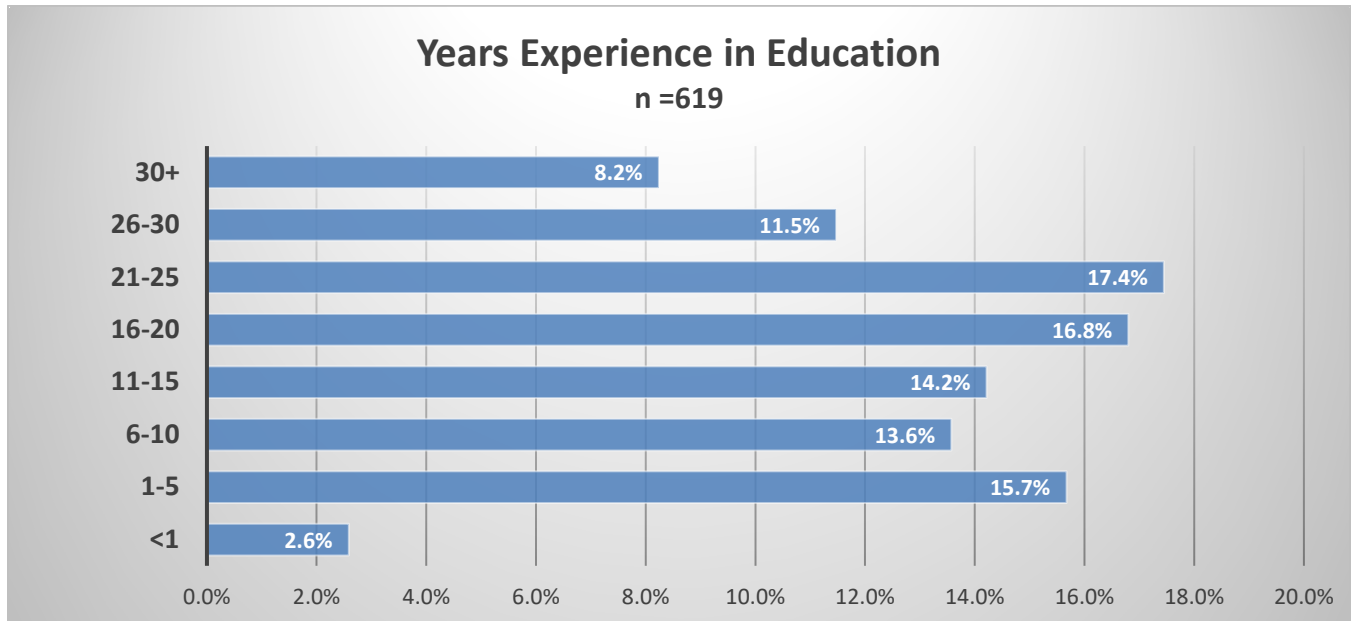


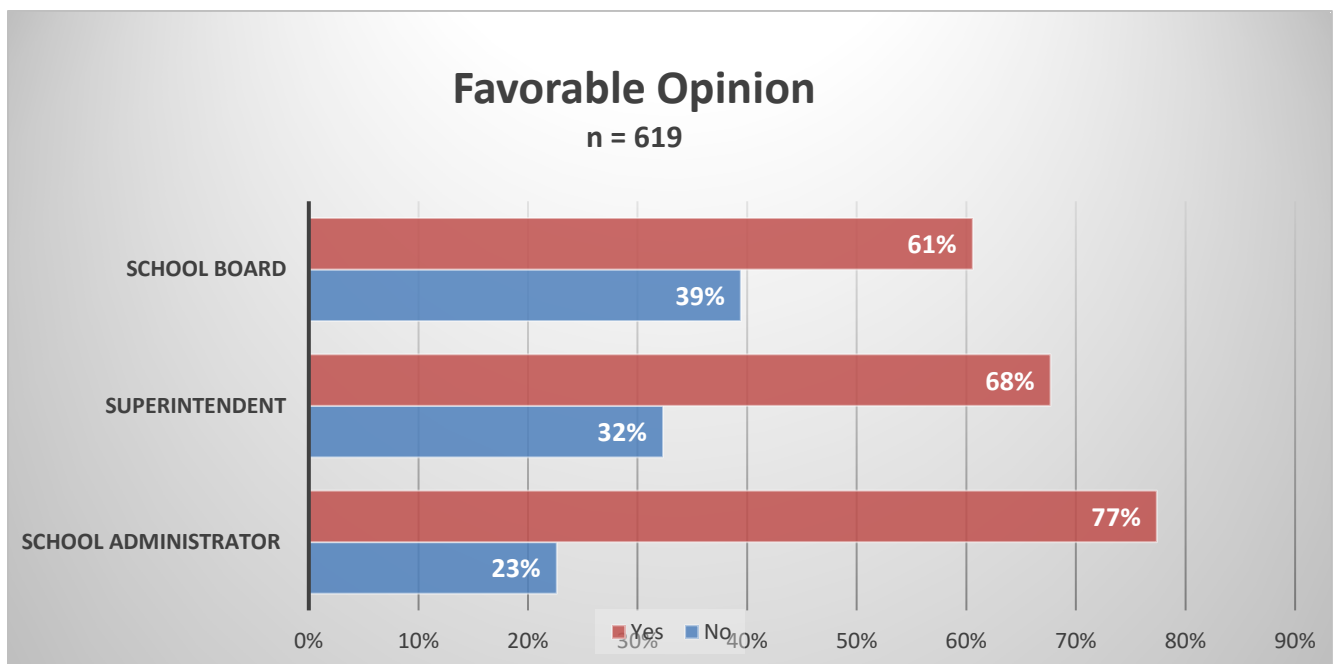
Professional Educators of Tennessee 2021 Fall Educator Survey Results

The policies of national groups rarely reflect the priorities of those in our state.

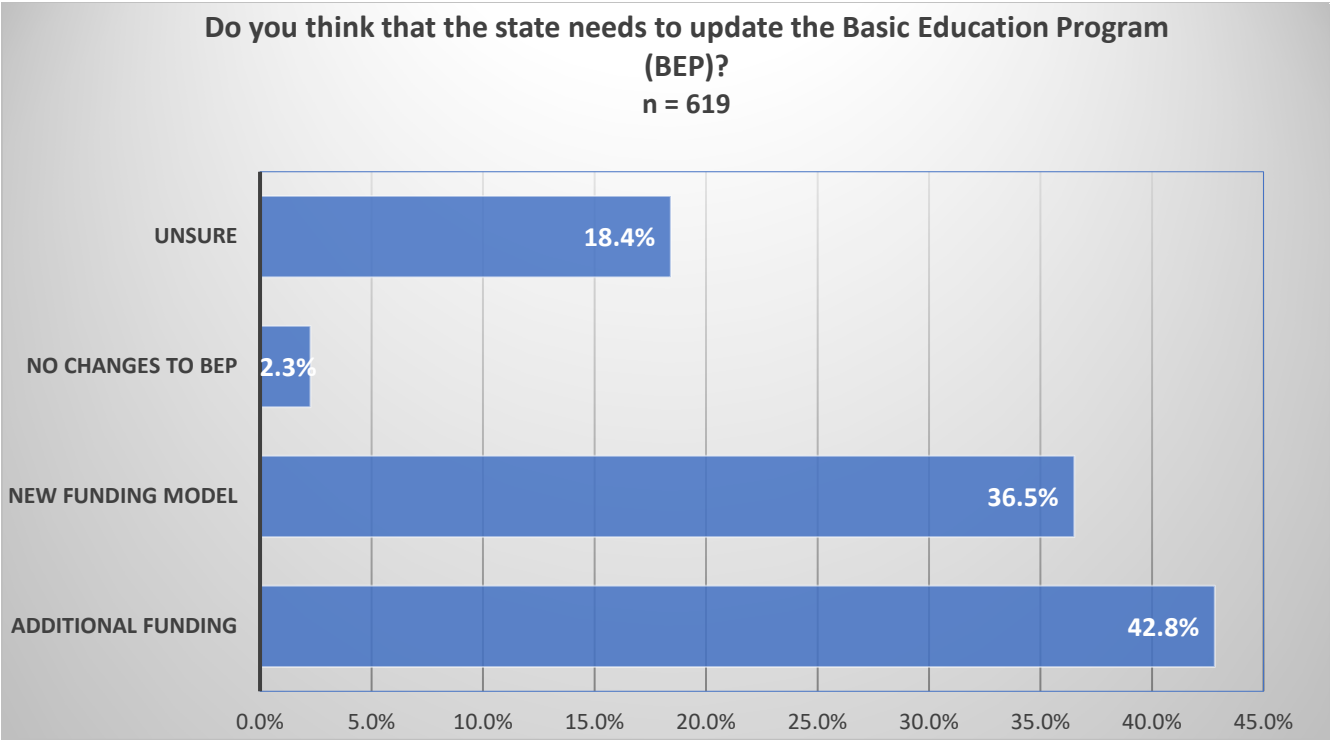
Of those who responded, 72% were classroom teachers while 5.3% were administrators. The rest were comprised of Central Office staff, counselors, teacher assistants, college students, and “other.” There were surveys returned from educators with various levels of experience. It is interesting to note that 68% had 10 or more years of teaching experience. The responses from various grade levels were very evenly distributed as well.



Overall, the educators had a favorable opinion of their school/district leaders with 77% feeling favorable toward their school administrator.



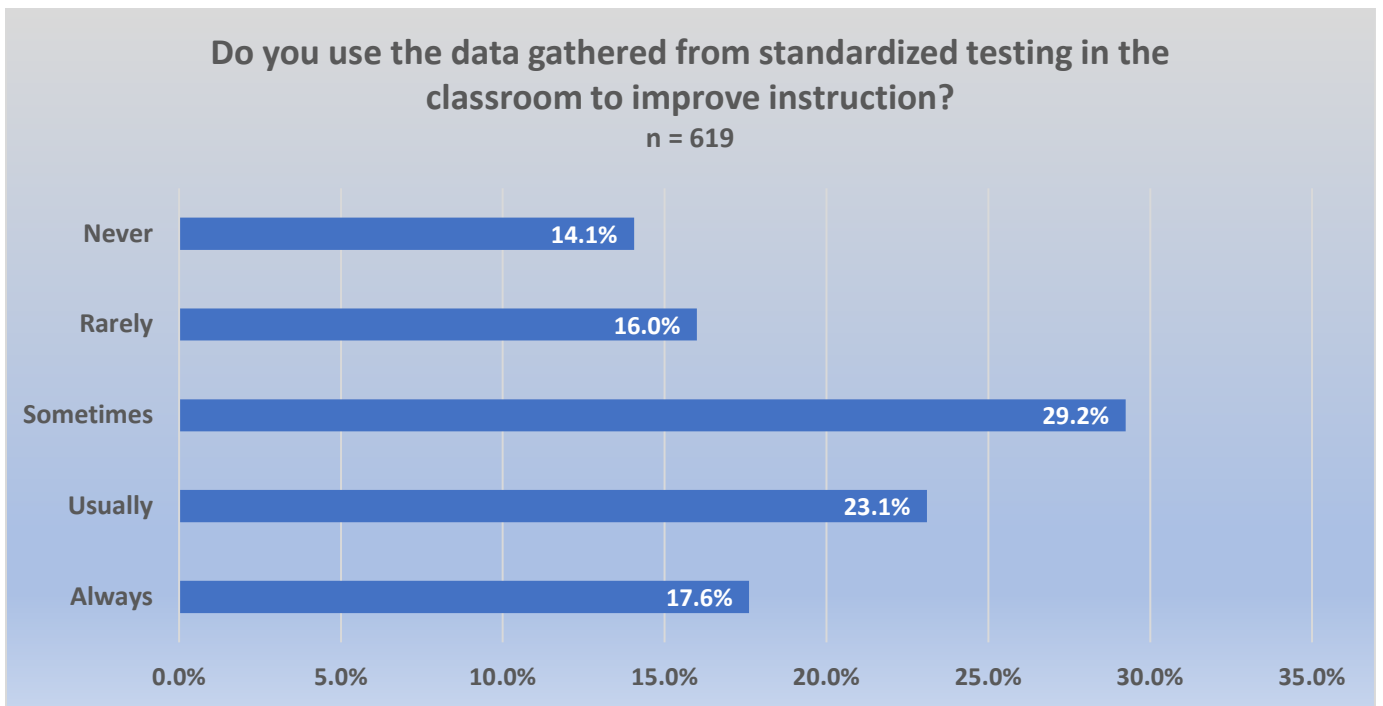
Tennessee, like most states, has struggled on how to fund public education. We wanted to understand what educators thought of the current Basic Education Program (BEP) funding model. While 79% thought funding should be updated, 18% felt they didn't have enough information to make a decision. The choice will likely be between additional funding in the BEP or a new funding model.



We recognize that the current funding formula lacks key modernizations, including examining the real cost of educating students, funding low socio-economic students, adequate facility cost and maintenance, as well as escalating pupil transportation costs. Unsurprisingly, 67% of educators agree that districts should receive additional funding for students with particular characteristics that indicate a greater need, such as being an English-language learner or qualifying for free or reduced-price lunch.

It is no surprise that educators do not support additional mandated state/district testing. A policy strategy we have long supported is to have fewer tests and achieve the desired results of transparency and accountability. Overall, it appears fewer tests are now required, however, 30% indicated that they gave 7+ mandated tests per year. Eighty-three percent test more than six days a year while 17% state they test more than 16 days per year.

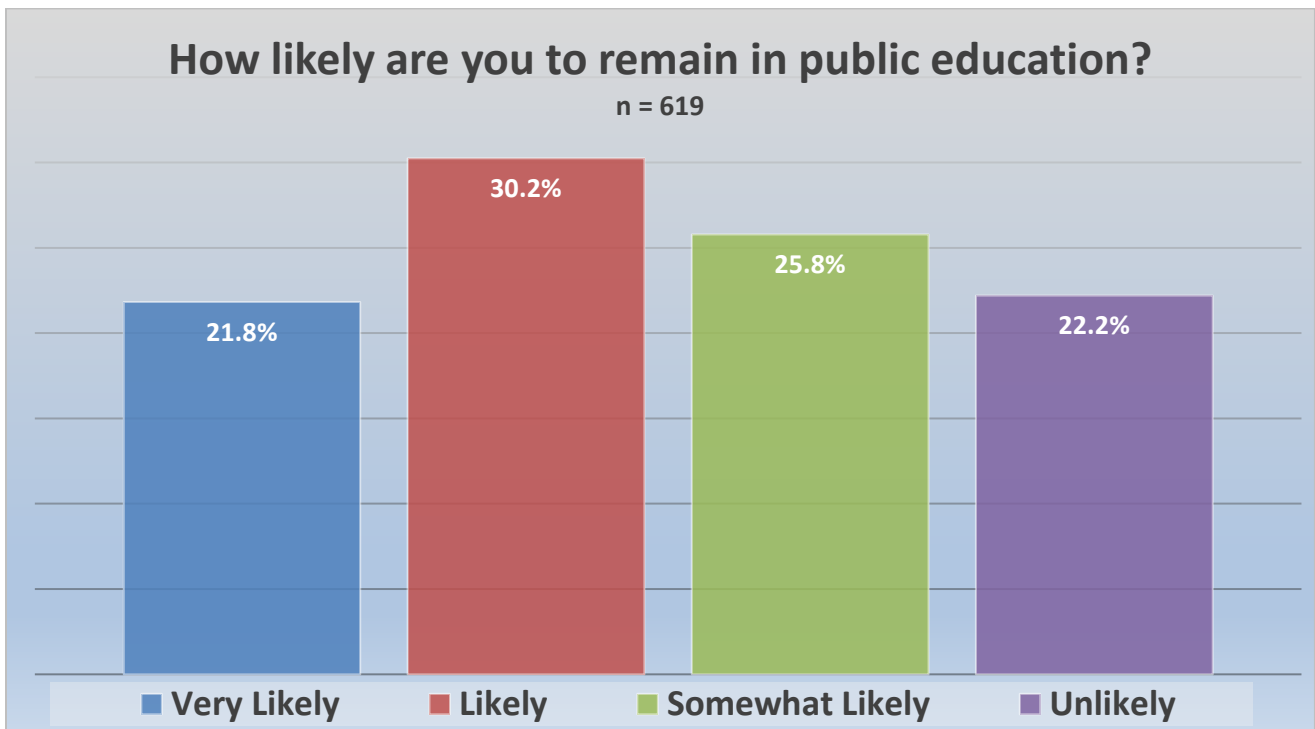
While the majority of teachers indicate that they sometimes or usually use testing data to improve their instruction they still do not feel testing is beneficial to students. Only 5% felt testing was very beneficial to students while 24% felt it was somewhat beneficial. More importantly, the survey showed that only 11% felt that testing provided accurate feedback for students, parents, and educators.



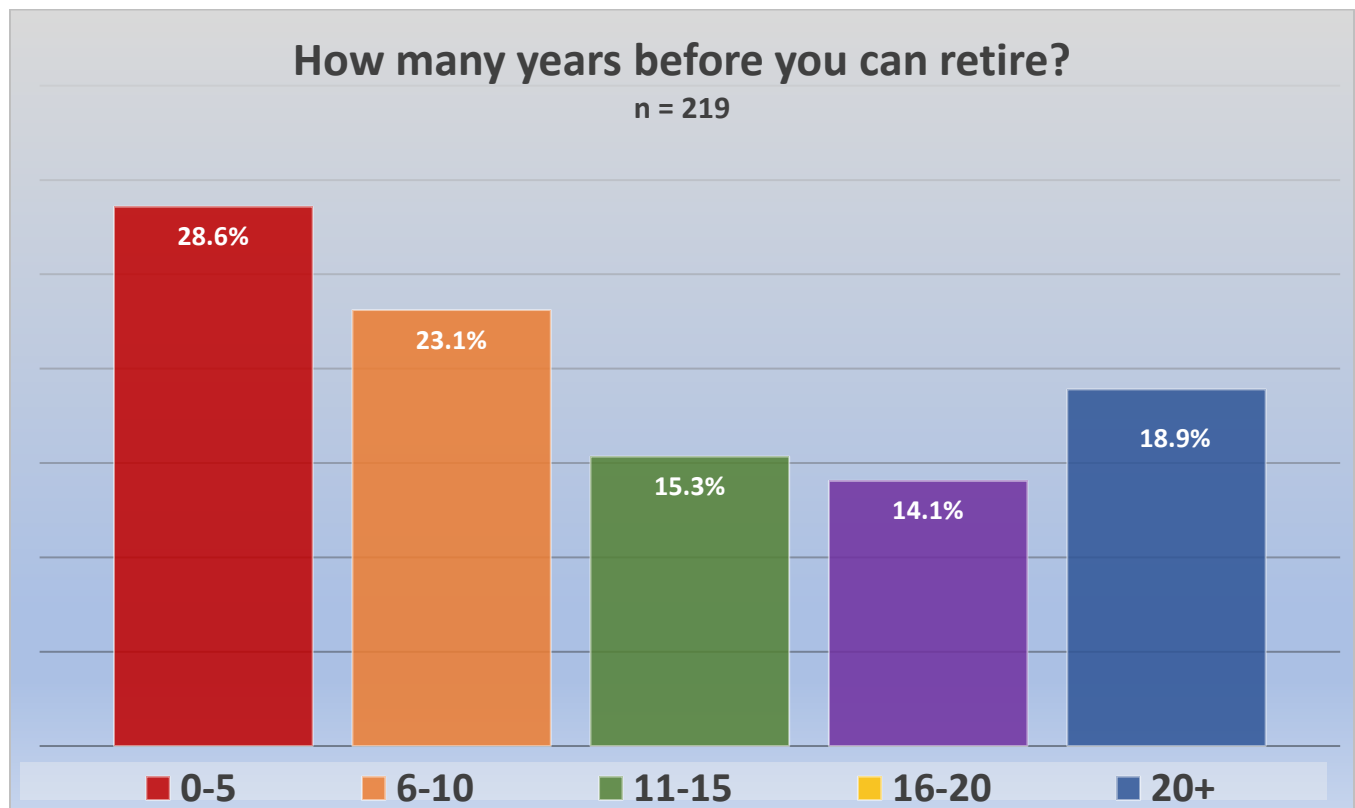
We asked Tennessee educators what they thought of the Tennessee teacher evaluation system. The survey shows that 56% of educators do not feel that our teacher evaluation system provides meaningful feedback, quality instruction, or accurate feedback for educators. Additionally, 68% of educators feel that the current teacher evaluation system needs to be changed.

Two important questions regarding the teacher shortage deal with retention and retirement.

Alarming, 22% of educators stated that they did not plan to remain in education.



When you couple the previous result with nearly 29% being eligible to retire within 5 years, there is cause for concern regarding the teacher shortage in Tennessee. We need multiple pathways for teacher accreditation in our classrooms.

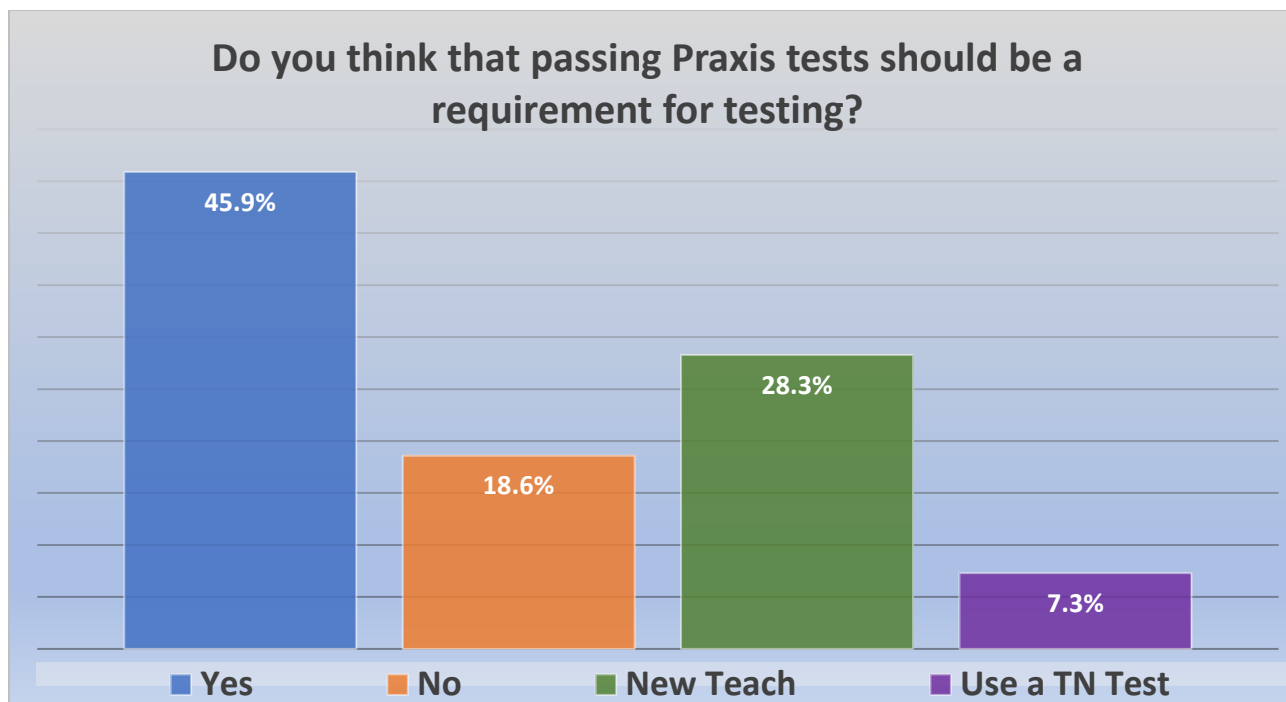


It is no surprise that 80% of educators are for across-the-board increases in salary. Ninety percent are for added pay for additional certifications or credentials. However, 81% also support additional pay for teaching in a subject or location that has a shortage.

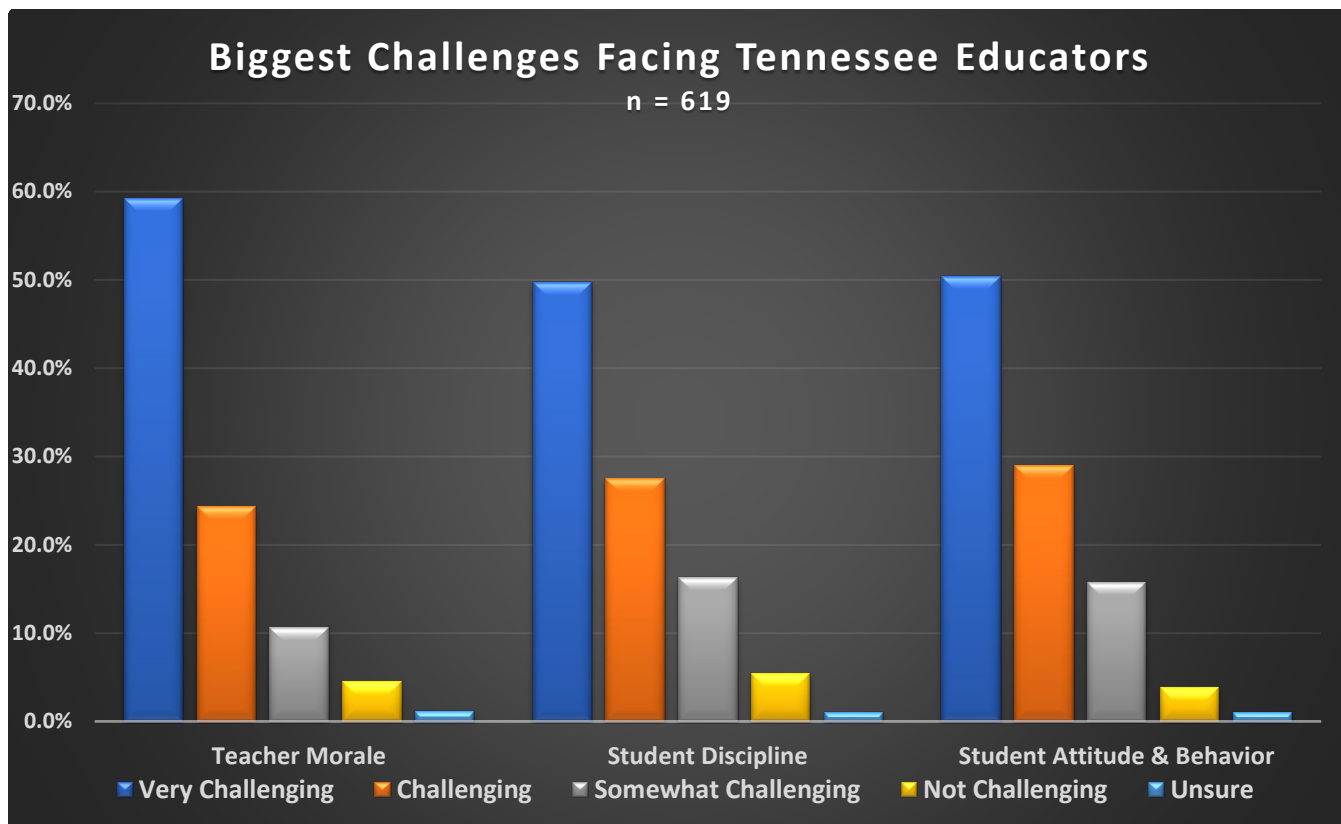
When it comes to incentives, 82% support a relocation incentive while 72% support performance-based rewards. Additionally, 82% of teachers would like tuition tax credits, and 79% support incentives for getting advanced degrees.

One thing we found out in the comments is the reason why so many teachers stay on past their required 25-30 years is because of health insurance. Most are still too young to receive Medicare and are often left without health insurance if they retire too soon.

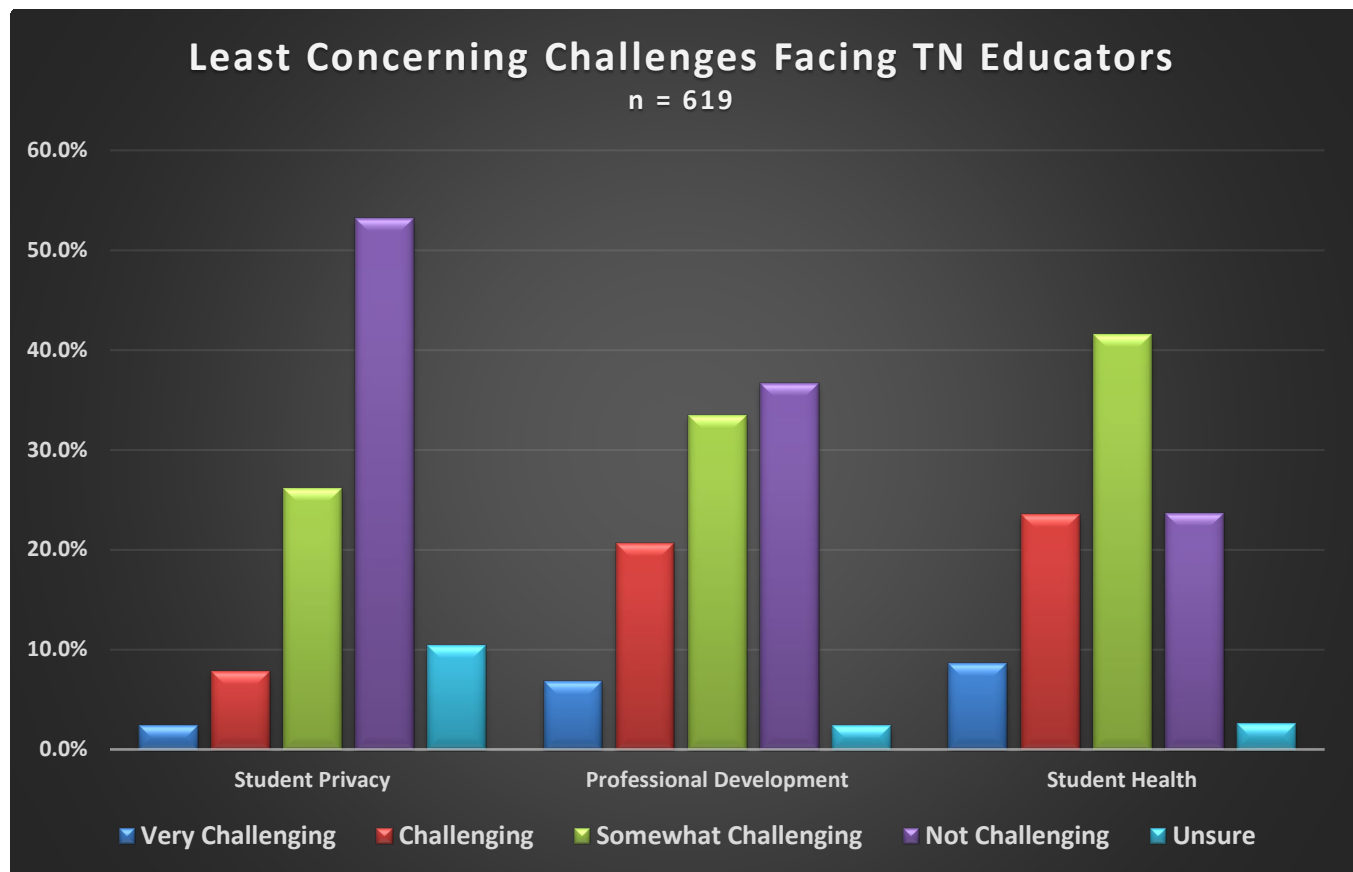
The finding we were most surprised about was the requirement for all teachers to pass the Praxis test. We thought there would be more leniency which would make certification less strenuous, but we were wrong. Only 19% of respondents were completely against taking the Praxis exam.



As a final question, we wanted to find out what were the major challenges or hurdles affecting educators. The number one problem that educators face is low teacher morale. A close 2nd and 3rd are student discipline and student attitude/behavior. This supports findings in other internal surveys where we find inadequate preparation, lack of respect, inadequate support from leadership, challenging working conditions, dissatisfaction with benefits and compensation, better career opportunities, personal reasons, and flawed policy for reasons why teachers are leaving the profession.



Also interesting is what educators found least challenging. Respondents indicated they were not very concerned about student privacy, professional development, or student health.



Falling in between these two ends of the spectrum was moderate concern regarding District Support, Student Support Services, Class Size, COVID Protocols, Facilities, School Safety, Learning Differences, Literacy, Classroom Management, Time Management, Standards, Curriculum, Poverty, Lack of Technology for Students, Lack of Technology for Teachers, Bullying, Parental Engagement, Student Family Environment, School Funding, Getting Sufficient Resources, and Federal Rules & Regulations.

In conclusion, we feel that stakeholders need to take note of three findings from our survey:

- 1) 83% of educators are concerned or very concerned about teacher morale.
- 2) 22% of teachers do not plan to stay in education.
- 3) Nearly 30% of Tennessee educators are eligible to retire in the next five years.

It is critical that current educators are retained and new educators are recruited. With low teacher morale, that is unlikely to happen. Although the majority of educators want to make a difference in the lives of their students, the top-down bureaucracy makes it nearly impossible for educators to maintain any semblance of normalcy while their own mental and physical health suffers. Our teachers are professionals, and it is time we started treating them as such. If we do not make this profession more appealing, teachers will leave, and no one else will want the job either. When teachers feel heard, they feel valued and in a better position to make a positive difference in the lives of their students.