U.S. educators are most concerned about technology’s potential for distraction, according to a new study by the education technology company Instructure. The survey, which polled 650 U.S. educators and more than 2,000 total around the world, also found a general optimism about technology’s impact on improving learning outcomes, increasing access to education, and making its delivery more efficient for teachers and students.

Further, while distractions are cited as the most pressing concern among educators, outranking issues such as privacy and security, very few teachers have outright bans on personal technology in the classroom, suggesting that educators think the benefits of technology in learning outweigh the tradeoffs. The study also asked educators about their personal opinions and habits regarding technology and includes their rankings of the most effective technology tools in aiding the learning process, both now and their expected changes to that ranking in five years. The study’s key findings are outlined in this report.

**CONCERNS: NOW AND LATER**

U.S. educators are most concerned about technology’s potential to distract, but they predict that this problem will wane over the years. The survey asked educators to rank their biggest technology concerns now and outline what they saw as the biggest concerns five years from now. The results are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>TODAY (2016)</th>
<th>TOMORROW (IN FIVE YEARS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distractions</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Accessibility</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privacy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Reliability</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline in Face to Face Interaction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Cost</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline in Privacy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1: Survey Question: On a scale of 1 to 7, where 7 means “very concerned” and 1 means “not at all concerned,” please rank your level of concern with each of the following technology issues as they relate to education. (Chart lists concerns ranked on level of concern now and in five years.)

It’s noteworthy that privacy ranks outside the top three concerns for U.S. educators currently, but is the top concern among Australian educators. Also, educators in the U.S., U.K., and Australia agree that privacy will be the top concern in 2020, suggesting a belief that worries over distraction and technical hiccups will fade as digital culture and infrastructure mature.
CLASS RULES

Despite ranking distractions as their top concern, U.S. educators are less likely than their counterparts in other English speaking countries to ban the use of personal electronics in the classroom:

- 23% – PERCENTAGE OF U.S. EDUCATORS THAT PROHIBIT ALL PERSONAL ELECTRONICS IN THE CLASSROOM
- 32% – PERCENTAGE OF U.K. EDUCATORS THAT PROHIBIT ALL PERSONAL ELECTRONICS IN THE CLASSROOM
- 31% – PERCENTAGE OF AUSTRALIAN EDUCATORS THAT PROHIBIT ALL PERSONAL ELECTRONICS IN THE CLASSROOM

*In fact, 1 in 7 U.S. educators allow any electronic device in class as long as it doesn’t distract other students, and 48% of U.S. educators say they’re fine with students bringing devices to class for educational purposes.*

BULLISH ON TECH

Despite their concerns, U.S. educators are remarkably optimistic about the positive impacts of technology on key aspects of education:

**OVERALL IMPACT**

- 94% say technology has had a positive overall impact on education

**ACCESS**

- 92% say technology has made education more accessible

**EFFICIENCY**

- 84% say technology has made education more efficient
- 81% say it makes their job easier

Nearly 2 in 3 say it saves them time, with 2 in 5 saying it saves them at least 3 hours per week

*Figure 2: Survey Question: What rules do you have in place to regulate the use of technology in your classroom? (Chart lists % of educators in each country who answered “Absolutely no use of personal electronic devices in class”)*

*In fact, 1 in 7 U.S. educators allow any electronic device in class as long as it doesn’t distract other students, and 48% of U.S. educators say they’re fine with students bringing devices to class for educational purposes.*

*Figure 3a: Survey Question: Think about technology as it relates to education in general. By responding “agree” or “disagree,” please share your thoughts on each of the following statements.*

*Figure 3b: Survey Question: Think about technology as it relates to your role as a teacher. On a scale of 1–7, where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 7 means “strongly agree,” please share your thoughts on each of the following statements.*

*Figure 3c: Survey Question: Please select the best answer as technology relates to the amount of time you spend teaching, grading papers and preparing lesson plans each week. Incorporating technology into the classroom...*
These findings are consistent with data from U.K. and Australian educators, as well. For example:

**IMPACT ON THE CLASSROOM**

- 81% say it makes them a more effective teacher
- 77% believe technology enhances the ability to learn
- 68% say it enables them to give more individual attention to students
- 66% believe it contributes to students achieving better results
- 66% believe it makes students more engaged

**Figure 3d:** Survey Question: Think about technology as it relates to your students. On a scale of 1–8, where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 8 means “strongly agree,” please share your thoughts on each of the following statements: (Chart reflects % or ratio of responses to these questions).

**Figure 4:** Survey Question: Think about technology as it relates to your role as a teacher. On a scale of 1–7, where 1 means “strongly disagree” and 7 means “strongly agree,” please share your thoughts on each of the following statements. (Chart lists % of educators in U.K. and Australia who strongly agree or agree.)

**GETTING PERSONAL**

Educators’ evolving views on educational technology may reflect their personal views.

- **93%** Percentage of U.S. educators that believe advances in technology are important.
- **1 in 6** Number of U.S. educators that consider themselves “early adopters” of technology (1 in 4 in the U.K. and Australia).
- **5%** Percentage of U.S. educators that are indifferent about advances in technology, and only 3% rarely or never try technology themselves.

**Figure 5:** Survey Question: Beyond education, how would you characterize your personal feelings about technology in general? Survey Question: Think about your personal technology habits. Which statement best represents your attitudes and/or behaviors as it relates to using or acquiring new devices or software programs? (Chart lists % or ratio of educators in different countries disclosing personal feelings about technology and personal technology habits.)
The study asked educators to rank the effectiveness of various education technology tools, both currently and their opinion of how this ranking might change in five years. U.S. educators seem to consider pedagogical tools and personal computers as education technology staples and are least excited about the place of MOOCs and personal devices, like tablets, in the learning process. The following rankings reflect U.S. respondents:

**CONCLUSION**

U.S. educators have modern views on technology, and their favorable opinions of technology’s role in learning are reflective of the mainstreaming of technology in nearly every facet of daily life. While recognizing the tradeoffs that come from introducing technology into the learning process, educators believe the Digital Age has improved students’ ability to learn, increased access to education, and made the teaching process more effective and efficient for all involved.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted via an online survey of 650 U.S. teachers, administrators, and staff at K-12 and higher education institutions. The survey polled a total of 2,011 educators from various industrialized countries with mature education institutions. The survey was conducted in December 2015 by Instructure, creator of the Canvas learning management system, which is used by 1,600 colleges, universities, and K-12 districts around the world.