

Teachers Say Internet Improves Quality of Education

By Michael Pastore

More than eight out of ten teachers (84 percent) believe that computers and access to the Internet improve the quality of education, according to a survey by education technology nonprofit NetDay (www.netday.org), and 75 percent of teachers said the Internet is an important tool for finding new resources to meet new standards.

Two-thirds of teachers, however, agree the Internet is not well integrated into their classrooms and only 26 percent of them feel pressure to use it in learning activities.

NetDay also found that nearly every teacher has access to the Internet at his or her school and 80 percent of classrooms have computers that are online. Seventy-seven percent of teachers agree that teachers without Internet access in the classroom are at a disadvantage.

Teachers cite multiple uses for the Internet, but most primarily see its potential as a research tool, and say it has not changed the way they teach. Forty-eight percent of teachers say the Internet has become an important tool for teaching over the last two years, yet across every demographic group of teachers, half or more use the Internet at school for less than 30 minutes a day.

Other findings from NetDay's survey include:

- 78 percent of teachers cited lack of time as the number one reason for not logging on to the Internet
- 46 to 50 percent list lack of equipment, speed of access or lack of technical support as hindering their use of online resources
- 44 percent of teachers cite lack of knowledge about how to use the Internet, and 32 percent list lack of leadership from the principal or administrators as reasons for not logging on.

NetDay's research suggests the critical challenge ahead is to find ways to help teachers go beyond the research functions of the Internet. Most teachers do not use the Internet in daily activities such as communication with students, parents and other teachers, or for organizational activities. Sixty-seven percent of teachers believe the Internet is not well integrated into their classroom. Those teachers most likely to use the Internet and say it is well integrated into their classrooms are sixth through eighth grade teachers.

Less than half of teachers use the Internet when building new lessons or engaging in classroom projects (42 percent), and an even greater number (62 percent) do not update lesson plans with material found online. Teachers in private and parochial schools engage in technology integration more often than teachers in public schools. Fifty-two percent of private and parochial teachers use the Internet for class projects and for updating lesson plans; compared to 40 percent of public school teachers who use the Internet for these activities.

Nearly three-quarters (73 percent) of teachers say they do not feel pressure to use the Internet in classroom instruction or the curriculum. Of those teachers who reported feeling pressure, 54 percent say district administrators, colleagues and peers are the source of that pressure. Only 10 percent say the pressure comes from principals. The lack of pressure that teachers feel from principals suggests the need

for more guidance to help principals learn how to best utilize technology to support education. In addition, learning how to provide leadership on educational technology is a new development area for many principals.

NetDay's survey was conducted by Lake Snell Perry & Associates and the Tarrance Group. It reached 600 public and private school teachers across the United States by telephone. The survey was conducted between Jan. 31 and Feb. 6, 2001.