

2018 VISTA Principal Survey: Summary of Findings

Survey Design and Methodology

The Views on Instruction, State Standards, Teaching, and Assessment (VISTA) survey is an annual survey sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE). VISTA gives educators a voice directly with the state on issues specific to education in Massachusetts. ESE will use educator feedback to improve statewide implementation, inform current and future policies, and better target state resources and supports.

In the 2018 administration, data collection began in mid-January and closed in mid-March. All Massachusetts principals were invited to participate. Principals from 38% of the state’s schools participated in the survey. Principal survey findings are weighted to represent all Massachusetts schools. Superintendents also participated in the 2018 VISTA survey; see the VISTA webpage (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/research/vista>) for a summary of key findings from the superintendent survey.

State Curriculum Frameworks

Nearly all principals expressed favorable views of the English Language Arts (ELA) & Literacy, Mathematics, Science and Technology/Engineering (STE), and Digital Literacy and Computer Science (DLCS) curriculum frameworks. Smaller majorities agreed that state assessments provide useful information about their students’ mastery of state standards in these subjects.

	ELA	Math	STE	DLCS
The curriculum frameworks set appropriate expectations for learning.	96%	96%	96%	92%
The curriculum frameworks positively affect preparedness for college and career.	96%	95%	95%	91%
The curriculum frameworks stimulate instructional shifts so students meet expectations.	95%	96%	88%	72%
State assessments provide useful information about students’ mastery of state standards.	78%	82%	71%	n/a

Agree strongly + agree somewhat from survey questions A1.1a-d (ELA), A2.1a-d (Math), A3.1a-d (STE), and A1.4a-c (DLCS)

Nearly all principals reported at least a general understanding of the ELA, math, and STE frameworks (99%, 98%, and 94%, respectively), and most principals report at least a general understanding of the newer DLCS framework (71%). When asked about how they prioritize different types of guidance on implementing the ELA, math, and STE frameworks, principals from at least 68% of schools rated guidance on how to support students with disabilities in mastering the expectations as a “high priority” (75%, 74%, and 68%, respectively).

Role of Evaluation in Supporting Educator Growth and Development

Principals expressed favorable views of their districts’ principal/teacher evaluation systems, though the responses were less positive in describing the effectiveness of their own evaluations.

	Principal evaluation	Teacher evaluation
Evaluation system generates fair results	79%	92%
Evaluation system is effective for identifying outstanding school leaders/teachers	74%	91%

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Evaluation system is effective for identifying struggling school leaders/teachers	73%	91%
The evaluation system used in my school is an effective tool to support teacher growth and development.	n/a	88%

Agree strongly + agree somewhat from survey questions B1c, B1a, and B1b (principal evaluation system); B5d, B5a, B5b, and B5c (teacher evaluation system)

Educator Pipeline Development

Principals generally expressed confidence in their districts' hiring processes, support of new teachers, and new educators' capacity to positively impact student learning. Principals were less likely to indicate that they have strategic partnerships with teacher preparation providers.

In general, I believe that it is possible for first-year teachers to positively impact student learning from their first day in the classroom.	98%
First-year teachers in my district receive induction and mentoring support that positively impact retention.	93%
My district's hiring processes and timelines support my ability to recruit and hire top talent.	70%
I have strategic partnerships with teacher preparation providers that help ensure I can meet my hiring needs.	45%

Agree strongly + agree somewhat from survey questions C1a, C1d, C1c, and C1b

Social and Emotional Learning, Health, and Safety

In a majority of schools, principals reported that school staff are proficient in providing tiered SEL instructional supports to students, and schools employ systems and human supports to build students' SEL competencies.

	Agree
Teachers consult/work with other personnel to provide SEL supports for all students.	90%
The student support team uses data to develop students' SEL support plans.	82%
The student support team uses data to monitor students' SEL support plans.	80%
Staff are proficient in providing supplemental SEL supports to students in need.	75%
Staff are proficient in providing core SEL instruction to all students.	74%
My school has systems in place to engage and collaborate with families to develop students' SEL competencies.	71%
Staff are proficient in providing and/or connecting intensive SEL supports to students in need.	56%

Agree strongly + agree somewhat from survey questions D1f, D1d, D1e, D1b, D1a, D1g, and D1c

ESE Overall Support

Principals from the majority of the state's schools agreed that ESE is effective in its efforts to improve the overall quality of public K-12 education (80%) and ESE is coherent and well-coordinated in providing services (70%) and in its communication (76%).