

Study conducted by

ORC MACROSM

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In collaboration with
Johns Hopkins Center
for Technology in Education
and Maryland Public Television

State of the State Survey: Assistive Technology

Part 6 of a series of reports on Maryland teachers and technology

The Survey of Technology Use by Maryland Teachers, funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Education, provides a picture of how educational technology is currently being used at the classroom level.

This survey of 664 K-12 teachers from all 24 Maryland school districts, conducted in the spring of 2002, measured teachers' knowledge and skills, access to technology, and use of technology for instructional and administrative purposes.

This summary describes teachers' attitudes regarding assistive technology, their access to assistive technology for those students who need it, and their skill at using it in the classroom. Other topic reports from the Survey of Technology Use are also available.

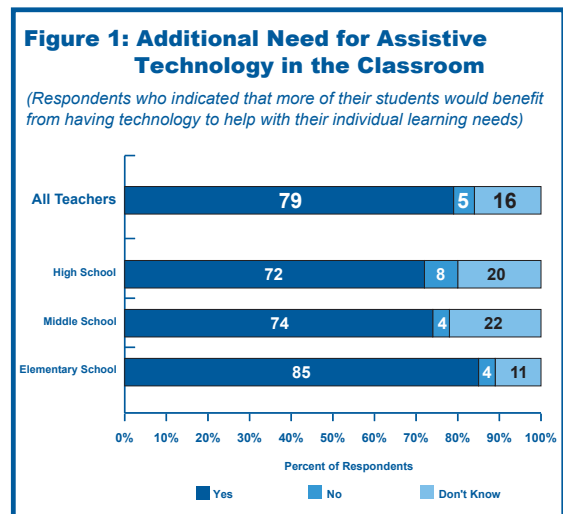
Teachers Endorse Use of Technology in Addressing Diverse Student Needs

Almost all teachers (92%) said that technology can be useful in addressing the diverse learning needs of students. Only 8 percent did not agree that technology can serve this purpose.

One third (34%) of respondents reported that they currently teach students whose individualized education plans (IEPs) require the use of assistive technology. Sixty-one percent said that they did not teach such students, while 5 percent acknowledged that they did not know whether any of their students' individualized education plans called for technology use.

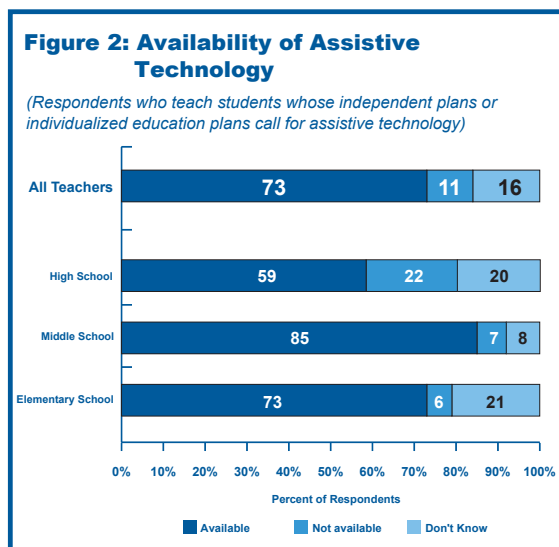
Middle school teachers were much more likely to have students in their classes whose plans addressed assistive technology (51%) than were those who teach in high (29%) or elementary school (28%).

Over three quarters of all respondents (79%) said that they have other students in their classes who would also benefit from assistive technology (Figure 1). New teachers were more likely to express this need; 89 percent of respondents with five years of experience or less said that more of their students would benefit from having technology to help with their learning needs. Elementary school teachers (85%) were also more likely than middle (74%) or high school teachers (72%) to report that more of their students would benefit from assistive technology.



Most Educators Report That Students Have Access to Assistive Technology

Among respondents who teach students whose IEPs call for assistive technology, three quarters (73%) said that their students have access to the necessary technology, 11 percent believed that they do not, and 16 percent did not know (Figure 2). High school teachers were less likely to believe that their students have access to the necessary technology (59%) than were elementary (73%) or middle school teachers (85%).



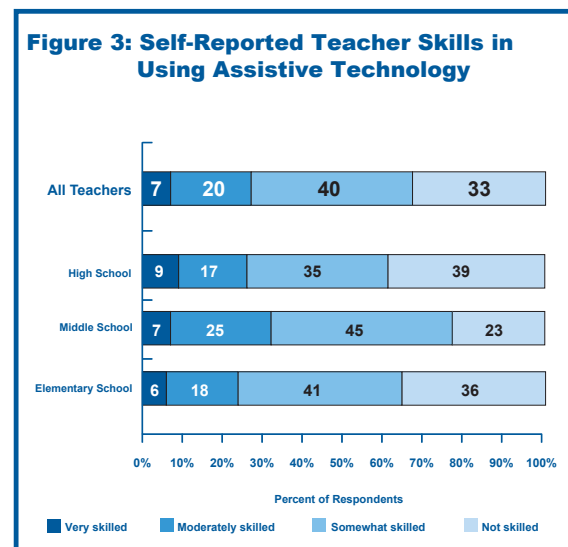
Despite the fact that most teachers believe that assistive technology is available to those who need it, many acknowledged that they do not understand the process for obtaining this technology for their students. Only 9 percent considered themselves "very" knowledgeable about the process for obtaining assistive technology, while a quarter (25%) rated themselves as "moderately" knowledgeable. Almost a third (29%) reported that they are not knowledgeable at all about this process.

Many Teachers Are Unsure How to Use Assistive Technology

In 2002, the State Department of Education developed seven standards for technology-related knowledge and skills that it determined Maryland teachers should possess (for more

information about the Teacher Technology Standards, see Part 2 of this series of reports). One of these standards states that teachers should "understand the issues surrounding the use of assistive technology to enhance student learning performance and apply that understanding to practice." However, many teachers currently lack this understanding.

Only a quarter (27%) rated themselves as "very" or "moderately" skilled at using assistive technology effectively with students, while a third (33%) indicated that they are "not skilled" at using assistive technology with students (Figure 3). Responses of teachers at different school levels were mixed; for example, high school teachers were most likely to report that they were "very skilled," but were also most likely to consider themselves "not skilled."



The majority of teachers expressed a desire to learn how to better address the needs of their students with learning disabilities. Forty-three percent said that they are "very interested" in participating in professional development activities on this topic, and half (49%) indicated that they are "somewhat interested" in doing so. Only 8 percent of Maryland teachers are not interested in learning how to address these learning needs.

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