



PENNSYLVANIA TEACHERS  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

# **PENNSYLVANIA TEACHERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

## COMMITTEE REPORT

### **Chapter 49 of the Pennsylvania School Code**

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February, 2019  
[www.ptacvoice.org](http://www.ptacvoice.org)  
[ptacinfo@ptacvoice.org](mailto:ptacinfo@ptacvoice.org)

## About the Pennsylvania Teachers Advisory Committee

### Vision

The Pennsylvania Teacher Advisory Committee (PTAC) will ensure quality education for all students in the Commonwealth by making teachers' expertise integral to the education conversation.

### Mission

The Pennsylvania Teacher Advisory Committee (PTAC) endeavors to create a direct pipeline between highly recognized teachers from the wide variety of teaching settings across the Commonwealth and education decision makers so that substantive feedback from classroom practitioners across Pennsylvania will inform the policy decisions and educational practices that impact students.

### Contributors to this report have been recognized for teaching excellence by the following organizations:

- Apple
- Carson Scholars Fund
- Center for Creative Learning through the Arts
- Future Farmers of America
- Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History
- Global Teacher Prize
- International Society for Technology in Education
- Kutztown University
- Microsoft
- Milken Family Foundation
- National Board for Professional Teaching Standards
- National Geographic Society
- National School Boards Association
- National Science Foundation
- Pennsylvania Art Education Association
- Pennsylvania Association of Educational Communications and Technology
- Pennsylvania Association of School Retirees
- Pennsylvania School Librarians Association
- Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Philadelphia Home and School Council
- US Department of State
- Yale University
- Veterans of Foreign Wars
- Voya

## Table of Contents

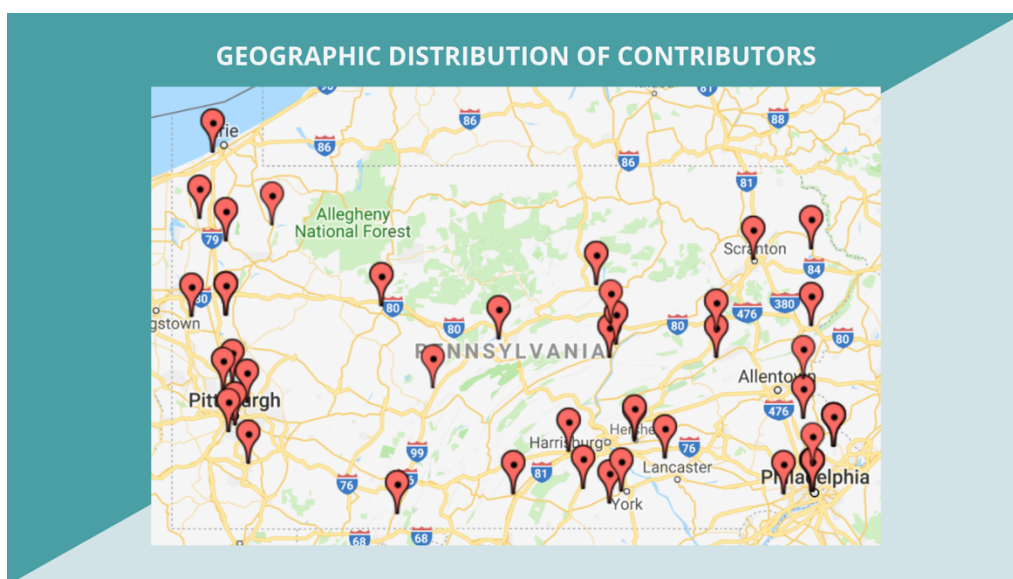
<b>Summary.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Part I: Teacher Shortage.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Part II: New Teacher Preparedness.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Part III: Social Emotional Learning and Trauma-Informed Care.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Findings.....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Contact Information.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Board of Directors.....</b>	<b>21</b>

## Summary

The Pennsylvania Teacher Advisory Committee (PTAC) consists of a diverse group of teachers who have been highly recognized for teaching excellence by statewide, national, and international organizations. These educators, each certified under the regulations laid out in Title 22, Chapter 49 of the Pennsylvania School Code, “Certification of Professional Personnel”, are dedicated to ensuring every child in Pennsylvania access to a quality education. Represented on PTAC are K-12 teachers in every content area from rural, urban, and suburban schools.

In July 2018, PTAC members were invited by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to join with other stakeholders in public comment sessions concerning Chapter 49. These sessions engaged stakeholders in conversations that ultimately informed recommendations made by PDE to the Pennsylvania State Board of Education. Five PTAC members attended these sessions across the Commonwealth and shared the impact of Chapter 49 on their classrooms and schools.

To corroborate and elaborate upon these initial discussions regarding Chapter 49, all PTAC members were surveyed and many attended virtual meetings. The objective of these surveys and conversations was to provide information regarding the practical implications of Chapter 49 on Pennsylvania’s students across content areas and grade levels, in large and small school districts and in urban, rural and suburban settings from the perspective of teachers who implement the policies on a daily basis in their classrooms. The daily experiences of classroom teachers with their students across Pennsylvania must inform decisions that strengthen the existing Chapter 49 regulations.



## Introduction

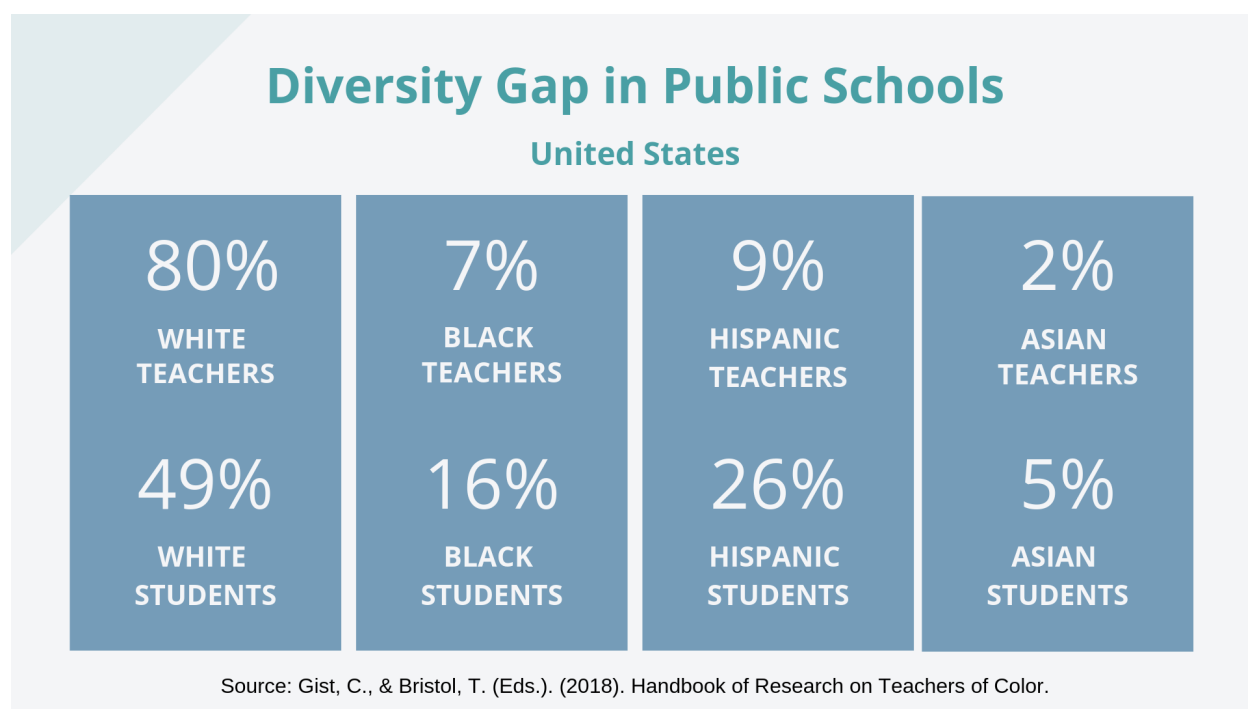
As part of the Public School Code of 1949, the Pennsylvania General Assembly adopted certification protocol for professionals pursuing careers in Pre K-12 school systems. Still in use today, this Code sets requirements for permanent, temporary, and substitute educators, supervisors, and administrators to both acquire and maintain their educational certificate. Title 22, Chapter 49 of the Code, helps drive programmatic guidelines at post-secondary institutions and more broadly in Pre K-12 educational systems. The impact of Chapter 49 regulations is directly felt daily by over a million Pennsylvania students and the teachers who serve them.

## Methodology

Data collection for this report was conducted in three ways. First, PTAC members who attended the PDE public comment sessions held a debriefing session on Chapter 49 during which they recorded comments and narratives that informed this report. Second, multiple surveys were sent out to PTAC membership in order to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Finally, virtual meetings and interviews were conducted with members to gather context for the data collected in the surveys.

## Part I: Teacher Shortage

Teacher shortages have become a major concern in an increasing number of US states. The shortage of teachers graduating from Pennsylvania institutions of higher education is particularly notable. According to Pennsylvania's ESSA State Plan, the number of newly certified teachers in Pennsylvania has dropped by 63% since 2010.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, the Center for Public Education reports that Pennsylvania has been the 4th-largest producer of educators, with roughly 5% of teachers nationwide being educated in the Commonwealth. The substantial decrease of teachers being trained in Pennsylvania is felt not only in the Commonwealth but throughout the entire Mid-Atlantic region.<sup>2</sup>



Pennsylvania school districts have also seen a decrease in the number of qualified educators entering into the job market. 91.1% of surveyed PTAC members perceive a teacher shortage in Pennsylvania. With only 5.6% of teachers in Pennsylvania being teachers of color<sup>3</sup>, declines in teacher retention and recruitment thwart efforts to diversify the workforce. The National Center for Education Statistics predicts that students of color will represent 54% of the overall student population by 2024.<sup>4</sup> Addressing diversity of the workforce as we address the teacher shortage is paramount.

<sup>1</sup> *Every Student Succeeds Act: Pennsylvania Consolidated Plan* (Publication). (2018). Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Education.

<sup>2</sup> Overview of Teacher Shortages: At a Glance. Center for Public Education. (2016, April).

<sup>3</sup> *New Data on Teacher Diversity in Pennsylvania* (2018). PA: Research for Action.

<sup>4</sup> *The State of Racial Diversity in the Educator Workforce* (2016). Washington, DC: United States Department of Education.

**My school has a very diverse student population. We have only three staff members of a racially diverse background and none of them are educators. I know our administrative team looks for racially diverse candidates, but the pool is shallow. We are not attracting racially diverse educators in Pennsylvania. I often wonder if our racially diverse students look at our make-up and feel like they don't belong in education because the only educators they see are white educators.**

*(Elementary technology teacher, small urban school in south-central Pennsylvania)*

## Diversity Gap in Pennsylvania's Schools

Only 5.6% of Pennsylvania's Teachers are Persons of Color

Pennsylvania's gap between students of color (33.1%) and TOCs remains among the most disparate in the country.

Fifty-five percent of Pennsylvania's public schools and 38% of all school districts employed only white teachers in 2016-17

Source: Philadelphia Education Research Consortium

An overwhelming majority, 98%, of surveyed PTAC members reported that the teacher shortage is having direct impact on their school district's ability to find substitute teachers. A substitute teacher shortage is often an indication of impending systemic issues with finding qualified teachers and directly impacts student learning.

A PTAC member from a mid-sized suburban school district in South Central Pennsylvania commented that her district has only two substitute teachers that are shared among all five of the schools. An elementary teacher from northeastern Pennsylvania commented, ***“it is virtually impossible to get a substitute with any knowledge of my content area.”*** In a large urban district, a teacher explained the burden of being absent, ***“I know when I call off that my colleagues will be covering my class. The chances of a substitute picking up my job is slim to none.”***

A lack of substitute teachers means that teachers are frequently pulled from preparation time, school duties that support students, and professional learning in order to cover classes. This adds to an already demanding workload for many teachers. 75% of surveyed PTAC members reported that they personally knew teachers who have left the profession claiming that an increase in demands, including covering classes that are not part of their usual workload, were a factor.

***When I entered the teaching profession 20+ years ago, educators were expected to create lesson plans, plan and deliver instruction, assess student learning, and manage student discipline. This seemed like a full plate and I honestly did not feel that my teacher candidate training program did a great job in preparing me for the realities of being a teacher. At that time, secondary teacher training programs focused primarily on content courses and until student teaching semester, there was very little interaction with students or in schools.***

***Over the next 23 years, the workload changed dramatically. Each year new responsibilities have been added, yet nothing has been taken away. No additional time has been added. Not only are educators tasked with helping students navigate the changes the 21st century has brought, we are also expected to complete additional administrative tasks, deal with more and more students who have experienced trauma, and provide more customized learning and problem-based experiences. We do all of this while worrying about how we and our schools will be “scored” on these elements, as well as things we cannot control.***

*(High school history teacher, rural school in northwestern Pennsylvania)*



Most critically, 65.6% of surveyed PTAC members confirmed that their districts are struggling to find qualified full-time teachers to fill positions. The pre-retirement attrition rate has increased drastically as well; 66% of teacher attrition is pre-retirement loss.<sup>5</sup> This combination of high pre-retirement attrition and low recruitment into post-secondary education programs significantly impacts school systems across the Commonwealth in rural, suburban, and urban districts.

***Student teachers have never been in abundance. However, we have always had one or two in most buildings each semester. This number has decreased dramatically in the last few years. We are now lucky to see one per building, per year. The last two student teachers that have been in my classroom were totally shocked that they would have to do so much work outside the school day and that other aspects of their lives would be impacted by the demands of the profession.***

*(High school social studies teacher, rural northwestern Pennsylvania)*

***There is a “quiet crisis” creeping across Pennsylvania school districts. Pre-retirement teachers are leaving the profession in unprecedented numbers, and their empty classrooms are being filled with less-qualified educators. Unfortunately, the highest concentration of pre-attrition loss and emergency certification occur in urban districts, a situation which increases the equity gap among Pennsylvania schools. Districts with the greatest need for highly-qualified teachers are settling for less-qualified instructors and larger class sizes.***

*(Elementary teacher, suburban eastern Pennsylvania)*

PTAC members from urban areas across the Commonwealth commented on seeing this “quiet crisis” every day. Teacher turnover in urban schools is particularly high. On average, 27% of teachers in Philadelphia leave their school at the end of each year.<sup>6</sup> PTAC teachers in urban settings connected the difficulty in teacher retention with issues from lack of trauma training to concern about school safety and the physical conditions of their buildings.

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<sup>5</sup> Pennsylvania Department of Education Chapter 49 Public Comment Hearing. (2018, July). Philadelphia, PA.

<sup>6</sup> Steinberg, M., Neild, R., Canulette, W.K., Park, S., Schulman, E., & Wright, M. (2018). Teacher mobility in the School District of Philadelphia, 2009-10 through 2015-16. Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Education Research Consortium.

***Teacher turnover in my school is insane. I think the life expectancy of most new teachers is five years, which is about two more years then our principals.***

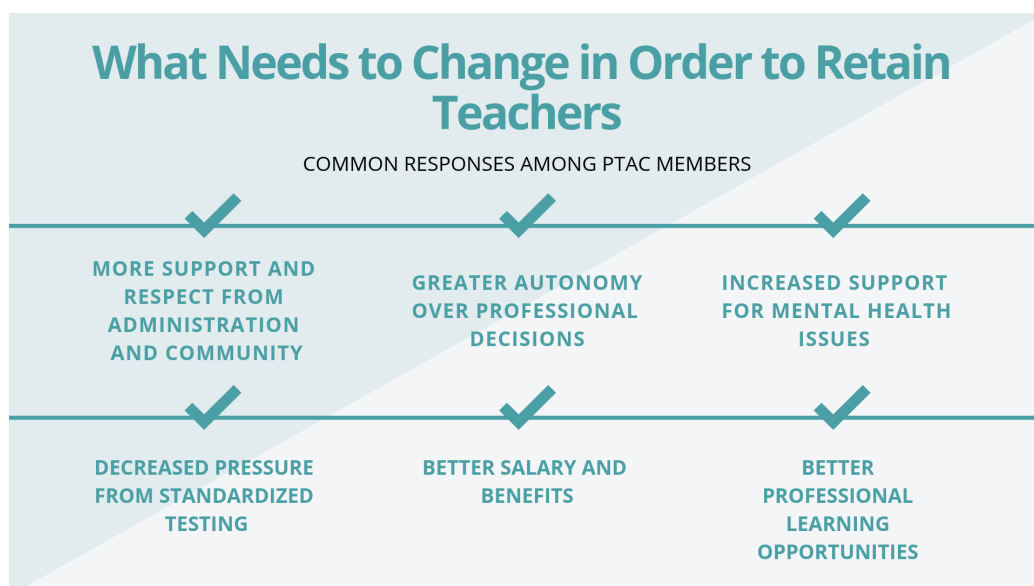
***Most teachers leave because the demand is too high, and the supports are too low. Teachers have not received the trauma training, mental health training, and resources to meet the demands of their job and the needs of their students. There is a lack of teacher appreciation too that I think hurts us. I mean, we get donuts in May and maybe a small gift card here and there but there is no elevation of our profession in my district. It's seemly impossible to be recognized for doing a great job. We often make “average” the standard and most of the people I know who love this job aren't OK with that. They leave and find a place where they are valued.***

*(Emotional Support Teacher, Pittsburgh)*

***Our school is in a very dangerous neighborhood where a lot of the issues from outside find their way into our schools. It is hard for some teachers to come to work because it can be scary. Add that to the fact that our doors don't always lock and the temperatures in the rooms can range from too hot to think to too cold to sit still.***

*(Elementary School Teacher, Philadelphia)*

Finally, educators were surveyed about what needs to change in order to retain educators.



## Part II: New Teacher Preparedness

The quality of educators is the most powerful school-related determinant of student success.<sup>7</sup> When time, energy and resources are put into mentoring new and pre-service educators, more qualified candidates are available to fill teaching positions.

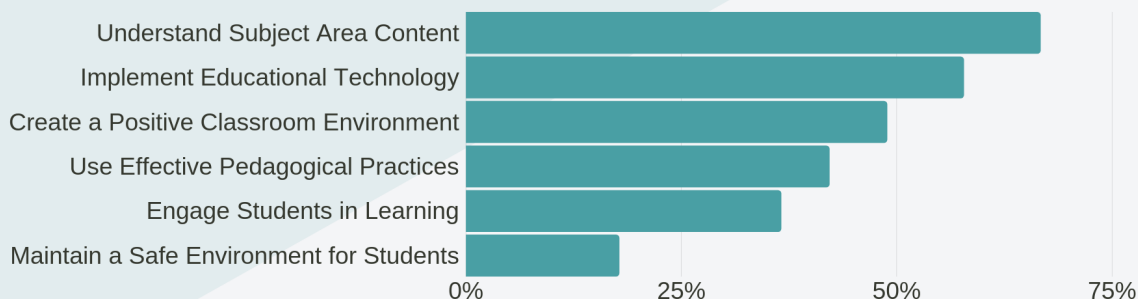
The majority of surveyed PTAC members, 53.3%, reported that student teachers that have served in their school were not prepared adequately to begin their career as a teacher. The most common deficiencies included areas of safety, motivation, and pedagogical practice.

- 82.2% of those surveyed reported student teachers had an inability to maintain a safe classroom environment
- 64.4% reported student teachers had a lack of ability to engage students
- 57.8% reported student teachers having difficulty in utilizing proper teaching strategies

The area where our survey showed the strongest preparedness among student teachers was in content area knowledge. While 66% of those surveyed reported their student teachers had a strong understanding of the subject matter they were teaching, this still leaves a third deficient in understanding the material they are teaching students.

### Have student teachers in your school been well prepared?

Percentage of PTAC members who say student teachers in their school were well prepared in these areas



Survey of PTAC members  
conducted between November  
2018 and January 2019

<sup>7</sup> "Hiring the Best Teachers," *Educational Leadership*, Volume 60, Number 8, May 2003, pp. 48-52.

**Over my 18 years of teaching, I have seen a decline in the preparation of my student teachers. For me, their lack of content knowledge is secondary to their inability to truly engage students and to be independent thinkers. I feel as if my student teachers think about their teaching in limited pockets of time. Years ago, student teaching was their “job”. Now they are juggling other jobs, more required coursework at their colleges, and family obligations. We need to figure out a way to balance their needs with the needs of our students.**

*(High school music teacher, suburban southwestern Pennsylvania)*

During an online meeting about Chapter 49, two PTAC members recounted recent experiences they had with student teachers and lesson planning. A social studies teacher from a suburban southwestern school commented on the “technology gap” for preservice teachers. **“Several of my past student teachers are very far behind with educational technology and there’s a big learning curve. They are often looking for lessons online rather than making their own. It’s great to start slow to get comfortable.”** A high school English teacher from rural, central Pennsylvania concurred, reflecting on a conversation she had with her student teacher during which he got upset when she asked him to create his own lesson plans rather than looking for lessons online.

**I have had three student teachers in the last eight years. All of them have said they needed more time in the classroom, and that they were not comfortable starting their own classrooms after they were finished.**

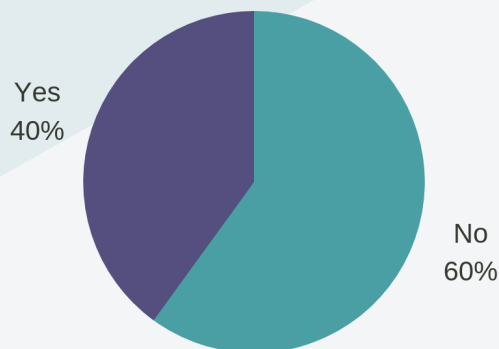
*(Elementary teacher, rural northeastern Pennsylvania)*

Educator preparedness extends beyond preparation as pre-service teachers and into mentoring programs for new teachers in schools. School district mentoring programs allow new educators an opportunity to bridge their training from an academic space to the real-world challenges of being in a classroom. 62.5% of our surveyed members report that their school district does not offer new educators mentoring beyond their first year. With 20% of educators leaving the profession within their first five years of teaching, successful in-house mentoring programs are critical.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> *Facts about the Teaching Profession for A National Conversation about Teaching* (Issue brief). Washington, DC: United States Department of Education.

## Does your school district offer a mentorship program for new teachers that extends beyond the first year of teaching?



Survey of PTAC members  
conducted between November  
2018 and January 2019

Even when supported by a mentoring program in their first year, new teachers are often overwhelmed by the demands of the profession.

**As department chair, I try to make sure all of our teachers are supported. One of our new teachers this year has told me multiple times that she is considering leaving teaching. Although she has a great attitude and adequate content knowledge, she is overwhelmed because she feels unprepared. During her student-teaching experience she was given scripted lessons to use by her cooperating teacher. Because her co-op was worried about how students would perform on the upcoming Keystone Exam, the student teacher was not given the opportunity to learn how to design lessons, differentiate instruction based on student needs, or adapt lessons when they failed. Now, this new teacher is in a situation where she has to learn all of those things while handling all of the other demands of the job. We've seen this in other cases at my school before. It's a systemic problem.**

*(High school science teacher, rural northeastern Pennsylvania)*

### Part III: Social Emotional Learning and Trauma-Informed Care

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was built upon the belief that the political community should exist for the common good. In that vein, educational stakeholders in Pennsylvania are committed to ensuring that all students have their educational needs met. This is reflected in Pennsylvania's ESSA plan.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, according to the Centers for Disease Control, one in five children living in the United States experience a mental disorder in any given year.<sup>10</sup> This must be addressed if these children are to be successful in school.

The terms "Social-Emotional Learning" (SEL) and "Trauma Informed Care" originated in the late 1990's as educators recognized an increase in students entering the classroom presenting social, emotional, and/or mental health needs. More recently, teachers, schools, and school districts are being intentional about addressing these needs. Despite this increased focus on SEL, many teachers are struggling to meet the needs of students with social-emotional issues. Surveyed PTAC members believe the majority of educators have not received the proper training and do not feel prepared to handle the social and emotional needs of their students.

***Educators and administration are not trained in the basic neuroscience of learning. SEL is an essential factor in students' abilities to engage in higher-cognitive functioning. Without staff awareness of how to regulate and relate to students through SEL, not only will behavioral issues manifest, real learning potential will be stunted.***

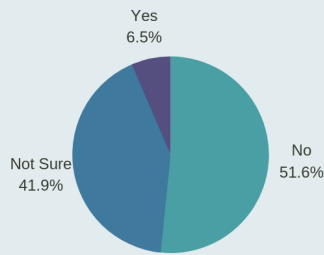
*(Secondary science teacher, Philadelphia)*

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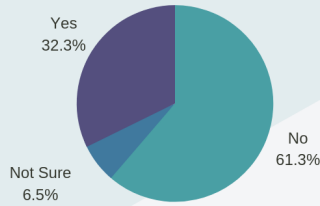
<sup>9</sup> *Every Student Succeeds Act: Pennsylvania Consolidated Plan* (Publication). (2018). Harrisburg, PA: Pennsylvania Department of Education.

<sup>10</sup> Children's Mental Health Report. Washington, DC: Centers for Disease Control. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/features/kf-childrens-mental-health-report.html>

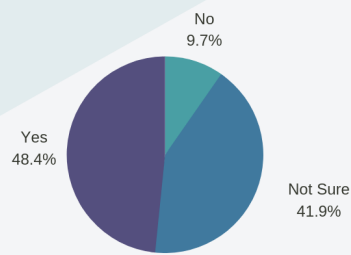
# Social Emotional Learning



**Do you feel teachers are prepared to handle the social and emotional needs of students in their care?**



**Have you received training on Social Emotional Learning?**

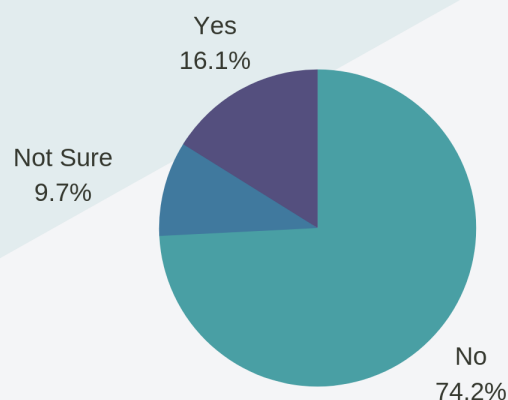


**Do community mental health agencies work well with your district to protect students?**

Survey of PTAC Members conducted between December 2018 and January 2019

The majority of surveyed educators come from districts that either do not contract out for mental health services or are unaware of how their districts meet these specific needs for students. As school districts focus on the wellbeing of the whole child, many educators are not prepared to meet the growing emotional needs of their students. In order to be effective, teachers must be able to identify the needs of their students and be trained in best practices for holistically teaching these students. The terminology may be familiar, but many educators and other stakeholders do not have a complete understanding of what social emotional learning is and how it affects our students. PTAC members overwhelmingly felt underprepared to address the increasing social-emotional issues they are faced with in their classrooms.

## Have you received training to properly meet the needs of students who have experienced trauma?

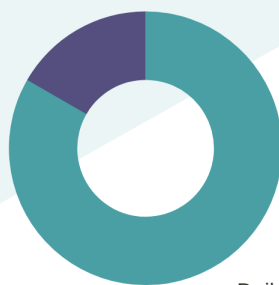


Survey of PTAC members  
conducted between December  
2018 and January 2019

We asked PTAC members who in their buildings is equipped to support students with social-emotional needs. The results were stark and speak to the inequity in educational funding and resource allocation across the Commonwealth. 60% said that they use guidance counselors or emotional support staff. One-sixth of surveyed teachers did not have daily access to any staff members trained in mental health needs.

## Access to Mental Health Resources

No Daily Access to Mental Health Resources  
16.7%



Daily Access to Trained Staff  
83.3%

Survey of PTAC Members  
between December 2018 and  
January 2019



***We have a major lack of social workers, crisis counselors, parental support systems, and mental health curriculum.***

*(Elementary teacher, suburban southeastern Pennsylvania)*

***We have students with needs and no proper placement for them. Some students are unsafe due to trauma and emotional issues. It is dangerous for them to be around other students. They threaten other students and teachers, as well as being a danger to themselves. Districts must pay large sums of money for alternate placements and therapies. It makes students and teachers alike feel nervous, powerless, and fearful. I feel bad for students who need something more and can't get it due to lack of resources, training, and funding. However, I also feel bad for educators asked to continually allow disrespectful behavior or teach with inadequate resources or training to meet needs for students who have experienced trauma.***

*(Elementary technology teacher, small urban school in south-central Pennsylvania)*

***I think teachers are given information about students who have been through trauma, but we receive no real training on how to help these students. Our district relies on videos as training for issues like these.***

*(Middle school language arts teacher, rural northwestern Pennsylvania)*

Social-emotional learning and trauma informed care is not isolated to any one demographic or age level. This makes a “one size fits all” approach an impossible solution for the children of Pennsylvania. The diversity of teaching settings within the PTAC membership provides for a wide range of voices and perspectives on how these issues are manifesting with students in classrooms across Pennsylvania. Every child and every community are unique.

***My district has many families who struggle to support themselves. Some parents work multiple low paying and/or part-time jobs, others struggle to find work. Generational poverty is a real issue in our community. In addition, drug use is on the rise and impacts directly or indirectly many of our families. There is also a fairly high percentage of teen pregnancy in our school district.***

*(High school social studies teacher, rural northwestern Pennsylvania)*

***As a gifted support teacher and parent of a gifted child, I am concerned about social/emotional learning for our population of gifted children. Many children who are gifted struggle with heightened emotions, difficulties interacting with peers and adults, and with being understood by others.***

*(Gifted teacher, suburban southeastern Pennsylvania)*

***Many of our students have parents in jail, have been abused, or are neglected. Teachers often need to help students deal with those issues before learning can take place.***

*(Emotional Support Teacher, Pittsburgh)*

Asked about the biggest concerns related to SEL and how they impact the learning environment, our membership responded with common trends. These trends are represented by the following statements:

***I think there is so much emphasis on the PSSAs, that things like social emotional learning aren't viewed as an important part of learning.***

*(Middle school language arts teacher, rural school northwestern Pennsylvania)*

***I think we talk about the social and emotional learning, but at least at the secondary level it goes by the wayside for content knowledge.***

*(High school English teacher, rural central Pennsylvania)*

***Our school board has made it clear that they believe these "feel good" programs don't work. It makes me sad that they don't see the value of social emotional learning for our students.***

*(Elementary teacher, rural northeastern Pennsylvania)*

In 2011 a Penn State University study of more than 270,000 students found that educators who are properly prepared in social emotional learning see, on average, an 11% growth in student achievement.<sup>11</sup> SEL and Trauma Informed Care directly impact the quality of education that Pennsylvania students receive. Our membership, some of the most highly trained teachers in Pennsylvania, feel untrained in these areas.

**While I feel like I have a lot to learn when it comes to meeting the social-emotional and mental health needs of my students, I am determined to do what I can to help them be successful. I want them to feel safe and supported. Most of the teachers I know in my school and in other locations feel the same way. We want the professional learning to help us be better in this area so that we can be better for our students.**

*(Elementary STEM teacher, rural northeastern Pennsylvania)*

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<sup>11</sup> Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development*, 82(1), 405–432.

## Findings

1. The teacher shortage in Pennsylvania is making the hiring of properly certified and diverse educators difficult. This, in conjunction with teacher turnover is currently impacting many students in the Commonwealth. Additionally, many school districts are finding it difficult to hire qualified substitute teachers. Our members feel that greater support, respect, and autonomy are needed to recruit additional teachers.
2. PTAC members report student teachers and teachers who are new to the profession are not well prepared to meet the needs of students. Most mentoring programs in school districts do not extend beyond the first year of teaching. Insufficient preparation of and support for new teachers directly affects students. This lack of support may also contribute to issues with teacher retention.
3. Teachers do not feel prepared to properly address the growing number of students they see who have experienced trauma or have social emotional learning needs. PTAC members are passionate about their students and feel that SEL and trauma-informed care are critical components in their daily work.

## Contact Information

### **Pennsylvania Teachers Advisory Committee**

5559 Hampton Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Email: [ptacinfo@ptacvoice.org](mailto:ptacinfo@ptacvoice.org)

Website: <http://ptacvoice.org>

Twitter: [@ptacvoice](https://twitter.com/ptacvoice)

## Board of Directors

### **Mairi Cooper, President**

The 2015-16 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year and Yale University Distinguished Music Educator, Mairi is the orchestra director and chair of the music department at Fox Chapel Area High School.

### **Michael Soskil, Vice-President**

The 2017-18 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year and a 2016 Global Teacher Prize Top-10 Finalist, Michael is an elementary science teacher and Head Teacher at the Wallenpaupack South Elementary School.

### **Brice Hostutler, Treasurer**

A National Board Certified Teacher, Brice is a special education teacher at Pittsburgh Perry High School. He teaches math and English while specializing in therapeutic support.

### **Cindy Ollendyke, Secretary**

A 2006 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year finalist, Cindy has thirty-five years' experience teaching science at the middle school level in the Peters Township School District.

### **Kelly Dougherty**

A 2016 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year finalist, Kelly has been teaching second grade for 15 years at Southern Lehigh School District.

### **Karey Killian**

The 2017 International Society for Technology in Education Librarian of the Year, Karey helps students see themselves as explorers, makers, inventors, and solution finders in the Milton Area School District.

### **Jake Miller**

The 2016 National History Day Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year and a 2017 NEA Foundation Teacher of Excellence, Jake teaches middle school history in the Cumberland Valley School District.

### **Tony Rocco**

Recipient of the National Liberty Museum's "Teacher as Hero" Award, Tony teaches children photography and how to appreciate one another in Philadelphia.

### **Rebecca Snyder**

The 2009 Pennsylvania Teacher of Year, Rebecca teaches English Language Arts at Greater Latrobe Senior High School.

