

TEACHER & PRINCIPAL SCHOOL REPORT  
TENNESSEE

Equity & Literacy

 SCHOLASTIC

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# EDUCATORS' VIEWS & EXPERIENCES: NATIONAL COMPARISON



## TENNESSEE FINDINGS IN COMPARISON WITH THE NATION

Overall, Tennessee educators have similar views and experiences as their national peers. Key differences include:

### ➤ BARRIERS TO LEARNING

More Tennessee educators say **many of their students face barriers to learning from outside of the school environment**, compared to their peers nationwide (95% vs. 87%).

Tennessee teachers are **more likely to have students who are living in poverty (93% vs. 82%), coming to school hungry (89% vs. 75%), and homeless or in temporary housing (75% vs. 66%)**.

Teachers in Tennessee are more likely to say **access to the internet and other learning resources outside of school (59% vs. 48%), and access to fiction and/or nonfiction books at home (57% vs. 46%) are not adequately available** for their students.

### ➤ FUNDING PRIORITIES

Compared to their peers nationwide, Tennessee teachers are more likely to cite **high-quality instructional materials and textbooks (64% vs. 55%) and technology devices and digital resources in school (56% vs. 47%) among their top funding priorities**.

Teachers from Tennessee are **more likely to have purchased clothing for students (38% vs. 26%), cleaning supplies (81% vs. 65%) and supplies like tissues, hand sanitizer, band-aids, etc. (79% vs. 69%)** for school, classroom or student use over the past year.

### ➤ READING IN AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL

Teachers in Tennessee are more likely than their national peers to say that a barrier they face to having more independent classroom reading time is that **independent reading is not considered an important use of class time (30% vs. 19%)**.

Tennessee educators are **less likely to promote reading among their students by talking with students about the books they read for fun (59% vs. 68%), encouraging summer reading (47% vs. 64%), reading aloud to students (55% vs. 63%) and encouraging families to visit the public library (36% vs. 49%)**.



The national *Teacher & Principal School Report* series can be found at [scholastic.com/teacherprincipalreport](https://www.scholastic.com/teacherprincipalreport).



# BARRIERS TO EQUITY IN EDUCATION

Nearly all Tennessee teachers and principals agree that many of their students face barriers to learning from outside the school environment (95%). Teachers report having students in their classrooms who face myriad situations that can impede learning:

**93%** living in poverty

**75%** homeless or in temporary housing

**89%** experiencing family or personal crisis

**64%** in need of healthcare services

**89%** coming to school hungry

**61%** in need of English language learning support

**77%** in need of mental health services



Equity means all students have the chance to learn and grow without emotional, social, mental or academic barriers. It should be the goal.

Elementary School Teacher

Resource needs in Tennessee are varied and significant, with teachers citing the following as NOT adequately available for their students:

## FAMILY & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONDITIONS

## OUTSIDE-OF-SCHOOL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

## IN-SCHOOL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

**55%** Family involvement in student learning

**59%** Access to the internet and other learning resources outside of school

**37%** In-school specialists to address students' social and emotional needs

**39%** Strong staff-to-family connections

**57%** Access to fiction and/or nonfiction books at home

**21%** High-quality instructional materials

**25%** Strong connections between schools and communities

Within Tennessee, teachers in higher-poverty schools are more likely than those in lower-poverty schools to indicate their students lack adequate access to fiction/nonfiction books at home (64% vs. 34%) as well as family involvement in student learning (62% vs. 35%).

# TEACHERS' FUNDING PRIORITIES & PERSONAL SPENDING

The top five funding priorities among Tennessee teachers include:

High-quality instructional materials and textbooks	64%
Technology devices and digital resources in school	56%
Higher salaries	48%
Academic or social-emotional intervention initiatives	45%
Early learning initiatives and programs	42%

Eighty-six percent of teachers in Tennessee receive discretionary funds from their school district or PTA, and in the past year they have spent \$497 of their own money on items for their students and/or classrooms.

**59%**  
OF TENNESSEE TEACHERS  
HAVE USED THEIR OWN  
MONEY TO PURCHASE  
CLASSROOM LIBRARY BOOKS  
OVER THE PAST YEAR

**62%**  
SAY THEY ARE ONLY  
ABLE TO UPDATE THEIR  
CLASSROOM LIBRARIES  
ONCE A YEAR OR LESS



“

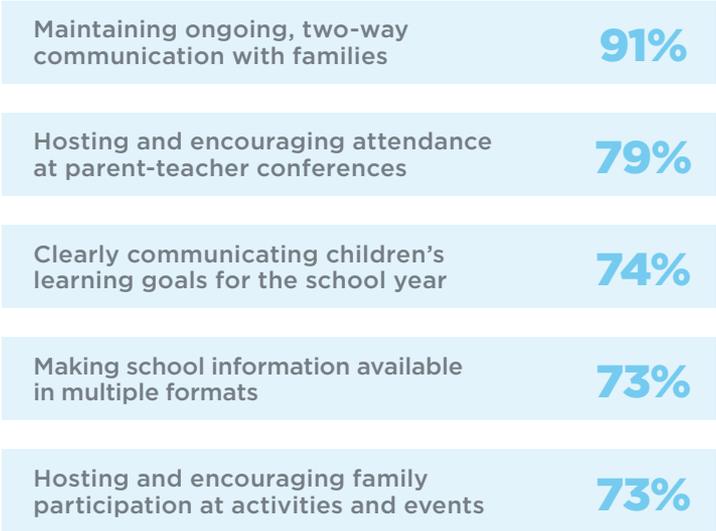
We need high-quality teachers who have access to the best resources to engage all students. That's how students feel safe. That's how they feel invested in their own learning and supported in their goals. That's how every student has the opportunity to become whatever they want, regardless of where they come from.

Middle School Teacher

# FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

All Tennessee educators say that involving families in children’s learning is important for student success (100%), but many educators need help engaging families (72%).

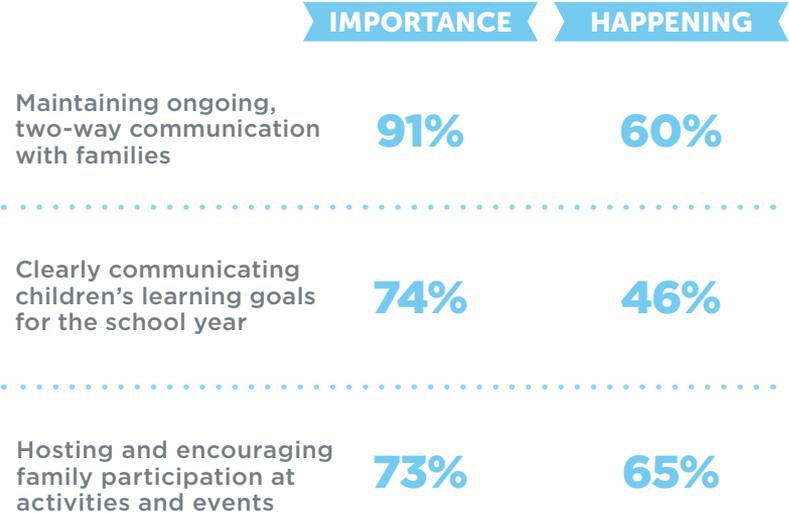
The activities Tennessee educators identify as most important in helping families engage in children’s learning include:



We teach students from a community, and we need to involve every aspect of the community to achieve our goal of helping every student.

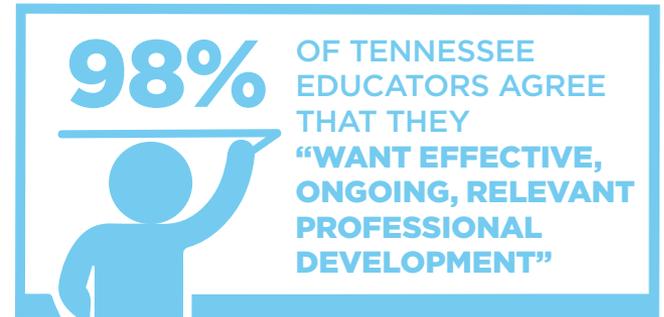
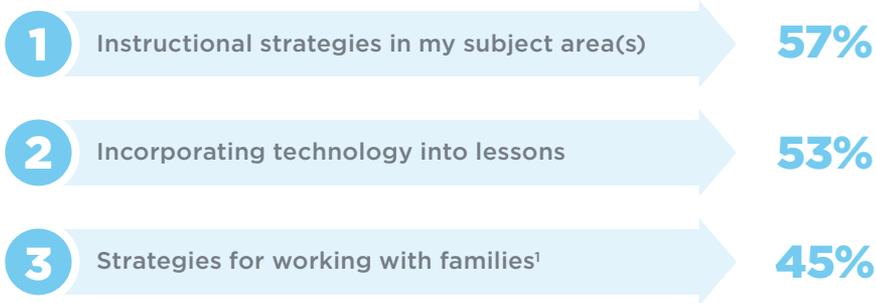
High School Principal

There are significant gaps between what Tennessee educators say is important and what is actually happening in schools. Among their top priorities, the largest gaps are in:



# TAILORED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Tennessee teachers indicate that the most effective formats for professional development include workshops conducted by outside consultants, authors or experts (66%) and professional conferences (61%). The top areas in which Tennessee teachers would like professional development in the coming year include:



<sup>1</sup>This item is a net of two items from the survey: “Strategies for working with students and families from all cultures” and “Strategies for improving engagement with families in support of their children’s learning.”

# EDUCATORS ON READING

## ALL YEAR-ROUND

NINETY-NINE PERCENT OF TENNESSEE EDUCATORS AGREE PROVIDING YEAR-ROUND ACCESS TO BOOKS AT HOME IS IMPORTANT TO ENHANCING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

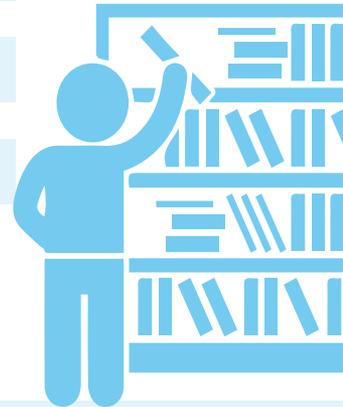
According to educators, **the number one way Tennessee students gain access to books during the summer is the public library (81%).** Other notable sources of books include:

Teachers providing books	16%
School/district providing books	14%
Community partners providing books	10%

The top types of reading materials Tennessee teachers need in their classroom libraries include:

1	Magazines	58%
2	Multiple copies of popular titles	50%
3	Books published in the last 3-5 years	49%
4	Culturally relevant titles	49%
5	Reference databases	49%

TENNESSEE TEACHERS' CLASSROOM LIBRARIES HAVE 240 BOOKS ON AVERAGE



# INDEPENDENT READING IN TENNESSEE

More than **one-third of Tennessee teachers set aside time for independent reading** or read aloud to their students every school day (36%)—for an average of 17 minutes. Fifty-one percent of literacy teachers set aside this time.

More than **six in 10 Tennessee teachers say they wish students were read aloud to or read a book of their choice independently *more often*** (62%). This is truer among elementary teachers than secondary teachers (81% vs. 46%).

Among teachers who wish it occurred more often, **the biggest barriers to independent reading are the demands of the curriculum not allowing enough time** (95%) and **independent reading not being considered an important use of class time** (30%).

# 95%

OF TENNESSEE EDUCATORS  
AGREE THAT STUDENTS  
SHOULD HAVE TIME DURING  
THE SCHOOL DAY TO  
READ A BOOK OF THEIR  
CHOICE INDEPENDENTLY



The top ways Tennessee educators promote reading among students include:

- |          |   |            |          |   |            |
|----------|---|------------|----------|---|------------|
| <b>1</b> | Encouraging students to use the school library          | <b>67%</b> | <b>4</b> | Reading aloud to students   | <b>55%</b> |
| <b>2</b> | Talking with students about the importance of reading   | <b>66%</b> | <b>5</b> | Making books available for students to take home during the school year | <b>54%</b> |
| <b>3</b> | Talking with students about the books they read for fun | <b>59%</b> |          |   |            |