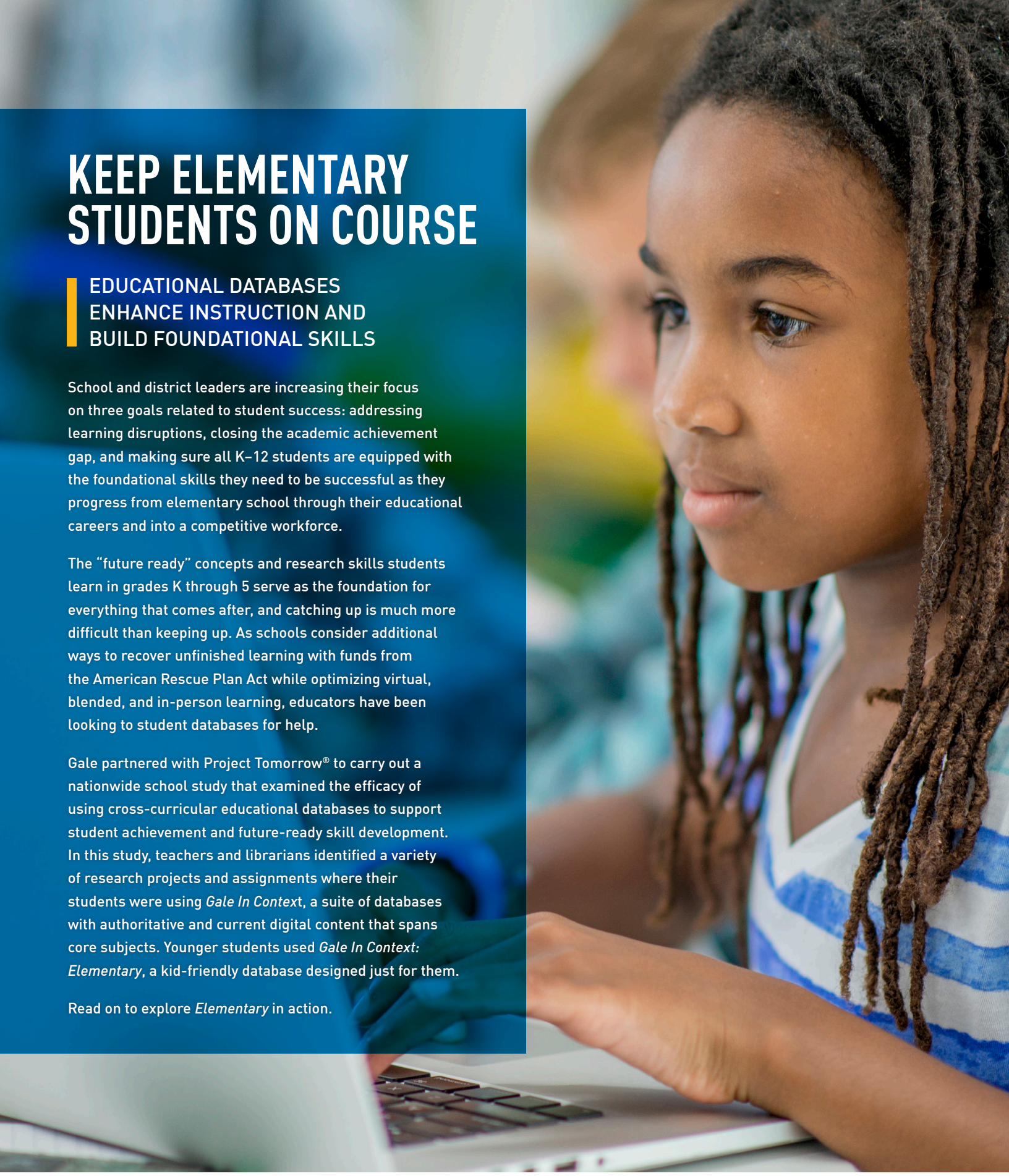


KEEP ELEMENTARY STUDENTS ON COURSE

EDUCATIONAL DATABASES ENHANCE INSTRUCTION AND BUILD FOUNDATIONAL SKILLS

School and district leaders are increasing their focus on three goals related to student success: addressing learning disruptions, closing the academic achievement gap, and making sure all K–12 students are equipped with the foundational skills they need to be successful as they progress from elementary school through their educational careers and into a competitive workforce.

The "future ready" concepts and research skills students learn in grades K through 5 serve as the foundation for everything that comes after, and catching up is much more difficult than keeping up. As schools consider additional ways to recover unfinished learning with funds from the American Rescue Plan Act while optimizing virtual, blended, and in-person learning, educators have been looking to student databases for help.

Gale partnered with Project Tomorrow® to carry out a nationwide school study that examined the efficacy of using cross-curricular educational databases to support student achievement and future-ready skill development. In this study, teachers and librarians identified a variety of research projects and assignments where their students were using *Gale In Context*, a suite of databases with authoritative and current digital content that spans core subjects. Younger students used *Gale In Context: Elementary*, a kid-friendly database designed just for them.

Read on to explore *Elementary* in action.

GALE
A Cengage Company

project tomorrow

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS HIGHLY VALUE GALE DATABASES TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF STUDENT LEARNING

100%

OF ELEMENTARY TEACHERS said one of their primary goals is to differentiate instruction for their students.

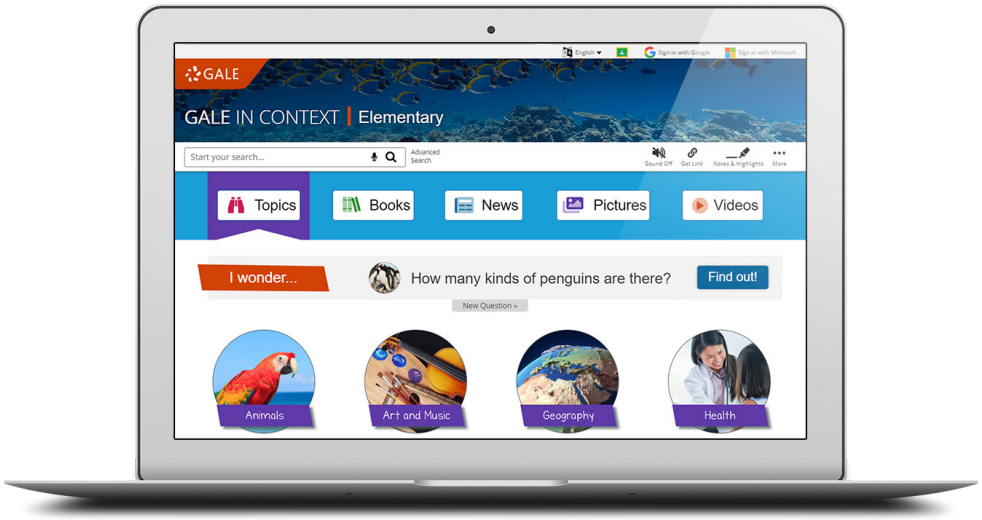
RESOURCES IN ACTION

In this study, older students used *Gale In Context: Middle School, Gale In Context: High School, Gale In Context: Global Issues*, and more, while younger students used *Gale In Context: Elementary*.

For example, a 4th-grade class at Stopher Elementary School in Louisville, Kentucky, used the self-directed reading feature of *Gale In Context: Elementary* in its reading centers to increase reading proficiency around areas of personal interest.

ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' PRIMARY INSTRUCTION GOAL

100 percent of elementary teachers said one of their primary goals is to differentiate instruction for their students. The 4th-grade students at Stopher Elementary School chose the topics they wanted to research and read about (e.g., animals, the environment, and historical figures). They used *Gale In Context: Elementary* in their reading centers to help with their research. **Giving students a choice led to increased student engagement** and a sense of agency while differentiating instruction holistically.



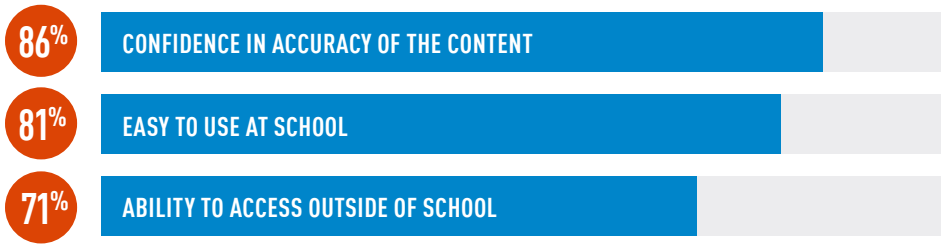
Product screen capture as of August 2021. Actual interface may vary.

"For our district's elementary students, including emergent readers, *Gale In Context: Elementary* is a game changer. This timely resource really provides the avenue for kids to be engaged and part of the reading conversation in our schools."

— Shelley Hunsaker, district elementary media specialist at Lincoln County School District #2

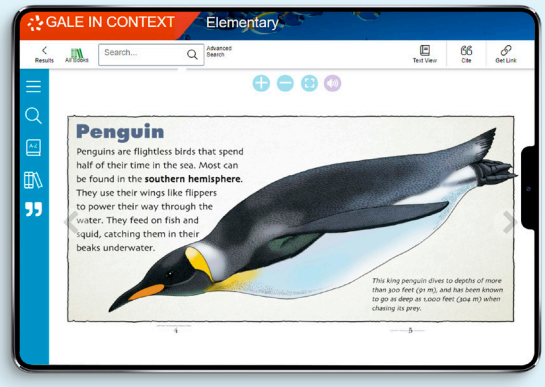
MOST EDUCATOR-VALUED DATABASE FEATURES

Teachers noted the most valuable features within *Gale In Context* databases: trusted, accurate content topped the list. Beyond that, teachers continue to appreciate the flexibility of being able to use Gale databases outside of school. This allows for a seamless transition between classroom and remote learning as well as improved access overall.



Teachers and librarians also liked the relevant topic pages available within *Gale In Context: Elementary*. These pages provide students with short, age-appropriate summaries of topics and help them organize resources for easy use in research projects. With organized topic pages, citation tools, leveled content, and a simplified interface, *Elementary* is an effective environment to introduce young students to research with appropriate guidance.

Students appreciated the ability to explore freely and select topics that appealed to them; teachers appreciated the built-in capability for differentiating instruction. Additionally, teachers welcomed the accommodating translation tools that offer students on-demand text translation into over 40 languages and ReadSpeaker text-to-speech technology available in over 20 languages, making the content more accessible to English Language Learners (ELLs).



Product screen capture as of August 2021. Actual interface may vary.

SIMPLIFIED EXPERIENCE

To continue to nurture elementary students' natural curiosity, *Gale In Context: Elementary* includes daily-updated "I wonder" questions, fun facts, and a visual topic tree. Further reducing barriers to learning, Gale's elementary resources are cross-searchable to help learners find all the content they need in one place. While using *Gale In Context: Elementary,* students can learn at their own pace as they explore periodicals, videos, and more to find information that draws them into any topic that interests them. When additional depth is needed, students can read entire eBooks right within the *Elementary* platform, providing uninterrupted access to a school's K–5 content. The eBooks are displayed in a simplified reader, making it easy for students to read and learn.

GALE RESOURCE USED BY ELEMENTARY STUDENTS IN THIS STUDY

ENHANCED TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

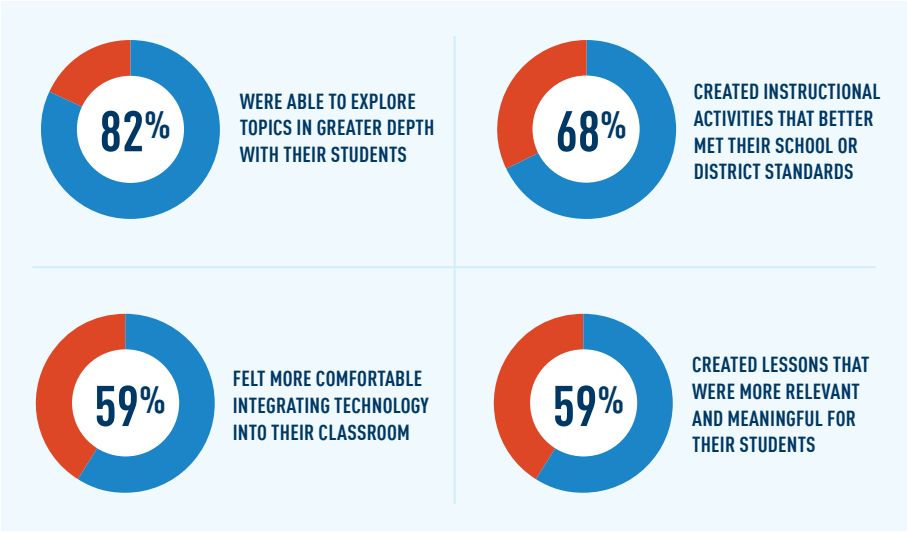
Access to Gale databases provides teachers with professional benefits that increase their efficacy for classroom assignments. This is especially significant because a majority of K–12 district administrators believe that the most sustainable way to close the achievement gap is to enhance teachers' overall effectiveness with classwork.[1] Research has long documented the connection between effective teachers and stronger student academic achievement. The teachers in this study validated that Gale databases provided them with benefits that resulted in enhanced teaching effectiveness. They categorized these benefits as having operational and instructional value.

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the importance of technology infrastructure, including one-to-one student devices and the delivery of instruction and content through digital platforms. In fact, **70 percent of teachers nationwide reported using G Suite for Education at least weekly to support classroom activities and operations.**[2] Therefore, it makes sense that Gale's technology integrations are highly valued by teachers and students alike. This is especially true for the efficiency it provides inside and outside of the classroom, particularly for kids who are just beginning to conduct proper research and need help organizing their research materials.

INSTRUCTIONAL VALUE

According to Education Week, researchers and educators believe that undoing the damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic requires a commitment to grade-level teaching, tutoring, strategies to engage students, and above all, a strong curriculum.[3]

Relative to instructional value, teachers appreciated how Gale databases supported their quest to create more meaningful learning experiences for students while still addressing curriculum standards. Specifically, teachers reported that as a result of using *Gale In Context* databases to enhance instruction, they felt more equipped in the classroom, as seen below.



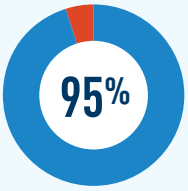
It is also worth noting that **95 percent of the teachers in the study, many of whom had never used Gale databases, said they are likely to use Gale databases in the next school year.**

"It was funner learning on *Gale In Context: Elementary*!!!!!! I definitely didn't know that Texas has a Tornado Alley."

— 4th-grade student, Stopher Elementary School

Teachers are typically less likely than other professionals to recommend resources to colleagues. Per research from Project Tomorrow, only 57 percent of teachers said they regularly suggest online resources to another teacher to use in their class.[4] Therefore, it's significant that after the experience of using Gale databases to support student learning, **100 percent of the teachers in this study said they are likely to recommend *Gale In Context* to a colleague or another teacher, with two-thirds of those teachers (68 percent) saying they would strongly recommend Gale resources in general.** The reasons for this high "recommend-ability" of the Gale resources is evident through the study findings. Per the teachers, the use of the Gale databases improved students' project quality, helped students develop stronger research skills, and enhanced teacher effectiveness by streamlining class workflow. For educators, this is a winning combination.

KID TESTED, TEACHER APPROVED



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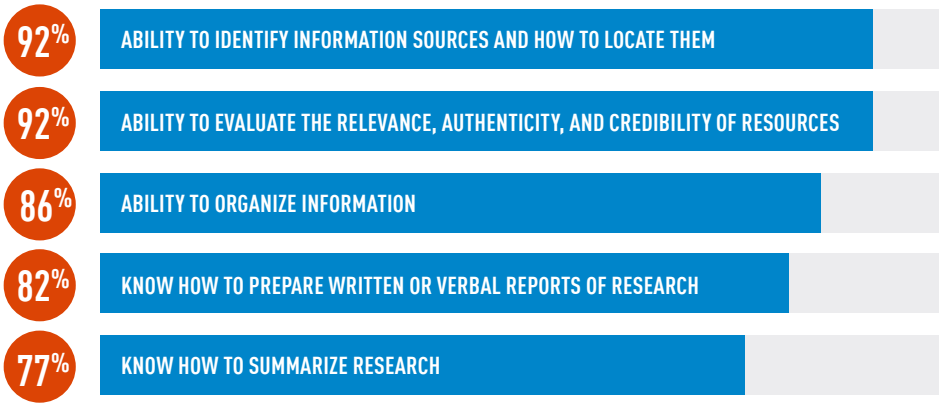
OF THE TEACHERS
IN THE STUDY SAID THEY ARE LIKELY TO RECOMMEND *GALE IN CONTEXT* TO A COLLEAGUE OR ANOTHER TEACHER.

CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP

School librarians and media specialists are on the front lines in terms of identifying information and media literacy skills students need and evaluating students' current skill levels. Per Speak Up Research from Project Tomorrow, librarians nationwide identified the following research skills as essential for students:



While educators are cognizant of the need for students to develop proficiency in these skills, librarians shared a sobering assessment of the current skill level of our nation's students. **According to the study, librarians reported only 29 percent of students are proficient in these skills, 58% have only basic skill knowledge about information and media literacy, and 13 percent have skills that rank as below or very below basic.[5]** For the sake of our students and communities, it is imperative to learn how to help students develop stronger overall research skills, and this begins in elementary school.

"I liked how *Gale In Context: Elementary* gave me all the facts about the topic so I had different things to choose from that helped me learn in ways that I liked."

— 4th-grade student, Stopher Elementary School

THE IMPACT ON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

The development of future-ready research skills is not limited to middle school or high school. Students need to begin developing these information and media literacy skills in elementary school. Using *Gale In Context: Elementary* is an effective way for younger students to gain exposure to online resources and learn basic research strategies. Elementary teachers and students were included in this study to examine the impact of Gale databases in these formative learning years.

Teachers at the elementary school in our study used *Gale In Context: Elementary* to both support students' overall literacy development and to seed emerging research skill development. The elementary teachers were especially impressed with the appropriateness of the language level and content within *Elementary*. In one example, 4th-grade students used *Elementary* to research animals for a science project. From this learning experience, changes in students' comfort level with several specific research tasks, particularly around the use of online information for an assignment, were noted. For most 4th-grade students, research is not a common learning activity. After using *Elementary,* however, 70% of the students said they were now comfortable doing a research project on their own, and 79% agreed that they were comfortable using online databases to support their research assignments. **Given that librarians identify "sourcing of information to use for research projects" as the most important research skill for students to acquire, it is significant that 52% more 4th-grade students in this study said they were comfortable sourcing information after using *Elementary*.**

STUDENTS GROWING WITH GALE

From elementary students to graduating seniors, the students and their teachers in our study agreed on the efficacy of using Gale databases like *Gale In Context* to support the development of stronger research skills. Gale databases provide a scaffolded approach to research skill development, which proved to be beneficial. As the students matured and tackled more complex and rigorous research activities, the sophistication of the Gale databases grew with the students, thus helping them develop stronger future-ready skills that are academically and developmentally appropriate. School and district leaders who struggle with finding ways to adequately prepare their graduates for college-level research or the demands of future employers should consider these study results very encouraging.

The average class doesn't have time allocated for students to specifically focus on critical-thinking or future-ready skills related to college and career development. Instead, teachers and librarians are making the most out of their time with classes by using instructional tools that enhance learning experiences and develop skills for a successful future. The schools that participated in this study demonstrated how to do that effectively through their daily use of the Gale databases.

The extent to which these resources support real-world class needs is most evident by the overwhelming support from students and teachers who want to continue to use Gale resources in their future teaching and learning activities.

"We want kids to be excited about learning, not overwhelmed. During our conversations with educators and students, we've seen that access to quality digital learning resources isn't enough. These tools have to offer an easy-to-use experience that helps students find the content they need, without having to jump from platform to platform. That's why we've brought K–5 eBooks directly into *Gale In Context: Elementary.*"

— Lemma Shomali, director of K-12 products at Gale

MEETING THE NEEDS OF TODAY'S LEARNERS

When it comes to developing educational resources and preparing young learners for future success, good simply isn't good enough. As an education company, Gale is continuously finding ways to enhance products and services to better support learners and educators as they navigate an increasingly technical world. Based on educator feedback and the need for a simplified learning experience for kids, *Gale In Context: Elementary* now includes access to K–5 eBooks from Gale—helping students find all of their elementary content in one easy-to-use platform.

Elementary encourages students to learn at a comfortable pace as they intuitively move through topics of interest. With text-to-speech and translation tools, the content is accessible to all students, including emerging readers and English Language Learners. The eBooks show up as students search or click through topic trees, which increases discoverability and inspires kids to keep finding answers to their questions.

SUPPORTING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

As fellow educators, Gale understands that academic health starts with mental health. Nurturing kids' social and emotional learning (SEL) has become increasingly more important, and the U.S. federal government agrees with the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act asking that districts reserve Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to respond to the social and emotional needs of students with evidence-based interventions.

2.5M+ STUDENTS

have access to Gale's essential SEL Resources.

That's why Gale continues to partner with SEL experts, like the Cameron K. Gallagher (CKG) Foundation, to cultivate awareness of mental health and wellness. Inspired by our collaboration, Gale offers SEL collections like Cameron's Camp for Wellness, a collection of nearly 100 age-appropriate eBooks to help young learners better understand mental health issues and enhance their coping skills.

NEXT STEPS

Contact an education consultant to see digital resources like *Gale In Context: Elementary* in action at **gale.com/K5**. Learn how this kid-friendly resource simplifies and enriches the K–5 learning experience and how you can help your youngest learners grow on their path to future success.

APPENDIX

The Gale data used in this report was based on the report "Turn Database Access into Action," from a 2018–2019 nationwide study conducted by Project Tomorrow® in partnership with Gale, a Cengage company, to determine the efficacy of using *Gale In Context: Elementary* (formerly *Kids InfoBits)* for elementary students and *Gale In Context* for middle and high school students to support learning outcomes. Project Tomorrow is a federally recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with a 23-year history of supporting innovation in K–12 education through research and school-based programs.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study design and methodology were developed to support a series of research questions around the efficacy of students and teachers using the *Gale In Context* databases to support student learning outcomes. Participating schools were chosen for this study based on various factors, including their current use of Gale resources, school demographic profile, and willingness to participate in the study requirements.

In total, 660 students in grades 4–12 and 32 educators from public schools in two K–12 school districts, including one private, independent school, participated in the study. Student and teacher experiences with the databases as well as their valuations on those experiences were captured through online surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Librarians and administrators provided additional insights based on their observations of usage and the impact database use had on student achievement and skill development. Qualitative data was coded for analysis using a deductive methodology. Descriptive statistics were identified from the quantitative data. Where appropriate, the research team used national benchmark data from the Speak Up Research Project to provide additional context to the study findings.

ABOUT PROJECT TOMORROW

Project Tomorrow's mission is to support the effective implementation of research-based STEAM learning experiences for students in K–12 schools. Project Tomorrow is particularly interested in the role of digital tools, content, and resources in supporting students' development of college and career-ready skills. For the past 15 years, the organization has focused efforts on national research projects and the design and implementation of evaluation, efficacy, and feedback studies examining the impact of digital tools or technology-enabled learning models in the classroom. Learn more about our research activities, including our globally recognized Speak Up Research Project, at tomorrow.org.

ABOUT GALE

We believe in the power and joy of learning. For K–12, Gale's mission is to help students succeed in school and in life by connecting kids to the curriculum-aligned digital content they need to become lifelong learners. Because the pairing of research and technology has become integral for learners of all ages, we continue to help schools bridge the gap from the library to the classroom, and home, by offering innovative digital resources that fit every need. Because student success begins with educator success, librarians and teachers are at the heart of everything we do. We provide instructional materials that make it easier for educators to meet students where they are, while they themselves experience professional growth and prioritize their own self-care.

Today, this includes supporting everything from unfinished learning and social and emotional learning to prioritizing equity and inclusion goals. Together, we can foster an environment where schools and students are encouraged to thrive, not just survive.

Digital resources are just one part of our story. Gale offers engaging webinars, white papers, best practices guides, and more, to inspire educators as they work to achieve their goals. Get started at gale.com/schools.

1. Speak Up Research Project for Digital Learning, Project Tomorrow.
2. Speak Up Research Project for Digital Learning, Project Tomorrow.
3. Shafer, Stephanie. "Overcoming COVID-19 Learning Loss," Education Week, August 19, 2020.
4. Speak Up Research Project for Digital Learning, Project Tomorrow.
5. Speak Up Research Project for Digital Learning, Project Tomorrow.