



A Study in Innovative Teaching Practices: Feedback from Summit Learning Teachers and School Leaders

Prepared by Project Tomorrow for Gradient Learning

Introduction

Sustaining innovative teaching practices in schools is often an elusive concept. Part of the problem is that innovation in education is hard to define. The nonprofit organization, Education Evolving, thinks about innovation within the context of what learning should really look like for today's students. They define effective learning as being built on "a foundation of strong relationships, responsive to basic needs, driven by student interests, respectful of their identities, adaptive to their academic needs, relevant to their lives beyond school, and not confined within school days and walls."¹ In short, innovative learning practices are highly student-centric and student-responsive. Yet, while many educators talk about wanting their classrooms to emphasize student-centered learning, few schools actually walk the walk in terms of creating a school culture that supports the sustainable implementation of concepts, such as individualizing learning to meet the needs of all students and supporting a more comprehensive set of student needs than simply academic knowledge.

Using research-based practices and programs provided by Gradient Learning, Summit Learning schools are ahead of the curve in sustaining innovative teaching practices that are centered on a commitment to student-centric learning. Their work is naturally evolutionary, leveraging lessons learned to support continuous improvement and layering in new innovations as appropriate. It therefore is helpful to examine what works in Summit Learning schools as a guide to helping other schools on their journey to support enhanced learning experiences for all students. On behalf of Gradient Learning, Project Tomorrow® designed and implemented two online surveys in spring 2023 to collect both quantitative and qualitative feedback from Summit Learning teachers and school leaders nationwide. This year's data collection represents the third year of examining the lived experiences and perceptions of Summit Learning teachers and school leaders about the impact of various innovative practices within their classrooms and schools.

Key findings from this year's Summit Learning Teacher and School Leader Feedback Study that can inform and inspire other schools include:

¹ <https://www.ednc.org/perspective-what-is-educational-innovation-here-are-some-common-themes/>



1. 9-in-10 Summit Learning teachers say they are using a variety of differentiation strategies and resources to support their students.
2. 53% of teachers report being very comfortable leveraging technology to support the differentiation of instruction within their classroom; only 29% of teachers nationwide have that same comfort level.
3. 90% of teachers and 96% of school leaders attribute having a shared school vision to Summit Learning.
4. Summit Learning teachers and school leaders have a higher level of satisfaction with their education career than teachers nationwide.
5. 73% of teachers say they would not want to go back to how they were teaching prior to the Summit Learning implementation in their classroom.

To facilitate effective usage of the findings and insights from the analysis of the teacher and school leader feedback, the report is organized into the following chapters:

1. Profile of teacher and school leader respondents (pages 3 – 6)
2. Implementation of innovative classroom practices: What is happening in Summit Learning schools (pages 6 – 20)
 - a. Differentiation of instruction to enable individualization of student learning
 - b. Purposeful use of digital tools and resources to support classroom goals
 - c. Laser-like focus on helping students develop future-ready skills and mindsets
 - d. Building a strong student-teacher relationship through mentoring
 - e. Creating a shared school vision and culture for successful achievement of goals
3. Defining the impact of innovative classroom practices on students, teachers and schools (pages 20 – 26)
4. Teachers' satisfaction with an education career – a comparative analysis (pages 26 - 30)
5. Thinking about the future of education: Leveraging the views of Summit Learning teachers and school leaders to inspire innovation (pages 30 - 31)
6. Summative value of Summit Learning per teachers and school leaders (page 31 – 34)
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1. Profile of respondents

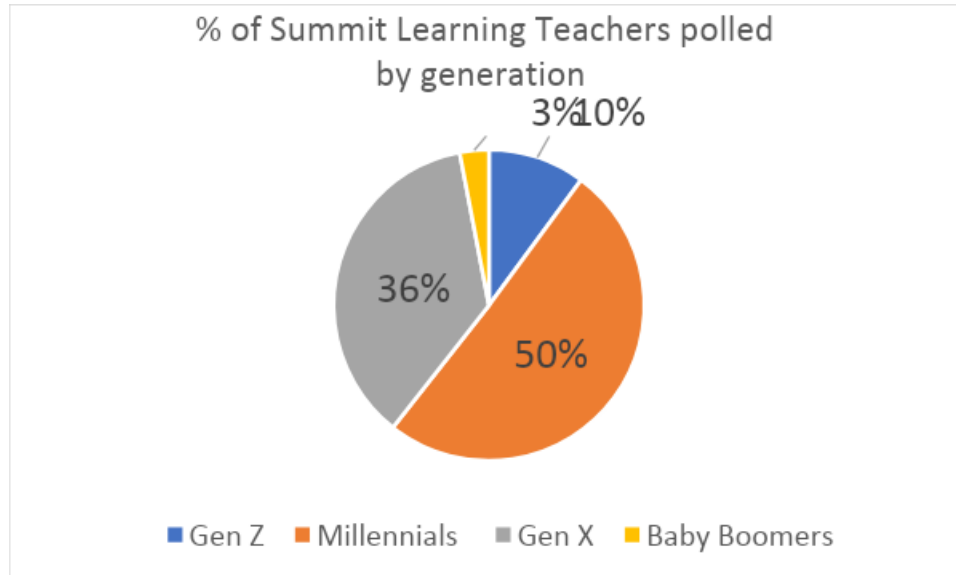
In spring 2023, 942 Summit Learning educators responded to a request for their feedback on how their implementation of innovative teaching practices within their school and classrooms impacted students and teachers.

Key defining characteristics of the sampling of Summit Learning teachers and school leaders who responded include:

Teachers:

- 85% identified as classroom teachers and 11% as special education teachers.
- Grade level assignments: (note: duplications as teachers served multiple grade levels)
 - 23% served the needs of students in grades 4 and 5
 - 81% served the needs of students in middle school grades 6-8
 - 76% served the needs of students in high school grades 9-12
- Primary content area assignments:
 - 23% Math
 - 21% English Language Arts
 - 15% Science
 - 14% Social Studies or History
- Number of years with Summit Learning experience:
 - 1st year – 23% (N = 182)
 - 2nd year – 19% (N = 145)
 - 3rd year – 15% (N = 114)
 - 4th year – 13% (N = 99)
 - 5+ years – 30% (N = 239)
- Types of Summit Learning training:
 - Attended in-person training prior to 2018 – 34%
 - Attended in-person training in 2022 – 23%
 - Attended virtual training in 2020 or 2021 – 32%
 - Did not attend training in 1st or 2nd year with Summit Learning – 16%
- Teachers self-identified their age as within the following age bands/generations:
 - Less than 26 years old: 10% (Gen Z)
 - 27 – 42 years of age: 50% (Millennials)

- 43 – 58 years of age: 36% (Gen X)
- 59 years of age or older: 3% (Baby Boomers)



- Racial/ethnic/cultural identity:

Racial/ethnic/ cultural identity	% of all teachers polled N = 799	% of elementary school teachers polled N = 165	% of middle school teachers polled N = 446	% of high school teachers polled N = 244
Caucasian/White (non- Hispanic)	61%	53%	63%	67%
Hispanic/Latiné	12%	21%	10%	8%
Decline to state	12%	10%	14%	11%
Black/African American	6%	8%	7%	1%
Asian	3%	4%	4%	4%
Multi-racial	3%	3%	2%	4%



School Leaders:

- 50% identified as school principals; 29% as assistant principals; and 21% as instructional coaches.
- Number of years of administrative leadership experience:

Years of administrative experience	Summit Learning 2022 data set (N = 143)
1 st year	8%
1 – 3 years	24%
4 – 10 years	32%
11 – 15 years	16%
16+ years	20%

- Number of years with Summit Learning experience:
 - 1st year – 19%
 - 2nd year – 18%
 - 3rd year – 12%
 - 4th year – 10%
 - 5+ years – 41%
- Racial/ethnic/cultural identity:

Racial/ethnic/ cultural identity	% of all school leaders polled
N = 143	
Caucasian/White (non- Hispanic)	60%
Hispanic/Latiné	10%
Decline to state	9%



Black/African American	10%
Asian	2%
Multi-racial	3%

2. Implementation of innovative classroom practices: What is happening in Summit Learning schools

Given this national interest in reframing our schools to support new innovative practices within classroom instruction, the experiences of Summit Learning teachers and school leaders provide an interesting model for exploration. In this report, we examine five key tenets of innovation that are part of the Summit Learning model. Our goal with this examination is to inform and inspire new conversations and potential replication so that all schools can improve student learning experiences. The five key tenets are:

- Differentiation of instruction to enable individualization of student learning
- Purposeful use of digital tools and resources to support classroom goals
- Laser-like focus on helping students develop future-ready skills and mindsets
- Building a strong student-teacher relationship through mentoring
- Creating a shared school vision and culture for successful achievement of goals

Differentiation of instruction to enable individualization of student learning

*“Learning is becoming more individually student centered,
and that is a core belief in our school.”*

- School Leader (Washington, D.C.)

On this year’s teacher feedback survey, Summit Learning teachers reported frequent usage of many innovative classroom practices and greater personal comfort with such practices compared to teachers nationwide. Teachers were provided with a list of practices that are considered essential components of the Summit Learning model, and asked to indicate how often they implement these practices in their classroom (daily, weekly, once within a unit, once within a semester or rarely or never). These practices are not necessarily



exclusive to Summit Learning; however, the frequency by which the Summit Learning teachers leverage these practices within their daily classroom activities indicate both a high adoption rate and purposeful usage. The frequency of the usage is also an indicator of value by the teachers.

An essential philosophy of the Summit Learning model is to appreciate that each student is an individual with different backgrounds, life experiences, interests, and learning strengths and thus to be effective, education experiences should be tailored to meet students where they are as individuals. That philosophy strongly resonates with the teachers in our annual polling, with 83% reporting that they are differentiating their instructional practices at least weekly; 42% note that they are doing this daily.

Additionally, 9-in-10 teachers say they are using a variety of differentiation strategies and resources to support their students. And 78% of the teachers report that they are adjusting classroom materials weekly to meet their students' diverse backgrounds.

“As a special education teacher, differentiation is a critical part of my teaching. Whether that’s giving the students a graphic organizer for writing, using manipulatives in math, or providing a timeline in history in order to make the concept more concrete. Differentiation provides me the opportunity to gauge how much students need to learn the material and how I can get that information to them in the best way possible. I must apply to students individualized education plan daily ensure fair education.”

- Middle School Special Education Teacher (Illinois)

Demonstrating that Summit Learning teachers pay close attention to their instructional practices, 81% also noted that they are prioritizing “process over product” in reviewing student work. This is supportive of what we have heard from students for many years through the national Speak Up Research. Students say their best learning is through the process of working on a group project or collaborative assignment, not in the completion of an assignment that checks all the boxes on a rubric.

Teachers' use of digital tools to support differentiated learning

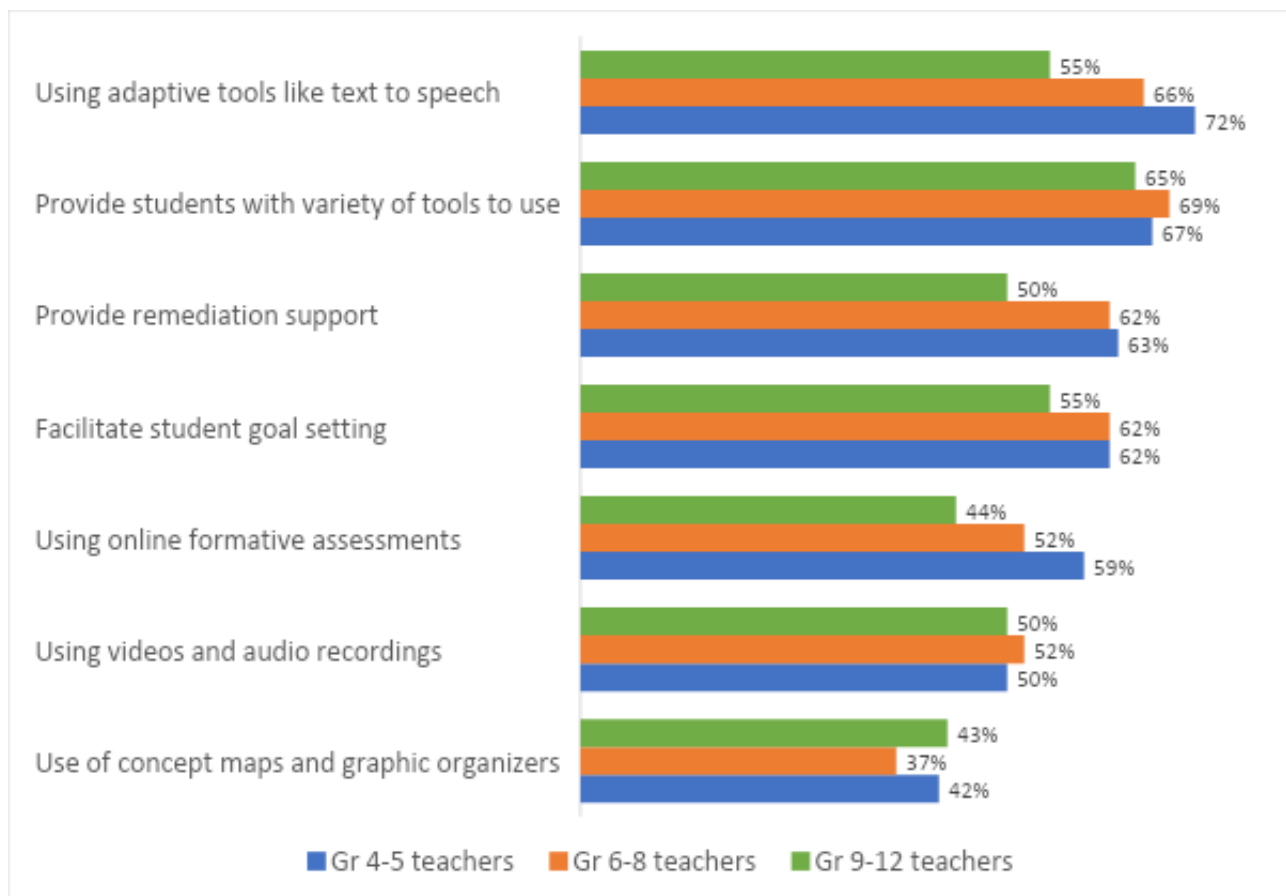
Summit Learning teachers identify various digital tools that they were using to support their differentiation of the learning process in their classroom. As would be expected, variations exist across the grade levels. **Chart 1** illustrates the types of digital tools that Summit Learning teachers are using to support differentiated instruction, and the variations in that usage based upon the grade level assignment of the teacher. The grade level differences are most likely due to differences in teaching strategies and developmental needs of students across the grades. For example, 59% of elementary teachers in grades 4-5 say they are effectively using online formative assessments that



provide them with student academic data that they can use to set up appropriate levels of reading or math groups. This usage may be less needed in secondary education.

Across all grade levels, the Summit Learning educators are using a variety of video and audio tools to meet students where they are in their learning process. Similarly, 62% of teachers in grades 4-8 and 55% of teachers in grades 9-12 are using digital tools to facilitate a process by which students set learning goals that teachers and students track together.

Chart 1: *Summit Learning teachers' use of digital tools to support differentiation*



From their observation point as principals and assistant principals, the Summit Learning school leaders report on the significant benefits that they observe because of how their teachers are differentiating instruction to meet individual students' needs.



As a result of the way our teachers are differentiating instruction ...

Our students have a higher sense of self-efficacy and confidence as a learner

97% of Summit Learning school leaders agree

Our teachers are more efficient and effective

97% of Summit Learning school leaders agree

**Our teachers are more likely to discuss data results with colleagues
to inform their practices**

98% of Summit Learning school leaders agree

**Our teachers are more effective meeting the needs of students who need extension
opportunities or extra support**

95% of Summit Learning school leaders agree

Our teachers feel more positive about their teaching experience

97% of Summit Learning school leaders agree

Additionally, 90% of the school leaders say that they believe that Summit Learning helps their students understand how they learn best. When students understand what they need to be successful learners, and teachers have the tools to help differentiate learning to meet those individualized needs, the combination results in an overall more effective learning environment for both students and teachers. As evident by the data results from this year's feedback study, Summit Learning teachers and school leaders are actualizing that reality every day.

"Differentiation is most crucial for those students that tend to excel at learning. We often focus on those students that struggle (which I spend majority of my time differentiating for them), but for those students that exhibit gifts we tend to forget. Using differentiation to push these gifted students to develop better critical thinking skills is one of the most rewarding parts of the job for me!"

- High School History Teacher (Washington, DC)

Purposeful use of digital tools and resources to support classroom goals

Teacher efficacy with using technology to support teaching and learning has always been difficult to evaluate. However, longstanding Project Tomorrow research has documented a relationship between the effective use of digital tools and resources within instructional practices and teachers' own valuation on the impact of technology on those practices. When teachers see personal or professional benefits to the use of technology within their



classroom, they are more likely to value digital learning experiences for their students. Additionally, technology is increasingly being leveraged to support more personalized learning experiences for students and to facilitate stronger relationship ties among teachers, parents, and students. Summit Learning teachers, through their effective and purposeful use of digital tools, are recognizing these benefits as well.

Summit Learning teachers (78%) identified that as a result of the way they are positioning and using technology within their classroom, they are better able to encourage student self-directed learning. This value statement aligns with the Summit Learning goals of ensuring that students are well-prepared for future success by helping them develop agency and skills for self-directed learning. Correspondingly, only 49% of teachers in the national Speak Up poll saw a connection between their use of technology and their students’ self-directed learning. Similarly, 64% of Summit Learning teachers said their classroom technology use was creating a more student-centered learning environment for their students. Only 42% of teachers nationwide realize the same outcomes from their classroom technology use. **Table 1** provides comparative data from Summit Learning teachers and national teachers polled through Speak Up about the outcomes teachers are realizing from their use of technology within instruction.

Table 1: Teachers’ identification of outcomes from their use of technology in the classroom

As a result of how I am using technology in my classroom, I am	% of teachers nationwide polled through Speak Up	% of Summit Learning teachers
Encouraging self-directed learning	49%	78%
Better able to personalize instruction for my students	64%	76%
Better organized in my classroom	60%	60%
More aware of what my students are learning and who needs help	43%	67%
Differentiating instruction more regularly	58%	64%



Facilitating student centered learning	42%	64%
Managing my class more effectively	36%	54%
Facilitating greater collaborations between students	28%	50%

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The realization that the effective use of technology can help a teacher have a better understanding about their students’ needs is highly significant. For too long, teachers only talked about digital tools as vehicles for driving student engagement. The experiences with virtual learning during the pandemic demonstrated to many teachers that technology could be a significant asset in knowing your students better, especially through the use of data derived from digital resource usage. Consequently, when asked about the types of outcomes they are witnessing through their students’ use of technology in the learning process, Summit Learning teachers reiterate key benefits that echo many Summit Learning principles.

When I have used technology effectively in my classroom, I have observed that my students are:

- “Learning at their own pace” – 71% of Summit Learning teachers agree
- “Directing their own learning” – 68%
- “Communicating with me more often” – 61%
- “Collaborating with other students more often” – 61%
- “Developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills” – 53%
- “Demonstrating a better understanding of class content” – 51%
- “Applying knowledge to practical problems” – 51%



The way that Summit Learning teachers talk about the value of technology within their own practice and to support student outcomes is also very much in alignment with the reasons why their school leaders say digital integration is important. The focus on preparing students for future success by individualizing the learning process is a key theme in the values espoused by school leadership. **For example, 83% of the Summit Learning school leaders say that the effective use of technology within learning is important because it helps students develop skills for life-long learning.** An additional 73% point out that effective technology use in the classroom can prepare students with the skills they need for college or career success. **Table 2** documents the complete set of benefits that Summit Learning leaders ascribe to effective technology usage.

Table 2: Why effective use of technology is important in Summit Learning schools

Benefits of effective technology use in classrooms	% of Summit Learning school leaders who agree
Students develop skills for life-long learning	83%
Prepares students with skills for college and career success	73%
Provides ways for learning to be personalized for each student	73%
Creates learning experiences that are interactive and relevant	73%
Supports equity of access to learning content	55%

A recurring theme in the analysis of Summit Learning educators’ perspectives on the value of technology within learning is a focus on individualizing instruction to meet the needs of each student. Every classroom environment is a unique mix of student abilities, preferences for learning modalities, and needs for remediation or additional support. The ability of a teacher to effectively differentiate their instructional approaches to meet every student where they are (not where we wish them to be) has been demonstrated to be a hallmark of effective teaching. As noted in the findings about how Summit Learning teachers and school leaders are valuing technology use, many educators are voicing support for digital tool use as an effective vehicle for differentiating instruction. Consequently, our analysis reveals that Summit Learning teachers are not only more



sophisticated in their valuation of technology than most other teachers, but they are using a wide range of digital resources and tools to support differentiation in their classroom. Effective technology use is therefore supporting greater teacher efficacy in Summit Learning schools.

“Because of Summit Learning, I have been able to integrate technology, 21st century skills, and many fun options due to the online platform. New resources have been introduced to me along the way.”

- Grade 6 Elementary School Teacher (Arizona)

Laser-like focus on helping students develop future-ready skills and mindsets

Summit Learning teachers are dedicated to helping their students develop life-long skills that will support their future success. Over the past few years, many school district mission statements and/or Graduate Profiles are increasingly articulating key skills that they term as future-ready or life skills. Within their practice, Summit Learning teachers are regularly supporting similar skill development as noted in **Table 3**.

Table 3: How Summit Learning teachers are supporting future-ready skill development with students

Practices to support future-ready skill development	% of teachers at this level of frequency		
	Daily	Weekly	At least weekly
Encourage students to persevere through problems	77%	19%	96%
Model personal growth mindset practice for students	53%	35%	88%
Facilitate collaborative exercises and experiences for students	49%	38%	87%
Facilitate student discourse	48%	36%	84%
Ask students to connect learning to real world problems	42%	42%	84%



This focus on perseverance and consequently, student self-efficacy as a learner, is also evident when teachers say they are modeling personal growth mindsets for their students. Again, these are not random practices but highly purposeful on the part of the Summit Learning teachers. Over half of the teachers (53%) say that modeling is happening daily in their classroom.

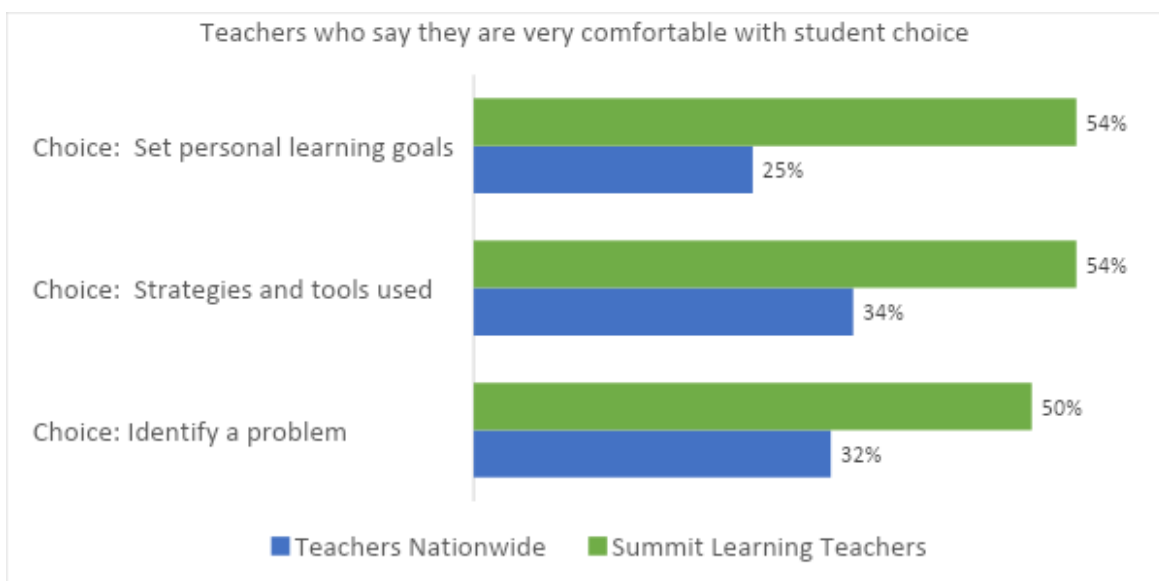
“Because of Summit Learning, my ELL classes are more specifically focused on the academic skills and vocabulary that my ELLs need to be successful in the classroom rather than random lessons that may or may not help them be successful in the future.”

- High School English Teacher (Oklahoma)

Given these twin foci within teachers’ classroom practices on differentiation of learning and helping students develop future-ready skills consequently supports a healthier classroom culture, and specifically one that highly values individualized student growth. **Teachers (63%) report that they are managing and reporting on student growth to both students and parents on a weekly basis. Additionally, 84% say that they are celebrating student growth in their classroom at least weekly, with 43% noting that is part of their daily routine.**

As depicted in **Chart 2**, Summit Learning teachers are more likely to say they are *very comfortable* with student choice than their counterparts in schools nationwide.

Chart 2: Teachers’ comfort with allowing for student choice in learning



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This higher level of comfort enabling students to have choices in their learning environments is not based upon aspirations alone. **Three-quarters of Summit School Leaders (75%) say that their teachers are proficient in how to effectively provide choices to their students, indicating that the valuation around choice is tied to competency and confidence in managing that type of a classroom environment as well as comfort.**

These higher levels of teacher confidence in novel or innovative classroom practices extends to partnering with parents, using technology effectively for learning and supporting students' social and emotional well-being. Teacher confidence provides a solid foundation for not only using key technologies today but the ability of the teachers to adopt and adapt new digital learning platforms potentially more easily than other teachers.

- **39% of Summit Learning teachers say they are very comfortable partnering with parents to engage their children around learning goals;** only 23% of teachers nationwide felt the same about their level of comfort with this practice.
- **53% of Summit Learning teachers report being very comfortable leveraging technology to support the differentiation of learning for their students;** only half as many teachers (29%) nationwide hold that same level of comfort. When asked about specific technology use, the Summit Learning teachers surpassed their peers nationwide significantly in all categories polled as noted below.

Other key comparative data points include:

Using data derived from online tools to inform instructional practices

- Summit Learning teachers – very comfortable: 58%
- Teachers nationwide – very comfortable: 37%

Using a Learning Management System (LMS)

- Summit Learning teachers – very comfortable: 53%
- Teachers nationwide – very comfortable: 24%

Facilitating student collaborations using digital tools

- Summit Learning teacher – very comfortable: 50%
- Teachers nationwide – very comfortable: 28%

With the increased emphasis on understanding the relationship between students' social and emotional well-being and academic outcomes, teachers are taking on new responsibilities in supporting students' mental health. Given the emphasis within Summit Learning on appreciating how all aspects of a student's life fit into their education profile, it is not surprising that 6-in-10 Summit Learning teachers (59%) say they are *very comfortable* providing support for a student's social and emotional well-being. **For 70% of Summit Learning teachers, this means incorporating a Habit of Success teaching moment or**



other social-emotional skill within their instructional process on a weekly basis. Again, teachers' comfort is most likely tied to their competencies with these new practices. Therefore, it is noteworthy that 88% of Summit Learning school leaders say their teachers are proficient in supporting their students' social and emotional needs. Per the Speak Up Research from the 2022-23 school year, only 44% of teachers nationwide felt *very comfortable* with these new responsibilities centered on their students' social-emotional health.

Building a strong student-teacher relationship through mentoring

"The one-on-one connection is so important to build relationships with our students. It also helps students and parents be more comfortable contacting the school for help because they have a primary contact person that they have interacted with many times."

- Instructional Coach (Alaska)

Summit Learning teachers' interest and comfort with supporting their students' social and emotional health may also be the result of simply knowing their individual students better and having a more robust relationship with them. This is likely the result of the Summit Learning emphasis on student mentoring by teachers. Summit Learning teachers from elementary through high school highly value their mentoring experiences with their students. And they believe in the power of mentoring to support their students' effective journey through their school.

Summit Learning teachers strongly value their mentoring experiences and note benefits for themselves as well as valuable student outcomes as a result of their mentoring.

"I believe that every student can benefit from a mentor"

80% of Summit Learning teachers strongly agree

"I enjoy the opportunity to work 1:1 with my mentees on their life goals"

76% of Summit Learning teachers strongly agree

"I feel connected to my mentees and invested in their personal success"

73% of Summit Learning teachers strongly agree

"I am proud of the success of my mentees"

71% of Summit Learning teachers strongly agree

"My mentor sessions help my mentee grow and develop as whole people"

65% of Summit Learning teachers strongly agree

"I believe that my 1:1 time with my mentee is valuable for them"

64% of Summit Learning teachers strongly agree



“Mentoring is by far my favorite piece of the Summit Learning program. Having that ‘family’ type group that meets outside of academic hours each day and meeting with students one on one has a huge impact on success and skills. It also allows for accountability, relationship building, and every student having a teacher that has insight into what is going on with them to share with the teaching team.”

- Middle School Science Teacher (Michigan)

Specific to student outcomes, the Summit Learning teachers note three distinctive changes in their students, which they attribute directly to the emphasis on mentoring at their school.

- a. They believe that their mentoring work results in positive changes in students’ academic performance, attitudes about school, and behavior. These views are highly correlated to the views of the Summit Learning teachers and school leaders from the previous 2021-22 school year. For example, 94% of Summit Learning teachers say they have observed positive changes in their students’ academic performance as a result of mentoring; 97% of the teachers said the same last year.
- b. Similarly, 93% of the teachers noted a positive relationship between mentoring and students’ attitudes about their education; 95% of teachers said the same in the 2022 polling.
- c. And finally, 92% of teachers this year say they have witnessed better behavior from their students, which they attribute to mentoring; 93% of teachers concurred last year.

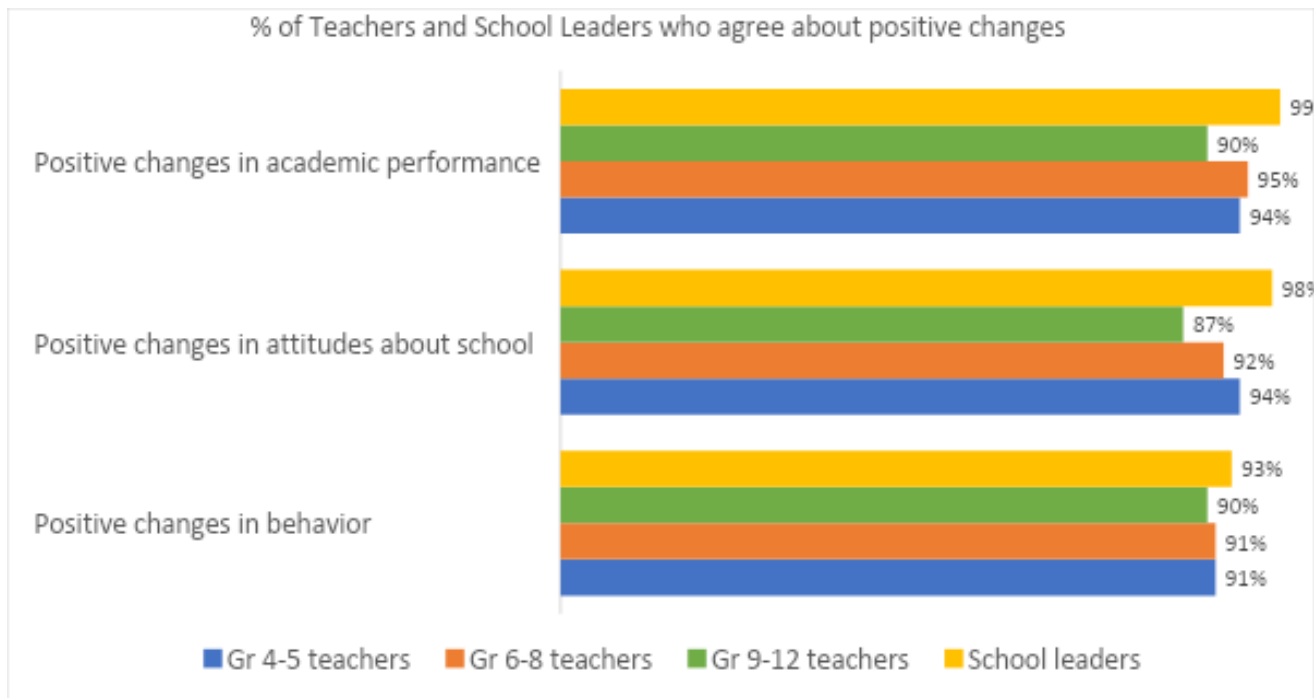
“Mentoring is VITAL. Students are going through a lot and they need to know someone at school cares. Spending time individually on them is so important for their attachment.”

- Grade 5 Elementary School Teacher (Iowa)

Significantly, there does not appear to be any grade-level differentiation in these student outcomes as espoused by the teachers and demonstrated in **Chart 3. Overall, 94% of grade 4-5 teachers, 95% of grade 6-8 teachers, and 90% of grade 9-12 teachers agree about the positive impact of mentoring on students’ academic performance.** Also noteworthy is the alignment of the teachers’ views with those of their school leaders. Regarding academic performance, for example, 99% of the Summit Learning school leaders polled agreed with their teachers’ assessment – mentoring positively impacts students’ academic results. The elevated levels of consistency across grade levels, the alignment of teachers and school leaders, and the stability of the valuation from year-to-year provide strong evidence of the power of mentoring to transform the ethos of the learning process for students from academics to behavioral issues.



Chart 3: Positive changes in student outcomes attributed to mentoring



In addition to the noted student outcomes, school leaders also connect their school's mentoring program to their school's overall success. **With almost unanimity, 96% of Summit Learning school leaders say that their school's success this year in meeting student achievement goals was positively impacted by the mentoring program.** Summit Learning has been a pioneer in not only effectively implementing mentoring programs in their partner schools but also in sharing results that speak to the impact of student mentoring. Increasingly, other school leaders, teachers, parents, and students are taking notice. In the Speak Up Research results from the 2022-23 school year, 53% of school leaders, 40% of parents, and 36% of teachers now identify a school mentoring program as a must-have in their school to help students excel.

Today's teaching environment is challenging. The results of the Gradient Poll in late winter 2023 provide quantitative evidence to the frustration and disappointment that many teachers feel today about their profession. For teachers to be effective, they need to feel valued and feel positive about the impact that they are making on students. As noted in the statistics shared above, the Summit Learning teachers derive value and benefits from their school's mentoring program. **As a summative assessment on the value of the mentoring program, 73% of Summit Learning teachers said they are proud to work at a school that facilitates a mentor relationship.**

“Mentoring allows educators to paint a fuller picture of a student's holistic experience, both inside and outside the school walls. Understanding this fuller, richer picture then enables teachers and school leaders alike to make changes and adapt school curriculum, culture, etc. to best serve the current group of students.”

- High School English Teacher (Washington)

Creating a shared school vision and culture for successful achievement of goals

Researchers and education thought leaders have multiple theories about what makes a positive school culture. Even without a formalized list of characteristics, however, school leaders intrinsically understand that an affirming culture in their building is highly desirable, and thus, a positive school culture is an important goal for them. In a review of the research literature, several common themes emerge about what constitutes an effective and successful school culture for supporting students, families, and educators. Some of those common themes include having *a*) a shared vision or goal for identifying progress, *b*) meaningful connections between staff members, students and families, *c*) a focus on continuous improvement and lifelong learning by all, *d*) a safe and supportive environment for innovation or experimentation, and *e*) an unwavering dedication to celebrating growth and success.

The Summit school leaders indicate in this most recent feedback survey that their adoption of innovative classroom practices and Summit Learning helps them create an environment for a positive school culture. Their evidence includes:

- **We have a shared vision for success at our school because of our implementation of Summit Learning – 95% agree**
- **The work environment at our school is now more supportive and collaborative – 95% agree**
- **Our school now has a stronger focus on students’ skills and their understanding of math concepts – 87% agree**
- **Teachers are better able now because of Summit Learning to identify where students need additional attention or support – 96% agree**
- **Teachers are empowered to develop student agency and self-confidence – 98% agree**
- **Our school is viewed as innovative in our community because of Summit Learning – 91% agree**



- **Families and caregivers have more insight into their students' learning since we have implemented Summit Learning – 76% agree**

“Summit Learning has had a huge impact on the way I give feedback to students. I have found that my feedback is more effective and impactful. It is specific and the checkpoints are structures to make the feedback relevant to the final product.”

- Middle School English Teacher (Utah)

Summit Learning teachers also see a relationship between the implementation of Summit Learning in their schools and their own effectiveness as an educator. Their statements about their self-efficacy also support the themes of a positive school culture. **For example, 76% of Summit Learning teachers say they feel that they are part of a larger community of innovative educators because of Summit Learning. Additionally, 85% of the teachers report that the Summit Learning approach helps them support their students' growth and development as whole people.** It is notable that across all grade levels, teachers feel supported by their school and district leadership, as well as the Summit Learning support team, to help translate their school vision into a reality for every student.

The gold standard belief in education is that when teachers are effective in the classroom, students will thrive. It seems that every day different solutions are proposed within the K-12 education sector to boost teacher effectiveness within the instructional process. The results of this year's feedback study from teachers and school leaders who have implemented Summit Learning in their schools indicate that a sustainable and attainable solution to enhancing teacher effectiveness in the classroom may be found in putting a focus on these five key tenets: 1) differentiation of instruction, 2) purposeful use of digital tools and resources, 3) focus on future-ready skills and mindsets, 4) student mentoring, and 5) a shared school vision and culture. But how does the adoption of these innovative practices impact student, classroom, or school goals? What can we learn from the insights and experiences of Summit Learning educators about the value of innovative classroom practices on tangible education results?

3. Defining the impact of innovative classroom practices on students, teachers and schools

Student impacts

While teachers and school leaders agree that Summit Learning generates positive impact outcomes for their students, we analyzed the feedback data from teachers and school leaders to identify relationships between the implementation of Summit Learning and



three key student outcomes desired by educators and families today. Those desired outcomes include:

- 1. Development of students' future-ready skills.** In the national Speak Up results from the 2022-23 school year, 48% of parents of school-aged children nationwide say they are concerned that their child is not learning the right skills in school to be successful in the future. Additionally, 68% of parents in the same Speak Up national poll state that students' abilities to learn new skills on their own is an important future-ready capacity for their children to learn in school. In examining how teachers and school leaders characterize the outcomes from their Summit Learning implementations, we focused on how Summit Learning supported the development of students' future-ready skills reflecting parents' concerns and interests in terms of their students' future success.
- 2. Development of students' self-efficacy as a learner.** As a result of the pandemic and various types of school disruptions over the past three years, both parents and educators are more focused today on ensuring that students are developing self-efficacy relative to their social, emotional, and mental well-being. In our examination of the feedback from educators, we sought evidence that Summit Learning supports those essential goals as well.
- 3. Impact on academic outcomes and growth mindset.** It is always important with all new teaching and learning models to understand the impact of those models on students' academic results. In examining how educators frame the benefits of Summit Learning, our assessment reviewed their perceptions on the value of Summit Learning to drive higher levels of academic results. Of special note are the student outcomes that enable those improved academic results, as well as student engagement in learning and metacognition skill development.

The feedback from teachers and school leaders who have implemented Summit Learning validates that students are developing future-ready skills, have stronger self-efficacy as learners, and demonstrating higher academic results because of Summit Learning. **For example, over 8-in-10 Summit Learning teachers identified the following student outcomes as a result of their implementation of the Summit Learning practices and curriculum in their classroom.**

1. Students are developing sustainable college and workplace ready skills (84%)
2. Students give, receive, and apply feedback to improve their processes and products (84%)
3. Students are more self-directed in their learning (83%)



4. Student growth reflects a whole student approach (81%)
5. Students' academic outcomes have improved (80%)
6. Students are better prepared to be successful in life (80%)

“With our school only in the second year of being open, it has been amazing to see students that come in with no experience with Summit change from ‘I need you to tell me what to do’ to someone who takes control of their work and grades. Our second year students have really blossomed. The growth we are seeing in our data is amazing. In my math classes, I have students that started by scoring in the 190’s on the MAP test and are now scoring around the 220’s. Their growth being in the 90th percentile. I believe in getting them involved with their scores and to watch their confidence soars when they see how much they’ve grown is so awesome. In summary, I believe the most important impact I have seen is the growth of the students. Not only academically but their self-worth as well.”

- Middle school math teacher (Idaho)

Additionally, over two-thirds of teachers and 83% of school leaders also identified other student outcomes as being derivative of the Summit Learning taking place in their classroom. **For example, 73% of teachers say that their students are more engaged in learning because of the Summit Learning approach in their classroom; 88% of school leaders agree as well.** Given that teachers identify the lack of student engagement as a primary concern right now, this finding about the connection between Summit Learning and enhanced student engagement is noteworthy.

The complete set of student outcomes and the comparative percentages of teachers and school leaders who agree with these outcomes is illustrated in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Student outcomes attributed to Summit Learning

Student outcomes attributed to Summit Learning	% of respondents who agree with the outcome statement	
	School leaders	Teachers
Development of sustainable college and workplace ready skills	98%	84%
Give, receive, and apply feedback to improve process and products	95%	84%



More self-directed in their learning	96%	83%
Student growth reflects a whole student approach	93%	81%
Better preparation for success in life	94%	80%
Academic outcomes have improved	90%	80%
Taking ownership of their learning	94%	79%
Spending more time with appropriately challenging schoolwork	90%	77%
Students are purposely reflecting on their learning and applying it	94%	74%
More engaged in learning	88%	73%
More resilient and persevere when faced with difficult challenges	88%	70%
Greater sense of belonging in school community	83%	70%
Enjoy learning more	90%	68%
Are more curious	86%	67%

The responses from teachers and school leaders about the outcomes they associate with Summit Learning address all three of the desired outcomes for student success.

- **Summit Learning promotes students' future-ready skill development:**
 - Students are developing sustainable college and workplace ready skills
 - Students are better prepared to be successful in life
 - Students are more self-directed in their learning
 - Students are taking ownership of their learning



- **Summit Learning supports the development of student self-efficacy relative to social, emotional and mental well-being:**
 - Students have a greater sense of belonging in school community
 - Students are more resilient and persevere when faced with difficult challenges
 - Students enjoy learning more
 - Student growth reflects a whole student approach
- **Summit Learning strengthens academic outcomes and student capacities to support further growth:**
 - Students' academic outcomes have improved
 - Students are purposely reflecting on their learning and applying it
 - Students are more engaged in learning
 - Students give, receive, and apply feedback to improve process and products

Classroom and school impacts

Teachers and school leaders attribute additional classroom-based and school-based benefits to their implementation of Summit Learning. Education researchers and thought leaders have long acknowledged the powerful influence of school culture on both classroom practices and student outcomes. **At the school level, 90% of teachers and 96% of school leaders say that their implementation of Summit Learning results in shaping a shared vision for their school. Correspondingly, 7-in-10 teachers and 91% of school leaders report that their school culture is more positive since they have implemented Summit Learning.**

Evidence that Summit Learning drives changes in culture, school processes and community reputation:

- We have a shared vision for success at our school
 - 90% of teachers and 96% of school leaders agree
- The work environment with colleagues is more supportive and collaborative
 - 83% of teachers and 95% of school leaders agree
- Our school district is viewed as innovation now
 - 80% of teachers and 91% of school leaders agree
- Our school has a stronger focus on students' skills and their understanding of math concepts
 - 79% of teachers and 87% of school leaders agree



- Our school culture is more positive
 - 73% of teachers and 91% of school leaders agree
- Our school reputation has improved
 - 72% of teachers and 85% of school leaders agree

The change in school culture that points to a stronger focus on students' cognitive skills, especially relative to understanding math concepts, will inevitably result in changes in teachers' classroom practices and capacities as well. For example, 9-in-10 teachers (90%) say Summit Learning helps them identify where students need additional attention or support. **Teachers (85%) say that Summit Learning provides ways for them to also differentiate instruction more regularly to meet individual student needs.** School leaders are acknowledging these changes as well. Supporting the earlier statements about the shared vision for student success, the alignment of the views of teachers with their school leaders speaks to an effective articulation of goals and shared understanding of the types of classroom practices that will drive those outcomes.

Evidence that Summit Learning drives changes in classroom practices:

- Teachers are better able to identify where students need additional attention or support
 - 90% of teachers agree
 - 86% of school leaders agree
- Teachers are empowered to develop student agency and self-confidence
 - 86% of teachers agree
 - 98% of school leaders agree
- Teachers are differentiating instruction more
 - 85% of teachers agree
 - 94% of school leaders agree
- There is more personalization of the learning process
 - 83% of teachers agree
 - 92% of school leaders agree

The focus within Summit Learning on individualization of the learning process resonates especially well among elementary school teachers, with **84% of the elementary school teaching cohort agreeing that they are creating more customized learning processes for individual students with Summit Learning; 47% of those teachers strongly agreed**



with that premise. This high percentage of elementary teachers who value this benefit from Summit Learning may also reflect the teachers' stronger comfort with using digital tools to differentiate instruction. As noted earlier, 77% of elementary teachers now connect the effective use of technology within their instructional practice with the ability to personalize the learning process.

Sustainable changes in teachers' classroom practices do not happen until teachers see value in the new practices and there are processes and supports in place to build up teachers' capacities and enable them to be successful with these new practices. In this year's analysis, we examine how Summit Learning supports the development of teacher self-efficacy and new capacities for innovation in their instructional practices.

When asked to identify the factors that can positively impact enhanced student outcomes, especially relative to academic results, school and district administrators regularly point to enhanced teacher effectiveness in the classroom. For that reason, education leaders are regularly evaluating the value of new learning models, emerging new resources and products, and enhanced professional learning opportunities with a goal to support or augment the effectiveness of their teachers. Longstanding research from Project Tomorrow indicates, for example, that school and district administrators believe that when effectively used, technology solutions can support new capacity development for teachers. In this evaluation of the feedback from Summit Learning teachers we have identified evidence about how the Summit Learning approach enables greater teacher self-efficacy and agency, and how that contributes to their overall teaching effectiveness. Given the current climate with increased teacher dissatisfaction with education as a profession, this discussion about the connections between innovative classroom practices and teacher agency takes on new meaning and value.

4. Teachers' satisfaction with an education career – a comparative analysis

In late winter 2023, Project Tomorrow and Gradient Learning conducted a poll of teachers and school leaders nationwide to better understand the forces that were driving dissatisfaction in the education profession. The polls included questions about current satisfaction levels with an education career, educators' views on the current state of education, and suggestions about what could be done to improve the professional environment in schools. The views of 639 educators were shared by Gradient Learning to stimulate new discussions about how to improve school environments (<https://gradientlearning.org/poll/the-great-teacher-resignation/>).

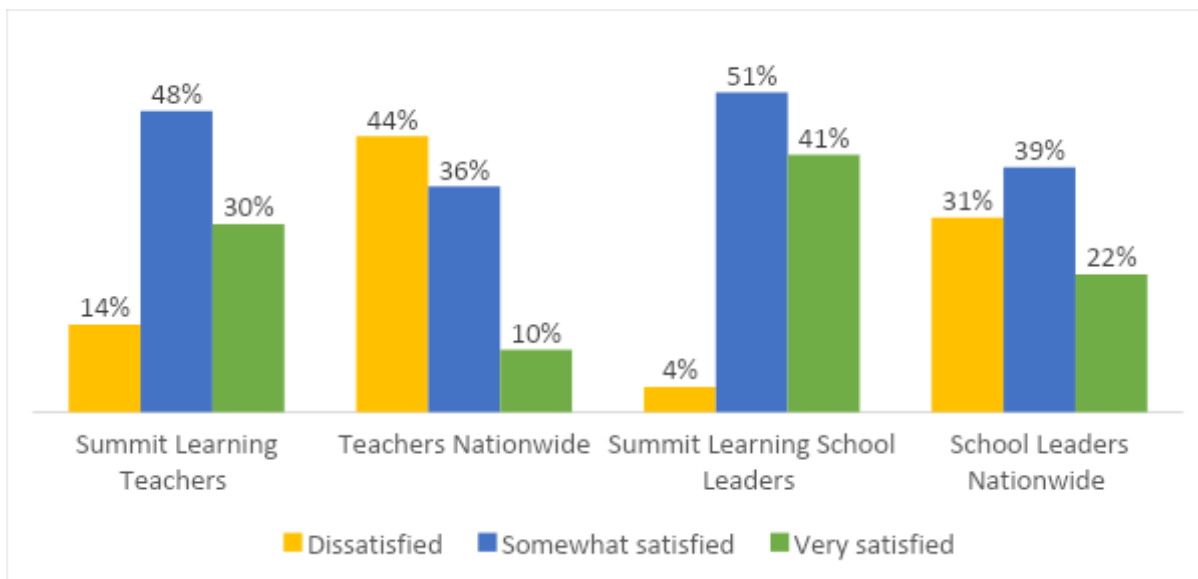
In this year's feedback survey of Summit Learning teachers and school leaders, we included a sampling of the same questions from the Gradient Poll to provide a comparative analysis to the views of educators nationwide. The driving question behind this analysis was to determine if teachers and school leaders in Summit Learning schools held the same or



different levels of satisfaction with education as a career and what factors may be driving their satisfaction levels. Key findings from this analysis include the following:

Summit Learning teachers and school leaders report a higher level of satisfaction with their choice to be an educator than our national sampling of teachers and school leaders through the Gradient Poll. Among the sampling of teachers nationwide, only 46% said they were satisfied with their career as a teacher (*Chart 4*). **Within the Summit Learning cohorts, 78% of teachers say they are satisfied with their role as a teacher, with 1-in-3 saying they are very satisfied with their profession.** A similar trend exists with the school leader findings. While 61% of school leaders nationwide said they were satisfied with their career choice, 92% of the Summit Learning school leaders said the same, with nearly twice as many school leaders who have implemented Summit Learning saying they are very satisfied (41%), compared to their colleagues nationwide (22%).

Chart 4: Current satisfaction with education as a career



Teachers' views on the challenges in education today are similar to Summit Learning teachers and the national poll teachers identifying common concerns. Seven-in-ten teachers from both surveys say there are challenges in teaching today that did not exist three years ago. Both groups also acknowledge that teaching is more challenging today than it was three years ago and that different challenges exist in different communities.

Similarly, school leaders in both groups shared similar reasons for why their positions may be more challenging today also. Common challenges included higher levels of parent dissatisfaction with schools, politicization of education, staffing challenges, additional workload, and student discipline issues.



But a significant difference for both the teacher group and the school leader group was a sense of hope. **Twice as many Summit Learning teachers (29%) say they are hopeful about changes that are happening in their schools and districts to address these challenges; only 15% of the national poll teachers held the same view.** Summit Learning school leaders (36%) are also more hopeful about these changes than their peers in schools without Summit Learning (21%).

Despite the shared understanding about the challenges, the differences in job satisfaction between the two groups of educators, and a belief that things will improve, indicate that the local environment for teachers and school leaders may be different in Summit Learning schools. Two key factors emerged from the analysis: 1) teachers in Summit Learning schools have a higher sense of empowerment to make decisions about their instructional practices and 2) Summit Learning focuses on supporting students beyond just academics and helping them with their emotional, cognitive, and identity development. As illustrated in **Table 5, 89% of Summit Learning teachers agree that they feel empowered to make decisions in their classroom that positively impact their students' learning, including 44% who strongly agree.** Comparatively, only 62% of the national sampling of teachers held the same view, with only 21% strongly agreeing that they have that same sense of empowerment.

Table 5: Comparative analysis – teachers' sense of empowerment as a professional in their classroom

I feel empowered as a professional to make decisions everyday about the instructional practices and use of resources that will have a positive impact on my students.	% of teachers who agree with this statement	
	Summit Learning teachers	Teachers in national poll
Strongly agree	44%	21%
Somewhat agree	45%	41%
Disagree	10%	37%
Not sure	1%	1%

Summit Learning school leaders also believe that their teachers are empowered to make appropriate classroom decisions. Among this group of school leaders, 92% agree with the

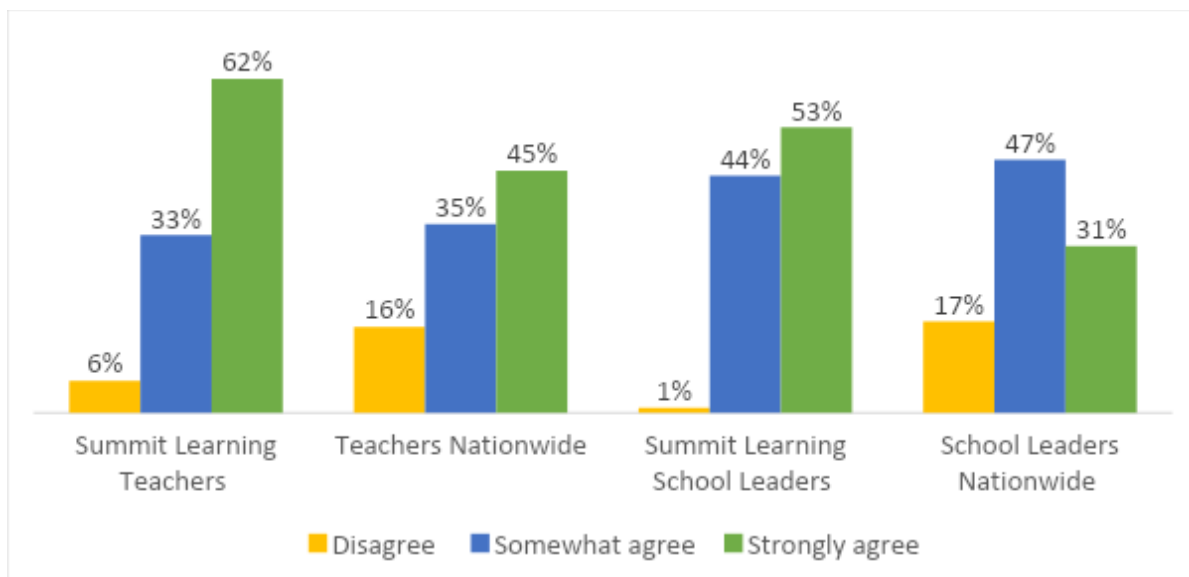


statement about their teachers, with 49% strongly agreeing. Within the national poll of school leaders, 70% agreed with the statement but only 22% strongly agreed.

As noted in earlier findings from the feedback study, Summit Learning teachers and school leaders acknowledge the benefits of addressing a comprehensive set of students' developmental needs, not just their academic needs. This belief is codified in many of the Summit Learning practices and beliefs. In both the Gradient Poll and the Summit Learning feedback study survey, we asked teachers and school leaders about a potential connection between job satisfaction and supporting the complete student. Teachers were asked to reflect on their personal experience; leaders provided their assessment of their teachers' views. **Nearly all the Summit Learning teachers (95%) and Summit Learning school leaders (97%) agreed that teachers have more job satisfaction when they are actively engaged in supporting their students' whole development, not just focusing on grades and test scores (Chart 5).** It is also very encouraging that 78% of the teachers and school leaders in the national poll agreed, even though their classroom reality may not reflect this same focus.

Chart 5: Comparative analysis – teachers' job satisfaction with supporting whole student approaches to learning

“Teachers have more job satisfaction when they are actively engaged in supporting their students beyond just academic development including helping them with their emotional, cognitive and identity development”





As a final summative statement on this comparative analysis, **while only 28% of the teachers in the national poll said they would recommend teaching as a profession to a family member or friend, twice as many Summit Learning teachers (57%) said they were likely to recommend a teaching career.** Similarly, Summit Learning school leaders (74%) were more likely to say they would recommend an education field career than their colleagues nationwide (44%). Given the reality that many school districts and communities are facing a serious crisis due to teachers and leaders leaving the education profession, and less college students are opting for a teaching career path, the discussions in this report about the value and benefits of a Summit Learning implementation may help explain why Summit Learning teacher and school leaders have a more positive viewpoint on their career and job satisfaction than other educators.

5. Thinking about the future of education: Leveraging the views of Summit Learning teachers and school leaders to inspire innovation

"I think education implementation needs to be reimaged to prepare students for vocational tracks and for higher ed, depending on students' interests."

- School Leader (Rhode Island)

A predominant theme in this year's report is a focus on how the implementation of innovative classroom practices supports both enhanced teacher effectiveness and stronger student outcomes. Given that background, it makes sense that Summit Learning educators think deeply about the future of education and how what they are learning through their implementation of these innovative practices can support other teachers and students in their education journeys. In this year's feedback surveys, we asked teachers and school leaders about their beliefs regarding key education principles and their thoughts about new directions for schools.

Summit Learning teachers and school leaders hold strong beliefs about what constitutes effective learning today and the potential of all students to be successful.

"I believe in a growth mindset for all students"

- 86% of Summit Learning teachers strongly agree with this belief
- 92% of Summit Learning school leaders strongly agree with this belief

"I believe that all students can achieve high levels of academic success"

- 74% of Summit Learning teachers strongly agree with this belief
- 82% of Summit Learning school leaders strongly agree with this belief
-



“I believe that social and emotional support can be integrated throughout instruction.”

- 72% of Summit Learning teachers strongly agree with this belief
- 90% of Summit Learning school leaders strongly agree with this belief

“I believe students perform better on both academic and non-academic measures when schools support student in developing identity.”

- 70% of Summit Learning teachers strongly agree with this belief
- 71% of Summit Learning school leaders strongly agree with this belief

“I believe that elevating student voice and perspectives is important for all students.”

- 76% of Summit Learning teachers strongly agree with this belief
- 79% of Summit Learning school leaders strongly agree with this belief

Given these strong belief statements about how schools should approach instruction and the potential capacities of all students, it follows that Summit Learning teachers (96%) and school leaders (90%) also believe that it is time for schools to adopt a broader definition of student success, a new definition that includes both academic and non-academic skills. This includes teachers across all grade levels. It is noteworthy that 93% of elementary school teachers, 96% of middle school teachers, and 95% of high school teachers agree with this broader definition of student success.

Finally, in thinking about the impact of this broader definition, Summit Learning teachers and school leaders also agree. For these educators who have had the experience already of embracing a whole student approach to learning and success metrics because of their implementation of Summit Learning, they naturally see a direct connection between the prioritization of understanding the complete set of student needs and student outcomes. **Summit Learning teachers (97%) and Summit Learning school leaders (98%) say that when schools prioritize whole child learning students perform better in the long term on both academic and non-academic measurements.**

6. Summative value of Summit Learning per teachers and school leaders

Overall, teachers and school leaders place high value on their implementation of Summit Learning within their school. This follows similar positive trends identified in our 2021 teacher report and 2022 teacher and school leader report.

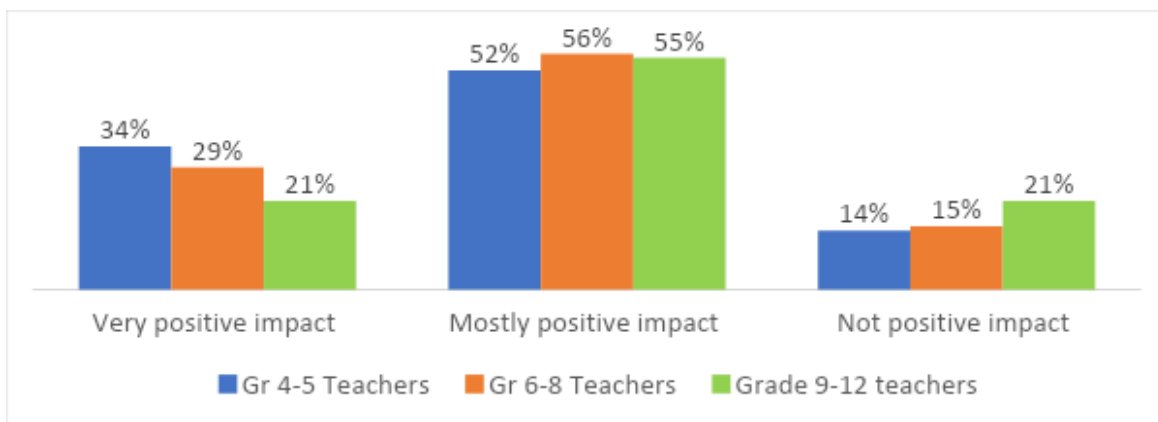
- 96% of school leaders say that Summit Learning has had a positive impact on their teachers (40% identifying that impact as *very positive*). 95% of school leaders say that Summit Learning has had a positive impact on their students, with nearly one-third identifying that impact as *very positive* (31%).



- 84% of teachers agree that Summit Learning has had a positive impact on them personally and 82% say that Summit Learning has had the same positive impact on their students.

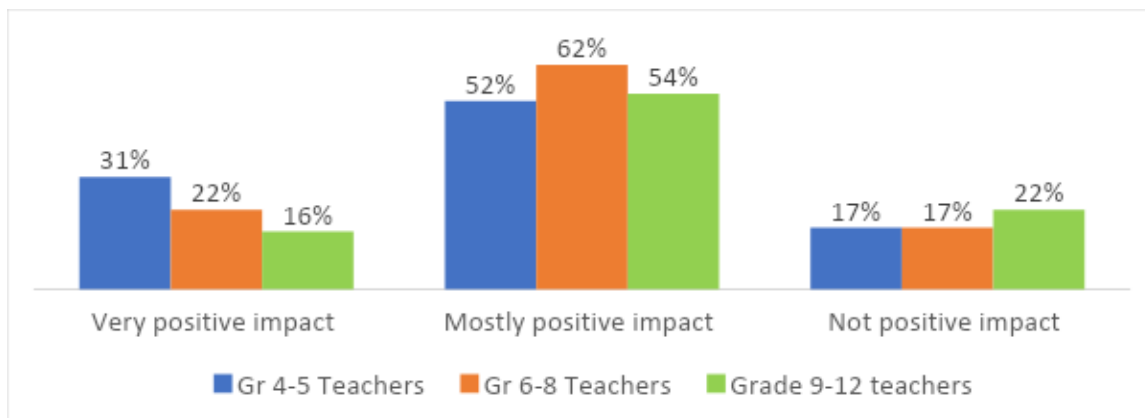
As illustrated in **Chart 6**, 86% of elementary teachers and 84% of middle school teachers saw a positive relationship between Summit Learning and their own efficacy as a teacher. Over three-quarters (76%) of high school teachers also note a positive impact from Summit Learning on their teaching practices as well.

Chart 6: Overall impact of Summit Learning on teachers (personal assessment)



A similar trend follows in terms of teachers' assessment of the impact of Summit Learning on their students. Per **Chart 7**, 83% of elementary teachers (Grades 4-5) and 84% of middle school teachers (Grades 6-8) indicate that the implementation of Summit Learning practices and curriculum in their classroom has had a positive impact on their students.

Chart 7: Overall impact of Summit Learning on students (teachers' assessment)





It is also interesting to examine if the overall perceptions of the positive impact of Summit Learning have changed or are consistent over time. Sustainability of impact over time is an important indicator of value with implementation of any new learning model in the classroom. Amongst middle school teachers specifically, the percentage of teachers who say that Summit Learning is having a positive impact on their students has remained highly consistent, as depicted in **Table 6**, with an average of 84% of teachers over a three-year period.

Table 6: Summit Learning has a positive impact on my students (teachers' assessment)

Middle School Teachers	% who agree
2021	85%
2022	84%
2023	82%

The evaluation of school leaders on the positive impact of Summit Learning has remained consistent as well. In 2022, 96% of school leaders said that Summit Learning had a positive impact on their teachers' efficacy; the same percentage as in 2023.

Two additional data findings speak to the high valuation that teachers and school leaders place on their Summit Learning experiences.

Nearly three-quarters of teachers (73%) say that they would not want to go back to how they were teaching prior to the implementation of Summit Learning in their classroom. Changing teachers' instructional practices and sustaining those new approaches is a longstanding challenge in K-12 education. It is a testament to the value that teachers place on Summit Learning that they are not willing or interested in returning to their legacy practices after realizing the benefits of these new approaches for both them and their students. In spring 2022, a similar percentage of teachers (76%) had the same view.

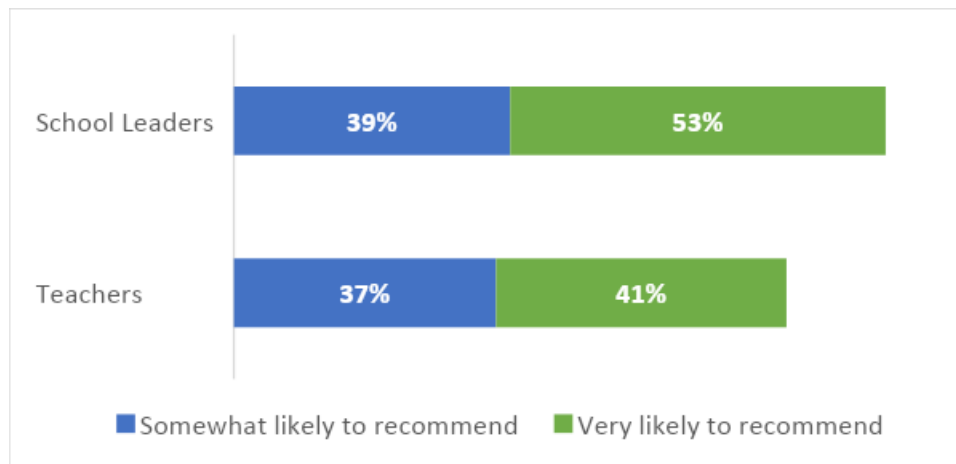
As noted in previous analyses of teacher and school leader feedback, asking an educator if they would be likely to recommend a learning resource, teaching model, or new approach to instruction to another educator can often be a tricky question. Given that, a teacher or school leader's willingness and/or interest in recommending Summit Learning to a



colleague continues to be a highly informative summative statement on the value proposition of Summit Learning.

Overall, 92% of school leaders and 78% of teachers say they are likely to recommend Summit Learning to another educator with 53% of the school leaders and 41% of the teachers saying that action is *very likely* for them (Chart 8).

Chart 8: Likelihood of recommending Summit Learning to another educator



Among teachers who say that Summit Learning has had a *very positive* impact on their teaching practices, 100% of those teachers are likely to recommend Summit Learning to a colleague, with 93% saying that recommendation action is *very likely*. For teachers who say they are better teachers today because of Summit Learning, 86% of those teachers are likely to recommend Summit Learning to another teacher. Though it goes against the grain in traditional education settings, Summit Learning teachers (and school leaders) appreciate the benefits of Summit Learning for themselves and enthusiastically want other educators to realize the same outcomes as well.

"I think the future is bright for education today. We are looking forward with our students and growing with them instead of sorting kids into who can and who can't. I wish I could have gone through school at this time!"

- School Leader (Missouri)



Appendix

About the study methodology

The Project Tomorrow online surveys were promoted by Gradient Learning to Summit Learning schools. The surveys were open for teacher and school leader input from April 22 to June 2, 2023. In total, 799 Summit Learning Teachers and 143 Summit Learning School Leaders submitted a Feedback Survey during that time period. Survey question types included multiple choice items, Likert scales and open-ended narrative responses. The resulting data was analyzed to produce descriptive statistics and to reveal similarities and differences between sub-groups of teachers and their leadership. For teachers, the data was additionally disaggregated by various profiling variables including content area assignment, school community type, grade level assignments and years of experience with Summit Learning. For certain questions, we are able in this report to also provide a three-year longitudinal review of the data findings to evaluate the sustainability and persistence of the teacher and school leader views. Where applicable, comparable data from Project Tomorrow's Speak Up® Research Project results were used to provide additional context. The open-ended narrative responses were evaluated for themes and representation.

About Project Tomorrow

Project Tomorrow's nonprofit mission is to support the effective implementation of research-based learning experiences for students in K-12 schools. Project Tomorrow is particularly interested in the role of digital tools, content, and resources in supporting students' development of future-ready skills and mindsets. The organization annually polls K-12 students, parents, educators, and community members about the impact of technology resources on learning experiences both in school and out of school through the Speak Up Research Project. Leveraging our research expertise, Project Tomorrow designs and implements efficacy, evaluation, and feedback studies on behalf of partners in K-12 education. Learn more at www.tomorrow.org.

About Gradient Learning

As a nonprofit organization led by educators, Gradient Learning is a trusted partner — to communities, schools, educators — that creates captivating solutions to meet the holistic needs of every child while fostering success for all. We are empowering an underpowered educational system to work for students of today and tomorrow. Our offerings include the Summit Learning program — a research-based approach to education designed to drive student engagement, meaningful learning, and strong student-teacher relationships — and Along, a teacher-student connection builder.