Division of Accountability & Research

Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) Survey
Executive Summary
April 2017

The Colorado Department of Education's Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning (TELL) survey is typically administered statewide biennially on odd-numbered years and surveys school-based educators to assess perceived teaching/working conditions at the school, district, and state level. In 2017 Aurora Public Schools contracted with the New Teacher Center to administer the same version of the TELL survey to APS licensed staff. One of the main purposes of the TELL survey is to provide additional data for school and district improvements. TELL results are also expected to inform state level policy (CDE, 2011).

The TELL survey was conducted anonymously and reports are generated for schools with greater than 50% participation. This year, the Aurora Public Schools district had 1933 completed surveys that represent 72.0% of all the potential participants. This compares to 2016 and 2015 APS participation rates for the district of 68.7% and 71.8%, respectively (the statewide survey has not been conducted since 2015).

TELL survey questions focus on: time, facilities and resources, community support and involvement, managing student conduct, teacher leadership, school leadership, professional development, instructional practices and support, future employment plans, new teacher support and district support for school leadership.

The bullets below summarize agreement rates and changes for the Aurora Public Schools on the TELL Survey:

- Compared to 2016, agreement rates generally remained stable. However, ten items had agreement rate increases of 6 or more percentage points and no items had agreement rate decreases of 6 or more percentage points.

- Overall, 55% of items met or exceeded moderately favorable response rates of 65%. 17% of the survey items had agreement rates less than 55% (18% in 2016).

- The overall statement at the end of the survey that reads, "My school is a good place to work and learn" received a 72.8% agreement rate, a decline of 1.6 percentage points (74.4% in 2016).

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Presented below are highlights on each of the TELL Survey assessed areas.

- **School Leadership: The ability of school leadership to create trusting, supportive environments and address teacher concerns.** This is a domain of high importance; TELL results suggest that teacher perceptions regarding school leadership is highly related to teacher retention. Fewer than half (46%) of the school leadership items had ratings of 65% or higher. Results were relatively stable since 2017 with no increases or decreases of six or more percentage points although there were improvements since 2013 on five of 26 items (regarding use of time, community engagement, professional development, and teacher empowerment). Only one item (regarding the teacher evaluation process affecting instructional strategy) decreased by six or more points. Areas of high agreement were on statements of fairness of evaluations, teachers being held to high professional standards for delivering instruction, leadership facilitation of the use of data to improve learning, leadership recognition of faculty accomplishments, leadership focus on staff professional growth and feedback, and minimization of disruptions allowing teachers to focus on students.

- **Time: Available time to plan, collaborate and provide instruction and barriers to maximizing time during the school day.** Past statewide results show teachers consistently report time as the biggest challenge. Improvements in the "Time" domain were a bright spot this year for APS; it had the most improvements over last year. Each of the questions about available time improved since last year and six out of seven of them improved by over five percentage points since last year and by over 10 percentage points since 2013. More specifically, APS teachers agreement rates on the question about sufficient instructional time improved (from 53% in 2016 to 61% in the current year), although it remained below 65%. The agreement rate regarding reasonable class sizes (64.5%) has improved from both 2017 and 2013.

- **Facilities and resources: Availability of instructional, technology, office, communication, and school resources to teachers**. In general, teachers reported they have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials (68%), reliable communications technology (92%), and sufficient access to a broad range of professional personnel (79%) and that the physical environment of classrooms supports teaching and learning (76%). Teachers report they would like additional training and guidance from school library staff to help students to become proficient in 21st century skills.

- **Community Support and Involvement: Community and parent/guardian communication and influence in the school.** Teachers reported overall that the community they served is supportive of the school and that teachers provide parents/guardians with useful information about student learning. Teachers agreed less with the statement that parents/guardians are influential decision makers in the school. Agreement rates on most questions in the area of community support remained stable since the 2016 TELL Survey administration and almost all showed improvements of 6 or more percentage points since 2013.

- **Managing Student Conduct: Policies and practices to address student conduct issues and ensure a safe school environment.** As in prior years, teachers reported low agreement rates to statements about students following rules of conduct and administration consistently enforcing rules for student conduct. Teachers continue to see school safety as an area of strength (79% agreement rate). These questions have remained relatively stable since last year and since 2013, with no substantial changes.

- **Teacher Leadership: Teacher involvement in decisions that impact classroom and school practices.** Agreement rates in the teacher leadership area were generally good with most showing agreement of 65% or higher, and were consistent with 2016. Compared with 2013, teachers reported increased recognition as educational experts regarding education issues and instruction. A lower level of agreement (53%) was noted for the statement regarding teachers having influence on decision making within their school and for faculty having an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems (57%).

- **Professional Development: Availability and quality of learning opportunities for educators to enhance their teaching.** Results suggested that the area of school professional development (PD) is a strength, and attitudes remained relatively stable since 2016. Areas of highest favorability include professional learning opportunities that are aligned with the school's improvement plan and that teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practice. Questions with lower rates of agreement included the presence of differentiated professional development to meet the needs of individual teachers and that professional development is evaluated with results communicated to teachers; yet, this item did show a seven percentage point improvement since last year.

- **Instructional Practices and Support: Data and supports available to teachers to improve instruction and student learning.** Areas of highest favorability for instructional practices and support included statements on teachers working in professional learning communities to develop and align instructional practices, encouragement of teachers to try new things to improve instruction, the use of formative assessments to adjust instruction, and alignment of curriculum with Colorado Academic Standards. Statements with low agreement rates were on state assessment data being available in time to impact instructional practices and state/local assessments being used to improve student learning, although these items saw notable improvements since last year. Compared with 2013, there were notable improvements on perceptions that teachers are assigned to classes that maximize the likelihood of student success, have autonomy to make instructional delivery decisions, that they work in professional communities on instructional practices, that curriculum aligns with state standards, and that the curriculum meets student needs.

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