

# Teachers are Consumers, Too

Spending Power and  
Buying Habits In and Out  
of the Classroom



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# A Look at Teacher Purchasing Power ...

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# Teachers Are a Passionate Group

They care about their schools, their classrooms and their students. As K-12 school districts face tighter and tighter budgets, teachers prove their passion by dipping into personal funds to buy supplies and services to support instruction and learning.

There are millions of educators employed in the U.S. — Agile has more than 4.4 million K-12 public school personnel in our database alone. And each of these teachers receives a healthy salary that makes them strong consumers outside of school, too.<sup>1</sup>



## MEDIAN TEACHER SALARIES

Elementary School: **\$55,490**

High School: **\$58,030**

Teachers also are key influencers in education purchasing. Even if they aren't pulling out their credit cards or signing a PO, teachers are an important resource for administrators and parents when making school-related purchases. Both groups turn to teachers often for product and service reviews and recommendations.

Keep reading our guide for a deeper look into how teachers spend their money and influence purchases, whether they're at work or at home. Also get tips for snagging your share of this lucrative customer market!

*Turn the page!*

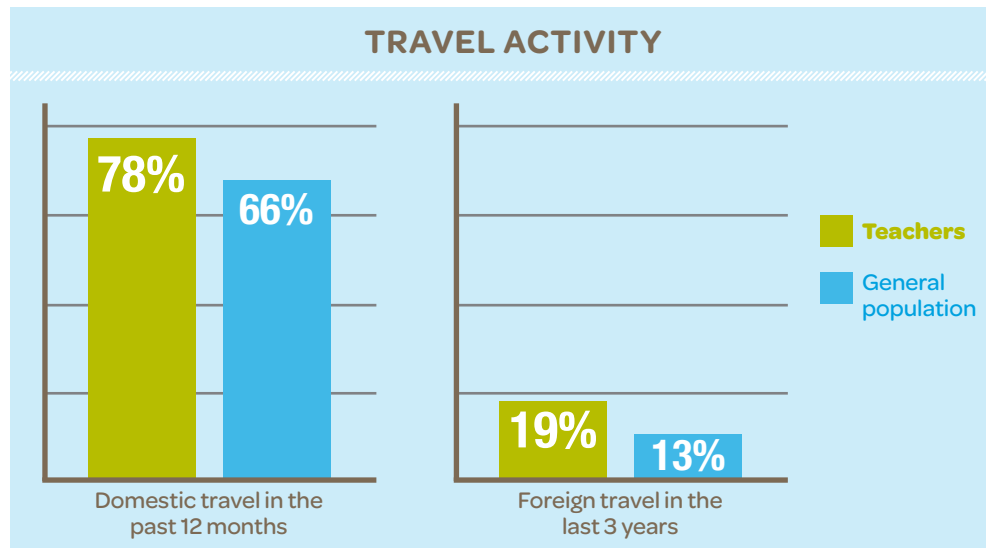


# Teacher Purchasing Outside the Classroom

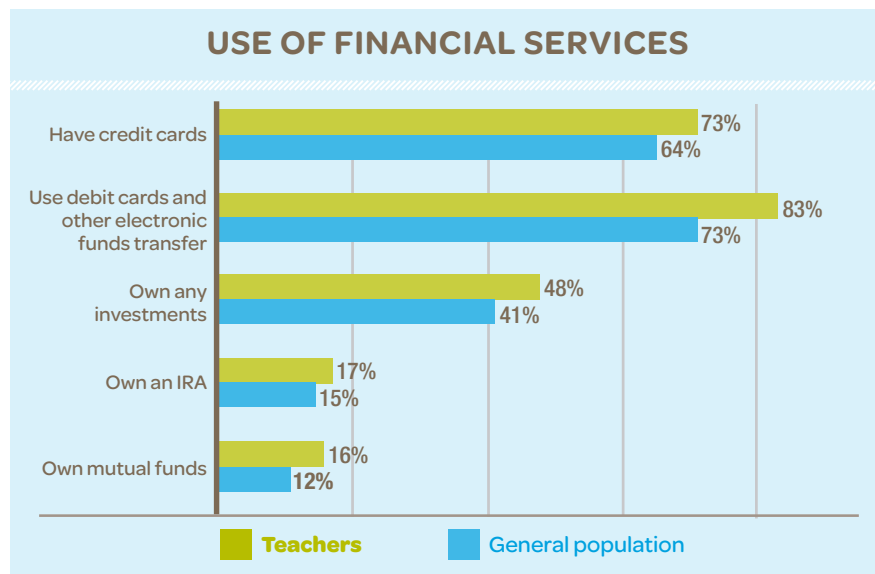
Teachers in the U.S. are not only financially secure, but they also are well-educated and have ample leisure time. These qualities, among others, make teachers great consumers to market to — and not just in the classroom. Teachers are strong prospects for selling books, apparel, travel, technology, financial products, and more.

Here's what we know about teachers when they're making purchases outside of class.<sup>2</sup>

**1. Teachers have disposable income** that allows them to splurge on items in spending categories such as books, music, videos, apparel and footwear, toys and games, events, electronics, and computer products. Travel can be a particularly popular spending category among teachers, as they have the means, desire and time (fall, winter and summer breaks) to do so. In fact, teachers pack up their suitcases and explore — even internationally — at above average rates compared to the general consumer population.



**2. Teachers invest in the future.** Teachers value and purchase financial services at a higher rate than the general population. Many own investments, and teachers also tend to own mutual funds and IRAs at higher rates.



**3. Teachers value discounts.** This group's financial savviness isn't just evident in their future planning; it's also clear that they value savings on everyday purchases.



**68%** will shop at different stores to find the best price on expensive purchases

**55%** will buy more of a product they don't immediately need if it's on sale

**55%** head straight for the clearance section when they enter a store

**53%** tend to delay a purchase until it goes on sale

**4. Teachers are savvy shoppers.** A majority of teachers rely on electronic methods of payment when making purchases: 73 percent have credit cards while 83 percent use debit and other methods of electronic funds transferring. Forty-seven percent of teachers say they do more of their shopping online than ever before.



## MEET THE TEACHER

Demographic	Teachers	General Population
Mean age	43	47
Mean household income	\$88,000	\$65,000
Own residence	76%	68%
Married	63%	53%
Parent or guardian	50%	36%

## Knock, Knock!

Send communications to teachers' home addresses to market non-school supplies, reinforce promotions they've received at school, and stay in contact while they're out of class.

**Use Agile's database to reach more than 1.8 million educators at home.**

# Teacher Purchasing Inside the Classroom

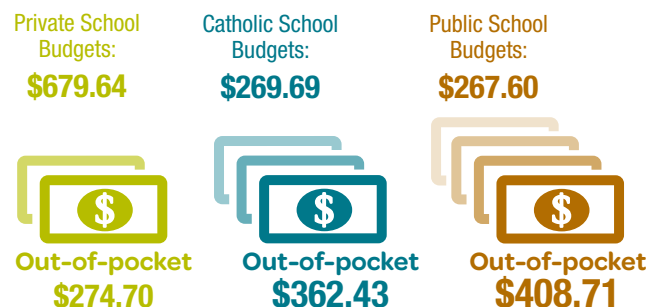
It's no secret that districts are faced with tight funding — and that they have been for some time. But now, school districts also face budget uncertainty due to the implementation of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the introduction of a new federal administration.

Teachers pick up the spending slack by using their personal funds to purchase items for their classrooms every year. Agile data shows that teachers invest a significant amount of their own money on classroom supplies and learning materials to supplement district and school budgets. During the 2016-17 school year, teachers spent an average of \$468 on their classrooms — or around 11 percent of their annual salaries.<sup>3</sup> And they do their shopping often. When asked how often they purchase new classroom supplies and materials, 64 percent said at least every few months.<sup>4</sup>

Agile data also shows that teachers tend to spend their money on specific items while reserving school funds for other purchases. For example, teachers consider classroom decorations and students rewards to be personal expenses while workbooks and computers are considered a school's responsibility.<sup>5</sup>

Item	Personal Funds	School Funds
Art supplies	45.1%	41.1%
Paper, pens, tissue	49.4%	47.0%
Classroom decorations	68.7%	18.6%
Workbooks	8.9%	72.3%
Lesson materials	52.2%	46.1%
Apps for personal use	77.4%	7.1%
Computer software for classroom	11.8%	67.3%
Professional materials	45.3%	47.6%
Reference materials	33.2%	53.1%
Classroom library books	47.6%	35.0%
Student rewards	80.4%	12.1%
Apps for student use	17.6%	59.5%
Classroom magazines	25.7%	43.3%

Discretionary spending among teachers can differ depending on where they work. Private school teachers tend to have higher budgets; therefore, they typically spend fewer dollars out-of-pocket. Teachers at Catholic and public institutions face tighter budgets and contribute more personal dollars to education-related purchases.<sup>6</sup>



## REACH TEACHERS AT SCHOOL

Agile's database of PreK-12 and higher education institutions and [personal](#) is the best available for your email, direct mail and telemarketing needs. We add and subtract contacts from our database continually throughout the year, relying on real people to verify that our information is accurate and up-to-date.



**Educator Email Addresses:**  
**3,761,494**



**K-12 Public, Private and Catholic Schools:**  
**130,106**



**K-12 Teachers:**  
**3,395,697**



**K-12 Administrators:**  
**245,036**



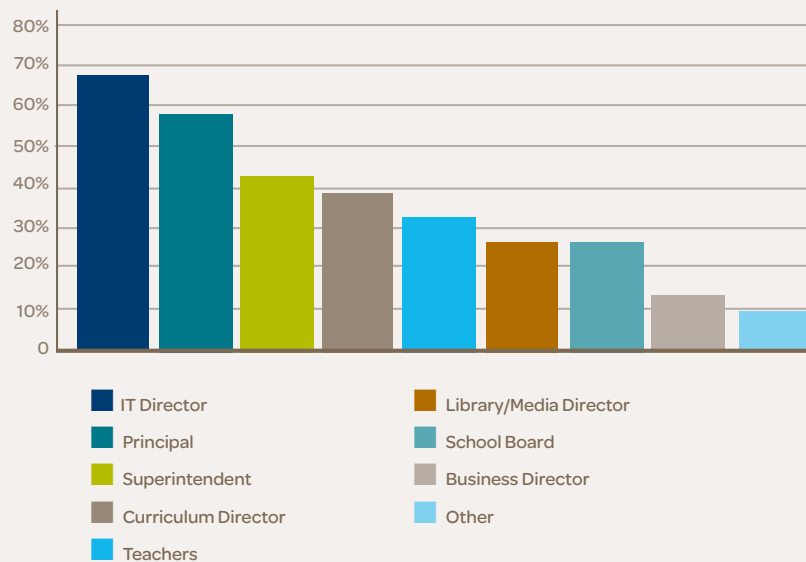
# Purchasing Persuasion at School

Schools make many purchases each school year: workbooks and black line masters, interactive whiteboards and digital projectors, computers and tablets, curriculum materials and professional learning resources.

A majority of schools finalize their budgets and make decisions regarding these purchases in Q2, during the months of April, May and June. Though you'll often see an administrator's signature on the final purchase order, these individuals turn to teachers to narrow their options — after all, teachers are typically the ones putting these products to use. Teachers also have a strong bottom-up influence over school purchases. Many purchases start when teachers recognize a need for a product or service and suggest solutions.

Education purchasing is a group effort and multiple influencers and decision-makers determine what's purchased and what's not. Just consider all of the stakeholders who have a say when buying edtech.<sup>7</sup>

## WHO PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN PURCHASING EDTECH?



Schools retain purchasing power in many categories, including non-digital supplemental materials, digital supplemental materials and professional learning materials, as well as core curriculum and computer materials. Teachers are involved with these purchases a great deal, even when their principal signs the contract.

## HOW INVOLVED ARE TEACHERS IN SCHOOL PURCHASES?<sup>8</sup>



**Classroom Supplies:**  
**89%** are somewhat to completely involved



**Supplemental Materials:**  
**75%** are somewhat to completely involved



**Core Curriculum Materials:**  
**58%** are somewhat to completely involved

Teachers even play an active role in technology purchases: 38 percent say they choose some technology for their classroom, and 28 percent say they offer input to their principal who makes the purchase decision.<sup>9</sup>

**THE BOTTOM LINE: Teachers are responsible for the allocation of a significant amount of purchasing dollars every year.**

# Purchasing Persuasion Among Parents

Every school year starts with a list. This list includes all of the items parents need to purchase for their children that year, from pencils and paper to tissues and gym clothes — even subscriptions to online learning programs. This is where a teacher's influence on parent purchasing begins.

If parents are your core market for an education-related product or service, it's a smart strategy to create targeted and well-timed campaigns to teachers, too. Getting in front of teachers will ensure your brand is top-of-mind when parents reach out to them for purchasing recommendations — which is often when it comes to supplemental educational materials.<sup>10</sup>

## Do your students' parents ever ask you for recommendations on supplemental education materials for their children?

	YES	NO
Workbooks	44.2%	53.4%
Apps	51.5%	45.4%
Tutors	63.8%	33.7%
Online programs	62.6%	34.4%
Supplies	50.3%	46.0%
Devices ( <i>LeapPad, iPad, Laptops, Chromebook, etc.</i> )	33.7%	62.6%

Teachers are willing to provide parents with recommendations when they're asked, particularly for online programs, apps, supplies, and tutors. Though not as frequently, teachers also recommend devices and workbooks.<sup>11</sup>

## Do you ever recommend supplemental educational materials to parents for their children?

	YES	NO
Workbooks	40.5%	56.4%
Apps	63.8%	31.3%
Tutors	60.7%	36.8%
Online programs	73.0%	23.3%
Supplies	63.2%	32.5%
Devices ( <i>LeapPad, iPad, Laptops, Chromebook, etc.</i> )	48.5%	45.4%

Teachers are more likely to make product recommendations at certain times of the year than others. Supply recommendations are popular from August to September, which coincides with back to school. Teachers are more likely to recommend tutors between the months of October and January, once they've had time to monitor student learning and identify individual learning needs.<sup>12</sup>



# Tips for Marketing and Selling to Teachers

Creating targeted communications that speak specifically to teachers is a smart strategy whether you're selling textbooks or t-shirts or travel packages. Not only do teachers have tremendous buying power in and out of the classroom, but they also are key influencers in purchasing decisions made by school and district leaders and parents.

Teachers, like any other audience, have specific buying habits and communication preferences. Tailor your messaging to those characteristics to make teachers aware of your brand and what you're selling, and to provide them with helpful information that leads them to make purchases and recommendations.

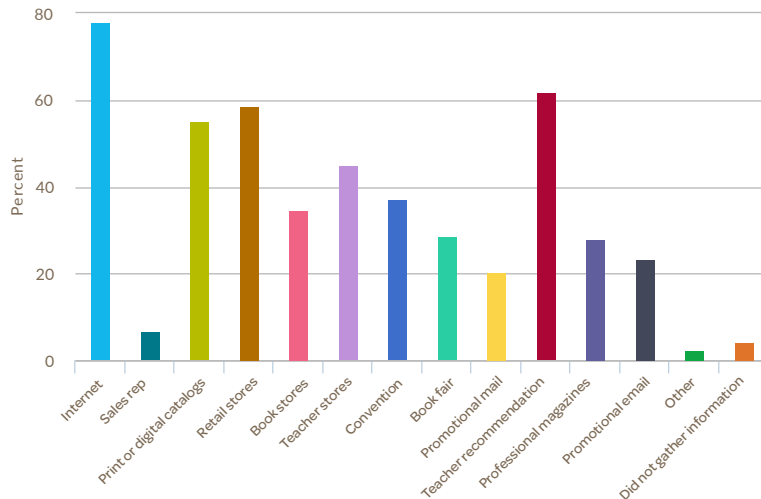
*What to do before, during and after the sale. Keep reading!*



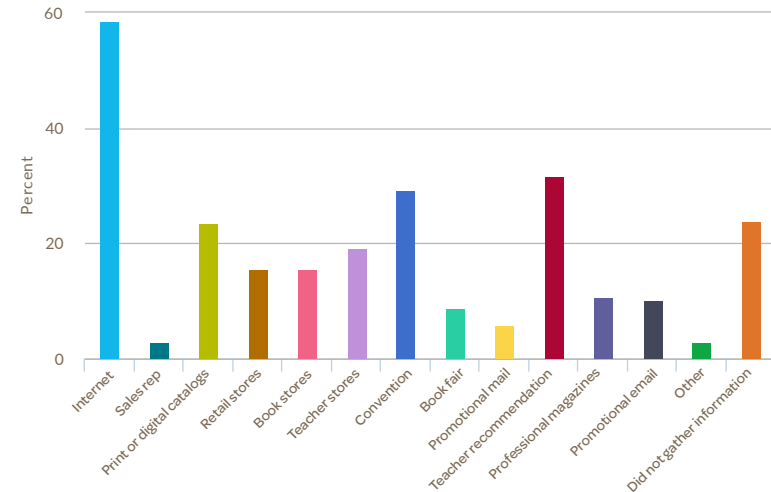
# Before the Sale

**1. Meet teachers where they are.** Consumers complete most of their product research and narrow down purchasing options before ever reaching out to speak to a salesperson. For teachers, Google has become a main source of information for educational products and services and resources for teaching and learning. The web is the most popular tool teachers use to research supplemental materials, classroom supplies and professional development materials. Catalogs also are still popular resources.<sup>13</sup>

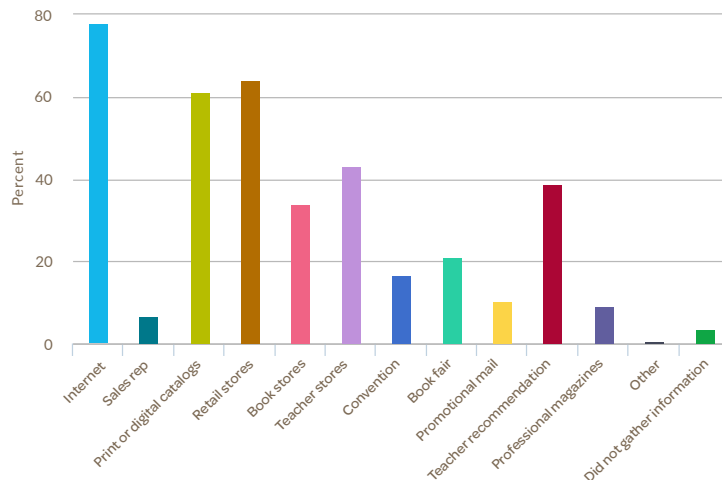
Which of the following have you used during this past school year to research supplemental materials for your classroom?



Which of the following have you used during this past school year to research professional development materials for your classroom?



Which of the following have you used during this past school year to research supplies for your classroom?



Cater to teachers' research preferences by packing your website with strategic content, from blog posts and efficacy studies to webinars and videos, that provide the information teachers seek at each stage of their buyer journey. If you don't have a catalog, consider creating one. If yours is simply outdated, update your products and pricing and resend it to educators each year.

**2. Reach out to teachers on the right platforms.** It's important to disseminate information through platforms they value and trust for information about education products and services.

#### TEACHERS' MOST-VALUED RESOURCES<sup>14</sup>



WEBSITES



WORD OF MOUTH



CONFERENCES



EMAILS



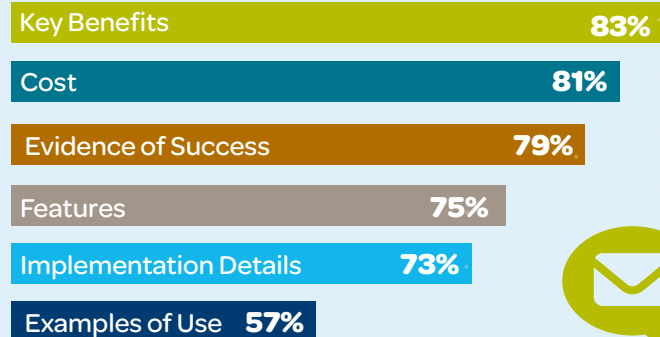
WEBINARS

Create an integrated marketing strategy that spans print and digital channels to increase your reach and maximize response. Use cross-promotion to drive traction on each one. For example, emails can share content from your website and can be forwarded among teachers to create word of mouth. Email also is effective for promoting conference registration and webinar attendance.

**3. Give teachers the information they want.** Some marketing messages motivate teachers more than others. With tight budgets, teachers appreciate when vendors help them save money. As they are tasked with meeting more rigorous educational standards and providing more individualized instruction, teachers value messages about saving time and improving student outcomes. Other points that are important to teachers include:

- Capturing student attention and interest and managing behavioral problems
- Managing, organizing and reducing paperwork
- Providing more individualized instruction to high-achieving and at-risk students
- Improving literacy skills

#### WHAT DO TEACHERS WANT TO LEARN FROM MY EMAILS?<sup>15</sup>



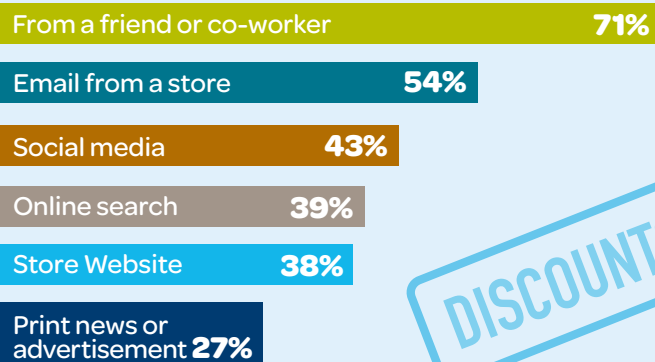
## During the Sale

**1. Entice teachers with discounts.** Teachers tend to be more loyal to brands that offer teacher discounts. Teachers want to use those discounts on:

- Office supplies
- Computers and electronics
- Restaurants
- Entertainment
- Travel
- Apparel
- Software<sup>16</sup>

**96% of teachers** are more loyal to brands that offer teacher discounts online when shopping for classroom supplies; 85% when shopping for personal items.<sup>17</sup>

### HOW DO TEACHERS WANT TO HEAR ABOUT DISCOUNTS?<sup>18</sup>



**2. Optimize your website.** More and more teachers go online to purchase supplemental materials, classroom supplies and professional learning resources as well as non-education related purchases. When shopping for themselves, 49 percent of teachers prefer to buy online. That number is only slightly lower when shopping for their classrooms (around 40 percent). Most teachers complete these purchases from their desktops or laptops rather than a tablet or smartphone.

Make sure your website delivers a positive shopping experience that won't turn teachers off. What causes teachers to empty their carts or abandon purchases when shopping online? Paying for shipping, a complicated checkout process, needing to create an account or profile, and not qualifying for teacher discounts can all turn teachers away.<sup>19</sup>



## After the Sale

District and school leaders may often be the final decision-makers when comes to education purchases, but teachers are typically the real end-users. To successfully integrate new products and services into the classroom, and keep your education clients satisfied, reach teachers with post-sale marketing beyond basic professional learning. Consider these tactics:



### 1. Welcome Emails

Once the contract is signed, deploy a welcome email, or a series of welcome emails, to all stakeholders. These initial messages should introduce end-users to the product and get them familiar with its functionalities. For teachers, one message might explain best practices for using the product in their classrooms; another might direct them to resources for FAQs and troubleshooting. Continue to use email consistently throughout the year to keep in touch with your current customers and strengthen your relationship by sharing helpful, brand-relevant content and news.



### 2. Training Videos

Develop a series of training videos and post them to your website. Make these easily accessible online and promote them via email, social media and other digital channels so educators know they are available when they're troubleshooting an issue or searching for ways to incorporate your product or service into instruction.



### 3. Webinars

Webinars are another great way to provide teachers with extra learning opportunities. Host webinars occasionally throughout the year to explain new product features or updates. Invite a current customer to join you to discuss how they've used your product to solve key challenges, improve outcomes or reach educational goals.



# Ready to Sell to Teachers? You Should Be!

Teacher spending power is strong. This group of consumers is responsible for a significant sum of money spent inside and outside of schools every year, whether they're investing in classroom supplies, planning their next summer vacation, recommending a supplemental curriculum to principals, or urging parents to download a new reading app.

The market is there, now you just have to reach them. This guide offers insight into teachers' specific buying habits. Put our tips to good use to turn teacher prospects into lasting, loyal customers.

If you need help along the way, [contact an Agile Account Representative](#). Nothing compares to the quality of our data, our people and our knowledge of the education market. We'll help you strategize, craft and deploy compelling integrated marketing campaigns that get you in front of teachers – and get results.

*What are you waiting for?  
Get started today!*

## References and Resources!

<sup>1</sup> United States Bureau of Labor Statistics

<sup>2</sup> Simmons® National Consumer Studies, Fall 2014

<sup>3</sup> [2017 Teacher Purchasing, Spending and Loyalty Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing & SheerID

<sup>4</sup> [2017 Teacher Purchasing, Spending and Loyalty Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing & SheerID

<sup>5</sup> [K12 Purchasing 2013: Classroom Purchasing Power](#); Agile Education Marketing

<sup>6</sup> [K12 Purchasing 2013: Classroom Purchasing Power](#); Agile Education Marketing

<sup>7</sup> [What Works When It Comes to Connecting with Education Decision Makers](#); Agile Education Marketing and PR with Panache!; July 2015

<sup>8</sup> [May 2016 Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing

<sup>9</sup> [2017 Teacher Purchasing, Spending and Loyalty Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing & SheerID

<sup>10</sup> [Fall 2016 Parent Teacher Conferences Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing and SignUp.com

<sup>11</sup> [Fall 2016 Parent Teacher Conferences Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing and SignUp.com

<sup>12</sup> [Fall 2016 Parent Teacher Conferences Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing and SignUp.com

<sup>13</sup> [May 2016 Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing

<sup>14</sup> [February 2017 Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing

<sup>15</sup> [February 2017 Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing

<sup>16</sup> [2017 Teacher Purchasing, Spending and Loyalty Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing & SheerID

<sup>17</sup> [2017 Teacher Purchasing, Spending and Loyalty Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing & SheerID

<sup>18</sup> [2017 Teacher Purchasing, Spending and Loyalty Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing & SheerID

<sup>19</sup> [2017 Teacher Purchasing, Spending and Loyalty Survey](#); Agile Education Marketing & SheerID