# 2023 School Leaders Survey

Tennesseecan

RESPONDENTS:

200 total respondents - compared to 270 last year - with a 63% completion rate.
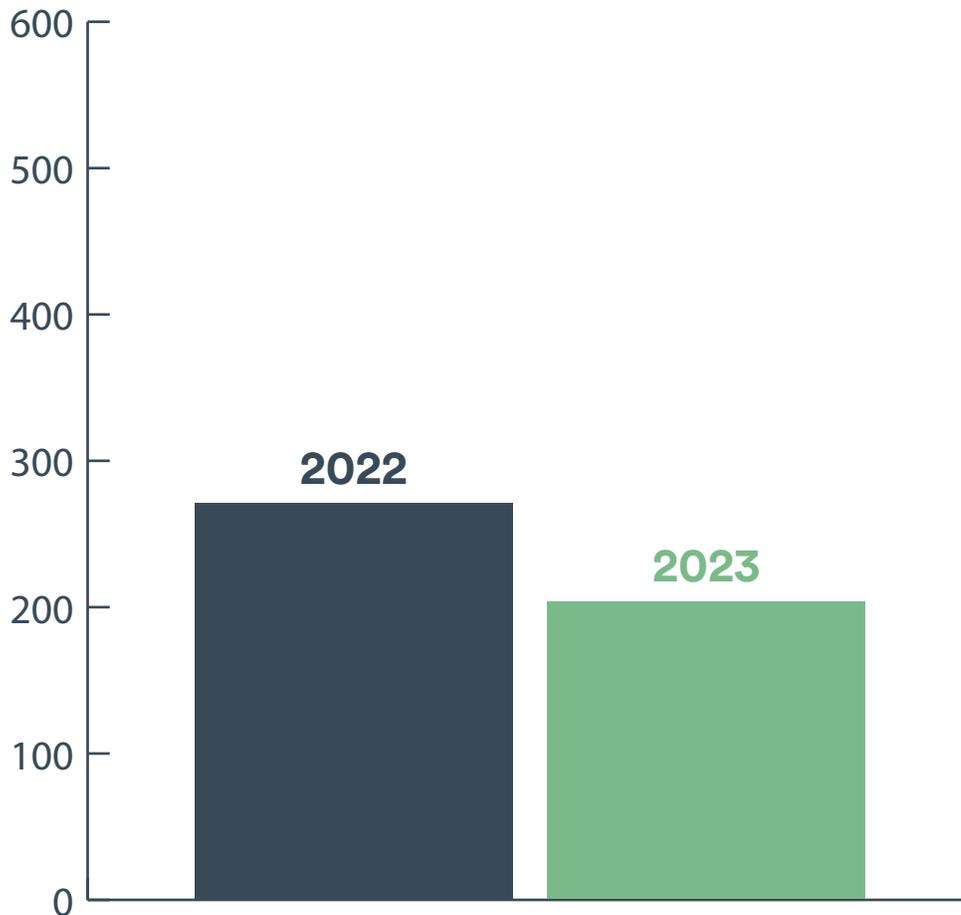
KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1 There was a sharp increase in the number of new school leaders who completed this year's survey.

2 Over 60% of survey respondents perceive the state of education in Tennessee as needing some or dramatic improvement.

3 When asked what limitations or constraints respondents feel hinder their ability to improve student outcomes, more respondents this year than previous years mentioned the negative impact that politics has had on schools. Respondents felt like politicians and lawmakers were making too many decisions for teachers and students with little to no knowledge of how things worked in the actual school setting.

4 When hiring new instructional staff, the majority of respondents considered character and personality shown during the interview when determining qualifications.

5 Over 55% of respondents felt as if they receive an equitable amount of school funding based on the population of students they serve.

6 Less than 10% of respondents shared that their finance and budgetary training was focused more on strategy (how to use dollars to impact student achievement) than compliance.

7 Over 20% of respondents shared that they do not believe their district will change the way they budget under TISA (compared to BEP).

RESPONSES:

What type of school do you lead?

Traditional District-Run School: 86.00% (+4.15%)[1]

Charter School: 5.00% (-0.56%)

Magnet School: 2.00% (-0.59%)

Optional School: 1.50% (-0.35%)

Alternative School: 3.50% (-3.54%)

Turnaround School: 2.00% (+0.89%)

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

How many years have you been a school leader?

1-3 years: 19.00% (+11.59%)

10-19 years: 40.00% (-7.78%)

4-9 years: 31.50% (+0.02%)

20+ years: 9.50% (-3.83%)

How many years did you teach prior to leading a school?

1-4 years: 6.50% (-2.02%)

11-15 years: 26.50% (+2.43%)

4-7 years: 14.50% (-4.02%)

16-20 years: 20.00% (+2.96%)

7-10 years: 25.00% (+0.93%)

20+ years: 7.50% (-0.28%)

Were you educated and trained in a traditional or alternative preparation program?

Traditional: 91.50% (+1.50%)

Alternative: 8.50% (-1.50%)

Do you feel that your leadership preparation program prepared you to be an effective school principal?

Yes: 74.00% (-0.07%)

No: 13.00% (-1.07%)

Unsure: 13.00% (+1.15%)

Have you ever taught or been a school leader at a school in another state?

YES: 12.63% (-5.33%)

NO: 87.37% (+5.33%)

What grade level does your school currently serve?

Elementary: 40.00% (+3.27%)

Middle: 27.37% (-1.61%)

K-8: 15.79% (+1.90%)

High School: 27.37% (-2.02%)

K-12: 5.26% (+1.59%)

What is your current perception of the state of education in your school district?

Excellent: 13.26% (-2.26%)

Good: 47.51% (+4.41%)

Neutral: 9.94% (+0.46%)

Needs some improvement: 22.65% (-1.92%)

Needs dramatic improvement 6.63% (-0.70%)

Unsure: 0.00% (0.00%)

What is your current perception of the state of education in Tennessee as a whole?

Excellent: 1.10% (+1.19%)

Good: 24.31% (-2.41%)

Neutral: 13.26% (-3.98%)

Needs some improvement: 40.33% (+4.12%)

Needs dramatic improvement: 20.44% (+1.91%)

Unsure: 0.55% (+0.55%)

What limitations or constraints do you feel hinder your ability to improve student outcomes?

Budget: 54.70% (-2.20%)

Staffing: 79.56% (-2.34%)

Scheduling: 30.39% (+3.67%)

Transportation: 15.47% (+1.25%)

Curriculum Quality: 13.26% (-2.69%)

Other: 24.31% (-0.69%)

Some of the most common "Other" responses:

- **Some of the most common "Other" responses referenced the impact negative politics has had on schools.** Respondents felt like politicians and lawmakers were making too many decisions for teachers and students with little to no knowledge of how things worked in the real school setting.

Which levels of policymaking do you feel are outside your influence?

State-level policy and law: 96.69% (+2.72%)

State-level programming: 85.64% (+0.30%)

District-level policy: 28.73% (+3.27%)

District-level programming: 23.76% (+3.93%)

Other: 3.31% (-0.57%)
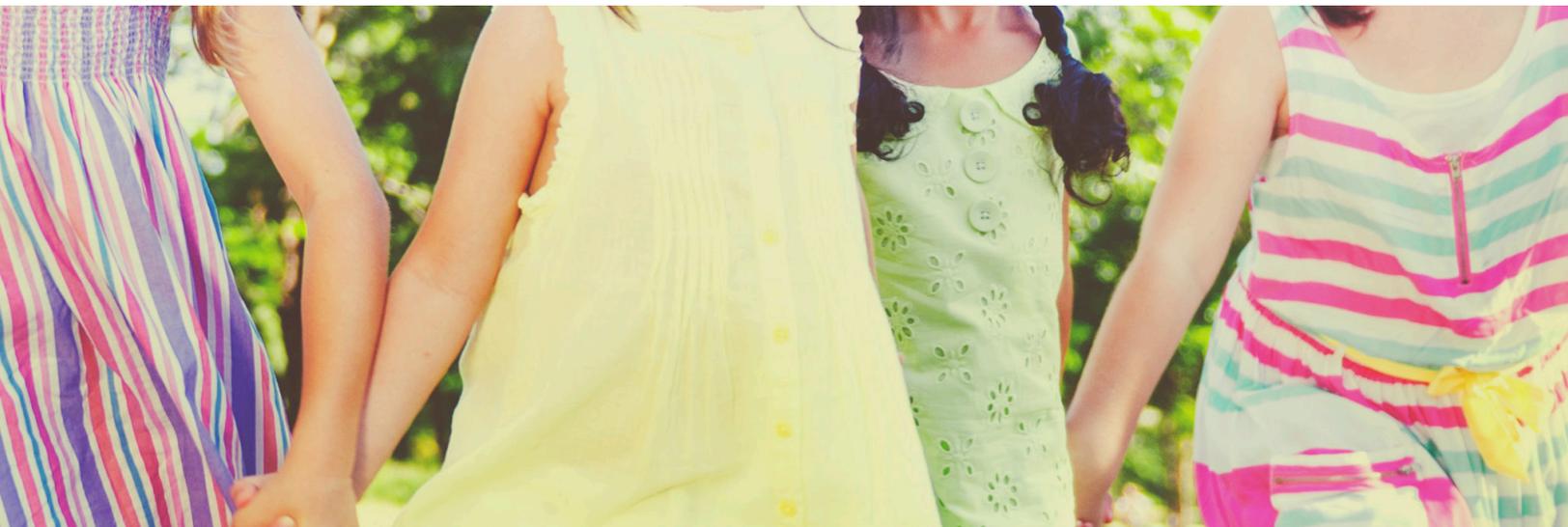
How often do you contact or interact with elected officials?

Never: 15.47% (-9.10%)

Once or twice a year: 59.67% (+8.81%)

Once a month: 13.81% (-1.71%)

Multiple times per month: 11.05% (+2.00%)

Do you feel that teachers in your district are prepared to be effective teachers?

YES: 73.30% (-5.70%)   **NO:** 13.07% (+0.74%)   **Unsure:** 13.64% (+4.96%)

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

YES: 48.30% (-3.75%)   **NO:** 42.05% (+6.89%)   **Unsure:** 9.66% (-3.13%)

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

YES: 80.00% (+4.88%)   **NO:** 13.14% (-7.14%)   **Unsure:** 6.86% (+2.25%)

If known, what is the approximate level of deferred maintenance funding for your current school building?

<$50,000: 12.57% (-2.64%)

$51,000-$100,000: 3.43% (-1.64%)

$101,000-$250,000: 3.43% (-0.72%)

$251,000-$500,000: 6.86% (+5.02%)

>$500,000 (I need a new building): 6.29% (-2.47%)

Unsure: 67.43% (+2.45%)

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

YES: 37.14% (-6.64%)   NO: 62.86% (+6.64%)

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

YES: 45.14% (-9.71%)   **NO:** 54.86% (+9.71%)

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

YES: 46.29% (-2.10%)   **NO:** 53.71% (+2.10%)

When hiring new instructional staff, which primary factors do you consider to determine qualification?*

Prior experience in relevant grade/subject area:

1: 36.95% (-0.49%)

2: 32.39% (+1.80%)

3: 16.48% (+0.04%)

4: 9.09% (-1.41%)

5: 5.11% (+0.09%)

Prior performance on evaluations/observations:

1: 5.68% (-0.26%)

2: 16.48% (+0.50%)

3: 28.41% (-4.47%)

4: 28.41% (-1.27%)

5: 21.02% (+5.49%)

Prior performance on standardized assessments:

1: 5.68% (+0.66%)

2: 13.07% (+4.39%)

3: 21.02% (+5.49%)

4: 29.55% (+0.78%)

5: 30.68% (-11.33%)

Character and personality shown during interview:

1: 43.75% (-5.11%)

2: 27.84% (+2.73%)

3: 13.07% (-1.09%)

4: 10.23% (+2.01%)

5: 5.11% (+1.46%)

Shared attributes with student population (e.g. similar demographics):

1: 7.95% (+5.21%)

2: 10.23% (-9.40%)

3: 21.02% (+0.02%)

4: 22.73% (-0.10%)

5: 38.07% (+4.28%)

When assigning students to classrooms for the upcoming year, 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 school year?

YES: 73.30% (+2.98%)

NO: 11.93% (-4.96%)

Not applicable/I do not make student assignment decisions: 14.77% (+1.98%)

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: 72.73% (+0.13%)

NO: 11.93% (-4.05%)

Not applicable/I do not make student assignment decisions: 15.34% (+3.92%)

I think parental involvement in my school...

Needs Dramatic Improvement: 9.39% (-4.83%)

Needs Improvement: 39.78% (-6.77%)

Is Adequate: 25.97% (+2.26%)

Is Above Expectations: 24.31% (+9.65%)

Is Overly Involved and Negatively Affects School: 0.55% (-0.31%)

What control (as a %) do you have over your school operating budget?

0%: I do not have any control over my school operating budget: 13.29%

<5%: 8.67%

5-15%: 13.87%

16-25%: 6.36%

26-50%: 12.14%

>50%: 45.66%

Do you receive an adequate amount of school funding?

YES: 46.82% (+4.03%)   **NO:** 39.31% (-3.95%)   **Depends:** 13.87% (-0.08%)

Has your district provided school finance and budgetary training to you?

YES: 48.55% (-4.01%)   **NO:** 51.45% (+4.01%)

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

Compliance: 53.54% (+5.39%)   **Both, but mostly compliance:** 35.35% (-7.61%)

Strategy: 2.02% (-0.20%)   **Both, but mostly strategy:** 9.09% (+2.42%)

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

YES: 55.49% (+4.33%)   **NO:** 36.42% (-2.65%)   **Depends:** 8.09% (-1.68%)

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 will your budgeting process look differently under TISA compared to BEP?
Respondents are asked to check all that apply

I do not believe our district will change our budgeting process: 20.81% (+3.14%)

Our district will be consulting with school leaders to inform many of our district's budgeting decisions: 29.48% (+6.69%)

Our district will consider merit-based bonuses to recruit or retain the best educators: 6.36% (-1.55%)

Our district will consider contracting with community-based providers for services that we may not be able to offer with district or school-level staff (i.e., behavioral specialists, school nurses, etc.): 10.40% (+5.28%)

I am unsure: 53.18% (-10.54%)

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 were asked to check one

After-school programming: 14.62% (+2.24%)

Summer learning camp (a six-week summer educational program): 19.88% (-21.36%)

Learning loss bridge camp (a four-week educational program conducted each year before the beginning of the school year): 10.53% (-1.55%)

Tutoring: 49.12% (+2.93%)

Other: 5.85% (-3.20%)

Some of the most common "Other" responses:

- Respondents suggested the most impactful way to combat learning loss is paying teachers more for the additional time and interventions they are doing to combat learning loss, or hiring additional staff who can take from teachers those additional responsibilities.

How were these progress reports messaged to parents/guardians?
Respondents are asked to check all that apply

Weekly personalized reports: 28.10% (+4.57%)

Daily personalized reports: 2.86% (+2.86%)

Pre-test assessment and post-test assessment reports: 67.14% (+20.08%)

Other: 21.90% (-7.51%)

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: 90.64% (+2.54%)

No, we have not seen much of a change in the number of students needing mental health services since before the pandemic: 9.36% (-2.54%)

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: 19.30% (+6.44%)

Somewhat, although we have a team of mental health professionals ready to respond to student needs, it is often difficult to staff these positions: 38.01% (+6.11%)

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: 42.69% (-12.55%)
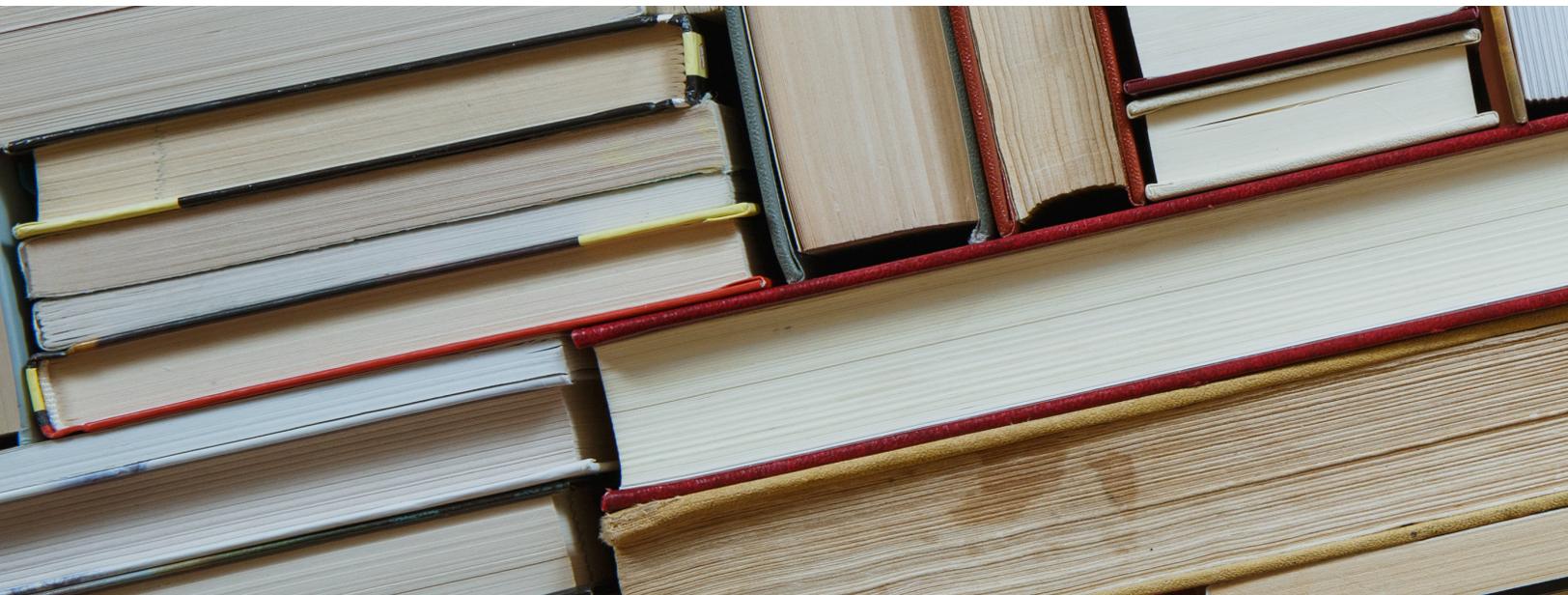
Revitalizing the state's education to workforce system is critical to ensuring that families can thrive within their communities and employers can fill jobs that are the engine of the state's economy. How do you inform students of the various CTE opportunities in your school?

- Counselors and CTE staff share information with students.
- An 8th grade transition program, middle school career coach, parent night/open house

How may students earn postsecondary credentials without enrolling in CTE courses?

- Dual credit at a local TCAT or postsecondary institution

How do you develop partnerships with businesses in your community?

- Develop partnerships with local industry leaders, including chambers of commerce

For More Information on the 2023 School Leaders Survey, visit:
www.tn-can.org