

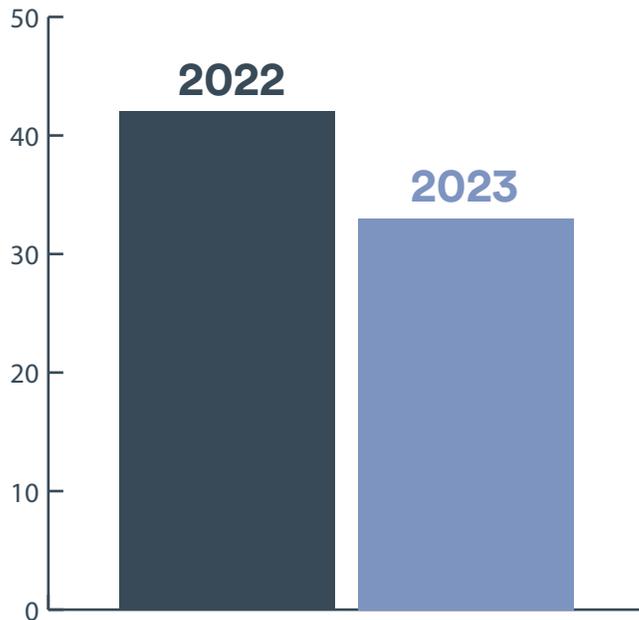


2023 District Leaders Survey

RESPONDENTS:

33 district leader responses from 141 school districts lead to a 23% completion rate.

Survey Respondents



Completion Rate

2022 (30%)



2023 (23%)



KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1

Zero respondents perceive the state of education in Tennessee to be “excellent,” while 12% more than last year perceive it to “need some improvement.”

2

When asked what were the most important areas in education policy that should be addressed immediately, about 58% of respondents referenced extreme difficulty in recruiting new teachers—especially in response to the teacher shortage—and in retaining high-quality teachers. A quarter of respondents mentioned that micromanagement from the general assembly and/or “politics” were problematic for our schools.

3

There was a nearly 15% increase in the number of respondents who feel state-level policy and law is outside of their influence.

4

Since last year’s survey, there was a 24% increase in the number of respondents who feel their schools receive an equitable amount of school funding based on the population of students they serve (example: economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, etc.).

5

There was a large increase in the number of respondents who plan to involve principals in their budgeting decisions under TISA. However, zero respondents will be sending their school leaders to trainings that are focused on strategy (how to use dollars to impact student achievement) as opposed to compliance.

RESPONSES:

How many years have you been a district leader?

1-3 years: 30.30% (-7.80%)¹

4-9 years: 36.36% (+10.17%)

10-19 years: 24.24% (+0.81%)

20+ years: 9.09% (-5.20%)

Were you a school leader/principal before leading a district?

YES: 78.90% (-9.20%)

NO: 21.21% (+9.31%)

¹+/- numbers show 2023 compared to 2022 results, reflected as a percent increase or decrease year over year.

Have you been a classroom educator in the past?

YES: 100% (0.00%)

NO: 0.00% (0.00%)

Have you ever led a district other than the one you currently lead?

YES: 9.09% (-9.96%)

NO: 90.91% (+9.96%)

Have you ever led a district in another state?

YES: 6.06% (-3.46%)

NO: 93.94% (+3.46%)

Approximately how many students are enrolled in your district?

Less than 2,000: 27.27% (-8.44%)

Between 2,000 to 10,000: 63.64% (+6.50%)

Between 10,000 to 15,000: 6.06% (+3.68%)

Greater than 15,000: 3.03% (-1.73%)

What is your perception of the state of education in Tennessee?

Excellent: 0.00% (-5.13%)

Good: 66.67% (+2.57%)

Neutral: 8.33% (-7.05%)

Needs some improvement: 25.00% (+12.18%)

Needs dramatic improvement: 0.00% (-2.56%)

Unsure: 0.00% (0.00%)

What limitations or constraints do you feel hinder your ability to improve student outcomes? *Respondents were able to answer more than once.*

Budget: 70.83% (-11.22%)

Staffing: 75.00% (-1.92%)

Scheduling: 12.50% (-5.45%)

Transportation: 33.33% (+15.38%)

Curriculum Quality: 4.17% (-8.65%)

Other: 25.00% (+4.49%)

Some of the most common “Other” responses include:

- Open-ended responses to “Other” include lack of family support and partisan politics.

What are the three most important areas in education policy that should be addressed immediately? *This was an open-ended question*

- **Teacher quality/teacher shortage:** About 58% of respondents referenced extreme difficulty in recruiting new teachers—especially in response to the teacher shortage—and in retaining high-quality teachers.
- **Funding:** About 46% of respondents mentioned “funding” without other information.
- **Politics:** A quarter of respondents mentioned that micromanagement from the general assembly and/or “politics” were problematic for our schools.

What areas of policymaking do you feel are outside of your influence?

State-level policy and law: 91.67% (+14.75%)

State-level programming: 62.50% (-1.60%)

District-level policy: 0.00% (0.00%)

District-level programming: 0.00% (0.00%)

Other: 20.83% (+10.57%)

How often do you contact elected officials?

Never: 0.00% (-2.56%)

Once or twice a year: 41.67% (+10.90%)

Once a month: 43.59% (-1.92%)

Multiple times per month: 16.67% (-2.41%)

If you do contact elected officials, what education topics do you discuss? *This was an open-ended question.*

Funding: 36.00%

Curriculum: 21.00%

Legislation that is not relevant to a quality education (aka “over-reach laws”): 25.00%

How would you describe your relationship with your school board?

Excellent: 62.50% (+0.96%)

Good: 29.17% (-6.73%)

Neutral: 4.17% (+1.61%)

Poor: 0.00% (0.00%)

Very Poor: 4.17% (+4.17%)

Do you feel that the principals in your district are prepared to be effective leaders?

YES: 95.83% (+3.52%)

NO: 4.17% (+4.17%)

Unsure: 0.00% (-7.69%)

Do you have the capacity and resources to recruit, hire, and support principals?

YES: 66.67% (-10.77%)

NO: 33.33% (+17.95%)

Unsure: 0.00% (-7.69%)

- When given the opportunity to comment, respondents reported that to better recruit, hire and support principals they would need additional funding, strategic recruitment or training and an ability to pay competitive salaries.

Student assignment/placement decisions in my district are primarily made by...

Me (The Director of Schools): 0.00% (-2.56%)

The School Board: 4.17% (+1.61%)

School leaders: 83.33% (-6.41%)

Teachers: 4.17% (+4.17%)

Other: 8.33% (+3.20%)

Unsure: 0.00% (0.00%)

When assigning students to classrooms, do you consider the effectiveness of the teacher/classroom the student had the previous year relative to the effectiveness of the teacher/classroom you would place them in for the coming year?

YES: 62.50% (+24.04%)

NO: 4.17% (+1.61%)

Not applicable/I do not make student assignment decisions: 33.33% (-25.64%)

Alternatively, when assigning students to classrooms, do you give consideration to the student's individual achievement levels from the previous year relative to the teacher/classroom performance where they will be assigned? (Ex: Student X is somewhat behind from the past year so they should be placed in one of your higher performing classrooms in the coming year.)

YES: 66.67% (+25.64%)

NO: 0.00% (-2.56%)

Not applicable/I do not make student assignment decisions: 33.33% (-23.08%)

Do you have the resources and support to get quality materials and equipment?

YES: 82.61% (+19.45%)

NO: 0.00% (-7.89%)

Depends: 17.39% (-11.56%)

- Respondents elaborate that costs - especially in regards to curriculum - are increasing.

Do you have the resources and support to build and maintain adequate facilities?

YES: 34.78% (+24.25%)

NO: 39.13% (-26.66%)

Depends: 26.09% (+2.41%)

- Respondents elaborate that the problem is not so much the amount of resources—ESSER funding has helped tremendously—but the varying priorities of how to spend funds and allocate resources, especially when costs overall are increasing.

Do you agree that teachers and schools have enough time in their day to meet the needs of our students?

YES: 52.17% (+2.17%)

NO: 47.83% (-2.17%)

Do you agree that teachers and schools have enough time in the year to meet the needs of our students?

YES: 56.52% (-17.16%)

NO: 43.48% (+17.16%)

Would you support an extended school year or school day given the necessary resources and state support?

YES: 43.48% (-1.26%)

NO: 56.52% (+1.26%)

Does your district provide school finance and budgetary training to your school leaders?

YES: 60.87% (-7.55%)

NO: 39.13% (+7.55%)



If yes, is the finance and budgetary training focused more on budgetary compliance or how to use dollars to impact student achievement?

Compliance: 35.29% (+1.96%)

Strategy: 0.00% (-6.67%)

Both, but mostly compliance: 47.06% (-6.27%)

Both, but mostly strategy: 17.65% (+10.98%)

Do you feel that you receive an adequate amount of funding?

YES: 17.39% (+6.86%)

NO: 60.87% (-12.81%)

Depends: 21.74% (+5.95%)

- Respondents expressed uncertainty around TISA.



Do your schools receive an equitable amount of school funding based on the population of students they serve? (Ex. economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, special education students, etc.)

YES: 47.83% (+24.15%)

NO: 34.78% (-28.38%)

Depends: 17.39% (+4.23%)

- Respondents expressed uncertainty around TISA.

Have you previously considered implementing student-based budgeting in your district? (Student-based budgeting is a district-level method of weighting the funding the district receives and distributing it to schools based on individual student needs while providing increased autonomy for principals over budgetary decisions.)

No, I have not considered implementing student-based budgeting in my district: 52.17% (+2.17%)

No, I have not considered implementing student-based budgeting in my district, but I would like to learn more about it: 4.35% (-8.81%)

Yes, I have considered implementing student-based budgeting in my district, but have not yet implemented it: 21.74% (-1.94%)

Yes, I have piloted or implemented student-based budgeting in my district: 17.39% (+7.71%)

Not applicable as I have never heard of student-based budgeting: 4.35% (-0.91%)

In the 2022 legislative session, lawmakers replaced the Basic Education Program (BEP), a resource-based formula, with the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA) Act, a district-based funding formula. One goal with TISA is to empower district and school-level leaders to make funding decisions that best meet the needs of their students. When your school district begins the budgeting for FY24, how much will you rely on previous budget years to make spending decisions?

We will rely completely on previous budget years to inform spending decisions for FY24: 13.04% (+5.15%)

We will rely heavily on previous budget years to inform spending decisions for FY24: 47.83% (-10.06%)

We will rely somewhat on previous budget years to inform spending decisions for FY24: 30.43% (+6.75%)

We will rely very little on previous budget years to inform spending decisions for FY24: 4.35% (+1.72%)

I am unsure: 4.35% (-3.54%)



When your school district begins the budgeting for FY24, how will your budgeting process look differently under TISA compared to BEP? *Respondents are asked to check all that apply*

We will not change our budgeting process: 52.17% (-3.09%)

We will ask principals to inform many of the budgeting decisions: 47.83% (+24.15%)

We will consider merit-based bonuses to recruit or retain the best educators: 13.04% (-2.75%)

We will consider contracting with community-based providers for services that we may not be able to offer with district hires (i.e., school counselors, school nurses, etc.): 25.09% (+19.83%)

Depends: 17.39% (-14.19%)

Who in your district will be attending eventual TISA training hosted by the Tennessee Department of Education regarding how to use dollars to impact student achievement?

Director of Schools: 78.26% (-21.74%)

School Business Officers: 78.26% (-5.95%)

School Board Members: 17.39% (-14.19%)

Principals/School-Level Leads: 39.13% (+2.29%)

Teachers: 0.00% (-5.26%)

Other: 21.74% (+8.58%)

Tennessee public schools are receiving over \$4.5 billion in federal relief funding for use between spring 2020 and fall 2023—a historic influx of federal funding to support K-12 schools and students across the state. Of the learning loss strategies mandated by the state, which of the following strategies to combat learning loss do you think will be the most impactful in your district?

Respondents are asked to check one

After-school programming: 9.09% (+0.98%)

**Summer learning camp
(a six-week summer educational program):** 18.18% (+1.96%)

**Learning loss bridge camp (a four-week educational program
conducted each year before the beginning of the school year):**
9.09% (-1.72%)

Tutoring: 63.64% (-1.22%)



Nationally, over 70% of schools are seeing an increase in the number of students seeking mental health services compared to pre-pandemic. Is this trend true for your schools as well?

Yes, we have also seen an increase in the number of students needing mental health services: 100% (0.00%)

No, we have not seen much of a change in the number of students needing mental health services since before the pandemic: 0.00% (0.00%)

If you answered “yes” in the previous question, are you able to effectively meet the needs of all students?

Yes, we have a robust team of mental health professionals ready to respond to student needs: 14.29% (+11.59%)

Somewhat, although we have a team of mental health professionals ready to respond to student needs, it is often difficult to staff these positions: 57.14% (+5.79%)

Not really, the needs have been too great and we are not able to hire the right staff to support the increase in student need: 28.57% (-17.38%)

**For more information on the 2023 District Leaders Survey, visit:
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