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In the Quest to Improve Schools, Have Teachers Been Stripped of Their Autonomy?

By Ulrich Boser and Robert Hanna January 21, 2014

Over the past few years, there has been an ever-growing chorus of pundits who argue that teachers have grown to deeply dislike their jobs. They argue that teachers are unhappy with their lack of control and freedom. These pundits believe that discouraged educators have been fleeing the profession in droves.

Take, for instance, teacher and education blogger Vicki Davis who recently argued in *The Washington Post* that many educators are leaving schools because of cookie-cutter approaches to teaching and learning. "Many U.S. teachers don't even have the authority to upgrade their web browser or fix a printer," Davis wrote.[1] Or consider UCLA education management expert Samuel Culbert who wrote in a *New York Times* article last year that teachers need far more space to try new things. "If [teachers] are allowed to search for the best answers, they'll find them."[2] And then there is Furman University education professor Paul Thomas, who argues that educators today are "teaching in a time of tyranny."[3]

But do teachers really lack autonomy and freedom? And more importantly: As a nation, have we reached the right balance of accountability and autonomy that is necessary for workplace innovation, career satisfaction, and overall results?

To gain a better handle on this issue, we examined a number of relevant data sets. First, we conducted an analysis of the 2011-12 Schools and Staffing Survey, or SASS, a nationally representative survey of teachers and principals administered regularly by the National Center for Education Statistics.[4] These data are the most recent available. Second, we looked at various state surveys, including 2013 data from Kentucky and Tennessee, as well as other recent national polling data on teacher attitudes.

The data suggest something much different than the conventional wisdom. In fact, teachers are far more autonomous—and far more satisfied—than most people believe. In many ways, the problem is how we think about educator autonomy. The issue is that for years, we as a nation have believed that teachers should have day-in, day-out control over both *what* they should teach (such as what students should know and be able to

do by the end of high school) and *how* they should teach (such as specific instructional strategies and methods).[5] This mindset should change because the real problem in public education today is that many teachers have too much control over what they teach each day in their classroom—and it prevents them from perfecting how they teach.

Among our findings:

- **Overwhelming percentages of teachers say that they have a great deal of autonomy.** For instance, more than 90 percent of teachers say that they have a good or great deal of control over selecting their teaching techniques, according to the most recent federal data. Similar patterns are found at every school level, across all subject areas, and in all 50 states.

  We also looked at more recent state surveys, and again teachers overwhelmingly report high levels of autonomy. In 2013, for instance, 94 percent of Tennessee educators believed they were encouraged to try new things to improve instruction. And another 82 percent of teachers in the state say they had the autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery such as pacing and materials.[6] Since 2012, other state surveys in North Carolina, Massachusetts, and Kentucky have found more or less the same thing.[7]

  These data have not changed much over time, and over the past several years, teachers have not reported that they have any more or less control over what they teach. During the 2007-08 school year, for example, 82 percent of U.S. teachers reported that they had some control over what they teach; in the 2011-12 school year, almost the exact same percentage of teachers—or 83 percent—reported some control.[8]

- **Overwhelming percentages of teachers say that they are satisfied with teaching.** Survey results reveal that most teachers are happy with their jobs. Most recently, 89 percent of teachers said that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with their jobs, according to a recent Scholastic and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation survey.[9] Similar results were found from a recent MetLife teacher survey: 82 percent of teachers reported that they were "somewhat" or "very satisfied" with their jobs.[10] Moreover, teachers appear to be more happy with their jobs than almost every other profession. According to one 2012 Gallup poll, teachers rate their overall "well-being" higher than nurses, farmers, and business owners.[11] The only group that rates their overall lives higher than teachers is doctors.

  In some states, teachers report almost complete autonomy. Although results vary across the states, there are a number of states where teachers report near total control over every aspect of teaching. In North Dakota, for instance, more than 80 percent of teachers report a moderate or great deal of control over what content to teach students. In contrast, only 42 percent of teachers in Virginia report that degree of autonomy.

Moreover, when it comes to autonomy over teaching practices, teachers in every state report very high degrees of freedom, and in every state, more than 80 percent of teachers reported that they have significant freedom over their teaching methods. Even in the states with the lowest levels of control over the topics taught, most teachers still report retaining some control. In Florida, for instance, 68 percent of teachers say that they have some control over teaching practices. Moreover, that is the lowest level reported by any state. In other words, clearly a majority of our nation's teachers believe that they wield influence when it comes to the topics taught in the classroom.

There is no question that policymakers have increased the demands on teachers in recent years, and some of the recent policy reforms at the state and national level have limited teachers' control over what they teach. A few years ago, for instance, a study found that since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, 62 percent of the nation's school districts have reduced the instructional time spent on history, music, and other subjects in elementary schools.[12]

In some areas of teaching, states and districts have also pushed teachers to employ ineffective teaching practices such as rote memorization and other test-cramming techniques in order to boost scores on standardized tests. Worst of all, the emphasis on standardized tests has created the wrong incentives in some places. Earlier this year, for example, investigators alleged that more than a dozen Atlanta educators, including teachers, principals, and the former superintendent of schools, were involved in cheating on the state test. In some instances, teachers appeared to have erased students' wrong answers and filled in the correct ones.[14]

The bigger problem in public education, however, might not be too little autonomy but rather too much. This makes it hard to create a true profession, which requires having a clear adherence to a common body of knowledge.

The point is not that standards and assessments should be developed without teacher input. Quite the opposite. We believe that teachers need to be a central part of the team that develops any set of educational processes, including—and perhaps most importantly—standards and assessments. Educators often know best about what their students should know and be able to do, and the process of developing educational goals needs to be a bottom-up one, not a top-down one. But at the same time, the profession needs to come together and define what students should know—and what teachers should know. Because without a robust and widely agreed-upon teaching base, it's hard to develop robust instructional practices.

This is an issue that goes back decades, if not centuries. From the beginning of public education in the United States, our nation's schools were built around the idea that most decisions should be made at the local level, and for many years, states were reluctant to even outline what students should learn before graduating from high school. But over

the past two decades, many observers have realized that a highly decentralized approach to academic standards makes teaching and learning more difficult. In such highly decentralized learning systems, a teacher typically has to develop much of his or her own curriculum, which takes significant time and dedication.

That's not to say, however, that teachers have no guidance. Some districts do lay out standards of learning for each grade level, which guides the curriculum that teachers deliver. The problem is that even then, administrators don't always support teachers in covering the material in those standards. Whatever the case, this highly decentralized approach makes it hard to scaffold the learning process. If you are teaching students how to write an essay, for example, and you are not sure if your students have mastered basic writing skills such as spelling, that is a problem.

But there's a second issue with not clearly defining what teachers should teach: It makes it difficult to build a true profession. Without clear standards for students, teachers have long struggled to build a proper craft of teaching—one that is built around a common body of skills and knowledge. In other words, if we don't know what students should learn, it's hard to create a set of skills and knowledge for the practice of teaching.

Or as Harvard University education professor Jal Mehta recently wrote, in education:

> *… there is no widely agreed-upon knowledge base, training is brief or nonexistent, the criteria for passing licensing exams are much lower than in other fields, and there is little continuous professional guidance. It is not surprising, then, that researchers find wide variation in teaching skills across classrooms; in the absence of a system devoted to developing consistent expertise, we have teachers essentially winging it as they go along, with predictably uneven results.*[15]

Others have echoed similar concerns over the years, including Albert Shanker, the former president of the United Federation of Teachers, which represents teachers in the New York City public schools. Many years ago, Shanker wrote:

> *… we don't have any agreement on what teachers need to know. Colleges and universities can't train teachers on the basis of the curriculum they are going to teach, or assess them on how well they know it, because their students will end up teaching in many different school districts and many different states. What these students get instead are abstract courses that most teachers say were not even helpful in teaching them how to teach.*[16]

The issue here is not the development of standards. Educators need to be a central part of the creation of any common body of knowledge that outlines what students should know and be able to do. The issue is that in many areas, the standards have been weak or nonexistent.

There have been policy efforts to address this problem, and in recent years, every state has adopted academic standards that describe what students should know and be able to do through high school. States have also created assessment programs that hold schools and districts accountable for their performance against those standards. And over the past few years, states have also been trying to further ratchet up the rigor of their education systems by adopting the Common Core State Standards. Led by a group of states, the Common Core is an effort to develop and implement national college- and career-ready standards.[17] Thus far, the initiative has received near unanimous support: More than 45 states and the District of Columbia have joined the initiative and formally adopted both the math and reading standards—a rare achievement for contemporary reform efforts.[18]

What's more, teachers—along with other experts and local leaders—played a key role in developing the standards, and today around 75 percent of teachers support the new standards.[19] This is an important development.

But still, as standards and assessments have been rolled out across the country over the past decade, some experts have worried that these reforms have taken away too much autonomy from teachers. Those with concerns often point to supposed teacher dissatisfaction with the new academic standards.

But what is notable in this debate is a lack of data or, just as problematic, skewed data. Take a recent analysis by Andy Rotherham, a former Clinton administration official and a co-founder of the education consulting firm Bellwether Education. In a lengthy online column, Rotherham showed that when MetLife recently released new survey data, the firm engaged in some "dubious polling" when it argued that teacher satisfaction had gone down. It turned out, according to Rotherham, that teacher satisfaction had likely stayed constant.[20]

More to the point, our analysis showed that even with current reforms underway, overwhelming percentages of teachers still report high levels of autonomy over almost every aspect of teaching, including what to teach and how to teach. In Iowa, for instance, more than 70 percent of teachers report "moderate" or a "great deal" of control over what content to teach students. (See Table 2 in the appendix for state-by-state data on this indicator.)

More than that, teachers are eager for more direction around what they should teach, and according a recent Scholastic/Gates Foundation poll, most teachers are supportive of the need for the new Common Core standards.[21] This despite the fact that teachers understand that the implementation of the Common Core will demand significant reform: More than 70 percent of teachers report that implementing the new standards "will require [them] to make changes in [their] teaching practice."

Moreover, it appears that recent reforms around standards and accountability have not created a teaching force of unhappy instructional robots, and for the most part, teachers continue to rate their jobs very highly. Or as Gallup noted in a recent report, "Teachers' high level of emotional health reflects a lot of positive daily experiences, without a lot of negative ones. Teachers experience more enjoyment than those in other professions, including physicians."[22]

This does not mean, however, that working conditions are perfect. Far from it. While teachers generally report a great deal of satisfaction, it's clear that conditions could be much better. There are issues with pay, underscored by the fact that teachers earn much less than other workers with similar backgrounds. A 2010 study found that teachers overall earned about 12 percent less than workers in other fields with similar education and years of work experience.[23]

Studies have also shown that teachers need better, more supportive school administrators. Not surprisingly, when teachers leave the profession, they frequently report that the lack of support from administrators was an important factor in their decision. In fact, teachers often say that weak leadership is a more important reason for leaving the profession than their relatively low pay.[24]

Looking forward, policymakers and education officials need to address the problem of teacher working conditions and weak pay structures. Likewise, there must be a recognition that teachers need to give up some of their autonomy over what to teach while at the same time retaining their control over how to teach. As a nation, we also need to make sure that teachers are always at the policy table, that they have a strong voice in how schools are run. At the same time, we also need to do more to support to teachers and allow them to focus on determining what instructional approaches work best for their students.

Think of teachers as orchestra conductors. They don't write the score, but they help the musicians implement the score and they lead the experience. This means, of course, that teachers should also have access to a common body of practice, including better instructional strategies, improved approaches to classroom management, and more targeted and developmentally appropriate learning experiences. Standards for students would help with the development of that common body of practice while respecting that teachers should have the freedom to figure out how to best implement that body of practice.

Recommendations

Our analysis leads us to the following recommendations for policymakers.

Better define what teachers should teach—and what students should learn

Higher academic standards like those set out in the Common Core can provide students and teachers with a clear set of goals that they can strive toward. This is an important first step, but far more should be done starting with teacher training, which should be made far more rigorous and aligned with the expectations of the Common Core State Standards. We also need to ensure that professional development provides a process to help educators improve their craft. But perhaps most important of all, there needs to be a robust body of knowledge that describes what great teaching looks like.

This work needs to start now. There is strong evidence, for instance, that states have not committed enough money and energy to provide teachers and schools with even the rudimentary support need to build a common body of practice around the Common Core standards. A recent study by the Center on Education Policy, a Washington-based think tank, found that more than 75 percent of school districts report that they do not have sufficient funds to fully implement the Common Core standards.[25] This must change.

Provide teachers with more support

Teaching is hard work, and teachers need more and better support to build their profession. The tools for improving teaching practice are many, and they start with a shift in policy. More needs to be done to build the next generation of teacher evaluation systems that give teachers the substantive feedback that they need. Furthermore, the culture around teaching must be improved. This means creating a culture around better developing the teaching practice rooted in a common knowledge base—one that's focused on the use of effective practices and constant improvement. Finally, far more needs to be done to give teachers time to develop their instructional practices. In other words, we need to give teachers more time not teaching so that they can work with their colleagues, develop lesson plans, and hone their instructional practice. This is done in many other high-performing countries—and our classrooms must take note.

Improve salary and working conditions

As a nation, we need to focus on working conditions. As noted earlier in this report, teachers generally have high levels of autonomy and job satisfaction. But there are clear issues and many teachers have been discouraged by recent policy developments. Furthermore, in many high-poverty areas, schools and districts lack equitable funding, which can fuel teacher discontent, and let us not forget that there is a need to boost pay for teachers while avoiding lock-step salary increases. Providing smart career advancement opportunities and targeted financial rewards are proven methods of motivating employees in every profession, and there's no reason to think that teaching is any different.

Conclusion

Looking forward, our findings suggest that states and the federal government have a long way to go before they have reduced teacher autonomy to a degree where teachers cannot innovate—or feel deeply unhappy with their work. The bigger problem is that as a nation, we have not provided teachers with the opportunities and supports that they need to build a true profession. This should not continue. Most certainly, teachers should be given a great deal of leeway over how they teach, but the country also needs to do a far better job defining what teachers teach—in the end, the teaching profession will be all the better for it.

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TABLE 1

Percentage distribution of public school teachers, by level of control, for the item "selecting textbooks and other instructional materials," 2011-12 school year

	No control	Minor control	Moderate control	A great deal of control
Alabama	17.7%	35.6%	31.1%	15.7%
Alaska	17.0%	24.1%	26.2%	32.7%
Arizona	21.2%	29.8%	28.7%	20.4%
Arkansas	13.7%	22.8%	29.7%	33.8%
California	22.3%	34.2%	24.2%	19.4%
Colorado	14.9%	27.1%	26.4%	31.6%
Connecticut	12.7%	22.1%	35.2%	30.0%
Delaware	24.2%	35.4%	21.4%	19.0%
District of Columbia	19.1%	21.4%	26.0%	33.5%
Florida	29.9%	34.4%	20.7%	15.0%
Georgia	21.0%	27.6%	31.2%	20.2%
Hawaii	13.9%	15.2%	45.2%	25.6%
Idaho	18.9%	24.9%	28.7%	27.5%
Illinois	11.8%	23.0%	30.4%	34.9%
Indiana	10.6%	26.8%	29.9%	32.7%
Iowa	9.1%	21.2%	33.3%	36.5%
Kansas	15.0%	18.8%	31.1%	35.1%
Kentucky	13.4%	23.9%	33.9%	28.9%
Louisiana	29.6%	28.7%	25.6%	16.1%
Maine	4.3%	20.4%	30.5%	44.9%
Maryland	24.2%	31.3%	25.8%	18.7%
Massachusetts	13.8%	23.9%	32.0%	30.3%
Michigan	18.6%	25.6%	31.1%	24.7%
Minnesota	9.0%	22.4%	31.4%	37.2%
Mississippi	15.0%	25.5%	34.0%	25.5%
Missouri	11.8%	23.4%	32.3%	32.6%
Montana	9.0%	21.2%	33.9%	35.9%
Nebraska	13.9%	26.4%	27.1%	32.7%
Nevada	22.9%	26.1%	26.2%	24.8%
New Hampshire	6.1%	17.1%	31.8%	44.9%
New Jersey	20.2%	25.9%	28.4%	25.6%
New Mexico	16.1%	26.9%	28.0%	29.0%
New York	11.2%	22.6%	31.4%	34.7%
North Carolina	19.5%	32.5%	25.3%	22.7%

	No control	Minor control	Moderate control	A great deal of control
North Dakota	9.9%	12.0%	29.5%	48.6%
Ohio	13.8%	27.6%	29.2%	29.4%
Oklahoma	11.2%	18.2%	34.9%	35.7%
Oregon	11.4%	26.5%	27.7%	34.4%
Pennsylvania	16.8%	23.5%	31.2%	28.4%
Rhode Island	17.9%	35.4%	25.5%	21.2%
South Carolina	16.4%	32.3%	29.9%	21.4%
South Dakota	5.7%	14.6%	30.1%	49.6%
Tennessee	23.6%	29.9%	25.6%	20.9%
Texas	21.3%	27.9%	29.0%	21.8%
Utah	18.9%	26.9%	27.6%	26.6%
Vermont	1.7%	12.8%	26.2%	59.3%
Virginia	16.3%	33.2%	30.7%	19.8%
Washington	12.8%	31.1%	31.9%	24.2%
West Virginia	22.1%	35.2%	24.2%	18.5%
Wisconsin	8.5%	27.8%	29.8%	34.0%
Wyoming	7.8%	21.4%	34.5%	36.3%
National	**17.4%**	**27.3%**	**29.0%**	**26.3%**

Notes: The question for this item was the following: "How much actual control do you have IN YOUR CLASSROOM at this school over the following areas of your planning and teaching? Selecting textbooks and other instructional materials."

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2011-12.

TABLE 2

Percentage distribution of public school teachers, by level of control, for the item, "selecting content, topics, and skills to be taught," 2011-12 school year

	No control	Minor control	Moderate control	A great deal of control
Alabama	17.6%	26.1%	32.3%	24.0%
Alaska	14.6%	20.3%	32.5%	32.5%
Arizona	17.1%	23.2%	29.9%	29.8%
Arkansas	15.2%	23.2%	29.4%	32.2%
California	16.3%	29.4%	25.6%	28.6%
Colorado	13.4%	26.7%	28.8%	31.2%
Connecticut	12.8%	26.9%	34.0%	26.3%
Delaware	26.4%	31.2%	25.5%	17.0%
District of Columbia	12.5%	17.8%	34.6%	35.1%
Florida	31.6%	22.4%	26.0%	20.1%
Georgia	30.2%	26.0%	26.0%	17.9%
Hawaii	19.9%	14.1%	43.6%	22.3%
Idaho	17.3%	25.5%	31.6%	25.6%
Illinois	9.3%	19.6%	33.9%	37.2%
Indiana	12.3%	27.9%	27.1%	32.7%
Iowa	9.2%	17.4%	36.0%	37.4%
Kansas	11.1%	23.1%	30.8%	35.1%
Kentucky	17.4%	28.1%	30.0%	24.5%
Louisiana	29.1%	26.6%	24.4%	20.0%
Maine	4.8%	23.5%	38.1%	33.6%
Maryland	29.2%	23.7%	27.6%	19.4%
Massachusetts	14.0%	25.6%	30.4%	30.0%
Michigan	17.9%	28.4%	30.1%	23.6%
Minnesota	7.1%	23.0%	31.1%	38.8%
Mississippi	14.9%	22.8%	31.1%	31.3%
Missouri	10.9%	25.4%	29.6%	34.1%
Montana	7.2%	19.6%	32.1%	41.0%
Nebraska	13.6%	23.3%	29.0%	34.2%
Nevada	22.4%	22.0%	24.6%	31.0%
New Hampshire	7.9%	18.4%	32.2%	41.5%
New Jersey	16.5%	23.8%	33.1%	26.6%
New Mexico	17.5%	18.8%	30.8%	32.9%
New York	9.8%	21.4%	33.1%	35.7%
North Carolina	16.3%	28.0%	31.8%	23.9%

	No control	Minor control	Moderate control	A great deal of control
North Dakota	4.2%	14.8%	31.3%	49.8%
Ohio	16.0%	25.1%	26.2%	32.7%
Oklahoma	8.8%	19.8%	30.1%	41.3%
Oregon	9.4%	20.1%	33.7%	36.9%
Pennsylvania	15.9%	26.4%	28.2%	29.5%
Rhode Island	20.3%	27.5%	26.4%	25.9%
South Carolina	19.0%	23.8%	30.8%	26.4%
South Dakota	5.3%	18.0%	30.8%	45.9%
Tennessee	24.2%	27.6%	25.9%	22.4%
Texas	24.1%	24.0%	26.8%	25.0%
Utah	19.2%	22.3%	24.7%	33.8%
Vermont	3.7%	19.7%	32.1%	44.5%
Virginia	27.8%	30.0%	22.4%	19.8%
Washington	12.4%	27.9%	32.4%	27.3%
West Virginia	22.3%	29.0%	24.1%	24.6%
Wisconsin	7.4%	22.2%	32.7%	37.8%
Wyoming	9.6%	25.2%	33.4%	31.8%
National	**17.5%**	**24.7%**	**29.1%**	**28.7%**

Notes: The main question for this item was the following: "How much actual control do you have IN YOUR CLASSROOM at this school over the following areas of your planning and teaching? Selecting content, topics, and skills to be taught."

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2011-12.

TABLE 3

Percentage distribution of public school teachers, by level of control, for the item, "selecting teaching techniques," 2011-12 school year

	No control	Minor control	Moderate control	A great deal of control
Alabama	1.9%	7.4%	30.7%	60.0%
Alaska	1.3%	8.5%	24.9%	65.3%
Arizona	3.2%	6.7%	30.6%	59.5%
Arkansas	1.7%	8.0%	27.5%	62.9%
California	2.1%	8.4%	28.3%	61.2%
Colorado	3.4%	5.5%	25.8%	65.3%
Connecticut	1.2%	6.7%	34.0%	58.2%
Delaware	3.2%	10.4%	37.6%	48.8%
District of Columbia	4.1%	5.5%	32.4%	58.1%
Florida	2.9%	14.5%	32.0%	50.6%
Georgia	2.6%	8.5%	29.2%	59.8%
Hawaii	0.0%	3.3%	19.2%	77.5%
Idaho	1.3%	4.5%	23.0%	71.2%
Illinois	2.3%	5.2%	22.8%	69.8%
Indiana	2.4%	6.6%	27.6%	63.4%
Iowa	0.1%	8.1%	25.5%	66.3%
Kansas	0.5%	6.1%	22.6%	70.8%
Kentucky	2.3%	7.1%	32.0%	58.6%
Louisiana	3.9%	7.1%	29.3%	59.7%
Maine	1.8%	4.1%	27.3%	66.8%
Maryland	0.9%	8.7%	38.8%	51.6%
Massachusetts	1.1%	2.4%	28.1%	68.4%
Michigan	1.5%	5.8%	27.7%	65.0%
Minnesota	0.4%	5.4%	22.5%	71.8%
Mississippi	1.1%	4.3%	29.7%	64.9%
Missouri	1.6%	6.0%	21.9%	70.5%
Montana	1.1%	3.0%	18.9%	77.0%
Nebraska	1.1%	7.4%	23.5%	68.0%
Nevada	4.0%	8.4%	25.2%	62.5%
New Hampshire	0.4%	4.3%	24.4%	71.0%
New Jersey	2.6%	6.5%	24.9%	66.0%
New Mexico	4.9%	4.9%	24.5%	65.7%
New York	2.2%	4.9%	27.0%	65.9%
North Carolina	1.8%	8.1%	26.6%	63.6%

	No control	Minor control	Moderate control	A great deal of control
North Dakota	0.8%	4.2%	20.2%	74.7%
Ohio	2.2%	4.2%	23.0%	70.6%
Oklahoma	0.9%	5.4%	19.5%	74.2%
Oregon	1.7%	2.7%	25.1%	70.5%
Pennsylvania	2.1%	6.7%	27.5%	63.8%
Rhode Island	3.9%	11.4%	33.7%	51.0%
South Carolina	1.2%	7.5%	26.8%	64.5%
South Dakota	1.3%	4.8%	17.8%	76.0%
Tennessee	3.0%	6.6%	25.9%	64.5%
Texas	2.1%	7.9%	29.8%	60.2%
Utah	3.3%	6.5%	16.4%	73.7%
Vermont	0.1%	2.7%	24.5%	72.7%
Virginia	2.9%	7.8%	26.8%	62.5%
Washington	1.0%	7.2%	25.7%	66.2%
West Virginia	1.2%	5.8%	32.5%	60.5%
Wisconsin	0.3%	3.6%	29.0%	67.2%
Wyoming	1.6%	4.6%	32.6%	61.2%
National	**2.0%**	**6.9%**	**27.4%**	**63.7%**

Notes: The question for this item was the following: "How much actual control do you have IN YOUR CLASSROOM at this school over the following areas of your planning and teaching? Selecting teaching techniques."

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2011-12.

TABLE 4

Percentage distribution of public school teachers, by level of control, for the item, "evaluating and grading students," 2011-12 school year

	No control	Minor control	Moderate control	A great deal of control
Alabama	2.3%	6.3%	24.8%	66.6%
Alaska	1.4%	4.6%	28.5%	65.5%
Arizona	1.6%	7.1%	24.3%	67.0%
Arkansas	0.7%	2.9%	22.1%	74.3%
California	1.5%	5.8%	21.7%	71.0%
Colorado	1.9%	3.0%	29.1%	65.9%
Connecticut	0.9%	7.7%	30.1%	61.4%
Delaware	1.2%	9.4%	38.9%	50.5%
District of Columbia	2.3%	4.6%	32.0%	61.1%
Florida	2.0%	8.8%	32.8%	56.4%
Georgia	1.3%	7.0%	28.7%	63.0%
Hawaii	0.0%	0.2%	34.1%	65.7%
Idaho	1.4%	5.1%	22.3%	71.3%
Illinois	0.9%	3.7%	22.9%	72.6%
Indiana	0.8%	6.4%	24.9%	67.9%
Iowa	3.4%	4.7%	26.3%	65.6%
Kansas	0.1%	4.0%	16.3%	79.6%
Kentucky	1.3%	4.5%	29.5%	64.6%
Louisiana	2.5%	9.7%	28.2%	59.6%
Maine	1.1%	7.2%	25.6%	66.1%
Maryland	1.3%	8.1%	29.7%	60.9%
Massachusetts	0.5%	4.9%	26.0%	68.6%
Michigan	1.0%	6.0%	29.3%	63.7%
Minnesota	0.3%	4.4%	28.0%	67.4%
Mississippi	1.4%	5.8%	29.7%	63.1%
Missouri	0.5%	5.4%	23.5%	70.7%
Montana	0.1%	2.3%	19.9%	77.7%
Nebraska	1.1%	7.0%	26.3%	65.6%
Nevada	1.1%	5.9%	30.0%	63.0%
New Hampshire	0.9%	2.1%	26.0%	71.1%
New Jersey	1.3%	4.2%	29.5%	65.1%
New Mexico	3.2%	8.9%	17.5%	70.3%
New York	1.8%	3.5%	30.6%	64.2%
North Carolina	2.5%	5.2%	29.0%	63.3%

	No control	Minor control	Moderate control	A great deal of control
North Dakota	1.3%	2.7%	17.8%	78.2%
Ohio	1.5%	4.4%	22.4%	71.7%
Oklahoma	0.7%	3.3%	23.7%	72.3%
Oregon	3.5%	5.6%	17.7%	73.2%
Pennsylvania	1.7%	5.2%	26.0%	67.1%
Rhode Island	2.6%	10.0%	39.9%	47.5%
South Carolina	0.7%	7.1%	26.4%	65.7%
South Dakota	0.3%	2.6%	18.0%	79.1%
Tennessee	1.1%	7.2%	27.8%	63.9%
Texas	1.5%	4.7%	27.9%	66.0%
Utah	1.7%	4.0%	17.0%	77.4%
Vermont	0.9%	3.3%	24.9%	70.9%
Virginia	1.2%	8.0%	32.8%	58.0%
Washington	0.6%	3.9%	27.5%	68.0%
West Virginia	1.7%	3.8%	22.3%	72.2%
Wisconsin	1.1%	6.6%	33.7%	58.6%
Wyoming	0.0%	5.6%	32.9%	61.5%
National	**1.4%**	**5.5%**	**27.0%**	**66.2%**

Notes: The main question for this item was the following: "How much actual control do you have IN YOUR CLASSROOM at this school over the following areas of your planning and teaching? Evaluating and grading students.

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2011-12.

TABLE 5

Percentage distribution of public school teachers, by level of control, for the item, "disciplining students," 2011-12 school year

	No control	Minor control	Moderate control	A great deal of control
Alabama	2.8%	14.5%	36.0%	46.8%
Alaska	0.4%	7.7%	34.2%	57.8%
Arizona	2.4%	7.4%	36.6%	53.7%
Arkansas	1.3%	8.9%	34.8%	55.0%
California	1.5%	9.1%	32.6%	56.8%
Colorado	1.6%	8.5%	39.4%	50.5%
Connecticut	0.6%	7.8%	39.7%	52.0%
Delaware	1.2%	19.0%	41.6%	38.3%
District of Columbia	5.8%	15.5%	37.4%	41.3%
Florida	1.8%	10.2%	40.7%	47.4%
Georgia	2.1%	16.2%	36.7%	45.0%
Hawaii	3.0%	4.3%	34.7%	58.0%
Idaho	0.9%	6.0%	26.9%	66.3%
Illinois	1.2%	8.1%	34.6%	56.1%
Indiana	1.2%	8.7%	32.2%	57.8%
Iowa	1.0%	6.6%	32.0%	60.4%
Kansas	0.4%	4.4%	31.4%	63.8%
Kentucky	1.9%	11.0%	39.9%	47.2%
Louisiana	3.7%	15.7%	34.8%	45.9%
Maine	0.2%	7.0%	38.3%	54.5%
Maryland	1.4%	14.8%	44.9%	38.9%
Massachusetts	0.6%	8.7%	31.3%	59.4%
Michigan	1.4%	9.2%	37.9%	51.6%
Minnesota	0.6%	7.5%	37.0%	54.9%
Mississippi	2.3%	13.6%	32.7%	51.4%
Missouri	1.3%	10.2%	37.4%	51.0%
Montana	0.3%	6.0%	33.2%	60.5%
Nebraska	‡	‡	‡	‡
Nevada	0.9%	11.6%	37.9%	49.7%
New Hampshire	0.7%	10.2%	31.6%	57.5%
New Jersey	1.9%	8.3%	36.0%	53.8%
New Mexico	1.1%	13.9%	30.6%	54.4%
New York	2.0%	10.5%	36.7%	50.9%
North Carolina	2.9%	11.8%	38.6%	46.8%

	No control	Minor control	Moderate control	A great deal of control
North Dakota	0.1%	4.2%	27.2%	68.5%
Ohio	1.2%	10.8%	34.9%	53.1%
Oklahoma	1.4%	7.9%	34.7%	55.9%
Oregon	0.5%	6.8%	33.7%	59.0%
Pennsylvania	2.2%	11.2%	37.6%	49.1%
Rhode Island	1.6%	11.5%	43.1%	43.8%
South Carolina	2.8%	13.5%	41.4%	42.3%
South Dakota	0.4%	5.2%	30.3%	64.1%
Tennessee	1.2%	8.9%	35.6%	54.3%
Texas	3.0%	12.5%	33.9%	50.7%
Utah	0.5%	6.3%	21.4%	71.8%
Vermont	1.1%	6.6%	39.7%	52.6%
Virginia	2.0%	13.7%	35.7%	48.7%
Washington	0.8%	9.7%	33.7%	55.8%
West Virginia	1.5%	11.5%	38.4%	48.6%
Wisconsin	0.2%	6.0%	37.9%	55.9%
Wyoming	1.8%	6.3%	31.5%	60.4%
National	**1.7%**	**10.3%**	**35.8%**	**52.3%**

‡ Institute of Education Sciences reporting standards not met.

Notes: The main question for this item was the following: "How much actual control do you have IN YOUR CLASSROOM at this school over the following areas of your planning and teaching? Disciplining students."

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2011-12.

TABLE 6

Percentage distribution of public school teachers, by level of control, for the item, "determining the amount of homework to be assigned," 2011-12 school year

	No control	Minor control	Moderate control	A great deal of control
Alabama	2.9%	5.8%	22.4%	68.9%
Alaska	0.7%	3.7%	17.9%	77.7%
Arizona	2.1%	4.4%	21.3%	72.2%
Arkansas	3.4%	2.3%	22.0%	72.3%
California	2.8%	6.6%	23.2%	67.4%
Colorado	0.5%	5.1%	20.9%	73.5%
Connecticut	3.3%	8.5%	30.6%	57.7%
Delaware	2.3%	2.7%	23.2%	71.8%
District of Columbia	7.2%	6.1%	14.7%	72.0%
Florida	1.4%	4.8%	27.5%	66.3%
Georgia	2.5%	5.0%	23.9%	68.6%
Hawaii	4.2%	0.0%	4.7%	91.1%
Idaho	1.6%	6.3%	15.9%	76.1%
Illinois	1.8%	4.1%	19.6%	74.5%
Indiana	0.5%	3.6%	22.7%	73.2%
Iowa	0.7%	2.4%	21.7%	75.2%
Kansas	0.4%	3.1%	20.2%	76.3%
Kentucky	2.6%	6.9%	25.5%	65.0%
Louisiana	2.4%	5.4%	22.4%	69.7%
Maine	2.5%	5.0%	24.4%	68.1%
Maryland	3.8%	4.8%	29.3%	62.1%
Massachusetts	1.5%	7.0%	23.5%	68.0%
Michigan	1.2%	3.6%	21.1%	74.1%
Minnesota	1.2%	3.3%	19.3%	76.2%
Mississippi	1.6%	4.2%	19.9%	74.3%
Missouri	1.2%	3.8%	17.4%	77.7%
Montana	0.4%	1.9%	19.0%	78.7%
Nebraska	1.6%	4.1%	19.7%	74.6%
Nevada	6.4%	4.6%	22.9%	66.1%
New Hampshire	2.0%	5.2%	27.5%	65.4%
New Jersey	1.6%	6.5%	23.9%	68.0%
New Mexico	1.0%	6.9%	21.3%	70.7%
New York	0.9%	2.9%	22.8%	73.4%
North Carolina	4.8%	4.3%	23.9%	67.0%

	No control	Minor control	Moderate control	A great deal of control
North Dakota	0.8%	2.4%	15.1%	81.7%
Ohio	1.2%	3.9%	20.6%	74.3%
Oklahoma	0.4%	3.2%	16.1%	80.4%
Oregon	0.9%	2.5%	14.5%	82.0%
Pennsylvania	1.6%	4.7%	26.3%	67.5%
Rhode Island	1.8%	7.9%	33.8%	56.5%
South Carolina	1.4%	7.0%	21.2%	70.4%
South Dakota	2.0%	3.6%	16.7%	77.6%
Tennessee	0.4%	4.2%	19.5%	75.9%
Texas	3.2%	7.4%	21.8%	67.6%
Utah	0.7%	4.7%	19.8%	74.9%
Vermont	0.9%	3.7%	19.1%	76.3%
Virginia	3.5%	6.7%	26.2%	63.5%
Washington	1.3%	6.4%	16.9%	75.4%
West Virginia	2.0%	6.2%	19.9%	71.9%
Wisconsin	1.5%	3.1%	20.2%	75.2%
Wyoming	1.2%	2.0%	20.1%	76.8%
National	**2.0%**	**5.0%**	**22.4%**	**70.6%**

Notes: The main question for this item was the following: "How much actual control do you have IN YOUR CLASSROOM at this school over the following areas of your planning and teaching? Determining the amount of homework to be assigned."

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS), "Public School Teacher Data File," 2011-12.

Endnotes

1 Vicki Davis, "The greatest teacher incentive: The freedom to teach," *The Washington Post,* July 19, 2011, available at http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2011-07-19/national/35267344_1_math-teacher-arne-duncan-education-system.

2 Samuel A. Culbert, "Allow more autonomy," Room for Debate, *The New York Times,* March 28, 2011, available at http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/03/27/how-to-raise-the-status-of-teachers/give-teachers-autonomy.

3 Paul Thomas, "Accountability without autonomy is tyranny," *Daily Kos,* January 15, 2012, available at http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/01/15/1055120/-Accountability-without-Autonomy-Is-Tyranny.

4 More information about the Schools and Staffing Survey, or SASS, available through the National Center for Education Statistics, or NCES, website at http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sass. The 2011-12 SASS data referenced is this report is from the 2011-12 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) Restricted-Use Data Files, provided through a restricted-use license from NCES.

5 Kevin Carey, "The teacher autonomy paradox," *The American Prospect,* September 17, 2008, available at http://prospect.org/article/teacher-autonomy-paradox.

6 Results from Tennessee's 2013 "Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning" TELL Kentucky survey can be found at http://telltennessee.org/.

7 Results from these state surveys can be found on the following websites. Kentucky's 2013 TELL Kentucky survey: http://www.tellkentucky.org/. Massachusetts's 2012 TELL Massachusetts survey: http://www.tellmass.org/. North Carolina's 2012 "Teachers Working Conditions Initiative" survey: http://www.ncteachingconditions.org/.

8 The 2007-08 SASS is from the 2007-08 Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) Restricted-Use Data Files, provided through a restricted-use license from the National Center for Education Statistics.

9 Scholastic and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, "Primary Sources: America's Teachers on Teaching in an Era of Change" (2013), available at http://www.scholastic.com/primarysources/2013preview/PrimarySourcesCCSS.pdf.

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11 The data are based on the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index. More information can be found at http://www.gallup.com/poll/wellbeing.aspx. The results referenced here are from Shane Lopez and Preety Sidhu, "U.S. teachers love their lives, but struggle in the workplace," Gallup, March 28, 2013, available at http://www.gallup.com/poll/161516/teachers-love-lives-struggle-workplace.aspx.

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22 Shane Lopez and Preety Sidhu, "U.S. teachers love their lives, but struggle in the workplace."

23 Sylvia A. Allegretto, Sean P. Corcoran, and Lawrence Mishel, "The teaching penalty: An update through 2010" (Washington: Economic Policy Institute, 2011), available at http://www.epi.org/page/-/old/issuebriefs/IssueBrief298.pdf.

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