

MetLife



The MetLife Survey of

THE
AMERICAN
TEACHER

Collaborating for Student Success
Part 3: Teaching as a Career

The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Collaborating for Student Success

The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Collaborating for Student Success (2009) examines the views of teachers, principals and students about respective roles and responsibilities, current practice and priorities for the future. The results are based on a national survey of 1,003 K-12 public school teachers, 500 K-12 public school principals and 1,018 public school students in grades 3-12 conducted in Fall, 2009. In addition, public school principals and teachers, as well as thought leaders in education participated in an online strategy session.

The Survey findings are being released as a series during the first quarter of 2010 with the following parts:

- Part 1: *Effective Teaching and Leadership* examines views about responsibility and accountability; what collaboration looks like in schools, and if and to what degree it is currently practiced.
- Part 2: *Student Achievement* examines views on student goals, teacher expectations, and what educators believe would increase student achievement.
- Part 3: *Teaching as a Career* examines collaboration in the context of teacher professional growth, experience level and career path.

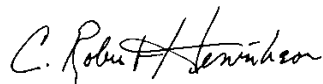
Message from MetLife

The 21st century workplace teaches that an education is never complete. There are always adaptations to be made, new things to learn, and opportunities for innovation. Collaboration plays a tremendous role in today's work environment. Success depends on commitment to a common purpose and working to accomplish more together than can be achieved individually, whether with colleagues down the hall, across the nation or around the globe.

The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Collaborating for Student Success looks at the school as a workplace, among its many functions. It asks if, how and to what extent teachers, principals and students work and learn together to increase their success.

Last year we observed the 25th anniversary of the annual MetLife Survey of the American Teacher series, and are pleased to continue our commitment to sharing the voices of those closest to the classroom. This year, we are releasing Survey results in three shorter reports, exploring new methods for presenting and accessing information, and emphasizing digital communication.

The voices in this Survey can help all of us – educators, parents, community members, employers, policymakers – consider our roles as collaborators in assuring the success of our schools and the students who are our future.



C. Robert Henrikson
Chairman of the Board, President and Chief Executive Officer
MetLife, Inc.

The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Collaborating for Student Success

Part 3: Teaching as a Career

Summary

Part 3 of the *Survey* examines collaboration in the broader context of changes in the teaching profession and the different pathways a career can follow. Career satisfaction levels are high among teachers. While these levels have not significantly increased in recent years, teachers' likelihood to leave the profession has decreased, perhaps reflecting the recent uncertainties within the U.S. economy. Highly satisfied teachers are less likely to leave the profession; furthermore, they are more likely to have experience with and believe in the benefits of collaboration in schools and to have high expectations for their students. New teachers are also particularly collaborative. Teaching careers are beginning in varied ways and taking more varied paths. Many teachers are career changers, have an interest in and experience with combining teaching with other roles in education, and have an interest in continuing to work in the field of education beyond traditional retirement.

Among the major findings are:

- Six in ten teachers (59%) are very satisfied with teaching as a career.
- Nearly two in ten teachers (17%) today say they are very or fairly likely to leave the profession to go into a different occupation within the next five years, compared to 26% in 2006.
- One-third of teachers (35%) report that they had a career outside of education before they became a classroom teacher. Most teachers (77%) and principals (69%) agree that they have career changers as colleagues – those who have had other careers before becoming teachers.
- Having career changers as colleagues is more common among secondary school teachers (89% vs. 73% of elementary school teachers) and teachers in schools with high proportions of low income students (82% vs. 72% of teachers in schools with low proportions of low income students).
- More than half of teachers (56%) and half of principals (49%) say that some teachers in their school combine part-time classroom teaching with other roles in their school or district, and nearly four in ten teachers (37%) say they are interested in such a hybrid role.
- Hybrid teaching roles are particularly appealing to new teachers (46%) and those who are less than very satisfied with their current career (42%).
- Three-quarters of teachers (75%) say they would like to continue to work in education beyond traditional retirement.
- Teachers very satisfied with their careers are more likely than others to work in schools with higher levels of collaborative activities (39% vs. 26%) and to strongly agree that the teachers in a school share responsibility for the achievement of all students (86% vs. 72%).

Background

Two important influences for any examination of teaching as a career today and for the future are the shifting demographics leading to retirement of teachers in the Baby Boom generation and the national emphasis on increasing student achievement and teacher quality. Both policy and practice seek to address the quantity of the teacher supply in ways that increase quality. This continuation of the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher, Part 3: Teaching as a Career* looks at collaboration in the context of major changes that are re-defining the profession.

The retirement of Baby Boom teachers combines with other factors to produce both pressures and a unique scale of opportunity to transform teaching as a career. Baby Boomers represent 53% of the current 3.2 million American teachers.¹ Although their retirement looms, this generation is reconsidering and re-defining what “retirement” will mean.² The generational shift, increasing enrollments and attrition of new teachers raise concerns that the supply of traditionally prepared teachers is not sufficient to meet demands. Alternative ways to enter the profession, including options for career changers to come into teaching from other occupations, can increase supply and address quality with a broader range of academic preparation, work experience, and life experience as resources for the classroom. Existing research on career changers indicates that they are a diverse group with a range of previous work experience who care deeply about the ability to give back to others through teaching, but also choose teaching to increase or maintain their financial security.³ “Induction” programs of mentoring and structured support for new teachers in their first years, irrespective of their preparation and entry path, work to reduce attrition rates of almost 50 percent in the first five years of teaching that are costly in dollars and costly for students.^{4,5}



¹ *Learning Teams: Creating What's Next*. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (2009).

² *MetLife Foundation/Civic Ventures New Face of Work Survey*. Civic Ventures. San Francisco, CA. (2005).

³ *Career Changers in the Classroom: A National Portrait*. The Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. Princeton, NJ. (2010).

⁴ Moir, E., Barlin, D., Gless, J., Myles, J. *New Teacher Mentoring: Hopes and Promise for Improving Teacher Effectiveness*. Harvard Education Press. Cambridge, MA. (2009).

⁵ *No Dream Denied: A Pledge to America's Children*. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. (2003).

The opportunities for collaboration and embedded, continuous professional learning are increasing although still less common in the United States than in other nations where students achieve at high levels.⁶ Visions for the future of teaching in the United States emphasize need for greater flexibility and options in career pathways.^{7,8} Greater flexibility in terms of how ongoing careers are structured, including other roles combined with teaching and greater collaboration, may increase satisfaction, retention and effectiveness. Alternate career pathways for classroom teachers may have additional appeal for teachers and those making hiring decisions at schools facing more challenges, such as secondary schools or those with high proportions of low income or minority students. Principals in such schools are more likely to indicate that teaching shortages will be a serious problem in their school and thus may be more flexible in their approaches to alternate career pathways.^{9,10} However, new teachers – regardless of their pathway – have less seniority and often are assigned to the most challenging schools with the highest teacher turnover rates, compounding the challenges they face. The current *Survey* report examines the prevalence of these different career pathways for a range of school settings, as well as teacher interest in pursuing alternatives.

The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher has been measuring teachers' career satisfaction since the inception of the series in 1984. The quality of interaction among teachers has been identified as a key element in satisfaction.¹¹ The *Survey* has also monitored the number of teachers planning to leave the profession and the factors that drive teachers to leave. The *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Transitions and the Role of Supportive Relationships* (2004-2005) examined what distinguishes new teachers (those with five years or less experience) who are likely to leave the profession from those who say they will remain in teaching. Twelve factors significantly predicted why new teachers would leave, including: not being satisfied with teaching as a career, feeling as if their job is not valued by their supervisor; feeling stress and anxiety related to budget, lack of funding and financial constraints; and feeling stress and anxiety related to unrealistic demands, workload and number of responsibilities. The current *Survey* examines the experiences of both new and more experienced teachers, and extends the understanding of the factors that distinguish those teachers who are likely to leave the profession from those who are not to include such areas as the role of collaboration within schools and views on student achievement.

⁶ Wei, R. C., Darling-Hammond, L., Andree, A., Richardson, N., Orphanos, S. *Professional Learning in the Learning Profession: A Status Report on Teacher Development in the United States and Abroad*. National Staff Development Council. Dallas, TX. (2009).

⁷ Berry, B., et al. *The Teachers of 2030: Creating a Student-Centered Profession for the 21st Century*. Center for Teaching Quality. Hillsborough, NC. (2009).

⁸ Carroll, T. and Foster, E. *Learning Teams: Creating What's Next*. National Commission on Teaching and America's Future. Washington, DC. (2009).

⁹ *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Expectations and Experiences*. (2006).

¹⁰ Berry, B., et al. *The Teachers of 2030: Creating a Student-Centered Profession for the 21st Century*. Center for Teaching Quality. Hillsborough, NC. (2009).

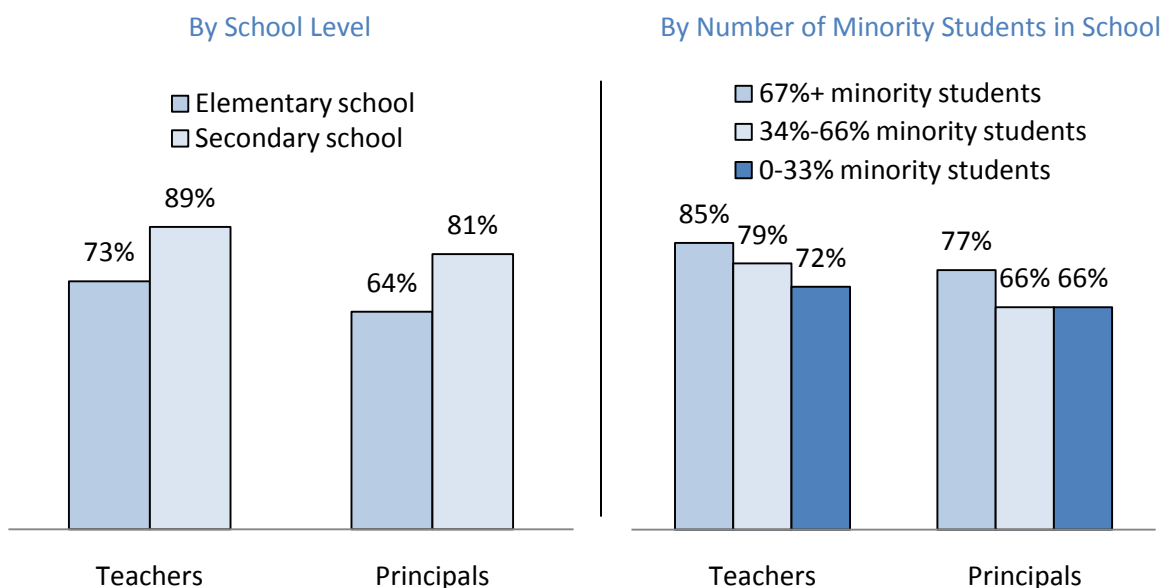
¹¹ *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Expectations and Experiences*. (2006).

Career Pathways in Teaching

The path to becoming a teacher has more than one starting point. Most teachers have colleagues at their school who had other careers before becoming teachers. Three-quarters of teachers (77%) agree that some teachers in their school have entered teaching from other careers, including 34% who strongly agree. Having colleagues for whom teaching is a second (or third) career is more common at the secondary school level than elementary school level (89% vs. 73%). In addition, teachers in schools with high proportions (at least two-thirds) of low income students are more likely than those with one-third or fewer low income students to report that they have career changers as colleagues (82% vs. 72%).¹² The same pattern holds for teachers in schools with high vs. low proportions of minority students (85% vs. 72%).¹³

A majority of principals (69%) also agree that some teachers in their school have entered teaching from other careers. Similar to teachers' reports, having teachers who are "career changers" as colleagues is more common among principals in secondary schools than those in elementary schools (81% vs. 64%) and among principals in schools with high proportions of minority students than those with low proportions of minority students (77% vs. 66%). However, a similar pattern does not emerge among principals of schools with high vs. low proportions of low income students.

Figure 3.1
Agreement That Some Colleagues Have Entered Teaching from Other Careers
 (% agree)



Q906: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Some teachers in my school have entered teaching from other careers?; Base: Teachers (n=1,003); Principals (n=500)

¹² Throughout this report, schools with "high" proportions of low income students refer to those schools with at least two-thirds low income students and "low" proportions of low income students refer to those schools with fewer than one-third low income students.

¹³ Throughout this report, schools with "high" proportions of minority students refer to those schools with at least two-thirds minority students and "low" proportions of minority students refer to those schools with fewer than one-third minority students.

One-third of teachers (35%) report that they had a career outside of education before they became a classroom teacher. More secondary school than elementary school teachers are career changers (45% vs. 31%). Career changers are also more prevalent in schools with high proportions of low income and minority students. Four in ten teachers (38%) in schools with high proportions of low income students had a career outside of education, compared to 29% of teachers in schools with low proportions of low income students. The same pattern holds for teachers in schools with high vs. low proportions of minority students (41% vs. 30%).

Regardless of their specific path to teaching, new teachers are strong proponents of collaboration.

Although teachers across experience levels agree on many of the topics in the *Survey*, new teachers (those with five years of experience or less) emerge as having a particular affinity for collaboration. New teachers strongly agree in greater numbers than do veteran teachers (those with more than 20 years of experience) that their success is linked to that of their colleagues (67% vs. 47%). Conversely, new teachers are less likely than veteran teachers to agree that if they do their job well their students will benefit regardless of how the rest of the school functions (76% vs. 87%). They are more likely than veteran teachers to report that teachers in their school always or often observe each other and provide feedback (32% vs. 21%) and twice as likely to report that they spend more than five hours per week in structured collaboration with other teachers and school leaders (14% vs. 7%). New teachers are also more likely to emphasize the importance of collaborating with other groups to improve student achievement. They are more likely than veteran teachers to say that strengthening ties among schools and parents is very important for improving student achievement (95% vs. 85%).

“New teachers who are mid-career changers bring valuable knowledge and experience.”
- Public education thought leader

New teachers bring different perspectives on other aspects of student achievement as well. By one measure, they have higher expectations for their students; more new teachers than veteran teachers believe that all of their students have the ability to succeed academically (46% vs. 30%). New teachers are more likely to believe that addressing the needs of students who are English Language Learners (ELL) is very important for improving student achievement (82% vs. 70%). However, they are less likely than


veteran teachers to strongly agree that their school does a good job of teaching ELL students (55% vs. 63%). Another area where they are more critical than veteran teachers is in the area of differentiated instruction. New teachers are less likely than veteran teachers to strongly agree that teachers in their school adjust instruction and assessment to meet the needs of diverse learners (63% vs. 74%).



Hybrid approaches to teaching roles are common. More than half of teachers (56%) and half of principals (49%) agree that some teachers in their school combine part-time classroom teaching with other roles or responsibilities in their school or district. Teachers from a range of school types, including school level and proportion of low income or minority students, report similar experiences with this hybrid approach. However, secondary school principals are more likely than elementary school principals to say that there are teachers in their school who have hybrid teaching positions (60% vs. 43%).

The hybrid role is appealing to many teachers for themselves. Nearly four in ten teachers (37%) agree they would like to teach in the classroom part-time combined with other roles or responsibilities in their school or district, including 46% of new teachers (five years or less experience). This option is also particularly appealing to those teachers who are less than very satisfied with teaching as a career (42%), compared to 33% of teachers who are very satisfied with teaching as a career.

Most teachers see their commitment to education extending beyond traditional retirement. Three-quarters of teachers (75%) agree that they would like to continue to work in education beyond traditional retirement as, for example, a teacher mentor, administrator, tutor, etc. Teachers in schools with higher levels of collaborative activities¹⁴ are more likely than those in schools with lower collaboration to be interested in continuing to work in education beyond traditional retirement (81% vs. 72%). Teachers who are very satisfied with teaching as a profession are also more likely than others to be interested in working in education after retirement (82% vs. 66%).

 From the Experts:

Benefits and challenges of hybrid teaching roles:

“Provides a career trajectory for folks that enables them to keep one foot in the classroom while also stretching themselves or sharing their expertise as a professional.”

“Is complicated, requires buy-in from all, and has potential to turn into multiple jobs that would lead to burnout.”

“Gives teachers more flexibility; greater opportunity to exercise or explore leadership roles or other roles outside the classroom without having to leave the classroom.”

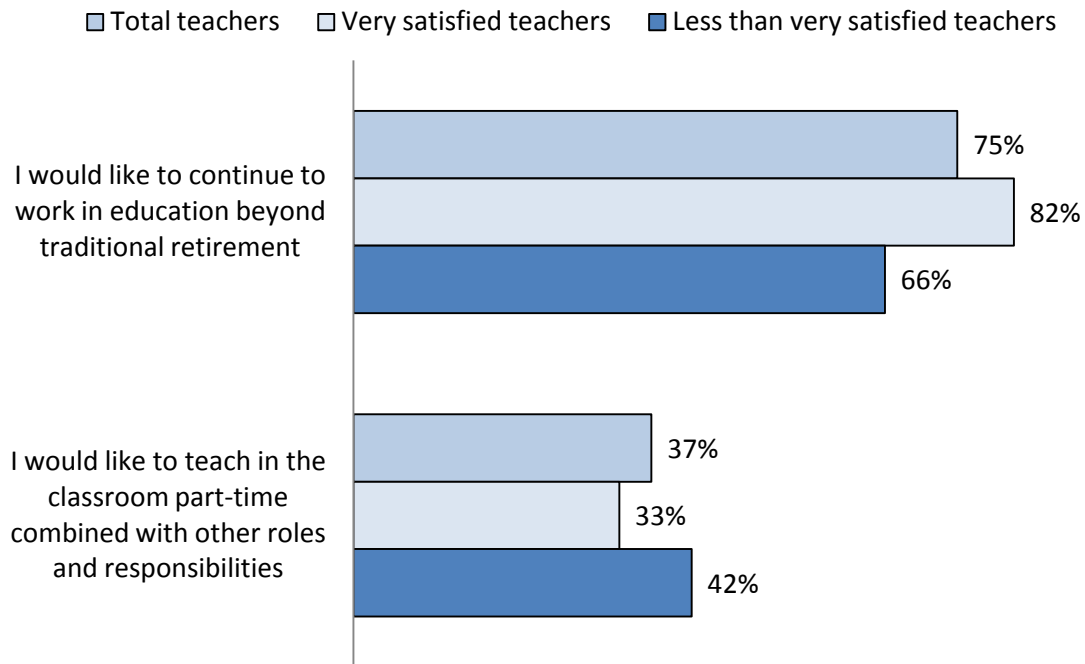
“Allows schools to take maximum advantage of teacher expertise without weakening the classroom presence of quality teachers.”

⇒ A Closer Look:

Throughout the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher* series, the reports have noted the important ways in which the experiences of teachers, principals and students vary significantly depending on the school setting, including such factors as school level (elementary, secondary), school location (urban, suburban, rural), and school population (proportion of low income students and/or minority students). This year, the *Survey* findings highlight how teachers in different school settings differ in their career pathways. They also differ considerably in how they work collaboratively with colleagues and their perspectives on student achievement. For insights into these areas, see the first two parts of the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Collaborating for Student Success* report: *Part 1: Effective Teaching and Leadership* and *Part 2: Student Achievement*.

¹⁴ see Part 1 of this report, *Effective Teaching and Leadership*, for more details on the definition and profile of schools with higher levels of collaboration.

Figure 3.2
Interest in Hybrid Teaching Roles
 (% agree)



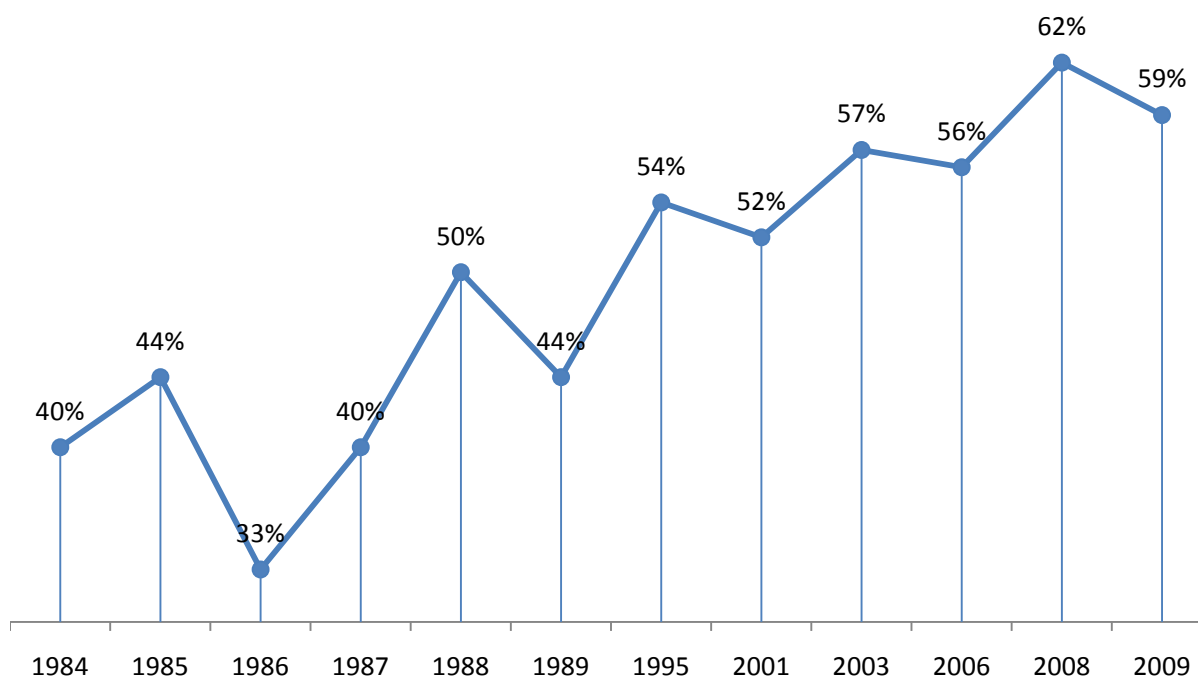
Q906: How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements: I would like to continue to work in education beyond traditional retirement as, for example, a teacher mentor, administrator, tutor etc./I would like to teach in the classroom part-time combined with other roles and responsibilities in my school or district?; Base: Teachers (n=1,003)

Satisfaction with Teaching as a Career

Teacher satisfaction may have reached a plateau. Six in ten teachers (59%) are very satisfied with teaching as a career, a level that is not significantly different from the 62% of very satisfied teachers in the previous report in the series, *The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Past, Present and Future (2008)*. During the 26-year history of the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher*, teacher career satisfaction has increased significantly from the 40% who were very satisfied with teaching as a career in 1984. Future surveys in the *MetLife Survey* series will help clarify whether this year's level of satisfaction represents a plateau in career satisfaction, or the beginning of an actual decline toward levels seen a decade ago (52% very satisfied in 2001).



Figure 3.3
Satisfaction with Teaching as a Career through the Years
 (% very satisfied)



Q910: How satisfied would you say you are with teaching as a career?; Base: Teachers (n=1,003)

Similar to previous *MetLife Surveys*, teachers in urban schools (50%) are less likely to be very satisfied with teaching as a career, compared to those in suburban (63%) or rural (62%) schools. In addition, teachers in schools with more than two-thirds minority students are less likely to be very satisfied with teaching as a career, compared to those in schools with one-third or fewer minority students (52% vs. 63%). The most experienced teachers (more than 20 years of experience) are the most likely to be very satisfied with teaching as a career (65%, compared to 55% of teachers with 6-20 years of experience and 58% of teachers with 5 years or less experience). As noted in Part 1 of this report, *Effective Teaching and Leadership*, teachers in schools with higher levels of collaborative activities are more likely than others to have high levels of career satisfaction (68% vs. 54% very satisfied). However, unlike in previous years, teacher career satisfaction does not differ significantly by school level (elementary vs. secondary) or proportion of low income students.

Highly satisfied teachers have a stronger belief in the success of their students, are more confident in their own ability to help their students succeed and have more support for and experience with collaboration in schools. Teachers who are very satisfied with teaching as a career are more likely than others to **have high expectations for their students**. They are more likely to report that all or most of their students have the ability to succeed academically (91% vs. 83%), are motivated to succeed academically (71% vs. 54%) and have a sense of responsibility for their own education (48% vs. 33%). They think that a higher percentage of their students will attend a two- or four-year college (53% vs. 45%) and they are less likely to agree that students in their school only do enough work to do as well as they need to get by in school (45% vs. 60%). Teachers who are very satisfied with teaching as a career also **have a greater sense of self-efficacy**. They are more likely than others to be very confident that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to enable all of their students to succeed (91% vs. 74%)

and they are more likely than others to strongly agree that if they do their job well, their students will benefit regardless of how the rest of the school functions (48% vs. 34%). Finally, highly satisfied teachers are **stronger proponents of shared responsibility and collaboration in schools**. Teachers who are very satisfied with teaching as a career are more likely to strongly agree that the teachers in a school share responsibility for the achievement of all students (86% vs. 72%), that other teachers contribute to their success in the classroom (56% vs. 44%), and that the teachers, principals and other school professionals at their school trust each other (59% vs. 40%). They are also more likely to report that a range of collaborative activities always occur at their school (see Figure 3.4 below).

Figure 3.4
Profile of Very Satisfied vs. Less Than Very Satisfied Teachers

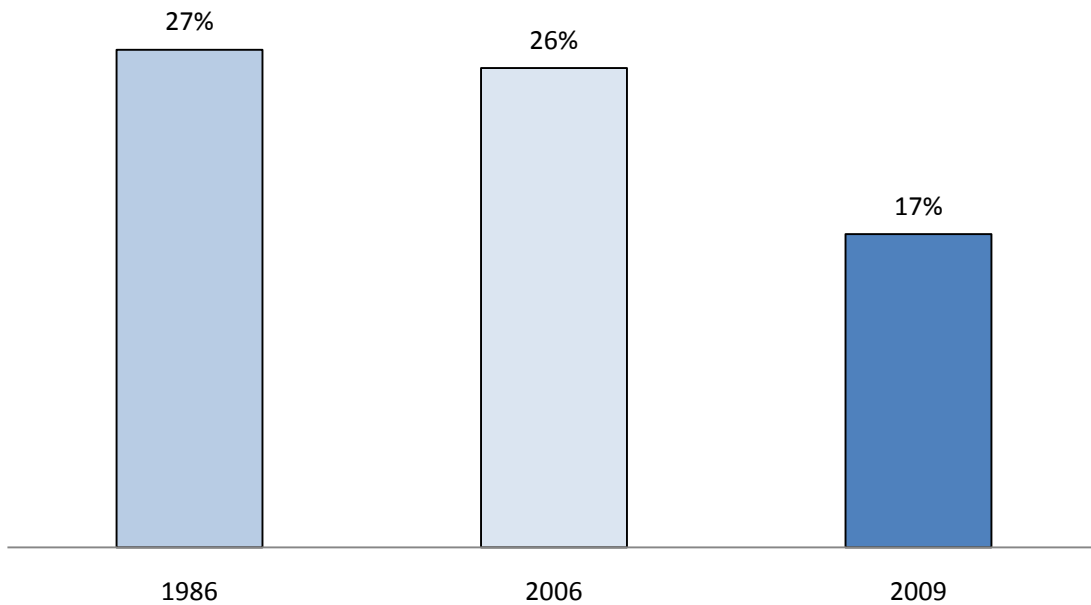
	All Teachers		
	Total n=1003	Very Satisfied n=599	Less Than Very Satisfied n=397
Setting high expectations for all students (% major impact on student achievement)	86%	88%	82%
Expectations for my students (% all/most)			
Have the ability to succeed academically	88%	91%	83%
Are motivated to succeed academically	64%	71%	54%
Have a sense of responsibility for their own education	42%	48%	33%
Percentage of my students who will attend a two- or four-year college	50%	53%	45%
Students in my school only do enough work to do as well as they need to get by in school (% agree)	51%	45%	60%
I have the knowledge and skills necessary to enable all of my students to succeed (% very confident)	84%	91%	74%
If I do my job well, my students will benefit regardless of how the rest of the school functions (% strongly agree)	43%	48%	34%
Frequency of collaborative activities (% always)			
Teachers meet in teams to learn what is necessary to help their students achieve at higher levels	41%	47%	33%
School leaders share responsibility with teachers to achieve school goals	36%	41%	29%
Beginning teachers have opportunities to work with more experienced teachers	45%	51%	37%
Teachers examine and discuss student work with each other regularly	32%	37%	25%
My school structures time for teachers to work together	34%	40%	26%
My principal's decisions on school improvement strategies are influenced by faculty input	28%	32%	21%
Shared responsibility and collaboration in schools (% strongly agree)			
The teachers in a school share responsibility for the achievement of all students	80%	86%	72%
Other teachers contribute to my success in the classroom	51%	56%	44%
The teachers, principals and other school professionals at my school trust each other	51%	59%	40%

Despite similar levels of career satisfaction, fewer teachers than in 2006 say they are likely to leave the profession – most probably due to the current challenging economic environment. Nearly two in ten teachers (17%) say they are very or fairly likely to leave the teaching profession to go into some different occupation within the next five years, compared to 26% who indicated they were likely to leave in 2006. Teachers who are very satisfied with their careers are less than half as likely to say they are very or fairly likely to leave the teaching profession (10% vs. 26%). Likelihood to leave the profession does not differ by school characteristics such as school level or proportion of low income or minority students.

 From the Survey Archives:

1995. “Although teaching is still a challenging though sometimes frustrating occupation, teachers may choose to remain in jobs that they perceive to be more secure than many private sector occupations. And as life in the private sector has come to be perceived as more uncertain and stressful, the teaching profession may appear more attractive in comparison.”

Figure 3.5
Likelihood to Leave the Teaching Profession
(% likely)



Q920: Within the next five years, how likely is it that you will leave the teaching profession to go into some different occupation?; Base: Teachers (n=1,003)

Listening to the Voice of the Teacher

A majority of teachers do not believe that teachers' voices are being heard. Seven in ten teachers (69%) disagree with the statement that “thinking about the current debate on education, teachers’ voices in general have been adequately heard.” This level is consistent across a range of school characteristics. However, teachers in schools with lower levels of collaboration (72% vs. 63%), as well as those who are less than very satisfied with their careers (77% vs. 63%) are more likely than others to believe that teachers’ voices are not being heard. Interestingly, the number of teachers who feel that teachers’ voices are not being heard is similar to the number who felt this way in 1984 (72%), when only 40% of teachers were very satisfied with teaching as a career.

From the Experts:

The public education thought leaders, principals and teachers convened in a strategy session, as part of the *Survey* development process, discussed what is meant by “voice of the teacher” and what the benefits are of listening to those voices.

Defining “Voice of the Teacher”

- *“Teachers having more than token ‘input’ on critical decisions in education.”*
- *“The teacher's voice is represented in policy debates and in whole school decision-making.”*
- *“Teachers playing an active role in shaping and leading the learning culture in their school.”*
- *“Understanding that the teacher is the most important factor in students learning and that they should have active ongoing input into educational policy and practice.”*

Proposed Benefits of Listening to the “Voice of the Teacher”

- Increased teamwork and collaboration among teachers
- Puts students first, creating more direct benefits to the students
- Teachers feeling that they can really make a difference/Higher level of teacher buy-in
- Policy will be in sync with best practices
- A connection to what’s really happening at the classroom level
- More implementable ideas
- A higher level of student achievement
- An improvement in the culture of teaching and learning

Conclusion

Teaching is a career in significant transition. Potential teachers have multiple points of entry to the profession. The many teachers who are interested in continuing in education beyond traditional retirement present a large and growing resource, and more flexibility is being introduced to the classroom teacher role. Current experiences and potential interest in these areas differ by school characteristics, pointing to opportunities as well as challenges for the most at-risk schools. Particularly for a changing profession, collaboration can help teachers and schools balance strengths and weaknesses and share different qualities of experience both inside and beyond the classroom to address more effectively varied student needs.

About the 2009 Survey and The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher Series

The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Collaborating for Student Success (2009) was conducted by Harris Interactive among a national sample of 1,003 public school teachers of grades K through 12 and 500 principals in schools with grades K through 12 by telephone, and 1,018 public school students in grades 3 through 12 online between October 14 and November 13, 2009. The data were weighted to key demographic variables to align with the national population of the respective groups. No estimates of theoretical sampling error can be calculated. In addition, an online strategy session was conducted on September 15, 2009 among a group of 25 public school teacher leaders, principals, and public education thought leaders to inform the development of the survey.

MetLife has sponsored the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher* series since 1984 to give voice to those closest to the classroom. The reports for the entire series are now available online at www.metlife.com/teachersurvey with links to the ERIC (Education Resources Information Center) website: <http://eric.ed.gov>.

About MetLife

MetLife is a leading provider of insurance and financial services with operations throughout the United States and the Latin America, Europe and Asia Pacific regions. MetLife Foundation places strong emphasis on education and draws on the findings of the Survey to inform its grantmaking. For more information about MetLife, please visit the company's web site at www.metlife.com. Additional information about the Foundation is available at www.metlife.org.

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