

“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
NORTH CAROLINA
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 it. We need to be preparing them for jobs that don’t yet exist?”
“How do we prepare students for jobs that don’t yet exist?”
“...being lifelong learners.”



“By holding students to high standards at all grade levels,
we can improve student achievement in our schools.”
– *Middle School Teacher in North Carolina*

***Primary Sources: North Carolina* 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 North Carolina. *Primary Sources: North Carolina* is based on the responses of nearly 1,700 public school teachers across North Carolina 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 North Carolina had important opinions about the critical issues in education at the national and state levels. Specifically, teachers in North Carolina:

- Are slightly less likely than teachers nationwide to rate student academic achievement at their schools as “Excellent” (21% in North Carolina, 28% nationally).
- Are open to common standards and assessments across states—believing that these could help improve student achievement.
- Are more open to innovative compensation policies—when compared to teachers nationwide, they are more likely to view higher salaries and performance rewards for teachers as impacting teacher retention and student achievement.

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

North Carolina's Teachers Recognize the Challenges Facing Their Students

With a state graduation rate of 63%—about six points lower than the national average—teachers in North Carolina 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 North Carolina:

- Teachers say that a high school diploma is not enough for today's students. Ninety-five 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 students could leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2- or 4-year college (91% nationally).
- Only one in 10 (11%) of teachers strongly agree that their students enter their classroom prepared for on-grade-level work. An additional 42% "somewhat agree" (This is in comparison to 16% and 44%, respectively, among teachers nationwide.).
- Only 21% of teachers rate student academic achievement at schools as "Excellent" (28% nationally).
- Fewer than half (43%) 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).

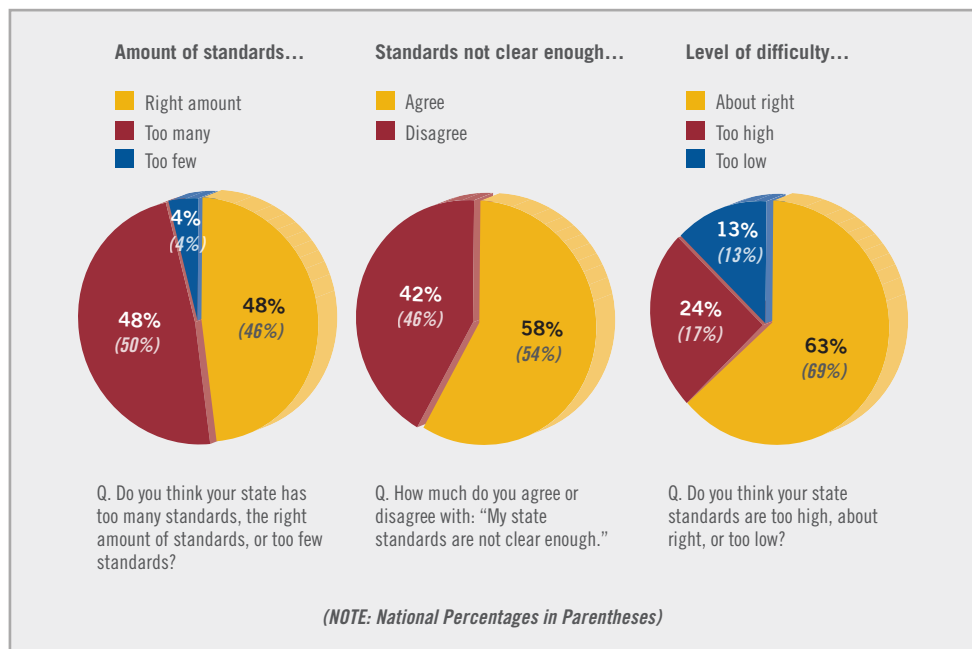
STATE AND NATIONAL STANDARDS

North Carolina Teachers' Views on Current North Carolina State Standards

As is the case with their peers nationwide, teachers in North Carolina recognize the role of academic standards in improving student academic 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 the same percentage of teachers (48%) reporting that North Carolina has too many standards as reporting that the number of standards is “about right” (51% and 44% nationally, respectively).
- As with their peers nationwide, a very small number of teachers in North Carolina (4%) believe that the state has too few standards.
- A majority of teachers (58%) say that North Carolina’s standards are not clear enough.
- While most teachers (about six in 10) say the rigor of their state standards is about right, nearly one quarter (24%) say standards are too high. Thirteen percent say they are too low.

Teachers' Views on North Carolina State Standards



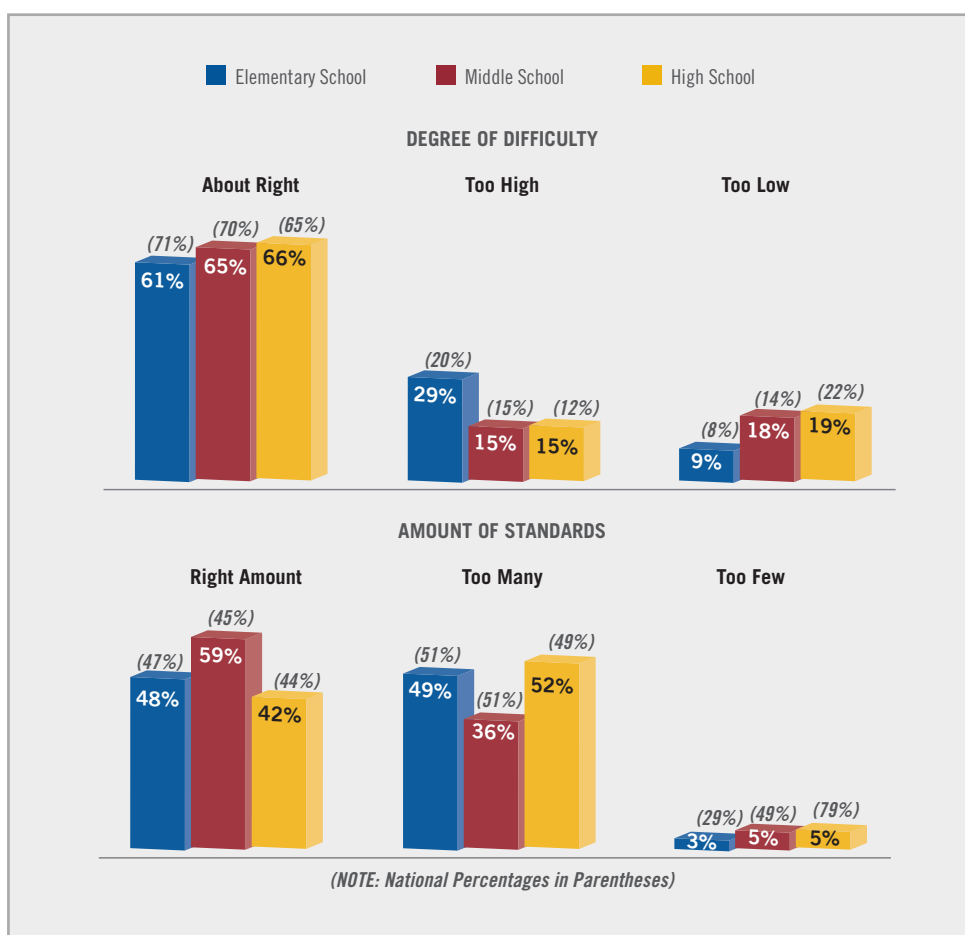
North Carolina Teachers' Views on Standards Shift as Students Progress in Grade Level

While the majority of teachers in North Carolina say the degree of difficulty of state standards is about right, meaningful percentages feel otherwise:

Elementary school teachers are about twice as likely as middle and high school teachers to say standards are too high (29% vs. 15%). Middle and high school teachers are twice as likely as elementary school teachers to think standards are too low (18% and 19% among middle and high school teachers, respectively, vs. 9% among elementary school teachers).

In terms of the amount of state standards, middle school teachers are less likely than elementary and high school teachers to say there are too many state standards, and more likely to say there are the right amount. This trend differs from the national trend across school levels: Middle school teachers in North Carolina are much less likely to say there are too many standards for their students (36% vs. 51%).

Teachers' Views on North Carolina State Standards, by School Level



North Carolina Teachers Support Clearer Standards, Common Across States

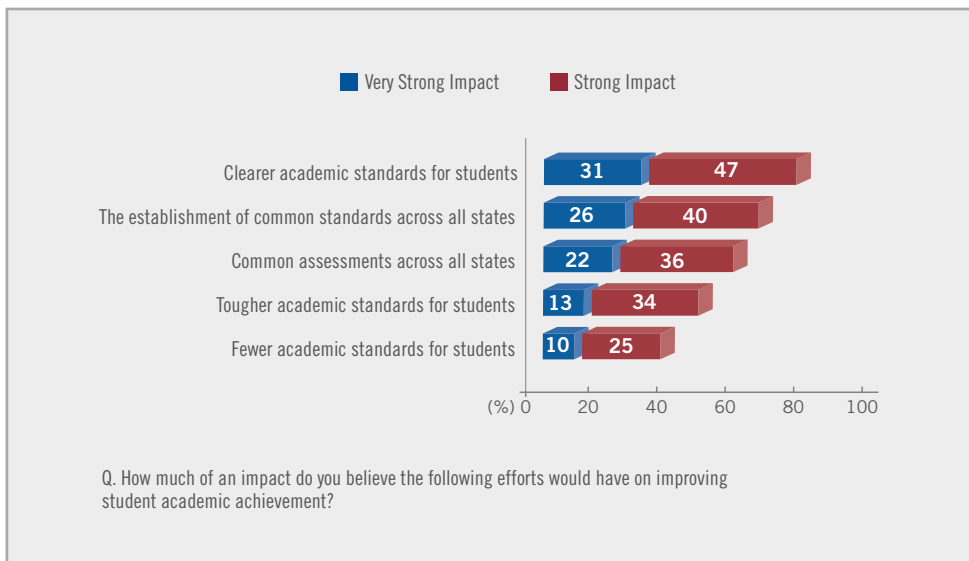
North Carolina’s teachers support the establishment of clear and common standards across states to a slightly greater degree than their peers across the nation. They say the following measures would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student achievement:

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

In keeping with the views of teachers across the country, North Carolina’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 (46% in North Carolina, 45% nationally)
- Fewer academic standards for students (35% in North Carolina, 34% nationally)

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



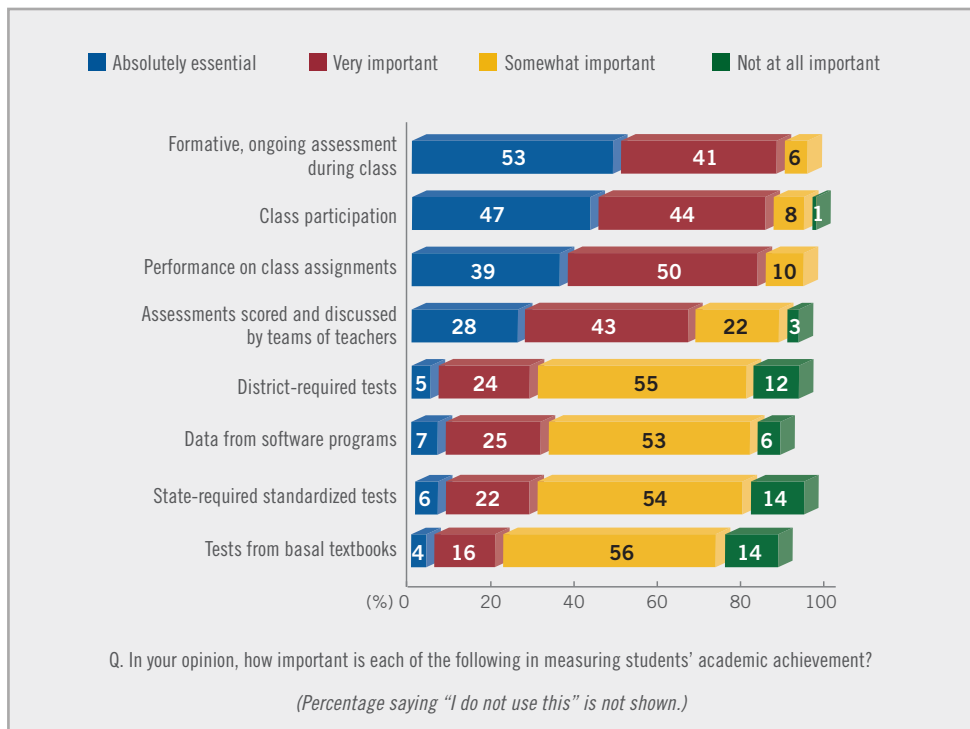
EVALUATING STUDENT AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE

North Carolina Teachers' Views on Evaluating Student Performance

North Carolina'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 North Carolina 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).

North Carolina Teachers' Views on Importance of Student Performance Measures



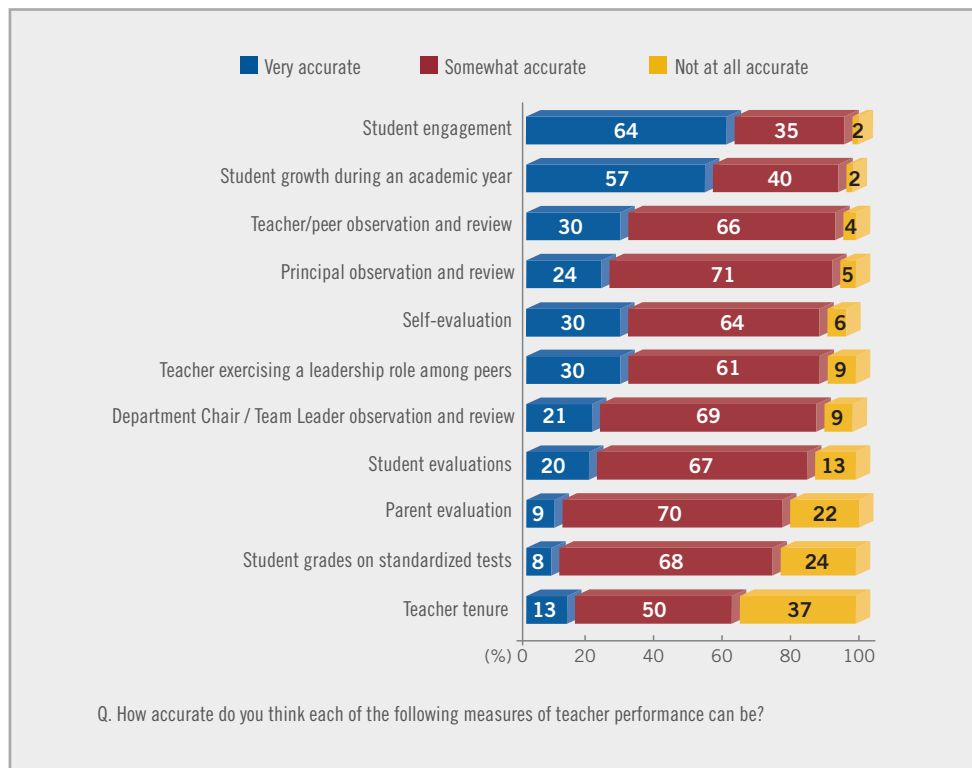
Further, as noted on page 5, nearly three in five North Carolina teachers say common assessments across states would have a very strong or strong impact on improving student achievement—with an additional 31% saying these would make a moderate impact.

North Carolina 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 North Carolina 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.

North Carolina Teachers' Views on the Degree of Accuracy of Measures of Teacher Performance



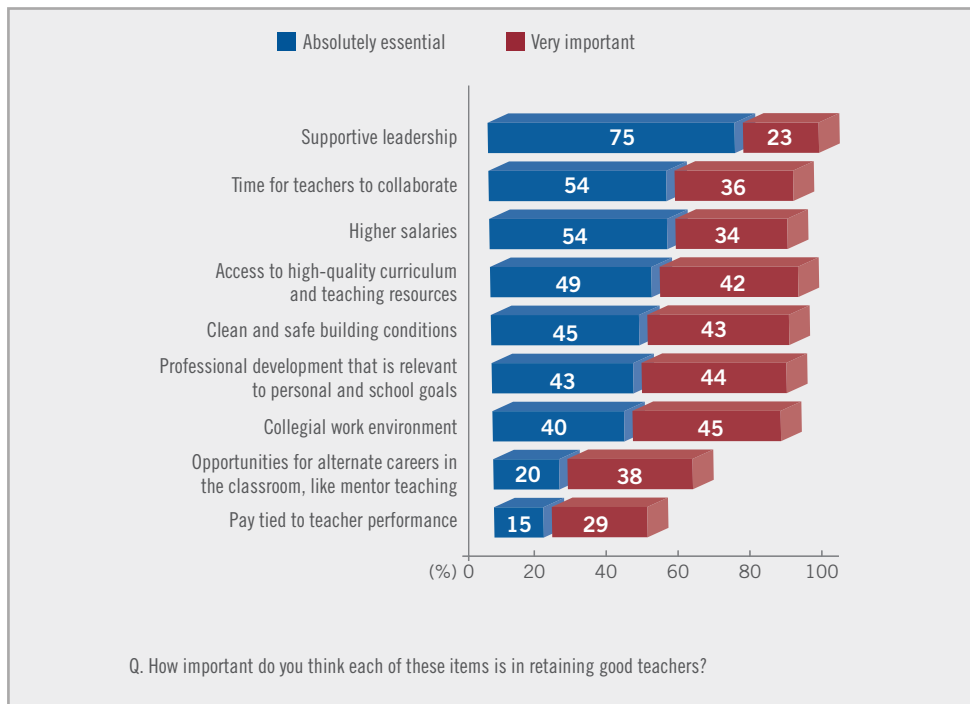
TEACHER RETENTION

North Carolina 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.

In nearly every state in the nation, supportive leadership is the most important factor in retaining good teachers, and North Carolina is no exception. In fact, teachers in North Carolina are even more likely than teachers nationwide to say that supportive leadership is absolutely essential in retaining good teachers (75% in North Carolina, 68% nationally).

North Carolina Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention



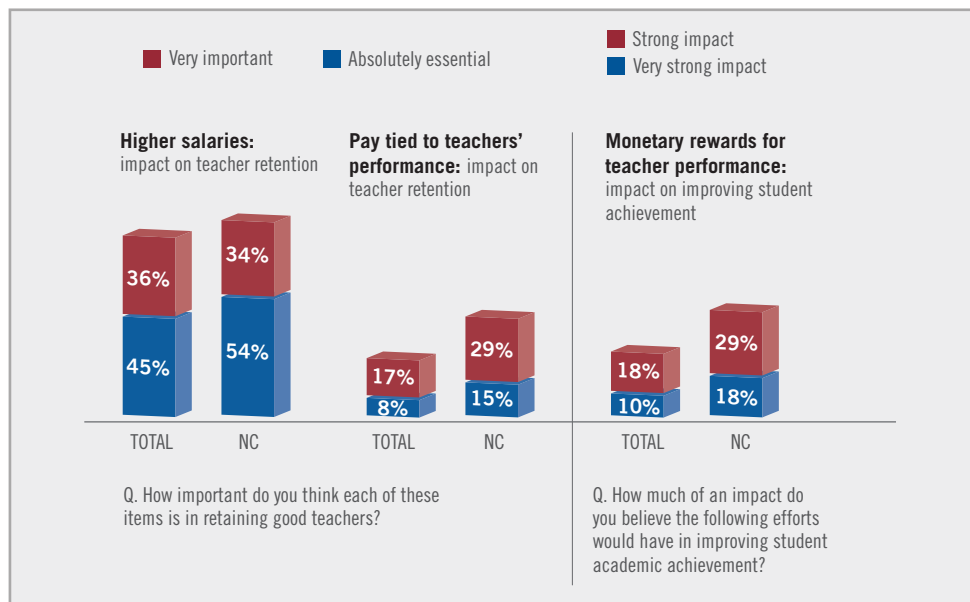
North Carolina Teachers' Views on Monetary Compensation

While the impact of higher salaries on teacher retention varies across states, it consistently ranks lower than other, non-monetary measures. This is not the case in North Carolina, however, where teacher pay ranks third out of nine items. Just over half (54%) of North Carolina teachers saying it is absolutely essential in retaining good teachers. This is higher than the national average of 45%.

North Carolina teachers are also more open to innovative compensation policies when compared to teachers nationwide. While pay tied to teacher performance ranks last on the list of what North Carolina teachers believe is important for retaining good teachers (as it does in nearly every state), as with higher salaries, more North Carolina teachers than teachers nationwide say it is an absolutely essential or very important factor in retaining teachers (44% in North Carolina, 25% nationally).

Teachers in North Carolina 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 (47% in North Carolina, 28% nationally). In fact, North Carolina teacher ratings for pay for performance as making both a positive impact on teacher retention and for improving student achievement are among the five highest ratings across all states in the nation.

North Carolina Teachers' Views on Monetary Issues



Methodology

This report is based on the responses of the 1,678 teachers in North Carolina who participated in the national survey for *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools*. The data reflect a cross-section of North Carolina 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=479) and online (n=1,199). 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.”