

Report: Students Prioritize Devices, Variety over Internet Access

- By [Joshua Bolkan](#)
- 06/06/13

Students prioritize the use of "a variety of digital learning tools such as mobile devices" over Internet access, according to [From Chalkboards to Tablets: The Emergence of the K-12 Learner](#), a new report from [Project Tomorrow](#).

The report also found that students increasingly see benefits to online learning, with 57 percent of respondents in high school saying that it would put them in control of their learning, up from 40 percent in 2009, and 56 percent saying that it would allow them to work at their own pace, a five percent increase over the same period. Students also said that it would provide other benefits, such as improved ability to review materials, a greater sense of independence, and an improved opportunity to succeed in class, in greater numbers than they did in 2009, though they are still not in the majority.

Part of the organization's national Speak Up initiative, the report marks the 10th anniversary of the data collection project and returned to the students, now in grade 12, interviewed in the 2003 sample.

"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," said Julie Evans, CEO of Project Tomorrow, in a prepared statement. 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."

According to the report, students are often unable to use their devices for learning because of school policies or other barriers imposed by their institution. Barriers reported by students who responded to the survey include, in order of importance, filters and firewalls that block sites students need to access, an inability to use social media, policies against using their own devices, too many rules about technology at school, and not being allowed to text message.

Those responses contrast the issues responding students reported in 2003, aside from complaints of firewalls and filters, which came in as the second most common complaint a decade ago. Other responses from the 2003 report included Internet access that was too slow, too few computers for student use, outdated computers, and software that was either too old or simply not good enough to be useful.

"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 key findings of the survey include:

- Only 21 percent of teachers who responded said they assign Internet homework at least once a week, but 69 percent, 61 percent, and 47 percent, of students in grades 12, 9, and 6, respectively, reported going online weekly to find some kind of support for their assignments;
- From 2011 to 2012, the number of middle school students who reported having their own digital reader doubled from 17 percent to 39 percent;
- Tablet ownership among middle school students who were surveyed also doubled from 2011 to 2012, to 52 percent from 26;
- Only half of high school students who said they owned a smartphone reported being able to use them at school and only nine percent of high school seniors surveyed said they are able to use tablets. Laptop policies are similarly lagging behind student usage, with only 18 percent of high schoolers who reported owning one saying that they could use them at school.
- A bare majority, 53 percent, of high school students surveyed said they have a Facebook page, but only 46 percent said they were "actively involved" with the platform, down from a high of 67 percent in 2007;
- Younger students are more likely to play massively multiplayer games online, with 26 percent of middle school students in the study saying they play as compared to only 14 percent of respondents in high school;
- Thirty percent of students who responded said they use Twitter every day and the same number said they create and post videos online, double the number who were doing so in 2007;
- Fifty-six and 68 percent of middle and high school participants, respectively, said they have access to the Internet via a 3G- or 4G-enabled handheld device, a stark contrast to the six percent of respondents who said they have no Internet access at home, whether they have a computer or not

The sample for the survey included "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," according to information released by Project Tomorrow.

For more information, or to view the full report, visit tomorrow.org.

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