

“There is not just a problem. 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

ILLINOIS

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?”

“When we believe in our students, they believe
in themselves. When kids have confidence,
it is amazing how they excel.”
— *Middle School Teacher in Illinois*

***Primary Sources: Illinois* 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 Illinois. *Primary Sources: Illinois* is based on the responses of nearly 1,500 public school teachers across Illinois 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 views on a number of issues that are central to the conversation around American schools—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 Illinois had important opinions about the critical issues in education at the national and state levels. Specifically, teachers in Illinois:

- Are divided in their opinions on the number of Illinois state standards.
- Are more likely than teachers nationwide to say that their state standards are not clear enough.
- Are slightly more likely than teachers nationwide to say that supportive leadership is absolutely essential in retaining good teachers, and slightly less likely to say higher salaries do the same.
- Say that common standards and common assessments across states would make a strong impact on improving achievement.

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

While *Primary Sources: Illinois* 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

Illinois's Teachers Recognize the Challenges Facing Their Students

Teachers in Illinois 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 Illinois:

- Teachers say 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 (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).
- About one in six (17%) of teachers strongly agree that their students enter their classroom prepared for on-grade-level work and an additional 45% "somewhat agree" (in comparison to 16% and 44%, respectively, among teachers nationwide).
- Only 29% of teachers rate student academic achievement at their schools as "Excellent" (28% nationally).
- Only half (51%) 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).

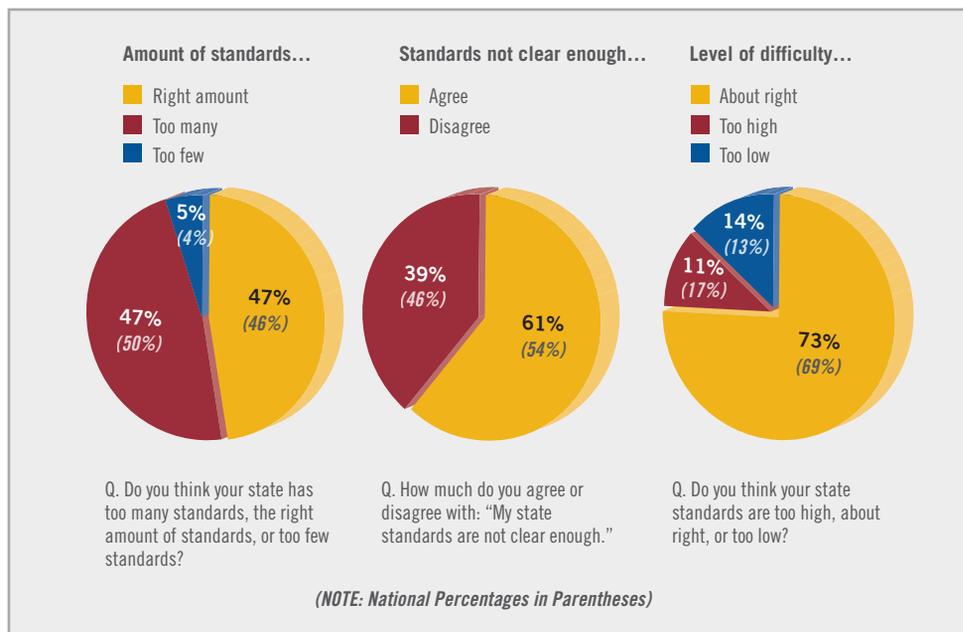
STATE AND NATIONAL STANDARDS

Illinois Teachers' Views on Current Illinois State Standards

Like their peers across the nation, teachers in Illinois 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 the amount of state academic standards, with half saying that Illinois has too many standards (47%) and half saying the number of standards is “about right” (47%) (50% and 46% nationally, respectively).
- As with their peers nationwide, a very small number of teachers in Illinois (5%) believe that the state has too few standards.
- A definitive majority (61%) of Illinois teachers believe that their state standards are not clear enough, more than the percentage of teachers nationwide who think the same (54%).
- More than seven in 10 Illinois teachers say the level of difficulty of their state standards is about right, and only 11% of Illinois teachers believe their standards are too high, a lower percentage than their peers nationwide (17%).

Teachers' Views on Illinois State Standards

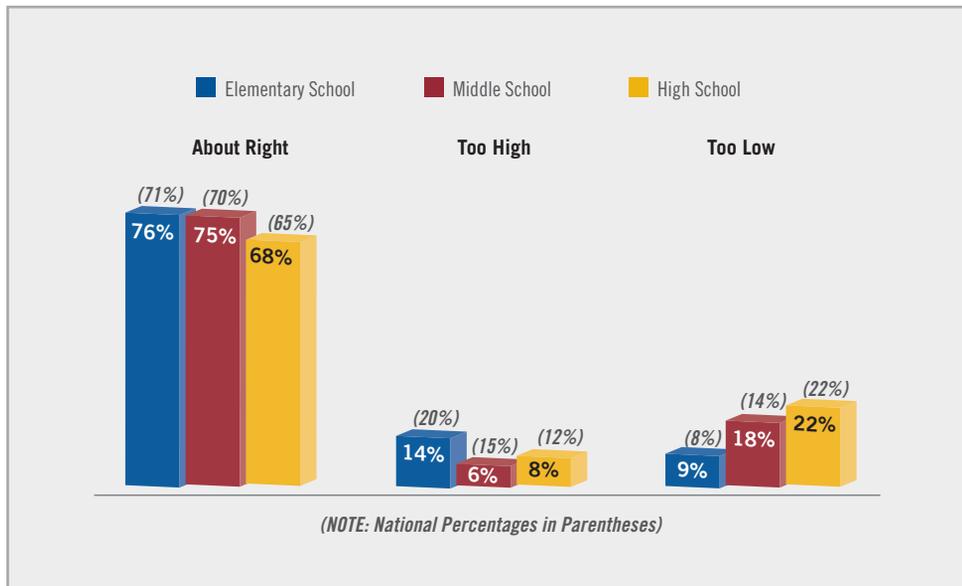


Illinois Teachers' Views on Standards Shift as Students Progress in Grade Level

While the majority of teachers across grade levels say the degree of difficulty of state standards is about right (68-76%), meaningful percentages feel otherwise:

- Elementary school teachers in Illinois are about twice as likely as middle and high school teachers to say standards are too high (14%, 6% and 8% respectively).
- Middle and high school teachers in Illinois are twice as likely as elementary school teachers to think they are too low (18% and 22% among middle and high school teachers, respectively, 9% among elementary school teachers).

Degree of Difficulty of Illinois State Standards, by School Level



Illinois Teachers Support Clearer Standards, Common Across States

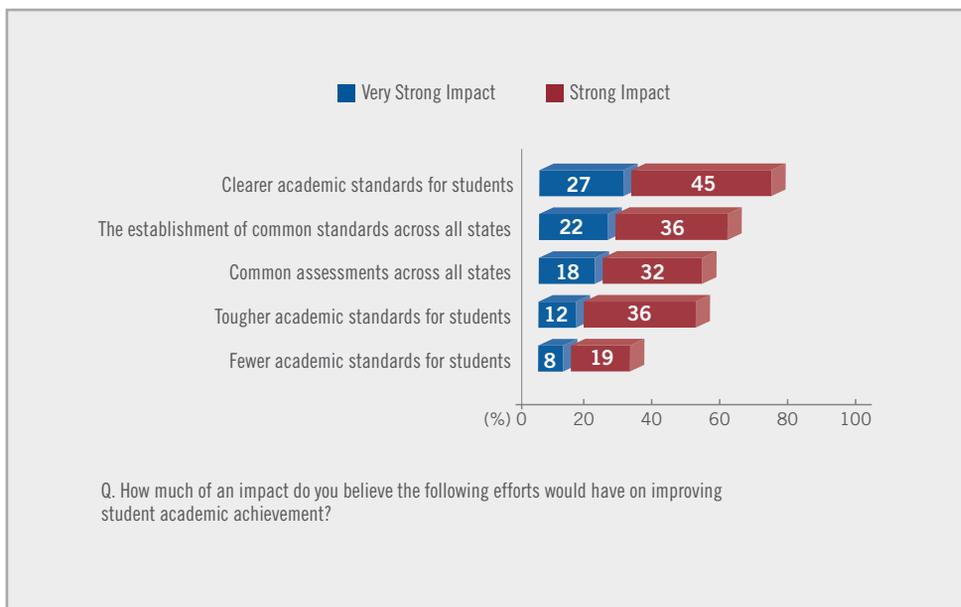
Illinois's teachers support the establishment of clear and common standards across states. They say the following measures would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student achievement:

- Clearer academic standards for students (73% in Illinois, 74% nationally)
- The establishment of common standards across all states (58% in Illinois, 60% nationally)

In keeping with the views of teachers across the country, Illinois's teachers are less certain that fewer and more challenging standards would make a strong or very strong impact on improving student achievement. While their views on tougher standards essentially mirror the views of teachers nationally, they are less likely than the nation to believe that fewer standards will help achievement.

- Tougher academic standards for students (49% in Illinois, 45% nationally)
- Fewer academic standards for students (26% in Illinois, 34% nationally)

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



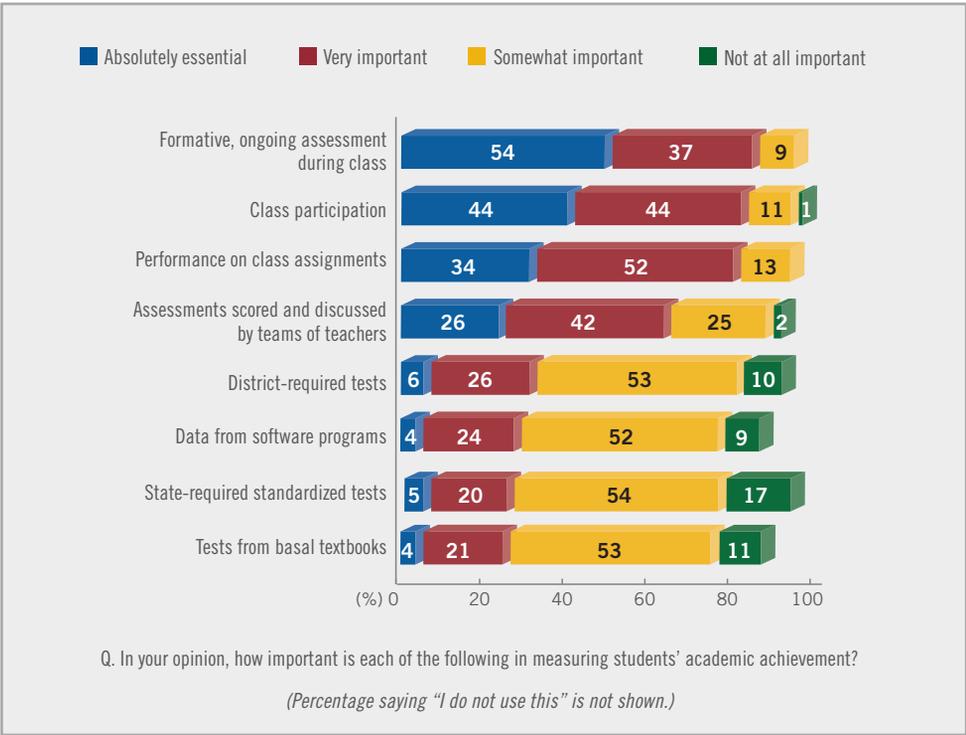
EVALUATING STUDENT AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE

Illinois Teachers' Views on Evaluating Student Performance

Illinois'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 Illinois also see value in standardized tests as a way to evaluate student performance. Only 10% and 17% of teachers say district- and state-required tests, respectively, are “not at all” important in measuring student academic achievement (11% and 16% nationally, respectively).

Illinois Teachers' Views on Importance of Student Performance Measures



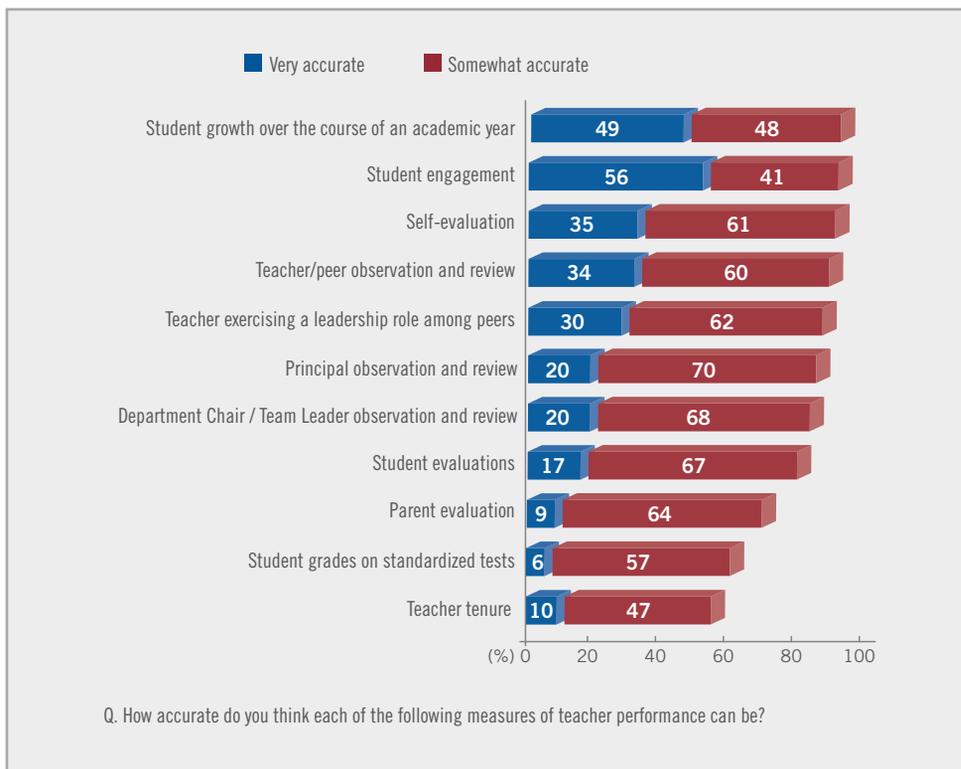
Further, as noted on page 5, 50% of Illinois teachers say common assessments across states would have a very strong or strong impact on improving student achievement—with an additional 35% saying these would make a moderate impact.

Illinois 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 Illinois 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.

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



TEACHER RETENTION

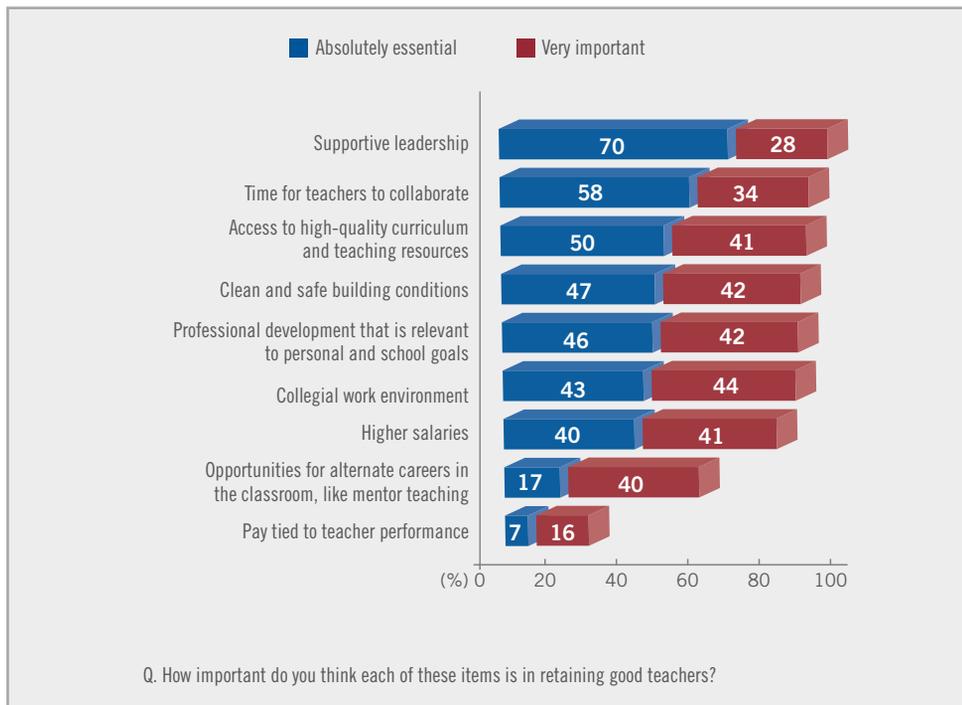
Illinois Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention

Overall, Illinois 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 Illinois is no exception. In Illinois, 70% of teachers say that supportive leadership is absolutely essential in retaining good teachers (68% nationally).

Higher salaries shows a good deal more variation across states, but overall it ranks far lower than non-monetary measures. In Illinois, teacher pay ranks seventh out of nine items asked about, with 40% of Illinois teachers saying it is absolutely essential in retaining good teachers. This is slightly lower than the national average of 45%.

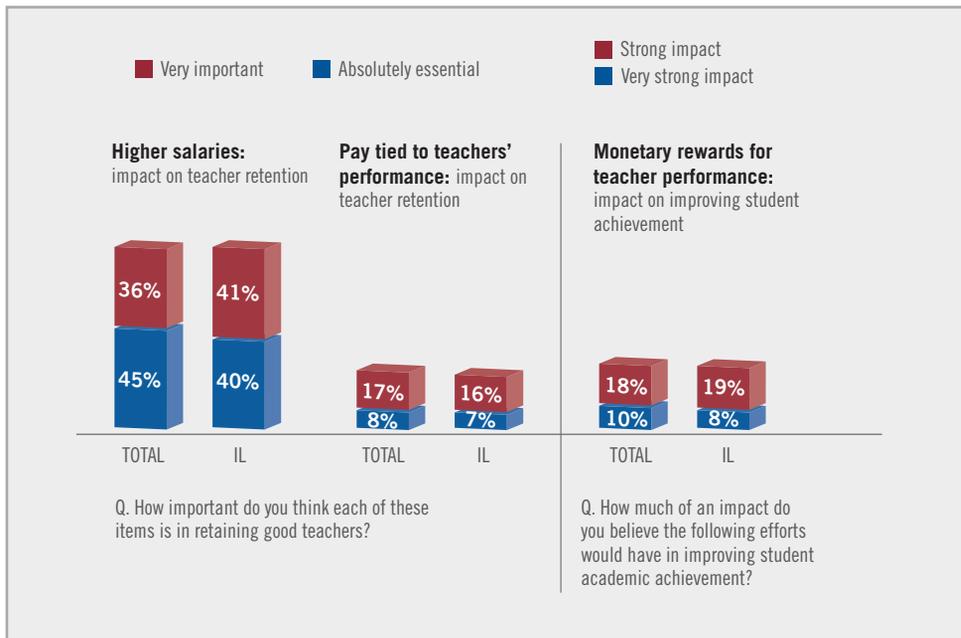
Illinois Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention



Illinois Teachers' Views on Monetary Compensation

Illinois teachers are in sync with teachers nationwide when it comes to compensation policies. Their views on salary and pay tied to teacher performance as necessary to retain good teachers are near identical to the national percentages and just over a quarter believe that monetary rewards for teacher performance would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student academic achievement (27% and 28% nationally, respectively).

Illinois Teachers' Views on Monetary Issues



Methodology

This report is based on the responses of the 1,495 teachers in Illinois who participated in the national survey for *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools*. The data reflect a cross-section of Illinois' 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=458) and online (n=1037). 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.”