Teaching Conditions by District Enrollment

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 (TDOE) and a coalition of education stakeholders worked collaboratively with the New Teacher Center (NTC) to implement the second iteration of the Tennessee Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning 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 district and school strategic planning.

The TELL Tennessee Survey is a statistically valid and reliable instrument that assesses nine research-based teaching and learning conditions: Time, Facilities and Resources, Community Support and Involvement, Managing Student Conduct, Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, Professional Development, Instructional Practices and Support, and New Teacher Support. Response options for core questions from TELL Tennessee use a Likert scale and range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. NTC administered the anonymous survey of all school-based licensed educators in early 2013. Over 61,000 educators (82 percent) in the state responded.

This brief is part of a series of special analyses requested by the Tennessee Department of Education to examine educators' responses on selected TELL conditions (Time, Teacher Leadership, Professional Development, and three items related to teacher evaluation) by different categories of educators, schools, and districts, which include:

- Educator years of experience,
- Alternative evaluation models (Coach, TEM (Teacher Effectiveness Measure), and TIGER (Teacher Instructional Growth for Effectiveness and Results) compared to the statewide TEAM (Tennessee Educator Acceleration Model),
- Combined alternative evaluation models compared to statewide TEAM,
- Urbanicity status,
- CORE (Centers of Regional Excellence) regions,
- District enrollment, and
- School accountability (Reward, Priority, and Focus) status.

The current brief examines differences across District Enrollment categories in Tennessee for select teaching and learning conditions. Enrollment categories divide the districts by size based on the number of students enrolled and were determined by the Department. The Department created four categories: enrollment exceeding 40,000 students; enrollment between 39,999 and 10,000 students; enrollment between 9,999 and 5,000 students; and enrollment of less than 4,999 students. Individual items associated with each survey area are listed in the endnotes.[1]

For this brief, results are summarized using a rate of agreement that combines the strongly agree and agree categories for each of the regions and the percentage point change from 2011 is reported. This brief presents the rates of agreement and change from 2011 for the overall constructs of Time, Teacher Leadership, and Professional Development. It also includes three teacher evaluation items. Item level details are not presented because items demonstrate similar patterns described by the overall constructs.

Findings

Across district sizes, increases in rates of agreement from 2011 to 2013 are observed in the areas of Time, Teacher Leadership, and Professional Development, but educators report challenges associated with teacher assessment and evaluation.

Time

When examining the average rate of agreement across items associated with the area of Time, Tennessee educators in each enrollment category report higher rates of agreement in 2013 than in 2011.

- All enrollment levels in Tennessee report an increase of at least five percentage points from 2011 to 2013.

- In 2013 and 2011, schools in the smallest enrollment category (4,999 or less) exhibit the highest rate of agreement of all the enrollment categories (75 percent in 2013), indicating these educators perceive more available time relative to other enrollment categories. Educators in the largest category report the lowest rate of agreement in both years. The range among the four enrollment

categories is nine percentage points for each year (66 percent to 75 percent in 2013 and 61 percent to 70 percent in 2011).

- District populations between 5,000 and 9,999 report the greatest increase from 2011 to 2013 (seven percentage points).

TABLE 1.   TIME CONSTRUCT BY DISTRICT ENROLLMENT: 2013 TO 2011

District Enrollment	Rate of Agreement 2013	Rate of Agreement 2011	Change From 2011
Enrollment > 40,000	66%	61%	**5**
39,999 > E > 10,000	70%	64%	6
9,999 > E > 5,000	72%	65%	7
4,999 > Enrollment	75%	70%	5

Of the individual questions asked within the construct of Time, educators report the largest growth for the item concerning efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine administrative paperwork teachers are required to do, with all reporting at least an eight percentage point gain (Table 2).

TABLE 2.   TIME ITEM BY DISTRICT ENROLLMENT CHANGE: 2013 TO 2011

Item	Enrollment > 40,000	39,999 > E > 10,000	9,999 > E > 5,000	4,999 > Enrollment
Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine administrative paperwork teachers are required to do.	11	11	11	8

ACROSS DISTRICT SIZES, *increases in rates of agreement from 2011 to 2013 are observed in the areas of Time, Teacher Leadership, and Professional Development.*

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Teacher Leadership

At the construct level, Tennessee educators report increases in Teacher Leadership similar to those observed in the area of Time (Table 3).

- In 2013, for each enrollment group, more than four out of five educators (80 percent) agree teachers have general teacher leadership opportunities.

- All District Enrollment categories in Tennessee report at least a four percentage point increase from 2011 to 2013.

- Districts enrolling between 5,000 and 9,999 students report the greatest increase from 2011 to 2013 (eight percentage points).

- Each administration, rates of agreement across enrollment categories varies by four percentage points or less.

Professional Development

Across all enrollment categories, educators report higher rates of agreement for the Professional Development construct in 2013 than in 2011 (Table 4).

- All enrollment groups in Tennessee report a three percentage point increase or greater from 2011 to 2013.

- In 2013, each enrollment category reports more than three quarters of educators (79 percent) agree with the items associated with the construct of Professional Development.

- Districts containing between 5,000 and 9,999 students report the greatest increase of any of the categories (six percentage points).

- Rates of agreement vary by two percentage points across categories in 2013 and by five percentage points in 2011.

TABLE 3. TEACHER LEADERSHIP CONSTRUCT BY DISTRICT ENROLLMENT: 2013 TO 2011			
District Enrollment	**Rate of Agreement** *2013*	*2011*	**Change From 2011**
Enrollment > 40,000	82%	78%	**4**
39,999 > E > 10,000	85%	80%	**5**
9,999 > E > 5,000	86%	78%	**8**
4,999 > Enrollment	85%	79%	**6**

TABLE 4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONSTRUCT BY DISTRICT ENROLLMENT: 2013 TO 2011			
District Enrollment	**Rate of Agreement** *2013*	*2011*	**Change From 2011**
Enrollment > 40,000	81%	78%	**3**
39,999 > E > 10,000	79%	76%	**3**
9,999 > E > 5,000	79%	73%	**6**
4,999 > Enrollment	79%	75%	**4**

AT THE CONSTRUCT LEVEL, *Tennessee educators report increases in Teacher Leadership similar to those observed in the area of Time.*

Teacher Evaluation

While there is no construct specific to teacher evaluation in the TELL Tennessee Survey, there are three questions that can contribute to a broader discussion of the evaluation process in Tennessee (Table 5). †

- On the question, 'Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction,' almost all educators across all enrollment categories in 2013 report high agreement (95 percent or more). Additionally, all enrollment categories increased in the rates of agreement (between two and three percentage points) from 2011 rates of agreement.

- Examining the question, 'Teacher performance is assessed objectively,' no District Enrollment group reported an increase from 2011 to 2013. Decreases in rates of agreement varied from three to six percentage points across enrollment groups.

† It should be noted that since the 2011 survey, all teachers in the state were introduced to a new evaluation instrument in the 2011-2012 school year.

- Of the three questions related to teacher evaluation, 'The procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent' exhibited the most decrease in rates of agreement (between eight and nine percentage points) between 2011 and 2013.

Summary

Across enrollment categories, educators indicate the lowest agreement for Time and the highest rates of agreement for Teacher Leadership. There is no consistent pattern across district sizes for which one reports the highest or lowest rate of agreement. However, educators in the enrollment category of 9,999 to 5,000 students consistently report the most increase across constructs across administrations and educators in districts with the largest enrollment, consistently report the smallest increases across constructs. While most educators agree teachers are held to high standards, their agreement that teacher assessment is objective and teacher evaluation is consistent decreased across enrollment categories.

TABLE 5. TEACHER EVALUATION BY DISTRICT ENROLLMENT: 2013 TO 2011								
TELL Teacher Evaluation Questions	**Enrollment > 40,000**		**40,000 > E > 10,000**		**10,000 > E > 5,000**		**5,000 > Enrollment**	
	2013 RA*	*Change from 2011*	*2013 RA*	*Change from 2011*	*2013 RA*	*Change from 2011*	*2013 RA*	*Change from 2011*
Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.	95%	2	96%	2	96%	3	96%	2
Teacher performance is assessed objectively.	80%	-6	84%	-5	85%	-3	86%	-4
The procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent.	80%	-8	84%	-9	85%	-8	86%	-8
* RA indicates rate of agreement after combining the agree and strongly agree response options.								

Endnote

1. The Time construct pertains to the available time to plan, collaborate, provide instruction, and eliminate barriers in order to maximize instructional time during the school day. The construct includes the following questions:

- Class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students.
- Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.
- Teachers area allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions.
- The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.
- Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine administrative paperwork teachers are required to do.
- Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.
- Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.

The Teacher Leadership construct pertains to the degree of teacher involvement in decisions that impact classroom and school practices. The construct includes the following questions:

- Teachers are recognized as educational experts.
- Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.
- Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.
- Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.
- The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.
- In this school, we take steps to solve problems.
- Teachers are effective leaders in this school.
- Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school.

The Professional Development construct pertains to the availability and quality of learning opportunities for educators to enhance their teaching. The construct includes the following questions:

- Sufficient resources are available for professional development in my school.
- An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development.
- Professional development offerings are data driven.
- Professional learning opportunities are aligned with the school's improvement plan.
- Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.
- Professional development deepens teachers' content knowledge.
- Professional development provides teachers with strategies to involve families and other community members as active partners in their children's education.
- Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice.
- Follow up is provided from professional development in this school
- Professional development provides ongoing opportunities for teachers to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices.
- Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers.
- Professional development enhances teachers' ability to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student learning needs.
- Professional development enhances teachers' abilities to help improve student learning.

The TELL Tennessee Survey included a few questions related to the Department's interest in teacher evaluation. They are:

- Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.
- Teacher performance is assessed objectively.
- The procedures for teacher evaluation are consistent.

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.