



# Gen Z in the Classroom: Creating the Future

[www.adobeeducate.com/genz](http://www.adobeeducate.com/genz)

# METHODOLOGY

WHO	HOW MANY	ACCURACY	WHEN	HOW
Gen Z Students (Ages 11-17) U.S. nationwide	n=1,007	MOE = +/- 3.1%	Data collected September 26 – October 6, 2016	Online Survey
Gen Z Teachers (Teach students ages 11-17) U.S. nationwide	n=414	MOE = +/- 4.9%		



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# GEN Z PERCEPTIONS

## GEN Z STUDENTS

Gen Z is more creative than past generations

Believe Gen Z is always looking for a new way to do things

Not thinking about how their online presence will be interpreted by future universities or employers

## GEN Z EDUCATORS

Doesn't see Gen Z as more creative than past generations

Believes Gen Z will have jobs that don't exist today

Consider technology the defining characteristic of Gen Z

Believe Gen Z learns best by doing/creating

Think Gen Z is only somewhat prepared for their future

Want more of a focus on creativity in the classroom

Believe creativity will play a big role in Gen Z's future success and solving today's challenges

## INSIGHT 1



GEN Z STUDENTS SEE TECH AND CREATIVITY AS IMPORTANT AND INTERSECTING ASPECTS OF THEIR IDENTITIES.

- Both students and teachers agree that growing up in the age of technology is the defining characteristic of Gen Z – and technology provides more digital tools and outlets for creativity.
- Gen Z students are most likely to describe themselves as “creative” and “smart.”
- Gen Z students think they are more creative than past generations and say that they are “always looking for a better way to do something.”



*They have grown up with the most recent technologies ... Since technology is such a big part of their world, it can become a hindrance for them to think without it.*

TEACHER



## INSIGHT 2



GEN Z STUDENTS ARE EXCITED BUT NERVOUS FOR THEIR FUTURES. THEY DO NOT FEEL FULLY PREPARED FOR THE “REAL WORLD”.

- Gen Z students have mixed emotions when it comes to their future after they finish school – their top emotions are “excited” and also “nervous.”
- Both students and teachers feel that Gen Z is only somewhat prepared for their futures after school.
- Many students feel uncertain about what they want to do, worried about finding a job and concerned that school has not properly prepared them for the “real world.”
- Most students are not thinking about how their online presence will be interpreted by future universities or employers, and while some plan to create online portfolios in the future, the vast majority have not started.

“  
*I feel unprepared due to a lack of jobs, the high cost of education, not learning important life skills after high school.*  
STUDENT  
”

## INSIGHT 3

GEN Z LEARNS BEST BY DOING AND CREATING, AND STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ALIKE WANT MORE FOCUS ON CREATIVITY.

- Both students and teachers alike agree that Gen Z learns best through doing / hands-on experience (e.g., lab work, creating content).
- Both audiences wish that there was more of a focus on creativity in the classroom.
- Teachers say that having more opportunities for this type of hands-on learning is the number one way they can better prepare Gen Z students for the workforce. Most feel that the technology is already in place, but the curriculum needs to catch up.

## INSIGHT 4

CREATIVITY WILL PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN THE FUTURE WORKFORCE.

- Students and teachers agree that being creative will be essential to their future success, and that creativity is going to play an integral role in solving many of the challenges the world faces today.
- Students believe that they will be creating things in their future careers, and that there are a lot of professions that require creativity.

## INSIGHT 5

TECHNOLOGY WILL SET GEN Z APART IN THE FUTURE WORKFORCE.

- Most say that increased access to digital tools and technology will make Gen Z more creative and better prepared for the future workforce. Still, some students and teachers think Gen Z's reliance on technology is holding them back from thinking "outside the box."
- Computers & technology classes are the "sweet spot" – not only a favorite class, but also a top class to prepare students for the future and a top class for creativity.
- Teachers say that their students will one day have careers that we didn't even know would exist today.

A photograph of three young women sitting at a table in what appears to be a meeting or classroom setting. The woman on the left is looking down, the middle woman is smiling and looking towards the right, and the woman on the right is resting her chin on her hand and looking towards the camera. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent dark blue filter.

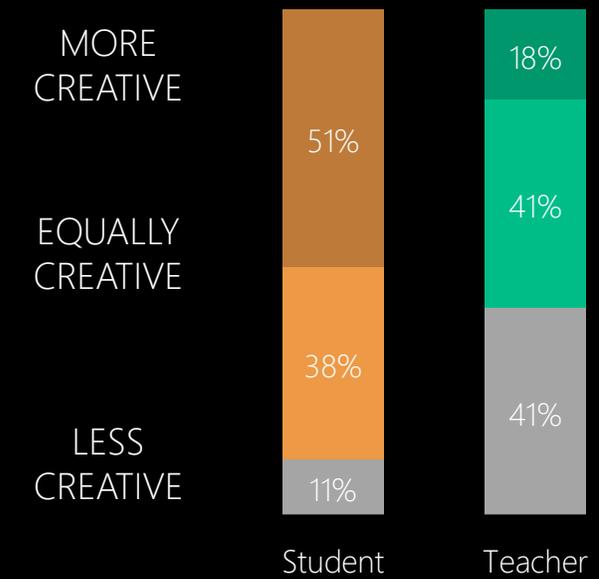
# DETAILED RESULTS

# Gen Z students say they are smart, hardworking and even more creative than past generations

Describing Gen Z  
(Shown: % Top 5 Selected)

	STUDENTS	TEACHERS
1	Smart (63%)	A little lazy (76%)
2	<b>Creative (47%)</b>	Social (65%)
3	Hard working (47%)	Bored by the past (49%)
4	Team player (42%)	Follower (30%)
5	Curious (39%)	Multitasker (27%)

Gen Z Creativity vs. Older Generations

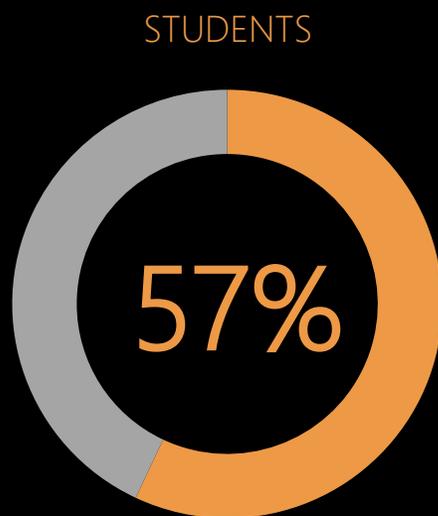


Q6: Which of the following words best describe [you / Gen Z]? [MULTI-SELECT]

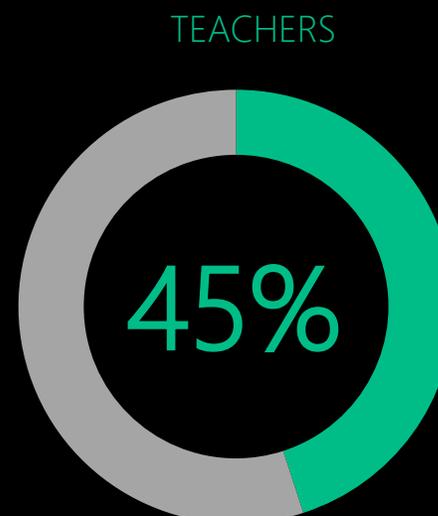
Q11: Do you think that [you are / Gen Z is] more creative, less creative or equally as creative as older generations?

# Technology is Gen Z's native environment

Technology & Electronics Define Gen Z  
(Shown: % Coded Open End Responses)



MENTION  
TECHNOLOGY OR  
ELECTRONICS A  
DIFFERENTIATOR  
BETWEEN GEN Z  
AND PAST  
GENERATIONS



*"I think that myself and my generation looks for smarter solutions to problems, instead of the long and tedious solutions."*  
STUDENT, AGE 16

*"My generation is more open and tolerant to different types of people. I think a new generation can bring fresh ideas and more thinking outside the box."*  
STUDENT, AGE 17

# Technology enhances access to information and global connectivity, but some teachers worry Gen Z is becoming too reliant

## Gen Z Advantages (Shown: Open End Responses)

- Gen Z sees interconnectivity, access to information, inclusion and the greater variety of professional choices as their greatest advantages.
- Teachers say that the ease of access and familiarity Gen Z has with technology opens a whole world of possibility, but they also allude to the lack of self-reliance and technological dependence because of this. They point to interpersonal, social, independent and logical thinking as skills Gen Z students are not adequately developing.

*"My generation is more open and tolerant to different types of people. I think a new generation can bring fresh ideas and more thinking outside the box."*  
STUDENT, AGE 17

*"We have more technology to help us than older generations, we don't have to work as hard as our grandparents did."*  
STUDENT, AGE 11

## Gen Z Challenges (Shown: Open End Responses)

*"Over-reliance on smartphones /the internet ... [They] can't spell without spell-check, need a calculator to do arithmetic ... [They are] reliant on social media for making/maintaining friendships."*  
TEACHER

*"They are used to others doing their thinking for them. They google for information, but [can't] use it in an articulate, well reasoned argument."*  
TEACHER

Q8: What are the biggest advantages that [you have / Gen Z has] compared to older generations? [OPEN END]

Q9: What are the biggest challenges that [you face / Gen Z faces] compared to older generations? [OPEN END]

# Technology provides more tools and inspiration for Gen Z creativity

## How Gen Z is More Creative (Shown: Open End Responses)

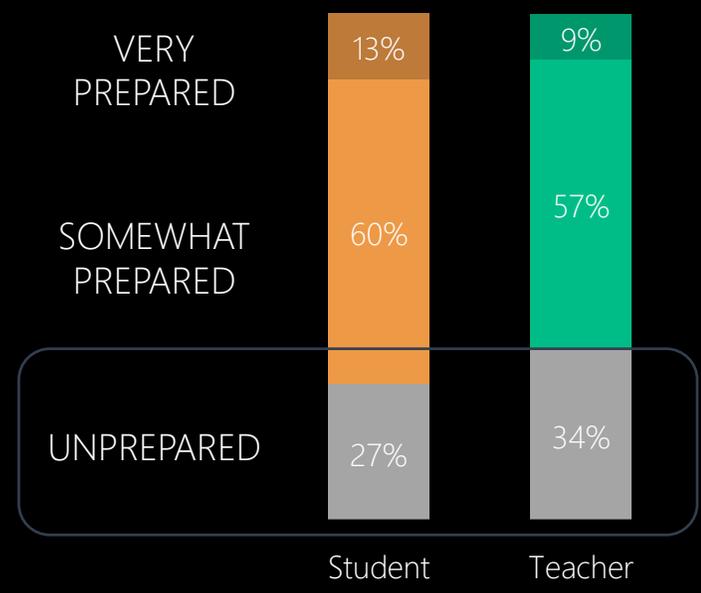
- Gen Z students think that their creativity comes from access to a greater variety of tools, platforms, opportunities and avenues to express oneself. They also point to the ability to access other people's ideas as something that inspires their own creativity.
  - Teachers say that Gen Z students have greater opportunities and are naturally exploratory. Teachers also mentioned visual skills like photography and social skills such as personal branding as assets to creativity.
- *I can create using apps and digital tools. Older generations didn't have access to that. I can be more creative on social media.* – STUDENT, AGE 13
  - *Our generation can utilize technology to innovate and create new things, like environmentally friendly vehicles, and new telephones. Things that wouldn't have been conceived when our grandparents were children.* – STUDENT, AGE 15
  - *"We have access to ideas and inspirations easier than other generations did."* – STUDENT, AGE 16
  - *"They are really good at photography and controlling their self-images."* – TEACHER

# Gen Z is excited and nervous about the future; both students and teachers feel they are not fully prepared for the “real world”

Gen Z Feelings About The Future  
(Shown: Top 5 Responses, Students)

1	Excited (59%)
2	Nervous (50%)
3	Curious (43%)
4	Happy (26%)
5	Confident (25%)

Gen Z Preparedness for the Future



*“We need to work harder, study harder to compete with others for few good jobs, everything is technology oriented and dependent now.”*  
STUDENT, AGE 15

*“We spend too much time preparing students for the ACT and other standardized tests that ultimately will serve them very little in the real world. We also aren't updating our curriculum to the technological age.”*  
TEACHER

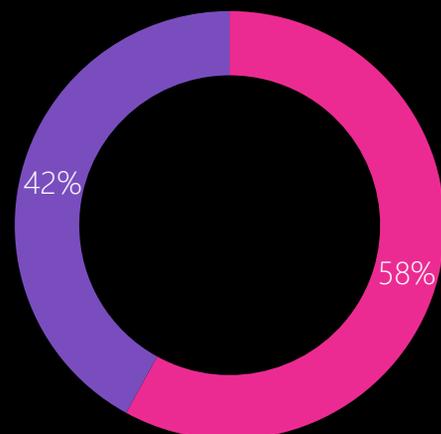
Q22: When you think about your future after you finish school, how do you feel? [MULTI-SELECT UP TO 3]

Q23: How prepared do you [feel for your / think your students are for their] future after [you / they] finish school?

Q25: What are some of the reasons why you [feel / think your students are] unprepared for [your / their] future after [you / they] finish school? [OPEN END]

# Almost half of students feel that what they learn outside the classroom is more important to their futures

Gen Z Views Preparation for the Future After School  
(Shown: Students)



- What I'm learning IN SCHOOL is most important in preparing me for my future after I finish school
- What I'm learning OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL is most important in preparing me for my future after I finish school

*"I have parents who discuss real world issues and problems with me and I get to see how they problem-solve."*

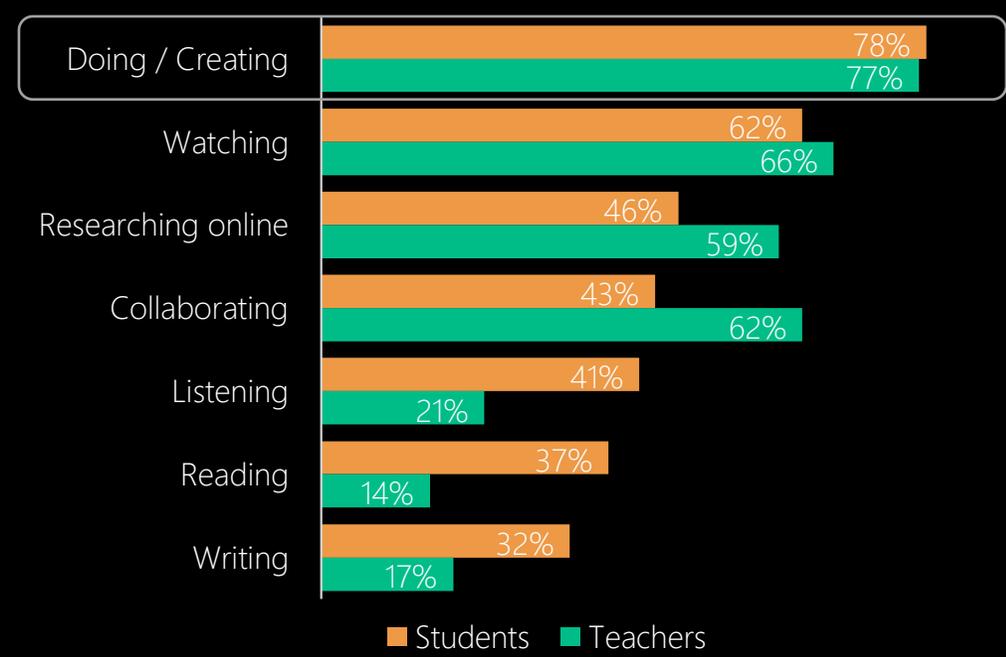
STUDENT, AGE 16

*"Everyone has a phone and/or tablet in class. This is unheard of even 4 years ago. Curriculum is WAY behind these kids...you can view instantaneous info whereas textbooks and papers are obsolete. Also, Gen Z students want to be entertained...they will believe/trust YouTube over a textbook any day."*

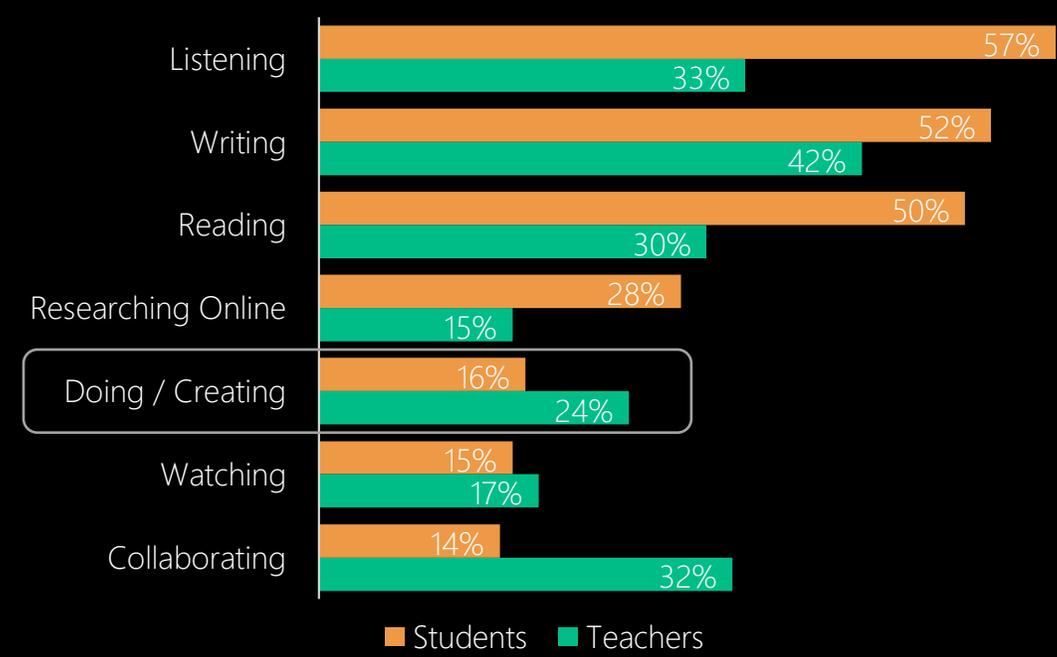
TEACHER

# Students and teachers agree that Gen Z learns best by creating, yet the current curriculum is more focused around lectures, writing and reading

Effectiveness of Gen Z Teaching Methods



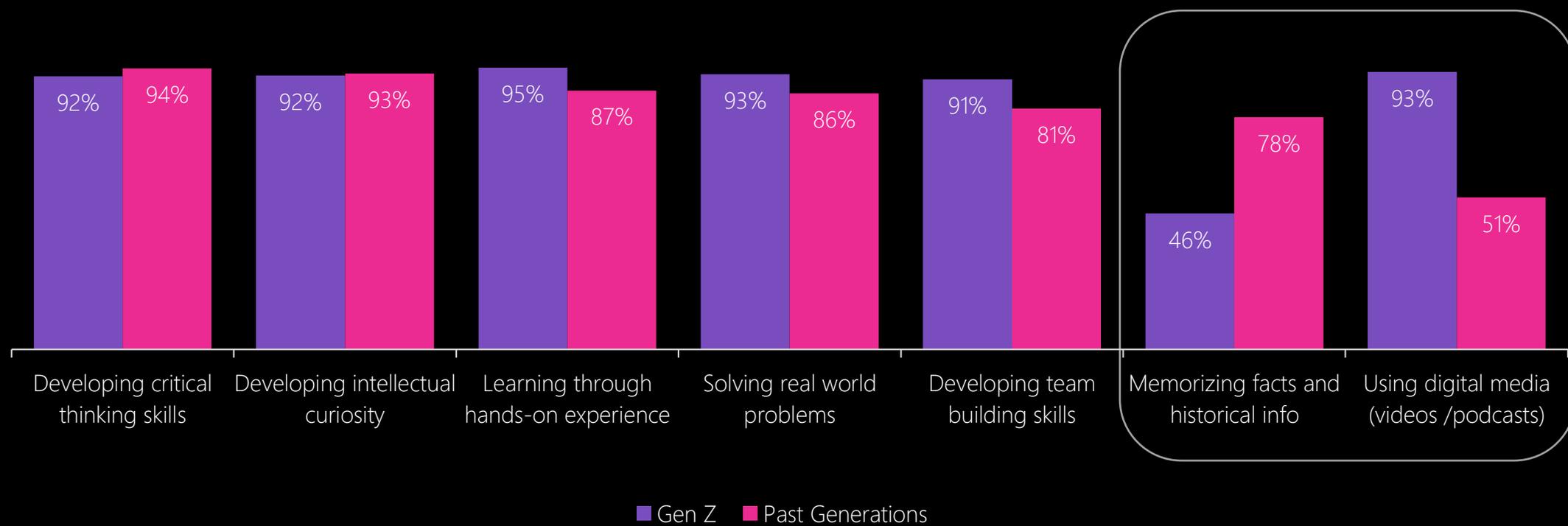
Frequency of Gen Z Teaching Methods  
(Shown: % All of the Time)



Q15: In which of the following ways do [you / Gen Z students] generally learn best when it comes to classwork? [MULTI-SELECT]  
 Q16: How often do [you / Gen Z students] get to learn by...? [ASKED FOR EACH METHOD SELECTED IN Q15]

# Teaching priorities today are more about interactive tools and less about memorizing facts

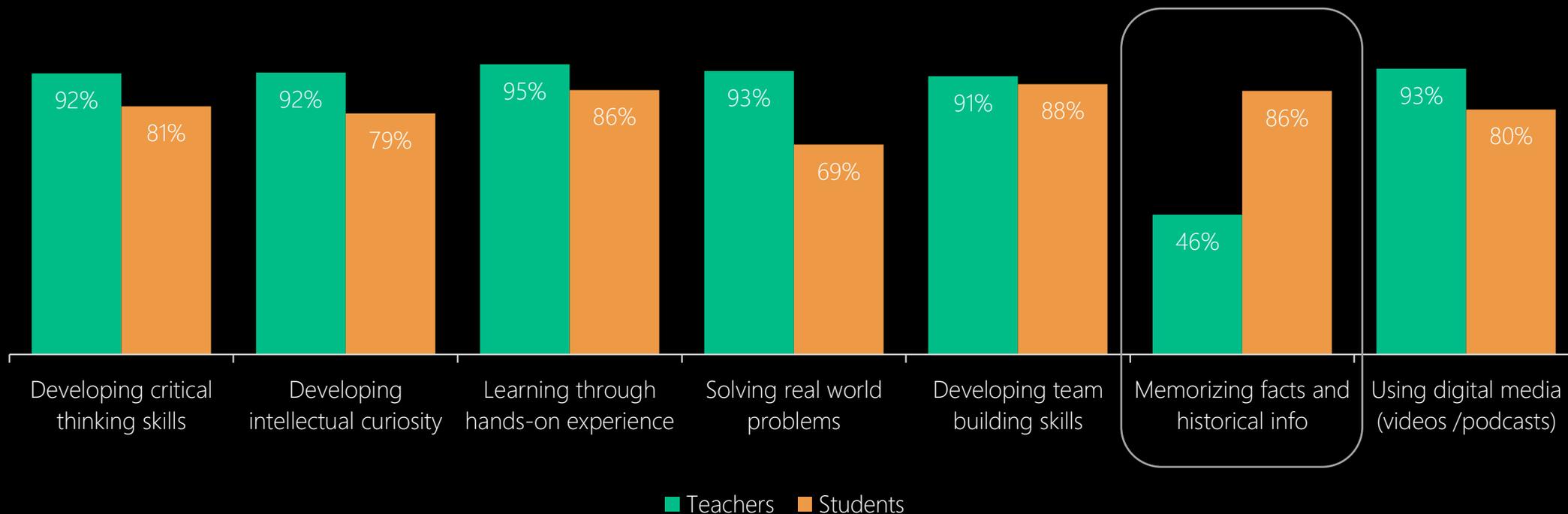
Educational Priorities for Gen Z and Past Generations  
*(Shown: % Somewhat / Very Important, Teachers)*



Q17: Below is a list of different educational priorities. How important were each of the following in educating previous generations of students?  
 Q18: Today, how important are each of the following in educating Gen Z students?

# Despite shifting priorities, Gen Z students still learn through memorization at least some of the time

Educational Priorities for Gen Z  
 (Shown: % Somewhat / Very Important; % At Least Some of the Time)

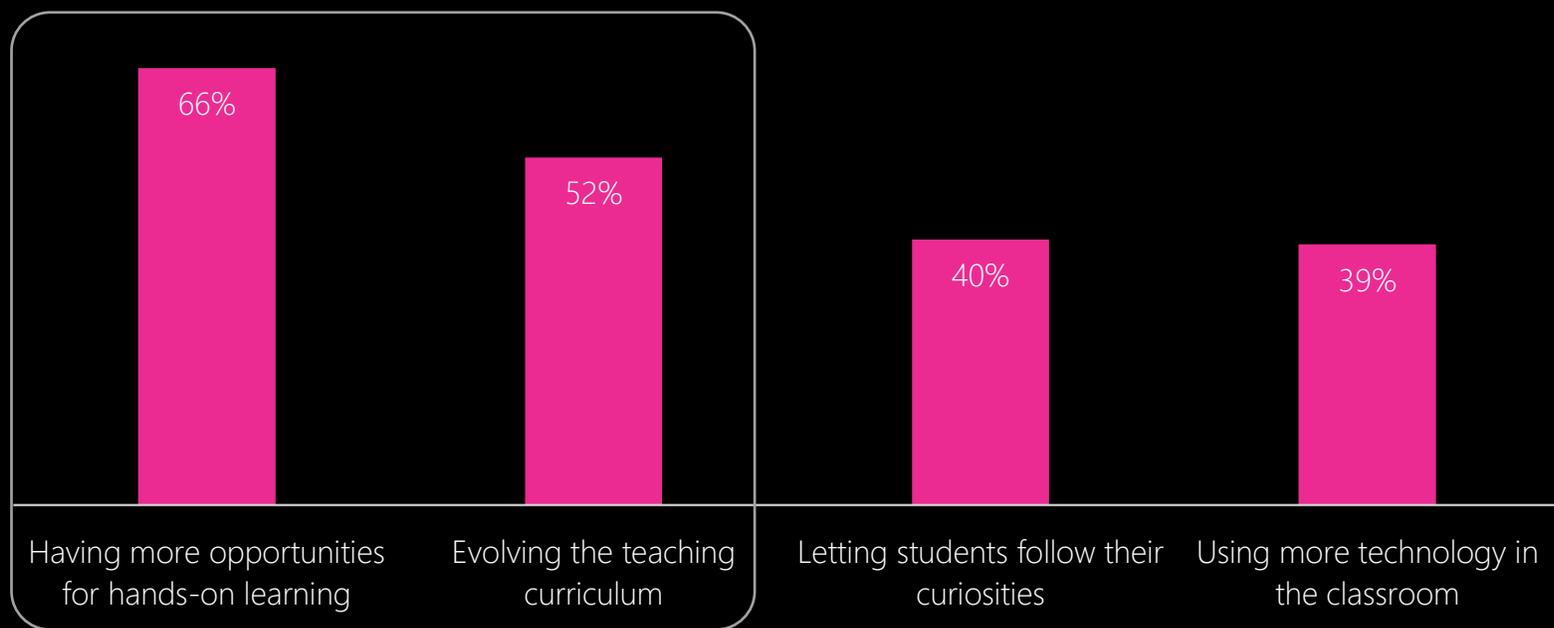


Q18: Today, how important are each of the following in educating Gen Z students?

Q19: Thinking about your own experience at school, how often do you learn in each of the following ways?

# Teachers want to make changes in the classroom to better prepare Gen Z for the future workforce

Methods to Better Prepare Gen Z for the Future Workforce  
(Shown: Teachers)



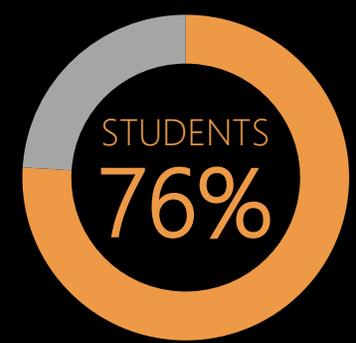
*"I try to make projects more applicable to their lives and integrate technology into labs including simulators, video clips and app usage."*  
TEACHER

Q35: What would help you better prepare Gen Z for the future workforce? [MULTI-SELECT]

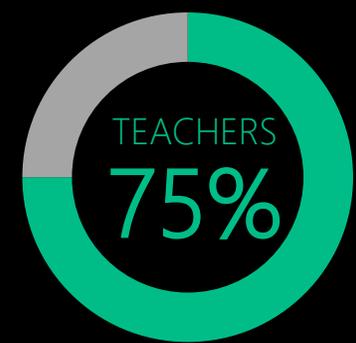
Q14: In what ways is technology changing the way you teach Gen Z students compared to how you taught in the past? [OPEN END]

# Both students and teachers want more creativity in the classroom because it will be essential to Gen Z's success in the future workforce

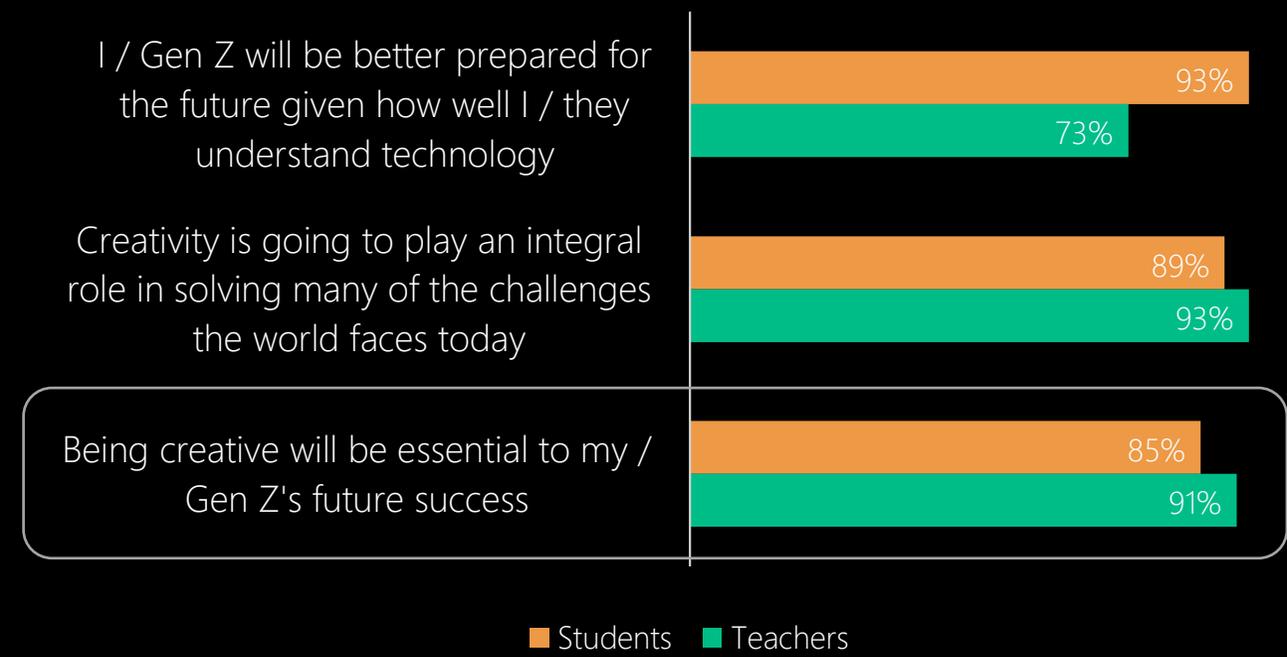
Creativity in the Classroom  
(Shown: % Somewhat Agree/Strongly Agree)



I WISH THERE WAS MORE OF A FOCUS ON CREATIVITY IN THEIR CLASSES/ CURRICULUM

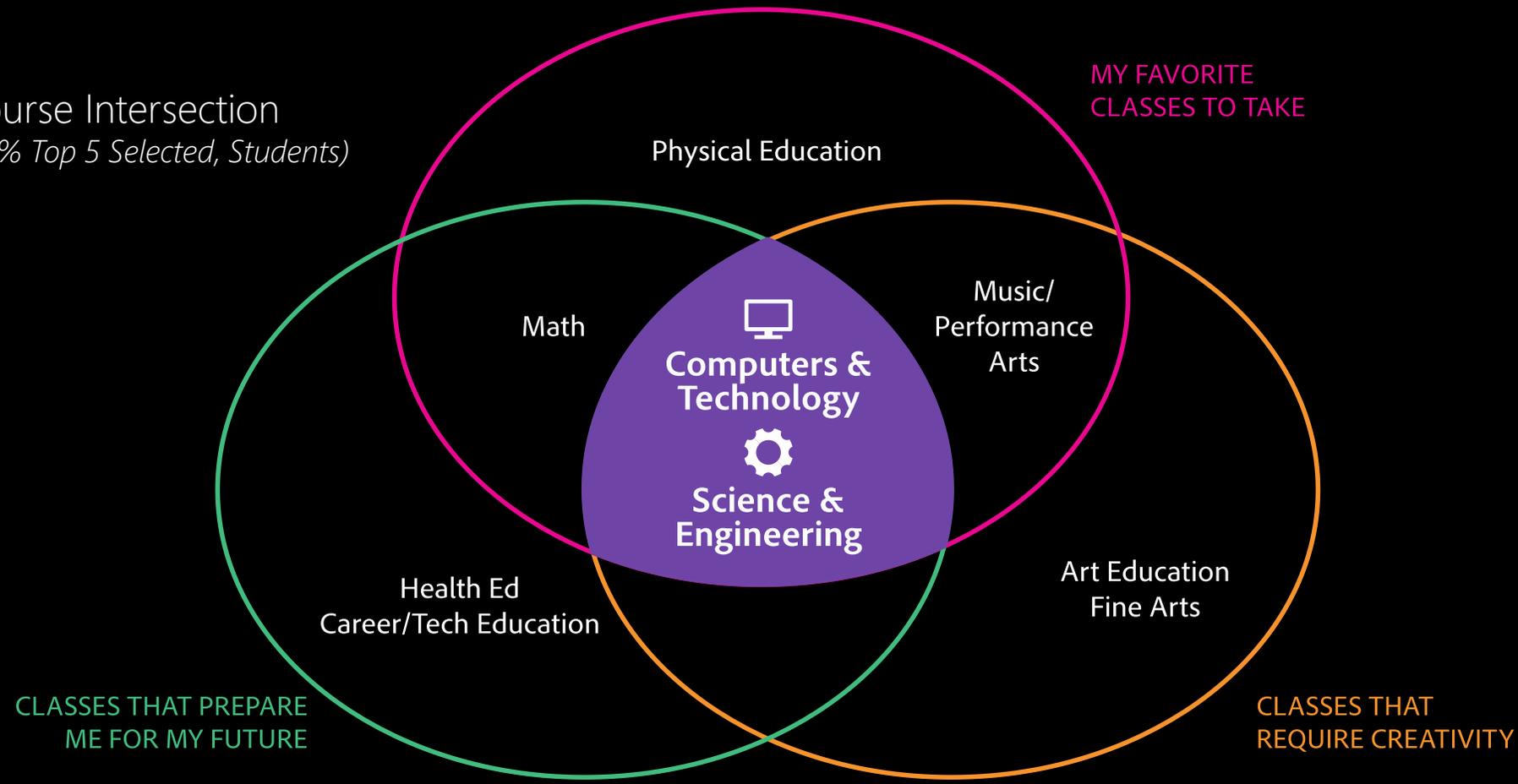


Role of Tech & Creativity in the Future Workforce  
(Shown: % Somewhat Agree/Strongly Agree)



# And technology will be the enabler...

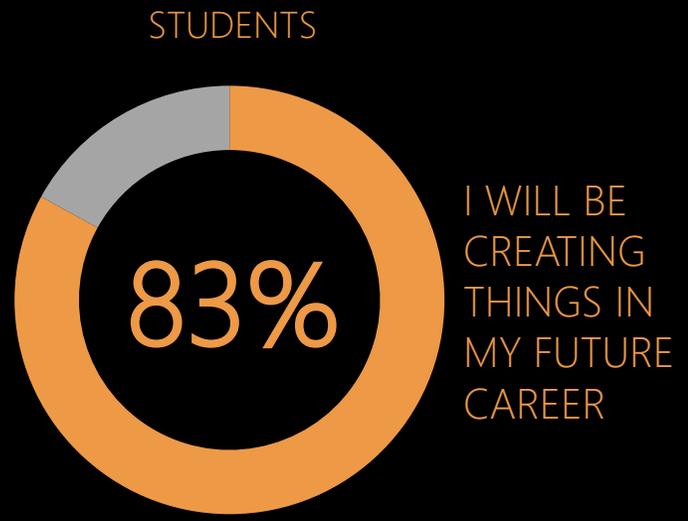
Course Intersection  
*(Shown: % Top 5 Selected, Students)*



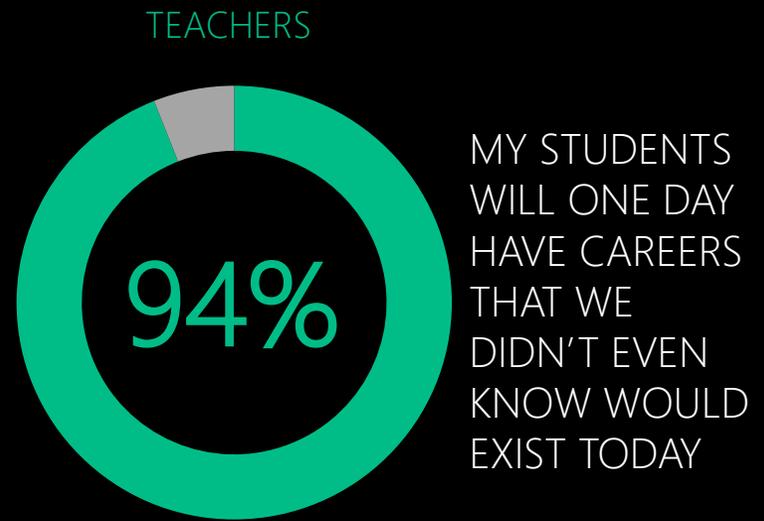
- Q1: What are your favorite subjects / classes to take? [MULTI-SELECT UP TO 3]
- Q29: Which of your classes is most useful to you in preparing for your future after you finish school? [MULTI-SELECT UP TO 3]
- Q42: Which of the following classes do you feel requires some form of creativity? [MULTI-SELECT]

# ...of a future we can't yet envision

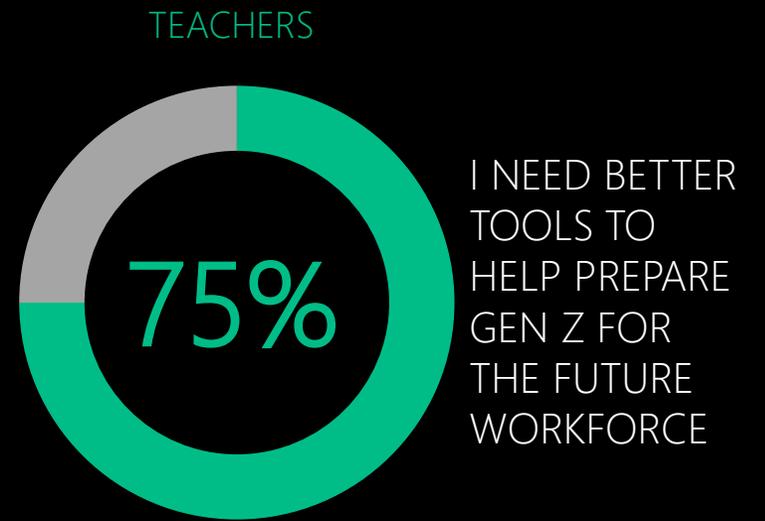
Perceptions of the Future Gen Z Workforce  
(Shown: % Somewhat Agree/Strongly Agree)



*\*asked only of students*



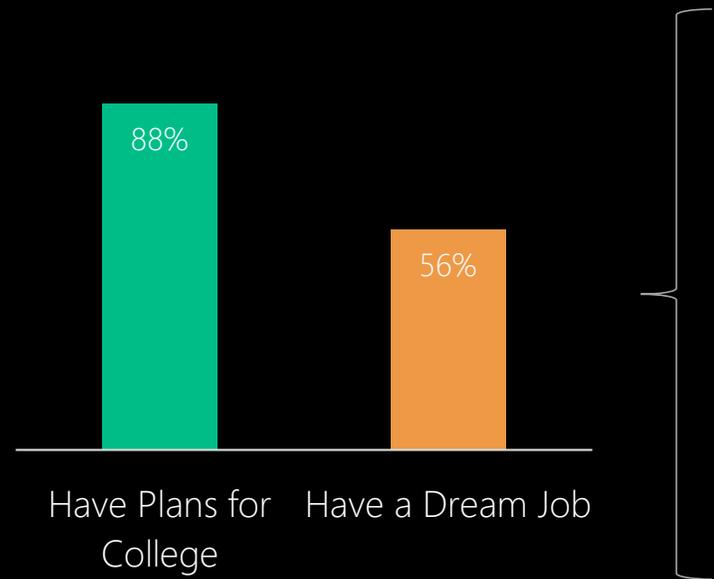
*\*asked only of teachers*



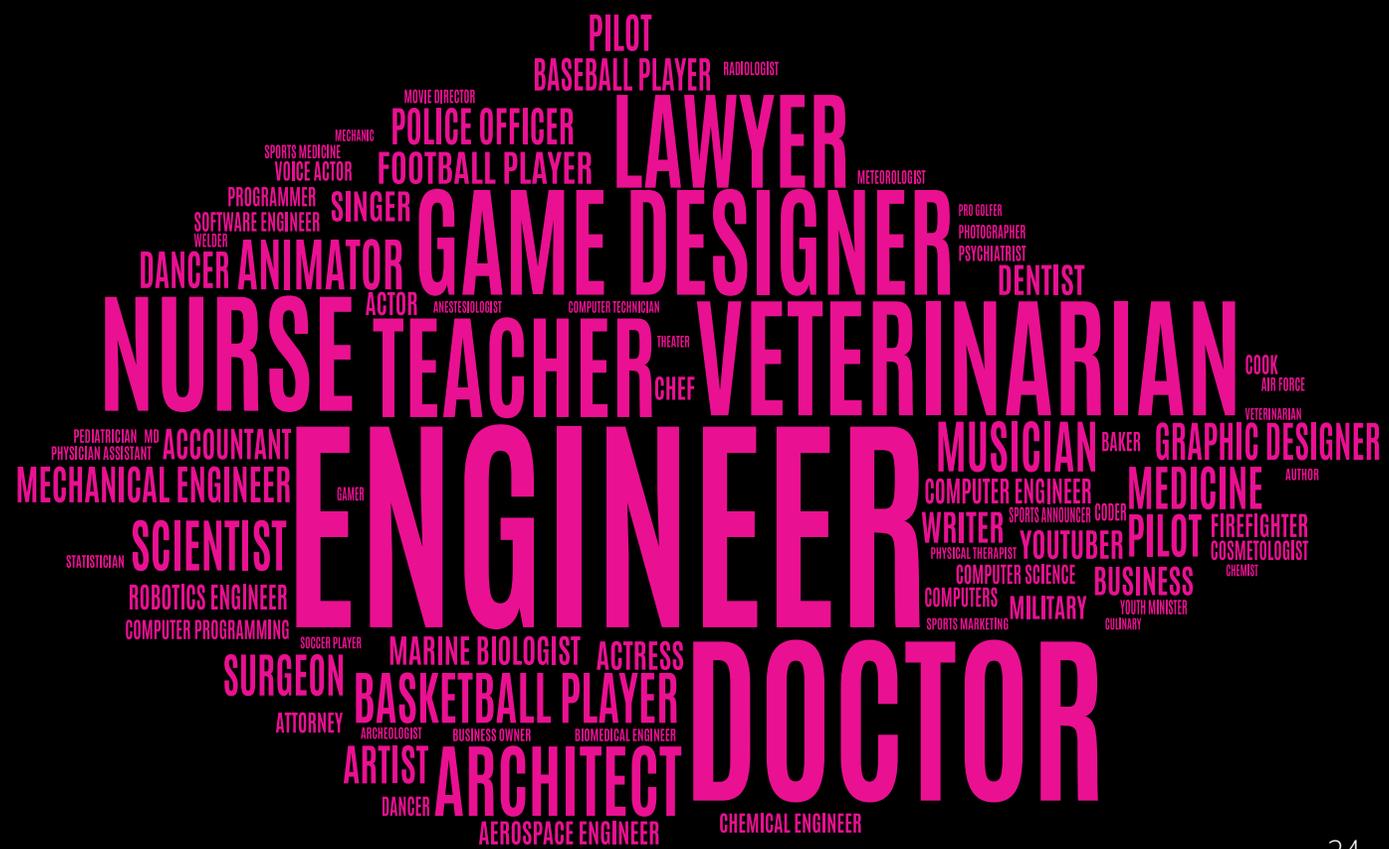
*\*asked only of teachers*

# Gen Z students plan to go to college, and among those with a dream job, many mention more traditional careers

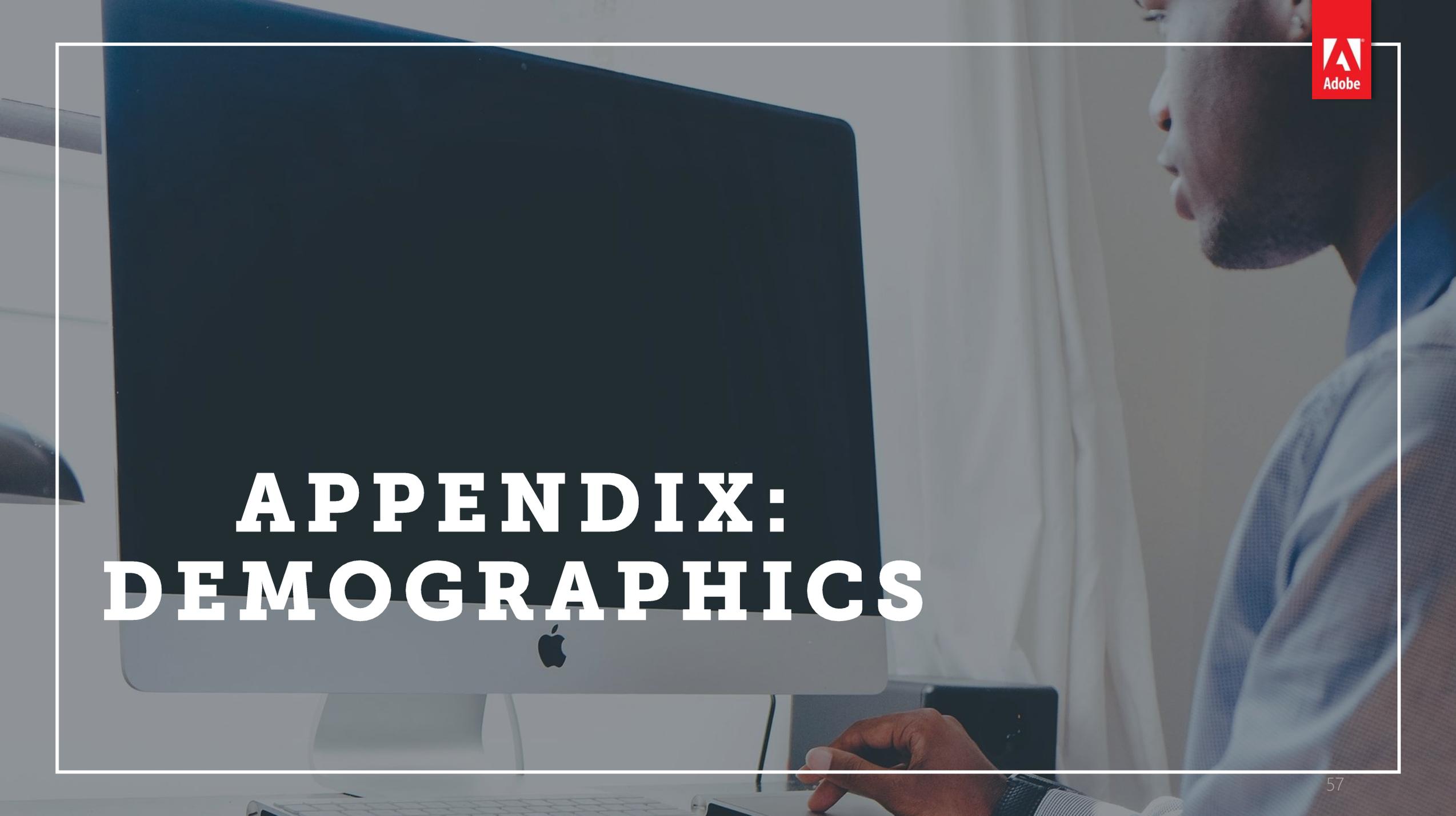
Plans for the Future  
(Shown: Students)



Gen Z Dream Jobs  
(Shown: Open End Responses, Students)



Q27: Do you plan to go to college one day?  
Q28: Do you have a dream career? [IF YES, SPECIFY]

A background image showing a person in profile, wearing a blue shirt, looking at a large computer monitor. The monitor is an Apple iMac. The scene is dimly lit, with a white curtain in the background. The text 'APPENDIX: DEMOGRAPHICS' is overlaid in large, bold, white letters across the center of the image.

# APPENDIX: DEMOGRAPHICS

# US GEN Z STUDENT PROFILE

	Favorite Classes	Extracurricular Activities	Online Sites / Apps	Online Behaviors
1	Mathematics (34%)	Sports (46%)	(78%)	Post my own photos (70%)
2	Science & Engineering (33%)	Music (26%)	(56%)	Post my own videos (43%)
3	Computers & Technology (27%)	Volunteering (25%)	(55%)	Share someone else's photos (38%)
4	Music / Performing Arts (22%)	Dance (9%)	(50%)	Share someone else's videos (35%)
5	Physical Education (21%)	Drama (9%)	(31%)	Share someone else's link to a story or article online (29%)

70%  
post content  
53%  
share content

Q1: What are your favorite subjects / classes to take? [MULTI-SELECT UP TO 3]

Q3: What extracurricular or after-school activities do you participate in? Please select all that apply. [MULTI-SELECT]

Q43: First, which of the following websites or apps do you use? Please select all that apply. [MULTI-SELECT]

Q45: And which of the following do you do online or using apps? Please select all that apply. [MULTI-SELECT]



# DEMOGRAPHICS – US STUDENTS

Category	Sub-Category	%	Favorite Subject	%	Extracurricular	%	Region	%
Gender	Male	52%	Mathematics	34%	Sports	46%	Northeast	20%
	Female	48%	Science & Engineering	33%	Music	26%	Midwest	25%
Grade	6th Grade	14%	Computers & Technology	27%	Volunteering	25%	South	32%
	7th Grade	14%	Music / Performing Arts	22%	Dance	9%	West	23%
	8th Grade	12%	Physical Education	21%	Drama	9%		
	9th Grade	12%	History	21%	Student government	7%		
	10th Grade	16%	Art Education	21%	Journalism / Yearbook	6%		
	11th Grade	17%	Language Arts & Literature	16%	Computer science	6%		
Age	12th Grade	15%	Social Studies / Political Science	16%	Fine arts	6%		
	11-13	38%	Fine Arts	11%	Robotics	6%		
	14-15	28%	World Languages	7%	Debate	3%		
	16-17	35%	Career & Technical Education	7%	Internship	3%		
			Health Education	5%				
			Industrial Arts	3%				

# DEMOGRAPHICS – US TEACHERS

Category	Sub-Category	%	Category	Sub-Category	%	Subject(s) Taught	%	Region	%
Gender	Male	35%	Grade(s) Teach	6th Grade	22%	Mathematics	28%	Northeast	21%
	Female	65%		7th Grade	30%	Language Arts & Literature	22%	Midwest	23%
Age	22-24	1%		8th Grade	30%	Social Studies / Political Science	19%	South	28%
	25-34	20%		9th Grade	50%	Science & Engineering	17%	West	27%
	35-44	22%		10th Grade	53%	History	13%		
	45-54	27%		11th Grade	54%	Special Education	11%		
	55-64	24%		12th Grade	54%	World Languages	7%		
	65-74	6%	Years of Experience	1-5 years	16%	Physical Education	7%		
75 and over	1%	6-10 years		15%	Music / Performing Arts	6%			
Employment	Full-Time	87%		11-20 years	31%	Computers & Technology	6%		
	Part-Time	13%	More than 20 years	37%	Health Education	5%			
					Career & Technical Education	5%			
					Art Education	4%			
					Fine Arts	3%			
					ESOL/Bilingual Programs	2%			
					Library Media Programs	2%			
					Industrial Arts	1%			