

The New Learning Leader

The Emerging Role of the Agile School Principal as Digital Evangelist and Instructional Leader



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Introduction

The Future Ready Framework for principals identifies six key priorities essential for school principals interested in creating and sustaining a new culture of personalized learning within their school. Those six priorities are as follows:



Create a vision for digital learning in their school



Enable ubiquitous connectivity, both at school and at home, for all students



Model professional learning with teachers that honors experimentation and new methodologies



Advocate for a diversity of approaches and strategies to meet learners where they are



Ensure that all students have access to anytime, anywhere learning



Communicate a shared vision within the school community including engaging parents

To be able to address these priorities, today's principals must demonstrate the type of agility and drive that Bill Gates refers to as a requirement for success. This is a tall order considering that the position of school principal is changing dramatically as the education enterprise evolves to meet the needs of today's learners and to address new expectations for college and career readiness. Additionally, it is increasingly realized today that the personal competencies and attitudes of the school principal are a significant factor in the success of implementing new learning models and innovations in the classroom as well as engaging the school community in that shared vision.



“Success today requires the agility and drive to constantly rethink, reinvigorate, react, and reinvent.”

Bill Gates
Technology Entrepreneur and Philanthropist

Based upon landmark research from Project Tomorrow, a new class of school principal is emerging. This new school site leader brings to the challenge of the position a set of skills and values that inherently emphasize the importance of personalized learning and effective school to home communications. We are calling this emerging principal profile the “New Learning Leader” as they embody the dual capacities of instructional leader and digital evangelist initiating and nurturing new modes of online and digital learning. The New Learning Leader values the potential of technology to create more personalized learning while at the same time appreciating what it takes to bring their teachers along in the process. In other words, they lead from both the front and the back. The New Learning Leader has a clear vision as to how to translate a district mission of equity, achievement and outcomes into actual practices within the classroom, working to motivate their teachers to adopt these new methodologies while at the same time being the cheerleader and communicator to the parents on the value of these new learning environments for their children. The New Learning Leader is ahead of the pack in terms of rethinking existing instructional practices and energizing their staff and community to be bold in visioning for the future, while at the same time reacting effectively to new challenges and reinventing educational outcomes that meet both student and community needs. Understanding the activities, attitudes and aspirations of this emerging cohort of school principals helps to drive both enhanced expectations and appreciation for the critically important work of school leaders today.

New findings from the Speak Up Research Project on Digital Learning provide a unique lens for examining the current state of leadership capacity in our nation’s schools for creating a fresh approach to personalized learning and community engagement. In this year’s digital learning trends report, we explore the characteristics of the New Learning Leader, examining the activities and attitudes that make certain principals more effective in this dual role of instructional leader and digital evangelist. To do so, the analysis focused on two sub-cohorts of New Learning Leaders – school principals that have implemented new learning models at their school, and principals who have prioritized supporting their teachers in the transition process to digital learning. In many ways these new groups of principals represent two sides of the same coin, initiating and nurturing the use of technology to support new classroom experiences, and ensuring that instructionally teachers are effective with the use of digital tools to support personalized learning. Providing additional context to this discussion, this year’s report also includes thought provoking insights from administrators about the challenges of school principalship in today’s schools, and how to effectively leverage digital solutions to both transform the student learning experience and engage the community in school success.

Key findings from this year's digital learning trends report

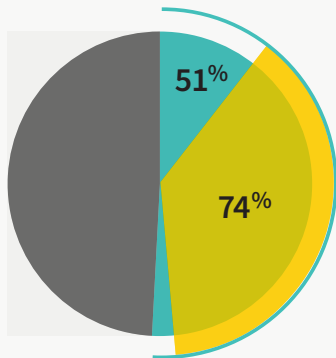


District leaders are increasingly placing a high value on the leadership skills of their school site administrators.

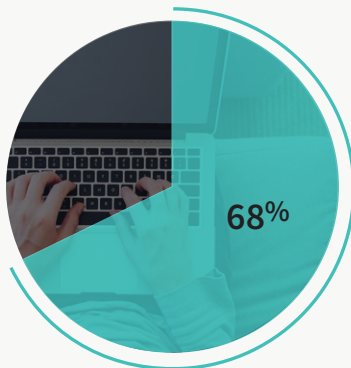
40% of education leaders now say that enhanced school leadership has the potential to result in improved student outcomes relative to college and career readiness, only 11% held the same view in 2010.

A new type of school principal, the New Learning Leader, is emerging that is both a digital evangelist at their school supporting new classroom models and an instructional coach providing modeling for their teachers about effective technology use for professional tasks.

The New Learning Leader is more likely than other principals to have implemented blended, competency-based or flipped learning environments at their school.



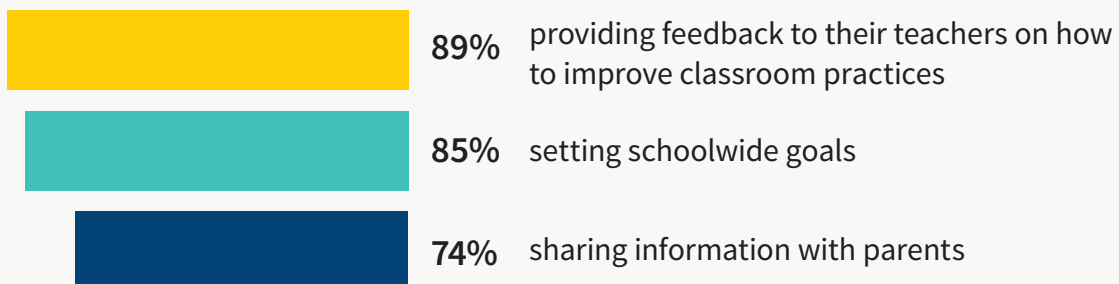
While 51% of all principals say that they have implemented blended learning at their school, 74% of these new principals are at the helm of a blended learning school.



Two-thirds (68%) of New Learning Leaders say that their most significant challenge in the effective use of digital resources at their school is providing effective teacher training.

Consequently, these principals have a stronger focus than most principals on modeling self-directed professional learning for their teachers.

The New Learning Leaders are using data to inform their leadership tasks including





Each year since 2003, Project Tomorrow, a global education nonprofit organization, facilitates the annual Speak Up Research Project on Digital Learning. A key aspect of the research project is to track the growth in student, educator, and parent interest in digital learning, as well as how our nation's schools and districts are addressing that interest by supporting innovative learning experiences in and out of the classroom. Since 2007, Project Tomorrow has collaborated with Blackboard to create a series of annual reports that focus on the year-to-year trends in the use of digital learning tools to change the classroom-learning paradigm through an in-depth analysis of the latest Speak Up data findings. In this Digital Learning Trends report, we examine the trends revealed through our analysis of the Speak Up data collected in fall 2017. More than 406,000 K-12 students, parents, educators, and community members participated in Speak Up 2017 and their authentic feedback representing over 10,000 schools is the foundation for this report.

The emerging role of the school principal as the new learning leader

Research and practice have long documented a connection between the success of a new school initiative and the effective leadership of the school principal. This realization is not lost on district administrators who often have the responsibility to develop programs to address dynamic community needs, but who rely upon front line managers such as principals to implement those programs. This is especially applicable when considering the need to effectively prepare today’s students for future success beyond high school graduation. For example, programs that support college readiness through dual enrollment in college classes are envisioned by district or central office personnel, but the effective implementation of those programs rest with the local school principal who needs to work with their internal staff as well as external partners. Understanding the criticality of effective school-based management, district administrators are increasingly focusing on the leadership capacity of their school principals as key to improving student outcomes especially in terms of college matriculation and career readiness. In 2010, only 11% of district leaders considered the personal leadership skills of their school administrators as important for addressing student achievement goals. The results from the 2017 polling indicate that 40% of district leadership now connect the enhancement of school leadership skills with improved student outcomes. This awakening to the criticality of effective school leadership is even more pronounced in urban communities where 55% of district leaders emphasize enhanced leadership skill development as an effective tool in the battle to close the achievement gap in their schools. Correspondingly, the efficacy of school leaders is also viewed as important in the discussions around ensuring educational equity for all children.



“I feel it is my responsibility as an administrator to encourage and get that movement going of being an innovative educator to my staff.”

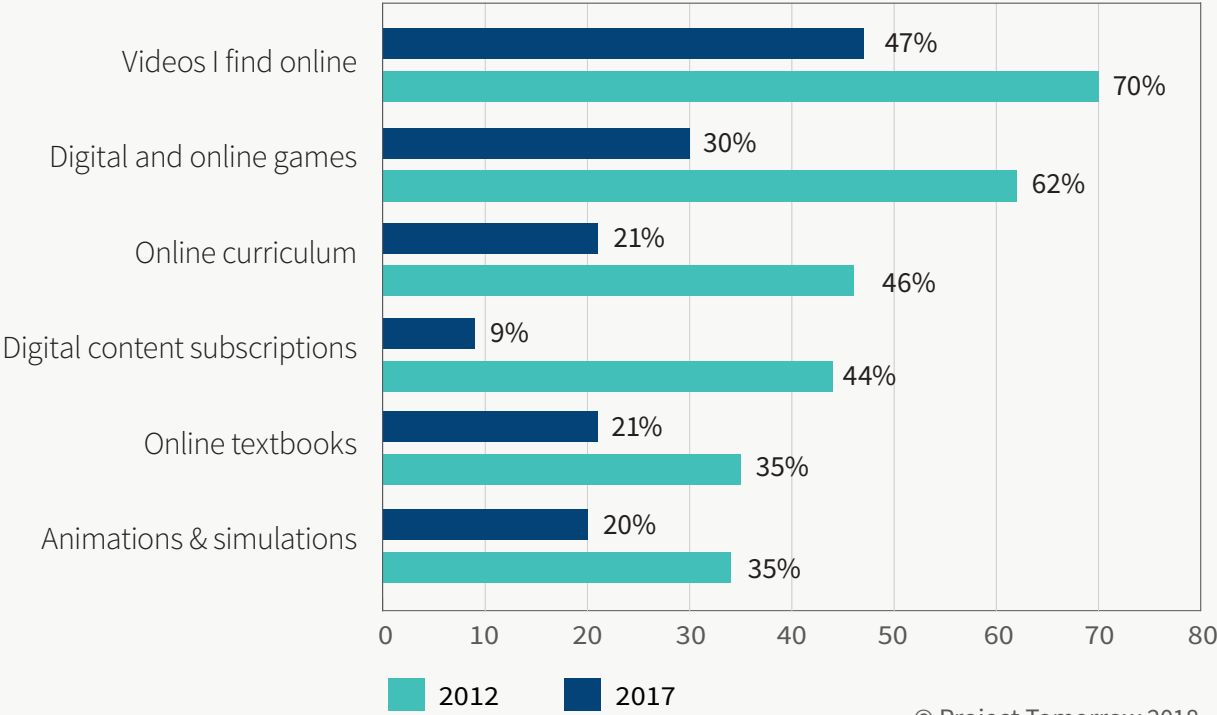
**Elementary School Principal
California**

The New Learning Leaders identified through the analysis of the Speak Up data share their district office's focus on student outcomes and educational equity. Almost 6 of 10 of these principals identified closing the achievement gap at their school as a top objective. These school site administrators also appreciate the importance of maintaining high teacher morale when implementing new initiatives that require their teachers to abandon their time honored instructional practices and adopt new digital strategies and materials. This challenge is front and center for most school principals today. Amongst the New Learning Leader cohort, 45% of those principals say that motivating their teachers to use technology more in the classroom to personalize learning is an ongoing hurdle at their school. To fully appreciate the magnitude of this hurdle, administrators need a clear understanding of teachers' current state of readiness to adopt new digital tools, content and resources for classroom instruction.

Teachers' usage of digital content within instruction has increased steadily over the past five years. Whereas in 2012, only 30% of classroom teachers for example had implemented digital or online games within their classroom, twice as many or 62% of teachers report in 2017 using games at least monthly with their students to support learning as illustrated in Figure A. A similar increase is evident in the percentage of teachers using online curriculum. During this same 5 year period, teachers' use of online videos increased from 47% in 2012 to 70% of teachers using video within instruction in 2017.



FIGURE A: WHAT TYPES OF DIGITAL CONTENT ARE TEACHERS USING IN THE CLASSROOM IN 2017 VS. 2012?



Increased usage of digital content however does not necessarily mean that the teachers are effectively integrating these tools into instruction or that the availability of the digital content is driving personalized learning. This disconnect around effective teacher use of digital resources is echoed by parents, students and school librarians. A majority of parents (51%) say that the technology use to support learning varies too much from teacher to teacher at their child’s school. High school students (43%) report that their primary obstacle to using technology at school is that their teacher limits that usage in the classroom. School librarians (59%) note they are consistently challenged to help the teachers at their school to move from sporadic use of digital resources to more sustained, seamless integration of those tools into daily instruction. The ability to use digital resources to provide every child with a highly personalized learning experience is greatly diminished if the usage is not effective or if it is only sporadic.

Teachers' representations about their use of technology within instruction underscores the importance of effective digital leadership in our schools today. Only one-quarter of teachers report that they are very comfortable personalizing learning for every child in their classroom, despite the plethora of tools available that enable individualized instruction. Rather, 80% of teachers say that their primary goal with using digital content in the classroom is to engage their students in learning. While engagement is an important goal, the potential of the digital and online resources to support new learning environments, and in particular to enable learning that is personalized for each child, is not yet being fully realized in our nation's classrooms. Teachers understand this as well. When asked to identify the types of professional development they need, the top response from teachers was a call for training on how to leverage technology to differentiate and personalize learning in the classroom.

Respecting that one size does not fit all when motivating teachers to change their instructional practices, the New Learning Leaders are driving innovation in their schools from two strategic positions – leading from the front and leading from the back. In their role as digital evangelist, the school principals are creating technology-rich environments to support the implementation of blended learning, flipped learning and competency-based learning in the classroom. For many, they see this role as part of their responsibility to ensure educational equity for all children. Rather than assuming that students will acquire the requisite skills for college or career readiness on their own, the New Learning Leaders are committed to providing these new learning experiences as a way to support the future success of all of their students. While principals are traditionally considered the instructional leaders on their campus, the New Learning Leaders however are stretching their impact by adding “coach” to their list of responsibilities. Within their coaches' playbook, these leaders are leveraging their own personal high valuations on digital learning and digitally-based professional

learning practices to model for their teachers how these tools can transform teaching and learning. Understanding that community engagement and buy-in is critical when implementing a new vision for their school, the school principals are also tapping into emerging digital tools for home to school communications and demonstrating the power of personalized engagement strategies with their own example. Through their actions, their attitudes and their aspirations, this new breed of school principal is creating a transformative school culture that puts a premium on student outcomes and teacher effectiveness using technology solutions.

“Empowerment happens through challenging teachers and then follow-through support. We must find ways to support our teachers and help teachers feel that they can experiment without judgement or fear of mistakes.”

**Middle School Assistant Principal
Oklahoma**

Leading from the front – the school principal as digital evangelist

Almost unanimously, the New Learning Leaders (95%) agree that the effective use of technology in the classroom is important for students’ future success. Two-thirds of the principals label effective digital learning as extremely important for their students’ future outcomes. But this is not just talk. Schools where New Learning Leaders are at the helm are on the forefront of implementing new classroom models that leverage technology to support student learning. Notably, the principals also report that their investments of time and resources in these innovations are resulting in effective usage of technology and positive student academic outcomes.

Interest in new learning models, notably blended, flipped and competency-based learning, continues to grow each year within the K-12 education sector. It is not surprising therefore that school district technology leaders such as Chief Technology Officers and Directors of Instructional Technology predict high growth for these models over the next two years especially when compared to other high profile digital initiatives (Table 1). For example, a majority of the technology leaders see a significant expansion of blended and flipped learning experiences for students by 2019.

“Change of instructional practices toward greater use of digital tools is no different than any other instructional change. A leader has to set the expectation with an understanding that some staff members will be trailblazers, some pioneers and some will be settlers. Create the capacity for teachers to experiment, to take a risk, and to learn from failure without being hammered if they do fail.”

High School Principal
Indiana



TABLE 1: TECHNOLOGY LEADERS' PREDICTIONS FOR HIGH GROWTH DIGITAL INITIATIVES

Digital Initiatives	% of technology leaders that predict high growth in next 2 years
Flipped learning classrooms	54%
Blended learning environments	53%
Competency-based learning	47%
1:1 mobile device programs – in school usage	37%
Online textbooks	36%
Students using their own mobile device at school	23%

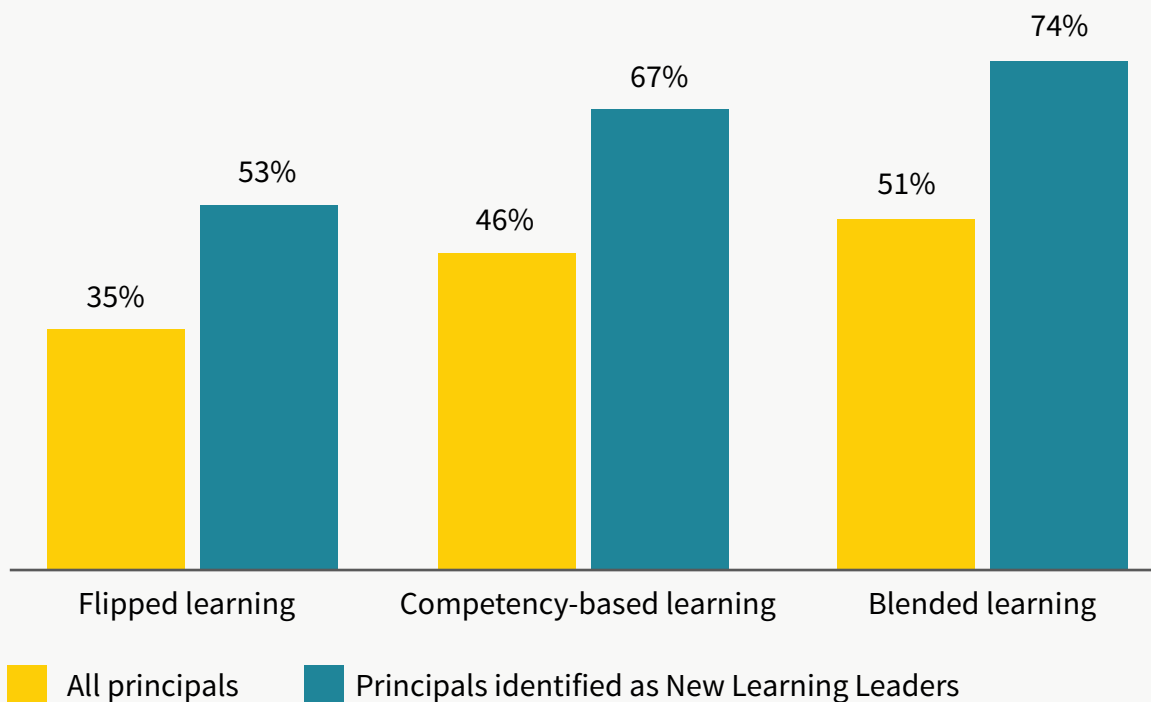
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The level of support that school district or central office staff provide to school leaders for the effective implementation of digital initiatives varies from district to district, community to community. Larger school districts often have greater human capacity than smaller districts for providing hands-on support within schools as they implement digital initiatives including new learning models. That support can include assistance from technology specialists and pedagogy experts as well as guidance on the identification of quality online resources for teacher and student use. Despite that, the New Learning Leader principal is not more likely to be in a large district than a small district. In fact, evidence from the Speak Up 2017 findings indicate that New Learning Leaders are emerging in districts of all sizes, and from a wide variety of communities including urban, rural and suburban locales.

A key distinguishing characteristic of the New Learning Leader however is the high level of implementation of new learning environments in their schools. As depicted in Figure B, a higher percentage of principals identified as New Learning Leaders report implementing blended, flipped and competency-based learning at their schools than compared to the general population of school principals. For example, three-quarters of New Learning Leaders (74%) say that their school has implemented blended learning. Two-thirds of the leaders (67%) have implemented competency-based learning at their school compared to 46% of all principals. A majority of New Learning Leaders (53%) are also supporting flipped learning environments at their school as well. This focus on innovative learning experiences for students translates into the implementation

of other types of digital learning as well. New Learning Leaders are more likely to implement cloud-based communications and collaborations tools, game-based learning environments and online classes for students and teachers than other principals.

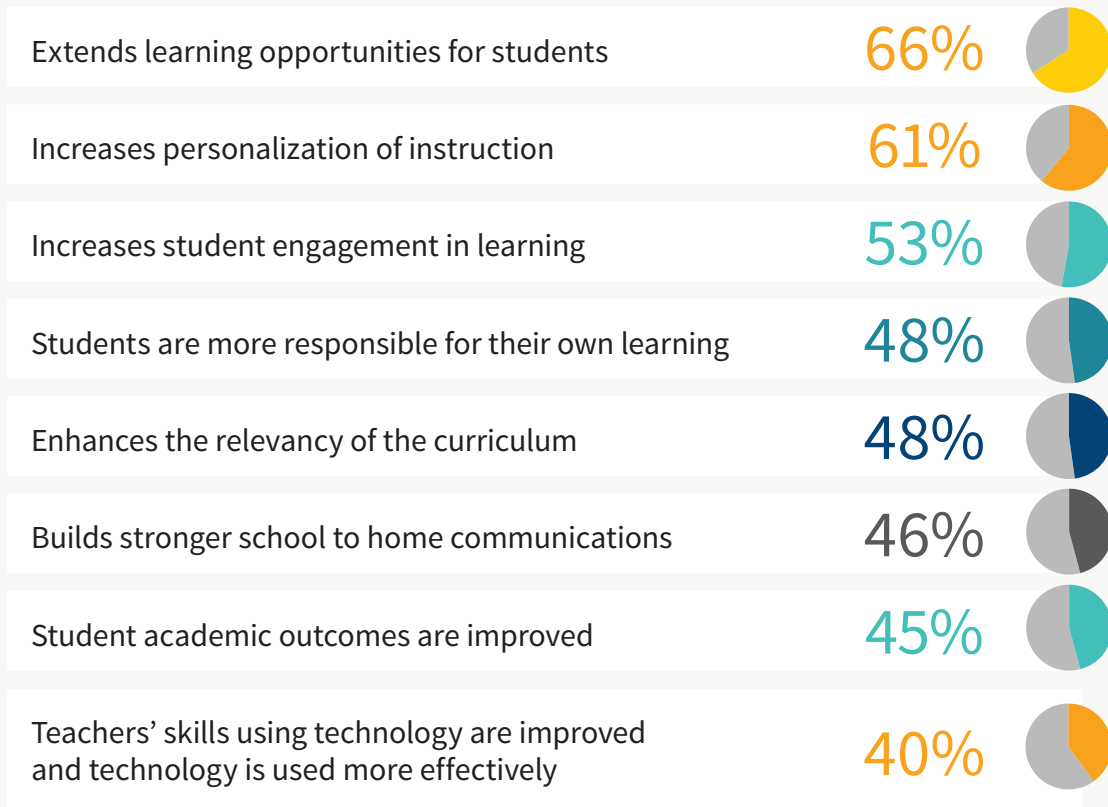
FIGURE B: IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW LEARNING MODELS BY PRINCIPALS



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Equally impressive is the percentage of leaders who say that they are already seeing positive academic results from these new learning model implementations. While only 24% of all principals say that their blended learning classrooms are demonstrating stronger academic outcomes, 39% of the New Learning Leaders report a positive connection between blended learning and student outcomes. This is not surprising given the variety of benefits that these emerging principal leaders ascribe to blended learning. The benefits address not only how the change to the learning experience impacts students, but also the effect on teachers' skills and parent communications and engagement. With their articulation of the benefits of the new classroom models on personalized learning, the principals are endorsing the connection between technology-enabled solutions and an effective way to address every student's diverse needs.

New Learning Leaders identify the following benefits of blended learning:



New Learning Leaders demonstrate their commitment to new classroom models and personalized learning with their actions as well as their valuations on the benefits of these innovations. The principals' views on where technology is being used most effectively in their school may represent where they are focusing their efforts as the school digital evangelist in supporting their teachers' adoption practices. The principals are realists however and thus also note that there is still room for improvement in the effective use of technology within teaching and learning in certain subject areas. As represented by Table 2, 49% of principals say that technology is being used effectively in math classes, but 37% also indicate that there needs to be improvement in how digital tools are used to support student instruction in math.

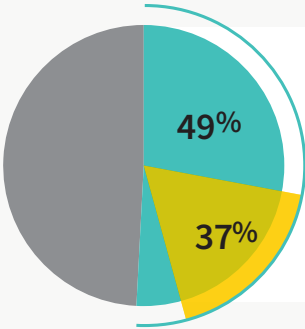


TABLE 2: NEW LEARNING LEADERS REPORT ON THE CURRENT EFFECTIVENESS OF TECHNOLOGY USAGE BY SUBJECT

Curricular subjects	% of New Learning Leaders who say tech use is effective in this subject	% of New Learning Leaders who say tech use needs to be improved in this subject
Math	49%	37%
English/Language Arts	47%	37%
Science	44%	40%
Social Studies/History	42%	43%
Computer Science	38%	15%
Career Technical Education	36%	15%

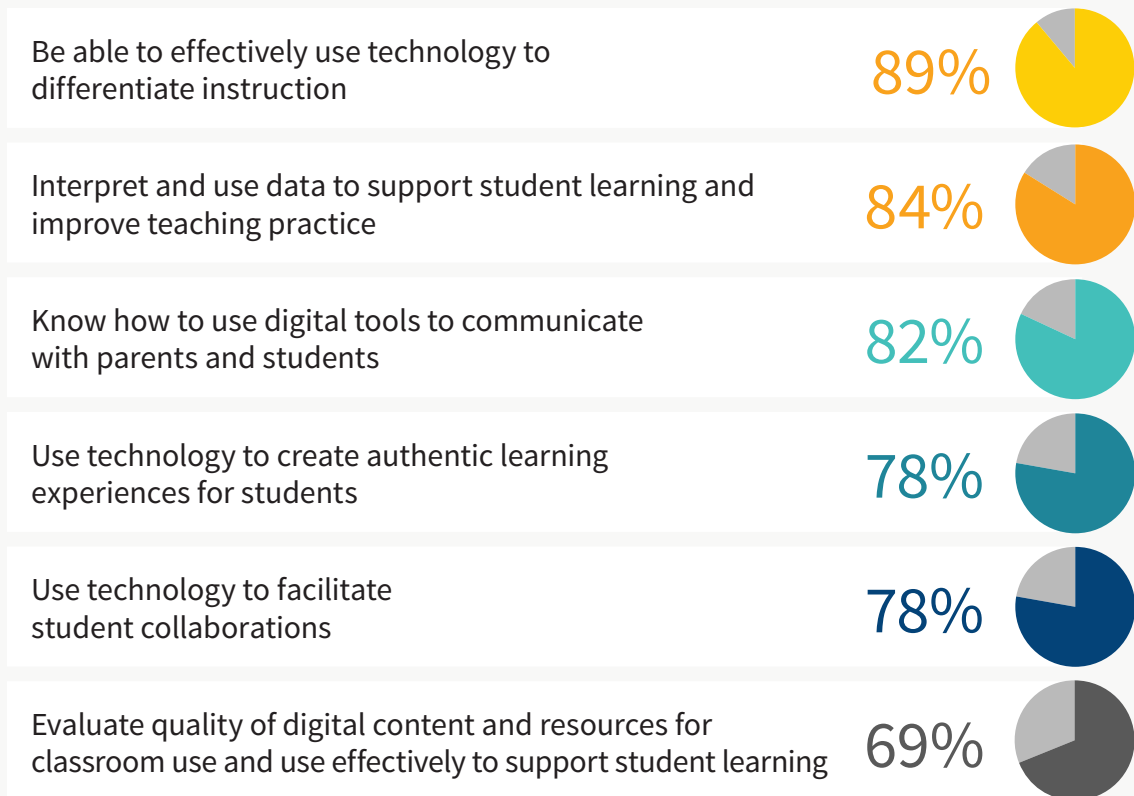
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Just as the New Learning Leaders are focused on how technology is being used in current classrooms, they are also highly interested in building school capacity to use digital tools to support stronger student outcomes. When asked about the proficiencies they would like to see in new teachers, the leaders of these digitally progressive schools have set a high bar for the new teachers they are going to hire in the future. These principals would like to see the next great generation of teachers learn a distinct set of skills in their teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities that will ultimately empower greater personalization in their future classrooms.



49% of principals say that technology is being used effectively in math classes, but 37% also indicate that there needs to be improvement in how digital tools are used to support student instruction in math.

Over two-thirds of New Learning Leaders want preservice teachers to develop these digital teaching skills before joining their school team:



Additionally, given a predisposition to supporting new classroom models, the new class of principals would also like aspiring teachers to acquire skills around implementing a blended learning environment (53%) or a flipped learning classroom (39%).

Increasingly, the school principal today must have almost super-hero skills in terms of understanding how to motivate their teachers to change their traditional practices.

“Administrators must model the practices and be instructional technology experts.”

High School Principal
Delaware

Leveraging their capacity for leadership at their school site, their vision is for their teachers to embrace new learning environments that enable personalization, and to then mimic that focus on personalization in their communication with parents. Even the New Learning Leaders identified through the Speak Up data do not have all of the solutions for how to move teachers from sporadic to sustain

usage of digital resources. However, how they are approaching this important task by leading from the front with their high personal valuation on personalized learning is an important insight for schools and districts facing similar barriers to education transformation. Equally important is how the New Learning Leaders are also working side-by-side with their teachers to encourage, nurture and support new practices in the classroom. By supporting their teachers with good modeling of both professional learning and data usage, the principals are leading from behind as well as from the front within their school communities.

Leading from behind – the school principal as instructional coach

Research has long documented the relationship between teacher efficacy and student outcomes. School principals realize that to improve student achievement and ultimately, to close the achievement and education equity gap between different groups of students, they need highly effective teachers. The highly effective teachers need high quality instructional materials and teaching strategies to use in the classroom as well as skilled site leadership that can create a vision and implementation plan for achieving those school goals. The relationship is inherently symbiotic in a high impact school. However, too often the traditional paradigms of the classroom obstruct the path to transformative learning. For example, it has long been understood that personalizing the learning process so that students' individual strengths, needs and interests are addressed can create an optimum environment for achievement. However, the implementation of new learning models that support personalization are too often hampered by antiquated policies such as seat time requirements or the inability to create teacher-friendly systems that support easy access to online tools and resources. The New Learning Leaders demonstrate that they have been able to leapfrog over such barriers. Within their schools, adding digital solutions and new classroom models to their teachers' instructional treasure chest has opened the door for greater personalized learning by augmenting good teaching practices. Inherent in this process has been the New Learning Leaders' focus on how to support their teachers in their implementations of digital tools, content and resources in the classroom.

“At our school the teachers learn how to incorporate technology into their classes by discussing ideas with colleagues and exchanging strategies with one another. Also, our principal and master teachers model real-world examples of apps, websites, and other online content teachers can use so they are aware of how to use the tools.”

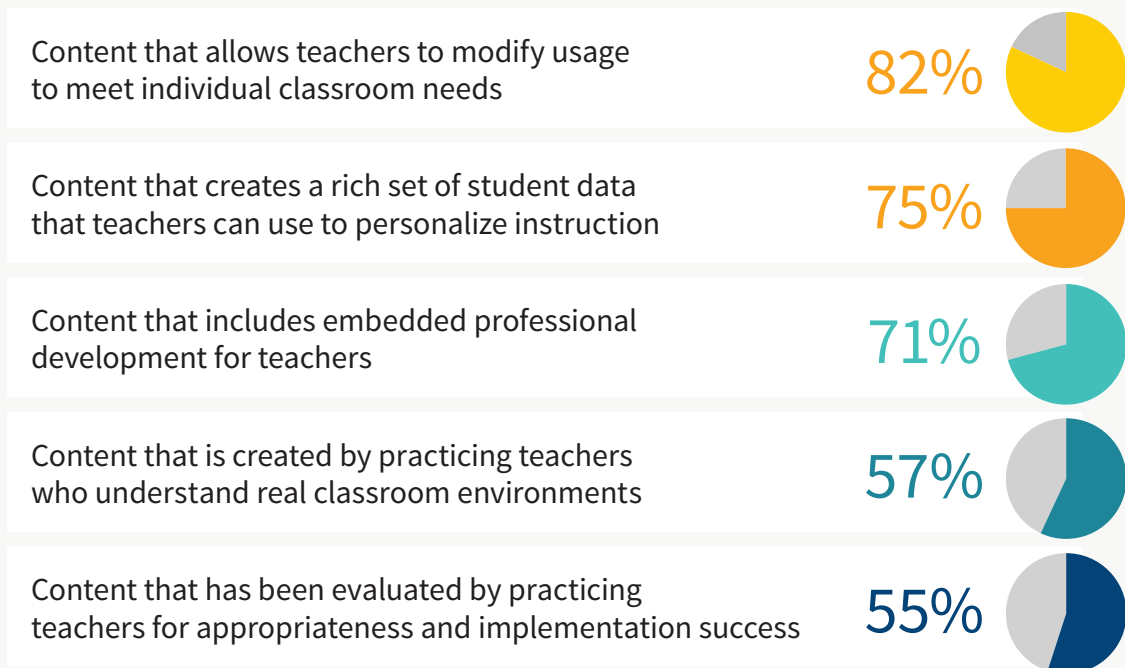
**Middle School Assistant Principal
Indiana**



When New Learning Leaders identify the challenges their school faces in using technology effectively within learning, they are more likely to emphasize what is happening in the classroom rather than issues associated with external factors such as district office policies. As the instructional leader, the principal is always concerned with how to balance instructional time constraints and finding the right mix of addressing curricular standards with opportunities for engaged student learning. This challenge of balance applies to the effective use of digital resources as well as noted by 58% of the New Learning Leaders. Of equal importance to these principals (58%) are the equity challenges they face in providing educational opportunities for all children. As such, the principals also focus on ensuring that students have access to appropriate devices in school such as laptops, Chromebooks or tablets (52%) for classroom usage, the digital products used in the classroom are high quality (51%), and those products are aligned and supportive of local curriculum (43%). While these are all important, the New Learning Leaders are particularly cognizant of their teachers' personal needs for professional learning, even more so than other principals. Two-thirds (68%) of New Learning Leaders say that their most significant challenge in the effective use of digital and online resources at their school is providing effective teacher training. Comparatively, only 51% of all school principals identified this challenge as most significant. The New Learning Leaders' concerns transcend training however as they are also more focused on the actual implementation process and what that mean for their teachers. While 35% of all principals say it is important to have in place a teacher-friendly system for the integration of digital content within instruction, 46% of the New Learning Leaders considered a teacher-friendly structure to be imperative.

This emphasis on the teacher experience and valuation with digital learning carries over to how principals evaluate the quality of digital content they approve or recommend for classroom usage.

The New Learning Leaders identify a select set of metrics to use when evaluating digital content that demonstrates a strong understanding of how to support their teachers' adoption process. That quality metric set includes:



Inherent within many implementations of new classroom models such as blended, flipped and competency-based learning is the use of student data derived from the digital tools supporting these environments. As noted above, principals that highly value digital learning also value tools that provide their teachers with data that can be used to personalize the learning process for each child. However, only 25% of teachers say they use data derived from online tools, software or apps to provide insights into their students' competencies. How the school principal therefore models his or her use of data to support school management and instructional leadership can be an important factor in greater teacher adoption of these powerful tools.

An example of effective modeling by the school leader therefore can be around the use of data for professional tasks. New Learning Leaders demonstrate a higher usage of data in their leadership practices than other principals. As illustrated in Table 3, the New Learning Leaders are regularly using data in their feedback to teachers about their practices, thus mirroring for their teachers how to use data to provide student feedback on classroom performance.

TABLE 3: PRINCIPALS REPORT ON THEIR USE OF DATA TO INFORM THEIR LEADERSHIP TASKS

Leadership tasks	% of New Learning Leaders who regularly use data for this task
Developing strategies for school improvement	91%
Provide feedback to teachers about how to improve their classroom practices	89%
Setting schoolwide goals and objectives	85%
Determining teachers' needs for professional development	83%
Tracking trends over time and within certain student cohorts	78%
Sharing information with parents	74%

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The same is true for goal setting and sharing information with parents. Just as these principals are using data to make changes in school goals and objectives, their teachers can use data to set and revise individual student goals, a practice that is critical in competency-based learning environments for example. Principals acknowledge the importance of effective school communications and how the use of data around student achievement can be very powerful for parental engagement. Teachers can learn from this effective modeling to adopt more data-focused practices in their classroom. By effectively modeling good data usage practices, the New Learning Leaders are leading from behind and nurturing changes in instructional practices that support sustained personalized learning.

The New Learning Leaders are also effectively modeling an emerging type of professional learning modality for their teachers. Increasingly, school districts are moving away from the “one size fits none – sit and get” model of professional development for their teachers. School district leaders (54%) want their teachers to feel empowered to be proactive with their own professional learning, seeking out self-directed learning experiences that are personalized to their needs. This migration to more individualized and potentially, more effective professional development for teachers has a double bottom line benefit. Since a majority of district leaders see the pathway to improved student outcomes through enhanced teacher effectiveness empowered by ongoing professional learning, district leaders are enthusiastic about

both the cost-effectiveness of self-directed professional development as well as the potential for more convenient and sustained learning by their teachers. Additionally, since many of the tools supporting self-directed professional learning are online or digital, the districts see this approach as a way to help their teachers become more comfortable with digital learning in general. This new approach to teacher training, similar to the adoption of digital tools, requires a new teacher mindset about professional development however.

As with the use of data, the New Learning Leaders in the schools are supporting their teachers' adoption of this new approach through their own modeling of self-directed professional learning through the use of various online and digital tools. As described in Figure C, the New Learning Leaders are leading the pack in terms of adopting digital tools for professional learning, and their usage outpaces most classroom teachers. However, it is noteworthy that teachers who have implemented blended learning in their classrooms are also more likely than other teachers to be comfortable with this new approach to personalized, self-directed learning. For example, 65% of the New Learning Leader principals say it is a regular practice for them to participate in webinars or other online conferences to gain information from education experts from the ease of their office or home. While only 1/3 of all teachers (34%) say this is a regular practice for them, 42% of the teachers who have implemented a blended learning model in their classroom are participating in webinars as a form of professional learning. This finding may indicate that as teachers are introduced to new classroom models for their own classroom, they may also seek out ways to address their own learning needs using similar digitally-based approaches. It also raises the possibility of leveraging teachers as peer-leaders within the school to support more effective modes of professional learning.

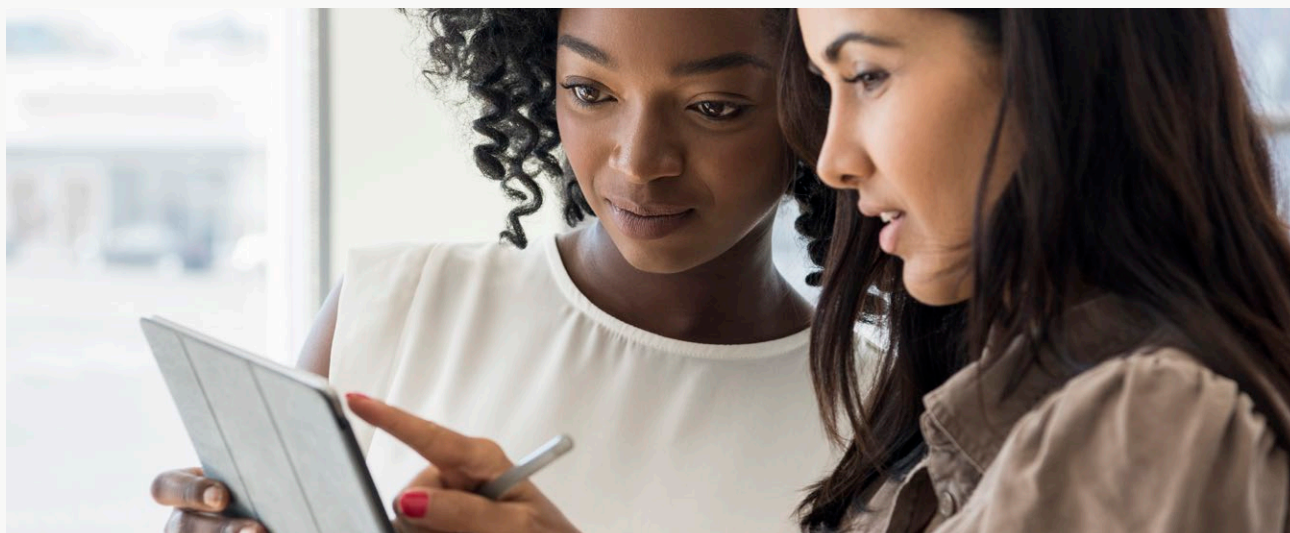
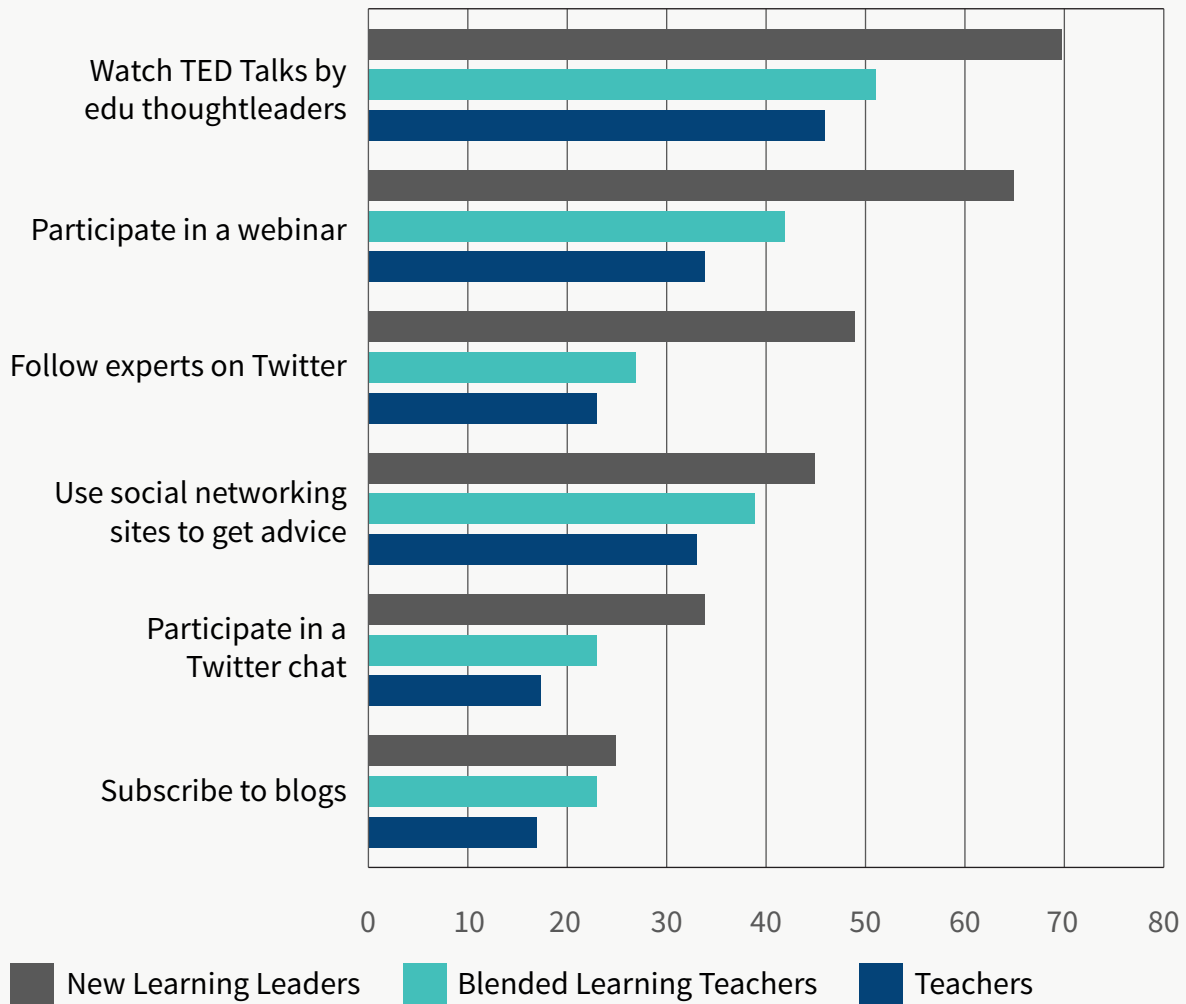


FIGURE C: USING ONLINE AND DIGITAL TOOLS TO SUPPORT SELF-DIRECTED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING



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“I am a new principal. I have made myself available to those teachers who are willing to try new technology but are somewhat afraid. I have walked some through new websites, shown them new strategies, and offered resources to them.”

Middle School Principal
New Jersey

Modeling therefore by the school principal and peer teachers can be a very powerful motivator for other teachers to take greater advantage of online and digital tools to support a new culture for continuous professional learning. As effective leaders in both their role as digital evangelist and instructional coach, the New Learning Leaders are “walking the talk” with their endorsement of technology-enabled, self-directed professional learning experiences.

Ending thoughts – insights to support school principals in their dual roles as digital evangelist and instructional coach

The job of a school principal is an increasingly complex and challenging position that requires a new set of leadership skills. Though not written with school principals in mind, the quote from Bill Gates aptly summarizes the types of agility that today’s school leaders need to be successful, especially when their vision is to empower new classroom models that enable their teachers to personalize learning for each child using innovative digital learning practices. Using the Future Ready Framework for principals as the foundation, this year’s Digital Learning Trends report examined an emerging cohort of principals that are exhibiting many of the attributes essential for creating and sustaining a new culture of personalized learning within schools. As represented through the analysis of the Speak Up 2017 results, the New Learning Leader principal has embraced the role of digital evangelist through their higher than average support for blended, flipped and competency-based learning



environments within their schools. They have also assumed new responsibilities as an instructional coach for their teachers modeling effective digital learning practices through their use of data and self-directed professional learning activities. While the findings about the New Learning Leaders provide interesting insights and potentially exemplar behaviors for school principals, the overall goal of the annual Digital Learning Trends report is always to stimulate further thinking beyond the report. As discussed in the introduction, we recommend that education leaders from the classroom to the school board reflect on the insights and findings shared in this year's report and use those reflections to fuel new local conversations around digital learning and the leadership required to create new school cultures that both nurture and sustain personalized learning.

The following thought-provoking questions can help to jumpstart that process in your school or district:

- › What do school principals need to be successful in implementing new learning models schoolwide, especially when the focus is on transforming the learning experience for students with personalized learning strategies? What types of support should be provided by the district office, the teachers, or even the school's parent community?
- › What do teachers need from their school principals to adopt new instructional strategies and practices so that they are ready to embrace and sustain digital learning in their classroom?
- › What are the most effective strategies to support a teacher's journey to more effective use of technology within instruction? How can various modes of professional learning support both principals and teachers in this process? In what ways can online tools support ongoing professional learning within a school community?
- › How does a school district develop a cadre of strong school site leaders within their community that are ready for the evolving challenges of principalship today?
- › What is the relationship between educational equity and personalized learning? Does personalized learning inherently support equity of opportunity because of the focus on students' individualized needs or are other interventions necessary from school and district leadership to ensure equity across classrooms or across schools?

About Project Tomorrow

Project Tomorrow is a global education nonprofit organization dedicated to the empowerment of student voices in education. With 22 years of experience in education, Project Tomorrow regularly provides consulting and research support around key trends in K-12 science, math, and technology education to school districts, government agencies, business, and higher education.

The Speak Up Research Project annually polls K-12 students, parents, educators and community members about the impact of digital tools, content and resources on students' learning experiences both in school and out of school, and represents the largest collection of authentic, unfiltered stakeholder voice on digital learning. Since 2003, over 5.4 million K-12 students, parents, teachers, librarians, principals, technology leaders, district administrators and members of the community have shared their views and ideas through the Speak Up Project.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT: TOMORROW.ORG

About Blackboard

Blackboard's unique approach to K-12 education focuses on creating a seamless and engaging experience for each learner. Our platform provides a way for students to learn in a safe, connected, and technologically savvy environment by focusing in on the three main foundational challenges districts face: • Advancing personalized, competency-based learning. • Engaging and informing the entire community • Maintaining a safe and secure space for academic achievement

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