



Doc H's Blog

Kentucky Education Commissioner
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What Teachers Say About Working Conditions

At the Kentucky Board of Education's April meeting, the board received the final report from the [TELL Kentucky](#) survey. This survey was a collaborative effort of many education partners and Governor Steve Beshear to ask teachers about teaching and learning in Kentucky schools.

More than 42,000 educators responded. To find out more about the survey, go to www.tellkentucky.org.

The report received by the board had several key findings, and I highlight a few of those below. The full executive summary is on the TELL Kentucky website.

Overall, Kentucky educators are satisfied with the teaching and learning conditions in their school. More than eight out of 10 educators (84 percent) agree that their school is a good place to work and learn, and more than four out of five teachers (83 percent) want to continue teaching in their current school buildings.

In comparisons with five other states conducting similar surveys, Kentucky educators are more positive about their teaching conditions in several important areas, including access to instructional technology and having sufficient time for professional learning opportunities that are well-aligned with their school improvement plans.

The area of greatest concern noted by teachers is time. Many Kentucky educators report that class sizes are insufficient for them to meet student needs, and only half agree that efforts are made to minimize paperwork that can distract from time for instruction.

Positive views of school leadership are related to quality standards, teacher assessment and school-based decision making (SBDM) councils, but more attention may be needed in areas related to conditions that build trust and mutual respect. Educators' perceptions of school councils are largely favorable, as more than eight out of 10 (84 percent) agree that overall, their SBDM councils provide effective leadership in their schools. But three out of 10 educators (or more than 12,600 teachers in the state) disagree that there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in their schools, and nearly three out of 10 (28 percent) report that teachers are not comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important.

Community support and involvement is most strongly connected with school-level student performance. Nearly all educators agree that teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning and that their schools maintain clear, two-way communication with parents/guardians and the community. Community support and involvement provide strong and statistically significant influences on student learning while controlling for student, teacher and school characteristics.

Community support and involvement and school leadership are critical influences on teachers' future employment plans. The analysis of individual teacher employment plans and estimated retention rates in TELL Kentucky schools indicate that leadership support, community involvement and the processes and systems in place to manage student conduct are important areas to address to enhance teacher retention. Teachers are more likely to remain working in schools where there are parents and school leaders that create trusting environments and where teachers feel safe and engaged.

I encourage school councils, school boards and principals to revisit the results from the TELL Kentucky survey and ensure specific strategies are in place to address community support and involvement. Meeting with the Parent Advisory Council this week, a recommendation was made to ask schools and districts to revisit the *Missing Piece of the Proficiency Puzzle* scoring rubric to identify specific issues that could be addressed to improve parent and community engagement. For more information about the *Missing Piece* rubric, click [here](#).

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