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Contact:
Amber Taylor
703-201-4893
ataylor@tomorrow.org

Nearly Half of All Teachers Now Use Games as Part of Instruction, Marking a Big Jump Since 2010

Teachers, Parents, Administrators Catching Up to Student Use of Games for Learning

Washington, DC – The use of game-based environments and online apps among teachers has doubled in the last six years, according to the national Speak Up survey released today. In 2010, just 23 percent of teachers reported using games, compared to 48 percent in 2015. Use of online videos among teachers has also jumped from 47 percent in 2010 to 68 percent in 2015.

These findings are detailed in a new national Speak Up report: *From Print to Pixel: The role of videos, games, animations and simulations within K-12 education*. The findings come from the annual online Speak Up surveys conducted by Project Tomorrow. More than 500,000 students, educators and parents responded to the surveys last fall. Report: www.tomorrow.org/speakup/SU15AnnualReport.html

“Many more schools are demonstrating greater use of digital content, tools and resources today than six years ago and we believe that the increasing adoption of interactive, visual media in the classroom by teachers is the driver for much of that change,” said Julie Evans, CEO of Project Tomorrow. “The explosion in teacher interest and usage of videos and game-based learning could be a harbinger of a new awakening for digital learning.”

Principals and other administrators have long talked about the struggle to get teachers to change their practice to accommodate digital learning. Despite the growth reported this year, that is still a challenge in many schools. For example, more than half (54 percent) of principals said motivating teachers to change their practice is a top challenge.

Students have been using social media and interactive, visual media outside of school to self-direct learning and even to learn about careers for years. Quite often their tool of choice is a mobile device – underscoring that learning can happen anytime, anywhere, anyplace when students have access to devices and the Internet.

“As parents and educators become more familiar with mobile devices and digital content to improve their own work, we’ve seen that they are increasingly using mobile technology as a tool for their children and students to learn differently,” said Angela Baker, senior manager of Government Affairs of Qualcomm Incorporated, one of the sponsors of Speak Up. Baker leads Qualcomm’s Wireless Reach efforts and collaborates with Project Tomorrow on education programs that utilize mobile technology. “Mobile devices with Internet connectivity create educational opportunities for students anytime, anywhere.”

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Speak Up has been asking teachers, students and parents to design their “ultimate school” by selecting a variety of tools and strategies for several years now. Nearly half (48 percent) of teachers included online or digital education games in their “ultimate” school, which is an increase from 34 percent in 2010. Among students in 2015, online or digital education games were selected by more than 50 percent of high school students and more than 60 percent of middle and elementary school students. The percent of parents adding games to their “ultimate” school doubled between 2010 and 2015, from just 19 percent to more than 40 percent.

When school and district administrators were asked in 2015 if they are implementing game-based learning to enhance student achievement and teacher effectiveness, nearly half said they have implemented this approach, but 38 percent of school administrators and 47 percent of district administrators said they have not and they have no plans to do so.

As the use of these tools expands in schools, there are new challenges that need to be addressed. There has been an increase in teachers looking for professional development opportunities from their schools and districts to support their use of digital content in the classroom. For example, in 2012 (the first year Speak Up asked about professional development and digital content), 26 percent of teachers said they were looking for professional development to better use games within instruction. In 2015, that number had jumped to 50 percent. Teachers’ expectations may not be fulfilled however. Among district administrators, just 27 percent said they were providing their teachers with instruction on game-based learning this year.

Teachers are also looking for guidance on approved and curated content for instruction. One-quarter of teachers said they are looking for curated sets of resources organized by grade level and content area to better support their integration of digital content. Others are looking for planning time to work with colleagues (57 percent), in school coaching on how to find and use high quality digital resources (36 percent) and online tools that help organize and keep track of digital resources (28 percent).

“There’s no shortage of content or tools -- the challenge and the opportunity is effectively discovering, curating and using these resources to enable student learning in exciting new ways,” said Stephanie Weeks, Vice President of K-12 Strategy at Blackboard, one of the sponsors of Speak Up. “The results of this survey point to the same trends that we have observed: students, teachers, districts and parents want innovative, blended learning experiences more than ever before, requiring change both inside and outside the classroom. We expect to see this trend continue, and our K-12 New Learning Experience Platform is focused on enabling teachers and school districts as they undergo this change.”

“This increased emphasis on digital learning in school is also shining a brighter light on the need to address the quality of students’ out-of-school connectivity, otherwise know as ‘the homework gap,’” said Evans. “Thirty-five percent of students in this year’s survey said they go to school early or stay late to access the school’s internet, 24 percent go to public libraries and 19 percent said they go to fast food restaurants and cafes for internet access. Nearly 70 percent of teachers told us they are reluctant to assign homework that requires Internet access because they are worried about this ‘gap.’” More on Speak Up’s Homework Gap findings can be found here: <http://www.tomorrow.org/speakup/pdfs/speak-up-2015-homework-gap.pdf>

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About the Speak Up Research Project and Speak Up 2015

Speak Up is an initiative of Project Tomorrow®, the leading global education nonprofit organization dedicated to the empowerment of student voices in education. Each year, the Speak Up Research Project polls K-12 students, parents and educators about the role of technology for learning in and out of school. This survey represents the largest collection of authentic, unfiltered stakeholder voices on digital learning. Since fall 2003, more than 4 million K-12 students, parents, teachers, librarians, principals, technology leaders, district administrators and members of the community have shared their views and ideas through Speak Up. K-12 educators, higher education faculty, business, and policy leaders report that they regularly use the Speak Up data to inform federal, state and local education programs.

In fall 2015, Project Tomorrow surveyed 415,686 K-12 students, 38,613 teachers and librarians, 4,536 administrators, 40,218 parents and 6,623 community members representing over 7,600 schools and 2,600 districts. Schools from urban (25%), suburban (40%), and rural (35%) communities are represented. More than half of the schools (58%) that participated in Speak Up 2015 are Title I eligible schools (an indicator of student population poverty). The Speak Up 2015 surveys were available online for input between October 1 and December 18, 2015.

The online survey is supported by many of our nation's most innovative companies, foundations and nonprofit organizations including Blackboard, BrainPOP, CDW, DreamBox Learning, Qualcomm® WirelessReach™ and Scholastic.

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