



For Immediate Release:
April 8, 2014

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Gender Gap Shrinks Among Students Playing Digital Games

Speak Up 2013 Reports on Students' Technology Use In and Out of School, Social Media Habits, Out of School Internet Access and Interest in STEM

Washington, D.C. – The stereotype that girls do not play digital games is outdated, according to the latest report from the Speak Up 2013 survey of students, teachers, administrators and parents released today. In 2013, approximately 42 percent of girls in grades 3-5 and 37 percent of girls in grades 6-8 said they regularly play games on tablets compared to 38 percent of boys in grades 3-8.

A similar pattern exists with game play on smartphones with equal percentages of girls and boys in elementary (28 percent) and middle school (45 percent) playing games on these devices.

“Boys are still playing more massively multi-player online games (MMOGs) than girls, but there is little difference now in all other digital game play,” said Julie Evans, CEO, Project Tomorrow, the organization that conducts the Speak Up survey. “We’re specifically interested in how students use games for learning, and this year’s survey shows that students of both genders think that digital games improve their levels of engagement in school and help them understand difficult concepts.”

Approximately 25 percent of teachers surveyed this year are integrating digital games into their instructional plans, and students report searching for games on their own to help them learn. Nearly one-quarter of middle school students reported that they have played an online game outside of school specifically to learn something. Among students who self-identified as advanced technology users, this number was 50 percent – among both girls and boys.

The latest report, *The New Digital Learning Playbook: Understanding the Spectrum of Students' Activities and Aspirations*, is available via:

www.tomorrow.org/speakup/SU13DigitalLearningPlaybook_StudentReport.html

The companion infographic on mobile learning is available via:

http://www.tomorrow.org/speakup/pdfs/SU2013_MobileLearning.pdf

Additional findings presented in the report include:

- Girls outpace boys in use of many digital tools for learning, particularly the socially based tools like texting and collaborating online.
- 29 percent of high school boys say that they are very interested in a job or career in a STEM field, but only 19 percent of girls say the same. This gap remains even among girls and boys who self-assess their technology skills as advanced. During the seven years that the Speak Up surveys have polled high school students on their interest in STEM fields, the level of student interest has not increased significantly.

- Students continue to report less regular interaction with traditional social networking sites like Facebook, while 44 percent of students in grades 6-12 report using social media apps like Instagram, Snapchat and Vine. Nearly one-third of high school students reported using Twitter.
- One-quarter of students in grades 3-5 and nearly one-third of students in grades 6-12 say that they are using a mobile device provided by their school to support schoolwork (these percentages were greater among Title I schools than non-Title I schools).
- In four years, the percent of middle school students taking tests online increased from 32 percent to 47 percent.
- High school students reported a mean average of 14 hours per week using technology for writing.
- Only one-third of middle school students say that for schoolwork reading, they prefer to read digital materials rather than printed materials; more than half, however, say online textbooks would be an essential component of their “ultimate school.”
- Digital equity, including to student access to the Internet outside of school, is a growing concern among district technology leaders with 46 percent saying it is one of the most challenging issues they face today (compared to just 19 percent in 2010).

“We asked students for their ideas about how to improve technology use in schools,” said Evans. “In general, they want a greater alignment between their out-of-school learning life and what they experience in the classroom. They would like access to mobile devices, digital games, Internet access throughout their schools and access to websites they use for learning, to name a few.”

“Innovative technologies are helping K-12 educators augment their teaching to reach students with more collaborative, creative and, ultimately, more effective delivery methods,” said [Mark Belles](#), senior vice president, K-12, [Blackboard](#). “We’re proud to partner with Project Tomorrow to gauge the progress districts continue to make in leveraging technology to better prepare students for future learning success.”

The 2013 online survey – completed by more than 400,000 K-12 students, parents, teachers, administrators and community members – offers the largest collection of authentic, unfiltered input on education and technology from those ‘on the ground’ in the schools.

In fall 2013, Project Tomorrow surveyed 325,279 K-12 students, 32,151 parents, 39,986 teachers and 4,530 administrators representing 9,005 public and private schools from 2,710 districts. The Speak Up 2013 surveys were available online for input in October, November and December 2013.

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.

Since 2003, more than 3.4 million K-12 students, educators and parents from more than 35,000 schools in all 50 states have participated in Speak Up. The online survey is facilitated by Project Tomorrow and supported by many of our nation’s most innovative companies, foundations and nonprofit organizations including Blackboard, Inc., BrainPOP, DreamBox, K12, Inc., Rosetta Stone, Schoolwires and SMART Technologies.

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 Learning Day, Digital Promise, edWEB.net, Flipped Learning Network, iNACOL, International Society for Technology in Education, National Association of 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.

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