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Growing Up Digital: Adults Rate the Educational Potential of New Media and 21st Century Skills

Common Sense Media &
the Joan Ganz Cooney Center

Conducted by Insight Research

PRESENTERS

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Background

- Who we are

- Why we commissioned the poll together

- Poll supported by the John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and PBS

Methodology

Insight conducted two online surveys:

- One nationally representative survey of parents
  - Recruited to the online survey via phone (i.e., via random digit dialing) to ensure a representative sample of US households, with a margin of error of +/- 3.5% overall and +/- 9.7% for the ethnic samples.

- One survey of teachers of grades 1 through 8
  - The surveys were fielded online with nationally representative samples, with a margin of error of +/-6.7%
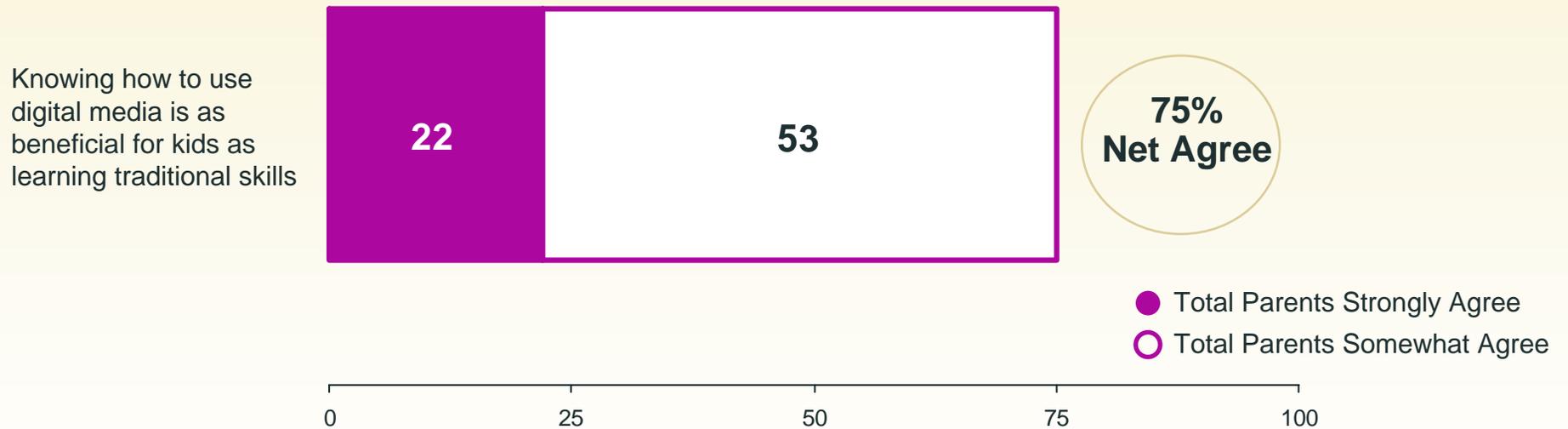
The parents survey was segmented as follows:

	Age of child				Total
	6-7 years old	8-9 years old	10-11 years old	12-14 years old	
Parents	n=177	n=172	n=165	n=181	
Parents: *African American*	n=103				**n=695**
Parents: *Hispanic*	n=105				

The teachers survey was segmented as follows:

	Age of child			Total
	Grades 1-3	Grades 4-6	Grades 7-8	
Teachers	n=79	n=104	n=81	**n=264**

3/4 of Parents Believe That Digital Media Is As Important As Traditional Skills

Nearly all parents agree that knowing how to use digital media is as essential as learning traditional skills.

Knowing how to use digital media is as beneficial for kids as learning traditional skills

| 22 | 53 |

75% Net Agree

0   25   50   75   100

● Total Parents Strongly Agree
○ Total Parents Somewhat Agree

Q17. The following statements relate to your feelings about your child's use of digital media and how they are currently using it. To what degree do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?

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And See Digital Media As Critical to Kids' Success…

Digital media gives my child the skills he or she needs for life in the 21st century

| 19 | 64 |

83% Net Agree

0   25   50   75   100

● Total Parents Strongly Agree
○ Total Parents Somewhat Agree
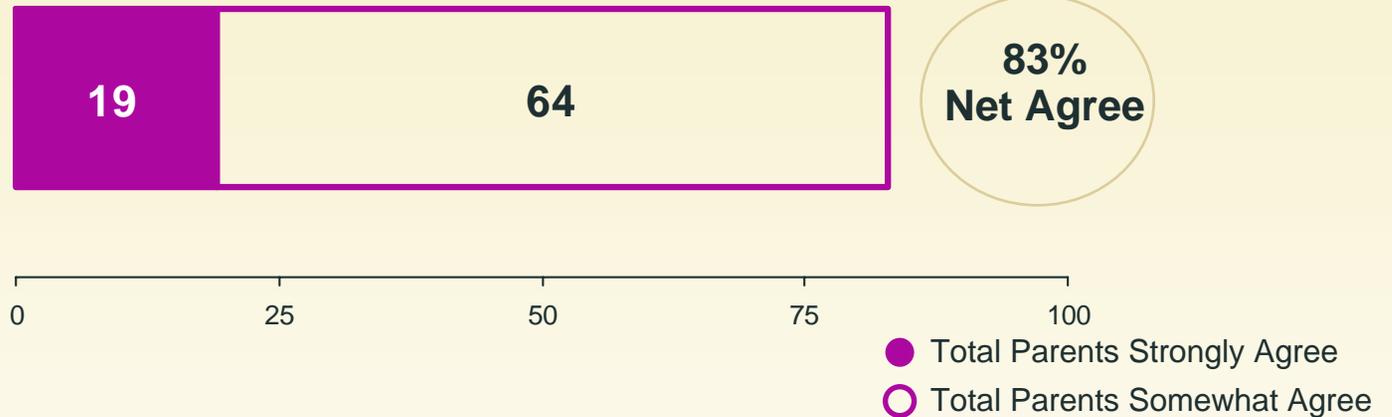
Digital media is a waste of my child's time

| 31 | 52 |

83% Net Disagree

0   25   50   75   100

○ Total Parents Somewhat Disagree
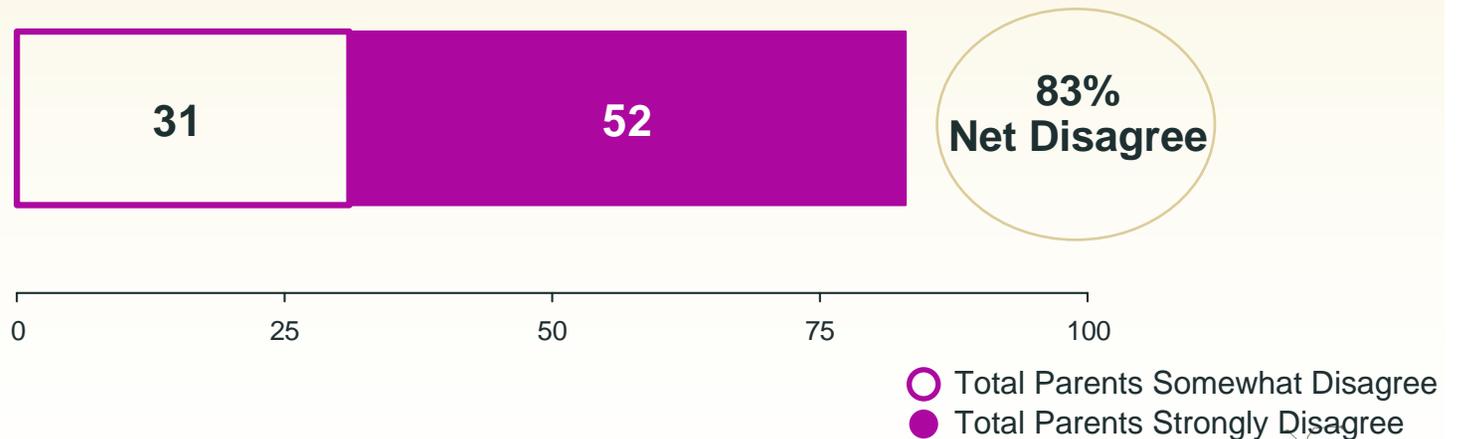● Total Parents Strongly Disagree
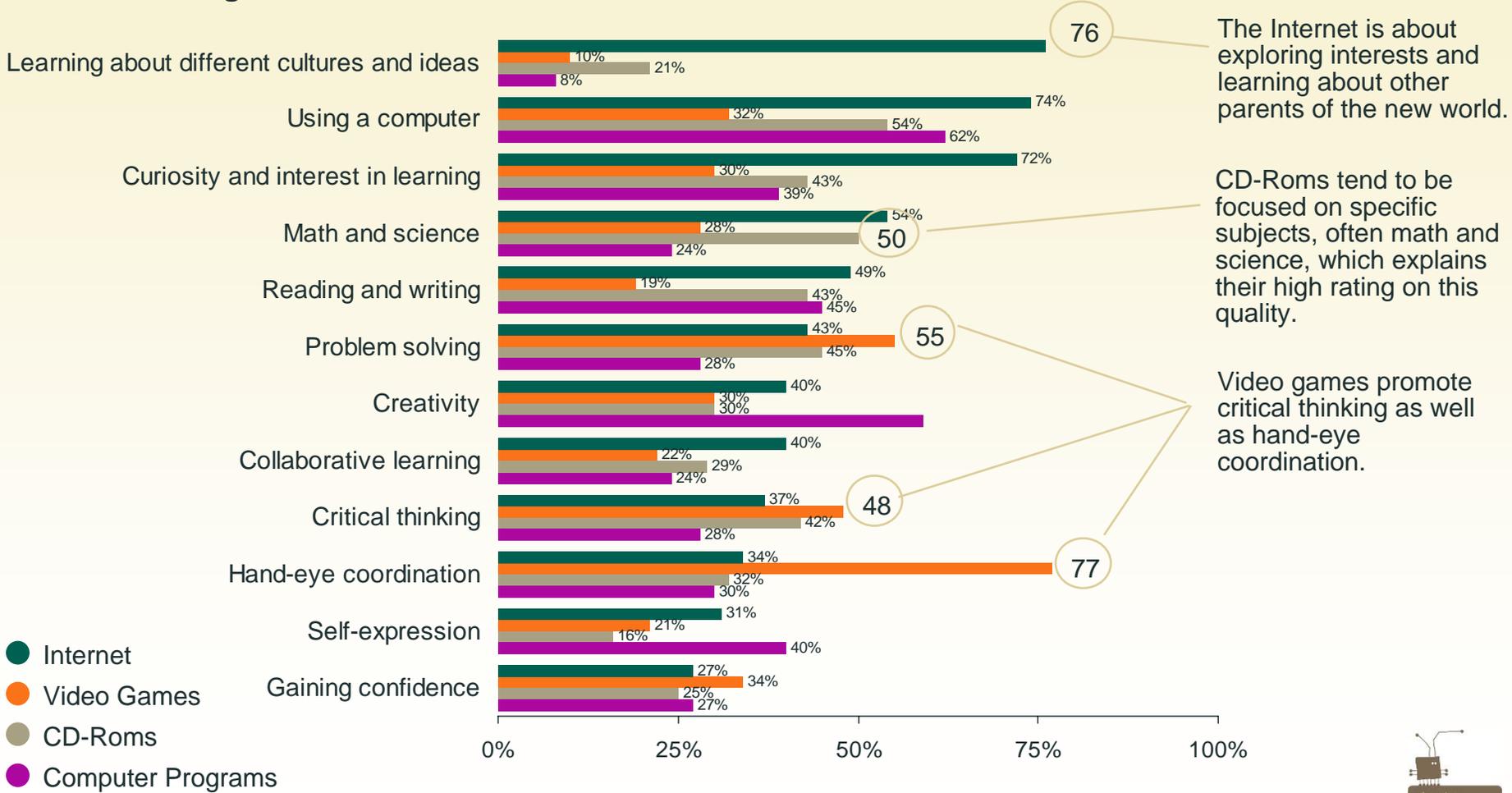
Q17. The following statements relate to your feelings about your child's use of digital media and how they are currently using it. To what degree do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?

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Parents Recognize That Digital Media Platforms Offer Different Educational Benefits For Kids

% Feel That Digital Media Platform Teaches…

Learning about different cultures and ideas
- Internet: 76
- Video Games: 10%
- CD-Roms: 21%
- Computer Programs: 8%

Using a computer
- Internet: 74%
- Video Games: 32%
- CD-Roms: 54%
- Computer Programs: 62%

Curiosity and interest in learning
- Internet: 72%
- Video Games: 30%
- CD-Roms: 43%
- Computer Programs: 39%

Math and science
- Internet: 54%
- Video Games: 28%
- CD-Roms: 50
- Computer Programs: 24%

Reading and writing
- Internet: 49%
- Video Games: 19%
- CD-Roms: 43%
- Computer Programs: 45%

Problem solving
- Internet: 43%
- Video Games: 55
- CD-Roms: 45%
- Computer Programs: 28%

Creativity
- Internet: 40%
- Video Games: 30%
- CD-Roms: 30%
- Computer Programs:

Collaborative learning
- Internet: 40%
- Video Games: 22%
- CD-Roms: 29%
- Computer Programs: 24%

Critical thinking
- Internet: 37%
- Video Games: 48
- CD-Roms: 42%
- Computer Programs: 28%

Hand-eye coordination
- Internet: 34%
- Video Games: 77
- CD-Roms: 32%
- Computer Programs: 30%

Self-expression
- Internet: 31%
- Video Games: 21%
- CD-Roms: 16%
- Computer Programs: 40%

Gaining confidence
- Internet: 27%
- Video Games: 34%
- CD-Roms: 25%
- Computer Programs: 27%

Legend:
- Internet
- Video Games
- CD-Roms
- Computer Programs

The Internet is about exploring interests and learning about other parents of the new world.

CD-Roms tend to be focused on specific subjects, often math and science, which explains their high rating on this quality.

Video games promote critical thinking as well as hand-eye coordination.

Q19. For each of the following digital media platforms, please indicate if you think this device currently helps teach your child the following skills:

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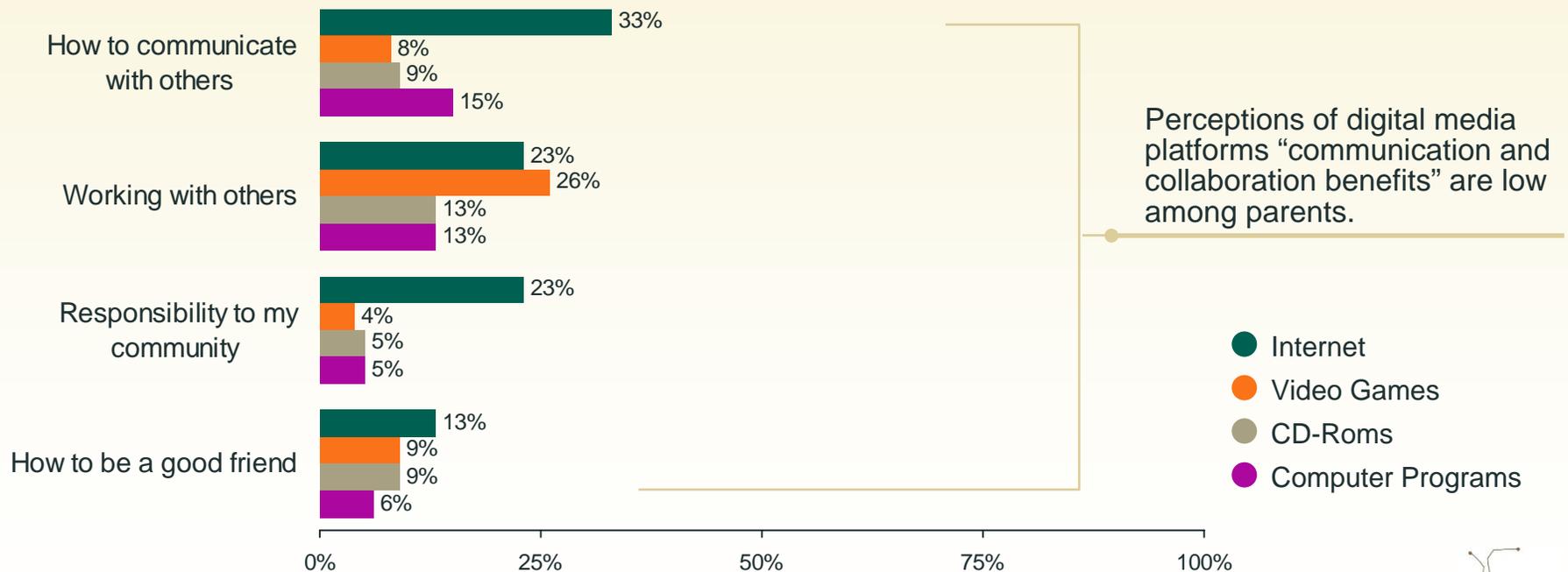the Joan Ganz Cooney Center at Sesame Workshop

But, the Majority of Parents Are Skeptical About Digital Media's Ability to Help Kids Learn Important 21st Century Skills

No digital media platform is perceived to teach kids how to successfully engage with others or teach social responsibility.

Further, two-thirds (64%) of parents disagree with the idea that because of digital media, kids can communicate better with people.

% Feel That Digital Media Platform Teaches…

How to communicate with others
- 33%
- 8%
- 9%
- 15%

Working with others
- 23%
- 26%
- 13%
- 13%

Responsibility to my community
- 23%
- 4%
- 5%
- 5%

How to be a good friend
- 13%
- 9%
- 9%
- 6%

Perceptions of digital media platforms "communication and collaboration benefits" are low among parents.

Legend:
- Internet
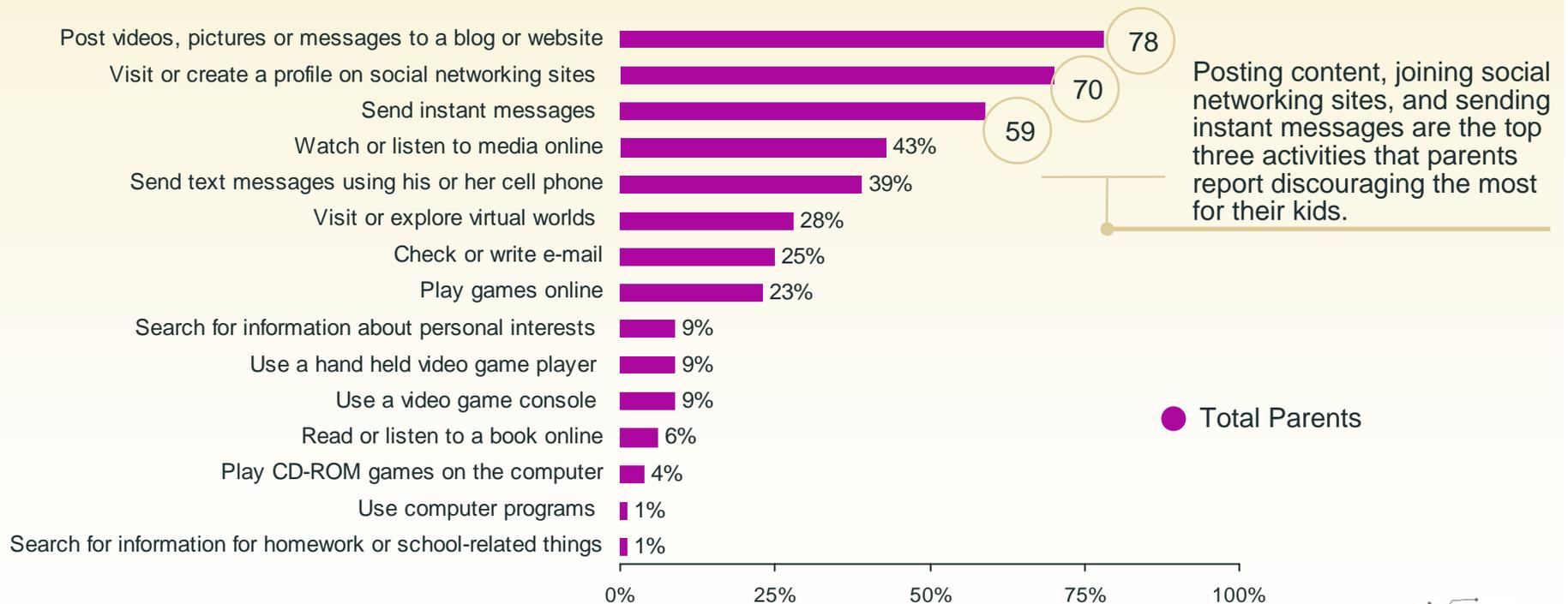- Video Games
- CD-Roms
- Computer Programs

Q19. For each of the following digital media platforms, please indicate if you think this device currently helps teach your child the following skills:

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And They Discourage Social Networking Activities

Parents report discouraging their kids from using digital media, particularly their computers, for social networking purposes.
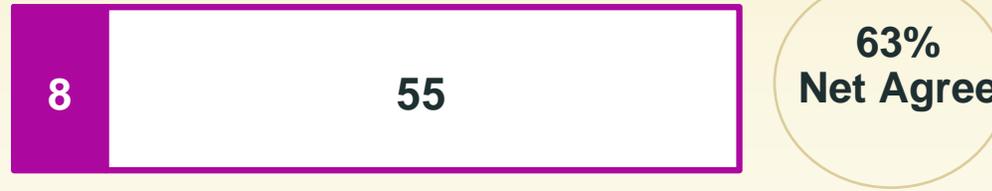
Activities Parents Discourage

Activity	Total Parents
Post videos, pictures or messages to a blog or website	78
Visit or create a profile on social networking sites	70
Send instant messages	59
Watch or listen to media online	43%
Send text messages using his or her cell phone	39%
Visit or explore virtual worlds	28%
Check or write e-mail	25%
Play games online	23%
Search for information about personal interests	9%
Use a hand held video game player	9%
Use a video game console	9%
Read or listen to a book online	6%
Play CD-ROM games on the computer	4%
Use computer programs	1%
Search for information for homework or school-related things	1%

Posting content, joining social networking sites, and sending instant messages are the top three activities that parents report discouraging the most for their kids.

● Total Parents

0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Q12b. In general, do you encourage, are neutral towards, or discourage this activity?
[Discourage It] [Out of those who use each platform]

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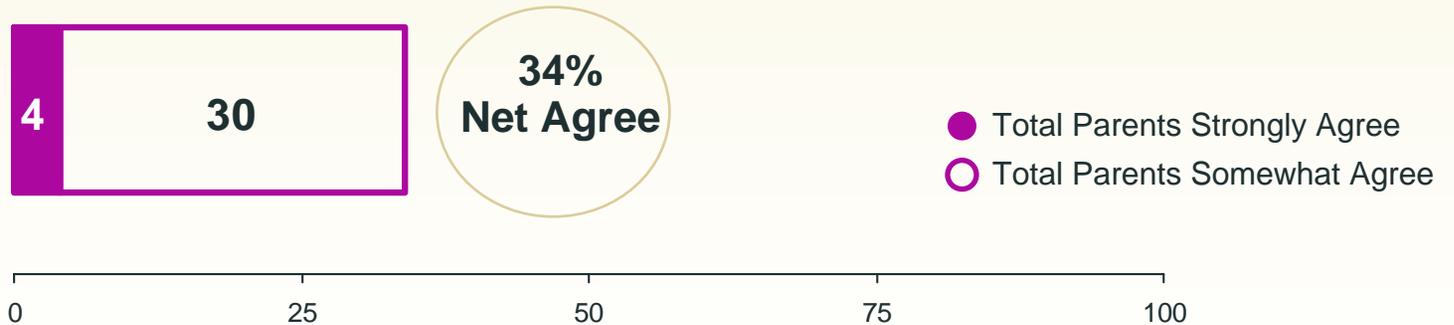# In Addition, Some Parents Remain Skeptical About How Educational Digital Media Really Is…

While they believe digital media can offer their kids educational benefits, 1/3 of all parents are not convinced of its true educational potential.

I'm skeptical about the educational claims that some digital media products make

| 8 | 55 |

63% Net Agree

There is no way to measure if digital media is educationally effective or not

| 4 | 30 |

34% Net Agree

● Total Parents Strongly Agree
○ Total Parents Somewhat Agree

0   25   50   75   100

Q17. The following statements relate to your feelings about your child's use of digital media and how they are currently using it. To what degree do you agree or disagree with each of these statements? [Net Agree]

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…And Wind Up Trusting Their Own Instincts

Most parents rely on their own instincts, or familiar resources, to figure out if a digital media product has educational value for their kids.

How They Discover Digital Media's Educational Benefits

Source	Percentage
Test it out myself	61
My child's teacher or school	53
Parents of other kids of similar ages	45%
News sources	34%
Organizations that provide media ratings and reviews	29%
Information from a specific product's website	20%
Advertisements	6%

● Total Parents

0%   25%   50%   75%
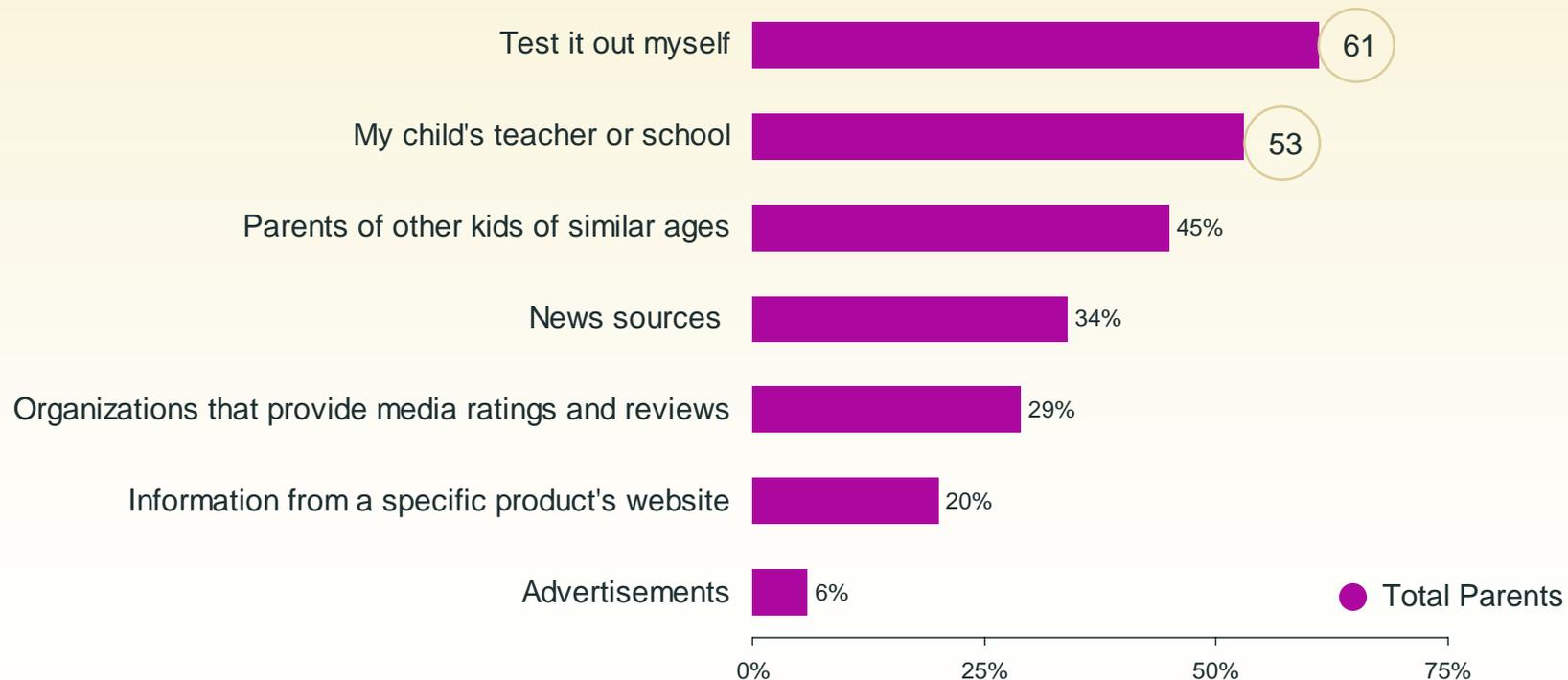
**Q23. What are the top three sources that you use to determine if a specific kind of digital media has educational value for your child?

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In Sum…

Parents see digital media as providing a variety of educational benefits…
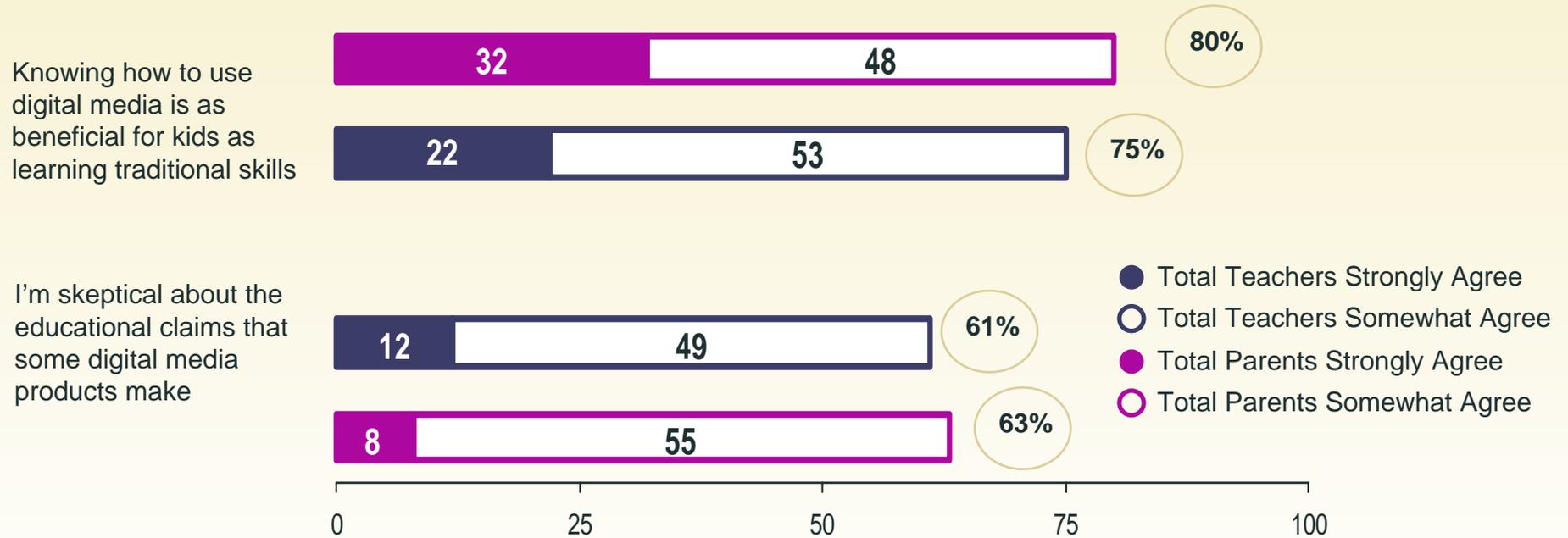
…but they feel it doesn't help as much with social/communication skills.

Therefore, they underestimate its full educational potential.

When It Comes to Digital Media, Parents and Teachers Are Generally On the Same Page

Knowing how to use digital media is as beneficial for kids as learning traditional skills

32	**48**	80%
22	**53**	75%

I'm skeptical about the educational claims that some digital media products make

12	**49**	61%
8	**55**	63%

● Total Teachers Strongly Agree
○ Total Teachers Somewhat Agree
● Total Parents Strongly Agree
○ Total Parents Somewhat Agree

0   25   50   75   100

Q17/16. The following statements relate to your feelings about digital media and how they are currently using it. To what degree do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?

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But Teachers Are More Optimistic About Digital Media's Ability to Teach Certain Skills Than Parents

Unlike parents, teachers give digital media more credit for the potential ways it could help kids with communicating, collaborating, and taking responsibility
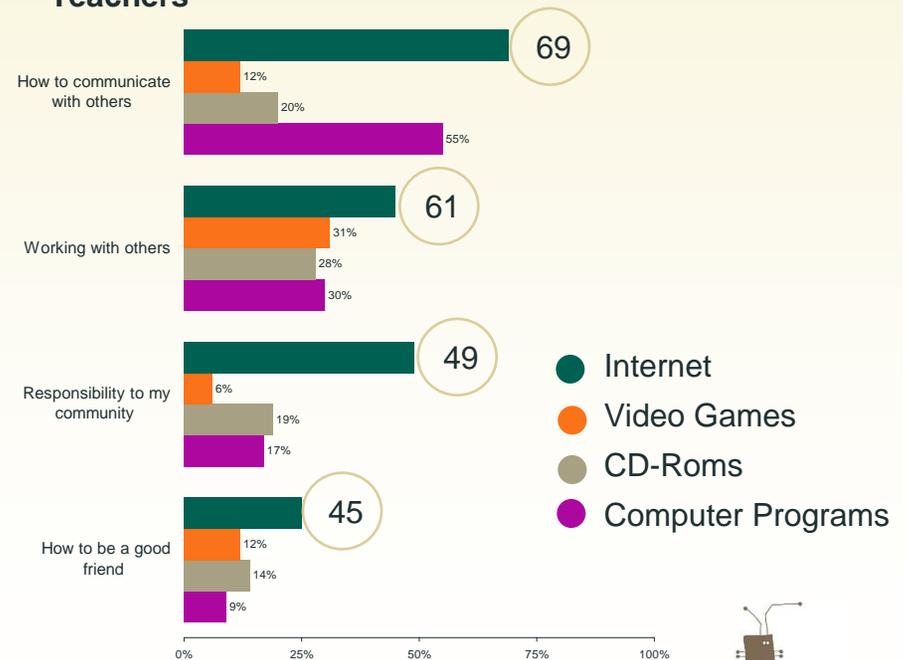
- They particularly feel that the Internet could be a good resource when it comes to helping kids learn to communicate with others.

Digital Media Platform Teaches the Following

Parents

How to communicate with others
33
8%
9%
15%

Working with others
23
26%
13%
13%

Responsibility to my community
23
4%
5%
5%

How to be a good friend
13
9%
9%
6%

Teachers

How to communicate with others
69
12%
20%
55%

Working with others
61
31%
28%
30%

Responsibility to my community
49
6%
19%
17%

How to be a good friend
45
12%
14%
9%
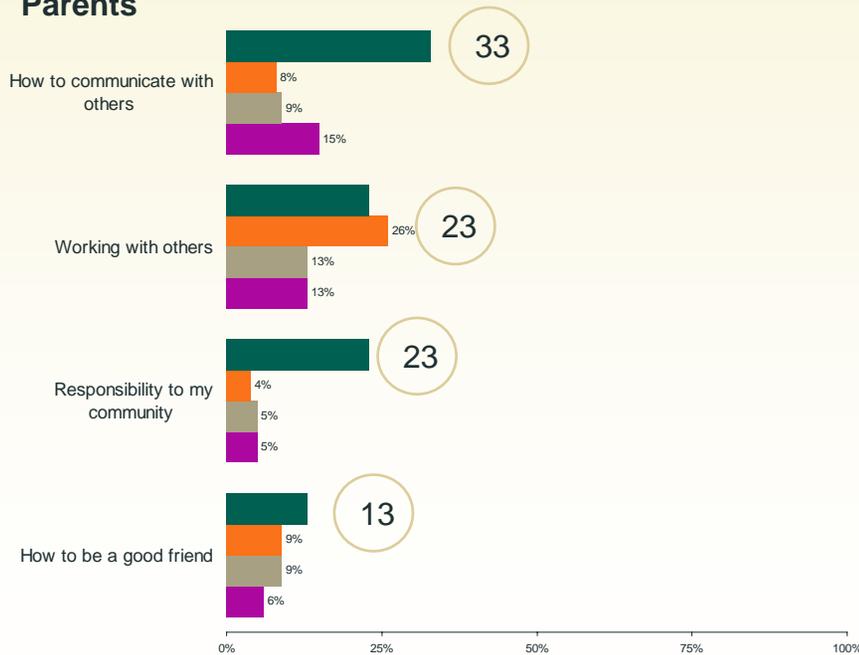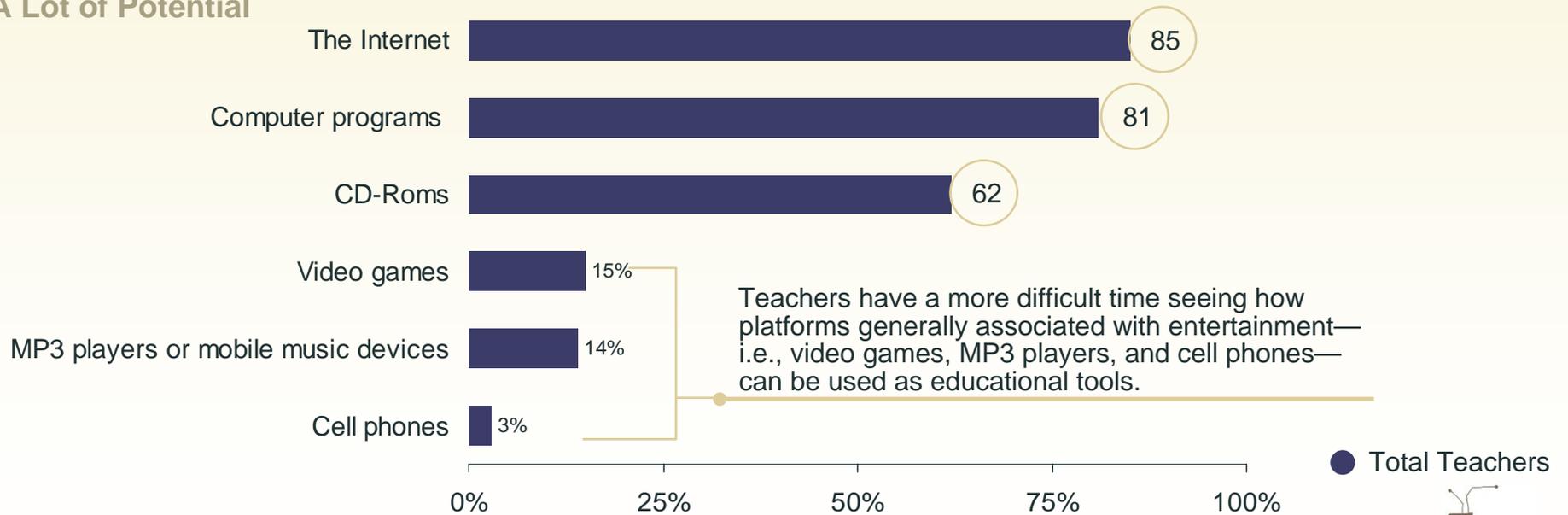
- ● Internet
- ● Video Games
- ● CD-Roms
- ● Computer Programs

Q18. For each of the digital media platforms below, please indicate if you think this device helps teach your students the following skills.

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Teachers See Even Greater Potential For Digital Media, Especially For Platforms With Clear Ties to Education

Teachers see the Internet, computer programs, and CD-Roms as having more educational potential than other forms of digital media, likely because they require kids to use their reading and writing skills.

- More than half of teachers see MP3 players as entertainment devices (54%) and feel they have no place in school (69%).

- Similarly, 85% of teachers see cell phones as distractions, with 64% agreeing they have no place in school.

A Lot of Potential

The Internet — 85

Computer programs — 81

CD-Roms — 62

Video games — 15%

MP3 players or mobile music devices — 14%

Cell phones — 3%

Teachers have a more difficult time seeing how platforms generally associated with entertainment—i.e., video games, MP3 players, and cell phones—can be used as educational tools.

● Total Teachers

0%   25%   50%   75%   100%

Q19. How much potential do you feel the following kinds of digital media have as educational tools? [A lot of Potential]

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In Sum…

Teachers, like parents, recognize digital media's potential for helping teach kids valuable skills.

They are more optimistic of its educational benefits, especially when it comes to social/communication skills.

But, they don't think that certain platforms (i.e. MP3 players and cell phones) have much potential as educational tools.

Recommendations

- **Policy-makers should support media education** and the integration of digital media into classrooms, a nationally consolidated effort to fund research on the learning potential of digital media, professional development for teachers as well as a public awareness campaign for parents

- In addition, policy-makers in both the public and private sector should create evidentiary standards to help make sense of products marketed as "educational."

- **A national public awareness effort should be mounted to help parents** understand that the full range of 21st century skills goes far beyond the traditional "3 R's."

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Recommendations, continued

• **Research on the added value of digital media to teach both traditional and 21st century skills** needs to be conducted. We also need to look at the critical role adults can play in guiding learning for students who are at academic and social risk.

• **The technology industry should create educational products** for digital media platforms– including the Internet, video games, and cell phones– that help elementary and middle school age children gain important 21st century skills.

• **Schools should integrate digital media into classrooms** in order to engage and educate students as well as help them acquire skills that allow them to create, collaborate, and communicate. Training on how to maximize the use of educational technology must be offered to teachers.

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