



# APEX LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION CAPSTONE

Prepared for Apex Learning, Inc.

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**edmentum™**



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# INTRODUCTION

In late 2020, Apex Learning, Inc. (Apex) partnered with Hanover Research (Hanover) to begin a mixed-methods product implementation evaluation. The multi-analysis evaluation aimed to explore district experiences implementing and using Apex products and services within the district-wide virtual and hybrid learning environments that resulted from the global pandemic between spring 2000 and fall 2021. This capstone report summarizes key findings and potential action items from the three analyses conducted.

Specifically, this report identifies and analyzes major themes present at all districts that participated in the survey, in-depth interviews, and focus groups. To frame these themes, the capstone sections present a complete picture of the common experiences educators and administrators have with Apex products and services through a four-phase lifecycle (i.e., adoption and planning, onboarding and getting started, implementation, outcomes).


Districts whose feedback informed the qualitative elements of this capstone report include, in alphabetical order: Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation (EVSC), Frenship Independent School District (Frenship), Manassas Park City Schools (Manassas Park), and Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District (Mat-Su). These districts were chosen by implementation success managers due to their successful transition to district-wide implementation of virtual and hybrid learning during the pandemic.



Additionally, case studies supplement this report and provide a more detailed review of specific district experiences and outcomes. Hanover will provide these analyses separately as shareable insights on how districts engaged with Apex products and services from initial adoption to outcomes.

# METHODOLOGY

Hanover conducted a survey, focus groups, and in-depth interviews to collect and evaluate stakeholders' experiences implementing and using Apex products and services. Details of each endeavor appear in Figure ES 1. *Note: All content presented in this capstone report comes from data and analyses resulting from projects completed with and for Apex.*

**Figure ES 1: Summary of Research Projects**

PROJECT	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SAMPLE
 <p><b>Survey Administration and Dashboard</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To what extent have Apex products and services helped (or hindered) the district in achieving virtual and hybrid instructional program goals?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To what extent did using Apex improve virtual and hybrid instructional program outcomes?</li> <li>○ To what extent did Apex products engage students and/or improve student outcomes?</li> </ul> </li> <li>■ To what extent did district technology administrators find success integrating Apex products and services into existing district networks?</li> <li>■ What factors prompted the district to incorporate Apex products and services into the virtual and hybrid program?</li> <li>■ To what extent did classroom instructional staff feel prepared to implement Apex products and services for virtual and hybrid instructional programs after completing training or professional development?</li> </ul>	<p>331 school and district staff members, 60 percent of whom began using Apex after COVID-related school closures</p>

	RESEARCH QUESTIONS	SAMPLE
 <p><b>In-Depth Interviews and Analysis</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How have Apex products and services helped (or hindered) district administrators achieve virtual and hybrid instructional program goals?</li> <li>▪ What are district administrators' perceptions of the effectiveness of Apex products and services for virtual and hybrid instruction?</li> </ul>	<p>Three technology and academic administrators from EVSC, Frenship, and Manassas Park</p>
 <p><b>Focus Group Sessions and Analysis*</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How have Apex products and services helped (or hindered) teachers achieve virtual and hybrid instructional program goals?</li> <li>▪ What are teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of Apex products and services for virtual and hybrid instruction?</li> <li>▪ To what extent did Apex products and services engage students and/or improve academic outcomes?</li> </ul>	<p>Four focus groups comprised of single-district staff members from EVSC, Frenship, Manassas Park, and Mat-Su</p>

\*Apex conducted the focus group for EVSC and shared responses with Hanover, which Hanover incorporated into its previous analysis and this capstone report.

# CAPSTONE: STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTIONS OF AND EXPERIENCES WITH APEX LEARNING

In this section, Hanover synthesizes the most salient findings from the staff survey, in-depth interviews, and focus groups in order of implementation lifecycle phase (i.e., adoption and planning, onboarding and getting started, implementation, outcomes) and offers recommendations for future action.

## ADOPTION AND PLANNING



Insights presented in the in-depth interviews, focus group conversations, and survey responses indicate that districts chose Apex because of how easy the platform is to navigate and the ability to customize curricula. When initially choosing a digital curriculum provider, districts prioritized virtual instruction and credit recovery needs. Further, districts chose to expand their use of Apex in response to COVID-19 since many teachers already knew how to use the system and how to support students and receive support from Apex's customer services. A repeated experience expressed among district staff was their use of the help center and additional resources during implementation.

In searching for a digital curriculum provider, particularly following the onset of COVID-19, districts prioritized programs and services that offered virtual instruction and credit recovery tools that were easy to use. Survey results show that when selecting which provider to use, districts prioritized those with virtual instruction (64%) and credit recovery supports (63%) more than other district needs, such as alternative education (39%) and summer school (29%), which received the next highest response rates.

Regarding why districts chose Apex specifically, in-depth interview participants commented on how easy Apex products were to incorporate quickly. Because certain districts already used Apex for specific reasons, districts found that their familiarity with Apex made expanding their use of its products and services easier than adopting a completely new platform. This familiarity also enabled staff who were comfortable with the platform to mentor students new to Apex tools. Interview participants also noted that Apex products and services are easy to navigate and provide quality customer service support, as described in the following quotes.

*"[...] by pairing [students] up with teachers, mentor teachers, to help and guide them along the way, we've seen a lot of success with using Apex with all of our learners."*

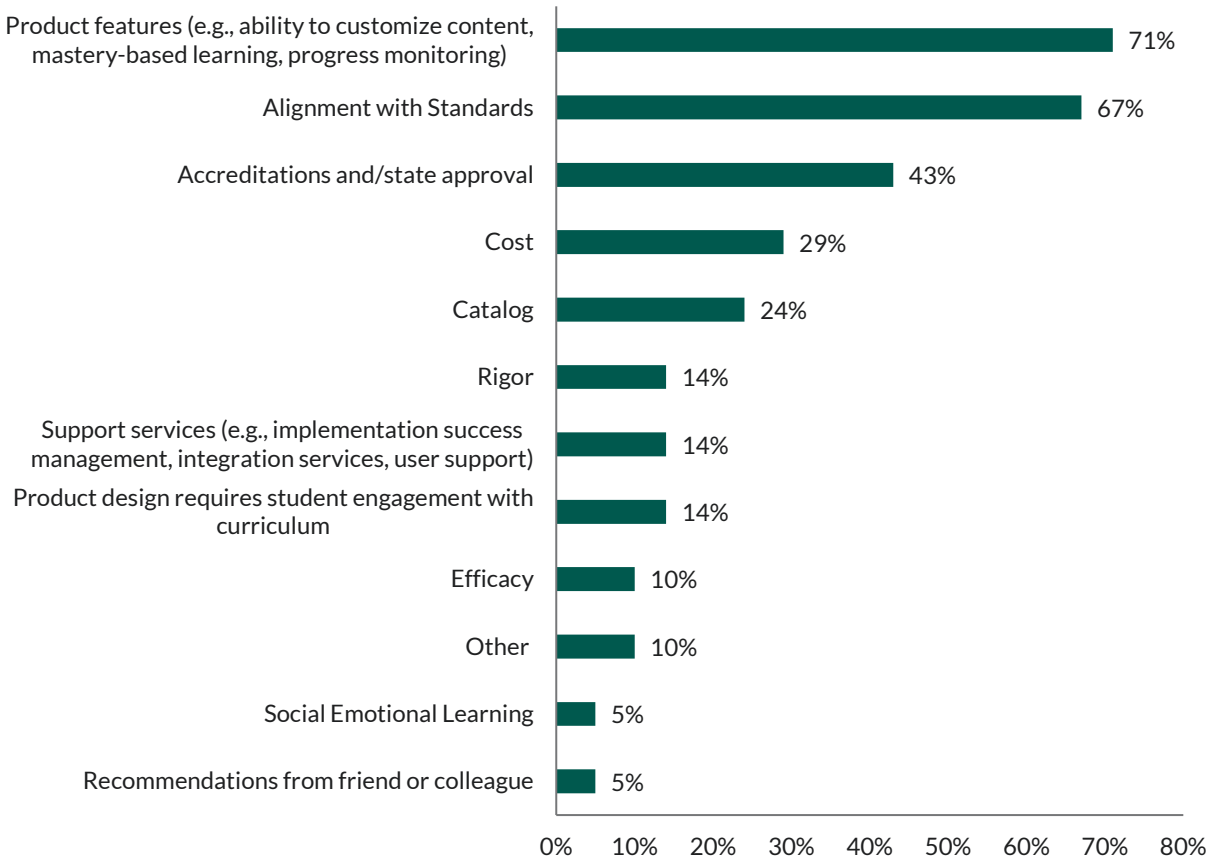
- Manassas Park Interview Participant

*"We had an extensive amount of very quick growth due to the pandemic...we went from 86 students in May of last year, [and] we ended this year with 1,750. [...] Because we were growing so quickly, we wanted to go with the product that we knew how to use, we knew how to navigate it, rather than trying to train more teachers on a platform that we weren't familiar with."*

- EVSC Interview Participant

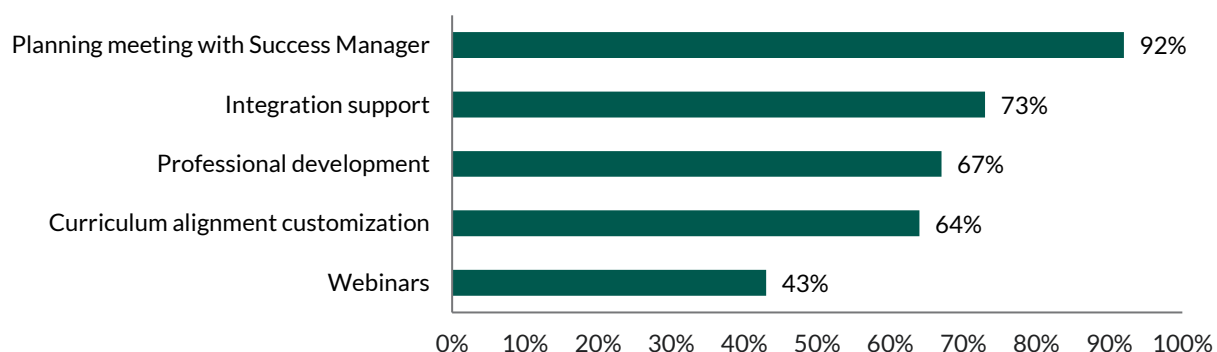
When asked a similar question on why the district chose Apex, survey participants most often indicated that product features, such as the ability to customize the content, provide mastery-based learning, and conduct progress monitoring, contributed to their selection (71%). As illustrated in Figure 1.1, Apex’s alignment with standards (67%) and accreditations and state approval (43%) also strongly influenced districts’ decision to choose Apex.

**Figure 1.1: Factors Contributing to Districts Choosing Apex**



As districts moved from adopting (i.e., identifying Apex as their digital curriculum provider) to planning (i.e., initially establishing Apex products and services as a part of programs), **districts used professional development services most often and found planning meetings with the Success Manager most helpful.** Specifically, survey results show that the three Apex services most often used by district staff when planning their virtual program included professional development (44%), curriculum alignment customization (30%), and webinars (25%). Further, of those staff that expressed using specific Apex planning services, the percentage of respondents who found these services very or extremely helpful appear in Figure 1.2.

**Figure 1.2: Apex Planning Services Identified as Very or Extremely Helpful**



Additionally, districts found that Apex tools were adjustable to fit their curricula and that the product was user-friendly upon initial implementation. Interviewed staff describe how Apex units and lessons did not follow the same sequence as their current curricula. However, units were easy to modify so that lessons and tests aligned to in-person curricula. They also found the Apex interface easy to navigate and appreciated how the platform was consistent across courses.

*"[...] we have tried other products. And we do use some other products currently, but Apex is our main go-to."*  
-Manassas Park Interview Participant

## ONBOARDING AND GETTING STARTED



Apex users adjusted to the system's platform and functions by creating strategies for connecting their learning management system (LMS) to Apex, accessing help center resources, and leveraging professional development opportunities offered by their district and Apex. Although certain staff members struggled to transition to virtual learning using Apex quickly, interview, focus group, and survey participants consistently cited Apex support services and videos as useful in navigating the new tool. Leveraging the support of Success Managers and readily accessible video guides provided key insights as teachers adjusted to Apex and learned about its features. Staff also found coaching and professional development opportunities within their districts helpful during virtual learning. Therefore, accessing the aforementioned supports and learning from colleagues facilitated the quick and unanticipated transition to widespread virtual learning.

Despite certain challenges integrating Apex with existing technology (e.g., teachers new to the platform adjusting to the tools, integrating technology with existing management systems and grade books), districts **highlight successful strategies for integrating Apex and how helpful the Apex technical support team was.** Teachers often had a separate LMS provided by the district to engage with their virtual students alongside Apex for content and lessons. Among surveyed staff, 60% of respondents integrated Apex with their LMS, the most common systems being Google Classroom and Schoology. To integrate these systems, focus group participants specified how teachers would combine Apex with other learning tools:

- Housing student-specific folders in a separate LMS that lists tasks and activities, one of which would be Apex. Students then knew to exit Schoology and log into Apex for this additional activity;
- Having students log into Apex to complete tasks and assignments, then contact teachers through an LMS if any questions arise; and

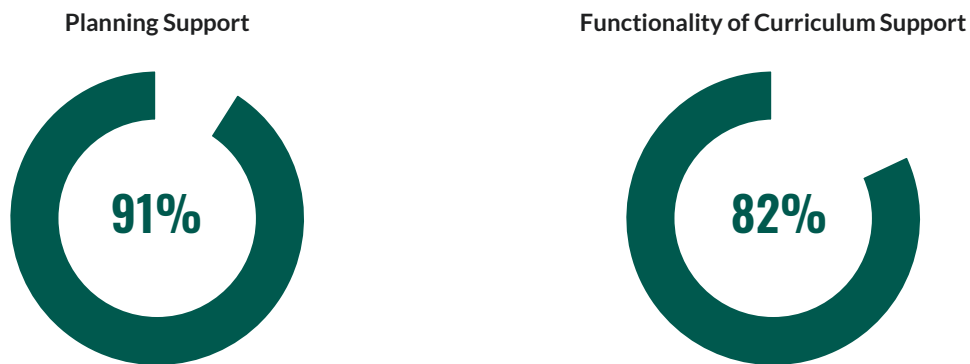
- Supplementing Apex learning materials with face-to-face or additional virtual learning content after completing all Apex lessons.

*"It was a game changer for us, the development, when we were able to integrate Apex into our Schoology Learning Management System."*

- Frenship Interview Participant

Additionally, districts found that the technical assistance provided when experiencing challenges with Apex was exceptional. Districts relied heavily on the Apex help center during the onboarding process and throughout the year when teachers, students, and administrators encounter issues with the platform. When accessing the help center support, survey respondents indicated that they leveraged functionality or curriculum support (63%) and planning support (58%) most often. A substantial proportion of the respondents who used these two services found the support very or extremely helpful, as shown in Figure 1.3.

**Figure 1.3: Apex Support Services Identified as Very or Extremely Helpful**



Interview participants, particularly, praise the Apex help center's support, timeliness, and ability to access instructional videos, as demonstrated by the following quotes.

*"I cannot say enough nice things about the helpdesk people. They are phenomenal. They're always so nice [...] And the other companies we've worked with, that has not been the case."*

- EVSC Interview Participant

*"Our consultant came for face-to-face training, and then also shared the videos that you'll have posted, and I believe it's called the Help Center. But those videos of just how to log in, and then how to manage classrooms, that was nice to have that as an on-demand resource for our teachers."*

- Frenship Interview Participant



*"So, if I send an email for a request, usually to their tech support, I usually receive an email back within a couple of hours, if not sooner. They're very responsive to me, and they really do work to try to troubleshoot whatever issues that you might be having."*

- Manassas Park Interview Participant

**Many district staff also emphasize the benefits of professional development opportunities offered by their district and Apex**, particularly opportunities and sessions with direct support and coaching. In terms of district services, survey participants that engaged in professional development leveraged workshops (66%), one-on-one coaching (27%), and other opportunities (6%). Alternatively, those that engage in Apex-offered professional development do so more consistently across opportunities. Specifically, survey participants used the following supports:

- In-person or video conference sessions with a Success Manager, regarding target coaching, specialized skill training, and specific implementation model training (29%);
- Online resources, such as Educator Academy, on-demand resources, and the help center (28%);
- In-person or video conference sessions with a Success Manager, regarding curriculum and LMS functionality, best practices for classroom management, instruction, student motivation, intervention, and follow-up training (28%); and
- Other (8%).

Among the survey participants who used these district- and Apex-provided resources, between one-third and three-quarters of respondents found them helpful. Regarding district-provided support, administrators often gave substantial one-on-one support throughout the first semester to students and teachers. Still, both teachers and students adapted well to using Apex in the new environment. Notably, the interview participant from Manassas Park described using help enter resources and videos to conduct scaffolded training sessions with staff. Figure 1.4 illustrates the percentage of district staff who used the professional development services offered by their district or Apex and found them very or extremely helpful.

**Figure 1.4: Staff who Identified Professional Development as Very or Extremely Helpful**



\*This survey item is shortened for brevity.

Furthermore, teachers across districts who were new to Apex were confronted with a large amount of new information and processes to learn given the extreme demands of pandemic-impacted operations during the school year. Certain teachers found the adjustment challenging until they became more familiar with the Apex materials. Others continued to need support to adopt Apex tools. However, as indicated by the quote from a Frenship focus group participant, teachers felt fortunate for readily available guidance and resources, which they leveraged to address concerns.

*“There was so much in Apex. I think for a brand new teacher, that is the most important thing. In fact, I think we’re going to have an Apex training next week sometime, and I’m going to go back to the training because once you get in, it’s the volume of resources that are wonderful.”*

- Frenship Focus Group Participant

## IMPLEMENTATION



**COVID-19 caused districts to adjust how they used Apex and quickly expand the number and types of students engaged with a virtual learning curriculum, prompting teachers to creatively incorporate Apex into their teaching practices and modify program components to meet students' needs.** Notably, teachers greatly appreciated the flexibility of Apex curricula and found that the ability to modify lessons and assessments was the most useful feature during this past year. Although student engagement posed challenges across all virtual learning products and platforms, teachers found that Apex provided a positive learning experience, particularly for accelerated, credit recovery, and summer school students.

**COVID-19 caused districts to transition from using Apex for credit recovery to expanding use to support hybrid and general education virtual learning.** Survey responses demonstrate that districts most often used Apex to meet virtual instruction needs (71%), followed by original instruction (38%) and credit recovery instruction (38%). Notably, the exact ways teachers used Apex differed depending on whether students were remote or on campus. For example, when students were remote, they used Apex for the core curriculum, all instruction, throughout the year, asynchronously, and for the full scope and sequence more often than when they were on campus. Figure 1.5 presents the division of remote and at-school Apex curriculum uses.

**Figure 1.5: Implementation of the Apex Curriculum According to Learning Environment**

CURRICULUM USE		REMOTE STUDENTS	ON-CAMPUS STUDENTS
Curriculum	Core curriculum	86%	67%
	Supplemental curriculum	14%	33%
Instruction	All instruction	74%	49%
	Supplemental instruction	26%	51%
Instruction time	Over the full school year	67%	57%
	During a targeted period of time	33%	43%
Learning	Synchronous	36%	64%
	Asynchronous	64%	36%
Scope	Accessing full scope and sequence	65%	52%
	Accessing partial scope and sequence	35%	48%

Additionally, focus group participants described how their **districts navigated the implementation stage by leveraging the range of materials and modifying the materials they used based on student needs and familiar teaching practices.** For example, one focus group participant from Manassas Park described printing out study guides for students needing to take notes by hand to learn. Conversely, another Manassas Park focus group participant distributed study guides and quizzes through Apex in addition to meeting with hybrid and virtual learning students to ensure students grasped concepts and connected material. Similarly, EVSC focus group participants described how they used Apex for certain aspects of instruction, such as foundational lessons. Yet, they found that in-person instruction better-suited student needs for certain subjects and tasks (e.g., quizzes for science instruction, conversations for French instruction). Although adjusting to these materials and capabilities took time, once teachers understood how to adapt and incorporate Apex products, they found that the system supported instruction.

*"[...] and at first, it seemed like it was a lot and it seemed overwhelming, but as I began to learn, and I'm still learning, I began to appreciate everything was there—the study guides, the quizzes, the tests, if a student logged in, if they didn't log in [...] There was so much in Apex. I think for a brand-new teacher, that is the most important thing [...] After I got in and I began to understand, the program is a wealth of knowledge. It's just knowing how to navigate."*

- Frenship Focus Group Participant

*"We are using [Apex] for our virtual students this year. In chemistry, I have been using it in our learning management system. It's linked to it. And then they are assigned lessons to help with going through the material at home."*

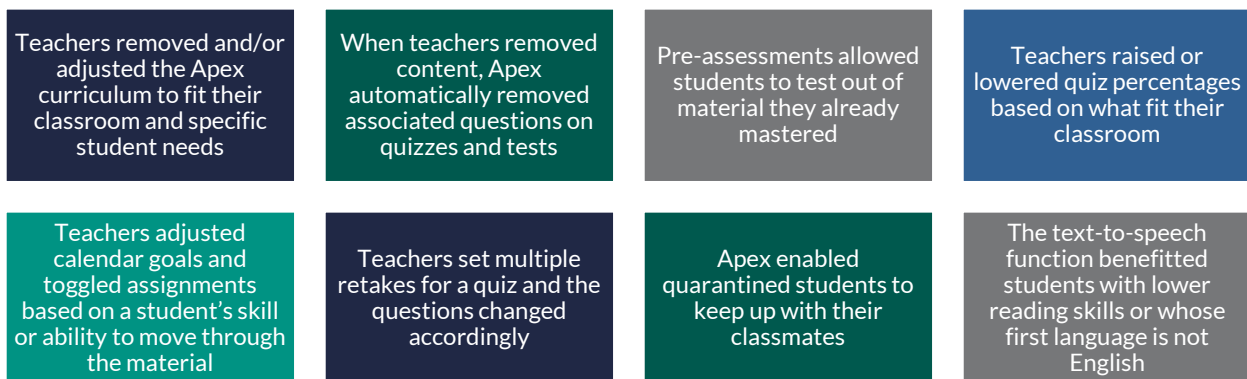
- Mat-Su Focus Group Participant

*"And so I kind of walk through the Apex notes, but modified to me, a form I'm comfortable with. And then I print off note packets that match what I do on the board to my students. So I teach them and then they practice with the quizzes in class with me and/or checkup."*

- EVSC Focus Group Participant

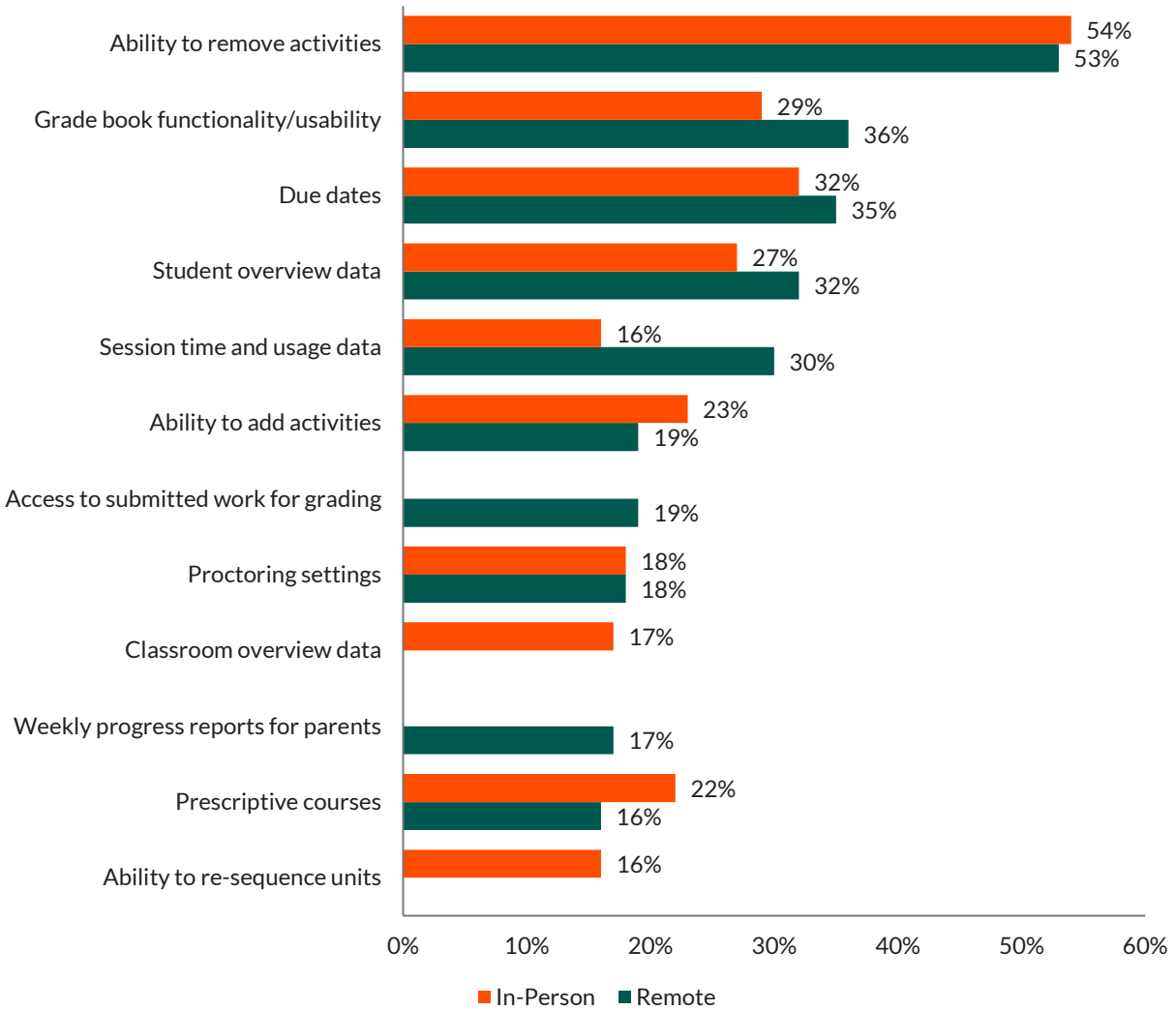
**Apex users also praise the flexibility of the products and services.** During focus groups, teachers highlight how Apex enables them to adjust the curriculum as needed to meet the needs of a particular group of students. Teachers greatly appreciate the ability to select or remove content and how the quizzes and tests will automatically eliminate questions when applicable. Further, Figure 1.6 presents the numerous ways in which teachers leveraged Apex's hallmark of flexibility.

**Figure 1.6: How Apex's Flexibility Supported Teachers**



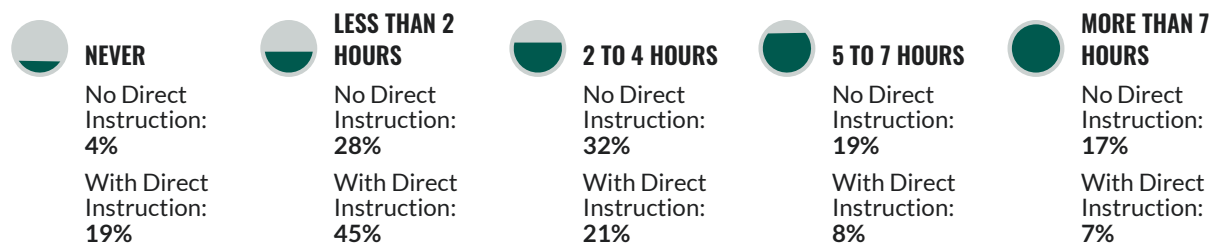
Additionally, survey responses demonstrate that the most helpful Apex feature, regardless of whether their students followed a remote or in-person learning model, was the ability to remove activities. Respondents selected nearly identical features of Apex when asked which were the most helpful during remote and in-person instruction. Figure 1.7 contains the top 10 features for instruction within each learning environment.

**Figure 1.7: Most Helpful Apex Product Features for In-Person and Remote Instruction**



Teachers agree that Apex—and virtual learning in general—is very effective among self-motivated, independent students. For other students, teachers typically needed to provide consistent and active progress monitoring to keep students engaged, which Apex supported through engaging videos and materials. As illustrated in Figure 1.8, most students spent four hours or less on Apex curriculum materials in a typical week for a single course (i.e., 5 hours/week/course) both with and without direct teacher instruction, and Apex was a more significant part of students’ days when teachers were not present to support learning.

**Figure 1.8: Amount of Time Spent Using Apex Curriculum in a Single Course in a Typical Week**



During these Apex hours, teachers reported that students engaged more with teachers present. According to survey results, a similar percentage of students appeared engaged and disengaged when learning without direct teacher instruction. In contrast, with teacher instruction, over three times as many students appeared engaged than disengaged. Figure 1.9 illustrates these differences in engagement.

**Figure 1.9: Student Engagement With and Without Direct Teacher Instruction**

	COMPLETELY OR SOMEWHAT DISENGAGED	NEUTRAL	COMPLETELY OR SOMEWHAT ENGAGED
Students using the Apex curriculum independently <b>without direct teacher instruction</b>	40%	20%	40%
Students using the Apex curriculum <b>with direct teacher instruction</b>	19%	15%	66%

These results and focus group responses corroborate to show how **teacher guidance is a key component of student engagement, particularly with students with special education needs, and one that spans across all aspects of remote learning rather than being specific to Apex.** Focus groups indicated that districts that previously used virtual programs incorporated in-person meetings as part of their online instruction pedagogy because of this consistent challenge with student engagement. Teachers being present to get students started with lessons, explain concepts differently, and provide support between assessments resulted in greater student engagement and learning through digital curricula.

While Apex users faced challenges with virtual learning and benefitted from modifying their practices to align with the Apex tools, focus group participants emphasized aspects of the product that they and their students got excited to use (e.g., engaging texts and supplemental videos).

*“As I say, I like the print with Apex and I love the diversity that you have there. Students today are just not seeing one group of people. They can see themselves in the videos. I enjoy that.”*

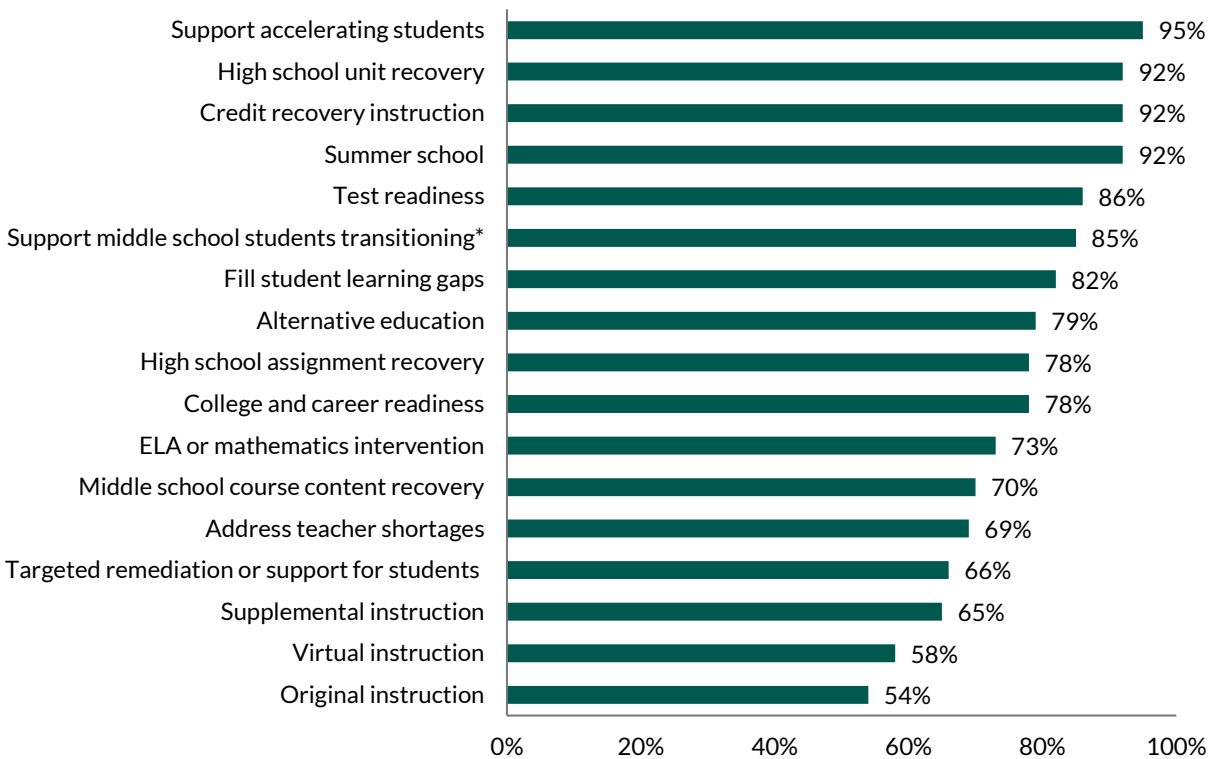
- Frenship Focus Group Participant

*“I think there’s a really good engaging in things in the English curriculum that students do enjoy. Sometimes they’re always going to complain about it, but I think they do enjoy much of it.”*

- Frenship Focus Group Participant

After implementing the Apex curriculum during a school year impacted by COVID-19, **teachers demonstrated appreciation for Apex’s content and curriculum and how it allowed students to graduate when they otherwise would not have.** Although teachers would prefer certain adjustments (e.g., more videos, easier reading materials, slower pacing, more scaffolding), survey responses show that more than half of teachers perceived Apex as positively impacting on-campus instruction (58%) and remote instruction (56%). Figure 1.10 details the percentage of teachers perceiving Apex to impact student outcomes across specific contexts positively.

**Figure 1.10: Contexts in which Apex has had a Somewhat or Very Positive Impact, Teacher Responses**



\*This survey item is shortened for brevity.

These perceptions align with qualitative responses captured during focus groups and interviews. Using Apex for summer school, accelerated instruction, and unit or credit recovery instruction often resulted in comparatively strong outcomes.

*“The Apex Tutorials are a great help. We’ll be using them a lot next year for that accelerated instruction.”*  
- Frenship Interview Participant

*“Summer school started this week for us, and we use Apex for all of our summer school courses. And I’ll be honest, the students need very little training or very little help with Apex, because now they are comfortable using it, since many of them have used it.”*  
- Manassas Park Interview Participant

*"The science material is really, really good. I've taught AP bio, I've taught advanced physics, physics, IBP. I've taught just about everything at one time or another. And I like the material. I think the material is very good. And it is, it's difficult. But I've had kids come back and say, 'I've learned a lot from this.'"*

- Frenship Focus Group Participant

*"I also think for credit recovery classes, they have pretests, which I think are beneficial because instead of making the kids sit through things that they already know—if they've already taken the class and they say they know solving equations or whatever, they can show that they know that—and then being bumped to something that they don't know that they need to practice on instead of wasting time on things that they already know."*

- Manassas Park Focus Group Participant

*"As far as credit recovery goes, I think it's a great tool for that. Yeah. It does help recover credit."*

- Mat-Su Focus Group Participant

## OUTCOMES



**Despite COVID-19's impact on learning environments, Apex supported positive student outcomes, particularly among students needing accelerated learning and credit recovery.**

Although districts chose Apex to meet needs within different educational contexts, over 90 percent of teachers who used the curriculum for supporting accelerated students, summer school, credit recovery, and high school unit recovery indicated that Apex positively impacted student outcomes. Further, district and school administrators felt most satisfied with Apex's rigor and alignment to state standards, respectively, while teachers felt most satisfied with Apex's support in tracking student success. Looking ahead, most Apex users contacted for this implementation evaluation believe they will use Apex to support virtual instruction again for reasons including student and staff familiarity, ease of use, and flexibility.

**Ultimately, district, school, and classroom staff felt satisfied with Apex's ability to support students needing to graduate and learn under a particularly challenging and irregular COVID-19-induced climate.** As described by focus group and interview participants, Apex provided the virtual platform needed to support students remotely and through a quick transition. Even in a completely virtual environment, Apex helped districts achieve successful results, including pass rates. Further, after teacher-made adjustments, Apex allowed teachers to devote more time to students.

*"Honestly, if I was to rate it, I'd give it an excellent for a lot of the reasons I had mentioned. It's just the ease of use and the interface for all users."*

- Manassas Park Interview Participant

*"I think our biggest success is [having] most credits that we had awarded for our high school students, and then just the option of allowing students to attend school safely for the year."*

- EVSC Interview Participant



*"I think another important feature, and I think we're all kind of used to it, but it most certainly came in handy was the ability to remove or adjust the curriculum, one based on our COVID lives right now. But then we had those snow days, and we were able to go in and kind of make some adjustments there. That was very, very helpful."*

- Frenship Focus Group Participant

While most surveyed users chose to implement Apex for virtual instruction, the platform had positive impacts on student outcomes across the spectrum of learning, including credit recovery, accelerated student learning, and middle school transition support. These uses led to higher percentages of teachers indicating positive effects on learning. As a specific example, an overwhelming percentage of teachers who indicated they used Apex for accelerated student learning found it impactful (95%). Although sample sizes vary, these results demonstrate the successful use of Apex for all types of learners.

Further, this contrast in most used versus most impactful applications for Apex illustrates how districts could use Apex to support goals and improvements outside of their current intentions and leverage Apex products and services to a greater extent. Figure 1.11 compares the needs that teachers intended to meet through Apex and the impact those teachers believe Apex had on student outcomes. Contexts appear from highest to lowest according to the percentage of teachers who used Apex for each context.

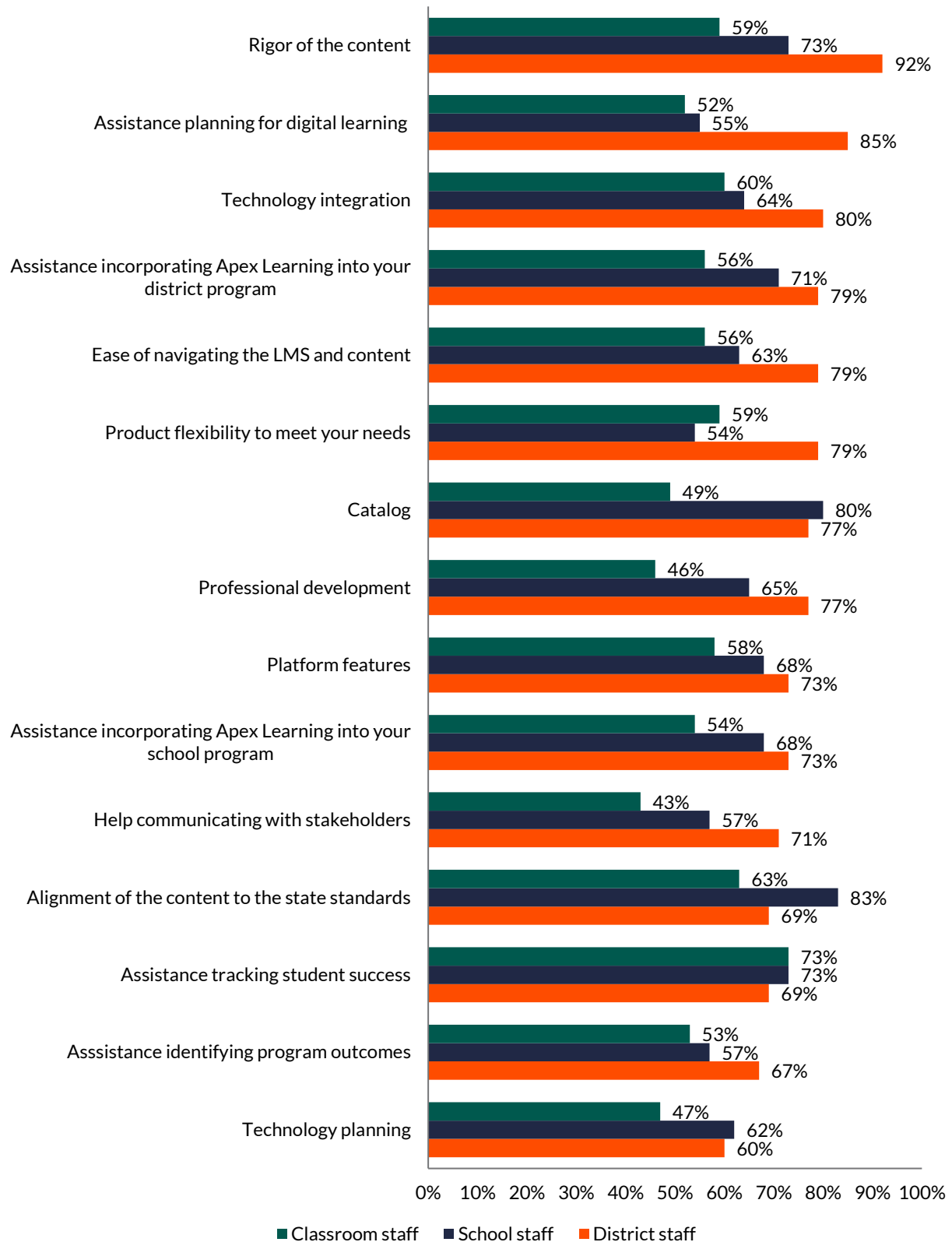
**Figure 1.11: Uses for and Positive Student Outcomes Associated with Apex, Teacher Responses**

CONTEXT	TEACHERS USING APEX TO ADDRESS THE CONTEXT	
Virtual instruction	71%	58% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
Original instruction	38%	54% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
Credit recovery instruction	33%	92% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
Alternative education	20%	79% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
Supplemental instruction	20%	65% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
High school unit recovery	17%	92% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
Summer school	17%	92% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
Support accelerated students	14%	95% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
High school assignment recovery	11%	78% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
Targeted remediation or support for students	11%	66% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
Fill student learning gaps	10%	82% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
College and career readiness	9%	78% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
Test readiness	8%	86% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes

CONTEXT	TEACHERS USING APEX TO ADDRESS THE CONTEXT	
ELA or mathematics intervention	6%	73% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
Address teacher shortages	5%	69% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
Middle school course content recovery	4%	70% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
Support middle school students transitioning to the next grade level or high school	4%	85% of whom believe Apex positively impacted student outcomes
Other	3%	N/A
Social Emotional Learning	2%	N/A

Additionally, **most district staff found that Apex had a positive impact during the last academic year (80%)**, and over half were satisfied with the products and services overall (54%). Further, district staff members were most satisfied with how rigorous Apex curricula are (92%) and the assistance provided when planning for digital learning (85%). District responses are typically higher than school and classroom staff responses regarding satisfaction. However, school staff members demonstrate particular satisfaction with the content’s alignment to state standards (83%), and teachers demonstrate particular satisfaction with assistance tracking student success (73%). Figure 1.12 illustrates the percentage of district, school, and classroom staff somewhat or completely satisfied with different aspects of Apex. Data appear in order of highest district staff satisfaction levels.

**Figure 1.12: Aspects of Apex with which District Staff are Somewhat or Completely Satisfied**



Additionally, district staff and administrators highlight the effectiveness of Apex in supporting students and teachers in an atypical learning environment. For example, an academic administrator from Frenship described how Grade 9 virtual students taking algebra performed only three percentage points lower than in-person students, on average. This administrator was pleasantly surprised by this outcome, given how teachers traditionally teach algebra by modeling problem-solving.

*"Our virtual algebra students were maybe three percentage points lower than our face-to-face, but still very comparable when you think about how the nature of the algebra one content, and how it's so helpful to have a teacher modeling for you. For our virtual students, not to have that, and only be maybe three percentage points behind was remarkable."*

-Frenship Interview Participant

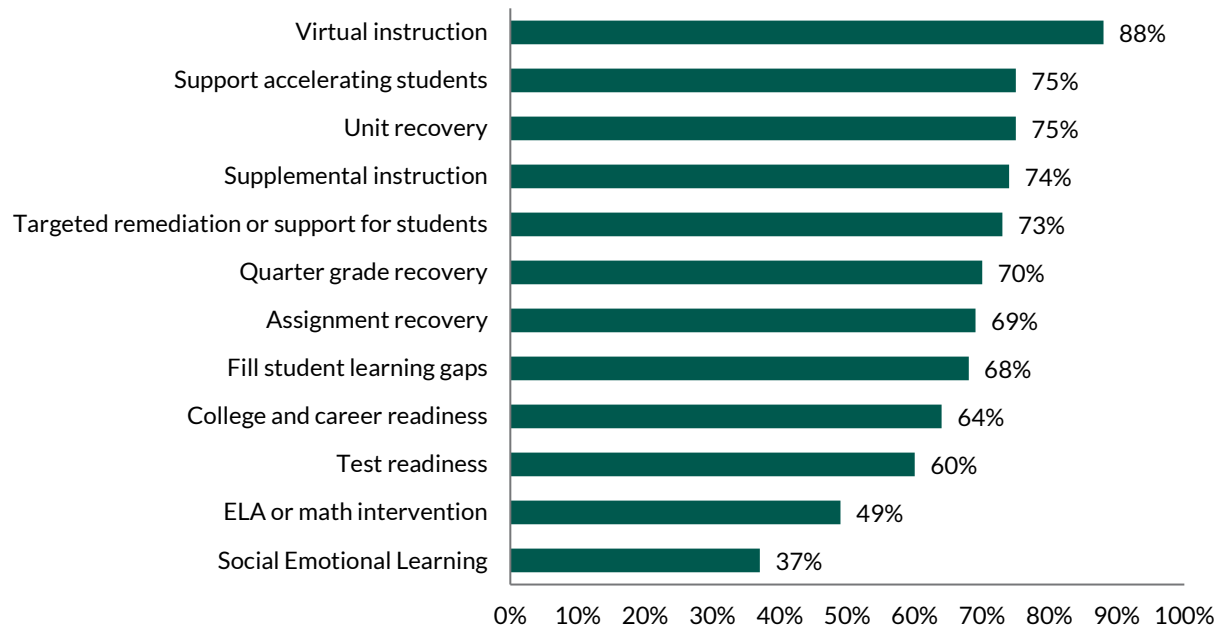
Other district administrators note how Apex effectively supported student course completion and graduation, enabled virtual transfers of student work and data, and incorporated updates to facilitate virtual learning. Notably, a district staff member from Manassas Park described how Apex products and services support instruction by making modifications that meet district needs.

*"One additional change that wasn't available in the past, but was opened up just late last year, was the ability to change the order of the units and whatnot. And that was always another thing that teachers wanted to do, but wasn't an option. But that was added last year. I think Apex does a great job at listening to a customer's needs, and then adapting to those changes."*

-Manassas Park Interview Participant

**Most teacher survey responses indicated that Apex positively impacted student outcomes during hybrid instruction (65%).** A smaller majority of respondents agree that Apex positively impacted student outcomes in fully in-person instruction (53%), followed by those who agree that the curriculum positively impacted student outcomes in fully virtual instruction (49%). Given these outcomes and their experiences, most teachers also indicated that they are somewhat or very likely to use Apex next year if offered by their district (55%). Figure 1.13 presents the percentage of survey respondents somewhat or very likely to use Apex again to meet certain needs.

**Figure 1.13: Contexts for which Teachers are Somewhat or Very Likely to Use Apex Again**



Additionally, focus group participants observed improved student outcomes after students became accustomed to the platform. Again, the transition to virtual learning resulted in general barriers to progress as students struggled to remain engaged. However, as familiarity with Apex and how virtual learning would operate increased, performance increased.

*"Once [students] realize that we can see the exact dates that they logged in and the exact amount of time that they were logged in for and the exact assignments that they handed in on specific days-- once I start talking about those things, it definitely kicks up their progress a little bit more."*

-Manassas Park Focus Group Participant


*"After that initial few little weeks of realizing why they're here and this is what they're going to have to do to be successful, most of them actually do really well."*


-EVSC Focus Group Participant

# SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND ACTION ITEMS

Figure ES 2 presents the overall findings and associated action items to present a complete picture of the common experiences educators and administrators have with Apex products and services and potential solutions to challenges referenced during conversations and through survey responses.

Figure ES 2: Key Findings and Action Items

LIFECYCLE STAGE	FINDING	ACTION ITEMS
 <p><b>Adoption and Planning</b></p>	<p>Insights presented in in-depth interviews, focus group conversations, and survey responses indicate that districts chose Apex because of how easy the platform is to navigate and the ability to customize curricula. When initially choosing a digital curriculum provider, districts prioritized virtual instruction and credit recovery needs. Further, districts chose to expand their use of Apex in response to COVID-19 since many teachers already knew how to use the system and how to support students and receive support from Apex’s customer services. A repeated experience expressed among district staff was their use of the help center and additional resources during implementation.</p>	<p><b>Action Item #1: Improve alignment, offer state-specific curricula, and/or add additional lessons to ensure users can customize lessons to meet desired standards more easily.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Focus on developing science curricula to ensure districts have the materials to align curricula with all state standards and enable students to engage in more hands-on learning opportunities.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow users to customize learning materials to align with student-specific reading levels.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow teachers to pull material within and across classes.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide a recap/background information at the start of each new section within units to reinforce key concepts.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Onboarding and Getting Started</b></p>	<p>Apex users adjusted to the system’s platform and functions by creating strategies for connecting their LMS to Apex, accessing help center resources, and leveraging professional development opportunities offered by their district and Apex. Although certain staff members struggled to transition to virtual learning using Apex quickly, interview, focus group, and survey participants consistently cited Apex support services and videos as useful in navigating the new tool. Leveraging the support of Success Managers and readily accessible video guides provided key insights as teachers adjusted to Apex and learned about its features. Staff also found coaching and professional development opportunities within their districts helpful during virtual learning. Although certain staff members previously used Apex products and services, this was not true for all staff members. Therefore, accessing the aforementioned supports and learning from colleagues facilitated the quick and unanticipated transition to widespread virtual learning.</p>	<p><b>Action Item #2: Improve integration with other learning software (e.g., Schoology, RDF, Canvas) and grade books.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop a feature that allows teachers to integrate their grading system with Apex activities, preferably directly but also using an intermediate step such as Excel exports.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure teachers know about Apex features that allow students to access Apex directly from their LMS and avoid logging into multiple platforms.</li> </ul> <p><b>Action Item #3: Offer one-on-one and small group training sessions for district and school leaders, staff, and parents before introducing Apex to students to ensure all stakeholders understand Apex products and services and are ready to support students if issues arise.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create a limited, general log-in for ease of orientation with new users that allows access to all the instructional videos from the help center.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Conduct one-on-one coaching with district leaders, school leaders, and interested staff members in a train-the-trainer format that enables these individuals to serve as extensions of the help center and Success Manager.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Advise district leaders to identify staff members skilled in using Apex products and</li> </ul>

LIFECYCLE STAGE	FINDING	ACTION ITEMS
 <p data-bbox="217 695 391 722">Implementation</p>	<p data-bbox="430 417 907 615"><b>COVID-19 caused districts to adjust how they used Apex and quickly expand the number and types of students engaged with a virtual learning curriculum, prompting teachers to creatively incorporate Apex into their teaching practices and modify program components to meet students' needs.</b></p> <p data-bbox="430 621 907 900">Notably, teachers greatly appreciated the flexibility of Apex curricula and found that the ability to modify lessons and assessments was the most useful feature during this past year. Although student engagement posed challenges across all virtual learning products and platforms, teachers found that Apex provided a positive learning experience, particularly for accelerated, credit recovery, and summer school students.</p>	<p data-bbox="930 243 1419 359">services and recruit those staff members to serve as mentors for a specific set of classrooms who can support colleagues and students on an ad-hoc basis.</p> <p data-bbox="930 380 1419 520"><b>Action Item #4: Improve the user experience and offer customizations that increase student engagement, drive motivation, and retain interest when teachers are not available for direct support.</b></p> <ul data-bbox="930 527 1419 940" style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Add more interactive videos that require a student response before moving to the next activity.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Enable the message center to accept stickers, bitmojis, and screenshots to communicate when students have done well, have turned in the wrong assignment, or need to redo some work.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate scaffolding options to allow better engagement for students of differing skill and Lexile levels.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Add more visual cues as rewards for students, such as stickers or badges.</li> </ul>
 <p data-bbox="248 1308 358 1335">Outcomes</p>	<p data-bbox="430 957 907 1583"><b>Despite COVID-19's impact on learning environments, Apex supported positive student outcomes, particularly among students needing accelerated learning and credit recovery.</b> Although districts chose Apex to meet needs within different educational contexts, over 90 percent of teachers who used the curriculum for supporting accelerated students, summer school, credit recovery, and high school unit recovery indicated that Apex positively impacted student outcomes. Further, district and school administrators felt most satisfied with Apex's rigor and alignment to state standards, respectively, while teachers felt most satisfied with Apex's support in tracking student success. Looking ahead, most Apex users contacted for this implementation evaluation believe they will use Apex to support virtual instruction again for reasons including student and staff familiarity, ease of use, and flexibility.</p>	<p data-bbox="930 1003 1419 1119"><b>Action Item #5: Ensure teachers and students have and can apply the necessary tools and features to meet instructional program goals and achieve successful academic outcomes.</b></p> <ul data-bbox="930 1125 1419 1539" style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Add the ability to include qualitative and quantitative data in the tracking forms.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Include texts and tools referenced in and required for subject-specific lessons within the platform (e.g., books, graphing calculator).</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide completed solutions for students, so they can understand where they went wrong.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Offer a weekly summary notification for students and parents to review the previous week and cue students for the upcoming week.</li> </ul>

*“So overall, we always come back to Apex just because there's so many benefits, that any of the negatives that we see, with content not always fully aligning, those are little in comparison to the benefits we get out of it.”*

-Manassas Park Interview Participant

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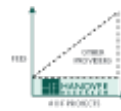
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