



# TELL Kentucky

## Creating Supportive School Conditions for Enhancing Teacher Effectiveness

*Executive Summary*



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## Executive Summary

To do their best work with students, teachers need supportive school environments that maximize their opportunity to be effective. With the leadership of Governor Steve Beshear and the Kentucky Department of Education Commissioner, Dr. Terry Holliday, a coalition of education stakeholders, working with the New Teacher Center, created the Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning Survey (TELL) Kentucky Survey to assess whether critical teaching and learning conditions are present in schools across the state. The anonymous survey of all school based licensed educators was conducted in early spring 2011 with over 42,000 educators (80 percent) of the state responding.

Data are available for the state, all school districts, and for the 1,286 (out of 1,395) schools in Kentucky that met or exceeded the 50 percent threshold for reporting. All results may be viewed online at [www.tellkentucky.org](http://www.tellkentucky.org). Key findings documented in this report include:

## Findings

- **Overall, Kentucky educators are satisfied with the teaching and learning conditions in their school.** More than eight out of 10 educators (84 percent) agree that their school is a good place to work and learn and more than four out of five teachers (83 percent) want to continue teaching in their current school building. In comparisons with five other states conducting similar surveys, Kentucky educators are more positive about their teaching conditions in several important areas including access to instructional technology and having sufficient time for professional learning opportunities that are well aligned with their school improvement plan. The area of greatest concern noted by teachers is Time. Many Kentucky educators report that class sizes are insufficient for them to meet student needs and only half agree that efforts are made to minimize paperwork that can distract from time for instruction.
- **Positive views of school leadership are related to quality standards, teacher assessment and School Based Decision Making (SBDM) Councils, but more attention may be needed in areas related to conditions that build trust and mutual respect.** Educators' perceptions of school councils are largely favorable as more than eight out of 10 (84 percent) agree that overall, their SBDM Council provides effective leadership in their school. But three out of 10 educators (or more than 12,600 teachers in the state) disagree that there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in their school and nearly three out of 10 (28 percent) report that teachers are not comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important.
- **Community Support and Involvement is most strongly connected with school-level student performance.** Nearly all educators agree that teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning and that their school maintains clear, two-way communication with parents/guardians and the community. The influence that Community Support and Involvement has a strong and statistically significant influence on student learning while controlling for student, teacher and school characteristics.

- **Community Support and Involvement and School Leadership are critical influences on teachers' future employment plans.** The analysis of individual teacher employment plans and estimated retention rates in TELL Kentucky Schools indicate that leadership support, community involvement, and the processes and systems in place to manage student conduct are important areas to address to enhance teacher retention. Teachers are more likely to remain working in schools where there are parents and school leaders that create trusting environments where teachers feel safe and engaged.
- **Many beginning teachers are reporting that supports are in place to help them adjust to their new work environment and enable them to do their best work.** For more than eight out of 10 beginning teachers (85 percent), mentors are assigned and some level of support is taking place. Eight out of 10 beginning teachers (80 percent) also agree that their school leadership consistently supports teachers. These supports appear to have had a positive impact on new teachers' employment plans. New teachers who want to remain working in their current school are significantly more likely to have received induction support than those who want to remain teaching, but move to another school.
- **Principals are positive about district supports and are more positive about whether conditions are in place across schools than teachers.** Principals report having the supports they need from districts to create positive teaching and learning environments in their schools. However, principals are significantly more likely than teachers to believe that positive school conditions are in place, particularly around areas of trust, support and effective decision making.

## Recommendations

### *Recommendation 1: Support Schools and Districts in Understanding and Improving Teaching Conditions*

- Create state standards for teaching conditions so all school faculty members understand the key elements of building a positive school climate.
- 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 Kentucky 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.

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

- Create clear expectations and/or standards for what school leaders need to know and be able to do in recruiting and retaining teachers as well as creating positive teaching and learning conditions.
- 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.
- Continue to provide professional development for principals and other school leaders that support efforts to create positive teaching and learning conditions.

***Recommendation 3: Support Schools in Engaging the Broader Community in Efforts to Understand and Improve Working Conditions.***

- Ensure that teaching conditions analysis and reform is a community effort.
- Identify and document successful community engagement practices through a thorough examination of teaching conditions data.

***Recommendation 4: Ensure that Every New Teacher Is Inducted into the Profession and Receives More Frequent Support to Improve Instruction.***

- Kentucky leaders should investigate expanding its Kentucky Teacher Induction Program (KTIP) beyond the one year, especially in District 180 schools.
- The Education Professional Standards Board (EPSB) should investigate strategies to provide accountability to ensure every new teacher receives a qualified mentor.

***Recommendation 5: Continue to Provide Systemic Opportunities for Teachers to Grow Professionally and Participate in Decisions that Impact Their Schools and Classrooms.***

***Recommendation 6: Use TELL Kentucky and Other Mechanisms to Collect Educators' Views on Teaching and Learning Conditions to Inform Local and State Human Capital Decisions.***

- Establish an oversight committee of policymakers and practitioners to coordinate the survey, and the design and implementation of strategies to improve teaching conditions.
- Gather, report and monitor other data sources that influence the teaching and learning conditions in schools to illuminate the perceptions of educators.

- Utilize survey questions (or others from validated surveys measuring similar concepts) from TELL Kentucky at the district or school level as necessary to monitor and track how faculty are responding to reforms.
- Provide teacher leaders and principals with other opportunities and incentives to conduct action research on similar topics.

The TELL Kentucky Survey data is a compilation of the voices of those who know schools best—the dedicated educators working with students every day. More than 42,000 of Kentucky’s educators responded with what they need to be effective. Policymakers, KDE and stakeholders have begun the long process of supporting schools in creating schools that give every teacher and student the best opportunity to be successful.

## 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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