



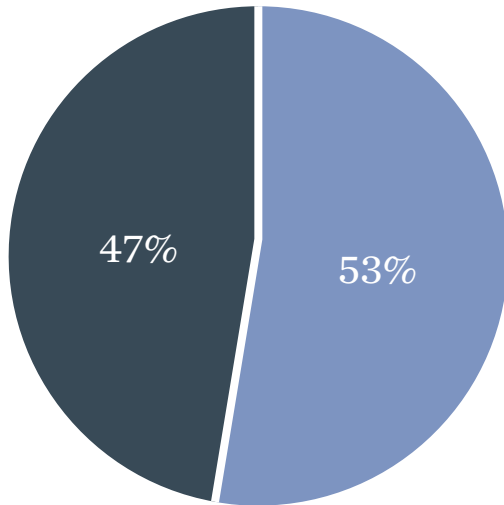
2020 District Leaders Survey

RESPONDENTS:

146 surveys were administered in August 2020 via an emailed survey to all current Tennessee Directors of Schools.

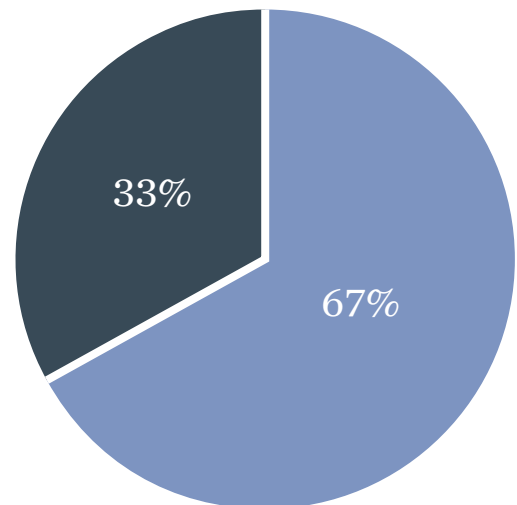
- 65 out of 146 answered the survey (44.52%/-1.63%)¹
- 146 emails found | 6 emails bounced-back | 3 opted out
- About two-thirds of survey respondents were from rural areas, classified as non-metropolitan areas by the USDA Economic Research Service²

Tennessee School Districts



• Urban • Rural

Survey Respondents



• Urban • Rural

¹+/- numbers show 2020 compared to 2019 results, reflected as a percent increase or decrease year over year.

²Rural-Urban Continuum Codes, Economic Research Service, US Department of Agriculture, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/rural-urban-continuum-codes.aspx>

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1

Even in a global pandemic, district leaders are hopeful about the state of education in Tennessee. The percentage of district leaders who perceive the state of education in Tennessee to be good or excellent increased slightly (71.7% this year compared to nearly 70% last year).

2

District leaders can easily identify constraints to improving student outcomes.

- Over 98% of district leaders identified the budget as a constraint to improving student outcomes, a 4-point increase from the previous year.
- Almost 67% of district leaders identified staffing as a constraint to improving student outcomes. The ability to hire enough staff and/or the flexibility to hire the right staff was most often mentioned in the above-noted budget constraints.
- Relatedly, of the 18 district leaders who responded to the question, “What do you need to better recruit, hire, and support principals,” 100% of district leaders reported that they needed additional funding to recruit, train and retain school leaders.

3

Many district leaders use data to inform student assignment decisions.

- Of the district leaders respondents who influence student assignment decisions, 86.5% consider the effectiveness of the teacher/classroom the student had the previous year relative to the effectiveness of the teacher/classroom in the coming year.
- Of the district leaders respondents who influence student assignment decisions, 91% consider the effectiveness of the teacher/classroom in the coming year relative to the student’s individual achievement levels.

4

District leaders are making spending decisions that are in response to wildly different needs from previous years, yet the current funding model that grants the money for those spending decisions is identical to prior years.

- Over 67% of district leaders - compared to over 60% last year - believe the school funding formula, the BEP, should be altered or overhauled completely, with over 20% unsure. Not a single respondent thought it should remain the same as it is now.
- Compared to 2019, the percentage of district leaders who reported being unfamiliar with student-based budgeting was cut in half, with a small increase in respondents who either have implemented/piloted or considered it. There was a large increase in those who haven't considered it but would like to learn more (15.25% to 26.6%).
- Many respondents from rural districts expressed frustrations that the current funding model ignores their diverse funding needs, especially in a global pandemic.
- There was a small decrease in the number of district leaders that would support removing class-size mandates if given additional funding flexibility. Respondents were most concerned about not having a limit.

5

In creating school reopening plans for the 2020-21 school year, only 58.6% of respondents reported having a parent voice in the process. Respondents reported having the following stakeholders inform their reopening plans:

- School administrators (98.28%)
- Local health officials (91.38%)
- Parents (58.62%)
- District leaders (96.55%)
- Teachers (89.66%)

RESPONSES:

How many years have you been a district leader?

1-3 years: 29.00%

4-9 years: 36.90%

10-19 years: 16.90%

20+ years: 16.90%

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

YES: 90.77% (+7.44%)

NO: 9.23% (-7.44%)³

³+/- numbers show 2020 compared to 2019 results, reflected as a percent increase or decrease year over year.

Have you been a classroom educator in the past?

YES: 98.45% (+3.00%)

NO: 1.54% (-3.00%)

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

YES: 20.00% (+3.33%)

NO: 80.00% (-3.33%)

Have you ever led a district in another state?

YES: 6.15% (+1.60%)

NO: 93.85% (-1.60%)

Approximately how many students are enrolled in your district?

Less than 2,000: 40.00% (+6.67%)

Between 2,000 to 10,000: 49.23% (-9.86%)

Between 10,000 to 15,000: 6.15% (+0.09%)

Greater than 15,000: 4.62% (+3.10%)

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

Excellent: 10.00% (+0.62%)

Needs some improvement: 21.67% (-0.21%)

Good: 61.67% (+2.29%)

Needs dramatic improvement: 3.33% (+3.33%)

Neutral: 3.33% (-6.05%)

Unsure: 0.00% (no change)

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

Budget: 98.33% (+4.58%)

Transportation: 11.67% (-0.83%)

Staffing: 66.67% (-9.89%)

Curriculum Quality: 11.67% (-11.77%)

Scheduling: 18.33% (-0.42%)

Other: 21.67% (-1.77%)

Some of the most common “Other” responses included:

- Too many state mandates
- Initiatives
- Priorities
- School board politics

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

State-level policy and law: 81.67% (-5.83%)

State-level programming: 73.33% (+12.39%)

District-level policy: 1.67% (-1.46%)

District-level programming: 1.67% (-1.46%)

Other: 3.33% (-4.48%)

How would you describe your relationship with your school board?

Excellent: 60.00% (-4.06%)

Good: 36.67% (+5.42%)

Neutral: 1.67% (+0.11%)

Poor: 1.67% (-1.46%)

Very Poor: 0.00% (no change)

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

YES: 86.67% (-2.39%)

NO: 8.33% (+0.52%)

Unsure: 5.00% (+1.87%)

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

YES: 66.67% (+16.67%)

NO: 25.00% (-17.19%)

Unsure: 8.33% (+0.52%)

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

YES: 61.67% (+2.29%)

NO: 16.67% (-6.77%)

Unsure: 21.67% (+4.48%)

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

YES: 33.30% (-2.64%)

NO: 66.67% (+2.61%)



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

YES: 45.00% (-0.31%)

NO: 40.00% (-0.63%)

Depends: 15.00% (+0.94%)

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

YES: 45.00% (+9.06%)

NO: 55.00% (-9.06%)

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

YES: 66.67% (+21.36%)

NO: 33.33% (-21.35%)

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

YES: 41.67% (-16.14%)

NO: 58.33% (+16.14%)



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

Me (The Director of Schools): 5.00% (-1.25%)

The School Board: 0.00% (-4.69%)

School leaders: 78.33% (+0.20%)

Teachers: 6.67% (+3.54%)

Other: 10.00% (+2.19%)

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: 53.33% (-4.48%)

NO: 8.33% (+5.20%)

Not applicable/I do not make student assignment decisions: 38.33% (-0.73%)

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: 51.67% (+1.67%)

NO: 5.00% (-2.81%)

Not applicable/I do not make student assignment decisions: 43.44% (+1.25%)

How often do you contact elected officials?

Never: 1.67% (+0.11%)

Once or twice a year: 21.67% (-4.89%)

Once a month: 35.00% (+5.31%)

Multiple times per month: 41.67% (-0.52%)

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

YES: 49.15% (-0.85%)

NO: 44.07% (+1.88%)

Unsure: 6.78% (-1.03%)

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

YES: 6.78% (+4.69%)

NO: 83.05% (-1.33%)

Depends: 10.17% (-0.77%)

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: 32.20% (+5.64%)

NO: 62.71% (-2.92%)

Depends: 5.08% (-2.73%)

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: 25.42% (-15.21%)

Depends: 5.08% (-4.30%)

NO: 23.73% (+3.42%)

Unsure: 45.76% (+16.07%)

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: 53.93% (+9.05%)

No, I have not considered implementing student-based budgeting in my district, but I would like to learn more about it: 15.25% (-11.31%)

Yes, I have considered implementing student-based budgeting in my district, but have not yet implemented it: 13.56% (-0.50%)

Yes, I have piloted or implemented student-based budgeting in my district: 5.08% (-2.73%)

Not applicable as I have never heard of student-based budgeting: 10.17% (+5.48%)



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: 38.98% (+6.17%)

Overhaul the BEP completely and create a new school funding formula: 28.81% (-2.44%)

Unsure: 20.34% (-4.66%)

Other: 11.86% (+0.92%)

Some of the most common “Other” responses included:

- Rural districts feel marginalized when it comes to state and federal funding
- Rural districts are expected to do more with less
- Funding should be equitable for all school systems, especially between metro and rural areas

Does your district have a reopening plan for the 2020-2021 school year?

Yes: 100%

No: 0.00%

Unsure: 0.00%

At this moment, how will schools in your district reopen for the 2020-2021 school year?

All students physical on campus: 5.17%

Hybrid; partially on campus, partially virtual education: 86.21%

All students in virtual education: 5.17%

Other: 3.45%

Do you feel prepared for schools in your district to open this fall?

Yes: 77.59%

No: 15.52%

Unsure: 6.90%

Who has been involved with creating reopening plans in your district?

State Leaders: 22.41%

District Leaders: 96.55%

School Administration: 98.28%

Teachers: 89.66%

Parents: 58.62%

Local Health Officials: 91.38%

Other: 5.17%

Has your district provided professional development for teachers regarding virtual education?

Yes: 98.28%



No: 1.72%

Unsure: 0.00%

Has there been discussion about what will happen if schools in your district must re-close this fall?

Yes: 98.28%



No: 1.72%

Unsure: 0.00%

Has your district received CARES Act funding?

Yes: 98.28%



No: 1.72%

Unsure: 0.00%

For more information on the 2020 District Leaders Survey, visit:
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