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News Release

"TELL" Survey Results Reveal "Generally Positive" Educator Satisfaction

Three-quarters of Colorado teachers believe their schools are good places to work and learn and four-fifths of teachers say they want to remain in their current positions. Additionally, nine out of 10 educators statewide believe the faculties of their schools are committed to helping every student learn.

These are a few of the findings in a 128-page report based on a first-ever survey that drew responses from 23,000 educators (more than a third of school-based licensed educators) statewide.

The complete report, "TELL Colorado: Creating Supportive School Environments to Enhance Teacher Effectiveness," is available at the following link: <http://tellcolorado.org/>

TELL stands for the Teaching, Empowering, Leading & Learning. The survey findings were presented to the Colorado State Board of Education at its meeting today.

"There is no question that good teaching and learning conditions are essential to improving student achievement and the rate of teacher retention," said Colorado Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones. "This report allows administrators to better understand the perceptions and attitudes about learning environments. A large chorus of voices spoke and we owe it to them to listen carefully."

The survey was authorized by House Bill 08-1384, which called for the Colorado Department of Education to conduct a biennial survey of

teaching and learning conditions. The bill stated that “these conditions must be systematically studied and addressed for Colorado to develop a critical mass of teachers who are well prepared to teach and who will remain in the hardest-to-staff schools long enough to make a significant difference for students and their families.”

The survey was managed and implemented by a partnership led by CDE. The partnership included the office of Gov. Bill Ritter, the Colorado Education Association (CEA), the Colorado Association of School Executives (CASE), the Colorado Association of School Boards (CASB) and the Colorado League of Charter Schools. Survey responses were sent to the New Teacher Center, a non-profit based in Santa Cruz, Calif., where the data was evaluated and where the report was produced.

“This survey is a unique and important opportunity to help shape education policy and practice with the perspective of the very teachers and administrators most involved in making Colorado’s students succeed,” said Beverly Ingle, president of the 40,000 member Colorado Education Association. “CEA understands what an important part teaching and learning conditions play in the success of the school, the teacher and, ultimately, the student. Recent research shows that the design, leadership and culture of schools have a direct influence on student learning and teacher retention. It is essential to create teaching and learning environments in our schools that are supportive of recruiting and retaining the best teachers throughout Colorado. As we all know, a quality teacher in every classroom is the key to student success.”

Added Nora Flood, vice president of school services for the Colorado League of Charter Schools: “We hope that school leaders and teachers will use the results of the survey to begin a dialogue about those teaching conditions that matter most in supporting effective instruction. If we can all agree on those conditions, our students will be the ultimate winners.”

Ken DeLay, executive director of the Colorado Association of School Boards, added: “CASB was pleased to support the TELL survey, and we are eager to further analyze its results. The generally positive climate data from educators is encouraging, but it is clear there are some areas that call for improvement. The TELL survey confirms that CASB’s work with school boards to improve community engagement, support leadership development and advocate for adequate school resources are right on target. We look forward to working with school

boards and others in the education community to find ways to improve the results of future TELL surveys.”

Among many findings:

- Community engagement and student learning conditions “exert significant influence on absolute performance and growth on state assessments.” (Student learning conditions are defined as the student and teacher influences on learning, including the commitment to and preparation and success of students and teacher use of assessments and curriculum to shape instruction.)
- Leadership is the most important condition affecting teachers’ willingness to continue teaching in their current school. Teachers who indicate that they plan to continue teaching in their school are twice as likely to agree they work in trusting and supportive environments.
- Principals are positive about most aspects of the support they receive from districts. Most principals in the state are positive about the resources they have available, their engagement in district-level decision-making and their professional development. Principals who report more positive leadership conditions are better able to provide teaching and leading conditions for their faculty in key areas.
- There are differences in perceptions of teaching and learning conditions across the state based on a variety of factors. Schools serving high poverty populations are less likely to note positive conditions, particularly in the area of community engagement and student learning conditions.
- New teachers are not systematically supported. Almost one-fifth of new teachers report not being assigned a mentor. Of those who were mentored, more than one-quarter never developed lesson plans, were observed by or analyzed student work with their mentor. New teachers reporting sufficient support are significantly more likely to indicate their intent to remain teaching in their current school.

The report also offers six recommendations:

1. Create systemic opportunities for teachers to grow professionally and participate in decisions that impact their schools and classrooms.
 - a. Ensure policies and practices are in place that make clear how decisions will be made and that clearly communicate the results and rationale of such decisions to faculty.
 - b. Consider areas where teachers can be appropriately engaged in decision making and ensure they have the knowledge and skills necessary to make the right choices.
2. Ensure that every teacher is inducted into the profession and receives more frequent support to improve instruction. The State Board of Education should reassess adopted rules and the approval process for district and BOCES (Boards of Cooperative Educational Services) programs. Programs should provide data that demonstrate that all new teachers are provided a mentor who provides regular support to help enhance instructional practices and teacher effectiveness.
3. Help school leadership establish positive teaching and learning conditions in every school. Create clear expectations and/or standards for what school leaders need to know and be able to do in recruiting and retaining teachers as well as creating positive teaching and learning conditions.
4. Support schools in understanding and improving teaching conditions.
 - a. Create standards or guidelines for teaching conditions so that all school faculty members understand the key elements of building a positive school climate.
 - b. Ensure that teaching conditions data be used as part of the school improvement planning process.
 - c. Provide incentives and/or resources for schools that create data-driven plans to improve teaching conditions.
5. Support schools in engaging the broader community in efforts to understand and improve working conditions.
 - a. Ensure that teaching conditions analysis and reform is a community effort.
 - b. Document successful community engagement practices through a thorough examination of working conditions data.

6. Use TELL and other mechanisms to collect educators' views on teaching and learning conditions to inform local and state human capital decisions.
 - a. Regularly assess and monitor progress on critical conditions identified as having a significant impact on expected teacher retention and student learning.
 - b. Establish an oversight committee of policymakers and practitioners to coordinate the survey and the design and implementation of strategies to improve teaching conditions.
 - c. Consider additional data that can help better understand the school context in which educators work in areas identified on the survey such as community engagement, data availability and utilization.

For more information, contact Mark Stevens, 303-866-3898, or Megan McDermott, 303-866-2334, in the CDE Office of Communications. To sign up for the CDE e-mail news service, please visit <http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html>.

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