

TEACHING, TECHNOLOGY AND LEARNING

Understanding the interconnection

Research Findings | February, 2016

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INTRODUCTION

The most recently published large-scale research study shows that technology is not having the impact on student learning that we'd all hoped. This revelation has increased the urgency for both educational institutions and industry to work harder to find a more effective approach. SMART Technologies initiated research aimed at uncovering the interconnections between success, technology and teaching/learning practices. The purpose of this research is to help guide decisions in the education and technology sectors.



HIGHLIGHTS

Great teachers get results.

But when they're able to use education technology to enable the best teaching practices, their ability to achieve successful outcomes is greatly enhanced.

The highest success comes from great teaching practices, complemented by software and hardware, in that order.

Teaching practices + Education software + Hardware = Success

342%

more likely to achieve outstanding success when using teaching best practices and technology frequently

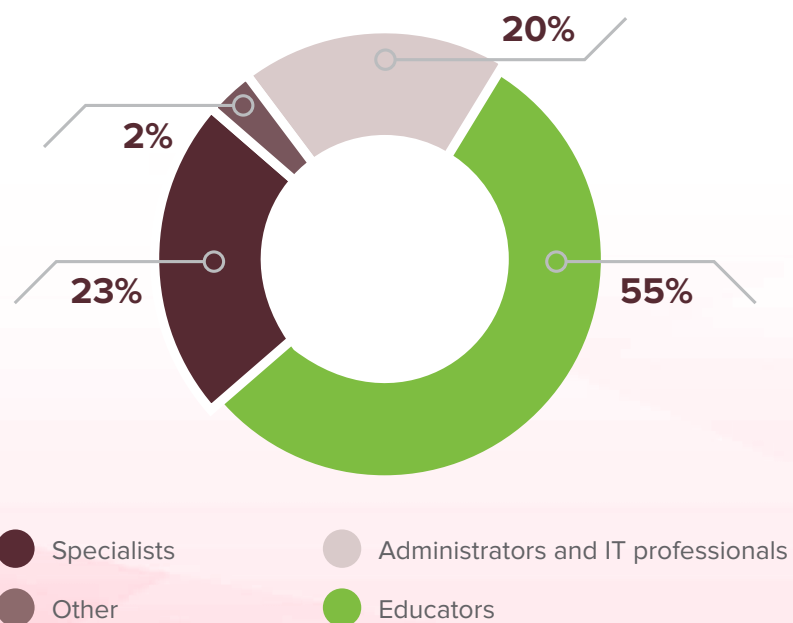
70%

achieve positive success when using collaborative software frequently

The Respondents

Research was conducted using over 400 education professionals, with a variety of roles in the education sphere.

More than 400 survey respondents



Geography

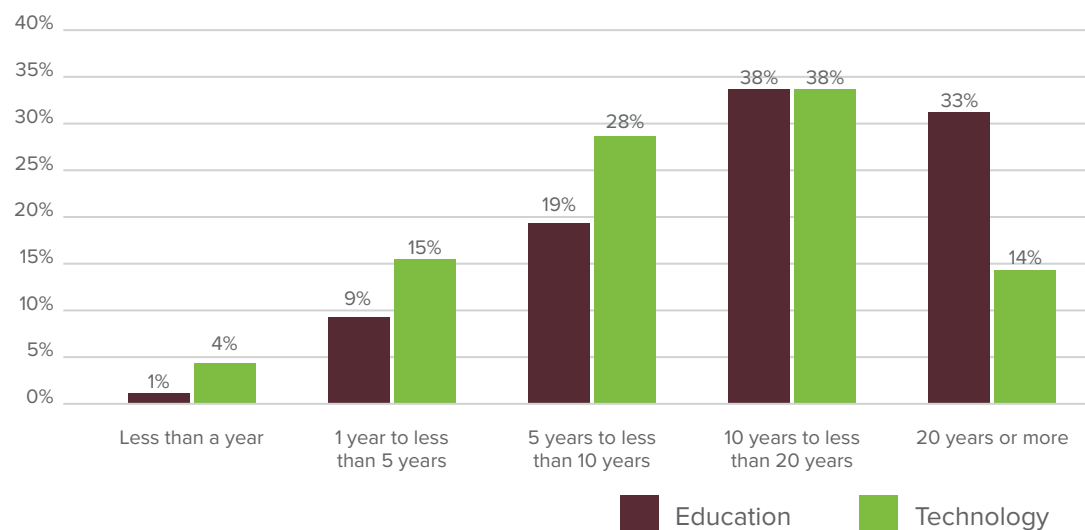
The majority of respondents are from the United States, UK, Germany, Canada, Netherlands and Sweden.

26 other countries are also represented.



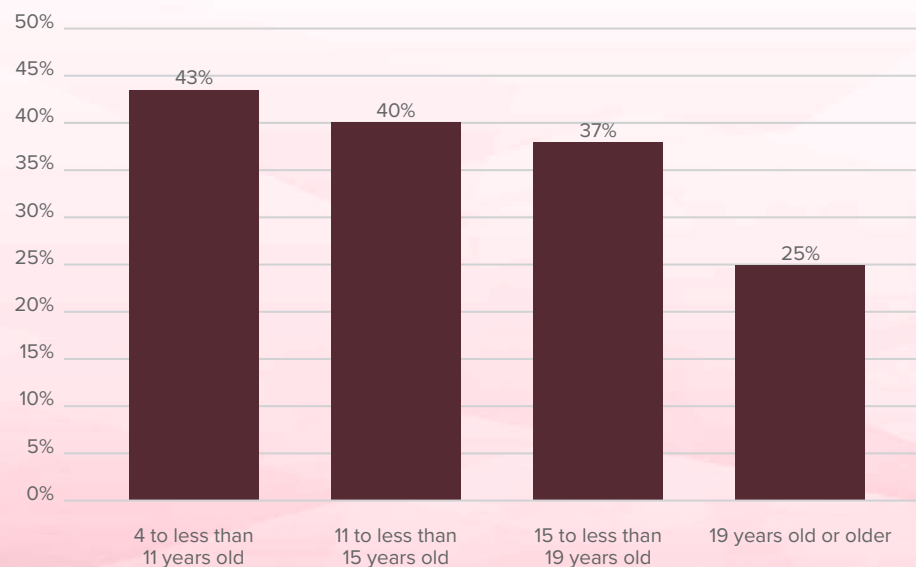
Experience

The education and technology experience of most respondents is quite high. This allows us to gain deeper insight into the behaviors and practices of those that use technology regularly.



Grade Level

Teachers were primarily drawn from K-12, with some Higher Education representation.



Conclusions:

- The fusion of great teaching practice with technology-rich environments results in much higher reporting of success
- The frequent use of active learning practices relates strongly to success
- SEL skills are becoming more prioritized than standardized tests by many in the education sphere
- A teacher's view on how learning works relates to success outcomes
- Evidence suggests the importance of software, even over hardware when trying to achieve success
- Assessment software is most closely tied to success, followed by collaborative and content creation software
- Interactive front-of-room display hardware outperforms projectors
- The successful integration of varied technologies in the classroom positively impacts success

Challenges:

- Students are mostly using their devices to consume content rather than to create content
- Attention needs to be given to increasing the frequency and quality of collaborative tasks
- Students need to be provided with more opportunities for feedback (daily vs weekly)
- Views on technology as a distraction vary based on teacher experience and student age

Best Practices and Technology

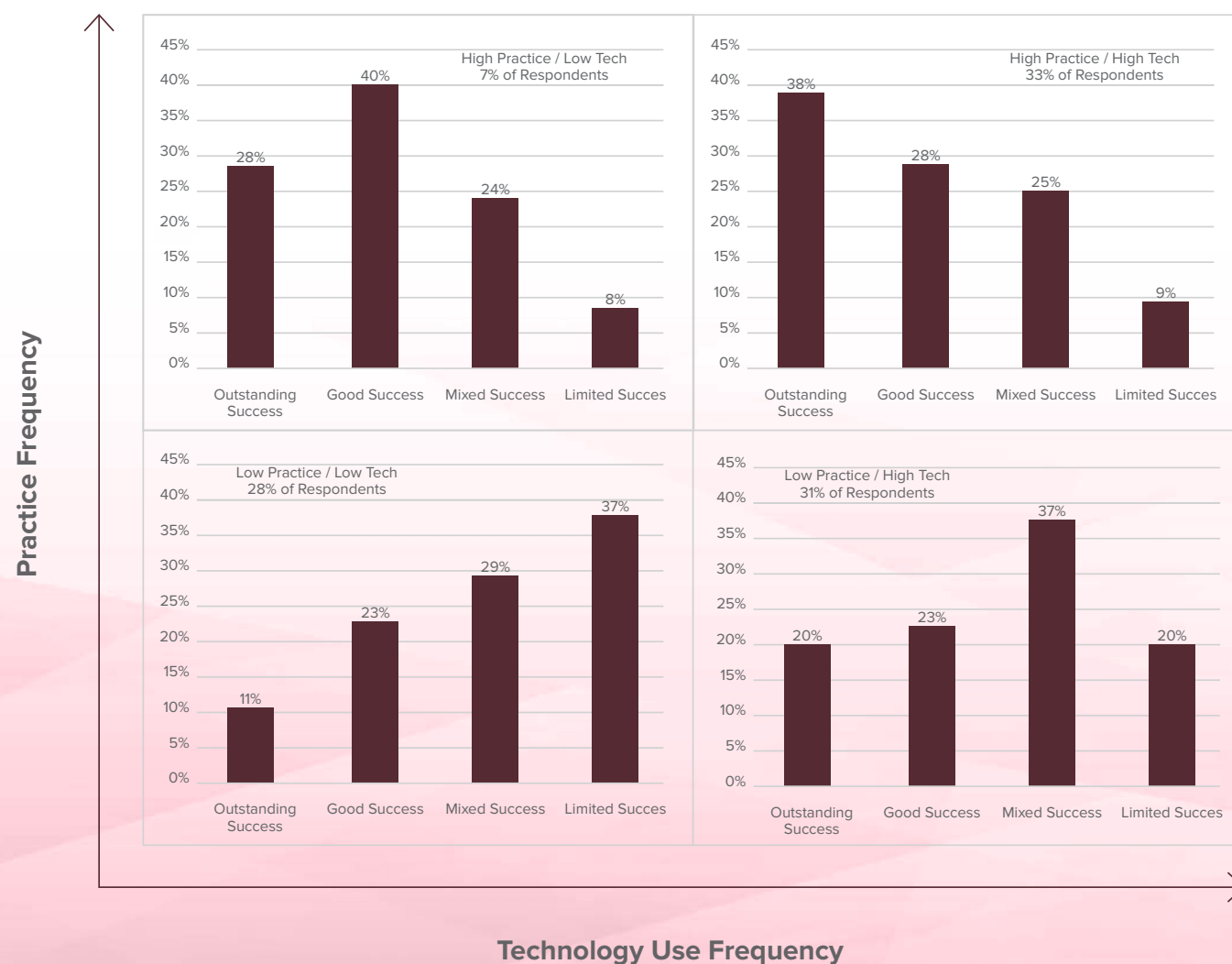
A constant use of best practices paired with a technology-rich environment results in more instances of outstanding success.



Success Matrix

This matrix displays the relationship between:

- 1) How frequently technology is used
- 2) How frequently best practices are used
- 3) Reported success



A Connected Approach Works

The findings of the matrix are as follows:	
High Practice/High Technology	3.4x more likely to report outstanding success, if using both technology and best practices frequently, than if using neither frequently.
High Practice/Low Technology	Largely saw good success, and were more successful than Low Practice/High Technology respondents.
Low Practice/High Technology	Saw good and mixed success, but not as much as the High Practice/Low Technology respondents. Yet still saw more success than the Low Practice/Low Technology group.
Low Practice/Low Technology	Substantially less success than any of the other three groupings.

BACKGROUND

OECD Research: Students, Computers and Learning

In September 2015, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) released a report concluding, based on their research, that a new approach to technology in schools is needed. This report was used as a starting point for this research, so identifying some of the key points is relevant.

The primary finding was that literacy and numeracy performance scores were not effected by technology.

- Some countries with high adoption of technology ranked lower on literacy and numeracy scores
- Some countries with low adoption of technology ranked higher than most other countries

That said, members of OECD cautioned against drawing conclusions about technology in the classroom based on this finding.

“This should not be used as an ‘excuse’ not to use technology, but as a spur to finding a more effective approach.”

ANDREAS SCHLEICHER

Director for Education and Skills/Special Advisor
on Education Policy
OECD

Other notable researchers in the field have drawn similar conclusions.

“For the last 50 years the average effect size of technology has barely changed. It’s not that it can’t work...it just hasn’t yet.”

JOHN HATTIE

Professor of Education and Director
of the Melbourne Education Research Institute
University of Melbourne

OECD Insights

Rather than removing technology from classrooms, the OECD report offers reasons why the impact of technology has not been as strong as it could be. These insights include:

1) The impact of technology depends more on how teachers use it in the classroom than district or school level policies around the use of technology

Training teachers on technology and encouraging them to collaborate on what is working in their respective classrooms has a far larger impact than high-level policy decisions.

2) It is integral to success that the technology being used promotes teacher-student interaction, not distracts from it

Technology that allows students to better interact and receive feedback from their teachers is much more likely to produce positive results.

3) Technology tools that encourage students to be active participants and promote collaborative learning are key

Technology that empowers students to actively participate and create their own content, and to work together with their peers and teachers, produces better results.

Assumptions

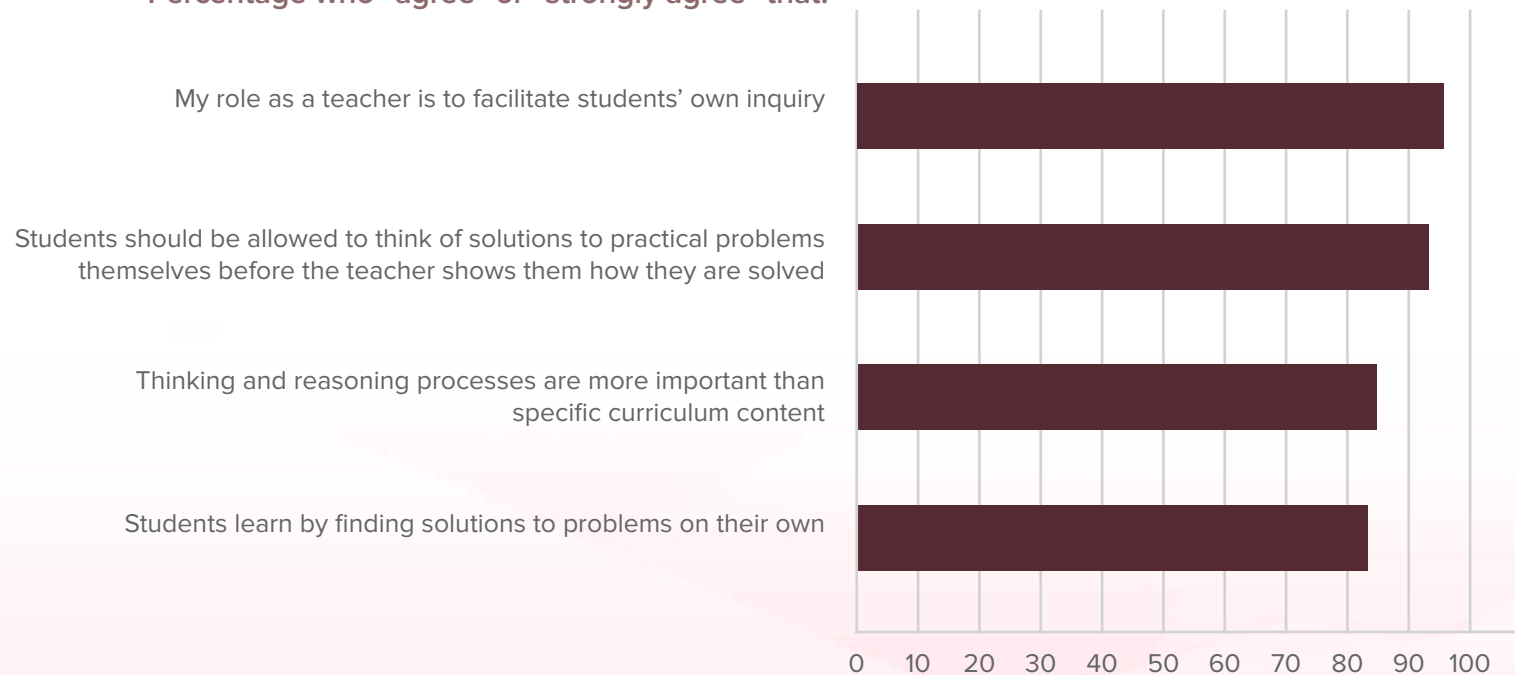
Areas to extend the OECD findings include:

- The reliance on standardized test performance as the sole success metric
- Exclusively focusing on computers as classroom technology (excluding front-of-room interactive and non-interactive displays, tablets, smartphones and a variety of software)
- Opportunity to go into more detail on the way students use technology, both in the classroom and at home

Views on Teaching

Findings from the OECD TALIS study indicate most teachers believe that 21st-century pedagogies are integral to their role.

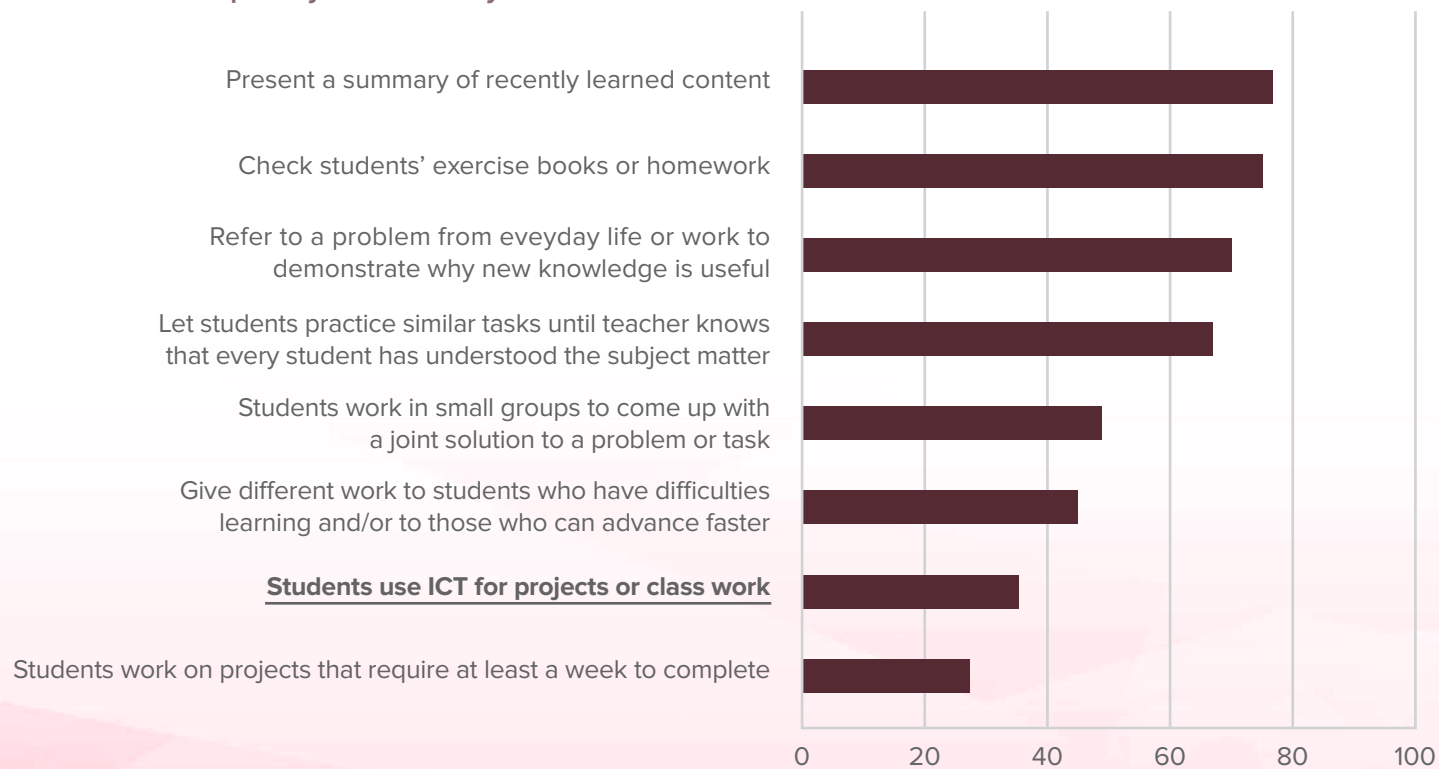
Percentage who “agree” or “strongly agree” that:



Source: OECD TALIS Study

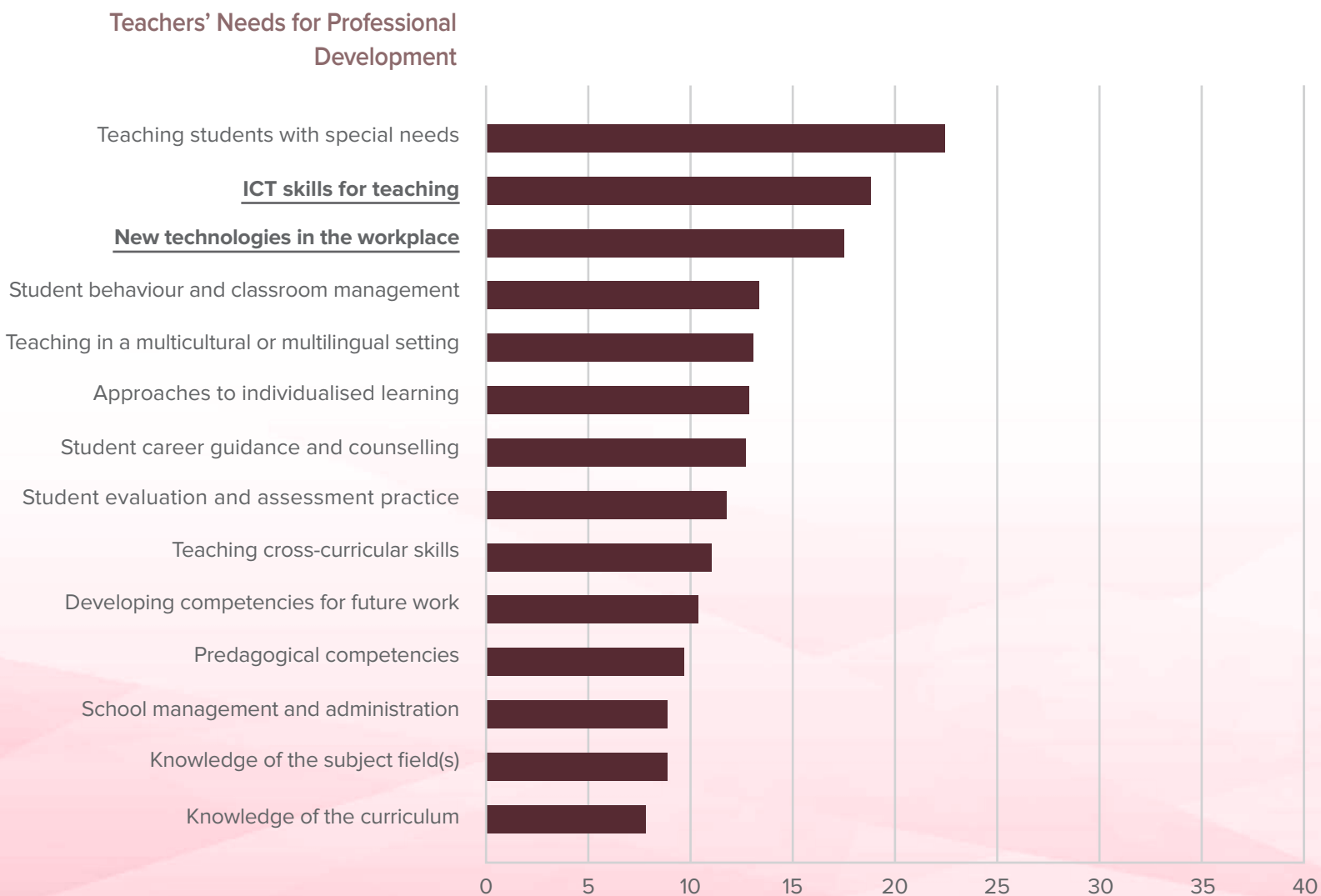
Yet most teachers don't engage students in ICT work frequently.

**Percentage who report using the following
'frequently' or 'in nearly all lessons':**



Source: OECD TALIS Study

And most teachers expressed support with ICT as one of their top PD priorities.



Source: OECD TALIS Study

Research Approach

This report used the following approach:

- Leverage insights from the OECD report
- Focus on the use of high-impact teaching practices
- Incorporate a larger variety of technology used in classrooms
- Broader success criteria

Classroom Technology

Classroom technology was defined to include:

- Student devices (laptops, Chromebooks, tablets, cell phones)
- Front-of-room technology (interactive whiteboards, interactive flat panels, interactive projectors, projectors, streaming devices)
- Software

High-impact Teaching Practices

Respondents were also asked to identify how frequently they used and engaged students in a variety of teaching/learning practices, including specific active learning pedagogies.

- Teacher clearly defines learning goals and criteria for success before learning begins
- The ability of the teacher to gain insight into the progress of a student's learning and have that insight guide the teacher's next steps
- The use of effective direct instruction
- Active participation of students
- Students applying knowledge in new contexts
- Ample opportunities for feedback (student to teacher & student to student)
- Collaborative learning

Success Measures

The following variables were used to determine success:

Visible learning

Teacher reports greater insight into student learning as it happened and more opportunities to intervene.

Preparation for standardized tests

Students are adequately prepared for standardized assessments.

SEL development

Social and emotional learning – preparing students to be active contributors to society and growing their individual well-being and social progress (ie: life skills, social skills, collaboration, communication & problem solving).

Students feel safe to contribute

In the classroom, students feel safe to contribute their ideas, answers and thoughts without hesitation.

Peer discussion

Students discuss their findings with each other.

Every student participating

Active engagement/rich discussions (everyone is part of the lesson, everyone participates).

Interdependence

Group work involves all participants, not just some.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Views on Teaching Practice

Amongst the respondents, there were two major similarities held almost unanimously about philosophies on how learning works:

98% strongly agree/agree that learning works when students make sense of new material they encounter by striving to relate this new information to their prior knowledge.

98%

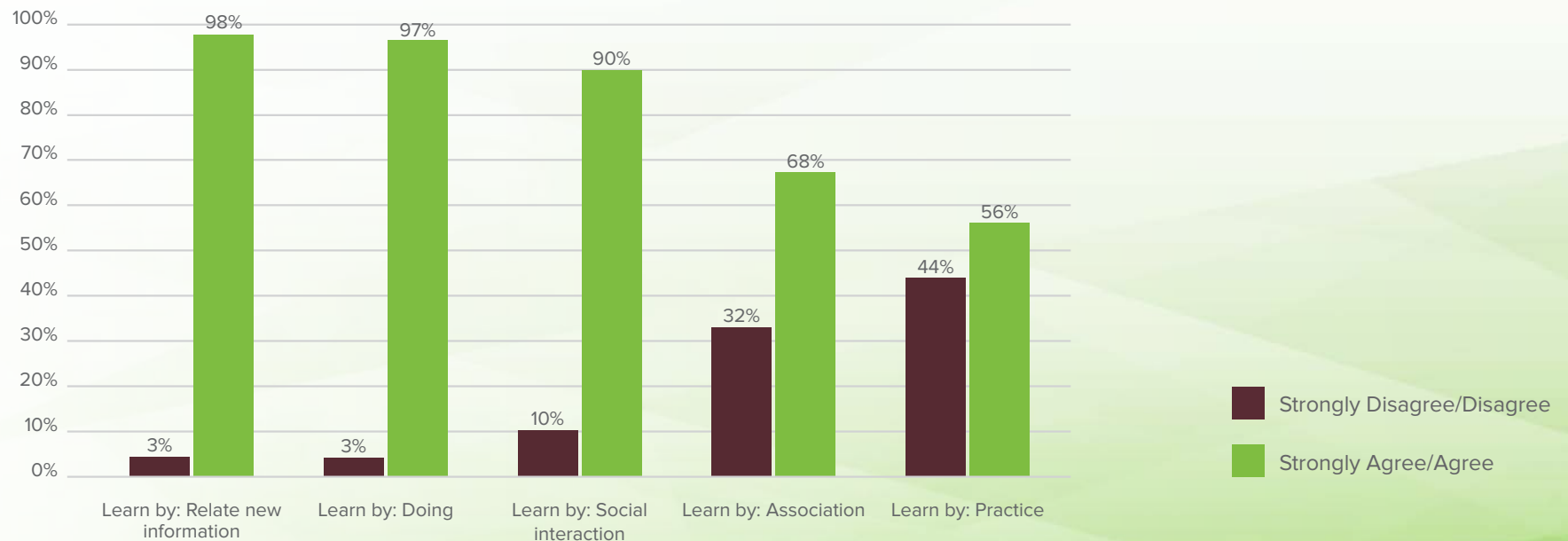
97%

97% strongly agree/agree that students also learn by engaging in hands-on activity, so it is better to learn by doing than by being told*

These numbers were particularly high amongst respondents who had been involved in education and using technology for 10+ years.

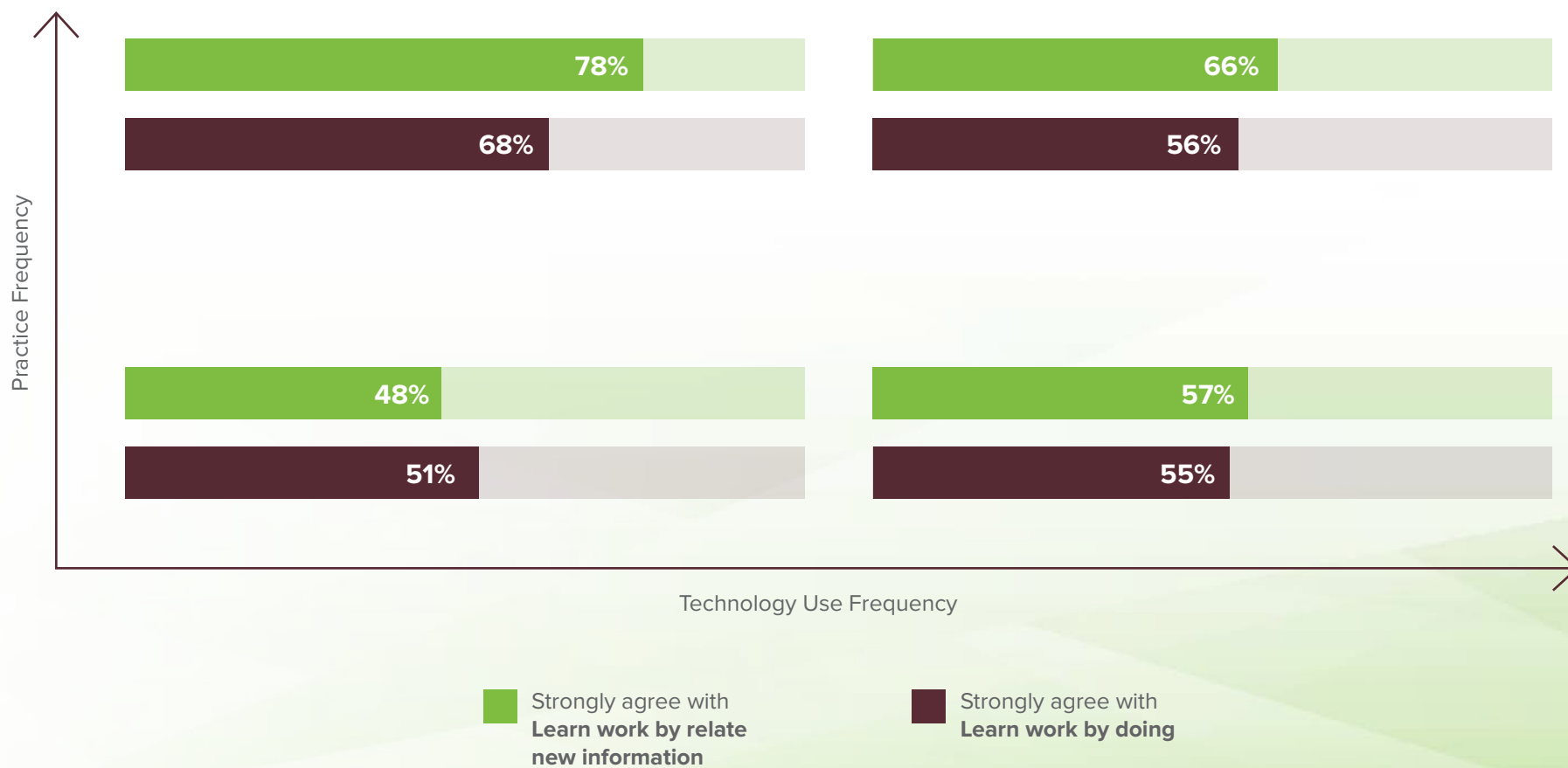
**It should be noted that according to Fiorella and Mayer's generative learning view, 'learning by doing', can focus too much on behavioral activity and not enough on cognitive activity. Doing things does not necessarily cause learning, but thinking about what you are doing does cause learning.*

L.Fiorella and R. Mayer, Introduction to Learning as a Generative Activity, Jan 2015



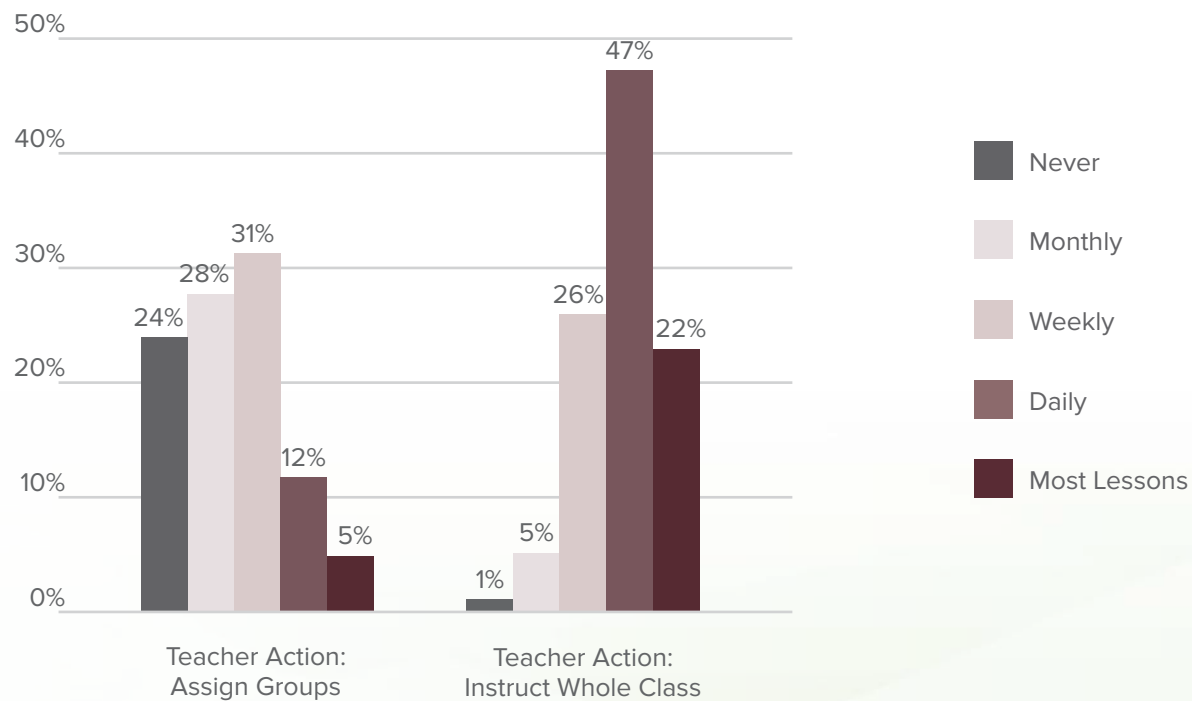
A Teacher's Beliefs on Learning Impacts Success

Participants in the high practice groups more frequently agreed with the notion that learning works by relating new information and by doing than those in the low practice groups.



Teaching Practice

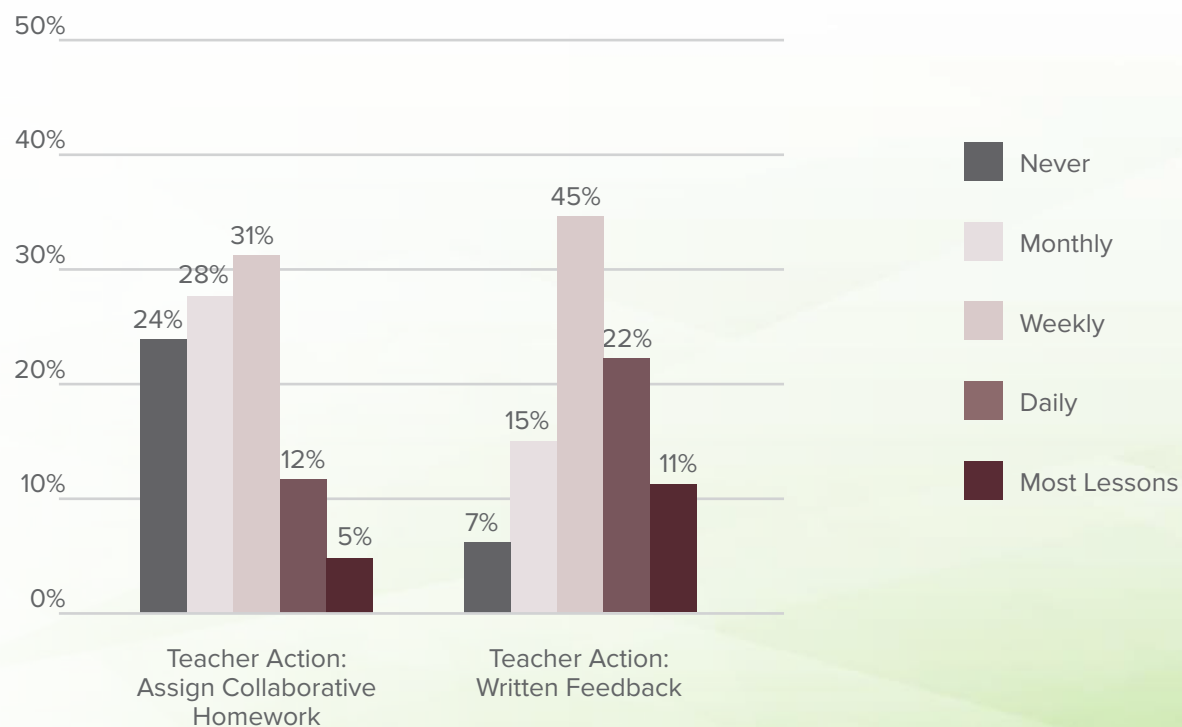
Whole-class instruction is the most frequently used teaching method.



Teaching Practice

The results showed that teaching practices are directly related to success. Some practices and the success metrics most positively impacted by them include:

- Those that reported higher use of project work saw a strong positive impact in 'Visible learning', 'SEL development' and 'Interdependence'
- Assigning collaborative homework is infrequent, but when done reported a strong positive impact in 'Visible learning', 'Peer discussion' and 'Interdependence'
- Providing written feedback daily (rather than weekly, as is more common) resulted in a strong positive impact in 'Students feel safe to contribute', 'Peer discussion' and 'Every student participating'



Active Learning

76%

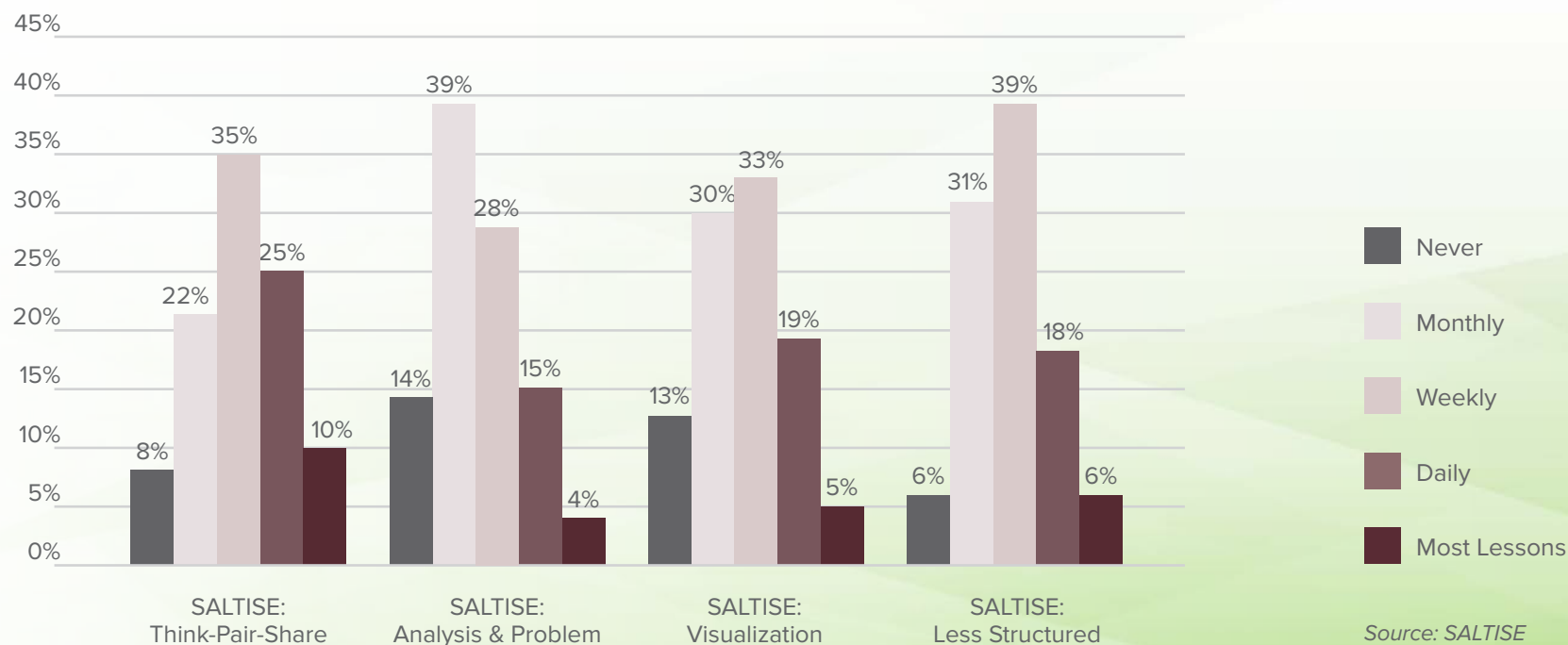
76% of respondents indicated active learning is an important approach at their school.

What is active learning?*

Active learning calls for student participation that is not just social, but involves meaningful cognitive engagement with the content, both individually and collectively.

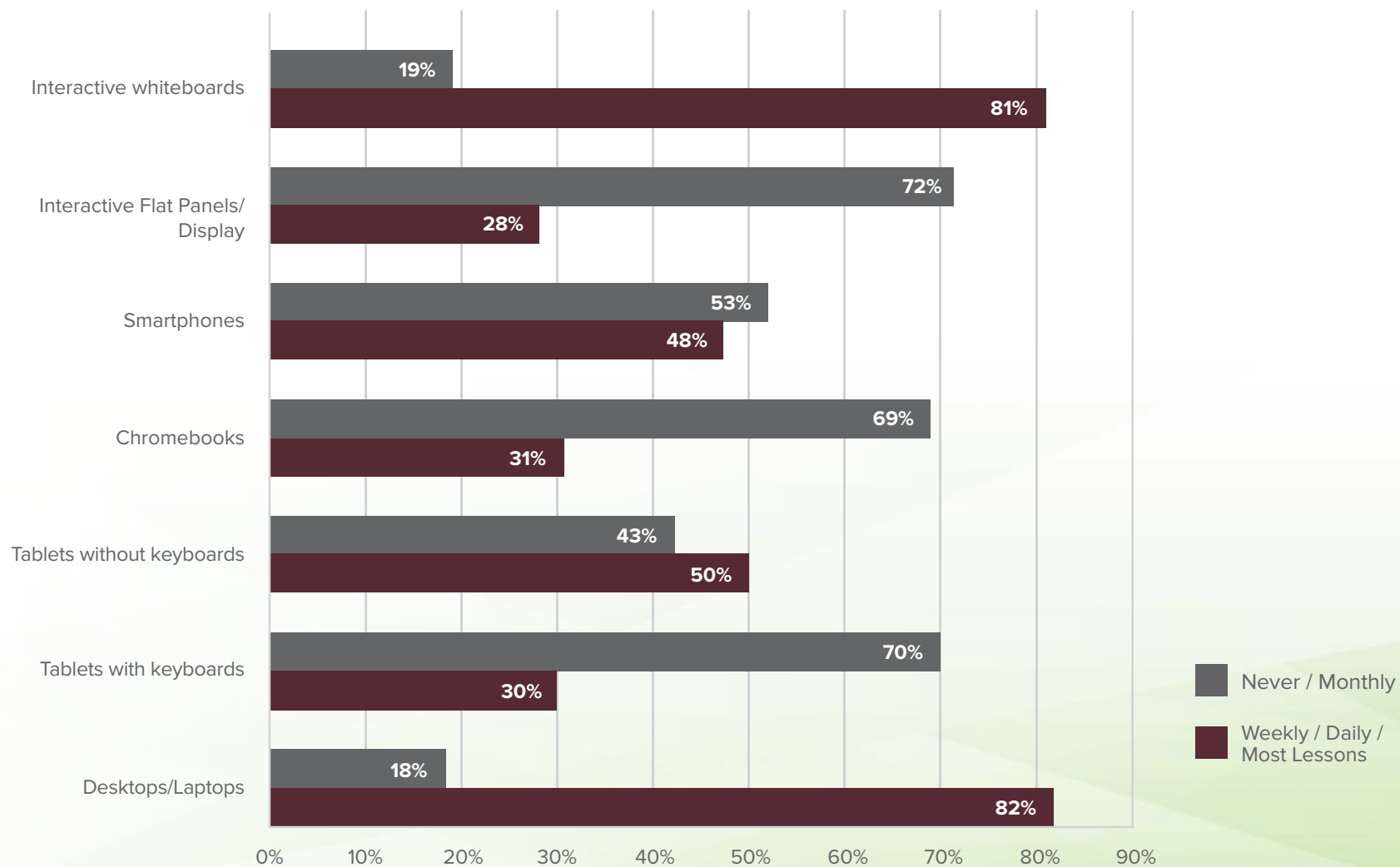
Common methods to create active learning opportunities include:

- Think-Pair-Share Activities [most common]
- Analysis and Problem Solving Activities [least common, most impact]
- Visualization Activities
- Less Structured Activities



Hardware Usage

Desktop computers and laptops are the most commonly used hardware in the classroom.

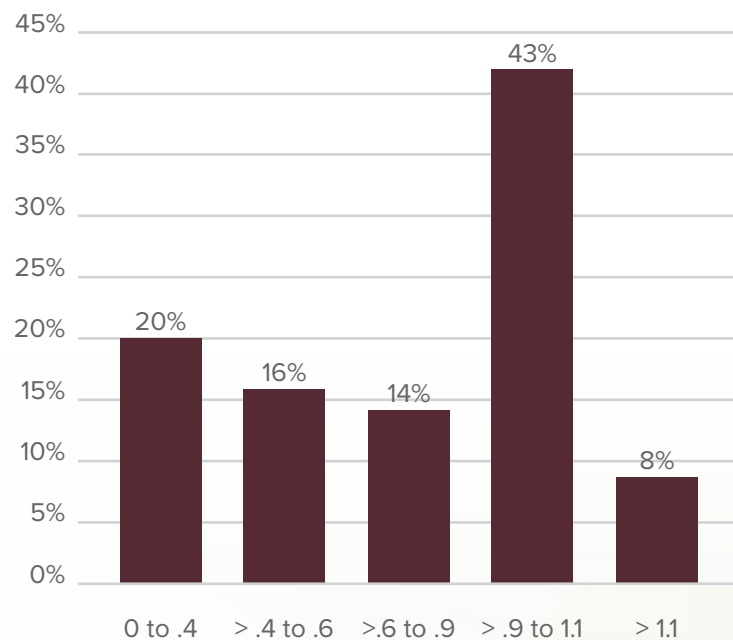


Note: purchasing trends show that Chromebooks will soon disrupt this, though.

Devices

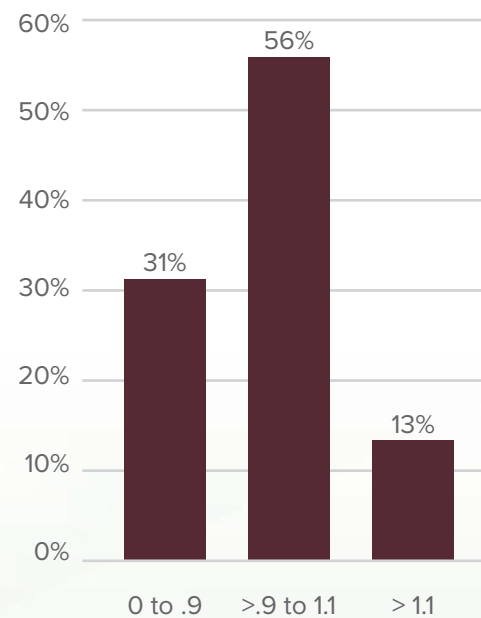
A 1:1 ratio of devices to students is fairly common, with a significant uptake in higher grades.

Ratio of Devices to Students



Sharing (ages 4-19)

- Close to 1:1 reported about half the time
- Under 0.4:1 about 20% of the time

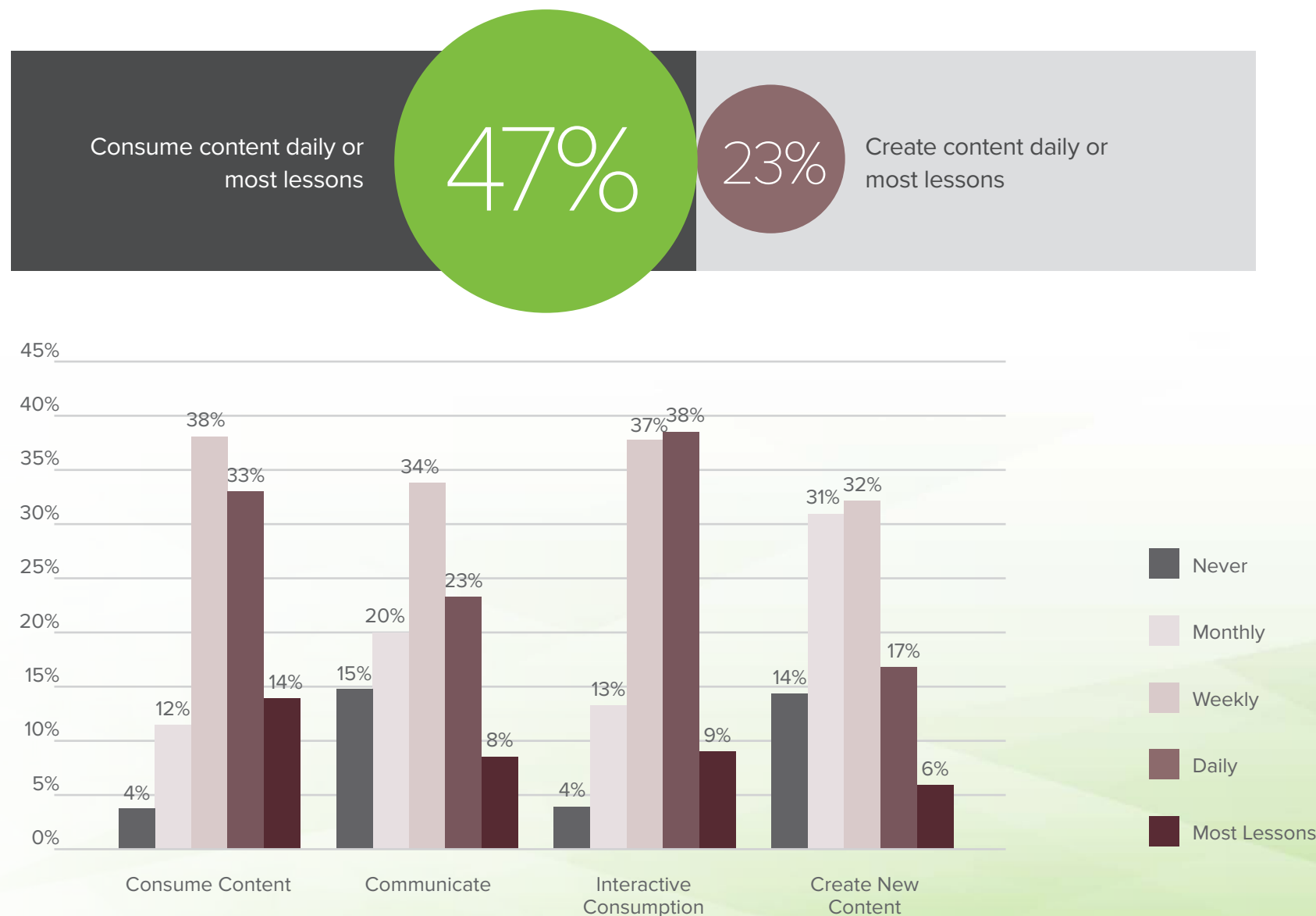


Sharing (ages 19)

- 1:1 ~ 60% of the time
- Close to 1:1 almost all observations

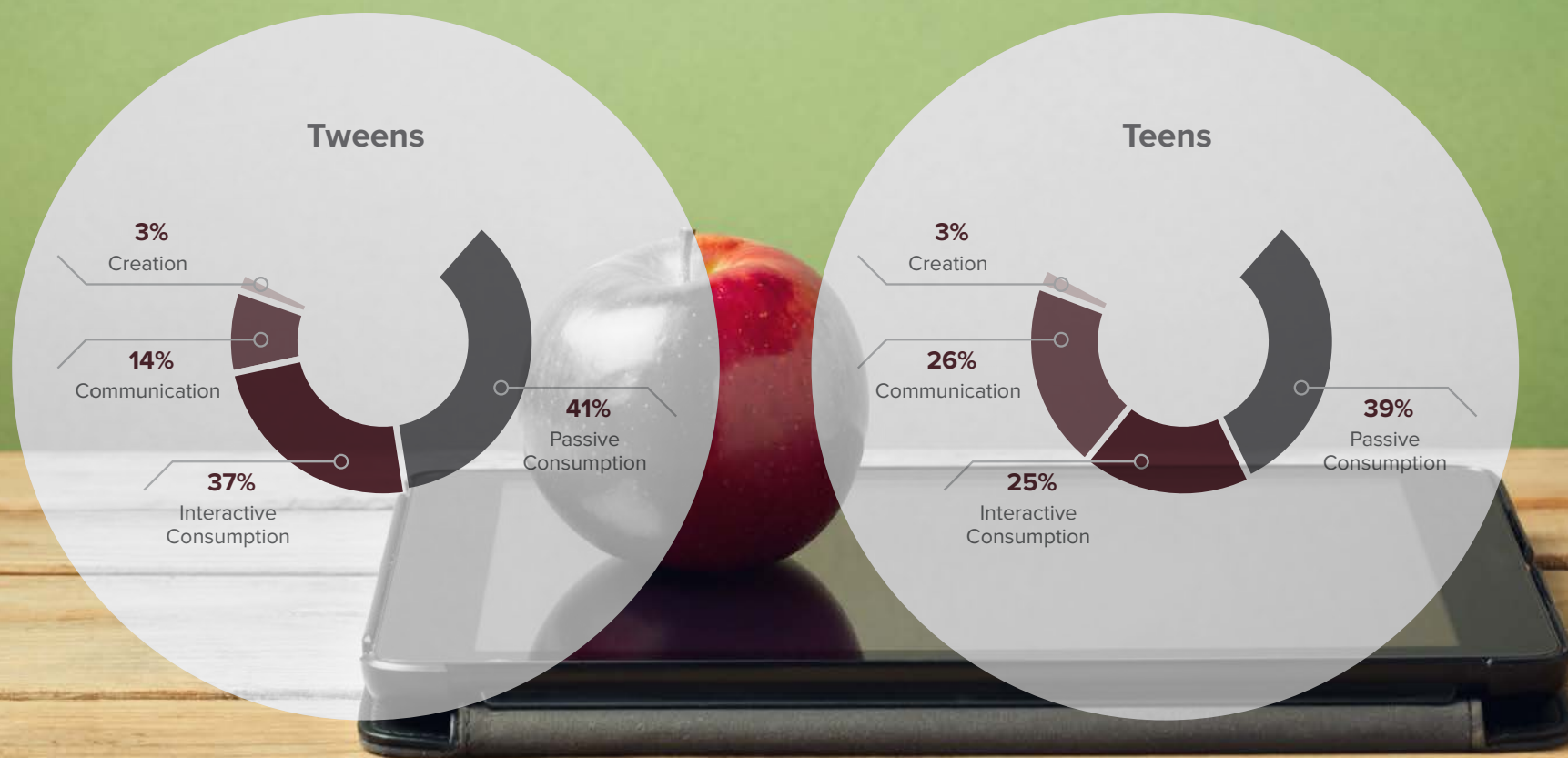
Students' Use of Devices

The majority of students use devices to consume content, yet in trying to develop higher order thinking skills it's known that *creating content is far more impactful than consuming content*.



Students' Use of Devices Outside of School

The findings from the previous page are consistent with the latest research from Common Sense Media, which looked at how students make use of media for non-school related tasks. The trend of using devices to consume rather than create content is also present in most students' personal lives.



**Source: Common Sense Media Inc. (2015) The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens*

Interactive vs Non-Interactive Hardware

Interactive hardware was defined as:

- Digital capture boards
- Interactive projectors
- Interactive whiteboards
- Interactive flat panels/displays

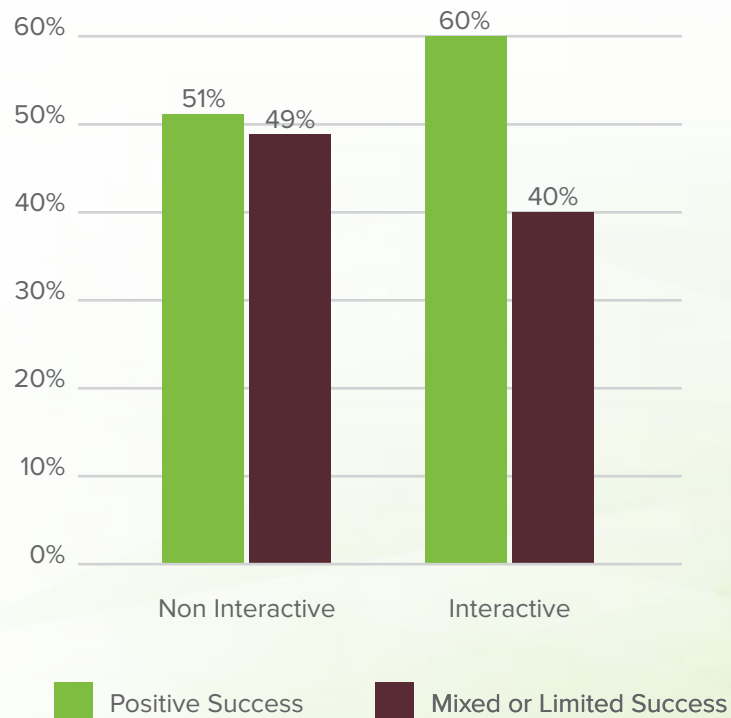
Those who use interactive hardware frequently saw a more positive impact on the 'Visible Learning' success metric.

Non-interactive hardware was defined as:

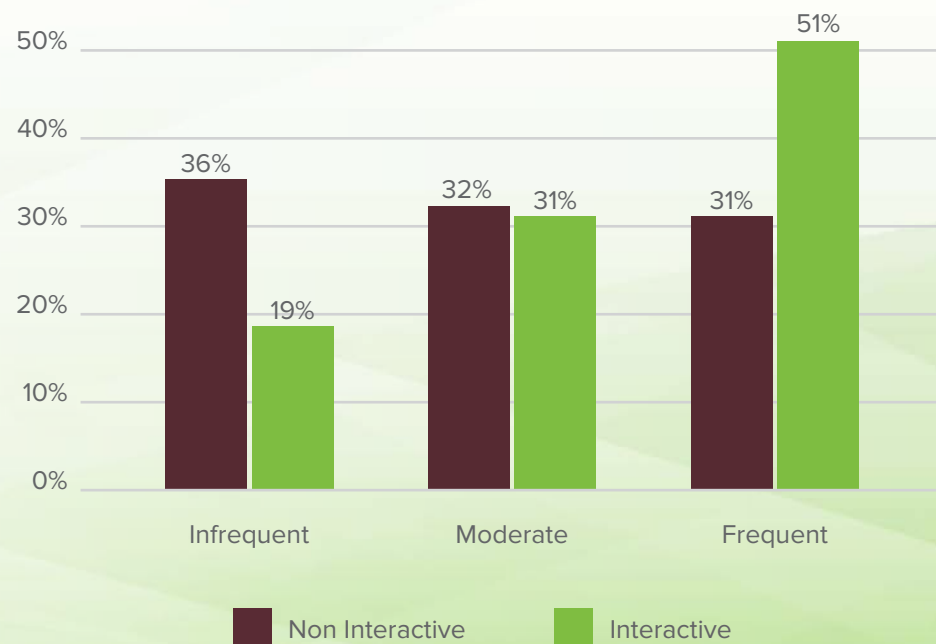
- Projectors
- Streaming devices

Those who use non-interactive projectors frequently reported the lowest impact across all success factors.

High Use of Classroom Hardware



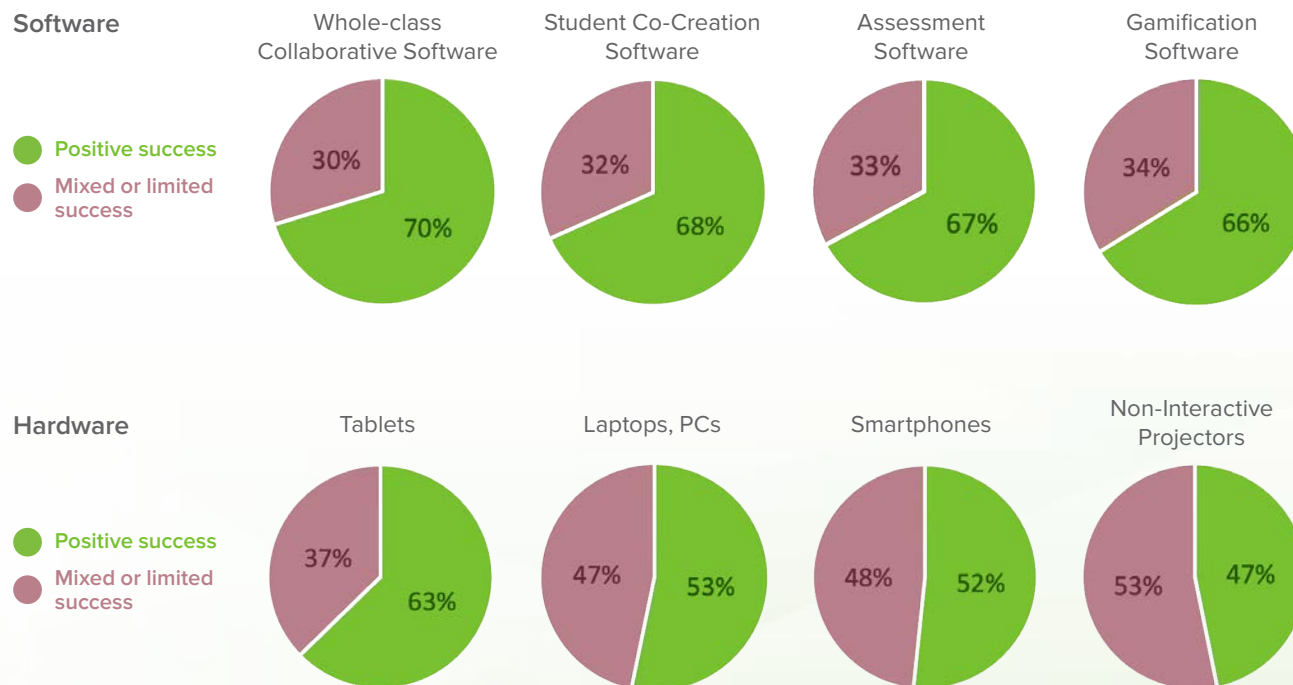
Impact on Insight to Learning



Software vs Hardware

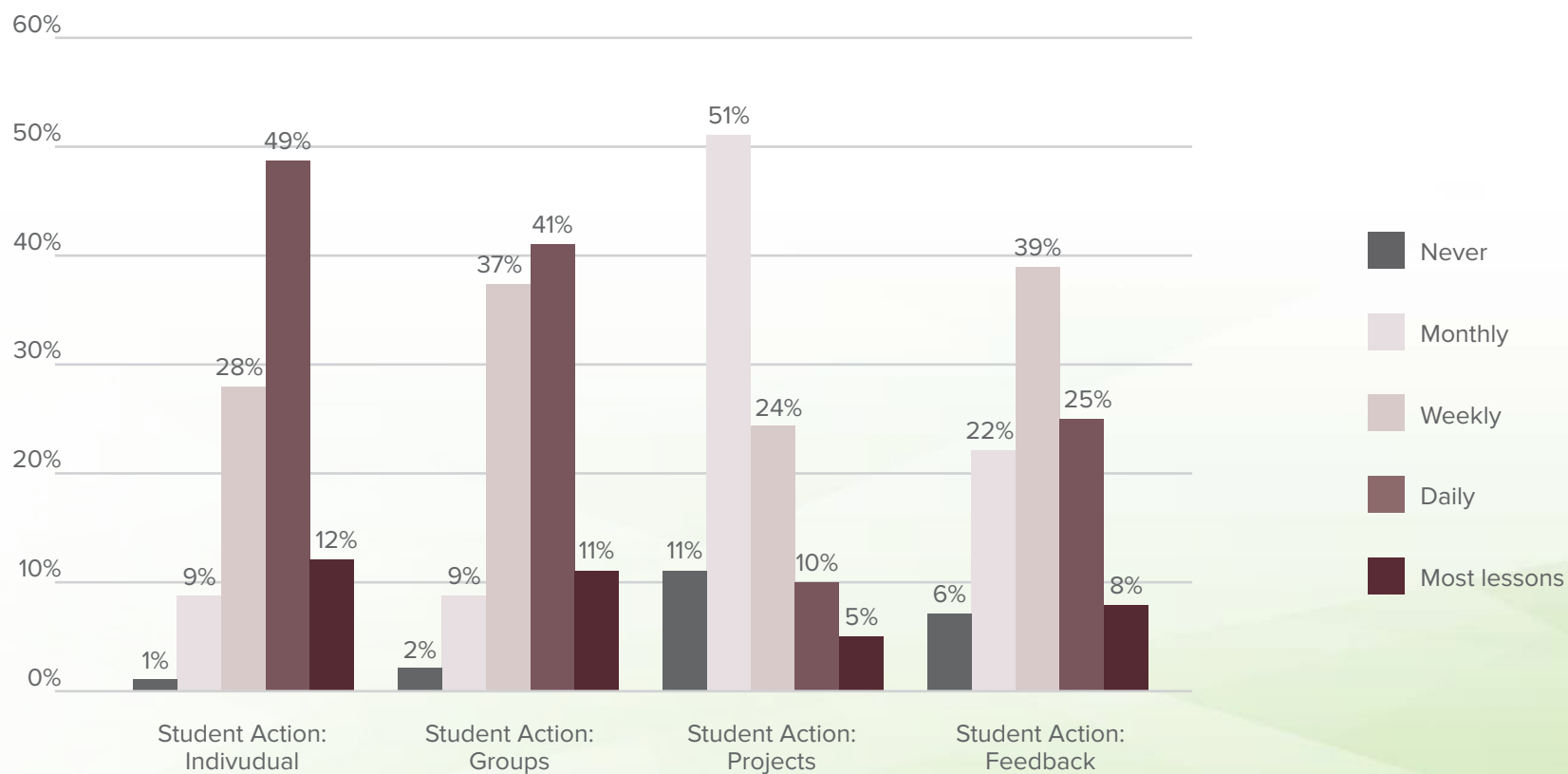
When comparing high frequency users of software and hardware we found that overall software is more closely related to success than hardware.

Below represents just a sample of the data:



Learning Strategies

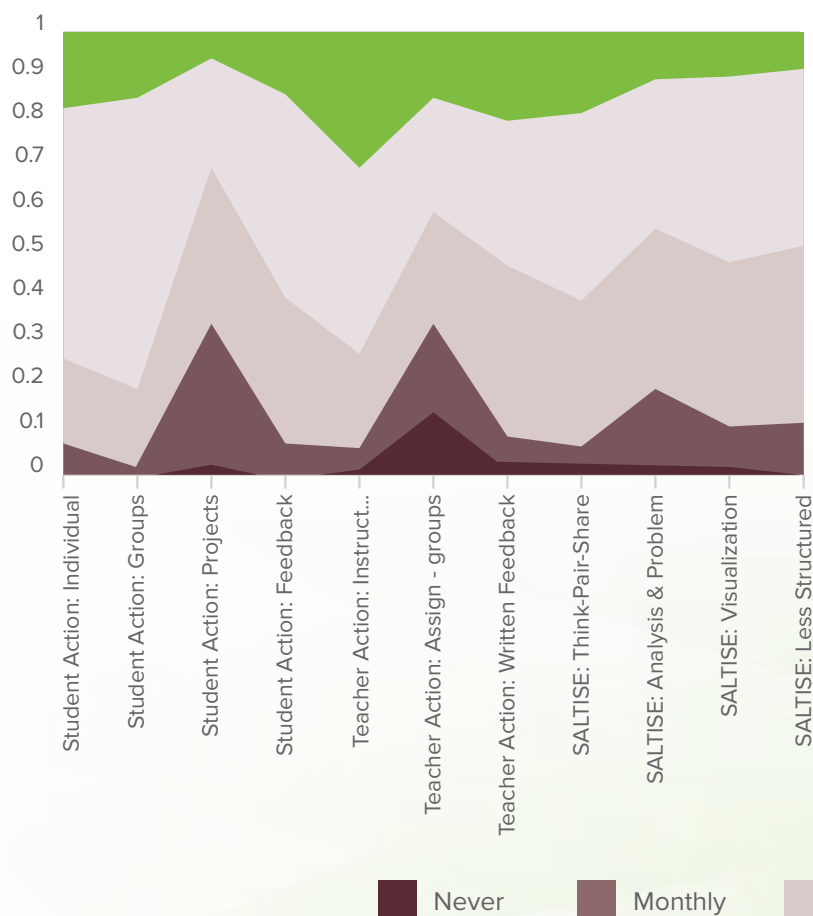
While the strongest impact on success measures came from assessment and collaboration software, it is more common for students to work individually. They also tend not to receive feedback daily.



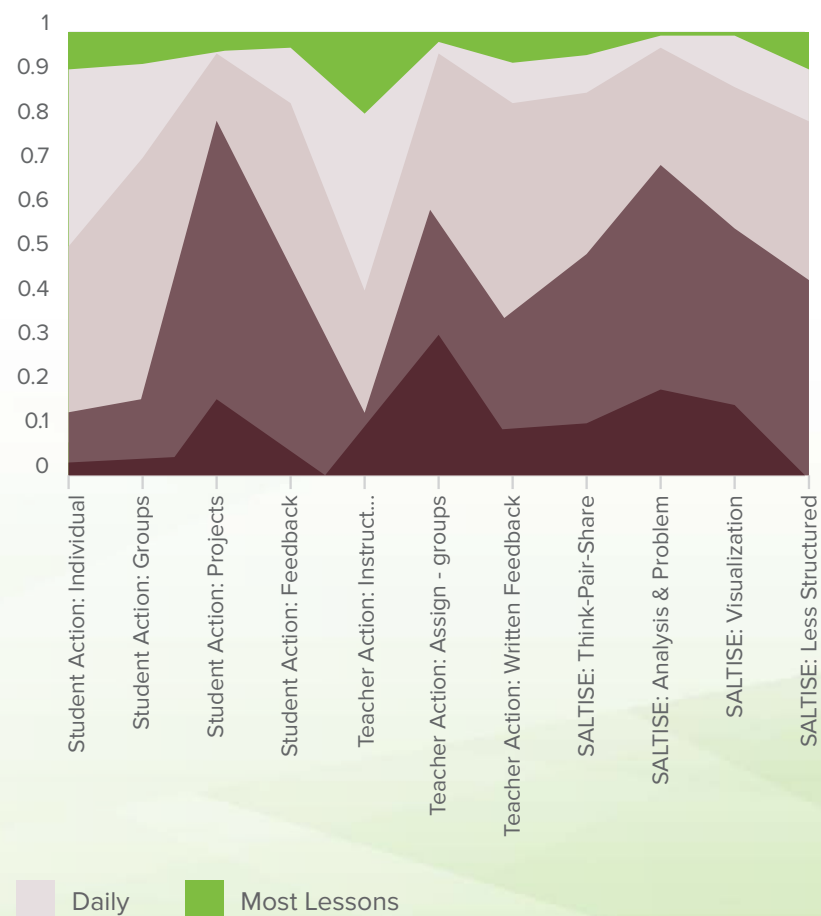
Collaboration

Though collaborative tasks are used less frequently in the classroom, the data indicates that when they are used frequently, success follows.

High Frequency Practice



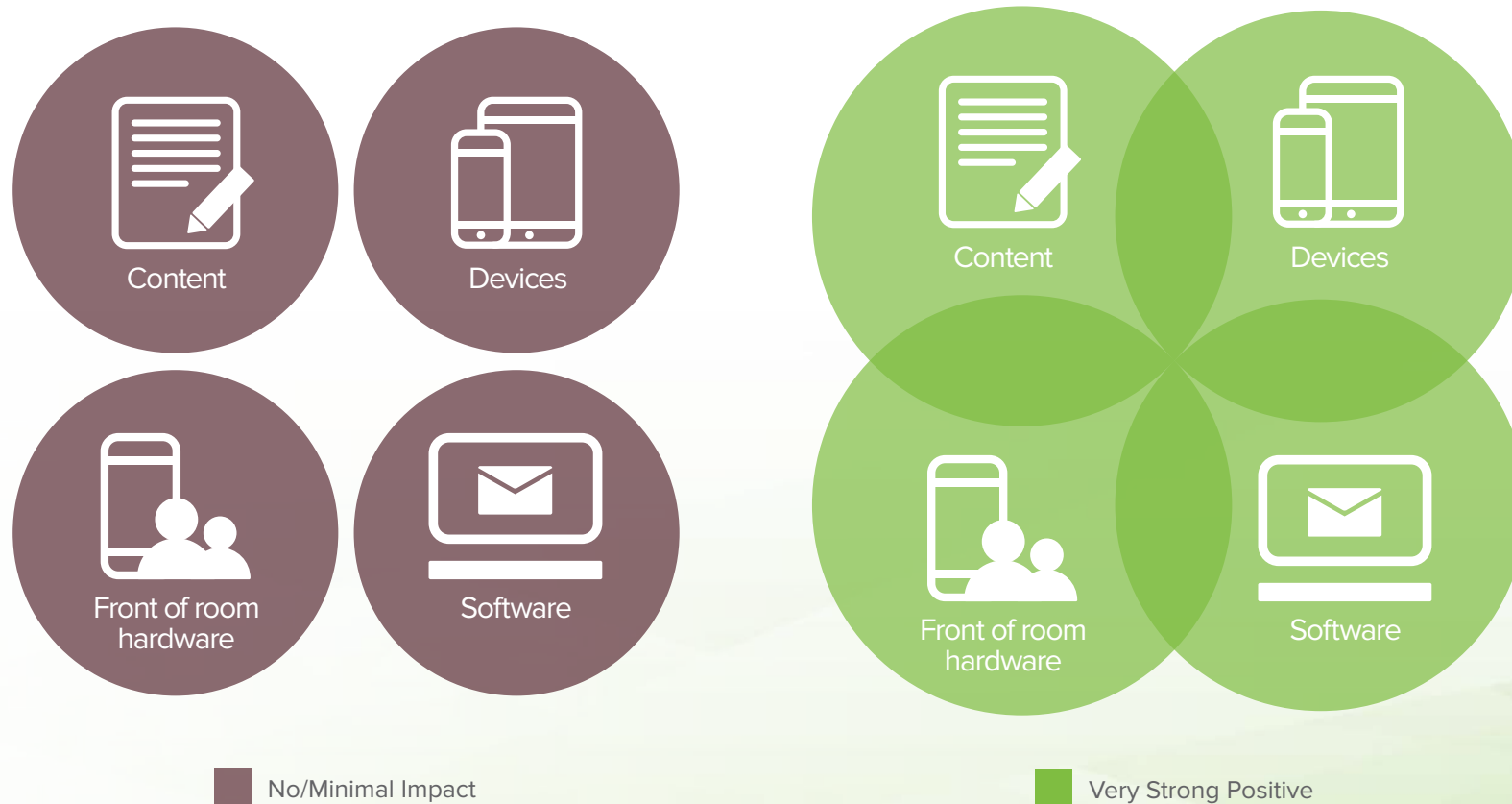
Low Frequency Practice



Integration

Those who reported successful integration of their classroom technology (integrating devices, hardware and software) consistently reported better success.

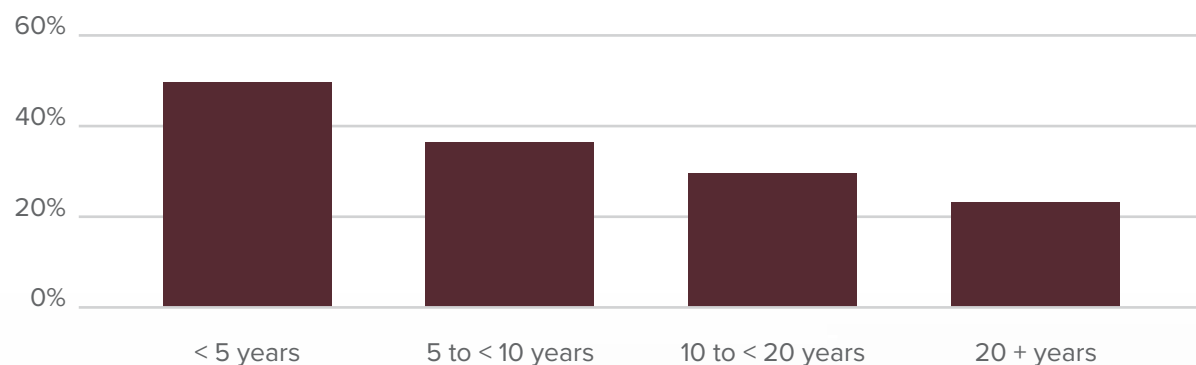
Level of Integration



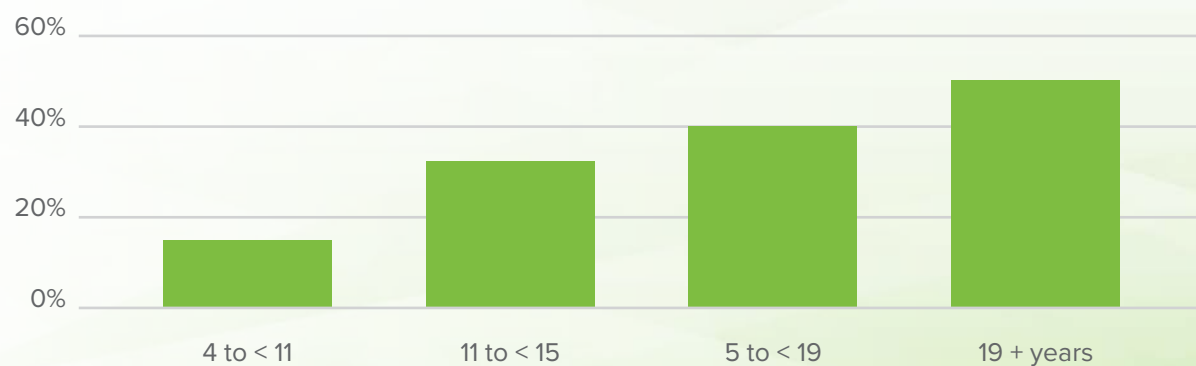
Device Distraction

Views on whether devices are a distraction in the classroom revealed trends that are particularly relevant when planning professional development.

Teachers with more experience are less likely to have concerns about devices being a distraction.

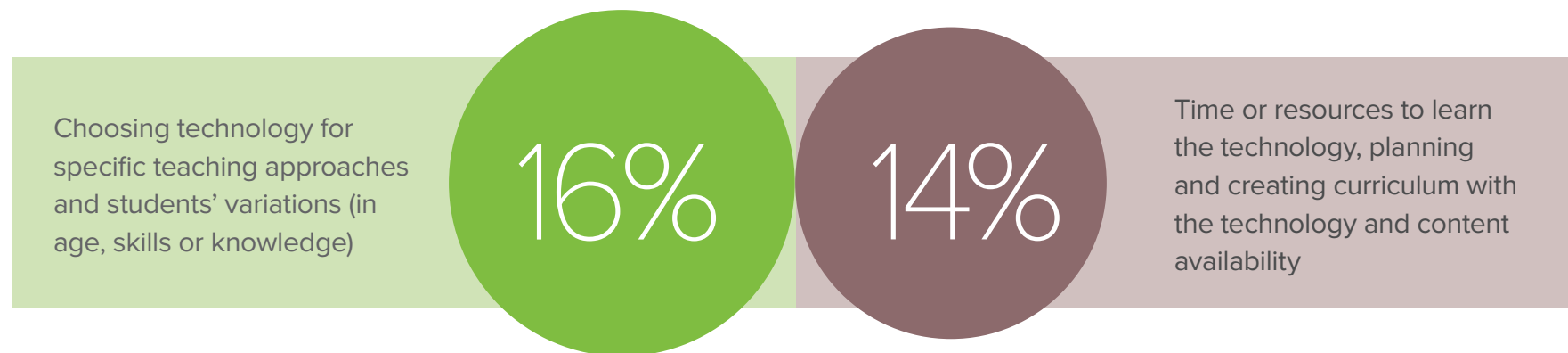


As students get older, their teachers are more likely to have concerns about devices being a distraction.



Challenges Associated with Technology

When asked to relate the most pressing challenges faced, respondents identified:



“My top challenge is navigating through what technology works best and well with and for my students, and for what projects and/or classwork.”

- *Survey Respondent*

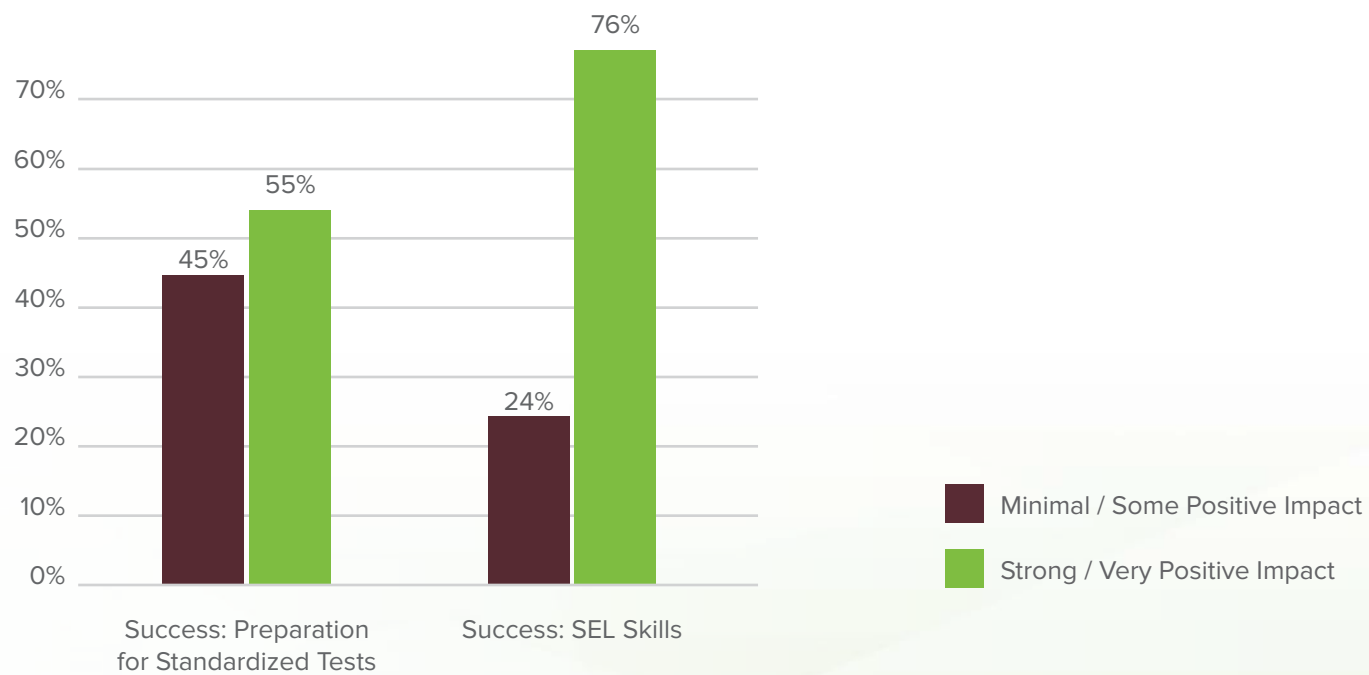
“The top challenge for me is to make teachers realize that effective teaching is not about the technology but about the pedagogy.”

- *Survey Respondent*

Reported Achievements

Investment in pedagogy and technology impacts SEL skills more than standardized test preparation.

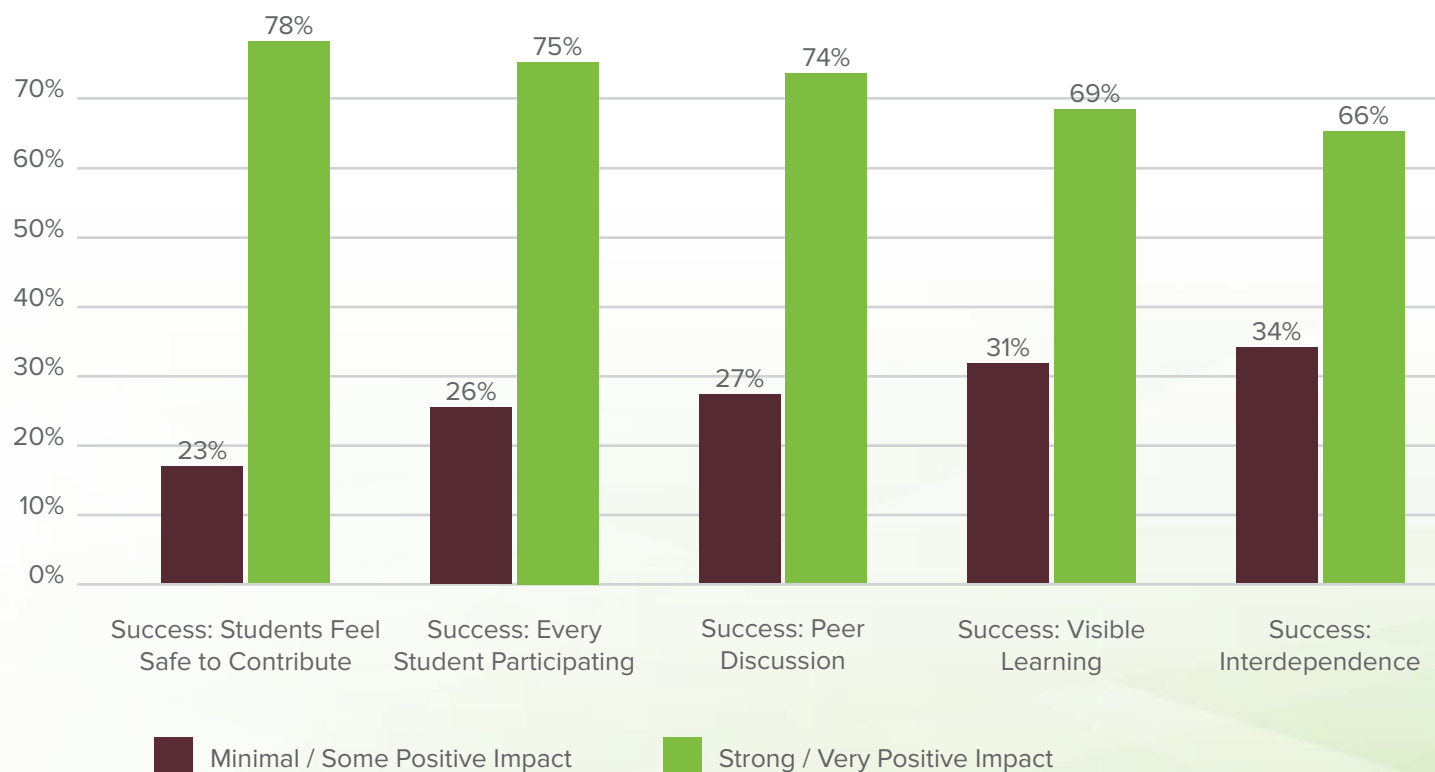
Success



Reported Achievements

The impact of investment in pedagogy and technology on in-classroom teaching practice:

- *'Students feel safe to contribute', 'Peer discussion' and 'Every student participating'* all demonstrated positive success
- *'Interdependence'* showed the least positive impact



As achieving higher forms of collaborative practices (interdependence) is the lowest rated, the suggestion is that it requires further attention.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions:

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In Closing

Whereas some research (including the OECD report) leads us to conclude that technology can amplify great teaching, but not replace poor teaching, this research finds differently. It indicates that while technology can certainly amplify great teaching, it can also help those with poor practices find greater success.

That said, accelerating the impact of technology in education requires a more effective approach. An approach that considers the various interconnections of hardware, software, high-performing pedagogies and classroom contexts. Insight gathered from this type of approach will not only actualize the potential of existing classroom technology, but also spur its more effective use across the globe.

SMART can help

Decades of experience and expertise in education and technology uniquely positions SMART to stay on top of emerging pedagogies. We partner with educators to design products for schools, keeping only the goal of making learning come alive in mind.

To learn more about our offering of education-focused software, interactive displays and whiteboards, please visit

smarttech.com/education