

“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

NEW YORK

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?”

“Our job is to ensure that students understand the real-world applications of what they are learning; they have to know that education is everything.”
– *High School Teacher in New York*

***Primary Sources: New York* 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 opinions 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 New York. *Primary Sources: New York* is based on the responses of more than 1,900 public school teachers across New York State 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 New York had important opinions about the critical issues in education at the national and state levels. Specifically, teachers in New York State:

- Are more likely than teachers nationwide to say that the level of difficulty of their state standards is too low;
- Say clearer standards and common standards across states would make a strong impact on student achievement;
- Are more likely to say clean and safe building conditions are absolutely essential to retaining good teachers;
- Say that, while teacher pay is important, it is not as important as many other, non-monetary issues in retaining good teachers.

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

While *Primary Sources: New York* 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

New York's Teachers Recognize the Challenges Facing Their Students

As is the case with teachers across the nation, teachers in New York 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 New York State:

- 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 15% of teachers strongly agree that students enter their classroom prepared for on-grade-level work, with another 41% agreeing "somewhat" (16% and 44% nationally).
- Only 27% of teachers rate the academic achievement of students at their school as "Excellent" (28% nationally).
- Only half (49%) of teachers agree that more than 75% 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

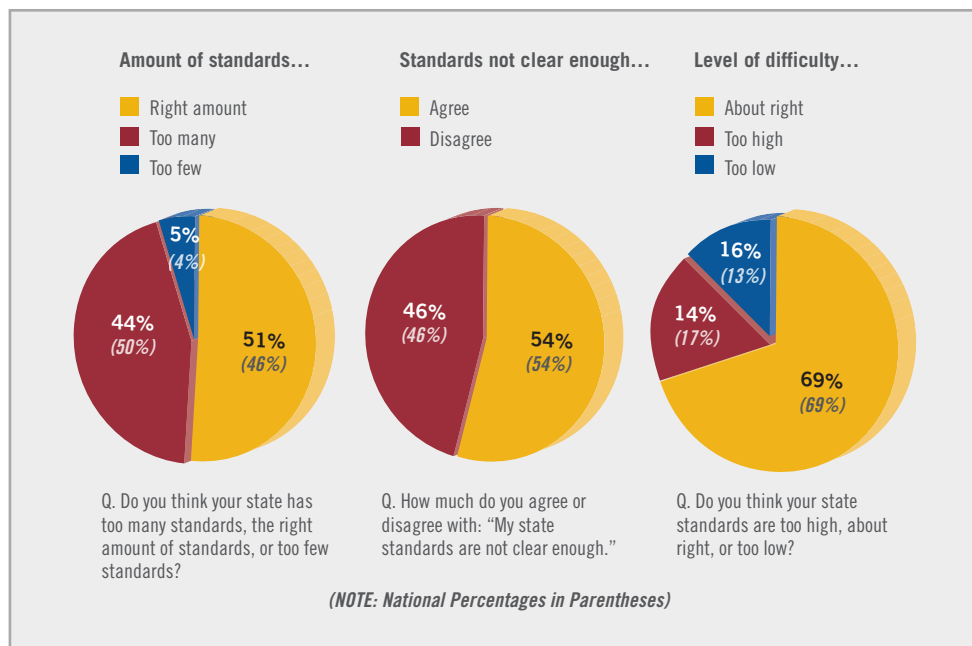
New York Teachers' Views on Current New York State Standards

Like their peers across the nation, teachers in New York recognize the role of academic standards in improving student achievement and preparedness.

They are divided, however, in their opinions on the amount, clarity and rigor of their state standards:

- Teachers are split in their opinions on amount of state academic standards, with nearly half saying that New York has too many standards (44%) and about half saying that the number of standards in New York is “about right” (51%), (50% and 46% nationally, respectively).
- As with their peers nationwide, a very small number of teachers in New York (5%) believe that the state has too few standards (4% nationally).
- New York’s teachers align with teachers across the country on their opinions on clarity of their state standards, with about half saying standards are clear enough (46%) and nearly half saying they are not (54%).
- Nearly seven in 10 teachers 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 New York State Standards

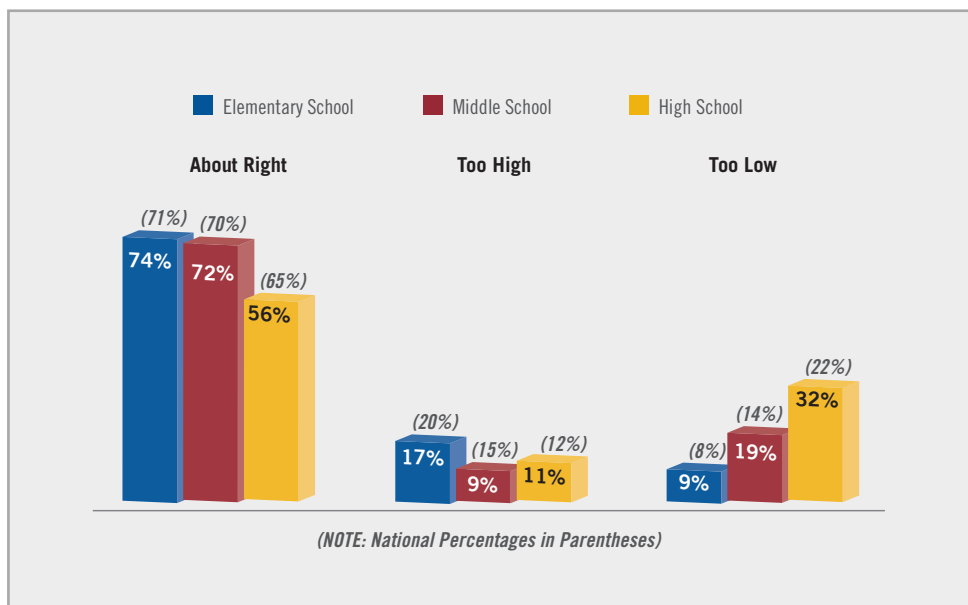


New York Teachers' Views on Standards Shift as Students Progress in Grade Level

While the majority of teachers across grade levels (56%-74%) say the degree of difficulty of state standards is about right, meaningful percentages feel otherwise:

- Elementary school teachers are more likely than middle and high school teachers to say New York state standards are too high (17% vs. 9% and 11%, respectively),
- Teachers of older students—particularly high schoolers—are more likely to think that New York state standards are too low (19% and 32% of middle and high school teachers, respectively, vs. 9% of elementary school teachers)
- High school teachers in New York are almost 50% more likely than the national average of high school teachers to say their state standards are too low (32% in New York, 22% nationally).

Degree of Difficulty of New York State Standards, by School Level



New York Teachers Support Clearer Standards, Common Across States

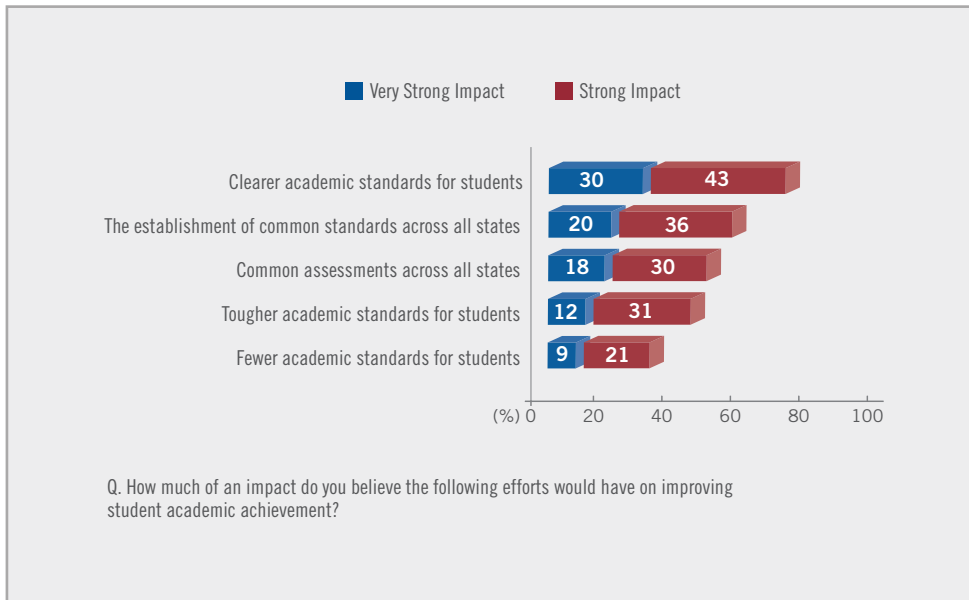
As is the case with teachers nationwide, New York teachers support the development of clearer standards and of standards that are common across all states. They say the measures would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student academic achievement:

- Clearer academic standards for students (73% in New York, 74% nationally)
- The establishment of common standards across all states (57% in New York, 60% nationally)

Also in keeping with the views of teachers across the country, New York 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 (44% in New York, 45% nationally)
- Fewer academic standards for students (30% in New York, 34% nationally)

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



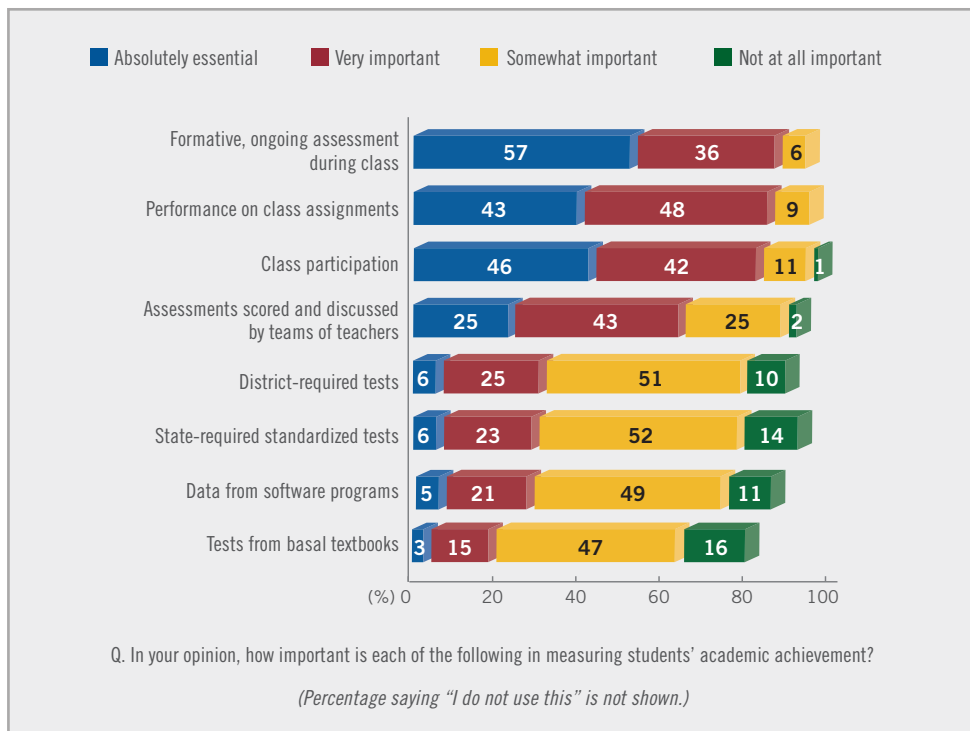
EVALUATING STUDENT AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE

New York Teachers' Views on Evaluating Student Performance

New York'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 New York also see value in standardized tests as a way to evaluate student performance. Only 10% 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).

New York Teachers' Views on Importance of Student Performance Measures



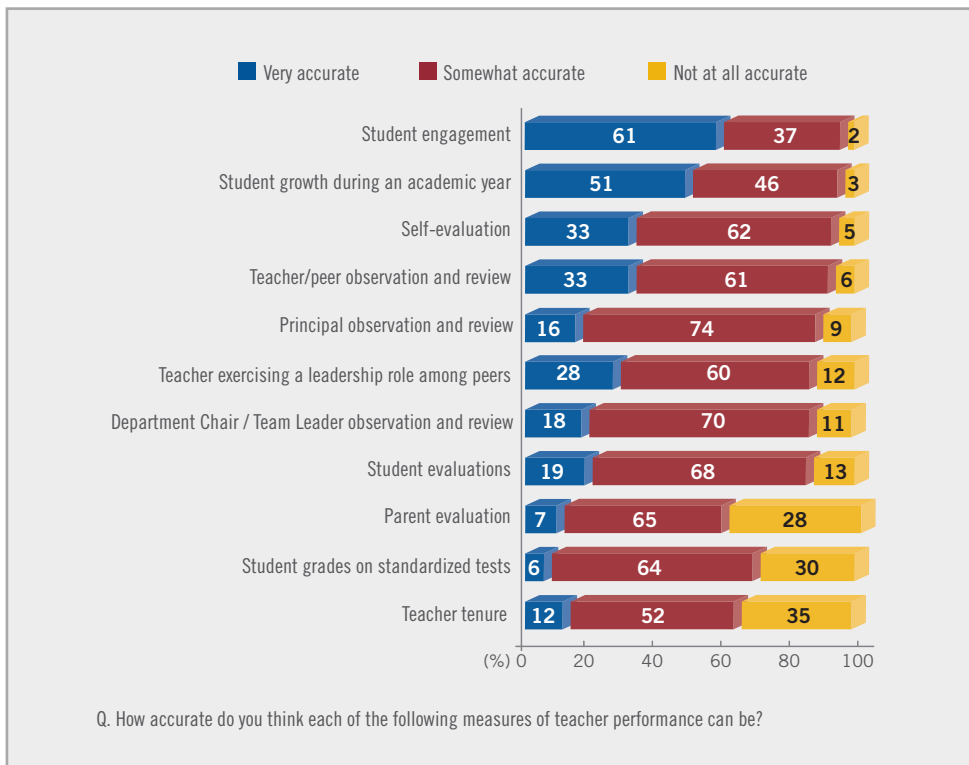
Further, as displayed in the chart on page 5, almost half (47%) of teachers in New York say common assessments across states would make a very strong or strong impact on improving student achievement—with an additional 37% saying these would make a moderate impact.

New York Teachers' Views on Evaluating Student 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 New York 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. Only 6% of teachers in New York feel that student grades on standardized tests are a very accurate measure of teacher performance (7% nationally).

New York Teachers' Views on the Degree of Accuracy of Measures of Teacher Performance



Teachers in New York are also significantly more likely than teachers nationwide to view tenure as a measure of teacher performance. Sixty-five percent of New York teachers label tenure as either a somewhat or very accurate measure of teacher performance. Nationwide, that number drops to 57%.

TEACHER RETENTION

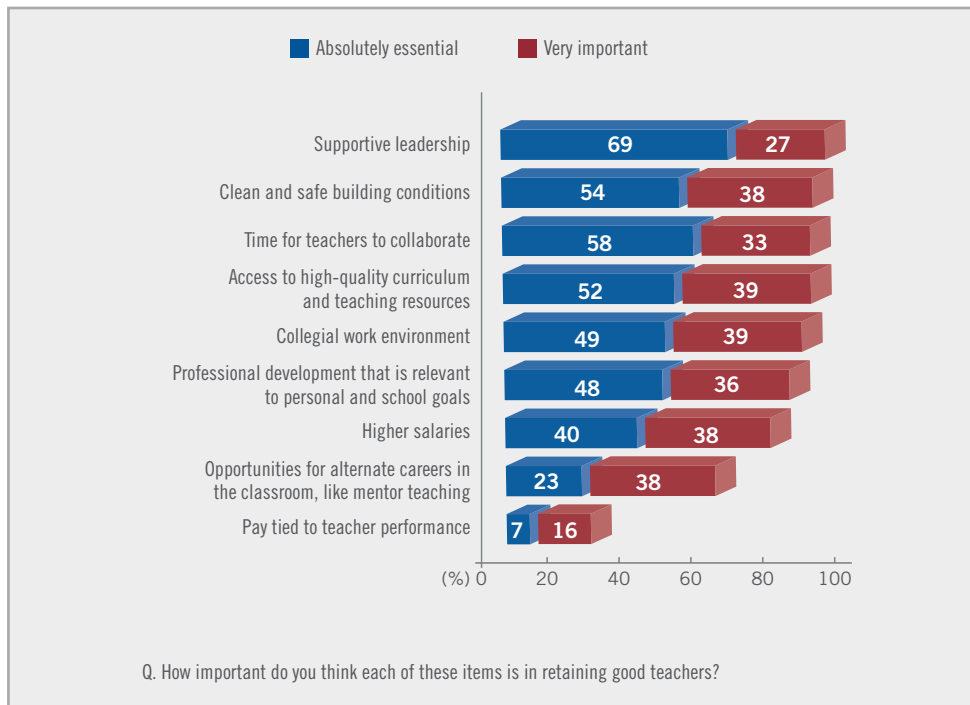
New York Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention

Overall, New York teachers feel similarly to their peers nationwide when it comes to the importance of various factors in retaining good teachers. In nearly every single state in the nation, supportive leadership is by far the most important factor in retaining good teachers, and New York is no exception. In New York, 69% of teachers say that supportive leadership is absolutely essential in retaining good teachers (68% nationally).

New York teachers also differ slightly from teachers nationally in two other areas relating to teacher retention:

- They are more likely to say clean and safe building conditions are absolutely essential (54% in New York, 45% nationally).
- They are more likely to say opportunities for alternative careers in the classroom are absolutely essential or very important (60% in New York, 53% nationally).

New York Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention

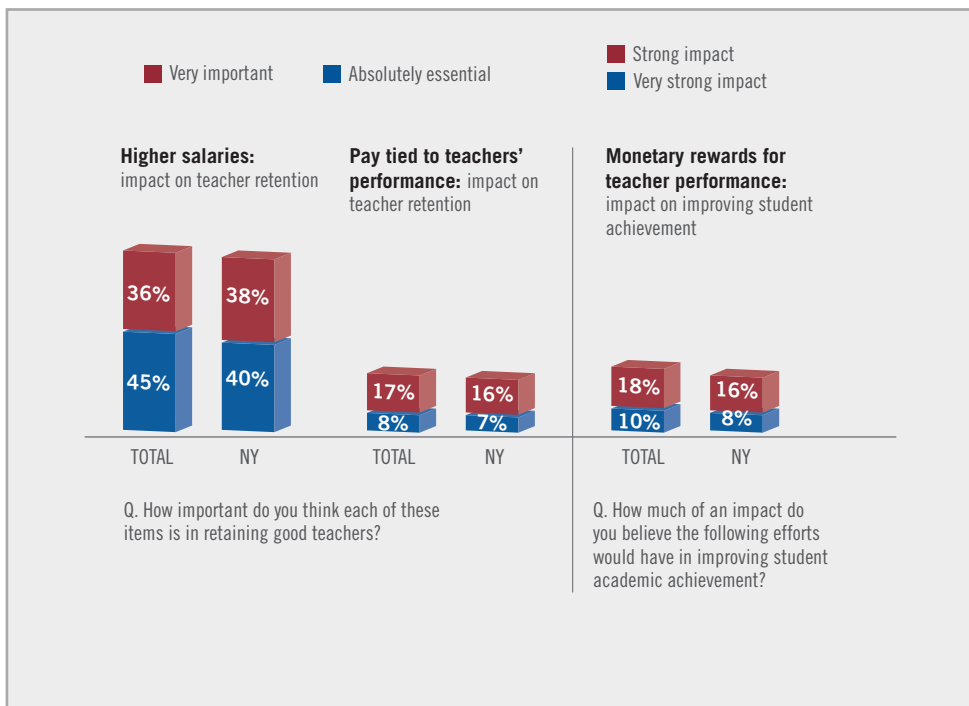


New York Teachers' Views on Monetary Compensation

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 New York. The state's teachers rank higher salaries seventh out of nine items impacting teacher retention, with 40% of New York teachers saying it is absolutely essential to retaining good teachers (slightly lower than the national average of 45%).

When discussing other issues of monetary compensation, however, teachers in New York State align with their peers nationwide. Nearly one quarter of New York's teachers believe that monetary rewards for teacher performance would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student academic achievement (23% in New York, 28% nationally).

New York Teachers' Views on Monetary Issues



Methodology

This report is based on the responses of the 1,906 teachers in New York who participated in the national survey for *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools*. The data reflect a cross-section of New York'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=546) and online (n=1,360). 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.”