

“There is not just a 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
FLORIDA
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 of being lifelong learners.”
“How do we prepare students for jobs that don’t yet exist?”



“As a nation, we must set high standards and expect students
to achieve them. If we believe in them,
they will believe in themselves.”
– *Elementary School Teacher in Florida*

***Primary Sources: Florida* 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 Florida. *Primary Sources: Florida* is based on the responses of more than 2,350 public school teachers across the state of Florida 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 Florida had important opinions about the critical issues in education at the national and state levels. Specifically, teachers in Florida:

- Are more likely than their peers nationwide to believe that clearer standards and common standards across states would make a very strong or strong impact on student achievement.
- Are more open to innovative compensation policies, like pay tied to teacher performance, and more likely to say that higher salaries are an essential factor in teacher retention.
- Are more likely than teachers nationwide to say common assessments across states would make a strong impact on improving student achievement.
- Are more likely to use student performance data to identify student needs and to monitor and discuss student progress with students and parents.

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

While *Primary Sources: Florida* 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

Florida's Teachers Recognize the Challenges Facing Their Students

Teachers in Florida 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 Florida:

- Teachers say that a high school diploma is not enough for today's students. Ninety-three 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).
- Just over half (54%) of teachers agree that students enter their classroom prepared for on-grade-level work, compared to 60% of teachers nationwide.
- Teachers are slightly more likely than the national average to rate student academic achievement at their schools as "Excellent" (31% in Florida, 28% nationally).
- Fewer than half (43%) of teachers say 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).

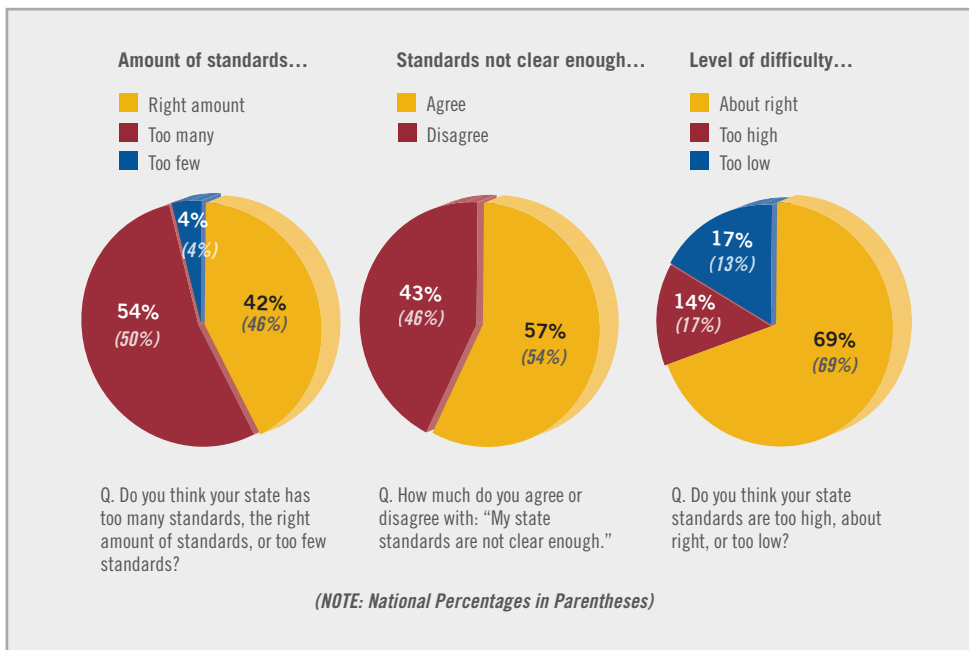
STATE AND NATIONAL STANDARDS

Florida Teachers' Views on Current Florida State Standards

As is the case with their peers across the nation, teachers in Florida 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 just over half saying that Florida has too many standards (54%) and half saying that the number of standards is “about right” (42%), (50% and 46% nationally, respectively).
- As with their peers nationwide, a very small number of teachers in Florida (4%) believe that the state has too few standards.
- A majority of Florida’s teachers (57%) say that their state’s standards are not clear enough.
- About seven in 10 teachers say the level of difficulty of their state standards is about right, which aligns with national data.

Teachers' Views on Florida State Standards



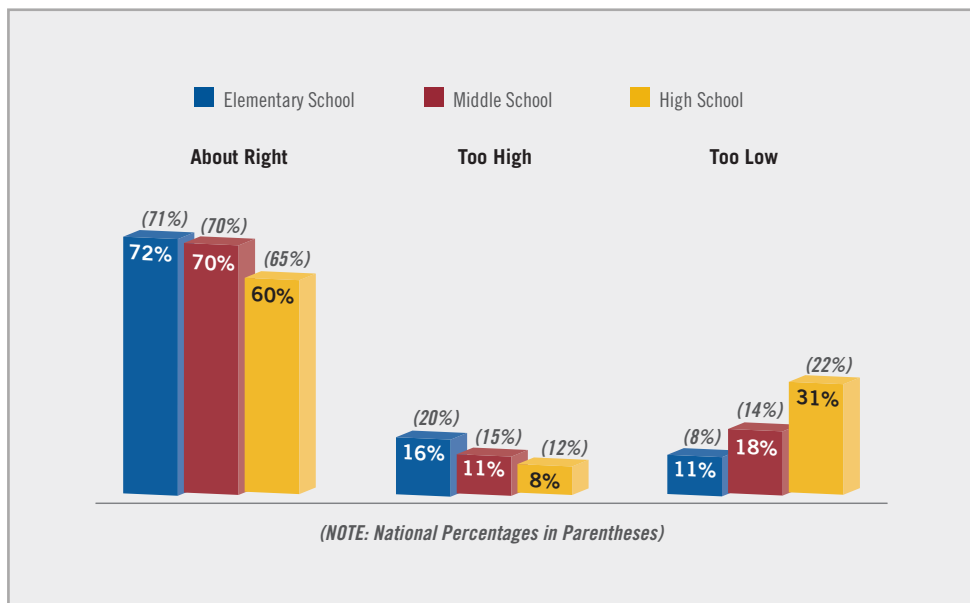
Florida Teachers' Views on Standards Shift as Students Progress in Grade Level

While the majority of elementary and middle school teachers in Florida (approximately 70%) say the degree of difficulty of state standards is about right, only 60% of high school teachers agree.

Other differences occur as follows:

- Elementary school teachers are twice as likely as high school teachers to say standards are too high, while high school teachers are nearly three times as likely as elementary school teachers to think they are too low.
- In terms of the amount of state standards, Florida teachers are very similar to teachers across the nation. High school teachers are least likely to believe the number is about right (35%) and most likely to believe there are too few (11%).

Degree of Difficulty of Florida State Standards, by School Level



Florida Teachers Support Clearer Standards, Common Across States

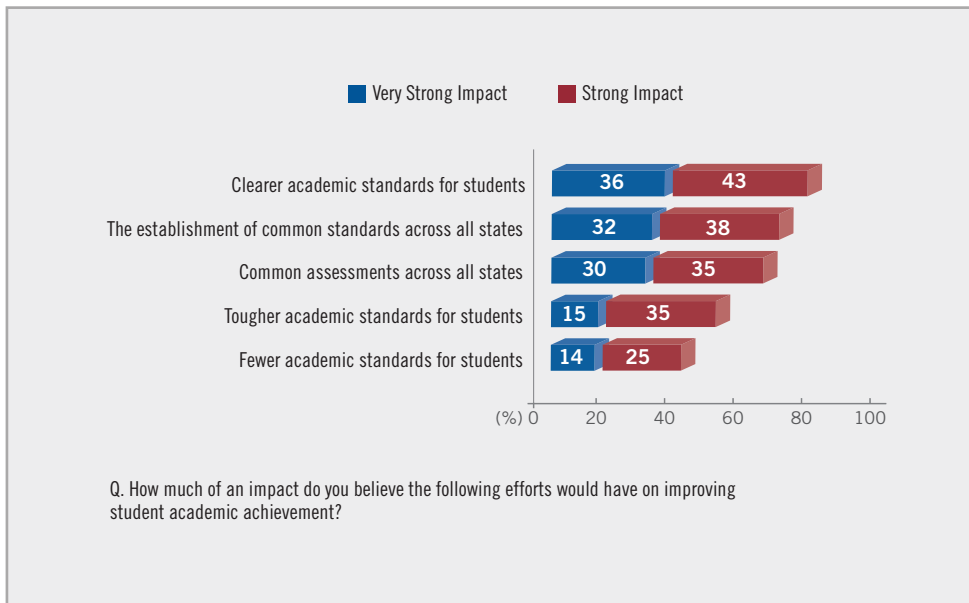
Florida's teachers support the establishment of clear and common standards across states to a slightly greater degree than their peers across the nation. They say the measures would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student achievement:

- Clearer academic standards for students (80% in Florida, 74% nationally)
- The establishment of common standards across all states (71% in Florida, 60% nationally)

In keeping with the views of teachers across the country, Florida's teachers are 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 (50% in Florida, 45% nationally)
- Fewer academic standards for students (39% in Florida, 34% nationally)

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



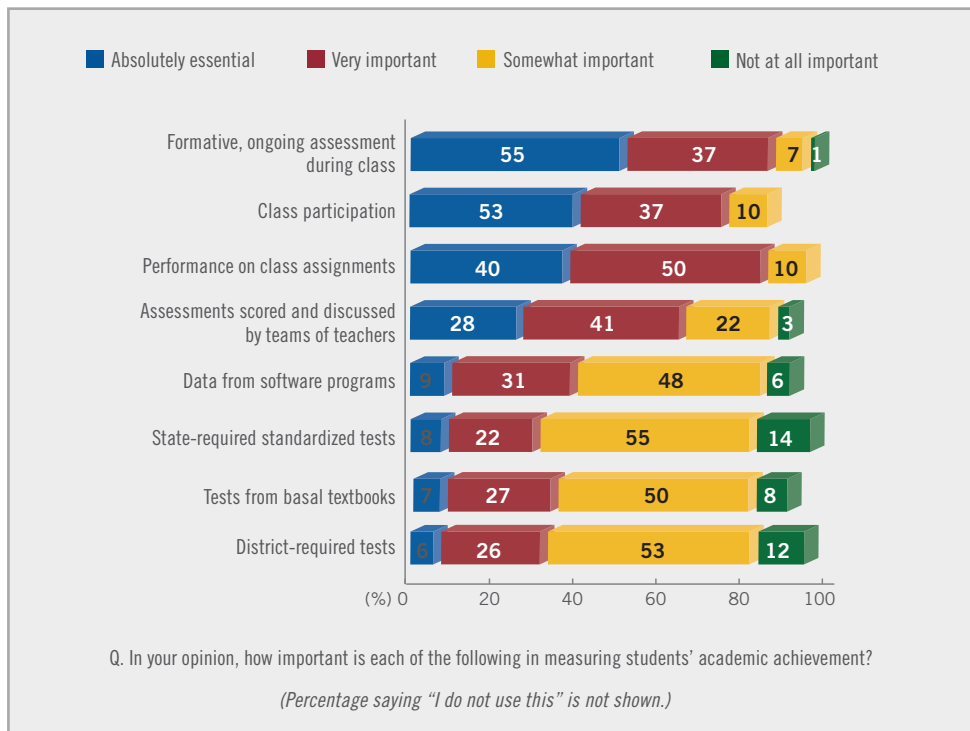
EVALUATING STUDENT AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE

Florida Teachers' Views on Evaluating Student Performance

Florida'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.

Teachers in Florida also see value in standardized tests as a way to evaluate student performance. Only 12% and 14% of teachers say district- and state-required tests, respectively, are “not at all” important in measuring student academic achievement (11% and 16% nationally).

Florida Teachers' Views on Importance of Student Performance Measures



Further, as noted on page 5, 64% of Florida teachers say common assessments across states would have a very strong or strong impact on improving student achievement—with an additional 28% saying these would make a moderate impact.

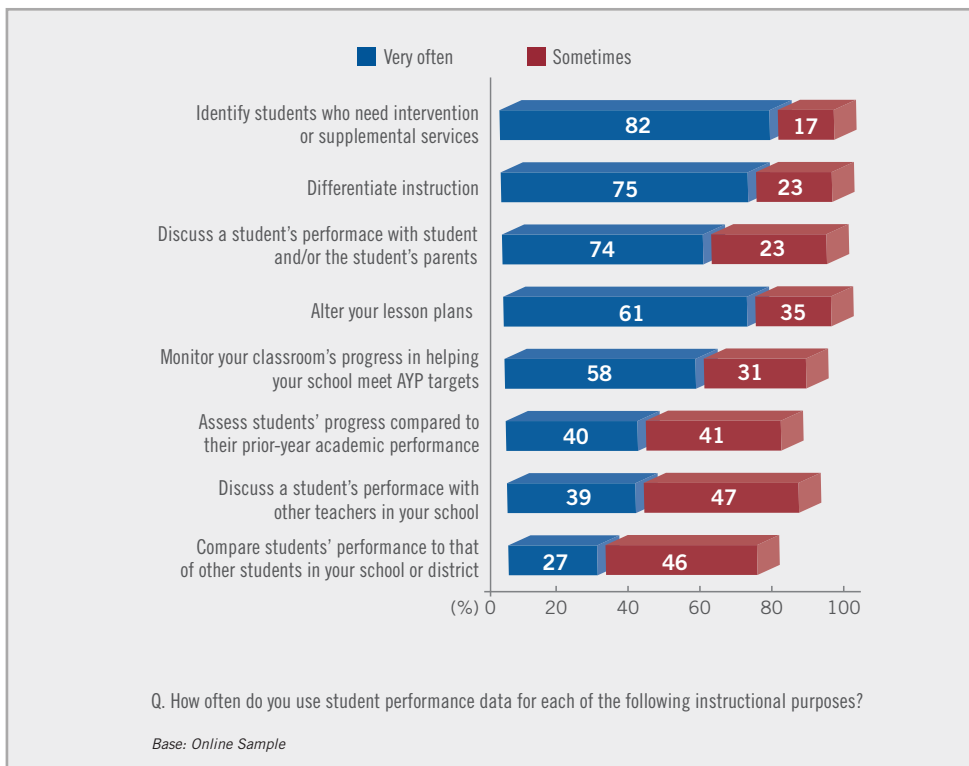
Florida Teachers' Use of Student Performance Data

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 Florida, however, are more likely than their peers nationwide to use student performance measures in several specific ways, including:

- Identifying students who need intervention or supplemental services (82% in Florida, 75% nationally);
- Discussing a student's performance with the student and/or the student's parents (74% in Florida, 64% nationally);
- Monitoring their classroom's progress in helping their school meet AYP targets (58% in Florida, 49% nationally);
- Assessing students' progress compared to their prior-year academic performance (40% in Florida, 29% nationally).

Florida Teachers' Frequency of Use of Student Performance Data



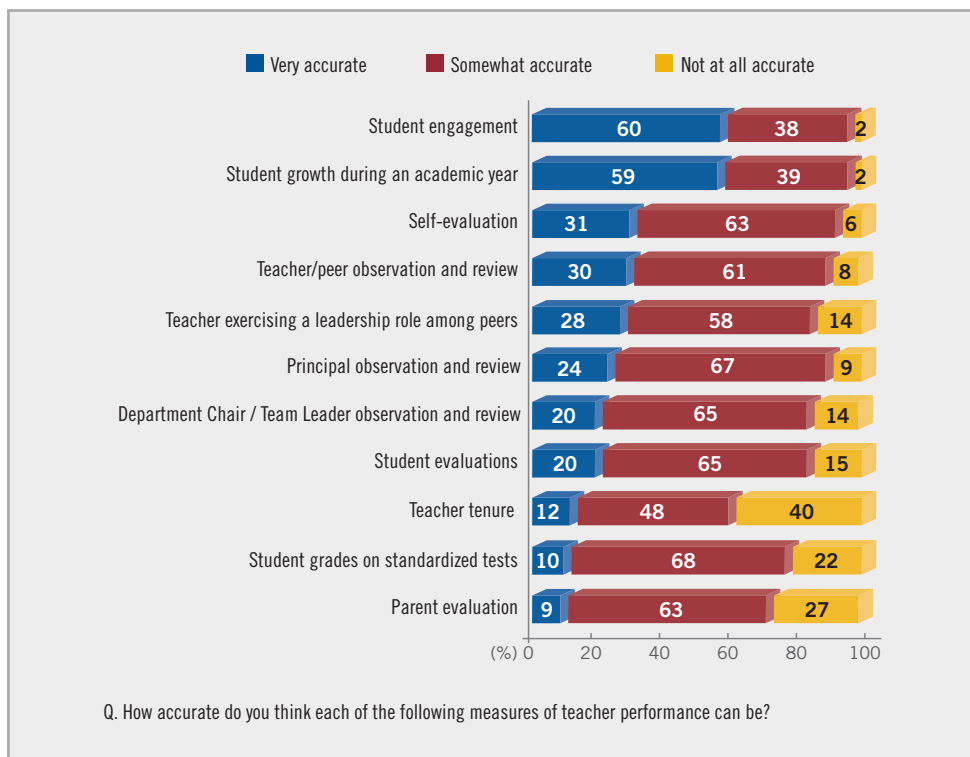
Florida Teachers' Views on Measuring Teacher Performance

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 Florida 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.

Interestingly, while few teachers nationally say student grades on standardized tests are very accurate measures of teacher performance, teachers in Florida are more likely than their peers nationwide to say they are at least somewhat accurate (78% in Florida, 69% nationally).

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



TEACHER RETENTION

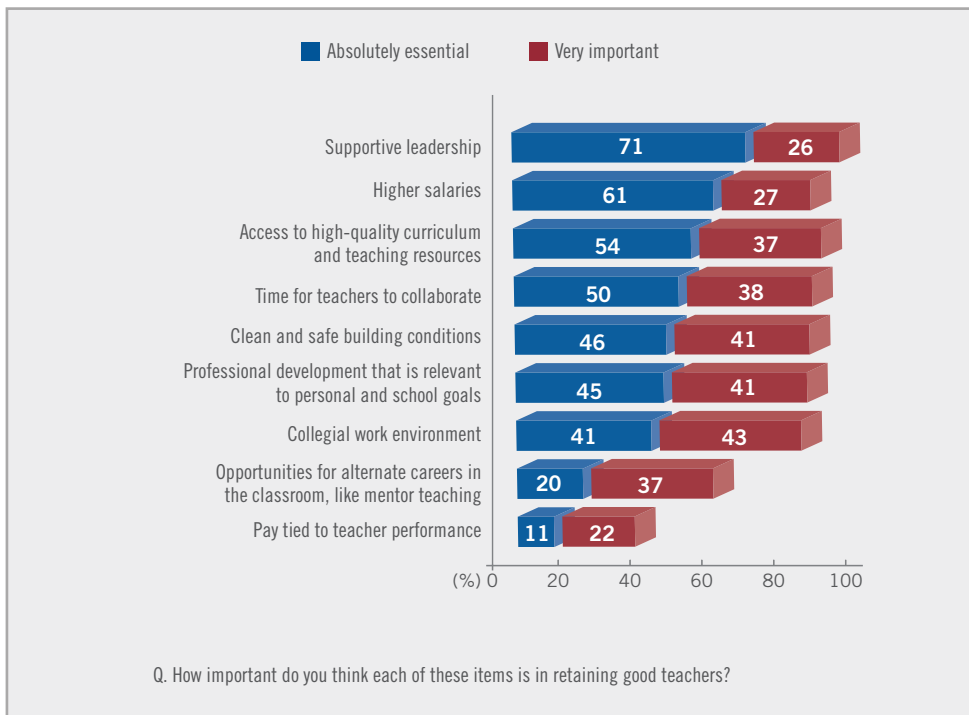
Florida Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention

Overall, Florida 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 the most important factor in retaining good teachers, and Florida is no exception. In Florida, 71% of teachers say that supportive leadership is absolutely essential in retaining good teachers (68% nationally).

Additionally, teachers in Florida are slightly more likely to say having access to high-quality curriculum and teaching resources is absolutely essential in retaining good teachers (54% in Florida, 49% nationally).

Florida Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention



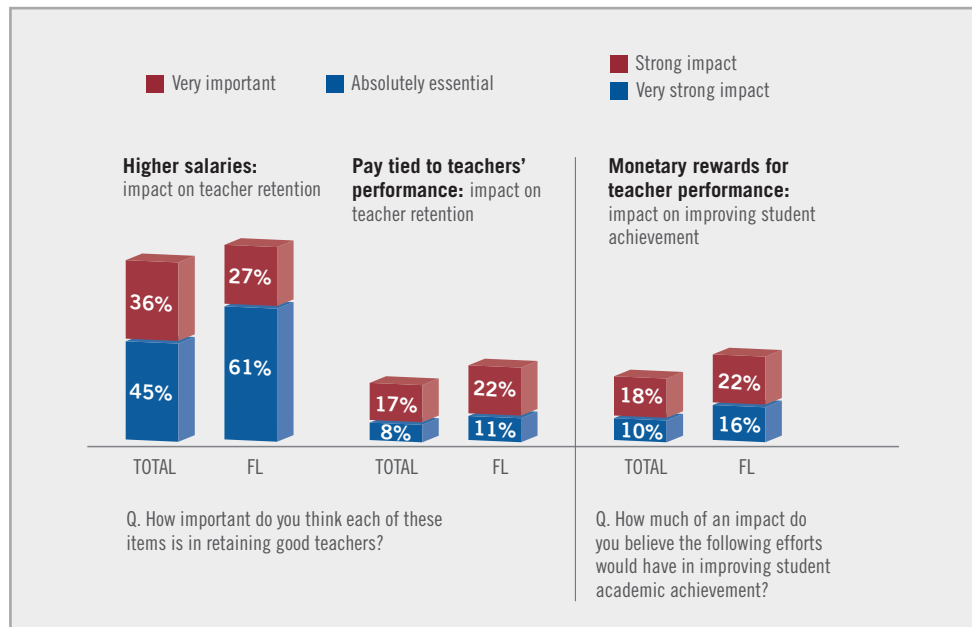
Florida Teachers' Views on Monetary Compensation

Interestingly, Florida is one of the few states where teacher salaries are ranked significantly higher on the list of factors in retaining good teachers. While “higher salaries” falls in the middle tier of responses nationally, in Florida, teachers rank salary in the top third of factors. Similarly, while pay for performance is nearly always the lowest ranked factor nationally, teachers in Florida are more likely to view it as absolutely essential or very important than teachers across the nation (33% in Florida, 26% nationally).

Florida teachers are also more open to innovative compensation policies when compared to teachers nationwide:

- Well over half (61%) of teachers in Florida say higher salaries are absolutely essential, versus 45% nationally.
- One in three Florida teachers say pay tied to teacher’s performance is absolutely essential or very important, compared to only 26% nationally.
- Teachers in Florida are also more likely to believe that monetary rewards for teacher performance would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student academic achievement (38% in Florida, 28% nationally).

Florida Teachers' Views on Monetary Issues



Methodology

This report is based on the responses of the 2,358 teachers in Florida who participated in the national survey for *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools*. The data reflect a cross-section of Florida'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=649) and online (n=1709). 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.”