



EDUCATION WEEK
RESEARCH CENTER

Teachers and Education Reform

Results from a National Survey



About Editorial Projects In Education

Editorial Projects in Education (EPE) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization based in Bethesda, Md. Its primary mission is to help raise the level of awareness and understanding among professionals and the public of important issues in American education. EPE covers local, state, national, and international news and issues from preschool through the 12th grade. Editorial Projects in Education publishes *Education Week*, America's newspaper of record for precollegiate education, the online *Teacher*, *EdWeek Market Brief*, and the TopSchoolJobs employment resource. It also produces periodic special reports on issues ranging from technology to textbooks, as well as books of special interest to educators.

The Education Week Research Center conducts surveys, collects data, and performs analyses that appear in *Education Week* and special reports such as *Quality Counts*, and *Technology Counts*. The center also conducts independent research studies and maintains the Education Counts online data resource.

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Executive Summary

In September of 2017, the Education Week Research Center fielded an online survey to a nationally-representative sample of more than 500 K-12 teachers. The margin of error is plus or minus 4 percent.

The topic of the survey was innovation and reform. Specifically, we were interested in learning more about the reforms that are impacting teachers most in the classroom. We also aimed to learn more about teachers' attitudes toward these reforms.

Almost every teacher who took the survey (86 percent) had experienced some type of changes or reforms in the past two school years.

The top three most common reforms that teachers have experienced are:

- Changes to a teacher-evaluation system (62 percent)
- Changes to the curriculum the educator teaches (58 percent)
- New approaches to professional development (53 percent)

Forty-one percent of the reforms that are impacting teachers' classrooms the most right now were initiated at the district level while 36 percent were handed down by the state. Nineteen percent started at individual schools, and 4 percent are federal. Teachers were split when asked whether the reform that had most affected their classrooms had negatively or positively impacted instruction. One-quarter said the reforms had a negative impact. Just over a third (36 percent) said the impact was equally negative and positive and slightly more (39 percent) said the impact was positive.

Most teachers (59 percent) say they have the support they need to implement the changes or reforms they have experienced over the past two years. Most (54 percent) also report that plans for changes or reforms are discussed with the entire teaching staff of their schools. Sixty-three percent say they can adjust reform implementation plans as needed.

However, teachers feel they have limited influence over reforms: Less than half (47 percent) say they can influence the implementation of reforms in their schools.

Teachers may also be experiencing reform fatigue. Fifty-eight percent say they have experienced too much or way too much reform in the past two years. Eighty-four percent perceive that as soon as they get a handle on a new reform, it changes. Sixty-eight percent are skeptical that "new" education reforms are truly new, agreeing with the statement that "they have (all) been tried before."

That said, most teachers are not resisting reforms by continuing to do what they've always done until they outlast the latest round of changes. Only a minority of teachers (44 percent) say the pace of reform increasingly makes them consider leaving the classroom. On the positive side, most teachers (58 percent) say reforms help them change their practice so their students learn better. A majority (58 percent) also perceive that reform goals are in line with their goals as teachers.

Teachers may need more training to implement ongoing reforms. A majority (56 percent) report that their training and professional development has not adequately prepared them to implement the reforms they have experienced over the past two years.

Introduction

In many ways, teachers are the frontline gatekeepers of education reform. No matter how big, well-funded, or popular a reform might be with lawmakers or the public, the buck ultimately stops with the teacher who has the ultimate responsibility of implementing the changes in the classroom. For this reason, it is critical to understand how teachers view education reforms. Are they embracing the changes? Are they getting the support they need? Is the pace of reform reasonable given the new demands on teachers' time? Too much reform at too quick a clip can lead to reform fatigue. On the other hand, if teachers dig in their heels and resist a reform, it may not occur at all. The goal of this survey report is to delve more deeply into the reforms teachers are experiencing in the current moment, with the goal of gaining a better understanding of how these changes are impacting classrooms throughout the United States.

Methodology

This nationally-representative survey included responses from 542 teachers. The margin of error is plus or minus 4 percent. The survey was administered in the fall of 2017. The survey instrument was developed with input from an expert panel.

Survey Details

Survey Administered: September 2017

Sample: Nationally-representative

Professional Roles of Respondents: K-12 teachers

Total Respondents: 542

Teachers' Perspectives on Education Reform

Reforms Impacting Teachers

Almost every teacher who took the survey (86 percent) had experienced some type of changes or reforms in the past two school years.

Teachers experienced a variety of reforms ranging from straightforward alterations to state testing to more recently-popular changes such as mindfulness, yoga, movement, increased recess time, or physical adaptations such as ball chairs or standing desks.

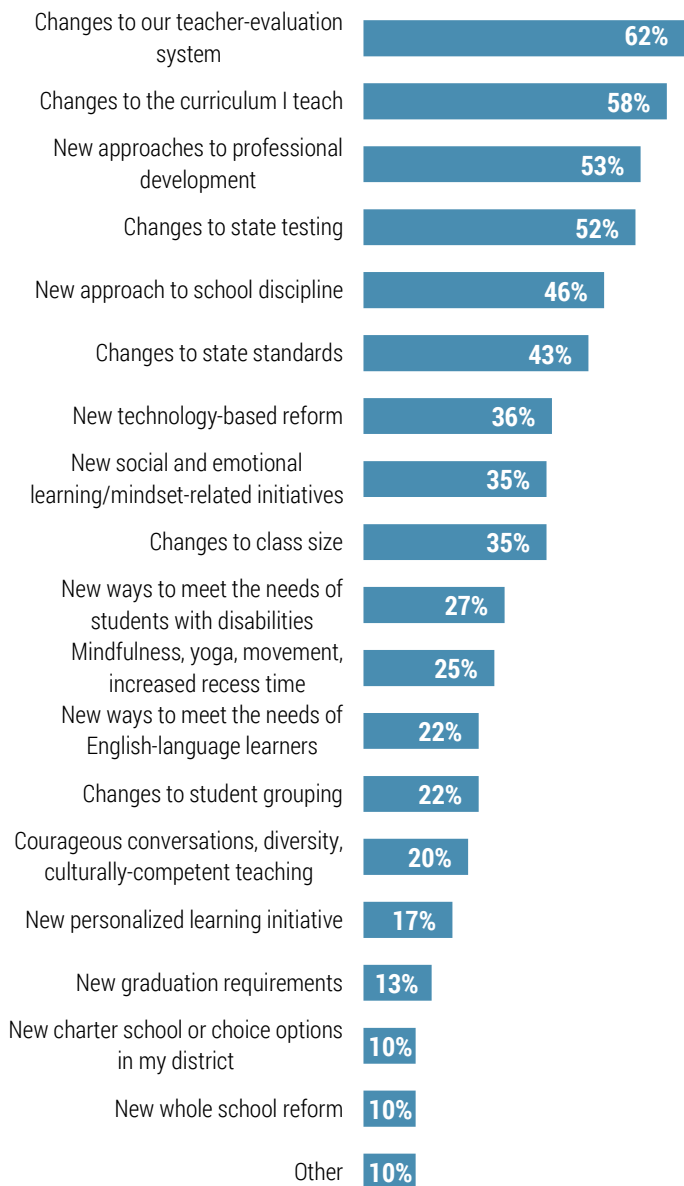
The top three most common reforms that teachers have experienced are:

- Changes to a teacher- evaluation system (62 percent)
- Changes to the curriculum the educator teaches (58 percent)
- New approaches to professional development (53 percent)

The three least commonly-experienced reforms are:

- New whole school reforms (10 percent)
- New charter school or choice options in the district (10 percent)
- New graduation requirements (13 percent)

Which of the following changes or reforms has directly or indirectly impacted you in the past two school years?



Note: Respondents were asked to select all answers that apply. Individual items do not sum to 100 percent.

Reforms in the Classroom

In addition to responding to a multiple-choice question about the reforms they had experienced directly or indirectly, teachers were also asked an open-ended question about the change or reform impacting their classrooms the most in the past two school years. The teachers mentioned 81 different reforms. Curriculum was the reform mentioned most frequently (15 percent), followed by standards (12 percent) and assessments (11 percent). The large number of reforms mentioned points to the depth and breadth of the changes teachers are dealing with right now in their classrooms.

In a few words, tell us which change or reform has impacted your classroom most in the past two school years.

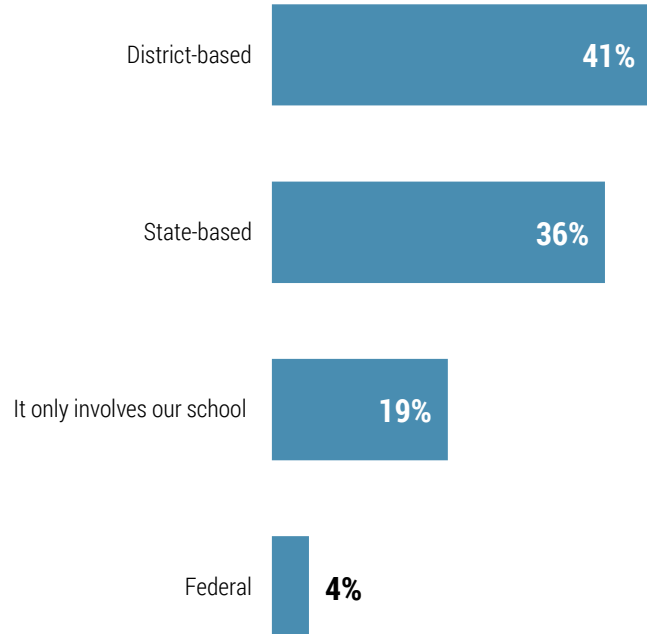
Curriculum	15%
Standards	12%
Assessments	11%
Technology	10%
Teacher-Evaluation System	9%
Class Size	7%
Discipline	5%
Instructional Approach/Pedagogy	3%
Increased Workload	3%
Special Education	3%
Diversity and Inclusion Initiatives	2%
Social and Emotional Learning	2%
Restorative Practice/Justice	2%
Professional Development	2%
Learning Mindsets	2%
Differentiated Instruction	2%
Student Grouping	1%
Data-Driven Initiatives	1%
Lack of Teaching Resources/Support	1%
Lack of Funding/Program Reductions	1%
Administration/Leadership	1%
Instructional Time	1%
Total Volume of Changes and Reforms	1%
Grading Practices	1%

Note: Responses were coded into all applicable answer categories. Individual items do not sum to 100%. Table shows categories with four or more responses.

Sources of Reforms

Most of the reforms impacting teachers the most originate at the district and state levels. Forty-one percent originate at the district level and 36 percent originate at the state level. The remainder are school-specific (19 percent) or federal (4 percent).

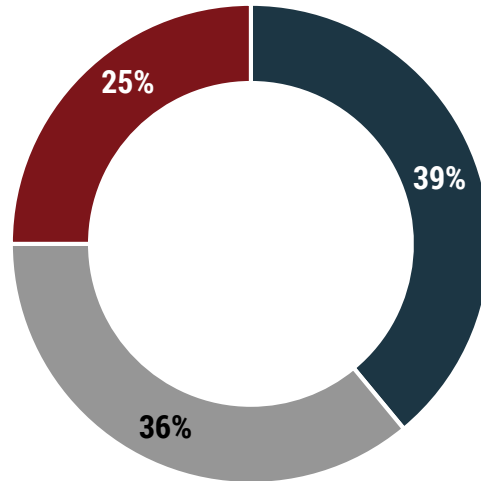
Which of the following best describes the origin of the change or reform that has impacted your classroom the most in the past two school years?



Perceptions of Reforms

Teachers offer neither a ringing endorsement nor a scathing indictment of the reforms that have most impacted their classrooms in the past two years. While a quarter say the reform had a negative impact on instruction, 39 percent say the impact was positive and 36 percent report the reform had mixed results.

Thinking of the reform that has impacted your classroom most in the past two school years, what kind of effect has it had on instruction?

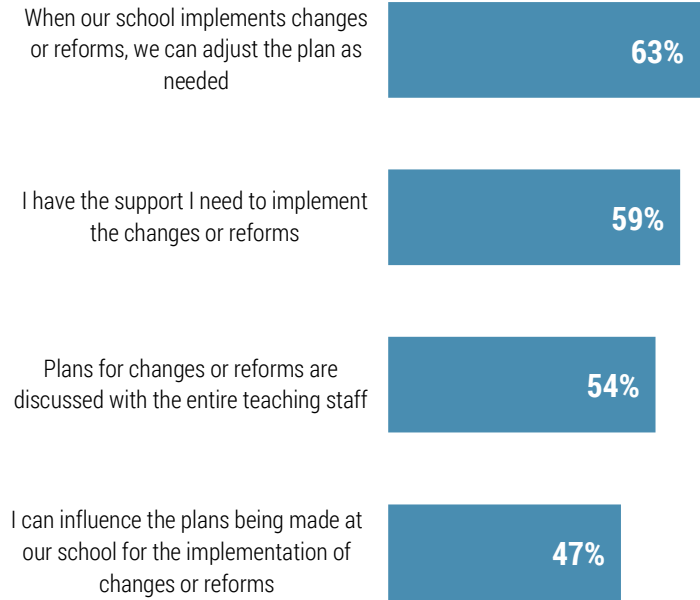


■ Positive ■ Mixed ■ Negative

Input and Influence on Reform

Most teachers (59 percent) say they have the support they need to implement the changes or reforms they have experienced over the past two years. Most (54 percent) also report that plans for changes or reforms are discussed with the entire teaching staff of their schools. Sixty-three percent say they can adjust reform implementation plans as needed. However, teachers feel they have limited influence over reforms: Less than half (47 percent) say they can influence the implementation of reforms in their schools.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about changes or reforms you have experienced in the past two years?

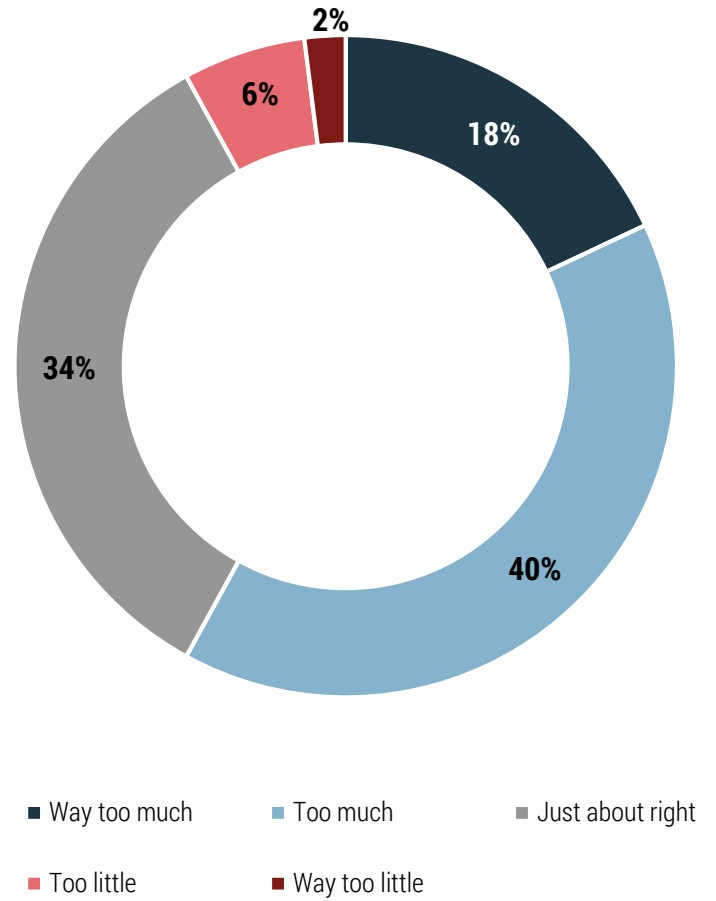


Percent agree

Amount of Reform

Teachers perceive that they are experiencing too much reform. Asked to assess the amount of educational change they have experienced in the past two years, 58 percent say it is “too much” or “way too much.”

How would you describe the amount of educational change or reform you have experienced in the past two years?



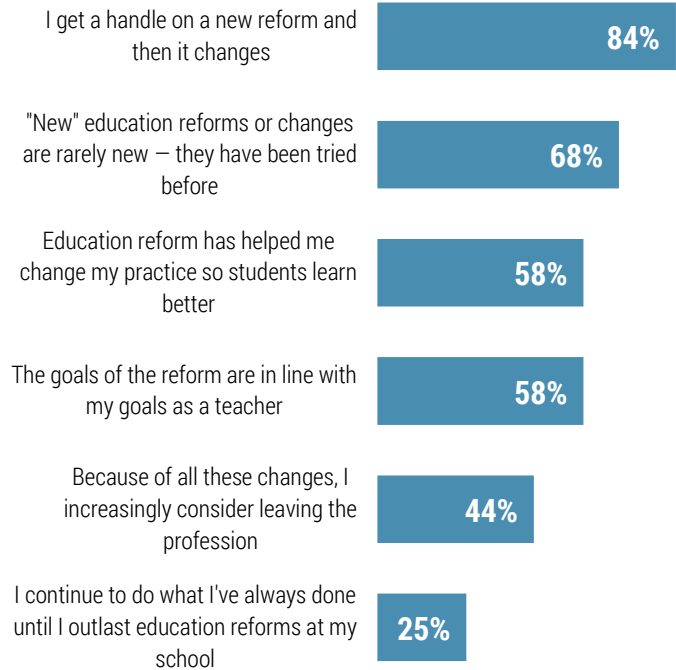
Do Teachers Have Reform Fatigue?

If teachers perceive that they are experiencing too much reform, do they have “reform fatigue?” Yes and no, suggest the results of a question that asked teachers to reflect upon a hypothetical education reform they learn will be rolled out at their schools. A majority of teachers (84 percent) agree that as soon as they get a handle on a new reform, it changes. And most (68 percent) agree that “new” education reforms are rarely new — they have been tried before.

But a majority of teachers (58 percent) also perceive that the goals of the hypothetical reform will be in line with their goals as a teacher. Most (58 percent) perceive that education reform has helped them change their practice so students learn better.

Only a minority (25 percent) would resist, outlasting reforms at their schools by continuing to do what they have always done. And reform fatigue is not driving most teachers out of education. Forty-four percent of teachers say that, because of all the changes, they increasingly consider leaving the profession. Teachers with more experience are more likely to consider leaving the profession as a result of the onslaught of reforms. While 27 percent of teachers with three or fewer years of experience are increasingly considering leaving due to reform, 50 percent of those with over 20 years of experience consider leaving due to reforms.

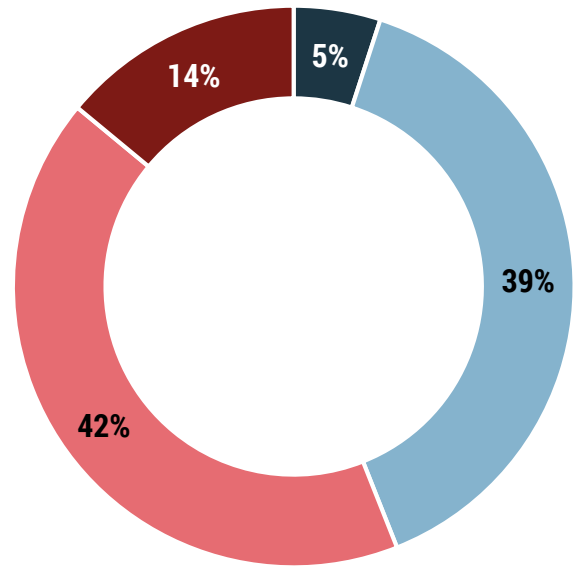
You learn that a (hypothetical) education reform will be rolled out at your school. To what extent would you agree or disagree that the statements below reflect your reaction?



Teachers Want More Training

Most teachers want more training to implement the reforms they have experienced over the past two years. Just 44 percent of teachers say their training has adequately prepared them for the reforms.

To what extent do you agree that the training you have received has adequately prepared you to implement any education reforms you have experienced?



■ Completely agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Completely disagree

Respondent Background

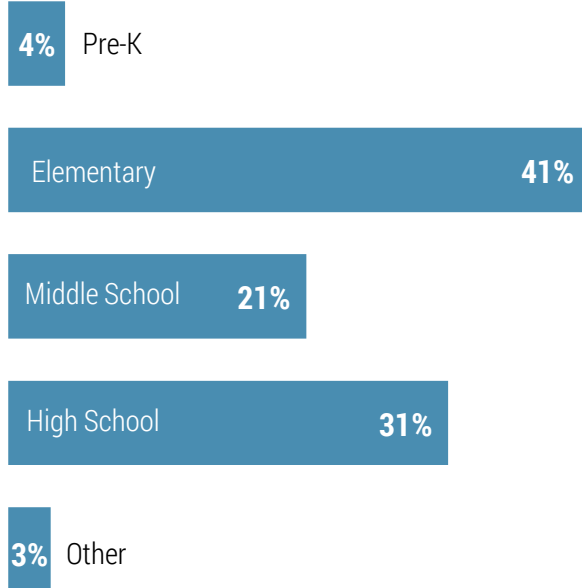
Regional Diversity

Respondents represented a diverse group, hailing from every jurisdiction in the nation except for the District of Columbia and Hawaii.

Grade Level

Just over half of survey respondents (52 percent) work in the secondary grades (six through 12). The remainder work in elementary (41 percent), pre-K (4 percent) or some other grade configuration (3 percent).

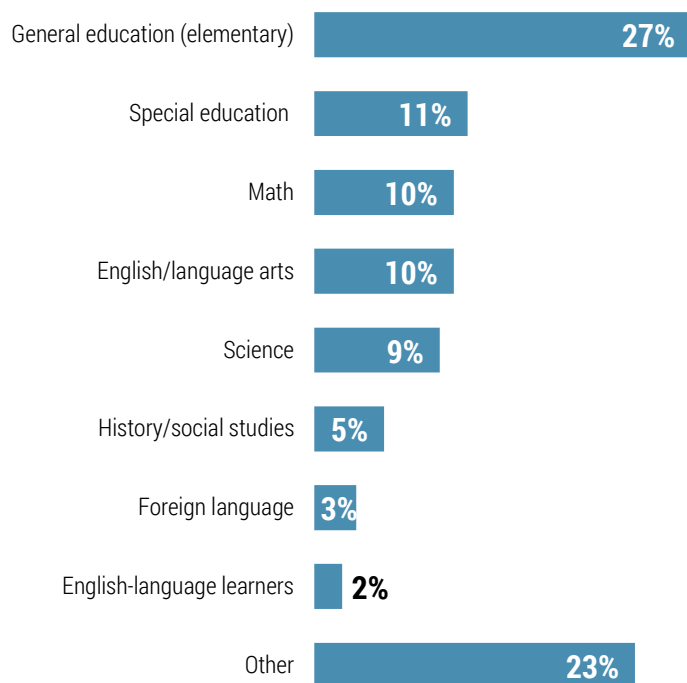
Which of the following best describes the grade level of the students you teach this school year?



Teaching Assignment

General education (elementary) was the most common teaching field for survey respondents.

Which of the following best describes your current primary teaching assignment?



Experience

Most respondents had at least 11 years of experience in K-12.

How long have you worked in K-12 education?

