

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MetLife



The MetLife Survey of
THE
**AMERICAN
TEACHER**

Teachers, Parents and the Economy

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Teachers, Parents and the Economy

Executive Summary

Full report is available online at www.metlife.com/teachersurvey

A Survey of Teachers, Parents and Students

Conducted for:
MetLife, Inc.

Survey Field Dates:
Teachers: October 14 – November 10, 2011
Parents: October 18 – October 31, 2011
Students: October 19 – October 27, 2011

In-depth Telephone Interview Dates:
Thought Leaders in Education: August 18 – August 31, 2011

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Report Date:
March, 2012

The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Teachers, Parents and the Economy

About the Survey

The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Teachers, Parents and the Economy was conducted by Harris Interactive and is the twenty-eighth in a series sponsored annually by MetLife since 1984 to give voice to those closest to the classroom. This MetLife survey examines the views of teachers, parents and students about the teaching profession, parent and community engagement, and effects of the current economy on families and schools.

Harris Interactive conducted the survey among 1,001 U.S. public school teachers of grades K through 12 by telephone, and online among 1,086 U.S. parents/guardians of public school students in grades K through 12 and 947 U.S. public school students in grades 3 through 12 between October 14 and November 10, 2011. 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.

A full methodology is included in the report, available online at www.metlife.com/teachersurvey.

About MetLife

MetLife is a leading global provider of insurance, annuities and employee benefit programs, serving 90 million customers in over 50 countries. Through its subsidiaries and affiliates, MetLife holds leading market positions in the United States, Japan, Latin America, Asia Pacific, Europe and the Middle East. MetLife Foundation places strong emphasis on preparing young people and draws on the findings of the annual MetLife Survey of the American Teacher 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.

About Harris Interactive

Harris Interactive is one of the world's leading custom market research firms, leveraging research, technology and business acumen to transform relevant insight into actionable foresight. Known widely for the Harris Poll and for pioneering innovative research methodologies, Harris offers expertise in a wide range of industries and serves clients in over 215 countries and territories. For more information, please visit www.harrisinteractive.com.

Executive Summary

The *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Teachers, Parents and the Economy* (2011) examines the teaching profession and parent-school engagement at a time when there has been a prolonged economic downturn. The survey explores how teachers, parents and schools are working together to promote student learning and healthy development in the context of reduced budgets, reallocation of resources, and continued attention to improving teaching and learning. These issues are examined from the perspectives of teachers, parents and students.

Teachers are less satisfied with their careers; in the past two years there has been a significant decline in teachers' satisfaction with their profession. In one of the most dramatic findings of the report, teacher satisfaction has decreased by 15 points since the *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher* measured job satisfaction two years ago, now reaching the lowest level of job satisfaction seen in the survey series in more than two decades. This decline in teacher satisfaction is coupled with large increases in the number of teachers who indicate that they are likely to leave teaching for another occupation and in the number who do not feel their jobs are secure.

Several factors distinguish teachers with high job satisfaction from those with lower satisfaction. Teachers with high job satisfaction are more likely to feel their jobs are secure and say they are treated as a professional by the community. They are also more likely to have adequate opportunities for professional development, time to collaborate with other teachers, more preparation and supports to engage parents effectively, and greater involvement of parents and their schools in coming together to improve the learning and success of students.

Overall, majorities of both parents and teachers say teachers are treated as professionals by the community and that teachers' health insurance and retirement benefits are fair for the work they do. However, majorities of parents and teachers do not feel that teachers' salaries are fair for the work they do.

The effects of the economic downturn are felt widely and deeply in education. More than three-quarters of teachers have faced budget cuts in their schools in the last year. These budget reductions have been enacted across the full range of school types: urban, suburban and rural schools, as well as in schools with either low or high concentrations of low-income students, minority students and English language learner (ELL) students. Two-thirds of teachers report that their schools have had layoffs of teachers, parent/community liaisons or other staff in the last year.

Teachers in schools where layoffs of classroom teachers have occurred are more likely to have witnessed the reduction or elimination of programs and services in their schools. Overall, more than one-third of teachers experienced reductions or eliminations of programs in arts or music, foreign language, or physical education in the last year. Nearly three in ten teachers indicate that there have been reductions or eliminations of health or social services in their schools.

Beyond reductions in staffing, programs, and services, six in ten teachers report that the average class size in their school has increased. One-third of teachers also indicate that educational technology and materials have not been kept up to date to meet student needs, while two in ten report that school facilities have not been kept in clean or good condition.

At the same time teachers report a reduction in school budgets, programs, and services, students and their families report an increase in needs. A majority of teachers across schools of all demographic types reports that the number of students and families requiring health and social support services has increased in the past year. Economic fears are also on the minds of students and their parents. Two-thirds of students and nearly three-quarters of parents worry about their families not having enough money for the things they need. Majorities of students and parents also worry about the parents' losing or not being able to find a job.

School budget cuts are associated with an additional negative impact. Four in ten teachers and parents of students are pessimistic that levels of student achievement will increase in the next five years. Teachers and parents who report that their schools' budgets have decreased are more likely to be pessimistic that the level of student achievement will improve than those in schools whose budgets have remained the same or increased.

Parent engagement has increased in the past 25 years but remains a challenge for many schools. Because parents and communities play a crucial role in student success, educators continuously seek ways to engage parents in their children's education. The good news is that most teachers, parents and students believe that their schools help engage parents in supporting student success. However, all three groups indicate there is room for improvement, particularly at the high school level, since this quality of engagement declines from elementary to middle to high school.

Students report greater parent engagement in their education compared to students 25 years ago. Two-thirds of today's students report that they talk about things that happen at school with their parents every day, compared to four in ten who reported speaking with their parents this frequently in 1988. There is also a threefold increase in the number of students who report their parents visit their school at least once a month, up from 16% in 1988 to 46% today.

Fewer parents than 25 years ago believe that lack of parent engagement is widespread. There are significant declines in the percentages of teachers and parents reporting that most or many parents take too little interest in their children's education, fail to motivate their children, or leave their children alone too much after school. Parents report that schools with high parent engagement perform better on a range of measures, including collaboration, resources, responsiveness, sharing information, contacting parents about learning issues, providing guidance on helping students succeed, and being flexible to meet with parents at different times of the day.

Another key finding of the report is the degree to which more parent engagement is associated with higher teacher job satisfaction, more optimism about student achievement, and more positive relations among parents and teachers. Teachers with high job satisfaction are more likely than other teachers to say their schools help parents better understand what they can do to help children learn, and to report that their schools have a plan for parent and community engagement. Parents who report high parent engagement in their child's schools are more likely than those who report low engagement to be optimistic that student achievement will be better in five years, to say they and their child's teachers work together to help their child succeed in school, and to rate other parents as excellent or good in effectively engaging them in their child's school and education.

The survey documents – from the perspectives of teachers, parents and students – how schools and parents can and do effectively collaborate to promote student learning, and how factors such as parent engagement and the economy are associated with teacher job satisfaction.

Major Findings

Teachers are less satisfied with their careers.

- Teacher job satisfaction has dropped 15 points since 2009, from 59% who were very satisfied to 44% who are very satisfied, the lowest level in over 20 years.
- The percentage of teachers who say they are very or fairly likely to leave the profession has increased by 12 points since 2009, from 17% to 29%.
- The percentage of teachers who do not feel their job is secure has grown since 2006 from eight percent to 34%.
- Majorities of parents and teachers say that public school teachers are treated as professionals by the community (71% of parents, 77% of teachers), that public school teachers' health insurance benefits are fair for the work they do (63% of parents, 67% of teachers), and that public school teachers' retirement benefits are fair for the work they do (60% of parents, 61% of teachers).
- Slightly more than half (53%) of parents and two-thirds (65%) of teachers say that public school teachers' salaries are **not** fair for the work they do.
- Teachers with lower job satisfaction are less likely than others to feel that their job is secure (56% vs. 75%) or that they are treated as a professional by the community (68% vs. 89%).
- Teachers with lower job satisfaction are more likely to be in schools that have had layoffs of teachers (49% vs. 37%) or other school staff (66% vs. 49%), or the reduction or elimination of arts or music programs (28% vs. 17%), after-school programs (34% vs. 23%), or health or social services (31% vs. 23%).
- Teachers with lower job satisfaction are more likely to report that in the last year they have seen increases in: average class size (70% vs. 53%), students and families needing health or social services (70% vs. 56%), students coming to school hungry (40% vs. 30%), students leaving to go to another school (22% vs. 12%), and students being bullied/harassed (17% vs. 10%).

The effects of the economic downturn are felt widely and deeply in education.

- Three-quarters (76%) of teachers report that their school's budget decreased during the past year.
- Two-thirds (66%) of teachers report that their school has had layoffs of teachers or other staff, including 44% who report layoffs of classroom teachers. In addition, slightly more than half (53%) of teachers report reassignments of teachers and staff have increased during the past year.
- More than one-third (36%) of teachers report reductions or eliminations of programs in arts or music (23%), foreign language (17%) or physical education (12%) in the last year.
- A majority (63%) of teachers reports that class sizes have increased in the last year.
- One-third (34%) of teachers report that educational technology and learning materials have not been kept up to date, and 21% report that school facilities have not been kept in clean or good condition, in the last year.

- A majority (64%) of teachers reports that in the last year, the number of students and families needing health and social support services has increased, while 35% of teachers also report that the number of students coming to school hungry has increased. At the same time, many teachers have seen reductions or eliminations of health or social services (28% overall, including 34% of high school teachers) and after-school programs (29% overall, including 32% of high school teachers).
- Seven in ten (72%) parents and two-thirds (65%) of students worry about their family not having enough money for the things they need, and 62% of parents and 54% of students worry about the parents' losing or not being able to find a job.
- Overall, 39% of parents and 43% of teachers are pessimistic that the level of student achievement will be better five years from now. Parents who say their child's school's budget has decreased are nearly twice as likely as those who say budgets have stayed the same or increased to be pessimistic about student achievement (52% vs. 28%). Nearly half (46%) of teachers in schools with decreased budgets are pessimistic that student achievement will improve, compared to 35% of teachers in schools whose budgets have stayed the same or increased.
- Many parents are unsure about whether budget-related changes have occurred at their child's school in the last year. One-third (32%) are not sure whether their child's school's budget has increased, decreased or stayed the same and one-quarter (27%) are not sure whether or not there have been reductions or eliminations of health or social services.

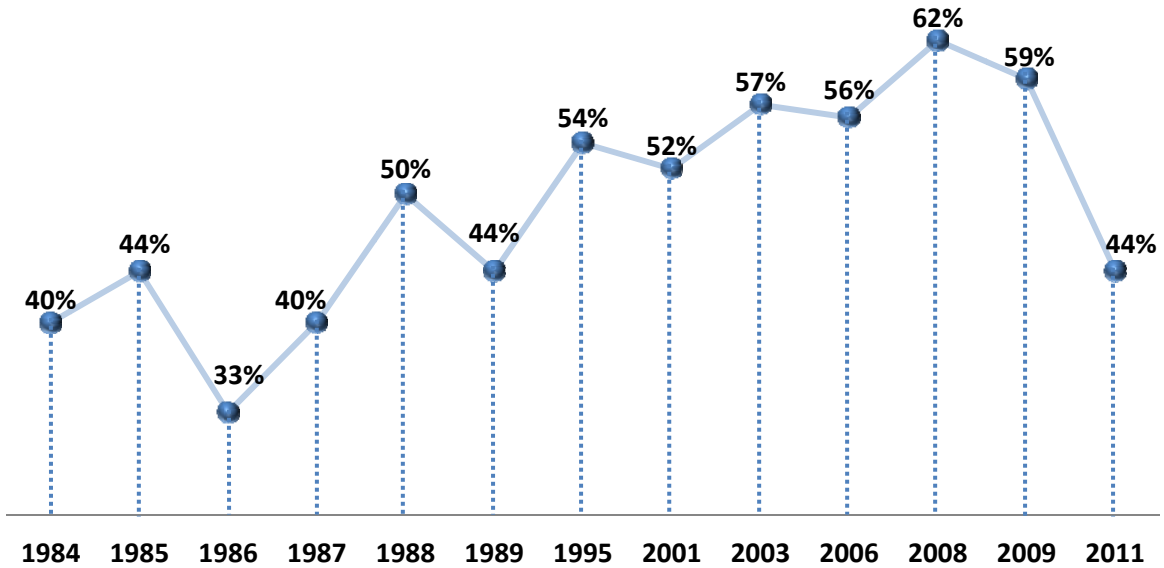
Parent and community engagement has increased but remains a challenge for many schools.

- Most teachers (91%) and parents (80%) agree that their/their child's school helps all parents understand what they can do at home to support a student's success in school, and 83% of students agree that their teachers and parents work together to help them succeed in school.
 - However, the level of agreement declines for each group from elementary to middle to high school. **Secondary school teachers** (86% middle school, 88% high school) are less likely than elementary school teachers (93%) to agree that their school helps all parents understand what they can do at home to support a student's success in school. **Parents of high school students** (69%) are less likely to agree that their child's school helps all parents understand what they can do at home to support a student's success in school than are parents of middle school (84%) or elementary school (86%) students. **High school students** (71%) and middle school students (89%) are less likely than elementary school students (96%) to agree that their parents and teachers are working together to help them succeed.
- Far more students today report that they talk to their parents about school every day (64%) as compared to 40% who said they did so in 1988, and the number of students who say their parents visit their school at least once a month has increased nearly threefold since 1988, from 16% to 46% today.

- Compared to 1987, fewer teachers and parents believe that lack of parent engagement is widespread:
 - Fewer teachers (35% vs. 48%) and parents (47% vs. 52%) say that most or many parents take too little interest in their children's education.
 - Fewer teachers (35% vs. 53%) and parents (42% vs. 52%) say that most or many parents fail to motivate their children to learn in school.
 - Fewer teachers (42% vs. 62%) and parents (44% vs. 59%) say that most or many parents leave their children alone too much on their own after school.
- Teachers in schools with high parent engagement are more than twice as likely as those in schools with low parent engagement to say they are very satisfied with their job (57% vs. 25%).
- Parents in schools with high parent engagement are more likely than those in schools with low engagement to be optimistic that student achievement will be better in five years (73% vs. 45%), to agree that they and their child's teachers work together to help their child succeed in school (96% vs. 55%), and to rate other parents at their child's school as excellent or good in effectively engaging them in their child's school and education (82% vs. 21%).
- Most parents say that the following are absolutely essential or very important sources of information about their child's school: their child (96%), individual teachers (92%) and general written communications from the school (88%).
- Other sources of information such as the principal, the PTA/PTO, the parent or community liaison, and other parents are particularly important for parents in urban areas and parents with no more than a high school education:
 - Parents in urban schools are more likely than those in suburban or rural schools to rate the principal (89% vs. 73% vs. 79%), the PTA/PTO (68% vs. 50% vs. 42%), the parent or community liaison (69% vs. 51% vs. 41%) and other parents (60% vs. 45% vs. 42%) as absolutely essential or very important sources of information.
 - Parents with no more than a high school education are more likely than those with at least a college degree to rate the principal (83% vs. 74%), the PTA/PTO (60% vs. 46%), the parent or community liaison (62% vs. 42%) and other parents (56% vs. 41%) as absolutely essential or very important sources of information.
- Teachers with high job satisfaction are more likely than other teachers to agree that their school helps all parents understand what they can do at home to support a student's success in school (95% vs. 87%), and has a plan for parent and community engagement that is linked to specific goals for improving student learning and healthy development (93% vs. 81%).

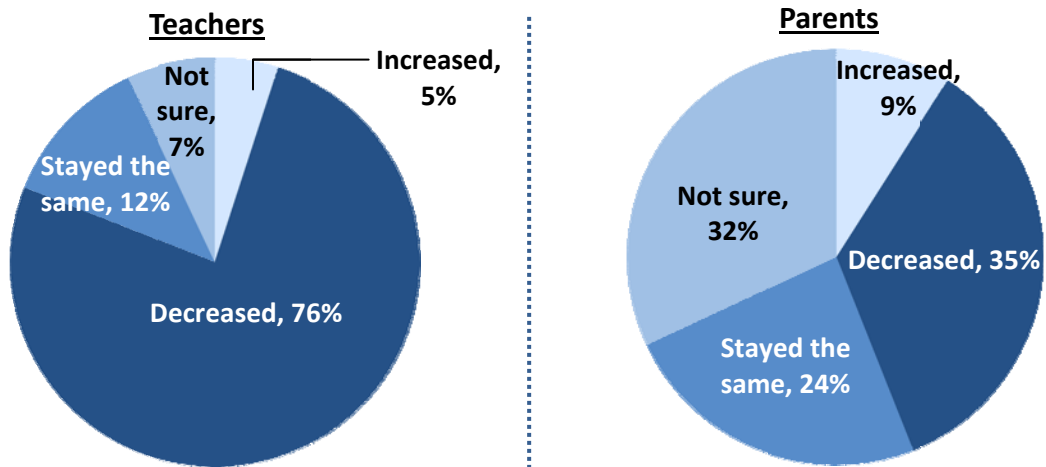


Teacher Job Satisfaction through the Years (% Very Satisfied)



Base: Teachers (2011 n=1,001) Q905. Question text in 2011, 2001, 1987, 1986, 1984: All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job as a teacher in the public schools?; Question text in 2009, 2008, 2006, 2003, 1995, 1989, 1988, 1985: All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with teaching as a career?

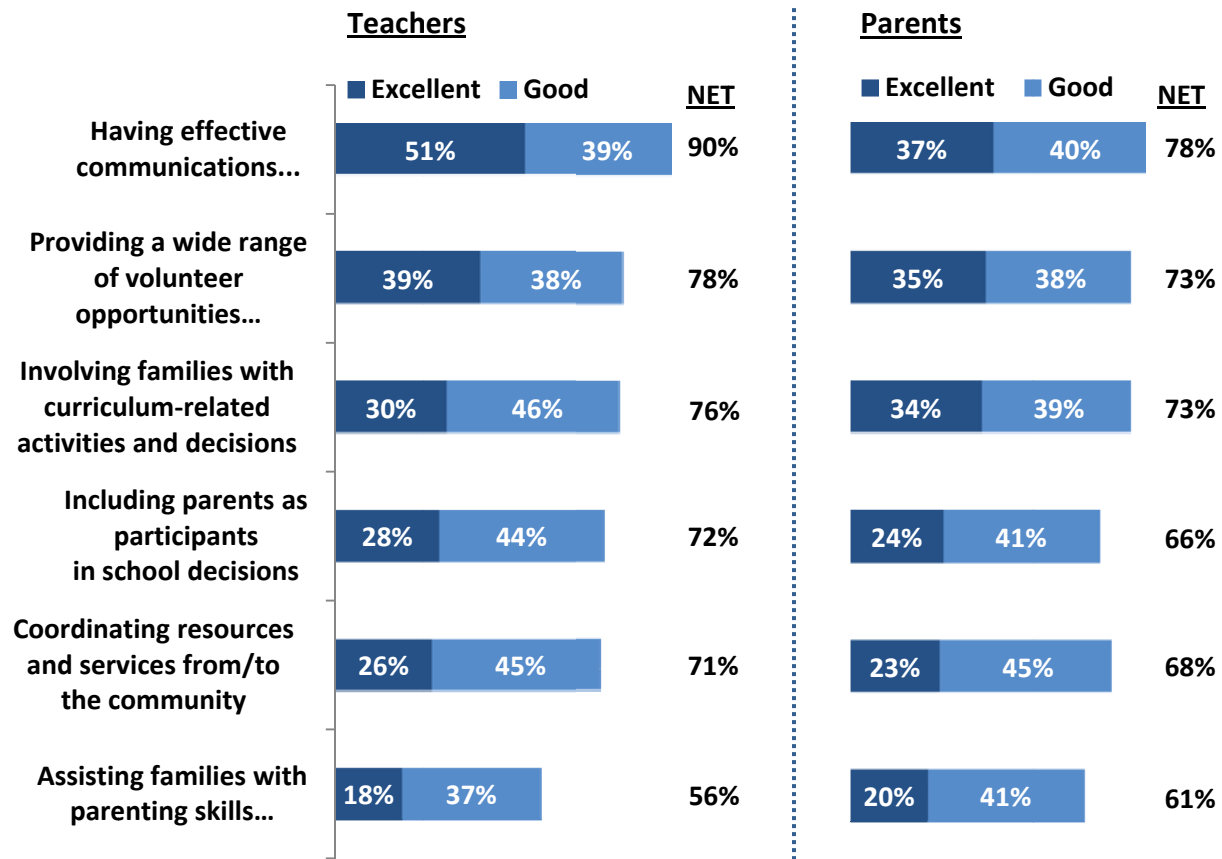
Changes in School Budget in Past Year



Base: Teachers (n=1,001); Parents (n=1,086)

Q810. Thinking about the past 12 months, has each of the following increased, decreased or stayed the same at your [child's] school?: Your/The school's budget

Ratings of Six Types of School-Parent Involvement



Base: Teachers (n=1,001); Parents (n=1,086) Q710/Q716. How would you rate your/your child's school on each of the following? Excellent, Good, Fair, Poor, Does Not Offer, Not sure/Decline to answer (Teachers only)

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