



Preliminary Findings of the 2013 TELL Tennessee Survey

To do their best work with students, teachers need supportive school environments that maximize their opportunity to be effective. As a part of the First to the Top Initiative, the Tennessee Department of Education and a coalition of education stakeholders worked collaboratively with the New Teacher Center to implement the second iteration of the Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning Tennessee Survey (TELL Tennessee Survey) to assess whether educators across the state report having the resources and supports necessary to encourage the most effective teaching. Findings from this initiative will inform school improvement planning.

About the Survey

The TELL Tennessee Survey is a statistically valid and reliable instrument that assesses eight research-based teaching and learning conditions.¹ The eight constructs are empirically linked to student achievement and teacher retention and include: Time, Facilities and Resources, Community Support and Involvement, Managing Student Conduct, Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, Professional Development, and Instructional Practices and Support.² See Table 1 for descriptions. Additionally, the TELL Survey

includes questions for novice teachers (those in their first three years in the profession) to assess induction support and for principals to assess district-level supports. Response options for core questions use a Likert scale and range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. For this brief, results are summarized using a rate of agreement that combines the strongly agree and agree categories.

Note: The results presented in these initial findings may vary slightly (within one percent) from the statewide data available in the web-based "detailed report" due to rounding the agree and strongly agree categories separately and then again rounding to a whole number. The "summary" report as well as holding the cursor over the detailed report bar graph provides agreement rates to a tenth of a percent. Additionally, some small variation (less than one percent) may result from final cleaning and data posting that occurred after these trends were compiled. In all cases, these small variations do not change reported trends.

1. Swanlund, A. (2011). *Identifying working conditions that enhance teacher effectiveness: The psychometric evaluation of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey*. Chicago, IL: American Institutes for Research.

2. See endnotes for research.

TABLE 1. 2013 TELL TENNESSEE SURVEY CONSTRUCTS

- Time**—Available time to plan, collaborate, provide instruction, and eliminate barriers in order to maximize instructional time during the school day
- Facilities and Resources**—Availability of instructional, technology, office, communication, and school resources to teachers
- Community Support and Involvement**—Community and parent/guardian communication and influence in the school
- Managing Student Conduct**—Policies and practices to address student conduct issues and ensure a safe school environment
- Professional Development**—Availability and quality of learning opportunities for educators to enhance their teaching
- Teacher Leadership**—Teacher involvement in decisions that impact classroom and school practices
- School Leadership**—The Ability of school leadership to create trusting, supportive environments and address teacher concerns
- Instructional Practices and Support**—Data and support available to teachers to improve instruction and student learning

This summary will provide a brief overview of major trends emerging from preliminary analyses at the state aggregate level.

Response Rate

NTC administered the anonymous survey of all school-based licensed educators in early 2013. Over 61,000 educators (82 percent) in the state responded (Table 2). This represents a five-percentage-point increase from the 77 percent responding in 2011. Response rates vary by school type. As Table 2 demonstrates, 84 percent of elementary

school educators participated in the survey, 85 percent of middle school educators responded, and 77 percent of high school educators responded. Almost three-quarters (72 percent) of educators assigned to other school types, such as alternative education settings, responded.

More than nine out of 10 schools (1,627 of 1,774) met or exceeded the 50 percent response rate threshold required to receive an individual school-level data report. All results may be viewed online at www.telltennessee.org.

TABLE 2. 2013 SURVEY RESPONSE RATE BY SCHOOL TYPE

School Type	Headcount	Responded	Percent Responded
Elementary	32,044	27,014	84.3
Middle	19,950	16,886	84.6
High	22,228	17,113	77.0
Other	454	328	72.2
TOTAL	74,676	61,341	82.1

Preliminary Findings

The rates of agreement by item and survey area were reviewed. Preliminary findings identify items across constructs with relatively high or low levels of agreement. Items and rates of agreement are reported within select survey areas below.

Tennessee educators report higher rates of agreement in 2013 on a number of areas compared to 2011 results.

Educators Continue to Report High Agreement with Items Related to Community Support and Involvement

Analyses conducted using the 2011 survey results found the engagement of parents and the community in schools to be an integral component of successful schools. In addition to positive correlations between the Community Support and Involvement construct and student achievement (.537 elementary, .592 middle, and .496 high), the construct also predicts school performance at all levels while controlling for a variety of school, teacher, and student characteristics.

Data from the 2013 survey indicates that educators continue to report high agreement with items related to community support and involvement (Table 3). All items in this area increased in rate of agreement between survey administrations.

- Almost all educators (96 percent) agree that they provide parents and community useful information.
- More than nine out of 10 (91 percent) agree that their school maintains clear, two-way communication with parents/guardians and the community.
- About the same proportion agrees (90 percent) that their school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.

Several items in this area demonstrated strong increases from 2011.

- More than eight out of 10 educators (83 percent) agree that community members support teachers, contributing to their success with students in 2013, an increase of five percentage points.
- Seventy-one percent of educators agree that parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students in 2013, an increase of almost five percentage points.
- Eighty-six percent of participants in 2013 agree that the community they serve is supportive of their school, an increase of four percentage points.

TABLE 3. QUESTIONS RELATED TO COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT

Community Support and Involvement Questions	Percent Agree		2013-2011
	2013	2011	
Teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning.	95.8	95.3	0.5
This school maintains clear, two-way communication with parents/guardians and the community.	91.4	89.9	1.5
This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.	89.8	88.1	1.7
Parents/guardians know what is going on in this school.	87.0	84.0	3.0
The community we serve is supportive of this school.	85.6	81.5	4.1
Community members support teachers, contributing to their success with students.	82.6	77.3	5.3
Parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students.	71.1	66.4	4.7
Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school.	68.7	65.0	3.7

Educators Report More Agreement with Items Related to Instruction and Professional Development Improvement

Across the state, educators agree that they have access to important materials and staff development critical to instructional delivery (Table 4).

- Educators agree more that state and local data are available in time to impact instructional practice. Two-thirds of educators in 2013 (66 percent) agree that they have access to state assessment data in time to impact instructional practices compared to more than half (53 percent) in 2011. The 13 percentage point gain is

the largest for any survey item. Eighty-seven percent of respondents report that local assessment data was available in time to impact instructional practices in 2013 compared to eight out of 10 (80 percent) in 2011.

- Eighty-three percent of educators agree that teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery in 2013, a six-percentage-point increase from 2011.
- Eighty-six percent of educators report that teachers work in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices compared to eight out of 10 (80 percent) two years ago.

TABLE 4. SELECT INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT QUESTIONS

Select Instructional Practices and Support and Professional Development Questions	Percent Agree		2013-2011
	2013	2011	
State assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.	66.0	52.5	13.5
Local assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.	86.9	79.5	7.4
Teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery (i.e. pacing, materials and pedagogy).	82.9	76.6	6.3
Teachers work in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices.	85.9	79.7	6.2
Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.	80.0	74.5	5.5
Follow up is provided from professional development in this school	74.4	69.1	5.3
Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.	67.8	62.9	4.9
Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers.	64.2	59.7	4.5

EDUCATORS AGREE MORE that state and local data are available in time to impact instructional practice. Sixty-six percent of educators in 2013 agree that they have access to state assessment data in time to impact instructional practices compared to 53 percent in 2011. The 13-percentage-point gain is the largest for any survey item.

Educators Report More Agreement With Items Related to Time in 2013 Than in 2011

However, this area received the lowest rates of agreement relative to other survey areas (Table 5).

- Over two-thirds (68 percent) of educators agree efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine administrative paperwork teachers are required to do, a ten-percentage-point increase from 2011 (57 percent).
- In addition to more educators indicating that they work in collaborative groups, more educators also agree that they have time available to collaborate (73 percent in 2013 compared to 68 percent in 2011).
- More educators agree that they have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students (69 percent in 2013; 62 percent in 2011) as well as sufficient non-instructional time (69 percent in 2013; 64 percent in 2011).

Educators Agree Less With Items Related to Teacher Evaluation

While Tennessee educators report more agreement across many items in 2013 as compared to 2011, the rate of agreement decreased the most between surveys for items related to formal evaluation. It should be noted, however, that since the 2011 survey, all teachers in the state were introduced to a new evaluation instrument in 2011-2012 school year.

- Seventy-nine percent of educators agree that the procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent compared to 88 percent in 2011, a nine-percentage-point decrease.
- Eighty-four percent of educators in 2013 indicate that teacher performance is assessed objectively compared to 88 percent two years ago, a four-percentage-point decrease.

Time Questions	Percent Agree		2013-2011
	2013	2011	
Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine administrative paperwork teachers are required to do.	67.7	57.4	10.3
Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.	68.5	61.8	6.7
Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions	72.1	66.0	6.1
Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.	73.3	67.8	5.5
The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.	68.5	63.5	5.0
Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students	74.3	69.6	4.7
Class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students.	68.5	65.1	3.4

Summary

Community Support and Involvement, identified in 2011 as integral to successful schools, remains positively viewed across the state. Educators report improvement among items related to instructional supports and professional development. Survey responses indicate conditions related to the area of time continue to be challenging, but are improving. Additionally, educators reported the most decline in agreement for questions related to teacher evaluation.

Next Steps

To provide support and inform Tennessee educators, stakeholders and policymakers around the results of this survey, a number of resources and reports are being developed, including:

- A series of tools for schools and districts to use in facilitating dialogue on their teaching and learning conditions and how to utilize this as an artifact to inform school improvement planning.
- Additional analyses and reports examining the connections of teaching and learning conditions with student achievement and teacher retention; validity and reliability of the survey instrument; and a variety of group comparisons (principals and teachers, charter and non-charter).

All resources and reporting will be made available electronically at www.telltennessee.org.

Endnotes

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About the New Teacher Center

New Teacher Center focuses on improving student learning by accelerating the effectiveness of new teachers. NTC partners with states, school districts, and policymakers to design and implement systems that create sustainable, high-quality mentoring and professional development; build leadership capacity; work to enhance teaching conditions; improve retention; and transform schools in vibrant learning communities where all students succeed.



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