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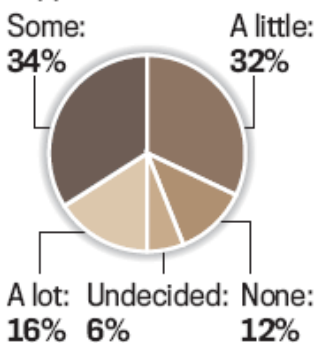
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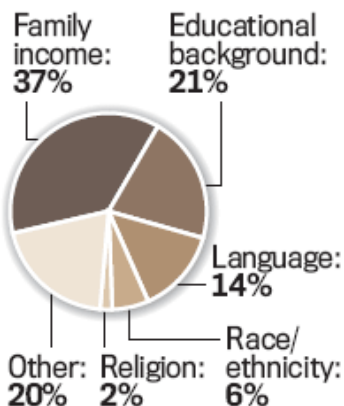
Teacher attitudes

Giving up on students
Frustrated Michigan teachers may give up on disadvantaged students. A breakdown on how often teachers say that happens:



Source: EPIC-MRA

Classroom conditions
Diversity issues that pose the biggest classroom challenge, according to teachers:



The Detroit News

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Teachers say they 'give up' on disadvantaged students

Survey shows need for better training and services

The Detroit News

Michigan teachers are so frustrated when dealing with their most challenging pupils that many say they simply give up on disadvantaged students.

The startling finding -- turned up in a statewide survey -- shows the problem is more a matter of class and income than race and ethnicity.

The data is a heads-up for schools of education, local school boards and administrators, as well as for parents and taxpayers.

The system is not working. The problems run deep and it's not all the fault of teachers. Every day, teachers face classrooms filled with society's problems, including differences in family incomes, religion, race and parent's educational background.

Yet teachers are expected to bring all students up to speed at the same rate, lest they violate the recent No Child Left Behind rules.

In some cases, it can't be done, say teachers in the survey by EPIC-MRA of Lansing. So

CyberSurvey

Teachers give up

In a new poll, 82 percent of Michigan teachers say educators sometimes "give up" on disadvantaged students out of frustration. Should teachers give up on those students?

- Yes
- No

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they give up on certain students and concentrate their efforts where they will have the most likelihood of success.

About 82 percent of teachers say that happens at least a little.

And 50 percent say the giving up occurs "some" or "a lot." Even if half the teachers are off base in their assessment, it's a major problem.

Education is the first rung on the ladder to economic success. If the children of the poor are denied the chance to get on the ladder, they are doomed to a lifetime of disadvantage.

Even in rich districts, there is a percentage of students who aren't successful. The survey was designed to get teachers' opinions on the issue, says pollster Ed Sarpolus.

The Michigan Education Association and other groups have long worked on classroom-related cultural issues, realizing that education can't be effective until other matters are also addressed. Sometimes a barrier to learning can be something a teacher doesn't expect, such as how a poor student perceives the manner or the clothes of a middle-class teacher, experts say.

The MEA has for years offered sessions and professional development on reaching into poor communities, says Margaret Trimer-Hartley, MEA spokeswoman.

Those kinds of efforts need the wider and fuller support of lawmakers and the rest of the education community.

For example, college students studying to be teachers would welcome more training on dealing with diversity, which is often synonymous with race. But the survey says the bigger problems in the classroom are more directly related to economic class (family income), the education background of parents, as well as language barriers.

Interestingly, the poll suggests all the problems won't be solved with higher school budgets. If teachers are right, many problems lie outside the classroom.

Teachers need better training before they are assigned to a classroom, and more support once they get there in dealing with poor children. Schools must also be prepared to provide additional services to help students from homes where education is not a priority.

And they must work with poor parents to engage them in the learning process.

The findings are from the teachers' point of view, which arguably may not be the whole picture. But on the other hand, teachers are at the heart of the system. And policy makers should study their analysis with an eye toward fixes.

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