

Preliminary Licensed Educator Findings

To do their best work with students, teachers need supportive school environments that maximize their opportunity to be effective. With the leadership of Governor Shumlin, Secretary of Education Vilaseca, the Vermont Education Association, and a coalition of education stakeholders in collaboration with the New Teacher Center (NTC), administered the Vermont Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning Survey (TELL Vermont Survey) to assess whether educators across the state report having the resources and supports necessary to facilitate effective teaching. Findings from this initiative will inform school improvement planning.

About the Survey

The TELL Vermont Survey is a statistically valid and reliable instrument¹ that assesses eight research-based teaching and learning conditions. The eight constructs are 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 of each area. Additionally, the TELL Vermont 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.

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.

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TABLE 1. 2013 TELL VERMONT 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

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

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

Response Rate

NTC administered the anonymous survey to all school-based licensed educators and Education Support Personnel (ESPs) in early 2013. Over 6,600 educators and ESPs (55 percent overall) in the state responded (Table 2). Response rates vary by school type. As Table 2 demonstrates 54 percent of elementary school educators and ESPs participated in the survey, 52 percent of middle school educators and ESPs responded, 55 percent of high school educators and ESPs responded, and 66 percent of special school educators and ESPs responded.

TABLE 2. 2013 SURVEY RESPONSE RATE BY SCHOOL TYPE

School Type	Headcount	Responded	Percent Responded
Elementary	4,440	2,404	54.1
High	3,385	1,847	54.6
Middle	3,311	1,719	51.9
Special	1,102	729	66.2
Grand Total	12,237	6,699	54.7

Additionally, of the 6,699 responding, 4,580 are licensed educators (68 percent), two percent are administrators, nine percent are other licensed educators, such as librarians and school psychologists, and 21 percent are ESPs. Table 3 provides response rates by participant type.

Respondents*	Response Rate (N) Spring 2013
Teachers	68.4% (4,580)
Administrators	01.8% (116)
Other Education Professionals	08.5% (570)
Education Support Personnel	21.4% (1,433)

***Note.** 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.

As Table 4 illustrates, 70 percent of schools (225 out of 322) met or exceeded the 40 percent response rate threshold required to receive an individual school-level data report. All results may be viewed online at www.tellvermont.org.

School Type	Schools Met Threshold	Schools	Percent of Schools Meeting Threshold
Elementary	99	151	65.6
High	41	53	77.4
Middle	61	86	70.9
Special	24	32	75.0
Grand Total	225	322	69.9

Preliminary Findings of Licensed Educators

This brief will examine the preliminary findings of licensed educators across the state. The preliminary findings of ESPs are discussed under separate cover. The rates of agreement by item and survey area were reviewed. Preliminary findings identify items across conditions with relatively high or low levels of agreement. Items and rates of agreement are reported within select survey areas below.

Vermont educators indicate that they are provided needed resources. Evidence from the TELL Vermont Survey suggests that licensed educators agree they are provided the facilities and materials needed to accomplish their work. Educators rated items in this area the highest across the survey.

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- More than eight out of 10 licensed educators indicate that teachers have sufficient access to office equipment (90 percent), communication technology (88 percent), and instructional materials (82 percent).
- Eighty-two percent (82 percent) agree that their school environment is clean and well maintained.
- About the same percentage (81 percent) agrees that the physical environment of classrooms in their school supports teaching and learning.

Vermont educators also report high rates of agreement on items related to communication with the community and parents. These data suggest that many Vermont schools actively encourage community and parent involvement in the learning process. Educators rated items related to this area second highest overall.

- More than nine out of 10 licensed educators (91 percent) report that teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning.
- Eight out of 10 (80 percent) indicate that their school maintains clear, two-way communication with parents/guardians and the community.
- About the same percentage (79 percent) reports that their school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.

While the majority of educators agree that there are professional development opportunities to improve their practice and student learning, fewer report follow up or evaluation of trainings. Survey results indicate that professional development opportunities are available and developed to address school identified needs.

- More than eight out of 10 licensed educators (82 percent) indicate that their professional learning opportunities are aligned with their school's improvement plan.
- More than three-quarters (77 percent) agree that their professional development enhances teachers' abilities to improve student learning.
- More than seven out of 10 (72 percent) report that sufficient resources are available for professional development in their schools.

However, far fewer educators indicate agreement that follow up is provided, that trainings are differentiated to meet teacher needs, or that professional development is assessed.

- Less than half of respondents (45 percent) indicate that follow up is provided from professional development.
- About the same percentage (44 percent) agrees that professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.

- Fewer than one-third (32 percent) agree that professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers.

About half of educators agree schools have shared visions and shared decision making processes. A majority indicate agreement with items associated with decision making and respect. However, it should be noted that while a majority does agree with these items, a relatively large percentage (more than 40 percent) of educators disagrees that key elements of decision making are in place. For example, more than 2,200 Vermont educators disagree that there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in their school.

- Almost six out of 10 licensed educators (57 percent) agree that there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in their schools.
- About the same proportion (59 percent) reports that their faculty and leadership have a shared vision.
- Fifty-three percent of licensed educators report that teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in their schools.
- Fewer than half of respondents (49 percent) agree that their faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.

Educators report the least agreement with items related to time. Fewer Vermont educators agree that teachers have sufficient time to teach, plan, and collaborate relative to other survey areas. Lower rates of agreement are consistent across all questions associated with time with the exception of reasonable class sizes.

- Almost eight out of ten educators (79 percent) agree that class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students.
- About half of participants (53 percent) agree that teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.
- Fifty-six percent of licensed educators indicate that the non-instructional time provided for teachers in their school is sufficient.
- About the same proportion (57 percent) agrees that teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.

In summary, a majority of Vermont educators agree they have the resources and materials to conduct their work. They also report strong communication with parents and the community. Additionally, most view opportunities to improve their practice and student learning. However, a majority of educators indicate a need for more follow up trainings and assessment of trainings. Finally, educators report a need for more opportunities to participate in decision making and to have time to collaborate and plan.

Next Steps

To support and inform Vermont educators, stakeholders, and policymakers about 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 (i.e. principals and teachers, charter and non-charter).

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

Endnotes

- Borman, G. & Dowling, N. (2008). Teacher attrition and retention: A meta-analytic and narrative review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(3).
- Buckley, J., Schneider, M., & Shang, Y. (2004). *The effects of school facility quality on teacher retention in urban school districts*. Chestnut Hill, MA: National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities.
- Johnson, S., Kraft, M., & Papay, J. (2012). How context matters in high-need schools: The effects of teachers' working conditions on their professional satisfaction and their students' achievement. *Teachers College Record*, 114(10).
- Ladd, H. (2009). Teachers' perceptions of their working conditions: How predictive of policy relevant outcomes? CALDER Working Paper 33. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education.
- Loeb, S., Darling-Hammond, L., & Luczak, J. (2005). How teaching conditions predict teacher turnover in California schools. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 80(3).
- Pogodzinski, B., Youngs, P., Frank, K., & Belman, D. (2012). Administrative climate and novices' intent to remain teaching. *The Elementary School Journal*, 113(2).

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.



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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.