

“There is not just a need for more teachers. 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
TENNESSEE
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.”



“We must tailor our standards and our curriculum to accommodate this rapidly changing, ever-expanding world. Only then can we impact student achievement in a massive way.”
– *High School Teacher in Tennessee*

***Primary Sources: Tennessee* 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 Tennessee. *Primary Sources: Tennessee* is based on the responses of nearly 900 public school teachers across Tennessee 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 Tennessee had important opinions about the critical issues in education at the national and state levels. Specifically, teachers in Tennessee:

- Are divided on the number and clarity of Tennessee state standards; more than one quarter of them feel that their standards are not rigorous enough.
- Believe clearer and common standards across states would make a very strong or strong impact on student achievement
- Are more open to innovative compensation policies when compared to teachers nationwide. Teachers in Tennessee are more likely to see performance rewards for teachers as making a strong impact on student achievement and teacher retention.
- Are more open to state testing as a measure of both student and teacher evaluation than their peers nationwide.

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

Tennessee's Teachers Recognize the Challenges Facing Their Students

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

- 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 14% of teachers strongly agree that their students enter their classroom prepared for on-grade-level work; an additional 42% "somewhat agree" (16% and 44% nationally).
- Only about one in four (28%) teachers rates student academic achievement as "Excellent," the same as teachers nationwide.
- Only four in 10 (41%) 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).

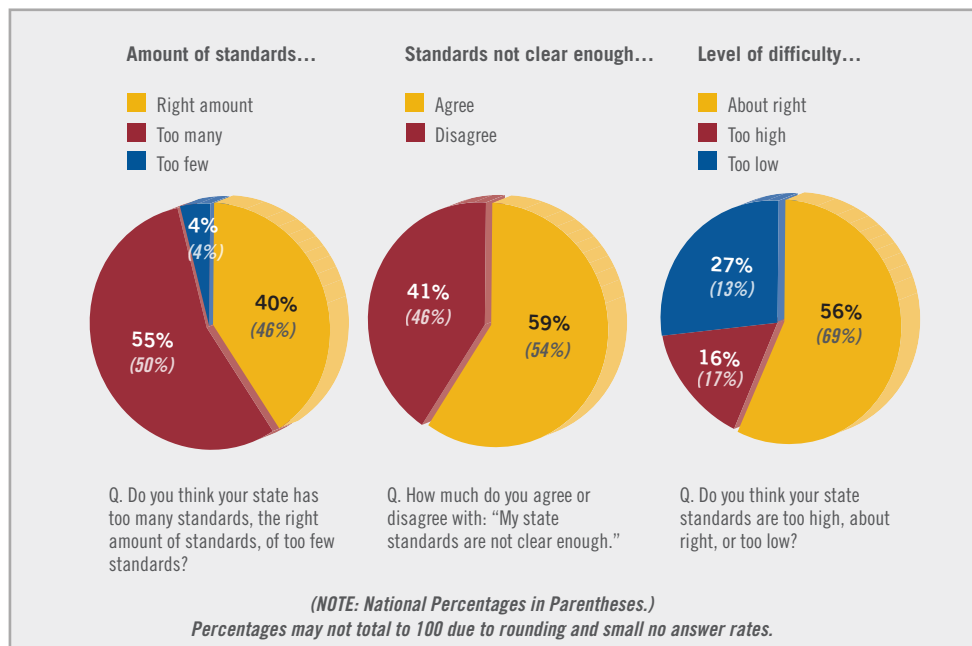
STATE AND NATIONAL STANDARDS

Tennessee Teachers' Views on Current Tennessee State Standards

Like their peers across the nation, teachers in Tennessee 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 more than half saying that Tennessee has too many standards (55%) and four out of 10 saying that the number of standards in Tennessee is “about right.” (50% and 46% respectively, nationally)
- Nearly six in 10 feel that their state standards are not clear enough, while the remaining four in ten say that their state standards are clear.
- As with their peers nationwide, a very small number of teachers in Tennessee (4%) believe there are too few standards.
- Tennessee’s teachers are less likely than teachers nationwide to say the level of difficulty of their state standards is “about right” (56% vs. 69%). The remaining 44% of teachers are more likely to say that standards are too low (27%) rather than too high (16%). In fact, in Tennessee, twice as many teachers say standards are too low (27%) compared to teachers nationwide (13%).

Teachers' Views on Tennessee State Standards



Tennessee Teachers Support Clearer Standards, Common Across States

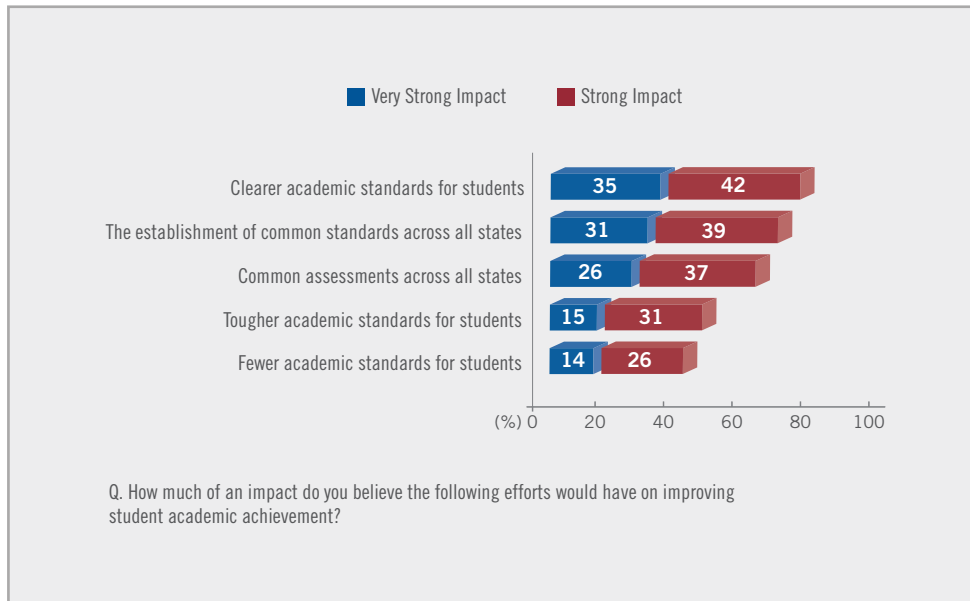
Tennessee’s teachers support the establishment of clear and common standards across states to a slightly greater degree than their peers across the nation. They say the measures would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student achievement:

- Clearer academic standards for students (77% in Tennessee, 74% nationally)
- Establishing common standards across all states (70% in Tennessee, 60% nationally)

In keeping with the views of teachers across the country, Tennessee teachers are far less certain that tougher and fewer standards would make a strong/very strong impact on improving student achievement:

- Tougher academic standards for students (46% in Tennessee, 45% nationally)
- Fewer academic standards for students (41% in Tennessee, 34% nationally)

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



EVALUATING STUDENT AND TEACHER PERFORMANCE

Tennessee Teachers' Views on Evaluating Student Performance

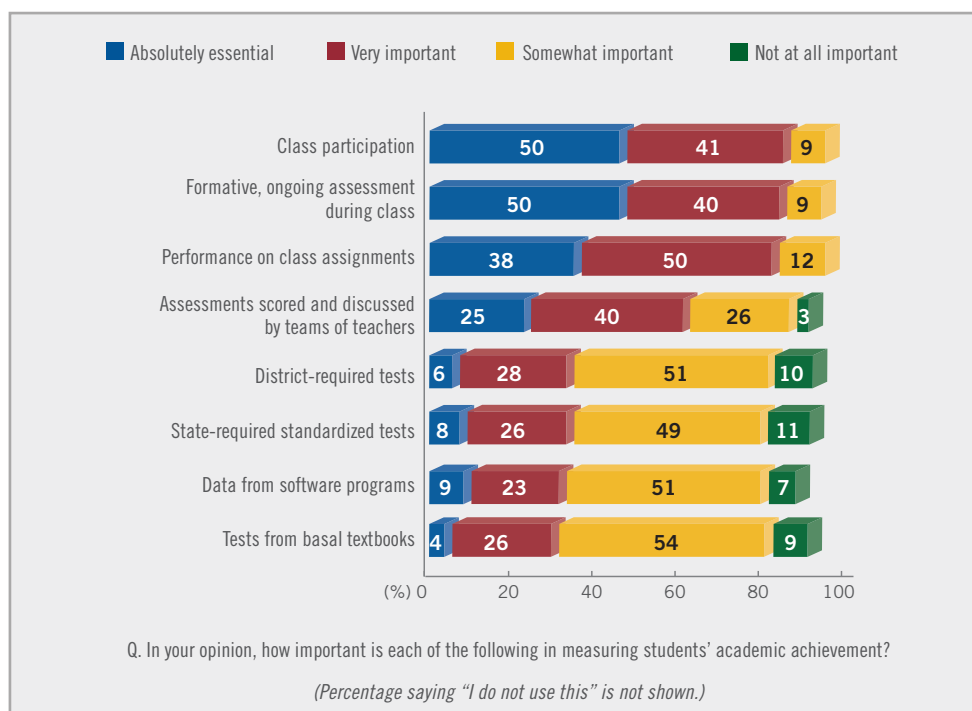
Tennessee teachers are similar to the nation's teachers in their firm belief that student assessment should be driven by in-classroom experiences, including formative ongoing assessments, class participation and performance on class assignments.

While there is a clear delineation between the measures of student achievement that teachers rank at high and low ends of importance, Tennessee's teachers are more likely to view two of these lower ranked, data-centric measures with greater favor than teachers nationwide.

Specifically, Tennessee's teachers are more likely than their peers nationwide to say the following are very important or absolutely essential in measuring student achievement:

- State-required standardized tests (34% in Tennessee, 26% nationally)
- Tests from basal textbooks (30% in Tennessee, 23% nationally)

Tennessee Teachers' Views on Importance of Student Performance Measures



Further, as noted in the chart on page 4, the majority of Tennessee’s teachers—63%, significantly higher than teachers nationwide (52%) say common assessments across states would make a very strong or strong impact on improving student achievement.

Tennessee Teachers’ Views on Measuring Teacher Performance

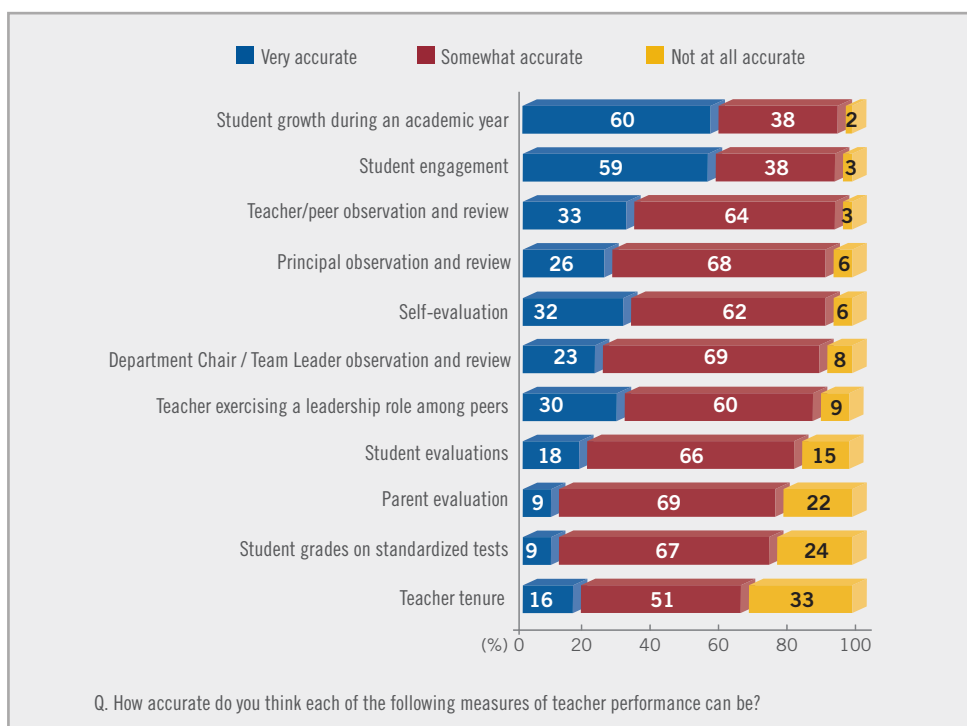
In qualitative conversation, teachers stress a desire for their performance to be based on factors they can impact directly—like student growth and student engagement—and not on factors that fail to consider the realities of individual students in individual classrooms.

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

Additionally:

- Teachers in Tennessee are even more likely to believe that tenure is an accurate measure of their performance, with 16% of Tennessee teachers saying this is very accurate in measuring teacher performance versus 10% among total teachers nationwide.
- While few teachers say student grades on standardized tests are “very accurate” in measuring teacher performance, teachers in Tennessee are more likely than teachers nationwide to say they are at least somewhat accurate (76% in Tennessee, 69% nationally).

Tennessee Teachers’ Views on the Degree of Accuracy of Measures of Teacher Performance



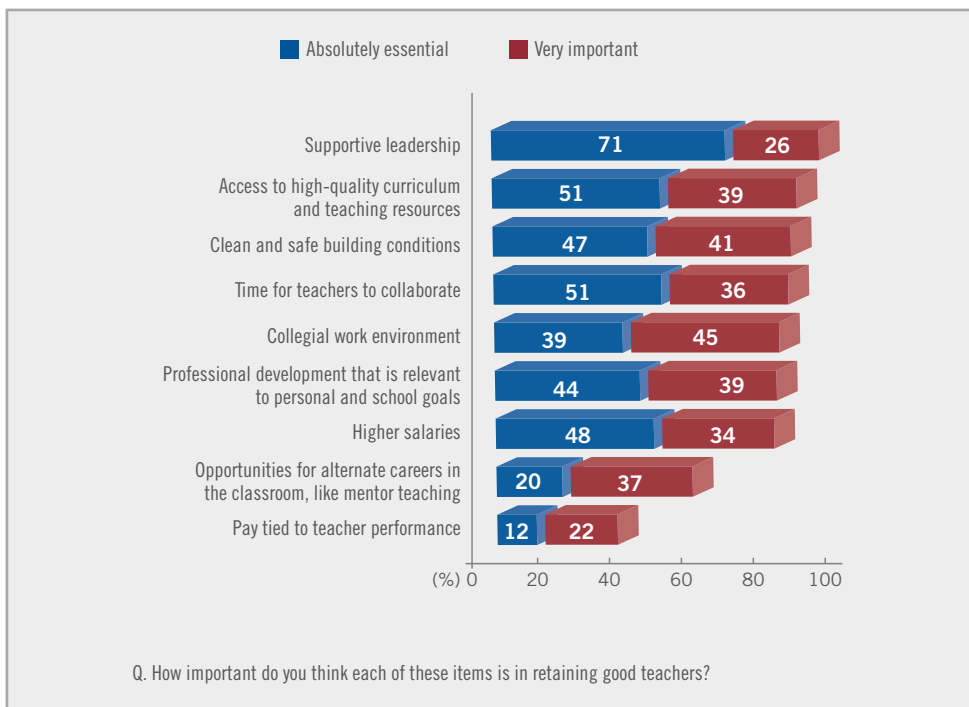
TEACHER RETENTION

Tennessee 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 slot, 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.

Tennessee Teachers' Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention



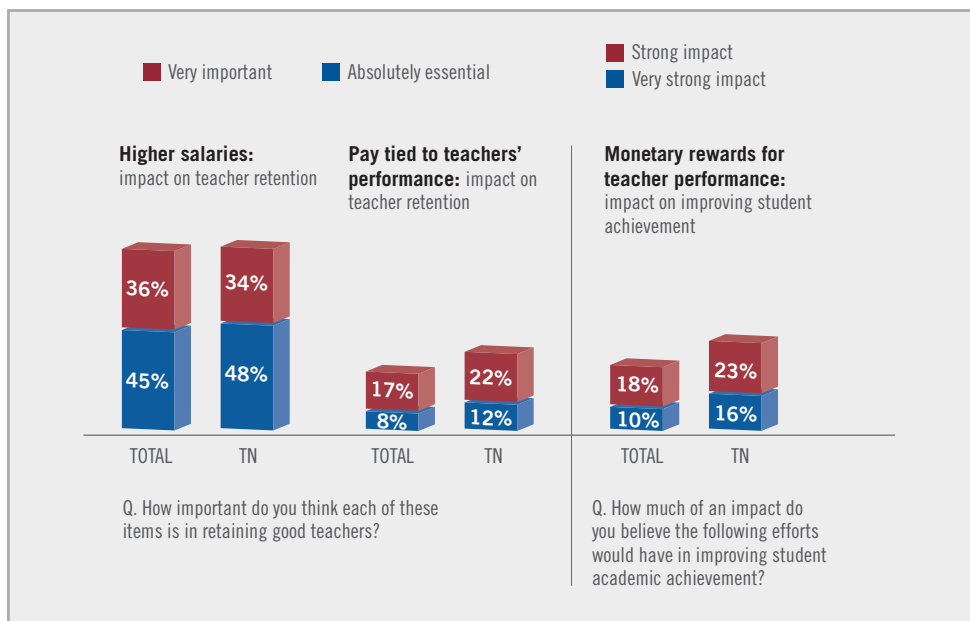
On all but one of these issues, Tennessee's teachers align with their peers nationwide. As discussed in the next section, Tennessee teachers are more likely to view pay for performance as important than are their peers nationwide.

Tennessee Teachers' Views on Monetary Compensation

Tennessee's teachers seem to be more open to innovative compensation policies when compared to teachers nationwide:

- While pay tied to teacher performance ranks last on the list of what Tennessee's teachers believe is important for retaining good teachers (as it does in nearly every state), more teachers in Tennessee say pay for performance is an absolutely essential or very important factor in retaining teachers (34% in Tennessee, 26% nationally).
- Tennessee's teachers are also more likely than their peers nationwide to believe that monetary rewards for teacher performance would have a very strong/strong impact on improving student academic achievement (39% in Tennessee, 28% nationally).

Tennessee Teachers' Views on Monetary Issues



Methodology

This report is based on the responses of the 881 teachers in Tennessee who participated in the national survey for *Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools*. The data reflect a cross-section of Tennessee'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=344) and online (n=537). 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.”