

“There is not a simple 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.”

 SCHOLASTIC

“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

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 being lifelong learners.”

“How do we prepare students for jobs that don’t yet exist?”

 BILL & MELINDA
GATES foundation

“Treat all students equally, provide high-quality teaching,
have high expectations and students will succeed.”
– *High School Teacher*

A LETTER FROM SCHOLASTIC AND THE BILL & MELINDA GATES FOUNDATION

We all remember at least one teacher who made us think, who challenged us, who encouraged us, who prepared us for tomorrow and who helped to make us the person we are today.

Teachers play a critical role in students' academic achievement, in our workforce's skills and in our nation's future. They dedicate their lives to educating, inspiring and preparing today's youth for life beyond high school and yet, according to the 2010 MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, 69% of teachers believe that their voices are not heard in the debate on education. The goal of *Primary Sources* is to place the views of our nation's public school teachers at the center of the discussion on education reform. As our nation grapples with how to dramatically improve student academic achievement, we must ask ourselves—if teachers are left out of the conversation on school reform, can the movement ultimately succeed?

When Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation reached out to teachers with a blind questionnaire on American education, more than 40,000 of them responded, making this a landmark undertaking—what we believe is the largest-ever national survey of America's teachers. We heard from educators in every state and at every grade level. We heard from those who teach in one-room schools in rural communities, in affluent suburbs and in large, urban districts. We heard from teachers in classrooms with children who are learning English, those with gifted students and those with children who have special needs. Indeed, the diversity and variety of our surveyed teachers reflects the challenge and opportunity inherent in addressing policy for America's schools.

We asked teachers about the state of American education—about the challenges facing students and the variety of supports and tools that teachers need to tackle those challenges. The response was overwhelming, confirming what we have always known to be true: that teachers are fully engaged in the hard work of educating our children; that they have strong ideas on how best to raise student achievement; and that they are vocal advocates for students, with thoughtful opinions on education reform, rooted in the realities of the classroom. They have powerful views on a number of issues that are central to the conversation around American schools—from performance pay and standardized tests to academic standards and teacher tenure.

Public school teachers were nearly unanimous in telling us that a high school diploma simply is not enough for today's students: 93% of teachers say that schools must prepare students for more than high school graduation. At the same time, 9 in 10 teachers say that not all of their students could leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2–4-year college. Indeed, they are not far off—according to *Education Week's*

2009 Diploma's Count, less than 70% of American high school students graduate from high school and, of those who do, far too many are unprepared for the rigors of higher education and today's workplace. Citing this disconnect, teachers identified five ways that we can address the challenges facing today's schools and ensure that all students achieve at their highest level:

- 1. Establish Clear Standards, Common Across States**—Teachers see the role standards can play in preparing students for their future, but want clearer standards and core standards that are the same across all states. Nationwide, 74% of teachers say that clearer standards would make a strong or very strong impact on student achievement, with only 4% saying they would have no impact at all. 60% of teachers say that common standards would have a strong or very strong impact on student achievement, with only 10% saying that they would have no impact at all.
- 2. Use Multiple Measures to Evaluate Student Performance**—From ongoing assessments throughout the year to student participation in individual classes, teachers are clear that these day-to-day assessments are a more reliable way to measure student performance than one-shot standardized tests. Ninety-two percent of teachers say ongoing in-classroom assessment is either very important or absolutely essential in measuring student performance, while only 27% say the same of state-required standardized tests.
- 3. Innovate to Reach Today's Students**—To keep today's students engaged in learning, teachers recognize that it is essential for instruction to be tailored to individual students' skills and interests. More than 90% of teachers say that differentiated assignments are absolutely essential or very important for improving student achievement and engaging students in learning. Also, showing a clear understanding of the world students inhabit outside of school, 81% of teachers say that up-to-date information-based technology that is well integrated into the classroom is absolutely essential or very important in impacting student achievement.
- 4. Accurately Measure Teacher Performance and Provide Non-Monetary Rewards**—Teachers are skeptical of current measures of teacher performance, with only 22% indicating that principal observation is a very accurate measure. At the same time, more than half of teachers indicate that student academic growth (60%) and student engagement (55%) are very accurate measures of teacher performance—much more so than teacher tenure, which a significant number of teachers said is not at all accurate. When asked about teacher retention, nearly all teachers say that non-monetary rewards like supportive leadership and collaborative working environments are the most important factors to retaining good teachers. Fewer than half of teachers say higher salaries are absolutely essential for retaining good teachers and only 8% say pay for performance is absolutely essential.
- 5. Bridge School and Home to Raise Student Achievement**—Teachers know what is necessary to build a sustainable culture of achievement in their schools: the right mix of academic instruction, family support and student engagement. Eight in 10 high school teachers (81%) attend after-school and weekend events of their students, and more than half (51%) of elementary school teachers are

willing to have parent-teacher conferences at students' homes. This report breaks down the above data and much more, revealing the diverse opinions of America's teachers. Teachers' strong but nuanced views on education are called out, particularly across teacher characteristics in two key dimensions: grade level taught and the length of time they have been teaching. Similarly, state-level data reflecting teachers' views on education policy and practice are discussed where interesting differences were found. The data tables in the appendix of the report further segment the findings by state and grade level. The quotes throughout reflect the wide range of views of the tens of thousands of teachers who participated in the survey and focus groups.

It is important to note that despite the added challenges for teachers in low-income communities, there is little difference between their views on these solutions and the views of their peers in high-income communities. The message from *Primary Sources* is clear—a good school is a good school for all children, regardless of income level.

While the report reflects the wide range of voices and opinions of teachers across the country, one thing is constant: teachers teach for the love of their students and the chance to make a difference in those young lives. Throughout this survey, we heard teachers declare their commitment to developing the potential of each and every child. Our goal as a nation should be to do all we can to support them in this endeavor.

Primary Sources is the beginning of an ongoing dialogue with America's Teachers; we are already planning the next step in this important exchange of ideas. We welcome your thoughts and opinions on the report at www.scholastic.com/primarysources.

Sincerely,



Margery Mayer

*President, Scholastic Education
Scholastic Inc.*



Vicki L. Phillips

*Director of Education, College Ready
United States Program
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*

OBJECTIVES

- Place teachers' voices at the center of discourse around education reform by sharing their thoughts and opinions with the public, the media and education leaders through the largest-ever survey of teachers in American public schools.
- Identify various supports and tools that directly impact teachers' ability to improve student achievement and help students to realize their full potential.
- Explore teachers' views on academic standards and assessments for measuring student and teacher performance.
- Accurately represent the diverse and nuanced opinions of America's teachers—highlighting their powerful, complex ideas about both the challenges of preparing children for success and the solutions to those challenges.

METHODOLOGY

Primary Sources: America's Teachers on America's Schools consisted of several research phases, culminating in what is believed to be the largest-ever national survey of more than 40,000 public school classroom teachers.

Phase 1: Foundational Research with Many Stakeholders

Focus Groups with Teachers—October 2008

Twelve in-person focus groups were conducted with 108 K–12 teachers in Schaumburg, Ill., and Fort Lee, N.J. (four groups with elementary school teachers, four groups with middle school teachers and four groups with high school teachers). In addition, in-depth follow-up interviews were conducted with several of the teachers who had participated in the focus groups. Throughout this report, when we use the phrases “in conversation” or “in conversations with teachers,” we are specifically referencing information and insights gleaned from the teachers we spoke with as part of this foundational research.

In-Depth Interviews with Education Stakeholders—November 2008

To build on focus-group research and ensure that we were moving in the right direction, in-depth interviews were conducted with K–12 education experts, including education policy leaders and advocates, educational researchers, public school administrators and teachers.

Phase 2: National Survey

The national survey, conducted by Harris Interactive, utilized telephone, mail-to-Web and email-to-Web survey methods to ensure the inclusion of the broadest and best representation of teachers. The list of teachers was sourced from Market Data Retrieval's (MDR) database of public school teachers. The survey was conducted by telephone (15,038 participated in the survey by telephone) and online (25,452 participated in the survey online) from mid-March to mid-June 2009 among 40,490 preK–12 public school classroom teachers.¹

The sponsors of the research were not revealed to respondents. Respondents were incented to participate with a gift certificate to an online education store, which was revealed to be the Scholastic Teacher Store Online only after they completed the survey.

¹ Public school teachers who teach full-time in the classroom in grades preK-12, excluding those who teach physical education exclusively.

Figures were weighted where necessary for gender, years of teaching experience, school level, region and urbanicity to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. Propensity score weighting was also used to adjust for any attitudinal/behavioral biases inherent in the sample of those who responded in each mode (telephone or online).

Throughout this report, we display data on teachers who teach in mutually exclusive grade ranges, the most common being elementary, middle and high school grades. Specifically:

- “Elementary school teachers” are teachers who teach grades K–5 and no other grades (except preK).
- “Middle school teachers” are teachers who teach grades 6–8 and no other grades.
- “High school teachers” are teachers who teach grades 9–12 and no other grades.

Creating mutually exclusive groups allows for a more straightforward comparison between teachers and, when the groups are based on common ranges such as the ones described previously, the vast majority of teachers are captured in one of these three mutually exclusive groups.

Additionally, certain terms were defined in the actual survey to ensure that teachers were responding with a clear and consistent understanding of the topic. These included:

- “By academic achievement we mean your students’ preparedness for the next level of education.”
- “By student performance data we mean things such as performance on class assignments, class participation and performance on standardized tests, etc.”

NOTE: In some cases, percentages may not sum to 100%, due to rounding and small no-answer rates.

“How do we prepare students for jobs that don’t yet exist?”
— *Middle School Teacher*

THE CHALLENGE

Teachers overwhelmingly agree that a high school diploma is not enough to prepare students for success in a changing world. Teachers understand the unprecedented challenges facing this generation, and they recognize the disconnect between students' current levels of achievement and the levels at which they must perform to achieve success in an increasingly competitive global economy.

Teachers Are Concerned that Students Are Not Adequately Prepared for College and Careers

When asked to choose the single most important goal of schools and teaching from a list of four possible goals, nearly all teachers (93%)—regardless of the grades they currently teach—say that schools must prepare students for more than high school graduation.

Teachers' Views on the Most Important Goal of Schools and Teaching	Total %
More than a high school diploma (NET)	93
To prepare all students so they are ready for careers in the 21 st Century	71
To prepare all students to be successful in a 2- or 4-year college	11
To provide all students with life skills such as managing a bank account, applying for a job and understanding a mortgage	11
To graduate all students with a high school diploma	6

In conversation, teachers are quick to address the complexities of this goal. They understand the shifting social and economic landscape of the 21st Century: students need rigorous, relevant curricula; they need to go on to college; and, most importantly, they need to be prepared to face the unknown challenges of the future.

“Internationally, we are competing for jobs and careers. We need to be more aware of what the world needs, and start thinking globally. I think the educational system is totally missing out on just how interconnected we are.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

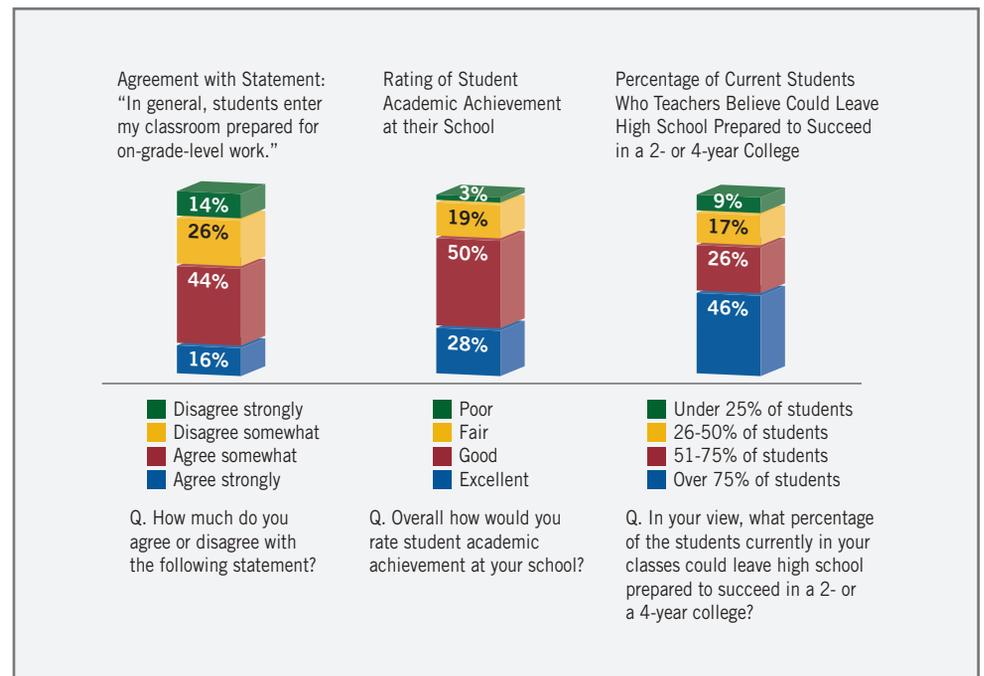
“What’s going to happen to these kids in college? I don’t know if they can make it.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“College isn’t the way for everyone. My students want so much more for themselves, but they don’t want college. I think we do students a huge disservice by offering only college-prep education.”
— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

Teachers recognize and are concerned about the disconnect between the level of preparedness students will need to succeed in the future and the actual level of achievement that those students currently reach. Their concerns are grounded in the realities teachers face every day: Only 16% of teachers “agree strongly” that students enter their classroom prepared for on-grade-level work. Only 28% rate student achievement at their school as “excellent.” And, while 79% of secondary school students plan to attend a 2- or 4-year college after high school,² only about half of teachers think that 75% or more of their students could leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2- or 4-year college. Only 9% of teachers say that all of their students could leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2- or 4-year college.

Teachers’ Views on Student Achievement and Preparedness

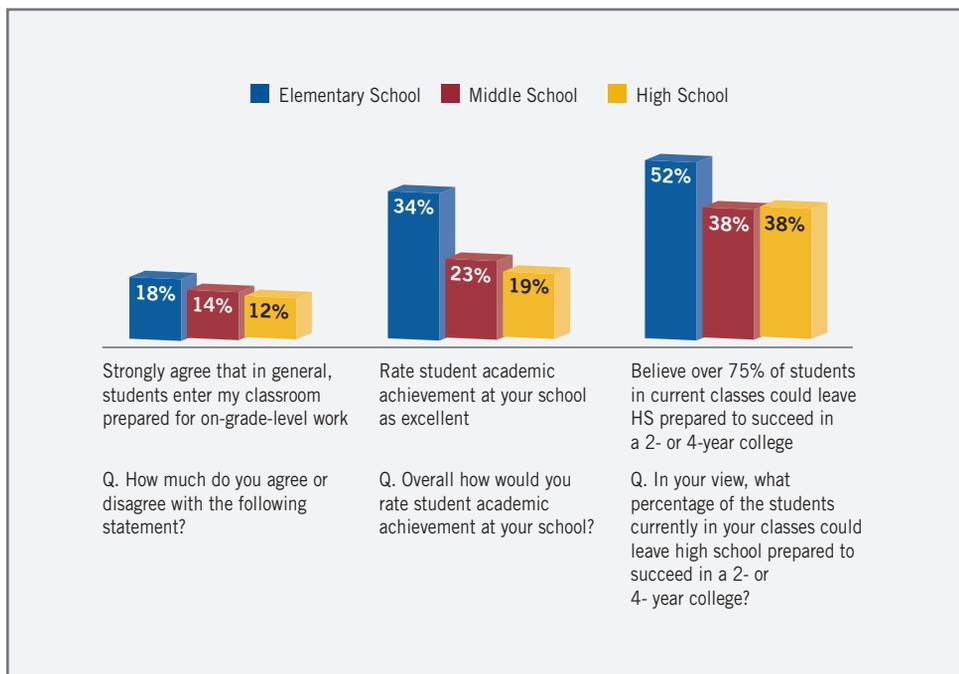


² The Metropolitan Life Survey of the American Teacher, 2000: Are We Preparing Students for the 21st Century.

Challenges Grow as Students Move from Elementary to Middle to High School

According to the teachers surveyed, levels of academic achievement and potential college success drop dramatically from elementary to middle school, with levels falling even lower in high school—a trend that is mirrored in data from research on student achievement, literacy rates and graduation rates. A number of factors are likely to contribute to this trend, not the least of which is time. In conversation, teachers of older students express concern that there is simply too narrow a window of time in which they can tackle the challenges facing their students.

Teachers' Views on Student Achievement and Preparedness (by grade taught)



“We need better intervention in the primary grades. First and second. By fifth and sixth grade, it’s too late.”
— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“I can only do the best I can, especially by the time they are seniors. I can’t re-teach them English.”
— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“If we don’t convince students in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades that education is important, they’re going to tune us out and move on.”
— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“Regardless of their background, students have the opportunity to achieve through education. Treat all students equally, provide high-quality teaching, have high expectations and students will succeed.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“With low-income students, you have to celebrate your wins and mourn your losses quickly.”

— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

59% of teachers—regardless of school income level—believe that high expectations for students are either absolutely essential or very important in impacting student achievement.

Challenges in Low-Income Communities Are More Severe

It is well documented that teachers in low-income communities are faced with some of the most significant challenges in American education. Among teachers who teach in low-income communities (those with median household incomes under \$40,000), about 40% teach in urban areas and 40% teach in rural areas/small towns. While the challenges across these communities are unique, teachers in low-income areas are working against inherent social and economic inequities to ensure success for their students.

Due in part to these inequities, achievement and college-preparedness measures vary dramatically according to the median household incomes of the communities in which teachers teach. A comparison of low- and high-income schools points to stark differences in teachers’ perceptions of their students’ ability to meet the challenges of the 21st Century.

Specifically, teachers in low-income schools are about:

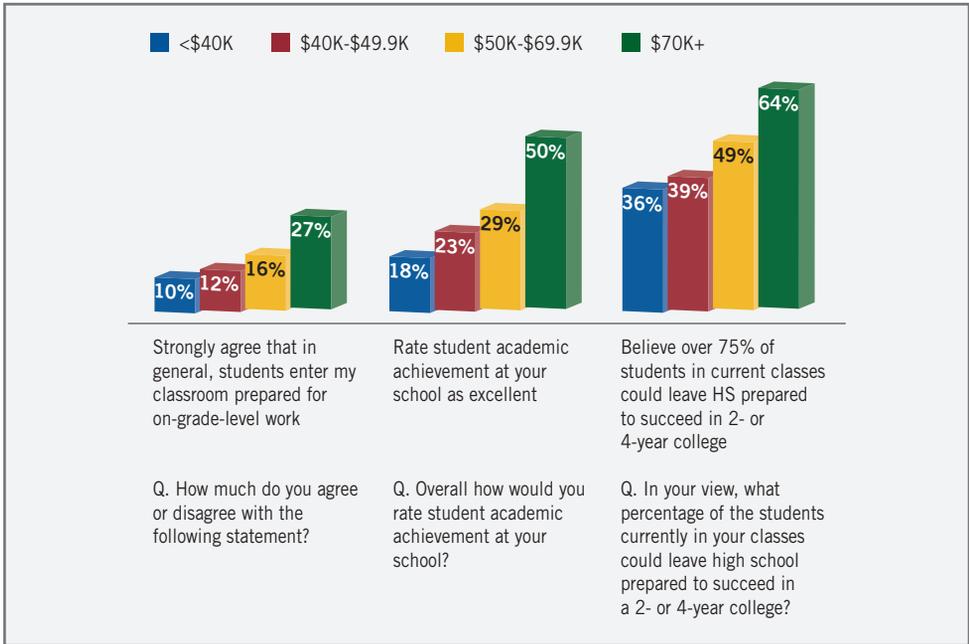
- One-third as likely as teachers in high-income schools to agree strongly that their students enter class ready for on-grade-level work;
- One-third as likely to rate student academic achievement at their schools as excellent; and
- Half as likely to say that more than three-quarters of their students could leave high school ready for postsecondary school success.

The response of teachers in low-income communities reflects the startling reality of our most underserved schools—50% of students in low-income communities will not graduate from high school by the time they are 18 years old,³ and, of the 13 million children growing up in poverty, only 1 in 10 will graduate from college.⁴

³ “Diplomas Count,” Editorial Projects in Education (Education Week), 2007.

⁴ Mortensen, Tom. “Family Income and Higher Education Opportunity,” Postsecondary Education Opportunity, 2005 with updated data from 2006.

**Teachers' Views on Student Achievement and Preparedness
(by schools median household income)**



At the State Level, Teachers' Views on Achievement and Preparedness Vary Widely, Largely Aligned with the Nation's Report Card

There is significant diversity among teachers at the state level across the three measures of student academic achievement and preparedness indicated above. Averages at the high end of the response range for student preparedness for on-grade-level work and for overall student academic achievement are more than double the average response rates at the low end of each range. There is less diversity around the percentage of students who teachers think could leave high school ready to succeed in college, but the range is still wide enough to be significant.

When considering the high and low ends of each of these three measures of achievement and preparedness, the differences become even more clear.

“Regardless of how the students come in, it’s our job to pick up and do the best that we can.”
—MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“You can be a good teacher no matter where you teach. You can reach kids no matter where they come from.”
—HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“I visited a nearby university, and the professors told me half of the students who take Freshman Comp (which is a required class) fail it and have to take it again.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

Teachers’ Views on Student Achievement and Preparedness (by state)

	Strongly agree that “In general, students enter my classroom prepared for on-grade-level work.”	Rate student academic achievement at school as “excellent”	Percentage of current students teachers believe could leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2- or 4-year college
HIGH END	IA MA ND NH NJ PA Average: 23%	KS MN MT ND NH SD Average: 38%	MA ND NJ SD VT Average: 76.2%
LOW END	AK DE HI MS NC NM Average: 9%	AK DE HI NV WV Average: 15%	AK HI LA NV WV Average: 61.9%
	Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement?	Q. Overall, how would you rate student academic achievement at your school?	Q. In your view, what percentage of the students currently in your classes could leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2- or 4-year college?
<i>NOTE: The states with the five highest and five lowest numbers are shown in alphabetical order. In some cases, there are more than five states listed because responses from several states were tied.</i>			

At the state level, teachers’ perceptions of their students’ academic achievement align with the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores for math and reading at the fourth- and eighth-grade levels. The states that receive the highest ratings according to the perceptions of teachers within those states tend to have higher-than-average NAEP scores. Conversely, those that receive low ratings among teachers tend to be at the lower end of NAEP scores.⁵

⁵ Additional state-level views on student achievement can be found in Appendix B.

Teachers Who Teach Exclusively 11th and 12th Grade Students Report Higher Levels of Achievement and Preparedness among Those Students

An interesting dynamic occurs during high school in terms of teachers' views on achievement and preparedness; ratings on both factors increase among those teachers who teach only 11th and/or 12th grade, versus those who teach only 9th and/or 10th grade.

- Half of exclusively 9th–10th-grade teachers (49%) report that students enter their classroom prepared for on-grade-level work. This is higher among exclusively 11th–12th-grade teachers, at 60%.
- One-third of exclusively 9th–10th-grade teachers (32%) say that at least three-quarters of their students could leave high school prepared to succeed in college. This rises to nearly half (45%) of exclusively 11th–12th-grade teachers.

While it is important to note that teachers who teach only 11th- and 12th-grade students are more likely to be veteran teachers and teach subjects that typically include more elective coursework, it is likely that this trend is also impacted by lower-performing students dropping out of high school before the 11th grade.

“Our student population takes a massive dip between ninth and eleventh grades, and then it levels. If I’m 16, and there’s no way I’m going to college when I graduate high school, what’s going to keep me in college-preparatory coursework for the next two years?”
— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“If we are going to compete as a nation
we should be learning as a nation.”

— *High School Teacher*

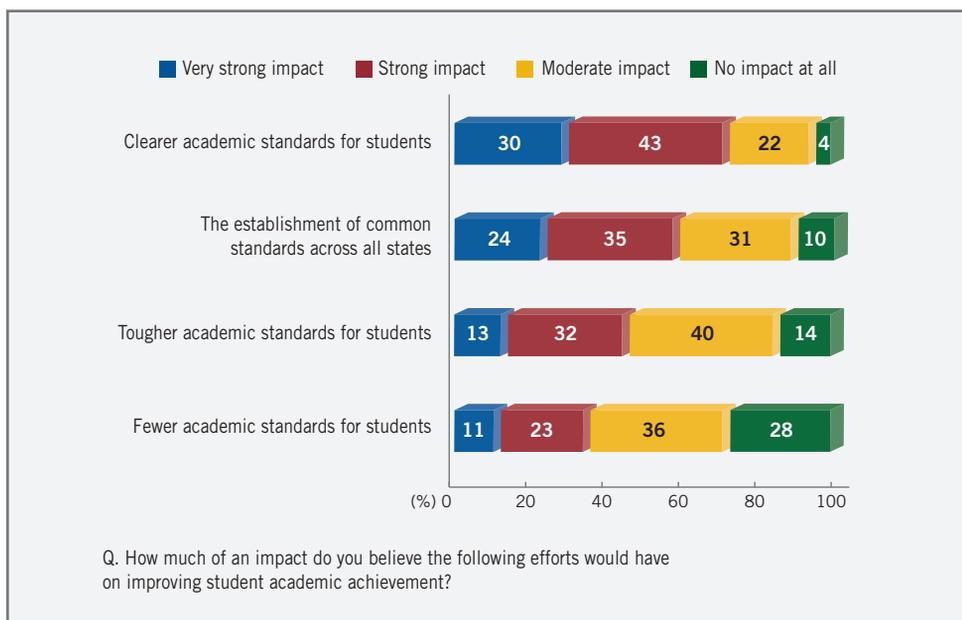
SOLUTION 1: Establish Clear Standards, Common Across States

Teachers recognize the role of academic standards⁶ in improving student academic achievement and helping students prepare for college, careers and life in the 21st Century. There is strong support among teachers for making standards clearer than they currently are and many say that common standards across states would have a strong impact on improving student academic achievement. Additionally, there is support for tougher standards, particularly among high school teachers.

Teachers Value the Role Academic Standards Can Play in Improving Achievement

There is broad acceptance among teachers of the impact academic standards can have on improving student academic achievement. A vast majority say that having clearer academic standards (95%), establishing common standards across states (90%) and having tougher academic standards (85%) would make at least a moderate impact on improving academic achievement:

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



⁶ Academic standards set forth educational goals in terms of what students should know and what skills they should have in order to succeed in school and beyond. Current standards vary from state to state.

“We owe students a consistency across their education.”
— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“Standards are about equity and expectation.”
— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“Students need to have high standards and they need to know what those standards are. They need to know what they will be held accountable for.”
— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

“Nationalized education standards would provide a level playing field for all teachers and learners. Common assessments and collaboration on a professional level would blossom because the goals would be clear to everyone.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

59% of teachers think standards common across states would have a strong or very strong impact on improving student achievement.

52% say the same of common assessments across states.

Teachers are less inclined (although it is still a majority) to favor fewer standards, with 71% of teachers saying that fewer academic standards would make a moderate or greater impact on improving academic performance and 28% saying it would make no impact at all. In conversations, teachers express concern that “fewer standards” might mean a “less rigorous” or “less comprehensive” curriculum.

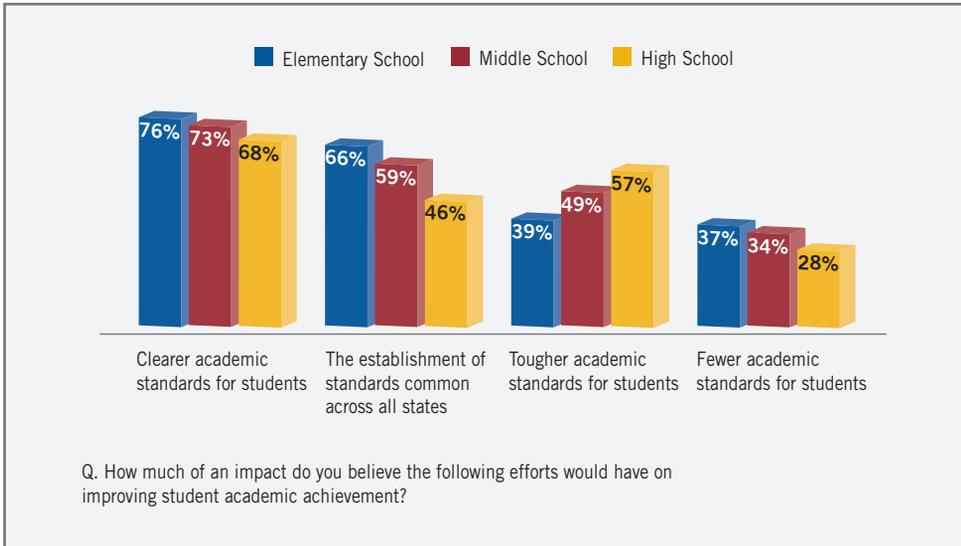
Note that when the more stringent measure of “very strong” or “strong” impact on improving academic achievement is considered, nearly 3 in 4 teachers (74%) favor clearer standards and about 6 in 10 (60%) favor standards common across states. Tougher standards drops to just under half of all teachers (45%) while fewer standards drops to 1 in 3 (34%). In step with 59% of teachers believing that common standards across states would strongly impact achievement, 52% of teachers think the same of common assessments across states.

Teachers’ Views on Standards Shift as Students Progress in Grade Level

As the grade level they teach increases, teachers are more likely to say tougher standards would improve student achievement and less likely to say that common standards would do the same.

Specifically, 57% of high school teachers say tougher academic standards would make a strong/very strong impact on improving student achievement—this is about 20% higher than the percentage of elementary school teachers who say the same. However, high school teachers are significantly less likely (46% compared to 66% of elementary school teachers and 59% of middle school teachers) to say that establishing common standards across states would improve achievement.

Teachers' Views on Changes to Standards as Having a Very Strong/Strong Impact on Improving Academic Achievement (by grade taught)



In conversations, high school teachers are keenly aware of the burden of preparing students for postsecondary education. Some think that having students exposed to tougher standards throughout elementary and secondary school would result in students being better prepared for the next level of their education.

“I’m not really sure about common standards...I think it’s important for communities to decide for themselves what their kids learn.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“You have to have flexibility so that when a teachable moment comes up, you don’t feel guilty about taking the time. I felt guilty every time I talked about the presidential election because my students were not being tested on it. It’s not in the curriculum.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“My first eight years of teaching, there were no state standards. Standards have given me a lot of direction, but to be honest, it was more fun to teach without standards.”
 — MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

Teachers’ Views on Their Own State Standards Vary

The number of and clarity of current state standards is problematic for many teachers. Fifty percent say their states have too many standards and 54% say their state’s standards are not clear enough. While both of these measures are consistent across grades taught, they are not consistent across states, particularly with regard to the number of state standards.

This disparity might help to explain the broad desire of teachers nationwide for common standards that might mitigate the vast inter-state differences in clarity, number and rigor of state standards.

Teachers’ Views on Own State’s Standards

	Think their state has too many standards		Agree with statement: “My state’s standards are not clear enough.”		Think their state’s standards are too low	
HIGH END	CA HI IN KY MI OH	Average: 63%	HI KY ME MT NM	Average: 67%	AK AZ ID NV TN	Average: 25%
LOW END	AL IA MS MT ND UT	Average: 31%	CA KS MD VA VT	Average: 44%	AR MI CA MN DE MO HI RI IN SC	Average: 7%
	Q. Do you think your state has too many standards, the right amount of standards or too few standards?		Q. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: “My state’s standards are not clear enough”?		Q. Do you think your state’s standards are too high, about right or too low?	
	NOTE: The states with the five highest and five lowest numbers are shown in alphabetical order. In some cases, there are more than five states listed because responses from several states were tied.					

Each state has a different “starting place” when it comes to the type, volume and clarity of the standards they already have. When considering teachers’ views on standard reforms at the state level, teachers across states differ on the degree to which they believe different kinds of reforms would improve student academic achievement.⁷

Teachers’ Views on Changes to Standards as Having a Very Strong/Strong Impact on Improving Academic Achievement (by state)

	Clearer academic standards		Common standards across all states		Tougher academic standards		Fewer academic standards	
HIGH END	FL	Average: 82%	FL	Average: 73%	KY	Average: 55%	CA	Average: 44%
	GA		GA		MD		GA	
	KY		KY		MS		HI	
	MS		MS		NE		KY	
	NM		SC		WV		SC	
	WY						WV	
LOW END	AK	Average: 67%	IA	Average: 47%	CA	Average: 37%	IA	Average: 27%
	CA		ME		HI		ID	
	IN		MT		IN		IL	
	ND		NE		OH		ME	
	PA		VT		VT		MT	
	SD		WI		WA		OK	
	VA						RI	
	VT							
<p>Q. How much of an impact do you believe the following efforts would have on improving student academic achievement?</p> <p><i>NOTE: The states with the five highest and five lowest numbers are shown in alphabetical order. In some cases, there are more than five states listed because responses from several states were tied.</i></p>								

“There are so many state standards that you can’t possibly get students to mastery in any topic because you are so rushed to get to all the standards. We are trying to dabble in everything instead of concentrating.”
— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

⁷ Additional state-level views on standards can be found in Appendices C & D.

“Where are the standards coming from? If we’re going to move toward common standards then we need people with real classroom expertise to create them.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“Shrink the standards. It’s ridiculous.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“We’re teaching standards and we should be teaching students.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

SPOTLIGHT ON: Proponents of “Clearer, Common, Higher Standards”

With standards so central to the conversation around education reform, it is critical to include the teacher voice on this important issue. Since teachers’ top three most supported efforts regarding standards include creating clearer, common and higher (or tougher) standards, we examined the 27% of teachers who say that all three of these categories would have a strong or very strong impact on improving student academic achievement (“Proponents”). These teachers were compared to the 12% of teachers who say all three would have “moderate” or “no impact at all” in improving student achievement (“Non-proponents”).

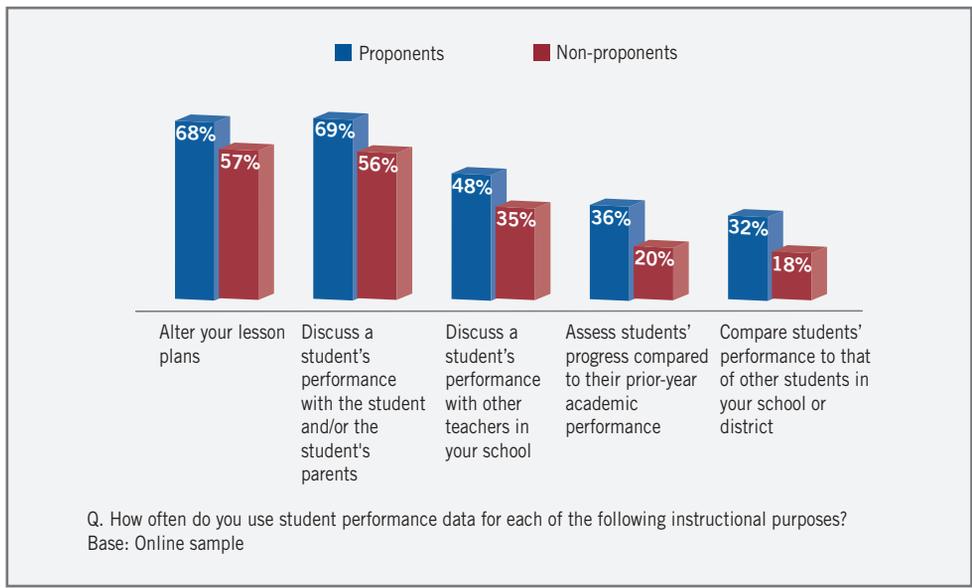
Proponents and Non-proponents of clearer, common, higher standards generally do not differ by the grades they teach or the level of their current students’ academic achievement. Nor do they differ according to the length of time they have been teaching.

Proponents of clearer, common, higher standards differ from Non-proponents in several key ways: they are more likely to embrace the use of technology in the classroom and they are far more likely to use student performance data in a variety of ways to improve student instruction.

Specifically:

- Proponents of clearer, common and higher standards are more likely than are Non-proponents to state that up-to-date information-based technology that is well integrated into the classroom has a strong/very strong impact on improving student academic achievement (90% vs. 55%).
- Proponents of clearer, common and higher standards are more likely than are Non-proponents to use student performance data very often to adjust their teaching.

**Teachers Who Use Student Performance Data for Various Instructional Purposes Very Often
(by support for clearer, higher and common standards)**



Proponents also have different opinions on their own state's standards and are more likely than Non-proponents to think that statewide testing is of great importance in measuring student achievement.

Specifically:

- Proponents are more likely to say their own state's standards are too low (19% vs. 7%), and that their state's standards are not clear enough (54% vs. 48%). Interestingly, they are less likely to say that their state has too many standards (43% vs. 55%).
- Proponents see statewide testing as more relevant in measuring student achievement than do Non-proponents. Even among Proponents, however, only 39% (vs. 15% of Non-proponents) say that state-required tests are absolutely essential/very important in measuring student academic achievement.

“Every other developed nation has an idea of what their students should look like —good or bad, at least they have a vision. We don’t have a vision for students; we want them to be better, but we don’t know what ‘better’ is.”
— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“Make standards few, but make them really rigorous.”
— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“Give them standardized tests, but not all the time.
Their lives shouldn’t depend on it and neither should ours.”
— *Middle School Teacher*

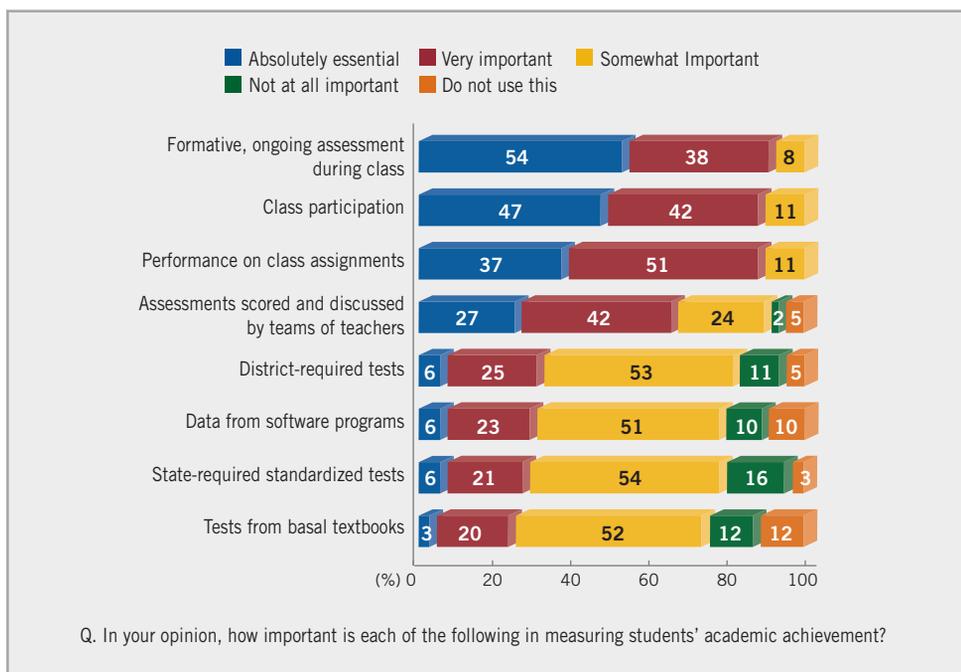
SOLUTION 2: Use Multiple Measures to Evaluate Student Performance

While teachers value the role standards play in improving academic achievement, they are very clear that standardized tests should not be the sole measure of student achievement. Rather, they say assessment should be driven by classroom experiences including formative, ongoing assessments during class, performance on class assignments and class participation. Having clear measures of student achievement is critical to teachers; they rely on student performance data to innovate and differentiate instruction in a variety of ways.

Teachers Say that Ongoing Assessment Is the Most Important Measure of Student Achievement

Teachers indicate that formative, ongoing assessments during class, along with class participation and performance on class assignments, are the most important measures of student achievement. Assessments that are scored and discussed by teams of teachers are seen as being less important—but are still viewed as far more important than state- or district-required tests.

Teachers' Views on Importance of Student Performance Measures



“District-required tests help. They make teachers accountable.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“I like benchmark testing at the beginning, middle and end of the year. The results are something concrete to show parents.”

— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

As is the case with common standards across states, elementary school teachers are most likely to see common assessments as contributing to student achievement: **58%** of elementary teachers say having common assessments across states would make a strong or very strong impact in improving academic achievement vs. **50%** of middle school and only **38%** of high school teachers.

“Not all my students have to get A’s and B’s but if I see improvement from the first to the third test, that makes me feel successful. I celebrate any improvement that my students make.”
— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“I look at how my students have improved over the course of the year — not at what level they are at.”
— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

Teachers see value in standardized tests — there are only 16% and 11% who say state- and district-required tests, respectively, are “not at all important” in measuring student academic achievement. They also see a role for common assessments across states. As previously noted, 52% think common assessments across states would make a strong or very strong impact on improving academic achievement.

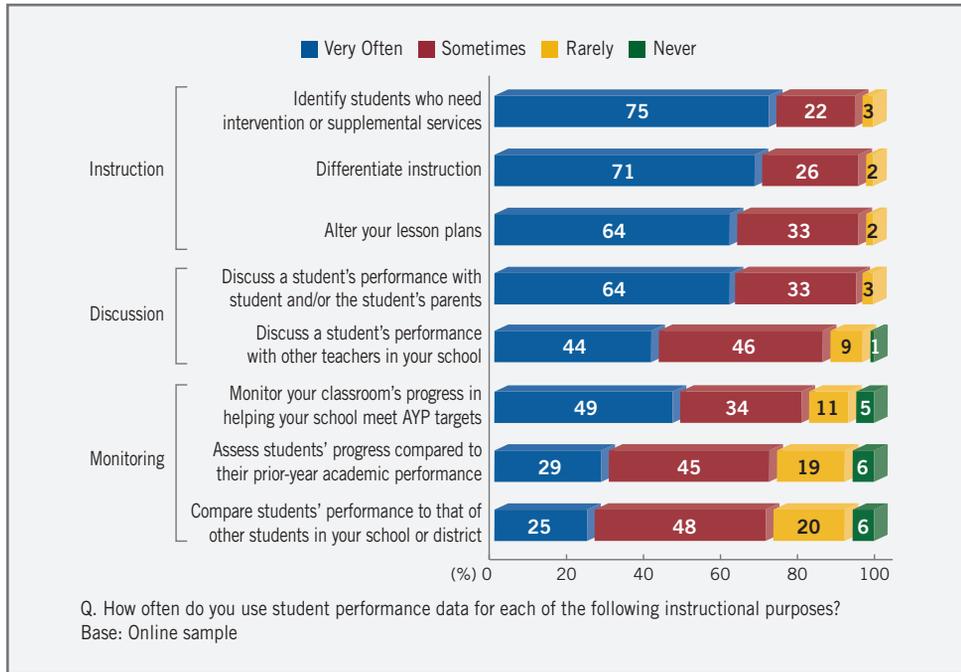
Teachers’ Views on Standardized Tests as Absolutely Essential/Very Important in Measuring Academic Achievement (by state)

	District-required standardized tests		State-required standardized tests	
HIGH END	LA MO MS TX WY	Average: 39%	GA TN HI TX KY LA MS	Average: 35%
LOW END	AK HI ME NV WV	Average: 19%	AK PA CO WV DE WY IN ME	Average: 19%
<p>Q. In your opinion, how important is each of the following in measuring students’ academic achievement? NOTE: The states with the five highest and five lowest numbers are shown in alphabetical order. In some cases, there are more than five states listed because responses from several states were tied.</p>				

Teachers Rely on Student Performance Data for Instruction

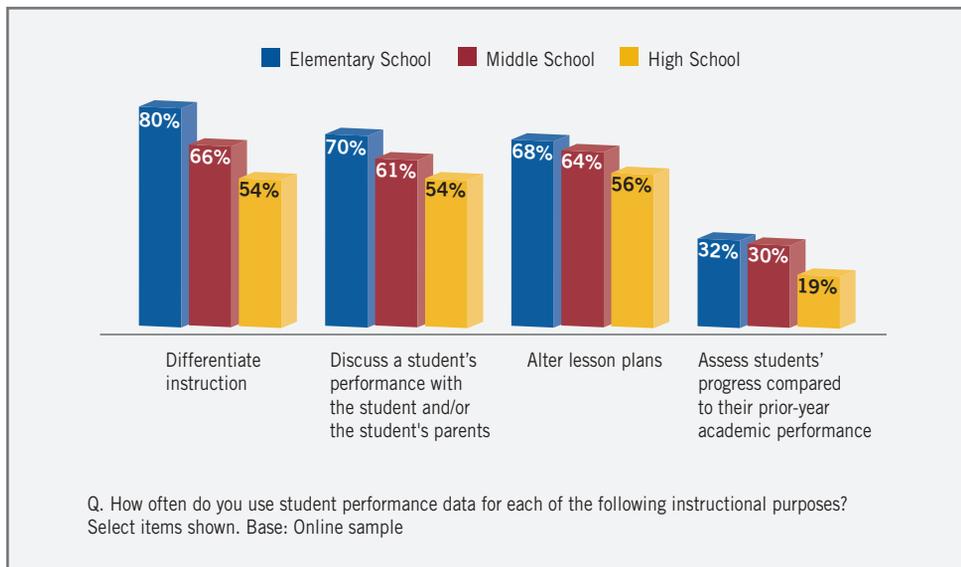
Teachers use performance data for: **Instruction**, which can include adjusting instruction on a class-wide or individual level, or pinpointing which students need intervention; as a platform for **Discussion** about student performance with students and parents and when collaborating with other teachers; and, to a much lesser extent, for **Monitoring** student and classroom progress.

Teachers' Frequency of Use of Student Performance Data



Overall, elementary and middle school teachers use student performance data to a much greater degree than do high school teachers. Still, over half of high school teachers use performance data to alter lesson plans, differentiate instruction and discuss student performance with students and/or their parents.

Teachers Who Use Student Performance Data Very Often (by grade taught)



“If you can barely convince a teacher that a test is valuable, it’s hopeless trying to convince a 16-year-old.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“If you don’t discuss students’ performance with them, they don’t take ownership and they don’t care. If you don’t tell students how they’re doing, how do they improve?”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

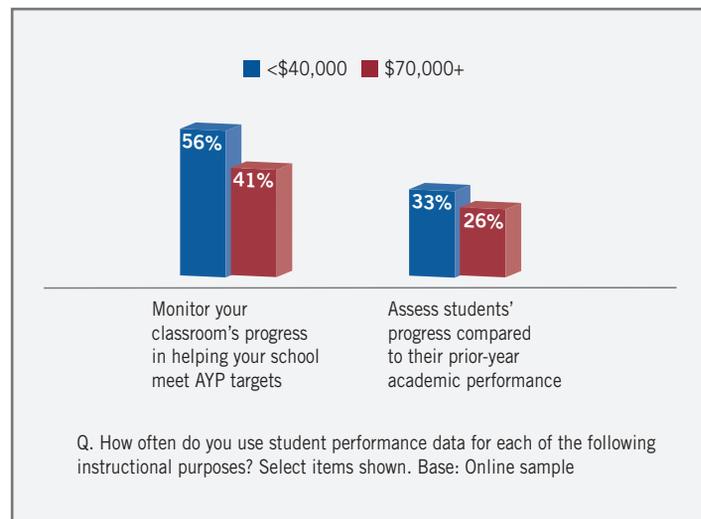
“In my opinion, the one change that would most improve student achievement in American schools would be to use student data driven instruction to meet the needs of the student so that no child is left behind.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

Teachers in Low-Income Schools Are More Likely to Use Student Performance Data for Select Purposes

Teachers in low-income schools are more likely than their counterparts in high-income schools to use student performance data to monitor their classroom’s progress in helping their school meet their Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) targets⁸ and to assess a student’s progress compared to the student’s prior-year academic performance.

Teachers Who Use Student Performance Data for Various Instructional Purposes Very Often (by school’s median household income)



⁸ Adequate Yearly Progress is the annual improvement each school must achieve under No Child Left Behind to bring all students in schools to states' proficient or advanced levels of achievement.

SPOTLIGHT ON: Heavy Users of Student Performance Data

In the past decade, data-driven instruction has become a critical component to the school-reform debate at both the national and local levels. Teachers have always relied on student performance data for a wide range of instructional purposes, but given the increase in good, reliable educational data in recent years, we considered those teachers who are the heaviest users of student performance data.

To do this, we constructed a score to reflect the degree to which teachers use performance data across the eight activities asked about in this study. Those that scored in the top quartile (24%) are considered “heavy users.” The remaining 76% of teachers were split into “moderate” (38%) and “light” (38%) user groups. In this analysis, we compare Heavy Users to Light Users.

Heavy Users of performance data are more likely than are Light Users to be elementary school teachers (73% vs. 45%) and they are more likely to teach in lower-income schools (28% vs. 23%). At the high school level, they are more likely to teach English Language Arts/Reading (34% of High Users vs. only 18% of Light Users). They are also more likely to have English Language Learners in their class (70% vs. 61%). There is no difference in years of teaching experience between these two groups.

While it should absolutely be expected that teachers in the Heavy Users of student performance data group use student data more frequently and for more purposes than do Light Users, the magnitude of these differences is dramatic.

“Benchmark tests are meant to inform your instruction so that you know where the child is and you know where to bring them next. The tests are not meant as punishment.”

— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

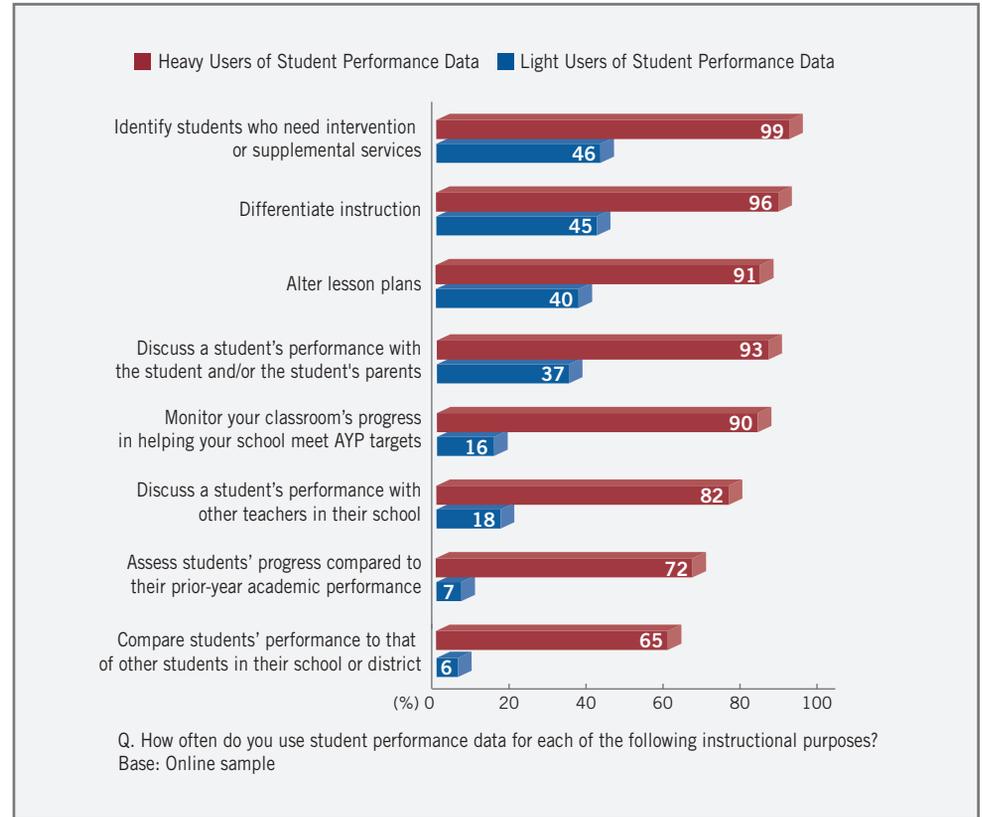
“It’s another full-time job to create, gather, analyze and input data, and then discuss it with colleagues, kids and parents. Testing has taken so much time that I’m no longer instructing.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“Nobody wants one test to be the stamp on a child for the whole next year. But that’s the reality.”
 — ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

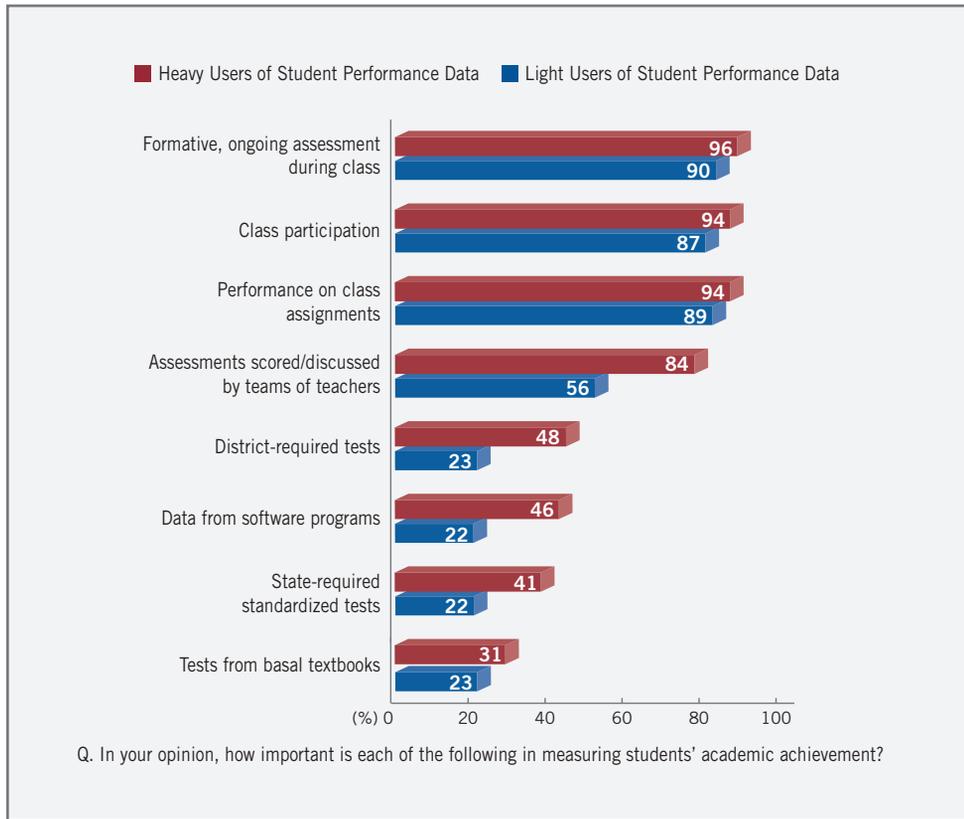
“There’s a big push to differentiate instruction, but the tests don’t differentiate. If we’re being asked to present our information in a different way, then the state’s going to have to present its tests in a different way.”
 — MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

Teachers Who Use Student Performance Data for Various Instructional Purposes Very Often (by frequency of use)



Finally, Heavy Users of student performance data are more likely than are Light Users to feel that all types of student performance measurements are very important or absolutely essential in measuring academic achievement. The most dramatic differences between Heavy and Light Users are seen in teachers’ views on the importance of district and state standardized tests in measuring academic achievement. Note, however, that even among Heavy and Light Users of student performance data, only 48% and 41%, respectively, believe these are absolutely essential or very important in measuring academic achievement.

Teachers' Views on Measures of Student Academic Achievement as Absolutely Essential/Very Important (by frequency of use of student performance data)



“Technology saves teachers time on gathering data. If I have to go through 27 sets of math tests, that’s a waste of my teaching time. If there is technology that can do that for me, then I can use that time to develop lessons and improve instruction.”
 — MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“Students are different learners than they were ten years ago.
Education is what needs to change.
Students today can’t learn the same way we did.”
— *Elementary School Teacher*

SOLUTION 3:

Innovate to Reach Today's Students

Nearly all teachers say learning experiences that provide students with the skills they need for today's world are absolutely essential or very important in impacting student achievement. Providing innovative experiences that develop and sharpen relevant skills and careers can only be accomplished through instruction that is engaging and has real-world relevance—both in actuality and in students' point of view. Differentiation plays a key role in this, as does the use of technology and non-textbook classroom materials.

Innovation in the Classroom Helps Teachers Meet a Wide Range of Student Interests and Achievement Levels

Teachers know that if students are unable to see the “real world” importance in a lesson, the instruction falls flat. Fully 94% of teachers across all grade levels say learning experiences that provide students with 21st Century skills are absolutely essential (54%) or very important (40%) in impacting achievement.

In conversation, teachers identify two key ways of providing these kinds of relevant experiences: 1) differentiate assignments to, in effect, meet students “where they are” in terms of both personal interest and individual ability; and 2) use technology and other materials to keep students engaged while teaching them the material they need to learn in order to advance academically. These ideas were clearly reinforced by the survey findings.

“In this day and age if you're not tech-savvy, you can't compete in the global marketplace at all.”

**— HIGH SCHOOL
TEACHER**

“We need a motivating curriculum that enhances a student's preparedness for life.”

**— MIDDLE SCHOOL
TEACHER**

“We need materials that help differentiate instruction so all students can be taught at their individual levels of achievement.”

— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

“Recognize that kids are individuals.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

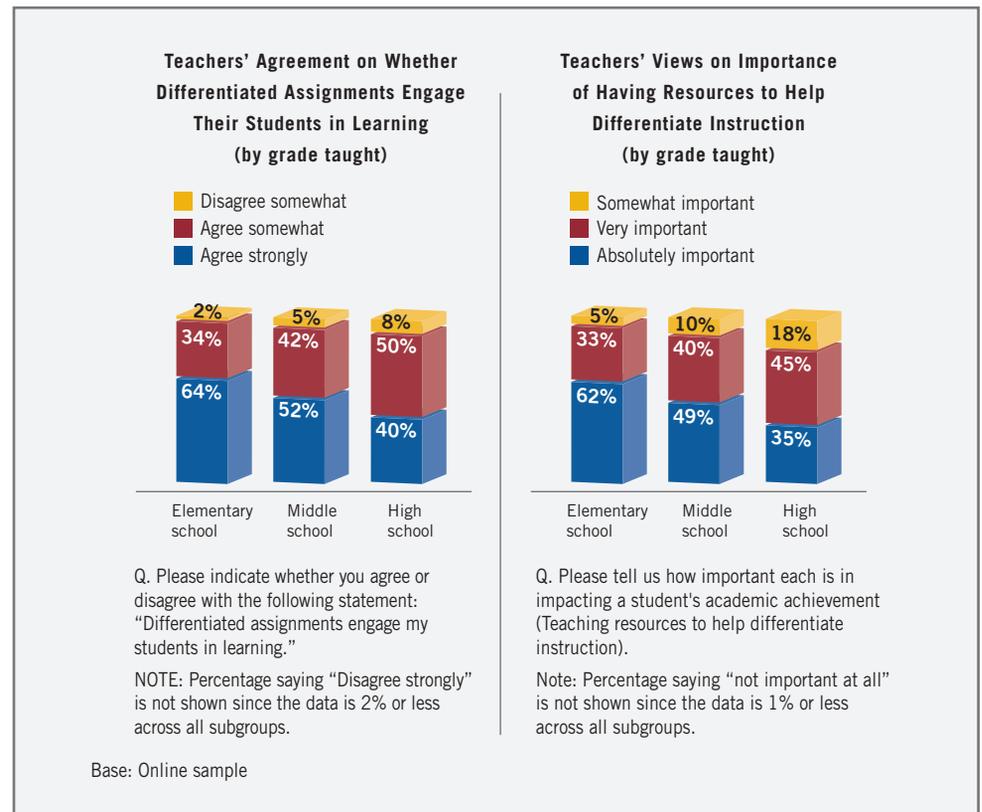
“We’re losing kids because we don’t differentiate in high school.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

81% of teachers say that up-to-date information-based technology that is well integrated into the classroom is absolutely essential (**38%**) or very important (**43%**) in impacting student achievement.

Teachers Say Differentiation Supports Engagement and Academic Achievement

Nearly all (95%) teachers think that using differentiated assignments engages their students in learning (56% strongly agree with this statement) and 90% say teaching resources to help differentiate instruction are absolutely essential (53%) or very important (37%) in impacting achievement. These data vary fairly significantly by grade taught, which may be due to the fact that teachers in upper grades do not have as great a need to differentiate for individual students since many high schools level their classes by student academic achievement to some degree.

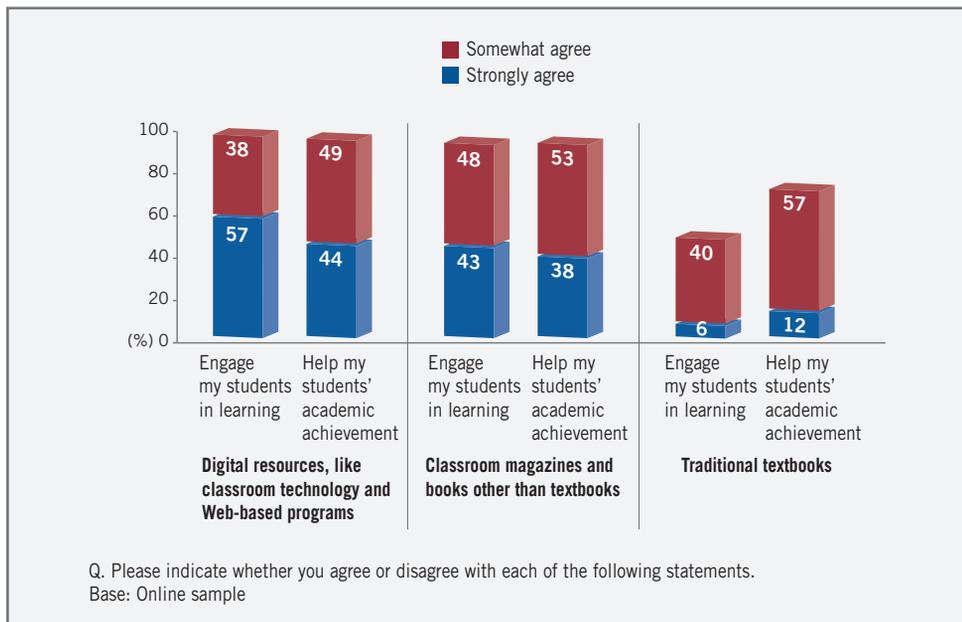


Teachers Acknowledge the Limitations of Traditional Textbooks for Today's Students

In conversations with teachers, they consistently say that having technology in the classroom is one of the keys to engaging today's digital natives and preparing them for success in the today's global marketplace. When asked about the value of more traditional resources, few teachers think that traditional textbooks can do the same, with only 12% strongly agreeing that textbooks help students' academic achievement and only 6% saying they strongly agree that textbooks engage their students in learning.

Both digital and non-digital resources—like classroom magazines and books other than textbooks—receive greater support from teachers. Both of these categories are viewed as far more powerful modes of engagement and far more effective ways to help academic achievement than are traditional textbooks.

Teachers' Views on the Impact of Classroom Resources on Student Achievement and Engagement



In conversations, teachers say that textbooks do not call on critical thinking and higher-level reasoning, instead relying on rote memorization and fact recall. They describe supplementing their textbooks with project-based instruction that requires additional resources and encourages students to make judgments and show evidence of their learning.

“My directive is to use the textbook every day and I refuse. A textbook is so easy: ‘Turn to page 57, answer the questions at the end.’ Kids are bored, but they like it because it’s easy. It doesn’t matter if they understand the material, because the answer is right there.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“I work in an affluent district and my science curriculum is from 1995.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“In my first year of teaching, I was using the same textbook I used when I was in middle school.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“Everybody’s talking about technology, but by the time students graduate, things will look different. Students need to have the baseline skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, understanding and communicating.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

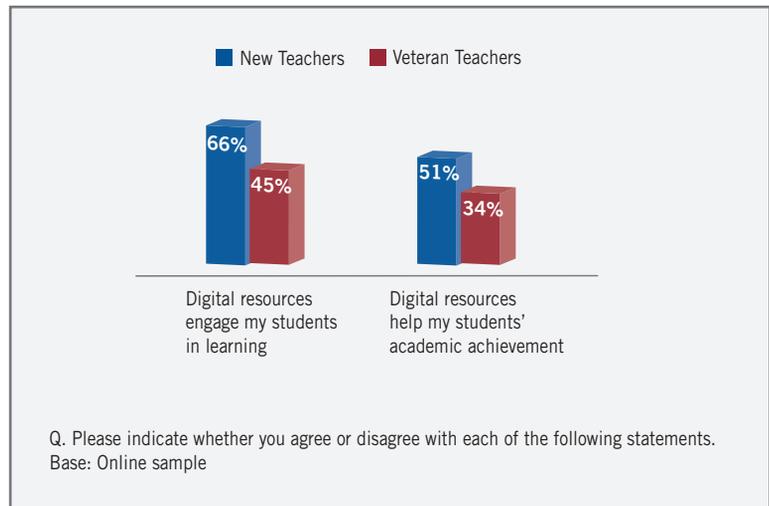
New Teachers Are More Likely to Say Technology Assists in Engagement and Academic Achievement

New teachers⁹ have a greater affinity toward technology for both engagement and academic support when compared to veteran teachers.¹⁰ Age is likely a factor (the average age of new and veteran teachers is 32.2 and 54.1 years, respectively), since younger teachers have grown up in the digital era and been educated with the aid of technology. While the vast majority of all teachers recognize the important role digital resources play in today’s classrooms—new teachers favor technology to a greater degree.

Specifically:

- New teachers are more likely than veteran teachers to strongly agree that digital resources engage their students in learning and that digital resources help their students’ academic achievement.
- New teachers are also more likely than veteran teachers to say that having up-to-date information-based technology that is well integrated into the classroom is “absolutely essential” in impacting students’ academic achievement (44% vs. 35%).

Teachers’ Views on Digital Resources, Strongly Agree to Statements (by experience)



⁹ “New teachers” are defined as those with three or fewer years of experience.

¹⁰ “Veteran teachers” are defined as those with more than 20 years of experience.

SPOTLIGHT ON:

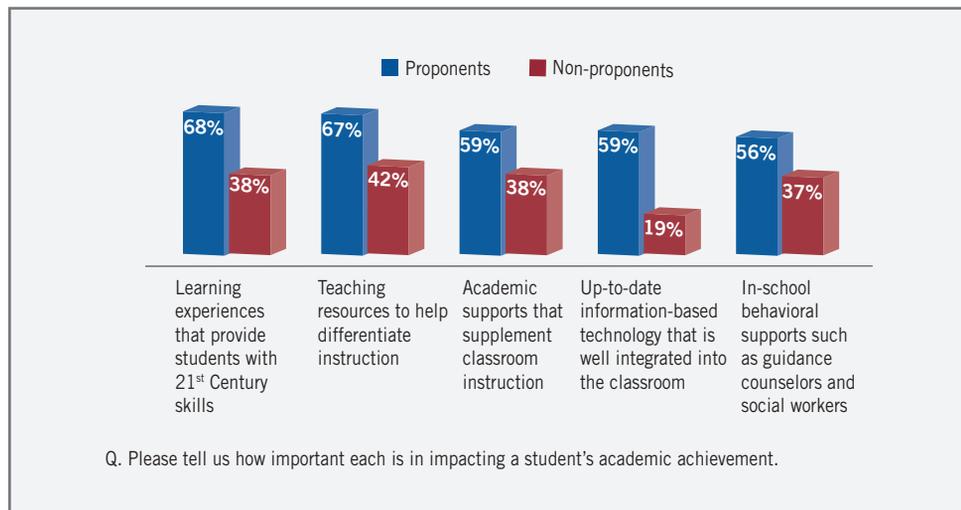
Teachers Who Strongly Favor Digital Resources for Engagement and Academic Achievement

Since the use of digital resources is an activity that has broad teacher appeal and broad student application, *Primary Sources* considered the characteristics of those teachers who say digital resources are important for both engagement and academic achievement. This analysis includes the 42% of teachers who strongly agree that “Digital resources engage my students in learning” and strongly agree that “Digital resources help my students’ academic achievement” (Proponents) and compares that group to the 41% who did not strongly agree to both of these statements (Non-proponents).¹¹

Proponents are more likely to be new rather than veteran teachers (25% vs. 17%). They also have a much stronger belief that students must be given opportunities to acquire 21st Century skills in the classroom (68% vs. 38%).

These teachers are not single-mindedly focused on technology, however. Instead, they seem to view technology as a key part of a well-rounded system of supports from all areas of the school.

Teachers’ Views on the Impact of Educational Resources as Absolutely Essential in Impacting Student Academic Achievement (by level of support for digital resources)



¹¹ Seventeen percent of teachers strongly agreed to one statement but not the other—this group was not considered in this analysis.

“My students have access to unbelievable technology and they can create all kinds of great work, but the substance is not always there. How much are they really engaging with the ideas?”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“I would never presume that technology would replace the knowledge that we bring to teaching. But man, it can be a real nice way to supplement it.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

Teachers who strongly favor digital resources for engagement and achievement are less likely to be high school teachers than are those teachers who do not strongly favor those resources (22% are high school teachers vs. 30% in the comparison group).

“This is the way to change schools—it isn’t about teacher pay;
it’s about helping teachers do their jobs
so that all students succeed.”

— *High School Teacher*

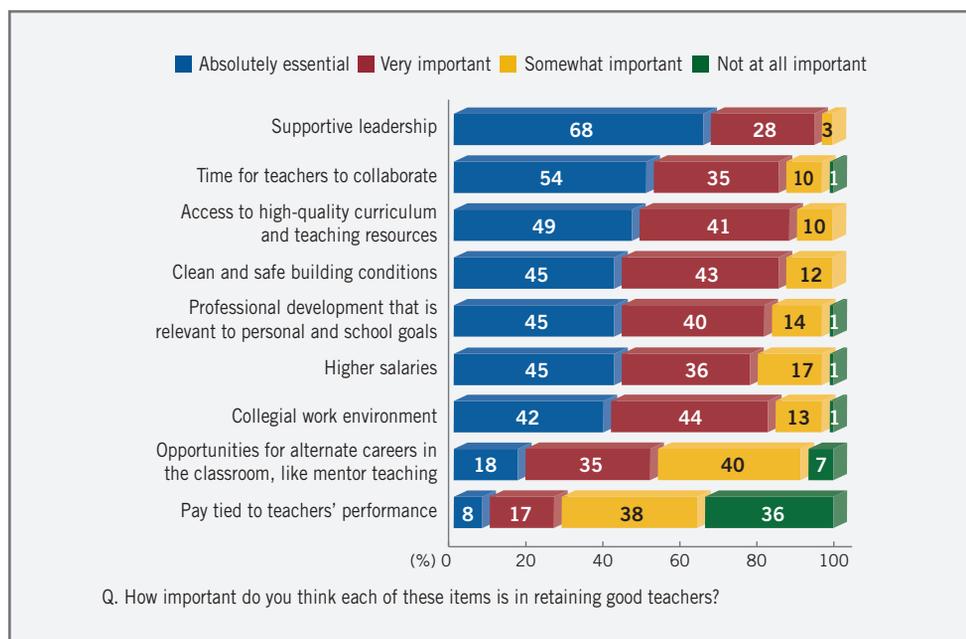
SOLUTION 4: Accurately Measure Teacher Performance and Provide Non-Monetary Rewards

In conversations with teachers, it is clear that the most satisfying part of their work is their time with students. As in any industry, overall job satisfaction is the result of multiple factors, and supportive leadership is the standout, top-ranked item contributing to teacher retention. Teachers say higher salaries, while important, are not as critical in retaining effective teachers as other, non-monetary rewards. Teachers say that the most accurate measures of their own performance are student engagement and student growth over the academic year.

Non-Monetary Rewards Top the List of Ways to Retain Effective Teachers

When asked about the things that are most important in retaining good teachers, supportive leadership, time for collaboration and a high-quality curriculum top the list, with supportive leadership by far the most important factor in teacher retention. Higher salaries fall squarely in the middle—important, but less so than non-monetary factors. Pay tied to teachers’ performance¹²—which will be discussed in greater detail within this section—is the lowest-ranked item, with 36% of teachers saying it is not at all important and 25% saying it is absolutely essential or very important in retaining good teachers.

Teachers’ Views on Factors Impacting Teacher Retention



¹² While the survey used the phrase “pay tied to teacher performance,” in conversations, teachers do not distinguish between “merit pay,” “performance pay” and “pay for performance.”

“Keep teaching your teachers.”

— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

“Teaching can be isolating because we’re with children all day—we all need to work with adults from time to time.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“Great teachers are leaving education and taking all their expertise with them. We need a better environment for collaboration to share what works and what doesn’t.”

— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

“On-going embedded professional development in an environment where teachers are valued and supported would have an enormous impact.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“There’s no career ladder to teaching. Status-wise, the only thing that differentiates a veteran teacher from a new teacher is pay.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

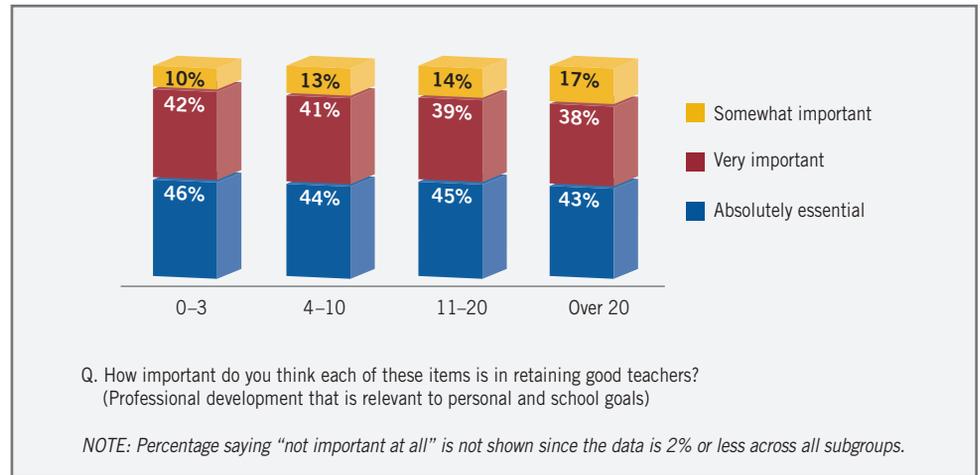
“I think teachers would be willing to consider pay for performance, but we don’t have any measures that accurately reflect how we’re doing with students.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

New and Veteran Teachers Value the Opportunity for Continuous Improvement

Teachers at all levels of experience value opportunities that promote professional learning and development. More than 4 in 10 teachers—regardless of the length of time they have been teaching—say it is “absolutely essential” to provide opportunities for relevant professional development in order to retain good teachers.

Teachers’ Views on the Importance of Professional Development in Retaining Good Teachers (by years teaching)



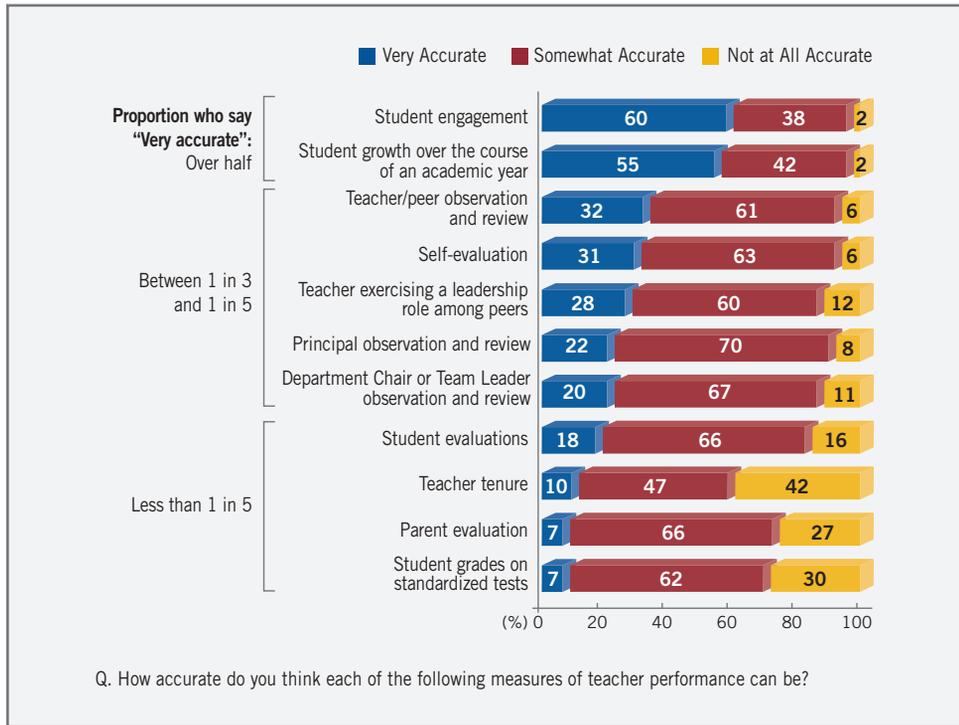
The desire for professional development may be linked to teachers’ desire for a larger recognition of teaching as a profession, and not merely a “job.” In conversations with teachers, they told us that they often feel as though the teaching profession is looked upon with a lack of respect, understanding and appreciation of its complexities and challenges.

Teachers Have Little Confidence in the Accuracy of Most Teacher Performance Measures

In conversations, teachers welcome performance assessment, including classroom visits, curricular observation and even peer and student review. They stress a desire for their performance to be based on factors they can impact directly—particularly student growth and student engagement—rather than on measures that fail to consider the realities of individual students in individual classrooms.

While current teacher performance measures heavily rely on principal and department-chair reviews, teachers indicate that more student-centered measures would better reflect teacher quality. Student engagement and student growth over the course of an academic year are the only measures deemed “very accurate” in measuring teacher performance by a majority of teachers.

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



Teachers at All Levels Are Skeptical of Tenure as a Measure of Teacher Performance

Only 10% of teachers say that teacher tenure is a “very accurate” measure of teacher performance, with 47% saying it is “somewhat accurate” and 42% saying that it is “not at all accurate.” Veteran teachers are more likely than new teachers to say that tenure is at least somewhat accurate. These results do not indicate teacher opposition to the tenure system, but rather skepticism that tenure is an accurate measure of teacher performance.

Teachers' Views on Degree of Accuracy of Tenure as a Measure of Teacher Performance (by years teaching)				
	0–3	4–10	11–20	Over 20 years
Very/somewhat accurate (NET)	55%	54%	57%	63%
Very accurate	9%	9%	10%	13%
Somewhat accurate	46%	45%	47%	50%
Not at all accurate	45%	46%	42%	36%

“Teachers should be measured by the growth of their students. ‘Where was the child when he entered my class and what did I help him achieve?’ That’s how I should be judged.”

— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

“Teachers must be held accountable whether or not they are tenured.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“I love tenure. I love that security.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“I would be all for getting rid of tenure because I know I’m a good teacher.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“You’re getting paid for test scores. What if you got a kid to talk who hasn’t talked for a year? Shouldn’t that get you merit pay?”

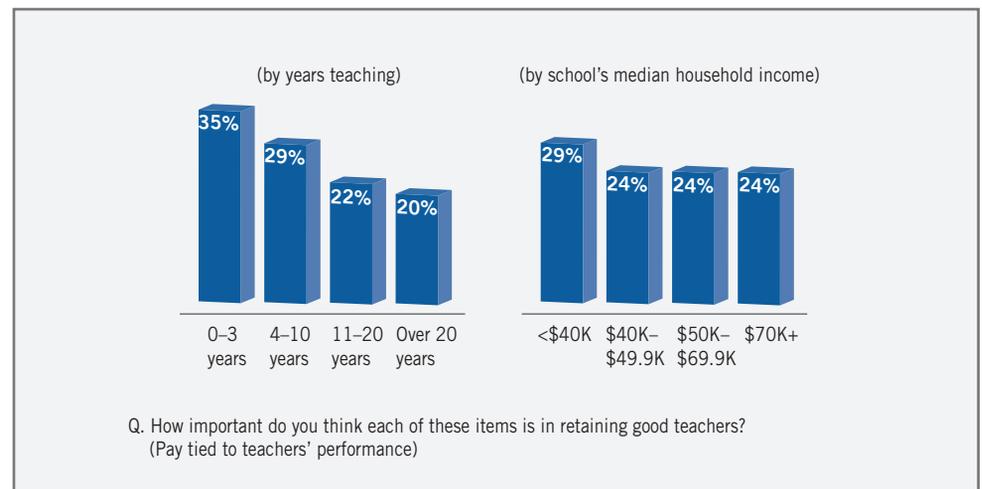
— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

Teachers’ Views on Monetary Compensation Vary

As noted in the chart on page 39 of this report, teachers are about three times as likely to say that higher salaries are absolutely essential or very important in retaining good teachers as they are to say the same of pay tied to performance (82% vs. 26%, respectively). Given teachers’ lack of confidence in most performance measurements, this is not surprising.

While teachers’ support of higher salaries does not vary significantly across the key dimensions of grade level taught, years of teaching experience or school median household income, views on pay for performance do vary across some subgroups, including years of teaching experience and, to a lesser extent, school income.

Teachers’ Views on Pay Tied to Performance as Absolutely Essential/Very Important in Retaining Good Teachers

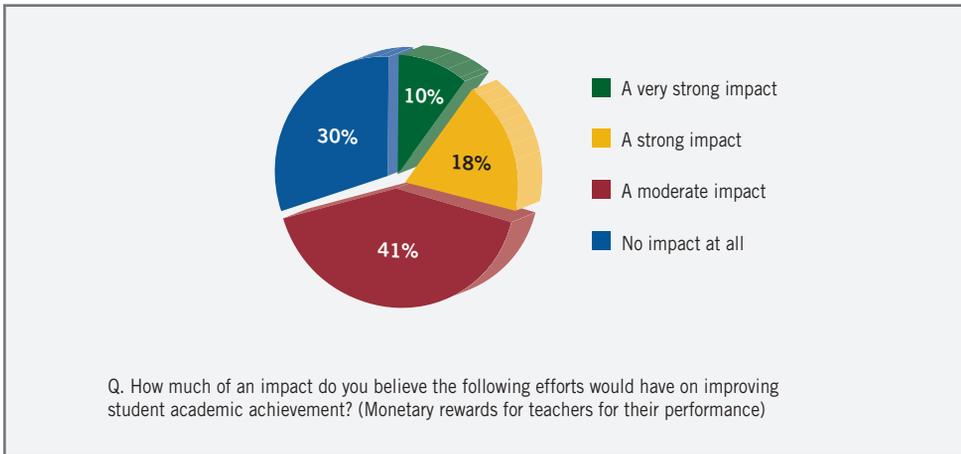


Teachers in charter schools are more likely than other teachers to say that **pay tied to teacher performance** is absolutely essential/very important in retaining good teachers **(36% vs. 25%)** and more likely to say **monetary rewards for teacher performance** would make a very strong/strong impact on improving academic achievement **(36% vs. 28%)**.

Note that veteran teachers are the least likely to think that pay tied to performance is either very important or absolutely essential in retaining good teachers. In conversations, teachers express concern that merit-based pay systems might discourage collaborative work, which they say positively impacts student achievement. Additionally, with collaboration being such an important factor in teachers’ job satisfaction, skepticism of pay for performance is understandable.

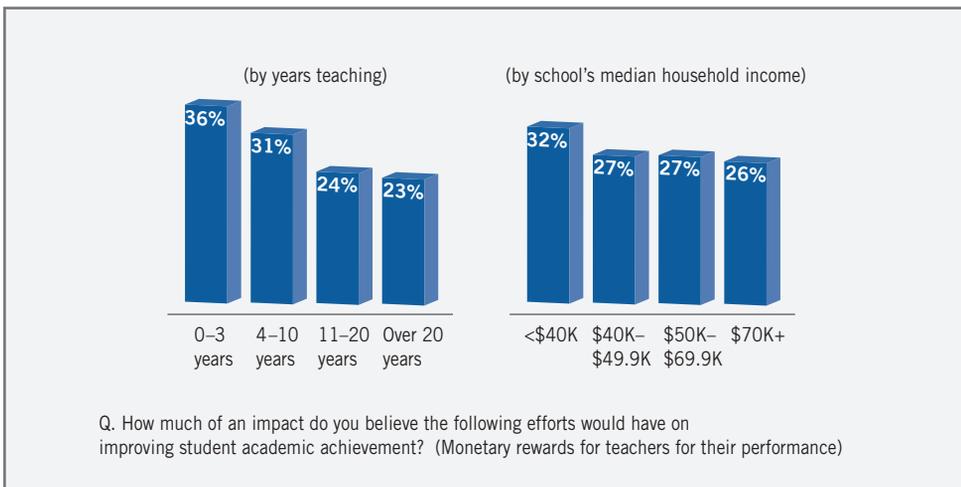
In *Primary Sources*, teachers also shared their views on the impact that monetary rewards for teacher performance would have on improving student achievement. In short, about as many teachers say this would make a very strong/strong impact (28%) on improving student achievement as do those who say this would make no impact at all (30%).

Teachers' Views on the Impact that Monetary Rewards for Teacher Performance Would Have on Improving Academic Achievement



The impact that monetary rewards would have on improving student academic achievement also varies by years teaching and by income. New teachers are more likely than are veteran teachers to say this would make a very strong/strong impact on improving academic achievement, which could be a result of veteran teachers' salaries being higher than those of their younger counterparts. To a lesser degree, teachers in schools with lower household incomes say monetary rewards would have a greater impact on academic achievement than do other teachers.

Teachers' Views on Monetary Rewards for Teacher Performance as Having a Very Strong/Strong Impact on Improving Academic Achievement



“Pay for performance demonstrates respect for the teacher.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“Pay tied to teacher performance does not work. It breeds competitiveness, jealousy, and negativity in teachers.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“I think we’re all a little bit afraid of merit pay.”

— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

“Merit pay would attract and retain more highly qualified individuals.

Effective teachers are the key to improving student achievement.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

State-Level Views on Monetary Rewards and Teacher Retention Vary

While teachers in all states rate supportive leadership, time for teacher collaboration and access to high-quality curriculum and teaching resources as among the most important factors needed to retain good teachers, measures related to monetary factors show wide variation. Even in the states that show the highest percentage of support for pay tied to teacher performance, however, only 40% of those teachers, on average, consider it absolutely essential or very important to retaining good teachers.¹³

Teachers’ Views on Monetary Rewards as Absolutely Essential/Very Important in Retaining Good Teachers (by state)

	Higher salaries		Pay tied to teachers’ performance	
HIGH END	AZ DE FL HI MD	Average: 89%	AZ DE LA MS NC SC	Average: 40%
LOW END	IN MI MT RI WI WY	Average: 69%	IA ID MN OR WA	Average: 13%
Q. How important do you think each of these items is in retaining good teachers?				
NOTE: The states with the five highest and five lowest numbers are shown in alphabetical order. In some cases, there are more than five states listed because responses from several states were tied.				

SPOTLIGHT ON:

Teachers Who Think Pay Tied to Teacher Performance Is Important in Retaining Effective Teachers

Given that pay for performance is such a widely discussed reform, we chose to look more closely at those teachers who are most likely to think that pay for performance would positively impact teacher retention. Specifically, we compared the 26% of teachers who said pay tied to teacher performance is “absolutely essential” or “very important” in retaining good teachers (Proponents) to the 36% who said it is “not at all important” (Non-proponents).

¹³ Additional state-level views on important factors in retaining teachers can be found in Appendix E.

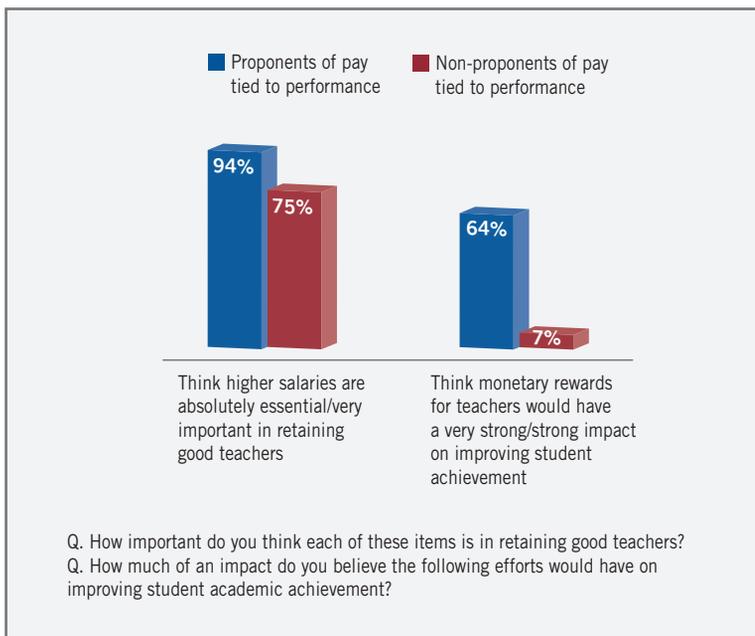
When compared to Non-proponents of pay for performance, Proponents are:

- More likely to be new teachers with 0–3 years of experience (22% vs. 12%)
- More likely to teach in communities with median household incomes under \$40,000 (28% vs. 23%)

Aside from these differences, Proponents and Non-proponents of pay for performance essentially value the same kinds of non-monetary rewards to ensure teacher retention and they say the same kinds of measurements are most accurate in measuring teacher performance. In terms of the latter, student engagement and growth over the course of the academic year are thought to be the most accurate measures of teacher performance among both groups. And while Proponents are significantly more likely than Non-proponents to say that student grades on standardized tests are accurate ways of measuring teacher performance, only 13% (vs. 4% of Non-proponents) believe these are very accurate measures of teacher performance.

Proponents are, not surprisingly, more likely to support other salary-related incentives.

Teachers' Views on Salaries and Monetary Rewards (by support for pay tied to performance)



“Paying teachers for performance seems undoable. The one thing that always makes an impact on education within a school is a spirit of collaboration — not competition — between teachers.”
— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“Academics are just a part of it—
we need to develop the whole child.”
— *Elementary School Teacher*

SOLUTION 5: Bridge School and Home to Raise Student Achievement

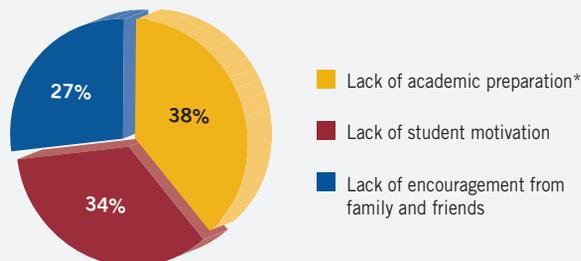
Teachers are keenly aware of the variety of factors, both in and out of school, impacting student achievement. From high-quality curriculum and instructional materials to a culture and community of support, teachers know what works to raise student achievement and build a sustainable culture of learning in America's schools.

Teachers Recognize Multiple Contributors to Students' Success

Nine in 10 teachers say that not all of their students could leave high school prepared to succeed in college. When asked to choose the one out of five possible reasons why, teachers across all grade levels are fairly evenly dispersed across three core components needed for success, which include both in-school and out-of-school elements:

- **Academic instruction**—promoting critical thinking, problem solving, reading and communication skills and coursework designed to prepare students for college;
- **A social support system**—including family and friends—that values and promotes learning; and
- **Student motivation**—a factor that teachers embrace as their responsibility and attempt to address at all teaching levels.

Single Most Likely Reason Teachers Say Some Students in Their Classes Won't Leave High School Prepared to Succeed in a 2- or 4-Year College



Q. Which one of the following do you believe is the most likely reason that some of the students in your classes won't leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2- or 4-year college?

Base: Say less than 100% of students currently in teachers' classes could leave high school prepared to succeed in a 2- or 4-year college.

*Includes three responses: Poor reading and communication skills (19%), lack of critical thinking/problem-solving skills (17%) and lack of participation in college preparatory coursework (2%).

“Motivation is the biggest thing—getting them to see the bigger picture and realizing it's attainable.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

“We should make time outside of the traditional school day for parents to be more able to come to school—especially the low-income families with parents who might be working three or four jobs. We should try to accommodate them so that they can see what's going on.”

— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

“One of my pains as a teacher is when I know there are a few students who just don’t get it. I can’t bring the curriculum level down too much, but I can see that they are lost. That’s when, as teachers, we have to be creative.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

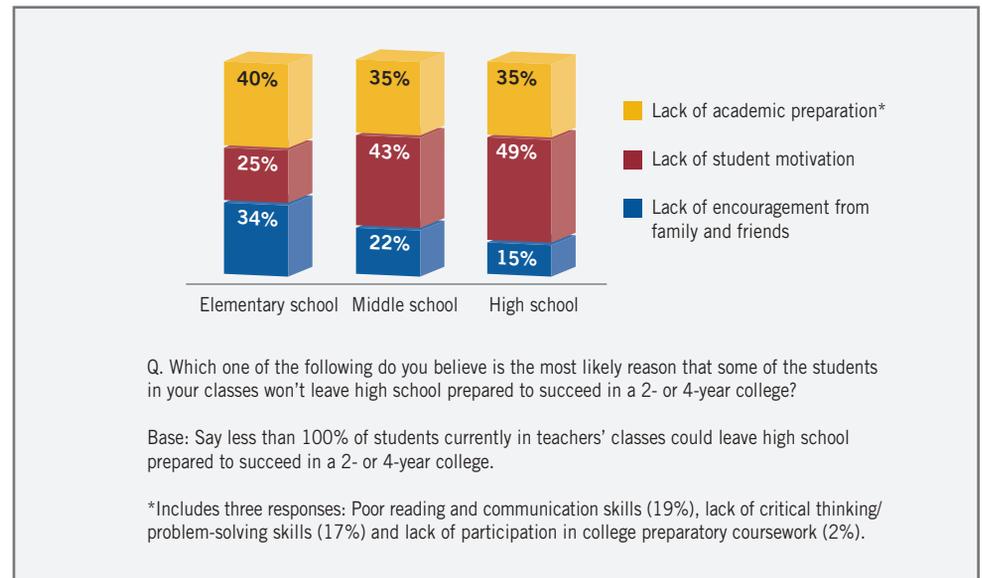
“The school should be a community center. The community needs to feel ownership of its school. Education cannot move forward without the support of those stakeholders.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

Barriers to Success Shift Across Grade and Income Levels

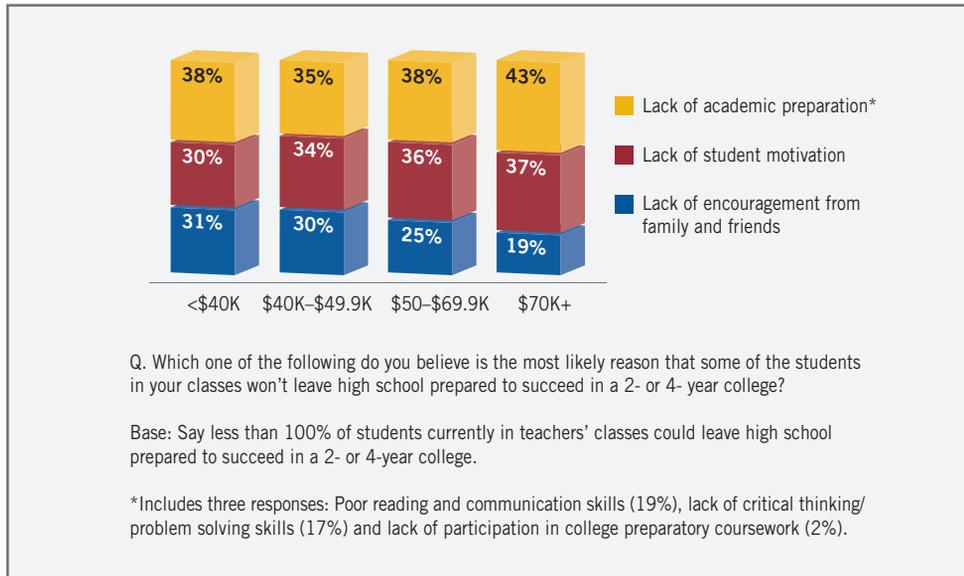
Motivating students is seen as an even greater challenge among high school teachers, who are twice as likely as their elementary school counterparts to list motivation as the single most likely reason students will not leave high school prepared to succeed in college (49% vs. 25%).

Single Most Likely Reason Teachers Say Some Students in Their Classes Won’t Leave High School Prepared to Succeed in a 2- or 4-Year College (by grade taught)



While all three factors remain relevant to students in disparate income brackets, teachers in low-income schools are more likely than are those in high-income schools (31% vs. 19%) to say that lack of encouragement from friends and family is the most likely reason some of their students will not leave high school prepared for college success.

Single Most Likely Reason Teachers Say Some Students in Their Classes Won't Leave High School Prepared to Succeed in a 2- or 4-Year College (by school's median household income)



Teachers Agree that a High-Quality Curriculum Is Essential to Student Success

Regardless of their views on the single most likely reason for their students' lack of preparedness, teachers are largely united in their views on the in-classroom resources necessary to sustain academic success. Nearly 9 in 10 teachers agree that a high-quality curriculum ensures academic success for their students (88%). Ninety-three percent agree that digital resources like classroom technology and Web-based programs help academic achievement, with a similar percentage (91%) agreeing that classroom magazines and books other than textbooks do the same.

“Many of my students’ parents work at jobs that require little skill beyond a high school diploma, and the students think they can do a similar job and make a living. I’m afraid that’s not the case anymore — a high school diploma is not enough.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“I am a firm believer that students will absolutely rise to the academic level you set.”

— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

“Leaders need to be visible for students—not just when students get in trouble, but in the classrooms so the kids know that their education is important enough that those in charge want to see what’s going on.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER

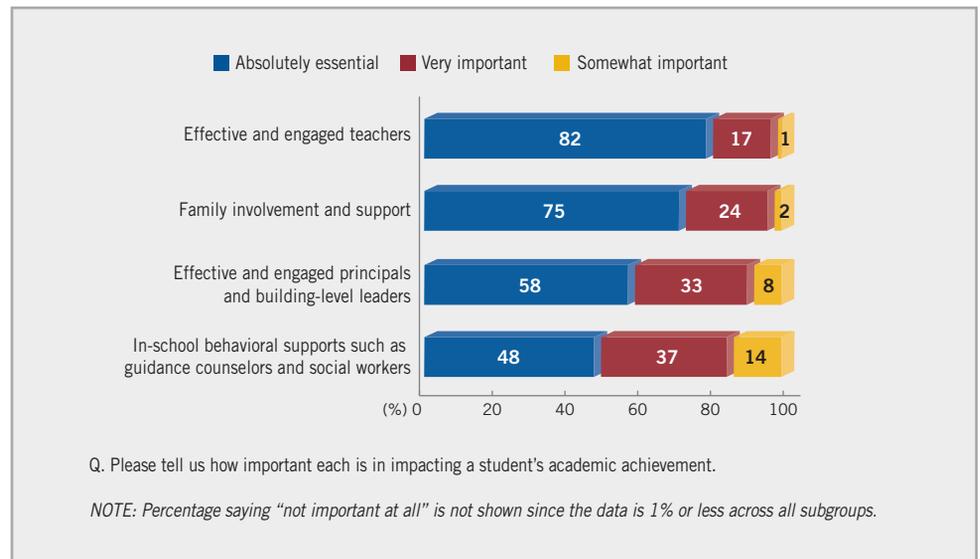
“We don’t have enough counselors, but we have a lot of struggling kids.”

— ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHER

Academic Achievement Is Fostered by a Community of Committed Individuals

Academic resources are only one piece of the puzzle. Teachers know they set the stage for student achievement: 82% of teachers say that “effective and engaged teachers” are “absolutely essential” in impacting student achievement—no other measure included in the study was rated higher. But they also know they can’t do it alone. Three in 4 teachers say that family involvement and support is also absolutely essential in impacting student academic achievement. Within the school setting, teachers need effective and engaged leaders along with specialty services like guidance counselors and social workers to help create and reinforce a culture of high expectations where learning is valued.

Teachers’ Views on People Who Impact Student Academic Achievement

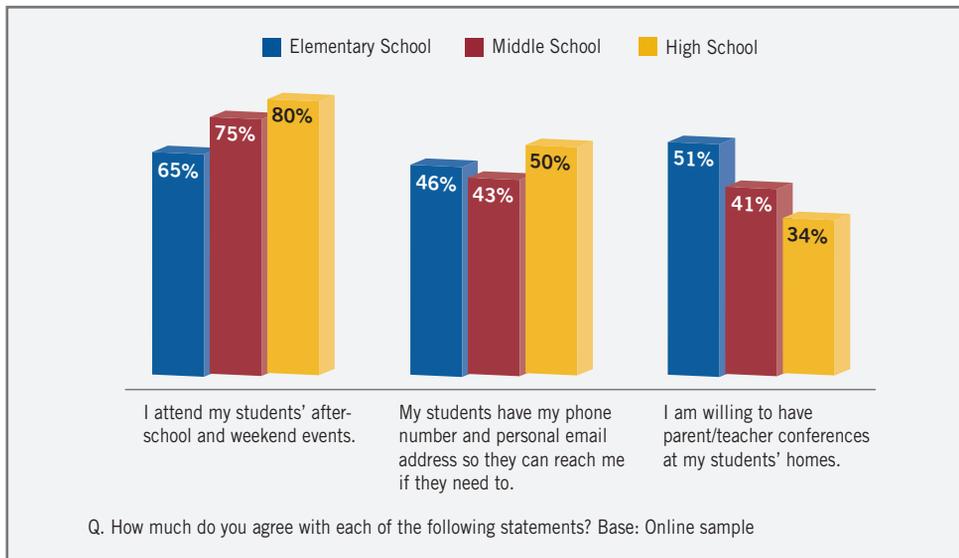


Teachers Go Above and Beyond to Strengthen the School-to-Home Connection

Many teachers go out of their way to establish an out-of-school environment that nurtures academic achievement. Specifically:

- Nearly half (47%) make themselves available to students outside of school hours by giving students their phone numbers and/or personal email addresses (remembering that some teachers are prohibited from sharing personal information with students by their schools or districts).
- Seven in 10 teachers show their support for their students by attending students' after-school and weekend events.
- Forty-five percent of teachers are willing to have parent/teacher conferences at their students' homes to strengthen the school-to-home connection, and the number increases to 51% for elementary school teachers.

Teachers' Views on Connecting with Students and Parents During Out-of-School Time, Total Agree to Statements (by grade taught)



While teachers are committed to building the school-to-home connection across all income levels, this is even more true of teachers in low-income communities. These teachers are more likely than are their counterparts in high-income communities to provide students with their personal phone number or email address (51% vs. 41%), and to be willing to have parent/teacher conferences at their students' homes (54% vs. 35%).

“I want to give my students and their parents what they need to succeed, and if what they need is more access to me, then I’m going to provide that.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

“At my school, students can be placed in a higher-level class in two ways. They can opt-in and anyone who wants the challenge can take the class regardless of scores. The other way is to score high enough on the test. If they’ve opted to take the class, I make it very hard for them to drop out.”

— HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

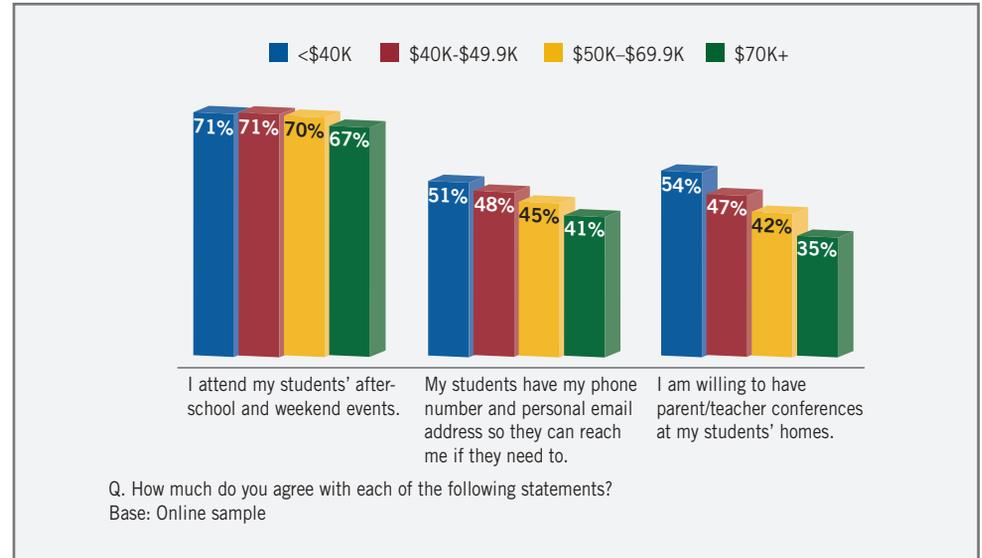
“Set the bar high,
for heaven’s sake.”

— HIGH SCHOOL
TEACHER

“In today’s world
it is absolutely
necessary for
students to achieve
at the highest
level their ability
allows, and then go
beyond.”

— MIDDLE SCHOOL
TEACHER

**Teachers’ Views on Connecting with Students and Parents During Out-of-School Time
(by school’s median household income)**



High Expectations Are Critical to Student Success

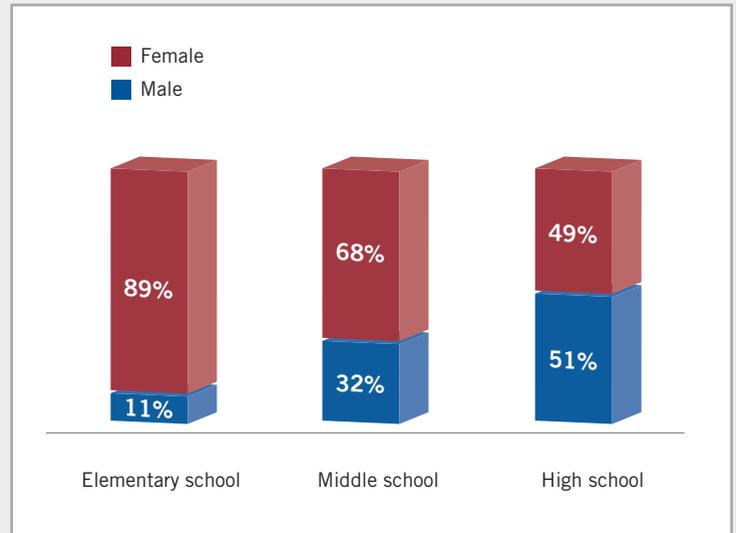
With all the factors impacting academic achievement, teachers are near universal in their understanding of the impact high expectations can have on their students. Ninety-seven percent of teachers say that setting high expectations for students is either “absolutely essential” or “very important” in positively impacting student academic achievement.

This firm commitment to helping students reach their potential resonates throughout conversations with teachers. Over and over we hear them talk about their confidence in the potential of all of their students and their role as teachers in helping them find success. “Students need people to believe in them, so they can believe in themselves,” one teacher told us, “When kids have confidence, they excel.”

A PORTRAIT OF AMERICA'S TEACHERS

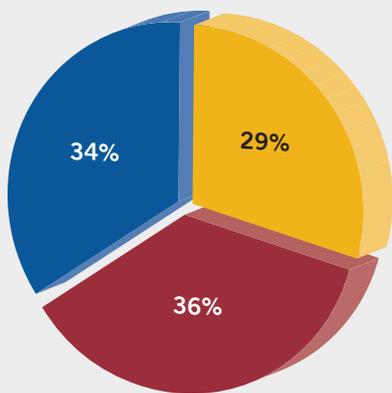
75%

OF TEACHERS ARE WOMEN, BUT THIS VARIES DRAMATICALLY BY SCHOOL LEVEL

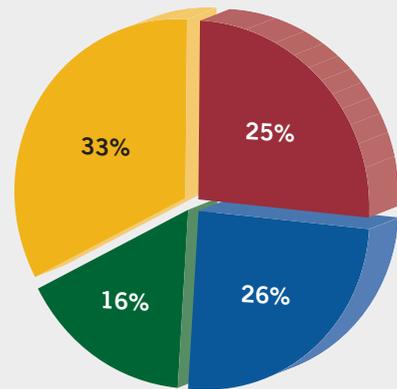


42.8

THE AVERAGE AGE OF TEACHERS IN THE SURVEY



Under 35
35-49
50 or older



0-3 years
4-10 years
11-20 years
More than 20 years

ON AVERAGE, TEACHERS HAVE ABOUT

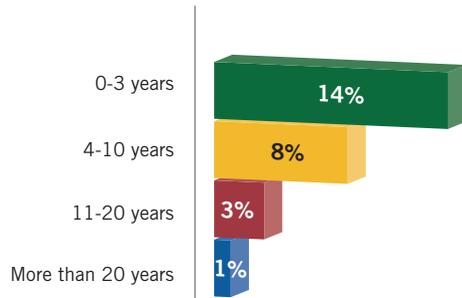
14

YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE

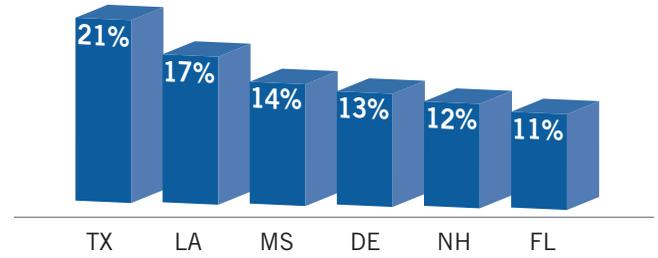
A PORTRAIT OF AMERICA'S TEACHERS

94% OF TEACHERS TOLD US THEY HAVE **FORMAL TEACHER CERTIFICATION**, WHILE **6%** HAVE **ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION**.

% OF TEACHERS WITH ALTERNATIVE CERTIFICATION BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE



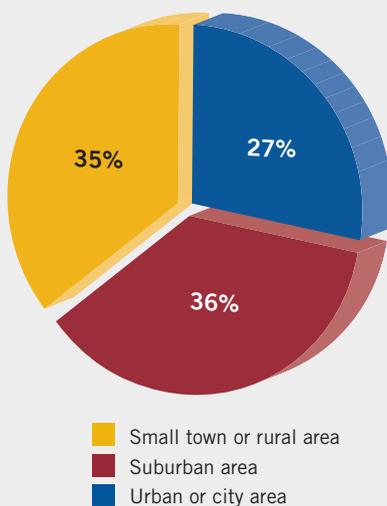
STATES WITH MORE THAN 10% OF TEACHERS ALTERNATELY CERTIFIED



TEACHER, SCHOOL AND CLASSROOM STATS BY SCHOOL METRO STATUS:

	URBAN	SUBURBAN	SMALL TOWN/RURAL
Hispanic, African American or other racial/ethnic background	22%	13%	8%
Have worked as a teacher for 0-3 years	19%	15%	14%
School household income is <\$40,000 per year	39%	12%	29%
Have English Language Learners (ELL) in their class	75%	69%	53%

WHERE TEACHERS TEACH...

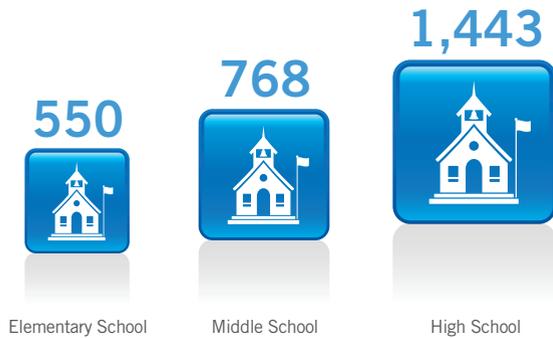


17% OF **NEW TEACHERS** (WITH 0-3 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE) IDENTIFIED THEMSELVES AS HISPANIC, AFRICAN AMERICAN OR OF ANOTHER RACIAL/ETHNIC BACKGROUND VS. ONLY **9%** OF **VETERAN TEACHERS** (WITH 21+ YEARS OF EXPERIENCE)

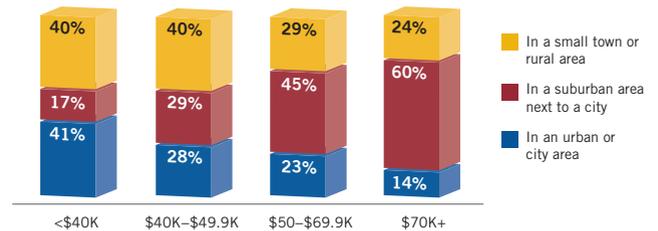
Note: Metro status, school size and median school income provided by MDR. All other information was self-reported by teachers in the survey.

A PORTRAIT OF AMERICA'S TEACHERS

AVERAGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN TEACHERS' SCHOOLS (BY SCHOOL LEVEL)



% OF TEACHERS WHO TEACH IN EACH TYPE OF COMMUNITY, BY SCHOOL'S MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME:



SCHOOL SIZE BY SCHOOL METRO STATUS:

	URBAN	SUBURBAN	SMALL TOWN/RURAL
Fewer than 500 students	30%	27%	46%
500-999 students	44%	47%	39%
1,000 students or more	26%	26%	14%

65%

OF TEACHERS SAID THEY HAVE ONE OR MORE **ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS** (ELL) IN THEIR CLASSROOM. THIS RISES TO **95%** OF TEACHERS IN CALIFORNIA, **77%** IN TEXAS AND **75%** IN FLORIDA.

25% OF TEACHERS TEACH IN COMMUNITIES WITH A MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME OF **LESS THAN \$40,000**, WHILE **17%** TEACH IN COMMUNITIES WITH A MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOMES OF **MORE THAN \$70,000**.

“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 could 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.”