

Lessons From Our Educators

Tennessee Educator Survey 2019 Results in Context



*A Joint Report From the Tennessee Education Research Alliance
and the Tennessee Department of Education*

About This Report

Every year, educators across the state complete the **Tennessee Educator Survey (TES)**, providing their insight on their experiences, schools, and our educational system. These reflections from educators provide crucial guidance for state policymakers as well as school and district leaders on the state of our schools and what we can do to improve over time.



45,000+

EDUCATORS RESPONDED TO THE SURVEY IN 2019, INCLUDING:

- 42,068 TEACHERS
- 1,032 PRINCIPALS
- 1,013 ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS



25,000+

WRITTEN COMMENTS FROM EDUCATORS OFFERED INSIGHTS INTO WHAT THE COMMISSIONER SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS



This report, written as a collaboration between the **Tennessee Department of Education's Division of Research and Analysis** and the **Tennessee Education Research Alliance (TERA)**, highlights some of the major takeaways from our statewide results. Comprehensive state, district, and school survey results are available online on the [TES website](#).

More educators than ever (over 45,000) responded to the survey in 2019. Overall, responses were slightly more positive than in past years, with small but notable growth in several of the questions tracked year after year:

- Seventy-six percent of teachers report feeling positively about the way things are run at their school.
- Seventy-six percent of teachers, more than ever, also agree that teacher evaluation improves their teaching.
- Nearly 90 percent of teachers say they would recommend their school to parents and that their school staff is a learning community.

However, alongside these positive trends, there are signs of distress among our educators:

- One in three teachers report they would not choose to become an educator if they could go back in time and choose again.
- One in three teachers report they would leave teaching as soon as possible if they could get a higher paying job.
- Four in 10 teachers feel less enthusiastic than when they began in education.

This report provides an overview of several items that have been asked over multiple years and then dives deeply into the 2019 findings to suggest steps that leaders can take to create more supportive environments, provide better instructional supports, and attract and develop beginning teachers. In addition, this report discusses the most representative and relevant comments from educators' feedback on what the state should prioritize.

Through this report, the department and TERA seek to amplify the perspectives and insights of our educators on a variety of issues including school climate, working conditions, school leadership, professional learning opportunities, and evaluation, along with specific modules focused on the experiences of counselors, interventionists, and administrators, as well as special education teachers and middle grade teachers. **By listening to our educators, the department and other policymakers can build on strengths, address the areas causing concern, and learn from differences across schools in how school leaders support teaching and learning.**


Trends over Time

The Tennessee Educator Survey tracks trends over time, and this year's results show:


- 1 Record participation
- 2 Positive perceptions of the evaluation system
- 3 Increased general job satisfaction

High overall survey participation led to record numbers of schools (1,292) and districts (139) reaching the 45 percent response rate threshold necessary to receive customized result reports. This represents over 70 percent of all public schools and roughly 95 percent of all districts in Tennessee.

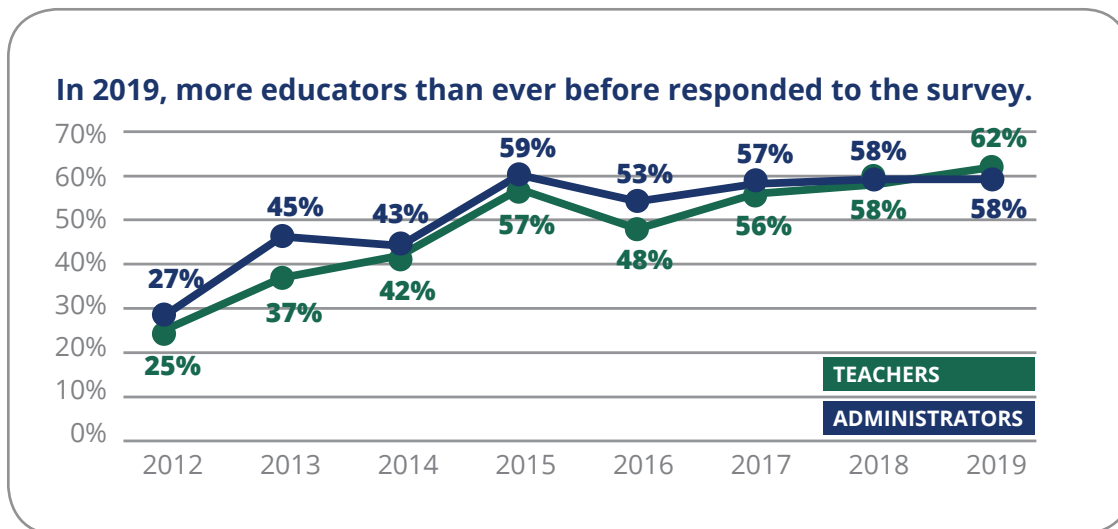
RECORD PARTICIPATION IN 2019
62% OF TEACHERS
& 58% OF ADMINISTRATORS PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY



1,292 & 139
SCHOOLS & DISTRICTS
 RECEIVED CUSTOMIZED RESULT REPORTS



SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS THAT REACHED THE 45 PERCENT RESPONSE RATE AND RECEIVED RESULTS (MINIMUM 5 RESPONSES)								
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Schools	97	604	757	1,188	945	1,065	1,167	1,292
Districts	4	54	91	130	123	130	133	139



These strong response rates, along with the correspondingly high number of schools and districts receiving reports on their results, show the positive cycle of participation. Increased participation demonstrates how much teachers and administrators value this opportunity to both provide and review rich feedback on conditions and practices in schools.



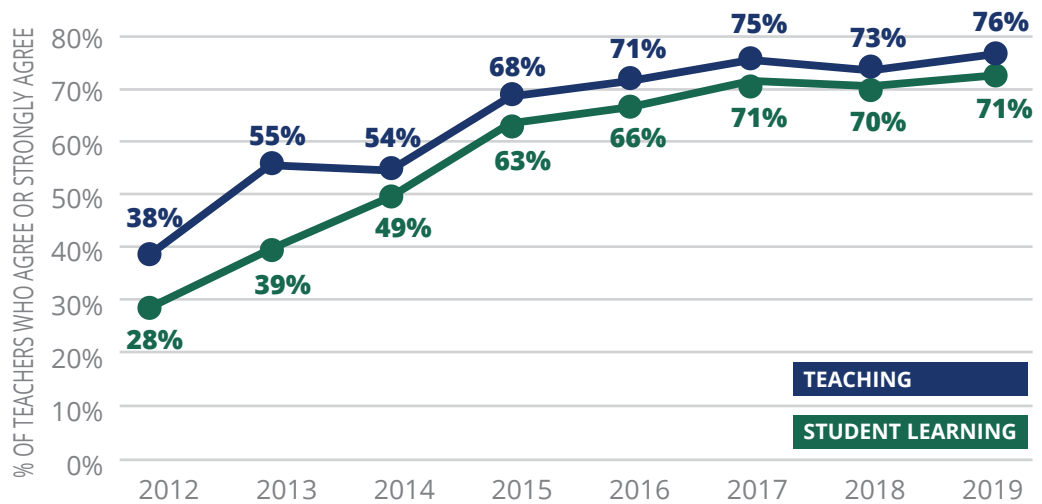
76%

OF TEACHERS AGREE THAT THE EVALUATION SYSTEM IMPROVES THEIR TEACHING

The percentage of educators who feel that evaluation is improving teaching has doubled since annual evaluation began in 2012.

Tennessee’s system of annual observation and evaluation of teachers has been in place for eight years, since the 2011-12 school year. The survey has tracked teachers’ perception of this evaluation system since its inception. Every year, teachers have been asked the extent to which they agree that the evaluation system has led to improvements in a) their own teaching and b) student learning. Though opinions of the evaluation system were initially low, that has risen substantially over the past seven years. In 2012, just 38 percent of teachers agreed that evaluation led to improvements in their teaching and 28 percent believed it improved student learning. Now, in 2019, 76 percent of teachers agree that the evaluation system improves their teaching, and 71 percent agree that it improves student learning.

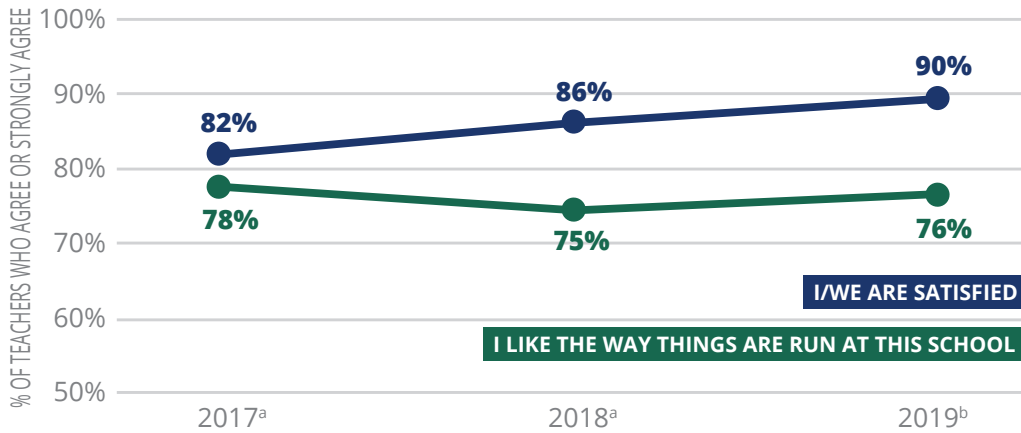
In 2019, more educators than ever agreed that the evaluation system has led to improvements in teaching and student learning.



71%

OF TEACHERS AGREE THAT THE EVALUATION SYSTEM IMPROVES STUDENT LEARNING

Tennessee educators are increasingly satisfied with their job.



a – Question asked whether respondents felt staff collectively were satisfied.

b – Question asked whether respondents individually were satisfied.

Overall employee satisfaction remains overwhelmingly high among teachers in Tennessee, with 90 percent of teachers reporting that they are generally satisfied working as a teacher in their school.

As another measure of teachers' satisfaction, the Tennessee Educator Survey also asks teachers whether they like the way things are run at their school. Responses to this item have remained relatively steady over the past three years, with just over three quarters of all teachers agreeing with this statement. However, teachers' agreement with the way things are run at their school is lower than overall satisfaction. This suggests that while teachers are generally satisfied in their school, there is a sizeable contingent who are satisfied with being a teacher in their school even if they have less positive feelings about their schools' leadership.



Creating Supportive Environments for Teachers



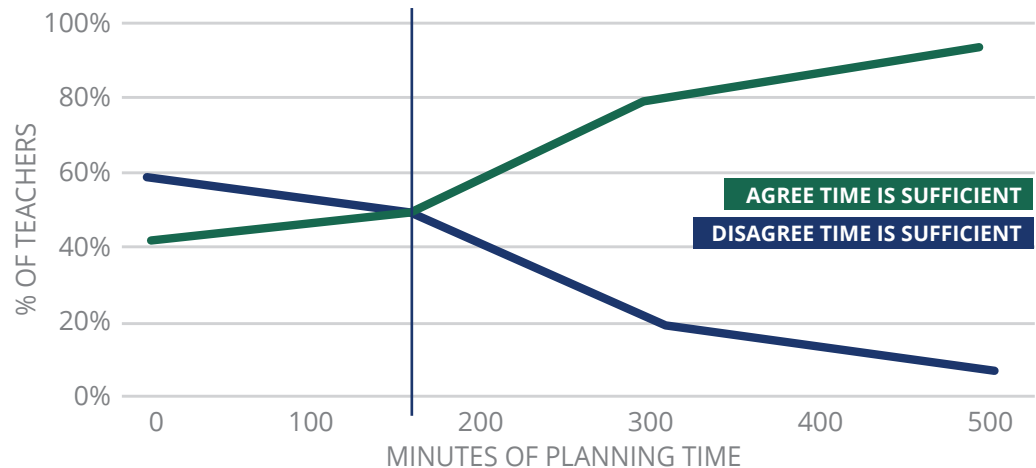
42%

OF TEACHERS REPORT THEIR INDIVIDUAL PLANNING TIME IS NOT SUFFICIENT

Teachers more often feel that they work in a supportive school environment when school leaders:

- 1 Protect teachers' planning time
- 2 Effectively and consistently handle student discipline
- 3 Foster an open and trusting culture among staff

Teachers want protected planning time, and two and a half to three hours a week seems to be the tipping point.



“I have to organize, create, or find my own materials and it takes up so much of my planning time. Teachers need more planning time to review student work and think about implementation and questioning.”
– Teacher

Time is one of teachers' most precious resources, yet many teachers report they do not get sufficient individual or collaborative planning time on a regular basis. Not surprisingly, the more individual planning time teachers report having, the more likely they are to feel that this time is sufficient. Two and one-half to three hours of protected individual planning a week seems to be the point at which a majority of teachers feel that their amount of individual time is sufficient: 72 percent of teachers who report more than three hours agree their planning time is sufficient, while 46 percent of teachers with less than three hours feel it is sufficient.

One factor that seems to influence whether teachers feel their planning time is sufficient is the extent to which they need to develop or modify their curricular materials. Teachers who agree they can **deliver high-quality (HQ) lessons using their curriculum as designed are over 20 percentage points more likely to think their planning time is sufficient.**



MY INDIVIDUAL PLANNING TIME IS SUFFICIENT

AMONG TEACHERS WHO **DISAGREE** THEY CAN DELIVER HQ LESSONS WITH THEIR CURRICULUM,

45%

SAY THEIR INDIVIDUAL PLANNING TIME IS SUFFICIENT

AMONG TEACHERS WHO **AGREE** THEY CAN DELIVER HQ LESSONS WITH THEIR CURRICULUM,

66%

SAY THEIR INDIVIDUAL PLANNING TIME IS SUFFICIENT



MY COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TIME IS SUFFICIENT

AMONG TEACHERS WHO **DISAGREE** THEY CAN DELIVER HQ LESSONS WITH THEIR CURRICULUM,

51%

SAY THEIR COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TIME IS SUFFICIENT

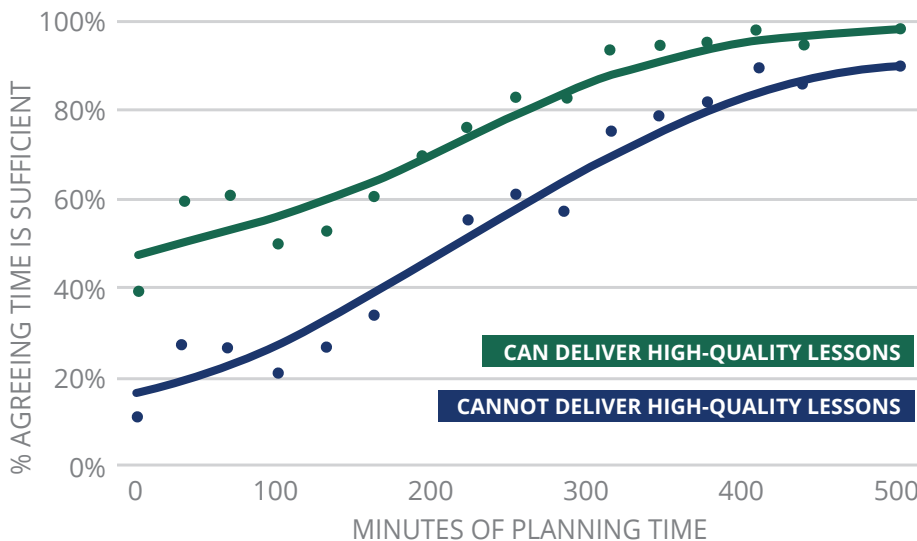
AMONG TEACHERS WHO **AGREE** THEY CAN DELIVER HQ LESSONS WITH THEIR CURRICULUM,

72%

SAY THEIR COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TIME IS SUFFICIENT

At any level of individual planning time, teachers who do not feel they can deliver high-quality lessons using the curriculum as designed are less likely to feel their planning time is sufficient than teachers who feel they can deliver high-quality lessons with their curriculum, and teachers satisfied with the lessons they are able to deliver with their curricula require just half the planning time. Among teachers who believe their curriculum does not enable high-quality lessons, it requires three and one-half hours per week of individual planning time for a majority to feel the time is sufficient. However, among those who believe the curriculum enables quality lessons as designed, a majority feel that anything over two hours per week is sufficient.

Teachers who do not feel like they can deliver high-quality lessons using the curriculum as designed are less likely to feel their planning time is sufficient.



“I think we truly need to think about how to schedule schools in a way in which teachers do not have to donate their time . . . I would rather have more [planning] time than any other resource.”
– Teacher

Teachers in urban districts report about 20 fewer minutes of individual planning time each week compared to other types of districts and are also less likely to report that amount of time as sufficient (49 percent of teachers in urban districts agree individual planning is sufficient, compared to 63 percent of teachers in non-urban districts).

“Student behavior is one of the main impacts on teacher retention.”
– Teacher

EFFECTIVE AND CONSISTENT STUDENT DISCIPLINE

When teachers believe their leadership effectively handles student discipline, they are more likely to express overall satisfaction with their school. When leadership does *not* effectively handle disciplinary issues, teachers lose instructional time dealing with discipline.



I LIKE THE WAY THINGS ARE RUN AT THIS SCHOOL

AMONG TEACHERS WHO **DISAGREE** SCHOOL LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVELY HANDLES STUDENT DISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS,

40% LIKE HOW THINGS ARE RUN

AMONG TEACHERS WHO **AGREE** SCHOOL LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVELY HANDLES STUDENT DISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS,

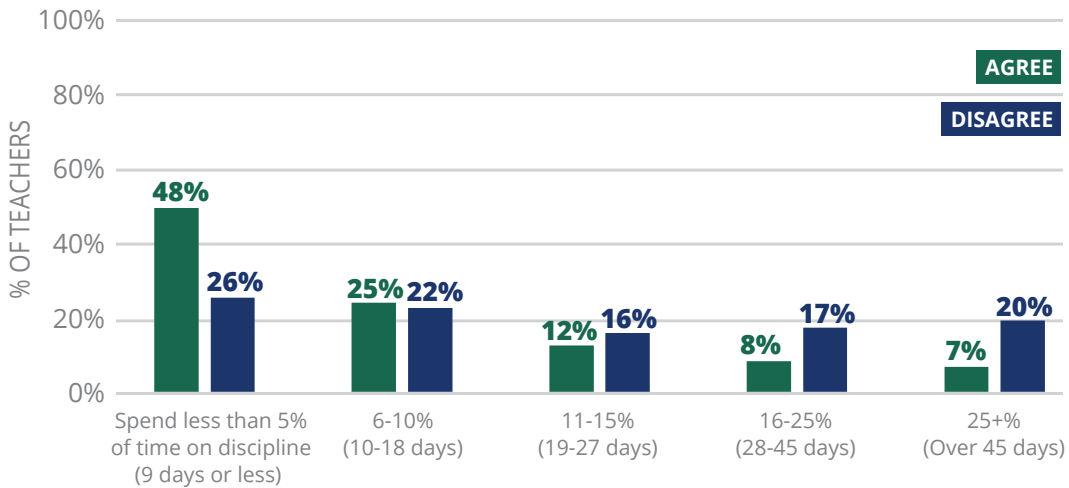
93% LIKE HOW THINGS ARE RUN

Teachers' perceptions of their leadership's effectiveness in handling student discipline and behavioral issues is predictive of whether or not they like the way things are run at their school. Ninety-three percent of teachers who agree that their leadership effectively handles discipline also agree that they like the way things are run at their school. Conversely, when teachers disagree that leadership effectively handles discipline, 40 percent report liking the way things are run.

A strong association appears between teachers agreeing that school leadership effectively handles student discipline and the amount of time those same teachers report having to spend dealing with disciplinary issues themselves. This association might imply two things:

- 1 Teachers' opinions of effective leadership hinges on the amount of time they have to spend dealing with disciplinary issues themselves.
- 2 When school leaders do not effectively handle disciplinary issues, teachers wind up spending substantial time dealing with disciplinary issues in their classroom.

Teachers who agree that school leadership effectively handles discipline problems spend less time handling discipline issues themselves.



In teachers' reports of how much instructional time they lose to discipline and behavioral issues, big differences appear depending on whether teachers feel behavior is effectively handled by their leadership. Over half (53 percent) of teachers who do not think leadership effectively handles discipline claim to lose more than 18 days of instructional time and **one-fifth say they lose more than 45 days of instructional time to disciplinary disruptions**. In contrast, one out of four teachers who agree their leadership effectively handles discipline say they lose more than 18 days of instruction.

The relationship between weak leadership on discipline and instructional time loss is strongest in urban districts: 28 percent of teachers in urban districts who do not think leadership effectively handles discipline (compared to 15 percent of teachers in other districts) report losing more than 45 days of instructional time.



53%

OF TEACHERS WHO DO NOT THINK LEADERSHIP EFFECTIVELY HANDLES DISCIPLINE REPORT THAT THEY LOSE MORE THAN 18 DAYS OF INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

“Teachers need real support, we need to feel like we can come to administrators with issues without negative consequences.”
 – Teacher

OPEN AND TRUSTING STAFF CULTURE

Teachers are more likely to report satisfaction with their school’s culture when they feel able to approach their school leadership with concerns.

Seventy-seven percent of teachers agree that staff is comfortable raising issues with leadership. Of the teachers who agree staff is comfortable raising issues with leadership, **92 percent agree** that they like how things are run in their school, compared to 23 percent of teachers who disagree they are comfortable raising concerns with leadership.



I LIKE THE WAY THINGS ARE RUN AT THIS SCHOOL

AMONG TEACHERS WHO **DISAGREE** STAFF IS COMFORTABLE RAISING ISSUES WITH LEADERSHIP,

23% LIKE HOW THINGS ARE RUN

AMONG TEACHERS WHO **AGREE** STAFF IS COMFORTABLE RAISING ISSUES WITH LEADERSHIP,

92% LIKE HOW THINGS ARE RUN

Nearly all teachers who agree staff is comfortable raising issues with leadership also agree with other indicators of high-quality leadership: 96 percent agree there is an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, and 97 percent are generally satisfied with being a teacher in their school. Out of teachers who disagree staff is comfortable raising issues, 44 percent agree there is an atmosphere of trust and respect and 61 percent agree they are generally satisfied. These patterns hold across teachers from urban, suburban, rural, and economically distressed districts.



THERE IS AN ATMOSPHERE OF TRUST AND MUTUAL RESPECT WITHIN THIS SCHOOL

AMONG TEACHERS WHO **DISAGREE** THAT STAFF IS COMFORTABLE RAISING ISSUES WITH LEADERSHIP,

44% AGREE THERE IS AN ATMOSPHERE OF TRUST

AMONG TEACHERS WHO **AGREE** THAT STAFF IS COMFORTABLE RAISING ISSUES WITH LEADERSHIP,

96% AGREE THERE IS AN ATMOSPHERE OF TRUST



I AM GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH BEING A TEACHER IN THIS SCHOOL

AMONG TEACHERS WHO **DISAGREE** THAT STAFF IS COMFORTABLE RAISING ISSUES WITH LEADERSHIP,

61% ARE GENERALLY SATISFIED

AMONG TEACHERS WHO **AGREE** THAT STAFF IS COMFORTABLE RAISING ISSUES WITH LEADERSHIP,

97% ARE GENERALLY SATISFIED

“We work so hard and deserve good leaders who are fair and promote a culture of mutual respect and kindness.”
 – Teacher

Providing Instructional Supports for Teachers

This year's survey suggests two areas in which leaders can improve the tangible instructional supports provided to teachers. The main areas of need that stand out here are:

- 1 Comprehensive instructional materials
- 2 Choice in professional learning opportunities

Most teachers (70 percent) report spending more than four hours per week creating or sourcing instructional materials. Nearly one in five teachers (19 percent) report spending more than 10 hours per week on this task.

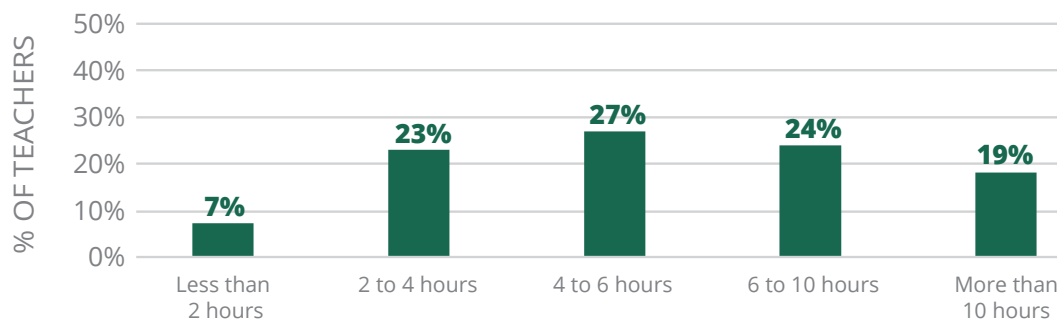


70%

OF TEACHERS REPORT SPENDING MORE THAN 4 HOURS PER WEEK CREATING OR SOURCING INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Teachers spend substantial time supplementing their curriculum, especially assessments and tasks.

On average, how many hours per week do you spend creating or sourcing materials to use for classroom instruction including planning time during and outside of school hours?



Teachers may be spending this additional time to compensate for what they see as lacking from the instructional materials they are provided. Sixty-one percent of teachers agree that the instructional materials they have access to are well-suited to teaching the standards— a drop of three percentage points from last year. The provided instructional materials are judged as especially lacking in quality assessments and tasks. While the majority of teachers believe their curriculum/ instructional materials are easy to use (73 percent), engaging (68 percent), and include high-quality lessons as designed (64 percent), less than half (46 percent) say that their materials contain adequate assessments and tasks.

“Many hours are spent looking for outside sources when this time could be used more wisely to focus on lesson plans and individual students.”
– Teacher



1 in 4 TEACHERS IN URBAN AREAS

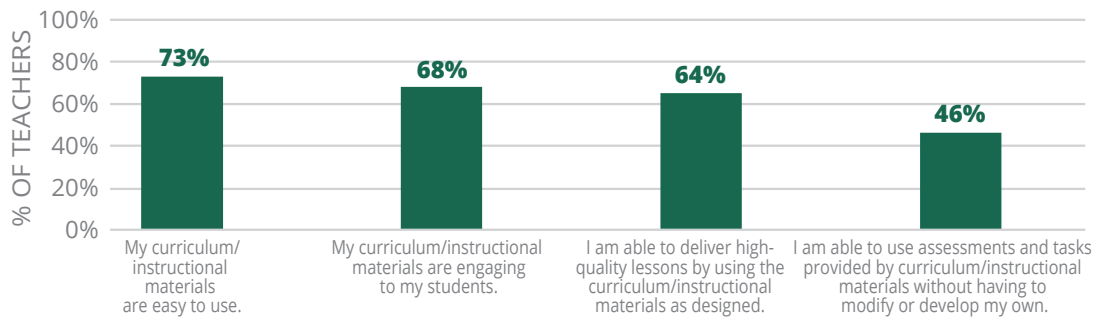
REPORT SPENDING MORE THAN 10 HOURS PER WEEK CREATING OR SOURCING INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Teachers in urban areas are even more heavily impacted by this issue.

Nearly one in four (22 percent, versus 16 percent for the rest of the state) report spending more than 10 hours per week sourcing materials. Across multiple questions on instructional materials, teachers in urban areas report more negative perceptions by seven to eight percentage points, compared to teachers in the rest of the state. Teachers in rural and economically distressed counties are least likely to report spending excessive time creating materials.

Less than half of teachers say they are able to use the assessments and tasks provided to them without making modifications.

Think about the curriculum/instructional materials that are provided by your school or district. Please rate your level of agreement with each statement.

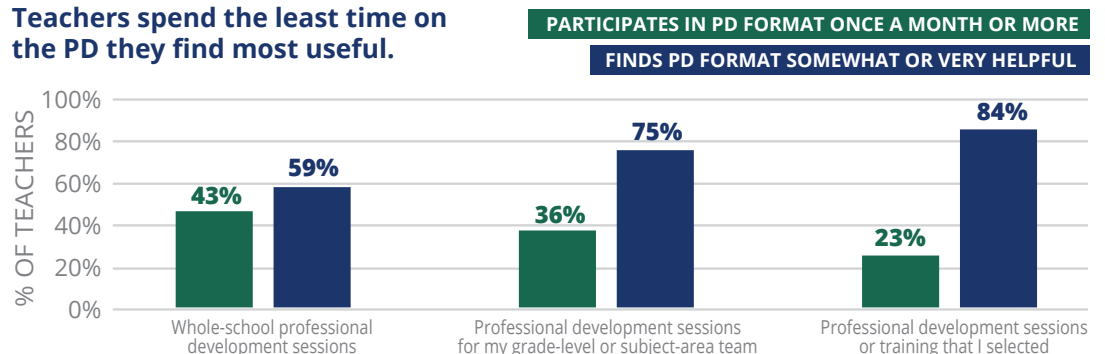


“I always use strategies and techniques I get from PD I choose on my own. I almost never use what I get in (the) required school and district PD.”
– Teacher

Professional learning is not often based on individual teacher needs.

Administrators infrequently report that the professional learning provided to their teachers is individualized or based on teacher choice, yet teachers consistently report that individualization and choice are key factors in whether that professional learning leads to improvements in their instruction. Six in 10 administrators report that professional learning is primarily prescribed by the district or the school rather than identified by teachers or based on individual needs identified in educator evaluations.

Teachers spend the least time on the PD they find most useful.

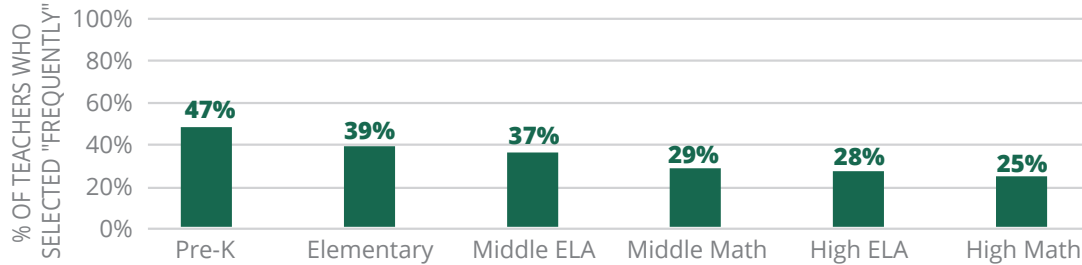


Teachers also report that teacher-selected professional development is the most helpful, though they engage in it least frequently. Twenty-three percent of teachers engage in self-selected PD once a month or more, but 84 percent report that it is somewhat or very helpful. Conversely, 43 percent of teachers participate in whole-school professional development sessions monthly or more, despite just 59 percent of teachers finding it somewhat or very helpful.

Belief in the quality of instructional support varies by grade level.

The strength of the alignment between instructional materials and professional learning opportunities varies by grade level.

My professional learning has been closely aligned to the instructional materials I use in class.



About one quarter of high school math and reading teachers report that their professional development is aligned to their curriculum (compared with 29 to 50 percent of teachers in other grades and subjects). High school math and English language arts (ELA) teachers are also less likely than their middle school counterparts to believe their professional learning is relevant to their content area or frequently leads to improvement (five to eight percent differences).

In other respects, high school teachers report receiving more supports than their counterparts. They tend to receive more individual planning time per week (about four hours) compared with elementary and middle school teachers (two and one-half to three hours) and are correspondingly more likely to think the time is sufficient. High school math and ELA teachers are more likely than middle school math and ELA teachers to believe their collaborative time is focused more on instruction than non-instructional issues (12 percent difference for ELA and 10 percent difference for math).

“Everything is always surface-level and teachers are always left needing so much more. Administrators scramble to prioritize the surface-level content to relay to teachers in their limited PD days.”
– Teacher

Attracting and Developing New Teachers



83%

OF TENNESSEE TEACHERS INDICATED THAT THEY ARE LIKELY TO STILL BE WORKING IN A TENNESSEE PUBLIC SCHOOL IN THREE YEARS

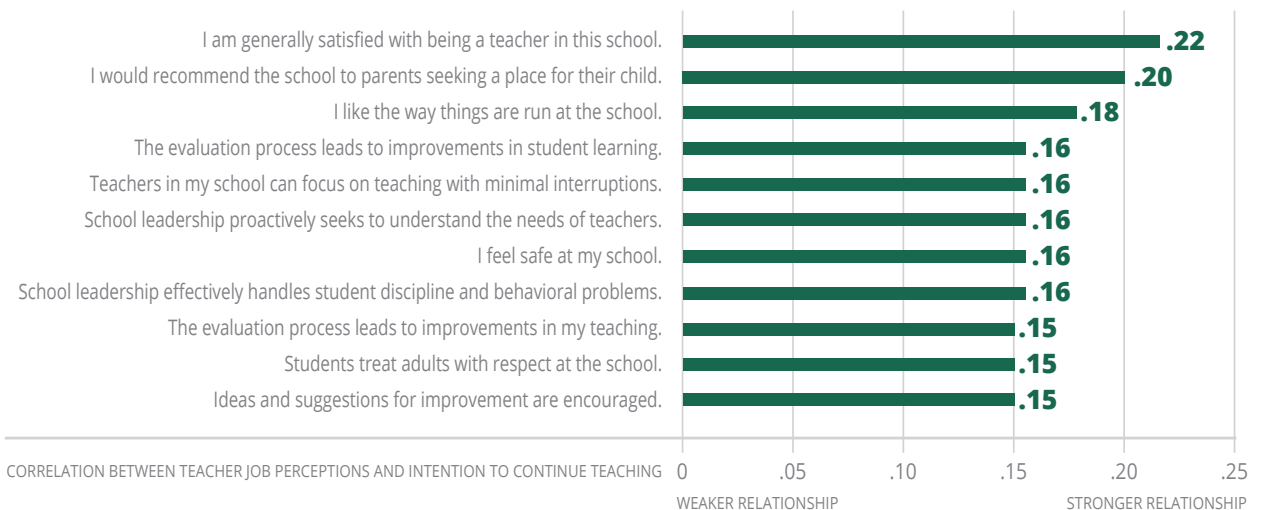
Educator responses point to four primary factors that contribute to their specific placement decisions, and ultimately, their desire to stay in or leave the profession:

- 1 Effective school leadership
- 2 Convenient school location
- 3 Pre-existing personal relationships
- 4 Strong preparation

School leadership can help influence teachers' intentions to continue teaching in Tennessee public schools.

Eighty-three percent of Tennessee teachers indicated that they are likely to still be working in a Tennessee public school in three years. Intention to continue teaching is most highly correlated with (most closely tied to) general morale measures such as satisfaction with being a teacher in their current school and whether they would recommend their school to parents. However, other factors within school leaderships' more direct control also predict intention to continue teaching. For example, teachers are more likely to say they will continue teaching if they feel that they are able to focus on teaching with minimal disruptions, that leadership proactively seeks to understand teachers' needs, and that leadership effectively manages student discipline and behavior.

Teacher perceptions of how they feel about their school and their job are correlated with their intention to continue teaching.



Teachers choose districts based on geography and pre-existing relationships.

As schools and districts look to recruit effective and diverse faculty, it is important to understand the characteristics teachers consider when selecting where to work. The survey asked a subset of new teachers about these considerations on the “Educator Workforce” module.

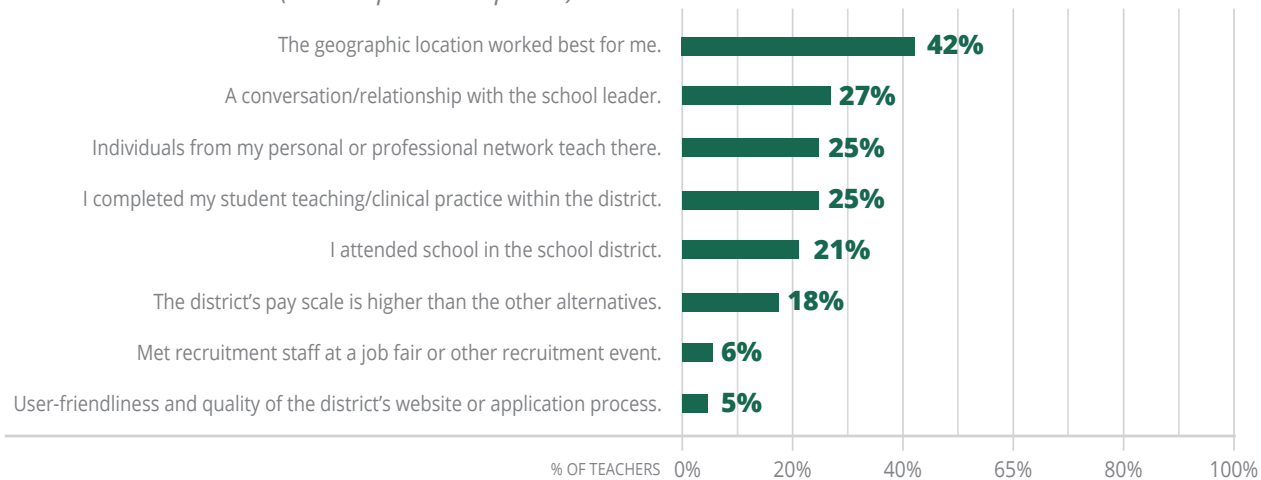
Though geographic fit was the most frequent single factor cited in a teacher’s decision to work in their current school and district, 59 percent of new teachers said they selected their school or district based on pre-existing relationships such as completing their student teaching within the district (25 percent), knowing teachers in the district (25 percent), or having attended school in the district (21 percent). Among teachers who did not report geographic location as a leading factor, these pre-existing relationships were even more common, reported by 72 percent of early-career teachers.

These findings suggest that to recruit new teachers, human resource leaders might focus on building relationships with prospective teachers while they are in high school, working on their teaching degree, or serving as teaching assistants.

“I learned so much in the few days that I observed other teachers in my school after I had been in my own classroom. The classes I’ve taken are not as beneficial as the time I’ve spent one-on-one with other teachers.”
– Teacher

Teachers choose districts based on geography and pre-existing relationships.

Out of the items listed below, which had the greatest influence on your decision to apply to your current school/district. (Select up to two options):



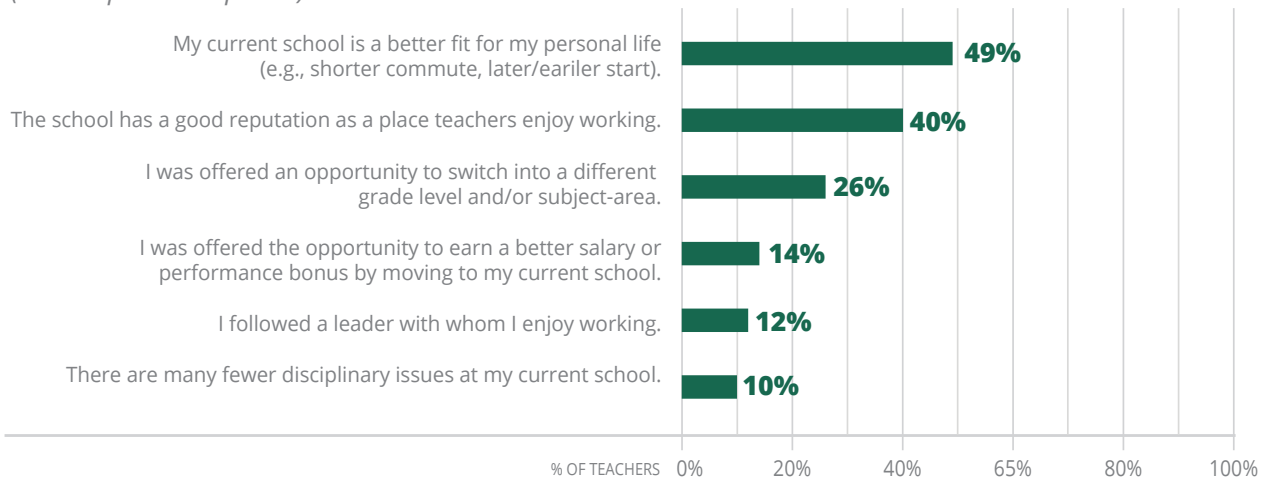
12% 

OF VETERAN TEACHERS WHO TRANSFERRED DISTRICTS REPORT THAT THEY DID SO TO FOLLOW A SCHOOL LEADER

The survey also asked about determining factors for veteran teachers who transferred districts. Among these teachers, physical convenience was once again the most commonly cited factor (49 percent), though this was followed by other professional considerations such as workplace reputation (40 percent), assignment opportunities (26 percent), or salary (14 percent). Personal and professional relationships may matter less among veteran teachers than early-career teachers, as just 12 percent of veteran teachers who transferred districts report that they did so to follow a school leader. For district retention efforts, these findings underscore the importance of offering career advancement opportunities within the district to prevent losing talent to other districts offering these opportunities.

Among veteran teachers who transferred districts, physical convenience most impacted their decision to move.

Which one or two of the reasons below best capture why you wanted to move to your current school? (Select up to two options)

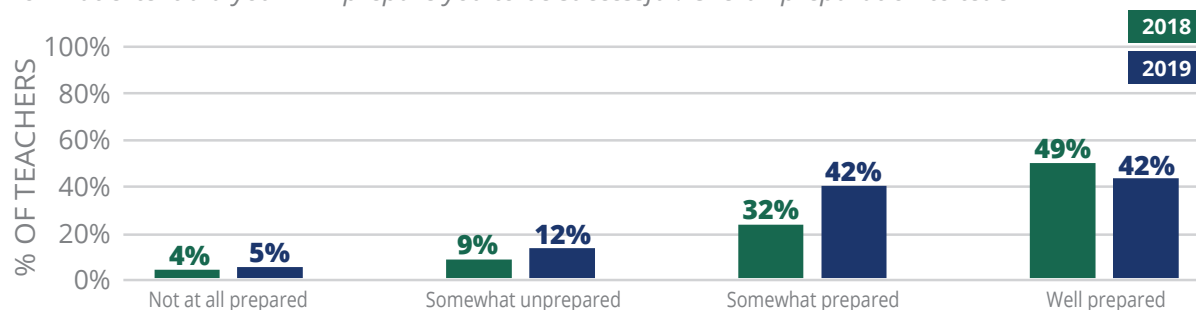


Effective educator preparation and early-career mentoring are vital for the development of new teachers.

Teachers in their first three years on the job report being generally happy with their educator preparation, though not necessarily well prepared. While four in 10 new teachers feel well prepared by their educator preparation provider (a slight decline from last year), an additional four in 10 feel at least somewhat prepared.

Less than half of teachers in their first three years report feeling well prepared for the classroom by their educator preparation program.

To what extent did your EPP prepare you to be successful: Overall preparation to teach



Many districts have adopted mentoring programs to help new teachers get off to a strong start—more than 70 percent of first-year teachers indicate that they have been assigned a mentor teacher by their school or district. The majority of these teachers report getting frequent, high-quality feedback from their mentor and feeling comfortable going to their mentor for advice.

However, one in three new teachers with mentors report that their mentors engaged in high-leverage mentoring activities frequently, including observing their teaching, asking new teachers to observe mentors, co-designing lessons, analyzing student work, and debriefing lessons. One in four report receiving none of these mentoring activities. **These signs of misalignment suggest that mentoring is a key part of educator preparation and development, and there is work to do in clarifying what is expected to deliver high-quality mentoring experiences to all of our new teachers.**

“My mentor was vital to my success. Without her, I would’ve left the profession quickly, instead of ending my 18th year.”
– Teacher

Educators Inform the New TDOE Strategic Plan

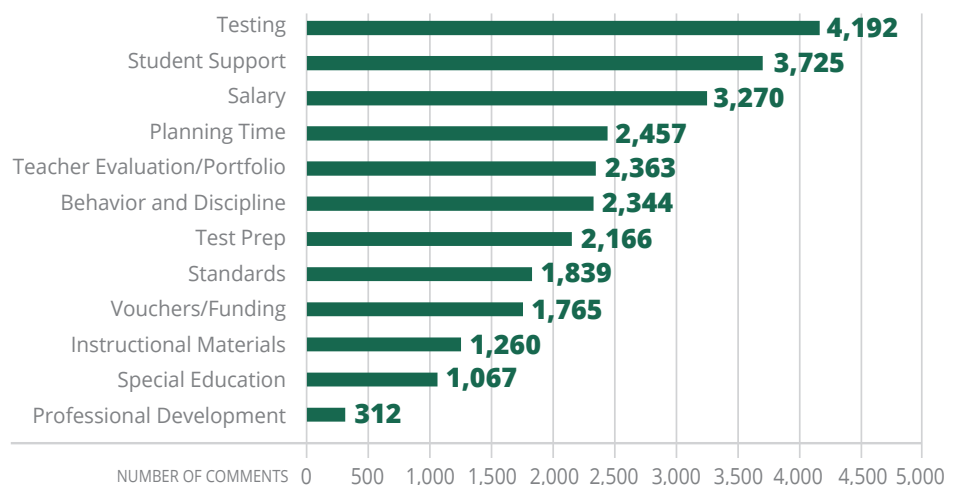
OVER
25,000
EDUCATORS
PROVIDED THEIR INSIGHTS
ON THE TWO MOST
IMPORTANT THINGS FOR
THE COMMISSIONER TO
CONCENTRATE ON OVER
THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

This year, in order to inform Commissioner Schwinn’s new strategic plan, the educator survey asked teachers to articulate the two most important things for the Commissioner to concentrate on over the next five years. Over 25,000 educators took this opportunity to provide their insights on this question. Educator comments most commonly addressed three issues:

- 1 Testing
- 2 Student Support
- 3 Salary

To inform the Commissioner’s work to develop the strategic plan, the department analyzed these answers using a technique called “natural language processing” to cluster comments into central themes and to identify representative comments within these themes. Within each category, the department analyzed comments through a combination of natural language processing and analytic judgment to identify the handful of comments most representative of the category and/or most relevant for state policy.

Educator comments focused most on testing, student support, and salary.



TDOE identified the following educator ideas as the most representative and relevant for policymakers.



TESTING

“Less testing...our students are faced with a constant barrage of school/district/state testing, including multiple CFAs, Benchmarks, Powertests, and CAB tests to prepare for TNReady. It is a wonder students still even care by the time they get to the TNReady tests!”

“Testing—why spend two or three weeks testing? What child on this planet can be successful on a test after 8 days of testing? Is there not a comprehensive test that students could take in ONE day—like the ACT or SAT? Allow teachers to see the previous year’s test and writing test results. How can I improve as a teacher if I have no idea what my students are consistently missing?”



STUDENT SUPPORT



“There has been a push in Tennessee to provide schools with more SROs [school resource officers] to provide safety and security, but it would be beneficial to push for more counselors and/or smaller caseloads so students can get help BEFORE they engage in school violence. We are gatekeepers who can provide referrals to outside mental health resources and can provide support to students who struggle with their mental health.”

“The mental health needs of students today are constantly rising. The need for highly trained counselors is crucial to address these needs and to provide support.”

“School districts should also be afforded the opportunity to explore resources that may be specifically tailored to the needs of the community they serve. Urban districts have needs that are unique and may vary greatly from the needs of rural school districts.”

SALARY



“While demands on teachers have greatly increased in the past few years, our salary increases don’t even keep up with the increases on the cost of insurance most years. We need a significant pay increase or I fear that teachers will leave the profession and young people will not choose the profession. Many teachers are now working second jobs just to live.”

“I think teacher salaries should be a focus. The false perception is that teachers work 8 to 3 every day and anyone who is in education knows that we put in far more hours than that. Teachers aren’t valued for the job that is expected of them every day. More and more things come from the state that we are expected to do, however pay is not being raised.”

As the department’s research team and TERA continue to analyze the responses to the educator survey, all 25,000+ comments will be re-examined from a different methodological angle— using qualitative analytic techniques to pull out additional themes and insights and ensure that educators’ voices continue to inform leaders at all levels.

Conclusions: Building Our Future

Although teachers' overall levels of satisfaction have increased on several items, they also express some worries about the future.

The findings highlighted in this report can help school, district, and state leaders address potential problems and build schools with supportive environments centered on growth and learning.

Understanding the perceptions of Tennessee educators through their responses to the Tennessee Educator Survey provides leaders at the state, district, and school levels the opportunity to react to what teachers and leaders say that they need from their leadership. The trends reported here indicate that while educators in Tennessee are generally satisfied, there are key areas for growth. Together, the **Tennessee Department of Education** and the **Tennessee Education Research Alliance** encourage policymakers, district leaders, school leaders, and teachers to examine the results in more detail. Over the coming year, the department and TERA will engage in survey-focused conversations at the local level and continue to provide insights for leaders on key issues highlighted here.

