

## Teacher Survey Results

### **Who Are These Teachers?**

We surveyed Wilson County teachers who have taught in the last six years or who are currently teaching. We created an online survey and distributed it primarily through social media and a little bit through email.

Over three hundred teachers completed the “NC Teacher Survey.” Only 106 of those results were relevant to our study. The teachers whose results we discarded had either never taught in Wilson or had not taught within the last six years.

### **Years in Education**

18-23: 27

12-17: 25

6-11: 16

29+: 15

0-5: 14

23-28: 9

### **Teaching Status**

Current Teachers: 76

Retired with Full Benefits: 11

Resigned to Pursue Different Career: 11

Took Early Retirement: 6

Left for Medical Reasons: 1

Left for Family Reasons: 1

**Why did they take early retirement or resign? Could choose as many as they wanted.**

There was an incident: 1

Felt unsafe\*: 2

When questioned about how safe they felt at school 11 said 'all of the time', 40 said 'most of the time', 45 said 'usually', 4 said they "usually feel unsafe", 1 said they always felt 'unsafe'.

Student behavior: 3

Students were held to developmentally inappropriate standards: 3

Health Reasons:3

Did not morally agree with decisions being made: 3

Lack of resources: 4

Family Reasons: 5

Position moved during the year: 8

Thinks teaching has become too political: 6

Lack of administrative support: 7

Accepted a different job with better pay: 7

Lack of respect as a professional: 8

Felt Undervalued: 8

Expectations were too unrealistic: 12

Burned out: 12

**What could have made them stay? Could choose as many as they wanted.**

More grade level support: 2

Increased paid leave: 2

Not changing their position during the school year: 8

Not changing teacher expectations during the school year: 6

Increased planning time: 7

Better Access to Intervention specialists: 7

An easier way to plan lessons: 8

More administrative support: 11

More realistic expectations for teachers: 19

More pay: 22

**Feelings About Their Teaching Career as a Whole**

Somewhat Satisfied: 44

Satisfied: 29

Unsatisfied: 19

Extremely Satisfied: 8

Extremely Unsatisfied: 6

**They Find Satisfaction in Teaching because:**

It's Creative: 64

It's not monotonous: 66

They like feeling needed: 67

It lets them use logic to problem solve: 69

They get adequate time off: 76

They have a chance to build relationships with people in the community: 80

They have a chance to give back to the community: 81

They have positive relationships with their coworkers: 84

They get a fresh start every year: 88

They get to be a role model: 91

They love learning along with their students: 95

They get to learn about different perspectives: 100

They love celebrating milestones with their students: 104

They love watching students learn: 105

## **Their Challenges Are:**

Parent behavior: 59

They don't have enough opportunity to collaborate with other teachers: 60

They don't feel like they have enough control over what happens in their classroom:\* 64

\*When asked if they feel they have control over school policies 42 said 'no/never', 51 said 'occasionally', 10 said 'often', and 3 said 'most of the time'

Not able to use the bathroom when they need to go: 65

Lack of free, easily available resources: 67

Not enough time to plan: 73

Difficulty finding work/life balance: 76

Student Behavior: 77

Lack of Parental Involvement: 79

Constant changes in curriculum and educational programs: 79

Not enough support from their school support network: 80

Excessive paperwork: 83

Being held accountable when students don't progress "enough": 84

Filling too many roles at once: 96

The pay:\* 97

\*Later when asked to rate the fairness of their pay 78 said it was 'not fair', 24 said it was 'somewhat fair', 4 said it was 'fair'

\*57 live in a house with two incomes, 30 live in a house with two incomes and have a second job, 16 are the only earner in their home and have a second job, 3 are the only earner and have no second job.

**Do they feel respected by the community?**

All the time: 2

Often: 30

Occasionally: 66

Not at all: 8

**What would make them feel more respected as a professional:**

***Everyone's First Choices***

The Creation of a Teacher Advisory Council to Advise School/County Decision-Making:  
34

Consistently Available Supplements for Supplies: 26

Knowing Their Job Won't Change During the School Year: 19

Kind Words: 14

More Access to Grants: 5

More Opportunities to Collaborate with Peers: 4

Celebrations:2

Discounts:2

No one selected more opportunities for awards/rewards as their first choice.

***Top Three Choices According to Rankings:***

The Creation of a Teacher Advisory Council for School/County Decision-Making: 100

Consistently Available Supplements for supplies: 71

Kind Words from Students, Parents, Administrators, Members of the Community: 42

Knowing Their Job Won't Change During the School Year: 38

More Access to Grants: 31

Discounts: 14

More Opportunities for Awards/Rewards: 14

Celebrations: 8

**What they would do if they were in an administrative role to improve teacher retention:**

***Everyone's First Choices:***

Give Bonuses (monetary or tokens of appreciation) for teachers who go "the extra mile" to improve the effectiveness of their teaching: 27

Show Consistent, Verbal Gratitude when teachers are working hard and doing what they should: 26

Ask teachers individually what they need and do your best to connect them with the resources they need: 20

Create a Teacher Advisory Council to help with the decision-making: 11

Have more teaching resources, materials, and lesson plans available online for free: 8

Introduce programs to support teacher well-being such as access to a counselor, healthy snack and lunch options, and fitness initiatives: 4

Survey Teachers as a whole and prioritize the needs of the group: 4

Create opportunities for teacher collaboration: 2

### ***Top Three Choices According to Rankings:***

Ask teachers individually what they need, and do your best to connect them with the resources they need: 63

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Have more teaching resources, materials, and lesson plans available online for free: 44

Create opportunities for teacher collaboration: 24

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Survey Teachers as a whole and prioritize the needs of the group: 21

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### **What makes them continue to teach? (They were allowed to pick as many of these options as they wanted.)**

They don't feel like I have an alternative: 17

They are close to retirement: 19

They love being a teacher: 44

They love helping others: 49

No longer teachers: 26



**Who can they turn to for help? They could choose as many of these options as they like.**

County Officials: 6

No one: 8

Lead Teacher in my cohort: 15

Administrators at My School: 37

My mentor teacher: 24

My coworkers: 92

**Open-ended response. What can communities do to make teaching a better experience for teachers?**

Encouragement: 1

Consistency: 1

Safety: 1

Class size: 1

Mental Health help: 1

Better communication: 1

Collaborate with teachers: 1

Discounts: 2

Less testing: 2

Support for families in need outside of school: 2

Less Responsibilities: 3

Celebrate teacher successes: 5

More resources: 8

More volunteers: 10

Listen to teachers: 14

Respect: 22

Pay: 26

Support: 25

**Analysis:**

Teachers are overwhelmingly motivated by altruistic motives. They love to watch their students learn. They love to learn with them and celebrate their learning.

Relationships are important to them. The relationships they have with people in school as well as relationships with people in the community.

This information does not come as a surprise. What was surprising is that more than the opportunities for rewards/awards, what teachers overwhelmingly seem to desire is a voice.

The majority of teachers who responded to this survey said the thing that would make them feel the most like a professional is to participate in an elected teacher advisory council on the school/county level so that they could feel like they had a voice in the decision-making.

In this category, they also prioritized supplements for supplies for their classroom and kind words from community members over personal rewards as things that would make them feel respected.

Similarly, when asked what they would do to retain teachers if they were in charge, they also prioritized helping connect teachers with resources and verbal gratitude, over bonuses (monetary or tokens of appreciation).

While teachers listed the pay as their greatest challenge, zero teachers listed more opportunities to earn awards/rewards as their first choice for what they needed to feel respected. And even in looking at the top three ranked choices more opportunities for awards/rewards ranked towards the bottom of the list.

Conversely, when it came to what they would do to promote teacher retention, quite a few teachers chose bonuses (monetary or tokens of appreciation) as their first choice, which hints at a disparity between what they feel they need themselves and what they perceive others might need.

In the comments section, where teachers could say anything they thought communities could do to make teaching a better experience for teachers, the thing most teachers said they wanted was support. They want to know parents, students, and community members trust them to know what they're doing and support their decisions they make in the classroom and that parents will reinforce what the teachers say at home. Very close behind that was pay. Teachers do not feel their pay is equal to the work they do. And very close behind that is respect. Teachers do not feel respected enough. According to an earlier question in the survey, 70% of teachers reported not feeling respected most of the time by members of the community.

Only 35% of the teachers who responded said that they could rely on their school administrators for help, whereas 87% of the teachers listed their coworkers as people they could rely on for help. Teachers were allowed to choose as many entities as they wanted. 7.5% reported not being able to rely on anyone for help.

## **Next Steps:**

### **No cost solutions:**

Create Voluntary Teacher Advisory Boards on the School/County Level

Provide Connected Social Praise Verbally to Our Teachers.

Have teachers provide kind words of praise to each other.

Ask Teachers their opinions on things and use their opinions to inform decision-making

Create an online common drive where teachers from different schools in the same grade level or subject area can freely share lesson plans and resources

Encourage more people to volunteer.

Talk about teachers in a respectful manner.

Use social media to highlight excellent things teachers are doing.

Organize breaks for them. If a teacher has a long stint of classes with no break, check on them and see if they need a break.

Have high school seniors, eighth graders and fifth graders write letters to the teacher who has made the biggest impact on their life at every stage. Help the letters get to the teachers.

Have a before/after school fitness club for staff.

Open lines of communication between staff and parents that work for them.

Encourage students to report to administrators when staff are doing good things. Read those reports on the announcements or in a staff meeting and/or send as an email.

### **Low cost solutions:**

Have a teacher of the week or month award that includes a certificate, gift card or privilege pass.

Organize teacher networking events, social outings, or team-building exercises during meetings.

Write thank you notes to teachers who you see doing excellent things.

Goodies for staff.

Get students to make art for teachers

Have a positivity wall in the staff room.

Have a take a kindness/leave a kindness basket in the staffroom with small supplies and treats.

### **Solutions that Require Funding:**

Supply free coffee/tea/water in the staffroom.

Ask teachers individually what they need and help them get it.

Give each teacher a supply stipend.

Have the PTO give teachers a supply stipend.

Have PTO establish cash rewards for teacher excellence.

Solicit a sponsor--a local business or alumni who could help sponsor a cash reward for teacher excellence.

Help teachers join professional development organizations and attend off-campus enrichment activities that excite them.

Gas cards for teachers who "go the extra mile".

Hold more community events at schools, inviting families, and supportive community members.

Hold more events to celebrate teachers in the community.

Create a teacher hall of fame in the county office for teachers who have done exceptional things.

Create a digital marketing campaign for public schools. (Could be created by media studies students)

Hire a sub to give an overworked teacher a break.

Hire a sub to give a teacher a break as a reward.

Have an end of the year party for teachers.

Have a Christmas party for teachers where they can meet from other schools.

### **County Data from Wilson Co Schools Teacher Turnover 2021 (95 lost)**

Family Relocation-5

Teaching Elsewhere in NC-25

Moved to Charter/Private School in Wilson-7

Resigned-Other-14

Resigned-Health-6

Re-Employed Retired-3

Retired Reduced-5

Resigned to Continue Education-4

Resigned Career Change-6

Changed Position within Wilson County Schools-3

Retired with Full Benefits-15

Family Responsibility-2

Last year, we had 95 teachers leave Wilson County Schools