

An Analysis of Teacher and Administrator Responses to the 2015-16 TN Educator Survey

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September 2016





Overview

Teachers and administrators of Knox County Schools had the opportunity to take an annual survey provided by the Tennessee Department of Education. This survey was not mandatory. Forty-five percent (45%) of teachers and fifty-nine percent (59%) of administrators in Knox County completed the survey. Therefore, the results only represent attitudes and perspectives of responding teachers and administrators, not those of the entire district.

Furthermore, the percentages provided in each data set were rounded to omit decimal places. For this reason, the values presented for some responses do not always add up to exactly 100%.

The topics covered for teachers were School Climate and Leadership, Instructional Practice, Instructional Improvement, and State Initiatives. Administrators answered questions on School Climate, Roles and Responsibilities, School Instructional and Improvement Practices, Administrator Evaluation, and State Initiatives. This document aims to highlight some results of the survey that may be useful for district administrators. The full results are available online at <http://educatorsurvey.tnk12.gov/>.

Items Shared by Teachers and Administrators

On both the teacher and administrator surveys, there were 16 identically worded items where respondents expressed their preferences on a Likert scale (from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”). Both groups were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with prompts regarding school climate, RTI², and TNReady testing.

Areas of Agreement

Among the questions shared by both groups, responses from teachers and administrators were the most similar for the three items in Figures 1 and 2 below. The difference in agreeable responses was less than 5% between the two groups for each of these items. The percentage listed in parentheses is the sum of the “agree” and “strongly agree” percentages.

Ninety-two percent (92%) or more of respondents in both groups believed that most of their colleagues shared their beliefs and values about the central mission of the school.

Ninety percent (90%) or more of respondents in both groups believed that their school fostered appreciation for the cultural beliefs and practices of all staff and students, with 37% of administrators and 26% of teachers strongly agreeing. When asked if they received the supports necessary to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students, roughly 80% of each group agreed.

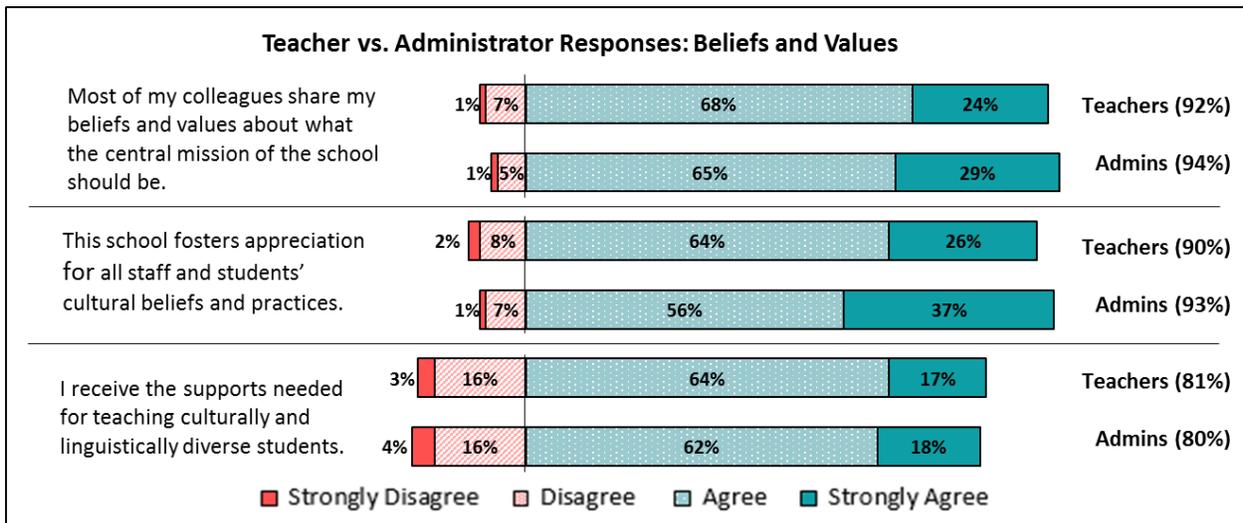


Figure 1

For the following items, the wording of each prompt was slightly different for teachers and administrators. For teachers, the prompt referred to "all students," while for administrators, the prompt simply said "students." It is unknown what effect (if any) this difference may have had on responses. Ninety percent (90%) of responding teachers and 86% of responding administrators believed that teachers held (all) students to high academic standards.

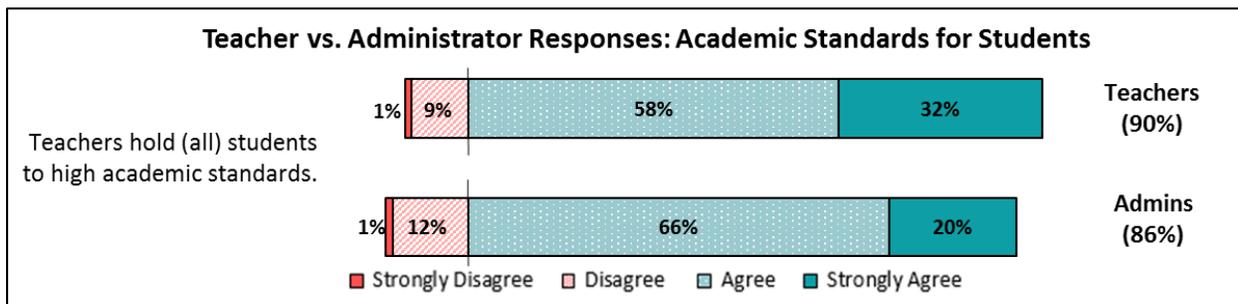


Figure 2

Areas of Disagreement

There were some shared items where agreeable responses from teachers and administrators differed significantly (10% or more). For all of these items, administrator responses were more positive than teacher responses.

Fifteen percent (15%) fewer responding teachers believed that staff felt comfortable raising important issues and concerns with school leaders (79% of teachers, 94% of

administrators). Similarly, 15% fewer responding teachers felt appreciated for their work (76% of teachers, 91% of administrators).

There was slight improvement from SY1415 among teachers for these items, with 4% more agreeing with the first prompt and 2% more with the second prompt. Administrator responses remained at essentially the same level (0% change for the first prompt, +1% change for the second prompt).

In addition, 13% fewer responding teachers believed that there was an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect within their school (75% of teachers, 88% of administrators). Agreeable responses for this item remained within one percentage point of responses from SY1415 for both groups (+1% for teachers, -1% for administrators).

Among questions regarding school climate, the greatest difference in agreeable responses between teachers and administrators was regarding student discipline. While over 90% of administrators believed student discipline at their school was consistent and effective, over 35% of teachers disagreed. This reflects trends noted at the state level, where over 95% of administrators and 69% of teachers agreed with these items. This was a new survey item for SY1516, so there was no data for comparison with the previous year.

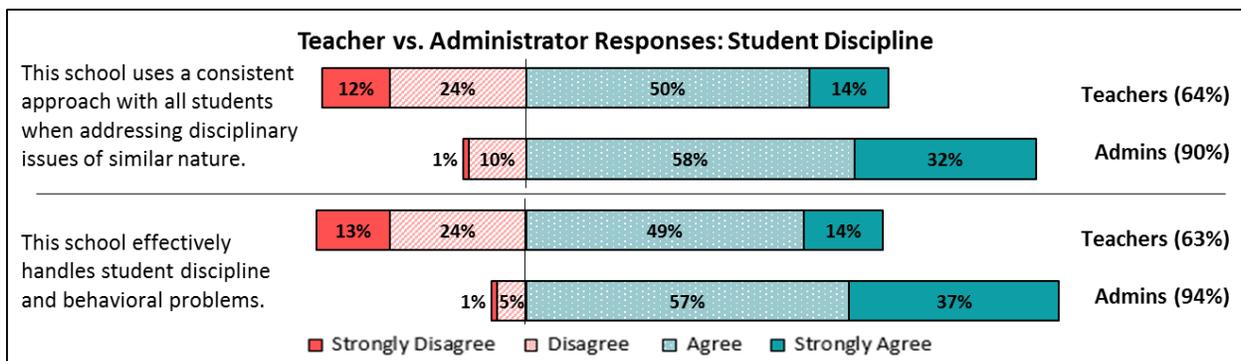


Figure 3

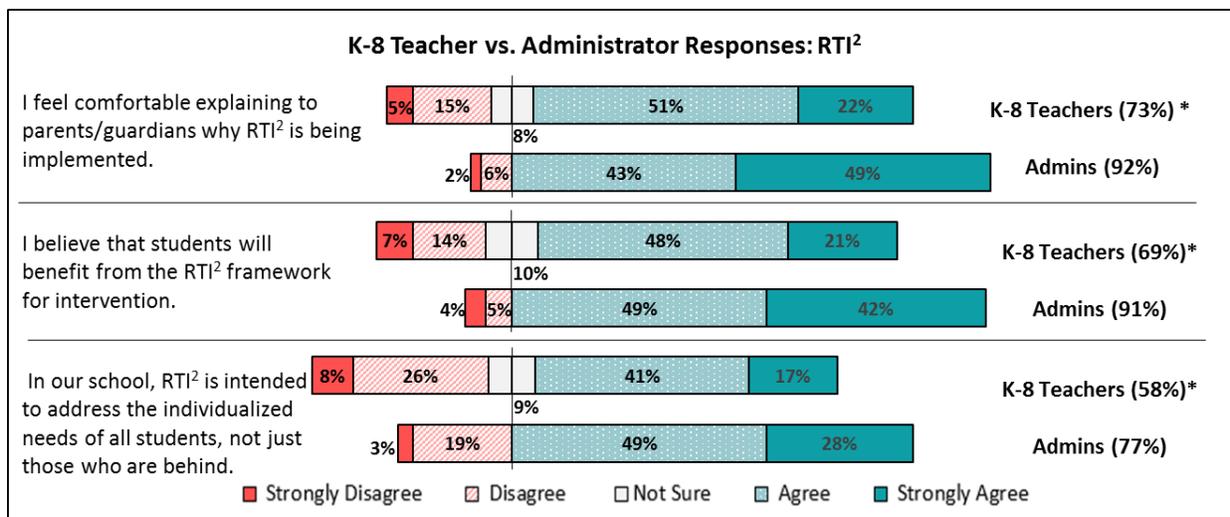
Items Referencing RTI²

Attitudes towards RTI² also differed between teachers and administrators. Because RTI² was only implemented at the elementary and middle school levels in SY1516, the subset of responses from only K-8 teachers was used. The data set made available by the state only included responses from all administrators, so their responses could not be disaggregated by grade level. It is possible that this skews their responses more negatively as high school administrators were unfamiliar with the program.

For these questions, teachers were given the option of answering "Not Sure", while administrators were not. These "Not Sure" responses were placed as the middle category in Figure 4 below so that they are divided equally among agreeable and disagreeable responses.

Responding K-8 teachers felt less comfortable explaining the reasons for RTI² to parents and were less likely to believe that students would benefit from the RTI² framework than responding administrators. For both groups, the prompt regarding RTI² that received the most disagreeable response was when asked if RTI² in their school was intended to address the individualized needs of all students rather than just those who are behind.

When "Not Sure" responses are included, the percentage of K-8 teachers agreeing or strongly agreeing to the three items in Figure 4 was 19-22% lower than that percentage for administrators. When "Not Sure" responses are excluded, the percentage of agreeable answers among remaining responses was 14% lower for teachers on all three items.



* When "Not Sure" responses were omitted, 78% of remaining K-8 teachers responded positively to the first question, 77% to the second, and 63% to the third.

Figure 4

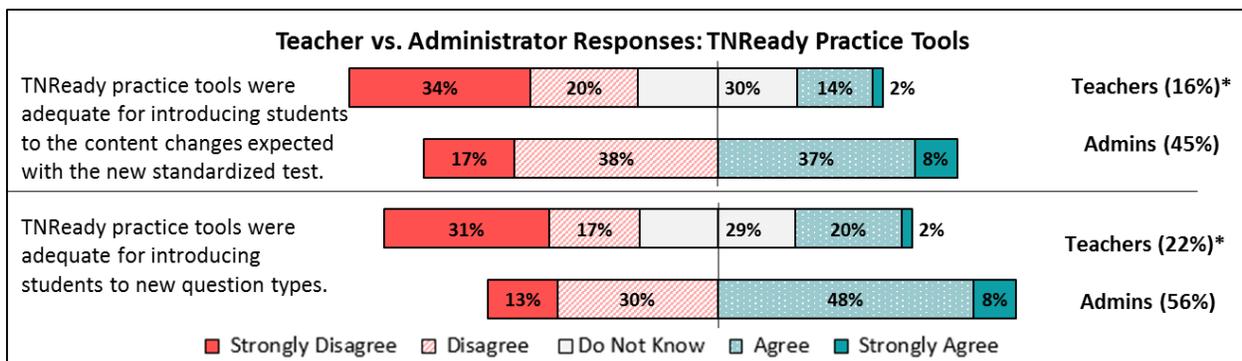
In SY1516, 91% of responding administrators believed that students would benefit from the RTI² framework. This can be compared to 82% in SY1415 (a 9% increase in agreeable responses). Teacher response data was not disaggregated by grade level in SY1415, so K-8 teacher responses cannot be compared to those from SY1415.

Items Referencing TNReady

Items that referenced TNReady received the least agreeable responses from both groups. Responses from teachers were once again more negative than those from administrators.

Similarly to the items referencing RTI², teachers had the option of answering "Do Not Know" while administrators did not. Roughly 30% of teachers replied "Do Not Know" to each of these prompts. As with "Not Sure" responses before, these "Do Not Know" responses were placed as the middle category in Figures 5 and 6 below.

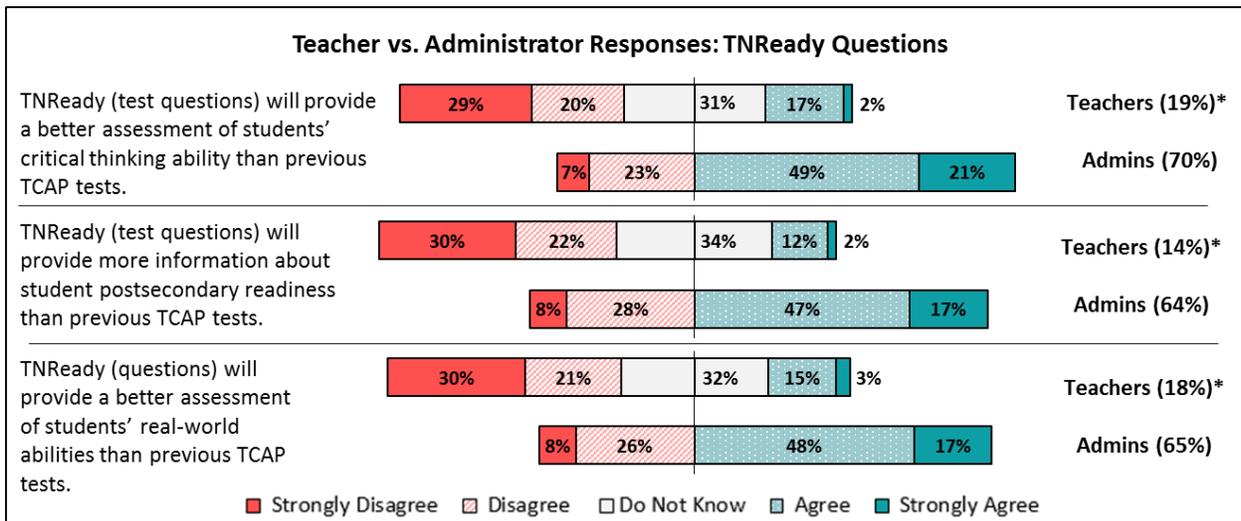
The significant difficulties faced by the district in administering TNReady last year could explain the negative responses from each group. The items with the lowest percentage of agreeable responses from both group addressed TNReady practice tools. A minority of teachers and roughly half of administrators believed that practice tools were adequate for introducing students to content changes and new question types.



* When "Do Not Know" responses are omitted, 23% of remaining teachers responded positively to the first prompt and 31% to the second

Figure 5

There were three additional items regarding TNReady that were almost identically worded. While the prompts for teachers began with "TNReady test questions will provide...", prompts for administrators began with "TNReady will provide...". It is unknown what effect the difference in wording may have had on the responses provided by each group. These items are in Figure 6 below.



* When "Do Not Know" responses are omitted, 28% of remaining teachers responded positively to the first prompt, 21% to the second, and 26% to the third.

Figure 6

Similar (But Not Identical) Items

For the items in Figures 7 and 8, the prompts were worded differently for each group. Teachers were asked about “high professional standards for delivering instruction,” while administrators were asked about “high academic standards.” Because of this, responses cannot be directly compared.

Among responding teachers, there was a high level of agreement that high professional standards for delivering instruction were held from administrators toward teachers (94%) and among teachers (93%).

Ninety-five percent (95%) of responding administrators believed that they held teachers to high academic standards and 88% believed that teachers held each other to high academic standards. The percentage of respondents that strongly agreed was much higher for the first item (53%) than for the second item (22%).

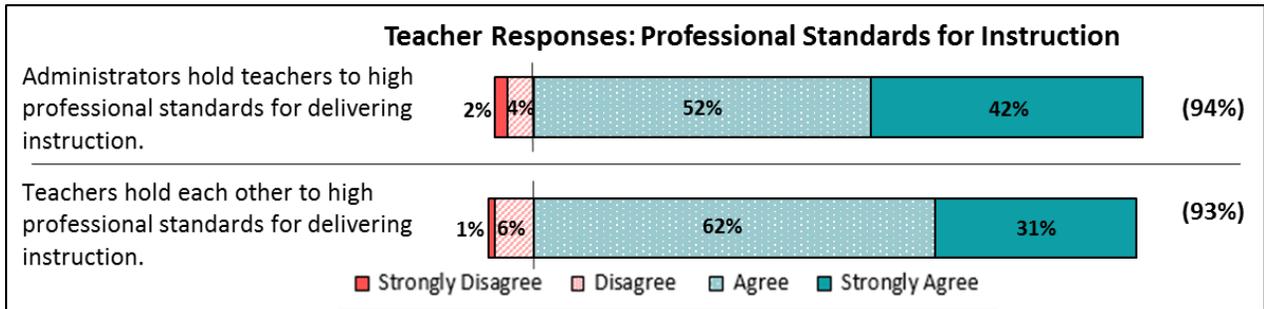


Figure 7

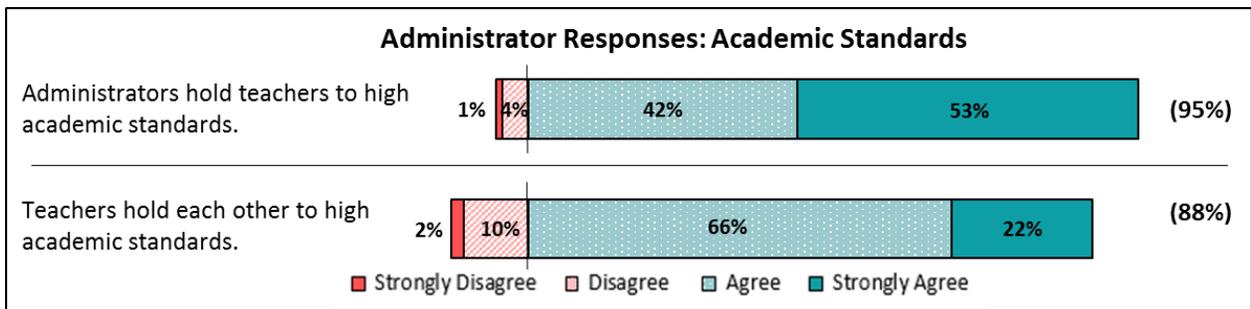


Figure 8

Teacher Responses

Areas of Agreement

Among items not already mentioned, the items in Figure 9 below received the most positive responses (85% or more) from teachers.

A majority of teachers agreed that they had opportunities to participate in shared leadership structures (93%) and were encouraged to take on leadership roles (87%). Most teachers also agreed that school leaders protected instructional time (88%) and provided useful feedback about instructional practices (86%).

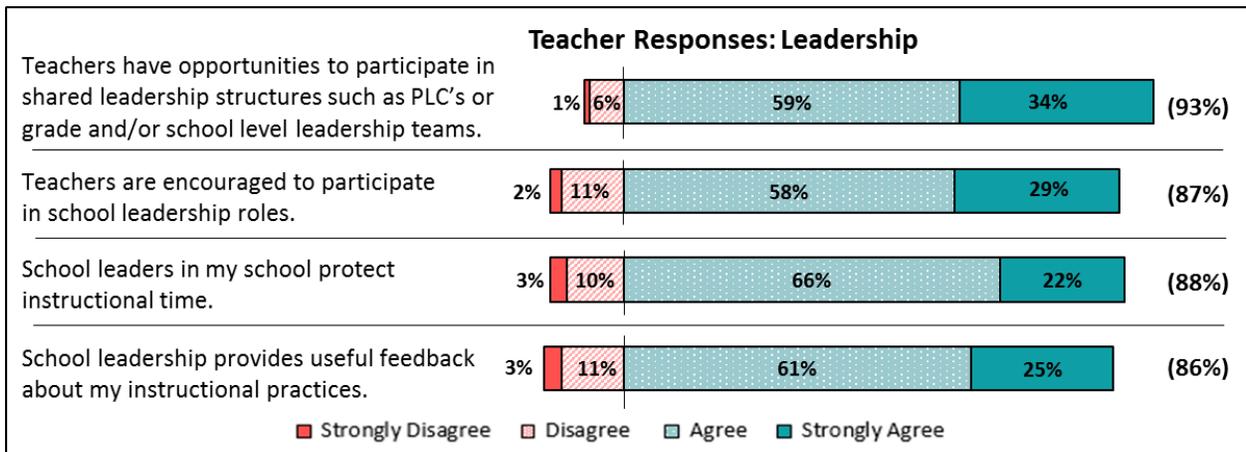


Figure 9

The third prompt in Figure 9 above saw the third-largest increase in agreeable responses among items also present on the SY1415 survey. Eight percent (8%) more of responding teachers agreed that school leaders protected instructional time from SY1415 (+4% agree, +4% strongly agree).

Areas of Disagreement

Teachers responded more negatively (less than 75% agreeable responses) to items addressing planning time, teacher evaluations, and professional learning.

➤ *Planning Time*

Somewhat more than half (56%) of responding teachers believed that individual planning time provided to teachers in their school was sufficient. Sixty-six percent (66%) believed collaborative planning time provided was sufficient.

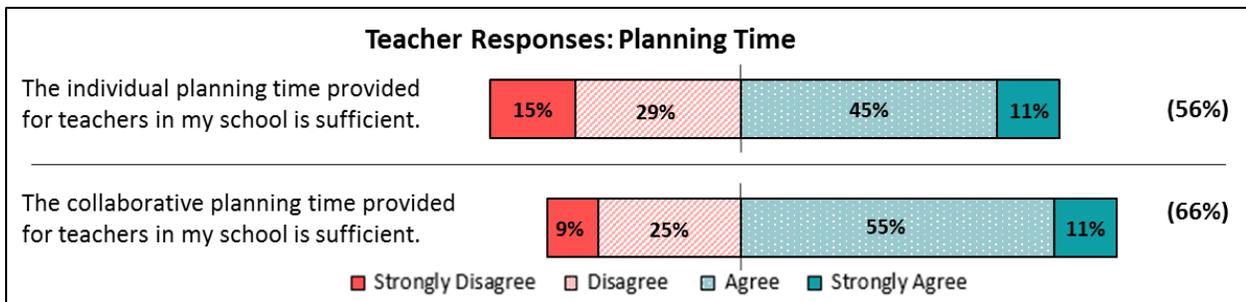


Figure 10

The first prompt regarding individual planning time was not present on the SY1415 Educator Survey. The second prompt saw the largest individual increase in agreeable responses among all items also present on the previous year's survey. Eighteen percent (18%) more of responding teachers believed collaborative planning time was sufficient compared to SY1415. Eleven percent (11%) fewer teachers strongly disagreed in SY1516 compared to SY1415.

➤ *Teacher Evaluations*

Sixty-eight percent (68%) of responding teachers believed that evaluation processes were fair to them. Seventy-two percent (72%) of them believed that the evaluation process had led to improvements in their teaching, with 66% believing that they had led to improvements in student learning.

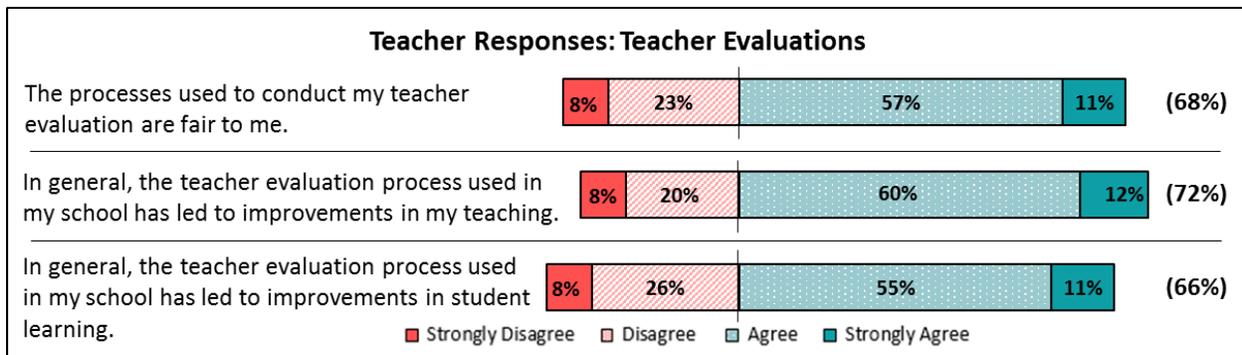


Figure 11

Attitudes towards teacher evaluations were more positive in SY1516 compared to SY1415. In SY1415, the percentage of agreeable responses for the three items in Figure 11 above were 62%, 67%, and 60%, respectively. Agreeable responses for these items increased in SY1516 by 6%, 5%, and 6%, respectively.

➤ *Professional Learning*

Seventy-two percent (72%) of responding teachers said that they receive specific professional learning suggestions that are tailored to their needs, and 70% said that they receive professional learning opportunities that target their individual professional growth needs.

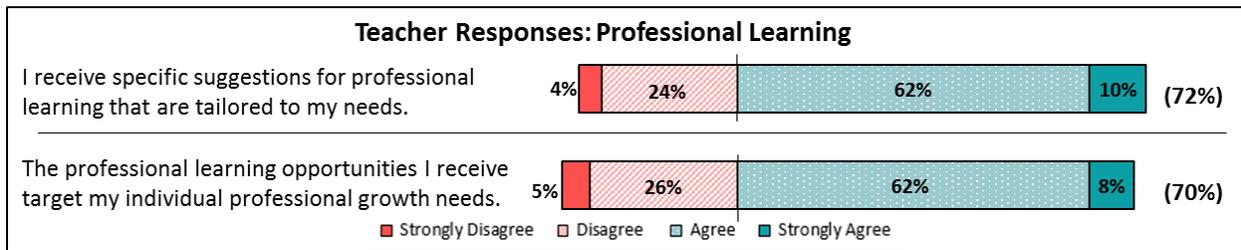


Figure 12

Observation Rubric

While most teachers (88%) agreed that indicators from the teacher observation rubric are often referenced in formal meetings where teaching is discussed, it seems that these indicators are referenced much less frequently in informal discussions between teachers (63% agreed or strongly agreed).

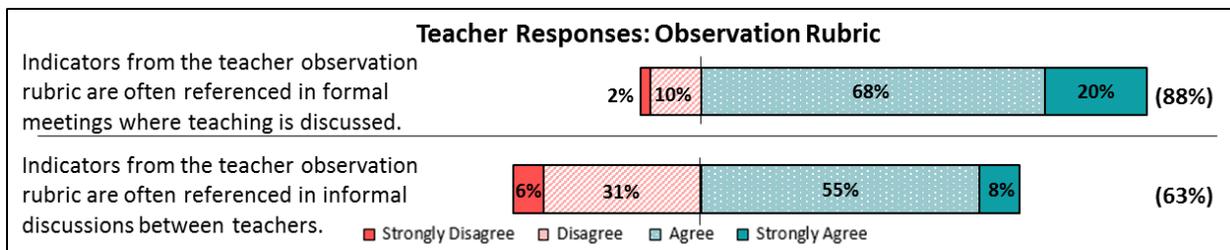


Figure 13

Degree of Additional Support Needed

For the prompts listed in Figure 14, teachers were asked to identify the degree to which they needed more support such as professional learning, training, or mentorship.

Degree of Additional Support Needed: Percentage of Responding Teachers				
Prompt	A Little / Not At All	Somewhat	Mostly / Completely	N/A
Using technology in the classroom	43%	30%	26%	2%
Meeting the needs of all learners (e.g., English learners and students with disabilities)	44%	32%	23%	1%
Instructional strategies and practices (e.g., questioning, wait-time, differentiation)	48%	34%	18%	1%
Addressing students' non-academic needs (e.g., socio-emotional development and/or student behavior)	54%	29%	17%	1%
Aligning standards, curriculum, and student learning outcomes	56%	27%	16%	1%
Content- or standard-specific instruction (e.g., U.S. History, Biology, early grades reading or numeracy)	58%	23%	16%	3%
Analyzing and interpreting students' summative and/or formative assessment results	59%	26%	14%	1%
Preparing students for postsecondary opportunities	61%	20%	13%	6%
Working with diverse racial, ethnic, or cultural groups	65%	22%	11%	1%
Creating positive classroom environments (e.g., establishing respectful culture and managing student behavior)	71%	16%	11%	1%

Figure 14

Most teachers felt they needed little to no extra support in creating positive classroom environments, working with diverse racial, ethnic, or cultural groups, or preparing students for postsecondary opportunities (where applicable).

On the other hand, 55% believed additional support was somewhat, mostly, or completely needed in meeting the needs of all learners. Fifty-six percent (56%) believed additional support was somewhat, mostly, or completely needed in using technology in the classroom. These final two items were the areas of greatest expressed need among teachers.

The percentage listed in parentheses in Figure 15 is the sum of the "somewhat", "mostly", and "completely" percentages. "N/A" values were placed between responses for "a little" and "somewhat."

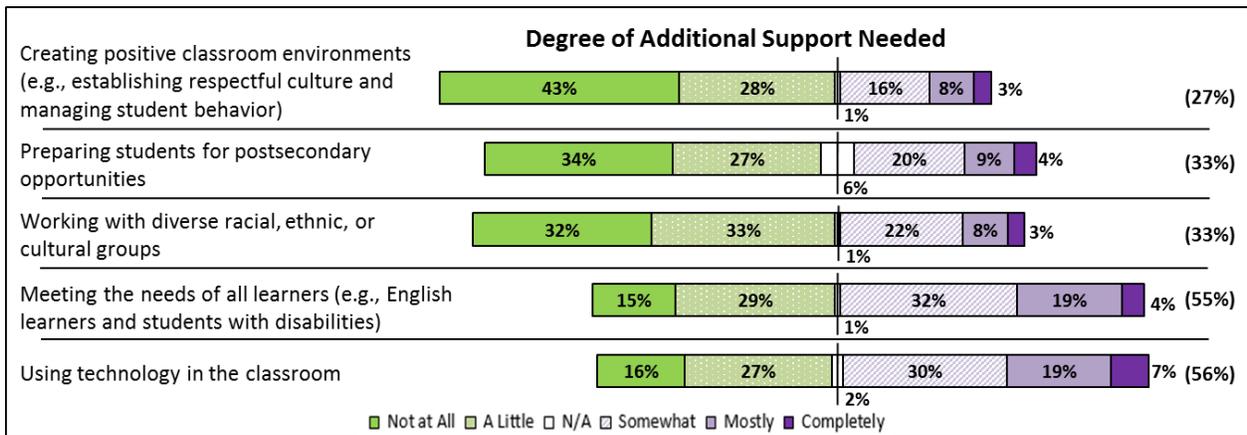


Figure 15

Administrator Responses

Administrator responses on the survey were largely positive, with 85% or more responding positively ("agree" or "strongly agree") to 23 out of 32 Likert scale prompts and 90% or more responding positively to 16 out of 32 Likert scale prompts. The only items that received less than 80% agreeable responses from administrators were those regarding TNReady and RTI² mentioned above in Figures 3-5.

School Climate

In addition to the items already mentioned, administrators responded positively to the items in Figure 16 regarding school climate. Ninety-five percent (95%) of responding administrators believed that the teachers at their school liked being there. Almost half (43%) strongly agreed and 0% strongly disagreed. While there may have been "strongly disagree" responses, there were not enough to round up to a whole percentage point as reported by TDOE.

Eighty-seven percent (87%) of responding administrators said that teachers believed that they were collaborative stakeholders in major school decisions.

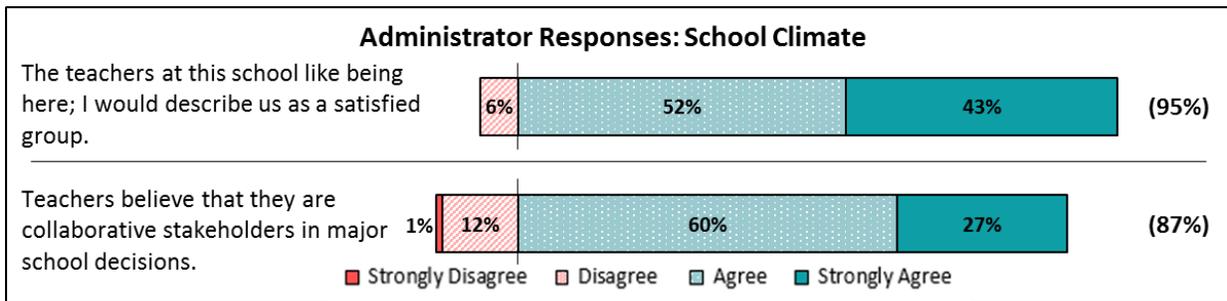


Figure 16

Administrator Evaluations

Administrators were also asked to respond to eight prompts regarding the administrator evaluation process. Responses were mostly positive to all items. The three items receiving the highest percentage of agreeable responses are below in Figure 17. All three items received over 90% agreeable responses.

Ninety-one percent (91%) of responding administrators thought that they received useful feedback as a result of the evaluation process. Ninety percent (90%) believed that the process helped them improve as a professional. Ninety percent (90%) also believed that the Tennessee Instructional Leadership Standards and their corresponding rubric clearly defined what was expected of them.

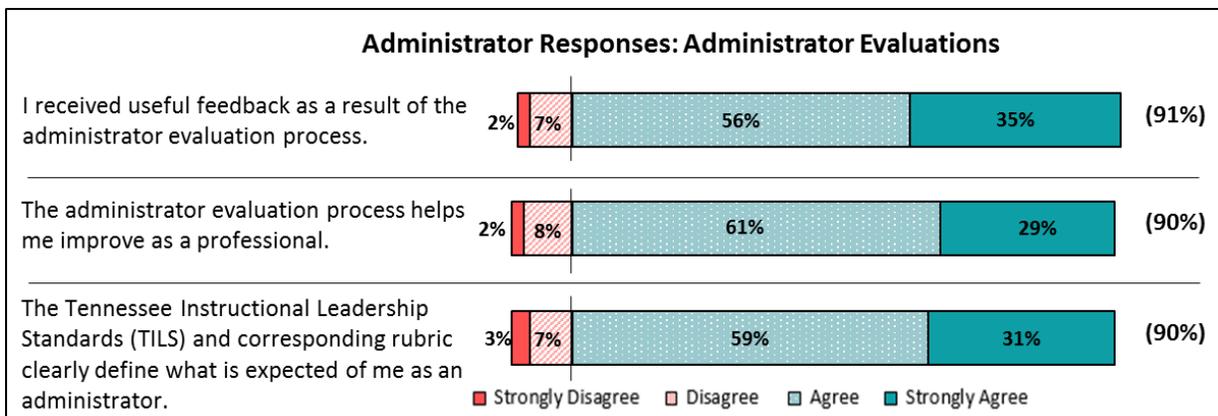


Figure 17

Among all items regarding administrator evaluations, the two that received the lowest percentage of agreeable responses are in Figure 18 below. Eighty-three percent (83%) of responding administrators believed that the administrator evaluation process would lead to improved student learning. The same amount (83%) was satisfied with Tennessee's administrator evaluation process.

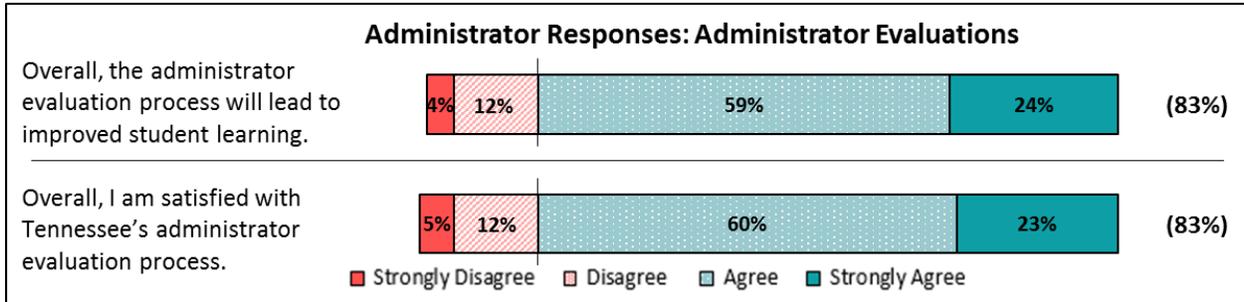


Figure 18

Administrator Time

Administrators were asked to indicate how much time they spent in an average week on the duties listed in Figure 19 below. The number in parentheses to the right of each item is the percentage of respondents that indicated spending at least five hours per week on that activity.

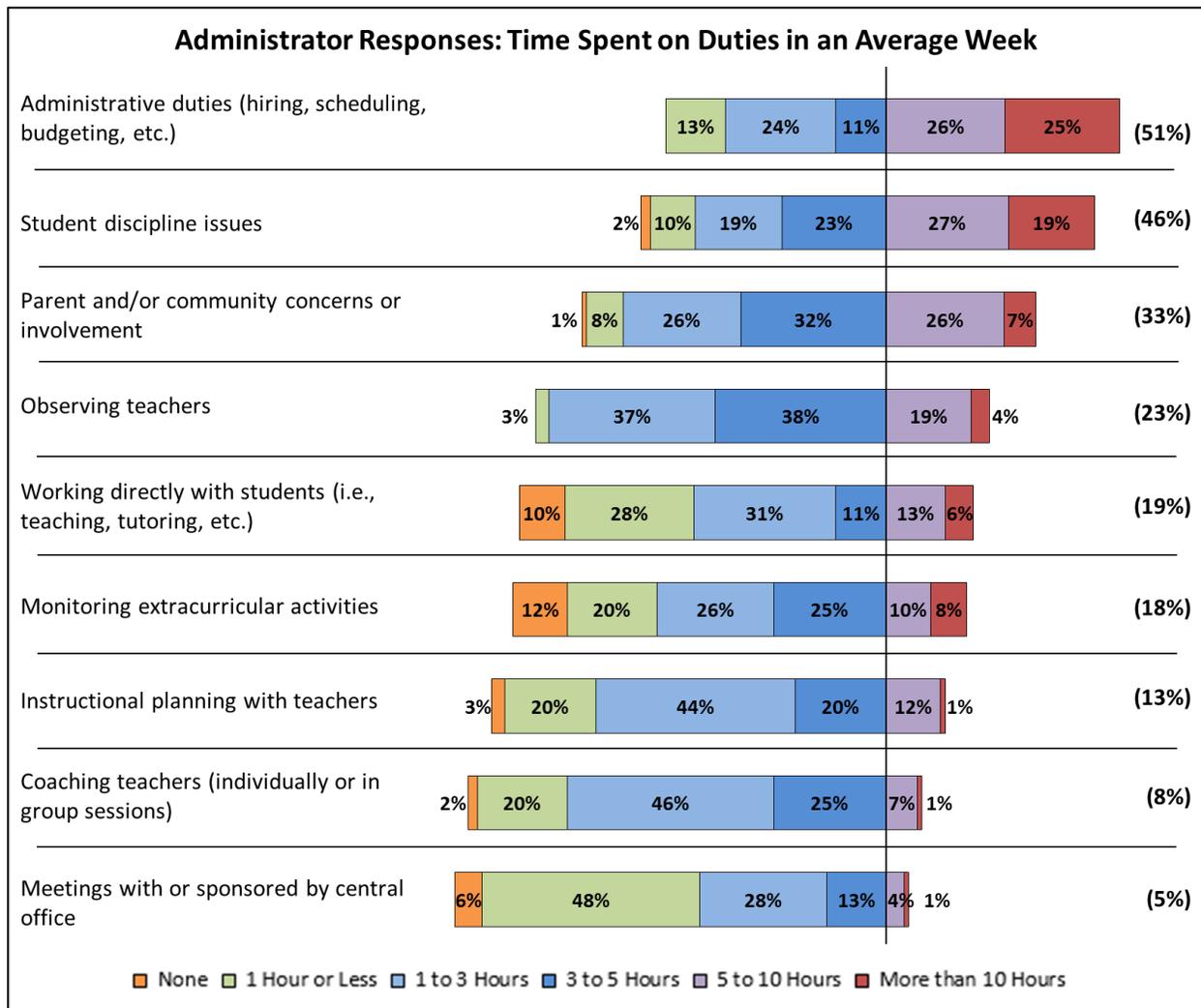


Figure 19

General administrative duties and student discipline issues were the two largest consumers of administrator time. These are the only two items for which more than 10% of administrators spent more than 10 hours per week (25% for administrative duties, 19% for student discipline issues). 51% of administrators spent more than five hours per week on administrative duties, and 46% spent more than five hours per week on student discipline issues.

Central office meetings took up the least amount of administrator time per week, with 5% of respondents indicating that that this took up at least five hours of their time per week. Forty-eight percent (48%) indicated that they spent one hour or less per week on central office

meetings and an additional 6% indicated that they spent no time at central office meetings in an average week.

Other activities that few administrators indicated as consuming more than five hours per week included coaching teachers (8%) and instructional planning with teachers (13%).

The largest shift from the previous year for an individual category of time from had to do with administrative duties. In general, the amount of time respondents spent on administrative duties decreased, although there was also a slight increase for some. Compared to response data from SY1415, the percentage of responding administrators spending 3-5 hours a week on administrative duties dropped by 14%. Those spending 1-3 hours per week increased by 4% and those spending less than 1 hour per week increased by 7%. At the same time, those spending 5-10 hours per week increased by 3%.

There was also an overall decrease in the amount of time respondents spent observing teachers from SY1415. The percentage of responding administrators that spent more than 10 hours per week observing teachers decreased by 6% and those spending 5-10 hours per week decreased by 8%. There was a 13% increase in the number of respondents spending 1-3 hours per week. Overall, the percentage of teachers spending at least 3 hours per week observing teachers decreased from 76% in SY1415 to 61% in SY1516. The change for each response can be seen in Figure 20 below.

Activity	Change in % of Respondents Selecting Each Option					
	none	> 1 hr per week	1-3 hrs per week	3-5 hrs per week	5-10 hrs per week	> 10 hrs per week
Instructional planning with teachers	3	1	2	-2	-4	0
Observing teachers	0	2	13	-1	-8	-6
Coaching teachers (individually or in group sessions)	2	7	4	-4	-6	-2
Meetings with or sponsored by central office	0	10	-6	-4	0	0
Administrative duties (hiring, scheduling, budgeting, etc.)	0	7	4	-14	3	-1
Parent and/or community concerns or involvement	0	4	7	4	-10	-5
Student discipline issues	2	2	7	-10	1	-2
Working directly with students (i.e., teaching, tutoring, etc.)	1	1	6	-13	5	-1

Figure 20

Administrator Hiring Priorities

Administrators were asked to select the three most important characteristics considered when hiring new teachers. The three most commonly selected items were previous teaching experience (62% of respondents), content knowledge (59%), and enthusiasm (54%).

The percentage of administrators selecting all three of these items increased from SY1415 (+8%, +8%, and +10%, respectively). The largest decrease in importance occurred for ratings from the district's Human Resource office (11% in SY1415, 3% in SY1516).

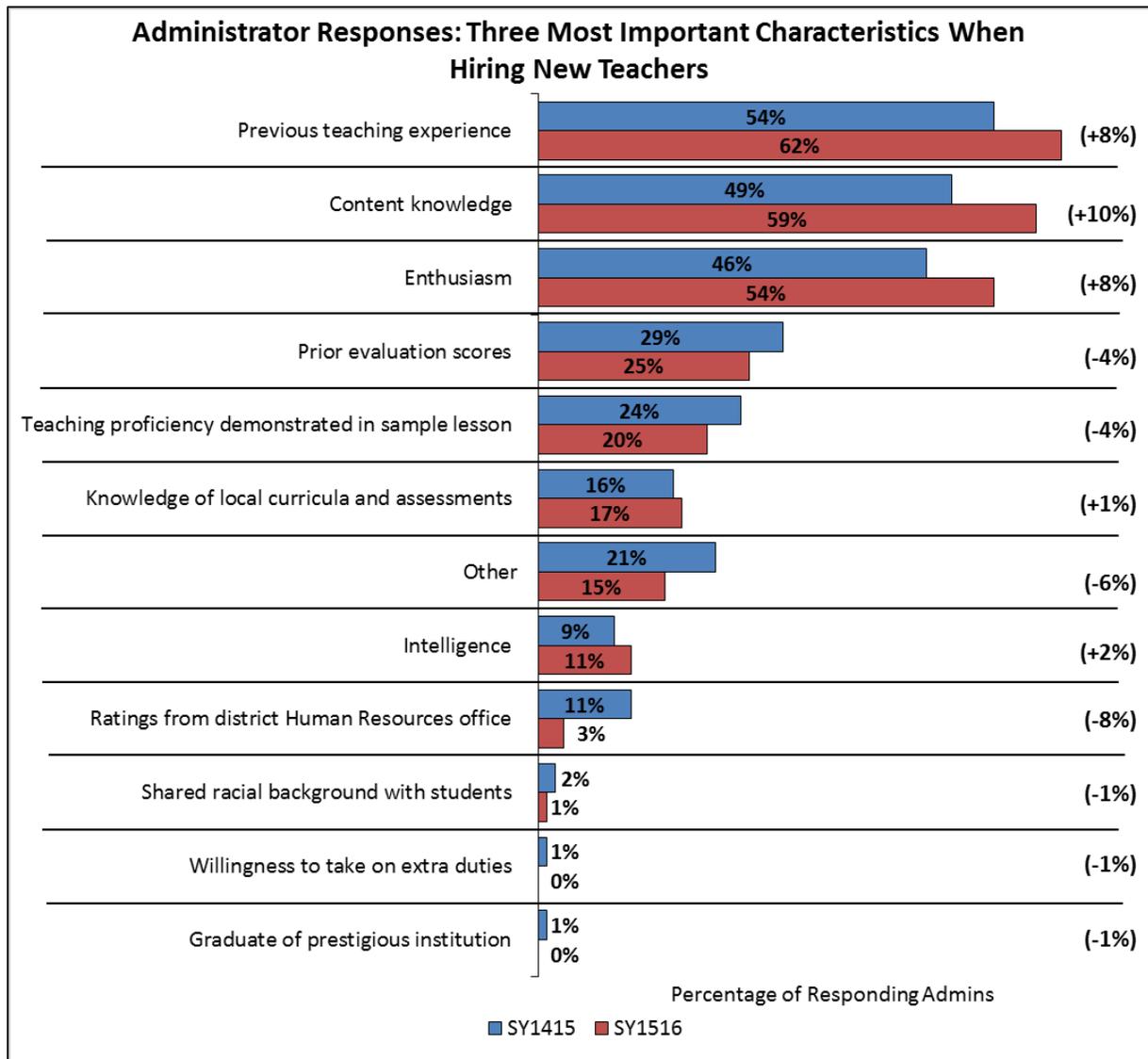


Figure 21



Summary

Shared Items

Teacher and administrator responses were similar for some items, while they varied for others. At least nine in ten respondents from both groups agreed that most colleagues shared their beliefs and values about the central mission of the school. The same percentage also agreed that their school fostered appreciation for the cultural beliefs and practices of all staff and students.

While the prompts were worded differently for each group, responses from both teachers and administrators were highly agreeable when asked about teachers holding students to high academic standards. Over 90% of responding teachers believed that high professional standards for instruction were held from administrators towards teachers and among teachers. Ninety-five percent (95%) of responding administrators believed that high academic standards were held from administrators towards teachers and 88% of administrators believed they were held among teachers.

Administrator responses were more consistently agreeable than those from teachers in regards to school climate. Approximately one in four responding teachers did not feel appreciated for the job they were doing and did not believe that there was an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within their school. The greatest difference in agreeable responses between teachers and administrators was regarding student discipline. Teacher responses regarding student discipline were over 25% less agreeable than those from administrators.

Administrators also responded more agreeably than K-8 teachers when asked if they felt comfortable explaining RTI² to parents and guardians, whether or not they believed students would benefit from the RTI² framework, and if RTI² was intended to address the individualized needs of all students.

The most disagreeable responses from both teachers and administrators regarded TNReady. In particular, there were highly disagreeable responses from both groups when asked about the adequacy of TNReady practice tools.

Teacher Items

Eight percent (8%) more of responding teachers believed that school leaders in their school protected instructional time compared to SY1415. Approximately two in three responding teachers agreed that collaborative planning time provided for teachers in their school was sufficient. This can be compared to less than half of responding teachers agreeing in SY1415



(an 18% increase in agreeable responses).

There was a 5-6% increase in agreeable teacher responses from SY1415 for several items regarding the fairness of teacher evaluations and their impact on teaching and student learning. There was still significant disagreement (28-34% of responding teachers) for these items in SY1516.

Indicators from the teacher observation rubric seemed to be discussed significantly more often in formal meetings than in informal discussions between teachers. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of responding teachers agreed that these indicators were often referenced in formal meetings that discuss teaching; 63% agreed that they were often referenced in informal discussions between teachers. This is a 25% difference.

The two areas where teachers expressed the greatest need for additional support were meeting the needs of all learners and using technology in the classroom. More than half of respondents stated that additional support was somewhat, mostly, or completely needed in both of these areas.

Administrator Items

Administrator responses were at least 80% agreeable for all Likert scale items except for all items regarding TNReady and one item regarding RTI². Responses from this group were at least 90% agreeable for half of the Likert scale items present on the survey (16 of 32).

At least nine out of ten responding administrators believed that the administrator evaluation process provided them with useful feedback (91%) and helped them improve as a professional (90%). Among items not referencing TNReady or RTI², the items receiving the lowest percentage of agreeable responses asked if the administrator evaluation process would lead to improved student learning (83%) and if the respondent was satisfied with the process (83%).

Administrator responses showed that the three duties taking up the largest amount of time in an average week were: administrative duties such as hiring, scheduling and budgeting; student discipline issues; and parent and/or community concerns or involvement.

Approximately half (51%) of administrators stated that they spent at least five hours a week on administrative duties. Forty-six percent (46%) stated that they spent at least five hours per week on student discipline issues. One in three administrators (33%) stated that they spent at least five hours per week on parent and/or community concerns or involvement.



Twenty-five percent (25%) of administrators stated that administrative duties took up more than ten hours per week and 19% of administrators stated that student discipline took up more than ten hours per week.

The activities that administrators indicated as taking up the least amount of time per week were meetings with or sponsored by the central office, coaching teachers, and instructional planning with teachers. In addition, the percentage of teachers spending at least 3 hours per week observing teachers decreased by 15% (76% in SY1415, 61% in SY1516).

When asked to select the top three characteristics that they considered when hiring new teachers, the three most common answers were previous teaching experience, content knowledge, and enthusiasm. The percentage of administrators selecting each of these items increased by 8-10% from SY1415. The largest decrease was for ratings from the district Human Resources office (11% selected in SY1415, 3% selected in SY1516).