



# Validity and Reliability Report

## Instrument Background and Design

The current national policy context demands a more nuanced understanding of the association between teaching and student learning. Federal law, such as No Child Left Behind, and federal competitive incentive programs, such as Race to the Top, the Teacher Incentive Fund, and School Improvement Grants, drive the need to effectively identify under what conditions teachers contribute to student learning (Steele, Hamilton, & Stecher, 2010). Additionally, research from private organizations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Measuring Effective Teachers Project (MET), increase the visibility and support of efforts to explain the relationship between teaching and learning.

This brief furthers the discussion by contributing to a growing body of research that specifically describes how teaching and learning conditions theoretically and empirically link to important outcomes including teacher retention and student learning. The purpose of this brief is to provide an overview of the research base documenting the association between teaching and learning conditions and outcomes of interest and to present a summary of the design and psychometric properties of the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Survey instrument developed by the New Teacher Center (NTC). The information provided in this brief serves as the technical basis for additional analyses and reporting and will be referenced in future briefs. The intent of the teaching and learning conditions work is to inform policy and practice.

## Research Base

Why do teaching and learning conditions matter? Teaching and learning conditions impact two significant areas of national interest, teacher retention and student learning. The following section summarizes the quantitative relationship between teaching and learning conditions and student learning and teacher retention. It is not intended as an exhaustive review.

### Teacher Retention

Large-scale empirical studies present evidence that contextual factors matter for teachers' decisions about staying and leaving schools. In a meta-analysis of 34 studies, researchers suggest that teaching and learning conditions influence teachers' career paths more than previously documented (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Boyd et al. (2011) demonstrate that teachers' perceptions of the school administration have the greatest influence on teacher retention decisions. Other work finds similar effects (Pogodzinski et al., 2012). Studies also find statistically significant relationships between teachers' perception of school facilities and their plans to stay or leave (Loeb, Darling-Hammond, & Luczak, 2005; Buckley, Schneider, & Shang, 2004).

Researchers, specifically using TELL data from various states, confirm that teaching and learning conditions influence teachers' plans to stay. Johnson, Kraft, and Papay (2011) demonstrate that the conditions that matter most in deciding to stay include the school's culture, the principal's leadership, and relationships among peers. Ladd (2009), also using TELL data, documents that teaching and learning conditions predict plans to leave a school, independent of school demographics.

## Student Learning

There are far fewer large-scale empirical studies exploring the association between teaching and learning conditions and student achievement. To date, work by Ladd (2009), Johnson, Kraft, and Papay (2011), and the MET Project examine this issue.

The analysis by Ladd (2009) shows that teaching and learning conditions predict student achievement in mathematics, and to a lesser degree, in reading. The Johnson, Kraft, and Papay (2011) research indicates that positive conditions contribute to improved student achievement. Both of these efforts use the TELL Survey data from various states to estimate the impact of teaching and learning conditions on student learning. Finally, the MET Project also examines the relationship between conditions and achievement using TELL Survey data. An initial study indicates that some teaching conditions predict student outcomes (Ferguson and Hirsch, 2013).

## TELL Background and Structure

The TELL Survey originates from extensive work by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission (NCPTSC) beginning in 2001. The NCPTSC conducted a literature review and analyses of state and national survey data from the National Center for Education Statistics' School and Staffing Survey in order to better understand the factors contributing to teacher satisfaction and employment trajectories. Based on these efforts, the NCPTSC identified the following areas: time, empowerment, leadership, decision making, and facilities and resources as related to future employment plans. The Commission created standards aligned with these areas, as well as administered a statewide survey in 2002 to assess if the standards were in place in schools.

The TELL Survey incorporates these constructs and includes others logically and empirically linked to outcomes of interest, teacher retention and student learning. These constructs include: student behavior support, community support, and instructional practices and support. Based on the NCPTSC-identified areas and an external validation study described below, the TELL Survey currently includes eight constructs. Exhibit 1 identifies the eight core TELL Survey constructs.

### EXHIBIT 1. TELL SURVEY CORE 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

**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

**Professional Development**—Availability and quality of learning opportunities for educators to enhance their teaching

**Instructional Practices and Support**—Data and support available to teachers to improve instruction and student learning

NTC adds questions about general demographic information, beginning teacher support, as well as client-specific information to these eight core constructs on current TELL Survey administrations. Core TELL Survey responses are scored using Likert-type ratings ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4) and include a “Don’t Know” option.

### *External Analyses of Validity and Reliability*

This section describes the methods used by an external analyst to verify that the structure and items included in the TELL Survey result in meaningful and useful information. This work is part of the MET Project supported through the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Swanlund, 2011). The Swanlund analyses use data from 286,835 educators from 11 states across the U.S. The external survey review examines both validity and reliability. These analyses identify patterns in the data that provide a clear structure for the survey and confidence for interpreting the results.

#### *Validity*

The term validity generally refers to the process of ensuring the survey accurately measures what it is intended to measure, in this case teaching and learning conditions. There are several approaches to testing validity. The external validity testing conducted for the TELL Survey assesses the structure of the response scale and the alignment between survey items and broader survey constructs as identified in Exhibit 1. The review uses the Rasch Rating Scale Model to examine the item-measure correlations, item fit, rating scale functioning, unidimensionality, and generalizability of the instrument.

Results from the external validity testing prompted several edits to increase the statistical stability of the TELL Survey. For example, a four-point rating scale was introduced that ensures appropriate scoring for both individual-level responses and school-level responses in place of the original six-point scale. Based on the external study finding that some survey constructs are more stable if broken into multiple constructs, an additional construct was added resulting in eight constructs. Additionally, the results indicate that some individual items overlap across survey constructs. For example,

items found in the teacher leadership construct overlap with the school leadership construct and should be reviewed for each analysis.

#### *Reliability*

Reliability testing ensures the survey instrument produces the same results across repeated measures either within the same population or with a similar population. A reliable survey is generalizable and therefore is expected to reproduce similar results across settings. The external review analyzes reliability using both the Rasch model person separation reliability and Cronbach’s alpha. The Swanlund (2011) study concludes the survey is capable of producing consistent results across participant groups.

For a detailed review of the methods and results from the external analyses, consult Swanlund (2011). In summary, the external analyses confirm the TELL Survey offers a robust and statistically sound approach for measuring teaching and learning conditions.

### *Internal Analyses of Validity and Reliability*

In addition to the external analyses, NTC conducts internal analyses of validity and reliability to verify the stability of the instrument across survey populations as promoted by industry standards found in the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (American Educational Research Association, American Psychological Association, and National Council on Measurement in Education, 1999). Statistical tests of validity include conducting factor analyses and reliability tests include generating internal consistency estimates.

The data for these analyses include 61,341 respondents out of a reported 74,676 school-based licensed educators in Tennessee, yielding a response rate of 82 percent. Respondents include several categories of educators: 89 percent are teachers, three percent are administrators, and five percent are other licensed educators, such as librarians and school psychologists. Exhibit 2 provides response rates by participant type.

EXHIBIT 2. RESPONSE RATE BY PARTICIPANT TYPE

Respondents*	Response Rate (N) Spring 2013
Teachers	89.1% (54,633)
Administrators	03.8% (2,320)
Other Education Professionals	05.2% (3,199)

\*Note. There were 1,189 records with no position defined. The respondent category "teachers" includes instructional coaches, department heads, literacy specialist, etc. The respondent category "administrators" includes principals and assistant principals. The respondent category "Other Education Professional" includes school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, etc.

### Validity

The validity analyses assess the degree to which the 2013 TELL Tennessee Survey measures the eight theoretical constructs it is intended to capture. See Exhibit 1 for descriptions of the constructs. NTC conducts factor analyses to group variables with similar characteristics together. NTC performs confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), using principal components analysis and varimax rotation procedures, in order to verify the actual structure of the data reflects the expected structure from previous validity studies.<sup>1</sup> For the CFA, an eight factor solution is specified.

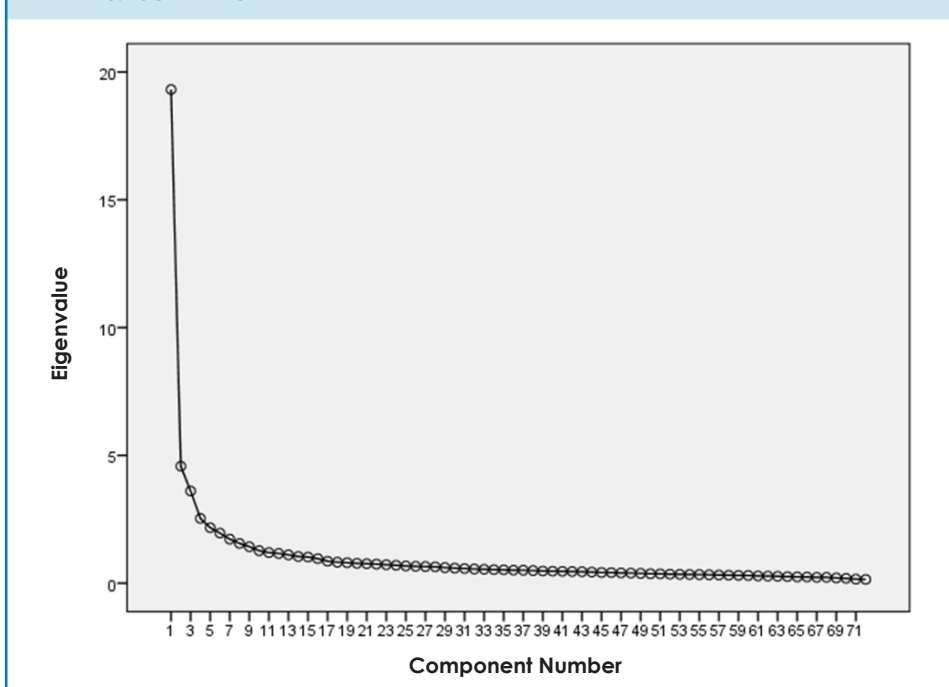
Researchers suggest several empirical criteria for determining which orthogonal or correlated factors to retain in a stable instrument. These criteria are based on an eigenvalue. Eigenvalues indicate how much variation each factor or component can explain. The criteria include: scree plot, Kaiser criterion, and variance explained (Cortina, 2002). Additionally, Hair et al., (2006) suggests including construct correlations. However, the final decision about which factors should be retained should be based on judgments of interpretability and consistency of the factors with sound

1. It should be noted the 2011 data reflected slightly different items within the same structure and can be referenced here, [http://2011.telltennessee.org/sites/default/files/attachments/TN11\\_valid\\_reliable.pdf](http://2011.telltennessee.org/sites/default/files/attachments/TN11_valid_reliable.pdf)

theory (Bandalos and Boehm-Kaufman, 2009). NTC provides information about each of the recommended empirical criteria.

The scree plot graphically represents the eigenvalues in descending order and connects them with a line. Researchers suggest examining the line for where it levels off. Exhibit 3 indicates an "elbow" beginning with factor two and continuing through factor eight or nine and then smoothing or showing that each additional factor beyond that accounts for smaller amounts of the total variance (Ledesma and Vlero-Mora, 2007). Therefore the scree plot would suggest approximately an eight to nine factor solution. See Exhibit 3.

EXHIBIT 3. SCREE PLOT



The Kaiser criterion (K1) suggest only including factors where eigenvalues are greater than one (as a theoretical lower bound). The initial eigenvalues displayed in Exhibit 4, show that the eight factors have a value of more than one and therefore meet minimal variance-explained thresholds. Another recommended approach for deciding which factors to retain suggests examining the variance explained and retaining factors contributing ten percent or more. Exhibit 4 shows that

the eight factors each contribute at least ten percent of the variance and together, explain 52 percent of the variance.

The construct correlations are presented to demonstrate that no factor is correlated with another factor above the professional standard of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2006). Factor correlations above 0.70 indicate that the constructs overlap and do not capture distinct areas of teaching and learning conditions. See Exhibit 5.

EXHIBIT 4. EIGENVALUES AND VARIANCE EXPLAINED

Component	Initial Eigenvalues		
	Total	Percent of Variance	Cumulative Percent
1	19.315	26.826	26.826
2	4.575	6.355	33.181
3	3.604	5.006	38.186
4	2.531	3.516	41.702
5	2.173	3.018	44.720
6	1.957	2.718	47.438
7	1.723	2.393	49.830
8	1.555	2.160	51.990

EXHIBIT 5. COMPONENT CORRELATION MATRIX

Component	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	1.000	.488	.370	.436	.329	.307	.527	.385
2	.488	1.000	.551	.463	.280	.495	.417	.318
3	.370	.551	1.000	.525	.327	.559	.421	.383
4	.436	.463	.525	1.000	.263	.486	.387	.285
5	.329	.280	.327	.263	1.000	.362	.340	.423
6	.307	.495	.559	.486	.362	1.000	.409	.414
7	.527	.417	.421	.387	.340	.409	1.000	.336
8	.385	.318	.383	.285	.423	.414	.336	1.000

**Extraction Method:** Principal Component Analysis.

**Rotation Method:** Promax with Kaiser Normalization.

Using an eight factor solution is consistent with the TELL theoretical framework, the external validity study, and is within the bounds of the empirical criteria. The constructs include: time, facilities and resources, professional development, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, instructional practices and support. For outcome analyses using teacher retention and student performance data produced later, NTC will include analyses using a variety of constructs and combinations to determine best model fit.

### Reliability

The internal reliability testing for TELL Tennessee confirms that the survey is generalizable and will produce similar results

with similar populations. The reliability analyses for TELL Tennessee produce Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.86 to 0.95. Alphas normally range between 0.00 and 1.00. The closer the Cronbach's alpha coefficient is to 1.00 the greater the internal consistency of the items in the scale. Alpha coefficients above 0.70 are considered acceptable (George & Mallery, 2003).

As Exhibit 6 indicates, all eight alpha coefficients are high and above 0.70 confirming internal consistency of the TELL Tennessee Survey constructs.

EXHIBIT 6. RELIABILITY BY CONSTRUCT	
Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
Time	0.86
Facilities and Resources	0.89
Community Support and Involvement	0.89
Managing Student Conduct	0.91
Teacher Leadership	0.89
School Leadership	0.95
Professional Development	0.96
Instructional Practices and Support	0.87

***TELL CONSTRUCTS INCLUDE: time, facilities and resources, professional development, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, instructional practices and support.***

## Summary of TELL Tennessee Validity and Reliability

Based on external and internal analysis of TELL Tennessee Survey data, results indicate the most appropriate structure of the survey includes eight factors consisting of 72 questions.

Exhibit 7 provides questions within each construct generated from the reliability analyses. These eight constructs will be the basis for other analyses investigating how outcomes of interest are associated with teaching and learning conditions, as well as other sub-factors discussed earlier.

EXHIBIT 7. TELL TENNESSEE CONSTRUCTS AND ITEMS		
Construct	Number of Items	Items
Time	7	<p>Class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students.</p> <p>Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.</p> <p>Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions.</p> <p>Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.</p> <p>The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.</p> <p>Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine administrative paperwork teachers are required to do.</p> <p>Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.</p>
Facilities and Resources	9	<p>Teachers have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials.</p> <p>The school environment is clean and well maintained.</p> <p>Teachers have access to reliable communications technology, including phones, faxes and email.</p> <p>The physical environment of classrooms in this school supports teaching and learning.</p> <p>Teachers have sufficient access to instructional technology, including computers, printers, software and internet access.</p> <p>Teachers have sufficient access to office equipment and supplies such as copy machines, paper, pens, etc.</p> <p>Teachers have sufficient access to a broad range of professional support personnel.</p> <p>The reliability and speed of Internet connections in this school are sufficient to support instructional practices.</p> <p>Teachers have adequate space to work productively.</p>

EXHIBIT 7. TELL TENNESSEE CONSTRUCTS AND ITEMS (CONTINUED)

Construct	Number of Items	Items
Community Support and Involvement	8	<p>Community members support teachers, contributing to their success with students.</p> <p>This school maintains clear, two-way communication with parents/guardians and the community.</p> <p>This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.</p> <p>Parents/guardians are influential decision makers in this school.</p> <p>Teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning.</p> <p>Parents/guardians know what is going on in this school.</p> <p>Parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students.</p> <p>The community we serve is supportive of this school.</p>
Managing Student Conduct	7	<p>School administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom.</p> <p>Students at this school understand expectations for their conduct.</p> <p>School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct.</p> <p>Policies and procedures about student conduct are clearly understood by the faculty.</p> <p>The faculty work in a school environment that is safe.</p> <p>Students at this school follow rules of conduct.</p> <p>School administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom.</p>
Teacher Leadership	8	<p>Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.</p> <p>Teachers are effective leaders in this school.</p> <p>Teachers are recognized as educational experts.</p> <p>The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.</p> <p>Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school.</p> <p>In this school we take steps to solve problems.</p> <p>Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.</p> <p>Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.</p>



EXHIBIT 7. TELL TENNESSEE CONSTRUCTS AND ITEMS (CONTINUED)

Construct	Number of Items	Items
School Leadership	11	<p>The procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent.</p> <p>Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching.</p> <p>Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.</p> <p>Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.</p> <p>The faculty are recognized for accomplishments.</p> <p>The faculty and leadership have a shared vision.</p> <p>The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school.</p> <p>Teacher performance is assessed objectively.</p> <p>The school leadership consistently supports teachers.</p> <p>There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.</p> <p>The school leadership facilitates using data to improve student learning.</p>
Professional Development	13	<p>Professional learning opportunities are aligned with the school's improvement plan.</p> <p>Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.</p> <p>Professional development offerings are data driven.</p> <p>Professional development deepens teachers' content knowledge.</p> <p>Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.</p> <p>Professional development enhances teachers' abilities to help improve student learning.</p> <p>Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers.</p> <p>Follow up is provided from professional development in this school.</p> <p>Professional development enhances teachers' ability to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student learning needs.</p> <p>Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice.</p> <p>Professional development provides teachers with strategies to involve families and other community members as active partners in their children's education.</p> <p>Sufficient resources are available for professional development in my school.</p> <p>An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development.</p>

EXHIBIT 7. TELL TENNESSEE CONSTRUCTS AND ITEMS (CONTINUED)

Construct	Number of Items	Items
Instructional Practices and Support	9	<p>The curriculum taught in this school is aligned with Common Core Standards.</p> <p>Teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery (i.e. pacing, materials and pedagogy).</p> <p>Teachers in this school use assessment data to inform their instruction.</p> <p>Local assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.</p> <p>Teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students.</p> <p>Teachers work in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices.</p> <p>State assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.</p> <p>Provided supports (i.e., instructional coaching, professional learning communities, etc.) translate to improvements in instructional practices by teachers.</p> <p>Teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction.</p>

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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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725 Front Street, Suite 400, Santa Cruz, CA 95060  
831-600-2200 | Fax: 831-427-9017 | [info@newteachercenter.org](mailto:info@newteachercenter.org)  
[www.newteachercenter.org](http://www.newteachercenter.org)