

A TENNESSEECAN STATEWIDE POLL

# District Leaders Survey 2018



**146 surveys were administered in August 2018 via emailed survey to all current Tennessee Directors of Schools.**

**63 respondents (43.15% (-4.11%)\* answered the survey: 146 email addresses found, 1 bounce-back, 6 opt-out.**

1. The vast majority of district leaders think the school funding formula, the BEP, needs to be improved or overhauled completely. Not a single respondent thought it should remain the same as it is now.

2. While most district leaders still perceive the state of education in Tennessee as improving, the percentage decreased in 2018.

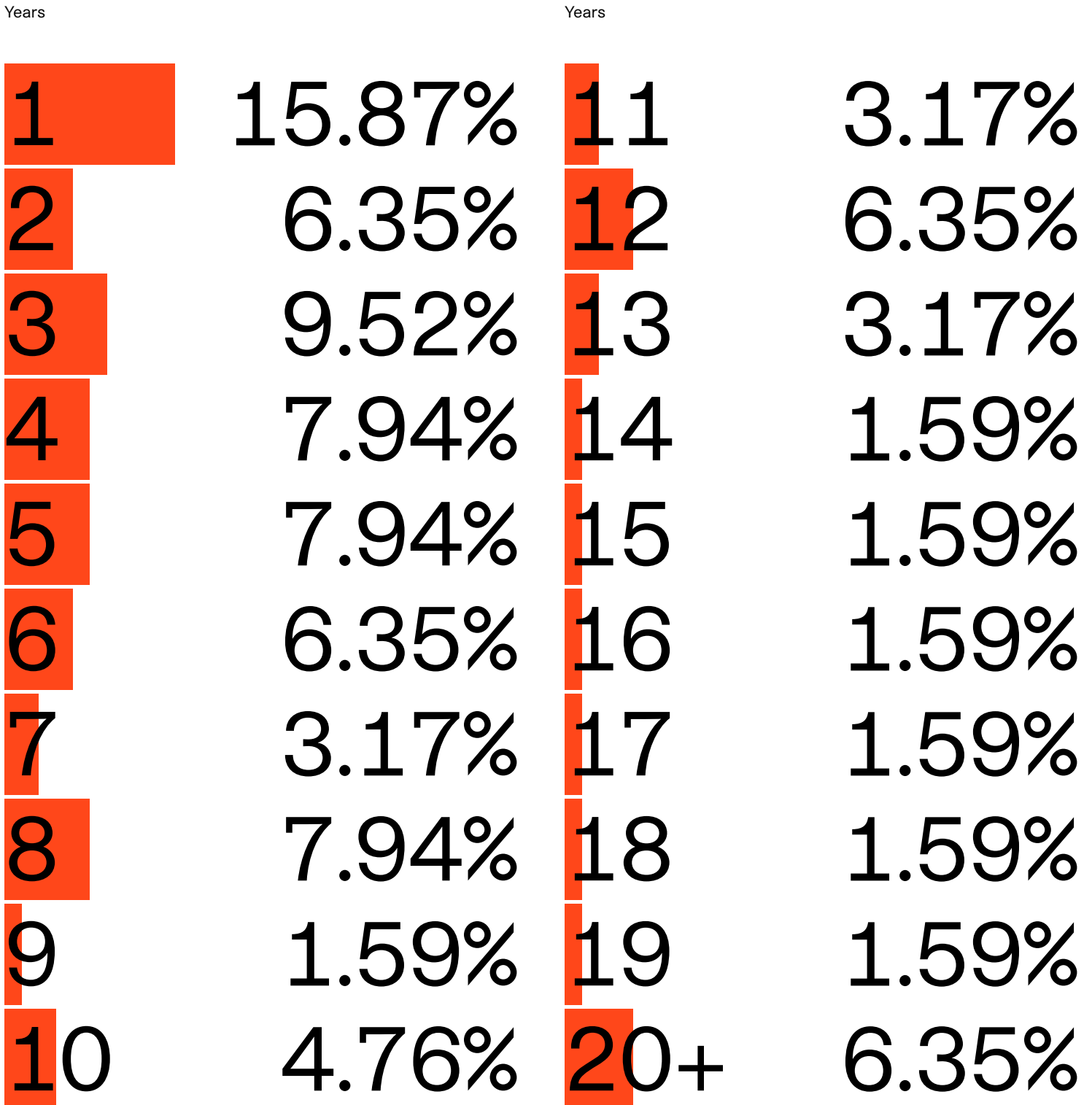
3. Budget and Staffing continue to be the largest perceived impediments to students success, though Curriculum Quality is also perceived as an impediment by many district leaders.

4. Only 4% of district leaders believe they receive an adequate amount of funding; however, nearly 50% believe they receive an equitable amount of funding based on the population of students they serve.

5. 2018 saw a large increase in the percentage of district leaders who felt they had the support and resources to recruit, hire, and support principals.

6. There remains a low percentage of leaders who believe they have the resources needed to build and maintain facilities.

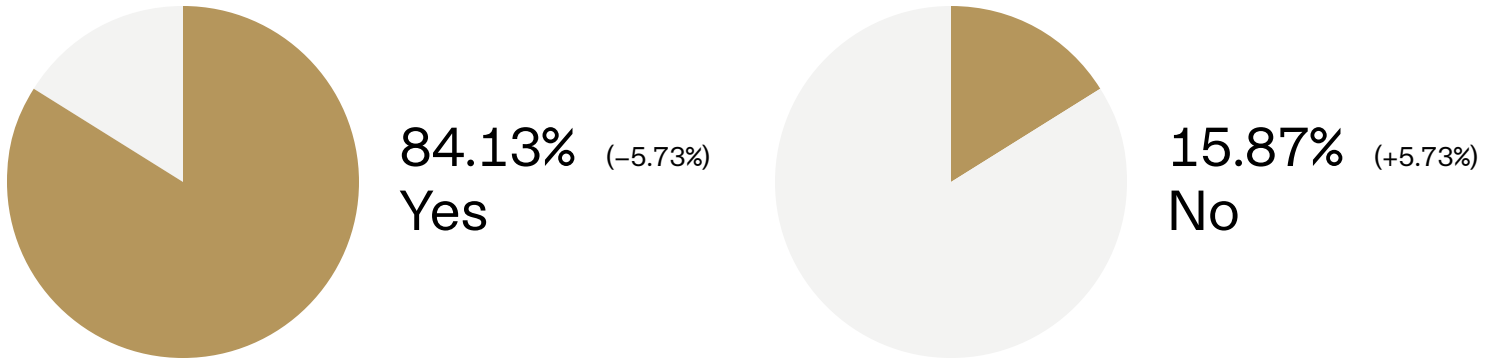
How many years have you been a district leader?\*



\* Most distributions held steady since 2017, but we did see an increase in 1st year district leaders and a large decrease of district leaders with 20+ years' experience.

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

---



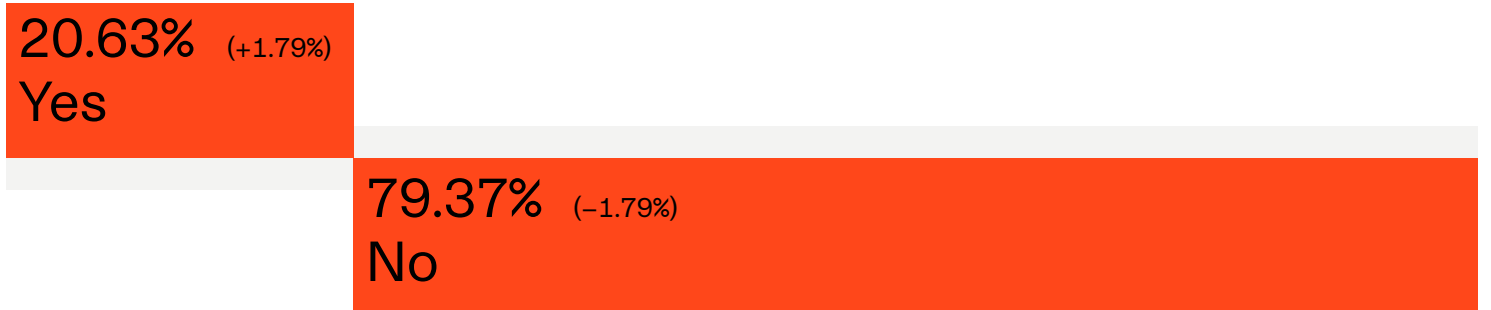
Have you been a classroom educator in the past?

---



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

---

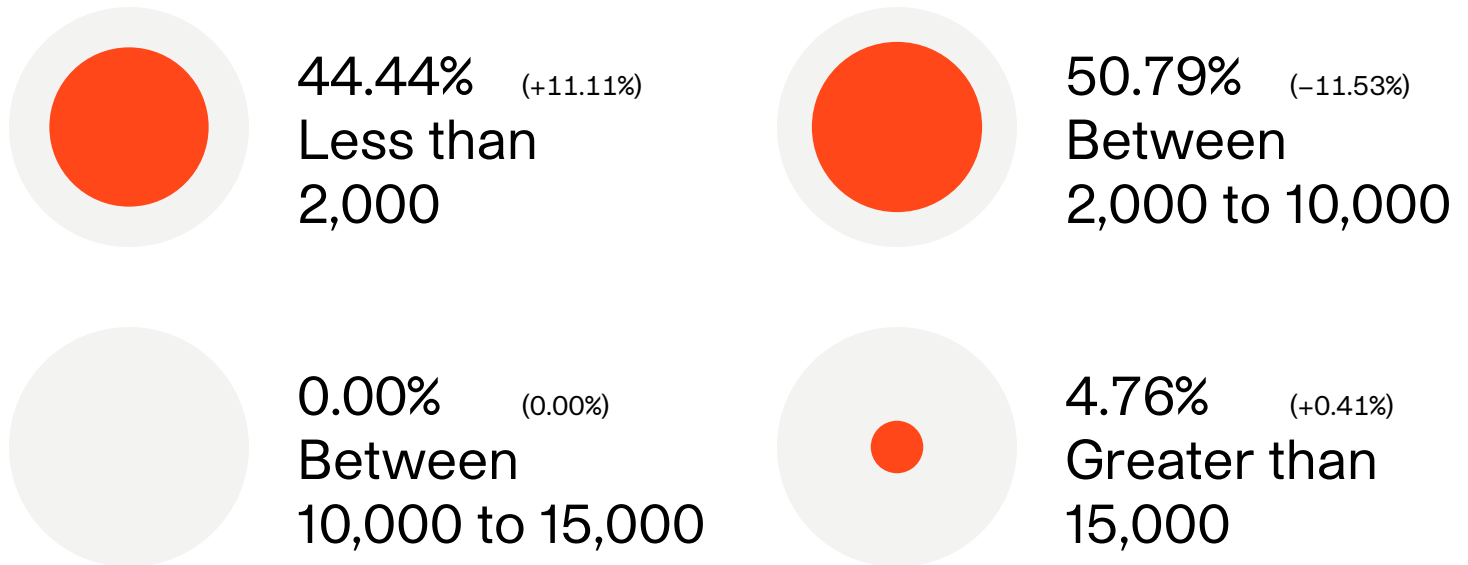


Have you ever led a district in another state?

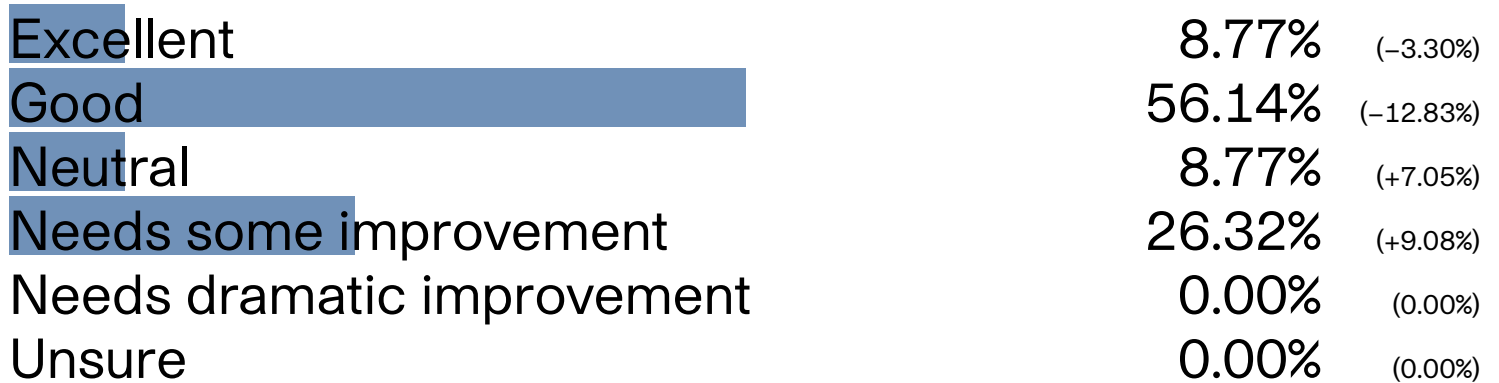
---



Approximately how many students are enrolled in your district?

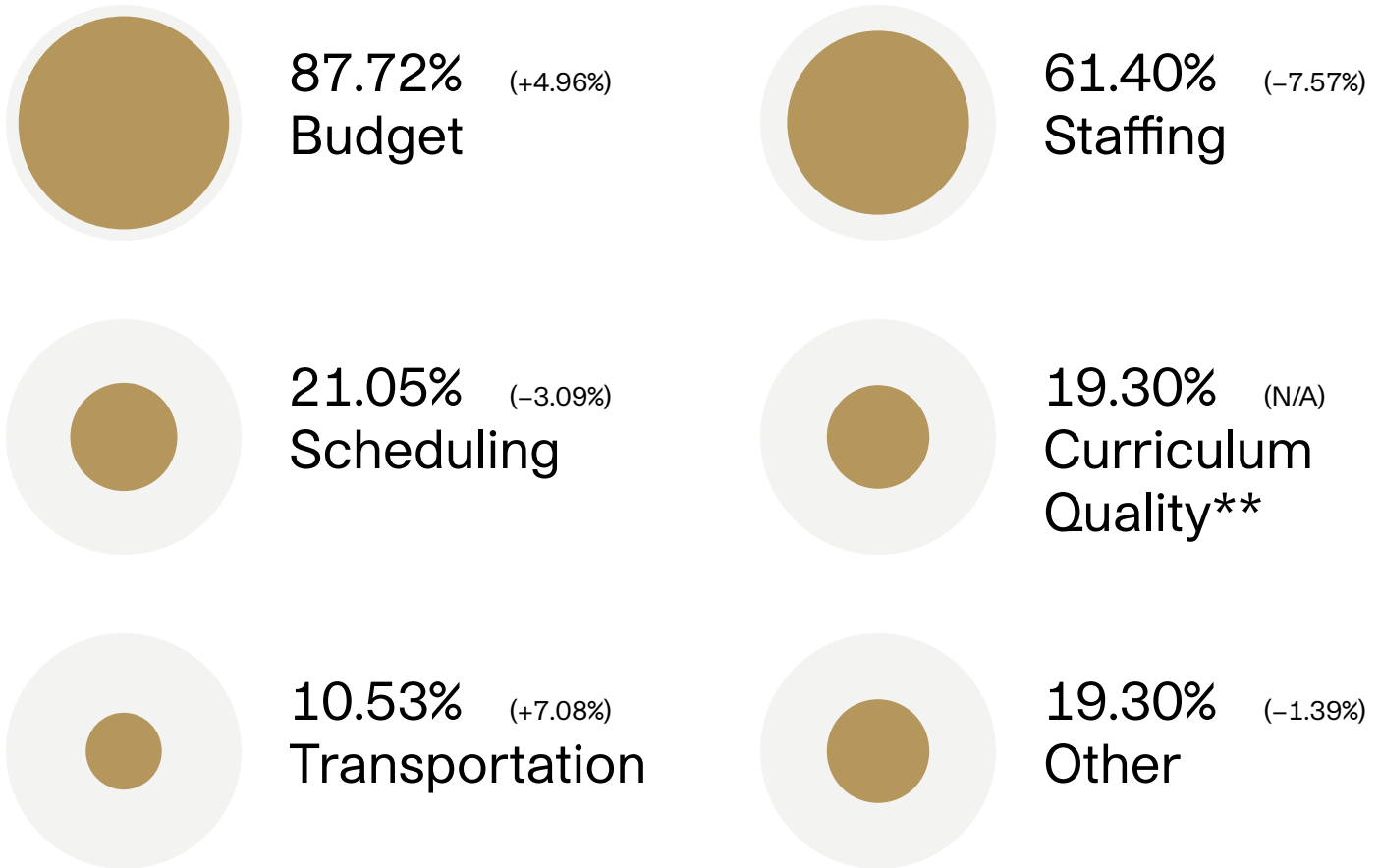


What is your perception of the state of education in Tennessee?



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

---



Some of the most common “Other” responses included:

1. Too much change in curriculum, testing, etc.
2. Unfunded mandates from the state
3. Lack of time

\* Survey participants asked to select all that apply.

\*\* Curriculum quality was added as a response category for the 2018 survey.



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

---

State-level policy and law	82.46%	(-0.30%)
State-level programming	66.67%	(+9.77%)
District-level policy	1.75%	(+1.75%)
District-level programming	0.00%	(0.00%)
Other	10.53%	(-3.26%)

Some of the most common “Other” responses included:

1. Assessment and data decisions
2. Federal education policy

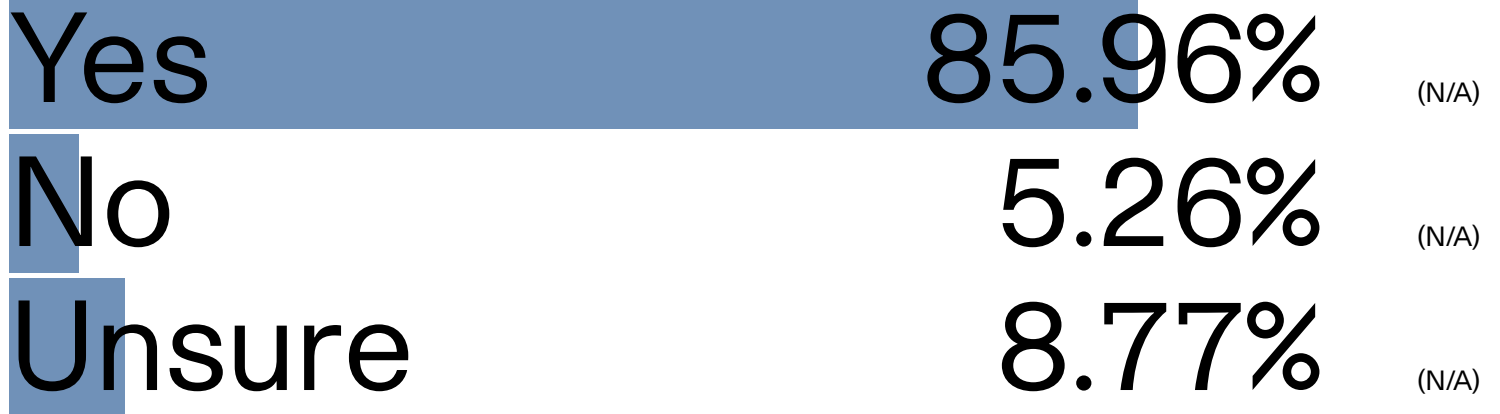
How would you describe your relationship with your school board?

---

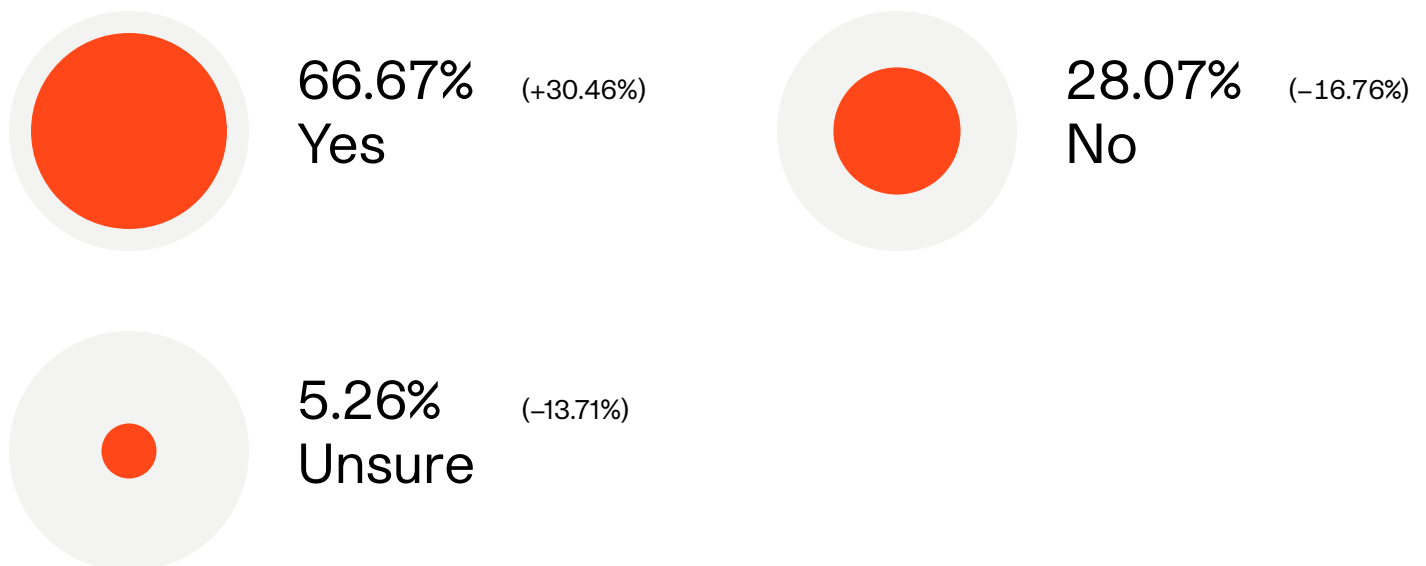
Excellent	66.67%	(-0.57%)
Good	29.82%	(+2.23%)
Neutral	3.51%	(-1.66%)
Poor	0.00%	(0.00%)
Very Poor	0.00%	(0.00%)

\* Survey participants asked to select all that apply.

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



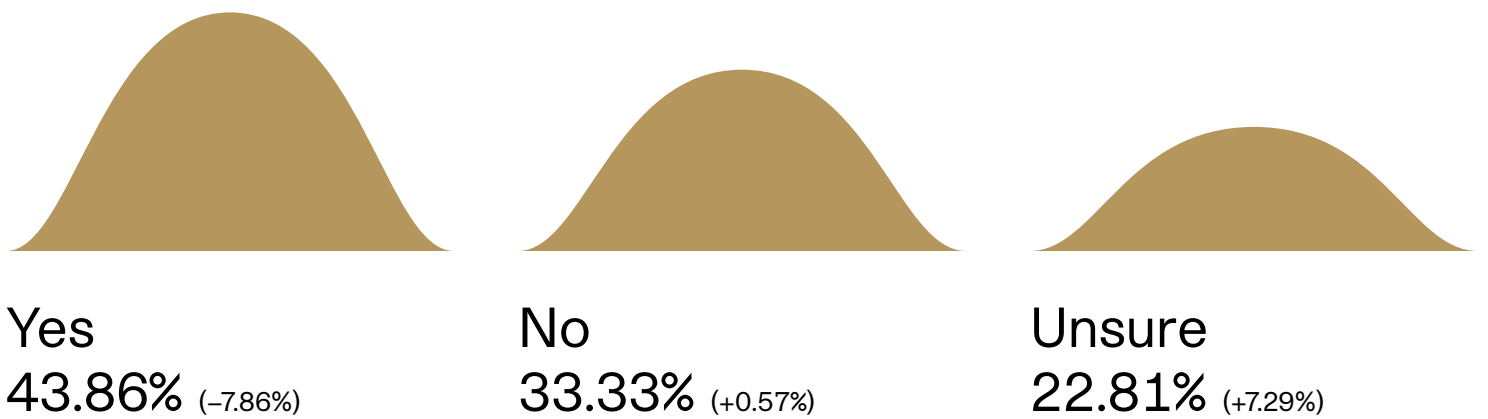
Do you have the capacity and resources to recruit, hire, and support principals? \*\*



\* This question was not asked in the 2017 survey.  
 \*\* Question slightly reworded from 2017 survey.

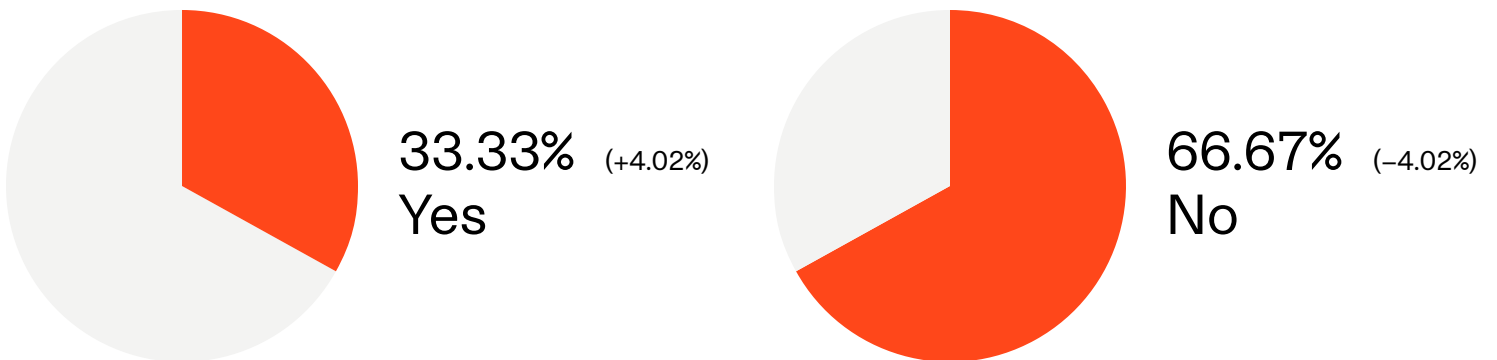
Do you have the resources and support to get quality materials and equipment?

---



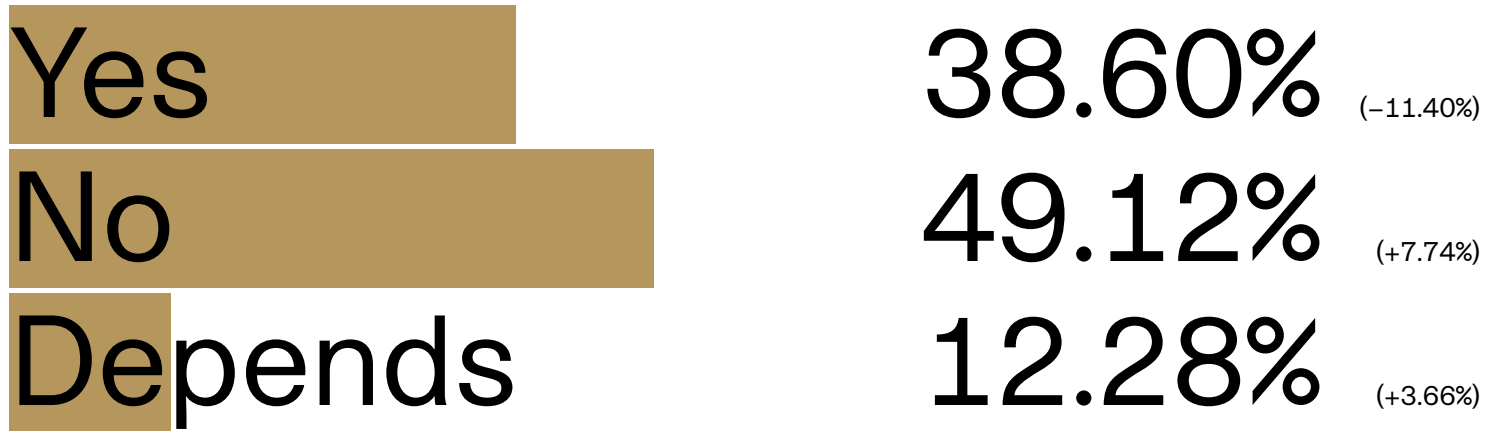
Do you have the resources and support to build and maintain adequate facilities?

---



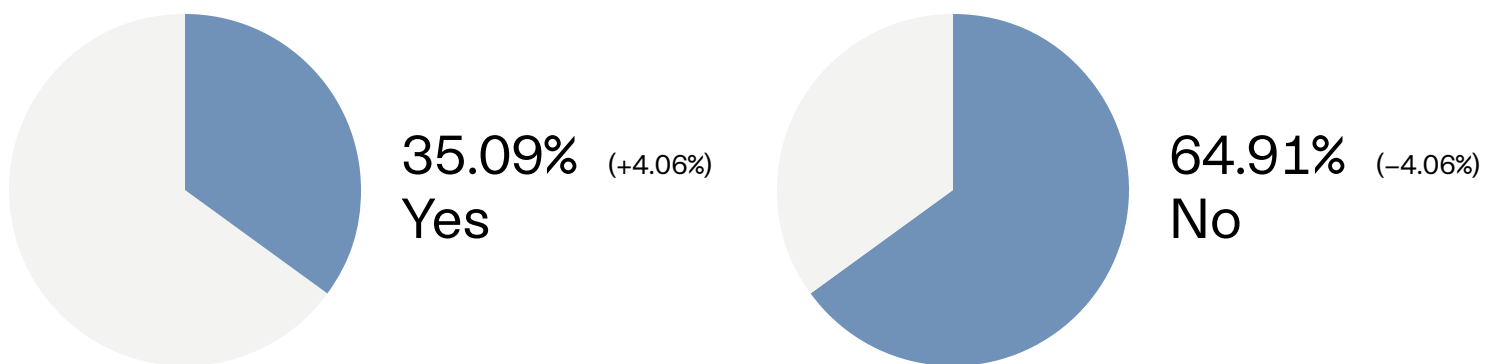
Would you support removing class-size mandates in order to receive more funding flexibility?

---



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

---



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

---

56.14% (+11.31%)

Yes

43.86% (-11.31%)

No

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

---

68.42% (-3.99%)

Yes

31.58% (+3.99%)

No

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

Me (The Director of Schools)	0.00%	(-3.45%)
The School Board	0.00%	(0.00%)
School leaders	80.70%	(-7.23%)
Teachers	5.26%	(+1.81%)
Other	14.04%	(+8.87%)
Unsure	0.00%	(0.00%)

When assigning students to classrooms, do you consider the effectiveness of the teacher/classroom the student had the previous school year relative to the effectiveness of the teacher/classroom you would place them in for the coming school year?

Yes	49.12%	(-16.40%)
No	5.26%	(+3.54%)
Not applicable (I do not make student assignment decisions)	45.61%	(+12.85%)

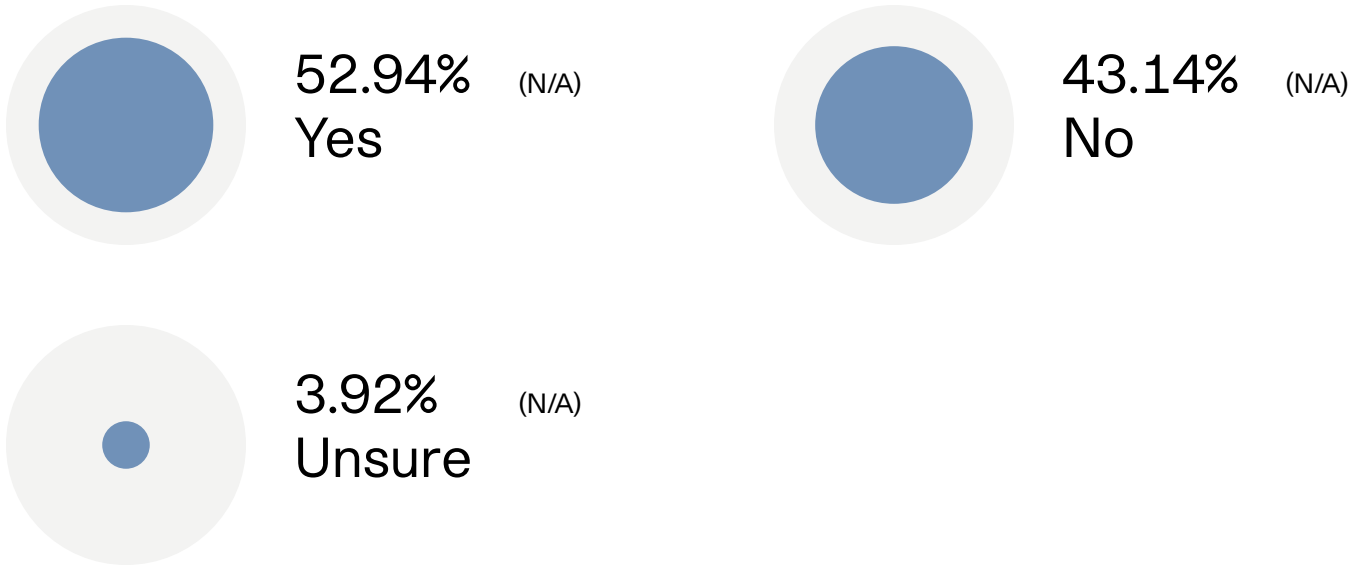
Alternatively, when assigning students to classrooms, do you give consideration to the student's individual achievement levels from the previous school year relative to the teacher/classroom performance where they will be assigned? (Ex: Student X is somewhat behind from the past school year so they should be placed in one of your higher performing classrooms in the coming school year.)

Yes	49.12%	(-9.50%)
No	7.02%	(-3.32%)
Not applicable (I do not make student assignment decisions)	43.86%	(+12.83%)

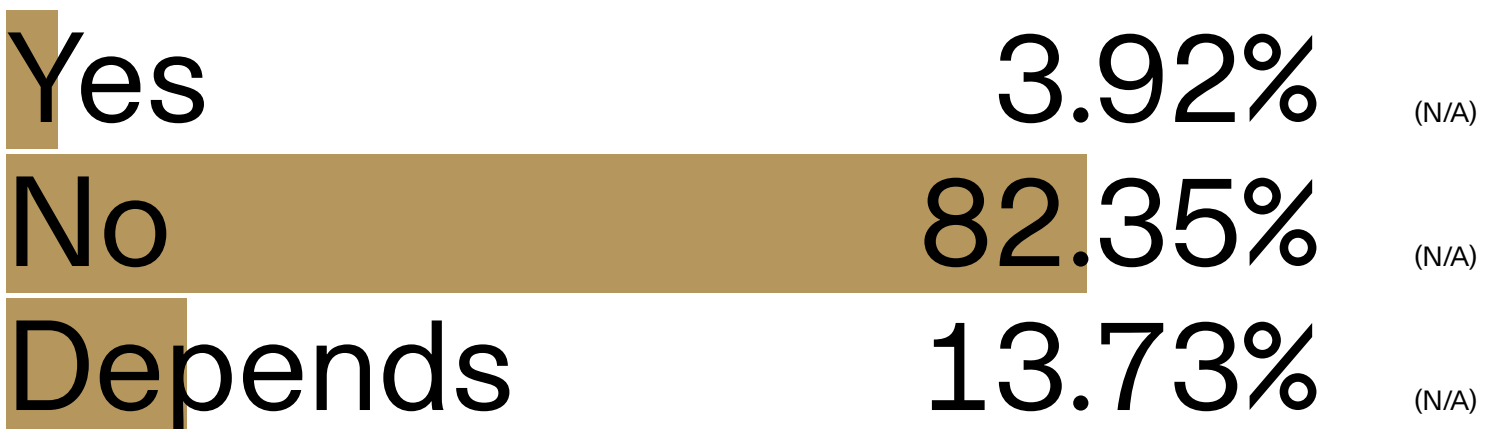
How often do you contact elected officials?

Never	3.51%	(+1.79%)
Once or twice a year	33.33%	(+7.47%)
Once a month	28.07%	(-1.24%)
Multiple times per month	35.09%	(-8.01%)

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



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



\*This question was not asked in the 2017 survey.

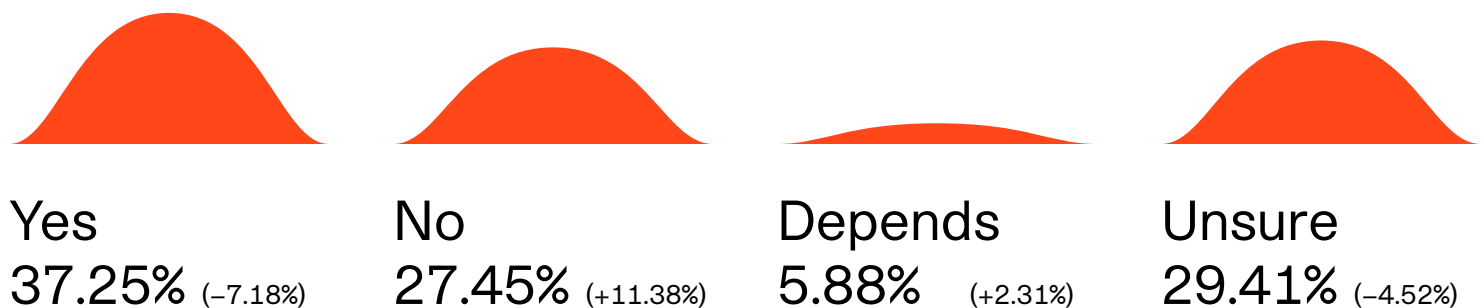


Do your schools receive an equitable amount of school funding based on the population of students they serve? (Ex. economically disadvantaged students, English language learners, special education students, etc.)\*

---

<b>Yes</b>	47.06%	(N/A)
<b>No</b>	50.98%	(N/A)
<b>Unsure</b>	1.96%	(N/A)

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? \*\*



\* This question was not asked in the 2017 survey.  
 \*\* Question slightly reworded from the 2017 survey.

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.)



54.90% (N/A)

No, I have not considered implementing student-based budgeting in my district



13.73% (N/A)

No, I have not considered implementing student-based budgeting in my district, but I would like to learn more about it



9.80% (N/A)

Yes, I have considered implementing student-based budgeting in my district, but have not yet implemented it



1.96% (N/A)

Yes, I have piloted or implemented student-based budgeting in my district



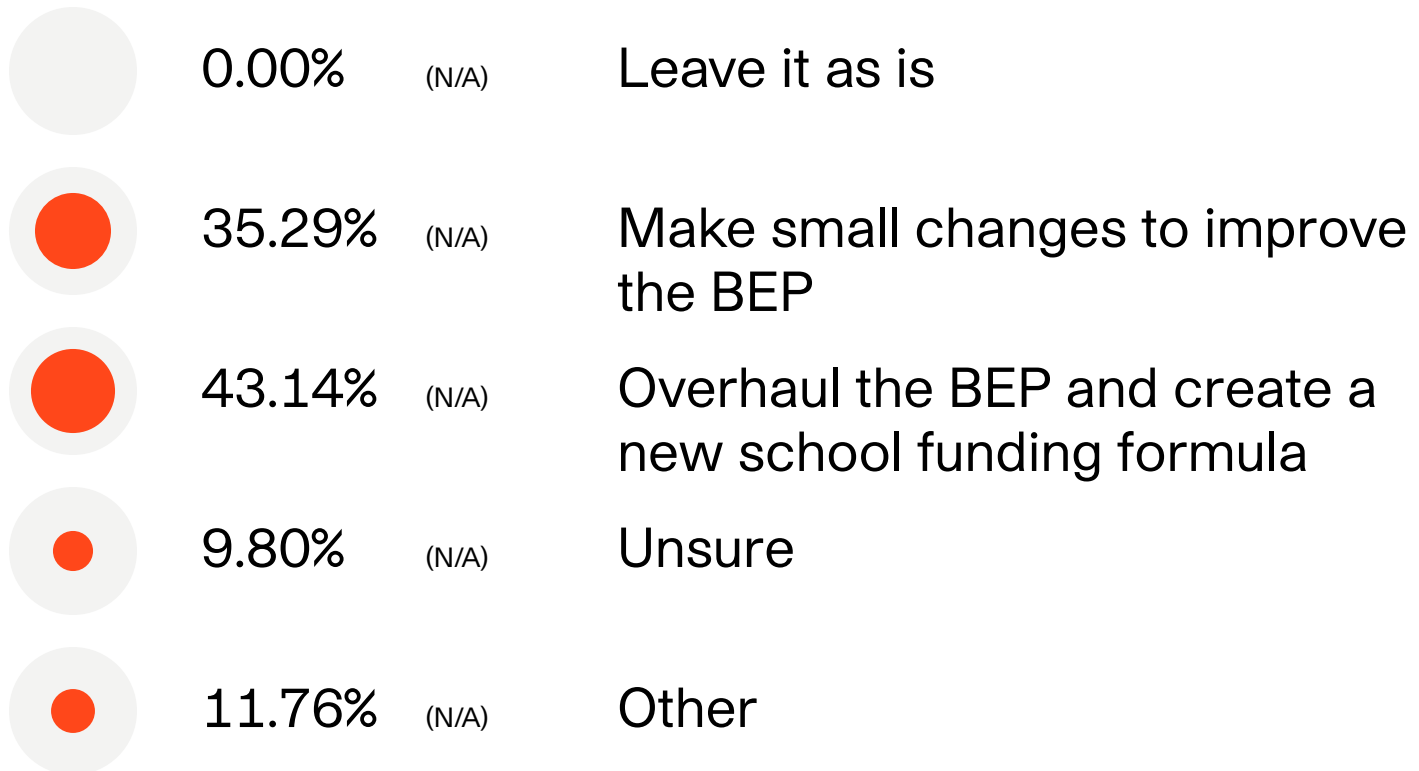
19.61% (N/A)

Not applicable as I have never heard of student-based budgeting

\*This question was not asked in the 2017 survey.

As you may have heard, several of the 2018 Gubernatorial candidates 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?\*

---



Some of the most common “Other” responses included:

1. Before changing formula, need to fully fund current mandates (e.g. Rtl, school nurses)
2. Fully fund the BEP
3. Make changes to bring more equity to rural districts

\*This question was not asked in the 2017 survey.