Research Finds Technology Coaches Provide Promising Approach to Closing the Digital Divide

Dynamic Learning Project participants report classroom-based coaching improves school culture and student learning

August 13, 2018 | Washington, D.C. – Research findings from the first year of the Dynamic Learning Project, a national program led by Digital Promise and supported by Google, suggest that instructional technology coaching is a promising approach to improve education equity and close the digital divide, gaps that exist between learning outcomes, graduation rates, and college readiness of students based on race, class, and where they live. As described in this newly released research report, after the pilot year, principals, teachers, coaches, and students are more engaged, more collaborative, and well on their way to experiencing a fundamental culture shift in their schools.

After one year of working with their Dynamic Learning Project coach, teachers are using technology more frequently and in more powerful ways—both to support *what* they are teaching, as well as *how* they are teaching it. At the end of the year, more than 80 percent of teachers involved in the project agreed they have the ability to use technology in ways to develop student agency and collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking—skills commonly referenced as those that will be required in workplaces of the future.

"Our mission at Digital Promise is to close the Digital Learning Gap, and this research suggests that classroom-based coaching for teachers can bring us one step closer to this goal," said Karen Cator, president and CEO of Digital Promise. "It's no small feat to change school culture. Through this project, we identified the core attributes of an effective coaching program, as well as the key qualities of an effective coach. We're encouraged by these results."

Working with 50 schools in 20 school districts across five states—Alabama, California, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Texas—each participating school received a grant to support an onsite, full-time instructional technology coach for one year. Support for the Dynamic Learning Project is part of Google's broader commitment to helping underserved communities benefit from the power of technology and their belief that everyone deserves access to a quality education.

"We entered into this pilot with the belief that coaching is not just for athletics—it can provide sustained support for educators to build the confidence and skills to use technology in more meaningful ways with their students," said Liz Anderson, Head of Social Impact Programs, Google for Education. "We are inspired by the pilot's research findings that instructional technology coaching can transform the way students create, work together, and solve problems in the classroom."

Over the course of the Dynamic Learning Project's pilot year, researchers from Digital Promise gathered data through surveys and conducted in-depth case studies to better understand the conditions necessary for classroom coaching to effectively foster more powerful use of technology for teaching and learning.

The Dynamic Learning Project coaches, supported by mentors from EdTechTeam, provided individualized support to teachers to help them select, tackle, and then reflect upon a classroom challenge and implement strategies with technology. The school-based coaches, as well as each school's principal, received sustained mentoring and ongoing professional development throughout the year.

Are you interested in instructional technology and want to stay updated on the Dynamic Learning Project? Sign up here. For more information about the Dynamic Learning Project, visit digitalpromise.org/dynamiclearningproject.

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