THE

2019

K–12 Digital Content Report

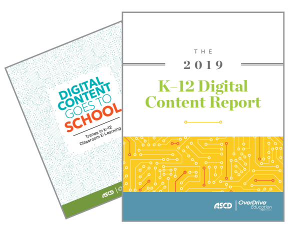
TABLE OF CONTENTS

1703 N. Beauregard St.
Alexandria, VA 22311 USA

THE STUDY

The findings cited in this report are based on a survey cosponsored by ASCD and OverDrive Education.

The 2019 K–12 Digital Content Report study was conducted online among ASCD members, both school-based and district-based administrators, to better understand their usage of and attitudes toward classroom digital content. This study is a follow-up to a similar study conducted in 2015 and published in 2016; both studies looked at the digital content market. The 2019 study focuses on current usage habits and future plans, as well as administrators' mindsets as they make their decisions on digital content going forward. This report provides information for digital content providers to meet educators' curriculum, instruction, and literacy needs in the classroom, the media center, and throughout the school.



FOLLOW-UP STUDY

This is the second in a series of studies cosponsored by ASCD and OverDrive Education investigating educators' use of digital content. The first study, *Digital Content Goes to School*, was conducted in 2015 and published in 2016. Differences in the two studies are noted in this report where appropriate, indicated by this graphic below.

2019 VERSUS 2016

1,948

ASCD MEMBERS

in administrative roles

CONDUCTED MAY 1–17

ASCD and OverDrive Education contracted with Readex Research to conduct this proprietary online study among 1,948 of ASCD's current members in administrative roles. The survey sample of 44,722 was selected in systematic fashion by ASCD and Readex Research from ASCD's member database. The data were gathered from May 1 through May 17, 2019 , with a response rate of 4 percent. Most results are based on the 1,491 respondents who said their role in education is a school- or district-based administrator. Only significant differences in the data are noted in the report.

= roughly 500 people

This report was prepared by the ASCD Research Unit and is available at **www.ascd.org/digitalcontentreport** and at **http://company.overdrive.com/DigitalContentReport**. The report appendix is available at **www.ascd.org/digitalcontentreportappendix**.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GROWTH OF DIGITAL CONTENT

Although digital content currently occupies about a third of administrators' instructional materials and library/media center budget, one of the key takeaways from this study is that the use of digital content is growing.

This follow-up to the 2016 research among school leaders and district supervisors clearly indicates increases in the use of digital content (defined here as e-books or audiobooks, as opposed to print materials, that can be used as instructional content or for independent/student choice reading) that was only hypothesized in the 2016 study. Nearly all schools are using some digital content, employing it in a variety of ways, from embedding it in their curriculum to using it in a library or media center. A vast majority use digital content in their classroom and over half as part of their curriculum. Based on the data from these two tracking studies, the reported use of digital content has grown by 15 percent overall since 2016, with its use as part of a school or district's curriculum showing a reported increase of 39 percent. The movement toward 1:1 programs, which half the districts in the study have in place and two out of 10 plan to have, has also contributed to the growth of digital content.

CLASSROOM BUDGETS

Their reported budget allocations support this amplified use, with the average budget for digital instructional materials used in the classroom increasing 12 percent, from an average of 34 percent of their total instructional materials budget in 2016 to 38 percent in 2019, a statistically significant increase, with the difference coming from a decrease in the percent who spend only 1 to 24 percent of their instructional budget on digital materials and an increase in the percent who spend 75 to 100 percent.

DEVICES

As the use of digital content grows, the devices employed by schools and districts have become updated since 2016, with decreases seen in the use of e-readers and PCs overall. Certain subgroups, like larger and public schools/districts, are more likely than their counterparts to use laptops or smartphones.

LIBRARY/ MEDIA CENTER

The use of digital content in a library or media center to create a well-rounded e-book or audiobook collection continues to be an emerging trend.

About half of these leaders indicate that digital materials are used in their library or media center, as compared to 80 percent using it for English/ language arts (ELA) in the curriculum, so there is certainly room for growth.

Since the 2016 research, fewer school leaders report using digital materials solely in the library or media center as they expand their use to multiple arenas. Those schools and districts that currently do allocate a higher percent of their library or media center materials budget to digital (at or above 50 percent) are heavy users of digital overall and in specific subjects; see the most benefits of using digital content; and acknowledge many positive effects on teacher comfort, digital literacy, and student needs and reading.

BENEFITS AND CONCERNS

This research reinforces many of the insights seen in 2016, particularly the benefits of digital content, which largely explain digital content's growth. Its ability to deliver individualized instruction and encourage independent practice are the most mentioned benefits in both research studies.

> **Since 2016, several of the perceived benefits of using digital materials have grown in importance. These include that digital content can deliver instruction directly to students, that it is cost-effective, and that it leverages devices that the school already owns.**

The use of digital content in schools is no longer a new frontier, but many of the concerns expressed by these educators in 2016 remain valid today. These hesitations about the use of digital content, held among users and non-users alike, are challenges regarding equity (Internet access at home), teachers who may or may not be comfortable with integrating the technology into their instruction, or lack of devices and funding.

EFFECTS

These educators were most likely to agree that the effect of using digital content was both an increase in teachers' comfort levels as well as the improvement of digital literacy for all.

At a secondary level, these educators felt the use of digital content met the needs of a greater number of learners.

SUBJECTS AND AREAS

Across the board, in every subgroup, these administrators reported that their teachers were most likely to be using digital content for ELA, rather than for any other subject area. Of the three specific areas in which improving literacy is a goal, they were working with digital content to improve literacy for struggling readers most frequently, rather than using digital content for early readers or for language acquisition/English as a Second Language (ESL).

VENDOR DECISION-MAKING

> **In making the decision on a product, vendor, or both, these administrators rate the ability to support differentiated or personalized learning as the most important determining factor in the selection process.**

Not surprisingly, the cost, the ability to customize, having high-quality materials, and being aligned to standards were the other top factors when considering a digital materials provider.

FUTURE PRIORITIES

The overall incidence of digital content in schools is high; nearly all schools and districts are using digital content in some form or another. However, the penetration of digital content in schools and districts can increase, along with its evolution into other subjects and areas, particularly in its use in the curriculum and in libraries and media centers.

One subject area that received mention as a digital priority for teachers was its use in foreign languages, currently taught via digital means in approximately a third of the schools and districts in this study.

Looking a year or two down the road, these leaders have prioritized professional development as the top area for digital content, followed by informational texts/literary nonfiction.

Current Usage

HOW DIGITAL CONTENT IS USED

92% **of the survey respondents are currently using digital content, e-books, or audiobooks for instructional content or for independent, student-choice reading.**

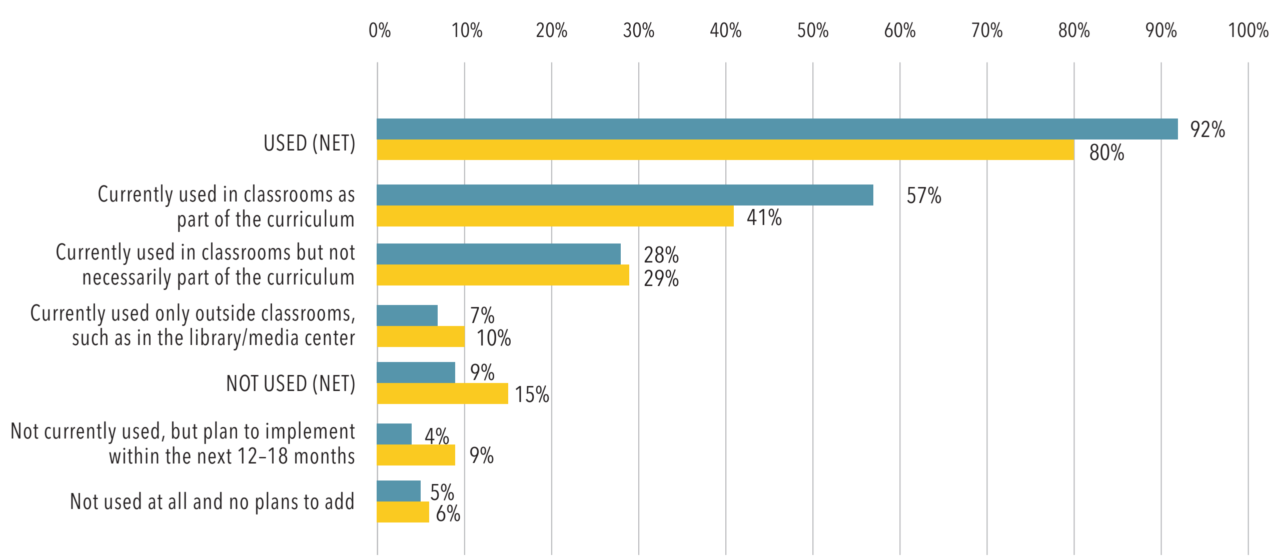
Another 4 percent of these educators are planning to implement digital content in the next year or so.

These digital content users vary in how it is being implemented. A total of 85 percent are using digital content in their classroom, with a total of 57 percent of these educators reporting that they currently use digital content as part of their curriculum. Also, 28 percent are using digital content in their classrooms but not necessarily as part of the curriculum, and 7 percent currently use digital content only outside their classroom, such as in the library or media center.

2019 VERSUS 2016

Reported use of digital content in the classroom is 15 percent higher than in 2016 due to the increase in those using digital content as part of their curriculum. Fewer are using digital content outside the classroom only, such as in the library or media center, with a 30 percent decrease from 2016.

Graph 1: Digital Content Usage



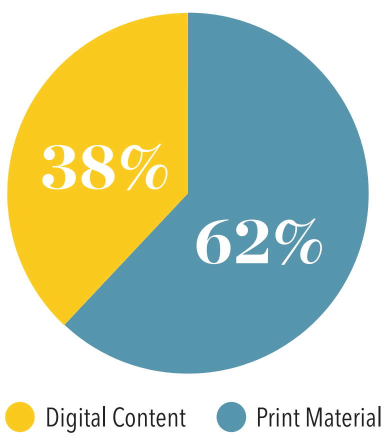
Digital Content as a Percent of Instructional Materials Budget

On average, those respondents using digital materials in the classroom are allocating

38%

of their total instructional materials budget to digital content versus print for classroom instruction.

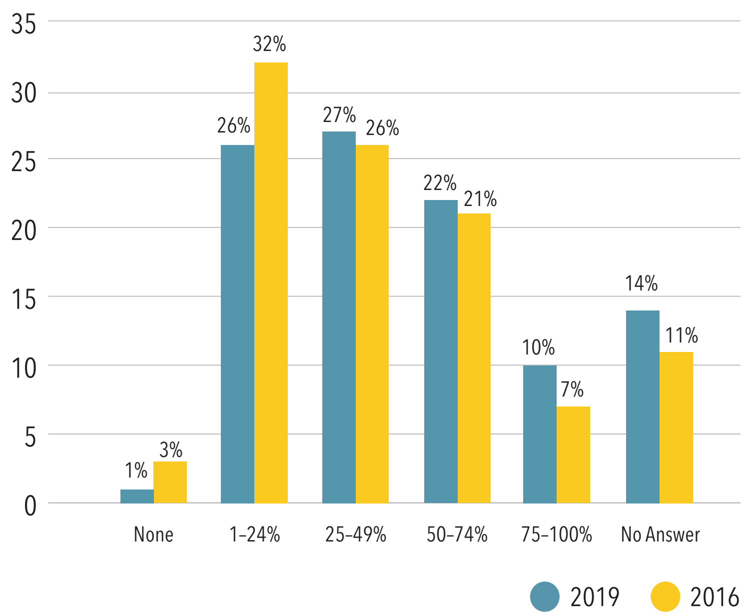
Graph 2: Average Allocation of Instructional Materials Budget



59%

of respondents using digital in the classroom spend more than a quarter of their instructional materials budget on digital materials.

Graph 3: Proportion of Budget for Digital Instructional Materials (among those using classroom digital content)



2019 VERSUS 2016

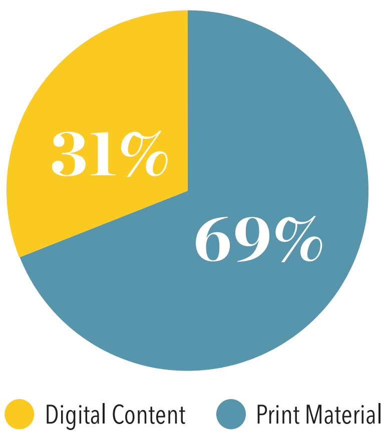
The percent of instructional materials budgets allocated to digital materials for classroom instruction has increased by 12 percent since 2016.

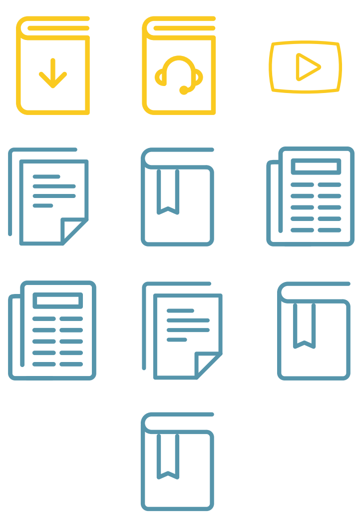
Digital Content as a Percent of Instructional Materials Budget

31%

of respondents' library/media materials budget is allocated to digital content versus print.

Graph 4: Average Allocation of Library/Media Materials Budget

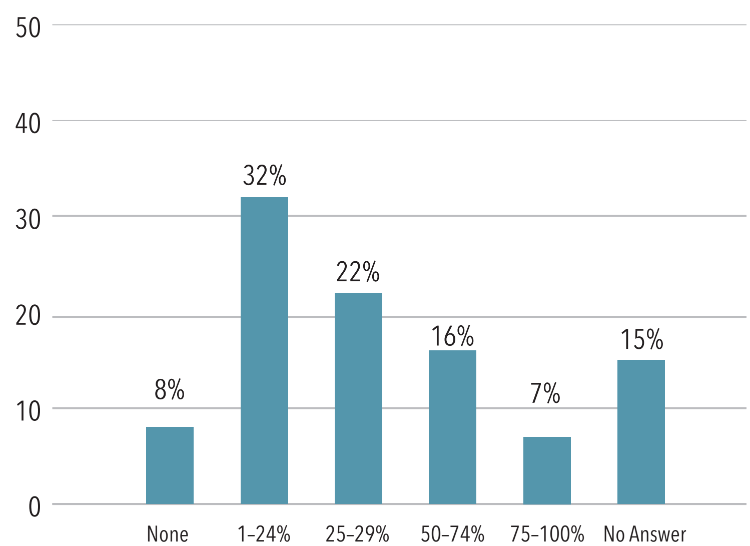


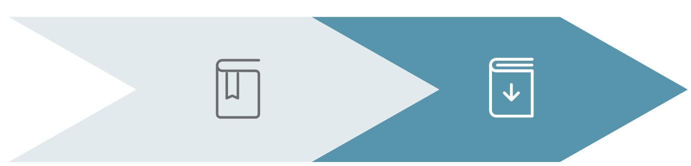


45%

of educators report that they spend more than a quarter of their library/media materials budget on digital content.

Graph 5: Proportion of Budget for Digital Library/ Media Materials





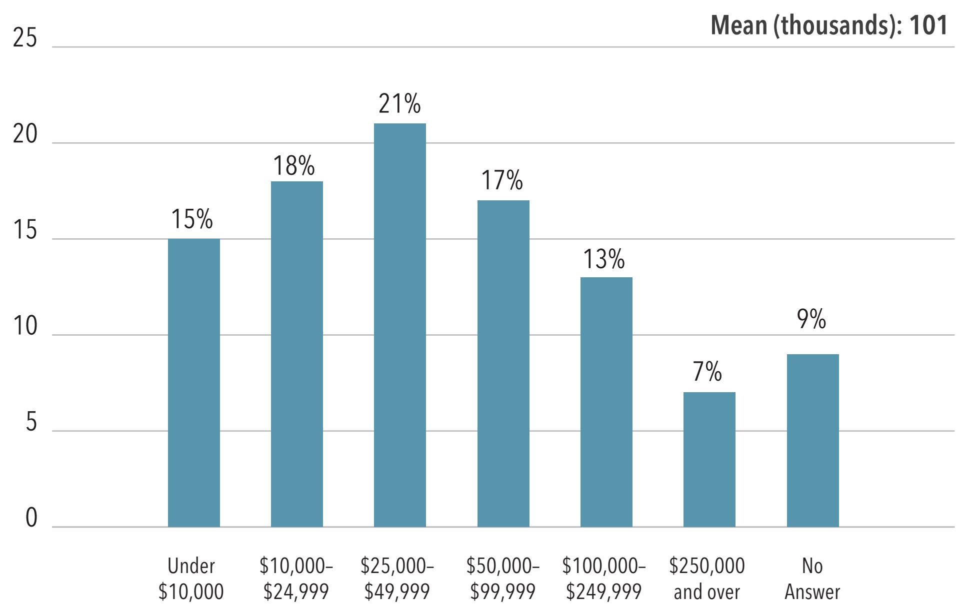
BREAKDOWN OF SCHOOL INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS BUDGETS

The average instructional materials budget for school-based administrators was

$101,000,

with over a third reporting their budget was $50,000 and over.

Graph 6: Amount of School Instructional Budgets (Both Print and Digital)



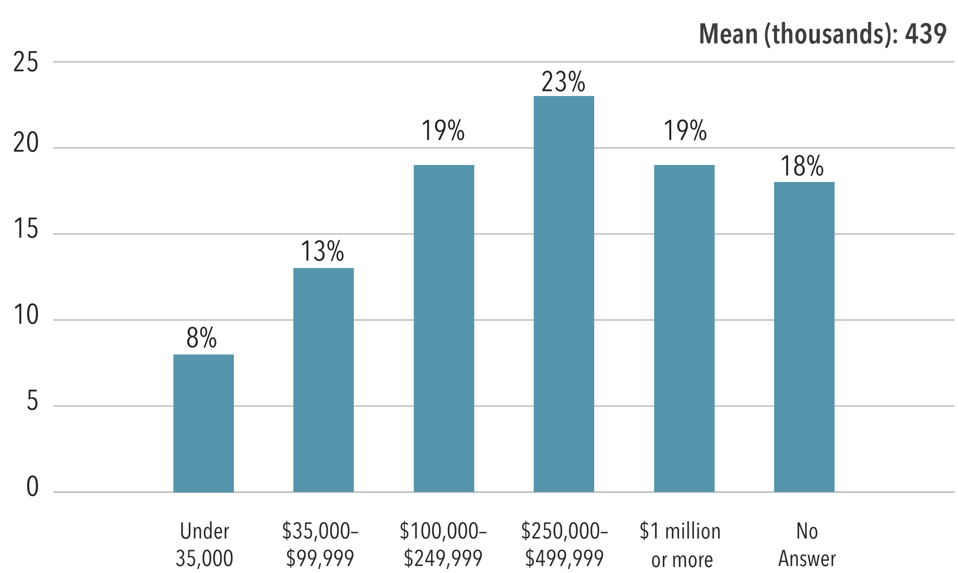
BREAKDOWN OF DISTRICT INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS BUDGETS

The average instructional materials budget for district-based administrators was

$439,000,

with four out of ten reporting their budget was over $250,000.

Graph 7: Amount of District Instructional Budgets (Both Print and Digital)

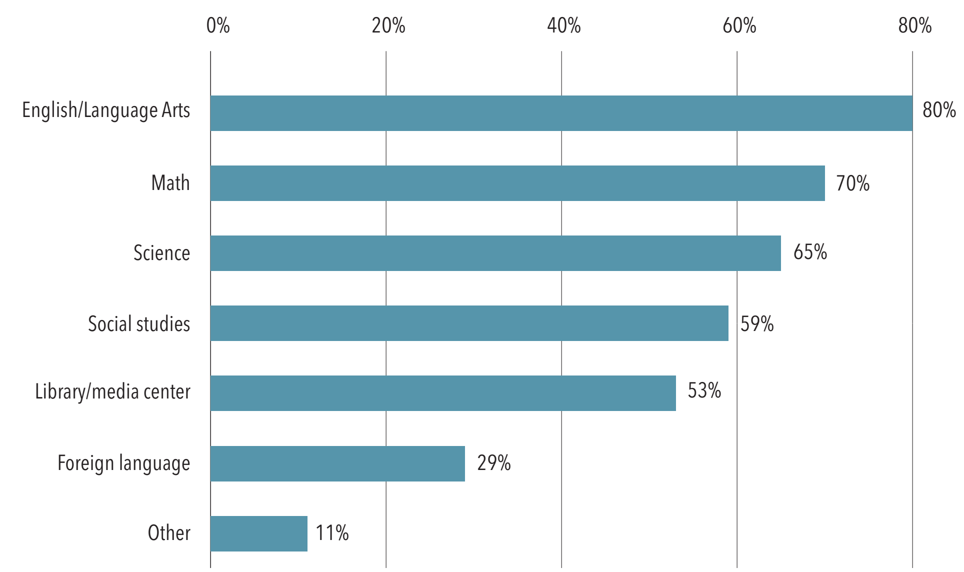


AREAS WHERE DIGITAL CONTENT IS USED

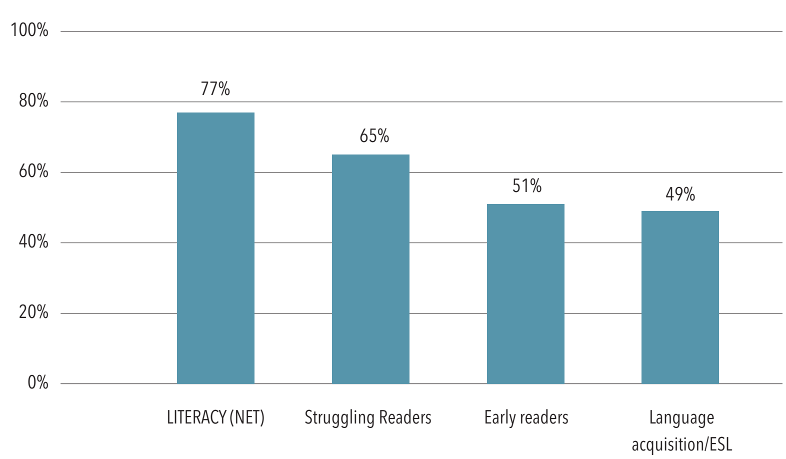
80% **of these leaders reported that their teachers were using digital content most frequently for teaching English/language arts.**

This was followed by its usage in math (70 percent) or in science (65 percent). It was used least in teaching a foreign language (29 percent).

Graph 8A: Subject Areas



Graph 8B: Literacy Areas



The second tier of usage of digital materials was for improvements in literacy.

Of the three types of literacy explored in this study, digital content was used most frequently with struggling readers (65 percent).

DEVICES USED TO ACCESS DIGITAL CONTENT

76%

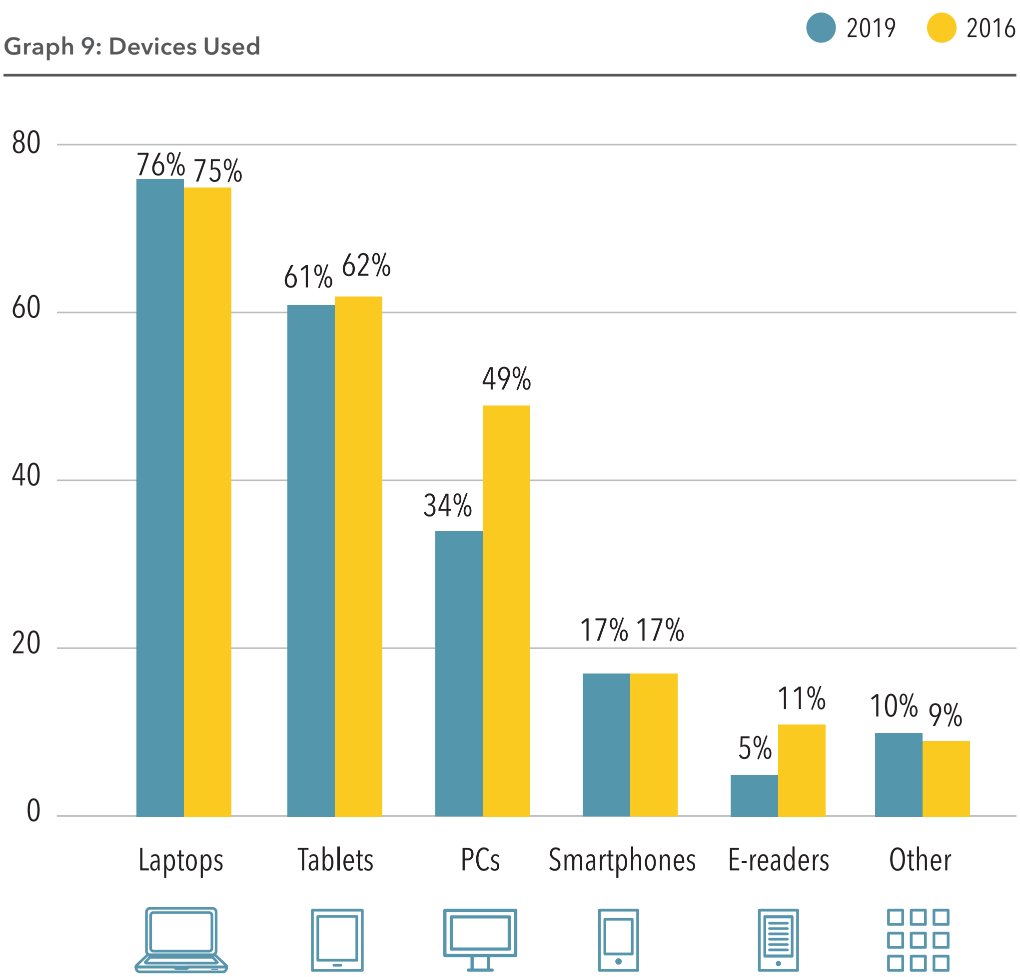
of these administrators report that their students use *laptops* for digital content.

More than 6 out of 10 mentioned *tablets* (61 percent), and a third reported they were using *PCs* (34 percent.) Far fewer said that students use *smartphones* (17 percent) or *e-readers* (5 percent).

2019 VERSUS 2016

Since the 2016 study, there has been a decrease in usage of PCs or e-readers as devices for accessing digital content.

Graph 9: Devices Used



TOP VENDOR SELECTION FACTORS

76% **of educators were most likely to consider whether the provider had the *ability to support differentiated or personalized learning* when deciding among vendors for digital content.**

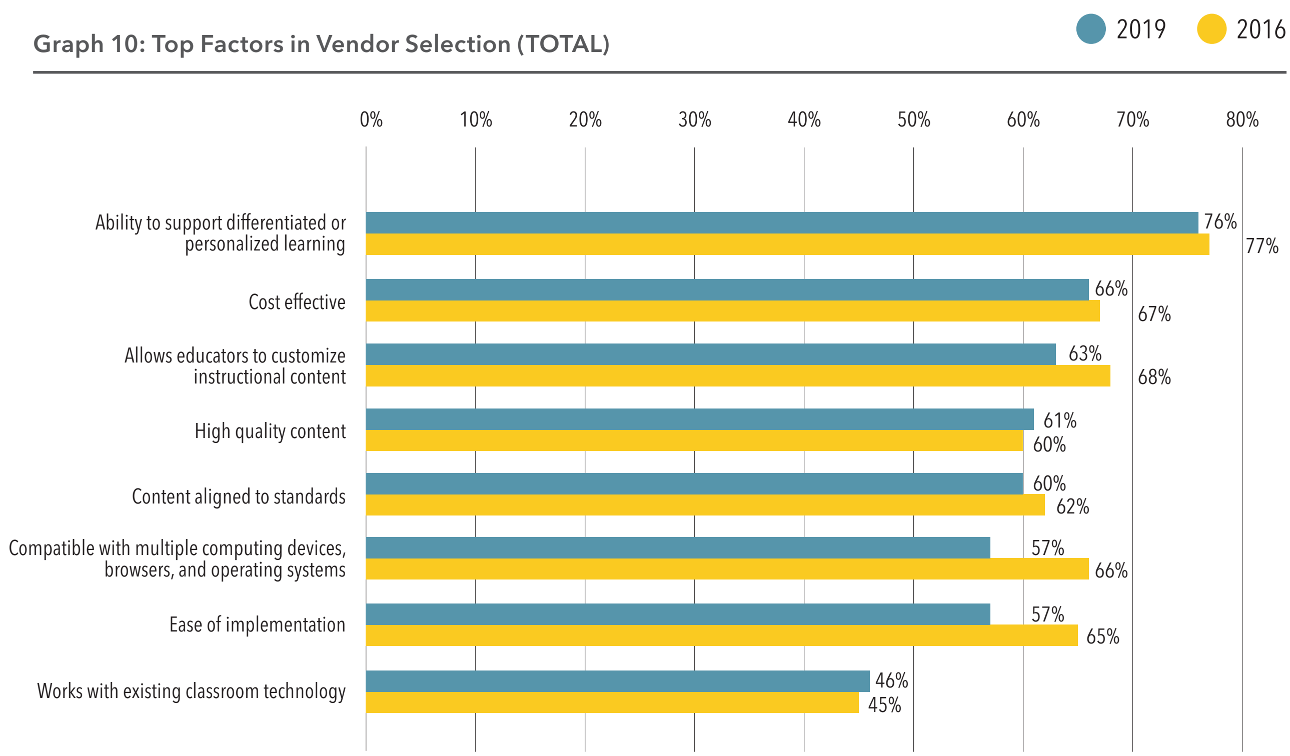
At a secondary level, they were equally likely to consider the following four factors:

- **Cost-effective**
- **Allows educators to customize instructional content**
- **High-quality content**
- **Content aligned to standards**

2019 VERSUS 2016

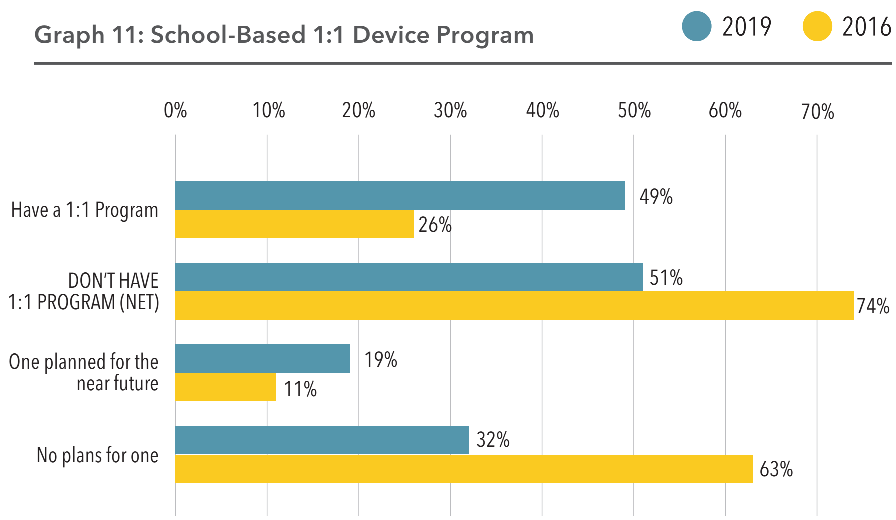
Many vendor selection factors are less important today than they were in 2016. However, whether a vendor *offers different packages in varying sizes and types* and whether it has been *adopted or approved by the state* are more important selection factors today.

Graph 10: Top Factors in Vendor Selection (TOTAL)



1:1 DEVICE PROGRAM

Graph 11: School-Based 1:1 Device Program



2019 VERSUS 2016

School are more likely to have a 1:1 device program than they were in 2016, and more plan on having one in the future.

School-Based Administrators

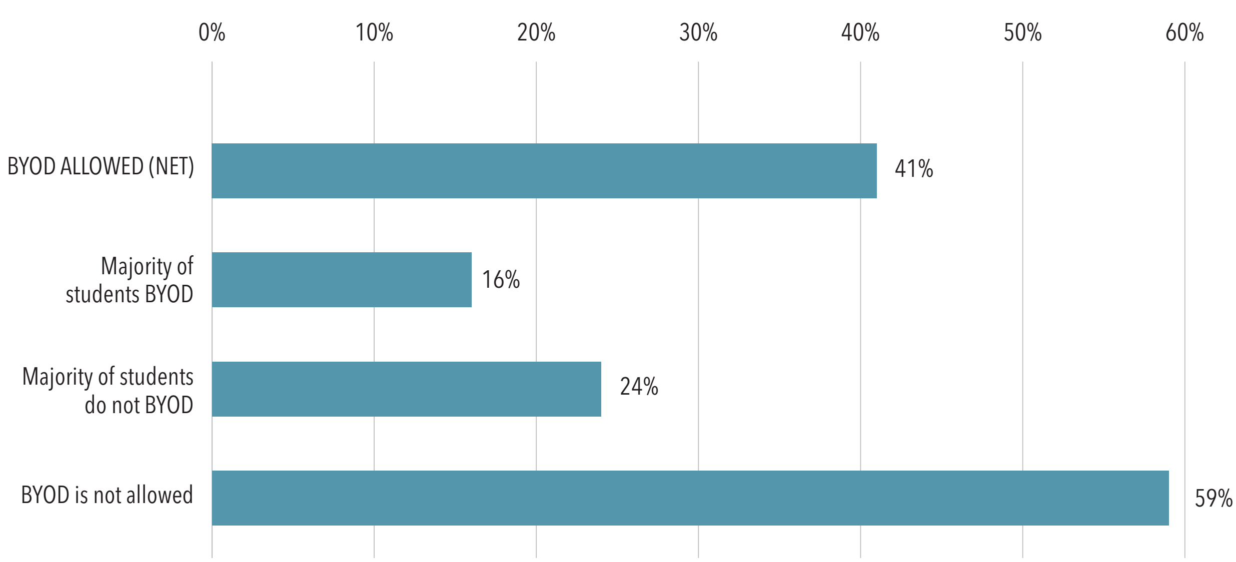
49%

of the school-based administrators report their school has a 1:1 device program in place.

Another 19 percent have one planned. About a third of the schools represented in this study neither have a 1:1 program, nor plan for one in the future (31 percent).

Of those schools that do not have a 1:1 program, four out of 10 of them allow students to bring their own devices (BYOD), with a total of 16 percent of schools where a majority of students bring their own devices.

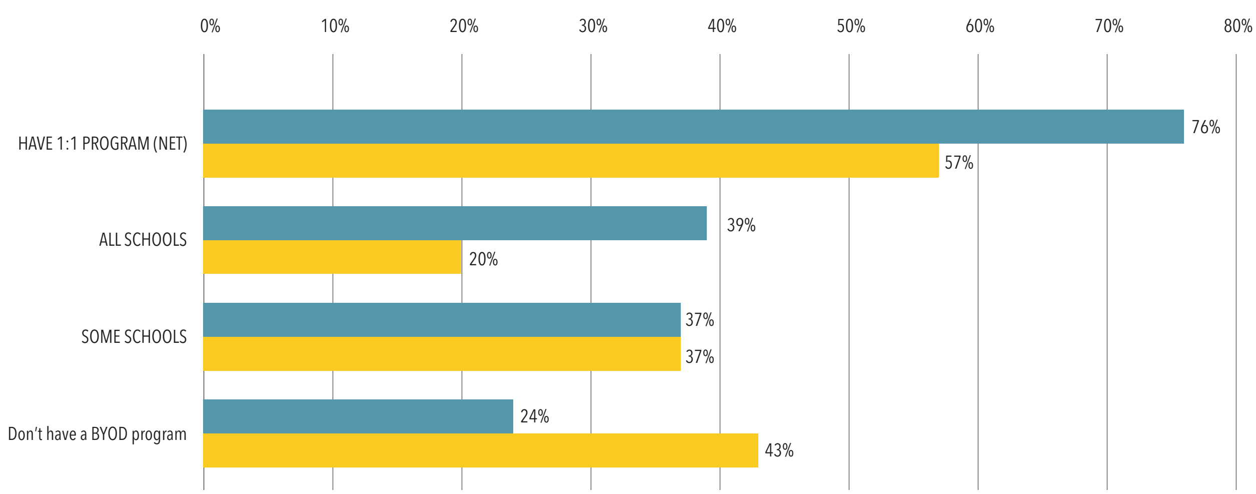
Graph 12: School-Based BYOD Program (No 1:1 Device Program)



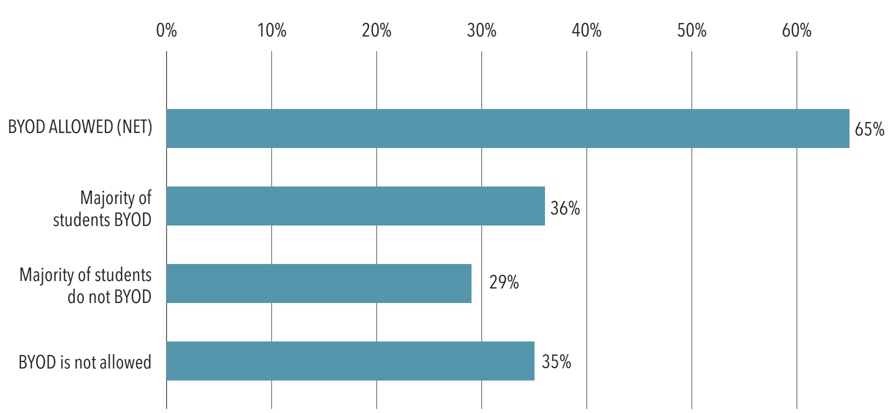
76% **of the district-based administrators have a 1:1 device program in place in at least some schools or some grades.**

Of these districts, they are evenly split between those who have 1:1 programs in every school in the district and those who have it in only some schools. A total of 21 percent do not have a 1:1 program.

Graph 13: District-Based 1:1 Device Program



Graph 14: District-Based BYOD Program (No 1:1 Device program)



Of those districts that do not have a 1:1 program, 65 percent of them allow BYOD and 35 percent do not.

2019 VERSUS 2016

District leaders are more likely today than in 2016 to report that their schools have a 1:1 device program.

Attitudes Toward Digital Content

EFFECTS

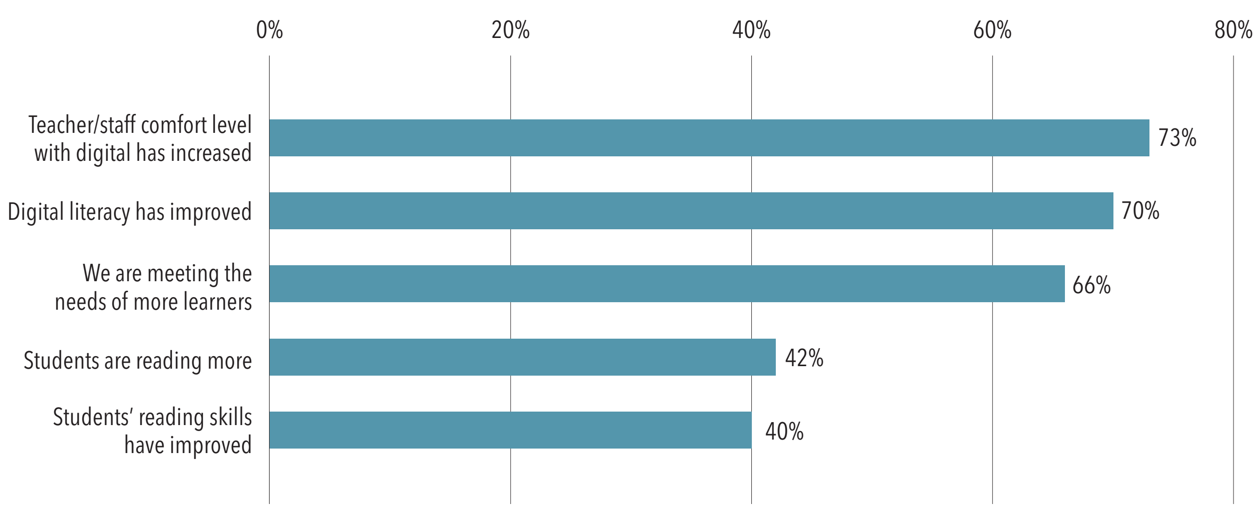
Approximately **87%** of these educators report that digital content has affected their school or district, with the specific effects indicated below.

73% report an increase in *teacher/staff comfort level with digital content.*

70% report an increase in *digital literacy.*

66% agree that by using digital content, *we are meeting the needs of more learners.*

Graph 15: Impact of Digital Content (TOTAL)



99% Virtually all respondents saw at least one benefit in using digital content over print.

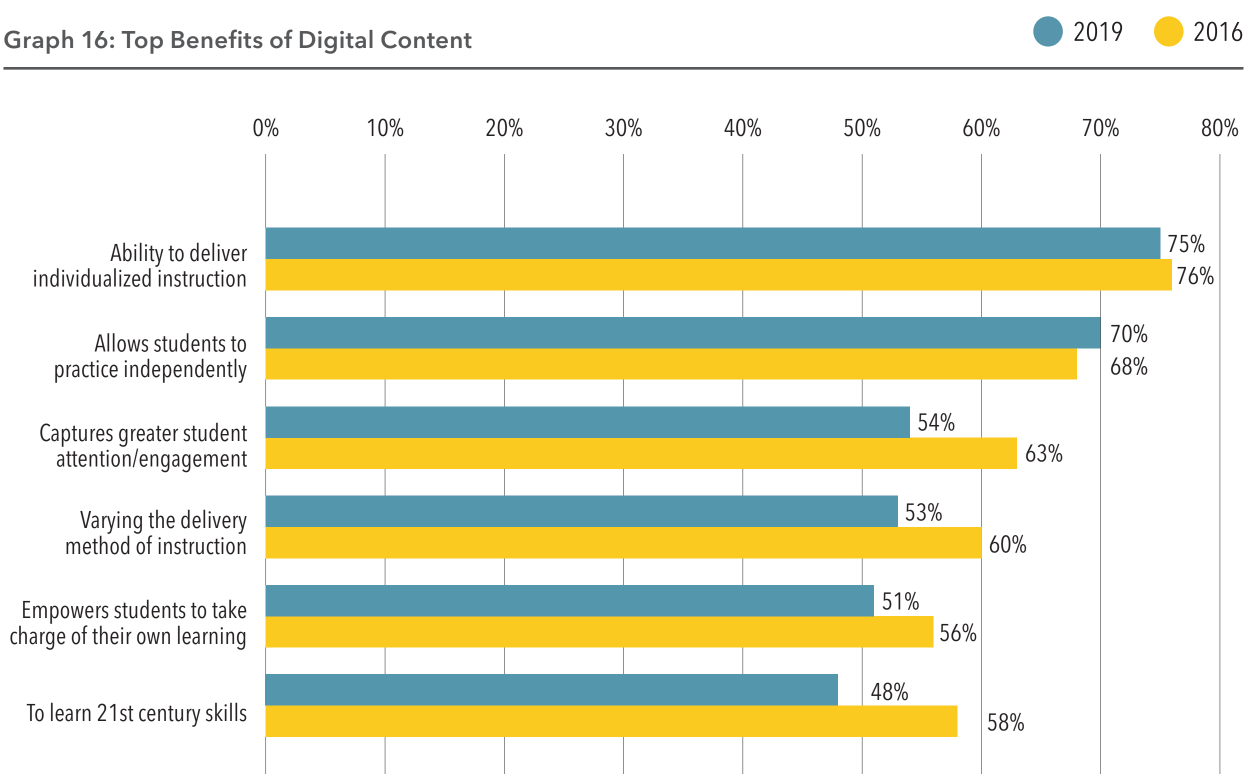
Whether or not they currently use digital content, respondents indicated that the top two benefits of using digital were the *ability to deliver individualized instruction* (75 percent), followed by *allows students to practice independently* (70 percent.) Other benefits mentioned by about half of the respondents included the following:

- **Captures greater student attention/ engagement**
- **Varys the delivery method of instruction**
- **Empowers students to take charge of their own learning**
- **To learn 21st century skills**

2019 VERSUS 2016

Several benefits of using digital content are more important in 2019 than they were in 2016. These include *delivering instruction directly to students*, that it is *cost effective*, and that it *leverages devices that the school already owns*. Other benefits of using digital content are less important today than they were in 2016.

Graph 16: Top Benefits of Digital Content



Despite virtually everyone seeing benefits in using digital content, respondents had a variety of concerns about moving to digital content versus print.

Nearly all respondents mentioned at least one concern (95 percent.) The issue at the top of the list was *equity concerns about lack of Internet access at home* (58 percent), followed by the *fear of teachers not wanting to go digital; teachers not prepared, comfortable, or effective with digital learning* (47 percent).

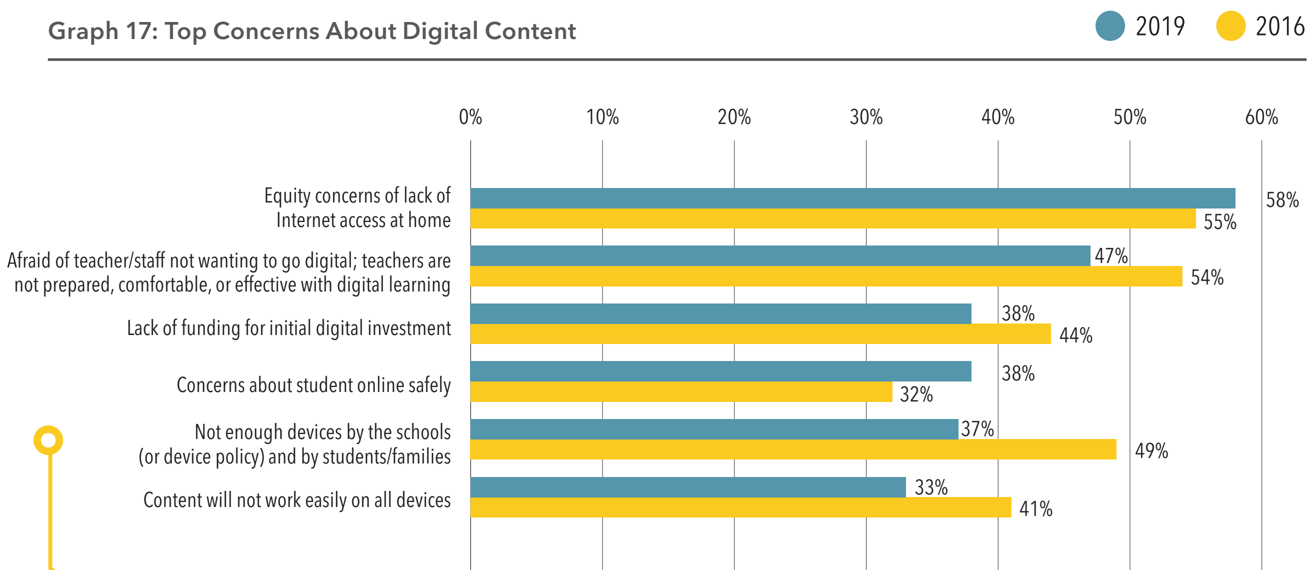
Just over a third of the respondents cited four additional concerns:

- **Concerns about student online safety**
- **Lack of funding for initial digital investment**
- **Not enough devices in the schools (or device policy) and owned by students/families**
- **Content will not work easily on all devices**

2019 VERSUS 2016

Half of the concerns about digital content for instruction are less likely to be mentioned in 2019 than they were in 2016. Four concerns are mentioned more frequently. These include *concerns about student online safety, students not ready/ students and parents preferring print, other priorities taking precedence,* and *too many competing solutions/providers.*

Graph 17: Top Concerns About Digital Content

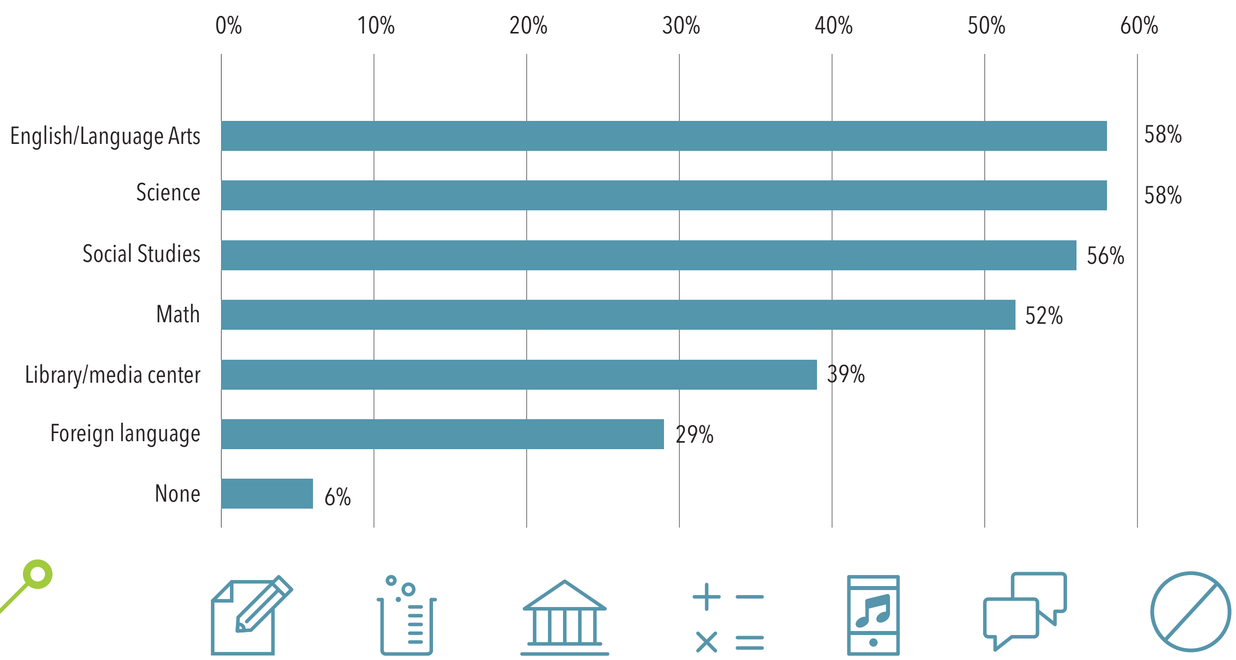


Planning for Future Digital Content Use

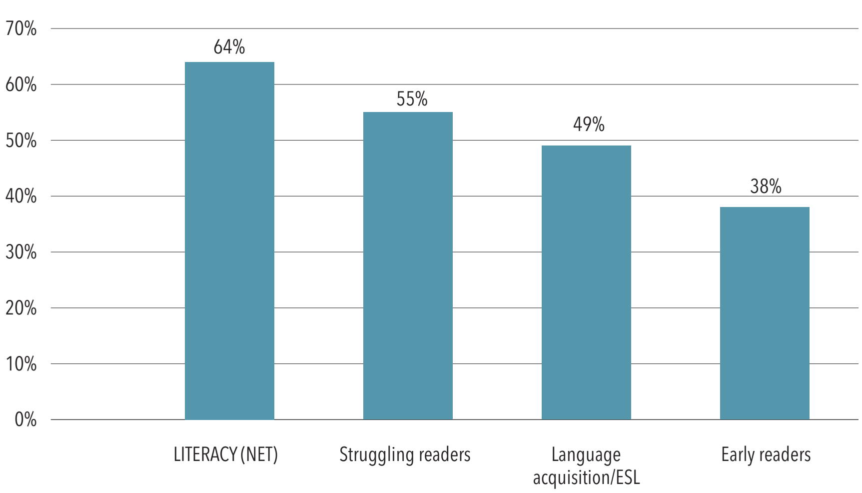
SUBJECT AREAS

Among subject areas, 58 percent of teachers are looking for digital materials for English/language arts, science, or both.

Graph 18A: Subject Areas



Graph 18B: Literacy Areas



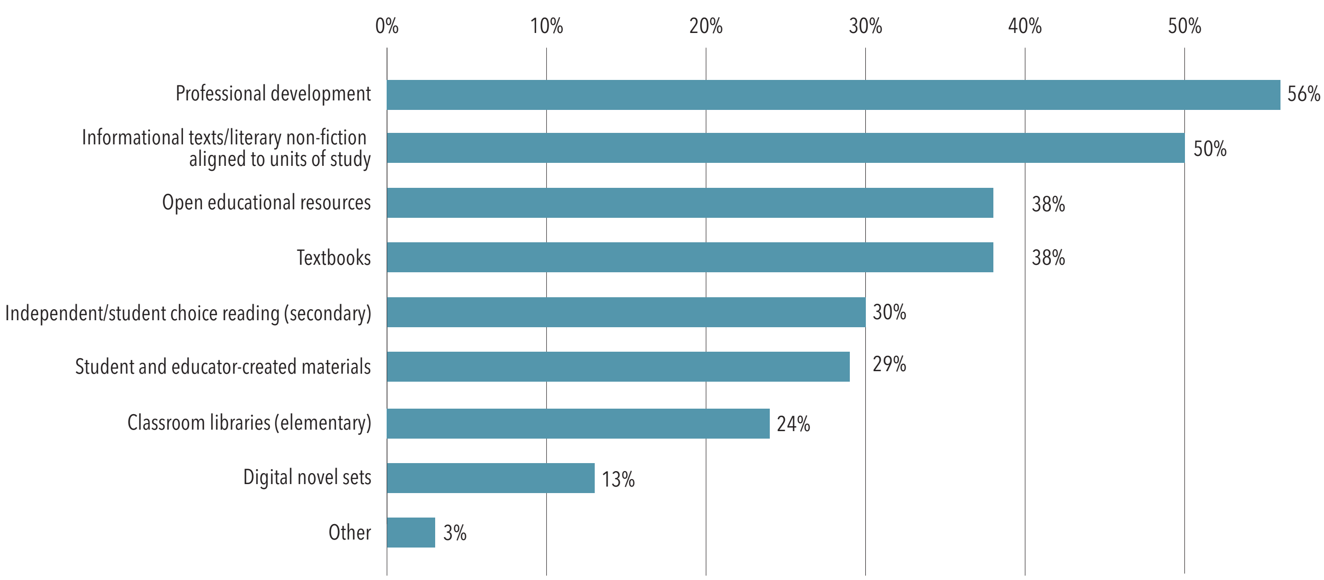
64%

of teachers are most looking for digital content to support literacy, specifically looking to serve their struggling readers.

56% **of schools and districts are planning on using digital content for *professional development* more than any other area.**

This is followed closely by the use of digital content for *informational texts/literary nonfiction aligned to units of study* (50 percent).

Graph 19: Future Digital Priorities (TOTAL)



SEGMENT ANALYSIS

The ASCD–OverDrive Education survey also highlighted numerous differences among the subgroup categories examined—whether schools were public or private; small, medium or large; had a 1:1 device program or not; used digital content in their curriculum or not; allocated a high percent of library/media center budget to digital content; or had literacy as a high future priority.

Those in public schools or districts, those in larger schools or districts, those with a 1:1 program, and those who allocate a high percent of their library budget to digital resources gave similarly robust responses in terms of their likelihood to use digital materials.

On the chart below, a bullet indicates that the item on the left was rated significantly higher for the subgroup listed across the top.

SIGNIFICANT SUBGROUP DIFFERENCES	Public	Largest	1:1 Device Program	Use in Curriculum	High % Library Budget	Literacy Priority
OVERALL USE						
use digital content	●	●	●			
use in curriculum	●	●	●		●	
USE IN SUBJECT AREAS						
nearly all subjects/areas			●	●	●	●
to improve literacy	●					
library/media center	●	●				
foreign languages		●			●	
FUTURE USE						
ELA		●				
literacy for early readers		●				
literacy with struggling readers	●					
literacy for language acquisition	●					
in all subject areas						●
foreign language		●	●		●	
science				●		
math				●		
DEVICES USED						
laptops	●	●		●		
smartphones		●	●		●	●
PCs			●			
tablets						●
BUDGET ALLOCATION						
higher % budget for digital in library		●	●	●		
higher % percent to digital for instruction materials			●	●	●	

SIGNIFICANT SUBGROUP DIFFERENCES	Public	Largest	1:1 Device Program	Use in Curricu-lum	High % Library Budget	Literacy Priority
POSITIVE IMPACTS						
all positive impacts of digital					●	
teacher comfort with digital has increased				●		
meeting more students' needs				●		●
digital literacy has improved			●	●		
students are reading more						●
students reading skills have improved						●
FUTURE PRIORITY						
informational texts/literary nonfiction			●	●		●
open educational resources			●	●	●	●
textbooks			●	●		
student/educator created materials			●			
independent student choice reading	●				●	●
digital novel sets	●					
professional development				●	●	●
classroom libraries						●
VENDOR SELECTION FACTORS						
nearly all factors important						●
ability to support differentiated learning	●					
content aligned to standards	●			●		
integrating with LMS	●	●	●	●	●	
adopted by state	●					
high-quality content			●	●		
good relationship			●			
offering different packages						
BENEFITS						
nearly all benefits important						●
ability to deliver individualized instruction	●				●	
leveraging devices school already owns	●		●	●		
varying the delivery method of instruction			●			
empowering students to take charge of learning			●			
cost-effective			●		●	
learning 21st century skills				●		
aligning with lesson plans				●		
delivering instruction directly to students					●	
providing a high degree of interactivity					●	
CONCERNS						
equity issues	●					
not enough devices	●					
student online safety				●		
fewer concerns			●	●		
greater concerns						●

SUBGROUP DEFINITIONS

	DESCRIPTION
TOTAL	All respondents
TYPE OF SCHOOL/ DISTRICT	Those who indicated they work in the following type of school/district:
Public	Public/public charter
Private	Independent/private or parochial/religious
STUDENT ENROLLMENT	Those who indicated the following number of students are enrolled in their school/district:
Small	Fewer than 300 (school) or fewer than 2,500 (district)
Medium	300–749 (school) or 2,500–9,999 (district)
Large	750 or more (school) or 10,000 or more (district)
1:1 DEVICE PROGRAM	When asked about their school's/district's 1:1 device program:
Yes	Those who are school-based who indicated their school currently has a 1:1 device program in place and those who are district-based who indicated at least some of their district's schools/ grades currently have a 1:1 device program in place
No	Those who are school-based who indicated their school currently does not have a 1:1 device program in place and those who are district-based who indicated none of their district's schools currently have a 1:1 device program in place.
USE OF DIGITAL CONTENT	Those who indicated the following best describes the use of digital content in their school/district:
In curriculum	Currently used in classrooms as part of the curriculum
In class	Currently used in classrooms, not necessarily as part of the curriculum
Out of class	Currently used only outside the classroom, such as in the library/media center
Not used	Not currently used, but plan to implement within the next 12–18 months or not used at all and no plans to add
DIGITAL LIT. PRIORITY	Those who indicated the following are area(s) teachers are most looking for digital content in the future:
Yes	Literacy–early readers, language acquisition/ESL, or struggling readers
No	NOT Literacy–early readers, language acquisition/ESL, or struggling readers
% DIGITAL OF LIB. BUDGET	Those who indicated the percent of their school's/district's current library/media materials budget allocated to digital materials as being:
High	At or above 50 percent
<High	Below 50 percent, including "none"

STUDY CONTRIBUTORS

ABOUT ASCD

Founded in 1943, ASCD is the global leader in developing and delivering innovative programs, products, and services that empower educators to support the success of each learner. Comprising 113,000 members—superintendents, principals, teachers, professors, and advocates from more than 129 countries—the ASCD community also includes 71 affiliate organizations. The nonprofit's diverse, nonpartisan membership is its greatest strength, projecting a powerful, unified voice to decision makers around the world. The association provides expert and innovative solutions in professional development, capacity building, and educational leadership essential to the way educators learn, teach, and lead.

ABOUT OVERDRIVE EDUCATION

OverDrive Education is the leading global digital reading platform for K–12, offering the industry's largest catalog of e-books, audiobooks and streaming video. As a 100 percent digital company serving 43,000 libraries and schools worldwide (90 percent of North American public libraries), OverDrive combines technology with content to support learning and reading in the classroom, library and home on all major devices, including iOS®, Android™, Chromebook™, and Kindle® (US only). OverDrive Education released Sora, the award-winning student reading app, in September 2018. In addition to digital titles available from their school, students can add their public library in Sora for instant access to thousands of age-appropriate e-books and audiobooks for both pleasure reading and classroom learning. Founded in 1986, OverDrive and OverDrive Education are based in Cleveland, Ohio, USA, and are owned by Tokyo-based Rakuten. overdrive.com/schools.

ABOUT READEX RESEARCH

Readex Research is a nationally recognized independent research company located in Stillwater, Minnesota. Its roots are in survey research for the magazine publishing industry, but specialization in conducting high-quality survey research (by mail or the Internet) has brought clients from many other markets, including associations, corporate marketers and communicators, and government agencies. Since its founding in 1947, Readex Research has completed thousands of surveys for hundreds of different clients.