

“There is not just a gap in achievement. 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

COLORADO

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.”

BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation

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

“We need to place a higher value on education with an understanding that every year is important, beginning with Kindergarten. If that happened, teachers would feel more valued, parents would be more involved, and students would be more motivated.”
– *Elementary School Teacher in Colorado*

***Primary Sources: Colorado* 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 Colorado. *Primary Sources: Colorado* is based on the responses of more than 850 public school teachers across Colorado 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.

As is the case with their peers nationwide, teachers from Colorado had important opinions about the critical issues in education at the national and state levels. Specifically, teachers in Colorado:

- Are divided on the number of Colorado state standards, and more likely than the national average to say that their state standards are not clear enough (61%, slightly higher than the national average of 54%).
- Are more likely than teachers nationwide to say that the level of difficulty of Colorado's standards is about right (76% in Colorado, 69% nationally).
- Say clearer standards (74%) and common standards across states (59%) would make a very strong or strong impact on student achievement.
- Say teacher pay is important, but not as important as many other, non-monetary issues in retaining good teachers.

It is important to note that *Primary Sources: Colorado* is a small subset of the data we collected on Colorado'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 Colorado available in the appendices of the complete *Primary Sources* report.

While *Primary Sources: Colorado* 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

Colorado's Teachers Recognize the Challenges Facing Their Students

As is the case with teachers across the nation, teachers in Colorado 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:

- Colorado teachers are near unanimous in saying that a high school diploma is not enough for today's students. Ninety-four 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.
- Nine out of 10 teachers in Colorado say that not all their students could leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2- or 4-year college (91% nationally).
- Only 14% of Colorado teachers strongly agree that their students enter their classroom prepared for on-grade-level work. (An additional 43% somewhat agree), (16% and 44% nationally, respectively).
- Only about one in four (24%) Colorado teachers rate student academic achievement at their schools as "Excellent," compared to 28% of teachers nationwide.
- Only half (49%, similar to teachers' views nationally at 46%) of teachers say that more than three quarters of their students could leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2- or 4-year college.

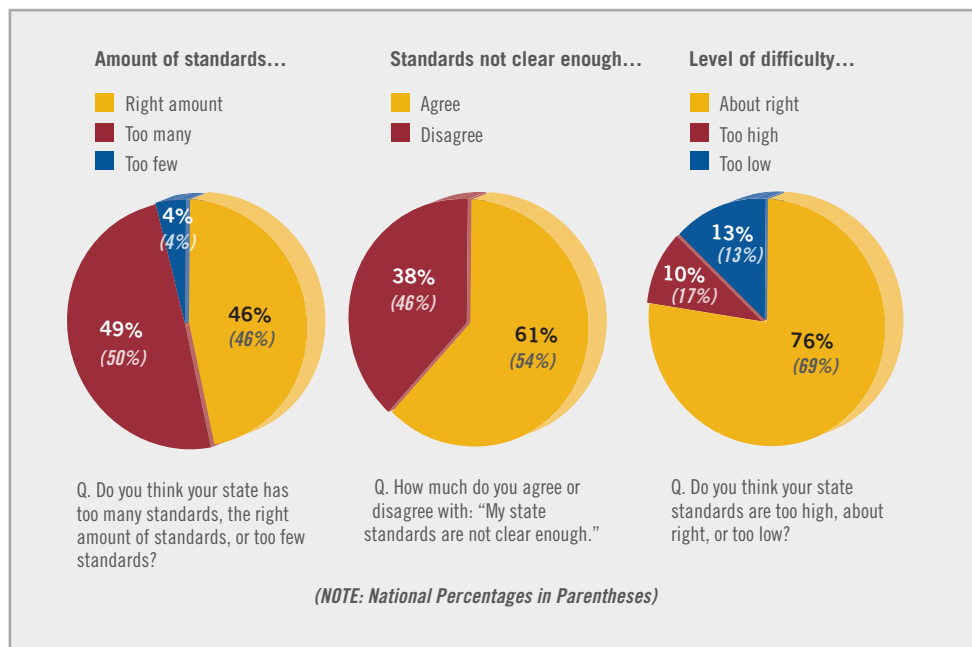
STATE AND NATIONAL STANDARDS

Colorado Teachers' Views on Current Colorado State Standards

Like their peers across the nation, teachers in Colorado 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:

- Teachers are split in their opinions on amount of state academic standards, with about half saying that Colorado has too many standards (49%) and just under half saying that the number of standards in Colorado is “about right” (46%), (50% and 46% nationally, respectively).
- As with their peers nationwide, a very small number of teachers in Colorado (4%) believe there are too few standards.
- Colorado teachers are slightly more likely than teachers nationwide to agree that Colorado standards are not clear enough (61% vs. 54% nationally).
- Just over three fourths (76%) of Colorado teachers—a higher percentage than teachers nationally—do believe that the level of difficulty of their state standards is about right.

Teachers' Views on Colorado State Standards



Colorado Teachers Support Clearer Standards, Common Across States

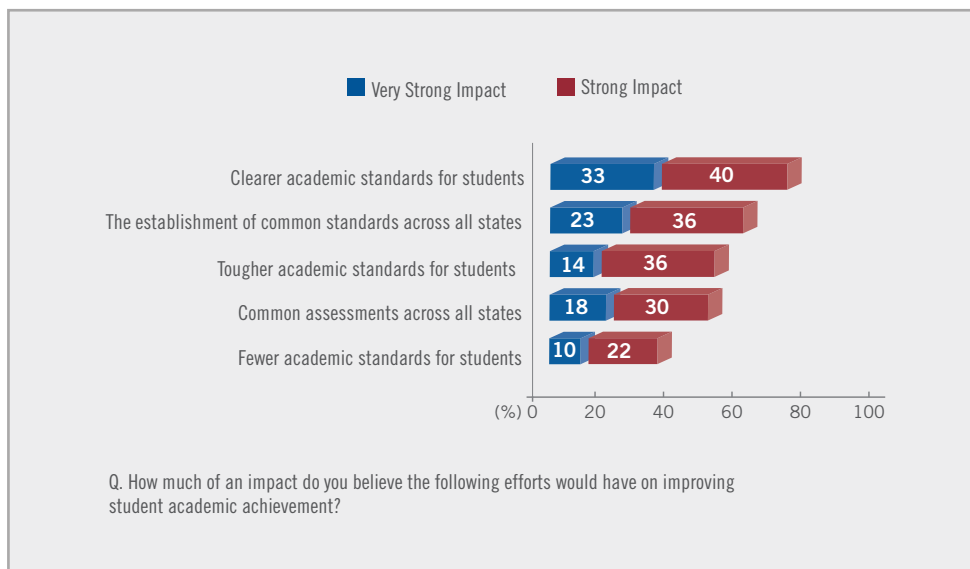
Colorado’s teachers support the establishment of clear and common standards across states. They say the measures would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student achievement:

- Clearer academic standards for students (74% in Colorado, 74% nationally)
- Establishing common standards across all states (59% in Colorado, 60% nationally)

In keeping with the views of teachers across the country, Colorado teachers are far less certain that tougher and fewer standards would make an impact on improving student achievement.

- Tougher academic standards for students (50% in Colorado, 45% nationally)
- Fewer academic standards for students (32% in Colorado, 34% nationally)

Colorado Teachers’ Views on the Impact Changes to Current Standards Would Have on Improving Academic Achievement



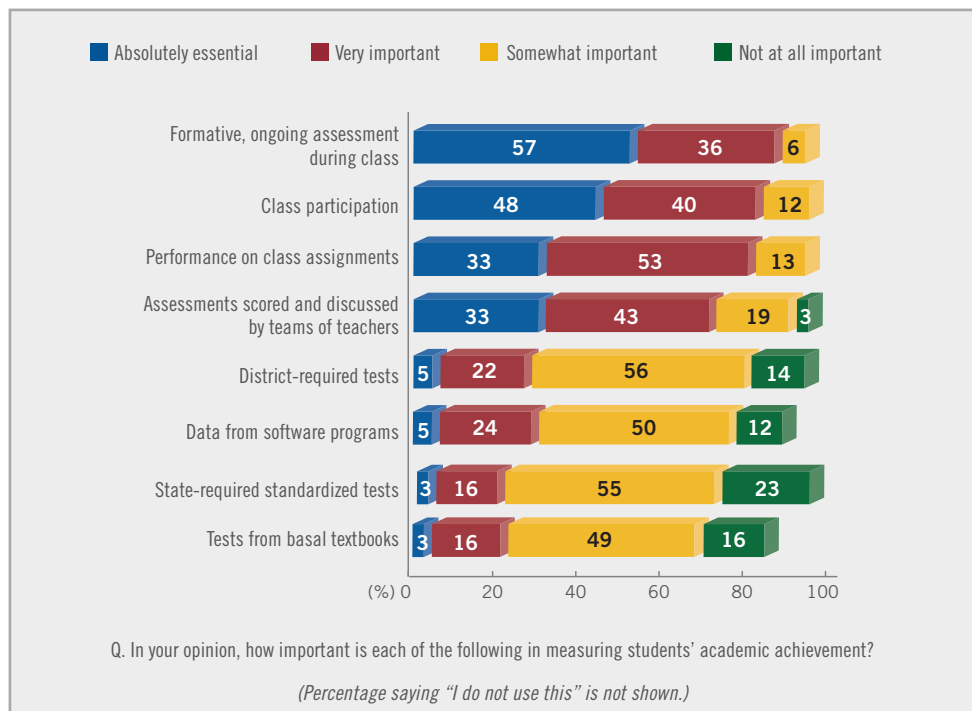
EVALUATING STUDENT AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE

Colorado Teachers' Views on Evaluating Student Performance

Colorado 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.

Although teachers do not outright reject standardized tests as a way to evaluate student achievement, Colorado teachers see less value in them compared to teachers on a national level, particularly in regard to state-required tests, with 23% (16% nationally) saying these are “not at all” important in measuring student achievement.

Colorado Teachers' Views on Importance of Student Performance Measures



Further, as noted in the chart on page 4, nearly half (48%) of Colorado teachers (similar to the 52% nationally) say common assessments across states would make a very strong or strong impact on improving student achievement—with an additional 37% saying these would make a moderate impact.

Colorado Teachers' Views on Measuring Teacher Performance

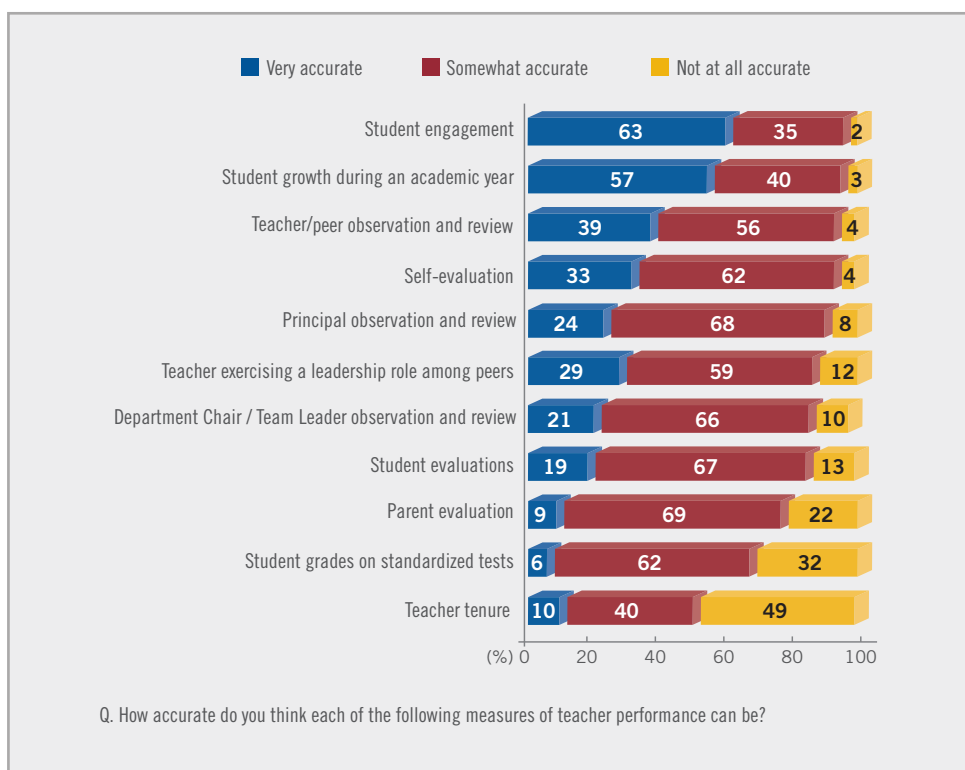
In qualitative conversation, teachers stress a desire for their performance to be based on factors they can impact directly—like student growth and student engagement—and not on factors that fail to consider the realities of individual students in individual classrooms.

This is clearly borne out in *Primary Sources* data at both the national and Colorado 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:

- Only 6% of Colorado teachers feel that student grades on standardized tests are a very accurate measure of teacher performance.
- 39% of Colorado teachers believe teacher/peer observation and review is very accurate, compared to only 32% of teachers across the nation.

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



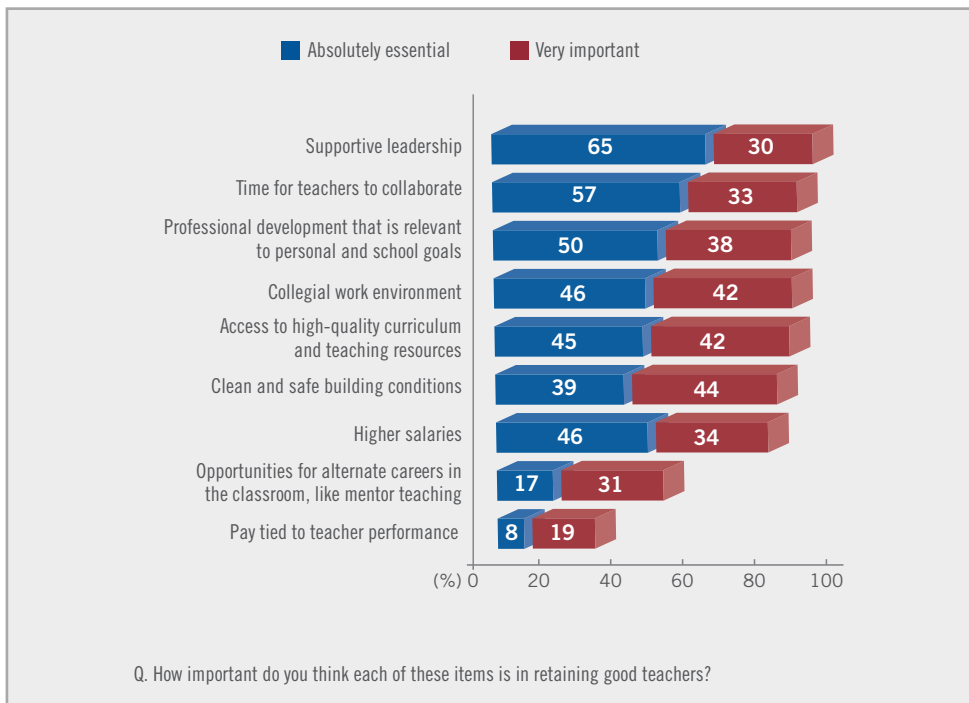
TEACHER RETENTION

Colorado Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention

Overall, Colorado 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 Colorado is no exception. In Colorado, 65% of teachers say that supportive leadership is absolutely essential in retaining good teachers (68% nationally).

Colorado teachers' views differ slightly with the views of teachers nationally on the importance of professional development, with half of the state's teachers considering professional development that is relevant to personal and school goals to be absolutely essential for teacher retention, compared to 45% across the nation.

Colorado Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention

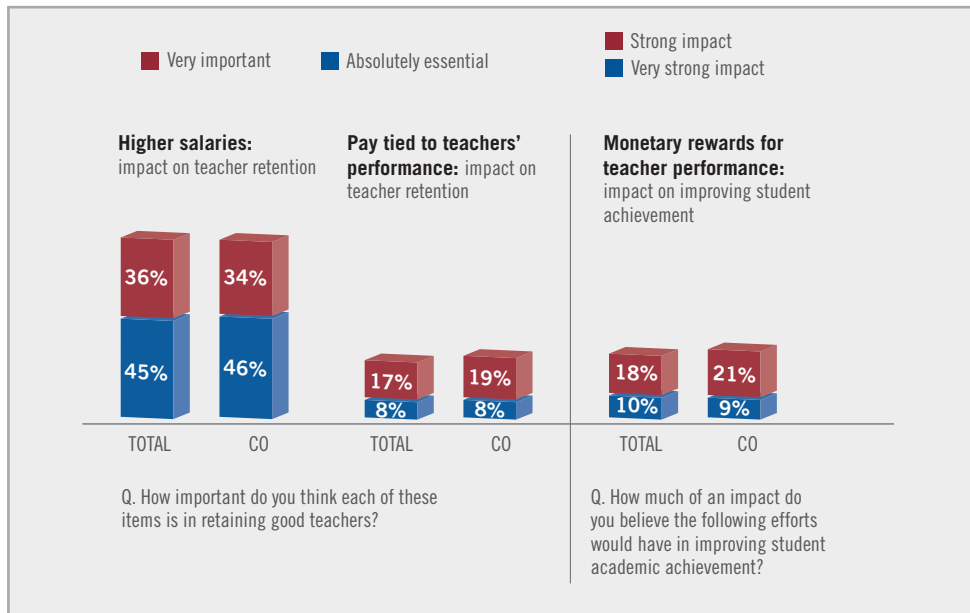


Colorado Teachers' Views on Monetary Compensation

While the impact of higher salaries on teacher retention varies across states, it consistently ranks lower than other, non-monetary measures; this is no different in Colorado. The state's teachers rank higher salaries seventh out of nine items impacting teacher retention, with 46% of Colorado teachers saying it is absolutely essential to retaining good teachers (45% nationally).

Their views on salary and pay tied to teacher's performance as necessary to retain good teachers are near identical to the national percentages, with 30% saying that monetary rewards for teacher performance would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student academic achievement (28% nationally).

Colorado Teachers' Views on Monetary Issues



Methodology

This report is based on the responses of the 852 teachers in Colorado who participated in the national survey for *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools*. The data reflect a cross-section of Colorado'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=345) and online (n=507). 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.”

“Standards are about equity and expectation.”

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

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.”