



K-12 Principals' Assessment of Education:

2020 EDITION

MCH 
Strategic Data

ABOUT THIS REPORT:

Every year, MCH Strategic Data reaches out to K-12 principals across our nation's public schools to get a temperature check on the state of K-12 education. Because our survey is confidential, we receive candid responses to our questions. The responses to our questions are published annually to help our clients anticipate trends and changes in U.S. schools and districts. This year, we received responses from over 700 principals – with representation in every state across the country.



PRINCIPALS' TOP CONCERNS HAVE SHIFTED FROM LAST YEAR:

2018-2019 Principals' Top Concerns	2019-2020 Principals' Top Concerns
Adequate Funding	Adequate Funding
Attendance	Student Readiness
Teacher Morale	Economic Fragility of Families

Receiving adequate funding was a top concern last year for principals, and that sentiment has not changed. It's a top concern this year, too. However, teacher morale and student attendance rates have improved over the prior year. Principals are more concerned with student readiness and the economic fragility of families this year. Student readiness can be attributed to the large focus on preparing students to succeed beyond high school. A large focus has been put on preparing students to either enter the workforce or to better prepare them to succeed at colleges and universities. Many schools and districts have been working on innovative ways to partner with community colleges or employers to develop programs aimed at helping students succeed.



Verbatim Responses: How principals are addressing student readiness

- Unpacking and examining instructional implications of next-generation standards.
- Need to better align high school exams to SAT.
- Need to move away from common core.
- We are partnering with local community colleges for college readiness.
- We are beginning to offer more work experience and career classes.
- Devices for administration and programs to collect evidence for teacher evaluation are important.
- We are providing ACT handbooks for all grades.



Last year, the low morale of teachers was linked to a lack of professional development. Teachers felt as if they had a lack of training to manage complex student issues. As a result, morale was at an all-time low, and principals struggled to provide the resources needed. This year, however, principals have invested more time and resources for teacher development. This highlights a positive change from prior years. Almost 40% of the respondents say that teacher professional development is much improved over last year. Teachers are better able to handle students with special needs. This results in better classroom experiences and learning environments for students and teachers.

Another theme that became prevalent last year was centered around **the safety and security of faculty and staff.** At the time of our survey last year, it was reported that many schools were beginning to take a more proactive approach to train faculty and staff on how to make their environments safer places to learn. In addition to training, schools were installing technology and enhancing facilities to provide for a safer environment. Just over 30% of the principals surveyed this year noted a significant improvement in safety and security measures.

ISSUES THAT IMPACT EFFECTIVE EDUCATION ENVIRONMENTS:

Funding and the economic environment are of great concern to most principals who responded to our survey. Principals specifically called out the economic fragility of families as having an impact on student readiness and the ability to create an effective educational environment for children. The lack of funding also contributes to the lack of resources to care for students who have social and emotional learning needs, mental health issues, or other customized needs. Being able to increase pay for teachers and purchase additional resources would help tremendously with these issues.

- Compared to last year, please describe the change in the following issues as they relate to the ability to create an effective educational environment.



	Better	No Change	Worse
Inadequate funding	14%	50%	36%
Insufficient student readiness	9%	57%	34%
Professional development of teachers	40%	50%	10%
Technology hardware	37%	52%	11%
Technology software and applications	34%	56%	10%
Economic fragility of families	5%	47%	48%
School safety	31%	60%	9%

The most common issues that impact K-12 education are essentially the same year over year. Principals were asked to describe any significant changes this year compared to last year.

■ Please select which best describes the following topics or issues compared to last year.

	Better	No Change	Worse
Behavior issues in children	31%	31%	38%
Aligning assessments to standards	45%	48%	7%
Adequate funding	17%	43%	40%
Attendance	25%	43%	32%
Bullying	36%	55%	9%
Class size	17%	60%	23%
Teacher morale	35%	35%	30%
Teacher professional development	48%	44%	8%
Adequate technology	42%	47%	11%
ESSA impacts	10%	72%	18%
Improving test scores	39%	46%	15%

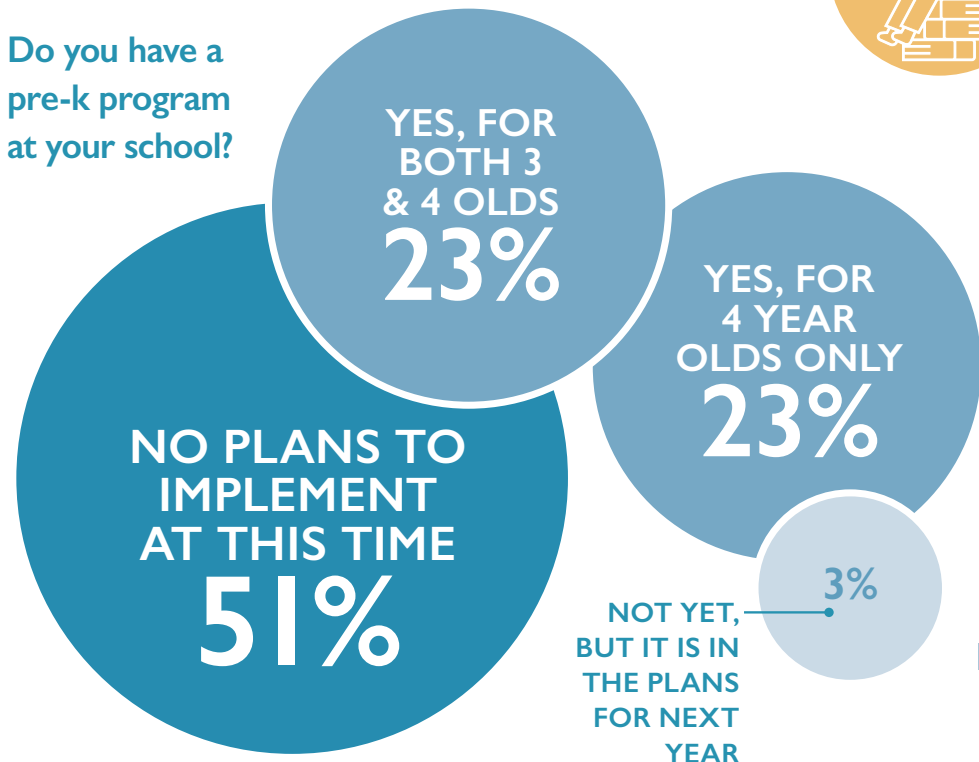


THE IMPORTANCE OF PRE-K PROGRAMS:

The benefits of pre-kindergarten education last well beyond kindergarten. According to many child development research reports, there are amazing long-term economic benefits from early childhood education for children in poverty. For example, the lifetime earnings of some children increase by hundreds of thousands of dollars, and the economic benefits of these programs outweigh the costs by a factor of up to 16 (in some programs). Also, such programs show that participants have lower crime rates and decreased rates of welfare dependence as adults, so the benefits of early childhood education can last a lifetime. About half of our survey respondents cite that they currently have a pre-k program at their schools. The data also indicates that the majority of schools that don't offer a program have no plans to implement one in the future. Also, 90% of those that have a pre-k program are satisfied with the current outcome of their programs and have no plans of making any significant changes to their programs.

MCH has a robust database of **early childcare institutions and personnel**. The federal government plays a critical role in providing funding for child care facilities, as they are seen as an opportunity to prepare children for school. These institutions have purchasing power, and they typically consume learning materials, safety and security products, office supplies, cleaning supplies and services, professional development, and training.

■ Do you have a pre-k program at your school?

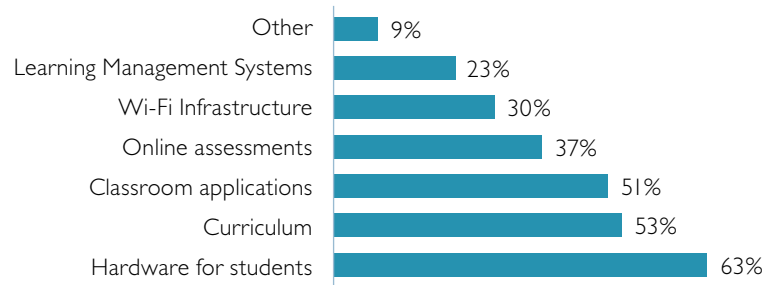


THE IMPORTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY:

According to the **Consortium for School Networking** (CoSN), the homework gap is the civil rights issue of the digital age. More and more teachers are assigning homework via internet-sourced programs that require students to have access to technology. For many children who are not connected at home, this poses a great challenge. To some degree, the digital divide is being addressed by governments, corporations, and nonprofits with their efforts to increase the digital bandwidth in public areas, including schools. Teachers are also making a concerted effort to give students time to access the internet during school hours to complete homework. A few years ago, when MCH asked principals about their greatest technology hurdle, they cited bandwidth issues. However, we have seen a positive shift. Principals have noted the improvement in technology bandwidth. They are less concerned about bandwidth and are spending money on other types of technology.



■ What kind of Technology purchases are you making?

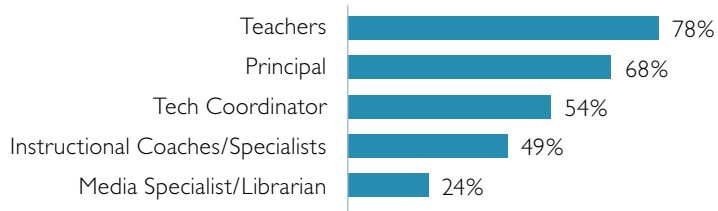


Some of the open-ended answers from principals included smartboards, STEM curriculum, technology carts, and cameras. MCH has recently worked with a trusted partner to capture STEM and STEAM information at schools. We have identified where these decisions are made – at the district level or at the school level. We have also identified STEM Coordinators and STEM Directors who make these critical decisions. Our **MCH Relationship Managers** are knowledgeable resources for helping identify who to contact for sales and marketing outreach.



THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

■ Who decides which apps will be used in the classroom?



Using technology applications in the classroom brings several advantages to learning. From greater student engagement to an expansion of the learning environment beyond normal school hours, applications can open new educational doors. When it comes to making decisions on who decides what applications are purchased or used in the classroom, teachers are the primary decision-maker. Many times, they will make these decisions on their own or will make them in conjunction with technology coordinators, principals, or instructional coaches or specialists. There is no question, though, that teachers are great influencers, and often make the final decisions regarding which technology applications to use.



SAFETY AND SECURITY OF STUDENTS AND TEACHERS:

Schools use a variety of practices and procedures to promote the safety of students, faculty, and staff. Certain practices, such as locking or monitoring doors and gates, are intended to limit or control access to school campuses, while others, such as the use of metal detectors and security cameras, are intended to monitor or restrict students' and visitors' behavior on campus.

Also, over 40% of the principals surveyed say that their schools have a dedicated sworn law enforcement officer on-premise. Forty percent of the schools that have a dedicated sworn law enforcement officer on-premise have formalized policies or written documents that outline the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of these officers at the school.

- Who makes decisions regarding safety and security? Check all that apply.



PRINCIPALS ARE OPEN TO NEW PRODUCTS AND SERVICES:

Principals prioritize spending based on expressed needs from teachers, students, and parents. They will make time to learn about new products or services that can help them overcome their top challenges. That said, not all districts have the same issues or concerns, so it takes a one-to-one approach to resonate. Businesses need to understand what the most important issues are for each school and district before crafting a targeted message strategy.

Key takeaways for sales and marketing professionals:

- Segment the audience, as districts have different needs.
- Shape the message to offer a solution to a problem.
- Develop case studies that show evidence-based solutions to problems.
- Match the right message to the right buyer or influencer.
- Choose a quality data partner to help identify the right opportunities.



MEDIA PREFERENCES:

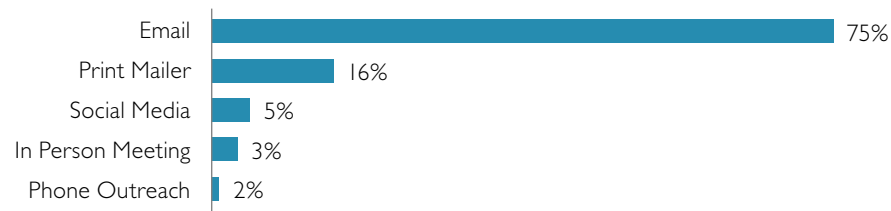
Many Principals like to hear about new products and services through email communications. That said, it's important to recognize that messages need to be on point, specific, and targeted. The most important value proposition for principals is having a clear understanding of how a product or service will solve their immediate need or problem.



Insights for Sales and Marketing Professionals:

- Principals look for brands they can trust. Testimonials, case studies, and a proven track record are important.
- All districts are not created equal. Each principal has unique challenges. Marketing messages should be segmented and relevant.
- Funding, impacts of ESSA, and demographic characteristics of the student population all contribute to the localized needs of each school and district. Marketing plans should be micro-focused on localized needs.

■ How do you like or hear about new products or services?



TRUST IN ADVERTISING:

- Please rank in order of most trusted to least trusted forms of media.

Item	Overall Rank
Email	1
Company Websites	2
Industry Magazines	3
Direct Mail	4
Print Advertising	5
Digital Advertising	6
Social Media	7

Insights for Marketing Professionals:

- Using email as a primary message-driver can be effective. Adhering to email best practices is critical for maintaining trust.
- Brands may want to consider a multi-channel marketing approach consisting of email, prominent messages on their company’s website, and credible industry trade publications.
- Targeted direct mail, although expensive, may also prove to be beneficial if sent with the right message at the right time.



CONCLUSION

Each year's survey provides insights into the current mindset of principals across the country. Recent years have illuminated the struggles with teacher morale, new technology, and new assessments. This year, principals have invested in professional development for teachers, and teacher morale has improved. Principals have also made an effort to address student readiness and are investing in programs that prepare students after high school.



ABOUT MCH STRATEGIC DATA

MCH knows education. After decades of helping educators, students and families, the K-12 and childcare markets are near to our hearts. Founded on the publishing and distribution of children's books, MCH has grown into a data solutions provider that commits the same care and quality to our B2B clients as we did directly with schools and families.

MCH helps organizations turn data into value. The best sales, marketing, and analytical programs mean nothing if they are built with inaccurate data. MCH will meet you where you are on your journey to becoming a data-driven organization. Our Relationship Managers can provide you advice and guidance on how to build effective targets, or if you are ready to transform holistically, our data scientists and engineers can design and build an infrastructure that meets your needs. For over 90 years, MCH has helped businesses harness the power of data to achieve complex business goals.

**For more information, please contact us at info@mchdata.com
or visit www.mchdata.com.**

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