



Teachers Driving Web 2.0 Use in Schools Says National Research Survey

Lightspeed Systems and Thinkronize, creator of netTrekker, partner on 'Safe Schools in a Web 2.0 World' initiative to examine use of Internet technologies in U.S. school districts

BAKERSFIELD, Calif. and CINCINNATI – April 6, 2009 – While many stakeholders are involved in developing policies on the use of Web 2.0 technologies in K-12 education, new research suggests that teachers are the most important group driving adoption. This is a major finding from a national research survey of more than 500 district technology directors. The survey was commissioned by [Lightspeed Systems Inc.](#), a leader in network security and management software for schools, and Thinkronize Inc., creator of [netTrekker](#), America's number one educational search tool, with support from Atomic Learning.

There is a persistent gap between how today's "digital" kids learn in school and how they work and interact outside of school, a trend that underscores the critical need for districts to keep pace with technological advances and adapt to students' learning needs. Education leaders are challenged with maintaining a high level of security and safety while allowing for creative and collaborative work in a 21st century classroom. To meet this challenge, Lightspeed Systems and netTrekker developed *Safe Schools in a Web 2.0 World*, an ongoing initiative to help schools implement Web 2.0 technologies safely and effectively to improve teaching and learning.

In the first part of the initiative, Interactive Educational Systems Design Inc. (IESD), an independent educational research firm, conducted the "National Online Survey of District Technology Directors Exploring District Use of Web 2.0 Technologies" in February and March 2009 to examine the current status, future plans, and ongoing challenges of Web 2.0 in K-12 education. The research survey broke down Web 2.0 into seven categories related to student instruction and learning environments, rather than treating it with a broad brush.

Teachers were most often identified as a key group leading the adoption of a wide variety of Web 2.0 technologies. Specifically, teachers were most frequently cited for driving the adoption of digital multimedia resources (78 percent), online learning games and simulations (65 percent) and teacher-generated online content (60 percent). They were also among the top three groups for student-generated online content (45 percent) and student use of virtual learning environments (42 percent). Another key group identified was students, who were most frequently cited as driving the adoption of social networking and student-generated online content.

"The research indicates that the movement toward Web 2.0 use to engage students and address individual learning needs is largely being driven in districts from the bottom up – starting with teachers and students," said Dr. Jay Sivin-Kachala, vice president and lead researcher for IESD. "Furthermore, the results show that many districts are using or planning to use Web 2.0 tools in teacher professional development, which suggests that teachers will become increasingly

comfortable with these technologies and better able to teach students how to use them safely and productively.”

Overall, the research confirms school districts are using or planning to use several types of Web 2.0 technologies, but reveals there is still resistance to using online social networking for instructional purposes. In 83 percent of districts, very few or no teachers use online social networking for instruction, and 40 percent of districts currently have policies that don’t allow use of this technology. However, some trailblazing districts have plans for adopting or promoting use of this technology.

Other key results of the survey include:

- The three most frequently cited reasons for adopting Web 2.0 technologies are: addressing students’ individual learning needs, engaging student interest, and increasing students’ options for access to teaching and learning.
- Online communications with parents and students (e.g., teacher blogs) and digital multimedia resources are the Internet technologies most widely used by teachers, and a majority of districts have plans for adopting these technologies or promoting their use.
- Teacher-generated online content (e.g., multimedia lessons, wiki-based resources) is likely to be the next area of growth in the use of Web 2.0 technologies. Almost half of districts have plans for adopting or promoting the creation and sharing of this content through Web 2.0 tools.

“Educators today face an overwhelming challenge, but have an unprecedented and consequential opportunity. They are charged with providing a collaborative, global education environment for students – one that emphasizes 21st century skills and integrates the many facets of Web 2.0,” said Randy Wilhelm, CEO of Thinkronize. “We felt it was important to design a survey that dug deep into the challenges and innovations of Web 2.0 in education, and we’re encouraged by the depth and breadth of the responses. We look forward to continuing to explore solutions to the adoption barriers that are limiting the benefits our digitally native kids derive from these new technologies.”

Over the next several months, the companies will conduct online focus groups, prepare a white paper summarizing and interpreting the research, and develop resources based on the insights learned to help guide districts in harnessing the educational power of the collaborative Web. The companies are exploring reaching out to curriculum directors and other educators next year to get their perspective on Web 2.0 use.

“We are committed to helping teachers use Web 2.0 technologies such as online videos and social networking sites with educationally rich content in the classroom,” said Scott Garrison, president of Lightspeed Systems. “The finding that teachers are key drivers confirms what we are hearing from our school district IT customers. Our mission is to provide a safe online learning environment for students throughout the world without over-blocking valuable learning tools.”

This national survey of district technology directors has a margin of error of 5.0 percent or less per question. To access the executive summary and research report, visit <http://www.lightspeedsystems.com/ResearchSurvey> or <http://new.nettrekker.com/surveyreport>.

About Lightspeed Systems

Lightspeed Systems Inc., founded in 2000, develops comprehensive network security and management solutions for the K-12 education market. Lightspeed is committed to helping schools operate their networks effectively and efficiently, so educators can provide a safe online teaching and learning environment. The company's flagship product integrates content filtering, spam management, bandwidth management, antivirus protection, extensive reporting capabilities, email archiving, and mobile filtering into a single application. Lightspeed Systems software is used in more than 1,500 school districts in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia to protect more than 5 million students. For the past two years, Lightspeed Systems has been recognized on the Inc. 5,000 list as one of fastest-growing private companies. For more information, call 661-716-7600, or visit www.lightspeedsystems.com.

About Thinkronize

Founded in 1999, Thinkronize is a leader in the digital delivery of K-12 educational content and is dedicated to enhancing the education of today's youth with highly effective technologies that deliver the rich educational value of the Internet to every child in a safe, relevant, easy-to-use format. With the mission to help every child learn and a belief that technology can transform education, Thinkronize was first to market with a standards-based educational search engine, utilizing the services of Academic Benchmarks (www.AcademicBenchmarks.com), the premier provider of comprehensive standards-based K-12 educational databases, alignment tools, and integration products. Thinkronize's flagship product, netTrekker, is the #1 educational search tool in K-12 schools and is currently used in over 21,000 schools nationwide. Peers, educators, and parents have honored Thinkronize and netTrekker over 25 times for its contribution to education. In addition, Thinkronize was named to the 2007 *Inc. 5000* and 2006 *Inc. 500* lists as one of the fastest-growing private companies in the United States. The company was founded by Robert Reinders and currently serves over 12 million students in all 50 states, including adoptions by key districts and states nationwide. For more information, visit www.Thinkronize.com or phone 877-517-1125.

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