

THE WIDGET EFFECT

Our National Failure to Acknowledge and Act on Differences in Teacher Effectiveness



ARKANSAS FACT SHEET

El Dorado • Jonesboro • Little Rock • Springdale

Research for *The Widget Effect* was conducted in collaboration with El Dorado Public Schools, Jonesboro Public Schools, Little Rock School District and Springdale Public Schools. Statewide, The New Teacher Project surveyed 2,191 Arkansas teachers, 117 administrators and examined over 1,500 evaluation records.

Key findings in surveyed districts include:

- Nearly 7 in 10 teachers believe that dismissing poorly performing non-probationary teachers is important for building a high-quality workforce.
- More than 5 in 10 administrators believe there are non-probationary teachers in their buildings who should be dismissed for poor performance.
- Virtually no non-probationary teachers in Jonesboro or Springdale have received an unsatisfactory performance rating since 2005.

Arkansas teacher evaluation systems almost never assign the lowest ratings to non-probationary teachers.

District	Satisfactory Ratings	Unsatisfactory Ratings
El Dorado	n/a	n/a
Jonesboro	99.7%	0.3%
Little Rock	n/a	n/a
Springdale	100%	0%

Jonesboro data represent school years 2003-04 to 2007-08. Springdale data represent school years 2005-06 to 2007-08.

Note: "n/a" indicates no evaluation data was available.

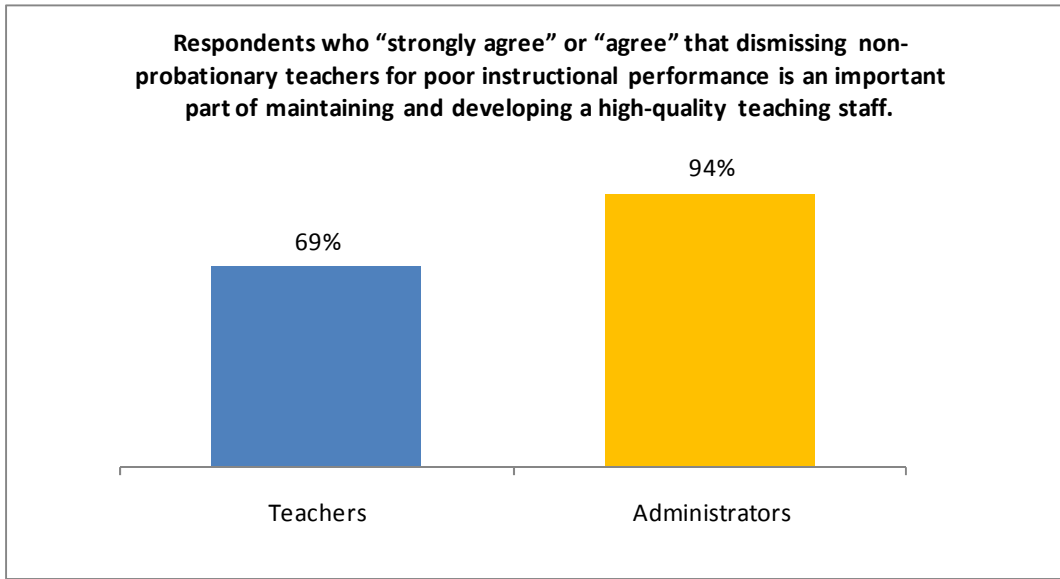
Teacher performance data is rarely used to make key human capital decisions.

X indicates when teacher performance is taken into account.

	El Dorado	Jonesboro	Little Rock	Springdale
Recruitment				
Hiring/Placement				
Professional Development				
Compensation				
Granting Tenure				
Retention				
Layoffs				
Remediation	X	X	X	X
Dismissal	X	X	X	X

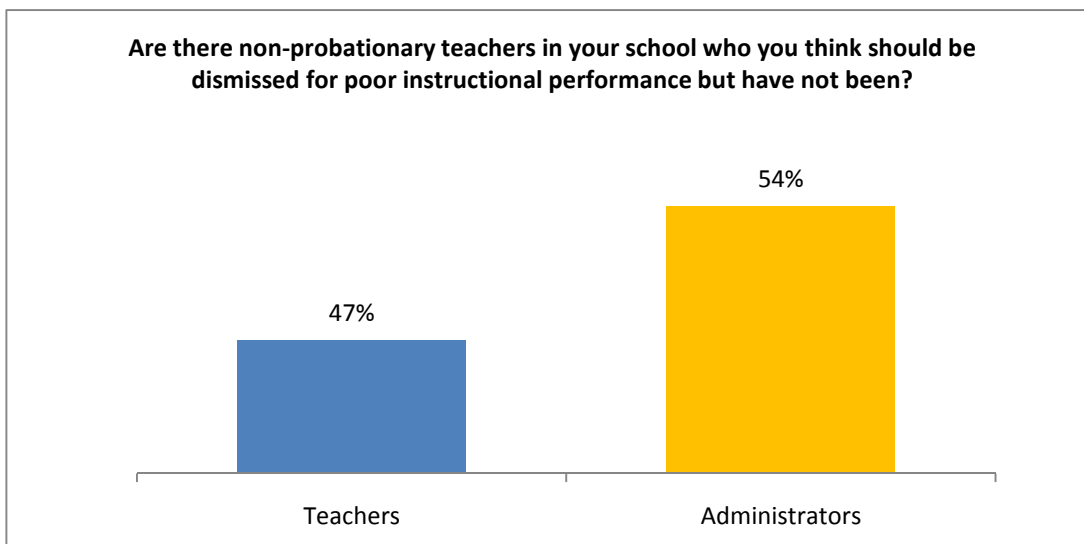


Teachers and administrators agree that dismissing poorly performing teachers is important for building a high-quality workforce.



Survey data collected from 2,196 teachers and 117 administrators across all four Arkansas study sites.

Despite the fact that both teachers and administrators recognize poor performance in their buildings, it goes unaddressed.



Survey data collected from 2,196 teachers and 117 administrators across all four Arkansas study sites.

Only some teachers report receiving quality feedback on their performance, yet most administrators feel confident in their ability to provide it.

- 69 percent of teachers “strongly agree” or “agree” that their evaluator provided them with constructive feedback and strategies that they could use to improve instruction.
- 94 percent of administrators feel confident in their ability to provide teachers with information and strategies to improve their instructional performance.

Arkansas Policy Overview

Background Information

- Number of school districts: 245¹
- Number of students: 476,409²
- Number of students in poverty (FRPL): 44,724
- Number of classroom teachers: 35,089
- Number of initial teaching certificates issued during school year 2006-07: 1,651³
- Arkansas is a right-to-work state whereby teachers do not collectively bargain.

Teacher and Student Data System⁴

- Arkansas has a data system with the capacity to provide evidence of teacher effectiveness, yet it does not use the data system to provide value-added evidence of teacher effectiveness.
- Students are assigned unique identifiers that connect student data across key databases across years.
- Teachers are assigned unique identifiers that enable the state to match individual teacher records with individual student records.
- The state has the capacity to match student test records from year to year in order to measure student academic growth.

Non-Probationary Status/Tenure

- Arkansas refers to its tenured teachers as “non-probationary” rather than “tenured.”
- Non-probationary status is a property right under Arkansas law.
- Arkansas teachers generally earn non-probationary status after teaching for three consecutive years in one of the state’s school districts.
- Probationary teachers, at the discretion of the district, may be required to teach for a fourth year prior to earning non-probationary status.
- State law does not require teacher effectiveness to be considered when a teacher passes from probationary to non-probationary status. Rather, the process is controlled at the district level with no uniform criteria applied across districts.

Layoffs/Reduction in Force

- Under state law, school districts are required to have a written policy on reduction in force based upon objective criteria for a layoff and recall of teachers.⁵ State policy is silent on whether or not instructional effectiveness, if measured objectively, can be used in layoff and reduction-in-force procedures.

Teacher Evaluation

- Arkansas state law requires that probationary and non-probationary teachers be evaluated annually.
- The state allows school districts to develop their own teacher evaluation system, yet it provides very thin guidance on what constitutes an “effective” system.⁶
- Under state law, districts are required to develop performance standards for teachers and evaluate teachers against these standards, yet criteria for the development of these standards does not exist.⁷
- Individual teacher instructional effectiveness is not factored into the teacher evaluation process.
- Districts are required, under state law, to train supervisors and teachers on their district’s teacher evaluation system. However, state law provides no criteria for the quality, rigor and frequency of such training.
- New teachers (those with less than one year of teaching experience) are observed three times annually by their mentor as part of the state’s mentoring program. After each observation, formative feedback is shared with the teacher to support the teacher’s individual growth and development. School administrators are not privy to observation outcomes and therefore have limited awareness of instructional shortcomings. Moreover, these observation data are prohibited from being used in employment decisions.⁸



Professional Development/Support

- State law requires teachers to participate in professional development. However, professional development activities, under state law, are not required to correlate with individual teacher development areas.

Compensation⁹

- Arkansas supports alternative pay for teachers. State law requires the use of “a variety of objective criteria that are credible, clear, specific, measurable indicators of student achievement, and generally accepted best practices to determine pay.”
- Annual increases in student test scores can be considered at no more than 50 percent of the alternative-pay program’s eligibility requirements.
- Alternative pay must equate to at least 10 percent of a teacher’s salary and be received by the teacher in one year.

Remediation and Dismissal

- State law requires school districts to develop a remediation plan for struggling teachers, yet the law is silent on whether or not failure to fulfill remediation plan requirements should result in dismissal.¹⁰
- State law does not limit the number of times a teacher can be placed on remediation causing poor performers to potentially cycle on and off remediation throughout their teaching career.
- The Arkansas *Teacher Fair Dismissal Act* clearly states that a teacher can be dismissed for “incompetent performance”¹¹ as defined by the district.
- The teacher dismissal process can take up to 60 days from start to finish, not including the remediation process.

¹ http://arkansased.org/schools/schools_public_sites.html

² School year 2006-07. <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/stateprofiles/sresult.asp?mode=full&displaycat=1&s1=05&s2=39>

³ School year 2006-07. <https://title2.ed.gov/Title2DR/NumCertified.asp>

⁴ http://www.nctq.org/stpy08/reports/stpy_arkansas.pdf and <http://www.dataqualitycampaign.org/survey/states/AR>

⁵ Arkansas Code 6-17-2407

⁶ Arkansas Teacher Effectiveness guidelines, from <http://www.arkansased.org/rules/pdf/current/050.pdf>

⁷ 4.05, “A set of teacher competencies descriptive of the local district’s expectations and aligned with teacher licensure principles,” from <http://www.arkansased.org/rules/pdf/current/050.pdf>

⁸ Arkansas Novice Teacher Mentoring Guidelines, from http://www.arkansased.org/teachers/pdf/im_guidelines_0508.pdf

⁹ Arkansas Code 6-17-119

¹⁰ Arkansas Code 6-17-1504(c)

¹¹ Arkansas Code 6-17-1507(a)

