

“There is not just a question of money. 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 KENTUCKY

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?”

“I would love to see common standards and common assessments for all states so that Kentucky schools know where we need to be. What are other states doing to find success? I would love to know!”
– *Middle School Teacher in Kentucky*

***Primary Sources: Kentucky* 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 Kentucky. *Primary Sources: Kentucky* is based on the responses of nearly 400 public school teachers across Kentucky 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 Kentucky had important opinions about the critical issues in education at the national and state levels. Specifically, teachers in Kentucky:

- Say Kentucky has too many standards and that state standards are not clear enough—to a greater degree than teachers nationwide.
- View standards-based reform efforts more favorably than teachers nationwide—this includes greater support of common, clearer, more rigorous and fewer standards, as well as common assessments across states.
- Are more open to a variety of measures of teacher performance than are their peers nationwide—including principal and department chair observation and student grades on standardized tests.

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

While *Primary Sources: Kentucky* 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

Kentucky's Teachers Recognize the Challenges Facing Their Students

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

- Teachers are near unanimous in saying that a high school diploma is not enough for today's students. Ninety-two 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 their students enter their classroom prepared for on-grade-level work. An additional 45% "somewhat agree" (16% and 44%, nationally, respectively).
- Only 30% of teachers rate student academic achievement at their schools as "Excellent" (28% nationally).
- Fewer than half (44%) 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 (46% nationally).

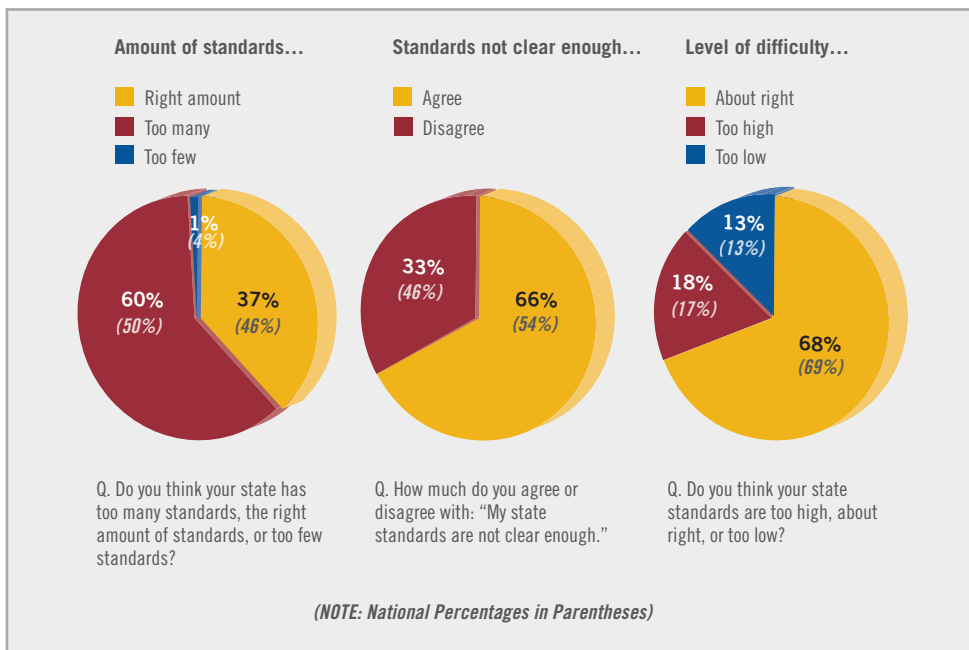
STATE AND NATIONAL STANDARDS

Kentucky Teachers' Views on Current Kentucky State Standards

Teachers in Kentucky are more likely than teachers nationwide to say that their state has too many standards and that those standards are not clear enough.

- 60% say Kentucky has too many standards (compared to an average of 50% nationally).
- 66% say Kentucky's standards are not clear enough (compared to an average of 54% nationally).
- As with their peers nationwide, a very small number of teachers in Kentucky (1%) believe their state has too few standards (4% nationally).
- About seven in 10 teachers in Kentucky (similar to the national average) say the level of difficulty of their state standards is about right, with the remaining three in 10 teachers being split on standards being too high or too low.

Teachers' Views on Kentucky State Standards



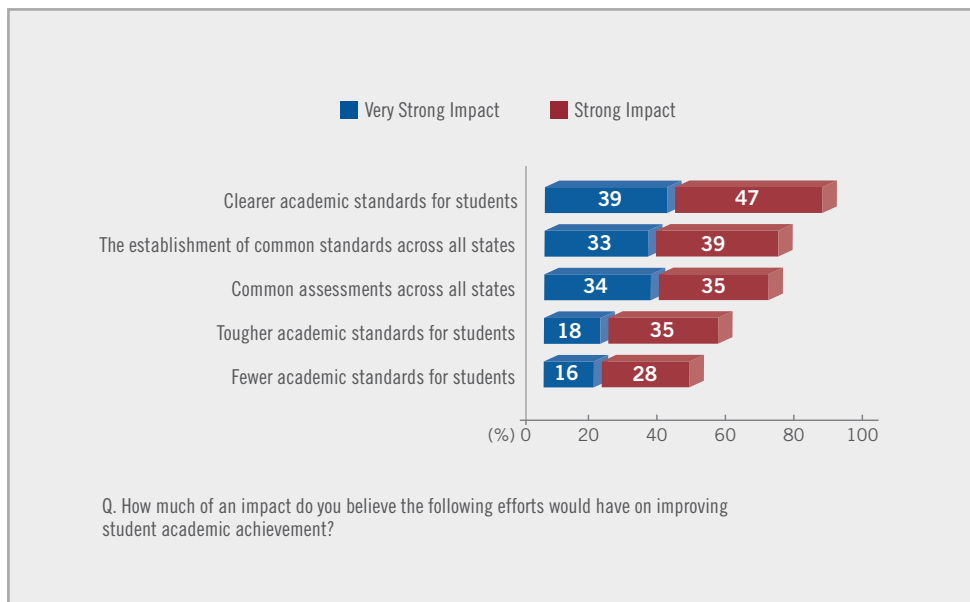
Kentucky Teachers Support Clearer Standards, Common Across States

Kentucky's teachers are stronger supporters of standards-based reform efforts than are their peers across the nation.

While support for clearer, common standards earns more support than efforts related to tougher and fewer standards, in all cases, Kentucky's teachers support all standards-related reform efforts more than teachers at the nationwide level. Specifically, more teachers in Kentucky than nationwide say the following measures would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student achievement:

- Clearer academic standards for students (86% in Kentucky, 74% nationally)
- Establishing common standards across all states (72% in Kentucky, 60% nationally)
- Common assessments across states (69% in Kentucky, 52% nationally)
- Tougher academic standards for students (53% in Kentucky, 45% nationally)
- Fewer academic standards for students (44% in Kentucky, 34% nationally)

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



EVALUATING STUDENT AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE

Kentucky Teachers' Views on Evaluating Student Performance

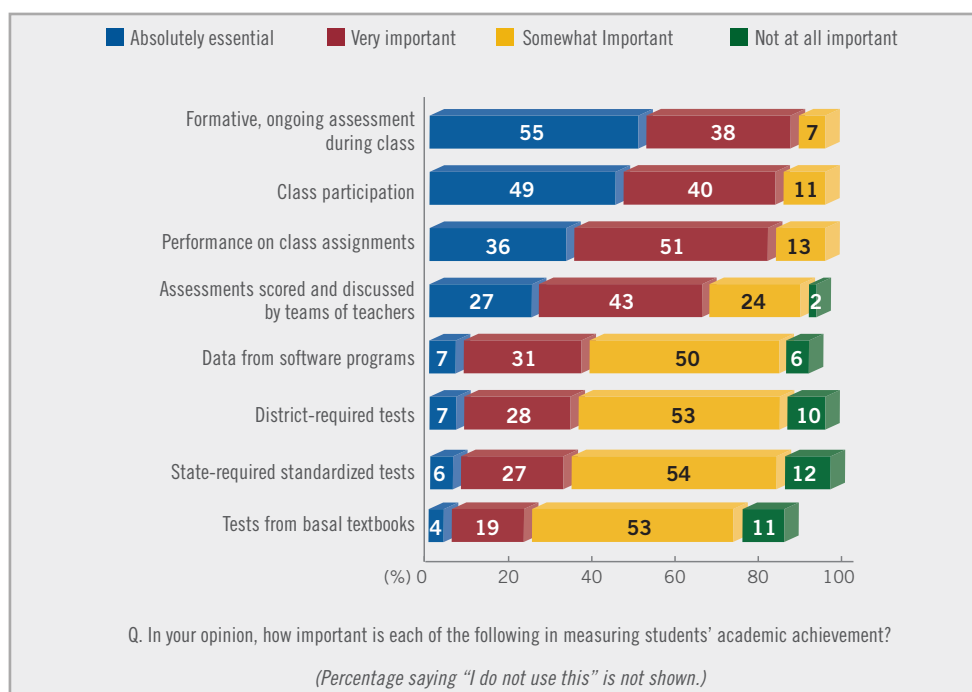
Kentucky teachers are similar to the nation's teachers in their firm belief that student assessment should be driven by in-classroom experiences, including formative ongoing assessments, class participation and performance on class assignments.

Teachers in Kentucky also see value in standardized tests as a way to evaluate student performance. Only 10% and 12% of teachers say district- and state-required tests, respectively, are “not at all” important in measuring student academic achievement (11% and 16% nationally).

As might be expected given Kentucky teachers' greater openness to standards-based reform efforts, they are more likely than teachers nationally to say state tests are absolutely essential or very important in measuring student achievement (33% in Kentucky, 26% nationally).

Teachers in Kentucky are also more likely to say that data from software programs are absolutely essential or very important in measuring student achievement (38% in Kentucky, 29% nationally).

Kentucky Teachers' Views on Importance of Student Performance Measures



Kentucky Teachers' Views on Measuring Teacher Performance

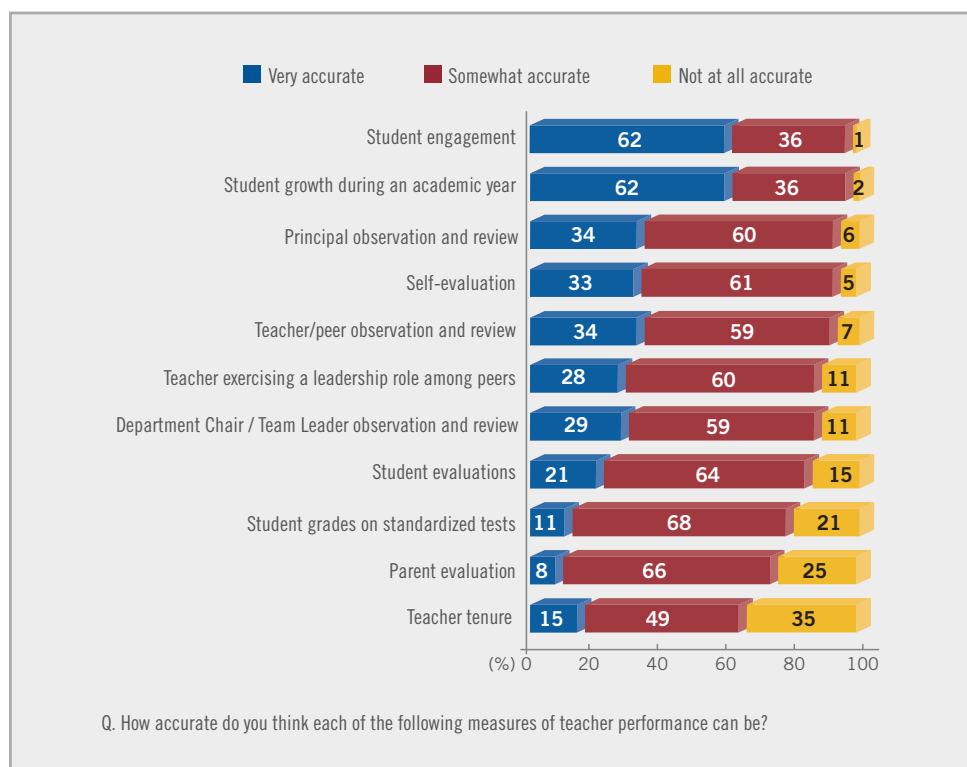
In qualitative conversation, teachers stress a desire for their performance to be based on factors they can impact directly—like student growth and student engagement—and not on factors that fail to consider the realities of individual students in individual classrooms.

This is clearly borne out in *Primary Sources* data at both the national and Kentucky 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.

Teachers in Kentucky are more likely than teachers nationwide to view several additional measures as more accurate in gauging teacher performance. Specifically, Kentucky teachers:

- Are more likely to say student grades on standardized tests are at least somewhat, if not very, accurate (79% in Kentucky, 69% nationally).
- Are more likely to say principal observation and review is a very accurate measure (34% in Kentucky, 22% nationally).
- Are more likely to say department chair or team leader observation and review is a very accurate measure (29% in Kentucky, 20% nationally).

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



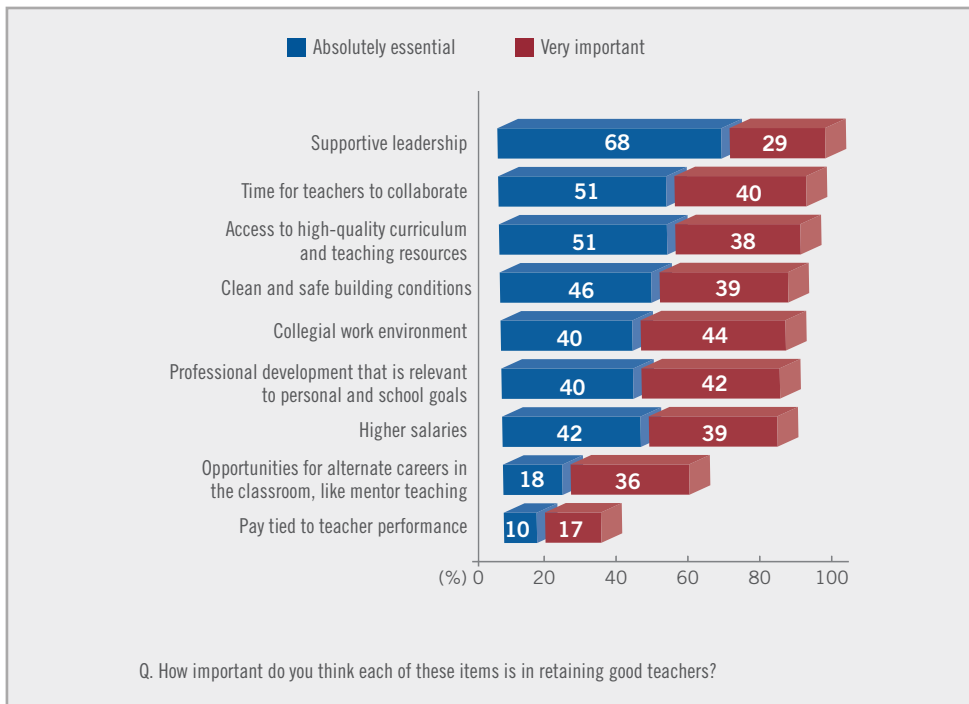
TEACHER RETENTION

Kentucky Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention

Teachers who participated in *Primary Sources* were asked to evaluate the importance of nine different factors in retaining good teachers. This information provided insight on the things teachers most value in their profession.

At the national level, the general trends put supportive leadership solidly in the top-ranked spot, followed by other non-monetary measures like access to high-quality curriculum and teaching resources and a collegial work environment. Higher salaries generally fall in the middle tier of importance while opportunities for alternate careers and pay-for-performance fall in the lowest tier.

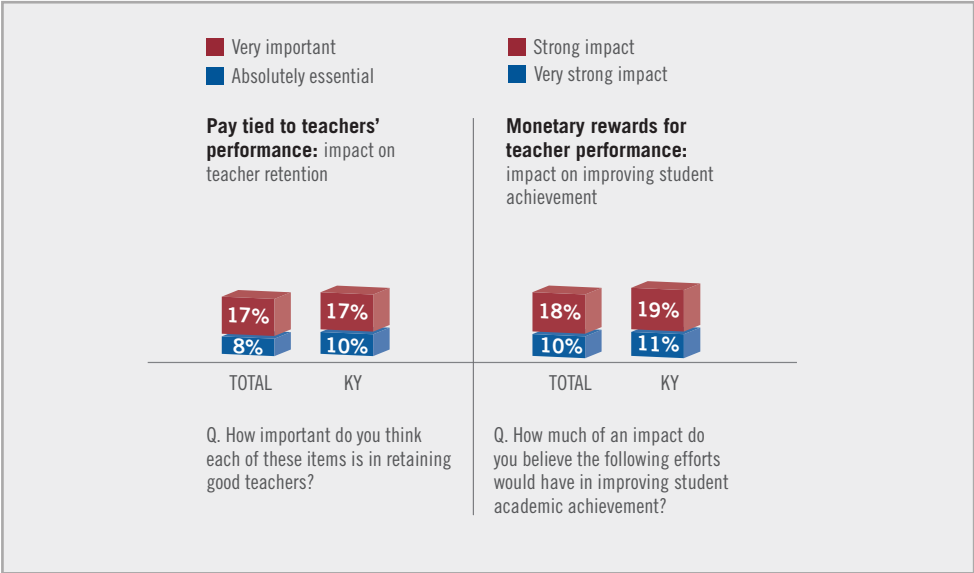
Kentucky Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention



There were no significant differences setting Kentucky's teachers apart from the national averages and trends on the issue of teacher retention.

Pay for performance is not viewed as highly important in retaining teachers by even one third of teachers nationwide. Similarly, few teachers in Kentucky say that pay-for-performance systems make a strong or very strong impact on improving student achievement.

Kentucky Teachers' Views on Monetary Issues



Methodology

This report is based on the responses of the 394 teachers in Kentucky who participated in the national survey for *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools*. The data reflect a cross-section of Kentucky'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=209) and online (n=185). 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.”