CNNFYI > Education News
March 30, 2001

What Web? Teachers Seldom on Internet, Survey Finds

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Despite the Internet's near universal presence in schools, most teachers say they don't spend much time online and don't turn to the Web when developing lessons, a survey says.

Ninety-seven percent of the 600 teachers surveyed said their schools have Internet access. Most teachers -- 87 percent -- said they are comfortable using the Internet, but 60 percent said they spend half an hour or less online at school each day. Only 6 percent said they spend an hour or more online.

"I think they use it as a research source for kids," said Cynthia Rudrud, principal of Cactus High School in Glendale, Arizona.

Dave Sackett, one of the survey authors, agreed, saying most teachers see the Internet merely "as a kind of electronic library" and not a place to get ideas or communicate with their colleagues.

Eighty-three percent of the teachers in the telephone survey, conducted between Jan. 31 and Feb. 6, were from public schools. Nine percent were from private schools and 7 percent from parochial schools.

The survey, conducted by Lake Snell Perry & Associates and the Tarrance Group, has an error margin of plus or minus 4 percent for questions posed to the entire group. Questions to subgroups have a slightly higher margin of error.

The survey by NetDay, a California-based nonprofit organization that helps schools use technology, found that less than half of teachers believe the Internet has become a more important teaching tool in the past two years.
Only one-third said the Internet is integrated into their classrooms. Many teachers said they just don't have enough time to get online.

"It's not the tool that they turn to when they think about their lesson plans," said researcher Alysia Snell. Surprisingly, the survey found that math and science teachers tend to rely less on the Internet than those who teach other subjects, such as English or history.

Among all teachers, 48 percent said the Internet has become a more important teaching tool, but only 37 percent of math teachers and 39 percent of science teachers agreed. Twenty-nine percent of teachers said the Internet has changed the way they teach, but only 21 percent of math teachers and 25 percent of science teachers said the same.
Rudrud said many of her teachers use the Internet in conjunction with prepackaged lessons that feature links to Web sites, but added that the Internet remains more popular with students.

She said her school has five computer labs, including one in the library that is full all day. But she said students become wary of the Internet once they learn that not all Web sites contain reliable information.

"It's amazing how enticing the other resources in the library become to them," Rudrud said.

Darrell Rud, principal of Garfield Elementary School in Billings, Montana, said new state requirements to teach basic skills are keeping teachers and students from exploring the Internet.

"I think the current age of high standards and accountability and so on have really caused most schools to focus on what the standards are saying," Rud said. "The computer time, unless you have several of them in a classroom, is very minimal. There are just not enough hours in the day to use them extensively."