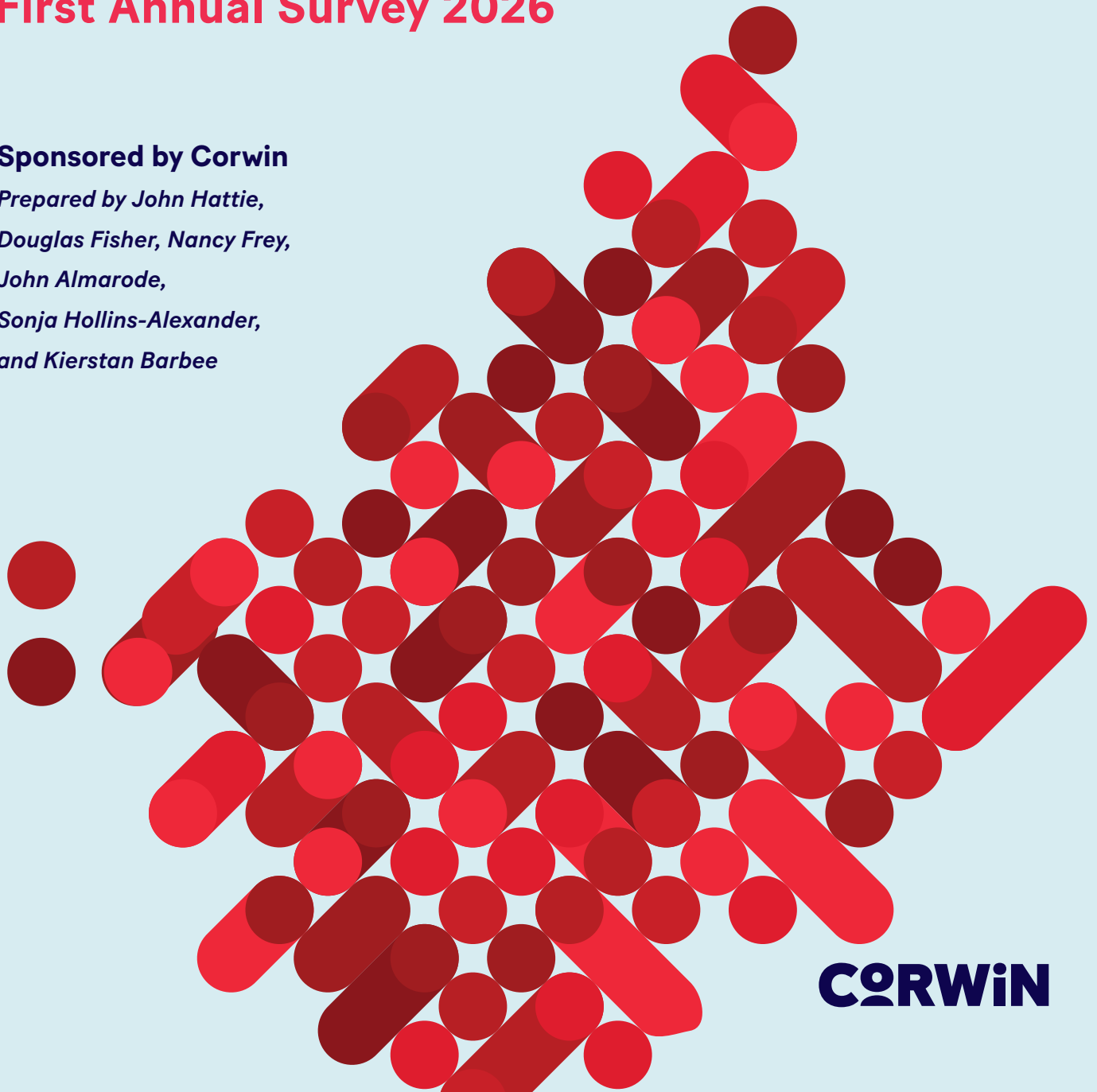


Pulse of Professional Learning

First Annual Survey 2026

Sponsored by Corwin

*Prepared by John Hattie,
Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey,
John Almarode,
Sonja Hollins-Alexander,
and Kierstan Barbee*



CORWIN

Introduction

In March 2026, Corwin conducted its first annual Pulse of Professional Learning Survey, designed by John Hattie, Douglas Fisher, Nancy Frey, John Almarode, Sonja Hollins-Alexander, and Kierstan Barbee. The survey explored the current state of professional learning across 14 domains and 90+ topics to identify priority areas, emerging needs, and topics that may be losing relevance in the field.

The survey included 711 educators from across the United States (with some international representation), spanning districts of all sizes and urban, suburban, and rural areas. Respondents included both customers and non-customers, and represented a range of roles: teachers, specialists, administrators, and other district and school personnel. For further information on respondents and methodology, see page 5.

Survey Respondent Profile

An overview of the educators who took part in this study



District Setting

Rural, urban, and suburban districts of all sizes

Customer Mix

Both customers and non-customers

Roles Represented

Teachers, specialists, and administrators

Personnel Level

Both school-level and district-level staff

10 Key Findings

Overarching Theme: The hierarchy is clear: interpersonal and instructional factors emerge as the highest priorities. Strong teaching, effective leadership, early childhood development, and coherent curriculum lead the way. Organizational structures that sustain improvement fall in the middle. Technology-driven innovations rank lowest. Educators prioritize professional learning that creates the most direct impact for students.

1 Building a positive school culture is the single highest-rated item.

The highest-rated topics across the survey were school culture, early childhood language development, early intervention, and evidence-based teaching strategies—with relational and foundational priorities consistently ranking highest.

2 Educators want judgment, not just strategies.

Educators appear less interested in additional tools than in guidance for effective implementation, specifically when and how to use them. The highest-rated topics tend to foster that kind of thinking, while the lowest-rated ones offer strategies with little evaluative purpose.

3 Early Childhood Education isn't just highly rated; it's viewed as a high-value professional learning priority.

Educators across all grade levels see early childhood education as a foundational investment, and they demonstrate a relatively coherent understanding of the domain: language development, play-based learning, and early intervention. That shared understanding makes it an essential area for professional learning.

4**Family and community engagement are important contributors to student success and are largely absent from the headlines.**

Family & Community Engagement ranked higher than both Leadership & School Improvement and Assessment & Evidence-Informed Instruction, yet it rarely gets the attention it deserves in education reform conversations. Educators see school–home partnerships, parent involvement, and community relationships as essential to student success.

5**Relational and student-centered practices: high individual interest, no shared framework.**

Educators show strong interest in topics like SEL, personalized learning, differentiation, and classroom management, among the highest-ranked topics in the survey, but tend to see each as valuable on its own rather than as part of a unified approach to teaching.

6**Equity is viewed through the lens of learning access, not broader identity initiatives.**

Equity, Inclusion, & Culturally Responsive practices show the widest range of opinions of any domain in the survey. Topics like instructional access and support for diverse learners rate highly, while gender inclusivity and LGBTQ+ student support receive lower ratings.

7**Digital Innovation is the lowest-rated domain by a wide margin.**

The four lowest-rated topics in the entire survey all fall within this domain: augmented/virtual reality, virtual learning, gamification, and micro-credentialing. Educators largely see these as peripheral to the core work of improving teaching and learning.

8**Professional learning priorities are consistent across political, regional, and demographic groups.**

Educator priorities show no meaningful differences across political affiliation, geographic region, Title I status, district type, or enrollment size—a striking finding given contemporary political debate surrounding education. Grade level introduces some nuance, but far more agreement than difference.

9**Policy and governance are valued as infrastructure, not drivers of improvement.**

Educators see policy, governance, and school operations as necessary background conditions rather than primary drivers of improvement. Compliance, safety planning, and budgeting are viewed as enablers, not the work itself. That distinction matters for how policy-focused initiatives land at the school level.

10**When asked what was missing, educators pointed to the same themes: practical, classroom-close concerns.**

Most felt the survey covered professional learning well but identified gaps in classroom behavior and mental health, literacy beyond the early grades, special education and MTSS, teacher well-being, AI literacy, and translating research into real classroom practice.

Survey Methodology & Overview of Respondents

Methodology

The survey asked educators to rate PL topics across 14 categories on a 4-point scale (1 = *Very Low Priority*, 4 = *Very High Priority*). Missing responses were recorded as “No Opinion.” John Hattie applied a maximum-likelihood factor analysis with oblique (Promax) rotation, a rigorous statistical method that groups related items into meaningful clusters, suggesting 8 distinct professional learning domains.

Rank	Domain	Mean	SD	Alpha	n
1	Early Childhood Education & Development	4.22	0.88	0.81	544
2	Family & Community Engagement	4.01	0.90	0.85	646
3	Leadership & School Improvement	4.00	0.77	0.89	613
4	Assessment & Evidence-Informed Instruction	3.99	0.69	0.85	711
5	Student-Centered & Relational Pedagogy	3.93	0.69	0.58*	711
6	Equity, Inclusion, & Culturally Responsive	3.60	1.01	0.93	658
7	Policy, Governance, & School Operations	3.51	0.96	0.84	646
8	Digital Innovation & Future-Focused Learning	2.90	0.81	0.85	658

**Low alpha for Student-Centered Pedagogy ($\alpha = 0.58$) indicates a more diffuse factor; composite scores should be interpreted with care.*

Respondents At a Glance

711	18%	57%	76%	48
Total Respondents	Corwin Customers	Title I Schools	16+ Yrs Experience	US States + 18 Intl Countries

Respondent Role

The sample skews toward instructional leaders and coaches relative to the national educator workforce.

Role	<i>n</i>	Survey %	National %	Rep.
Teacher	342	56%	88%	Under-rep.
School Coach/Specialist	133	21%	3%	Over-rep.
Principal/Asst. Principal	47	7%	5%	In line
District Curriculum Admin/Dir.	45	7%	1%	Over-rep.
District PL Admin/Dir.	21	3%	1%	Over-rep.

District Size

Small districts are over-represented; large districts are significantly under-represented relative to national enrollment figures.

District Enrollment	<i>n</i>	Survey %	National %	Rep.
< 2,500 students	183	31%	9%	Over-rep.
2,500–9,999 students	178	31%	19%	Over-rep.
10,000–49,999 students	135	24%	37%	Under-rep.
50,000+ students	80	14%	32%	Under-rep.

School Setting

Rural educators are notably over-represented; suburban educators are under-represented.

Setting	<i>n</i>	Survey %	National %	Rep.
Rural	187	30%	20%	Over-rep.
Suburban	262	42%	53%	Under-rep.
Urban	167	27%	27%	In line

School Grade Configuration

PreK–5, middle, and high school grade bands are broadly in line with national figures; K–12 schools are somewhat over-represented.

Grade Configuration	<i>n</i>	Survey %	National %	Rep.
PreK–5	222	35%	35%	In line
K–8	46	7%	10%	Under-rep.
Gr 6–8	90	14%	15%	In line
Gr 6–12	23	3%	6%	Under-rep.
Gr 9–12	181	28%	22%	Over-rep.
K–12	75	12%	5%	Over-rep.

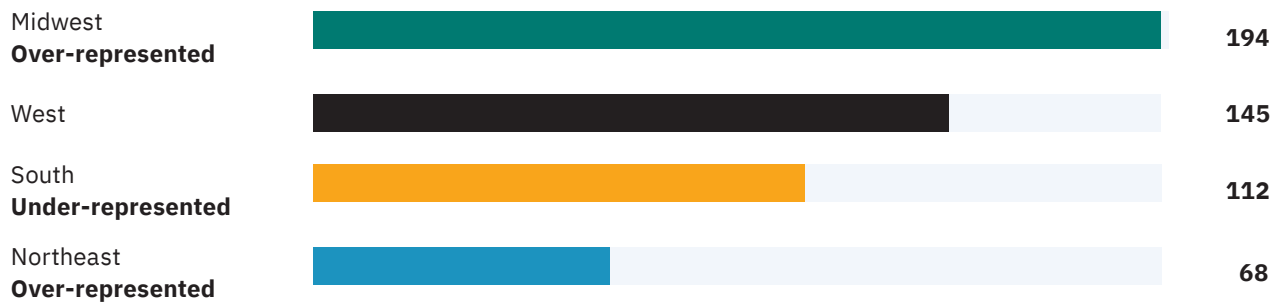
Geography

(Note: there is missing data for these two measures)

Political Distribution



Regional Distribution



John Hattie's full report is available at www.corwin.com/PulseofPL

Key skews to keep in mind when looking at findings:

- Experienced educators dominate: 76% have 16+ years vs. 32% nationally.
- Coaches and administrators are over-represented; teachers are under-represented.
- Small and rural districts are over-represented; large suburban districts are under-represented.
- The South is geographically under-represented; the Midwest and Northeast skew higher.