



Personal Development: The Key to Teacher Success

Introduction	2
Survey Background	2
Purpose	4
Professional & Personal Development	5
Current Conditions	7
Support	9
Where Do We Go From Here?	11



DATA
from over
5,000
teachers.

Introduction

Media coverage of public K-12 education in the United States over the past decade, and in the past 2 years especially, has made increasingly frequent use of terms such as “crisis,” “mass exodus,” and “emergency” to depict the current state of the industry. These claims have brought alarm not only to parents but to educational professionals nationwide as they continue to operate within a system that is facing an unprecedented amount of obstacles.

Are these terms an accurate reflection of the state of education in the United States today? Well, it depends on who you ask. As with any multifaceted systemic issue, a one word answer to the question at hand will be at worst a gross misunderstanding of the problem and at best an insufficient response. In order to better understand the problems facing the public education system in the U.S., our team surveyed teachers across the nation to find out where they stand.

Survey Background

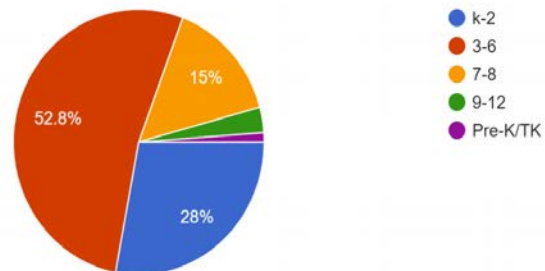
The survey examined in this report collects data from over 5,000 teachers spread across the US. There is no geographic concentration for these respondents, nor is there restriction in regards to age group or experience level of the teachers surveyed.



Over 50%

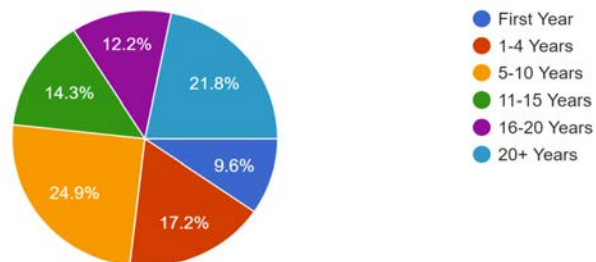
of respondents reported struggling with burnout and fatigue.

What grade do you teach?



Of the 5,815 respondents, only .2%¹ said that they teach grades 9-12 or Pre-K/TK. 15%² reported that they teach grades 7-8, while 28%³ of respondents said that they teach grades K-2. An overwhelming majority of respondents, 52.8%⁴, said that they teach grades 3-6. As we examine the information garnered from these responses, note that the largest concentration of participants teach in the upper elementary and lower middle grades, with two smaller clusters of participants in the grades directly below and directly above this

How long have you been teaching?



¹ Approximately 103 people

² Approximately 778 people

³ Approximately 1,452 people

⁴ Approximately 2,378 people



This data shows us that a vast majority of teachers do what they do for the impact, not the income. Most educators want to be a part of something bigger than themselves, but don't see teaching as a way to do this.

range. While this information can be applied to K-12 teachers at any grade level, the answers collected will be most representative of the opinions and experiences of upper elementary/lower middle school teachers.

While the age taught by survey respondents has a clear majority result, the experience levels collected are far more evenly distributed. First year teachers make up the smallest percentage, with 9.6%⁵ of the total responses, while teachers with 5-10 or 20+ years of experience take the lead with 24.9%⁶ and 21.8%⁷ of responses, respectively. These larger percentages are particularly interesting, as they mark two distinct career points: that of an early career teacher and that of a veteran teacher. Teachers with 5-10 years of experience have moved past the beginning stages of their career and are now considered career teachers, but they are still early enough into their careers that a transition into another field isn't out of the question. Those who are at the 20+ stage have a harder time leaving: their retirement is at stake, they have benefits they may rely on, and they're so far into the payscale that they don't really have the option

⁵ Approximately 498 people

⁶ Approximately 1,291 people

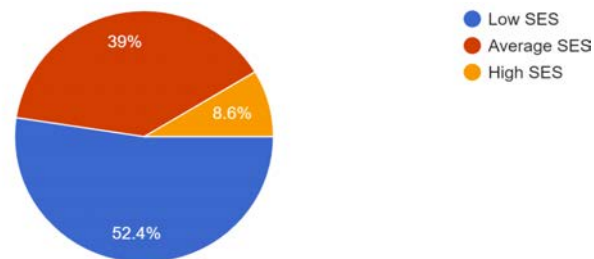
⁷ Approximately 1,130 people



to go anywhere else. Alternatively, they also have a much clearer idea of what they need in order to succeed in the classroom.

Only 8.6%⁸ of survey respondents would describe the SES of their classroom as “high,” as opposed to the 39%⁹ of respondents who selected “average” SES and the 52.4%¹⁰ who described their classroom SES as “low.” These statistics suggest that, for the majority of participants, additional support, resources, and time need to be given to developing students in order to reach the same level of development as students in high SES classrooms.

What best describes the Socio Economic Status of your classroom?



Purpose

The field of education, and K-12 education in particular, is one intrinsically tied to social and emotional development. As such,

⁸ Approximately 446 people

⁹ Approximately 2,022 people

¹⁰ Approximately 2,217 people

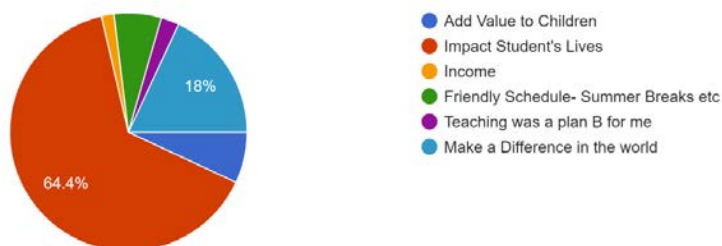


Why do you do what you do?

analyzing data that focuses solely on numerical standards would create an incomplete picture of the issue at hand.

In this prompt, survey participants were asked to select one of the answers below in response to the question “Why do you do what you do?”. The three most popular choices, “add value to children,” “make a difference in the world,” and “impact student’s lives,” all relate back to the concept of “purpose.” Financial stability, flexible scheduling, and job security contributed to less than a quarter of the total responses. This data shows us that a vast majority of teachers do what they do for the impact, not the income. Most educators want to be a part of something bigger than themselves, but don’t see teaching as a way to do this.

Why do you do what you do?



Professional & Personal Development

Professional development plays a crucial role in the growth of educators today, and many school districts prioritize regular training

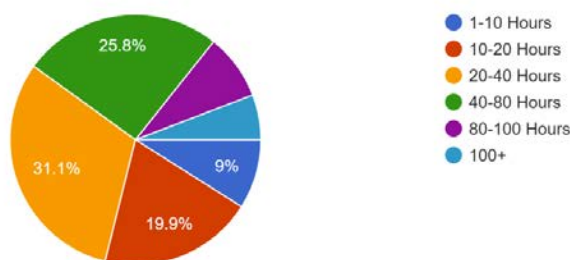


Unfortunately, **personal development does not get the same level of recognition** amongst educational professionals.

for staff members year-round. In fact, market research conducted by the Gates Foundation estimates that “[\\$18 billion is spent annually on professional development](#).”¹¹ While the amount of funding and staff hours dedicated to this practice will vary between states, districts, and even schools, the general consensus on professional development is that it’s a crucial component of teaching and learning

9%¹² of teachers surveyed reported spending 1-10 hours a

What is the average amount of time in hours you spend a year in professional development, in-services, school/district lead teacher/curriculum trainings?



year on professional development, while 19.9%¹³ reported spending 10-20 hours, 25.8%¹⁴ reported spending 40-80 hours, and 31.1%¹⁵ reported spending 20-40 hours a year on professional development. The remaining 14.2%¹⁶ of respondents claimed to receive over 80

¹¹ Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, *Teachers Know Best: Teachers’ Views on Professional Development* (2014), <https://s3.amazonaws.com/edtech-production/reports/Gates-PDMarketResearch-Dec5.pdf>.

¹² 467 people

¹³ Approximately 1,032 people

¹⁴ Approximately 1,338 people

¹⁵ Approximately 1,613 people

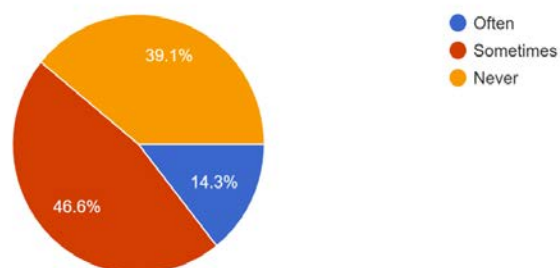
¹⁶ Approximately 736 people



hours of annual professional development. Additionally, it's important to note that these estimated hours likely underestimate the total amount of time spent on professional development during the year, as most teachers are unlikely to factor more minute job requirements such as weekly staff meetings or daily planning into their calculations.

Unfortunately, personal development does not get the same level of recognition amongst educational professionals. When asked if they do any personal development work outside of what is required for their job, 85.7%¹⁷ of respondents answered “never” or “sometimes,” while only 14.3%¹⁸ of respondents said that they “often” commit to personal development activities outside of their mandatory obligations.

Do you do any personal development outside of what is required for your job?



¹⁷ Approximately 4,443 people

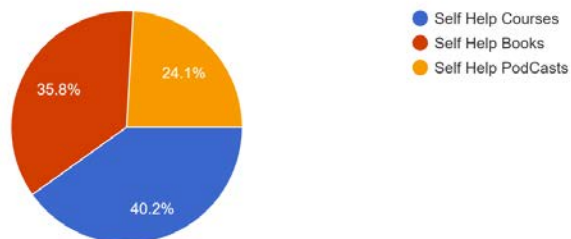
¹⁸ Approximately 741 people



... schools are still reeling from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic **but are simultaneously reaching for new opportunities to grow.**

2,400 respondents elaborated on their personal development habits by commenting that they either prefer to follow self help courses, podcasts, or books. While responses to these three choices were fairly evenly split, there was a clear preference for self help courses over podcasts or books. This lean towards coursework suggests that, for a majority of teachers, independently timed guided learning is the most ideal vehicle for this type of training.

If you answered yes to the last question, what type of personal development do you do?



Current Conditions of the Industry

The education industry in 2022 exists in a liminal space, wherein schools are still reeling from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic but are simultaneously reaching for new opportunities to grow.

When asked to provide their biggest challenges as teachers, over 50%¹⁹ of respondents reported struggling with burnout and

¹⁹ Approximately 2,585 people



fatigue. 65.1%²⁰ of respondents said that they felt overwhelmed, 70.6%²¹ said that they felt stressed, and a whopping 81.2%²² of respondents admitted that they struggled with the challenge of not having enough time.

What is the biggest challenge you face as a teacher? Mark as many as apply



These results are not surprising: time will always be the enemy of the teacher. More notable, however, is that all of these responses stem from a lack of mentorship and/or continued personal development. It is safe to assume, therefore, that an increased focus on personal development for teachers in schools would lead to an overall decrease of teacher burnout, stress, overwhelm, and fatigue.

How would you describe yourself in your current position



²⁰ Approximately 3,375 people

²¹ Approximately 3,661 people

²² Approximately 4,210 people

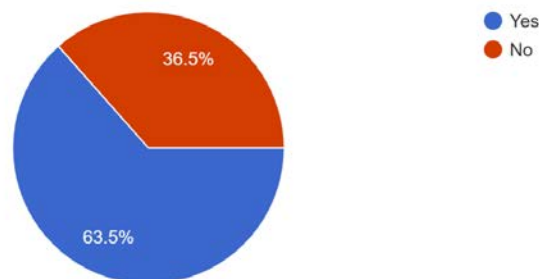


> When asked if they had considered leaving the profession altogether in the last year, **63.5% of respondents answered “yes.”**

As it stands, an overwhelming majority of teachers right now are struggling. A measly 9%²³ of surveyed teachers claimed to be thriving in their careers – 91%²⁴, contrastingly, said that they were either barely surviving or somewhere in the middle. If we break this calculation down further, we can see a clear point of opportunity within the 70.7%²⁵ of people who claimed to be somewhere between thriving and barely surviving in their careers. While positive change can potentially sway some of these respondents to feel more positively about the profession, lack of intervention on the part of school administration can push even more teachers into a state of despair.

In fact, when asked if they had considered leaving the profession altogether in the last year, 63.5%²⁶ of respondents answered “yes.” This data is a clear indication that, without immediate action, the education system risks losing a majority of its career teachers to other options.

In the last year, have you considered leaving the field of education?



²³ Approximately 467 people

²⁴ Approximately 4,718 people

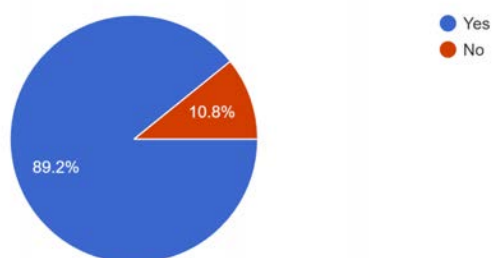
²⁵ Approximately 3,665 people

²⁶ Approximately 3,292 people



To be clear: the urge to leave is not driven by lack of passion. 89.2%²⁷ of survey respondents said that they still feel like they are making an impact on their students right now. As we saw earlier in this report, the majority of our respondents do what they do because they want to make an impact on student lives. This driving purpose is

Do you feel like you are still making an impact as a teacher?



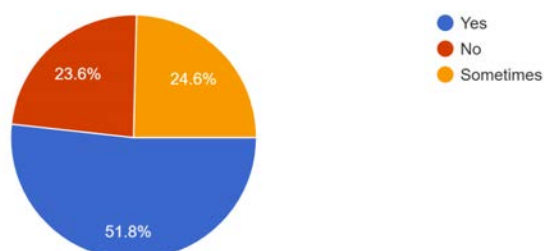
still present, so why have so many teachers considered leaving education behind? Simply put, this passion for impacting students is the “glue” of the field at this point in time. The only reason teachers are holding on is because they feel a heart responsibility to the profession that they believe has allowed them to make a positive impact in their communities. Relying on purpose alone, however, to supplement teacher’s needs enough to keep them from leaving, is a dangerous mistake to make.

²⁷ Approximately 4,625 people



Support is the key to fostering a healthier, more balanced, and more sustainable working environment for educators.

In the last 1-2 years have you questioned your ability to continue teaching?

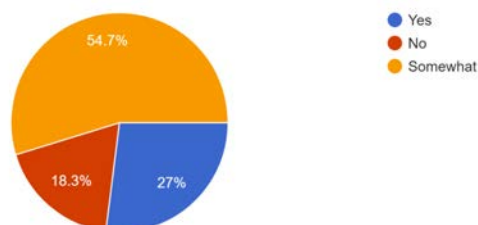


Right now, 76.4%²⁸ of surveyed teachers say that they question their ability to continue teaching at least some of the time. Without an immediate shift towards teacher support focused on mental and emotional wellbeing, these uncertain individuals may decide that leaving teaching altogether is the only option they have left.

Teacher Support

Support is the key to fostering a healthier, more balanced, and more sustainable working environment for educators. In order to know how to support teachers best, we asked them: “do you feel supported in your job?”. Only 27%²⁹ of respondents answered a

Do you feel supported in your job?



²⁸ Approximately 3,961 people

²⁹ Approximately 3,961 people



definitive “yes” to this question, while 18.3%³⁰ said that they did not feel supported and 54.7%³¹ said that they only feel somewhat supported in their current position. This is an issue – if people don’t feel supported where they are, it’s because they lack community. The

If you answered no, or somewhat, check the reasons that apply



difference between “somewhat” and “yes” and “somewhat” and “no” may not be a big delta. Whether a teacher moves from “somewhat” to “yes” or slips into “no” is dependent on whether or not their administrative support system is willing and able to take immediate action.

Of those who selected “no” or “somewhat” in response to the question above, 81.3%³² reported that a lack of consideration for the recent rise in teacher responsibilities contributed to the feeling that

³⁰ Approximately 949 people

³¹ Approximately 2,836 people

³² Approximately 4,215 people



they were not being supported by those around them. When asked where that lacking support was most needed, respondents were quick to respond with answers that are intrinsically tied to personal development: mental health, stress management/emotional support, social emotional support, work/life balance, and self-care.

In what area
do you need
more
support as a
teacher
right now?



Where Do We Go From Here?

As this study has shown, teachers are in urgent need of mental and emotional support from their communities, not just in words but in swift, effective action. Implementing a structure for personal development within your school system allows teachers a space in which their wellness as individuals is treated as a priority. Additionally, this new approach must coincide, rather than contradict, with the already established responsibilities to their personal and



The Well

Designed
by teachers,
for teachers.

professional lives that teachers have already made. A personal development tool that does not allow for flexibility and independence will become a hindrance to your teachers, and will add additional stress and pressure to their lives. Instead, your solution must meet educators where they are and offer them a walkable path to the places they want to go.

The Well is that tool. Designed by teachers, for teachers, this digital personal development course allows teachers to refill their buckets so that they can better pour into their students. Using the data collected in our teacher survey, the creative team behind The Well has created a compact lesson plan centered around 11 key areas of development:

1. **Mindset**
2. **Success**
3. **Work/Life Balance**
4. **Energy**
5. **Time Management**
6. **Attitude**
7. **Burnout**
8. **Growth**
9. **Stress Management**
10. **Emotional Intelligence**
11. **Letting Go**



All of these modules were designed to target the socio-emotional needs pinpointed in the data we've covered in this report. Every individual who attends this course can approach the material in the pace and order that works best for them. No matter the path, all members of The Well will have 24/7 access to the support that they need in order to thrive in their careers.