

“There is not just one solution. It will take a partnership of teachers, parents and administrators to improve student achievement. No one and no thing can accomplish this monumental task alone.”

“Treat all students equally, provide high-quality teaching, have high expectations and students will succeed.”

“In today’s world it is absolutely necessary for students to achieve at the highest level their ability allows, and then go beyond.”

PRIMARY SOURCES: AMERICA’S TEACHERS ON AMERICA’S SCHOOLS

LOUISIANA

A PROJECT OF SCHOLASTIC AND THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

“Everyone should finish high school and move on to something higher. I think they all can.”

“Give them standardized tests, but not all the time, and their lives shouldn’t depend on it; and neither should ours.”

“Learning is a lifelong project and all students

are capable

being lifelong learners.”

“How do we prepare students for jobs that don’t yet exist?”

“Future teachers need to be the best and the brightest.
There should be incentives for our best students
to become teachers.”
– *High School Teacher in Louisiana*

***Primary Sources: Louisiana* is meant for use in conjunction with the complete *Primary Sources* report available at www.scholastic.com/primarysources.**

A NOTE FROM SCHOLASTIC AND THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

In March 2010, Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation released the landmark study, *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools*, placing the views of our nation's public school teachers at the center of the discussion on education reform.

More than 40,000 teachers participated in the survey – from every state and at every grade level – and the unprecedented size and scope of the study allows for the release of new, state-level data from Louisiana. *Primary Sources: Louisiana* is based on the responses of more than 550 public school teachers across the state of Louisiana who participated in the national survey.

We asked teachers about the state of American education, the challenges facing students and the variety of supports and tools that teachers need to tackle those challenges. They responded with powerful, nuanced opinions on a number of issues, from student and teacher performance, to classroom innovation and academic standards, to the importance of the school-to-home connection.

Similar to their peers nationwide, teachers from Louisiana had important opinions about the critical issues in education at the national and state levels. Specifically, teachers in Louisiana:

- Believe clearer standards and common standards across states would make a very strong or strong impact on student achievement.
- Are significantly more likely to say that innovative compensation measures like monetary rewards for teacher performance strongly impact teacher retention and student achievement.
- Are more open than teachers nationwide to the use of state standardized tests in evaluating both student and teacher performance.
- Are more likely to use a wide range of data-centric measures of student performance and to use collected data in a variety of ways to benefit their students' progress.

It is important to note that *Primary Sources: Louisiana* is a small subset of the data we collected on Louisiana's teachers. Although we have selected the most statistically significant and state-relevant data for inclusion in this mini-report, we encourage you to look at the additional data on Louisiana available in the appendices of the complete *Primary Sources* report.

While *Primary Sources: Louisiana* reflects the wide range of voices and opinions of teachers across the state, one thing is constant: Teachers teach for the love of their students and the chance to make a difference in those young lives. Our goal should be to do all we can to support them in this endeavor.

Sincerely,



Margery Mayer

President, Scholastic Education, Scholastic Inc.



Vicki L. Phillips

Director of Education, College Ready, United States Program

THE CHALLENGE

Louisiana's Teachers Recognize the Challenges Facing Their Students

With a state graduation rate of 62%—nearly 7 points lower than the national average—teachers in Louisiana are keenly aware of the limitations of a high school diploma and the disconnect between students' current levels of achievement and the levels at which they must perform to achieve success beyond high school.

Specifically, in Louisiana:

- Teachers say that a high school diploma is not enough for today's students. Eighty-nine percent of teachers in the state say that the most important goal of schools and teaching is to prepare students for success beyond high school (93% nationally).
- Nine out of 10 teachers say that not all their students could leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2- or 4-year college (91% nationally).
- Only 16% of teachers strongly agree that students enter their classroom prepared for on-grade-level work, with another 35% agreeing "somewhat" (16% and 44% nationally).
- Only 25% of teachers rate the academic achievement of students at their school as "Excellent" (28% nationally).
- Fewer than four in 10 (38%) teachers agree that more than three quarters of the students currently in their classes could leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2-or-4-year college (46% nationally).

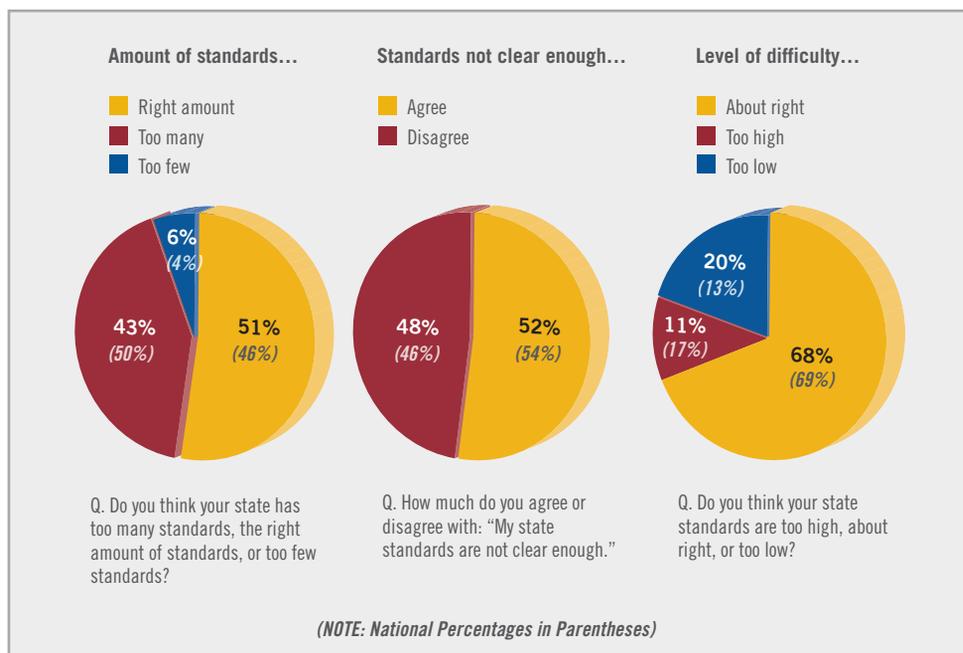
STATE AND NATIONAL STANDARDS

Louisiana Teachers' Views on Current Louisiana State Standards

Like their peers across the nation, teachers in Louisiana recognize the role of academic standards in improving student achievement and preparedness. They are divided, however, in their opinions on the amount and clarity of their state standards:

- Fewer than half say that Louisiana has too many standards (43%), while half say that the number of standards is “about right” (51%), (50% and 46% nationally, respectively).
- As with their peers nationwide, a very small number of teachers in Louisiana (6%) believe that the state has too few standards (4% nationally).
- Louisiana’s teachers align with teachers across the country on their opinions on clarity of their state standards, with about half saying standards are clear enough (48%) and half saying they are not (52%).
- About seven in 10 teachers say the level of difficulty of their state standards is about right, which aligns with national data. In most states, however, the remaining three in 10 teachers are evenly split between thinking their state standards are too high and too low. In Louisiana, almost twice as many teachers say standards are too low (20%) than say they are too high (11%).

Teachers' Views on Louisiana State Standards



Louisiana Teachers Support Clearer Standards, Common Across States

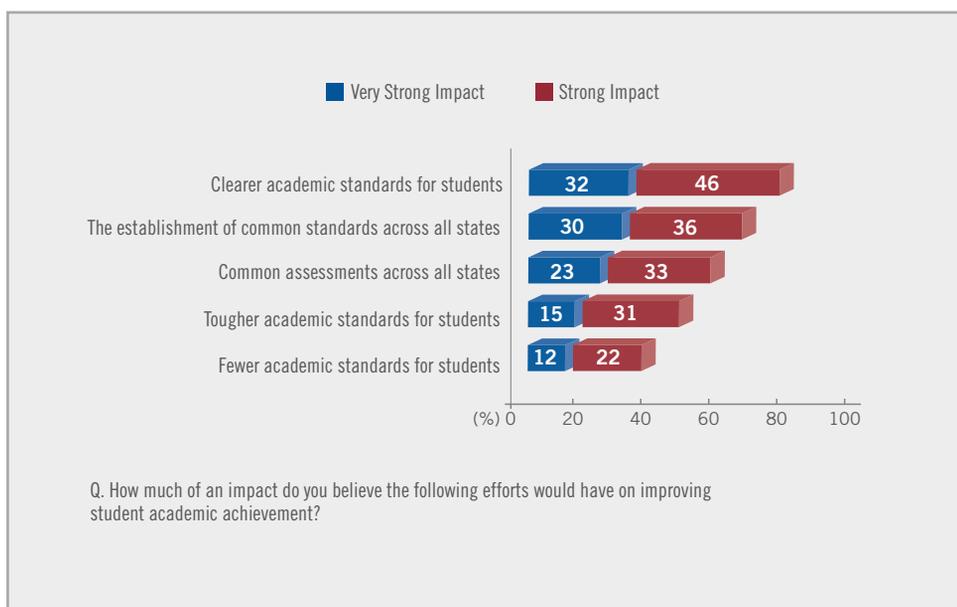
Louisiana's teachers support the establishment of clear and common standards across states to a slightly greater degree than their peers across the nation. They say the following measures would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student achievement:

- Clearer academic standards for students (79% in Louisiana, 74% nationally)
- The establishment of common standards across all states (66% in Louisiana, 60% nationally)

In keeping with the views of teachers across the country, Louisiana's teachers are far less certain that fewer and more challenging standards would make a strong or very strong impact on improving student achievement:

- Tougher academic standards for students (46% in Louisiana, 45% nationally)
- Fewer academic standards for students (33% in Louisiana, 34% nationally)

Louisiana Teachers' Views on the Impact Changes to Current Standards Would Have on Improving Academic Achievement

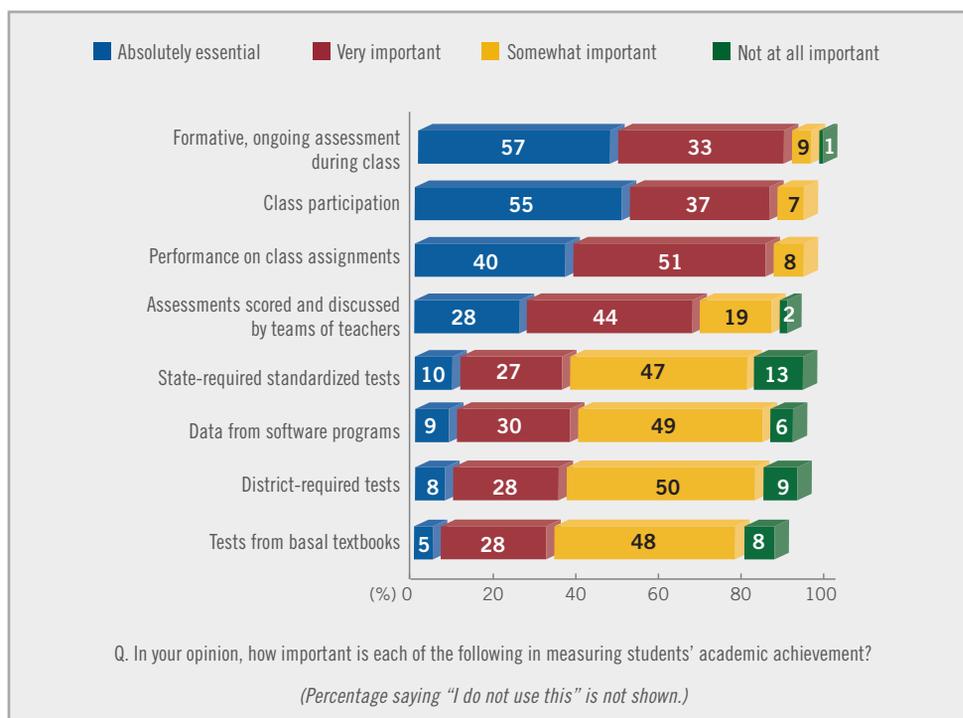


EVALUATING STUDENT AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE

Louisiana Teachers' Views on Evaluating Student Performance

Louisiana's teachers are similar to the nation's teachers in their firm belief that student assessment should be driven by in-classroom experiences, including formative ongoing assessments, class participation and performance on class assignments.

Louisiana Teachers' Views on the Impact Changes to Current Standards Would Have on Improving Academic Achievement



While there is a clear delineation between the top and bottom four ways that teachers believe children's achievement ought to be measured, Louisiana's teachers are more likely to have faith in all four of the lower ranked, data-centric measures of student achievement when compared to teachers nationwide.

Specifically, when the percentages of Louisiana's teachers are compared to the percentages of total teachers nationwide, Louisiana's teachers are more likely to say the following are very important or absolutely essential in measuring student achievement:

- Data from software programs (39% in Louisiana, 29% nationally)

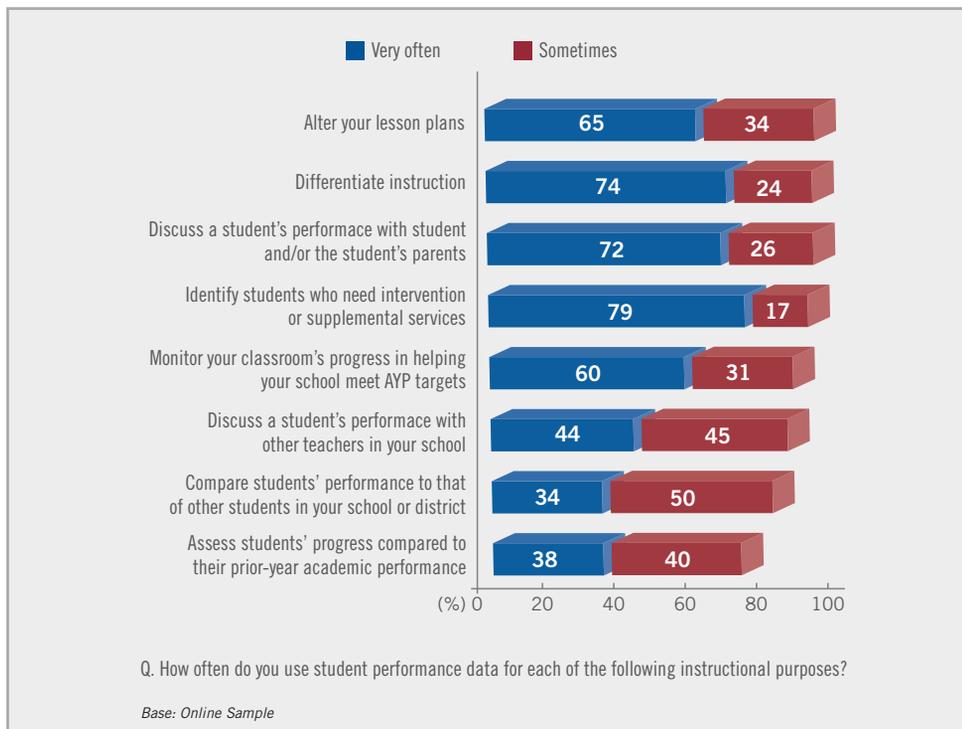
- District-required tests (37% in Louisiana, 31% nationally)
- State-required standardized tests (37% in Louisiana, 26% nationally)
- Tests from basal textbooks (33% in Louisiana, 23% nationally)

Louisiana Teachers' Use of Student Performance Data

All teachers use student performance data to drive instruction, discuss student performance with parents, students and sometimes other teachers, and monitor student and classroom progress. Teachers in Louisiana, however, are more likely than their peers nationwide to use student performance measures in several specific ways including:

- Discussing a student's performance with the student and/or the student's parents (72% in Louisiana, 64% nationally);
- Monitoring their classrooms' progress in helping their school meet AYP targets (60% in Louisiana, 49% nationally);
- Assessing students' progress compared to their prior-year academic performance (38% in Louisiana, 29% nationally);
- Comparing students' performance to that of other students in their school or district (34% in Louisiana, 25% nationally).

Louisiana Teachers' Frequency of Use of Student Performance Data



Louisiana Teachers' Views on Measuring Teacher Performance

In qualitative conversation, teachers stress a desire for their performance to be based on factors they can impact directly—like student growth and student engagement—and not on factors that fail to consider the realities of individual students in individual classrooms.

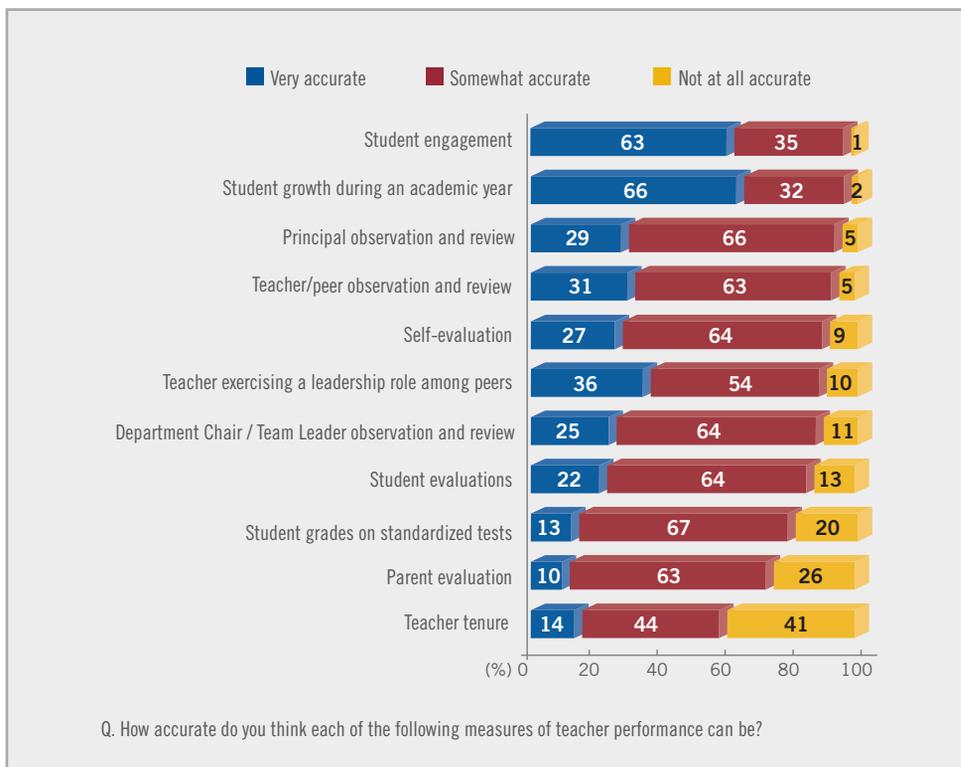
This is clearly borne out in *Primary Sources* data at both the national and Louisiana levels. By far, teachers say that student growth over the course of an academic year and student engagement are the most accurate measures of teacher performance.

Additionally, teachers in Louisiana are even more likely to believe their performance ought to be measured by:

- Student growth over the course of an academic year (66% say this is very accurate in measuring teacher performance vs. 55% among total teachers nationwide)
- Whether teachers exercise a leadership role among peers (36% vs. 28% say this is very accurate in measuring teacher performance)

Interestingly, while few teachers nationally say student grades on standardized tests are “very accurate” measures of teacher performance, teachers in Louisiana are more likely than their peers nationwide to say they are at least somewhat accurate (80% in Louisiana, 69% nationally).

Louisiana Teachers' Views on the Degree of Accuracy of Measures of Teacher Performance



TEACHER RETENTION

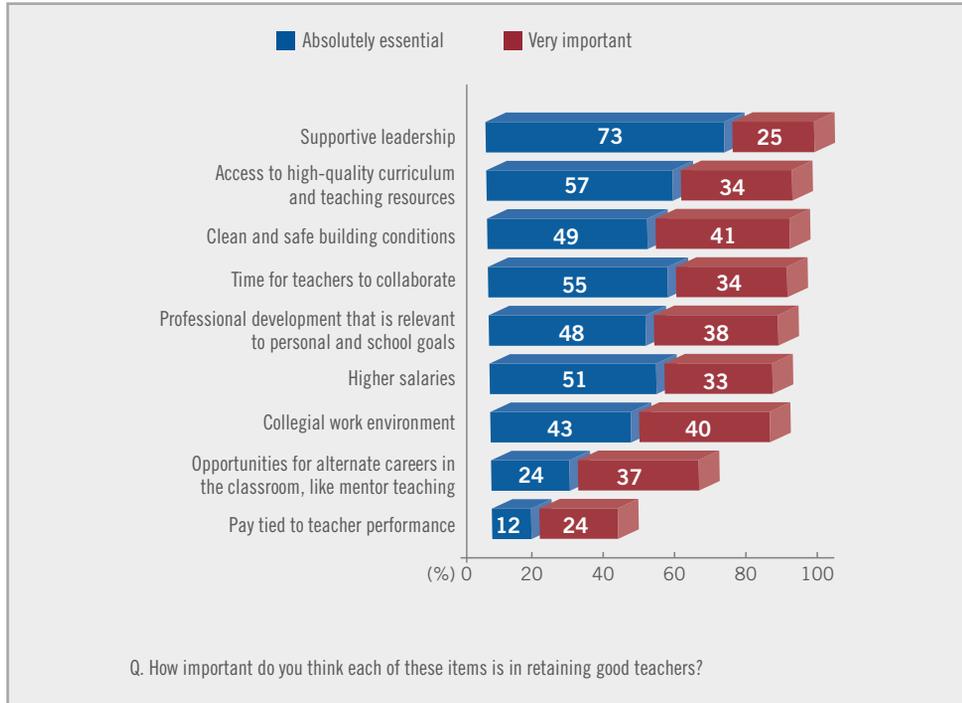
Louisiana Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention

Overall, Louisiana teachers feel similarly to their peers nationwide when it comes to the importance of various factors in retaining good teachers.

In nearly every state in the nation, supportive leadership is ranked as the most important factor in retaining good teachers, and Louisiana is no exception. Seventy-three percent of teachers in Louisiana say that supportive leadership is absolutely essential in retaining good teachers (68% nationally).

Additionally, teachers in Louisiana are more likely to say having access to high-quality curriculum and teaching resources is absolutely essential in retaining good teachers (57% in Louisiana, 49% nationally).

Louisiana Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention



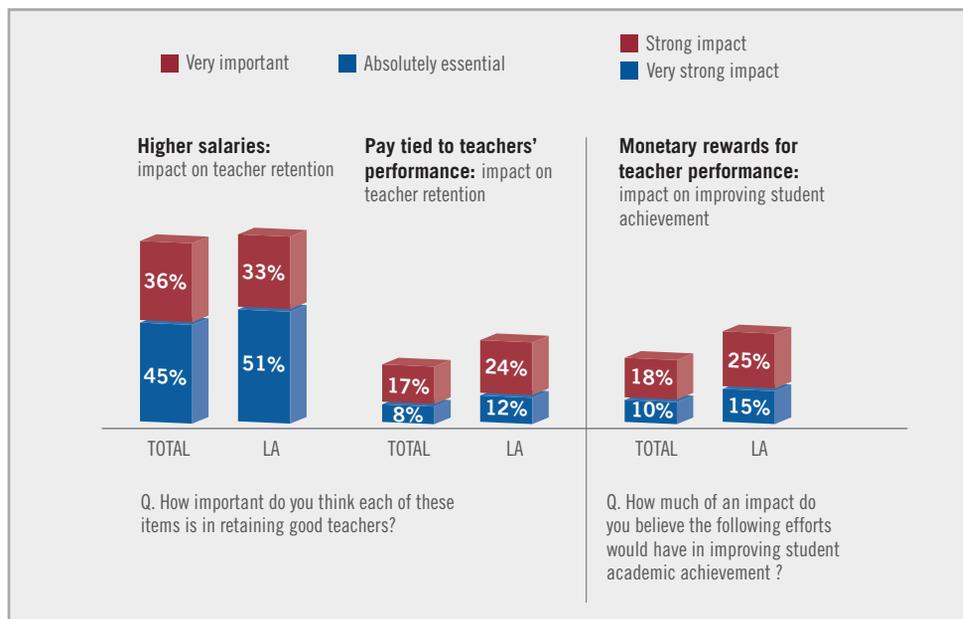
Louisiana Teachers' Views on Monetary Compensation

While the impact of higher salaries on teacher retention varies across states, it consistently ranks lower than other, non-monetary measures such as those noted previously; time to collaborate and the opportunity to participate in professional development generally rank above higher salaries nationally.

While these general patterns are repeated in Louisiana, Louisiana teachers are slightly more likely than their peers to say higher salaries are absolutely essential in retaining good teachers (51% vs. 45%). Louisiana's teachers also seem to be more open to innovative compensation policies when compared to teachers nationwide:

- While pay tied to teacher performance ranks last on the list of what Louisiana's teachers believe is important for retaining good teachers (as it does in nearly every state), Louisiana's teachers are more likely to say that pay for performance is an absolutely essential or very important factor in retaining teachers (36% in Louisiana, 26% nationally).
- Louisiana's teachers are also significantly more likely to believe that monetary rewards for teacher performance would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student academic achievement (40% in Louisiana, 28% nationally).

Louisiana Teachers' Views on Monetary Issues



Methodology

This report is based on the responses of the 555 teachers in Louisiana who participated in the national survey for *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools*. The data reflect a cross-section of Louisiana's teachers across many teacher and school characteristics, including grade level(s) taught, years of teaching experience and community income.

The fieldwork for this survey was conducted in March through June of 2009 by phone (n=249) and online (n=306). For more details on the methodology of this study, please see the full *Primary Sources* report at: www.scholastic.com/primarysources.

“This job doesn't pay much but I always want to go to work”

“Teaching is not like any other job. It's a passion.”

“Value should be placed on education. Every job, career, and occupation starts here.”

“Standards are about equity and expectation.”

PRIMARY SOURCES is the beginning of an ongoing dialogue with America's Teachers.

We welcome your thoughts and opinions on the report at www.scholastic.com/primarysources.

“If you're not tech-savvy, you can't compete in the global marketplace.”

“Role model the skills, believe in the students, and never give up.”

“If we are going to compete as a nation we should be learning as a nation.”

“We have a great system for getting them through the system. We don't have a great system to teach them to think outside the box.”