

Preliminary Findings of the 2013 TELL Kentucky Survey

To do their best work with students, teachers need supportive school environments that maximize their opportunity to be effective. With the leadership of Governor Beshear and Commissioner Holliday, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and a coalition of education stakeholders¹ working with the New Teacher Center (NTC), administered the second iteration of the Kentucky Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning Survey (TELL Kentucky Survey). The TELL Kentucky Survey assesses whether educators across the state report having the resources and supports necessary to facilitate effective teaching. Findings from this initiative will inform school improvement planning.

About the Survey

The TELL Kentucky Survey is a statistically valid and reliable instrument that assesses eight research-based teaching and learning conditions.² The eight constructs are empirically linked to student achievement and teacher retention and include: Time, Facilities and Resources, Community Support and Involvement, Managing Student Conduct, Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, Professional

Development, and Instructional Practices and Support.³ See Table 1 for descriptions of each area. Additionally, the TELL Survey includes questions for novice teachers (those in their first three years in the profession) to assess induction support and for principals to assess district-level supports. Response options for core questions use a Likert scale and range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. For this brief, results are summarized using a rate of agreement that combines the strongly agree and agree categories.

1. The coalition of education stakeholders includes Governor Beshear, Commissioner Holliday, the Kentucky Department of Education, the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, the Kentucky School Boards Association, the Kentucky Association of School Administrators, the Kentucky Education Association, The Education Professional Standards Board, the Kentucky Chamber, the Kentucky Association of School Councils, the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, TELL Kentucky, and the Kentucky PTA.

2. 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.

3. See endnotes for research.

Note: The results presented in these initial findings may vary slightly (within one percent) from the statewide data available in the web-based "detailed report" due to rounding the agree and strongly agree categories separately and then again rounding to a whole number. The "summary" report as well as holding the cursor over the detailed report bar graph provides agreement rates to a tenth of a percent. Additionally, some small variation (less than one percent) may result from final cleaning and data posting that occurred after these trends were compiled. In all cases, these small variations do not change reported trends.

TABLE 1. 2013 TELL KENTUCKY SURVEY CONSTRUCTS

Time—Available time to plan, collaborate, provide instruction, and eliminate barriers in order to maximize instructional time during the school day

Facilities and Resources—Availability of instructional, technology, office, communication, and school resources to teachers

Community Support and Involvement—Community and parent/guardian communication and influence in the school

Managing Student Conduct—Policies and practices to address student conduct issues and ensure a safe school environment

Professional Development—Availability and quality of learning opportunities for educators to enhance their teaching

Teacher Leadership—Teacher involvement in decisions that impact classroom and school practices

School Leadership—The Ability of school leadership to create trusting, supportive environments and address teacher concerns

Instructional Practices and Support—Data and support available to teachers to improve instruction and student learning

This summary will provide a brief overview of major trends emerging from preliminary analyses at the state aggregate level.

State Context

Since the release of the 2011 TELL Kentucky Survey results, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and each of the TELL Kentucky Partners engaged in extensive outreach with stakeholders across the Commonwealth. The goals of outreach efforts were to emphasize the importance of the TELL data and to provide guidance in how to use the TELL data for improvement planning. Because educator professional development is largely executed by various stakeholder organizations rather than through the KDE, TELL Partners such as the Kentucky Association of School Administrators, Kentucky School Boards Association, Kentucky Association of School Councils and Kentucky Education Association developed their own guides using the TELL data and incorporated this information into professional development offerings across the state, ensuring wide dissemination. Additionally, based on the 2011 TELL Kentucky Survey results, the Kentucky Board of Education implemented specific policies to address areas of need identified through the data. In 2011, Kentucky educators indicated needing support

in the areas of Time, School Leadership, and Professional Development. The following initiatives resulted:

- The new Kentucky Professional Growth and Effectiveness System incorporates the use of the TELL data as a required component of the evaluation tool being developed to assess administrator effectiveness.
- The Consolidated District Improvement Plan (CDIP) and the Consolidated School Improvement Plans (CSIP) require the use of the TELL data.
- The Kentucky Learning Forward initiative relies on 2011 TELL data when examining policy recommendations impacting the use of teachers' time and continued opportunities for teachers to collaborate.
- The Kentucky Department of Education asked every KDE office to incorporate the use of the 2011 TELL data into their discussions with respective stakeholder groups. All field staff, including technology partners, used the TELL data as a basis for conversation around how to improve teaching and learning conditions.

- The Kentucky Leadership Networks support professional learning opportunities and curriculum and assessment development aligned to teaching conditions standards implementation.

Combined, the outreach efforts and policies resulted in wide-spread knowledge and use of the 2011 TELL Kentucky Survey data. This brief uses the 2013 TELL Kentucky Survey data to assess progress across survey areas, including those targeted by KDE and partner organizations.

Response Rate

NTC administered the anonymous, full-population survey to all school-based licensed educators spring 2013. Over 43,700

educators (87 percent) in the state responded (Table 2). This represents a seven-percentage-point increase from the 80 percent responding in 2011. Response rates vary by school type. As Table 2 demonstrates, 90 percent of elementary school educators participated in the survey, 86 percent of middle school educators responded, and 83 percent of high school educators responded. Additionally, 75 percent of educators assigned to schools such as alternative education settings responded.

Ninety percent of schools (1,296/1,441) met or exceeded the 50 percent response rate (and at least 5 respondents) threshold required to receive an individual school-level data report. All results may be viewed online at www.tellkentucky.org.

TABLE 2. 2013 SURVEY RESPONSE RATE BY SCHOOL TYPE			
School Type	Headcount	Responded	Percent Responded
Elementary	25,407	22,880	90.1
Middle	9,548	8,189	85.8
High	13,826	11,408	82.5
Other	1,719	1,284	74.7
TOTAL	50,500	43,761	86.7

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Preliminary Findings

The rates of agreement by item and survey area were reviewed and compared between 2011 and 2013 results. Preliminary findings identify items across conditions with relatively high or low levels of agreement. Items and rates of agreement are reported within select survey areas below. Kentucky educators report higher rates of agreement in 2013 on a number of areas compared to 2011 results.

Kentucky educators report high increases in rates of agreement across items related to Instructional Practices and Support since 2011. Educators rate this area of the survey highest overall and each of the eight items in this area increased. Educators indicate having structures and supports to facilitate instructional delivery (Table 3).

- More than eight out of 10 (84 percent) report that teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery compared to 77 percent in 2011. This represents an increase of six percentage points.
- More educators in 2013 agree that teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students compared to 2011 (74 percent in 2013 compared to 68 percent in 2011).

- Nearly all respondents (98 percent) in 2013 agree that the curriculum taught in their school is aligned with Common Core Standards compared to more than nine out of 10 (92 percent) in 2011.

Gains in agreement are present across all items related to School Leadership. This area is also rated high overall compared to other areas in 2013 and also shows increases relative to other areas. Communication between school leadership and faculty as well as the supports that school leadership provide exhibit the strongest gains in this area (Table 4).

- More educators agree that teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them in 2013 (72 percent) than they did in 2011 (67 percent).
- Over 80 percent of educators (84 percent in 2013) agree that the school improvement team provides effective leadership at their schools compared to 79 percent in 2011.
- Eight out of 10 educators (80 percent) report that their school leadership consistently supports teachers in 2013 compared to three-quarters (75 percent) in the previous survey administration.

TABLE 3. SELECT ITEMS RELATED TO INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND SUPPORT

Survey Item	Percent Agree		2013-2011
	2013	2011	
Teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery (i.e. pacing, materials and pedagogy).	83.5	77.3	6.2
Teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students.	74.1	67.9	6.2
The curriculum taught in this school is aligned with Common Core Standards.	97.7	92.0	5.7
Teachers work in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices.	89.9	84.6	5.3
Provided supports (i.e. instructional coaching, professional learning communities, etc.) translate to improvements in instructional practices by teachers.	86.2	82.4	3.8

TABLE 4. SELECT ITEMS RELATED TO SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Survey Item	Percent Agree		2013-2011
	2013	2011	
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	72.1	67.6	4.5
The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school.	83.7	79.2	4.5
The school leadership consistently supports teachers.	79.6	75.3	4.3
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.	74.5	70.4	4.1
The faculty is recognized for accomplishments.	80.7	77.0	3.7

More educators agree that teachers participate in decision making and school improvement processes. In addition to increases in agreement about teacher decision making about instruction and educational issues, more educators report that teachers are being included in decision making and processes outside of their own classrooms (Table 5).

- Fewer than seven out of 10 educators (69 percent) reported that their faculty had an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems in 2011 compared to three-quarters (75 percent) in 2013. This represents a six-percentage-point increase in agreement between administrations.

- More than two-thirds of Kentucky educators in 2013 (67 percent) indicate that teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in their school. This is a five-percentage-point gain from 2011 (62 percent).
- More than eight out of 10 educators in 2013 (83 percent) acknowledge that in their schools they take steps to solve problems. This is an increase of 4 percentage points from 2011 (79 percent).

TABLE 5. SELECT ITEMS RELATED TO TEACHER LEADERSHIP

Survey Item	Percent Agree		2013-2011
	2013	2011	
The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	74.8	68.9	5.9
Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school.	66.6	62.1	4.5
In this school we take steps to solve problems.	82.7	78.5	4.2
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	84.9	81.0	3.9
Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.	83.5	79.7	3.8

While the rates of agreement for items related to Time are lower compared to other survey areas, they increased the most between administrations. The area of Time demonstrates the most increase in rate of agreement across survey iterations with each item gaining more than five percentage points. Two individual items in this area increased the most across all items. Results indicate that there is the least agreement that routine paperwork is minimized and class sizes are reasonable. However, these items also demonstrate growth between surveys (Table 6).

- More than two-thirds of educators in 2013 (67 percent) report that the non-instructional time provided for teachers in their school is sufficient compared to about six out of 10 (61 percent) in 2011.
- Seventy-three percent of educators indicate that teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues in 2013. This is an increase of seven percentage points from two-thirds (66 percent) in 2011.
- Nearly seven out of 10 respondents (69 percent) agree that teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students compared to 63 percent in the previous administration.

TABLE 6. SELECT ITEMS RELATED TO TIME

Survey Item	Percent Agree		2013-2011
	2013	2011	
The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.	67.4	60.6	6.8
Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.	72.7	66.0	6.7
Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.	68.6	62.6	6.0
Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do.	56.4	50.5	5.9
Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions	70.7	65.1	5.6
Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.	74.2	68.9	5.3
Class sizes are reasonable such that teachers have the time available to meet the needs of all students.	64.0	58.8	5.2

THE AREA OF TIME demonstrates the most increase in rate of agreement across survey iterations with each item gaining more than five percentage points.

Summary

All survey areas show an increase in the rates of agreement between the 2011 and 2013 survey administrations. The area of Instructional Practices and Supports indicates the highest overall rate of agreement and also demonstrates large increase between surveys. Educators report the lowest rates of agreement on items related to Time; however, this survey area shows the most increase between the 2011 and 2013 survey administrations.

Next Steps

To provide support and inform Kentucky educators, stakeholders and policymakers around the results of this survey, a number of resources and reports are being developed, including:

- A series of tools for schools and districts to use in facilitating dialogue on their teaching and learning conditions and how to utilize this as an artifact to inform school improvement planning.
- Additional analyses and reports examining the connections of teaching and learning conditions with student achievement and teacher retention; validity and reliability of the survey instrument; and a variety of group comparisons (principals and teachers, charter and non-charter).

All resources and reporting will be made available electronically at www.tellkentucky.org.

Endnotes

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About the New Teacher Center

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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