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NETWORK FOR ALABAMA TEACHING FELLOWS SURVEY INVITES EDUCATORS TO VOICE OPINIONS ABOUT CLASSROOM CHALLENGES
Results Show Continued Need to Streamline Quality of Support and Resources

Montgomery, Ala. – Nearly 7,500 teachers from across the state shared their insight on a variety of topics related to educator effectiveness and student success as part of the 2016 Perception Survey conducted by the Network for Alabama Teaching Fellows (NATF).

The NATF is the result of a collaboration between the Alabama State Department of Education (ALSDE), Alabama Education Association (AEA) and A+ Education Partnership. The focus of the teacher fellows program is to unify the individual voices of Alabama educators into one, collective, powerful voice for the purpose of improving educational outcomes for all students.

As part of that work, the NATF developed this initial perception survey, which provided an opportunity for educators across the state to voice their opinions about the primary challenges they face on a daily basis, said Dr. Tony Thacker, coordinator for the ALSDE Division of Research and Development. Teachers were asked to share feedback about professional development; school climate and professional support; implementation of the Alabama College- and Career-Ready Standards; and fiscal concerns and/or roadblocks to success.

The overall results of the survey indicate that while educators work diligently to help students overcome academic, social, emotional, and environmental barriers that impede student success, the “one size fit all approach” does not work with students nor educators. In addition, the results implied the need to continue streamlining and improving the quality of support and resources provided to educators while ensuring alignment to student, teacher, and district needs.

The survey was open for responses from January 1 to February 5, 2016, and approximately 7,454 Alabama educators participated.

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The highlights include:

- The overwhelming majority of educators reported professional development (PD) opportunities were developed based on teacher/student needs (88.2%) and were a good use of their time (77.3%). The top-three PD format favored by educators were sessions presented by local/subject experts (colleagues) (50%); job embedded PD offered over time (38%); and sessions presented by external experts in their field (37%).

- Overall, educators reported a healthy school climate where leadership supports learning (94.2%) and educators (84.7%), establishes clear expectations for student behavior/interaction (85.7%), and sets a positive example for staff and students (90.6%).

- The overwhelming majority of educators were familiar with CCRS (95.3%), believed teaching and assessment practices at schools are aligned to CCRS (93.6%), and CCRS are more rigorous than previous standards (73.9%). When asked what the greatest challenge to implementing CCRS, educators’ responses reiterated the need for quality, effective PD focused on the standards in a positive environment with resources to implement standards adequately.

- When asked about the wrap-around services that are most effective in helping students with challenges outside of school, educators’ responses were differentiated based on the school/district’s needs. The responses suggested the need for more community services, greater family engagement efforts, additional educational services, and easier access to family health services all help students facing a myriad of outside-of-school challenges.

“Because of the positive feedback the survey engendered, we at the ALSDE realized the need for a tool that will allow educators to provide on-going, continuous, feedback,” Thacker said, noting the NATF is currently working on developing and implementing an interactive website that will allow educators to communicate directly with their colleagues both throughout the state and at the ALSDE. “Our hope is that this level of open communication will foster high-quality collaboration between educators and educational stakeholders.”

To learn more about the Network for Alabama Teaching Fellows, click here. Follow the NATF on Twitter here.

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