



— WHAT KEEPS EFFECTIVE —  
**TEACHERS IN THE  
CLASSROOM**

MAKING A DIFFERENCE  
**SUPPORT** EXPERIENCE  
QUALITY OF WORK  
OPPORTUNITY CAREER GROWTH  
TEACHER'S VOICE **NETWORKS**



**This brochure gives you the direct voice of teachers,**

as they offer their insights on what challenges they face in schools, what pressures threaten to push them out of the classroom, and what factors keep them in the classroom. It should come as no surprise that teachers tell us that high-quality training and continued professional development are key to attracting and supporting effective teachers. And once teaching, support for teacher collaboration, most notably in structured mentor programs, as well as opportunities for leadership—including teachers’ voices in policy and decision-making—are instrumental in retaining effective teachers.

This larger initiative—developed from a survey of over 1,200 teachers around the country and supplementary teacher interviews—includes a research report, a series of policy briefs, and a documentary showcasing the voices of teachers. Its aim is to help education decision makers at all levels think about what supports and measures need to be put in place to improve teacher retention, teacher quality, and ultimately student performance.

**TEACHER LEADERSHIP**

**What Teachers Say**



**Peggy Gordon; over 28 years; Pre-Kindergarten; Miami, FL**  
At my school, they lay the responsibility on the experienced teacher for handling the committee, handling more than one committee. I’m on four different committees at my school; plus I’m a member of the mentoring team – the professional growth team that mentors the new teachers. But it’s a lot on my plate.



**Jane Fung; over 25 years; Kindergarten; Los Angeles, CA**  
I want teaching to be a career that has multiple steps where teachers can continue to grow and get paid for what they do in different steps, and if they choose to do something with more responsibility, they’re compensated for it.



**Caron Rose; over 12 years; Elementary School; Miami, FL**  
We are the experts. We went to school. We studied. We now know what the children in our classes need. We are the professionals, the specialists, if you will. And we work at it every day.



**Susan Gold; over 20 years; Middle School English Language Arts and Social Studies; San Francisco, CA**  
Teachers are right at the nexus of this issue. They’re caught between the policy makers who mandate what education should look like and the children. I think we’re in a very good position to guide the policies that would give us an excellent education system.

**What The Research Says**

Accomplished teachers tend to seek out leadership opportunities but require supports to fulfill their promise as leaders.

Increased opportunities to lead build on one another and translate into increased success for instructional leaders. Teachers who report more control over the policies in their schools and greater degrees of autonomy in their jobs are more likely to remain in teaching and to feel invested in their careers and schools.

Professional networks for teachers offer a means by which teacher leadership can be nurtured and expertise can be spread.

Expanding leadership roles and advancement opportunities for teachers may be an excellent and cost-effective strategy for retaining the most effective teachers.

# TEACHER COLLABORATION

## What Teachers Say



**Lyntonia Coston**; 6 years; *High School Global History; Brooklyn, NY*  
One of the main reasons I’m staying is because I’m at a school where I feel supported and where I feel that I have opportunities to lead new teachers and to learn from teachers.



**Brenda González**; 5 years; *Bilingual Special Education; Bronx, NY*  
We should have teachers mentor other teachers. We’ve just put in a buddy system where we have veteran teachers mentor other teachers who have just come in. And so it’s not coming from the bureaucracy; it’s not coming from outside – it’s coming from within. ...Nothing beats experience in the classroom.

## What The Research Says

When teachers are given time and tools to collaborate with their peers, they are more likely to teach effectively and more likely to remain in the high-needs schools that need them most.

Collaboration among teachers paves the way for the spread of effective teaching practices, improved outcomes for the students they teach, and the retention of the most accomplished teachers in high-needs schools.

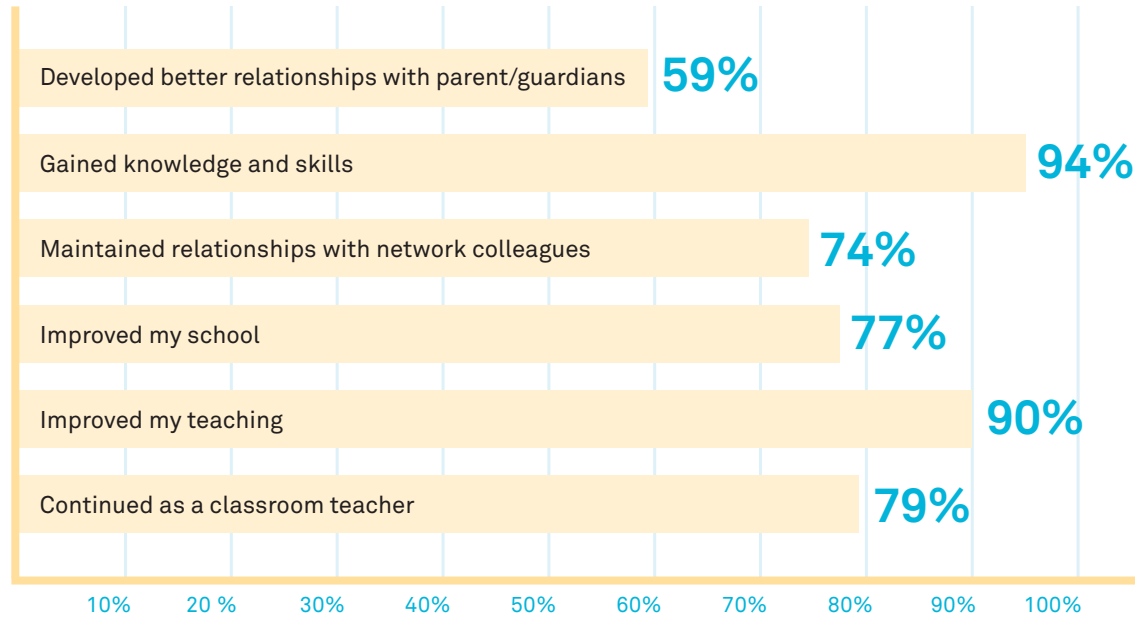
Over 90 percent of the teachers reported that their network participation improved their teaching practice, and over three-fourths feel that it has improved their school overall.

Almost 80 percent claimed that their network involvement fueled their intention to stay in teaching.

Schools that operate collaboratively tend to be more attractive schools in which to work. To be most effective, though, collaboration should be structured carefully.

## Teachers Network Survey Responses

“As a result of network participation, I have...”



Respondents to the Teachers Network survey were also clear about the benefits of their participation in **collaborative** activities through teacher networks. Over 90 percent of the teachers reported that their network participation improved their teaching practice, and over three-fourths feel that it has improved their school overall.

# TEACHER TRAINING & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## What Teachers Say



**Garth Wolkoff; 13 years; High School English; Brooklyn, NY**

Teacher training is incredibly inadequate. There's the stereotype of the first year teacher who goes home and cries. 'This is going to be the worst year of your life,' you tell these first year teachers. Why does it have to be like that?



**Deborah Van Doren; 5 years; Elementary School Music; Brooklyn, NY**

I went in there; I was bright-eyed and bushy-tailed and I was just thinking, "Oh these kids just need more love - that's all they need" and they looked at me and I was like dinner. There's nothing that can take the place of having had experience with a real teacher.



**Daniel Abramowski; 4 years; High School Government and Economics; New York City, NY**

What you hear about schools is 'there's a lot of testing,' 'your students are not going to pass this test,' 'you're not going to be successful,' 'you're going to work long hours, and it's going to be miserable.' When you have options, it's hard to choose that option of putting yourself in the position where you're going to be teaching in a public school. So, I think It's about creating conditions in public schools where teachers can be successful.



**Renny Fong; 12 years; Elementary School Information Technology; New York, NY**

What will keep me in teaching is that I feel that I can continue to make a difference in education. And when we're given the tools and the training then I feel that I can keep learning more. That's the beauty of teaching; you never stop learning.

## What The Research Says

Teachers cite early, frequent, and relevant clinical experiences as a critical component of high-quality professional preparation. A high-quality, clinically intensive preparation program is what matters most for training effective new teachers—not whether it is a traditional or alternative route into the profession.

Peer learning opportunities, including mentoring, are critical supports – especially for beginning or less-accomplished teachers – and contribute both to instructional effectiveness and retention.

When teachers have greater ability to direct the professional development they receive, they are more likely both to appreciate those experiences and to improve their classroom practice as a result of them.

Teachers assert that the most useful professional development experiences are teacher-driven and ongoing.

Teachers value collaborative professional development experiences – including participation in action research – as the learning opportunities that most strengthen their effective teaching practice.

## Improving the quality of the teaching environment

requires a better grasp of the challenge. Educators and policy makers must pay attention to the quality of "systems" that enable teachers to be successful. That's because variations in teaching performance are largely a function of variables such as pre-service preparation, induction programs for new teachers, evaluation, professional development, school climate, and time for professional collaboration.

What we hear from teachers, supported by the research, is that there is an interlocking set of conditions that allow talented individuals to teach effectively: serious preparation for the subjects and students assigned; time and tools for teachers to learn from each other and work with other support providers; and accountability measures that not only identify who is effective and who is not, but also why they are, and what needs to be done for continued improvements in teaching and learning.

## About Teachers Network

**Teachers Network** is a non-profit organization—*by teachers, for teachers*— with a three decade long track record of success, dedicated to improving student learning in public schools. Using the power of our award-winning website, video, and print resources, we leverage the creativity and expertise of a national and international community of outstanding educators.

**Teachers Network** is unique in its focus on the teacher as key to improving student achievement in public schools. Through its leadership, Teachers Network empowers teachers to transform public schools into creative learning communities so every student will succeed and contribute to the public good. Over the years, we have directly impacted over 1.5 million teachers and nearly 40 million students.

For more information about the mission and work of Teachers Network, please visit us online at **www.teachersnetwork.org**. Or call us at 212.966.5582.



Companion materials for What Keeps Effective Teachers in the Classroom are available through:

**Teachers Network**

285 West Broadway

New York, NY 10013

Telephone: 212.966.5582

Fax: 212.941.1787

Email: [info@teachersnetwork.org](mailto:info@teachersnetwork.org)

You can download the study and join the conversation by visiting **[www.teachersnetwork.org](http://www.teachersnetwork.org)**

---

Research findings cited in this brochure are from a Teachers Network survey. Subsequent reports and policy briefs are written by researchers from the **Center for Teaching Quality** as well as **West Ed**.

The production of this publication was supported by a generous grant from the **Ford Foundation**.