



Tennessee Educator Survey

2024 Overview

A Report from the Tennessee Department of Education



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Introduction

The Tennessee Educator Survey (TES) is a comprehensive annual effort between the Tennessee Department of Education (department) and the Tennessee Education Research Alliance (TERA) used to gather information about the experiences of educators across the state and empowers stakeholders and decision-makers to meet the needs of teachers to the best of their ability. The survey provides teachers, school leaders, and certified staff the opportunity to share what is working and opportunities for improvement in public education in Tennessee. The TES intends to give policymakers and researchers key insights on topics including teacher satisfaction, preparedness, workload, and engagement with key education initiatives.

This report highlights the major takeaways from the 13th annual TES administered in spring 2024. Housing over a decade's worth of information, the TES continues to build on years of data on policy implementation strategies, providing insights on where Tennessee has been and where it may go as a state to continue to attract and retain educators. Key policies included in the TES have historically been around state standards and assessments, instructional materials, planning time, and teacher evaluations. More recently, additional key topics included school funding, teacher licensure initiatives, teacher retention, career and technical education, and learning acceleration implementation.

Several takeaways from the 2024 TES are related to the state's bold policies and initiatives to boost student achievement and outcomes, including the Tennessee Literacy Success Act, Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act, Reading 360, TN ALL Corps, Career and Technical Education (CTE) and Innovative School Models (ISM), and the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA) Act.

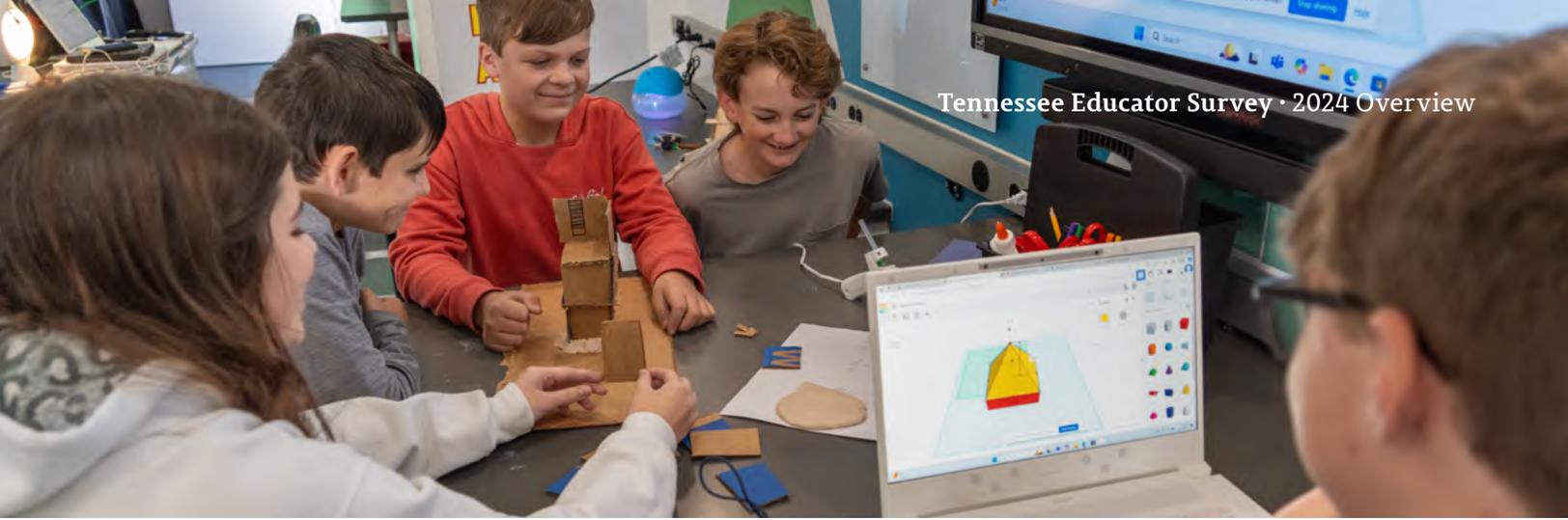
Visit the TES website to explore survey results at the state, district, and school levels at educatorsurvey.tn.k12.gov.

About the TES

Administered under a partnership between the department and TERA, the TES is ***the state's most comprehensive tool for gathering input from Tennessee teachers and administrators***. For over a decade, the TES has provided Tennessee with valuable insight into educator's perceptions of practice, policy, and school climate across the state. The TES is a key initiative in the partnership between TERA and the department. TERA, a research-practice partnership based out of Vanderbilt University, conducts high-quality, rigorous research to encourage evidence-driven decision-making across the department's Best for All strategic plan.

Best for All aims to set all Tennessee students on a path to success through strategic policies and strong practices.

The department understands the importance of using evidence-based decisions to close gaps, provide resources for educators, strategically invest in proven initiatives, and accelerate student academic achievement. TERA's research highlights much of the work of the department, including ways to recruit, prepare, support, and retain educators. By utilizing the strong connections and data capabilities of an institution such as Vanderbilt, TERA provides the department with valuable support in administering and collecting TES results.



Survey Data

The following analyses use data from the 2024 TES, primarily responses collected from teachers and school leaders. Over half of teachers (N=42,104, 55% response rate) and school leaders (N=2,175, 52% response rate) responded to the survey.

To account for differential response rates across school type, region, and economically disadvantaged students served, analytic weighting is applied to produce results that are more representative of public school teachers and school leaders in Tennessee.

Responses are analyzed from each branch of the survey. The Core modules are given to all respondents, based on the respondents' roles (Administrators, Certified Support Staff, Counselors, Mental Health Professionals, and

Teachers). For example, Teacher Core and Administrator Core are given to all teachers and school leaders, respectively. The Core modules include topics related to school environment, school resources, career shifts and goals, and professional learning. In addition to the Core modules, TES gathered responses from the English Language Arts (ELA) Branch (given to teachers who teach ELA, N=11,606), the Math Branch (given to teachers who teach math, N=11,261), the Early Career Branch (given to teachers in their first three years of teaching, N=5,071), the CTE Branch (given to CTE teachers, N=2,166), the Principal Branch (given to school principals, N=1,000), and the Academics Module (one of three randomly assigned teacher modules, N=11,729).

THE 2024 TES WAS CONDUCTED



42,104
TEACHERS (55%)



+ 2,175
SCHOOL LEADERS (52%)



completed the TES & provided
*reflections of educators
across Tennessee*

TES PARTICIPANTS STATS BY BRANCH...

11,606
ELA

11,261
MATH

5,071
EARLY CAREER

2,166
CTE

11,729
ACADEMICS MODULE

ACADEMICS & Tennessee's Strategy for Learning Acceleration

First and foremost, our teachers are focused on student learning and creating rich and rigorous educational experiences for every student. Tennessee has focused on ensuring strong foundations for learning are available for students at schools and districts across the state.



Overall, teachers' responses on this year's TES indicate that perceptions of curriculum materials, trainings, professional development, and tutoring support have maintained high satisfaction. This suggests the state's plan to utilize a data-centered approach to learning acceleration and give students unique learning experiences has garnered support from the educator workforce.

Tennessee Literacy Success Act and Reading 360

Tennessee has invested in strong initiatives relating to academic success. The Tennessee Literacy Success Act and Reading 360 are comprehensive early literacy initiatives that aim to support Tennessee students in attaining strong reading skills in early elementary school. Launched in December 2020, Reading 360 provides grants, tools, and resources to ensure Tennessee students develop strong phonics-based reading skills by supporting districts, teachers, families, and communities.

Beginning in 2023, the TES included questions for math teachers to collect specific feedback on the math curriculum and math-related instructional supports. Responses from the TES can inform the state's efforts by providing teachers' feedback on ELA and math curriculum, training, and instructional supports.

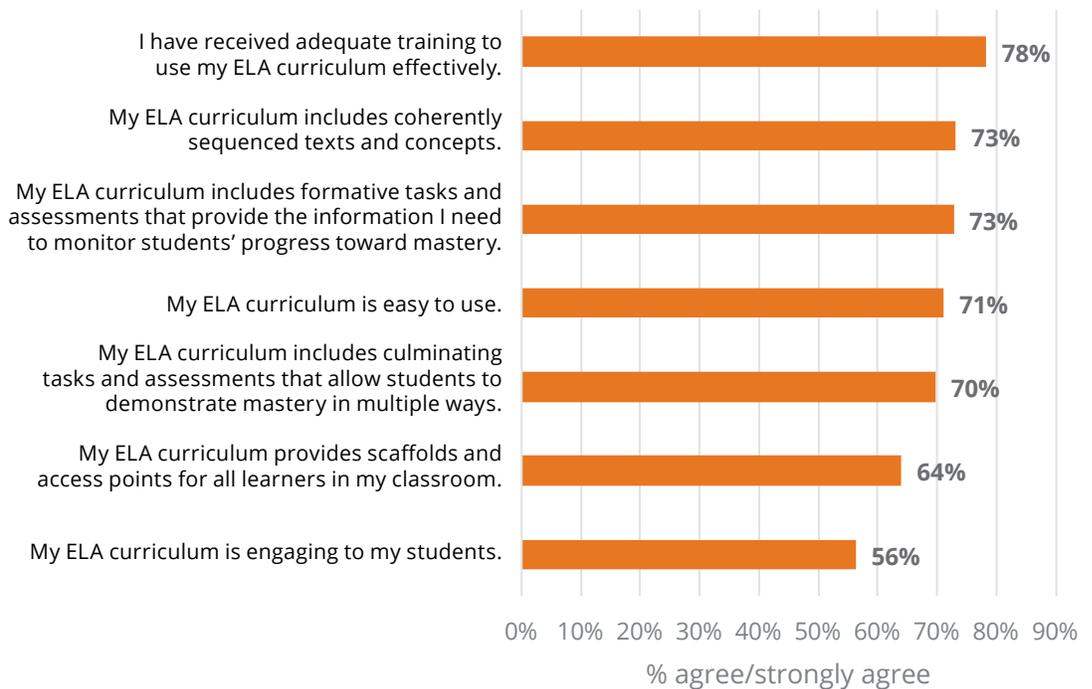




ELA and math teachers reported high levels of satisfaction with many elements of their curriculum.

Nearly 78% of ELA teachers reported that they receive adequate training to use their ELA curriculum effectively. Approximately 73% of ELA teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their curriculum includes coherently sequenced texts and concepts, as well as formative tasks and assessments that provide the information needed to monitor students' progress toward mastery. Over half (56%) of ELA teachers agreed that their ELA curriculum is engaging to their students.

Think about the ELA curriculum that is provided by your school or district. Please rate your level of agreement with each statement.



Teachers in lower grades were more likely to be satisfied with some of these aspects of the required curriculum. For example, 61% of K-2 teachers and 60% of teachers in grades 1-5 agreed that their curriculum is engaging to students, compared to 52% of teachers in grades 6-8 and 47% of teachers in grades 9-12. K-2 teachers also reported that their Universal Reading Screeners (URS) are useful. Nearly 3 out of 4 K-2 teachers said their URS provides excellent instructional information on student progress, and over 8 out of 10 K-2 teachers reported that they refer to the results from the URS when discussing student progress with parents.

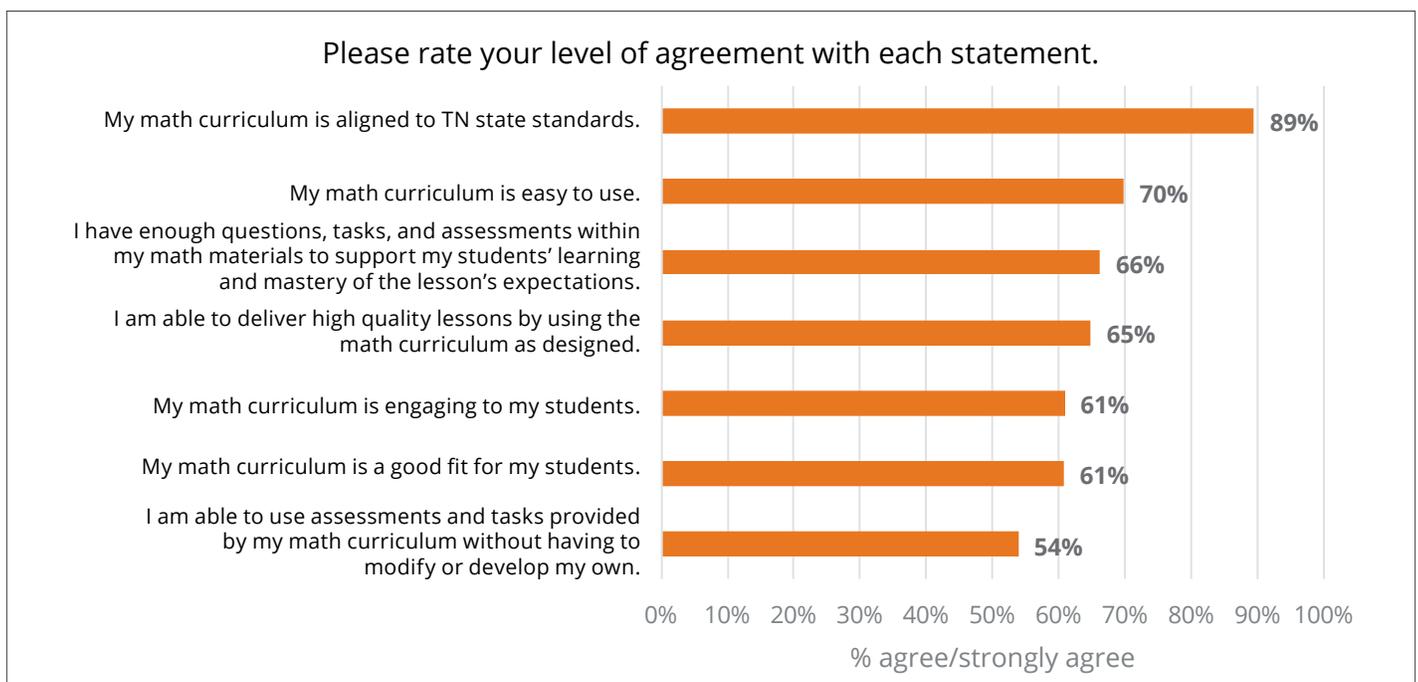




Mathematics Instruction and Support

Tennessee has made significant strides toward students' success in mathematics. In 2021, the Tennessee State Board of Education adopted revised state math standards. These revised standards were implemented in the 2023-24 school year, and the department released [instructional resources](#) to support the implementation of these standards.

Similar to ELA teachers, math teachers also expressed general satisfaction with various elements of their curriculum. **70% of math teachers agreed that their curriculum is easy to use. Over half of math teachers (54%) agreed or strongly agreed that they can use assessments and tasks provided by the math curriculum without having to modify or develop their own.**





Most ELA and math teachers reported receiving access to content-specific supports during the school year.

As part of the Tennessee Literacy Success Act and the Reading 360 initiative, the state has invested heavily in training and resources around foundational, phonics-based literacy skills primarily taught in early elementary grades, such as district networks and the Universal Reading Screener (URS). However, many of the direct supports happen in the school building and at the local level.

Most ELA (89%) and math (88%) teachers reported that they received access to student diagnostic assessment data, and about 8 out of 10 ELA and math teachers (82% and 79%, respectively) participated in content-focused Professional Learning Communities (PLC). ELA teachers were slightly more likely than math teachers to receive walk-throughs, feedback cycles and instructional coaching. Roughly 79% of ELA teachers and 76% of math teachers reported receiving coaching supports from either an instructional coach/curriculum specialist with content-level experience, coaching provided by an outside partner, or both. Since 2021, the percentage of ELA teachers who reported having access to diagnostic assessment data increased from 85% to 89%, and the percentage of ELA teachers who reported that they received walk-throughs and feedback cycles increased from 76% to 82%.

High school teachers were less likely to report that they receive these ELA and math supports. For example, 67% of ELA teachers in grades 9-12 said they receive coaching supports (either from an instructional coach/curriculum specialist or through an outside coaching partner), compared to 84% of teachers in kindergarten, 82% of teachers in grades 1-5, and 83% of teachers in grades 6-8. About 66% of high school math teachers said they receive coaching supports, compared to 79% of middle school and 78% of elementary math teachers. High school ELA and math teachers were also less likely than middle school and elementary school teachers to report that they receive access to student diagnostic assessment data and that they receive walk-throughs and feedback cycles.

High-Dosage, Low-Ratio Tutoring



To ensure all students can receive the learning supports they may need to succeed, Tennessee has many resources targeted towards increasing learning time for students to accelerate achievement. Tennessee schools implement various models of high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring such as community-based partner supports, locally driven initiatives, and the Tennessee Accelerating Literacy and Learning Corps (TN ALL Corps) grant program. TN ALL Corps is a research-based high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring program for elementary and middle school students outlined in the Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act. Following its second full school year of implementation, the 2024 TES included questions for teachers and administrators to learn about what is going well with high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring programs and how the tutoring programs can be improved.

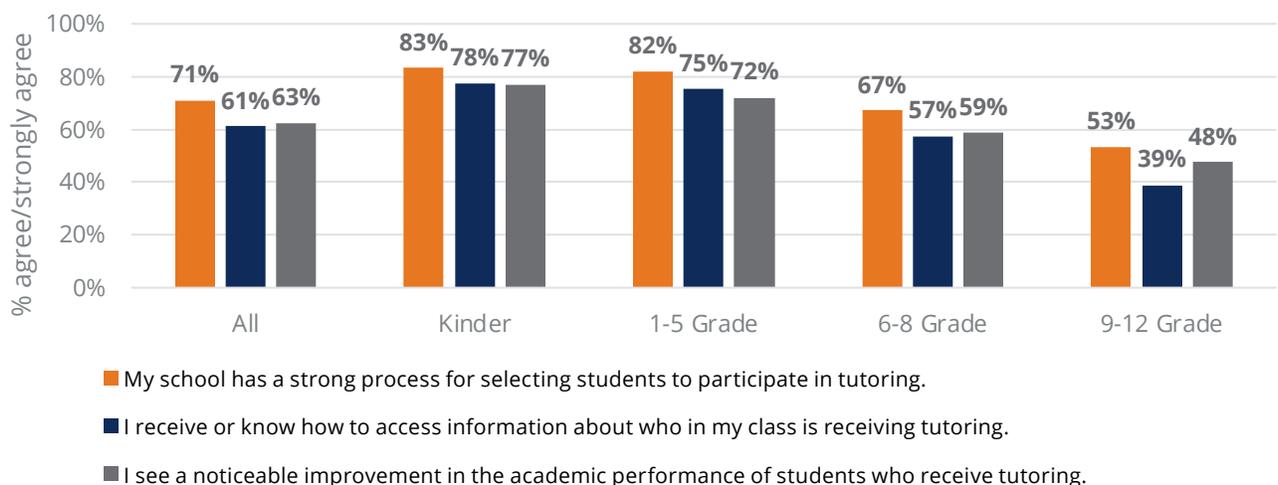


 **Elementary school teachers reported high satisfaction levels with the tutoring programs at their schools.**

Overall, 63% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they see a noticeable improvement in the academic performance of students who receive tutoring. However, this percentage was much higher for kindergarten teachers (77%) and teachers in grades 1-5 (72%). Kindergarten teachers and teachers in grades 1-5 were also more likely to report that they receive or know how to access information about who in their class is receiving tutoring (78% and 75%, respectively), compared to 57% of middle school and 39% of high school teachers. Eighty-three percent of kindergarten teachers and 82% of teachers in grades 1-5 also agreed or strongly agreed that their school has a strong process for selecting students to participate in tutoring.



Please indicate the extent to which you agree/disagree with the following statements regarding the high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring program used within your school.

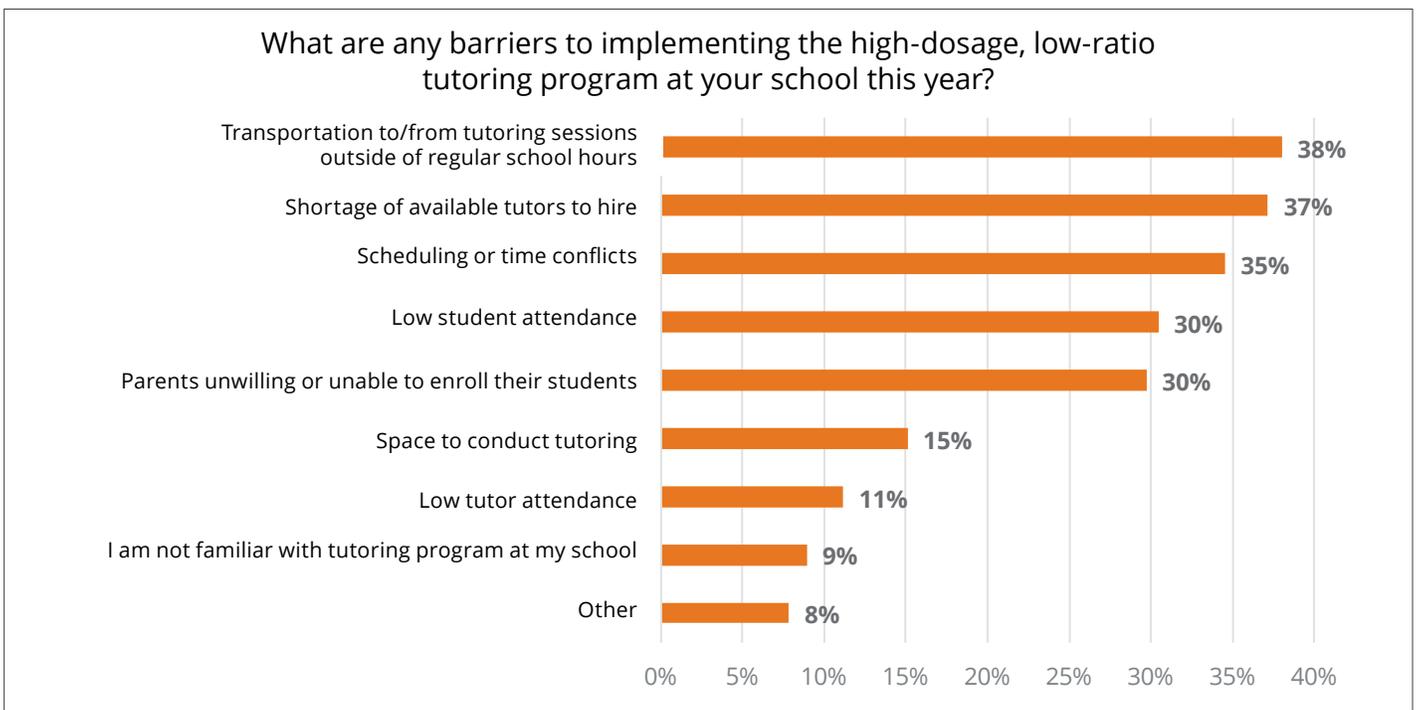




Most administrators reported that their tutoring programs were well-managed, organized, and had a positive impact on student learning while identifying several common barriers to implementation.

When asked what the high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring program has done well this year, 71% of school leaders reported that the program was well-managed and organized, and 63% said that the program has had a positive impact on student learning. These percentages were even higher for elementary school leaders – 75% and 68%, respectively.

Additionally, school leaders identified several common barriers to implementing their high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring programs. The most frequently identified barrier was transportation to/from tutoring sessions outside of regular school hours, closely followed by a shortage of available tutors to hire and scheduling or time conflicts. Thirty percent of school leaders also identified low student attendance and parents unwilling or unable to enroll their students as barriers to implementation.



STUDENT READINESS

Tennessee has made strong investments in preparing students for success beyond the classroom, and teachers in the state support these strategies. Tennessee continues to be a leader in the nation for policies and initiatives that enhance CTE and aid districts, schools, and educators. Federal-funded Perkins Reserve Grants foster local innovation and support the implementation of CTE programs and career pathways aligned with regionally identified high-skill, high-wage, and/or in-demand occupations or industries. The investment of \$500 million to bring Innovative School Models to all middle and high schools to reimagine time, space, modes of learning, and community partnerships have expanded and supported learning opportunities.



Career and Technical Education

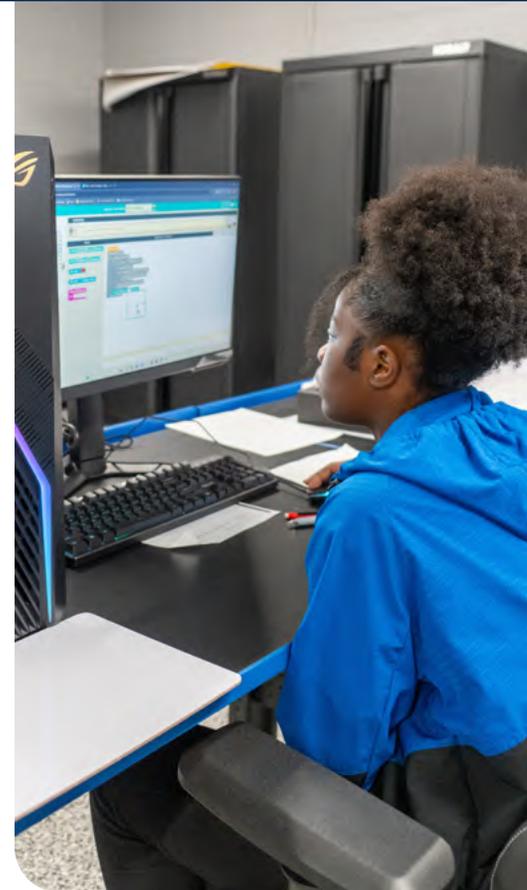
Career and Technical Education (CTE) is the rigorous, academic, technical, and employability skills or content that is taught through career-focused standards and courses. Students participate in career exploration and advisement, WBL, early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs), pre-apprenticeships, advanced placement and dual enrollment courses, and more, preparing them for postsecondary education and the workforce. CTE teacher responses on the TES can provide insight into what is going well or where improvements can be made to keep these programs successful.



CTE teachers reported that they have a wide variety of experiences and that they frequently integrate different types of skills into their lessons.

In 2024, the largest share of CTE teacher respondents said they teach in STEM, business management and administration, and health science content areas (all 14%). **About 61% of CTE teachers reported they have previously held a full-time job in industry aligned to their CTE content area**, with the average CTE teacher bringing about 16 years of industry experience to their classroom.

Nearly all CTE teachers reported that they integrate leadership skills (87%) into most classes or every class. About 80% of CTE teachers said they integrate technical skills to lead to student attainment of industry credentials into most classes or every class. Fewer CTE teachers (49%) said they integrate academic skills to improve ACT or end of course exam scores into most or every class.



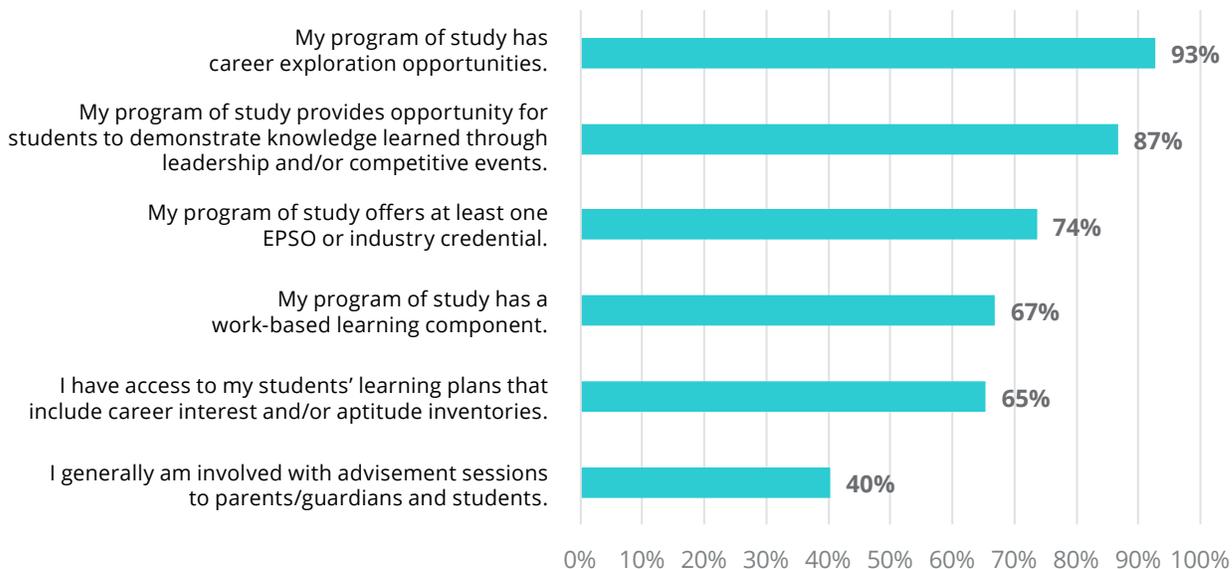


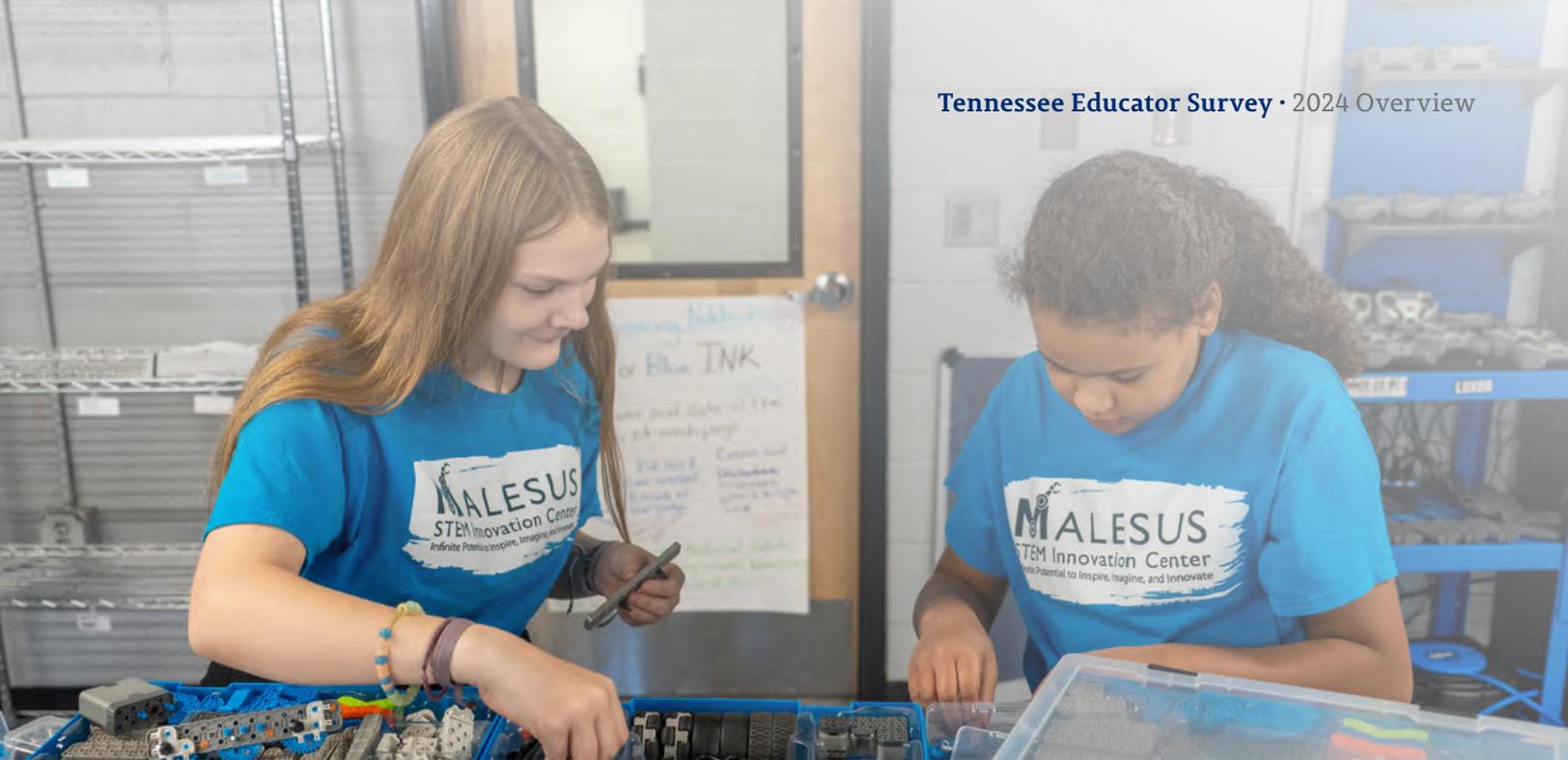
CTE teachers reported that their programs offer various types of learning opportunities for students, including career exploration and EPSOs.



CTE teachers indicated that their programs contain important learning experiences for students to prepare them for success in the workforce. **93% of CTE teachers reported that their programs have career exploration opportunities, and 87% said their program provides opportunities for students to demonstrate knowledge learned through leadership and/or competitive events.** Approximately 74% of CTE teachers agreed that their program offers at least one EPSO or industry credential, and 67% of CTE teachers reported that their program has a work-based learning component. Nearly all high school counselors (95%) agreed that their students are aware of EPSOs available to them.

Please indicate whether or not the following statements are true.



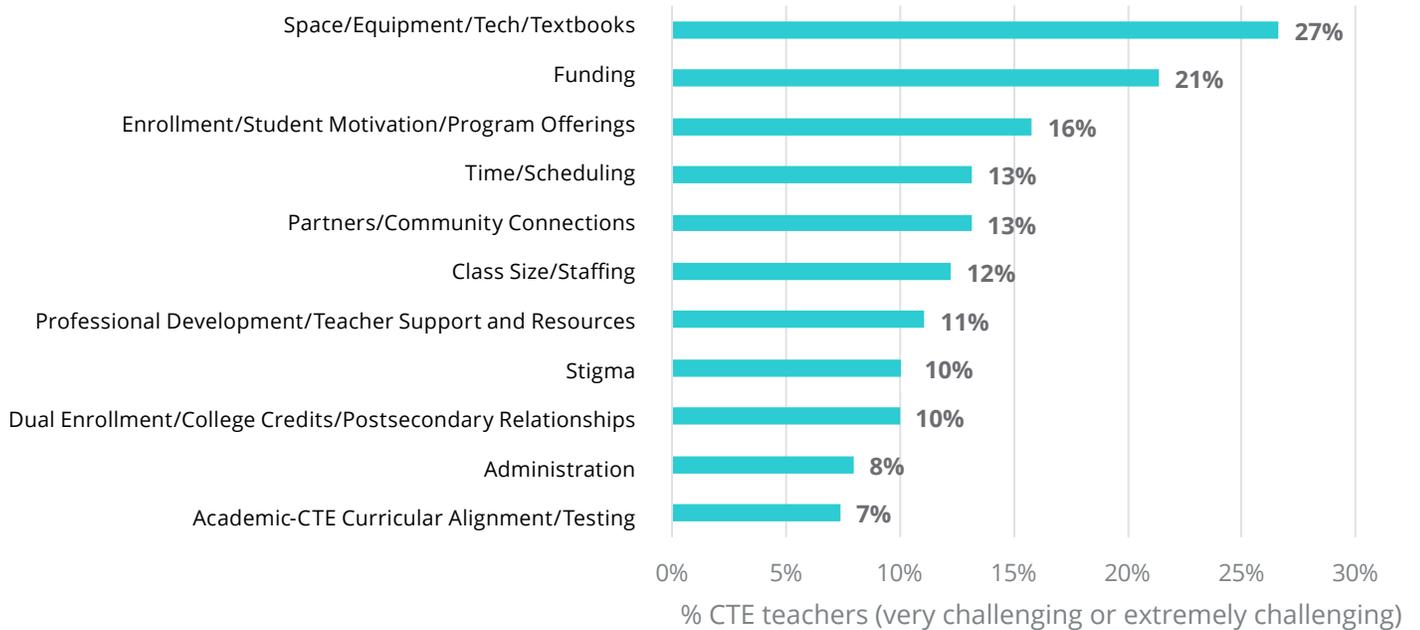


CTE teachers identify space/equipment and funding as the top challenges to their programs.



When asked about challenges to their programs, CTE teachers identified space, equipment, technology, and textbooks and funding as the most common challenges.

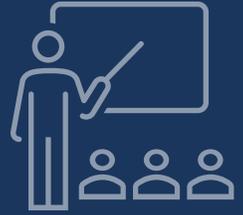
Please indicate the extent to which each of the following are a challenge to your program.



Roughly 74% of CTE teachers said that space/equipment/technology/textbooks were at least somewhat challenging, with 27% of CTE teachers identifying it as very or extremely challenging. Additionally, 75% of CTE teachers reported that funding was at least somewhat challenging, and 21% said funding was very or extremely challenging.

EDUCATORS

Tennessee strives to be a top state to become and remain a teacher. The state has developed a range of initiatives to support the recruitment and preparation of new teachers, such as the [Grow Your Own](#) apprenticeship program, the [Tennessee Future Teacher Scholarship](#), and raising [teacher salaries](#). The TES gathers insight from teachers and school leaders on areas of growth or challenges within recruitment and preparation.



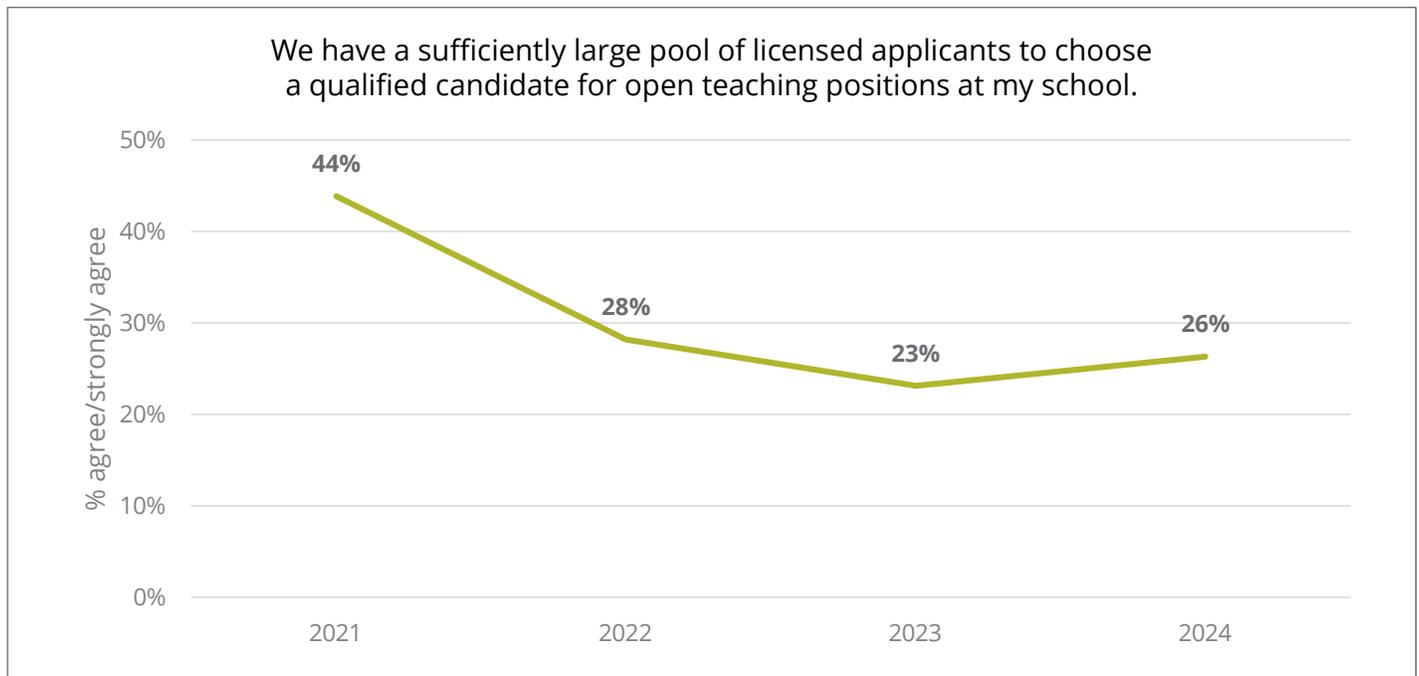
Educator Preparation and Teacher Pipelines



Many school leaders reported significant challenges with recruiting teachers to their schools.

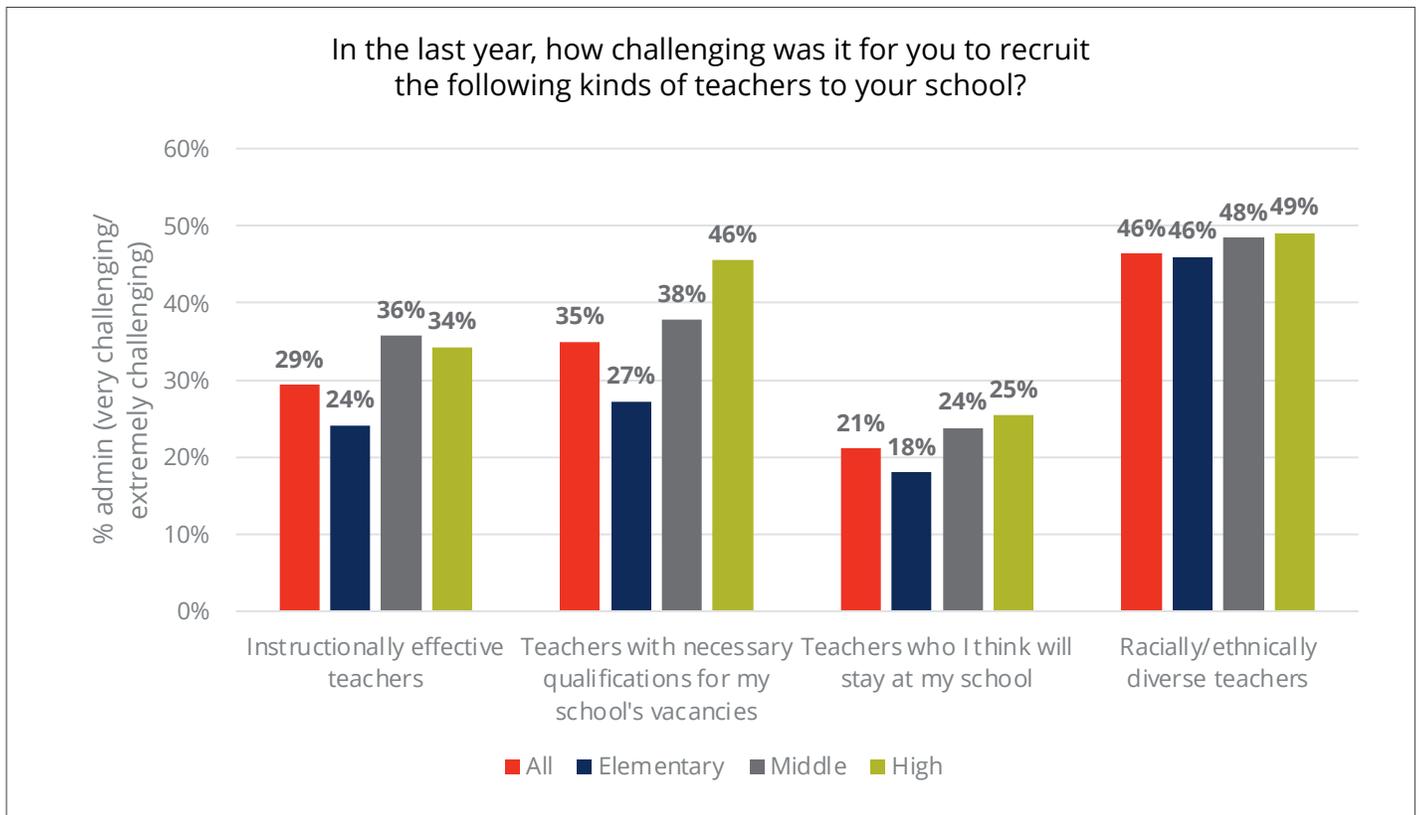


In 2024, 26% of school leaders agreed or strongly agreed that they have a sufficiently large pool of licensed applicants to choose a qualified candidate for open teaching positions at their schools. Elementary school leaders (33%) and leaders in schools with fewer economically disadvantaged (ED) students (lowest ED quartile, 30%) were slightly more likely to agree that they have a sufficiently large pool of licensed applicants. In 2021, 44% of administrators were satisfied with their teacher applicant pool, but this percentage has hovered around 25% for the past three years.





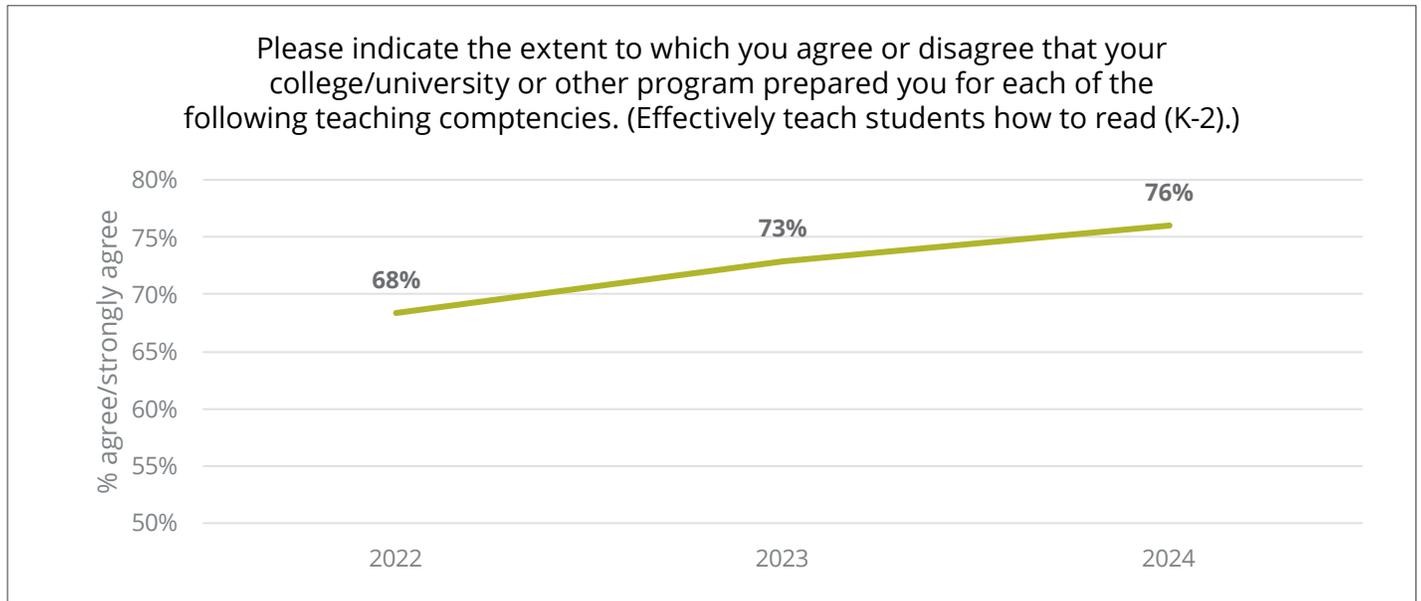
When asked about how challenging it was in the past year to recruit a variety of teachers to their schools, school leaders identified racially/ethnically diverse teachers as the most challenging to recruit – **46% of school leaders reported that this was very challenging or extremely challenging.** High school leaders reported the greatest challenges in recruiting teachers with necessary qualifications for their school's vacancies – nearly half (46%) of high school leaders said this was very challenging or extremely challenging, compared to 27% of elementary school leaders and 38% of middle school leaders.



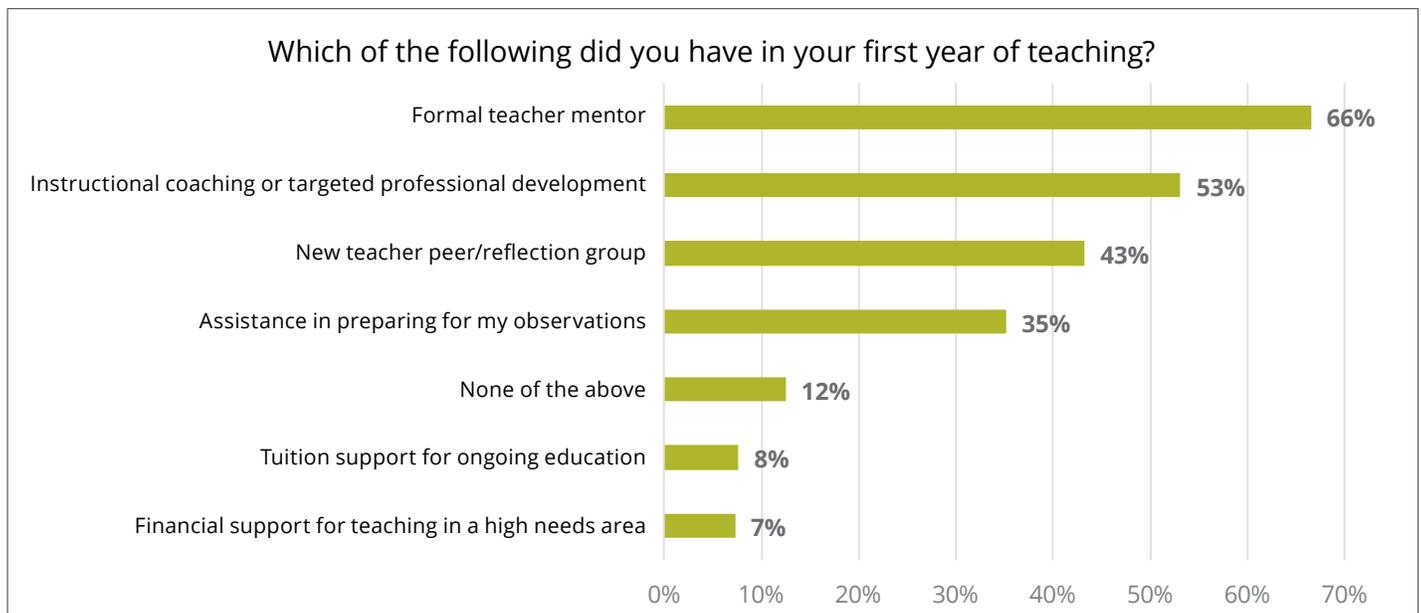


A high percentage of early-career teachers reported that they feel well-prepared for their roles, and most receive mentorship support as new teachers.

Early-career teachers in their first three years of teaching reported that their educator preparation programs (EPP) prepared them for a variety of teaching competencies, such as incorporating principles of engaging students in critical thinking (86%) and supporting all students’ academic development (84%). While only 64% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that their preparation program prepared them to effectively teach students how to read, this number was much higher for kindergarten teachers (84%) and K-2 teachers (76%). **Further, the percentage of K-2 teachers who said they were prepared to effectively teach students how to read has climbed since 2022, from 68% to 76% in 2024.**



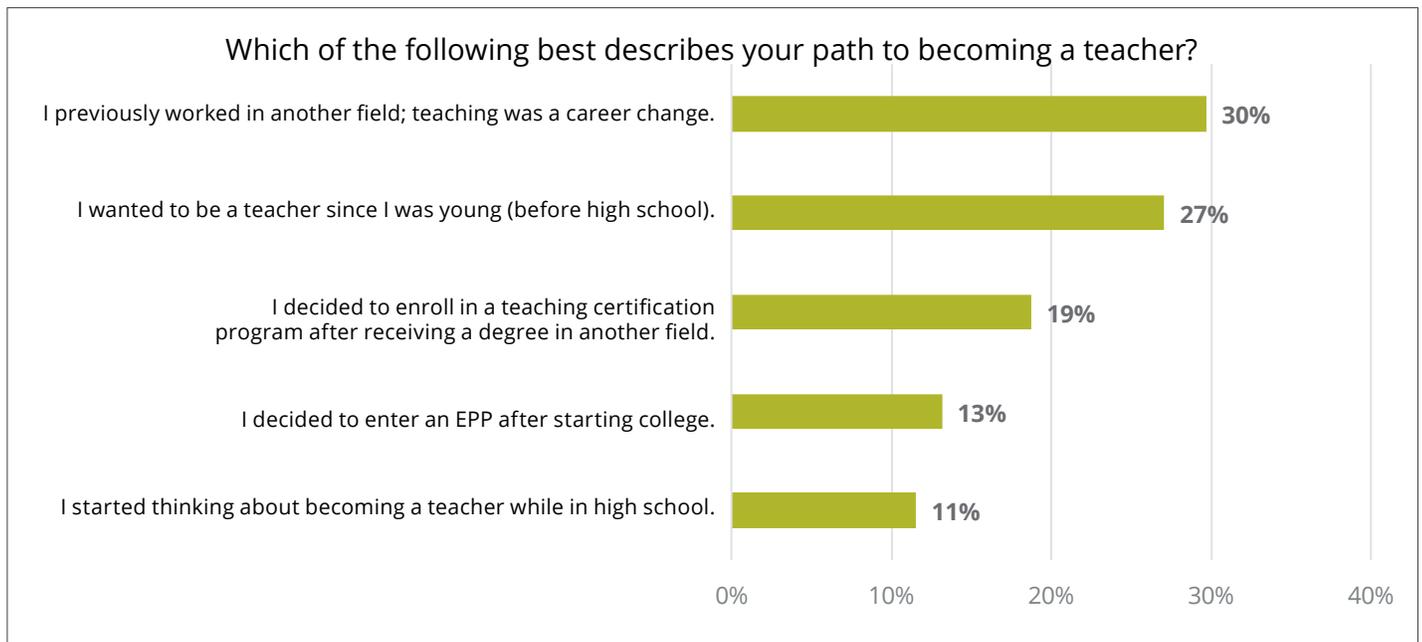
About 66% of early-career teachers (teachers in their first three years of teaching) reported that they received a formal teacher mentor in their first year of teaching, and 62% said they had a formal teacher mentor in the 2023-24 school year. 53% of early-career teachers reported that they received instructional coaching or targeted professional development in their first year of teaching, and 43% said they participated in a new teacher group. Twelve percent of early-career teachers reported that they did not receive any of the new teacher supports in their first year.





The largest share of early-career teachers reported that they entered teaching as a career change. Pathways and motivations to teach tend to differ by grade level taught.

In 2024, the largest share (30%) of early-career teachers in their first three years reported that they entered teaching via a career change and had previously worked in another field, an increase from 27% in 2023. Another 27% of early-career teachers said they wanted to be teachers since before entering high school.



High school teachers in grades 9-12 were the most likely to say that they entered teaching through a career change (43%), compared to 30% of teachers in grades 6-8, 23% of teachers in grades 1-5, and 14% of kindergarten teachers. Conversely, kindergarten teachers were the most likely to say they knew they wanted to be a teacher since they were young (43%), compared to 36% of teachers in grades 1-5, 22% of teachers in grades 6-8, and 13% of teachers in grades 9-12.

Early-career teachers most frequently identified enjoying working with kids in other settings and positive experiences in school among their top reasons for wanting to become a teacher. Kindergarten and first grade teachers were more likely to say they were influenced to teach because they enjoy working with kids in other settings (69% and 65%, respectively). Middle and high school teachers were more likely to say they felt motivated to teach because they wanted to share their passion for their content area (46% and 54%, respectively).

Half of early-career teachers reported that they did some or all of their student teaching in the district in which they currently work, an increase of 11% in the past year. This number was higher for kindergarten teachers (59%) and teachers in grades 1-5 (55%), compared to 47% of teachers in grades 6-8 and 40% of teachers in grades 9-12.





STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

Tennessee schools and districts leverage funding from federal, state, and local governments to invest in student learning and outcomes. Further, teachers, community organizations, and nonprofits or philanthropic organizations contribute additional resources to invest in our students and their success. While Tennessee districts have received historic amounts of funding in recent years, it is important to note that local districts approach their budgeting practices in different ways.



Tennessee has made a strong effort to improve strategic investments in recent years. Since spring 2020, Tennessee has received almost \$4.2 billion in federal relief and funding through ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief). While ESSER funds expire in fall 2024, Tennessee's new K-12 funding formula, the Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA), went into effect the 2023-24 school year. This transition to a student-based funding approach aims to provide the necessary resources to all students to ensure success and includes a recurring state investment of \$1 billion.



The 2024 TES included questions for teachers and school principals to gather feedback on where there is the most need for additional resources to effectively serve their students. Results from this year's survey indicate that educators believe some of the highest needs are related to counseling services and school climate and supporting students with disabilities.



Many educators reported the need for additional resources to support students' mental health.

When asked about the most urgent need for additional support/resources in their school, teachers and mental health professionals identified counseling, psychological, and social services as the area of greatest need. Social and personal skills and school climate were identified as the second area of greatest need. About 69% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that they have access to the resources they need to address the mental health needs of their students. Elementary school teachers were less likely to agree that they had access to resources to support students' mental health needs (65% compared to 72% of middle school teachers and 71% of high school teachers). Teachers reported that the most common resources for supporting students' mental health in their schools were social workers (58%), behavioral/mental health specialists who were district employees (51%), and in-school therapy (51%). Further, 55% of administrators reported that inadequate funding limited their ability to provide mental health supports to students in a minor way, and 32% reported funding limited their ability in a major way.



Many teachers expressed a need for additional resources to support students with disabilities.

Nearly 41% of teachers identified lack of support personnel as a challenge they have experienced in supporting students with disabilities. Elementary teachers were the most likely to say lack of support personnel was a challenge (46% compared to 42% of middle school teachers and 35% of high school teachers). Other top challenges to supporting students with disabilities included disruptions to the classroom environment and the flow of teaching (59%), the additional planning time it requires (45%), and additional meetings (43%). Additionally, 35% of teachers reported they did not have access to adequate resources, training, or both to support students with disabilities; 38% of teachers said they lacked resources and/or training to support students with 504 plans.



Conclusion

Results from the 2024 TES highlight the experiences of educators in the state and provide important feedback around implementation of the state's new policies focused on reading in elementary school, learning acceleration and intervention strategies, and tutoring. The survey is an important resource for the department and education stakeholders in the state to understand what is working and where improvements are needed to better support Tennessee educators and students.

Teacher responses from this year's TES indicate continuing improvement in perceptions of the ELA and math curriculum materials and trainings they receive. Tennessee teachers identified summer learning programs, efforts to reduce absenteeism, and high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring have made noticeable improvements in students' academic performance. Most administrators agreed that their tutoring program was well-run and positively impacted student learning while identifying several common implementation barriers.

The state's commitment to preparing students for their chosen postsecondary careers is reflected in the multiple initiatives surrounding the many opportunities available for students, including Career and Technical Education, Work-Based Learning, and Innovative School Models. These programs provide learning experiences to prepare students for the workforce and success after graduation through participation in innovative local programs aligned to the state's highest-demand skills and careers. CTE teachers reported that their programs have career exploration opportunities for students to demonstrate knowledge learned through leadership and/or competitive events.

This year, teachers and mental health professionals identified counseling, psychological, and social services as the area of greatest need for additional resources. Many teachers also expressed a need for additional resources to support students with disabilities. The Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement (TISA) funding formula aims to provide the necessary resources to all students to ensure success. Tennessee has committed to investing one billion dollars in education aimed at empowering students to read proficiently by third grade, preparing high school graduates for postsecondary success, and providing opportunities for all students to succeed.

The survey is an important resource for the Tennessee Department of Education and other education stakeholders in the state to understand what is working and where improvements are needed to better support Tennessee educators and students.





A message from the Tennessee Educator Survey Team

To the teachers, administrators, and other certified staff who participated in the Tennessee Educator Survey this year, the department sincerely thanks you. Please continue to make your voice heard and hold us accountable to listen.

To all readers, the department thanks you for your interest in learning from the perspectives of Tennessee's phenomenal educators

For any questions on this brief, reach out to tdoe.research@tn.gov.



About TN Education Research Alliance

TERA brings together Vanderbilt University's Peabody College and the Tennessee Department of Education to create an expanding body of knowledge that directly impacts Tennessee's school improvement strategies. Through TERA, scholars at Vanderbilt and other leading universities carry out high-quality, practical research that informs state-level policy, impacts the practice in schools and districts across Tennessee, and contributes to national conversations on K-12 education. For more information visit, peabody.vanderbilt.edu/TERA.



About Tennessee Department of Education

The Tennessee Department of Education serves the state's nearly one million Pre-k-12 students in 1,800 schools across 148 diverse districts—with both distinct urban and rural populations. As a department, we are dedicated to the goal of dramatically improving student achievement and committed to the belief that children from all backgrounds can succeed when given the opportunities they deserve. For more information, visit tn.gov/education.



Andrew Johnson Tower, 9th floor
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243

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