

Quality Teachers: Do Experience and Education Matter? North Carolina Principals Respond



Results of a Survey of Approximately 300 Administrators in North Carolina Public Schools

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A MESSAGE FROM THE RESEARCHERS

“Teaching might even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit.”

-John Steinbeck

Think about any profession and ask yourself, *Do experience and education matter when it comes to doing that job?* Certainly, the consensus and emphatic response is *Yes!* But a debate about the value of experience and education for those entrusted to teach our public school children is currently ongoing in North Carolina and in state houses across the United States. The end of additional pay for teachers who earn master's degrees, the removal of salary step increases for veteran teachers, and the weakening of licensure requirements for entry into the profession indicate that experience and education are losing value in the eyes of those who make policy.

In 2007, NC embarked on a major overhaul of public education with the creation of five new standards for teachers and administrators (NC Department of Public Instruction, 2014). The changes were seen as a way to prepare students for the 21st century and included new expectations for teachers to not only excel in their classroom practice but also become leaders in their schools and communities. Teachers and administrators embraced the standards for their overt acknowledgement of the multiple and complex roles good teachers play. Two years later, a sixth standard was added, “Impact on Student Learning.” This standard was a product of North Carolina accepting Race to the Top funding from the Obama administration and it pushed the state to join others in the nation in using value-added scores to rate teachers and schools based on student academic performance, and to reward or punish them accordingly.

Beyond using value-added measures to rate individual teachers, a growing number of researchers in universities, think tanks and state capitals are using those data to compare teacher performance on a range of variables including experience, level of education, and even preparation program. Findings from this research have been simplified to conclude that teacher experience beyond an initial number of years does not raise student scores and that teachers with advanced degrees, except possibly in math and science, also do not raise student scores. These findings have led some to conclude that teacher experience and advanced degrees are not important. In reflecting on advanced education, Bill Gates asserted, “My own state of Washington has an average salary bump of nearly \$11,000 for a master's degree...That's more than \$300 million every year that doesn't help kids.”

In an effort to better understand the value of teacher experience and teachers earning advanced degrees, we have surveyed NC public school, K-12 principals. Principals oversee and evaluate teachers and therefore have a unique and important perspective on these areas.

The findings presented in this report indicate that North Carolina principals overwhelmingly value teacher experience and support teachers earning advanced degrees. Nearly 85% of principals agreed that teachers’ classroom practice improved as a direct result of those teachers pursuing advanced degrees. Principals described the benefits of teachers pursuing advanced degrees including: they gain the latest instructional strategies, techniques and insight in their area of study; it is extremely motivating for students to know their teachers are also students; they are more likely to try new ideas in their classrooms and more likely to collaborate with colleagues about educational initiatives or ideas.

In addition, nearly 82% of principals agreed that classroom practice improves as teachers gain years of experience. Principals described the following benefits of teacher experience: they have honed their classroom

management skills and style so it becomes second nature and learning is the first priority; they are able to address various needs and learning levels; they are equipped with the tools to better handle conflict with parents or colleagues; they are more likely to take on responsibilities outside of the classroom and share knowledge and experiences with new teachers.

In making decisions about staffing NC classrooms, it would be wise to consider the views of NC principals who have a unique perspective on teacher quality and performance. Their strong support for the benefits of teacher experience and teachers earning advanced degrees is consistent with calls for broader, more meaningful measures of student learning. Well-educated and experienced teachers do not simply increase student achievement: they are more likely to act as school leaders, solve complex school problems, and engage their students with meaningful lessons (Blair-Hilty, 2011).

References:

Blair-Hilty, E. (2011). *Teacher Leadership*. New York: Peter Lang

NC Department of Public Instruction (2014). North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards. Retrieved June 12, 2014 <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/effectiveness-model/ncees/standards/prof-teach-standards.pdf>.

What follows is a summary of key findings, quantitative results and participant's comments.

Special thanks to Catherine Miller for her help in preparing the report.

KEY FINDINGS

- Nearly 85% of respondents agreed that teachers' classroom practice improved as a direct result of those teachers pursuing advanced degrees, with 28% in strong agreement.
- Over 79% of respondents agreed that student learning was improved in classrooms of teachers who pursued advanced degrees.
- Three-quarters of respondents agreed that as a result of pursuing advanced degrees, teachers are better able to meet students' needs.
- Over 82% of respondents reported that as a result of pursuing advanced degrees, teachers generally take on more leadership roles in school.
- Over 68% of respondents agreed that as a result of earning advanced degrees teachers are better able to address complex student issues (academic, social, emotional and behavioral).
- Over 75% of respondents agreed that earning advanced degrees enabled teachers to more effectively deal with complex issues within their schools.
- Just over one-quarter of respondents stated that they would prefer their teachers to obtain a master's degree in a content area, while 43% of respondents reported that they would prefer their teachers seek a master's degree in education. In addition, 31% indicated that they had no preference.
- Almost 82% of respondents agreed that classroom practice improves as teachers gain years of experience.
- Over 78% of respondents agreed that student learning improves under teachers with years of experience.
- Over 80% of respondents agreed that as teachers gain years of teaching experience they are better equipped to meet the needs of students.
- Over 71% of respondents agreed that more experienced teachers are better able to take on leadership roles in school.
- Over 81% of respondents agreed that as teachers gain years of teaching experience they are better able to address complex student issues in school.
- About 80% of respondents agreed that as teachers gain years of teaching experience they are better able to deal with complex issues in their schools.

KEY RESPONDENT COMMENTS ON THE BENEFITS OF TEACHERS WITH ADVANCED DEGREES AND/OR YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

- When teachers are engaged in the pursuit of advanced degrees they are regularly and consistently engaging in research and cutting edge pedagogy.
- I think it is extremely motivating for students to know their “teachers” are also “students”. I have found our recent Legislation to be an insult to the education profession to no longer recognize the value of advanced degrees.
- I believe advanced study gives our teachers the latest instructional strategies, techniques and insight in their area of study. Additionally, advanced degrees allow educators to study how our students learn and how to engage them more effectively.
- Teachers with advanced degrees have, in general, a greater understanding of the methods and materials needed to teach students with diverse academic backgrounds.
- [Teachers with advanced degrees] are more likely to try new ideas in their classrooms. They are more likely to collaborate with colleagues about educational initiatives or ideas.
- [Experienced teachers] are able to address various needs and learning levels in the same classroom. They have honed their classroom management skills and style so it becomes second nature and learning is the first priority.
- By year ten, [teachers] stop wanting to be the students’ “friend” and take on the role of mentor. By year fifteen, they know how to build a professional relationship with students while still showing them that they care.
- Experience does equip teachers with the tools to better handle conflict with parents or colleagues. Also, they have more experience with planning and executing functions outside of the classroom (i.e., parent nights, festivals, etc.)
- Teachers with years of experience are more likely to take on responsibilities outside of the classroom. They are more likely to be in a position to share knowledge and experiences with new teachers based on their own experiences.... It is not until a teacher is comfortable with the daily responsibilities of being a classroom teacher that they are free to pursue leadership commitments in a building.

Q4 As a result of pursuing advanced degrees, teachers improve their classroom practice.

Answered: 273 Skipped: 19

Findings:

- Nearly 85% of respondents agreed that teachers' classroom practice improved as a direct result of those teachers pursuing advanced degrees, with 28% in strong agreement.
- Less than 3% of respondents disagreed that the pursuit of advanced degrees had a positive impact on teachers' classroom practice, while only about 12% of respondents were neutral on the issue.

Significant commentary: *When teachers become students again they retain a healthy reminder of what it is like to be sitting on the other side of the desk. This is an added benefit and I find affects their perspectives on number and quality of assignments they give their students. I also find that teachers value the importance of the delivery style and impact of lessons that are rigorous, relevant, and motivational for the learner. When teachers are engaged in the pursuit of advanced degrees they are regularly and consistently engaging in research and cutting edge pedagogy. I appreciate and value this major component of higher learning. All of these things positively impact the students and the climate of my school.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	1.47%	4
Disagree	1.10%	3
Neutral	12.45%	34
Agree	56.78%	155
Strongly Agree	28.21%	77
Total		273

Further respondent commentary:

Instructional practice and leadership capacity increases as teachers are exposed to a variety of research topics.

The process of education requires teachers to reflect on themselves and their work in the classroom. This is a huge benefit. I believe it also broadens their perspective about a variety of education related issues.

Educational degrees often focus on research and theory, few degrees focus on improving instruction and instructional strategies. Many degrees provide subject area and theoretical understanding but do not necessarily improve instructional practice in the classroom.

By furthering their education, teachers improve their experience as a student and put items in their toolbox for use in the classroom.

Q5 As a result of pursuing advanced degrees, teachers improve student learning in their own classrooms.

Answered: 274 Skipped: 18

Findings:

- Over 79% of respondents agreed that student learning was improved in classrooms of teachers with advanced degrees.
- Almost 17% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that teachers with advanced degrees showed improved student learning in the classroom.
- Just over 4% of respondents disagreed that the pursuit of advanced degrees had a positive impact on student learning in those teachers' classrooms.

Significant commentary: *Very simply stated, it is difficult for a teacher to encourage "education" if they themselves cease learning. I think it is extremely motivating for students to know their "teachers" are also "students". I have found our recent Legislation to be an insult to the education profession to no longer recognize the value of advanced degrees.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	1.46%	4
Disagree	2.55%	7
Neutral	16.79%	46
Agree	54.74%	150
Strongly Agree	24.45%	67
Total		274

Further respondent commentary:

I believe that most teachers that pursue advanced degrees are those that are more invested in their personal accomplishments and have a high degree of intrinsic motivations. My experience is that these individuals are more aware and better able to manage their time and responsibilities. In most instances, the students reap the reward of receiving instruction that is well planned, thorough and engaging.

While teachers are pursuing advanced degrees, they often bring new insight into their own approaches to student learning because of the research they are doing. Additionally, teachers collaborate with their peers from other districts in their advanced degree classes, and that forum provides an excellent opportunity for them to share ideas and strategies.

Many teachers have degrees and incredible book smarts, but no real knowledge of how to increase student outcomes or higher levels of student learning within his/her own classroom. Those things require a marriage of theory and practice along with a true desire to teach children--not just the easy to teach ones, but all children with varying abilities from varying backgrounds. Not everyone can do that regardless of multiple degrees.

Q6 As a result of pursuing advanced degrees, teachers are better able to meet the needs of students.

Answered: 273 Skipped: 19

Findings:

- Three-quarters of respondents agreed that teachers with advanced degrees are better able to meet students' needs than are teachers without advanced degrees.
- Just over 19% of respondents were neutral on whether teachers with advanced degrees are better able to meet students' needs.
- Five-and-a-half percent of respondents disagreed that advanced degrees better equipped teachers to meet students' needs.

Significant commentary: *I believe advanced study gives our teachers the latest instructional strategies, techniques and insight in their area of study. Additionally, advanced degrees allow educators to study how our students learn and how to engage them more effectively.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	1.47%	4
Disagree	4.03%	11
Neutral	19.05%	52
Agree	52.38%	143
Strongly Agree	23.08%	63
Total		273

Further respondent commentary:

I see more content knowledge that our students can access. The teacher with advanced degrees will typically be able to offer assignments, guidance, and answers that consider ambiguity, irony, less dependence on formulaism, and greater opportunities for complex thinking in causation, contrast, and definition, among other areas.

Teachers with advanced degrees have, in general, a greater understanding of the methods and materials needed to teach students with diverse academic backgrounds.

It is a stressful time for teachers as they are earning the degrees due to the high demands of the classroom and the additional demands of their own graduate classroom expectations. However, teachers implement the learning immediately and students benefit through the experience and students also see their teachers as life long learners.

Q7 As a result of earning advanced degrees, teachers generally take on more leadership roles in school.

Answered: 274 Skipped: 18

Findings:

- Over 82% of respondents reported that teachers with advanced degrees take on more leadership roles in their schools than do teachers without advanced degrees.
- Almost 6% of respondents disagreed that teachers with advanced degrees take on more leadership roles in their schools than do teachers without advanced degrees, while about 12% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed.

Significant commentary: Teachers with advanced degrees have, in general, a greater understanding of the methods and materials needed to teach students with diverse academic backgrounds. They are, assuming the program is a quality one, equipped with a broader knowledge base, better leadership ability and are more facile with the language of our profession. Many of the teachers with advanced degrees I have known are also more open minded and respond better to the constant change(s) in our profession.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	1.09%	3
Disagree	4.74%	13
Neutral	12.04%	33
Agree	39.42%	108
Strongly Agree	42.70%	117
Total		274

Further respondent commentary:

When teachers do pursue advance degrees they serve as ambassadors to share with university faculty the new innovations and programs that are being implemented in public schools.

I have noticed that the teachers who pursue advanced degrees tend to take a much stronger and natural leadership role in the classroom and in the school at large. They are more confident in their skills and have an increased capacity for leadership and excellence in classroom instruction. In addition, it shows to me that they have a commitment to lifelong learners and want to continue being a learner themselves.

They are no longer afraid to take risk in the classroom. They get to network with other teachers and share ideas.

Often an assumption of leadership in the building comes with completion of advanced degrees. Improved teacher leadership then trickles down to improved practice and improved student outcomes.

Q8 As a result of earning advanced degrees, teachers are better able to address complex student issues (academic, social, emotional, behavioral).

Answered: 272 Skipped: 20

Findings:

- Over 68% of respondents agreed that teachers with advanced degrees are better able to meet students' needs than are teachers without advanced degrees.
- Almost one-quarter of respondents were neutral on the topic of whether advanced degrees better equipped teachers to address complex student issues. This percentage of neutral responses is higher than for any other question on our survey.
- Over 7% of respondents disagreed that teachers with advanced degrees are better able to meet students' needs.

Significant commentary: *Generally, anyone who has the desire to gain additional knowledge and insight are the individuals who are passionate about their profession and care deeply for their students. Children benefit having teachers who genuinely care.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	1.47%	4
Disagree	5.88%	16
Neutral	24.26%	66
Agree	47.06%	128
Strongly Agree	21.32%	58
Total		272

Further respondent commentary:

For most teachers who pursue advanced degrees from credible universities, the benefits come from the exposure to intensive and continuous professional development. Teachers become more reflective in their instructional practices as well as their relationship-building with their students.

Two staff members who earned their master's in administration re-energized our PBiS program and dropped office referrals 70% on one year.

They have a stronger core knowledge to assist struggling students. They also have the ability to assist with differentiation for AIG students as they have knowledge to assist them with application and synthesis.

Q9 As a result of earning advanced degrees, teachers are better able to address complex school issues (i.e. community connections, curriculum development, mentoring, school improvement).

Answered: 271 Skipped: 21

Findings:

- Over 76% of respondents agreed that earning advanced degrees enabled teachers to more effectively deal with complex issues within their schools.
- Almost 17% of respondents were neutral on whether teachers with advanced degrees are more capable of addressing complex school issues, indicating that they do not see a difference between teachers with advanced degrees and those without.
- Over 6% of respondents disagreed that teachers with advanced degrees are able to more effectively deal with complex issues within their schools.

Significant commentary: *They are more likely to try new ideas in their classrooms. They are more likely to collaborate with colleagues about educational initiatives or ideas. They are more likely to ask why we do the things we do, and sometimes they offer ideas for doing things differently. They tend to share literature with their colleagues.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	1.48%	4
Disagree	4.80%	13
Neutral	16.97%	46
Agree	49.82%	135
Strongly Agree	26.94%	73
Total		271

Further respondent commentary:

Teachers who have been engaged in advanced degree programs generally bring suggestions for continual school improvement, both within PLCs and the general school environment. Advanced degree participation generally invigorates a teacher's enthusiasm and passion for teaching.

We definitely benefit from teachers pursuing advanced degrees, especially the ones who sit in actual classes with other teacher from other areas. Online coursework is also good, but lacks the conversation that occurs in an actual classroom setting. Teachers learn from each other and bring back ideas from other schools and districts that can be utilized in their own schools and classrooms.

At the high school level, teachers often have more training in their undergraduate studies in their content area. Pursuing advanced degrees in curriculum then balances the teacher, as they are able onto take their classroom experience, content knowledge, and combine it with their new studies of curriculum.

Q10 Which degree would you prefer your teachers pursue?

Answered: 274 Skipped: 18

Findings:

- Just over one-quarter of respondents stated that they would prefer their teachers to obtain a master's degree in a content area, while 43% of respondents reported that they would prefer their teachers seek a master's degree in education.
- Almost 32% of respondents reported having no preference as to what degree their teachers would pursue.

Significant commentary: *I believe advanced degrees in content areas deepen teacher's understanding of the content in a way that cannot help but make student learning better. Advanced degrees in education are a benefit, but the positive effects can be duplicated with classroom experience and dedication to meaningful professional development.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Master's in Education (i.e. Secondary Education, Curriculum, Language and Literacy)	43.07%	118
Master's in a Content Area (i.e. English, Philosophy, Math)	25.18%	69
No Preference	31.75%	87
Total		274

Further respondent commentary:

When they earn more specific content related degrees I see great instructional improvement in that area and leadership ability in that area.

Advanced degrees in a particular area/field/discipline can be limiting to a specific class of instruction. Teachers who are more able to see a bigger picture can provide benefits to larger portions of the school as a whole.

There is no relationship between advanced degrees and improved practice unless the degree is relevant to their practice, which is often not the case.

It appears to me in my county, the only teachers pursuing advance degrees are those interested in administration as this degree is the one that can take them out of the classroom. With everything going on, and this year especially, teachers are wanting to get out of education all together or get out of the classroom. No raises, the 25% rule, Read to Achieve Law, possibility of cut in masters' pay, cut in teacher assistants, and an increase in class size, to me, sends a clear message that education is not important to our state leaders. Teacher morale is low and the 25% rule is not helping at all. My question is why would teachers want to pursue an advanced degree and how could they afford it?

Q12 As teachers gain years of teaching experience, teachers improve their classroom practice.

Answered: 265 Skipped: 27

Findings:

- Almost 82% of respondents agreed that classroom practice improves as teachers gain years of experience.
- Almost 16% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that years of experience has an impact on teachers' classroom practice.
- Just over 2% of respondents disagreed that teachers improve their classroom practice after years of teaching experience, with no respondents strongly disagreeing.

Significant commentary: *The personal experience is priceless! A teacher really does not know their philosophy or what strategies to use until about their fifth year. By then, they have mastered classroom management, which is one of the hardest things to learn for most new teachers.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	2.26%	6
Neutral	15.85%	42
Agree	53.21%	141
Strongly Agree	28.68%	76
Total		265

Further respondent commentary:

The only shortcoming can be complacency. The benefits are innumerable.

Feedback from colleagues and administrators, professional development along with the experience improve classroom practice and student learning. Experience does help in most situations.

For the majority of teachers, learning is a passion and they continue to try new ideas, methods, and use data to improve their practice. However, there are still a few teachers who believe there is no need to continually improve. They are still teaching the same way they taught when they first entered the profession.

I believe this debate is not about whether experience improves the teacher's craft, but whether you have a good teacher versus a bad one. If you have a good teacher, they reflect on their practice and improve as "data" comes in regarding their teaching and the student's learning. If you have a bad teacher, the experiences they have tend to reinforce their negative impact as they take no responsibility for their role in the classroom.

Q13 As teachers gain years of teaching experience, teachers improve student learning in their own classrooms.

Answered: 265 Skipped: 27

Findings:

- Over 78% of respondents agreed that student learning improves under teachers with years of experience.
- Almost 20% of respondents were neutral on the topic of whether years of teaching experience affects student learning.
- Less than 3% of respondents disagreed that student learning improves under teachers with years of experience.

Significant commentary: *They are able to address various needs and learning levels in the same class room. They have honed their classroom management skills and style so it becomes second nature and learning is the first priority.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	2.64%	7
Neutral	19.25%	51
Agree	54.72%	145
Strongly Agree	23.40%	62
Total		265

Respondent commentary:

Most teachers who are seasoned have better classroom instruction. They know the curriculum and the order in which it needs to be taught. Diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments are used more effectively. The veteran teacher knows how to help most students who struggle in their class.

Teachers have learned through trial and error what works and does not work. Also, through numerous staff development experiences, they develop and implement effective strategies to improve teaching and learning.

Experienced teachers learn to better handle classroom student behavior, which in turn helps make the learning environment more positive. Veteran teachers must continue to be lifelong learners in order to keep up with the ever-changing technology instructional opportunities.

Q14 As teachers gain years of teaching experience, teachers are better able to meet the needs of students.

Answered: 265 Skipped: 27

Findings:

- Over 80% of respondents agreed that more experienced teachers are better equipped to meet the needs of students.
- Almost 17% of respondents were neutral on whether teachers developed greater ability to meet students' needs over years of experience.
- Less than 3% of respondents disagreed that teachers with more years of experience are better able to meet their students' needs than are newer teachers.

Significant commentary: *The benefit of years of experience is that it enables teachers with the knowledge of how to best meet the needs of the students that they teach. They gain a better understanding of classroom management and how to teach the difficult students while at the same time meet the needs of the well behaved students as well. They just learn "how" to teach in different situations and that is very hard for beginning teachers to understand.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	2.64%	7
Neutral	16.98%	45
Agree	54.34%	144
Strongly Agree	26.04%	69
Total		265

Further respondent commentary:

I think they are more able to meet the needs of all their students. They have tried different techniques and strategies with various students and know what works better for different learning styles. I also think they are able to assume more leadership within the school because they have a comfort level in their classroom.

Teachers who have years of experience have a greater repertoire of strategies and gain flexibility in responding to student needs.

More years of experience may lead to better understanding the needs of students, but often there becomes less concern about students' needs or investigating how best to meet those needs.

Q15 As teachers gain years of teaching experience, teachers are more likely to take on leadership roles in school.

Answered: 264 Skipped: 28

Findings:

- Over 71% of respondents agreed that more experienced teachers are more likely than new teachers to take on leadership roles in school.
- Almost 29% of respondents were either neutral or in disagreement about more experienced teachers' elevated willingness to take on leadership roles, though no respondents strongly disagreed.

Significant commentary: *Teachers with years of experience are more likely to take on responsibilities outside of the classroom. They are more likely to be in a position to share knowledge and experiences with new teachers based on their own experiences. New teachers begin with the basic knowledge of what is to occur in the classroom. They spend the first few years learning about specific curriculum, classroom management, keeping up with data analysis, newsletters, parent conferences, school based meetings, professional development responsibilities and many other areas they didn't even know were involved in being a classroom teacher. It is not until a teacher is comfortable with the daily responsibilities of being a classroom teacher that they are free to pursue leadership commitments in a building.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	5.30%	14
Neutral	23.48%	62
Agree	42.80%	113
Strongly Agree	28.41%	75
Total		264

Further respondent commentary:

When I think of the experienced teachers I know and have known, I reflect on the generosity they show in sharing their experience, strength, and hope with their younger colleagues. Occasionally, I have met experienced teachers who become set in their ways. But most experienced teachers relish the opportunity to learn new methods and strategies to help them help their students.

In my experience, I have found experienced teachers who are strong instructional leaders in building with proven track records for student achievement. In turn, they many times become supportive leaders and mentors to our staff members without much experience.

If a teacher is good, then yes they will improve as they continue to teach and will grow in leadership. If a teacher has been granted tenure and those 4 years were the hardest that they worked, then no they will not continue to grow...but will become someone who is content to get paid at the end of the month no matter how many plans they are put on.

Q16 As teachers gain years of experience, teachers are better able to address complex student issues (academic, social, emotional, behavioral).

Answered: 266 Skipped: 26

Findings:

- Over 81% of respondents agreed that teachers with more experience are better able to address complex student issues in school.
- Almost 16% of respondents neither agreed nor disagreed that teachers with more experience are better able to address complex student issues.
- Only 3% of respondents disagreed that years of experience is a factor in teachers' abilities to address complex student issues.

Significant commentary: *By year ten, they stop wanting to be the students' "friend" and take on the role of mentor. When they have been betrayed by students a few times, they learn to keep their professionalism, and their distance. By year fifteen, they know how to build a professional relationship with students while still showing them that they care.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	3.01%	8
Neutral	15.79%	42
Agree	56.39%	150
Strongly Agree	24.81%	66
Total		266

Further respondent commentary:

They usually are much stronger in student discipline, dealing with parents and depending upon how many times their positions have changed, they are usually stronger in content knowledge.

They have experienced so many issues and situations that they know what to expect and can anticipate students' needs and possible misunderstandings.

The benefits of gaining experience is that it can directly affect student learning, these teachers are more adaptable to handle student and parent issues with past knowledge of how and when to address certain issues.

Q17 As teachers gain years of experience, teachers are better able to address complex school issues (i.e. community connections, curriculum development, mentoring, school improvement).

Answered: 261 Skipped: 31

Findings:

- About 80% of respondents agreed that teachers with more years of experience are better able to deal with complex issues in their schools than are new teachers.
- Over 16% of respondents were neutral on whether teachers with more experience are better able to address complex school issues.
- Over 3% of respondents disagreed that experience teachers are better able to deal with complex issues in their schools than are new teachers.

Significant commentary: *In dealing with more complex issues, experienced teachers usually have dealt with similar situations and may be more likely to deal with those situations in a more appropriate way than a less experienced teacher.*

Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly Disagree	0.00%	0
Disagree	3.45%	9
Neutral	16.48%	43
Agree	54.79%	143
Strongly Agree	25.29%	66
Total		261

Further respondent commentary:

Experience does equip teachers with the tools to better handle conflict with parents or colleagues. Also, they have more experience with planning and executing functions outside of the classroom (ie. parent nights, festivals, etc.)

They have experience and strategies for dealing with challenging situations. They tend to relate better to parents because most of them are parents themselves. I saw one 22 year-old teacher pointing her finger at parents in a conference while telling them how to raise their child. She had zero credibility with those parents.

Experienced teachers offer insight into tackling schoolwide issues that address any number of instructional and/or organizational issues. They are vital to the site based decision making process.

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to gather opinion data from North Carolina principals on the value of teacher experience and teachers with advanced degrees. This document offers findings from a quantitative survey of North Carolina principals. Participants completed the survey online. A link to this survey was emailed to all NC principals, who were invited to share their thoughts on the value of teacher experience and teachers with advanced degrees. The survey was opened on May 1st and closed on May 22nd, 2014.

Participants

- 294 principals from school systems in North Carolina participated in the survey. A total of 261 (88.7%) participants responded to every question on the survey. For each question reported, the number of respondents is also listed.
- 49.6% of respondents were elementary school principals, 22.5% were middle school principals, and 27.8% were high school principals.
- 97.5% were principals and 2.4% assistant principals.
- 15.7% had 1-4 years experience as an administrator, 33% had 5-9 years, 28% had 10-14 years, and 23% had 15 or more years.

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