



News Release

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Growing Demand for Online Learning Not Yet Matched by Opportunities at K-12 Schools, Districts *Funding, Teacher Preparation Cited As Barriers in Survey*

WASHINGTON—June 29, 2009—Despite growing interest in online learning, school district priorities and availability of online classes have not kept pace with demand, according to a survey report from Project Tomorrow[®], a national education nonprofit organization, and Blackboard Inc. (NASDAQ: BBBB), a global leader in educational technology.

Despite widespread interest, there are still few opportunities for students to actually participate in online learning. According to the survey, more than 40 percent of 6-12th graders have researched or demonstrated interest in taking a course online, but only 10 percent have actually taken an online course through their school. Meanwhile, comparable percentages of middle school students (7 percent) and high school students (4 percent) have instead pursued opportunities outside their school to take online courses, underscoring the disconnect between the supply and demand of online learning in today's classrooms.

Meanwhile, a majority of school principals, 58 percent, say that online classes currently offered in their districts are primarily for teachers; while only 31 percent say the classes are primarily for students. Additionally, while a full one-third of teachers have taken an online course for professional development – a 57 percent increase from since 2007 – just 3 percent of teachers surveyed report they have taught a class online, a number that has not changed in three years. Just 13 percent are interested in teaching online, a considerable mismatch with the growing student desire to learn online.

The findings are included in the report *Learning in the 21st Century: 2009 Trends Update*, which offers an analysis of data from Project Tomorrow's Speak Up project, an annual survey which has collected and reported on the views of more than 335,000 U.S.K-12 students, parents and educators about online education and 21st century learning.

“While many of our nation's K-12 schools clearly recognize the advantages of online learning and instruction in teacher professional development, there remains a lag in utilizing this technology for student achievement,” said Julie Evans, CEO of Project Tomorrow. “Educators must embrace these emerging technologies to enhance student learning and fully prepare today's students for future success.”

“Today's students are eager to embrace technology in school but there is still a wide gap between the way they live and the way they learn,” said Jessie Woolley-Wilson, president, Blackboard Learn K-12. “As schools and districts look to complement traditional learning methods with digital and online tools,

teachers and principals must learn how to effectively use technology in a way that gives students more control of the learning process and contributes to student achievement.”

The report revealed that K-12 students want to pursue online learning to gain more control of their own learning experience, have access to more courses and work at their own pace. When asked why learning through an online class might make school more interesting, 47 percent of 9-12th graders, 39 percent of 6-8th graders and one in four 3-5th grade students said they want to learn online to “be in control of my learning.” Students do not expect courses to be easier online, but they do expect the online format to make it easier to succeed because they can review materials when they want and are more comfortable asking teachers for help.

The desire for online opportunities is best expressed through the words of students themselves. When asked, “What is the one thing that you would do to improve schools to ensure that all students had the skills they needed to be successful in life,” a 10th-grade student from Alcoa High School in Tennessee responded, “I would provide personal laptops for each student and provide online classes. Every school does not have all the classes a student is interested in and online classes provides another option (sic).”

Teachers who have experience teaching online overwhelmingly agree: 76 percent believe that online learning benefits students by giving them greater control of their learning, compared to just 10 percent of all teachers surveyed.

School principals cited funding and teacher preparation as key barriers to offering expanded access to online courses, with 22 percent reporting that online learning was not a funding priority in their district. Specific to teachers, principals felt that teachers are not comfortable using the tools (18 percent) or teaching online (17 percent), are reluctant to try (14 percent), or their school does not have the expertise to create online courses (14 percent).

To view the complete findings of *Learning in the 21st Century: 2009 Trends Update*, please visit www.blackboard.com/k12/education21c. To learn more about Blackboard K-12 solutions, please visit www.blackboard.com/k12.

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About Blackboard Inc.

Blackboard Inc. (NASDAQ: BBBB) is a global leader in enterprise technology and innovative solutions that improve the experience of millions of students and learners around the world every day. Blackboard’s solutions allow thousands of higher education, K-12, professional, corporate, and government organizations to extend teaching and learning online, facilitate campus commerce and security, and communicate more effectively with their communities. Founded in 1997, Blackboard is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with offices in North America, Europe, Asia and Australia.

About Project Tomorrow®

Speak Up is a national initiative of Project Tomorrow® (formerly known as NetDay), the nation’s leading education nonprofit organization dedicated to ensuring that today’s students are well prepared to be tomorrow’s innovators, leaders and engaged citizens. Since fall 2003, the annual Speak Up project has collected and reported on the views of over 1.5 million K-12 students, teachers, administrators and parents representing over 18,000 schools in all 50 states. The Speak Up data represents the largest collection of authentic, unfiltered stakeholder input on education, technology, 21st century skills, schools of the future and science instruction. Education, business and policy leaders report using the data regularly to inform federal, state and local education programs. For additional information, visit www.tomorrow.org.

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