

PRESS RELEASE



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THE EDUCATOR AND THE CLASSROOM

Former President Theodore Roosevelt gave an often-cited speech about citizenship in a Republic called [The Man in the Arena](#) at the Sorbonne in Paris, France on April 23, 1910. Roosevelt, a remarkable man of great accomplishments declared: “There is little use for the being whose tepid soul knows nothing of great and generous emotion, of the high pride, the stern belief, the lofty enthusiasm, of the men who quell the storm and ride the thunder.”

I often think of modern educators as “The Man in the Arena,” although in this case, a better title might be “The Educator and the Classroom.” I love this descriptor of those who quell the storm and ride the thunder. Educators do quell the storm and ride the thunder in educating the public. Too often our critics mistake cynicism for critical thinking, and vice-versa. We must never fear to critically analyze our profession or our performance. Roosevelt would likely remind us “It is not the critic who counts” but those who are actually “in the arena.”

On August 21st, the [2019 Tennessee Educator Survey report](#) was released by [Tennessee Education Research Alliance](#) and the [Tennessee Department of Education](#). Over 45,000 educators responded to the survey, representing 62% of the state's teachers - an all-time high response rate. Lots of positive feedback, as well as some gloom and doom.

The positive feedback includes:

- **Three out of Four** teachers report feeling positive about the way things are run at their school.
- **Three out of Four** teachers agree that teacher evaluation improves their teaching.
- Nearly 90 percent of teachers say they would recommend their school to parents.

Among the negative conclusions:

- **Four in 10 teachers** feel less enthusiastic than when they began in education.
- **One in three Tennessee teachers reports they would choose another profession** in hindsight.
- As well, **one in three also says they would leave teaching altogether** if they could find a higher paying job, according to a report released TODAY on the opinions of teachers statewide.
- Teacher opinions are split on how much **planning time** they have in schools.
- **Teachers are also spending many hours creating instructional materials**, with feedback showing **educators are divided on whether instructional materials are adequate**.
- About **half of all teacher says they need to modify or create instructional materials**.

Policymakers and stakeholders need to take those negative findings very seriously. A third of Tennessee teachers wish they had gone into another profession, and they lack the time and adequate instructional materials to teach the children, which they have been assigned. This does not bode well for Tennessee schools moving forward. Merely increasing teacher salaries does not solve the issue of self-respect, time, or resources.

There is a lot of information for all of us to digest. Education is changing. We need increased educator voices to make Tennessee the best state in the nation for education and in turn, the best place to raise a family. We must proactively address the issues raised by educators, with real and attainable solutions. The philosopher Bertrand Russell often discussed the importance of using our imaginations in constructing our world, which was the inspiration for this point by

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SUMMARY

We must proactively address the issues raised by educators, with real and attainable solutions.

Sharon Ann Lee: “There are people who build things and people who tear things down. Just remember which side you are on.”

Roosevelt added: “Well for these men if they succeed; well also, though not so well, if they fail, given only that they have nobly ventured, and have put forth all their heart and strength.” If you want to see passion just visit a classroom in Tennessee. There you will witness our educators zealous to see our children educated to the highest level possible. So, choose to be one who builds, not a cynic who merely criticizes the work of others. Offer hope, ideas, and support to those in the classrooms. Then criticize, if you must after you made that effort to quell the storm and ride the thunder.

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JC Bowman is the Executive Director of Professional Educators of Tennessee, a non-partisan teacher association headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee. Permission to reprint in whole or in part is hereby granted, provided that the author and the association are properly cited. For more information on this subject or any education issue please contact Professional Educators of Tennessee. To schedule an interview please contact [Audrey Shores, Director of Communications](#), at 1-800-471-4867 ext.102.