

**T**eaching **E**mpowering **L**earning & **L**earning  
**MARYLAND**

# Educators' Survey

Martin O'Malley, Governor    Anthony Brown, Lt. Governor



## Understanding the Results of the TELL Maryland Educators' Survey: Initial Findings

by

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To help ensure all students can learn teachers need to work in schools designed for their success. Positive teaching conditions, where educators are supported and empowered, are essential to creating schools where teachers want to work and students can learn.

To assess whether these conditions are present across Maryland, Governor O'Malley in partnership with a coalition including the American Federation of Teachers – Maryland, Maryland Association of Boards of Education, the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals, Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals, Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland State Teachers Association, Maryland State Board of Education, and Public Schools Superintendents Association of Maryland worked with the New Teacher Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz, to conduct a survey in February and March 2009 of all school-based licensed educators in the state. By hearing directly from educators who intimately understand teaching conditions, the state will have the opportunity to make data-driven decisions to establish policies and practices that make all schools great places to work and learn.

Educators across the state have shared their perceptions of the teaching and learning conditions in their schools. **Over 43,400 educators (62 percent) from across the state participated in the TELL Maryland survey.** Data is now available for over 1,000 schools (1.023), providing critical information for making school and district level decisions to improve Maryland schools.

An interim report will be completed this summer, providing more in-depth analysis of the survey results. A final report, analyzing the findings of the survey relative to student learning and teacher retention, will be submitted in the fall. In the meantime, some general trends are already clear in the state survey results.

Overall, Maryland educators are satisfied with the teaching conditions in their school. About three-quarters (73 percent) agree that their school is a good place to work and learn. Four out of five teachers want to continue teaching in their current school building (80 percent). While only half of teachers want to keep teaching at their school over the long term (50 percent), 30 percent hope to pursue an administrative or non-administrative position within education. Only two percent of survey respondents want to leave education immediately and one out of 10 (nine percent) hope to leave education over the course of their career.

Teaching conditions appear to be important factors influencing employment plans according to survey respondents. Adequate support from school administration (62 percent strongly agree), effectiveness with students (58 percent), time to do their job during the work day (55 percent), teaching assignment (54 percent strongly agree), collegial atmosphere amongst the staff (51 percent strongly agree) were the strongest influences on teacher decision making about future professional plans; more so than salary (39 percent strongly agree), cost of living in the community (37 percent strongly agree), student behavior (35 percent strongly agree), and quality of life within the community (27 percent strongly agree).

But while Maryland educators are generally positive about their school context, several areas were identified as issues that merit further analyses and discussion at the school, district and state level. The following trends were evident upon initial analyses of the statewide survey results.

### **Time: Educators need more time to plan and work with colleagues**

Less than half of educators agree that they have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students (49 percent) and enough non-instructional time to plan and collaborate (45 percent).

- One-third (33 percent) of Maryland teachers report receiving, on average, an hour per day of non-instructional time in an average week while one-quarter (27 percent) receive three hours or less.
- Much of this planning time appears to be in isolation. One-quarter of Maryland teachers (24 percent) report receiving no time for structured collaborative planning and less than half (48 percent) agree that teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues

Addressing time concerns is important as 38 percent of Maryland teachers believe that issues of time (amount, quality and use) are the most important teaching condition in promoting student learning, more than student conduct (24 percent), facilities and resources (12 percent) and school leadership (10 percent).

Administrators too feel a time crunch, which may have an impact on their ability to serve as instructional leaders. Less than half (45 percent) of the almost 1,000 principals responding to the survey agree that they have sufficient time to focus on instructional leadership issues. In a given week, principals are much more likely to focus on administrative duties than instructional tasks. More than half of principals (55 percent) report spending ten hours or more per week on administrative tasks (versus 2 percent spending equivalent time on instructional planning with teachers and 10 percent observing teachers). Meeting with parents and the community and student discipline issues also detract from administrators' ability to focus on instructional leadership. Central office procedures may contribute to principal time issues as well as only one-third of principals (34 percent) believe districts have streamlined procedures to minimize principal's time on non-instructional tasks.

### **Facilities and Resources: Educators are positive about the resources available to them**

Most Maryland educators report that they have access to sufficient resources and facilities to work productively. About three-quarters of educators believe that teachers have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials and resources (73 percent), instructional technology (72 percent), communications technology (77 percent) and office equipment (69 percent). Similar proportions of educators are positive about their school building, agreeing that their facilities are clean and well maintained (75 percent) and that the physical environment of classrooms in the school support teaching and learning (71 percent).

### **Student Conduct: Educators agree that schools are safe and student conduct rules are understood and enforced**

Only one out of ten Maryland educators report that they work in a school that is unsafe. About three-quarters of educators agree that students understand expectations for their conduct (77 percent) and that teachers consistently enforce rules for student conduct (72 percent). And while two-thirds of educators report that students are caring toward one another (64 percent), more than eight out of ten (83 percent) agree that students and the faculty make efforts to stop bullying in their school.

### **Community Engagement: Parents/guardians are involved and supportive**

While eight out of ten educators (81 percent) agree that their school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement and nine out of ten (89 percent) report that teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning, only half (55 percent) agree that parents/guardians are influential decision makers and that they support teachers (62 percent).

### **School leadership: Leadership is supportive in many arenas, but may need to do more to address concerns about teaching and learning conditions**

When asked which of the eight overarching conditions assessed in the survey most affects your willingness to remain teaching at your school, more than one-quarter (29 percent) of teachers indicated that school leadership was the most critical, more than any other area (student learning 23 percent, time during the day to plan and collaborate 14 percent).

Fortunately, educators are positive about several aspects of school leadership. An overwhelming majority believe that they are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction (85 percent) and that school leadership facilitates the use of data to improve student learning (83 percent). Communication from school leadership is viewed positively by educators. Almost three-quarters agree that clear expectations are communicated to students and families (73 percent), and that teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching (69 percent). Other areas of leadership, however, appear to be of greater concern to Maryland educators.

- Two-thirds of educators believe that there is an atmosphere of trust in their school (66 percent) and six out of ten feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them (61 percent).
- About half of educators report that school leadership is making a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about leadership (49 percent) and six out of ten agree that efforts are made in the areas of the use of time and teacher empowerment (58 percent respectively). Educators are more positive about leadership efforts to address concerns about student learning (77 percent), student conduct (66 percent) and facilities and professional development (65 percent).

### **Empowerment: Teachers do not feel engaged in important decisions about their school**

Seven out of ten Maryland educators believe that there are opportunities for teachers to participate in school leadership roles (69 percent), that teachers trust each other (70 percent) and that teachers are recognized as educational experts (70 percent). But this does not appear to translate into feelings of empowerment, as many Maryland educators report that teachers do not feel engaged in education decision making. About six in ten (59 percent) of educators believe that teachers are integrally involved in decision making about educational issues and agree that there is an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems(59 percent).

Educators indicate that teachers play a large or the primary role in issues that impact their practice such as devising teaching techniques (58 percent), setting grading and student assessment practices (35 percent) and selecting instructional materials and resources (54 percent). But teachers are not influencing other decisions that affect their classroom and school. About three-quarters of Maryland educators report teachers in their school play a small role or no role at all in the selection of teachers new to the school (79 percent), and deciding how the school budgeting will be spent (71 percent). Other critical decisions that impact teaching and learning do not appear to be influenced by teachers. A significant proportion of educators report that teachers have a small role or no role in determining the content of in-service professional development programs (52 percent), establishing student discipline procedures (39 percent), and school improvement planning (30 percent).

Only 42 percent of educators agree that teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in their school and less than one out of five (17 percent) agree for decision making within their district.

### **Professional Development: Educators report that many state professional development standards are being met**

Several questions were asked to assess the extent to which the state's professional development standards were being met through learning opportunities across Maryland schools. Educators were positive about several aspects of professional development. About two-thirds of educators agree that professional development deepens teachers' content knowledge and skills (67 percent), provides teachers with the knowledge and skills to apply research to teaching (65 percent), provides support to work with colleagues to refine teaching practices (67 percent),

enhances the implementation of instructional and assessment strategies to meet diverse student learning needs (69 percent), and assists teachers in analyzing and refining practices that promote optimal learning environments (67 percent).

However, less than half of educators noted that professional development provides teachers with strategies to engage families and community members (44 percent) and that learning opportunities are evaluated with results communicated to teachers (47 percent). Additionally only half of educators believe professional development reflects best practice in adult learning (52 percent), and six out of ten educators report that professional development relies on rigorous analysis of data (60 percent).

Teachers identified several areas where they need additional professional development to be more effective: instructional strategies to meet the learning needs of diverse groups of students (51 percent), collaboration for improving instruction (49 percent), and strategies for engaging families and other stakeholders in the school community (43 percent). Only one out of five educators report needing more support in their content area (17 percent), understanding state content standards (20 percent) and using assessment to gauge mastery of state standards (18 percent).

Although less than half of educators agree that professional development is differentiated to meet the individual needs of teachers, more than two-thirds of educators (68 percent) agree that professional development enhances teachers' abilities to help improve student learning.

### **Student Learning: Educator report using assessment data to differentiate instruction and drive practice**

Nine out of ten educators agree that the faculty is committed to helping every student (90 percent). Virtually all educators agree that teachers use formative assessments in their classrooms to make appropriate adjustments to instruction (86 percent) and that teachers develop appropriate daily learning objectives that are aligned to the Voluntary State Curriculum in content and rigor (86 percent). About two-thirds agree that state and local assessments are available in time to impact decision making (63 percent), are used to improve student learning (67 percent), though 57 percent agree these assessments are useful in efforts to improve student learning.

### **Mentoring: There are inconsistencies in the quality and quantity of support offered**

About 5,500 beginning teachers answered specific questions about any additional support they receive. Only two-thirds (65 percent) of new teachers—those with three years of teaching experience or less—report being formally assigned a mentor while most (82 percent) attended an orientation for new teachers and seminars designed for new teachers (72 percent).

Of those 65 percent of new teachers assigned a mentor, many report never working with their mentor in critical areas such as analyzing student work (38 percent) and developing lessons plans (29 percent). More than one-quarter of novice teachers report that their mentor never observed their teaching. About half (54 percent) of the 300 new principals who responded to the survey

were formally assigned a mentor, but many of those who received induction support never were observed in their school by their mentor (67 percent), nor did any school improvement planning with their mentor (41 percent).

Despite these inconsistencies, about two-thirds of novice teachers receiving any induction report that the support improved their instructional practice (62 percent) and helped to impact student learning (63 percent). Half (51 percent) of the supported new teachers agreed that the additional support they received was an important factor in their decision to remain teaching at their current school.

TELL Maryland data can help the state, districts, and schools assess, understand and improve their teaching and learning conditions in order to foster improved perceptions, motivations and performance in schools. Ultimately these data drive conversations can help to create positive school environments where all educators are supported, want to work and can thrive.