

How Different Educators Perceive Teaching Conditions

Comparisons Across Participant Groups

With the leadership of Governor Beshear and Commissioner Holliday, the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) and a coalition of partners¹ worked collaboratively with the New Teacher Center (NTC) to administer the second iteration of the Kentucky Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning Survey (TELL) in spring 2013. The TELL Survey is a full population survey designed to report educators' perceptions about the presence of teaching and learning conditions. The TELL Survey groups the conditions into eight distinct areas or constructs including: Time, Facilities and Resources, Professional Development, School Leadership, Teacher Leadership, Instructional Practices and Support, Managing Student Conduct, and Community Support and Involvement.

This brief is part of a series of reports providing results from the 2013 TELL Kentucky Survey. Briefs describing preliminary findings and summarizing instrument design and psychometric properties can be found on the TELL Kentucky website under the Resources tab (www.tellkentucky.org/resources). These two documents also offer the research base supporting the association between teaching and learning conditions and important outcomes, such as student performance and teacher retention. Please refer to them for more detail.

1. The coalition of education partners includes the Governor's Office, Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky Association of School Superintendents, Kentucky School Boards Association, Kentucky Association of School Administrators, Kentucky Education Association, Education Professional Standards Board, Kentucky Chamber, Kentucky Association of School Councils, Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education, and the Kentucky Parent Teachers Association.

The purpose of this brief is to highlight discrepancies between and within groups of participants, and subsets of schools, as well as changes that occurred since the 2011 administration. This report provides a summary of rates of agreement across constructs and items by different participant groups and demographic characteristics. Item-level data demonstrate the largest rates of agreement differences between participant groups. Construct-level data indicate differences within and across constructs by participant group. Results are provided to illustrate these differences and provide context for school and district improvement efforts.

Response Rate

NTC administered the anonymous survey to all school-based licensed educators in early 2013. The data for these analyses include more than 43,000 educators in Kentucky, yielding a response rate of 87 percent, which by social science standards for online surveys is considered strong.² This is a seven-percentage-point increase from the 80 percent collected in the 2011 administration. Respondents in 2013 include several categories of educators: 88 percent are teachers, more than two percent are principals, two percent are assistant principals, and seven percent are other education professionals such as librarians and school psychologists. This distribution is similar to the data collected two years ago (Table 1).

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

Respondents*	2013 Response Rate (N)	2011 Response Rate (N)
Teachers	88.3 (38,621)	88.9 (37,381)
Principals	2.5 (1,091)	2.5 (1,057)
Assistant Principals	2 (895)	1.8 (743)
Other Education Professionals	7.1 (3,086)	6.8 (2,844)
Total**	43,761	42,025

*Note. The respondent category "teachers" includes instructional coaches, department heads, literacy specialists, etc. The respondent category "Other Education Professionals" includes school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, etc.

** Less than one percent (68) of respondents did not include a defined position and are excluded from the analysis

Response rates also vary by school type. As Table 2 demonstrates the 2013 sample participating in the survey includes 90 percent of elementary school educators, compared to 86 percent in 2011; 86 percent of middle school educators, compared to 80 in 2011; 83 percent of high school educators, compared to 70 percent in 2011.

Of the 1,450 schools across the state of Kentucky, 1,296 met or exceeded the 50 percent minimum response rate threshold of 50 percent to have access to individual school-level reports on their survey results. Those results can be accessed at www.tellkentucky.org.

School Type	2013			2011		
	Responded	Headcount	% Responded	Responded	Headcount	% Responded
Elementary	22,880	25,407	90.1	22,129	25,622	86.4
Middle	8,189	9,548	85.8	8,071	10,082	80.1
High	11,408	13,826	82.5	10,341	14,713	70.3
Total	43,761	50,500	86.7	42,025	52,349	80.3

THE 2013 SAMPLE PARTICIPATING in the TELL Kentucky Survey includes 90 percent of elementary school educators, compared to 86 percent in 2011; 86 percent of middle school educators, compared to 80 in 2011; 83 percent of high school educators, compared to 70 percent in 2011.

Findings

The Preliminary Findings brief provides data aggregated at the state level. This brief provides comparisons in order to show variation in the perceived presence of teaching conditions based on one's position, years of experience, and school level. The descriptive information included here demonstrates that reporting the data by different demographic and organizational characteristics presents alternative ways to view and think about the results. Implications are provided after each comparison.

Comparisons by Position

Finding: Principals view teaching conditions more positively than teachers.

Principals report higher rates of agreement across almost all survey items. Items in Table 3 highlight the greatest differences in perceptions between teachers and principals in 2013. On all but two survey items, principals reported higher rates of

agreement compared to teachers. Examples of large differences between the two groups can be found in all survey areas. Some of the largest discrepancies in perception between teachers and principals are in the areas of Time and School Leadership.

- The question with the greatest difference (39 percentage points) between principals and teachers, 'Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do,' is in the area of time. More than nine out of 10 principals (93 percent) agree with this item compared to about half of teachers (54 percent) who agree with this item.
- Almost all principals (99 percent) indicate that teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them compared to seven out of 10 teachers who agree (70 percent).
- Nearly all principals (99 percent) report that school administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct compared to 71 percent of educators who agree.

TABLE 3. 2013 ITEM RATES OF AGREEMENT BY PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

Survey Items	Percent Agree		Difference
	Principals	Teachers	
Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do.	93.0	54.1	38.9
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	98.8	70.2	28.6
School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct.	99.0	71.3	27.7
Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions.	95.5	69.0	26.5
Teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students.	98.1	72.1	26.0
The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.	90.8	65.2	25.6
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.	97.6	73.0	24.6
Students at this school follow rules of conduct.	97.0	72.9	24.1

Comparisons with 2011 TELL Survey data indicate similar patterns of principals consistently viewing teaching conditions more positively than teachers. See Appendix for details.

Implication: *Teacher and principal differences in perceived conditions is not uncommon.¹ However, the impact of these differences is important. For a staff to prioritize areas of need, there must first be a shared understanding of the most pressing concerns. Administrators play a critical role in defining areas of focus as school leaders. Therefore acknowledging the consistent differences between teachers and principals is an important first step. The TELL data presents an opportunity to facilitate staff discussions.*

Comparisons by Future Employment Plans

Finding: *Teachers who intend to stay at their current school report more positive teaching conditions than those who intend to move to a different school.*

The TELL Kentucky Survey includes a question that asks teachers to describe their immediate professional plans.

“Stayers” includes those teachers who intend to remain teaching in their current schools. “Movers” includes those who want to remain teaching, but not in their current schools. A comparison of stayers versus movers suggests that these two groups of educators view their teaching and learning conditions differently. Stayers report higher rates of agreement on every question of the survey than their mover colleagues (Table 4).

- Many of the questions with the greatest percentage point differences between stayers and movers reside in the area of School Leadership. The rate of agreement among stayers is more than twice the rate of agreement reported by movers on items concerning: the school leadership consistently supports teachers; teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them; and teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making at their schools.
- Almost nine out of 10 stayers (88 percent) agree that overall their school is a good place to work and learn compared to fewer than half of movers (47 percent).

TABLE 4. 2013 ITEM RATES OF AGREEMENT BY STAYERS AND MOVERS

Survey Items	Percent Agree		Difference
	Stayers	Movers	
The school leadership consistently supports teachers.	81.7	38.9	42.8
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	74.0	32.2	41.8
Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.	87.9	47.2	40.7
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about leadership issues.	81.3	42.5	38.8
Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school.	68.6	31.0	37.6
The faculty and leadership have a shared vision.	85.9	48.4	37.5
The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school.	85.8	49.8	36.0
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about the use of time in my school.	81.4	45.7	35.7

Additionally, six of the eight questions with the greatest differences between stayers and movers in 2013 are also the same questions with the greatest differences in 2011 (see Appendix).

Implications: Teachers identify positive teaching conditions as important factors in deciding to continue teaching at a school.ⁱⁱ Specifically, the TELL data indicate teachers intending to remain in current assignments report strong School Leadership compared to teachers who intend to leave their current schools. Considering which conditions contribute to teachers' plans to stay or leave a school provides staff with areas of focus for school improvement planning.

Comparisons by Years of Experience Teaching

Finding: Most beginning teachers indicate receiving additional support, however, they receive inconsistent mentor support.

Most beginning teachers indicate access to support structures. More than eight out of 10 beginning teachers engage in regular communication with principals (88 percent), have an orientation to their role (83 percent), and are formally assigned a mentor (81 percent). Less than half of beginning teachers report formal time to meet with mentors during school hours (49 percent), release time to observe other teachers (46 percent), and a reduced workload (17 percent). See Table 5.

TABLE 5. PERCENT OF BEGINNING TEACHERS INDICATING SCHOOL SUPPORTS

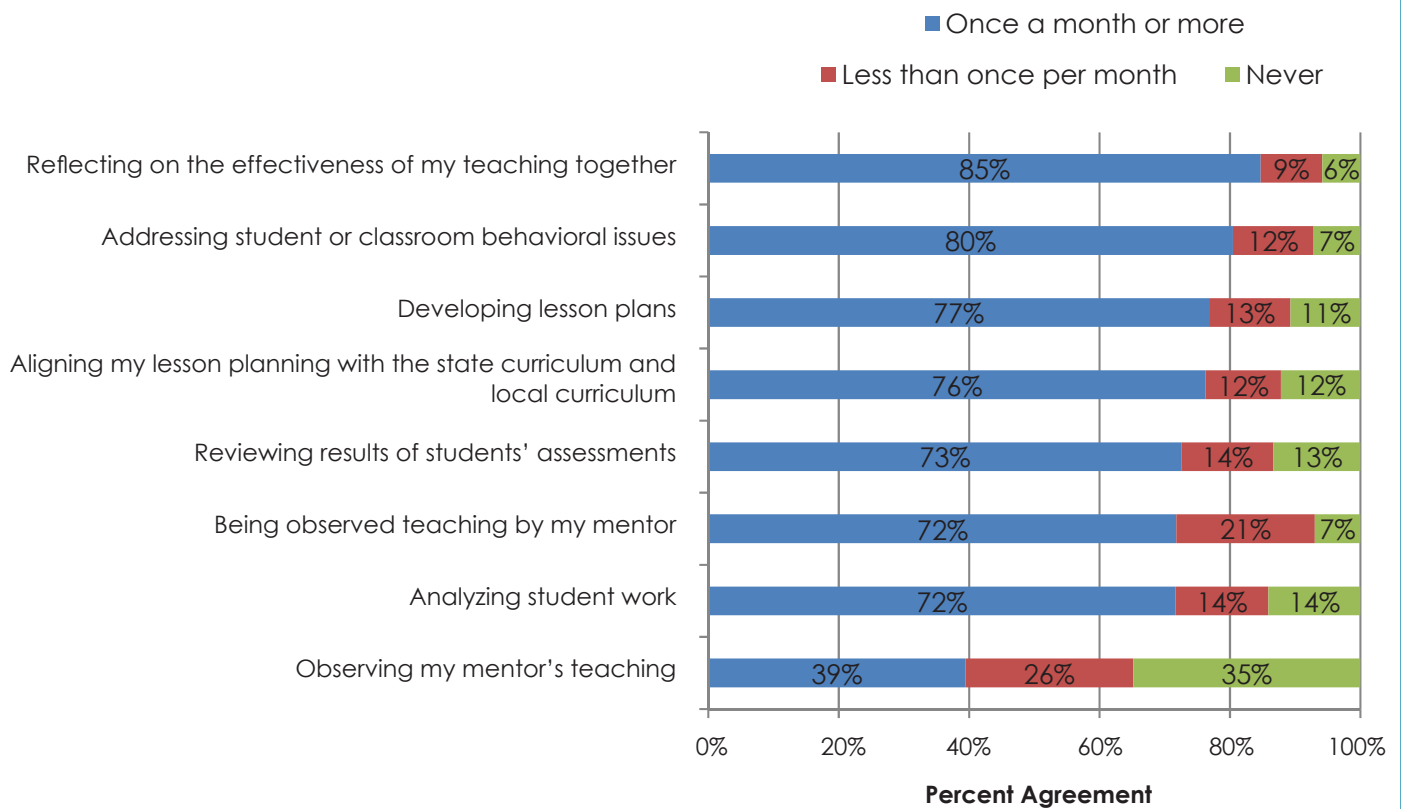
Survey Items	Percent Agree 2013	
	Yes	No
Regular communication with principals, other administrator, or department chair	87.5	12.5
Orientation for new teachers	82.6	17.4
Formally assigned mentor	81.1	18.9
Access to professional learning communities where I could discuss concerns with other teacher(s)	76.3	23.7
Common planning time with other teachers	76.0	24.0
Seminars specifically designed for new teachers	69.0	31.0
Formal time to meet with mentor during school hours	49.3	50.7
Release time to observe other teachers	46.2	53.8
Reduced workload	16.6	83.4

MOST BEGINNING TEACHERS INDICATE receiving additional support, however, they receive inconsistent mentor support.

The TELL Kentucky survey also captured the frequency with which supports are provided to beginning teachers as perceived by those educators in their first three years of teaching experience (Figure 1).

- More than eight out of 10 of beginning teachers report receiving mentor support once a month or more to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching (85 percent) and to address student or classroom behavior issues (80 percent).
- More than three-quarters of beginning teachers report similar frequency of support in developing their lesson plans (77 percent) and aligning their lesson planning with state and local curriculum (76 percent).
- More than seven out of 10 acknowledge support at least once a month in reviewing results of students' assessments (73 percent), being observed by their mentor (72 percent), and analyzing student work (72 percent).
- Fewer than four out of 10 beginning teachers (39 percent) report observing their mentor's teaching once a month or more.

FIGURE 1. 2013 FREQUENCY OF MENTOR SUPPORT



Many of the findings reported in 2013 show slight improvement (one to three percentage points) compared to those collected in 2011 for frequency of mentor support. See the Appendix for 2011 findings on frequency of mentor support.

Of the supports provided, beginning teachers are also asked how much that support influenced their practice in a variety of areas. More than three-quarters of beginning teacher respondents report that these supports had at least some influence on their practice (Table 6). These findings are similar to those observed in 2011 (See Appendix).

TABLE 6. 2013 DEGREE TO WHICH MENTOR SUPPORTS INFLUENCE BEGINNING TEACHER PRACTICE

Beginning Teacher Supports	At Least Some Influence*
Instructional strategies	89.8%
Providing emotional support	88.9%
Complying with policies and procedures	88.5%
Classroom management strategies	88.3%
Working collaboratively with other teachers at my school	86.0%
Differentiating instruction based upon individual student needs and characteristics	85.7%
Completing administrative paperwork	85.7%
Creating a supportive, equitable classroom where differences are valued	85.1%
Using data to identify student needs	84.5%
Connecting with key resource professionals (e.g., coaches, counselors, etc.)	80.6%
Subject matter I teach	75.4%
Enlisting the help of family members, parents and/or guardians	75.2%

* 'At Least Some Influence' combines the following categories: 'Some', 'Quite a Bit', and 'A Great Deal'

MORE THAN THREE-QUARTERS of beginning teacher respondents report that provided supports had at least some influence on their practice.

Overall, beginning teachers value the supports they are provided. Nine out of 10 report that mentor support improves their instructional strategies. Over 88 percent of beginning teachers also indicate that mentors provide emotional support, help them understand policies, and help with classroom management strategies.

Generally, patterns from 2011 data are similar to the 2013 data (see Appendix for details).

Implication: While research indicates that a lack of beginning teacher support is not uncommon, the consequences are severe, including loss of teachers and invested resources.ⁱⁱⁱ The majority of Kentucky beginning teachers report receiving school and mentor supports. District and school staff can use the TELL data to examine mentoring supports offered and enhance this area identified as critical to retaining beginning teachers.

Finding: New teachers perceive more positive teaching conditions compared to veteran teachers.

Factors like the number of years of experience in teaching influence respondents' perceptions of whether or not conditions are present. Across constructs, beginning teachers report higher rates of agreement compared to veteran teachers (Figure 2). The largest decrease in rate of agreement between consecutive groupings of teachers is between the first two groupings of teachers, first-year teachers and second- and third-year teachers, (four percentage points) and are the lowest for teachers with seven to 10 years of experience. Rates of agreement are generally high and stable for Kentucky teachers and increase for those with 11 or more years of experience. Additionally, these trends are a slight improvement over agreement rates recorded in 2011 (all within two to four percentage points, see Appendix).

FIGURE 2. 2013 AVERAGE RATES OF AGREEMENT ACROSS ALL CONSTRUCTS BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

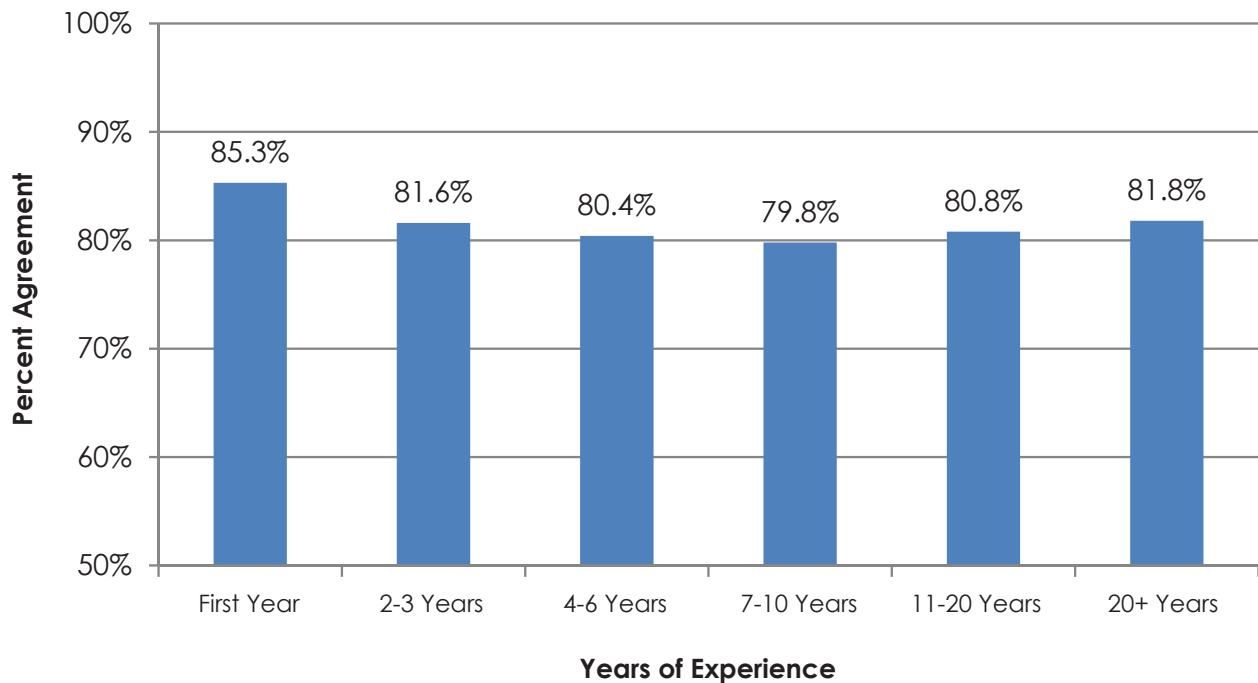
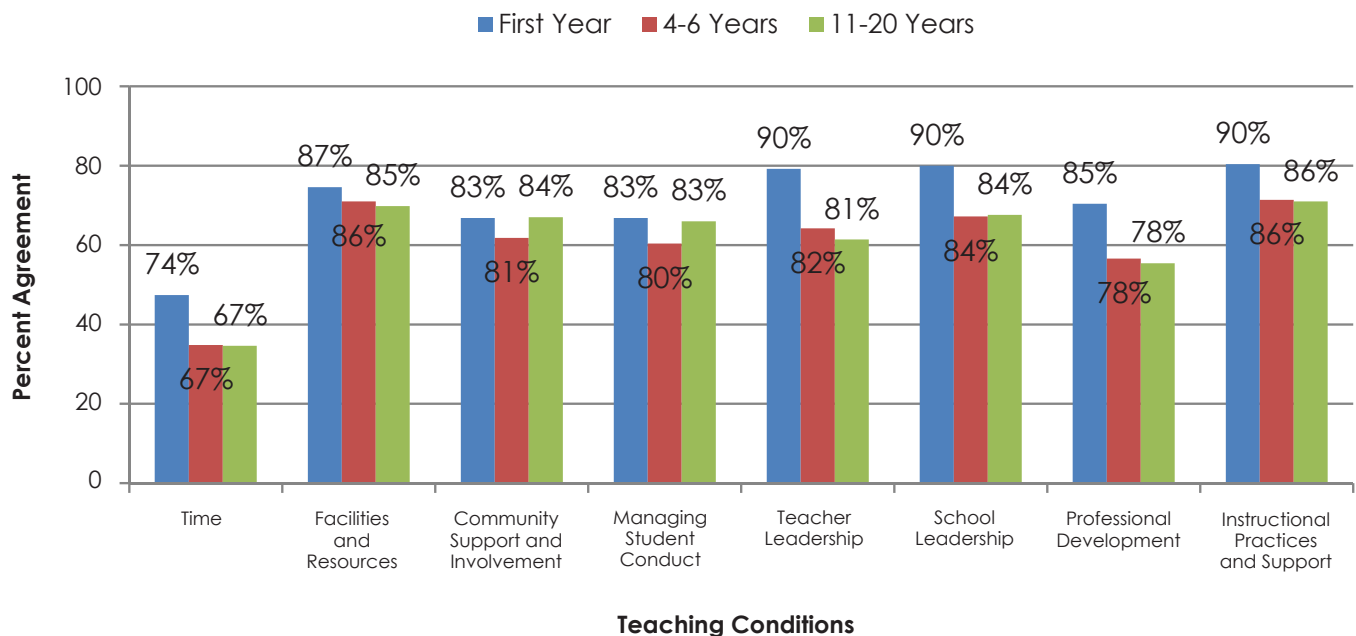


Figure 3 shows average rates of agreement by construct for first-year teachers, teachers with four to six years of experience, and teachers with 11 to 20 years of experience to demonstrate differences by years in the profession. Generally, beginning teachers report the most positive teaching conditions.

- Teachers, regardless of experience levels, report similar rates of agreement for Facilities and Resources, Community Support and Involvement, and Managing Student Conduct.

- Educators, regardless of experience level, report the lowest rates of agreement for the Time construct.
- First-year teachers report rates of agreement five or more percentage points higher than veterans in the constructs of Time, Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, and Professional Development.
- Across constructs, teachers with 11 to 20 years of experience report similar rates of agreement as teachers with four to six years of experience.

FIGURE 3. 2013 AVERAGE RATE OF AGREEMENT BY CONSTRUCT BY EXPERIENCE LEVELS



EDUCATORS, REGARDLESS OF EXPERIENCE level, report the lowest rates of agreement for the Time construct.

These findings are similar to those observed in 2011 (see Appendix).

Implication: Positive teaching conditions are related to higher teacher retention. Regardless of which schools teachers are assigned to, they are more likely to remain if they work in a positive school environment.^{iv} Additionally, regardless of years of experience, teachers in positive school environments report more satisfaction.^v The TELL data show a pattern where teachers' perceptions of positive conditions generally decrease during middle years of service and remain the same or increase slightly in later years. This pattern may indicate areas for staff to investigate, particularly related to community engagement and student conduct.

Comparison by School Level

Finding: Elementary educators report more positive teaching conditions in all areas except Time.

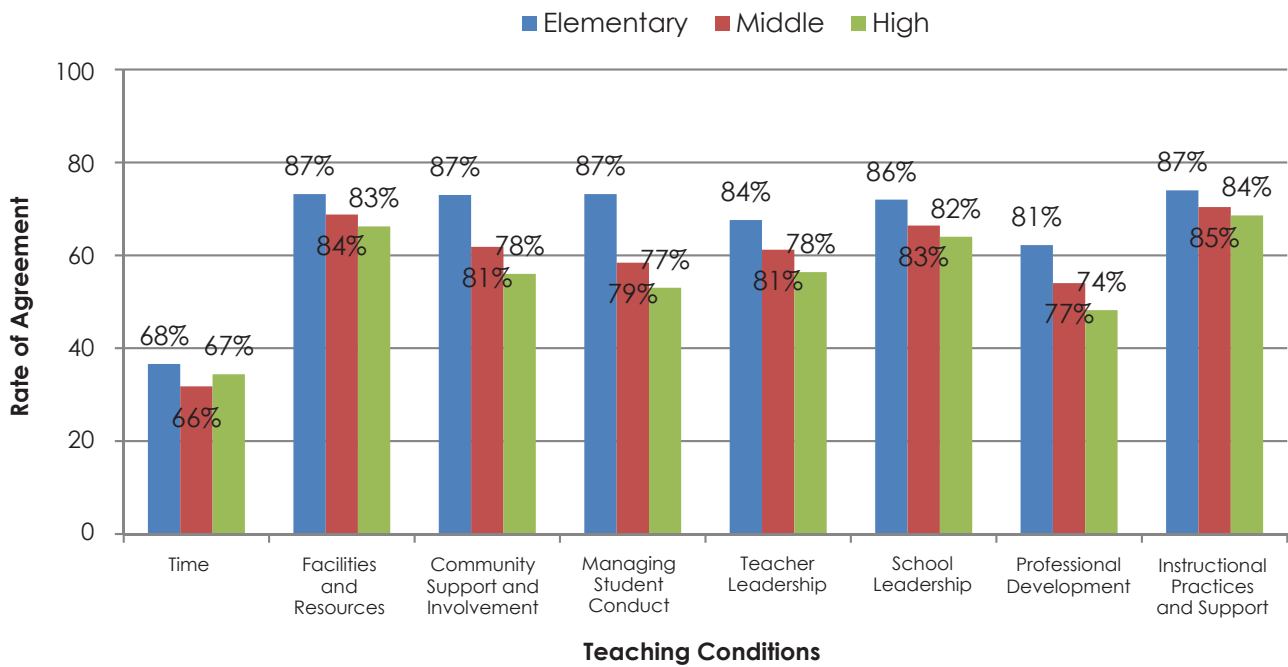
As illustrated in Figure 4, rates of agreement by construct vary by what level educators teach (elementary, middle, or

high schools). Educators in elementary schools report higher agreement than middle or high school teachers, particularly in the areas of Community Support and Involvement, Managing Student Conduct, Teacher Leadership, and Professional Development.

- The largest difference in rates of agreement between school levels is reported for the area of Managing Student Conduct, where high school educators report less agreement than middle school educators (2 percentage point difference) and elementary school educators (10 percentage point difference).
- The lowest rates of agreement regardless of school level are reported in the area of Time.
- The least variation in rate of agreement across school levels is reported for the construct of Time.

These findings are similar to what was observed in 2011 across levels (see Appendix).

FIGURE 4. 2013 AVERAGE RATE OF AGREEMENT BY CONSTRUCT BY SCHOOL LEVEL



Implication: While finding that elementary school teachers perceive more positive conditions compared to secondary teachers is not surprising, typically due to smaller size and higher levels of community involvement,^{vi} it should not be overlooked that research documents that strong teaching conditions in other areas, such as school leadership, can reduce differences in perceived conditions across school levels.^{vii} The pattern TELL data exhibit by school level provide an opportunity for secondary staff to examine gaps in perception of teaching conditions, specifically in the area of Managing Student Conduct and Community Support and Involvement.

Summary

As this brief demonstrates, there are differences between educators across the state and how they perceive their teaching and learning conditions based on position, intent to remain at a school, years of experience, and school level. Principals report higher rates of agreement across almost all survey items compared to teachers. Teachers intending to stay at their current school report higher rates of agreement on every question of the survey than their colleagues planning to leave the school. Across constructs, beginning teachers report higher rates of agreement compared to veteran teachers. Across all constructs, teachers in elementary schools report higher agreement than middle or high school teachers.

These differences have important implications for school improvement planning and should be examined closely by local stakeholders. The TELL Kentucky data provide an entry point for conversations at the district and school level.

Understanding the perspectives represented by different stakeholders allows educators to collaboratively identify areas of priority.

- School improvement planning should be a collaborative and inclusive process to capture the different perspectives of as many people as possible across a school. Including all stakeholders in the development of a plan is an important step to encouraging dialogue about new processes.
- Wide differences between educators in a school about teaching and learning conditions can sometimes be challenging to talk about. Efforts to set collaborative norms, agree on common definitions, focus topics, and approach the process transparently and objectively are important to promote open and safe discussion about teaching and learning conditions.
- Wide differences across staff can sometimes be the result of complex and long-term challenges in communication, procedures, and/or behaviors. Solutions to some of these identified challenges may be complex and take time to explore.

Results of the TELL Kentucky Survey are an important tool in identifying areas for school improvement planning. The supporting tools, graphic organizers, drilldown processes, and facilitators guides located at www.tellkentucky.org can be a valuable resource to engaging school staff in efficient and meaningful dialog about their teaching and learning conditions.

SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING should be a collaborative and inclusive process to capture the different perspectives of as many people as possible across a school.

Appendix. 2011 TELL Data Across Comparison Groups

TABLE A-1. 2011 GREATEST ITEM DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

Survey Items	Percent Agree		Difference
	Principals	Teachers	
Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do.	86.8	48.5	38.3
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	98.3	65.6	32.7
School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct.	99.0	67.8	31.2
Teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students.	95.4	65.7	29.7
The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems.	95.3	67.2	28.1
Students at this school follow rules of conduct.	97.0	69.4	27.6
Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions.	90.8	63.4	27.4
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about leadership issues.	98.9	72.1	26.8

TABLE A-2. 2011 ITEM RATES OF AGREEMENT BY STAYERS AND MOVERS

Survey Items	Percent Agree		Difference
	Stayers	Movers	
The school leadership consistently supports teachers.	77.6	32.7	44.9
Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.	87.6	43.1	44.5
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	69.6	27.1	42.5
The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school.	81.8	40.5	41.3
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about leadership issues.	76.2	35.1	41.1
The faculty and leadership have a shared vision.	83.0	43.5	39.5
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about managing student conduct.	77.7	39.7	38.0
In this school we take steps to solve problems.	80.7	42.8	37.9

TABLE A-3. PERCENT OF BEGINNING TEACHERS INDICATING SCHOOL SUPPORTS

Survey Items	Percent			
	2013		2011	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Regular communication with principals, other administrator, or department chair	87.5	12.5	85.7	14.3
Orientation for new teachers	82.6	17.4	84.7	15.3
Formally assigned mentor	81.1	18.9	85.0	15.0
Access to professional learning communities where I could discuss concerns with other teacher(s)	76.3	23.7	71.1	28.9
Common planning time with other teachers	76.0	24.0	72.5	27.5
Seminars specifically designed for new teachers	69.0	31.0	71.3	28.7
Formal time to meet with mentor during school hours	49.3	50.7	50.4	49.6
Release time to observe other teachers	46.2	53.8	43.3	56.7
Reduced workload	16.6	83.4	14.1	85.9

FIGURE A-1. 2011 FREQUENCY OF MENTOR SUPPORTS

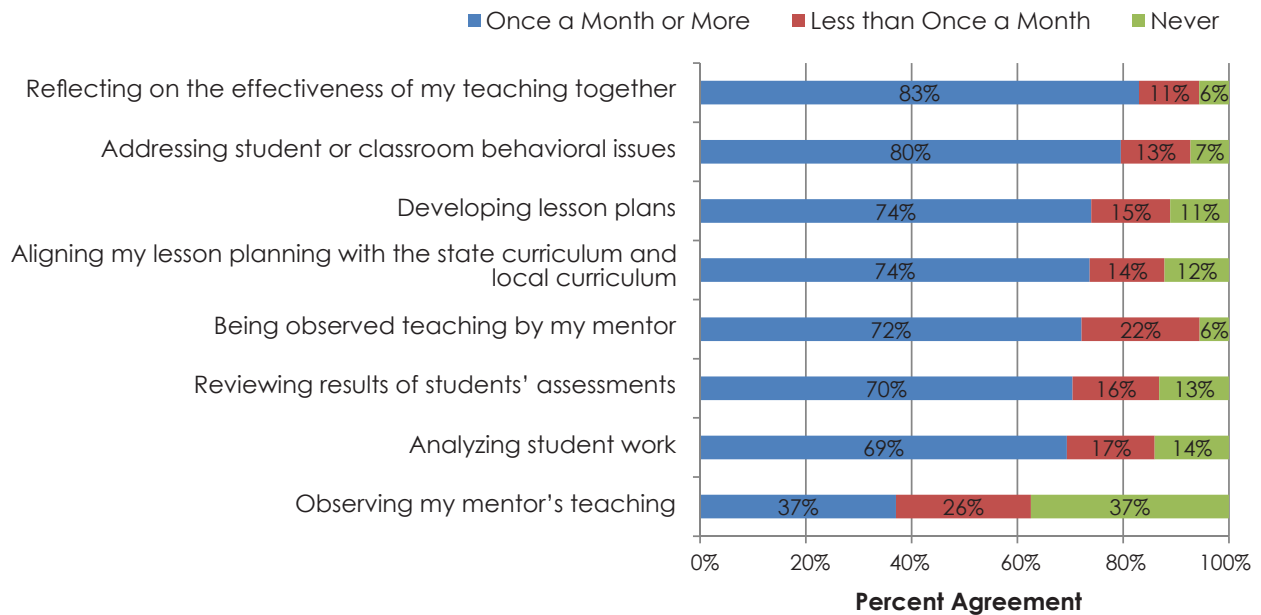


TABLE A-4. 2011 DEGREE TO WHICH MENTOR SUPPORTS INFLUENCE BEGINNING TEACHER PRACTICE

Beginning Teacher Supports	At Least Some Influence*
Instructional strategies	88.2%
Providing emotional support	87.0%
Complying with policies and procedures	85.6%
Classroom management strategies	84.9%
Working collaboratively with other teachers at my school	83.2%
Completing administrative paperwork	82.4%
Differentiating instruction based upon individual student needs and characteristics	82.3%
Creating a supportive, equitable classroom where differences are valued	82.1%
Using data to identify student needs	80.5%
Connecting with key resource professionals (e.g., coaches, counselors, etc.)	75.9%
Subject matter I teach	72.4%
Enlisting the help of family members, parents and/or guardians	70.5%

FIGURE A-2. 2011 AVERAGE RATES OF AGREEMENT ACROSS ALL CONSTRUCTS BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

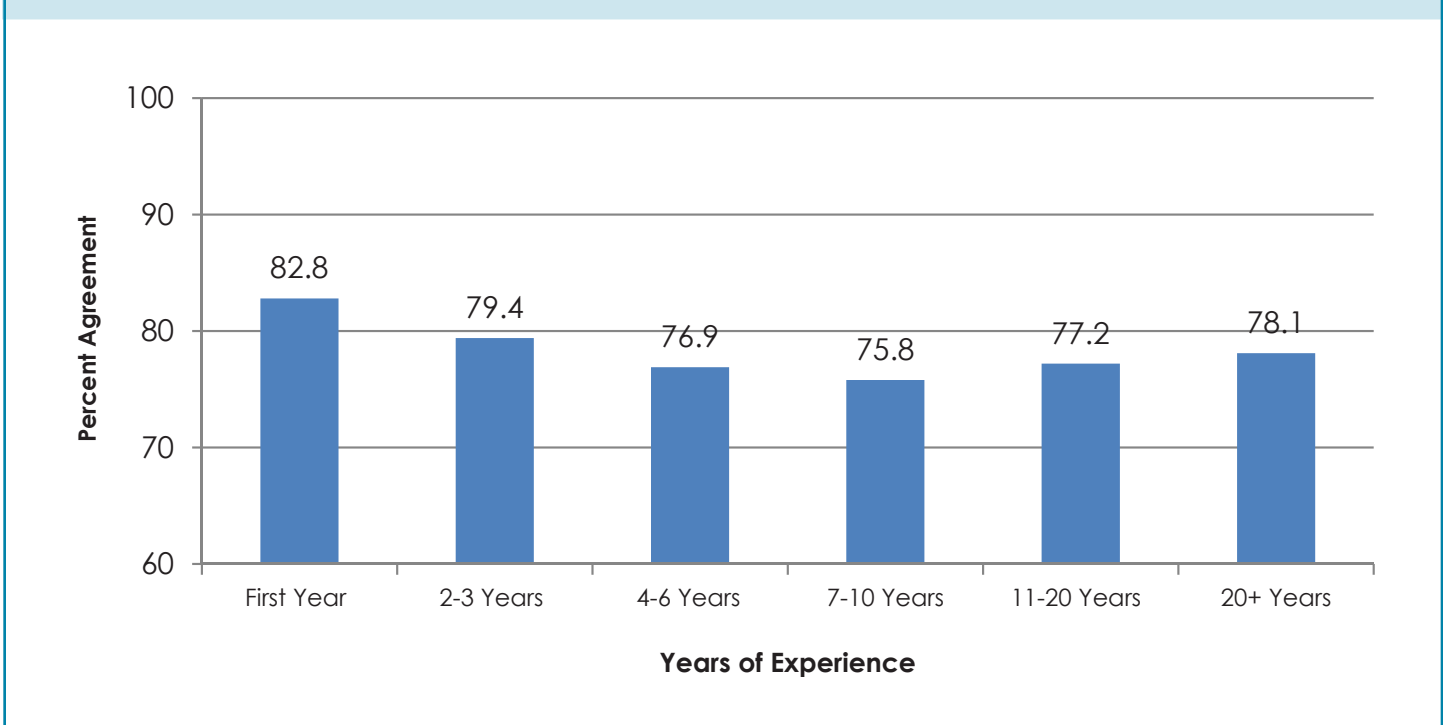


FIGURE A-3. 2011 AVERAGE RATE OF AGREEMENT BY CONSTRUCT BY EXPERIENCE LEVELS

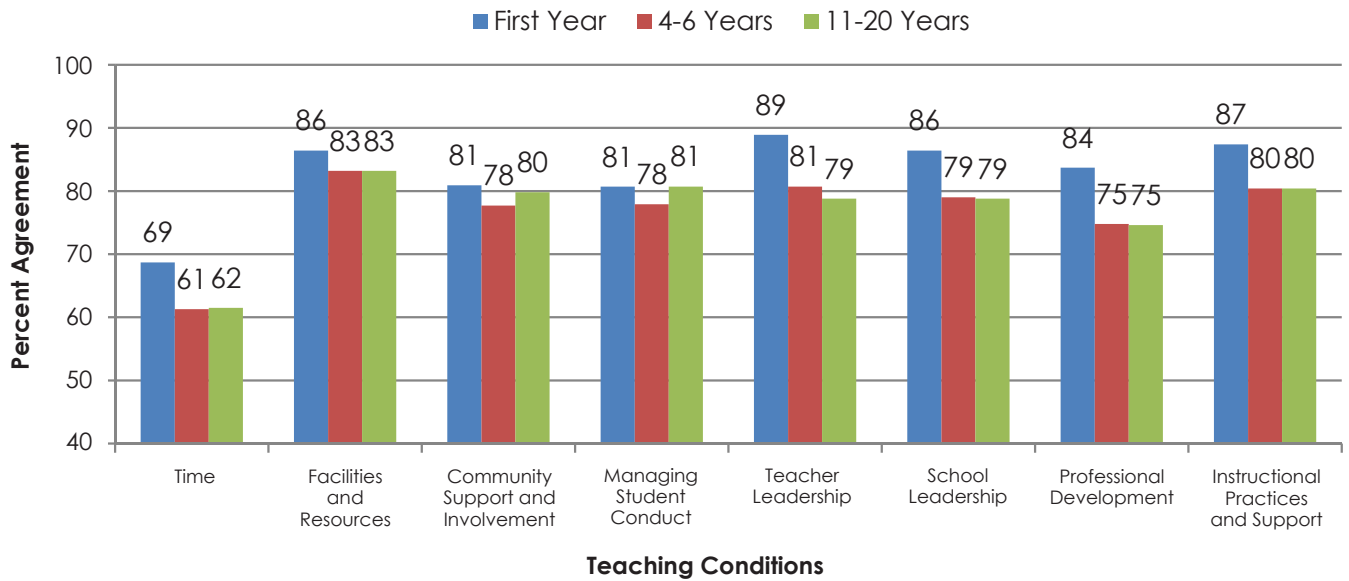
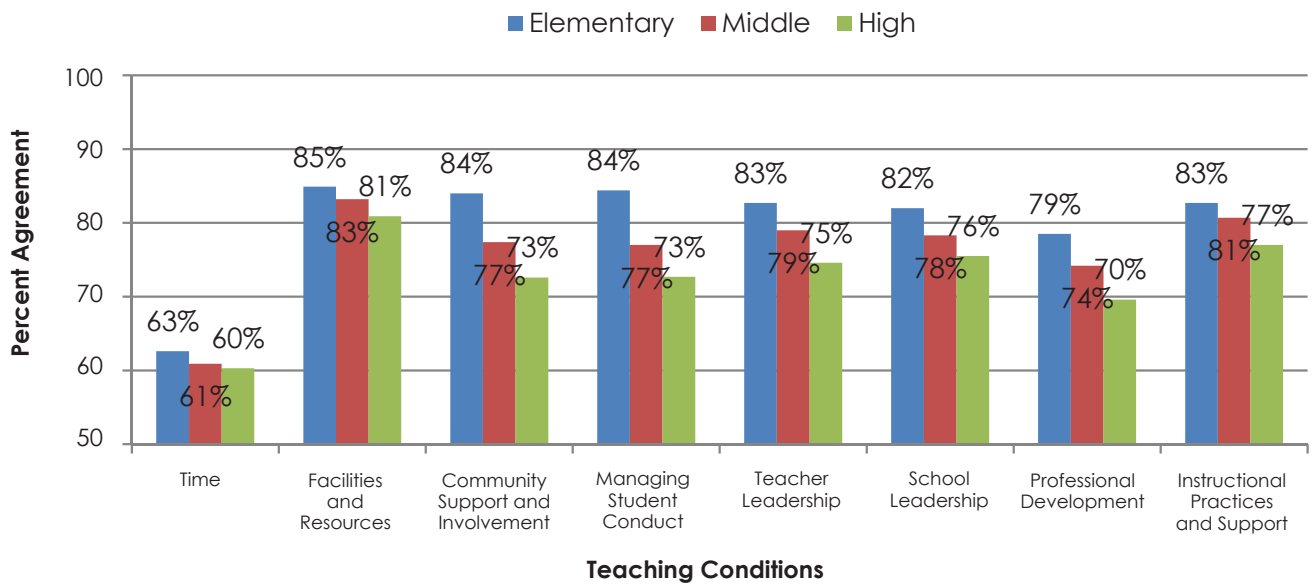


FIGURE A-4. 2011 AVERAGE RATE OF AGREEMENT BY CONSTRUCT BY SCHOOL LEVEL



Endnotes

- i. Kelley, R., Thornton, B., & Daugherty, R. (2005). Relationships between measures of leadership and school climate. *Education*, 126 (1).
- ii. Guarino, C., Santibañez, L., & Daley, G. (2006). Teacher recruitment and retention: A review of the recent empirical literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 76 (2).
Horng, E. (2009). Teacher tradeoffs: Disentangling teachers' preferences for working conditions and student demographics. *American Educational Research Journal*, 46 (3).
- iii. Kardos, S. & Johnson, S. (2007). On their own and presumed expert: New teachers' experience with their colleagues. *Teachers College Record*, 109 (9).
- iv. See ii.
- v. Alt, M. & Henke, R. (2007). To teach or not to teach? Teaching experience and preparation among 1992–93 bachelor's degree recipients 10 years after college. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Education Statistics.
- vi. See v.
- vii. Ladd, H. (2009). Teachers' perceptions of their working conditions: How predictive of policy relevant outcomes? CALDER Working Paper 33. Washington, D.C.: National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education.

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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