TEACHING AND LEARNING

Utah State
Board of
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2022 Educator
Engagement Survey

Qualitative Data
Summary Report

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2022
Educator Engagement Survey

Qualitative Data Summary Report

☉ Utah State Board of Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In accordance with Utah State Code 53G-11-304 and as authorized by Board Rule R277-325, the Utah State Board of Education began administering an educator engagement survey to Utah educators in the 2019-2020 school year. This survey is administered every other year alternating with the administration of the school climate survey. The survey includes multiple choice (closed) response questions in seven areas and free-response (open-ended) questions in six areas. This executive summary synthesizes educator responses to questions related to:

- School leadership.
- Collaboration.
- Professional learning.
- Career growth.
- Job satisfaction.
- Mentoring.

This summary is intended to provide an overview of educator sentiment. Readers who desire more comprehensive insight than is provided in the executive summary are encouraged to examine the additional sections of this report which include a sampling of educator responses to each of the open-ended questions posed in the survey.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Throughout the Utah Educator Engagement Survey, the term educator refers to all general education classroom teachers, preschool teachers, special education teachers, and school-based specialists. Additionally, one section of the survey includes questions asked only of early career educators. This term is used to describe educators with three or fewer years of experience.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

Analysis of themes in this section suggest that educators value having regular communication from their school leaders and being treated with kindness and as professionals. They want to know where they stand and what is expected of them. Further, educators desire leaders who are visible to students and staff and who are accessible when needed. They want to be provided guidance and feedback related to their instruction and they want leaders to offer consistent and authoritative leadership based around a strong school vision and positive school culture.

COLLABORATION

In environments where collaboration is handled well and perceived as relevant, educators acknowledge benefit for their professional growth as well as building

their team and supporting the growth of their students. However, many educators find themselves in environments where collaboration time is not provided or is handled less effectively. In these cases, the perceived benefit fails to outweigh the challenges of time and the ancillary personal or professional issues and disagreements that arise among team members.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

When engaging in professional learning, educators most appreciate gaining deeper content or grade-level knowledge and collaborating with their peers. Effective professional learning helps educators develop their instructional practices and grow personally and professionally. However, many educators struggle to find time to engage in professional learning or worry about leaving their classroom and being able to find substitutes while they are away. Educators crave differentiated and personalized learning opportunities, with many wanting to have a say in the types of professional learning they engage in. They want their learning opportunities to be relevant to their specific contexts and to have the time to digest and implement learning, particularly mandated learning, before being asked to take on more professional learning.

CAREER GROWTH

Educators want leaders to be aware of and support achievement of their career goals. Educators also want to be made aware of available opportunities to lead and they want such opportunities to be assigned in ways that allow different educators to serve on committees and in leadership roles. Educators appreciate being compensated for their efforts and having professional learning opportunities made available to help them reach their goals.

JOB SATISFACTION

Educators have generally been demoralized by recent political events and the climate surrounding education has caused decreased satisfaction with educator salaries and the level of respect and appreciation teachers receive. Educators feel that they work harder than other professionals with similar education and invest many hours of unpaid time in ensuring the welfare of their students and the success of their classroom instruction. The combined pressures educators perceive facing and the low compensation for the "extra" work they feel they do has many educators worried about whether or not continuing in the profession is worth it. Although cliché, the sentiment of teachers being "overworked and underpaid" resounded throughout the sampled responses. Educators express wanting to be treated as professionals and trusted to do the job they have trained to do without the interference of those they perceive as having little understanding related to the realities of classroom teaching.

MENTORING

Educators are most complimentary of mentoring relationships and experiences that allow them to have an easily accessible peer with whom to address questions and from whom they can gain valuable insight and feedback about how to approach

instruction as well as how to improve as educators. Having a kind, caring, and knowledgeable peer to assist with both the mundane and more essential aspects associated with entering the profession is a well identified benefit. Educator frustrations center primarily around the inability to access the same kinds of support and feedback that educators identify as beneficial.

Among all educators, there is great value seen in having positive and collaborative peers with whom to address questions, share ideas, and simply laugh and decompress. Educators who in other sections of this survey indicate being overwhelmed and burnt out, highlight the need to have peer relationships that provide an outlet for venting the frustrations that beset the profession.

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INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Utah State Code 53G-11-304 and as authorized by Board Rule R277-325, the Utah State Board of Education began administering an educator engagement survey to Utah educators the 2019-2020 school year. This survey is administered every other year alternating with the administration of the school climate survey. The survey includes both multiple choice (closed) and free response (open-ended) questions, resulting in both quantitative and qualitative data. A summary of the quantitative data obtained during the 2022 survey administration is provided in a companion Quantitative Data Summary Report. The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the themes that emerged in educator responses to 11 open-ended questions that appear in six of the seven sections of the survey. The sections of the survey in which these questions appear, and the questions posed were:

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP
- In what aspect(s) of his/her leadership would you say your principal or immediate supervisor shows great strength?
- What aspect(s) of his/her leadership would you say your principal or immediate supervisor could improve upon?

COLLABORATION
- What would you consider to be the greatest benefit you have experienced this year in collaborating with other educators?
- What would you consider to be the greatest challenge you have experienced this year in collaborating with other educators?

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
- In what way(s) have you most benefitted from professional learning opportunities this year?
- What barrier(s) have you faced in participating in professional learning opportunities this year?

CAREER GROWTH
- What could those in leadership positions do to support you in reaching your goals for career growth and advancement?

JOB SATISFACTION
- In your opinion, what could be done to improve job satisfaction among Utah educators?

MENTORING

- ▪ What aspects of your mentoring relationship(s) do you find particularly helpful?
- ▪ What aspects of your mentoring relationship(s) do you find particularly frustrating?
- ▪ Please briefly describe the way(s) your informal mentor(s) support you.

A complete list of all questions on the survey is available at https://schools.utah.gov/administrativerules/documentsincorporated under Board Rule R277-325.

This survey is distributed to every charter school and school district in the state and these local entities distribute the survey to all active educators in their system. Survey completion is voluntary, and educators may opt to discontinue the survey at any time. Consequently, the number of responses to open-ended questions varies and not all survey participants respond to the open-ended questions. To assist the reader, the approximate number of valid responses obtained from each question are provided throughout the analyses.

ANALYSIS

Analyzing qualitative data involves examining written responses for the emergence of common themes. The evaluation of data for themes, commonly referred to as coding, can be accomplished in many ways. For the purposes of this analysis, an initial sample of 350 responses was coded and in each case this was sufficient for the coders to reach saturation in coding. In this context, the term saturation refers to reaching a point where the identified codes seem to be sufficient for capturing the themes in new responses.

The specific process used to analyze the thousands of responses provided to each of the open-ended questions involved the following steps:

1. Using Excel, all responses to a given question were assigned a random number between 0 and 1.
2. Responses representing no response (e.g., blank entries and entries such as "N/A," "?," or "none") were removed.
3. Using the random number assigned, remaining responses were sorted in ascending order.
4. The first 350 responses were coded, representing a random sample of all responses.
5. In some cases, a selection of responses from the original random sample of 350 was provided to a second coder, who repeated the above process in an effort to verify and/or refine the results of the initial coding. In all cases where this was done, satisfactory agreement among coders was reached.

In each section of the analysis below, sample responses are included for the most common themes to each question. This is done to assist the reader in understand-

2

ing the nature of educator sentiments within a particular theme. In such cases, the comments were selected to showcase both the commonality and the variability in educator sentiment within a theme. Information about the prevalence of less common themes is also provided but, in the interest of brevity, direct quotations are not included for these themes. Some quoted comments have been edited to correct spelling or minor grammatical errors. However, as far as can be determined, the sentiments expressed in the sampled responses accurately convey educator perspectives.

LIMITATIONS

The analysis presented here does not represent an examination of all the several thousand responses to each of the open-ended questions in the survey. However, the selection of a random sample of responses and subsequent coding to ensure saturation help ensure that this report provides an accurate representation of the sentiments of those who completed the survey and responded to each open-ended question. It is possible that additional themes not captured in the random sample are evident in the data. Thus, the analysis presented here does not purport to fully capture the sentiment of all Utah teachers. However, this analysis does provide a good foundation from which to begin asking important questions for further consideration.

During coding, some responses addressed multiple themes and were coded in multiple categories. When these responses were used as sample responses within a theme, some editing was necessary to focus the comment on relevant aspects of the statement. Thus, in some cases, quoted comments capture only a portion of an educator's expressed perspective. Further, some comments were edited to maintain anonymity of persons or schools mentioned in the comments.

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Open ended questions in this section of the survey provide educators with the opportunity to identify aspects of strength and areas of improvement for their principal or immediate supervisor.

ASPECTS OF STRENGTH AMONG SCHOOL LEADERS

Approximately 10,000 educators provided responses to the question in what aspect(s) of his/her leadership would you say your principal or immediate supervisor shows great strength? An analysis of a random sample of 350 was sufficient to reach saturation. Two complementary themes emerged with significantly higher frequency than other identified themes.

The most common theme represented was educators' perception that leaders understood the difficulties associated with teaching and treated them as professionals by providing autonomy, rather than micromanagement. This sentiment, expressed in 47.3% of the sampled responses was manifest in statements such as:

She remembers what it is like on the front lines and she is supportive. She fights for us.

... She is good at holding people accountable, but also showing compassion. I don't feel like she's out to get us. I think she really believes in us and really wants us to succeed ...

He's practical, he knows what it's like to be in the classroom. He understands that school is just one part of our lives and respects the need to balance work and home life. He never asks us to do something he isn't more than willing to do himself.

My principal is very good at respecting the professionalism of the teachers and understanding that we need time to do our jobs.

She doesn't micromanage and she trusts me to perform my duties and be professional. She values my work and doesn't push too many mandates on me at once even though she may be getting pressure from the district.

She's so willing to let us do what we think is best for our students, and only steps in when she feels something would harm the kids. It allows us to have a greater sense of pride in what we do and also form a deeper connection with our students.

My principal understands the demands of teaching and is very supportive. He trusts us to do our jobs and doesn't feel the need to micromanage everything we are doing. However, if someone isn't doing what they are supposed to, he will let them know.

...he 'thinks like a teacher.' He puts our needs first and always tries to see situations from our perspective. This is so helpful and makes us feel comfortable telling him about our concerns, our feelings, and also feeling like we have someone in our corner.

I think my principal shows great strength in supporting and taking care of his teachers and staff. He will go to great lengths to ensure that we are heard, listened to, taken care of, and have what we need. He is really good about going the extra mile to let his teachers and staff know we are appreciated. He also backs his teachers completely and will 'go to bat for us' if necessary. I really appreciate the extent that he goes to [sic] make sure we are appreciated and that we have someone fighting for us.

The second most common theme was complementary to the first and represented educator sentiment that their school leader possessed interpersonal skills such as kindness, caring, and being generally likeable and approachable. This theme was evident in 31.1% of the sampled responses and was represented with statements such as:

... He is great at creating good relationships with parents, teachers, and students.

She's approachable. ... She's done a tremendous job at making me feel welcome as a new teacher and supporting me in every way she can.

My principal is one of the kindest, most uplifting people I know. She leads by working alongside us. ... She makes all employees and students feel important. She loves learning right alongside all of us.

My principal is caring and tries to help whenever I approach them. They are very approachable, I feel I could go to them with any problems and they would listen and offer good advice.

My principal cares about me as a person first. She understands how hard the last few years have been and cares about my mental and physical health and knows that is first and foremost. ...

He cares about me as more than an employee. He cares about me as a person. He shows interest in me and what I am doing. He is easy to talk to. I never feel uncomfortable when he enters my classroom.

Friend first, boss second...

... He understands I'm at my breaking point and has been wonderful in working with me to help me from going over the edge.

He is so understanding of how difficult this year has been to navigate. He encourages everyone to take care of themselves first.

... She is approachable and kind so you never feel like asking questions or giving ideas is not allowed. ... While she is kind and approachable, she doesn't let people walk all over her and she demands respect but not in a bad way.

The following themes also emerged, but were less common among the sampled responses:

- Positive sentiment related to leaders' management skills, including organization, problem solving, decision making, and delegation (present in 17.8% of sampled responses).
- Communication skills, including listening and responsiveness (present in 15.9% of sampled responses).
- Focus on and valuing of student learning (present in 12.7% of sampled responses).
- General leadership skills, including creating a positive work environment, accepting responsibility, being dependable, and working hard (present in 11.6% of sampled responses).

Expressed less frequently were comments related to leaders being innovative or visionary (8.6%), establishing high expectations focused on improvement (7.8%), providing feedback (4.9%), being knowledgeable (4.6%), and providing needed professional development and resources (3.0%).

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT AMONG SCHOOL LEADERS

Approximately 8,500 educators responded to the question what aspect(s) of his/her leadership would you say your principal or immediate supervisor could improve upon? An analysis of a random sample of 350 was sufficient to reach saturation. Two themes emerged, with similar frequency, in just under 23.0% of the sampled responses.

Interestingly, the first theme that emerged was the same as emerged among perceived leader strengths. In 22.9% of the sampled responses, educators expressed a desire for their leaders to improve in valuing them and their efforts and expressing appreciation for them. Sentiments in this category include:

... acting like he has concern and regard for the job we are doing in class. Maybe just being noticed, valued, and appreciated every once in a while.

My principal does not actually listen to the staff. It's her way or the highway. She does not care about our time and is checking off her list while ignoring ours. She speaks down to us as if we are children.

Care for the individual person, understanding we have families too...

I would like to [be] thanked and acknowledged for the incredibly difficult task that I have taken on. I would like this to be sincere, not just a general thank you for all

you do. I feel more support and validation as a teacher from the secretary than I ever have from my direct admin.

The lack of support and backing for the teachers is a real struggle. I feel as though I'm thrown under the bus when I'm trying to go above and beyond in my job.

In faculty meetings, I have gone in overwhelmed with the difficulty and frustration of the job ... and feel like rather than expressing understanding and solidarity with me, the principal reminds me that my contract requires this and this my efforts haven't been enough, and they can't help me if I don't do it all.

... I still wish that he was more supportive of teachers when it comes to issues with parents. It would be nice to feel like someone has your back. A lot of times when it comes to issues with parents, you feel like you are automatically guilty until you can prove your innocence. I wish it was the way that it is supposed to be here in America, you are innocent until they can prove you guilty. ...

He needs to show more empathy to the burdens that teachers are carrying and not be so micromanaging.

My principal could improve in understanding what supports (emotional, instructional, behavioral, etc.) the faculty and staff really need in order to teach effectively.

Sometimes a lack of understanding of the full weight of the combined workload of everything going on in our lives as teachers.

The second theme, represented in 22.6% of the sampled responses, conveys educators' feelings that their leaders could better communicate with them. This sentiment was conveyed around communication generally, as well as with specifics such as expectations, school vision, rules, and procedures. While many of the comments simply say "communication," more detailed sentiments included in this category include:

Communication with staff and letting the staff be heard even if it's not going to change their mind on what needs to be done.

Her actions and tone of voice can be abrupt at times, with both staff and students. She comes across as abrasive, although I feel she is quite sensitive and caring (it just doesn't always sound that way). ...

... Does not communicate effectively and does not explain what they mean. ...

He needs to be a better communicator and let us know what is happening before it comes from the parents. ...

My principal could improve on the ability to clearly and directly communicate high expectations when an employee is not fulfilling their professional responsibilities, or only doing the bare minimum, or just 'dropping the ball.'

There is little to no communication. Things are always changing. Their expectations are always changing.

Communication. In an effort to send out only the best information, it is often late coming from my principal and I hear it from other sources.

Communication. I feel like there are lots of unknowns. When important decisions are being made that affect me, I would love to be more included in conversations and be informed about these decisions.

Communicating expectations further ahead of time so we can be more prepared.

The following themes also emerged with less regularity:

- Improving collaboration and creating a positive school environment or vision (present in 12.3% of sampled responses).
- Being more present and visible in the school and in classrooms (present in 10.9% of sampled responses).
- Participating in more classroom observations and providing feedback (present in 10.3% of sampled responses).
- Being less defensive and open to others' ideas (present in 9.4% of sampled responses).
- Being consistent in following through with expectations, rules, and procedures (present in 9.1% of sampled responses).
- Developing better school procedures for managing student behavior or discipline (present in 8.0% of sampled responses).
- Leaders needing to take better care of themselves (present in 7.7% of sampled responses).
- Being more authoritative (present in 6.0% of sampled responses).

Also expressed were themes associated with being more approachable or accessible (3.7%), holding fewer or more effective meetings (2.9%), being better organized (2.0%), having better conflict management skills (1.7%), and being a better instructional leader (1.1%).

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP SECTION SUMMARY

Combining the analysis of the sampled responses for this section suggests that educators value having regular communication from their school leaders and being treated with kindness and as professionals. Further, educators desire leaders who are visible and accessible, who provide guidance and feedback, and offer consistent and authoritative leadership based around a strong school vision and positive school culture.

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COLLABORATION

Questions in this section of the survey provide educators the opportunity to express both the benefits and challenges associated with working collaboratively with other educators.

BENEFITS FROM COLLABORATION

Approximately 9,500 educators provided responses to the question what would you consider to be the greatest benefit you have experienced this year in collaborating with other educators? An analysis of a random sample of 350 was sufficient to reach saturation. Two themes emerged with significantly higher frequency than other identified themes.

The highest frequency theme, represented in 43.7% of sampled responses, expresses benefit from gaining new perspectives, knowledge, or ideas from other teachers. Sentiments in this category include:

> The greatest benefit I have experienced this year in collaborating with other educators is the wealth of knowledge that so many of them have about teaching in general.

> I love that every Friday before staff [meeting] or PLC we all meet together in the library to answer any questions we have or bring up any issues we may have had during the week. It's a great way to bounce ideas off of each other and to make sure everyone is on the same page.

> The ability to see others' perspectives and different ways of doing things.

> We have learned together this year. ... Having a team that works well together and shares our strengths is the only way we have made it this year.

> Various viewpoints and experiences allow us to find and implement "Best Practices."

> I have benefitted in my growth as a teacher. My team collaborates well and all share their knowledge. We push each other to grow!

> Other educators looking at a challenge from an outside point of view can often have ideas that I wouldn't have thought of. I work with some brilliant people who are creative and effective at their jobs.

> With many backgrounds, there is always innovation and creativity that comes from collaboration.

Having the opportunity to share ideas and activities to be able to accomplish the goals and expectations that have been set for us. ...

Being a first year teacher, I have greatly benefited from sharing ideas and strategies for classroom management, lesson plans, and progress monitoring with my fellow educators.

Another common theme was that collaboration supports the building of professional relationships that offer educators needed emotional support. This sentiment was expressed in 24.6% of sampled responses and includes comments such as:

Realizing that all teachers are having a difficult year and working together to lift each other's load.

... When collaborating people feel heard and valued. They become more invested in the kids and the school.

... It is a safe place to vent frustrations and ask for help.

The great benefit ... is being positively accepted within the school's teaching team, without any problem, objection, or simply discrimination. ...

We can lift each other up and encourage each other during this very difficult time. I know I am not alone in my struggles.

We build each other up and support each other to be the best we can be.

Mental health. It's been relieving to know that almost all the teachers are experiencing the same amount of stress and overload as the rest of us. ...

The comradery I feel with my team. We work well together.

The greatest benefit has been the emotional support and close bonds I have built with my team. We all get along so well, and it makes all the difference to have close friends to help and support me.

... It has been good to have the support of other teachers who are also going through a rough time, and to hear that my problems are not unique to me – this year has me feeling like a terrible teacher.

Secondary themes expressed by educators include:
- Working to develop a unified approach to helping students (present in 16.6% of sampled responses).
- Planning and aligning curricular practices (present in 16.3% of sampled responses).
- Sharing the workload across team members (present in 9.4% of sampled responses).

Less common themes include support for behavior management (6.0%), development of and engaging in data-driven practices (4.3%), sharing resources and lessons (3.4%), and help troubleshooting issues with technology (1.1%).

CHALLENGES TO COLLABORATION

Approximately 9,300 educators responded to the question what would you consider to be the greatest challenge you have experienced this year in collaborating with other educators? An analysis of a random sample of 350 was sufficient to reach saturation. The most resonant theme was related to time. Comments in this category were present in 33.7% of the sampled responses and include not having enough collaboration time as well as finding and balancing available time to meet other demands. Sample comments include:

A big challenge is trying to balance between time spent collaborating with other teachers, or time spent completing tasks for my classroom. Grading, answering emails, material prep, etc. I never feel like there's enough time to complete everything that I need to feel totally prepared for teaching.

Not having enough [time] to collaborate. It would be helpful to have a larger chunk of time set aside to plan and discuss goals.

When in the world does anyone expect us to do this? The state and district [have] added to teacher workload so that it is nearly crushing us. We want to collaborate, but we also need to plan what is happening today and this week, and next week. Then we need to differentiate and help struggling students, and the list goes on and on. We could easily be at school for 12-15 hours a day. It would be helpful to have 30 minutes a week or twice weekly where our class is somewhere else and our team could get together and collaborate. There is nothing like that in place though.

TIME TIME TIME! To collaborate ... but also the "extra" time outside of contract hours, which is sometimes needed to put into creating and implementing effective teaching strategies.

... as a teacher of severely disabled students in a self-contained classroom I am also the head of my classroom team, my paraeducators. It is so hard to collaborate with them because we are given no time to do so because of budget restraints and there is no time during the school day because our students require constant care and attention. ...

Just finding time to get all our collaboration done. Finding common prep periods, especially among teachers who you collaborate with but don't teach the same subject, has been nearly impossible. So that means time to collaborate before/after school or during lunch.

Collaboration is taking up too much time. Collaboration would be more effective if we could limit it to once a month for a longer period of time.

We have very little time each week to actually collaborate. Our collaboration and planning time have been consumed with meetings with admins about student behavior, IEPs, 504s, etc. Many weeks this year I have had only 30 minutes of planning time for the whole week.

Not having enough time to actually do the work we know would be best. Everything is rushed because our time during contract hours is so severely limited. We need more time to do a good job.

Two additional themes occurred with identical frequency in 14.9% of the sampled responses. The first of these themes centers around navigating and resolving personal conflicts or differences of opinion among team members and is evident in comments such as:

Individuals who can't get past personal irrelevant feelings for the greater good of the students.

Differing opinions on how to teach or sequence curriculum and how to come to a compromise.

Negativity and close-mindedness ("that would never work with my students").

Sometimes strong personalities come out and feelings are hurt.

Teachers tend to have strong ideas about what they want to focus on. Sometimes we just don't see eye to eye ...

Refusal to work together.

Not willing to throw out old ideas and embrace new ones.

Agreeing on the vertical alignment of standards.

Sometimes we have a difference of opinions, and one voice always tends to be louder than the rest.

Similarly, an equally common expressed challenge is a team member or team members who lack knowledge and/or willingness to engage in collaboration. This sentiment is evident in comments such as:

Some teachers do not understand or have little understanding as to services for students with disabilities and/or classroom management as to accommodate for target behaviors and instilling positive replacement behaviors and expectations.

... [one] teacher ... was disengaged and didn't care what exactly went on in our meetings. In this situation, my co-teacher went to her for any advice and help, so we rarely met as a ... team. I was pretty much on my own all year.

... You have some veterans that want to do it their way and others that are learning

new things feel that they know how to do everything.

... New teachers who are clueless about the process we have gone through have been put in charge of dictating what each department is expected to do.

... some teachers feel like they are above collaborating with others and some do not share the vision or promote the culture of the school.

Teachers not being willing to share. Teachers wanting individual praise instead of team recognition.

Not all teachers are willing to change. Most are willing to improve, but occasionally a teacher does not want to change what they have typically done.

Time is set aside to collaborate, but the other teachers don't show up and when they do are unprepared to collaborate and share. They don't see the value in the meetings, and many are so overwhelmed by teaching ... they want to use collaboration time to do other things so they just don't come.

General rudeness, not paying attention when we try to help them with things, lack of gumption to try and utilize technology and learn the basics.

The biggest challenge has been getting all of the group members to participate and teach the same topics. ¾ of us are doing great together, the ¼ doesn't want to be told what to teach or how to teach it. That makes for quite a bit of discord.

In addition to these sentiments, several secondary themes emerged including:
- Educator burnout or inability to balance competing priorities (present in 9.7% of sampled responses).
- Lack of common goals among team members (present in 8.9% of sampled responses).
- Logistical challenges associated with meeting place, times to meet, or needed resources (present in 6.0% of sampled responses).
- Ineffective collaboration (present in 5.1% of sampled responses).

Some educators also expressed challenges of failing to feel like they have anything to contribute (4.0%), having limited peers with whom to collaborate (3.4%), having difficulty staying focused during collaboration time (2.6%), appropriately responding to student issues (2.3%), and having to collaborate in the first place (1.7%).

COLLABORATION SECTION SUMMARY

A synthesis of the data presented above suggests that in environments where collaboration is handled well and perceived as relevant, educators acknowledge benefit for their professional growth as well as building their team and supporting the growth of their students. However, many educators find themselves in environments where collaboration time is not provided or is handled less effectively. In these cases, the perceived benefit fails to outweigh the challenges of time and the ancillary personal or professional issues and disagreements that arise among team members.

Questions in this section of the survey provide the opportunity for educators to comment on how they have benefitted from professional learning and the barriers they have experienced in accessing professional learning.

BENEFITS FROM PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Approximately 8,500 educators responded to the question in what ways have you most benefitted from professional learning opportunities this year? An analysis of a random sample of 350 was sufficient to reach saturation. The most referenced benefit was related to increasing personal content or grade specific knowledge. Of the 92 sampled responses coded in this category, 50 specifically mention benefitting from the statewide LETRS professional learning. Other learning specific to math, science, English language arts, career and technical education, and special education are also mentioned. Overall, such comments are evident in 26.0% of the sampled responses and include comments such as:

> We have been given some great training with LETRS. The information has been awesome, and I have been able to implement effective practices with my reading groups. I wish I had had this training when I first started teaching.

> ... the trainings on the science curriculum were helpful to understand how to navigate the new platform.

> I recently completed the requirements for the SPED math endorsement. I was able to attend Utah State University in my town (without going to Logan) and take the necessary classes.

> The Number Talks was great to get kids talking about different math strategies. It was also beneficial to help them learn from and embrace mistakes to get better.

> I became certified to teach AP English Literature and Composition which helped me also better understand how to run other, non-AP courses as well.

> The SEED science training has been really helpful.

> The mental health ones from the district have been SO GOOD!

> I received training for ELA as well as math interventions. I was also able to receive teacher's aide specific training, which was really helpful.

My learning coach has done a lot of research on identifying behaviors and the "why" behind them and how to work through those misbehaviors. She provided a great training on that topic. Also, I have attended some great literacy workshops this year.

I have deepened my own understanding of content and best instructional practices. ...

Another common theme relates to the ability to collaborate with and learn from other teachers both in and outside of the same school. This is represented in 20.0% of the sampled responses and is evident in comments such as:

... I have also learned skills to work more productively with my colleagues.

The best professional learning opportunities have come from staff members at my school. The reason for this is because they know our students and know what we need to learn/know/do to support our students.

Learning from colleagues in positions similar to mine.

I have benefitted the most when the professional learning opportunities allow our site teams to work and collaborate to lesson plan.

Collaborating with teachers from different schools.

Networking with other teachers in the state.

I like having the chance to collaborate with teachers who teach different subjects! It's a great way to learn new classroom management and assessment strategies.

PLCs have given my team the time and space to collaborate. It's helped me to better understand data and other important aspects of classroom teaching.

I was able to lead a few and get ideas from other professionals. I find value in talking with other teachers from other schools to see what is going well in their environment.

In my position, I have had the opportunity to participate in professional learning that I have been able to, in turn, share with the teachers at my school. The quality of these sessions has been very high.

A third theme, present in 16.6% of sampled responses, relates to educators' perceptions of professional learning contributing to improvement of their capacity. Generally, comments in this category reference becoming a better professional after engaging in professional learning. Examples include:

I have benefitted from district trainings for instructional coaches and from building my capacity to lead out and facilitate professional learning opportunities.

It gives me the added tools and insight to be successful in what I do.

Professional learning opportunities this year have been critical for me in leading change within my district. ...

They help me with the day-to-day stresses of being a teacher. They are applicable.

I have been able to learn more about how to do my [job] more effectively. All the professional development I have had the opportunity to learn and participate in has broadened my knowledge base and allowed me to perform the duties of my job more effectively.

I have learned many more things that have helped me become a more purposeful and insightful instructor.

They can keep me up to date in a changing world.

The fourth most common theme was complementary to the third and references educators gaining deeper knowledge of instructional practices. Rather than reference specific content or improved capacity, these responses, present in 13.0% of the sampled responses, call out gains in how to teach. Examples include:

New ways to develop curriculum for improved student understanding.

Mostly in planning curriculum and thinking more in terms of mastery vs. "filler assignments".

I am currently taking a class from the district that requires us to video ourselves teaching a ... lesson and then present it to our class for feedback. I have enjoyed this class because of the feedback I was given and the ideas that I have got from watching the other teachers teach.

Gaining information on how children learn and then how to incorporate that into the classroom.

Ideas for standards-based grading.

Improving my curriculum, classroom management and creating more engaging lessons. ...

... I have also learned the best ways to help students who cannot yet meet the standards.

... They have been extremely beneficial in understanding the basics of creating creative lesson plans to foster healthy peer relationships and coordination.

The following themes also emerged with less regularity:
- Gaining new ideas or resources that can be immediately used in the classroom (present in 10.0% of sampled responses).

- Gaining better understanding of new programs, tools, or expectations (present in 6.6% of sampled responses).
- Learning to use technology more effectively (present in 6.0% of sampled responses).

Educators also expressed appreciation for online or virtual professional learning that could be accessed on their own time schedules (3.7%), improvements in their motivation or morale (2.3%), and better skills related to data analysis and testing (2.0%).

BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATING IN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Approximately 8,500 educators responded to the question what barrier(s) have you faced in participating in professional learning opportunities this year? An analysis of a random sample of 350 was sufficient to reach saturation. The most common theme, a lack of time, appears in more than half (50.9%) of the sampled responses and frequently appears in conjunction with other common themes such as job-related stress and not wanting or not being able to get subs to cover classes. Comments identifying time as a key barrier include:

Time! The district has required that we spend personal time working on LETRS in the form of reading the chapters. The schedule for completing units is very unrealistic and difficult to keep up with....

Time. Having to work double time when I return after missing a day.

Just having enough time to get the learning opportunities and then practice using whatever it is we've learned.

Time is always an issue. Planning, teaching and grading don't EVER stop, so finding extra time to partake in extra training or opportunities is challenging.

It has been SO TIME CONSUMING. I have been very overwhelmed this year with teaching, school, professional development, etc.

Time. I hate being expected to do all of my professional development (LETRS, etc.) on my own time, such as after school or weekends. ...

Trying to squeeze in the time to take advantage of these opportunities. It seems like almost every day is taken up by PLCs, LETRS training requirements, oh yeah and planning curriculum/grading/preparing projects/parent communications. ...

... I don't want to give up a weekend or evening to participate ..., especially this year. I value my non-work hours and NEED them for relaxation and restoration time and my mental health, so I don't want to lose that for professional development. ...

Time. If I want to participate in something, it needs to be outside of school time. Even when there is time set apart for PD as a school, being in special education,

there is always an emergency where a parent needs to meet about their student, or an IEP is going to expire so it's either participate in PD or let the IEP be out of compliance. There is never adequate time for anything.

I think that sometimes we have so many extra opportunities for professional development that we don't always have adequate time to do the work that we need to do in our own classrooms.

In addition to not having time for professional learning, many educators (19.4%) express dissatisfaction with available opportunities. This includes comments related to the lack of personalization or relevance of available professional learning as well as perceptions of poor quality. Sample responses include:

School level professional learning is never differentiated, and I often find it very repetitive and boring.

… The opportunities are geared to new teachers and not veteran teachers.

They often do not pertain to kindergarten. We are very different from the other grades.

… Why aren't teachers able to design some of their own PD? That way it can really apply to each content area.

I have not been aware of any trainings specifically for Art of [sic] Music teachers.

The only barrier I have is that I am often forced to participate in PDs that do not relate to my content and, when they do, I rarely have time to implement what I learn before I am forced to take on another challenge and implement something else that is "new" or "better."

Blanket training sometimes is too general and abstract.

I have been teaching for over 15 years. I know I don't know everything about teaching, but I feel comfortable applying appropriate learning strategies to the appropriate situation. What I lack is true professional education. As a science teacher, there needs to be improved access to science conferences to keep science teachers up to date on current scientific issues.

I would like a choice of what I am trained in. There are things that I have been using for years that are new for others so sitting through instruction on them can be frustrating. Scaffolding of learning doesn't seem to be applied as often when teachers are being taught as we do for our students.

Educators also indicate the following as being barriers to their participation in professional learning:

- A lack of subs and/or not wanting to be out of the classroom (present in 13.7% of sampled responses).

- Being overburdened and burnt out with all of what is expected of them (present in 12.6% of sampled responses).
- Available professional learning opportunities being inconvenient or difficult to access (present in 8.0% of sampled responses).
- Distance or challenges with travel due to the pandemic (present in 5.6% of sampled responses).

Among other themes expressed with less regularity are difficulty or insufficient time to apply what is learned (4.9%), funding or having to pay for their own professional learning (4.3%), insufficient availability of professional learning (2.6%), having too much professional learning available (2.6%), insufficient or no compensation to attend professional learning (2.3%), not knowing how or if access to professional learning is available (2.3%), struggles to balance home and work life (1.4%), and lack of encouragement or cooperation from team members to attend professional learning (1.0%).

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SECTION SUMMARY

A synthesis of educator comments related to professional learning suggest that educators most appreciate gaining deeper content or grade-level knowledge and collaborating with their peers. Effective professional learning helps educators develop their instructional practices and grow personally and professionally. However, many educators struggle to find time to engage in professional learning or worry about leaving their classroom and being able to find substitutes while they are away. Educators crave differentiated and personalized learning opportunities, with many wanting to have a say in the types of professional learning they engage in. They want their learning opportunities to be relevant to their specific contexts and to have the time to digest and implement learning, particularly mandated learning, before being asked to take on more professional learning.

A single open-ended question in this section of the survey provided the opportunity for educators to provide their perspectives related to how those in leadership might support them in their goals for career growth.

HOW LEADERSHIP CAN SUPPORT EDUCATORS' CAREER GROWTH

Approximately 4,000 educators responded to the question what could those in leadership positions do to support you in reaching your goals for career growth and advancement? Analyzing this question posed some difficulty because many educator responses failed to properly address the prompt. For example, responses such as "I am already a teacher leader" or "Exactly what they are already doing" provided insufficient insight for coding purposes. Consequently, several such responses were removed from consideration during coding. The resulting analysis of a random sample of 350 was sufficient to reach saturation. However, there was far greater disparity in teacher responses to this question. Still, three major themes emerged.

One common theme, expressed in 31.4% of sampled responses, centers around making educators aware of available opportunities and allowing opportunities for all teachers to participate in available opportunities. These sentiments often indicate that leadership opportunities are typically made available to the same individuals within a school and thus fail to develop the capacity and identify the strengths of other educators. Examples of comments in this category include:

> Sometimes there is an "us" and "them" mentality, where teacher leaders are treated as more valuable, and ideas and information are not reviewed by any others.

> Help me know people in the district and understand what career advancement in my district looks like.

> Have open conversations about opportunities and how to pursue them.

> ... More people in the school should be offered the opportunity to coach, lead and teach. There are so many good teachers in our school; many would step up if asked or expected to do so.

> Listen to my ideas rather than shutting me out. Often those in higher up positions don't take the time to listen to what the people in the trenches under them are actually saying so the great ideas are already squashed before they have a chance to be heard.

There are a set number of teachers that run all of the leadership teams and those teams are full with the same people every year.

Recognizing opportunities that I could succeed in and communicating about them to me personally.

Help guide me on how to move into leadership positions. It seems like you have to know the right people to even make it into a different position outside of the classroom.

Help me understand the different pathways and opportunities available.

Leadership positions need to not be stagnant. All bodies should be given a voice.

A secondary theme of knowing educator goals and providing feedback to educators is expressed in 16.9% of the sampled responses. Such responses indicated a desire to discuss career growth with school leaders. A sample of such responses include:

I would really like to discuss my possible pathways toward leadership.

Observations and instructional support help me see issues in my instruction.

Accountability and setting goals together.

It would be helpful to have positive encouragement and feedback relating to their thoughts on things I do well, and how they think I could be a leader at work.

I think it is important that they first know what my goals are. It is really hard to support someone in goals when they have no idea what the person is reaching for. I have actually never been asked in person what my goals are...

More observations – helping me recognize where I need to improve in my current practice.

Give more frequent feedback and a clearer path to advancement.

I would love to know what I do well and what I need to improve on to be a better support or source of information to teachers at my school.

Leadership could support me in reaching my goals with my career and advancement by scheduling a more one on one meeting and having a clear meeting just for that purpose.

Continue to talk with me and check on my progress.

One additional theme expressed by educators had to do with providing the time, money and additional resources needed to pursue and to convey value in career growth and teacher leadership. Statements expressing this sentiment, present in 16% of sampled responses, include:

Many positions are not on a track for advancement....

Leadership roles might be available to some teachers, but for many they seem out of reach because they require extra time and resources that are expected outside of contract hours and there is little to no compensation. ...

Any time you take a "leadership" position it just means more work with a minor stipend or nothing at all, so it's not really beneficial to take on leadership roles.

Offer more time and compensation for furthering education to enable growth.

I would appreciate monetary and/or time compensations for the extra responsibility and work associated with teacher leadership and student advisory positions.

Teaching has a ceiling on it. You either teach or you don't teach. Teachers who become administrators or coaches or other district employees often seem to quickly lose touch with teaching. And there's no salary benefit in becoming a "teacher leader." It just means more work without pay in an environment where more work is always being added, like it or not. ...

It would be great to have a stipend for extra classes that I'm taking.

Provide college tuition or discounts.

Be clear if there is funding for such opportunities.

Better funding and help in receiving more education in a field that is already extremely underpaid and underappreciated.

Additional themes evident in educator responses include:

- Provide access to more and to desired professional development opportunities (present in 9.4% of sampled responses).
- Provide opportunities for collaboration, including on teams and with instructional coaches and mentors (present in 9.1% of sampled responses).
- Provide emotional support, encouragement and professional advice (present in 8.6% of sampled responses).
- I don't want or need such opportunities or it's up to me to seek out such opportunities (present in 8.3% of sampled responses).
- Support educators in working on advanced degrees (present in 2.6% of responses).

CAREER GROWTH SECTION SUMMARY

Educator responses to this question demonstrate much less consistency and there is a possibility that framing the question in terms of what leadership could do led many to provide feedback on qualities of school leaders rather than professional growth opportunities. Still, the sampled responses seem to indicate that educators want leaders to be aware of and support achievement of their career goals. Educators also want to be made aware of available opportunities to lead and they want such opportunities to be assigned in an equitable manner. Educators appreciate being compensated for their efforts and having professional learning opportunities made available to help them reach their goals.

A single open-ended question in this section of the survey provides the opportunity for educators to express perspectives related to how to improve job satisfaction among Utah teachers.

IMPROVING JOB SATISFACTION

Approximately 9,500 educators provided responses to the question in your opinion, what could be done to improve job satisfaction among Utah educators? An analysis of a random sample of 350 was sufficient to reach saturation. Educator responses to this question were typically lengthier than responses in other sections of the survey and often touched on multiple areas of educators' perceptions. To help ensure that responses were accurately represented, separate coders completed an analysis of the same random sample of responses. The degree of agreement between the coders in classifying responses was high and, to facilitate further agreement, subclassifications were identified to provide a more robust portrayal of educator sentiment.

The most common identified theme, appearing in 50.3% of sampled responses, was increasing educator salaries. Other responses, related to educators being paid for additional work they put in, will be reported in a separate category. Among perceptions of salary are sentiments such as:

> *BETTER PAY. We are being asked to teach online, teach in-person, prepare lessons and assessments without the time needed, put in grades, and communicate with families and the community. These things should be their own jobs. We don't get paid fairly for the teaching in-person that we are signed up for, let alone for the other jobs. If we were fairly compensated, we wouldn't be losing teachers at the rate that we are.*

> *I don't make enough money to buy a house. Let me say that again louder. I DO NOT MAKE ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY A HOUSE. ... I cannot cover my most basic needs. I can't afford to have my own children because our state does not value its educators. I am literally sacrificing my own happiness and personal life fulfillment for other people's children to complain to me ...*

> *Increase base salary and steps and lanes. It has taken me 15 years to make $69,000; I started with a master's degree at $28,000. After two endorsements in three years, I qualified for a lane change to make $32,000 (Master +30). The salary is not commensurate for all we are expected to do. ... Those raising families are hard pressed to qualify for housing unless one of the spouses works in a profession. Compared*

to ... who has worked for Vivint for 8 years as a graphic artist: started at $40,000 and now makes over $120,000. In half the time he makes nearly twice what I do.

Pay a living wage that, at the very least, increases at the same rate as inflation. I'm making more money on paper, but it doesn't go as far in the month. A 3.5% raise wasn't sufficient considering the average rate of inflation has been between 7-10%. If wages do not increase across the board for teachers, I will likely leave the profession.

Pay us what we're worth! We need to be paid on a similar pay scale as any other educated professional!

There is a great discrepancy between how much money someone makes in a rural place where I live compared to someone in another school district, yet the cost of living is not much less here. If I were in another district, with the education and experience I have I would make close to 20k more than I make here...

We could be paid better. While my school does well to give us incentives and a transparent pay scale, I often wonder what other careers I could pursue that would compensate me more for the number of hours I put into work each week. ...

We need to be paid more. We are professionals with a college degree. We are responsible for 25+ children every single day. We help them with their academic and emotional needs. We deal with behavior problems without any help. The list goes on and on. Most of all, we do NOT work a 40-hour week. We work "off the clock" many hours during the school year. Jobs everywhere are getting huge pay raises. We are not seeing this, and teaching is harder than ever.

The next most referenced theme was related to educators' perceptions of not feeling respected as professionals by the legislature, state administration, district or school administration, and/or community members, families and students. These sentiments were represented in 37.1% of the sampled responses and often referenced specific legislative actions or perceived negative political targeting of educators and their work. These include statements such as:

... Allow us to use the education we received to teach effectively and help us improve if we are not. Cease to Monday morning quarterback what we do in a dynamically changing classroom.

Be real about what the transparency bills HB234, SB114 and SB157 will do to teachers, classrooms, and our ability to complete our jobs. These bills appear to be a no confidence vote for the USBE by the Legislature. ... I was hired by my LEA to perform my job because of many years of experience and education and these bills are a slap in the face to teachers.

... Respect the profession. ...Trust your teachers. Most teachers go to more than 5 or more years of college to become a professional of the job. Trust us to do that job we learned to do.

Educators need to be treated respectfully and professionally. ... I would like educators to be trusted in their work as other professionals are. I understand that there are some teachers that do things incorrect. The one should not weigh out the many! ...

Have state legislatures [sic] recognize that we are professionals and not introduce bills that undermine our ability to teach. There were several bills this year that seemed to insinuate teachers cannot be trusted. That lack of trust in our profession was disheartening. ...

I recently relocated to this state from another, and it currently feels like a witch-hunt for educators in this state. Uninformed legislators, parents and community members are currently seeking to weaken public education and teacher autonomy. They think we are teaching things that we are simply not teaching. I would love to see a greater push to highlight the work that really happens in the classroom. ... teachers need to be recognized as stakeholders ALONGSIDE parents. ... Our professional knowledge should be treated with more respect.

... Stop letting a few small groups that have something that bothers them influence law makers to increase the load on teachers backs. Dumb things continue to be discussed on 'the hill' that will just push great teachers out of the classrooms just because a small group has some 'bridge to burn' about something they think is happening in schools. Support teachers and help build confidence in education. ...

More respect! I hold a BS in elementary education, a master's in special education, and am currently working on my EdD in organizational leadership with an emphasis in K-12 education, yet the level of respect I receive both from district leaders and community members does not equal what other professions with similar levels of schooling as I have receive.

Treating educators as professionals would be incredibly helpful. Most educators have endorsements and master's degrees beyond their bachelor's degrees. ... I put my own mental and physical health on the backburner for these kids. I feel very heavily the burnout. At some point, probably very soon; it won't be worth it anymore.

... Lastly, the respect of students and parents is absolutely essential. It is appalling to see so much disrespect tolerated among social media, the news, and my interactions. Many educators (myself included) feel like we are drowning and for what? ... We love our students and are sacrificing for them, but at the end of the day, we need help or we are all going to burn out.

Another prevalent theme in educator responses involves teacher workload which was present in 28.6% of sampled responses. Sentiments in this area typically highlight one or more specific aspects of teacher workload. Thus, following an initial coding of responses for workload sentiments, three subcategories were identified.

First, 11.4% of the workload responses request having more time to accomplish the work. A sample of these responses include:

Additional days or planning time. Time for training and collaboration. Time and resources to attend conferences.

... adequate prep time that is part of my workday, not personal time!

... Providing more paid workdays (where teachers have to be in the building working, but no students are there) so we have more time to collaborate and talk would also be very beneficial.

... more paid time to work over summer.

... Job satisfaction could be improved by providing more time for planning lessons and curriculum and collaboration. ... It would help immensely if there was additional planning time built into contract hours.

Make sure that teachers are given the time that is actually needed to prepare and improve ourselves to be better teachers. Also, to prepare lessons each week to adjust and be the best we can to meet the kids' needs.

Second, 10.3% of the workload responses center on having more realistic expectations of teachers and their work. Sample responses in this category include:

... Job expectations are not realistic by other normal occupations. Other jobs are not expected to take work home or work for free without overtime pay.

STOP adding things we have to do without removing prior responsibilities. We are now having to be mental health professionals, online course masters, new content standard developers, etc. We keep trying to fix problems without an adequate understanding of what is going on [sic] the front lines.

... More reasonable expectations for adults working 6+ hours with kids each day, and less distraction from working WITH and FOR students.

Let us teach! We have so many programs, trainings, meetings, new curriculum, committee responsibilities, etc. that our time is tied up in data entry and progress monitoring. On top of all that we are expected to be first aid trained, psychologists, counselors and in some cases pseudo-parents to these kids. ...

Lessen some demands and requirements of educators so we feel we have the time to collaborate, plan well for the actual teaching part of our jobs. ... I always bring home students IEPs and re-eval reports and work on them there, this seems unfair but it's the only time I can do it. ...

... I think what we need the most is for those who are in positions of leadership and decision-making to remember that no classroom is perfect and is not filled with

faceless students and teachers. It is filled with students and teachers, who come from different backgrounds, face different problems and situations every day. ... stop putting unrealistic expectations on the teachers and students and berating us when we don't reach perfection. ...

Finally, 6.8% of the workload responses mention not being assigned additional work outside of the classroom or being fairly compensated for that time. These responses include:

As a teacher I am required to sponsor a club and this work is on an over time basis. All over time work should be paid at 150% - just like any other JOB. Except I am required to accept a wage that is $25 per hour; instead of $75.

As the graphics teacher, I am often asked to do extra projects for various school groups (like designing and screen printing 50 shirts for a given club, which takes me hours to do). I do not get paid extra for the additional time I spend outside my contract time to complete these jobs. It is free work, and I often feel like I am required to do it, especially when I am asked by administration to do so. ... I feel we are given more responsibilities each year, that just keep getting piled on, and we are not compensated for the extra time it takes to accomplish those expectations on top of our job of teaching. ...

Get paid extra at my rate for extra hours. Not be expected to put in overtime. Most of us don't have the time to do it all but we'll be seen as lazy or not fulfilling our jobs if we don't put in many after hours to get everything done (this week alone, I've worked 1.5-2.5 hours every night grading). ...

... I am so busy with documentation, evaluations, report writing, providing services, preparing for IEP meetings, holding IEP meetings, and attending school and district meetings that I don't have time left to plan unless I want to work until 7:00 every night. ... Implementing caseload caps or weighted caseloads could be a helpful solution to prevent special educators from burning out so quickly.

... I shouldn't be required to substitute for other teachers and run after school activities for $20 an hour.

When teachers are asked to serve on committees, curriculum adoptions, or in leadership roles they should be adequately compensated for their time. Currently it is expected to serve on these committees at the cost of personal time or planning time. ...

Additional themes emerged from the analysis with lower frequency. These include:

- Having less mandates and oversight from district, state, and legislative bodies (present in 12.3% of sampled responses).
- Having better benefits, including insurance and retirement (present in 12.0% of sampled responses).

- Reducing class sizes (present in 10.6% of sampled responses).
- Hiring additional personnel (e.g., tutors, paraprofessionals, aides, and teachers) to help in classrooms (present in 8.3% of sampled responses).
- Increasing support for student related issues such as discipline, behavior management, and achievement (present in 8.0% of sampled responses).

Additional recommendations include increasing classroom level funding and re-sources (5.4%), providing better training, licensing, and professional development structures (2.6%), implementing flexible contracts and schedules such as a four-day work week (2.3%), providing more paid time off, particularly for sickness due to COVID-19 (2.0%), and reducing the amount of "change" thrust upon the educational system and educators (1.4%). Additionally, 2.3% of the sampled responses address matters that were specific to a district or school that could not be classified in one of the more general educator classifications included above.

JOB SATISFACTION SECTION SUMMARY

A synthesis of the data presented above suggests that educators have generally been demoralized by recent political events and that the climate surrounding education has caused decreased satisfaction with educator salaries and the level of respect and appreciation teachers receive. Based on the analysis, educators feel that they work harder than other professionals with similar education and invest many hours of unpaid time in ensuring the welfare of their students and the success of their classroom instruction. The combined pressures educators perceive facing and the low compensation for the "extra" work they feel they do has many educators worried about whether or not continuing in the profession is worth it. Although cliché, the sentiment of teachers being "overworked and underpaid" resounded throughout the sampled responses. Educators express wanting to be treated as professionals and trusted to do the job they have trained to do without the interference of those they perceive as having little understanding related to the realities of classroom teaching.

Two of the three questions in this section of the survey were presented only to educators who indicated that they were in their first three years of teaching. These questions provide the opportunity for early career educators to give their perspective related to both the helpful and frustrating aspects of working with an assigned formal mentor. The third question was asked of all educators who indicated they had an informal mentor. Informal mentor is defined in the survey as "persons within the school who befriend you and provide extra support to you without having an assignment to do so".

MOST HELPFUL ASPECTS OF FORMAL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Approximately 1,000 early career educators provided responses to the question what aspects of your mentoring relationship(s) do you find particularly helpful? An analysis of a random sample of 350 was sufficient to reach saturation. The most common theme, occurring in 37.1% of sampled responses was having a "go-to" person who the early career educator could ask questions and get answers. Responses in this category include:

It has been helpful to have someone kind of take me under his wing and show me the ropes of the new school.

She is proactive and always ready to answer any questions I have.

... Because of the relationship that I have with my mentor I feel like I can ask her questions without the fear of being criticized.

... I like having one person that I can go to when I am starting out to know who to talk to and where to get information I need.

Asking questions that are not always obvious.

I love having someone to talk to and work with on the content and the crazy stuff that happens at school. I just sometimes need other opinions and someone to answer my questions.

My mentor is someone I know I can go to and ask questions. Even if I feel like the question is stupid, I can still talk to him and he will be there to offer support and help.

My mentors are a safe place to go to – I feel like I can ask about anything and they answer all of my questions even when it is something I should have already known about/been doing.

I have become personally close with my mentor, which allows me to share honest conversations, opinions, struggles, etc. with her.

He helps a lot with things that aren't really covered in any trainings—things like recruitment, how to work with the community, etc.

Early career educators also express that they appreciate their mentor's expertise with curriculum and lesson planning. This sentiment was present in 21.7% of the sampled responses and includes:

Because my mentor teaches the same topic as I and he has been doing it for much longer, he is very insightful into how to present material to students. This is especially helpful for lab work, as he has seen where students seem to struggle and gives great advice for preventing certain issues.

My mentors give me stuff that they use in their class such as activities and games. It is really helpful and takes a ton of stress off of my shoulders.

My mentors have helped me to understand the lingo (since I did not get a teaching degree) and recognize which methods/techniques I am using in my classroom, even if I don't know what to call it.

Her knowledge for classroom management and structuring lesson plans has been an amazing resource to use. ...

Help with engagement strategies and understanding district expectations for implementing the curriculum.

My mentor has been a great friend and teacher to me. She has taught me many teaching strategies, worked with me to confront the challenges that teaching provides, and created resources for me to reference when needed.

I find that the most helpful aspects of my mentor has been her incredible depth of knowledge of education. We are able to utilize this wealth of knowledge to fine-tune my teaching to best help meet the needs of my students.

It is very helpful to have an experienced teacher as a resource when dealing with new curriculum and experiences. My mentor(s) has shared resources as well, which has been extremely valuable.

Guidance in curriculum instruction, when just expected to know how to exactly teach something the best way. Super helpful, offer to model and team teach concepts. ...

My designated mentor—and IC—has a never-ending knowledge base of teaching tools, methods, and activities that she shares with me. That has been particularly helpful to me as I am just becoming familiar with the curriculum and gathering an array of options to help me adjust to varied student needs as I am teaching.

Early career educators also appreciated being able to receive quality feedback from their mentor. These sentiments, present in 19.7% of sampled responses are present in comments such as:

I appreciate the class observations and encouragement. The observations provide me with opportunities to apply what I've learned in training and receive feedback on that.

They always provide constructive criticism.

... The specificity of feedback on what to try and how to improve.

Positive feedback and the positive way in which criticism is given. ...

She gives me great feedback and specific ways that I can improve my lessons and grow as a teacher but in a very positive way.

... I also appreciate their role as a classroom observer – I love having people observe my classroom so we can talk about what was good, bad, and techniques that can improve my weaknesses and whatever else went wrong.

When they come and provide ideas and make observations about things in the classroom, especially in places where it is difficult to see. They bring up things that I have never thought about.

My mentor comes to observe me when I want to work out specific aspects of my teaching that I wish to improve. She takes detailed notes about what I do during my instruction and provides constructive and positive feedback to help me improve or recognize what I am doing well.

The openness of communication that allows my mentor and I to discuss my skills honestly and without judgment. My mentor allows me to try methods that I want to try and then help with the reflection process.

Other common sentiments include:

- A friend to provide encouragement and emotional support (present in 18.9% of sampled responses).
- Assistance with classroom management (present in 16.3% of sampled responses).
- Appreciation for the collaborative nature of the mentoring relationship (present in 14.3% of sampled responses).
- Having the mentor be readily accessible and/or available when needed (present in 12.3% of sampled responses).

Less common sentiments include assistance with goal setting (2.6%) and navigating particulars associated with special education (2.3%). Additionally, 3.4% of sampled

responses related to district or school specific supports such as school meetings or specific mentor personality traits.

MOST FRUSTRATING ASPECTS OF FORMAL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Approximately 800 early career educators provided responses to the question what aspects of your mentoring relationship(s) do you find particularly frustrating? An analysis of a random sample of 350 was sufficient to reach saturation. The most common theme, occurring in 36.0% of sampled responses was having a mentor who was unavailable because of scheduling conflicts, physical location, or generally being too busy or uninterested in supporting the early career educator. A sample of sentiments expressing this perspective include:

Not always having them be accountable to the time we set.

That my mentor teacher and I don't have the same prep period so we can meet consistently.

I wish we had more time with our mentor. She is split between about 12 of us.

They have too much to do and don't really have enough time to actually mentor and observe and help improve new teachers' instructional practices.

It is frustrating to know that I have a mentor at my school who is getting paid a stipend to mentor me and they have not done a thing (besides answer questions when I approach them).

Since my mentor is only here 2-3 days a week, she is not always available if I have questions.

Having to track down my mentor at times that work for them. They have their own classroom, responsibilities, and extra responsibilities. They are under the same loads and stresses if not more. There is not a time for them to come observe or spend time addressing things in real time.

My building mentor wasn't even aware that he was my formal mentor until months into my first school year, which seems like a major oversight on the part of admin. I ended up being ok without it because of my strong team dynamic, but knowing I had someone specifically in my corner would have been appreciated.

I have a mentor at a different school because there isn't a veteran teacher in my grade level at my school. This makes it a little difficult to meet.

Offers to help, but doesn't show up to help.

A second common theme was early career educators not receiving personalized or appropriately helpful assistance from their mentor. This sentiment was present in 27.8% of sampled responses and includes comments such as:

Sometimes I wish there was more mentoring on the logistical aspects of how the school runs (i.e., how to request a bus, ordering supplies, etc.)

My school mentor could have been more helpful. I don't really think they were much of a mentor; they were more of a team member so we talked often about the classes we were teaching, but we didn't talk about things that I needed help with or that I could or that I wanted to change. It was also frustrating that my school mentor didn't understand the type of teaching I wanted to do and couldn't help me transition into that way of teaching.

… Sometimes my general education mentor doesn't understand some aspects of special education that I need to do.

I don't really get to talk with her because she is only here during Tier 1 time when I am teaching. She doesn't have any solid advice on how to help with unruly students or other classroom management helps. I feel like it is just one more person scrutinizing my every move as a teacher.

Feedback from observation was given months afterwards. I could hardly remember what I'd observed. …

Lack of quality feedback: I feel like my mentor rarely ever had constructive criticism or things for me to work on. I am a new teacher, but there were rarely any suggestions for improvement.

She is strictly a mentor to improve classroom management. It would be nice to have a mentor for emotional or even physical support.

My mentor did not enter my classroom until the 3rd quarter, after I had already established my classroom. Having my mentor teaching my class, changing rules and classroom procedures has been confusing for my students and many have lost their trust in my abilities.

I find it frustrating that I haven't had support for the last three years. I have had to figure out so many things on my own because my mentors haven't been proactive. It is hard to have a mentor who has never been through the APPEL/ARL process because they don't really know how best to help me.

I came in halfway through the year and I feel that I have not received a ton of training or guidance. I have been thrown into things a lot faster than most teachers in their first year and everyone is so busy, it feels like they don't always have time for me.

Other common themes expressed by early career educators include:
- Being given or engaging in tasks that are unproductive (present in 16.4% of sampled responses).
- Complications due to having an assigned mentor whose grade level, sub-

ject area, or gender did not match the early career educator's (present in 10.8% of sampled responses).

- Personality conflicts resulting in mentors who were rude, condescending, overly negative, or who micromanaged the early career educator's instruction (present in 7.9% of sampled responses).

Additionally, 3.1% of the sampled responses were classified as representing "other" concerns related to various aspects associated with the educator or the mentor misunderstanding the role of mentoring.

SUPPORTS RECEIVED FROM INFORMAL MENTORS

Approximately 8,100 educators provided responses to the question please, briefly describe the way(s) your informal mentor(s) support you. An analysis of a random sample of 350 was sufficient to reach saturation. The most common theme, occurring in 50.0% of sampled responses is having a general friendship and someone to lean on and vent frustration with. This sentiment is evident in statements such as:

… I feel safe with this person and appreciate their friendship.

… A lot of time just talking to them alleviates concern and solves problems without having to go higher up the chain. …

Encouraging when things get overwhelming.

…My mentor keeps confidences and leads by example. She is also transparent and genuine in encouraging me and helping me to be a better educator and person.

… We also encourage each other (mostly she encouraging me) and act as each other's "onsite therapist" when the job gets to be too much to handle.

Someone to confide in … and to give honest (even brutal) feedback.

A secondary theme was seen in educators engaging in collaboration with their informal mentors. This sentiment, expressed in 35.1% of sampled responses is evident in statements such as:

… We have assignments to make the load easier. … We each have assignments and do them for the entire team. …

We collaborate on lesson plans, share ideas on how to present material and how to assess students' proficiency.

… We meet to collaborate weekly on upcoming projects, activities, and student needs. …

My informal mentors give me the opportunity to collaborate about behavioral concerns and interventions, share curriculum ideas, reflect on worries/concerns.

We compare and share notes (literally) for lesson plans, support each other through challenging situations by brainstorming for solutions together, cover each other's classes when possible/necessary, collaborate cross-disciplinary lessons/activities, and hold space for each other on a personal level.

We collaborate and have discussions about lessons and how we can improve as educators, individuals, and general members of society. ...

The third resounding sentiment expressed by educators indicates the ability to access a knowledgeable peer for questions and/or advice. Within the sampled responses, 28.6% express this type of support from informal mentors. Sample comments include:

I feel comfortable approaching a variety of people in my building for any questions or concerns I need help with.

We help each other with teaching ideas, answer each other's questions and share experiences to help each other out.

Answer questions, provide resources for professional development, provide training.

The mentor gives me feedback and a different perspective on a variety of issues. I am able to ask questions and just run ideas past this person for discussion.

I sometimes go to a colleague with clarification or technical questions and she comes to me with the same. ...

She is a more senior [member] on our team ... Great person to ask questions to.

The final theme evident was the sharing of ideas and brainstorming. There were 21.1% of the sampled responses indicating this support. Such responses include:

... Now, we bounce ideas off each other for new labs. ...

They discuss strategies with me. Different ways to help students. Curriculum ideas.

They give me ideas to use in the classroom – either for classroom management or on a subject.

... We share ideas and other materials for the lessons.

We have times where we get together and discuss best practices and exchange new ideas.

Ideas for instruction, behavior management, sharing resources, interpreting ideas from meetings or announcements ...

(Continued)

MENTORING SECTION SUMMARY

A synthesis of the above data suggests that early career educators are most complimentary of mentoring relationships and experiences that allow them to have an easily accessible peer to address questions and from whom they can gain valuable insight and feedback about how to approach instruction as well as how to improve as educators. Having a kind, caring, and knowledgeable peer to assist with both the mundane and more essential aspects associated with entering the profession is a well identified benefit. Educator frustrations center primarily around the inability to access the same kinds of support and feedback that educators identify as beneficial.

Among all educators, there is great value seen in having positive and collaborative peers with whom to address questions, share ideas, and simply laugh and decompress. Educators who in other sections of this survey indicate being overwhelmed and burnt out, highlight the need to have peer relationships that provide an outlet for venting the frustrations that beset the profession.

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