



How Different Educators Perceive Teaching Conditions

Comparisons Across Participant Groups

With the leadership of Governor O'Malley, the New Teacher Center (NTC) worked collaboratively with a coalition of education partners¹ to implement the third iteration of the Maryland 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 Maryland Surveys. Briefs describing preliminary findings and summarizing instrument design and psychometric properties can be found on the TELL Maryland website under the Resources tab (www.tellmaryland.org/resources). These 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 included the Maryland Association of Boards of Education, the Maryland Association of Elementary School Principals, the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals, the Maryland State Board of Education, the Maryland State Department of Education, the Maryland State Education Association, the Public School Superintendents Association of Maryland, and the American Federation of Teachers-Maryland.

The purpose of the brief is to highlight discrepancies between and within groups of participants, and subsets of schools, as well as document 2013 results compared to 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 and designated education support personnel in early 2013. The data for these analyses include more than 50,000 educators in Maryland, yielding a response rate of 58 percent, which by social science standards for online surveys is considered acceptable.² This is a six-percentage-point increase from the 52 percent collected in the 2011 administration. Respondents in 2013 include several

2. The statistical accuracy of the survey depends on how many of the full population respond and how closely those responding reflect the population. If this were a sample survey, in order for the survey results to be generalizable to all Maryland educators, a sample size calculation for 95% certainty (confidence level) of +/- 1% accuracy (confidence interval) of the results requires 8,644 participants. Because this is a full population survey, analyses comparing participants to the population are appropriate to determine bias. These comparisons will be conducted during outcome analyses. Given the relatively high response rate overall and the sample size requirements, consumers can be confident in the results reported, Van Bennekom, F. C. (2002). *Customer surveying: A guidebook for service managers*. Boston, MA: Customer Service Press.

categories of educators: 75 percent are teachers, two percent are principals, two percent are assistant principals, seven percent are other education professionals such as librarians and school psychologists, and 14 percent education support professionals (ESPs). Additionally, 1,880 respondents are beginning teachers (with three years of experience or less) (five percent). This distribution is similar to the data collected two years ago (see Table 1).

Response rates also vary by school level. As Table 2 demonstrates, the 2013 sample participating in the survey includes 62 percent of elementary school educators, compared to 55 percent in 2011; 58 percent are middle school educators, compared to 52 in 2011; 54 percent are high school educators, compared to 46 percent in 2011; and 56 percent are educators assigned to “other” schools such as alternative education settings, compared to 53 percent in 2011.

Findings

The Preliminary Findings brief provided 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.

TABLE 1. RESPONSE RATE BY PARTICIPANT TYPE

Respondents*	2013 Response Rate (N)	2011 Response Rate (N)
Teachers	75.1% (36,434)	75.1% (34,485)
Principals	1.8% (863)	1.7% (790)
Assistant Principals	2.2% (1,057)	2.1% (953)
Other Education Professionals	6.7% (3,266)	7.0% (3,204)
Education Support Professionals	14.2% (6,896)	14.1% (6,469)
Total**	48,516	45,901

*Note. The respondent category “teachers” includes instructional coaches, department heads, literacy specialist, etc. The respondent category “Other Education Professionals” includes school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, etc. The respondent category “Education Support Professionals” includes specifically instructional or clerical support professionals.

**3.5% (1,756) of records did not include a defined position and are excluded from the analysis

TABLE 2. 2013 SURVEY RESPONSE RATE BY SCHOOL TYPE

School Type	2013			2011		
	Headcount	Responded	% Responded	Headcount	Responded	% Responded
Elementary	24,548	39,842	61.6	23,445	42,775	54.8
Middle	11,415	19,849	57.5	8,604	16,413	52.4
High	13,267	24,550	54.0	10,568	23,140	45.7
Other	1,042	1,869	55.8	3,284	6,160	53.3
Total	50,272	86,110	58.4	45,901	88,488	51.9

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 three survey items, principals reported higher rates of agreement than teachers. The largest differences in rates of agreement between teachers and principals are in the areas of Managing Student Conduct, Professional Development, and School Leadership.

- Nearly all principals (99 percent) report agreement that school administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct compared to 65 percent of teachers.
- Nearly nine out of 10 principals (88 percent) agree that professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers compared to 55 percent of teachers who agree.

- Almost all principals (98 percent) indicate that teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them compared to about two-thirds of teachers who agree (65 percent).

Comparisons with 2011 TELL Survey data indicate similar patterns of principals consistently viewing teaching conditions more positively than teachers. See Appendix for details. On only one survey item did the difference in rates of agreement between teachers and principals change by more than five percentage points between 2011 and 2013. The item asks if state assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices. In 2013 and 2011, the teacher rates of agreement were similar, about 60 percent agree each year. However, as Table 4 illustrates, the principal rate of agreement decreased between survey administrations, from 60 percent in 2011 to 42 percent in 2011. The change in principal rate of agreement resulted in a 17-percentage-point change in the difference between teacher and principal perception between 2013 and 2011.

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.	87.6	50.7	36.9
Teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students.	97.2	61.9	35.3
School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct.	99.2	65.3	33.9
Professional development is differentiated to meet the needs of individual teachers.	87.9	55.0	32.9
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	97.7	65.4	32.3
Professional development deepens teachers' content knowledge.	94.8	65.9	28.9
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.	96.8	68.3	28.5
Students at this school follow rules of conduct.	96.6	68.2	28.4

TABLE 4. ITEM WITH THE GREATEST CHANGE BETWEEN 2013 AND 2011

Survey Item	2013			2011			Change from 2013 to 2011
	Teacher	Principal	Principal minus Teacher	Teacher	Principal	Principal minus Teacher	
State assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices.	59.6	41.5	-18.1	60.6	59.6	-1.0	-17.1

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 Maryland 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 5).

- 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: there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in their school; 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 (87 percent) agree that overall their school is a good place to work and learn compared to fewer than half of movers (46 percent).

TABLE 5. 2013 ITEM RATES OF AGREEMENT BY STAYERS AND MOVERS

Survey Items	Percent Agree		Difference
	Stayers	Movers	
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.	75.0	32.1	42.9
Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.	87.3	46.1	41.2
The school leadership consistently supports teachers.	78.0	37.5	40.5
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	71.4	31.8	39.6
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about leadership issues.	77.7	40.5	37.2
Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in this school.	65.7	29.9	35.8
The faculty and leadership have a shared vision.	82.8	47.0	35.8
School administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom.	81.0	46.8	34.2

Additionally, the eight questions with the greatest differences in rates of agreement between stayers and movers in 2013 are also the same eight 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 three quarters of beginning teachers have an orientation to their role (86 percent), are formally assigned a mentor (77 percent), have access to seminars specifically for new teachers (78 percent), and report regular communication with principals, other administrators, or department chairs (76 percent). Less than half of beginning teachers report release time to observe other teachers (49 percent), formal time to meet with mentors during school (48 percent), and a reduced workload (15 percent). See Table 6.

TABLE 6. PERCENT OF BEGINNING TEACHERS INDICATING SCHOOL SUPPORTS

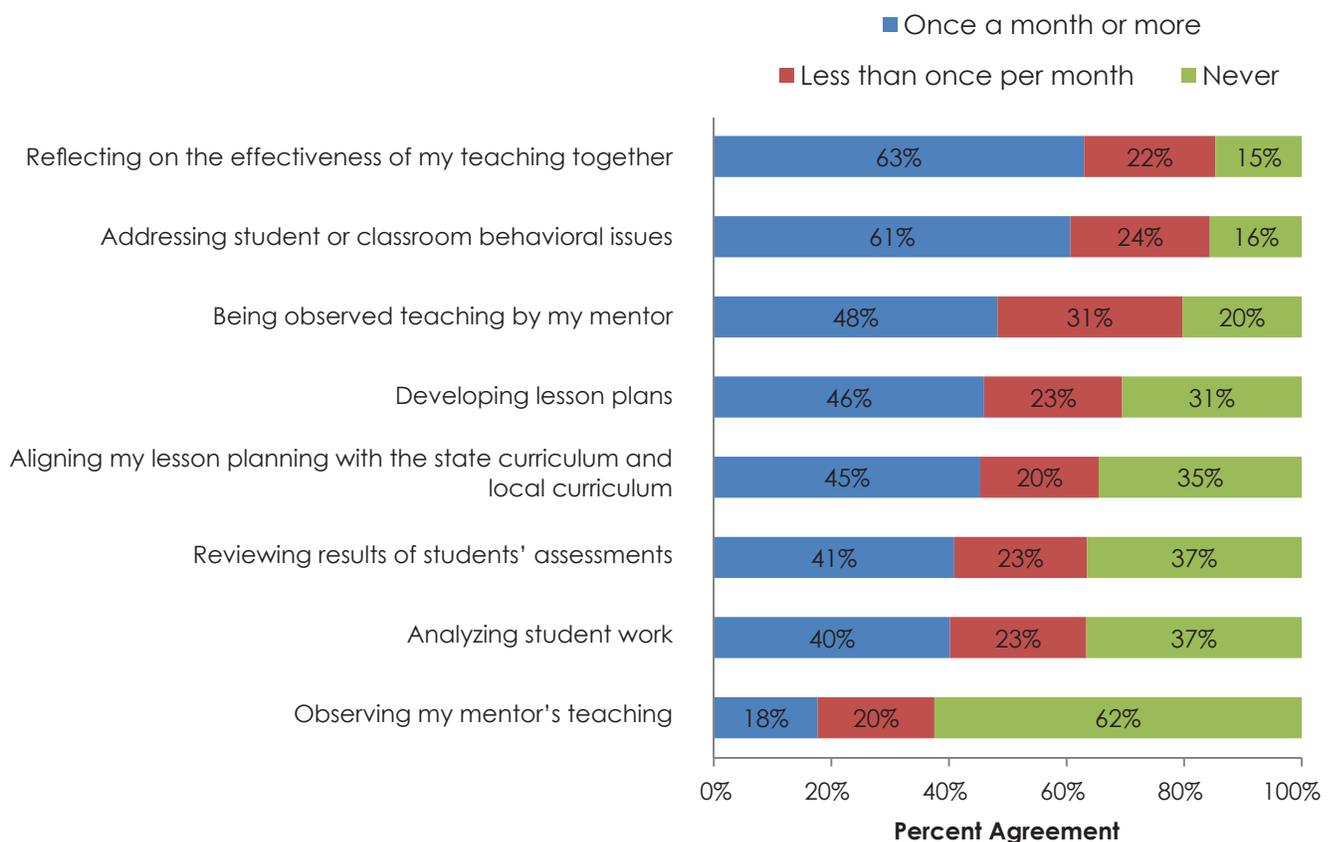
Survey Items	Percent 2013	
	Yes	No
Orientation for new teachers	86.4	13.6
Seminars specifically designed for new teachers	78.4	21.6
Formally assigned mentor	76.6	23.4
Regular communication with principals, other administrator, or department chair	76.4	23.6
Common planning time with other teachers	69.1	30.9
Access to professional learning communities where I could discuss concerns with other teacher(s)	63.1	36.9
Release time to observe other teachers	48.9	51.1
Formal time to meet with mentor during school hours	47.6	52.4
Reduced workload	14.5	85.5

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

More than six out of 10 of beginning teachers report receiving mentor support once a month or more to reflect on the effectiveness of their teaching (63 percent) and to address student or classroom behavior issues (61 percent). Less than half of the beginning teachers indicate receiving mentor support once a month or more in the areas of: observed by their mentor (48 percent), develop lesson plans (46 percent), or align their lesson plans with the state and local curriculum (45 percent). Additionally, some beginning teachers who were assigned a mentor, report receiving no mentor support (Figure 1).

- More than six out of 10 beginning teachers (62 percent) never have an opportunity to observe their mentor’s teaching.
- More than one-third (37 percent), report never reviewing results of students’ assessments with mentors.
- The same proportion (37 percent) indicates that they never analyze student work with their mentor.

FIGURE 1. 2013 FREQUENCY OF MENTOR SUPPORT



The findings in 2013 are similar to those collected in 2011 for frequency of mentor support (see Appendix for 2011 findings).

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 Despite inconsistent mentor support, the majority of Maryland beginning teachers report receiving school 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). Rates of agreement decrease the most between first year teachers and second and third year teachers (six percentage points). Rates of agreement are similar for teachers with between two and ten years of experience and increase slightly for those with 11 or more years of experience. Teachers with twenty years or more experience report the second highest rates of agreements. Additionally, these trends mirror those observed in 2011 (all within one percent in both years, see Appendix).

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

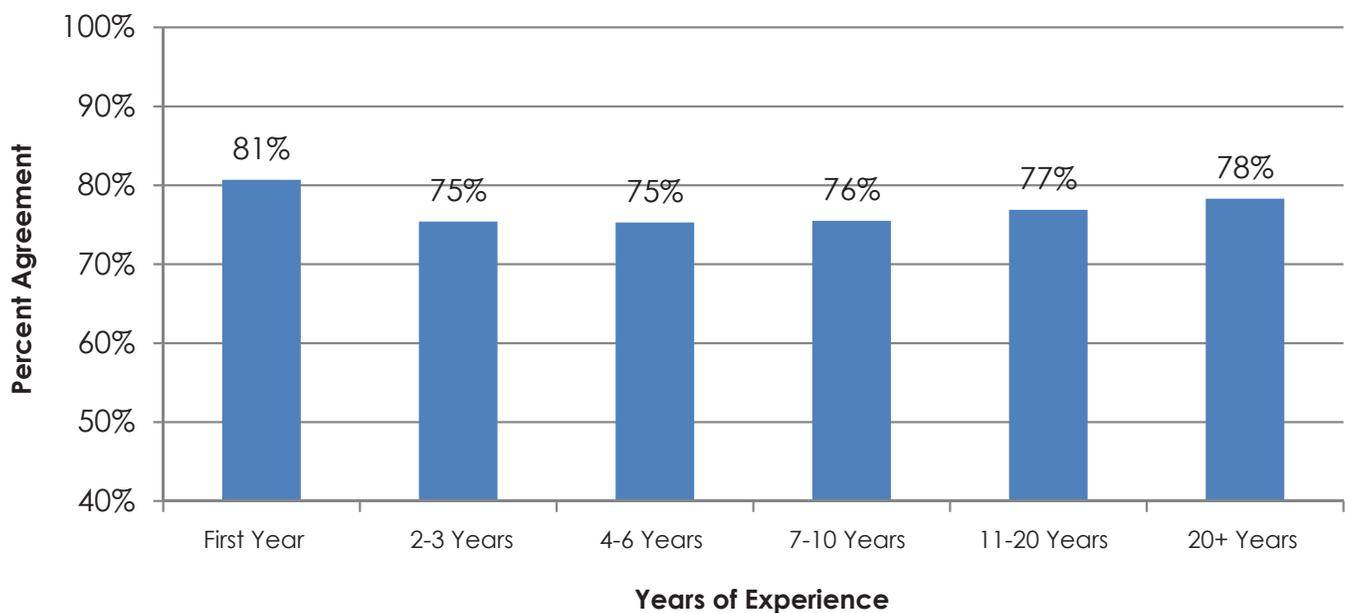


Figure 3 shows average rates of agreement by construct for first-year teachers, teachers with four to six years of experience, and teachers with 11 to 20 years of experience to demonstrate differences by years in the profession. Across almost all constructs, beginning teachers report the most positive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

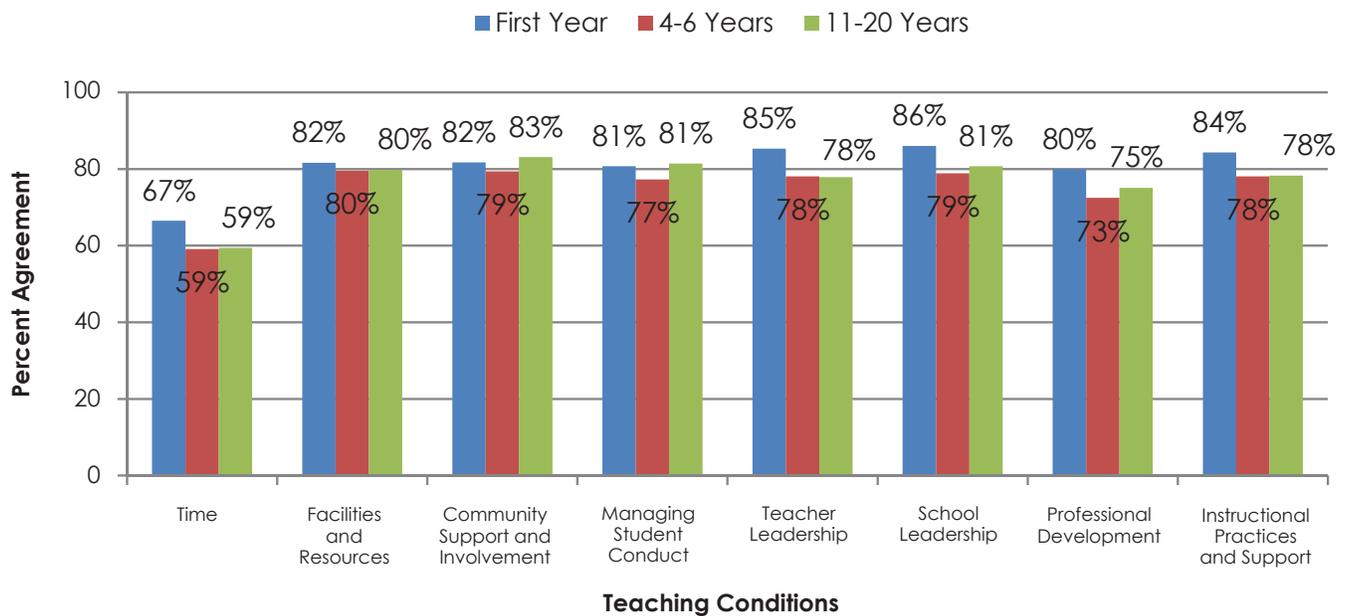
- Teachers, regardless of experience levels, report similar rates of agreement (within five percentage points) for Facilities and Resources, Community Support and Involvement, and Managing Student Conduct.
- Educators, regardless of experience level, report the lowest rates of agreement for the Time 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, Professional Development, and Instructional Practices and Support.

- Across constructs, educators with 11 to 20 years of experience report the same or higher rates of agreement as teachers with four to six years of experience.

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 That 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 an area for staff to investigate, particularly in areas related to the community and student conduct.

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



Comparison by School Level

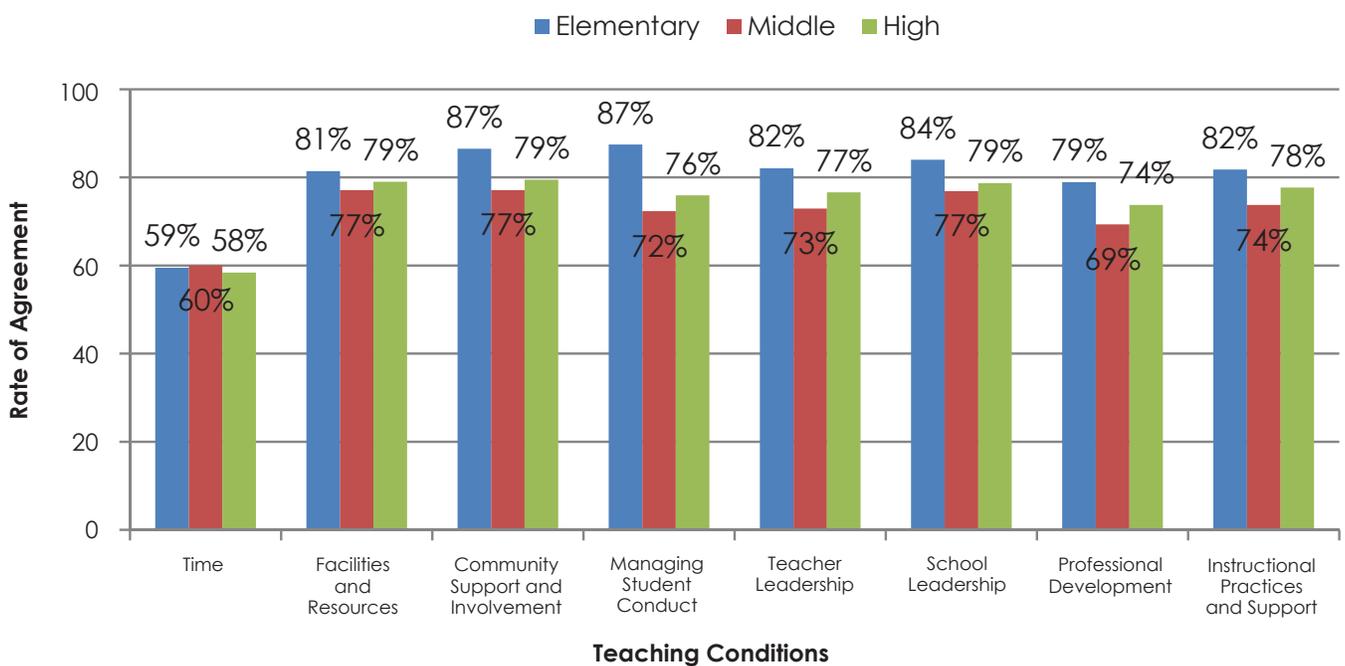
Finding: Elementary educators report more positive teaching conditions in all areas except Time.

Rates of agreement by construct vary by what level educators teach (elementary, middle, or high schools). See Figure 4. With the exception of the Time construct, 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 School Leadership. Additionally, middle school educators report the lowest rates of agreement across constructs, excluding the Time construct.

- The largest difference in rates of agreement between school levels is reported for the area of Managing Student Conduct, where middle school educators report the lowest rate of agreement and elementary school educators report the highest agreement. There is a 15-percentage-point difference between the two.
- 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.

The findings that elementary schools report more positive teaching conditions are similar to the 2011 findings. However, in 2011 middle schools generally reported the lowest rates of agreement whereas, in 2013, high schools report the lowest rates of agreement (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.

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. With the exception of the Time construct, educators 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 Maryland 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 dialog 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 Maryland 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.tellmaryland.org can be a valuable resource to engaging school staff in efficient and meaningful dialog about their teaching and learning conditions.

Appendix. 2011 TELL Data Across Comparison Groups

FIGURE A-1. RATES OF AGREEMENT BY PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS BETWEEN 2013 AND 2011

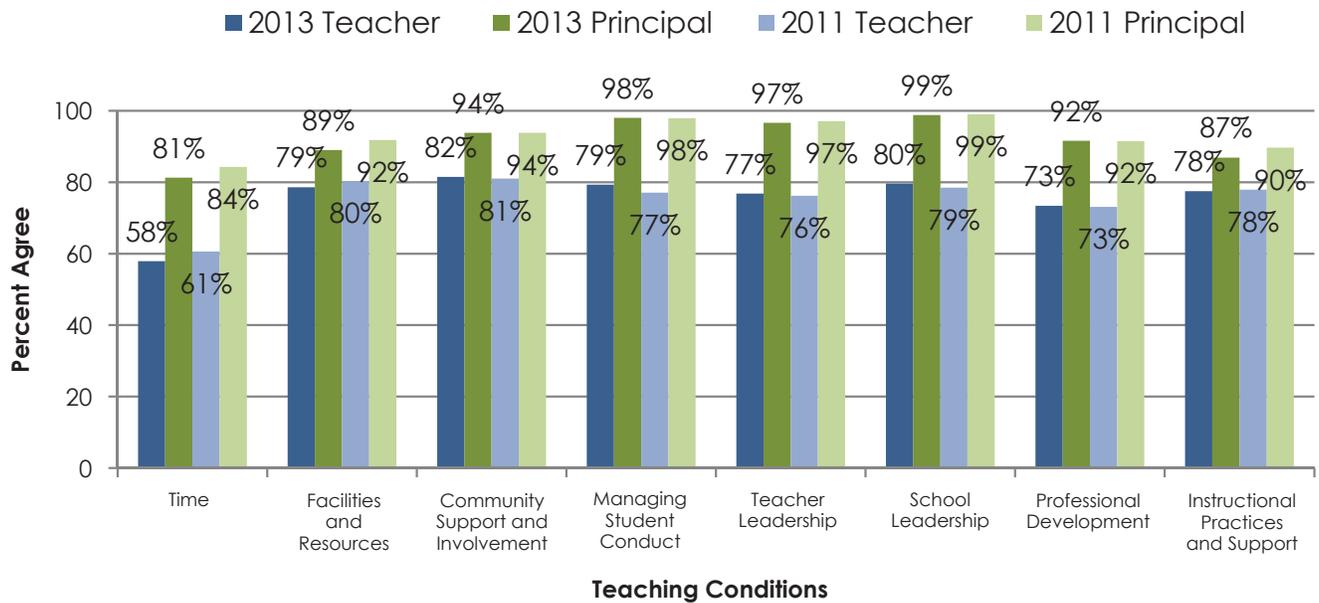


TABLE A-1. 2011 ITEM RATES OF AGREEMENT BY STAYERS AND MOVERS

Survey Items	Percent Agree		Difference
	Stayers	Movers	
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.	86.5	46.6	39.9
Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.	71.5	33.1	38.4
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school.	74.5	37.8	36.7
The school leadership consistently supports teachers.	68.4	33.2	35.2
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	74.3	40.3	34.0
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about leadership issues.	80.2	47.5	32.7
The faculty and leadership have a shared vision.	76.5	45.0	31.5
School administrators support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom.	62.6	32.3	30.3

TABLE A-2. PERCENT OF BEGINNING TEACHERS INDICATING SCHOOL SUPPORTS

Survey Items	Percent			
	2013		2011	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Orientation for new teachers	86.4	13.6	87.2	12.8
Seminars specifically designed for new teachers	78.4	21.6	77.0	23.0
Formally assigned mentor	76.6	23.4	69.8	30.2
Regular communication with principals, other administrator, or department chair	76.4	23.6	74.6	25.4
Common planning time with other teachers	69.1	30.9	68.0	32.0
Access to professional learning communities where I could discuss concerns with other teacher(s)	63.1	36.9	64.4	35.6
Release time to observe other teachers	48.9	51.1	48.0	52.0
Formal time to meet with mentor during school hours	47.6	52.4	42.7	57.3
Reduced workload	14.5	85.5	15.3	84.7

FIGURE A-2. 2011 FREQUENCY OF MENTOR SUPPORT

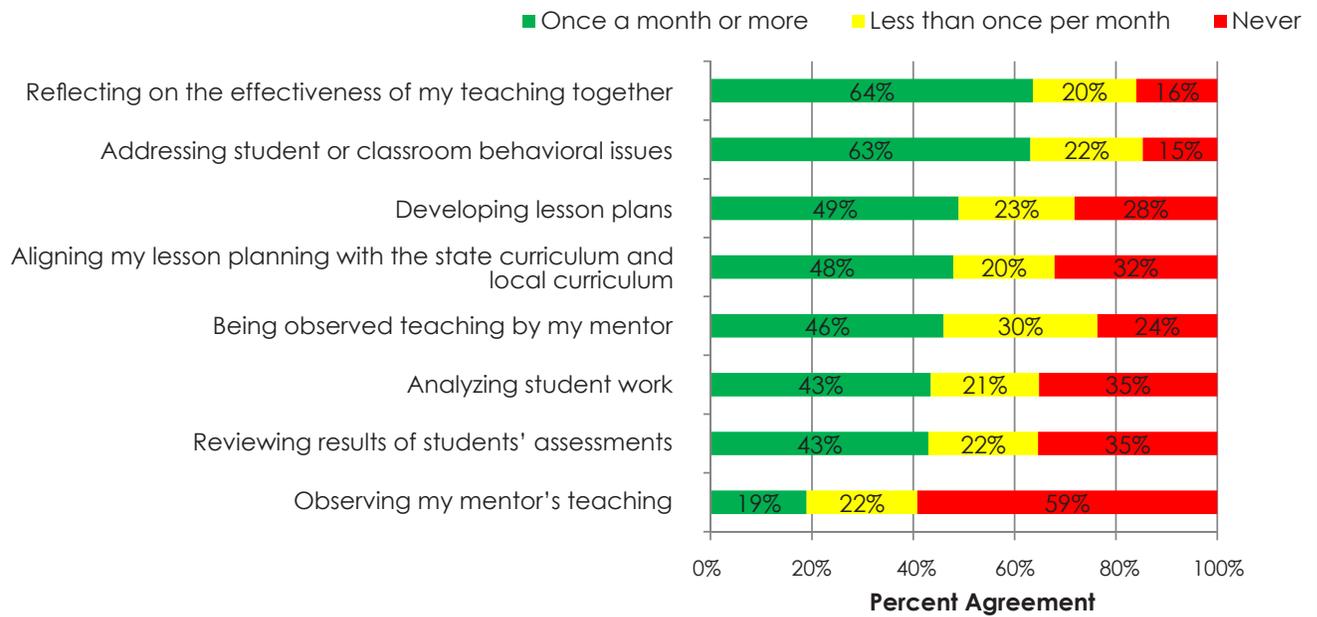


FIGURE A-3. 2011 AVERAGE RATES OF AGREEMENT ACROSS ALL CONSTRUCTS BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

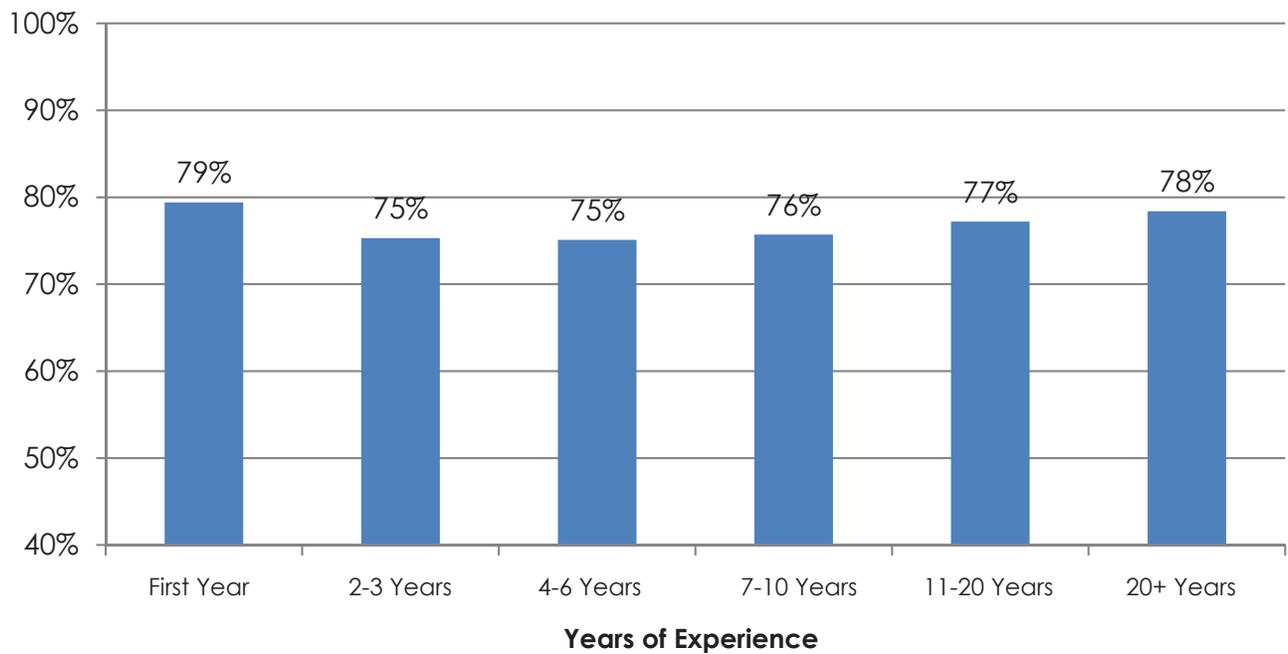


FIGURE A-4. 2011 AVERAGE RATE OF AGREEMENT BY CONSTRUCT BY EXPERIENCE LEVELS

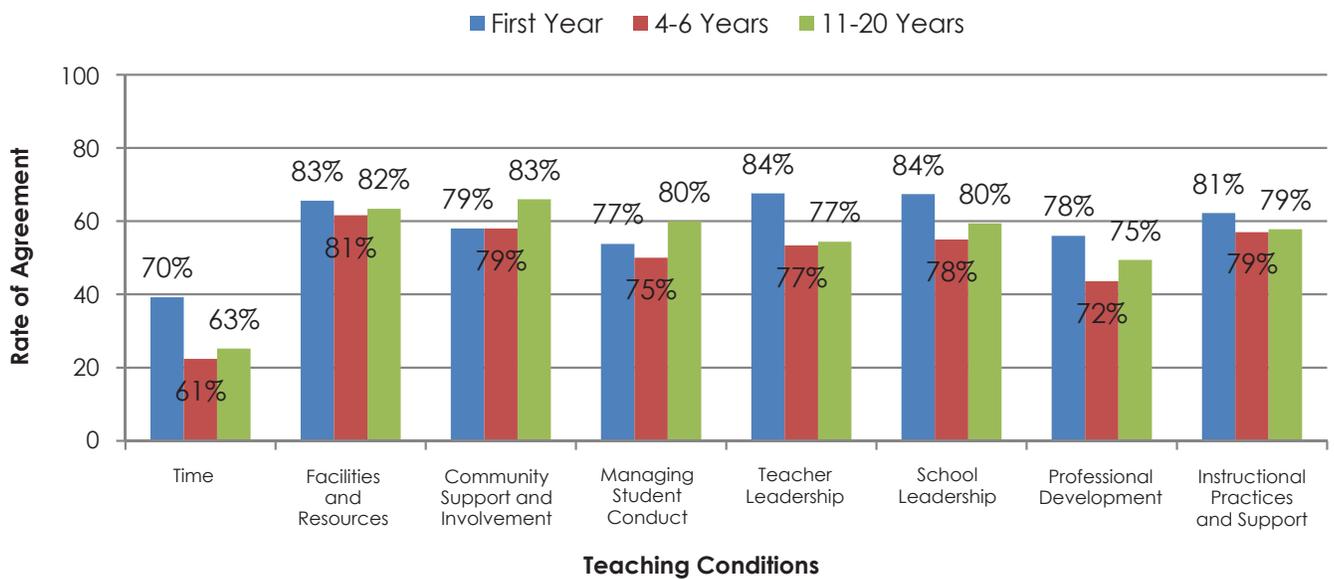
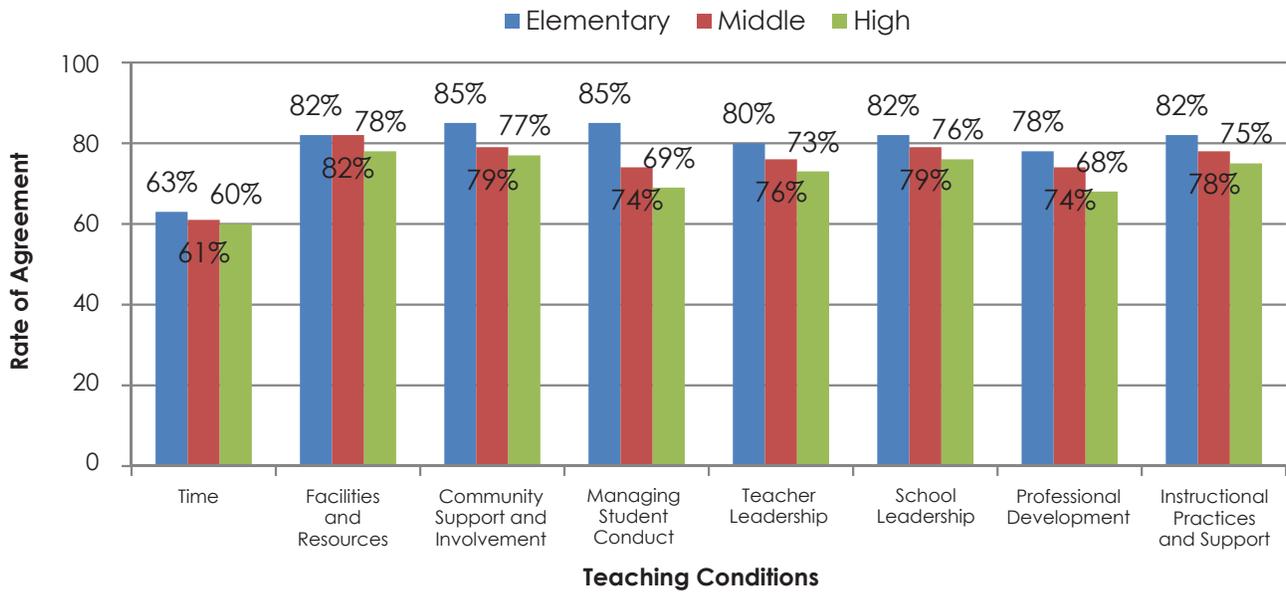


FIGURE A-5. 2011 AVERAGE RATE OF AGREEMENT BY CONSTRUCT BY SCHOOL LEVEL



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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