



2019 School Leaders Survey





RESPONDENTS:

1,745 surveys were administered in August 2019 via emailed survey to all current Tennessee school principals, including public charter school principals.

- 514 out of 1,745 (29.46% / +1.45%)*
- 1,745 emails found | 14 email bounce-back | 3 opt outs

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

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- 1** The majority of school leaders still perceive the state of education in their district and Tennessee as a whole to be positive, both percentages increasing in 2019.
- 2** Nearly 95% of principals believe that state policy and lawmaking is outside of their influence.
- 3** Most principals believe that the state funding formula, the BEP, needs to be altered or overhauled completely, though 26% of respondents were unsure whether changes were needed. Less than 7% of principals believe the BEP formula should remain as is.
- 4** A strong majority of principals identified Budget and Staffing as constraints that hinder their ability to improve student outcomes, with both percentages increasing in 2019.
- 5** Over 58% of principals would support an extended school day or school year if given adequate resources to do so.
- 6** We saw a 2.51% increase in 2019 of principals who were trained in alternative preparation programs.



RESPONSES:

What type of school do you lead?

Traditional District Run School: 89.88% (+1.21%)

Charter School: 3.50% (+0.57%)

Magnet School: 1.17% (-1.17%)

Optional School: 0.58% (-1.18%)

Alternative School: 2.92% (+0.38%)

Turnaround School: 1.95% (+0.19%)

How many years have you been a school leader?

1: 5.06% (26)

6: 6.61% (34)

11: 4.09% (21)

16: 3.11% (16)

2: 4.09% (21)

7: 6.42% (33)

12: 4.09% (21)

17: 1.17% (6)

3: 7.20% (37)

8: 6.81% (35)

13: 4.09% (21)

18: 1.56% (8)

4: 6.23% (32)

9: 5.84% (30)

14: 4.28% (22)

19: 2.53% (13)

5: 8.75% (45)

10: 6.23% (32)

15: 3.89% (20)

20+: 7.98% (41)

*Most distributions held steady since 2018, but we did see a slight decrease in 1st and 2nd year principals, and a slight decrease in 18, 19, and 20+ year principals.

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

1-4 years: 3.50% (+1.55%)

11-15 years: 25.68% (-1.27%)

4-7 years: 19.07% (+2.47%)

16-20 years: 15.95% (-3.00%)

7-10 years: 24.90% (+1.85%)

20+ years: 10.89% (-1.61%)

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

Traditional: 92.80% (-2.51%)

Alternative: 7.20% (+2.51%)

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

Yes: 74.90% (+3.81%)

No: 14.79% (-2.20%)

Unsure: 10.31% (-1.60%)

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

YES: 16.00% (-0.73%)

NO: 84.00% (+0.73%)

What grade level does your school currently serve?

Elementary: 48.80% (-1.00%)

Middle: 23.80% (+3.60%)

K-8: 12.80% (-2.30%)

High School: 22.00% (+3.84%)

K-12: 2.60% (-1.48%)

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

Excellent: 16.48% (-2.89%)

Needs some improvement: 20.44% (-1.18%)

Good: 50.55% (+0.10%)

Needs dramatic improvement: 4.18% (-1.0%)

Neutral: 7.69% (+4.54%)

Unsure: 0.66% (+0.43%)

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

Excellent: 1.54% (+0.41%)

Needs some improvement: 31.65% (-5.06%)

Good: 43.30% (+4.56%)

Needs dramatic improvement: 9.45% (-3.39%)

Neutral: 13.41% (+3.50%)

Unsure: 0.66% (-0.02%)



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

Budget: 67.03% (+1.26%)

Staffing: 67.47% (+2.83%)

Scheduling: 27.91% (-3.40%)

Transportation: 7.91% (+0.03%)

Curriculum Quality: 24.18% (+4.59%)

Other: 24.62% (-4.88%)

Some of the most common “Other” responses included:

- Constant changes in curriculum, standards, and testing
- Adequate training time for teachers
- Constantly shifting accountability measures
- Student trauma and mental health
- Parental support and accountability

*Survey participants asked to select all that apply.



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

State-level policy and law: 94.95% (+0.58%)

State-level programming: 79.78% (-0.85%)

District-level policy: 22.42% (-3.26%)

District-level programming: 15.16% (-5.11%)

Other: 2.64% (-1.64%)

Some of the most common “Other” responses included:

- Policies related to school funding
- Policymakers of all kinds don't seek educator opinions

*Survey participants asked to select all that apply.



How often do you contact or interact with elected officials?

Never: 19.78% (+4.01%)

Once or twice a year: 58.46% (+1.48%)

Once a month: 13.63% (-3.71%)

Multiple times per month: 8.13% (-1.78%)

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

YES: 79.78% (+0.50%)

NO: 8.57% (+0.91%)

Unsure: 11.65% (-1.41%)

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

YES: 65.49% (+2.88%)

NO: 26.37% (-2.91%)

Unsure: 8.13% (+0.02%)

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

YES: 60.44% (+4.13%)

NO: 12.97% (-3.47%)

Unsure: 26.59% (-0.66%)

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

<\$50,000: 27.25% (+1.35%)

\$51,000-\$100,000: 10.11% (+0.20%)

\$101,000-\$250,000: 5.05% (-3.06%)

\$251,000-\$500,000: 3.30% (+1.5%)

>\$500,000 (I need a new building): 4.84% (-0.11%)

Unsure: 49.45% (+0.13%)

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

YES: 24.62% (+0.75%)

NO: 57.14% (-0.75%)

Depends: 18.24% (No change)

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

YES: 40.88% (+5.52%)

NO: 59.12% (-5.52%)

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

YES: 52.31% (+3.66%)

NO: 47.69% (-3.66%)

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

YES: 58.02% (+0.59%)

NO: 41.98% (-0.59%)



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

*Survey participants asked to rank in order with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important.

Prior experience in relevant grade/subject area:

1: 30.99% (-3.92%)

2: 32.53% (+0.32%)

3: 18.24% (+1.35%)

4: 12.09% (+2.63%)

5: 6.15% (-0.38%)

Prior performance on evaluations/observations:

1: 8.79% (+0.23%)

2: 18.68% (-1.82%)

3: 30.77% (-1.21%)

4: 30.33% (+2.18%)

5: 11.43% (+0.62%)

Prior performance on standardized assessments:

1: 9.89% (-0.02%)

2: 16.92% (+4.98%)

3: 23.96% (+3.01%)

4: 24.62% (-1.73%)

5: 24.62% (-6.24%)

Character and personality shown during interview:

1: 42.20% (+0.53%)

2: 20.44% (-3.43%)

3: 12.75% (-0.76%)

4: 14.95% (+0.09%)

5: 9.67% (+3.59%)

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

1: 8.13% (+3.18%)

2: 11.43% (-0.06%)

3: 14.29% (-2.38%)

4: 18.02% (-3.15%)

5: 48.13% (+2.41%)

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: 80.72% (+7.04%)

NO: 11.43% (-6.88%)

Not applicable/I do not make student assignment decisions: 7.85% (-0.16%)

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: 75.34% (+1.66%)

NO: 16.82% (-1.72%)

Not applicable/I do not make student assignment decisions: 7.85% (+0.07%)

I think parent involvement in my school is...

Needs Dramatic Improvement: 6.53% (-3.79%)

Needs Improvement: 44.14% (-1.04%)

Is Adequate: 32.43% (+6.74%)

Is Above Expectations: 16.89% (-1.69%)

Is Overly Involved and Negatively Affects School: 0.00% (-0.23%)





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

0%: 5.50% (-3.80%)

<5%: 5.73% (-0.78%)

5-15%: 9.63% (+0.33%)

16-25%: 8.03% (-0.34%)

26-50%: 16.28% (-1.39%)

>50%: 54.82% (+5.98%)

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

YES: 46.10% (+6.80%)

NO: 44.50% (-8.06%)

Depends: 9.40% (+1.26%)

Do you receive an adequate amount of school funding?

YES: 39.91% (-0.32%)

NO: 42.20% (-1.29%)

Depends: 17.89% (+1.61%)



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: 58.49% (+2.44%)

NO: 31.88% (-2.31%)

Depends: 9.63% (-0.14%)

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: 45.41% (+0.06%)

Depends: 5.50% (-1.01%)

NO: 22.02% (-0.07%)

Unsure: 27.06% (+1.01%)



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: 6.65% (+0.37%)

Make small changes or tweaks to improve the BEP: 30.96% (-4.85%)

Overhaul the BEP completely and create a new school funding formula: 27.29% (+0.55%)

Unsure: 26.38% (+0.80%)

Other: 8.72% (+3.14%)

Some of the most common “Other” responses included:

- Need to increase funding; current amounts and categories are not realistic
- Fully fund the formula to meet student needs
- Funding dedicated to retain teachers in hard-to-staff schools
- Counties with multiple school districts are not receiving equal funding
- Increase funding for rural/small districts

*Question slightly reworded from 2018 survey.

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

