SCHOOL LEADERS SURVEY 2017

A TennesseeCAN Statewide Poll

TennesseeCAN

1,781 surveys were administered in late July/early August 2017 via emailed survey to all current Tennessee school principals, including public charter school principals.

462 respondents (25.94%) +6.74%* answered the survey: 1,781 email addresses found, 74 bounce-back, 27 opt-out.

*+/− numbers show 2017 compared to 2016 results, reflected as a percent increase or decrease year over year.

1. While principals continue to have a more positive perception of their district than the state as a whole, a far greater proportion of respondents positively rated the state of education for the entire state than in 2016.

2. Budget and Staffing continue to be the greatest perceived constraints for principals, while principals perceive state-level policies and programming to be most out of their control.

3. A majority of principals would support an extended school day and/or year if given the necessary resources to do so.

4. Principals continue to consider character, personality, and prior experience of an applicant teacher over prior performance or shared attributes with students; however, a greater proportion of principals rated shared attributes with student population as important than in 2016.

5. Principals are increasingly considering classroom effectiveness and past student achievement when making student assignment decisions as compared to 2016.
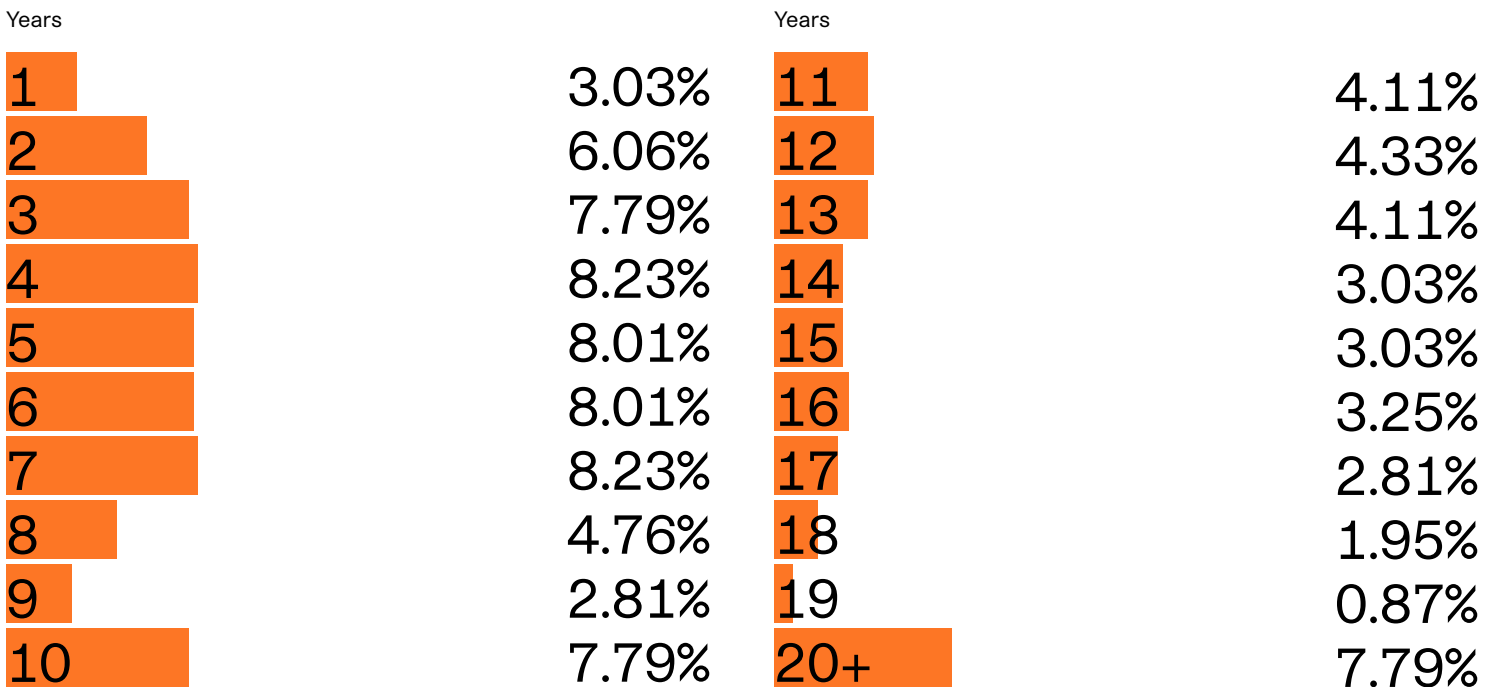
6. While perceptions of parent involvement are improving, most principals still considered that parental involvement at their schools needs improvement.

7. Principals generally support the idea of weighting funding based on student need for at-risk categories of students, though many respondents were "unsure" or noted that they needed more information to decide.
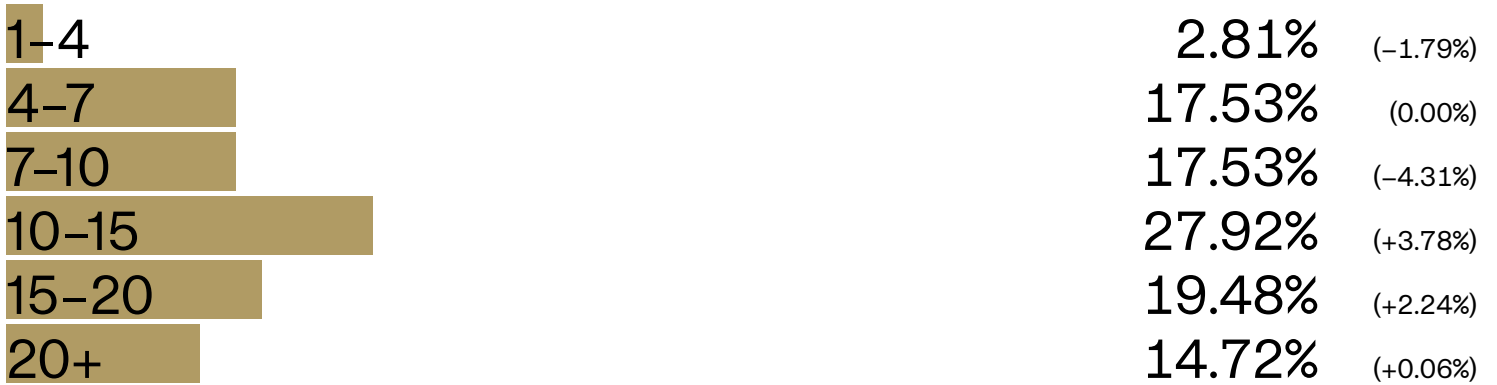
What type of school do you lead?

Traditional District Run School	87.88%	(+3.11%)
Charter School	3.90%	(+1.03%)
Magnet School	1.08%	(−0.93%)
Optional School	1.30%	(+0.44%)
Alternative School	4.33%	(−0.27%)
Turnaround School	1.52%	(−0.49%)

How many years have you been a school leader?*

| Years		Years	
1	3.03%	11	4.11%
2	6.06%	12	4.33%
3	7.79%	13	4.11%
4	8.23%	14	3.03%
5	8.01%	15	3.03%
6	8.01%	16	3.25%
7	8.23%	17	2.81%
8	4.76%	18	1.95%
9	2.81%	19	0.87%
10	7.79%	20+	7.79%

*Most distributions held steady since 2016, but we had a decrease in new principals (1–2 years), a slight increase in principals of 6–7 years, and a slight decrease in long-term principals (20+ years).

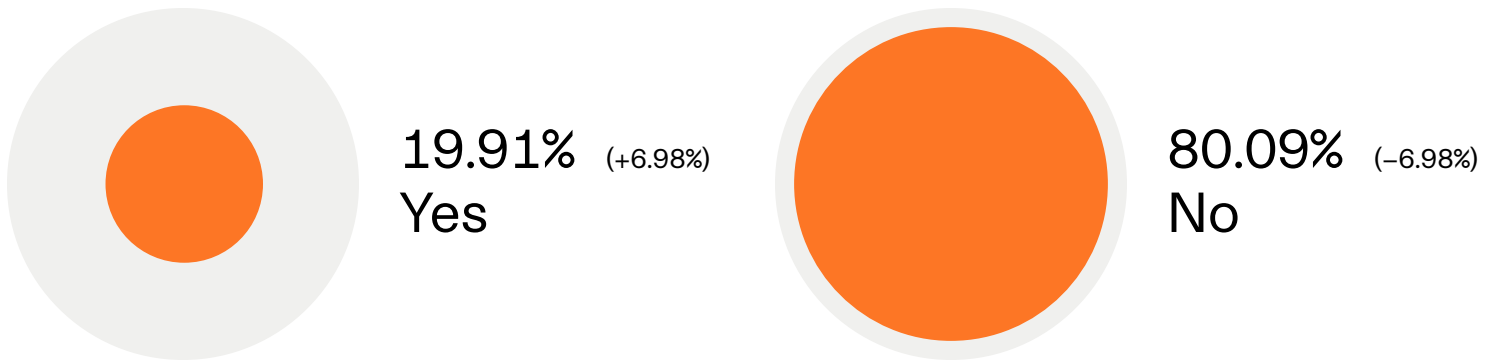How many years did you teach prior to leading a school?

1–4	2.81%	(−1.79%)
4–7	17.53%	(0.00%)
7–10	17.53%	(−4.31%)
10–15	27.92%	(+3.78%)
15–20	19.48%	(+2.24%)
20+	14.72%	(+0.06%)

Were you educated and trained in a traditional or alternative preparation program?*
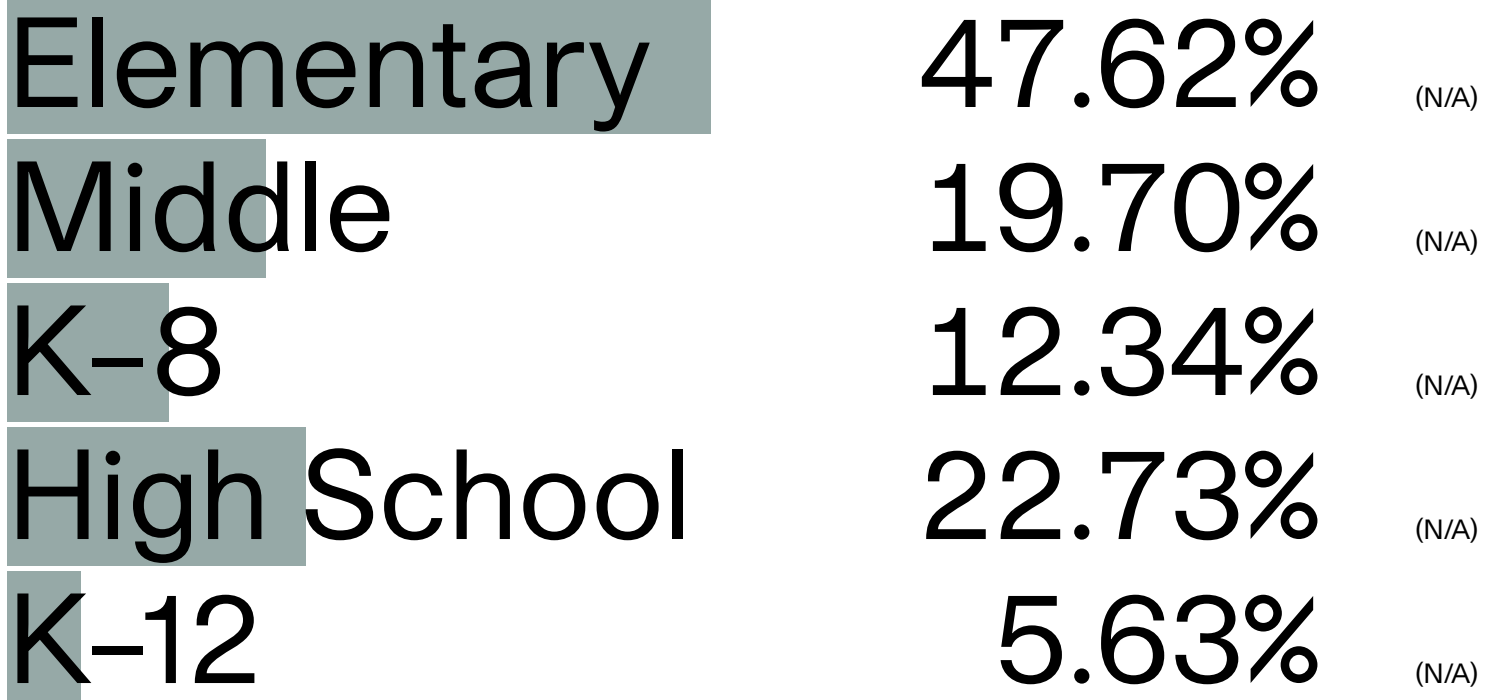
94.59% (+0.34%) Traditional

5.41% (+0.52%) Alternative
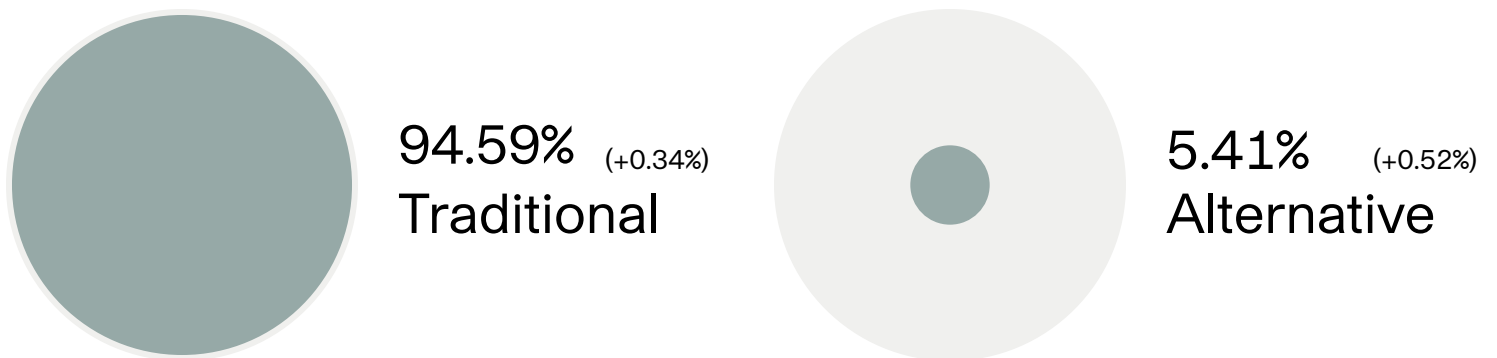
*In 2016 "Other" was a response option, but this was removed in the 2017 survey.

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

19.91% (+6.98%)
Yes

80.09% (−6.98%)
No

What grade level does your school currently serve?*

Elementary	47.62%	(N/A)
Middle	19.70%	(N/A)
K–8	12.34%	(N/A)
High School	22.73%	(N/A)
K–12	5.63%	(N/A)

*"K–8" and "K–12" were added as response categories for the 2017 survey.

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

Excellent	21.45%	(–5.73%)
Good	50.90%	(+4.26%)
Neutral*	4.91%	(N/A)
Needs some improvement	18.60%	(–2.21%)
Needs dramatic improvement	3.88%	(–1.49%)
Unsure	0.26%	(–0.44%)

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

Excellent	2.33%	(+0.65%)
Good	44.44%	(+10.88%)
Neutral*	12.92%	(N/A)
Needs some improvement	34.11%	(–17.57%)
Needs dramatic improvement	5.17%	(–7.25%)
Unsure	1.03%	(+0.36%)

*"Neutral" was added as a response category for the 2017 survey.

What limitations or constraints do you feel hinder your ability to improve student outcomes?*
(Check all that apply)

Budget	**70.80%**	(+0.67%)
Staffing	**67.44%**	(+6.37%)
Scheduling	**28.42%**	(−8.83%)
Transportation	**8.27%**	(−0.79%)
Other	**22.74%**	(N/A)

Some of the most common "Other" responses included:

1. State mandates
2. Changing standards/assessments
3. Too many assessments
4. Generational poverty
5. Parental/Community Support
6. Politics
7. Poor teacher training
8. Non-instructional duties

*Question slightly reworded from 2016 survey. "Other" was added as a response category for the 2017 survey.

Which levels of policymaking do you feel are outside your influence?* (Check all that apply)

State-level policy and law	93.54%	(−3.78%)
State-level programming	75.71%	(−9.86%)
District-level policy	18.86%	(−6.64%)
District-level programming	14.21%	(−4.58%)
Other	2.84%	(N/A)

Some of the most common "Other" responses included:

1. Policymakers spending time in classrooms
2. Student home life
3. Federal law

Do you have the resources and support from your LEA/District to attract and retain quality teachers?

Yes	62.27%	(+3.88%)
No	15.50%	(+2.08%)
Depends	22.22%	(−5.97%)

*Question slightly reworded from 2016 survey. "Other" was added as a response category for the 2017 survey.

Do you have the resources and support from your LEA/District to get quality materials and equipment?

Yes   **67.44%** (+11.40%)

No   **13.18%** (+1.10%)

Depends   **19.38%** (−12.50%)

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

23.26%
Yes

16.28%
Depends

60.47%
No
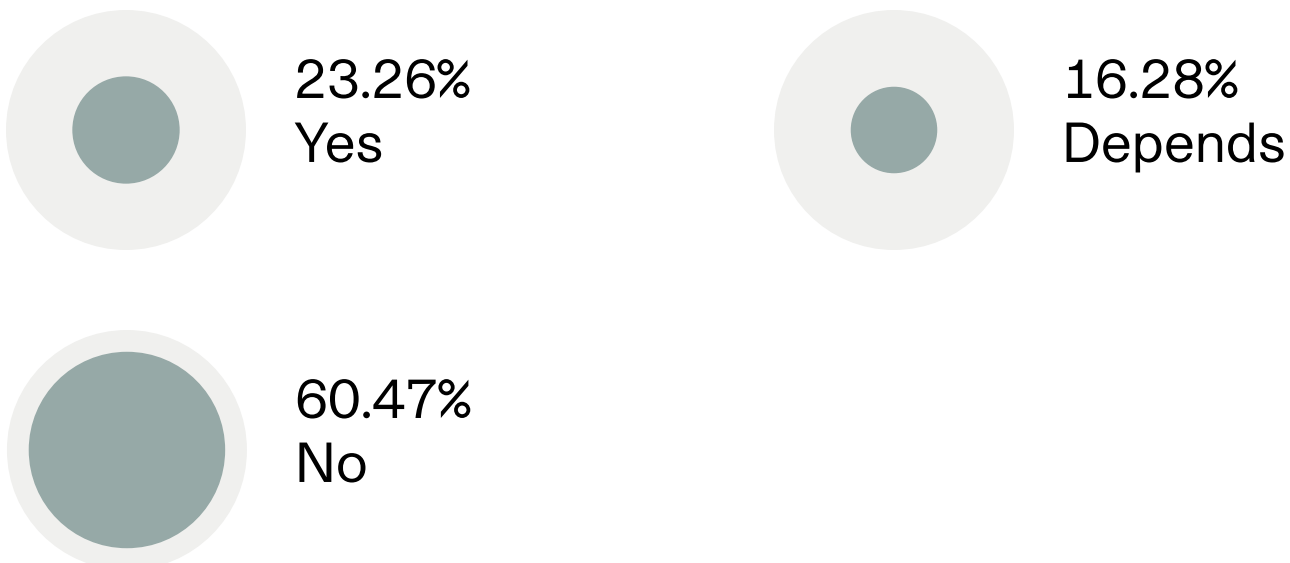
*This question was not asked in the 2016 survey.

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

Yes   36.95%   (+2.72%)

No   63.05%   (−2.72%)

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

Yes   46.51%   (+12.28%)

No   53.49%   (−12.28%)

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

58.66% Yes

41.34% No

*In the 2016 survey these questions and the question below were combined as a single question. +/− percentages compare 2017 responses to the combined question from 2016.

**In the 2016 survey this question and the question above were combined as a single question. +/− percentages compare 2017 responses to the combined question from 2016.

***This question was not asked in the 2016 survey.

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

Prior experience in relevant grade/subject area:

1	28.68%	(−0.10%)
2	29.20%	(−1.80%)
3	19.90%	(−2.61%)
4	15.50%	(+3.69%)
5	6.72%	(+0.82%)

Prior performance on evaluations/observations:

1	11.63%	(−0.73%)
2	21.71%	(+3.16%)
3	30.49%	(−0.06%)
4	25.32%	(−3.41%)
5	10.85%	(+1.03%)

Prior performance on standardized assessments:

1	10.59%	(−1.37%)
2	17.57%	(+3.44%)
3	20.67%	(+0.30%)
4	28.42%	(+1.25%)
5	22.74%	(−3.71%)

*Respondents were asked to rank order all choices with a 1 as the most important and 5 as the least important.

Character and personality shown during interview:

1	42.38%	(+3.36%)
2	21.19%	(−5.99%)
3	15.25%	(+1.66%)
4	12.92%	(−0.67%)
5	8.27%	(+1.65%)

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

1	6.72%	(+0.49%)
2	10.34%	(+1.34%)
3	13.70%	(−2.91%)
4	17.83%	(−1.55%)
5	51.42%	(+2.63%)

*Respondents were asked to rank order all choices with a 1 as the most important and 5 as the least important.

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	76.80%	(+1.97%)
No	15.73%	(+0.29%)
Not applicable (I do not make student assignment decisions)	7.47%	(−2.26%)

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 is somewhat behind from the past year so they should be placed in one of your higher performing classrooms in the coming year.)

Yes	79.73%	(+2.88%)
No	14.13%	(−0.30%)
Not applicable (I do not make student assignment decisions)	6.13%	(−2.59%)

# I think parent involvement in my school is...*

Needs Dramatic Improvement	7.99%	(N/A)
Needs Improvement	45.45%	(N/A)
Adequate	27.27%	(N/A)
Above Expectations	19.28%	(N/A)
Overly Involved/Negatively Affects School	0.00%	(N/A)

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

0% (I do not have any control over my school operating budget)	7.44%	(−0.73%)
Less than 5%	6.61%	(−2.11%)
5-15%	9.64%	(+0.58%)
16-25%	6.61%	(−1.11%)
26-50%	17.91%	(+4.49%)
Greater than 50%	51.79%	(−2.57%)

* The response categories were revised from the 2016 survey which only contained 3 response categories: "Insufficient", "Adequate", "Exceeding my peers".

Do you receive an adequate amount of funding for students with special needs?*

58.10%
Yes

8.38%
Depends

33.52%
No
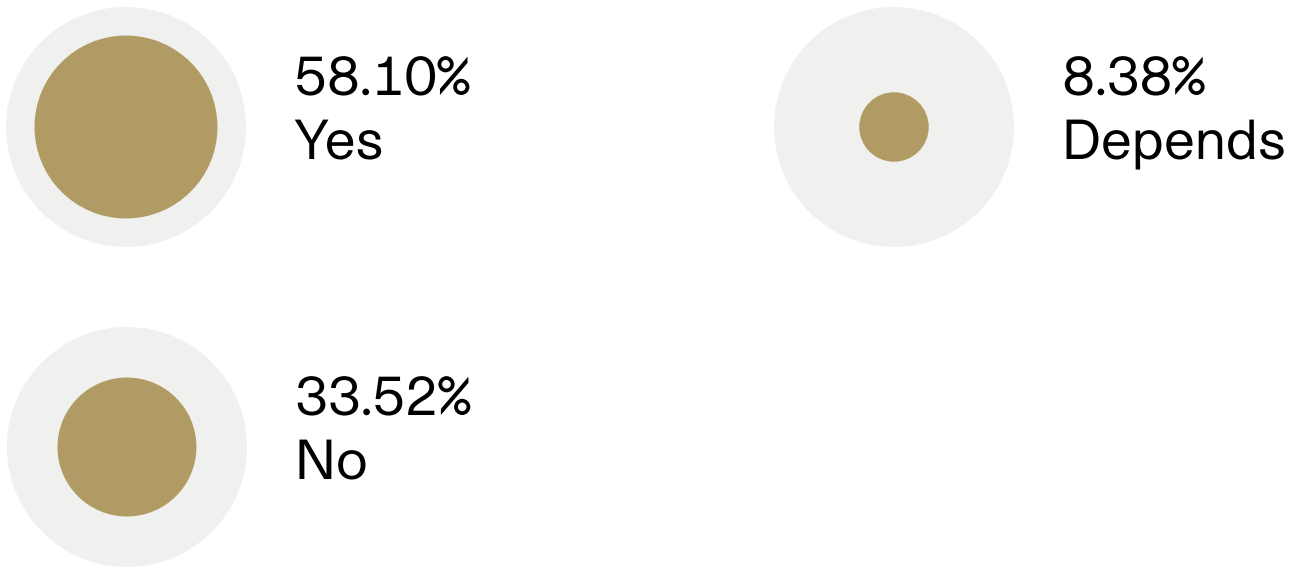
Would you support the state weighting special education funding based on individual student needs rather than dispersing an average amount to all students with special needs?*
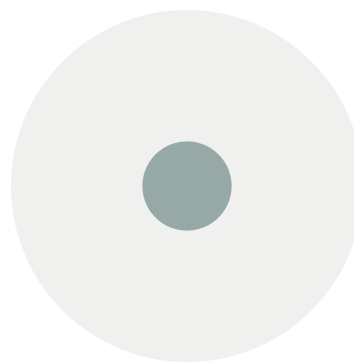
Yes
37.15%

No
15.36%

Depends
3.91%

Unsure
43.58%
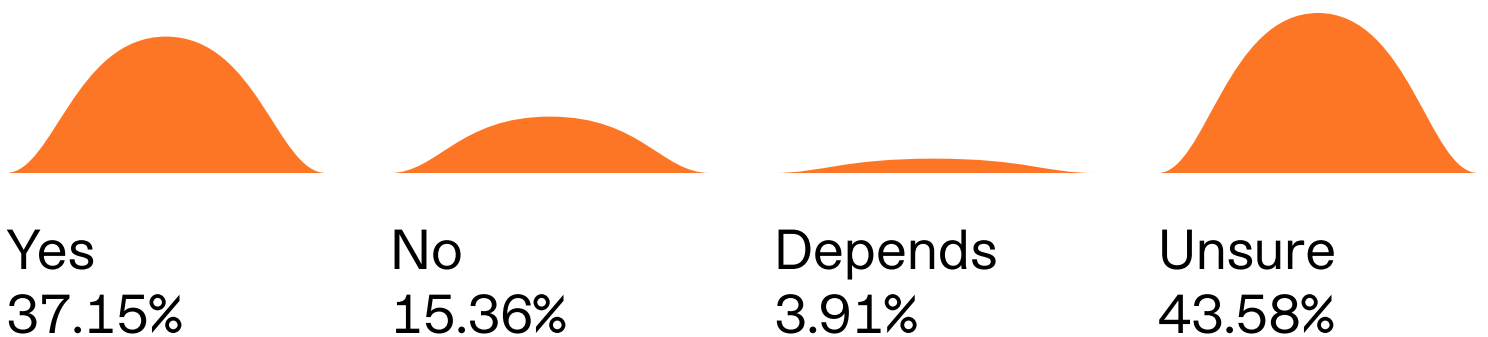
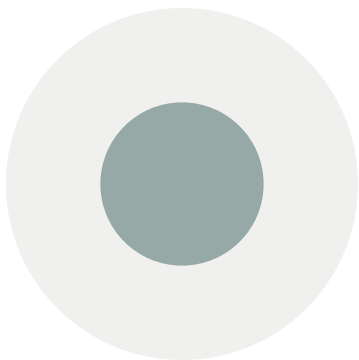*This question was not asked in the 2016 survey.

Would you support the state weighting per pupil funding for additional student characteristics (e.g. economically disadvantaged status, English Learner status, etc.) rather than dispersing an average per pupil amount regardless of individual student needs?*
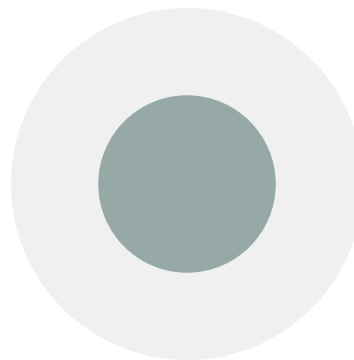
46.65%
Yes

6.42%
Depends

21.51%
No

25.42%
Unsure

*This question was not asked in the 2016 survey.