



National Survey Takes Pulse of American Public on What Matters in Learning

Majority Support Tailoring Instruction to Help Address Learner Variability

May 21, 2019 | Washington, D.C. – At least 75 percent of public school parents, teachers, and the American public believe most students are capable of reaching high levels of educational achievement, [according to a survey](#) conducted by Langer Research Associates of New York for Digital Promise Global’s Learner Variability Project.

Approximately eight in ten of those surveyed also say that learners vary by way of their “personal background and knowledge, their health and psychological wellbeing, and how they think, among other things.” And while they express an overwhelming preference for approaches tailored to students’ learner variability—their strengths, challenges, social and emotional abilities, and background—only 19 to 29 percent of those surveyed say most students are reaching high levels of educational achievement today.

“This is the first in a series of surveys we plan to conduct to explore how teachers, parents, and the general public view learning in the 21st century,” said Karen Cator, president and CEO of Digital Promise. “We hope to use the findings to inform efforts to ensure all students have powerful learning experiences.”

The study surveyed 1,389 U.S. adults, including 550 public school parents, and an additional 516 public school teachers on a range of issues related to learning, including the capability of students to achieve at high levels, learner variability, tailored approaches to learning, use of educational technology (edtech), and what teachers rely on to do their work. Other findings from the report include:

- In a key result of statistical modeling, recognizing learner variability and believing most students are capable of high levels of academic achievement are the strongest predictors of thinking that all students can benefit from tailored instruction.
- Adults who perceive a great deal or good amount of learner variability are more likely than others to support tailored instruction and also the use of edtech.

- Majorities of those surveyed say edtech improves students' learning experiences by helping students discover new information and ideas, find new learning strategies, and develop organizational and task management skills.
- When asked what they rely on to support their work, teachers note their own experience at 91 percent; instincts at 86 percent; professional development at 66 percent; and academic research at 53 percent.
- While comparatively few teachers report that they rely on academic research in doing their work, those who do are much more likely to be very comfortable using edtech.

“Findings from this survey help us see that an understanding of learner variability—that students vary across cognitive, social-emotional, and background factors—is key to providing the tailored opportunities students need to reach their full potential,” said Vic Vuchic, chief innovation officer at Digital Promise. “This survey provides valuable insights for anyone concerned with improving education to meet the needs of the full diversity of learners.”

Digital Promise Global’s Learner Variability Project translates learning sciences research into accessible learner models through its free, open-source web app, the Navigator, for designing products and practices that meet the needs of diverse learners. Its interconnected framework begins with factors under four pillars of learning: Content, Cognition, Social and Emotional Learning, and Student Background. The project surfaces research-based strategies that support the factors with the goal of informing design and practice.

For more information on Digital Promise Global’s Learner Variability Project, visit lvp.digitalpromiseglobal.org.

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About Digital Promise Global

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