

People, this a two-part document. You must digest both parts. 😊

International Survey: U.S. Teachers Grapple with Low Support, High Rate of Student Poverty

Posted July 16, 2014 in [Featured Stories](#)

SOURCE: <http://education.cu-portland.edu/blog/news/international-survey-us-teachers-low-support-high-student-poverty/>

By Monica Fuglei

The headlines have spoken: According to new data from the *Teaching and Learning International Survey* (TALIS), American teachers have some of the longest work weeks, highest student poverty rates, least guidance, and lowest collaborative work time among their international peers.

While this may seem depressing, the TALIS reveals where U.S. education policy must improve. Examining the TALIS results can lead to positive and measurable change in teacher's resources — and help raise student performance on the international scale.

What does the Teaching and Learning International Survey measure?

The TALIS is a survey run by the Organisation for Economic and Co-operation and Development (OECD), an international organization that seeks to provide data-driven recommendations and analysis. Because OECD believes that effective teachers are essential in creating successful students, they use the Teaching and Learning International Survey to study teaching-related trends.

Participating nations submit a representative sample of surveys from their lower secondary education teachers and school leaders. The survey collects information regarding teacher training, professional development, teacher feedback, and school leadership practices, as well as socioeconomic information. This allows OECD to identify which nations face similar difficulties and help provide analysis and guidance to improve teacher support and performance.

The most recent survey, released in late June, was the first in which American teachers participated. Unfortunately, the American participation rate was low enough that they were not included in the International Report, but OECD compiled a country note for the United States that shed light on the results.

Good news: American teachers are highly educated and love their jobs

Some of the information gathered from the TALIS is quite positive. The United States has a slightly higher number of male teachers than the international average. 99 percent of teachers report completing a university program, with 95 percent having taken specific teacher training programs.

American teachers show high rates of career satisfaction, feeling that their job challenges are outweighed by the benefits and that, given a chance to do it over, they would choose the profession again. All of the teachers surveyed reported being subject to formal evaluation process and many report these evaluations included direct observation, student test score analysis, and parent and student feedback.

Bad news: U.S. teachers have more students living in poverty than other industrialized nations

There were also some less positive results. American teachers, more so than many other industrialized nations, teach in schools with high rates of poverty. Two-thirds of American teachers surveyed report that they are teaching in schools with 30 percent or higher rates of free and reduced lunch. This sheds light on some of the challenges these teachers face, as research clearly correlates student performance with poverty.

While low-income students can and do succeed, closing the education gap has been particularly difficult without investment and collaboration. Additionally, American teachers report a significantly higher than average number of special needs students. These two challenges have an influence on outcomes.

American teachers have long work weeks, less time for collaboration and mentoring

Other red flags appeared as well. Teachers reported that they do not feel valued by society, often work independently, and work longer work weeks. In an effort to address our lagging performance on international tests like the PISA, educational policy has focused on increasing instructional time, sometimes to the detriment of teacher planning and collaboration.

While American teachers report having slightly more time devoted to professional development than their international counterparts, they do not report their professional development having a significant influence on their teaching. Particularly troubling is the low rate of instructor feedback and collaboration.

OECD suggestions for improving U.S. teacher's resources

In their Country Note for the United States, OECD offered suggestions for policy changes in the United States. Probably the most essential change is for principals and other administrators to increase opportunities for interpersonal relationship building among their teachers as well as chances for co-teaching, collaborative planning, classroom observations, as well as mentoring and coaching.

Building mentoring and coaching networks also opens the doors to another of OECD's suggestions which is to increase teacher power at the school level and increase their decision-making ability within their school. To combat their sense of not being appreciated, teachers should be given opportunities for collaborative work as well as a leadership position in the school, as those who are afforded these tend to report that they feel most valued by society.

Because 2013 is the first year the United States participated in the TALIS, there is no longitudinal data to study and see how educational policy is addressing issues at the teacher level, but the first results provide insightful data as to what could and should be long-term goals to improve both teacher satisfaction and student performance.

Monica Fuglei is a graduate of the University of Nebraska in Omaha and a current adjunct faculty member of Arapahoe Community College in Colorado, where she teaches composition and creative writing.

HUFFPOST THE BLOG 06/30/2014 03:17 am ET Updated Aug 30, 2014

To Close the Achievement Gap, We Need to Close the Teaching Gap

SOURCE: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/linda-darlinghammond/to-close-the-achievement_b_5542614.html

By [Linda Darling-Hammond](#)

For years now, educators have looked to international tests as a yardstick to measure how well U.S. students are learning 21st-century skills compared to their peers. The answer has been: not so well. The U.S. has been falling further behind other nations and has struggled with a large achievement gap.

Federal policy under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Department of Education's 'flexibility' waivers has sought to address this problem by beefing up testing policies — requiring more tests and upping the consequences for poor results: including denying diplomas to students, firing teachers, and closing schools. Unfortunately, this strategy hasn't worked. In fact, U.S. performance on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) declined in every subject area between 2000 and 2012 — the years in which these policies have been in effect.

Now we have international evidence about something that has a greater effect on learning than testing: Teaching. The results of the [Teaching and Learning International Survey](#) (TALIS), released last week by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), offer a stunning picture of the challenges experienced by American teachers, while providing provocative insights into what we might do to foster better teaching — and learning — in the United States.

In short, the survey shows that American teachers today work harder under much more challenging conditions than teachers elsewhere in the industrialized world. They also receive less useful feedback, less helpful professional development, and have less time to collaborate to improve their work. Not surprisingly, two-thirds feel their profession is not valued by society — an indicator that OECD finds is ultimately related to student achievement.

Though it has been conducted since 2008, 2013 was the first time the United States participated in TALIS, which surveyed more than 100,000 lower secondary school teachers and school leaders in 34 jurisdictions. Although U.S. participation rates fell just below the minimum for full inclusion in the comparative report, OECD prepared a U.S. country report. These data tell an important story.

Nearly two-thirds of U.S. middle-school teachers work in schools where more than 30 percent of students are economically disadvantaged. This is by far the highest rate in the world, and more than triple the average TALIS rate. The next countries in line after the United States are Malaysia and Chile. Ignored by our current education policies are the facts that one in four American children lives below the poverty line and a growing number are homeless, without regular access to food or health care, and stressed by violence and drug abuse around them. Educators now spend a great deal of their time [trying to help children and families](#) in their care manage these issues, while they also seek to close skill gaps and promote learning.

Along with these challenges, U.S. teachers must cope with larger class sizes (27 versus the TALIS average of 24). They also spend many more hours than teachers in any other country directly instructing children each week (27 versus the TALIS average of 19). And they work more hours in total each week than their global counterparts (45 versus the TALIS average of 38), with much less time in their schedules for planning, collaboration, and professional development. This schedule — a leftover of [factory-model school designs](#) of the early 1900s — makes it harder for our teachers to find time to work with their colleagues on creating great curriculum and learning new methods, to mark papers, to work individually with students, and to reach out to parents.

Partly because of the lack of time to observe and work with one another, U.S. teachers receive much less feedback from peers, which research shows is the most useful for improving practice. They also receive less useful professional development than their global counterparts. One reason for this, according to our own Schools and Staffing Surveys, is that, during the NCLB era, more sustained learning opportunities reverted back to the one-shot, top-down, “drive-by” workshops [that are least useful for improving practice](#).

The picture is very different in countries that rank highly in both the TALIS survey and in student achievement on international tests. Here are some policy lessons we can learn from these high-achieving nations:

Address inequities that undermine learning: Every international indicator shows that the U.S. supports its children less well than do other developed countries, who offer universal health care and early childhood education, as well as income supports for families. Evidence is plentiful that when children are healthy and well-supported in learning in the early years and beyond, they achieve and graduate at higher rates. The latest PISA report also found that the most successful nations allocate proportionately more resources to the education of disadvantaged students, while the United States allocates less. It is time for the U.S. finally to equalize school funding, address childhood poverty as it successfully did during the 1970s, institute universal early care and learning programs, and provide the wraparound services — health care, before- and after-school care, and social services — that ensure children are supported to learn. [A bill introduced into the Congress this week](#) by Senators Reed and Brown, with [a companion bill](#) introduced by Representative Fudge — the “Core Opportunity Resources for Equity and Excellence Act” — would make headway on the school resource issues that are essential for progress.

Value teaching and teacher learning: Countries where teachers believe their profession is valued show higher levels of student achievement. Nations that value teaching invest more in high-quality professional learning — paying the full freight for initial preparation and ongoing professional development, so that teachers can continually become more capable. OECD data show that they also pay teachers as well as other college-educated workers, while U.S. teachers earn only 60 percent of the average college graduate’s wage and receive little support for their learning. To recruit and retain top talent and enable teachers to help all children learn, we must make teaching an attractive profession that advances in knowledge and skill, like medicine and engineering.

Redesign schools to create time for collaboration: OECD studies show that higher-performing countries intentionally focus on creating teacher collaboration that results in more skillful teaching and strong student achievement. U.S. researchers have also found that school achievement is much stronger where teachers work in collaborative teams that plan and learn together. Teachers repeatedly confirm that opportunities to work with their colleagues often determine where they are willing to work. Collaboration, however, requires time as well as will, and this means that school staffing and schedules must be designed differently. The TALIS data show that U.S. schools generally hire many fewer teachers and many other non-teaching personnel than schools in other countries. We need to rethink how we invest in and organize schools, so that time for extended professional learning and collaboration become the norm rather than the exception.

Create meaningful teacher evaluations that foster improvement: All U.S. teachers stated that formal appraisal is used in their schools, based on classroom observations; feedback from parents, guardians, and students; and review of test information. This is not very different from the TALIS average. What is different is the nature of the feedback and its usefulness. American teachers found the feedback they received to be less useful for improving instruction than their peers elsewhere. Interestingly, they received much more of their feedback from busy principals (85 percent of U.S. teachers vs. a TALIS average of 52 percent) and much less from other teachers or assigned mentors (27 percent vs. a TALIS average of 42 percent), who can generally offer more targeted insights about how to teach specific curriculum concepts and students.

In addition, the feedback from test data is different across countries. Most tests in other countries are open-ended measures scored by teachers, usually internal to the classroom or, occasionally, standardized across schools (typically in one or two grade levels). The United States is the only country in which students are tested annually with external, multiple-choice standardized tests, with scores reduced to [a value-added metric assigned to teachers](#). Aside from the wide error range found to be associated with these metrics, they offer no information about what students actually did, said, or thought that could help teachers improve their practice. A more meaningful system would use classroom data and feedback from peers and principals in ways that are much more focused on how to teach specific content to particular students.

We cannot make major headway in raising student performance and closing the achievement gap until we make progress in closing the teaching gap. That means supporting children equitably outside as well as inside the classroom, creating a profession that is rewarding and well-supported, and designing schools that offer the conditions for both the student and teacher learning that will move American education forward.

Linda Darling-Hammond is Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at Stanford University and Faculty Director of the [Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education](#). She is also the Founding Director and a Commission member of the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future, which [hosted the release of the TALIS results](#) Friday, June 27th, in collaboration with the OECD. Follow Linda Darling-Hammond on Twitter: www.twitter.com/LDH_ed [Linda Darling-Hammond](#) President & CEO, Learning Policy Institute, Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education Emeritus at Stanford University