

# Insights for School Leaders: How to Better Support Teachers

A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR SCHOOL LEADERS AND THEIR TEAMS

EdWeek's State of Teaching project offers valuable insights for school leaders on how they can support teachers professionally. The project is based on a nationally representative survey conducted by the EdWeek Research Center from August-November of 2025 of 5,802 teachers; and on reporting from Education Week's editorial team.

Overall, the Teacher Morale Index—a metric created by our Research Center—finds that educators' morale fell slightly from a score of +18 to +13 over the past year, though the score is still above what it was two years ago. Beyond that topline score, the project provides takeaways for principals, who wield unmatched influence over policy, practice, and hiring in their schools – in supporting educators.

## KEY FINDING 1:

**There's a Link Between Student Discipline and Teacher Morale. And Student Discipline Requires Parental Support.**



“

Parents are a major issue in education today. So many of them believe that their children are faultless and should not be asked to change their behavior in any way.”

High school ELA teacher  
from Indiana

A majority of educators surveyed indicated that changes to policies and administrative practices that help with student behavior would significantly improve their morale. Asked in another question on the survey about specific changes that would help with student discipline, teachers pointed to smaller classes sizes. But they also called for policies that encourage parents to act as productive partners in encouraging positive student behavior.

**64%**

of teachers surveyed said that the behavior of students they teach has **gotten worse over the past year.**

Just **36%** said it's the same or gotten better.

## TOP 10 RESPONSES

What—if anything—would have a MAJOR positive impact on your students' behavior and ability to manage your classroom? Select all that apply.

63%

Smaller class sizes

58

Instruction for parents on teaching children how to behave in ways that are appropriate for school

54

Limiting parents' ability to undermine consequences when their children get in trouble for misbehaving

53

Reducing students' access to screens, phones, devices

50

Tougher consequences for student misbehavior including more/longer office referrals, suspensions, expulsions

47

More support from school leaders on issues related to student discipline

44

Placing (more) students with behavioral challenges in a separate class or school

44

More opportunities for physical activity for students during the school day

39

More student access to mental health professionals

33

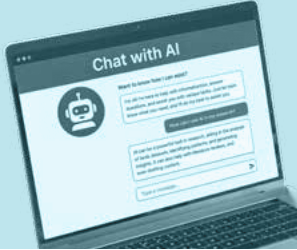
Fairer and more fairly applied discipline rules

DATA SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center nationally representative August-November 2025 survey of 5,802 teachers

Images: Getty

## KEY FINDING 2:

### Teachers Want Professional Development That Will Help Them With AI



Asked what kinds of PD they need now, the highest portion of educators surveyed—23%—said they don't need any. But roughly 1 in 6 said they want professional support focused on helping them with artificial intelligence. It's likely that many teachers are intrigued by the possibility that AI could help them engage and challenge students—not to mention the technology's potential to assist with rote administrative tasks and lesson-planning.

Teachers' experiences with AI in the classroom are mixed. In a summer 2025 survey, **3% of educators** said they used AI tools a lot, **58% of educators** said they used them some, or a little, and **21% educators** said they've never used them and don't plan to start.

## HELP MASTERING TECHNOLOGY, AND MOTIVATING STUDENTS

What PD do you need most right now?



**48%** of teachers surveyed have taken part in any training or professional development on AI provided by their schools or districts, according to a report released this month by the nonprofit Center for Democracy and Technology.

**Related resource:** [How one district rolled out PD for teachers on AI](#)

DATA SOURCE: EdWeek Research Center nationally representative August-November 2025 survey of 5,802 teachers

“

When students are pulled out of my class for special services, the smaller class size makes a remarkable difference. I think smaller class sizes are the key to better public education.”

English/language arts teacher at a Texas elementary school

More than 50 percent of teachers surveyed say that smaller class size would have a major impact on their morale. As many school leaders know, lowering class sizes has long been a popular goal among classroom educators, who believe it would make their classes more manageable and make the process of teaching and learning more effective.

The average class size of teachers who responded to the survey is **25 students**. Asked what their ideal class size is, teachers, on average, said **19 students**.

The EdWeek Research Center found that teachers with smaller class sizes had higher scores on the Teacher Morale Index. For instance, teachers whose current class size is between 11-20 students had a score of +20 (on an overall scale of -100 to +100) and those with class sizes of 21-30 students had a score of just +8.

## KEY FINDING 3:

### Lower Class Size Positively Affects Morale. And There's a Preferred Number

