

Summit Learning Teacher Feedback Study

Review of Key Findings from Spring 2021 Data Collection
Prepared by Project Tomorrow for Gradient Learning
August 2021





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Introduction

On behalf of Gradient Learning, Project Tomorrow® designed and implemented an online survey in spring 2021 to collect both quantitative and qualitative feedback from Summit Learning teachers nationwide. The goal with the data collection effort was to better understand teachers' lived experiences with Summit Learning and how Summit Learning benefits both teachers and students. The survey included questions about teachers' views on mentoring, the impact of Habits of Success, the Summit Learning platform, project-based learning, and technology use within the classroom. Teachers' overall satisfaction with Summit Learning was also polled. Survey question types included multiple choice items, Likert scales and open-ended narrative responses.

The online survey was promoted by Gradient Learning to Summit Learning schools and was open for teacher input from March 3 to April 16, 2021. In total, 1,418 Summit Learning teachers submitted a Teacher Feedback Survey. The resulting data was analyzed to produce descriptive statistics and to reveal similarities and differences between sub-groups of teachers. The data was disaggregated by various profiling variables including grade level assignment, content area assignment and years of experience as a Summit Learning teacher. Where applicable, comparable data from Project Tomorrow's Speak Up™ Research Project results were used to provide additional context. The open-ended narrative responses were evaluated for themes and representative statements.

This resulting report provides a snapshot view of the key findings from the Teacher Feedback Study and is organized to address the following key components:

1. Profile of teacher respondents (page 2)
2. Teachers' views on the value of Summit Learning (page 3 – 14)
3. Teachers' views on supporting teaching and learning innovations (page 14 – 20)
4. Summary of the key findings (page 20 – 21)



1. Profile of teacher respondents

In spring 2021, 1,418 Summit Learning educators responded to a request for their feedback on their Summit Learning experience by completing an online survey designed and administered by Project Tomorrow.

Key defining characteristics of the sampling of Summit Learning teachers who responded include:

- 85% identified as classroom teachers and 11% as special education teachers
- Grade level assignments:
 - 14% are assigned to elementary school Grades 4 and 5
 - 50% are assigned to middle school Grades 6-8
 - 36% are assigned to high school Grades 9-12
- Primary content area assignments:
 - 21% Math
 - 20% English Language Arts
 - 17% Science
 - 16% Social Studies or History
- Number of years of Summit Learning experience:
 - 1st year – 42%
 - 2nd year – 17%
 - 3rd year – 21%
 - 4th year – 12%
 - 5+ years – 7%
- Community type representation:
 - 42% of the responding teachers teach in suburban communities
 - 30% in rural communities
 - 28% in urban communities



2. Teachers' views on the value of Summit Learning

"As a result of Summit Learning at my school, I think there are two important changes. One is improved relationships with the students. Mentoring helped focus our relationship building. The other is students have taken ownership of their learning."
(Middle School Teacher, CO)

Overall valuation

Summit Learning teachers connect the success of their students and their personal success as an educator to Summit Learning values, pedagogical approaches and supporting resources.

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of teachers say that the Summit Learning approach has a positive impact on their students. They explain that positive impact in three ways: a) their enhanced ability as an educator to meet the needs of their students because of Summit Learning (74%), b) Summit Learning provides a way for students to develop a greater understanding of who they are as learners (66%), and c) the focus inherent in Summit Learning on seeing and understanding students as individuals and personalizing the learning process to meet each student's unique needs (61%).

Relative to their enhanced ability as an educator, **two-thirds (65%) of the teachers say that they are a stronger teacher because of Summit Learning.** Across all grade levels, the teachers (72%) believe that they have stronger 1:1 relationships with their students because of Summit Learning. Mentor Time is an obvious contributor to that belief.

Additionally, teachers believe that their enhanced capacity for effectiveness is driven by the Summit Learning community at their school and beyond. Six in ten teachers (61%) say that they feel part of a larger community of innovative educators because of Summit Learning, and 71% agree that they feel supported by the Summit Learning team to make their school's vision a reality for every child. Through this community experience, teachers identify five key outcomes that support their beliefs that they are a more effective teacher because of Summit Learning (Table 1). Those key outcomes are:

- 1) Spent more time thinking about how to support individual students (62% of teachers)
- 2) Greater confidence in their own abilities to support student centered learning (56% of teachers)
- 3) Developed closer working relationships with teachers at my school (54% of teachers)
- 4) Greater proficiency in the use of data to inform my instructional practices (52% of teachers)
- 5) Spent more time collaborating with colleagues on the implementation of new learning practices and strategies (50% of teachers)

As would be expected, teachers who have had more experience with Summit Learning are more likely to identify with these outcomes. For example, while 43% of the first-year teachers say they developed greater proficiency



using data, 65% of the teachers with 4 or more years of Summit Learning experience say that statement is true for them.

Table 1: Impact of Summit Learning on Teacher Efficacy Outcomes

Teacher Efficacy Outcome	All teachers	% of teachers who agree disaggregated by years of experience with Summit Learning				
		1 year N = 588	2 years N = 245	3 years N = 300	4 years N = 173	5+ years N = 95
Spent more time thinking about how to support individual students	62%	58%	63%	63%	70%	72%
Greater confidence in own abilities to support student centered learning	56%	48%	54%	62%	66%	72%
Developed closer working relationships with teachers at my school	54%	48%	53%	60%	66%	54%
Greater proficiency in the use of data to inform practice	52%	43%	52%	59%	65%	65%
Spent more time collaborating with colleagues on new learning strategies	50%	48%	54%	52%	46%	53%

These efficacy outcomes are significant since they directly point to the impact of several key tenets of the Summit Learning approach on teachers’ self-efficacy and overall effectiveness. Teachers’ feedback on student mentoring, the value of the Summit Learning platform, and their connections with other teachers at their school are important to understanding the value of Summit Learning.

Mentoring experiences

“The mentor program is critical; I can't imagine how other schools are able to provide quality instruction to their students without it. Habits of success, and watching our students develop them, has been an amazing experience.”
(High School Teacher, ID)

The very high value teachers place on mentoring students and the impact of Mentor Time cannot be understated. **Nearly all the teachers who provided feedback (95%) say they believe that every student can benefit from a mentor and 81% strongly agree with this statement.** Across all grade levels, different content areas, years of experience with Summit Learning and varied community types and schools, teachers connect

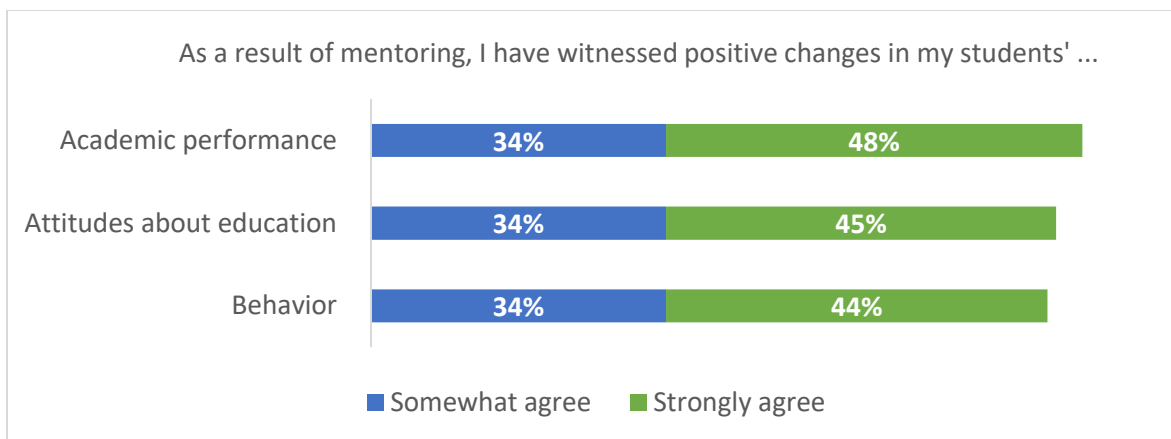


their work as a mentor to their students' success and their own efficacy and self-satisfaction as a teacher. Consequently, it is informative to examine the teachers' beliefs about mentoring through these three different outcomes: student success, teacher effectiveness and teacher satisfaction.

*"I like the mentoring program the best. Being able to build and foster 1:1 relationships with students is integral to their success in school and as a person."
(Middle School Teacher, MA)*

Teachers (88%) strongly believe that their one-on-one mentoring time provides value to their students. The teachers note that they see positive changes in their students' attitudes about their education, their behavior, and their academic performance as a result of mentoring (Chart 1). For example, 82% of the Summit Learning teachers agree that mentoring time with their students results in positive changes in the academic performance of their students.

Chart 1: Impact of Mentoring on Changes in Student Outcomes



Teachers ascribe Mentor Time to other outcomes that support their efficacy as a teacher. **Teachers believe that because of mentoring they are more successful in helping their mentees establish clear action plans for achieving their goals (87%) and helping their students develop skills to be more successful (83%).** As part of that preparation for success, 78% of teachers also point to the effectiveness of using mentoring time to coach students on the Habits of Success including 44% who strongly agree with this connection.

As a result of an emphasis on Habits of Success at their school, teachers identify additional changes in their students' approach to learning, and the overall outcomes of that emphasis (Table 2). Those key changes noted by the Summit Learning teachers include: a) taking ownership of their learning, b) being more comfortable asking others for help, c) more eager to self-direct their learning, d) understanding their strengths and where they need to develop new capacities, and e) developing college and workplace skills.

In some cases, elementary school teachers are slightly more likely than high school teachers to notice these changes in their students. An orientation to emphasizing student agency, self-awareness of the learning process



and self-directed learning is, in general, a new concept within elementary education and thus, elementary teachers may be more observant of these changes in their students. **For example, 50% of elementary teachers acknowledge that as a result of a Habits of Success orientation at their school, their students are more eager to self-direct their learning.**

Table 2: Outcomes of Habits of Success

Outcomes of Habits of Success emphasis	All teachers	% of teachers who agree disaggregated by grade level assignment		
		Elementary N = 280	Middle N = 839	High N = 381
Taking more ownership of their learning	62%	65%	63%	58%
More comfortable asking others for help	62%	65%	62%	59%
More eager to self-direct their own learning process	47%	50%	49%	41%
Understand their strengths and where they need to develop new capacities	47%	51%	49%	46%
Developing sustainable college and workplace ready skills	43%	36%	44%	50%

*“I like getting to know my students as humans rather than just as students. I enjoy being a mentor and seeing them grow and succeed over the year.”
(Middle School Teacher, TX)*

Finally, another key aspect of the inclusion of mentoring within the Summit Learning model is teacher self-satisfaction. A key reality today in many schools is that administrators are increasingly concerned about their staff morale and motivation, both as a byproduct of the recent pandemic, but also a result of increasingly challenging workloads and environments over the past few years. Project Tomorrow’s Speak Up research from the 2020-21 school year indicates that 46% of school site principals say the morale and motivation of their teaching staff is an issue that keeps them up at night. It is therefore impressive that mentoring provides Summit Learning teachers with a feeling of success, satisfaction, and pride in their work. **Overall, 85% of teachers say that Mentor Time is a valuable use of their time.**

- I am proud to work at a school that facilitates a mentor relationship (92% of teachers)
- I enjoy the opportunity to work one-on-one with my mentees on their life goals (91% of teachers)
- I feel connected to my mentees and invested in their personal success (90% of teachers)



- I am proud of my success with my mentees (87% of teachers)
- Our school's overall success in meeting student achievement levels is positively impacted by our mentoring program (87% of teachers)

Benefits of the platform

“The platform is really intuitive and rich. Every day I learn something new that helps my instruction, or I consider a new way to work with the data to improve my teaching and demonstrate positive student outcomes.”
(Middle School Teacher, AZ)

Teacher satisfaction with Summit Learning is also tied to the benefits that they attribute to the effective use of the Summit Learning platform. Those benefits include aspects of the platform that directly support their efficacy as a teacher as well as what they see as key benefits for their students. The common thread in both aspects is how the platform supports personalized learning and facilitates ways for students and teachers to focus on learning outcomes. The teachers in this sampling identified five key benefits of the platform on their efficacy (Table 3). Those key benefits include:

- 1) Visibility into student work and progress (66% of teachers)
- 2) Built in assessments (61% of teachers)
- 3) Multiple ways to provide student feedback (57% of teachers)
- 4) Ability to customize content and curriculum (54% of teachers)
- 5) Emphasis on personalizing learning (51% of teachers)

Traditionally, the ways teachers implement digital platforms or tools often vary by their content area. The same may be true here with the Summit Learning platform as evidenced by the slight differences in the valuations ascribed to different platform features or functions. For example, while 57% of English Language Arts teachers note that the platform's emphasis on personalizing learning is a key benefit for them, only 47% of Math teachers hold that same view. From the Speak Up research, we have long documented the reticence of some teachers to fully embrace new learning platforms or digital tools. Universally, the teachers highly value the inclusion of built in assessments (61%) as those most probably represent a time-saving feature of the platform; time-savings always has wide appeal with teachers.



Table 3: Teacher Benefits of the Summit Learning Platform

Teacher Benefits	All teachers	% of teachers who agree disaggregated by assigned content area			
		English Language Arts N = 283	Math N = 296	Science N = 239	History/Social Studies N = 231
Visibility into student work and progress	66%	71%	58%	67%	66%
Built in assessments	61%	66%	63%	62%	57%
Provides multiple ways to provide feedback to students	57%	65%	52%	58%	58%
Ability to customize content and curriculum	54%	62%	49%	53%	58%
Emphasis on personalizing learning	51%	57%	47%	56%	51%

From a student benefit perspective, teachers articulate several key benefits that mirror the teacher benefits as well as support other aspects of the Summit Learning approach, most notably the emphasis on self-directed learning. Those key benefits are:

- 1) Students’ ability to monitor their own work (78% of teachers)
- 2) Students’ ability to track their progress against their goals (64% of teachers)
- 3) Ability for their teachers to see when they need to intervene and provide additional support (59% of teachers)
- 4) Platform facilitates self-paced learning (55% of teachers)
- 5) Parents have greater visibility into student work and progress (54% of teachers)
- 6) Students’ ability to set goals for school, college and beyond (48% of teachers)
- 7) Emphasis on personalizing learning as a student benefit (46% of teachers)

For the most part, these benefits did not vary much by grade level assignment, except for the benefit of parent visibility. As would be expected given parents’ greater involvement with their children in elementary school, elementary teachers (60%) were more likely to value that benefit than high school teachers (50%).

Connections with other teachers



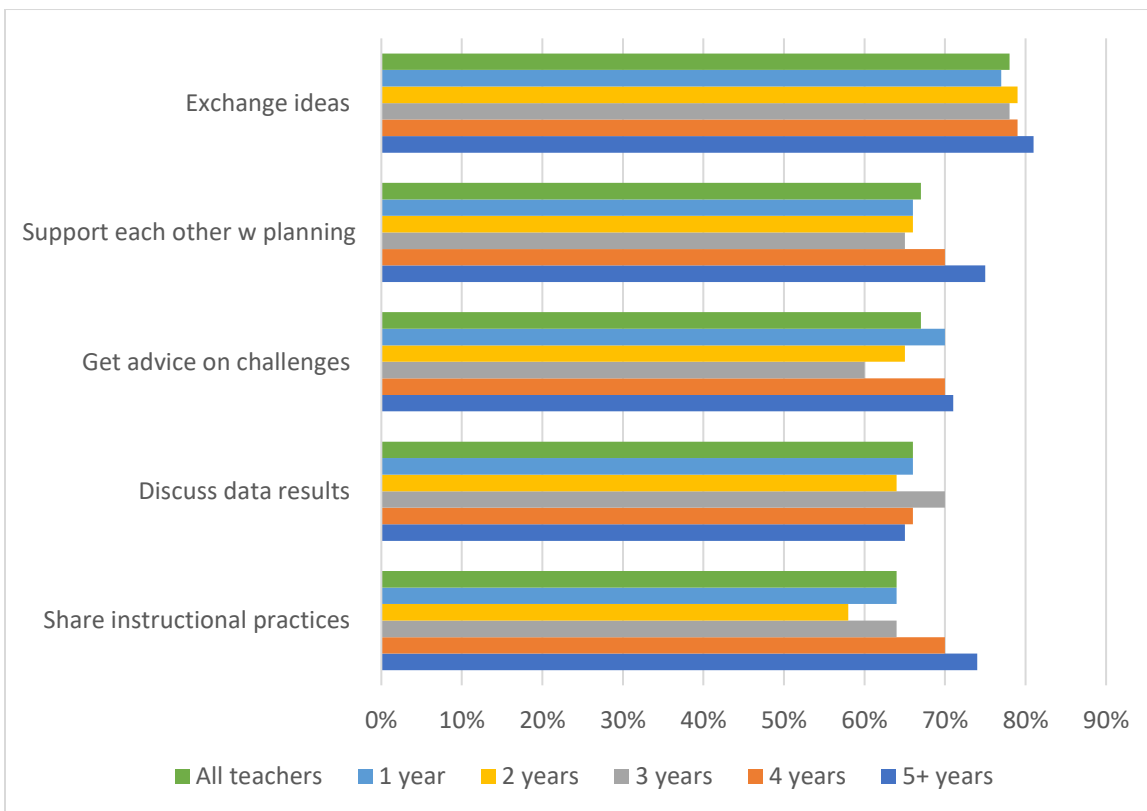
“It is great that the Cognitive Skills are used across so many contents. It creates a team effort across multiple disciplines to improve student success. That sense of being a team is what I like most about being part of the Summit Learning program at my school.”

(High School Teacher, UT)

Teachers mentioned many times throughout the survey that **Summit Learning helped them develop a closer working relationship with colleagues at their school (54%) and that they spent more time collaborating with other teachers on new teaching strategies (50%)**. When asked how often they connected with other Summit Learning teachers at their school, 91% of the teachers said those connecting events were weekly. The frequency of these connecting events was consistent across cohorts and school certification levels.

When asked to identify the purpose for those connections, the emphasis was the practical needs of supporting better instruction. **Teachers connected with their Summit Learning colleagues to get advice on classroom challenges (67%), discuss data results (67%) or share instructional practices (64%)** (Chart 2). The impression is that the connections were two-way, with teachers sharing their expertise and insights as well as asking for advice from trusted colleagues, even across varying levels of teacher experience.

Chart 2: Why Teachers are Connecting with other Summit Learning Teachers – Disaggregated by Years of Experience with Summit Learning





This mutually supportive ethos is echoed in the data and is especially evident when the results are disaggregated by the teachers' years of experience with Summit Learning (Chart 2). The consistency across the years of experience is noteworthy. For example, teachers with 1 year of experience (70%) were just as likely as teachers with 4 years of experience (70%) to ask for advice on challenges they were facing in their classroom.

The cooperative culture amongst the Summit Learning teachers may also be supported by the teachers' perception of how their district or charter management organization is supporting the Summit Learning implementation. **Three-quarters of the teachers (76%) say that their Summit Learning implementation is effectively supported by their district or organization.** Research has long documented the importance of supportive leadership for teachers when implementing a new teaching or learning model. It is therefore noteworthy the level of support teachers say they enjoy. The support enjoyed today also appears to be an increase in support compared to what Summit Learning teachers reported in spring 2019. On a similar Project Tomorrow facilitated survey with the same item, 67% of Summit Learning teachers in spring 2019 said their district or organization provided effective support for Summit Learning. The increased level of support in spring 2021 may indicate that administrators are more aware of the benefits of Summit Learning and seeing tangible impacts on students and teachers from their Summit Learning implementations.

Impacts and outcomes

*"I like that I am playing an active role in the progression of our school and how we view our professions and student outcomes."
(Elementary School Teacher, KY)*

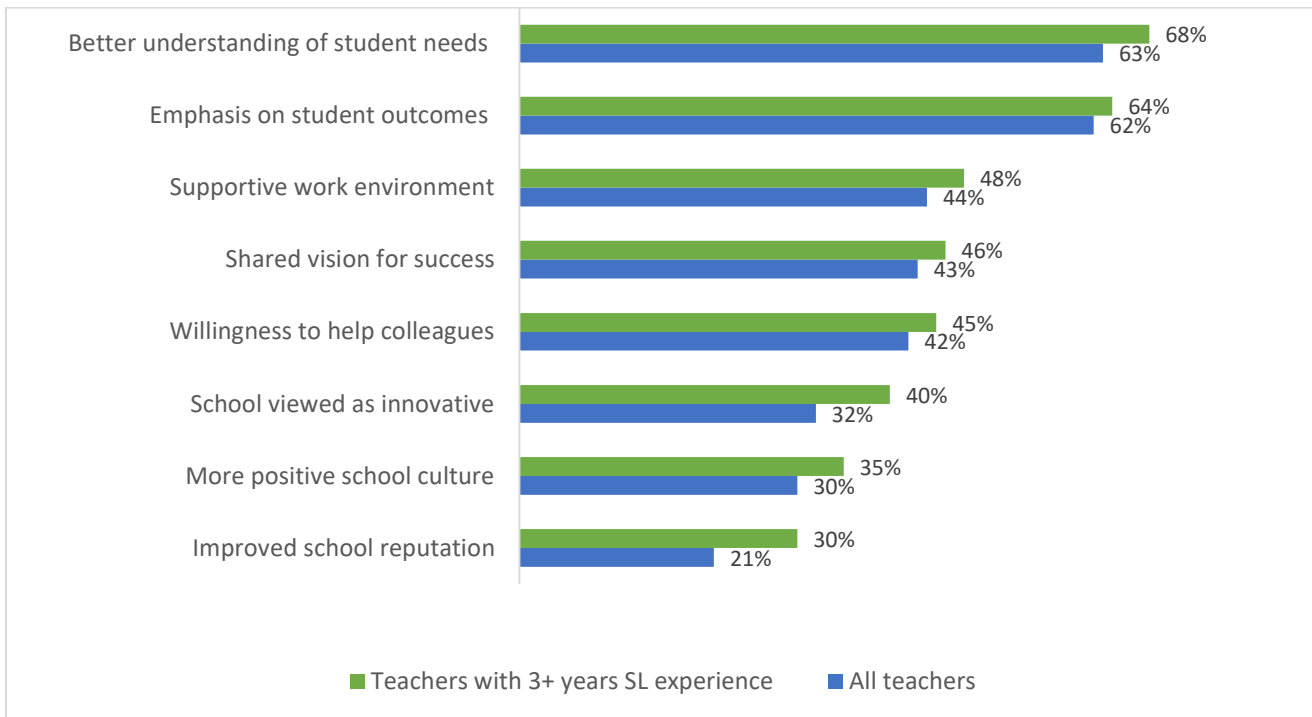
Teachers report that Summit Learning has impacted their school and community in multiple ways. The top impacts noted across all teacher subgroups include:

- 1) Better understanding of students' needs (63% of teachers)
- 2) Greater emphasis on student outcomes (62% of teachers)
- 3) More supportive work environment with my colleagues (44% of teachers)
- 4) Shared vision of success at our school (43% of teachers)
- 5) Greater willingness to ask for help from colleagues (42% of teachers)

However, as to be expected, teachers with more years of Summit Learning experience are more likely to voice support for these outcomes as well as some others (Chart 3). **For example, 40% of teachers with 3 or more years of Summit Learning experience say that the association has helped their school be viewed as innovative within their community.**



Chart 3: Impact of Summit Learning on School Community



It is important to point out however that the implementation of Summit Learning requires not only structural changes to the teaching and learning process, but it also mandates teachers, students, parents, and administrators adopt a new mindset for what constitutes success in student learning. The difference between change and transformation is applicable here. Technologists define change as using external influences to modify actions, whereas transformation modifies beliefs, so actions become commonplace with a sustained desired result.¹ Therefore, to evaluate the sustainable impact of the new mindset adopted by Summit Learning teachers, it makes sense to listen to teachers’ responses when asked about what has changed at their school because of Summit Learning.

The top three changes noted by teachers reflect the emphasis within Summit Learning on student agency: students are more self-directed in their learning (58%), students are taking ownership of their learning (45%), and students are leaders in their own education (39%). One-third of teachers also indicated that students are taking greater responsibility for their own learning and the time spent in the classroom is being used more effectively now because of Summit Learning.

Mindset transformations do not happen overnight, however. Just as teachers in their first year with Summit Learning need time to fine-tune their mentoring techniques, schools need time to develop their own capacities within the Summit Learning model before the transformative impacts are fully realized. This is especially true

¹ <https://www.cioinsight.com/it-management/expert-voices/the-difference-between-change-and-transformation>



relative to seeing students adopt new behaviors such as taking ownership of their learning. Table 4 examines the changes that teachers have noticed at their school across five different cohorts of schools in the Summit Learning adoption journey. The more mature schools with a longer history of Summit Learning are represented as Cohort 2 and 3 with the newest adoptee as Cohort 6.

A good example of this difference based upon school maturity is reflected in the percentage of teachers who say that their students are more self-directed in learning because of Summit Learning. Whereas 72% of teachers in Cohort 2 schools agree that they have regularly observed that behavior with their students, only 47% of teachers in Cohort 6 have had this same experience at this point. Implementations of new learning models take time to develop roots and for teachers to recognize the signs of change, especially relative to student behaviors.

Table 4: What Teachers Report as School Changes Due to Summit Learning – Disaggregated by School Cohort Identification

Changes at my school	All teachers	% of teachers who agree disaggregated by school cohorts				
		Cohort 2 N = 222 teachers	Cohort 3 N = 498 teachers	Cohort 4 N = 304 teachers	Cohort 5 N = 109 teachers	Cohort 6 N = 193 teachers
Students are more self-directed in learning	58%	72%	54%	64%	54%	47%
Students are taking more ownership of their learning	45%	54%	41%	50%	49%	36%
Students are leaders in their own education	39%	49%	36%	46%	36%	29%
Students show greater responsibility for their learning	37%	45%	34%	41%	33%	32%
Time is spent more effectively in the classroom	36%	43%	33%	40%	37%	27%

In an open-ended prompt, teachers were also provided with the opportunity to share in their own words some of the changes that they have seen at their school with their students because of Summit Learning. The following examples are representative of the common themes in the teachers' responses.

"I have seen more students engaged and they have less time to be distracted. They are more motivated and are acquiring habits of success. Our data has continually increased. I especially like the mentoring part because we can help our kids succeed."

(Middle School Teacher, TX)



*“Students' Cognitive Skills have vastly improved. They are mastering skills that will help them be successful after high school.”
(High School Teacher, UT)*

*“I have found that students have learned to be self-directed learners more so than I have seen in the past. Whether they realized this quickly or it took some time, most kids have at least realized the importance of being in charge of their own learning.”
(Elementary School Teacher, KY)*

“I feel like my instruction is more closely aligned with cognitive skills and students' learning is deeper instead of broad strokes. Students seem to enjoy learning to learn as opposed to just to pass a test.” (Middle School Teacher, IN)

*“I believe the overall writing skills of students have improved because of the guided structure of the cognitive skills across all of the subjects. It creates a pathway for them to go into depth of their content.”
(High School Teacher, TX)*

*“The relationships in the mentoring class have been amazing in terms of building and maintaining rapport with students both in terms of their personal lives and their academic progress.”
(High School Teacher, UT)*

*“The students are required to do more of the cognitive lift when completing the projects. Although this has been challenging as we teach during a Global Pandemic, it has been an important positive change since we implemented Summit Learning.”
(Elementary School Teacher, MI)*

The pandemic and sudden shift to remote learning impacted Summit Learning teachers in many of the same ways it affected teachers nationwide. **However, over three-quarters of teachers (77%) say that their Summit Learning experiences helped them adapt to new learning models and formats during COVID-induced school closures and interruptions.** This makes sense since the sudden shift to remote learning included a much stronger emphasis on technology use and the need to understand individual student needs more effectively, both key tenets of Summit Learning. While many teachers were first introduced to personalized learning during remote learning, for the Summit Learning teachers, personalizing learning was already part of their instructional playbook.

*“I am the remote 4/5 teacher this year for my school, and Summit has been wonderful for organizing and facilitating continued learning and growth through technology. I don't think I could have done it without the platform.”
(Elementary School Teacher, CO)*



Summative value

The high valuation that Summit Learning teachers place on the methodologies, practices and values of Summit Learning is well-documented in the feedback results. It should not be surprising, therefore, that **over two-thirds (68%) of the teachers say that every student can succeed with Summit Learning**. The teachers believe in the Summit Learning approach and have seen the results to support that belief. This viewpoint of efficacy is held even more highly by teachers with 3 or more years of experience with Summit Learning; 76% of those teachers believe every student can succeed in a Summit Learning school.

However, most teachers are naturally reluctant to recommend a new learning model or instructional strategy to another teacher or colleague. The view is that every teacher's class or environment is different and unique, and thus, a success with any new learning approach in one classroom may simply not be effectively transferrable to another teacher's environment. **Given that, it is remarkable that 75% of the teachers say that it is likely they would recommend Summit Learning to a friend or colleague**. Recommendation likeliness is a valuable summative assessment on value. With Summit Learning, teachers across grade levels and content areas from schools in urban, rural and suburban communities are in alignment on not only the impact that Summit Learning has on their students, but on their belief that other teachers should know about Summit Learning and adopt the model within their own classrooms.

3. Teachers' views on supporting teaching and learning innovations

In addition to supporting the core Summit Learning values of student engagement, meaningful learning, and strong student–teacher relationships, the Summit Learning teachers are also on the forefront with several other teaching and learning innovations. As part of the feedback study, teachers shared their views on the use of technology within learning and the benefits of project-based learning within their practice. The teachers also commented on the value of a culturally sustaining curriculum and other leading philosophies within education today, including a whole-child approach to education. The Summit Learning teachers' values and views on these topics are important to better understanding the overall impact and value of Summit Learning on student outcomes and teacher effectiveness.

Use of technology within learning

Summit Learning teachers leverage digital tools and resources to create interactive and engaging learning experiences for their students. With a constant eye on preparation for future success, the Summit Learning teachers also connect these digital learning experiences with the development of college and workplace ready skills. And as would be expected, the Summit Learning teachers believe that the effective use of technology can help to improve teacher- student communications since relationship building is central to the Summit Learning approach. Table 5 identifies the top benefits that Summit Learning teachers ascribe to digital learning experiences for their students compared to the views of teachers nationwide collected through the Speak Up Research Project.



Table 5: How the Effective Use of Technology Impacts Student Success

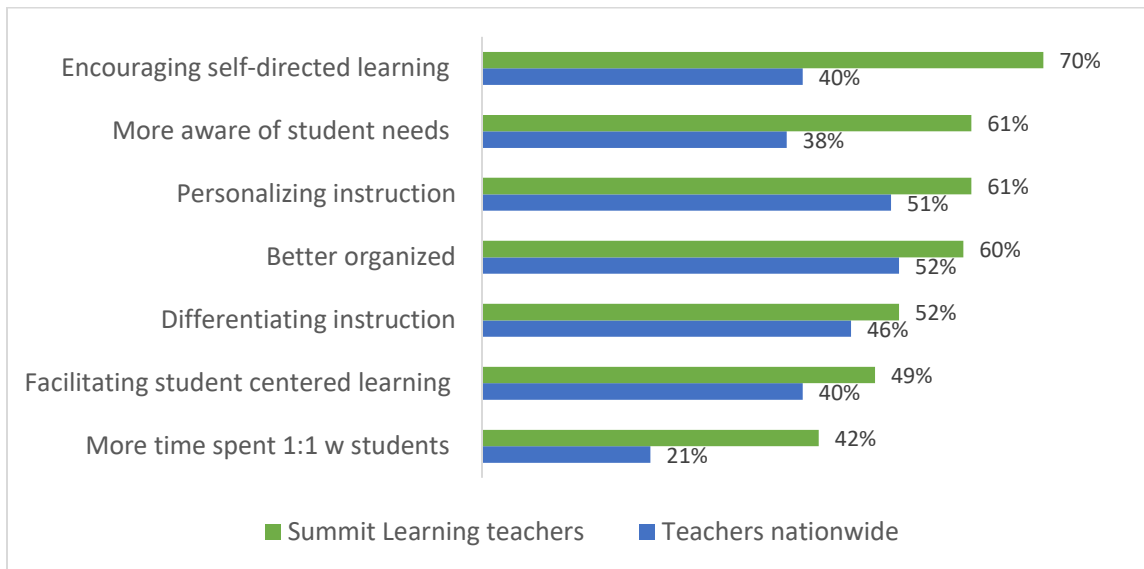
Ways that digital learning can impact student success	% of teachers who agree	
	Summit Learning teachers N = 1,418	Teachers nationwide N = 3,642
Creates interactive and participatory learning experiences	69%	65%
Expands access to online content that is current and relevant	60%	53%
Develops skills for life-long, self-directed learning	59%	63%
Increases student engagement in learning	55%	39%
Prepares students with skills for college or workplace success	54%	60%
Improves teacher-student communications	51%	31%

For the most part, the views of the two samplings, Summit Learning teachers and teachers nationwide, are very similar. **However, Summit Learning teachers (55%) are more likely to say that the effective use of technology increases student engagement in learning than nationwide teacher sampling (39%).** This difference speaks to the intentionality of the use of technology by Summit Learning teachers. For example, 54% of Summit Learning teachers report using an online curriculum with their students; only 44% of teachers nationwide say the same. Summit Learning teachers (50%) are also leveraging digital and media creation tools to support project-based learning experiences for their students to a greater extent than other teachers. And Summit Learning teachers (42%) are more likely than teachers nationwide to facilitate student collaborations using online and digital tools than other teachers (35%).

However, it is in the Summit Learning teachers' reflection on how technology impacts their teaching practices that we see the more significant differences in the two groups. Summit Learning teachers are more likely than teachers nationwide to see a stronger connection between the effective use of technology and positive changes in their instructional practice. **For example, while 70% of Summit Learning teachers say that their use of digital tools and resources helps them provide opportunities for their students to develop self-directed learning skills, only 40% of teachers nationwide articulate that same impact on the Speak Up surveys (Chart 4).**



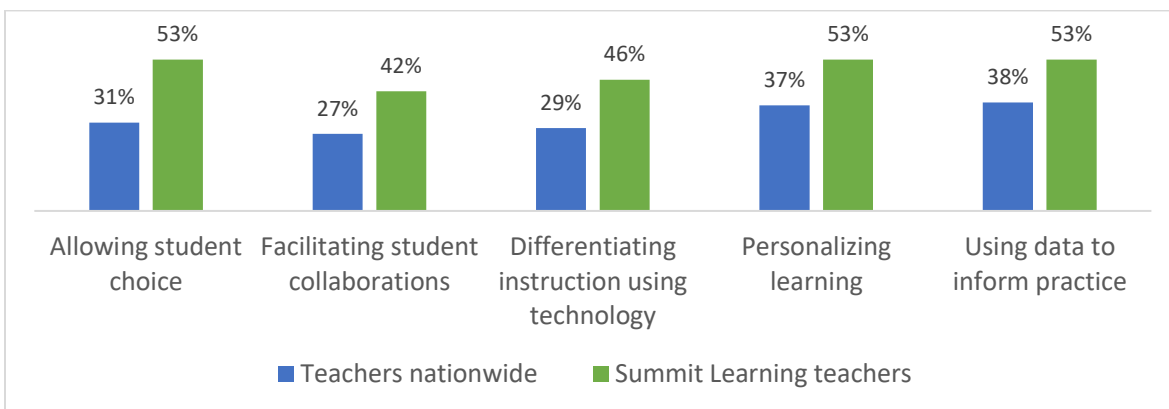
Chart 4: Impact of Effective Technology Usage on Teaching Practices



As a result of how they are using digital tools and resources in their classrooms, Summit Learning teachers are also more aware of their students’ individual needs (61%) and more likely to be leveraging technology to personalize learning for their students (61%).

These higher valuations on the impact of technology on teaching may also correspond to teachers’ level of comfort with key classroom practices such as allowing student choice, differentiating instruction and using data to inform practice. Given that many of these practices align with core Summit Learning values, it is not surprising that the Summit Learning teachers are more comfortable with these strategies than teachers nationwide. Summit Learning teachers are more likely than teachers nationwide to say that they are *very comfortable* allowing students to have choice about how they learn, personalizing and differentiating instruction to meet individual student needs, and using data to inform their instructional practice (Chart 5).

Chart 5: Teachers Report Being “Very Comfortable” with Key Classroom Practices





The emphasis on the intentional and effective use of technology within Summit Learning is also evident in teachers’ assessment as to the overall value of technology in supporting students’ preparation for future success. While all teachers agree that the effective use of technology in the classroom is important for helping students develop the future-ready skills, the intensity of the agreement level from Summit Learning teachers is particularly noteworthy. **Across all grade levels, Summit Learning teachers are more likely than teachers nationwide to *strongly agree* with the connection between effective technology use and student success** (Table 6).

“The effective use of technology within learning is important to help students develop the skills and knowledge they need for future success.”

Table 6: Teachers who strongly agree with this statement

Grade level distribution	Summit Learning Teachers	Teachers nationwide
Elementary school teachers	71%	60%
Middle school teachers	72%	58%
High school teachers	66%	61%

The contrast between the views of Summit Learning teachers and teachers nationwide is most stark when comparing elementary and middle school educators. **Among middle school teachers, 24% more Summit Learning middle school teachers strongly agree that effective use of technology is important for students’ future success than compared to their middle school teachers nationwide.** Summit Learning is helping teachers see the purpose of digital learning through the intentional use that helps teachers personalize learning and supports students in their development of college and workplace ready skills.

Project-based learning

“Summit Learning provides an opportunity for our team to develop cross-content projects because of the platform set up and cognitive skills development.”
(Middle School Teacher, KY)



The intentional emphasis on project-based learning within the Summit Learning model is also well-represented in the teachers' feedback on their practices and values. In terms of teacher outcomes from project-based learning (PBL), Summit Learning teachers see PBL as a vehicle for personalizing the learning process for their students. **Nearly two-thirds of Summit Learning teachers (64%) say that the facilitation of PBL experiences provides a unique environment for differentiating instruction and identifying where their students need additional attention or support.**

"I like the Summit program because the materials are there for the teachers and students. It's organized and easy to follow. It is set up for students to work on their own and at their own pace. The projects are engaging and students learn while enjoying!"

(Elementary School Teacher, IA)

Project-based learning is also very appealing to students as a learning modality. According to Speak Up research collected this year from almost 8,000 high school students nationwide, 55% say that having authentic problem-solving experiences around real-world issues is an optimum way to develop college and career-ready skills. **The Summit Learning teachers (54%) place a high premium on the real-world context of project-based learning.** Additionally, 78% of the teachers say that it is advantageous for students to have teachers who can connect academic content to real world applications such as demonstrated through PBL.

Given the focus on project-based learning within Summit Learning schools, the teachers' articulation of the benefits of PBL for students is especially well-informed. Teachers across all different content areas report that the following features or capacities within PBL are especially beneficial for their students (Table 7):

- 1) PBL provides a real world context for projects (54% of teachers)
- 2) Students can make choices about their project or work process (47% of teachers)
- 3) Student give, receive and apply feedback from others to improve their projects (47% of teachers)
- 4) Students are engaged in the learning process as a result of PBL (46% of teachers)
- 5) PBL helps students develop strong cognitive skills (43% of teachers)



Table 7: PBL Benefits for Students

PBL Benefits	All teachers	% of teachers who agree disaggregated by assigned content area			
		English Language Arts N = 283	Math N = 296	Science N = 239	History/Social Studies N = 231
Real world context or problem for the project	54%	55%	47%	60%	49%
Student ability to make choices about project and process	47%	50%	40%	55%	45%
Students give, receive and apply feedback	47%	58%	41%	49%	48%
Students are engaged in the learning process	46%	52%	46%	45%	43%
Development of strong cognitive skills	43%	51%	30%	46%	46%

As could be expected, the implementation of PBL learning experiences however may look different in a science class vs. a history class. Correspondingly, the Summit Learning teachers’ perceptions on the key characteristics that are most beneficial for their students vary by content area. For example, Science teachers are more likely than teachers in other subject areas to recognize the value of student choice within projects. English teachers more highly value the ability for students to give, receive and apply feedback to improve their project and processes than teachers in other subject areas.

Quite often with early implementations of project-based learning, educators and policymakers want to know how PBL supports academics exclusively. While academic outcomes are always important, the Summit Learning teachers look holistically at their students and thus, 80% say that PBL experiences can help students develop a civic identity and a deeper understanding of their personal social responsibility within a community. This value proposition is in alignment also with the Summit Learning teachers’ perspectives on the importance of a culturally sustaining curriculum, and a whole-child education approach.

Culturally sustaining curriculum and support for whole-child learning

A culturally sustaining or responsive curriculum focuses on student-centered learning environments that affirm cultural identities, not negate them. Many of the core values of Summit Learning support cultural



responsiveness. **Summit Learning teachers overwhelmingly agree that a culturally sustainable curriculum is important for their students (80%, helps them avoid their own inherent biases, and should be a priority for every school (78%). Most significantly, Summit Learning teachers (79%) link the implementation of a culturally sustainable curriculum with improved student success and achievement.** Other valuation statements about why a culturally sustainable curriculum is beneficial include:

- Provides an authentic way for students to see themselves represented in schoolwork and instructional materials (81% of teachers agree)
- Helps students develop self-agency (80%)
- Helps to promote inclusion and equity in our school (79%)
- Fosters improved relationships and connections between families and communities (74%)

As with a focus on a culturally sustainable curriculum, the Summit Learning model brings a new perspective to enabling a whole-child perspective to learning and new ideas about student outcomes and the purpose of school. Summit Learning teachers strongly endorse this approach as well. **For example, nine of ten Summit Learning teachers (91%) agree that when schools prioritize whole-child learning, students perform better, both on academic and non-academic measures.** Likewise, teachers value the inclusion of critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration skills as key student outcomes from their learning experience with 88% of the teachers calling for schools to adopt a broader definition of student success to include both academic and non-academic skills. Included in that broader definition is a prioritization on helping students develop the skills and knowledge they need to ensure an engaged and informed citizenry, a position endorsed by 92% of the Summit Learning Teachers.

*“I like the focus on the whole student. Emotional skills and collaboration are just as important as content for the future of our students.”
(High School Teacher, AK)*

4. Summary of key findings from the Summit Learning Teacher Feedback Study

The most significant findings from this year’s Summit Learning Teacher Feedback Study are summarized as the following:

- The teachers believe that Summit Learning has a positive impact on their students and their teaching efficacy.
- 75% of Summit Learning teachers say they would recommend Summit Learning to a friend or colleague.



- Two-thirds of Summit Learning teachers say that every student can succeed with Summit Learning.
- Summit Learning teachers say the biggest change they have seen at their school is an increased emphasis on student agency and self-directed learning.
- 95% of Summit Learning teachers believe that every student can benefit from a mentor and that the mentoring process results in positive changes in students' academic performance, attitudes about their education and behavior.
- The Habits of Success provide students with the tools to take greater ownership of their own learning.
- The Summit Learning platform has significant benefits for students and teachers including enabling a greater emphasis on personalizing learning.
- The teachers highly value their working relationships with Summit Learning colleagues at their school and are connecting weekly with those peers to exchange ideas and solve problems collaboratively.
- More teachers today say that their district or organizational leadership support Summit Learning than in spring 2019.
- 77% of the teachers believe that their Summit Learning experiences better prepared them to deal with school changes during the pandemic.
- Summit Learning teachers are more comfortable with digital learning practices than teachers nationwide, thus, see greater benefits from the effective use of technology within learning including a high valuation on the impact of effective technology use on students' future success.
- Two-thirds of teachers say that project-based learning helps them differentiate instruction and identify where their students need additional help or support.
- Summit Learning teachers believe that when schools prioritize whole-child learning students perform better both on academic and non-academic measures.