

THE LEARNING System

EVERY EDUCATOR ENGAGES IN EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EVERY DAY SO EVERY STUDENT ACHIEVES

Inside

- Develop a community constituency for professional learning, p. 2
- Maryland emphasizes value of family, community involvement, p. 3
- Tool: Evaluate district partnerships using the standards, pp. 6-7

Spring 2012

Vol. 7, No. 3

Community schools boost teacher and principal satisfaction

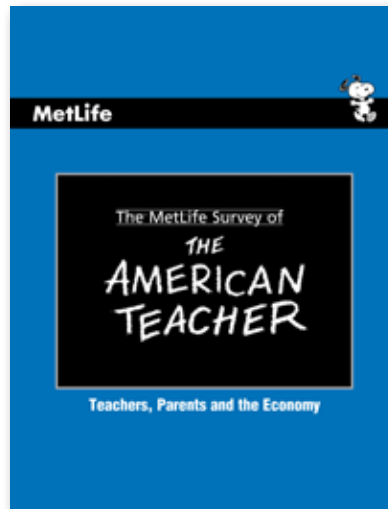
By Anthony Armstrong

Teacher satisfaction has reached its lowest point in 22 years, according to the new *MetLife Survey of the American Teacher: Teachers, Parents and the Economy*.

Teachers, Parents and the Economy.

During the last two years, the number of teachers who are very satisfied with their job has dropped 15%, which is the biggest decline the survey has seen in teacher satisfaction since the survey began tracking it in 1984, and the lowest point in teacher satisfaction since 1989. At the same time, the survey also saw an increase in the number of teachers who are thinking of leaving the profession (MetLife, 2011).

Meanwhile, the community school model is continuing to grow in popularity, thanks in part to its high rate of student success and teacher satisfaction. “We have evaluation data going back to the earliest years of this work, and it gets confirmed in every other evaluation, that teachers really like being part of a community school,” said Jane Quinn, vice president for community schools at the Children’s Aid Society in New York City, and director of its National Center for Community Schools, which has facilitated the development of over 15,000 community schools



nationally and internationally.

According to the Coalition for Community Schools’ website, community schools are centers for integrated social, health, and learning support. “A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities” (Coalition, 2012).

While the focus of community schools is on students and their communities, a close examination of the

Children’s Aid Society’s model reveals three key elements that offer opportunities to contribute to teacher and principal satisfaction while aligning with principles of high-quality professional learning.

ALIGN LEARNING SUPPORT

“We bring supports and services for students into each school and link them with the core instructional program, which the teachers are primarily responsible for,” said Quinn. “We have a parent resource center with a full-time

Continued on p. 4

MetLife Foundation

This newsletter was made possible with support from MetLife Foundation.



Your membership in Learning Forward gives you access to a wide range of publications, tools, and opportunities to advance professional learning for student success. Visit www.learningforward.org to explore more of your membership benefits.

Continued from p. 1

parent coordinator, an after school program, and a summer enrichment camp that is not summer school, but a camp that is designed to expand learning opportunities.”

While the exact services may vary, some schools go beyond their initial work with students and families and offer adult education courses for parents and other relatives, such as English as a second language, GED classes, and job training. These types of outreach activities help engage parents and align them with supporting student learning (Coalition, 2009). Such approaches are one part of building educator satisfaction. 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” (MetLife, 2011, p.9).

Because research shows that student success requires good physical and mental health, many of the Society’s community schools have a wellness center that provides medical, dental, and mental health services (Children’s Aid Society, 2011). Teachers praise such services because they allow them more time to focus on teaching. “Teachers are free from being distracted by the child who can’t see the blackboard or the child who just arrived in the states and is depressed because they feel like an outsider,” explained Quinn. “There are other professionals in the building to whom teachers can refer students when they need a vision screening or they have a toothache.”

To make sure the teachers and staff are familiar with

OTHER MODELS OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

• **City Connects**

Boston, Mass.
www.bc.edu/schools/lsoe/cityconnects

• **Communities In Schools**

Alexandria, Va.
www.communitiesinschools.org

• **Center for Mental Health in Schools: An Enabling Component to Address Barriers to Learning**

Los Angeles, Calif.
smhp.psych.ucla.edu

• **University Assisted Community Schools**

Philadelphia, Pa.
www.upenn.edu/ccp/programs/university-assisted-community-schools.html

• **Schools of the 21st Century**

New Haven, Conn.
www.yale.edu/21C/index2.html

the services offered and to best align their activities, the Children’s Aid Society’s community schools start each school year with an orientation for teachers and staff. The orientation provides an opportunity to learn about the partnership and to learn how everyone can help students access the services brought into the school.

Teachers and principals may request additional professional learning activities throughout the year, such as family engagement or child and adolescent development. These can be coordinated with regular professional development time.

PROVIDE COLLABORATIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Acting as more than just someone to whom students are referred, many of the health and wellness professionals on site are available to enter the classroom and work with teachers at the teacher’s request, or contribute to staff

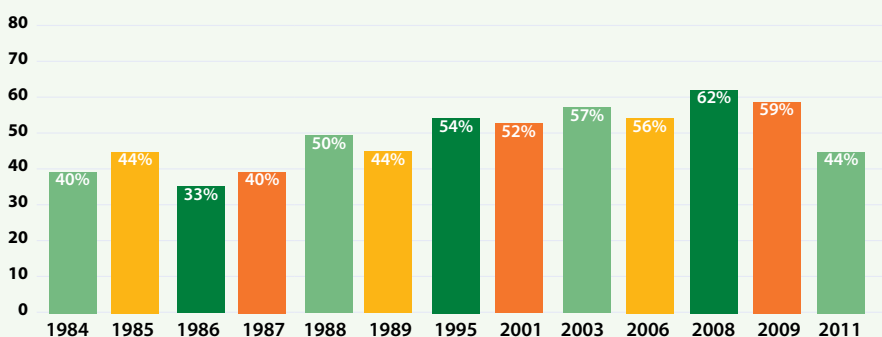
professional learning in collaborative team environments.

Mental health specialists are frequently a popular contributor to just-in-time staff learning, assisting with classroom observations and feedback, which often naturally transitions into a coaching role. “Teachers may want the mental health staff to help them with a particular child and his or her behavior, or teachers may want some guidance on classroom management if they’re having some behavior issues in their class,” said Quinn. “We often hear from teachers and principals that child and adolescent development was not something they learned about in preservice, and they want to get grounded in the basics, such as what is normal behavior, what are the developmental stages, or what are the developmental needs and tasks of a 6th grader versus a 3rd grader or a 9th grader.”

Site coordinators in the Society’s model also embed themselves into the professional teams throughout the schools. “We’re in the building all day every day,” said Quinn. “We are part of the school leadership team, the school safety committee, and what they call in New York the pupil personnel team. Most schools have a table at which the needs of individual children are discussed and teachers

Continued on p. 5

TEACHER JOB SATISFACTION THROUGH THE YEARS (% VERY SATISFIED)



Continued from p. 4

might go to that organized table to talk about a child that needs help. We are a part of the organizational structure.” In addition to more effective teaching and learning, this type of collaboration and shared leadership has been associated with higher levels of trust and job satisfaction, career satisfaction, improvements in school climate, and retention of qualified teachers and administrators (MetLife, 2009, p. 9).

ENSURE SUPPORTIVE LEADERSHIP IS PRESENT

According to Quinn, a mantra for the Society’s community schools is that there’s no substitute for a willing principal.

“Principal leadership is essential in all of this work,” said Quinn. “As far as we’re concerned, the principal, as the instructional leader, can make or break a community school.”

Learning Forward BELIEF

Remarkable professional learning begins with ambitious goals for students.


Citing a seven-year study of Chicago schools, published as *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago* (Bryk, Bender Sebring, Allensworth, Luppescu, & Easton, 2010). Quinn shared elements of the Society’s community schools for


success. “The first one, not surprisingly, is that the principal is the driver of change and has an inclusive leadership style. The second ingredient related to the first one was that the schools that were improving had significant family and community engagement. What they found was that the principal knew how to use community resources like the Children’s Aid Society and also knew how to work with parents as partners so that everybody was working in the same direction to promote student success. Principal leadership is essential in all of this work.”


According to Quinn, participating principal satisfaction is high as well. “We have a lot of principals who will tell you this — it makes their job a whole lot easier because we as a partner are able to take a lot of things off their plates. But we have a waiting list of principals who want to work with us, so I have no question that it is something that principals want.”

Community support

The need for community support comes at a time when a number of districts are cutting health and social services and experiencing a growing trend of large budget cuts. Within the last year:

 **28%** of teachers have seen reductions or eliminations of health or social services.

 **64%** of teachers reported an increase in students and families needing health and social support services.

 **76%** of teachers reported that their school’s budget has decreased.

Source: MetLife, 2011.

REFERENCES

Bryk, A.S., Bender Sebring, P., Allensworth, E., Luppescu, S., & Easton, J.Q. (2010). *Organizing schools for improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Children’s Aid Society. (2011). *Building community schools: A guide for action*. New York: Author.

Coalition for Community Schools. (2009). *Coalition for community schools research brief 2009*. Washington, DC: Author.

Coalition for Community Schools. (2012). *What is a community school?* Available at www.communityschools.org.

MetLife. (2009). *The MetLife survey of the American teacher: Collaborating for student success*. New York: Author.

MetLife. (2011). *The MetLife survey of the American teacher: Teachers, parents and the economy*. New York: Author.

Anthony Armstrong (anthony.armstrong@learningforward.org) is publications editor at Learning Forward. ●

All reports in the MetLife teacher survey series are available at www.metlife.com/teachersurvey.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

In 1994, the Children’s Aid Society founded the National Center for Community Schools in response to increased demand for information and advice about community schools implementation. Since then, the center has facilitated the development of more than 15,000 community school adaptations nationally and internationally. It shares the lessons from its work in *Building Community Schools: A Guide for Action* (2011), available for download from its website: www.childrensaidsociety.org/community-schools.