

Listening to Maryland's Educators to Create Supportive Teaching Conditions

Executive Summary

Supportive school environments are necessary to provide every Maryland teacher with the best opportunity to be effective. Under Governor O'Malley's leadership, the state started documenting the teaching and learning conditions across all schools through the TELL Maryland Educator Survey in 2009. Analyses of those results and other research from across the country demonstrate that empowering teachers in schools where educators are valued, trusted and have the time to work collaboratively are essential to student learning and teacher retention.

In 2011, almost 46,000 educators shared their perception of their school conditions on the voluntary survey, and they were more positive about their teaching environments than in 2009. Despite the economic challenges currently faced by schools, more than four out of five (83 percent) report that their school is a good place to work and learn. In particular, perceptions of teacher professional development have improved since 2009. For example, four out of five educators (79 percent) agree that sufficient resources are available for professional development in their school compared to less than six out of 10 (57 percent) in 2009. Educators were much more likely to agree that professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers and enhances teachers' abilities to improve student learning. Additionally educators are significantly more likely to agree that critical conditions in the area of school leadership as well as new teacher and community support

than in 2009. Changes in policies and practices—revised rules on mentoring, Race to the Top resources—and the economy all may be influencing Survey results.

However, while educators are more positive across the state, there are differences across districts and schools that merit further consideration. Many schools have positive teaching environments and improved conditions since 2009, but others are less likely to have necessary supports and have declined. Almost 900 schools had at least half of their faculty and support staff complete the TELL Maryland Survey and can now access their school results online at www.tellmaryland.org. More than 700 schools have results for both 2009 and 2011 to drive school improvement conversations.

To inform Maryland educators of the results of this survey and support their use of findings and recommendations, a number of resources are being developed. In addition to this report on general trends, briefs on data related specifically to beginning teachers, principals, and Education Support Professionals are also being developed. A brief on the validity and reliability of the survey instrument is also available. A final report that builds on these initial analyses will be developed when student achievement and other data are available to the New Teacher Center to better assess the connection between teaching conditions and student learning and teacher retention. All of these resources will be made available electronically at www.tellmaryland.org.