



# Cross-State Analyses of Results, 2012-2013

Fall 2013

Research Report  
2013 TELL Survey



New  
Teacher  
Center

Time **Facilities and Resources** Professional Development Teacher Leadership  
School Leadership **Instructional Practices and Support** Managing Student  
Conduct **Community Support and Involvement** New Teacher Support **Time**  
Professional Development Facilities and Resources **School Leadership**  
Teacher Leadership **Managing Student Conduct** Community Support and  
Involvement **New Teacher Support** Time Facilities and Resources Managing  
Student Conduct **Professional Development** School Leadership Time  
**Teacher Leadership** Instructional Practices and Support Managing Student



# Introduction



The New Teacher Center (NTC) worked collaboratively with nine state coalitions—including governors, state education agencies, teacher associations, stakeholder groups and practitioners—to implement the Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning Survey (TELL) statewide in nine states from the spring of 2012 to the spring of 2013. The TELL Survey is a full-population survey of school-based licensed educators designed to report perceptions about the presence of teaching and learning conditions that research has shown increase student learning and teacher retention.<sup>1</sup> The conditions assessed in the TELL Survey include: Time, Facilities and Resources, Professional Development, School Leadership, Teacher Leadership, Instructional Practices and Support, Managing Student Conduct, and Community Support and Involvement and New Teacher Support (for teachers in their first three years in the profession).<sup>2</sup>

Comparing the results of the TELL Survey at the state level across the country provides an additional contextual lens for interpreting results from each participating state to better understand their own findings. While it is useful to compare state-level results across states, it is imperative to understand the different contexts specific to each state. Additionally, aggregating data at this level also obfuscates the variation that occurs within a state and even within each school. Readers are encouraged to use the information in this report as way to orient overall findings and frame discussions with state and local stakeholders using more specific local data to ground those conversations.

Many important contextual factors influence the governance of education systems and perceptions of educators across states surveyed that are important to understand while looking at cross-state differences. At the broadest level, there are cultural differences between southern and northern states, between local control and state-oriented states, between right-to-work and collective bargaining states that may require attention and further analyses as more states participate in the TELL initiative. For example, states implementing right-to-work or at-will employment laws tend to be located in the south and research generally shows that overall job-satisfaction tends to be higher in states with right-to-work legislation.<sup>3</sup>

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1. See endnotes related to the link between teaching conditions and student performance and teacher retention.

2. As new teacher support questions are offered only to a subset of the full population surveyed (teachers in the profession three years or less) they are not analyzed and reported here. A separate publication analyzing new teacher support issues will be published separately.

3. See endnotes for research related to job satisfaction and right-to-work laws.



This does not necessarily mean that the teaching conditions in right-to-work states are better per se, but that educators' perceptions and/or expectations of whether key resources and supports are in place may differ in places where contracts are accepted versus where they are negotiated.

Additionally, some states have worked with the NTC for many years to implement the TELL Survey. The TELL Survey work began in North Carolina with the extensive work by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission (NCPTSC) in 2001. The Commission created standards aligned with survey areas, as well as administered a statewide survey in 2002 to assess if the standards were in place in schools, documenting the first iteration of the TELL Survey. North Carolina has implemented the survey six times; Maryland and Colorado three times; Tennessee, Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Vermont two times, and Delaware for the first time in 2013. Table 2 reports the number of TELL Surveys administered in each state discussed in this report. Note the TELL Survey is administered every other year (though several districts working with NTC like Hillsborough County Public Schools and Pittsburgh Public Schools survey annually).

Another difference across states that is critical to Survey success is the level of support and type of support for implementing the survey from different stakeholder groups. NTC encourages the involvement of a host of stakeholder groups representing teachers, superintendents, and community and business leaders working collaboratively to conduct the TELL Survey. Collectively referred to as the "TELL Partners" in each state, the involvement and support of these stakeholder groups is crucial to obtain high response rates.



Our hope, given these differences, is that this analysis is used to help states situate themselves relative to each other and make comparisons that help them better understand and interpret their own survey results.

### About the Survey

The TELL Survey administered in each state is statistically valid and reliable.<sup>4</sup> Descriptions of the eight survey areas are provided in Table 1. The individual items used for this analysis include a set of common questions across all state clients. This research brief compares state level aggregate results from Colorado, Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, and Vermont.

Response options for core area questions use a four-point Likert scale and range from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). Results for this brief are summarized by reporting the overall mean for each survey area across all states and each state's individual mean for each survey area. The survey area means could range from one to four corresponding to the Likert scale response choices. A mean of 3.0 for a construct indicates that when averaged together, educators in a state "agree" with all items in the construct. Differences of means tests are conducted to see if the difference between the overall mean and each state mean is by chance. Because the numbers of respondents for the TELL Survey is large, most differences are statistically significant, meaning the differences likely did not occur by chance.

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4. Swanlund, A. (2011). *Identifying working conditions that enhance teacher effectiveness: The psychometric evaluation of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey*. Chicago, IL: American Institutes for Research.

It should be noted that statistical significance does not necessarily imply practical or meaningful differences in the data. Most state means across survey areas reported here are statistically different from the overall mean; however, this is due in large part to the very large number of respondents. Statistical significance is presented to indicate tests were conducted but do not indicate the differences are necessarily worth intense scrutiny and analyses on behalf of state coalitions and policymakers.

In the graphs presented throughout this report, a blue arrow within a column indicates the state mean is statistically different from the overall mean. The blue line in each graph represents the overall mean presented in the first column of each graph for each survey area. When interpreting the data presented in the graphs, the reader can use the general guide of considering differences of .3 or more between the means as noteworthy, possibly indicating an important difference and area for closer review by stakeholders. While differences between a state and the cross-state mean may be statistically significant with much smaller differences (meaning they are not likely to have randomly occurred), that is due in part to the large number of surveys collected and analyzed. So small differences are not by chance, but may not be large enough to merit substantial changes to current policies and practices based on the data.

*Statistical significance does not necessarily imply practical or meaningful differences in the data.*

In addition to reporting the averages for each survey area by state, select survey items for each area are included. Responses for these items are reported as rates of agreement by combining the “agree” and “strongly agree” categories. Generally, items with the highest and lowest overall rates of agreement in each of the survey constructs are reported, as well as items with the most range in rate of agreement across the states. This brief presents the survey areas in order of highest overall average to lowest overall average. Implications and recommendations are presented for stakeholders to consider within each state’s unique context.

Table 1. TELL Survey Constructs

<b>Time</b> —Available time to plan, collaborate, provide instruction, and eliminate barriers in order to maximize instructional time during the school day
<b>Facilities and Resources</b> —Availability of instructional, technology, office, communication, and school resources to teachers
<b>Community Support and Involvement</b> —Community and parent/guardian communication and influence in the school
<b>Managing Student Conduct</b> —Policies and practices to address student conduct issues and ensure a safe school environment
<b>Teacher Leadership</b> —Teacher involvement in decisions that impact classroom and school practices
<b>School Leadership</b> —The Ability of school leadership to create trusting, supportive environments and address teacher concerns
<b>Professional Development</b> —Availability and quality of learning opportunities for educators to enhance their teaching
<b>Instructional Practices and Support</b> —Data and support available to teachers to improve instruction and student learning

NTC administered the anonymous survey to all school-based licensed educators. See Table 2 for when each state was surveyed as well as individual state-level response rates. The data for this analysis includes 364,929 respondents (out of a reported 626,266 school-based licensed educators surveyed across the nine states), yielding a response rate of 58 percent, which by social science standards for online surveys is considered acceptable for this type of analyses.<sup>5</sup>

Table 2. Response Rate by State, 2012-2013

Survey Year	Number of TELL Statewide Administrations	State	Total School-based Licensed Educators Surveyed	Number of Respondents	Response Rate
2013	2	Vermont	12,210	6,699	55
2013	2	Tennessee	74,676	61,341	82
2013	1	Ohio	134,230	21,057	16*
2013	3	Maryland	86,440	50,272	58
2013	2	Kentucky	50,496	43,761	87
2013	1	Delaware	10,392	6,153	59
2013	3	Colorado	60,891	33,200	55
2012	6	North Carolina	116,025	100,042	86
2012	2	Massachusetts	80,906	42,404	52
<b>TOTAL</b>			626,266	364,929	58

\* The response rate for Ohio is significantly lower than other states assessed. Analyses to look at potential response bias are underway. Please interpret Ohio findings with caution as results may not be generalizable to the state as a whole.



*Many important contextual factors influence the governance of education systems and perceptions of educators across states surveyed that are important to understand while looking at cross-state differences.*

5. Babbie, E. (2007). *The Practice of Social Research*. 11th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

## Findings

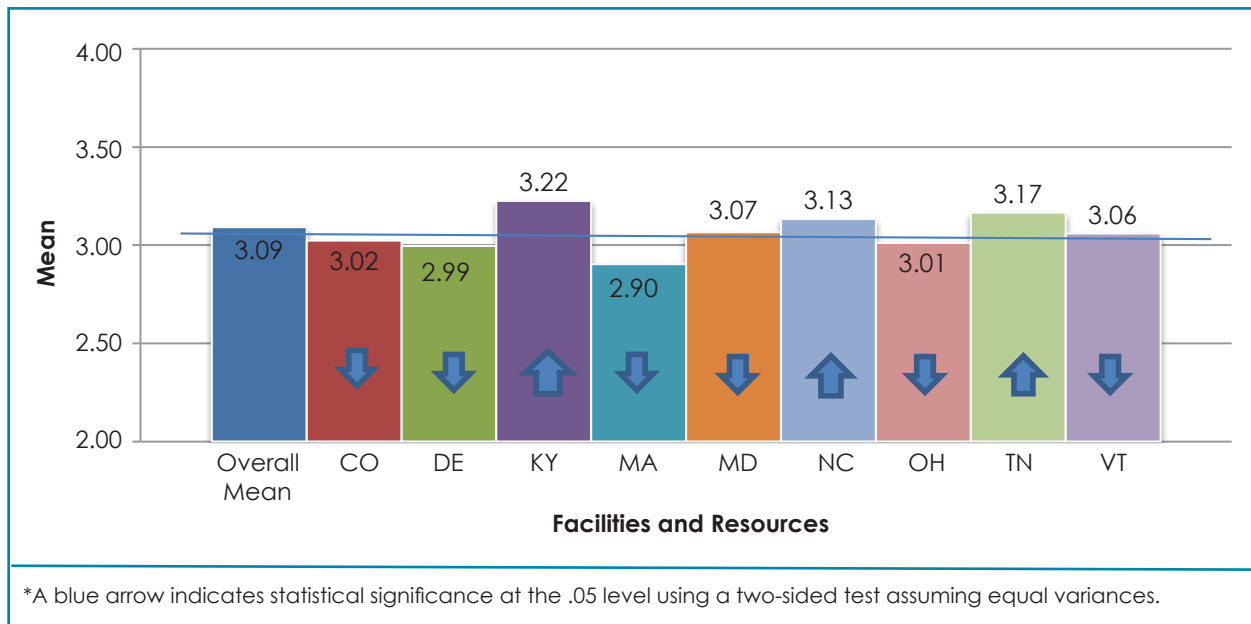
NTC published state specific analyses for each statewide TELL Survey administration (available online—see appendix for a listing of websites with data, reports, tools, etc.). This brief provides comparisons across states in order to show variation in the perceived presence of teaching conditions. In addition to exhibiting the overall area means by state, items with the highest and lowest rates of agreement, as well as items with the most range across agreement rates are presented.

### Facilities and Resources

***Finding: Educators across states overall agree they have the resources and supplies necessary to support learning.***

Educators report more positive conditions in the area of Facilities and Resources than any area of the Survey. Educators indicate the highest overall mean for Facilities and Resources, 3.09. On a four-point scale, a 3.0 corresponds to the “agree” category. KY educators report the highest agreement for this construct, a mean of 3.22. This average is also the highest area mean across all states and constructs. All but two states report a mean above 3.0. MA educators reported the least agreement with items related to Facilities and Resources, a mean of 2.90. Additionally, the difference between KY and MA is greater than .3; this gap could suggest more review of this area by MA stakeholders. Every state in the analysis is statistically different from the overall state average, meaning the differences between the individual state and the overall mean are not by chance. KY, NC, and TN are above the mean. The blue line in Figure 1 indicates the overall area mean for Facilities and Resources.

Figure 1. Area Mean for Facilities and Resources by State\*



As exhibited in Table 3, most educators surveyed, agree they have access to reliable phones, faxes, and emails; however, there is less agreement that educators have access to technology, such as printers and computers. Additionally, rates of agreement vary widely across states on access to technology and whether or not the physical classroom environment supports learning.

Educators in KY (94 percent) indicate the most agreement that they have reliable communication technology, compared to 78 percent of educators in MA. Over eight out of 10 educators (82 percent) in KY agree they adequate access to technology, such as computers and printers compared to two-thirds or less of educators in CO, MA, and OH. The greatest range in responses relates to the item asking if the physical environment supports learning. There is a 21 percentage point difference across states. Over nine out of 10 TN educators (91 percent) agree the physical environment support learning compared to 70 percent of CO educators.

Table 3. Agreement on Select Items Related to Facilities and Resources

TELL Survey Questions	CO	DE	KY	MA	MD	NC	OH	TN	VT
	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree								
Teachers have access to reliable communication technology, including phones, faxes and email.	90	90	94	78	87	90	87	90	88
Teachers have sufficient access to instructional technology, including computers, printers, software and internet access.	66	69	82	64	73	78	66	79	72
The physical environment of classrooms in this school supports teaching and learning.	70	80	89	78	82	89	83	91	81

**Implication:** While educators rate Facilities and Resources the highest compared to other teaching conditions, there are areas for improvement within this condition. For example, the lowest rated item in this area pertains to accessing instructional technology. While research shows that many factors contribute to student performance and teacher retention; some are easier to influence than others. Improving facilities can influence both student performance and teacher retention and may be more easily accomplished compared to other areas.<sup>6</sup> For example, facilities improvement like equipping a school with wireless internet accessibility may be a one-time investment that last for many years and could be supplemented by state or federal funding. Examining TELL responses within each state at the district and local level provides a chance to identify areas within the Facilities and Resources condition that can be affected.

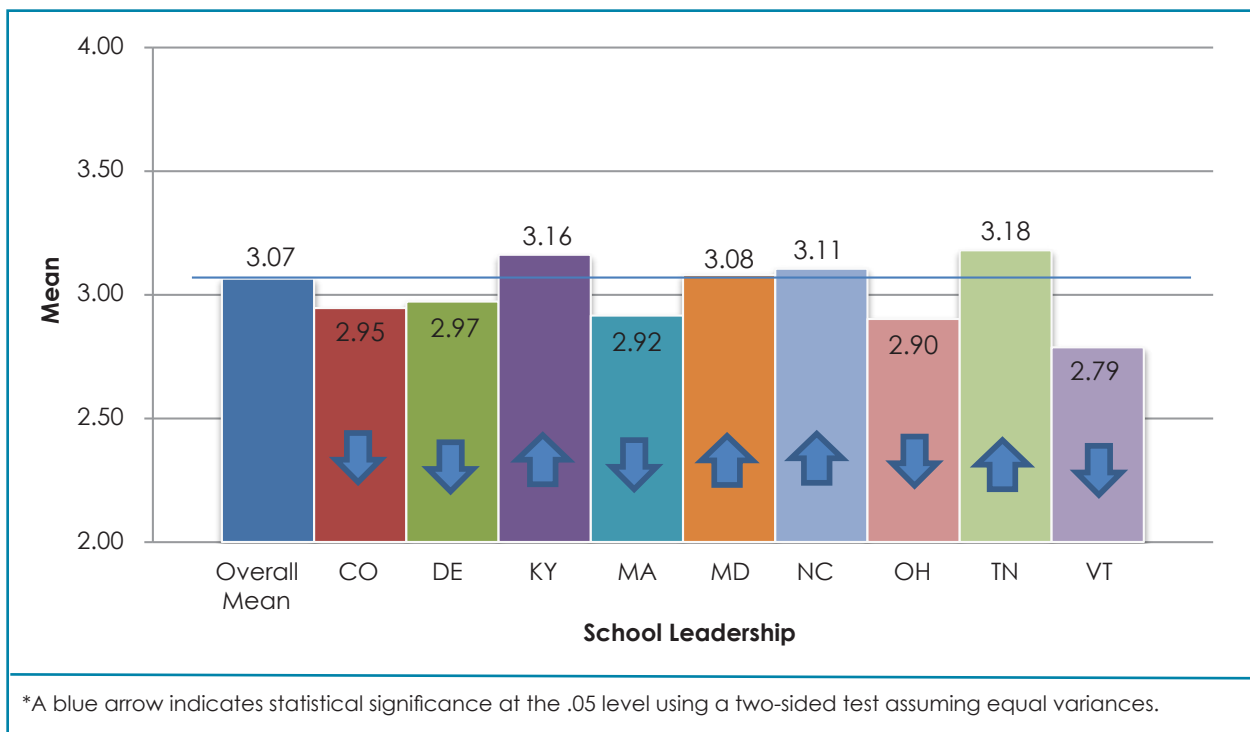
6. Buckley, J., Schneider, M., & Shang, Y. (2004). *The effects of school facility quality on teacher retention in urban school districts*. Chestnut Hill, MA: National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities.

School Leadership

**Finding: Educator perception about the support provided by school leaders differs widely across states.**

The School Leadership area demonstrates the most range of the eight constructs, from a high of 3.18 in TN to a low of 2.79 in VT. KY and OH educators also have disparate perceptions of school leadership (defined on the TELL Survey as any individual, group or team that makes decisions about the direction of the school). The overall area mean is a 3.07 which corresponds to the “agree” category; however, there is over a .3 difference between the three highest rated states and VT. VT educators disagree there is adequate school leadership. Every state in the analysis is statistically different from the overall state average. The gap between VT and other states merits further review.

Figure 2. Area Mean For School Leadership by State\*



As Figure 2 demonstrates, rates of agreement across School Leadership items vary substantially between states. Most educators across the states agree that teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction. With the exception of VT educators (85 percent), nine out of 10 educators agree that there are high standards for teachers. TN educators report the highest rate of agreement for this item (96 percent).

Responses indicate that educators report less agreement that there is mutual trust or a shared vision. In some states the difference are large. Overall, 25 to 40 percent of educators in each state, do not feel comfortable discussing concerns. This item demonstrates the lowest rate of agreement in the School Leadership area. Three quarters or less of educators in TN (75 percent), KY (72 percent), and NC (71 percent) agree they can raise issues of concern. Educators in VT (61 percent), OH (62 percent), and DE (63 percent) report the lowest rates of agreement.



With the exception of TN, at least one-quarter of survey respondents (more than 25 percent of educators) across states disagree that there is an atmosphere of trust and respect. MA (63 percent), OH (63 percent), and VT (57 percent) educators report the lowest agreement rates.

Educators from different states vary the most in perceptions if their school leadership and faculty share a vision. Over eight out of 10 educators in KY, NC, and TN agree that there is a shared vision between leadership and faculty. Whereas, 59 percent of VT educators indicate the leadership and faculty share a vision.

Table 4. Agreement on Select Items Related to School Leadership

TELL Survey Questions	CO	DE	KY	MA	MD	NC	OH	TN	VT
	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree								
Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.	90	92	94	91	94	94	90	96	85
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	65	63	72	64	67	71	62	75	61
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.	69	66	74	63	70	72	63	78	57
The faculty and leadership have a shared vision.	72	72	84	68	79	83	69	87	59

**Implication:** It is important to understand how educators’ perceptions of school leadership impact implementing major initiatives, such as Common Core and new teacher evaluation systems. In states where one third of educators disagree that their school has an atmosphere of trust and respect or staff and leadership do not share a common vision,<sup>7</sup> complex reforms may be difficult to implement. States need to assess policies related to principal preparation, recruitment, induction, and support to ensure leaders have the skills and capacity to build strong school cultures with effective decision making processes. For a staff to work together to solve problems, there must first be a shared understanding of the most pressing concerns. Administrators play a critical role in defining areas of focus and building trust as school leaders.



*For a staff to work together to solve problems, there must first be a shared understanding of the most pressing concerns.*

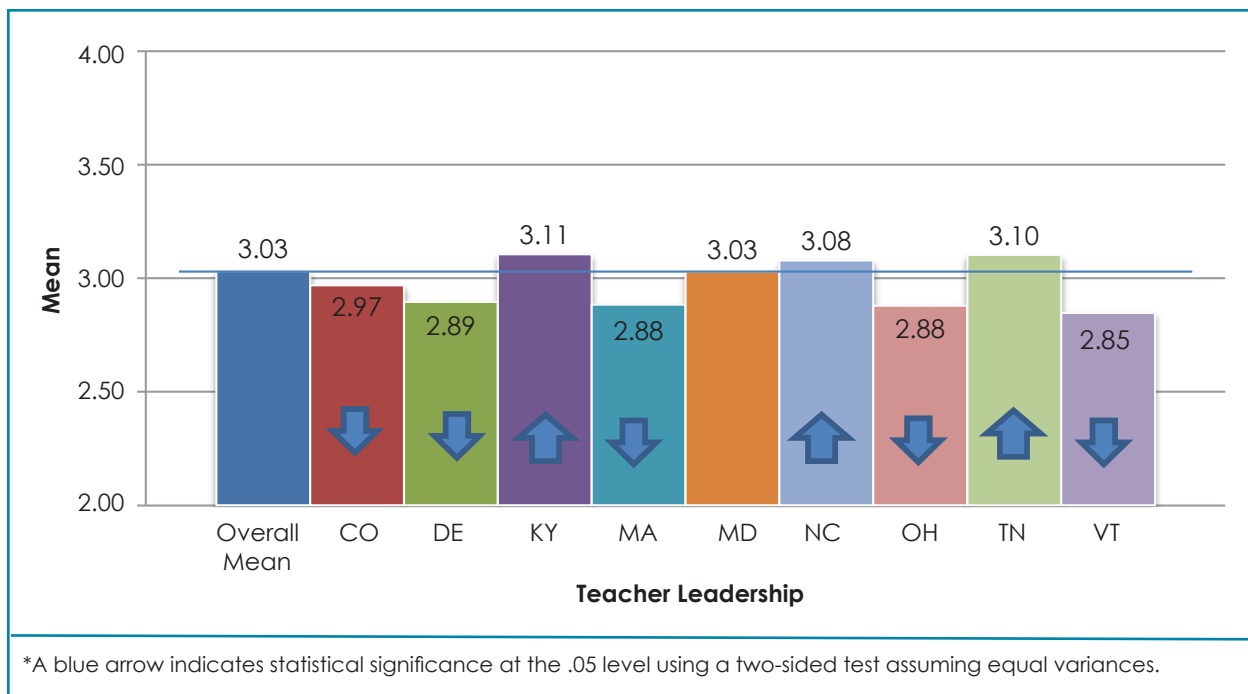
7. Kelley, R., Thornton, B., & Daugherty, R. (2005). Relationships between measures of leadership and school climate. *Education*, 126 (1).

### Teacher Leadership

**Finding: Educators across states generally view leadership opportunities for teachers within their schools.**

Educators in KY, MD, NC, and TN “agree” (a mean of at least 3.00) that teachers provide leadership within their schools and are included in decision making. State means vary little from the overall average, indicating educators from different states view this area of the survey similarly. All means are within .3 of one another. The overall area mean for Teacher Leadership is a 3.03. Five states are below 3.0. The individual state means range from a high of 3.11 in KY to a low of 2.85 in VT. Each state in the analysis is statistically different from the overall state mean. KY, NC, and TN are above the mean.

Figure 3. Area Mean for Teacher Leadership by State\*



Considering individual items associated with the area of Teacher Leadership, educators report the highest agreement rates for the item on leadership opportunities. About nine out of 10 educators in KY (90 percent), NC (92 percent), and TN (89 percent) agree that teachers have opportunities to lead in schools.

Educators report the least agreement that faculties have effective processes for making group decisions to solve problems. All rates of response were below 80 percent across states for this item. Educators in MA and OH (58 percent) and VT (49 percent) educators indicate the lowest rates of agreement in this area. Additionally, this item demonstrates the most range between states; 28 percentage points between NC (77 percent) and VT.

Additionally, the range of responses within a state varies considerably across these items. For example in VT, 81 percent of educators report teachers are encouraged to participate in leadership roles but more than half (49 percent) disagree that schools can effectively solve problems.

Table 5. Agreement on Select Items Related to Teacher Leadership

TELL Survey Questions	CO	DE	KY	MA	MD	NC	OH	TN	VT
	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree								
Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles.	78	84	90	82	88	92	84	89	81
The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	66	62	75	58	70	77	58	76	49
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	78	75	85	79	82	84	78	86	80
Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	76	72	84	75	79	83	73	83	74

**Implications:** TELL survey data consistently demonstrates that educators perceive teachers have the most decision-making authority related to instructional decisions and points to the need for districts and schools to consider the roles teachers play in decision-making on school-wide issues such as staffing, budgeting, professional development opportunities, etc. This finding may have far reaching consequences given other work showing the importance of improving student learning through shared teacher leadership.<sup>8</sup> Similar to the area of School Leadership, as districts and schools embark on implementing major policy changes, such as implementing the Common Core and new teacher evaluation systems, having an effective process for decision making related to these complex issues at the local level is critical. States where teachers feel less empowered to contribute to school-wide issues will be further challenged.

### COLORADO

**Colorado has administered** the TELL Survey biennially since 2009 and has utilized the data in a variety of ways. Data from the survey demonstrated that many new teachers were not supported, leading to the funding of a state report analyzing current policies. Recommendations from the report will be considered by a task force this fall. Additionally, the survey is being used not only as a potential data source in principal evaluation, but as a means of assessing the roll out of the state's new teacher evaluation system. The Colorado Department of Education has integrated TELL results in the school improvement planning process.

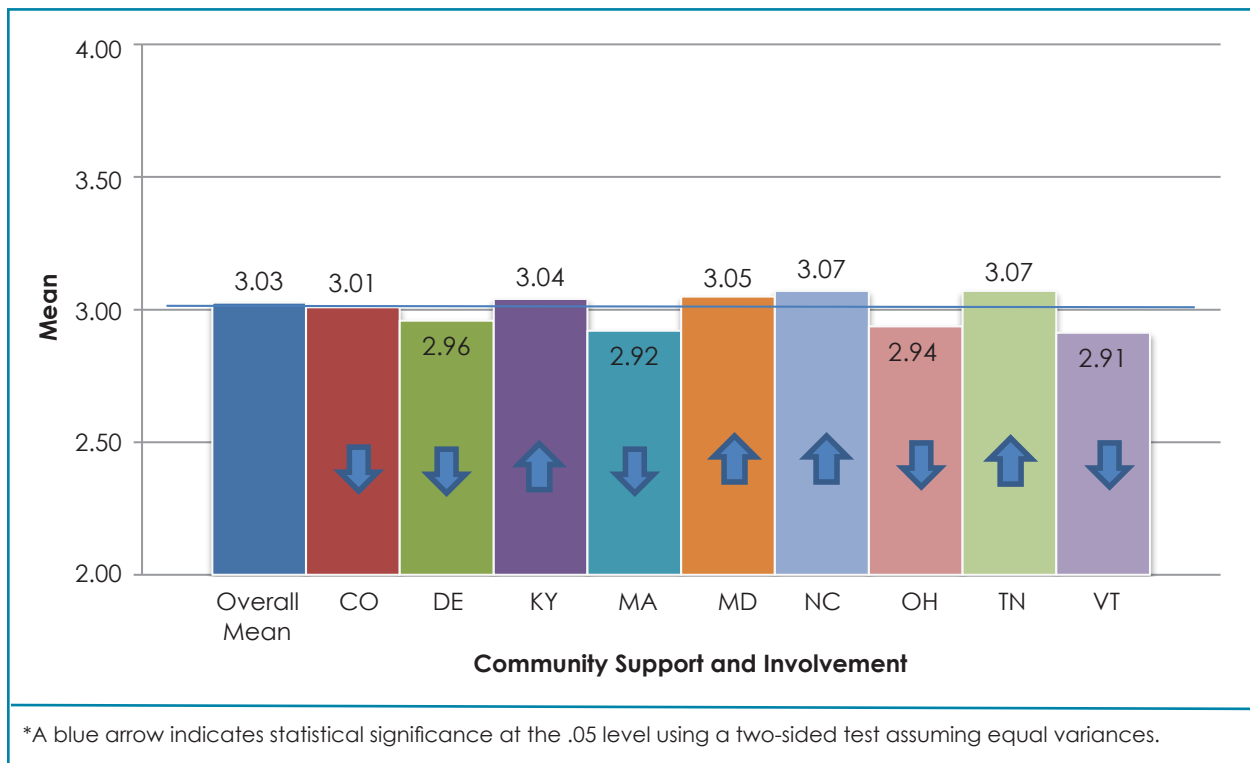
8. Louis, K., Dretzke, B., & Wahlstrom, K. (2010). How does leadership affect student achievement? Results from a national US survey. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 2 (3).

### Community Support and Involvement

**Finding: Educators across states perceive the presence of community support and community involvement.**

Educators generally report positive conditions in the area of Community Support and Involvement. Educators from the different states largely agree they have the necessary support and engagement from parents and the community. Additionally, educator responses show little variation across states and are all within .3 of each other and the overall mean. The overall area mean is a 3.03 corresponding with the “agree” category. Each state in the analysis is statistically different from the overall state mean. KY, MD, NC, and TN are above the mean.

Figure 4. Area Mean for Community Support and Involvement by State\*



Considering individual items included in the Community Support and Involvement area demonstrates the range of educator perceptions both across states, as well as across items. Almost all educators (nine out of 10) perceive that teachers provide sufficient information to the community. Less than three-quarters in NC agree that parents and guardians support teachers, while two-thirds (66 percent) of DE and OH educators report the agreement with this item.

The item from the Community Support and Involvement area that educators view the most differently across the states relates to the support provided by the general community. Over eight out of 10 educators in KY, NC, and TN agree that the community provides support. However, fewer educators in MA (68 percent) and OH (69 percent) indicate that community members provide support to teachers. There is a 15-percentage-point difference between the highest and lowest rates of agreement.



Table 6. Agreement on Select Items Related to Community Support and Involvement

TELL Survey Questions	CO	DE	KY	MA	MD	NC	OH	TN	VT
	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree								
Teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning.	93	95	95	93	95	96	93	96	91
Parents/guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students.	72	66	71	68	72	74	66	71	73
Community members support teachers, contributing to their success with students.	73	70	82	68	77	84	69	83	73

**Implications:** *Increasing community support and involvement has been a focus of education reform for decades.<sup>9</sup> The TELL Survey provides evidence that educators perceive they are encouraging participation from the community and parents. Given research showing the critical connection between parent and community involvement and student achievement, local districts and schools should closely review data within this condition to examine how to build on the work already accomplished by schools and further promote shared educational decision-making between schools and communities.*

## DELAWARE

**Delaware has already started** using their first statewide TELL results from February 2013. In a press conference held when the results were available, state leaders outlined a plan to focus on two of the more immediate needs the survey results showed: common core and instructional practices, and new teacher support. Since then, the Delaware Department of Education has launched an educator induction and mentoring competitive grant opportunity for districts. They are providing an opportunity for interested LEAs to submit a proposal to the Department through the newly-minted “Comprehensive Induction Innovation Grant”. Through this process, LEAs will be eligible to receive funding to support the development and delivery of innovative induction and mentoring strategies. Districts must utilize their TELL Delaware new teacher section data to support their proposals.

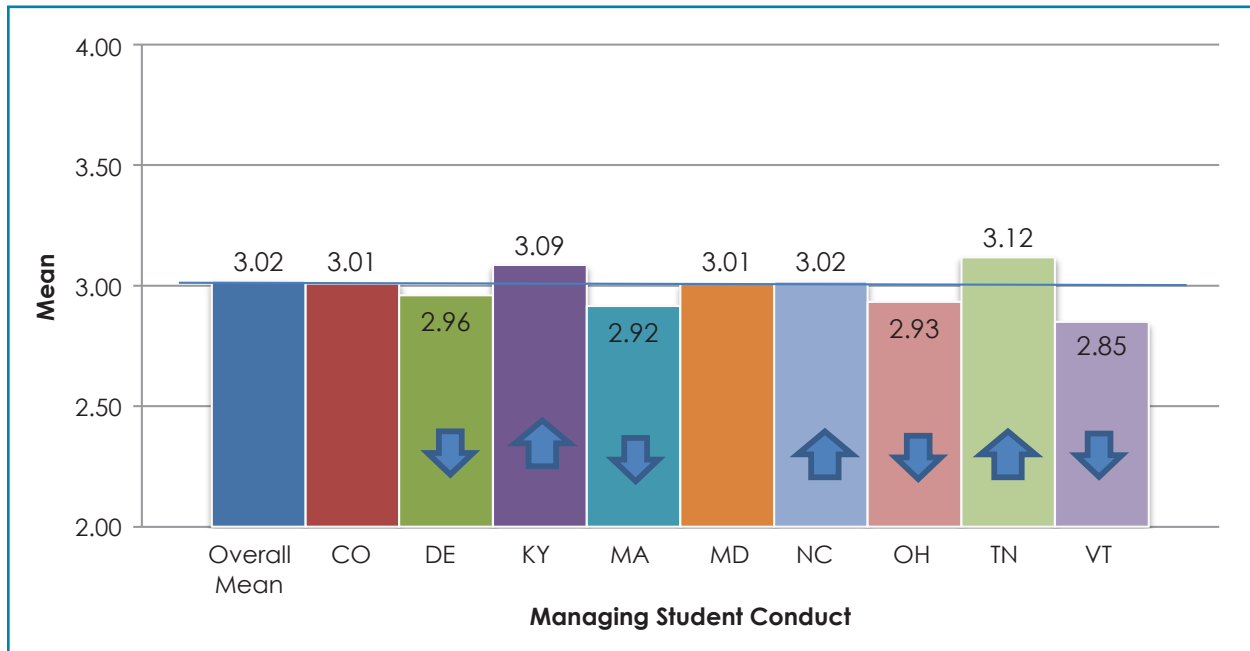
9. Conway, K. & Houtenville, A. (2008). Parental effort, school resources, and student achievement. *Journal of Human Resources*, 43(2).

Managing Student Conduct

**Finding: Overall, educators agree that conditions are in place to manage student conduct and support learning.**

Across states, the average for the Managing Student Conduct area is a 3.02 or almost exactly “agree.” State averages for this area range from a high of 3.12 in TN to a 2.85 mean in VT and are all within the .3 guideline for comparisons. CO and MD responses are similar to the overall mean and DE, MA, OH, and VT are below the mean. All states except CO and MD are statistically different from the overall state mean.

Figure 5. Area Mean For Managing Student Conduct by State\*



\*A blue arrow indicates statistical significance at the .05 level using a two-sided test assuming equal variances.

Across states, educators generally report they work in safe environments where students understand expectations for their conduct but there is less agreement that school leaders enforce behavior policies and rules.

Over nine out of 10 educators in CO, KY, MA, NC, OH, and TN indicate their schools are safe. DE (88 percent), MD (89 percent), and VT (88 percent) are within two percentage points. This item also demonstrates the least variation across states. Over eight out of 10 educators across states, also report students are aware of school expectations for behavior. Other state responses are similar for this item, as well.

However, between 23 percent and 42 percent of educators do not agree that school administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct. KY (73 percent) and TN (77 percent) educators report the highest rates of agreement for this item. In VT, over 40 percent (42 percent) of educators disagree that school leaders enforce rules. This is a 19 percentage point difference from KY, which is the greatest range in agreement for this condition. Additionally, VT educators’ perceptions across the items in this area range substantially from 88 percent agreement to 58 percent, a difference of 30 percentage points.

Table 7. Agreement on Select Items Related to Managing Student Conduct

TELL Survey Questions	CO	DE	KY	MA	MD	NC	OH	TN	VT
	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree								
The faculty work in a school environment that is safe.	92	88	93	91	89	93	92	94	88
Students at this school understand expectations for their conduct.	87	84	87	81	85	85	83	88	81
School administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom.	79	75	83	76	78	80	78	85	74
School administrators consistently enforces rules for student conduct.	69	63	73	63	68	71	63	77	58

**Implications:** Survey data suggests that educators believe that behavior polices and expectations are generally understood by students and faculty and that their schools are safe. Given most perceive they work in safe environments, local systems can leverage existing student behavior-related data to review and evaluate current policies and practices and revise where appropriate.<sup>10</sup> Such an analysis combined with TELL and other data can reveal gaps in implementation of policies and expectations, beyond perception data which in states with a large range in responses is especially important. While there are time and resource issues associated with a review, reconciling if other data sources support a lack of enforcement can help school staff prioritize improvement efforts.

## KENTUCKY

**In 2011 Kentucky administered** its first statewide TELL survey. Prior to the survey the state had already passed legislation that required the use of educator survey data to assist school leaders in improving persistently low performing schools (called District 180 Schools). State leaders have since incorporated the use of the TELL data in the evaluation tools for administrators and in annual school and district improvement plans. Kentucky highlights schools with strong teaching conditions and high achievement, best-practice schools through its “Winner’s Circle Awards” and incorporated the use of the TELL data as part of its approved waiver of the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

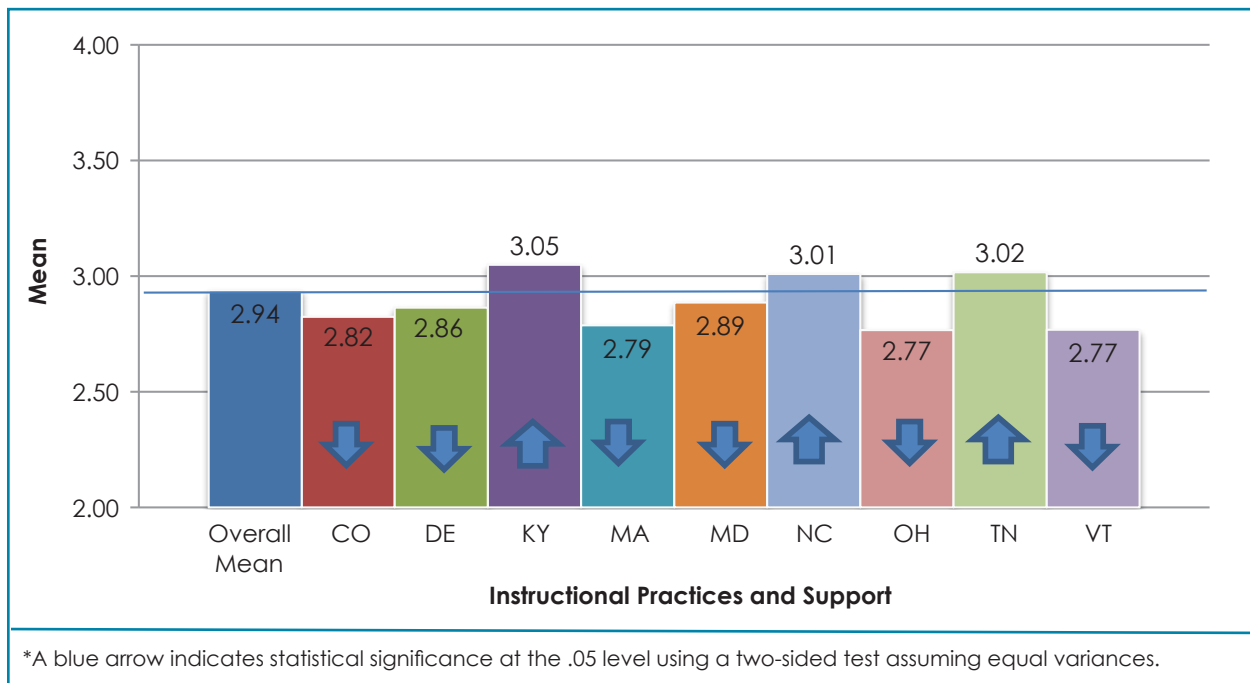
10. Hutton, T. & Bailey, K. (2007). Effective strategies for creating safer schools and communities: School policies and legal issues supporting safe schools. *The Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence & Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory* : Washington, DC.

Instructional Practices and Support

**Finding: Educators across states indicate they are encouraged to be innovative in the classroom; however, they also report challenges receiving state assessment data in time to inform instructional choices.**

The overall mean for the Instructional Practices and Support area is below the “Agree” category, 2.94. Individual means range from above a 3.0 (KY, NC, and TN) to the lowest mean rating of 2.77 in OH and VT. The difference between OH and VT and the highest rated state KY is close to .3, suggesting these stakeholders may want to examine this area more closely. Every state in the analysis is statistically different from the overall state mean.

Figure 6. Area Mean for Instructional Practices and Support by State\*



Considering items related to Instructional Practices and Support, Table 8, shows educators report the highest rate of agreement that teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction. Almost nine out of 10 educators across states agree with this statement. Additionally, educators report similar rates of agreement across states for this item. There is a seven-percentage-point difference between KY (94 percent) and OH (88 percent) for example.

Educators report much more variation across other items in this construct. For example in some states (KY and TN), about nine out 10 educators agree that teachers work in professional learning communities to align instructional practice. In other states (VT), 67 percent of educators agree with that item, a difference of 23 percentage points.

The lowest-rated item, as well as the item with the most range in response rates, pertains to how quickly teachers receive state assessment data to inform instructional choices. More than half the teachers in VT (55 percent) and CO (56 percent) disagree that state assessment data is available in time to impact instructional practice. This item also demonstrates the most variation across states, from a rate of agreement of 75 percent in NC to 44 percent in CO, a 31-percentage-point difference.



Educators across states also report lower rates of agreement for the item stating that teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students. Over seven out of 10 educators in KY, NC, and TN agree with this statement, while fewer educators in DE (51 percent), MA (56 percent), and OH (54 percent) agree.

Table 8. Agreement on Select Items Related to Instructional Practices and Support

TELL Survey Questions	CO	DE	KY	MA	MD	NC	OH	TN	VT
	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree								
Teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction.	88	88	94	88	91	93	88	94	87
Teachers work in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices.	80	89	90	70	80	90	71	86	67
State assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.	44	74	64	65	60	75	55	66	45
Teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students.	64	51	74	56	64	70	54	72	60

**Implications:** Educators report teachers have instructional autonomy but are not provided additional supports, such as timely data and appropriate assignments to maximize student learning. Given this condition was rated below a 3.0 across most states, individual state, district, and local results should be examined carefully. While some elements such as timeliness of state data are beyond local control, teacher assignment can be within the control of local education agencies and leaders should look for opportunities to maximize teacher backgrounds.

**TENNESSEE**

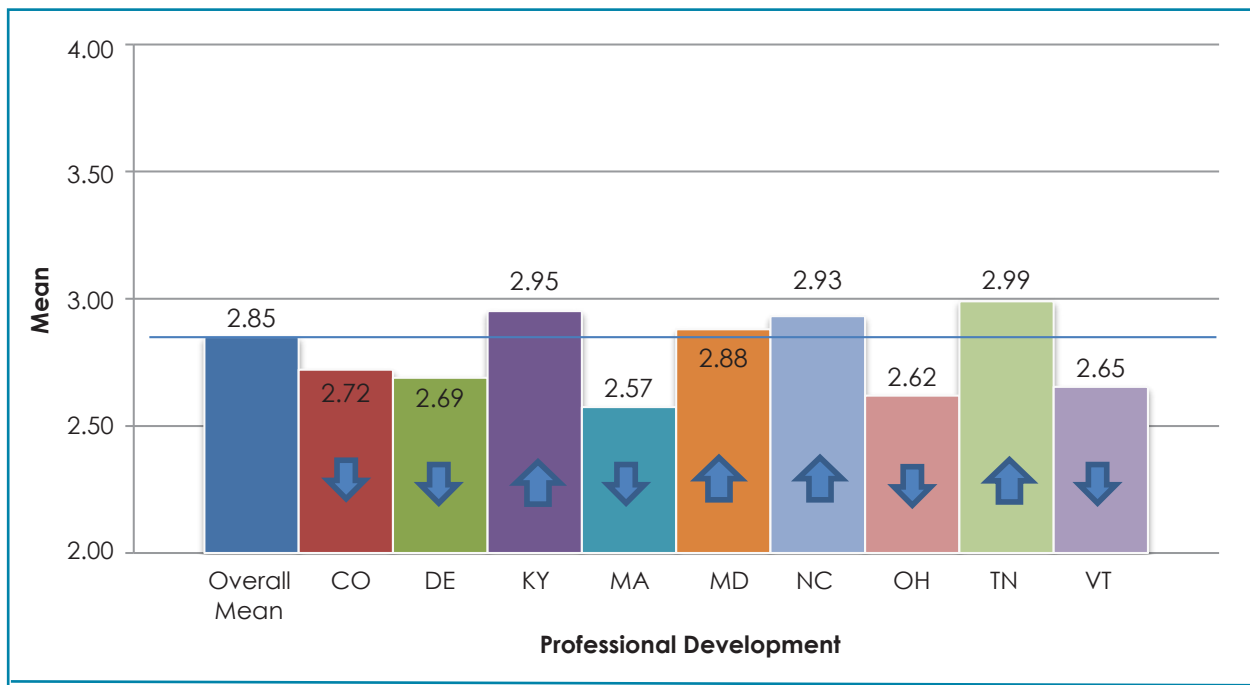
**The Tennessee Department of Education** administered the TELL Survey in 2011 and 2013 as part of its First to the Top initiative. With a particular focus on improving the persistently low performing schools, efforts have included the use of the survey data in school improvement plans and outreach and support to schools and districts through the Tennessee Department of Education's regional analysts and directors across the state.

Professional Development

**Finding:** A majority of educators across states agree that professional development is aligned with school improvement plans; however, fewer agree that professional development is differentiated or evaluated. Additionally, state responses vary widely for this area.

The overall mean for the Professional Development area is also below the “agree” category, 2.85. This is one of two survey areas where no individual state mean is above a 3.0. Individual means range from 2.99 in TN to 2.57 in MA. There is more than a .3 gap between educators’ perceptions of this survey area for high ranking and low ranking states. MA, OH, and VT means are considerably lower than KY, NC, and TN and may deserve more attention. Every state in the analysis is statistically different from the overall state mean.

Figure 7. Area Mean for Professional Development by State\*



\*A blue arrow indicates statistical significance at the .05 level using a two-sided test assuming equal variances.

As shown in Table 8, the majority of educators across states, agree that professional learning opportunities are aligned with school improvement plans. Over nine out of 10 educators in KY (93 percent), NC (91 percent), and TN (92 percent) agree. Over three-quarters of MA and MD (78 percent each) educators agree.

Educators also largely agree that they are encouraged to reflect on their own practice. KY, NC, and TN all report rates of agreement above 90 percent. MA and MD report 78 percent agreement.

Far fewer educators agree that professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers. Only in KY, NC, and TN do over 60 percent of educators agree. More than half the educators in the majority of states (CO, DE, MA, MD, OH, and VT) disagree that professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.

Similarly, overall most educators across states disagree that professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers. This item also demonstrates the most range in agreement rates across states with some states' educators reporting rates of agreement below 40 percent. Less than two-thirds of educators across states agree with this item ranging from 65 percent agreement in NC to 32 percent agreement in VT. The difference between TN and VT is 33 percentage points.

Table 8. Agreement on Select Items Related to Professional Development

TELL Survey Questions	CO	DE	KY	MA	MD	NC	OH	TN	VT
	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree								
Professional learning opportunities are aligned with the school's improvement plan.	83	83	93	78	78	91	83	92	82
Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice.	86	86	91	78	78	93	81	93	80
Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.	45	44	65	40	40	62	42	68	44
Professional development is evaluated and results are communicated to teachers.	46	42	61	38	38	65	38	64	32

**Implications:** While this teaching condition was also rated below a 3.0 by educators across all states, the rating was largely driven by the need to differentiate and evaluate professional learning and share results with teachers. While teachers are asked to provide very specific and differentiated instruction to students as well as measure the impact of the instruction, there is a dearth of research on supporting differentiated professional development for teachers. As a starting point, local education agencies may consider how the professional learning communities that largely exist across schools can be used as an organizational structure to facilitate differentiated learning for teachers.<sup>11</sup> Impacting this area of the teaching conditions is paramount especially for stakeholders in MA, MD, OH, and VT.

## MARYLAND

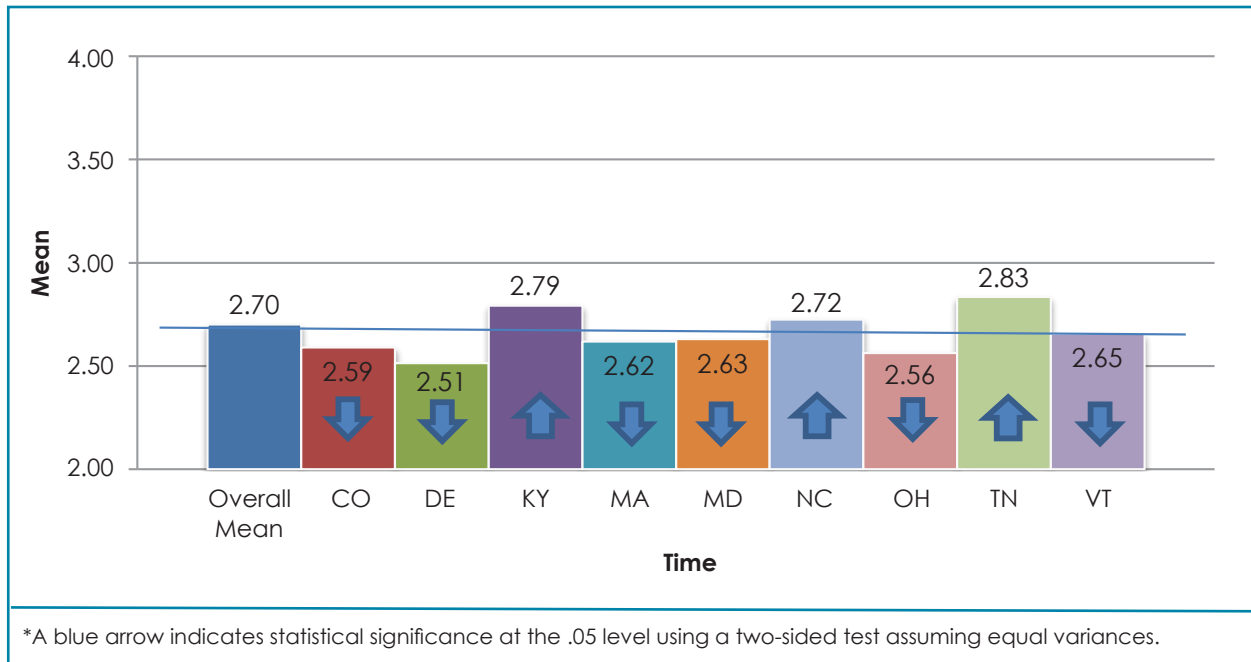
The state of Maryland has used TELL results to assess new teacher support. Since the 2009 TELL Maryland data showed that many new teachers were not assigned a mentor and those who were mentored often did not get the type and frequency of support that research shows is necessary to help new teachers get better, faster. The State Board of Education and the Governor's Office have revised and approved new regulations addressing induction. Additionally the Maryland State Department of Education's Race to the Top work with teacher induction, the TELL Survey has been integrated in Master Plans for District Professional Development and Teacher Induction.

11. Bowgren, L. & Sever, K. (2009). *Differentiated professional development in a professional learning community*. Solution Tree.

Time

**Finding:** Across statewide participants, educators view *Time* as the condition with the most constraints. Compared to all survey constructs, educators report the lowest overall mean for Time. The overall area mean for Time is a 2.70 on a four-point scale and no state reported a mean above a 3.0. The individual state means range from a high of 2.83 in TN to a low of 2.51 in DE. The difference between DE and TN is more than .3 suggesting DE may want to examine this area more closely. Every state in the analysis is statistically different from the overall state mean. KY, NC, and TN are above the mean.

Figure 8. Area Mean For Time by State\*



As Table 9 demonstrates, in the area of *Time*, the item with the highest overall agreement relates to teachers feeling protected from duties that interfere with teaching. KY and TN educators both indicate relatively high agreement with this item (74 percent), and DE educators report the lowest agreement (60 percent).

Educators report the least agreement that efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork they do. Almost seven out of 10 (68 percent) educators in TN agree paperwork is minimized while less than four out 10 (39 percent) educators in DE agree with this item.

The greatest range in responses relates to the item asking if class sizes are reasonable so that teachers can meet the needs of all students. VT educators respond most positively to this item (79 percent). DE educators indicate the least agreement (49 percent), a difference of 30 percentage points between these two states' educator response for this item.



Table 9. Agreement on Select Items Related to Time

TELL Survey Questions	CO	DE	KY	MA	MD	NC	OH	TN	VT
	Percent Agree/Strongly Agree								
Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.	63	60	74	69	69	70	63	74	62
Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do.	51	39	56	55	53	55	48	68	57
Class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students.	57	49	64	59	56	62	57	68	79

**Implications:** Consistent with TELL Surveys administered statewide for the past five years, the area of Time is regularly perceived by educators to be one of the most challenging areas. Educators across states indicate difficulty balancing the demands of rigorous accountability systems with meeting the needs of diverse learners. These data show that many educators responding the TELL Survey do not have sufficient time to meet their professional obligations. Specifically, educators report being burdened by routine paperwork. Stakeholders should consider carefully examining scheduling, use of planning time, and use of non-instructional time to maximized shared learning and minimize individual efforts to address diverse learners’ needs.

### NORTH CAROLINA

**As the state with the longest history** of the use of the survey data, policy development is extensive. The state requires the use of the data in annual school and district improvement plans, as part of the plans to assist persistently low performing schools, as part of the required training of administrators in their preparation programs. The data is a recommended artifact as part of the evaluation of all principals. Additionally, legislation was passed to address instructional planning time for teachers during the work day.

## Summary

Across nine states discussed throughout this report, almost 365,000 educators responded to the TELL Survey. In summary, educators agree that conditions in five of the eight survey areas are present in their schools. Instructional practices, professional development, time are lacking. Additionally, KY, NC, and TN educators report means consistently above the overall average and consistently at or above a 3.0 with the exception of the area of Time. MA, OH, and VT educators' responses are consistently below the overall means for survey areas. Across all states, results indicate:

- ✓ Educators report the most positive conditions associated with Facilities and Resources.
- ✓ Educators' perceptions of School Leadership vary widely across states surveyed. While educators indicate teachers are held to high standards, they indicate there is not an environment of trust where teachers can raise concerns.
- ✓ Survey respondents also indicate their schools promote Community Support and Involvement as it relates to student learning but also need strategies to ensure engagement.
- ✓ Educators perceive they have instructional autonomy in the area of Instructional Practices and Support as well as Professional Development, but lack access to state assessment data in time to impact instructional choices. Additionally, while teachers view professional learning as largely aligned with school improvement planning, they report that it lacks differentiation to meet individual needs as well as lacks an evaluation component.
- ✓ Educators across the nine states consistently report that they lack time to collaborate and plan and are burdened with routine paperwork.



*Across nine states discussed throughout this report, almost 365,000 educators responded to the TELL Survey.*

## Recommendations

This report presents information comparing each state to an overall state average for each teaching condition in the survey. Sample items within each survey area are also provided to show the range of responses within a survey area. Findings and implications should be considered within the context of the geographical and cultural differences between states, as well as the differences in number of years implementing the survey and building survey coalitions to advocate for the survey. The following recommendations are designed to be useful across states, all of which are in different phases of their teaching and learning conditions improvement work. Some states may have already implemented some of these recommendations fully, while others may be in the initial phase of implementation.

### *Recommendation 1: Support Stakeholders at the State, District, and Local levels in Understanding and Improving Teaching Conditions*

- ✓ Establish an oversight committee of policymakers and practitioners to coordinate the development of teaching standards so all stakeholders understand the key elements of building a positive school environment.
- ✓ Ensure teaching standards are widely advocated and disseminated across stakeholder groups including districts and schools.
- ✓ Create trainings and materials to be shared statewide for understanding and implementing state teaching standards.

### *Recommendation 2: Provide Supports to Help School Leadership Establish Positive Teaching and Learning Conditions in Every School.*

- ✓ Create clear expectations and/or guidelines for how school leaders can build positive teaching and learning conditions, including strategies for recruiting and retaining teachers.
- ✓ Partner with institutions of higher education to ensure new principal candidates graduate from programs with the knowledge and skills they need to create positive teaching and build trusting supportive school climates.
- ✓ Provide professional development for principals and other school leaders that support efforts to create positive teaching and learning conditions.



### *Recommendation 3: Monitor and Ensure Implementation of Teaching Standards through a Data-Driven Process*

- ✓ Create a process for collecting data to monitor teaching standards implementation including timelines and avenues for sharing results.
- ✓ Utilize the TELL Survey (or other validated surveys measuring similar concepts) at the state, district, and school level to monitor and track teaching standards implementation.
- ✓ Gather, report, and monitor other data sources that influence the teaching and learning conditions in schools to illuminate the perceptions of educators.

### *Recommendation 4: Embed Teaching and Learning Conditions Implementation in the School Improvement Process.*

- ✓ Promote the involvement of multiple stakeholder groups, including the community, in teaching conditions analysis and improvement at the local level.
- ✓ Ensure that teaching conditions data be used as part of the school improvement planning process.
- ✓ Provide professional development opportunities through multiple means for school leaders to assess and use their own TELL results to inform decisions for school improvement planning.
- ✓ Recognize schools of varying demographics that have excellent teaching conditions and successful students.
- ✓ Provide incentives and/or resources for schools that create data-driven plans to improve teaching conditions.

This report is a compilation of the voices of those who know schools best—the dedicated educators working with students every day. More than 360,000 educators across nine states responded to TELL Survey providing state and local stakeholders with data necessary to improve teaching and learning conditions in schools. Policymakers, state and local education agency staff, and stakeholders have the tools to create schools that give every teacher and student the best opportunity to be successful.



## Endnotes

### *Teaching conditions and student learning and teacher retention.*

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- Loeb, S., Darling-Hammond, L., & Luczak, J. (2005). How teaching conditions predict teacher turnover in California schools. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 80(3).
- Pogodzinski, B., Youngs, P., Frank, K., & Belman, D. (2012). Administrative climate and novices' intent to remain teaching. *The Elementary School Journal*, 113(2).

### *Job satisfaction and right-to-work laws*

- Robinson, C. (2010). Labor unions, corporations and right-to-work laws: Impacts on the American economy. *New Visions for Public Affairs*, (2).
- Daniel L. Reynolds, D. & Moser, H. The public's impression of labor unions in a right-to-work state: A comparison of the relationship between job satisfaction and union support. *National Social Science Association Journal*. Retrieved July 19, 2013 from: <http://www.nssa.us/journals/2007-27-2/2007-27-2-19.htm>.

## Appendix

Websites by state for locating state-specific data, reports, and tools are listed alphabetically below. Available data results are located under the results tab. Research briefs can be found under the resources tab on each site and district and local data tools are posted under the tools tab on each site.

[www.tellcolorado.org](http://www.tellcolorado.org)

[www.telldelaware.org](http://www.telldelaware.org)

[www.tellkentucky.org](http://www.tellkentucky.org)

[www.tellmaryland.org](http://www.tellmaryland.org)

[www.tellmass.org](http://www.tellmass.org)

[www.ntcteachingconditions.org](http://www.ntcteachingconditions.org)

[www.tellohio.org](http://www.tellohio.org)

[www.telltennessee.org](http://www.telltennessee.org)

[www.tellvermont.org](http://www.tellvermont.org)



## About New Teacher Center

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New Teacher Center focuses on improving student learning by accelerating the effectiveness of new teachers. NTC partners with states, school districts, and policymakers to design and implement systems that create sustainable, high-quality mentoring and professional development; build leadership capacity; work to enhance teaching conditions; improve retention; and transform schools in vibrant learning communities where all students succeed.



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