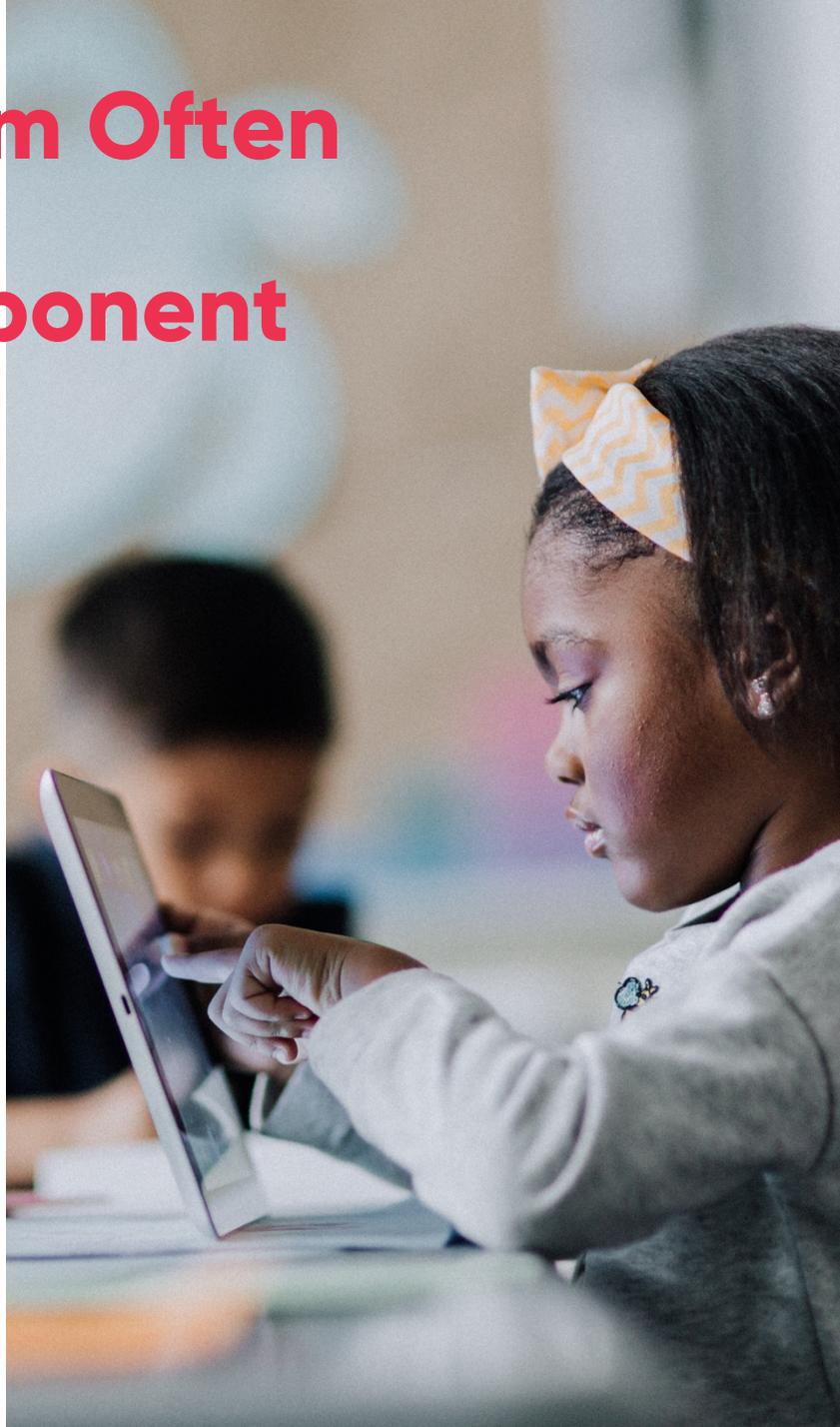
# Points of Optimism Often Include a Strong Technology Component

Within the full list of items of which educators are optimistic, strong percentages are optimistic about the impact that technology is having on a wide range of dynamics.

These include access to online learning tools and new instructional methods, along with use of social media and online communities for student and parent engagement.

**“There has been a shift in educators’ mind set; teaching students to think critically and analytically has become a more common practice. This creates a student who can think for themselves and have a deeper understanding of the concept.”**

– ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER,  
MASSACHUSETTS



## AREAS WHERE EDUCATORS ARE ESPECIALLY OPTIMISTIC

Collaborating with colleagues to develop engaging/effective instruction for students	54%
Shift in standards toward requiring more critical thinking from students	46%
Actually using data to inform/improve instruction instead of just collecting data	45%
More opportunities for real-world application in curriculum and assessment	43%
Access to new open source curriculum materials	43%
More access to online learning tools	37%
Learning & implementing new instructional methods	29%
Increased access to the latest technology	29%
Using social media/online communities to interact with parents/families	27%
Using social media/online communities to interact with other educators	25%
Using social media/online communities to improve student engagement	17%
Implementing the Common Core State Standards	11%
Impact of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)	4%
Implementing state standards	4%

# While Educators' Concerns Remain Plentiful, Many Are on the Decline

Half of the 18 potential concerns included in the survey have seen a decline relative to 2017.

Diminishing concerns are seen regarding access to technology devices and PD to help integrate technology, along with requirements related to assessments, teacher accountability, and/or ESSA.

## AREAS WHERE EDUCATORS ARE VERY CONCERNED

Teachers' salaries being too low *	69%
Lack of funding	60%
Keeping schools safe from intruders *	42%
Differentiating lessons for Special Education and students who require intervention	42%
Implications of teacher accountability requirements	38%
An over-reliance on technology to solve instructional challenges *	31%
Lack of technology devices (desktops, laptops, tablets, etc.)	29%
Lack of effective PD to help teachers implement curriculum	29%
Not enough proper training for new teachers	27%
Inadequate instructional materials	26%
Differentiating lessons for English Language Learners	26%
Lack of PD to help effectively integrate technology into instruction	24%
Lack of classroom autonomy	22%
Meeting the requirements of Common Core assessments	20%
Lack of digital technology resources *	17%
Meeting the requirements of ESSA	17%
Meeting the requirements of standardized state assessments *	10%
Protecting student privacy	5%



## A CLOSER LOOK

In sync with top teacher concerns, among the 36% of educators who do not rule out a strike in the coming years, reasons for a potential strike include:

- 1 Teacher salaries (75%)
- 2 Funding policies (39%)
- 3 Lack of respect from elected officials (36%)
- 4 Concerns about student and teacher safety from violence (31%)

41%

**SAY SCHOOL SAFETY ISSUES  
HAVE NOT BEEN ADEQUATELY  
ADDRESSED IN THEIR SCHOOL**

While a slim majority would like to see an increased police presence in their school/district,

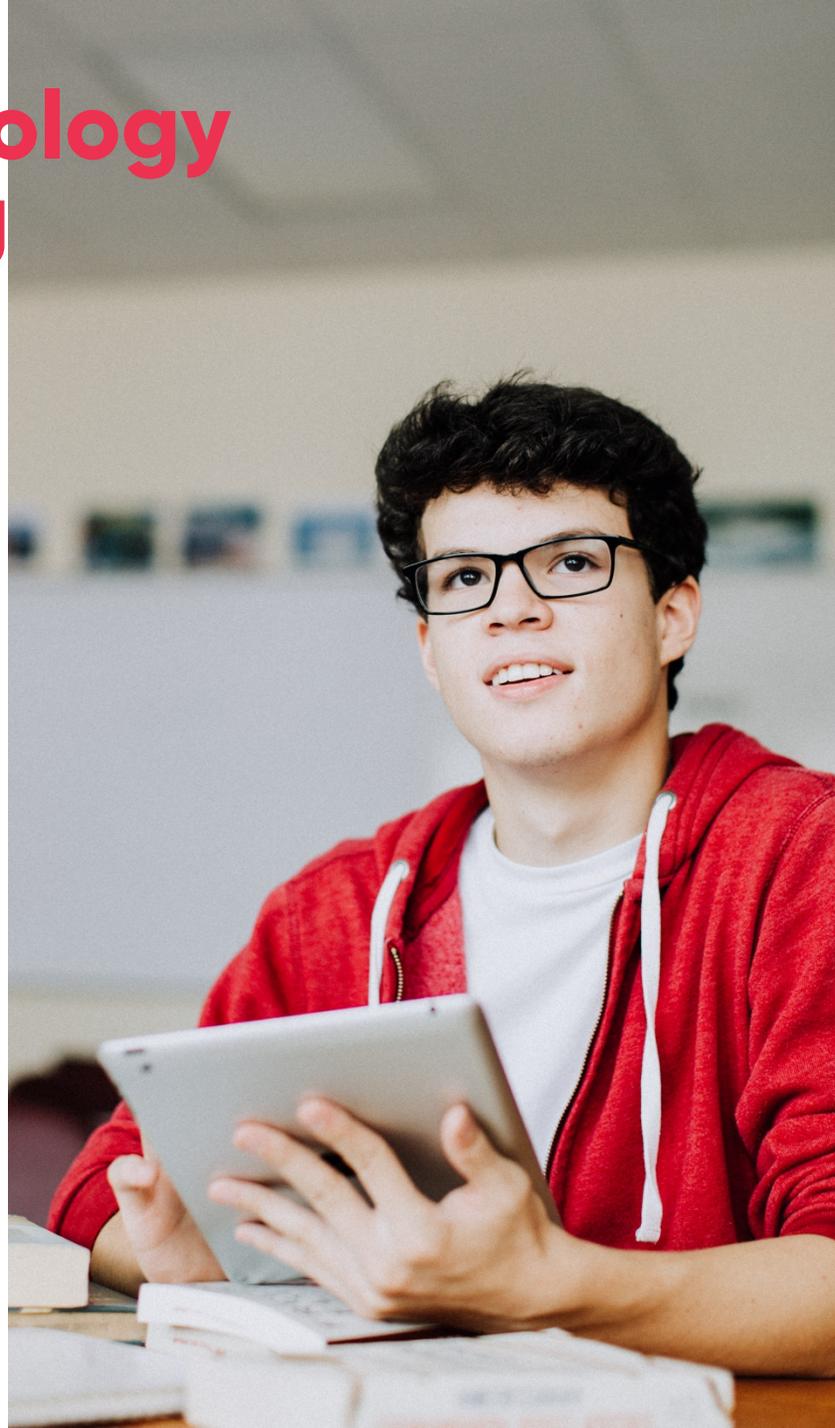
ONLY **1/4**

**SUPPORT TEACHERS AND  
ADMINISTRATORS BEING  
ALLOWED TO CARRY GUNS.**

# Barriers to Technology Use Are Declining

Educational technology is a key component of many points of optimism—from teacher collaboration and data-driven instruction to student engagement and opportunities for deeper learning.

And while barriers to successful, instructionally effective use of technology still exist—with lack of time to integrate digital materials into instruction the most common obstacle—key barriers related to hardware and quality digital content are waning.



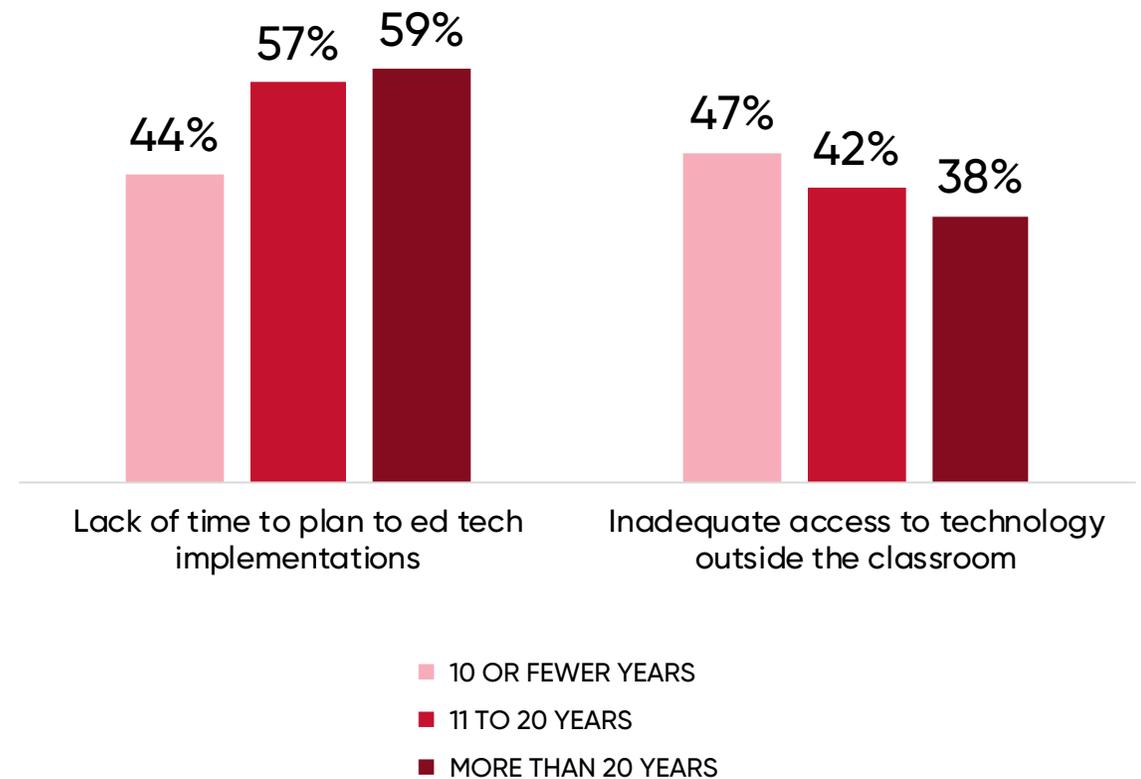
## BARRIERS TO MORE SUCCESSFUL, INSTRUCTIONALLY EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

Lack of time to plan for integration of digital resources into instruction	52%
Inadequate student access to devices/internet outside the classroom	42%
Lack of devices for students in the classroom	42%
Device/network unreliability	35%
Lack of technology-focused professional development	33%
Lack of digital curriculum-focused professional development	30%
Discomfort with using unfamiliar technology tools and resources	27%
Lack of connectivity/bandwidth at schools	26%
Uncertainty about where to find/how to evaluate the right digital resources to meet my needs	23%
Lack of devices for teachers	22%
Use of technology in ways that weaken the relationship between students and teachers	21%
Use of technology as a replacement for teachers	19%
Lack of high-quality digital instructional content/resources	19%



## A CLOSER LOOK

**TEACHERS WITH MORE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE ARE MOST LIKELY TO REPORT:**



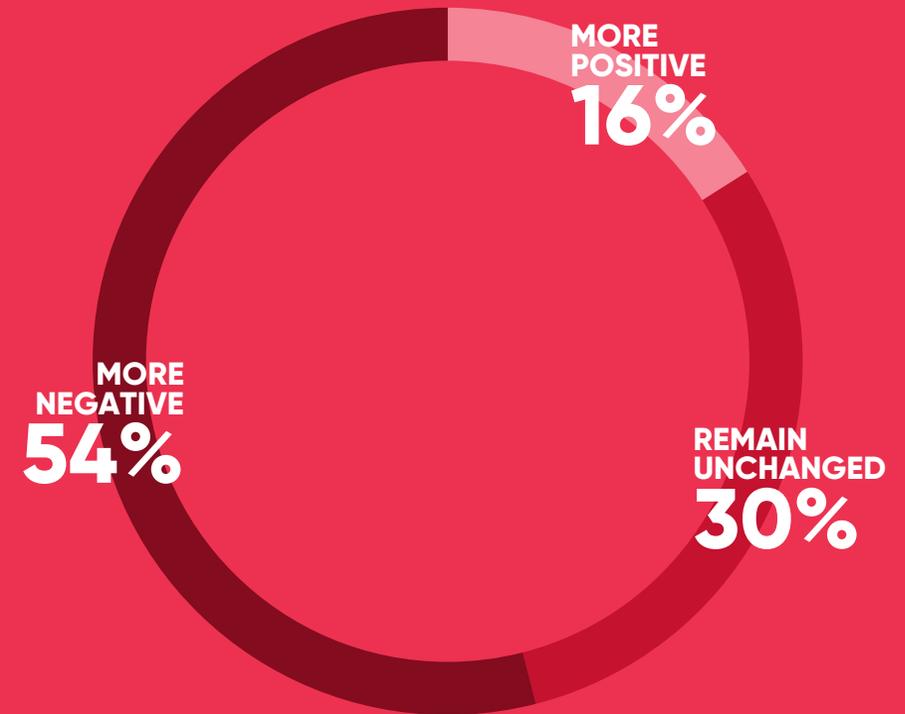
# Despite Positive Trends, Many Educators Report Viewing the Profession More Negatively

Key themes among the 54% of educators whose views have become more negative include lack of respect for the profession, salaries, frustration over expectations of what can be accomplished in a day, and dissatisfaction with administrators, to name a few.

For the 16% whose views have improved, themes include a positive change in individual situations (like a change of schools or having more confidence in their abilities), increased access to and meaningful use of technology, increased autonomy, and excitement about a greater focus on deeper learning for students.

## CHANGE IN FEELINGS ABOUT THE TEACHING PROFESSION COMPARED TO FIVE YEARS AGO

Among educators with 5+ years of experience

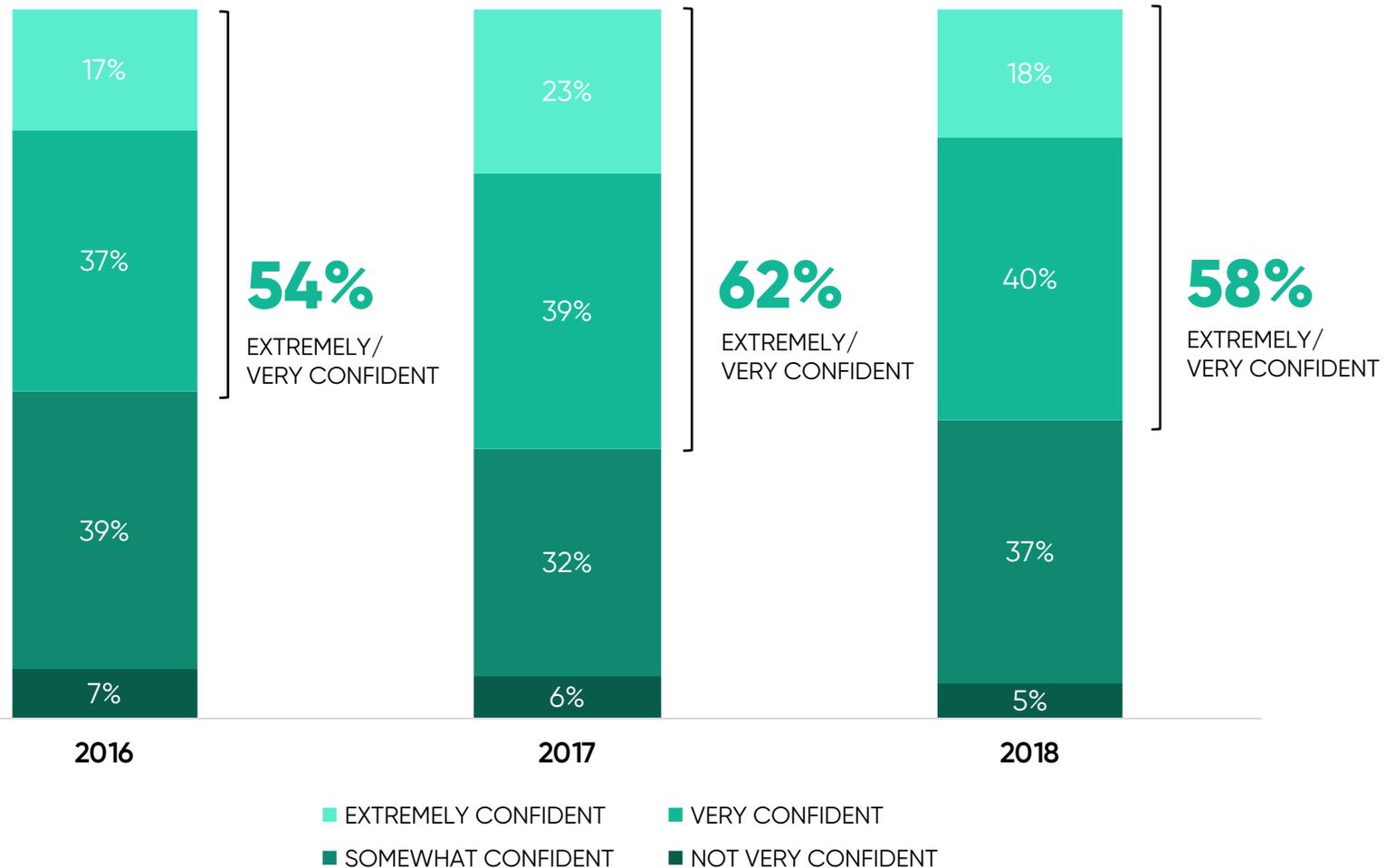




# Use & Impact of Educational Technology

Teacher confidence is keeping pace with technology.

Despite the always-evolving educational technology landscape, teacher confidence in using educational technology is holding steady: 58% say they are extremely or very confident in their ability to use ed tech in instructionally effective ways.





## A CLOSER LOOK

Confidence in using ed tech in instructionally effective ways is highest among teachers with the fewest years of teaching experience and declines as years of experience increases.

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% of Teachers Who Feel Extremely or Very Confident in Their Ability to Use Ed Tech in Instructionally Effective Ways by Years of Teaching Experience:

10 or fewer years

64%

11 to 20 years

58%

More than 20 years

49%

# Teacher Use of Digital Resources & Tools Is Up

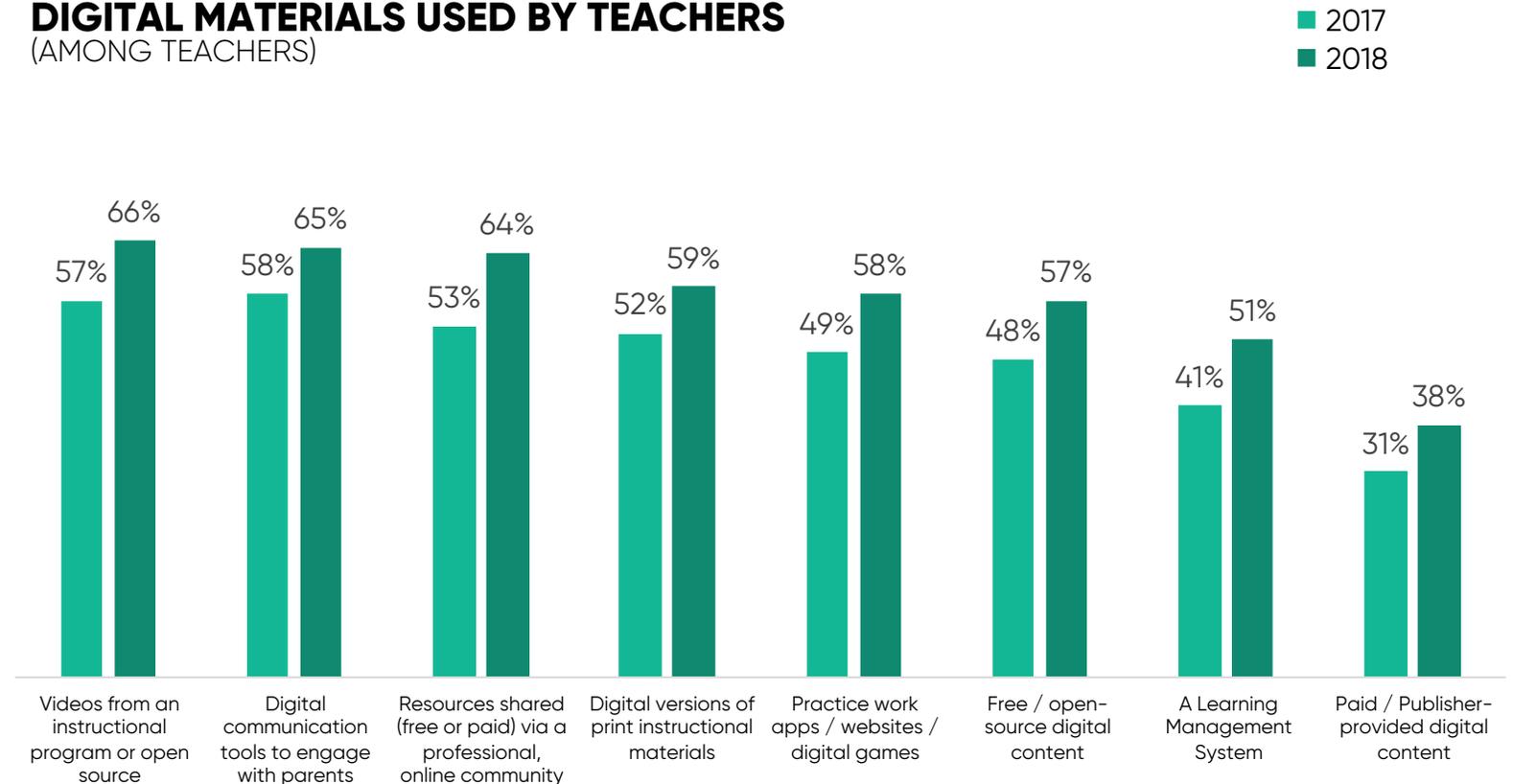
Confidence in using technology effectively may be holding, at least in part, due to increased use of educational technology tools among teachers.

Nine of the 13 tools asked about in the survey show significant increases in the percentage of teachers using each compared to 2017.

**Tools and resources that are holding steady from 2017 include:**

- Online assessments (51%)
- White board lessons & activities (47%)
- Digital communication tools to engage with students after school hours (43%)
- Online social/online communities for student learning (19%)

## DIGITAL MATERIALS USED BY TEACHERS (AMONG TEACHERS)



# Use of Social Media and Sharing Platforms Is Strong

A majority of educators use social media, apps, and/or online communities for parent engagement, peer collaboration, and instructional content.

And they have many options from which to choose, from generic tools (like email), to mainstream apps (like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest) to sites and apps designed specifically for educators (like Remind, ClassDojo, Khan Academy, and Teachers Pay Teachers).



HOW DO TEACHERS USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

80%

EXPLORE TEACHING & INSTRUCTIONAL CONTENT

74%

COMMUNICATE/INTERACT WITH STUDENTS' FAMILIES

72%

INTERACT WITH OTHER EDUCATORS

# Nearly All Educators (96%) Have Seen Benefits from Using Educational Technology

The most common benefits include improved student engagement, ability to differentiate, and increased opportunities for students to learn anywhere at any time.

Second tier benefits experienced include increased student collaboration along with improved achievement. This is likely due to early indicators of student struggles provided by digital learning reporting tools, improved parent/family engagement, and time savings in the delivery of instruction.

**“Technology has allowed me to deliver focused, timely, differentiated hands-on lessons to my students in a variety of ways. It has allowed me to supplement my current practice as well as reinforce student learning and provide timely feedback to students.”**

- ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER,  
MASSACHUSETTS

## BENEFITS EDUCATORS HAVE EXPERIENCED FROM USE OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Improved student engagement with learning	63%
Improved ability to deliver differentiated, individualized instruction	52%
Improved ability for students to access instructional content anytime/anywhere	50%
Time savings in workflows and processes (like entering grades, tracking student growth, etc. )	44%
More student collaboration opportunities	37%
Continuous feedback loops where student learning progress is captured, teacher reports are generated	35%
Earlier indicators to know when a student is struggling or experiencing a skills gap	34%
Improved parent/family engagement	33%
Time savings in delivering instruction	33%
Improved student achievement	32%
Improved student/teacher connections	25%
Greater ability to predict student performance on summative tests	20%

# Technology Empowers Teachers

Regardless of how long they have been teaching, a majority of teachers say technology has empowered them to strengthen their practice in ways they would not otherwise be able to do. Administrators concur, with 82% agreeing with this sentiment.

At the same time, educators feel that technology has not yet accomplished what they believe it could in terms of streamlining workflows and processes.

**"Technology allows students to reach new potentials and provides the opportunity to support thinking and engagement."**

- ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER,  
ARIZONA

TECHNOLOGY HAS EMPOWERED ME TO STRENGTHEN MY TEACHING PRACTICE . . .



. . . HOWEVER AS A PROFESSION, WE ARE NOT FULLY LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE WORKFLOWS AND MAKE PROCESSES MORE EFFICIENT



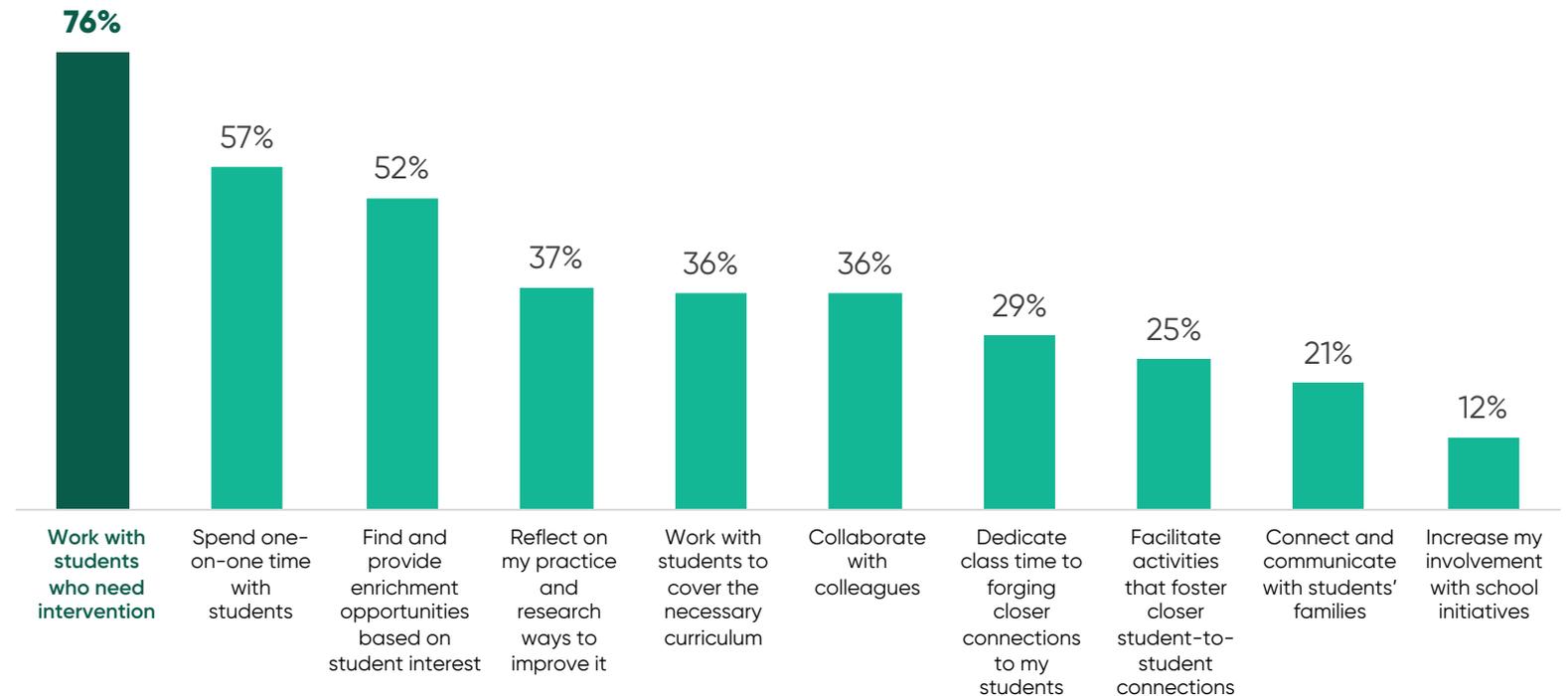
# Students Win When Technology Saves Teachers' Time

If potential time savings from technology were fully realized, students would be the big winners. A majority of teachers would spend their newfound time working with students who need intervention, working one on one with students in general, and searching for ways to provide personalized learning experiences based on student interest.

*"With the use of technology . . . I am able to accomplish more in less time, all the while maintaining active communication with students, parents, and staff."*

- HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER,  
CALIFORNIA

## WAYS TIME WOULD BE SPENT IF ED TECH GAVE TEACHERS TIME BACK (AMONG TEACHERS)



# Technology and the Student-Teacher Relationship: It's All about Balance

Of the 80% of teachers who agree that technology has empowered them to strengthen their practice, one in four, based on open-ended responses, say this due to technology's role in helping them connect with, engage, and motivate students.

At the same time, just over half worry that technology is hindering student-teacher relationships.

*"I think there is a fine balance between technology being a benefit and technology being a detriment in education. It is to be used as a TOOL and a RESOURCE, not the only source used to teach."*

- ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER, MISSOURI

## TOP REASONS EDUCATORS SAY TECHNOLOGY HELPS STRENGTHEN THEIR PRACTICE

(Among the 80% who feel this way)

25% Connecting with/engaging/motivating students

22% Access to additional resources/a wider variety of content

17% Access to ideas/improve my practice/enhance my skills

*Above data is from coded open-ended responses.*

## I WORRY THAT A FOCUS ON USING TECHNOLOGY IS AT THE EXPENSE OF PERSONAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN STUDENTS AND TEACHERS



■ STRONGLY AGREE  
■ AGREE



# Professional Learning & Ed Tech

Lifelong learners rely on many sources to support effective use of technology. Nearly all educators (99%) use resources to support their use of educational technology, with collaboration and self-reliance being the most common courses of action.

Self-guided research is trending up significantly, as is use of social media and informal discussions with colleagues.

96%  
AGREE:

Teachers need to be  
lifelong learners

<b>Informal discussions with fellow teachers/colleagues</b> (↑ 5 pts.)	<b>70%</b>	Training resources offered by educational content providers/publishers	<b>37%</b>
<b>Formal professional development provided by my school/district</b> (↑ 15 pts.)	<b>64%</b>	Professional Learning Communities/Communities of Practice (offered by external organizations)	<b>29%</b>
<b>Social media/online communities to support personal learning networks (e.g., Pinterest, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)</b>	<b>51%</b>	Formal professional development opportunities offered by external organizations (e.g., ASCD, ISTE, SXSW EDU, ICLE)	<b>23%</b>
Professional Learning Communities/Communities of Practice (provided by state, district, or school) (↑ 9 pts.)	<b>39%</b>	Industry publications/journals/newsletters (e.g., "Accomplished Teacher", EdWeek)	<b>19%</b>
Teacher support resources included/embedded within my instructional program	<b>38%</b>	My own self-guided research (other than the options listed above) (↓ 5 pts.)	<b>13%</b>



96%  
AGREE:

I am always looking for ways to improve my teaching practice

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"Technology has given me the opportunity to learn from so many other teachers around the world. Often what they post gives me inspiration for something in my classroom or just reassures me that I'm on the right track."

– SECONDARY ELA TEACHER,  
SOUTH DAKOTA

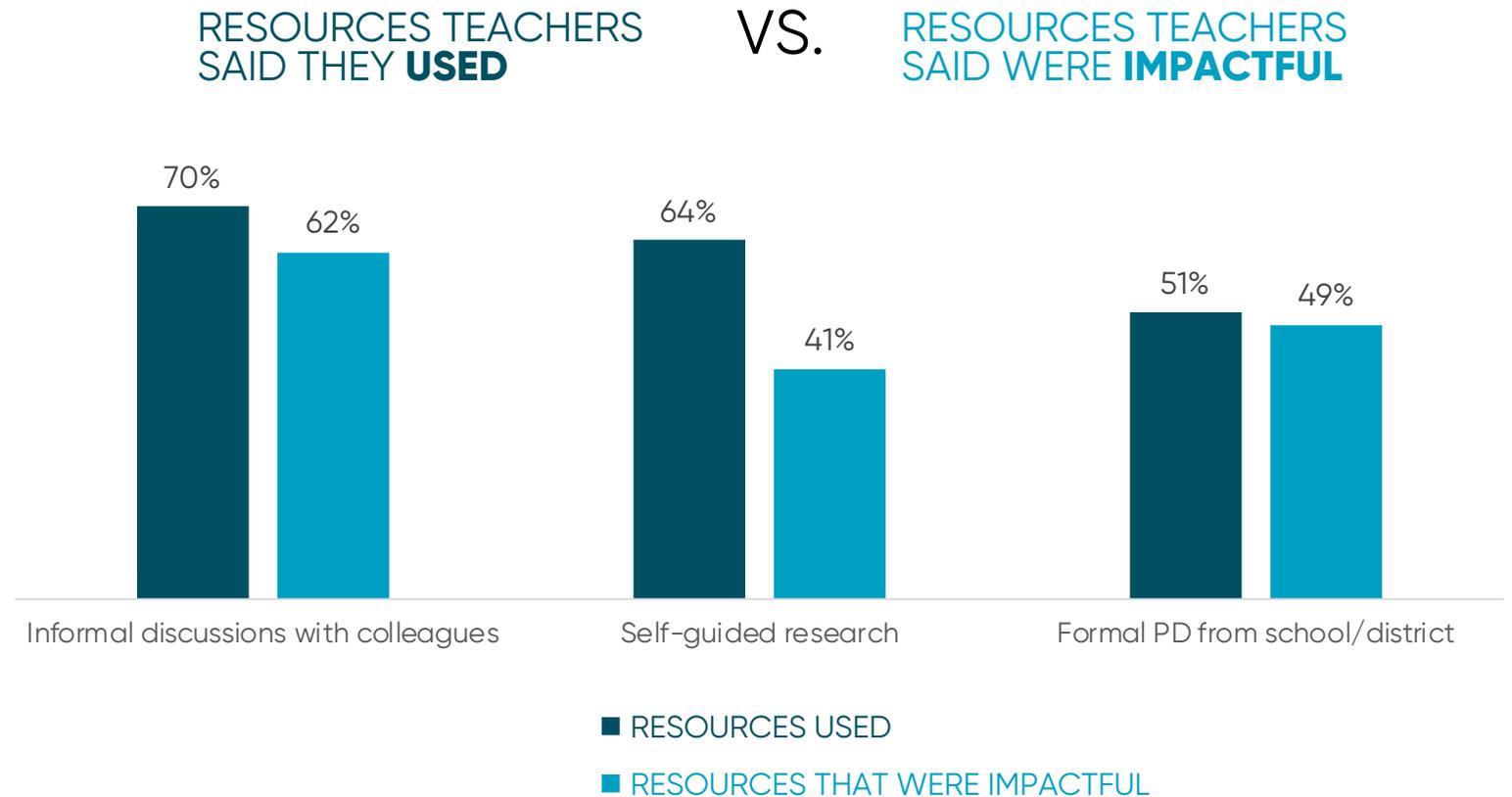
# Peer Collaboration Is the Most Common and Most Impactful Way to Learn about Ed Tech

Informal discussions with colleagues are both the most commonly used and the most impactful educator resource for supporting the use of technology.

This is not the case for self-guided research: while it is the #2 most common activity—with nearly three in four educators saying they rely on self-guided research—only four in ten rate this activity as among the most impactful.

**“I have taken using technology into my own hands. I will [do this] as much as I can and won't wait for our tech department to provide support.”**

– SECONDARY SCIENCE TEACHER,  
IOWA



# Equity: Technology in High-Poverty Schools

## Lack of Access Is the Main Barrier for High-Poverty Schools

Educators in High-Poverty Schools are not able to realize the benefits of technology to the same degree as their peers in Low-Poverty schools. While situations vary, the main barriers to using technology in instructionally effective ways is sheer lack of access to devices—both in and out of school—along with lack of internet access at home.

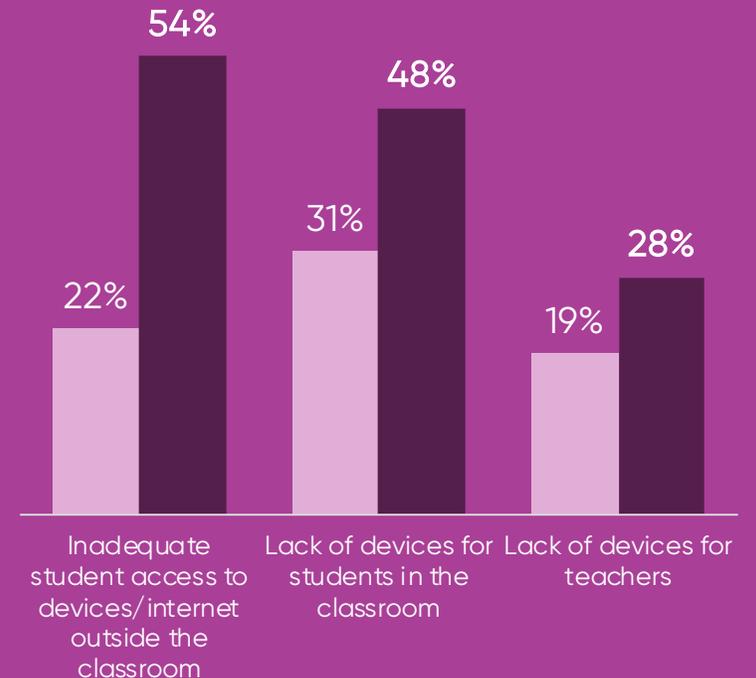
“Technology is great but unfortunately we don't have enough devices in the classroom to allow all students to use them. Also many of our students do not have Internet access at home. And our connection at school is sometimes slow.”

– TEACHER,  
HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOL, TEXAS



## BARRIERS TO MORE SUCCESSFUL, INSTRUCTIONALLY EFFECTIVE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

■ LOW-POVERTY  
■ HIGH-POVERTY



# Use of Digital Resources Differs According to Poverty Status of Schools

■ LOW-POVERTY  
■ HIGH-POVERTY

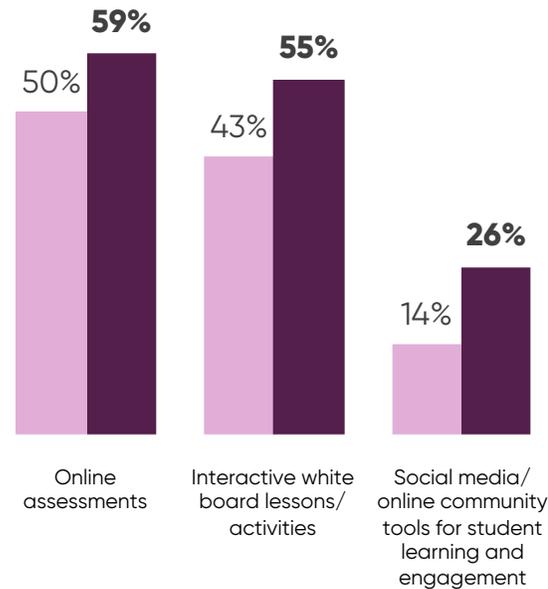
Teachers in High-Poverty schools are less likely to use several key types of digital resources, including tools to connect with parents and students, apps, websites and games to support skills practice, and Learning Management Systems (LMS).

Perhaps because these teachers have less access to digital learning and communication tools, they are more likely to use social media or online community tools for student learning and engagement. Similarly, while they have less access to apps, websites, and games for learning, they are more likely to be using interactive white board lessons.

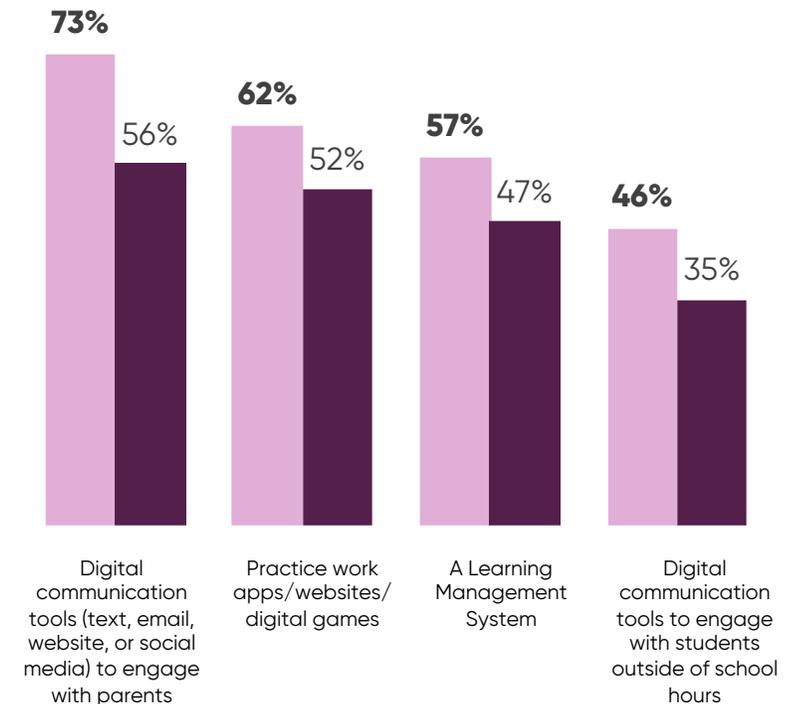
**“I can differentiate for students with varying abilities based on programs that assess each student and assign tasks accordingly. It frees up time for me to work with particular students who need interventions and extra help.”**

– ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER,  
HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOL, PENNSYLVANIA

HIGH-POVERTY MORE LIKELY TO USE . . .



HIGH-POVERTY LESS LIKELY TO USE . . .



Note: There are no significant differences in use of videos, resources from online communities, digital versions of print materials, open-source digital content, adaptive games and content, or paid, publisher-provided content.

# Technology May Make a Greater Impact in High-Poverty Schools

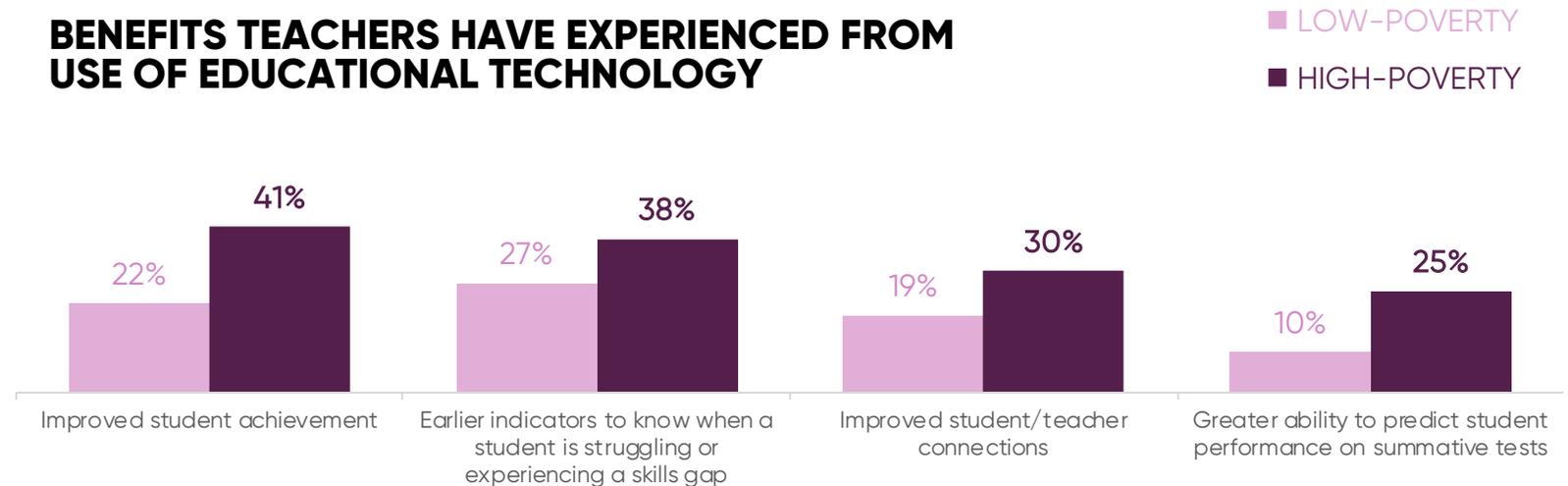
Despite less access to technology overall, educators in High-Poverty schools are more likely to have experienced several key benefits from educational technology, including improved student achievement, earlier indicators of student learning gaps, improved connections between teachers and students, and greater ability to predict summative assessment results.

Additionally, while about eight in ten teachers agree that education technology has helped improve their practice, teachers in High-Poverty schools are much more likely than others to strongly agree that this is the case.

*“My personal use of technology has strengthened my professional practices immensely, especially using Facebook community groups to connect with other teachers and watching other teachers on YouTube.”*

– TEACHER, HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOL, OREGON

## BENEFITS TEACHERS HAVE EXPERIENCED FROM USE OF EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY



## TECHNOLOGY HAS EMPOWERED ME TO STRENGTHEN MY TEACHING



# CONCLUSION: The Personal Connection

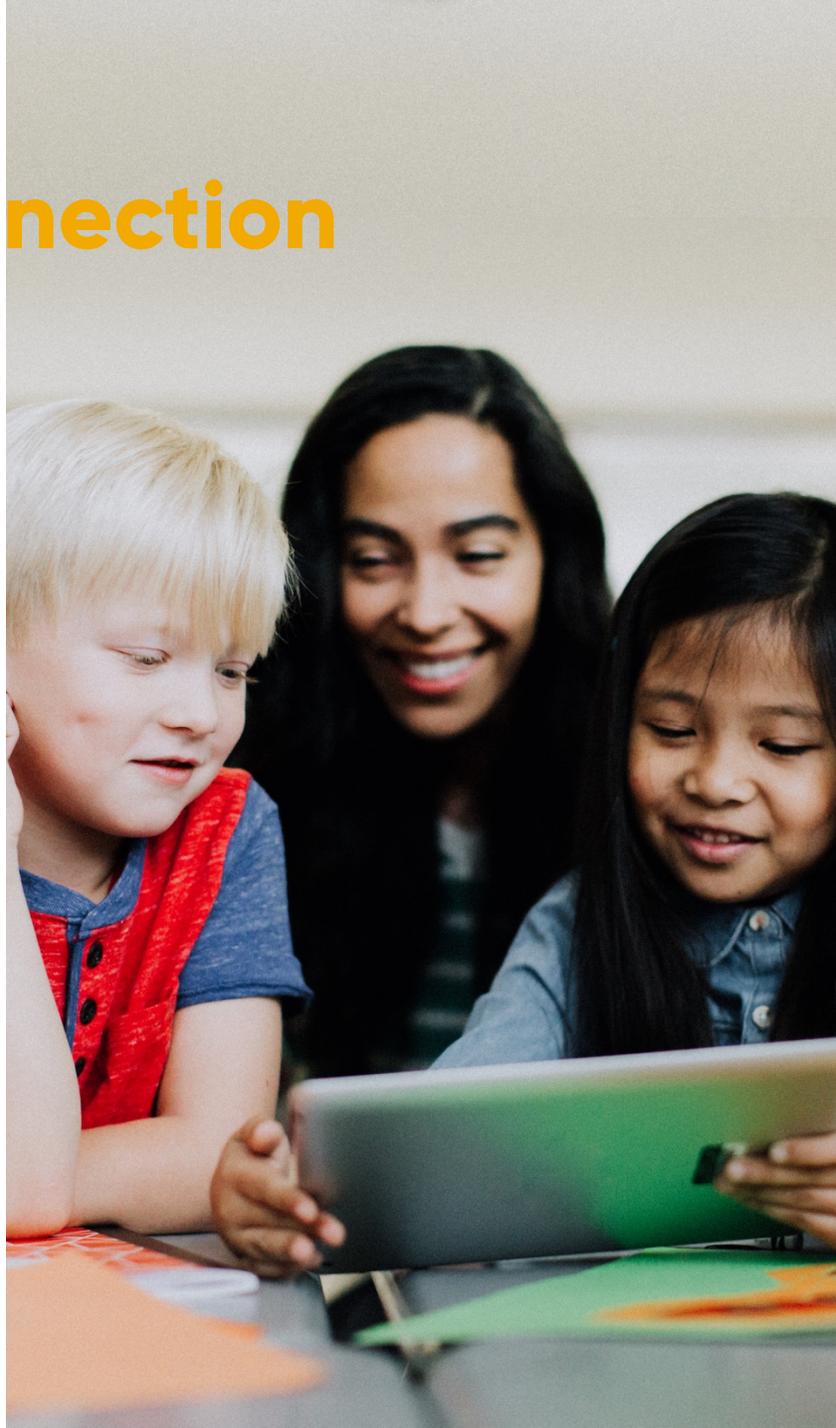
No matter the advancements being made—deeper student learning, increases in teacher collaboration, use of technology for teaching and learning, along with improved workflows and efficiency—personal relationships remain at the heart of learning.

This is especially important in a time where safety concerns are high and educators feel increasing pressure to address and solve problems many feel are out of their control.

It's the intersection of educators, students, and families that sets the stage and creates the foundation needed to fully maximize the potential of each child. Educators fully understand this and look to policy makers, educational resource providers, and society at large to support them in this mission.

**“The most important thing is the relationship created between teachers and their students in order to engage and motivate them to make an impact in their future.”**

— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER,  
TEXAS



**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN THE LEARNING LANDSCAPE IS THE HUMAN CONNECTION A TEACHER MAKES WITH A STUDENT**



**AS EDUCATORS, WE NEED THE SUPPORT AND ENGAGEMENT OF STUDENTS' FAMILIES TO HELP ENSURE STUDENT SUCCESS**



■ STRONGLY AGREE

■ AGREE

# APPENDIX A: Methodology Details

- The survey sample was sourced from MDR's database of U.S. educators. Emails were sent to a sample of teachers and school and district administrators who were invited to participate in the research. The sponsor of the research was not known to invitees.
- Once all responses were collected, the sample was balanced to reflect the historical Educator Confidence Report 80/20 mix of teachers and administrators. This allows the survey to be tracked year over year, despite this year's data collection period reflecting a greater proportion of teachers to administrators.
- The sample was further weighted to reflect national norms, per the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), regarding regional representation, mix of grade(s) taught, and teacher gender.
- Poverty levels were defined in accordance with NCES standards which states: "the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) under the National School Lunch Program provides a proxy measure for the concentration of low-income students within a school."
- Using this indicator, we placed educators from public schools into poverty categories by FRPL eligibility. High-Poverty schools are defined as public schools where more than 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL, while Low-Poverty schools are those where 25.0 percent or less of the students are eligible for FRPL. In this report, we focus on comparing these two groups. Generally speaking, findings among educators in Mid-High Poverty schools (those where 50.1 to 75.0 percent of the students are eligible for FRPL) and Mid-Low Poverty schools (where 25.1 to 50.0 percent of students are eligible for FRPL) fall in between the findings among those of High- and Low-Poverty schools.  
[https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator\\_clb.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_clb.asp)

