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**NEW SPEAK UP REPORT LOOKS AT DECADE OF DIGITAL LEARNING  
STUDENTS LESS CONCERNED ABOUT ACCESS TO SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY,  
FOCUSED ON USING THEIR OWN DIGITAL TOOLS**

**Student access to mobile devices grows; Devices change dramatically since 2003 but  
institutional barriers to school usage remain constant**

Access the 10th anniversary report, *From Chalkboards to Tablets: The Emergence of the K-12 Learner* via: [www.tomorrow.org/speakup/pdfs/SU12-Students.pdf](http://www.tomorrow.org/speakup/pdfs/SU12-Students.pdf)

Washington, D.C. – As the third graders who were the first Speak Up participants in 2003 graduate from high school this spring, a decade of digital learning research provides a birds' eye view of the changing environment for digital learning both in and out of school. Today's students are more concerned about using a variety of digital learning tools such as mobile devices and less concerned about access to the Internet, according to the Speak Up 2012 National Report on K-12 Students released today.

The shift from personal cellphones that cannot access the Internet to Internet-enabled smartphones is increasing among students, however the vast majority of this access is not school provided and many students say they cannot use their own mobile devices at school.

With smartphone usage dramatically on the rise - 65 percent of students in grades 6-8 and 80 percent of students in grades 9-12 are smartphone users – a main concern among today's digital learners is how to leverage the unique features of different devices, from laptops to smartphones to tablets or digital readers, and use them for certain academic tasks.

"We've had the benefit of hearing from the first student Speak Up participants who started as third graders and have been on the frontlines of digital conversations coming out of our classrooms and schools for the past ten years, said Julie Evans, CEO, Project Tomorrow, the organization that conducts the Speak Up Survey.

"To some extent these students have been guinea pigs as their teachers have learned how to use tools such as interactive white boards, mobile devices and online content, and then brought new strategies for technology integration into the classroom. Meanwhile, these third graders who were so excited about playing educational games and getting their first email account in 2003 have

developed and refined their own digital learning profile outside of school. They have opened our eyes to help us understand that digital learning is not just about games but it can be about developing college and career skills and personalizing the process to make the learning experience richer for all students.”

Just as they use different textbooks for different classes, today’s students want to be able to choose from their own collection of mobile tools to create an individualized learning process. They not only are adopting new technologies faster than most adults but they are also better at adapting the products to fit their particular needs. For example nearly 75 percent of students in grades 6-12 use their cellphone, smartphone or tablet to take a photo of the assignment their teacher has written on the board rather than writing it down on a piece of paper.

“The results being released today show that we are indeed in a new world. And we as adults need to learn from kids in this instance,” said U.S. Rep. George Miller, the senior Democrat on the House Education and the Workforce Committee. “We need to learn from students about how they learn, where they learn, and how they seek information. I believe we must harness this information to give all students a 21st century skill set to prepare them for high-growth, high-demand jobs in the global economy.”

This desire by students to use mobile devices and social media tools to self-direct their learning is often thwarted by school policies and other institutional barriers. In 2003, when students were asked to identify the top barriers to using technology at school, their top responses focused on access to the tools that were school provided: 1. Internet access is too slow; 2. School filters and firewalls block websites I need; 3. Not enough computers for students to use; 4. Computers are too old; and 5. Software is too old or not good enough to use

Students’ responses in 2012 also include a complaint about school filters and firewalls, but the other top responses center on how the school is limiting their access to the digital tools and resources they are using regularly outside of school: 1. School filters and firewalls block website I need; 2. I cannot access my social media sites; 3. I cannot use my own mobile device; 4. There are too many rules about using technology at school; and 5. I cannot use text messaging

“This change in the student perception of the obstacles that prevent or inhibit them from using technology at school is very telling,” said Evans. “In 2003, it was all about the access to school provided tools. In 2012 it is about having access to their personally acquired tools and resources.”

Other noteworthy findings from the 2012 student report include:

- While only 21% of teachers in middle and high schools are assigning Internet homework on a weekly basis, 69% of high school seniors, 61% of high school freshman and 47% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders are online at least weekly to find resources to support their homework.
- In just one year, the number of middle school students with a personally acquired, digital reader more than doubled from 17 percent in 2011 to 39 percent in 2012.
- In fall 2011, 26 percent of students in grades 6-8 said that they had a personal tablet computer. In one year’s time, the percentage of middle school students with tablets jumped

to 52 percent, a doubling over the 2011 percentage.

Despite this increase of mobile devices in the hands of students, schools are still reluctant to allow them. Among high school students with smartphones, only half say they can use their device at school and only nine percent of students say they can use their personal tablets at school. With 73 percentage of high school seniors saying they have a laptop, only 18 percent of the Class of 2013 say they are allowed to use their personal laptop at school.

The largest collection of authentic, unfiltered stakeholder voices on digital learning graduate from high school, Speak Up has surveyed over 3 million K-12 students, parents, teachers, librarians, principals, technology leaders and district administrators since the fall of 2003.

In fall 2012, Project Tomorrow surveyed 364,240 K-12 students, 39,713 parents, 53,947 teachers, 2,399 librarians, 1,564 district administrators, 3,947 school administrators, and 500 technology leaders representing 8,020 public and private schools from 2,431 districts.

Now in its 10th year, the annual survey about education and technology is facilitated through public, private and charter schools all around the country; every school is eligible to participate. The results provide important insights about education, technology and student aspirations to individual schools, state departments of education and national leaders.

Project Tomorrow partners with more than 75 different education associations, organizations and think-tanks for outreach to the schools and development of the survey questions including the American Association of School Administrators, Consortium for School Networking, Digital Promise, Digital Learning Day, iNACOL, International Society for Technology in Education, National School Boards Association, , National Secondary School Principals Association, Southern Regional Education Board and State Education Technology Directors' Association.

### **About Project Tomorrow**

Speak Up is a national initiative of Project Tomorrow, the nation's leading education nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that today's students are well prepared to be tomorrow's innovators, leaders and engaged citizens of the world. The Speak Up data represents the largest collection of authentic, unfiltered stakeholder input on education, technology, 21st century skills, schools of the future and science instruction. Education, business and policy leaders report use the data regularly to inform federal, state and local education programs. For additional information, visit [www.tomorrow.org](http://www.tomorrow.org).

