



2019 District Leaders Survey



RESPONDENTS:

143 surveys were administered in August 2019 via emailed survey to all current Tennessee Directors of Schools.

- 66 out of 143 answered the survey (46.15%/+3.00%)*
- 143 emails found | 2 email bounce-back | 1 opt out

*+/- numbers show 2019 compared to 2018 results, reflected as a percent increase or decrease year over year.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- 1** We saw a large increase in 2019 of district leaders' perception of the state of education in Tennessee with nearly 70% viewing it as good or excellent.
- 2** Nearly 94% of district leaders identified Budget as a constraint to improving student outcomes—a sizeable increase compared to 2018.
- 3** Over 60% of district leaders believe the school funding formula, the BEP, should be altered or overhauled completely, though 25% of respondents were unsure whether changes were needed. Not a single respondent thought it should remain the same as it is now.
- 4** Further, over 40% of district leaders would support a funding formula that would weight funding based on student-need, with a sizeable percentage of respondents being unsure.
- 5** We saw sizeable increases in the percentage of district leaders who have piloted/implemented student-based budgeting or have actively considered implementing student-based budgeting.
- 6** We saw a 7% increase in the number of district leaders that would support removing class-size mandates if given additional funding flexibility, with the overall percentage nearing 50%.
- 7** Nearly 60% of district leaders would support an extended school year or day, though this percentage decreased from 2018.

RESPONSES:

How many years have you been a district leader?

1: 12.12% (8)

6: 0.00% (0)

11: 0.00% (0)

16: 0.00% (0)

2: 15.15% (10)

7: 6.06% (4)

12: 4.55% (3)

17: 0.00% (0)

3: 9.09% (6)

8: 7.58% (5)

13: 3.03% (2)

18: 1.52% (1)

4: 9.09% (6)

9: 4.55% (3)

14: 1.52% (1)

19: 3.03% (2)

5: 13.64% (9)

10: 3.03% (2)

15: 1.52% (1)

20+: 4.55% (3)

*Most distributions held steady since 2018, but we did see an increase in 2nd year district leaders and a decrease of district leaders with 19 and 20+ years' experience.

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

YES: 83.33% (-0.80%)

NO: 16.67% (+0.80%)

Have you been a classroom educator in the past?

YES: 95.45% (+4.55%)

NO: 4.55% (-4.55%)

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

YES: 16.67% (-3.96%)

NO: 83.33% (+3.96%)

Have you ever led a district in another state?

YES: 4.55% (-1.80%)

NO: 95.45% (+1.80%)

Approximately how many students are enrolled in your district?

Less than 2,000: 33.33% (-11.11%)

Between 2,000 to 10,000: 59.09% (+8.59%)

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

Greater than 15,000: 1.52% (-3.24%)

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

Excellent: 9.38% (+0.61%)

Needs some improvement: 21.88% (-4.44%)

Good: 59.38% (+3.24%)

Needs dramatic improvement: 0.00% (no change)

Neutral: 9.38% (+0.61%)

Unsure: 0.00% (no change)

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

Budget: 93.75% (+6.03%)

Transportation: 12.50% (+1.97%)

Staffing: 76.56% (+15.16%)

Curriculum Quality: 23.44% (+4.14%)

Scheduling: 18.75% (-2.30%)

Other: 23.44% (+4.14%)

Some of the most common “Other” responses included:

- Inequitable funding streams
- Mental health and community supports
- Legislative overreach
- Moving accountability targets

*Survey participants asked to select all that apply.

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

State-level policy and law: 87.50% (+5.04%)

State-level programming: 60.94% (-5.73%)

District-level policy: 3.13% (+1.38%)

District-level programming: 3.13% (+3.13%)

Other: 7.81% (-2.72%)

Some of the most common “Other” responses included:

- National education policy
- Last minute changes by the legislature that affect school operations
- Lack of respect for LEAs and local control

*Survey participants asked to select all that apply.

How would you describe your relationship with your school board?

Excellent: 64.06% (-2.61%)

Poor: 3.13% (+3.13%)

Good: 31.25% (+1.43%)

Very Poor: 0.00% (no change)

Neutral: 1.56% (-1.95%)

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

YES: 89.06% (+3.10%)

NO: 7.81% (-2.55%)

Unsure: 3.13% (-5.64%)

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

YES: 50.00% (-16.67%)

NO: 42.19% (+14.12%)

Unsure: 7.81% (+2.55%)

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

YES: 59.38% (+15.52%)

NO: 23.44% (-9.89%)

Unsure: 17.19% (-5.62%)

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

YES: 35.94% (+2.61%)

NO: 64.06% (-2.61%)



Would you support removing class-size mandates in order to receive more funding flexibility?

YES: 45.31% (+6.71%)

NO: 40.63% (-8.49%)

Depends: 14.06% (+1.78%)

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

YES: 35.94% (+0.85%)

NO: 64.06% (-0.85%)

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

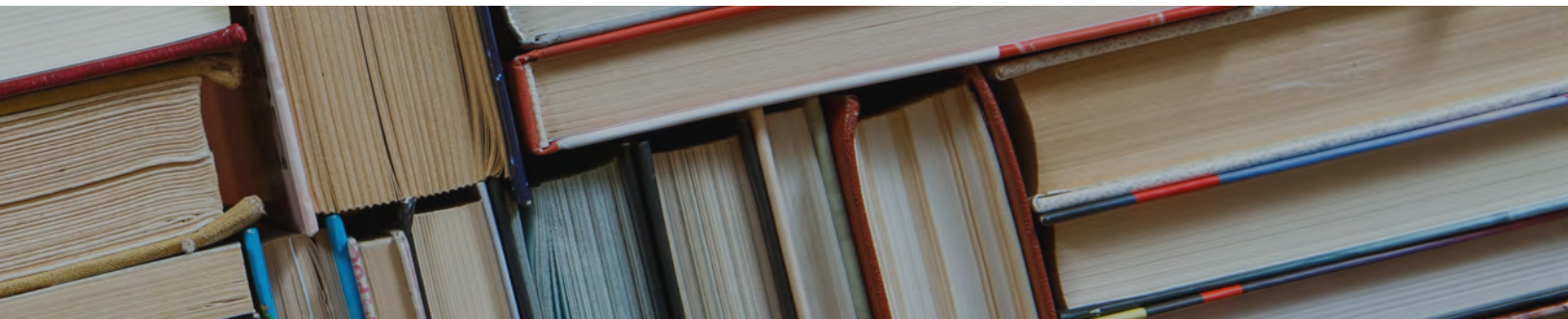
YES: 45.31% (-10.83%)

NO: 54.69% (+10.83%)

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

YES: 57.81% (-10.61%)

NO: 42.19% (+10.61%)



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

Me (The Director of Schools): 6.25% (+6.25%)

The School Board: 4.69% (+4.69%)

School leaders: 78.13% (-2.57%)

Teachers: 3.13% (-2.13%)

Other: 7.81% (-6.23%)

Unsure: 0.00% (No change)

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: 57.81% (+8.69%)

NO: 3.13% (-2.13%)

Not applicable/I do not make student assignment decisions: 39.06% (-6.55%)

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: 50.00% (+0.88%)

NO: 7.81% (+0.79%)

Not applicable/I do not make student assignment decisions: 42.19% (-1.67%)

How often do you contact elected officials?

Never: 1.56% (-1.95%)

Once or twice a year: 26.56% (-6.77%)

Once a month: 29.69% (+1.62%)

Multiple times per month: 42.19% (+7.1%)

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

YES: 50.00% (-2.94%)

NO: 42.19% (-0.95%)

Unsure: 7.81% (+3.89%)

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

YES: 4.69% (+0.77%)

NO: 84.38% (+2.03%)

Depends: 10.94% (-2.79%)

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: 26.56% (-20.50%)

NO: 65.63% (+14.65%)

Depends: 7.81% (+5.85%)

Would you support the state weighting per pupil funding based on student need (ex: economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, special education students, etc.) rather than dispersing an average per pupil amount regardless of individual student needs?

YES: 40.63% (+3.38%)

Depends: 9.38% (+3.50%)

NO: 20.31% (-7.14%)

Unsure: 29.69% (+0.28%)

Have you 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: 46.88% (-8.02%)

No, I have not considered implementing student-based budgeting in my district, but I would like to learn more about it: 26.56% (+12.83%)

Yes, I have considered implementing student-based budgeting in my district, but have not yet implemented it: 14.06% (+4.26%)

Yes, I have piloted or implemented student-based budgeting in my district: 7.81% (+5.85%)

Not applicable as I have never heard of student-based budgeting: 4.69% (-14.92%)





Many policymakers, including Governor Bill Lee, have stressed the need to reform our state's school funding formula, the BEP. How should our state handle the BEP funding formula going forward?

Leave it as is: 0.00% (No change)

Make small changes or tweaks to improve the BEP: 32.81% (-2.48%)

Overhaul the BEP completely and create a new school funding formula: 31.25% (-11.89%)

Unsure: 25.00% (+15.20%)

Other: 10.94% (-0.82%)

Some of the most common “Other” responses included:

- Fully fund all staffing positions
- Lack of fairness between counties with differing local wealth
- “The framework of the BEP needs to be revised... The world has changed in 27 years and the bones of the formula has not. Transparency and simplicity is a must...”

For More Information on the 2019 District Leaders Survey, visit:
www.tn-can.org

