

Student lessons shape lives: exploring the life “lessons” teachers have learnt from their students: a survey on behalf of Get Into Teaching

Introduction

Kindred Agency commissioned research company OnePoll to carry out a survey on behalf of the *Get Into Teaching* campaign exploring the positive aspects of teaching as a career and the ‘life lessons’ teachers have learnt from interactions with their students, in the context of fulfilment and personal growth opportunities a career in teaching can offer.

Findings from the survey were used to inform campaign development and marketing, in particular public relations activity to position teaching as an opportunity for those looking for a rewarding career option. Press releases based on the main survey findings were proactively shared with target national and regional media for publication. These releases included information about how those considering a career in teaching can find out more.

Methodology

The research was conducted by OnePoll in accordance with the MRS Code of Conduct between 24th February and 6th March 2023. The aim was to sample 1,250 working teachers in state schools in England, which was the final response number. Respondents were asked a set of single answer and multi-answer questions. All responses were gathered using an online survey and individuals were recruited from an online “double opt-in” panel (where all eligible respondents are required to answer the demographic screening questions again to take part in the survey) of the general public.

Panellists can opt to answer all surveys but will be filtered out if a survey is not relevant to them. OnePoll employs members of the Market Research Society and its research activity abides by the ESOMAR principles.

The way these surveys were built meant that respondents were asked a number of preliminary screening questions to gather their demographic data, which could be used to analyse the data. This demographic data included age group, gender, city and region.

Questions for current teachers were based on a range of topics and themes including:

- What the best aspects of being a teacher are, when thinking about their career to date
- Whether their students, overall, have had a positive influence on their outlook on life
- What teachers feel they have learnt from working with students and whether it is more than they thought they ever would
- The extent to which they feel a sense of fulfilment from teaching and whether learning life “lessons” makes them feel they made the right decision to teach
- How their students might respond if teachers were to ask them what “lessons” they think they have taught them

In the survey, we are working with a maximum 2.8% margin of error (and a 95% confidence interval).

Summary findings

Respondents were asked when thinking about your career in teaching to date, what do you think are the best aspects of the job: 66% said *making a difference to the lives of young people*; 62% said *witnessing students’ progress and develop over time*; 52% said *seeing students get excited about a subject that I love*; 51% said *lightbulb moments – witnessing someone understand something for the first time*; 51% said *the joy and energy you get from working with young people*; 46% said *working with young people who give me a different perspective on life*; 43% said *knowing that every day is a learning opportunity for me too*; 34% said *knowing my role enables me to grow as a person*.

Asked whether, overall, your students had a positive or negative influence on your outlook on life, 41% said *very positive*; 52% said *fairly positive*; 5% said *neutral* and 1% said *fairly negative*. When respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *“I’ve learnt more about myself from working with students than I ever thought I would”*: 46% said *strongly agree*; 46% said *somewhat agree*; 6% said *neither agree nor disagree*; and 2% said *somewhat disagree*.

Respondents were asked, when thinking back over your teaching career to date, which “lessons” students have taught you the most: 47% said *the importance of fun and laughter in the working day*; 46% said *to better understand different perspectives and experiences*; 42% said *to show the same resilience and positivity in the face of challenges*; 40% said *to expect the unexpected*; 39% said *to learn to find enjoyment in every day*; 39% said *how enthusiasm is infectious*; 33% said *to be myself*; 28% said *to live in the moment more*; and 27% said *to not be afraid of the unknown*.

When respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *“I feel a huge sense of fulfilment when I feel that I am learning too, alongside teaching young people”*: 50% said *strongly agree*; 42% said *somewhat agree*; 7% said *neither agree nor disagree*; and 1% said *somewhat disagree*. When respondents of those who cited they’ve been taught 'lessons' by their students were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *“Learning life ‘lessons’ from my students makes me feel that I’ve made the right decision to become a teacher”*: 50% said *strongly agree*; 39% said *somewhat agree*; 8% said *neither agree nor disagree*; 2% said *somewhat disagree*; and 1% said *strongly disagree*.

Respondents who cited they’ve been taught 'lessons' by their students were asked what your students might say if you were to ask them what life “lessons” they think they have taught you: 47% said *the importance of fun and laughter*; 46% said *to never stop learning*; 44% said *to understand / be open to different perspectives and experiences*; 38% said *to be myself*; 37% said *how to stay calm*; 36% said *not to take myself too seriously*; 27% said *how to use the tech from time to time*; and 1% said *not sure*, and 1% *not applicable*. Respondents were asked if any of the following statements applied to them: 68% said *“I feel fulfilled as a teacher when I know that I am positively impacting lives”*; 42% said *“I feel fulfilled as a teacher when the life ‘lessons’ my students teach me help to make me a better person”*; 41% said *“I feel fulfilled as a teacher when there are opportunities for me to learn and grow via interactions with students”*; 41% said *“I feel fulfilled as a teacher when the life ‘lessons’ my students teach me make me a better teacher”*; and 1% said *none of the above*, and 1% *not applicable*.

Respondents of those who cited they’ve been taught 'lessons' by their students were asked to complete the following statement *“Some of the life ‘lessons’ my students have taught me have...”* from a range of options: 53% selected *“...makes me a better teacher”*; 47% said *“...changed the way I approach certain situations”*, 43% said *“...helped me understand another viewpoint”*; 43% said *“...made me a better person”*; 42% said *“...improved my relationship with the student/s”*; 39% said *“...stayed with me for a long time”*; 25% said *“...felt wise beyond their years”*; and 1% said *none of the above*. When respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the following statement: *“Some of my most profound moments in teaching have been when a student has taught me something about myself”*: 34% said *strongly agree*; 49% said *somewhat agree*; 12% said *neither agree nor disagree*; 4% said *somewhat disagree*; and 1% said *strongly disagree* .

The city-based statistical variations report:

City-based data	Birmingham	Brighton	Leicester	Liverpool	London	Manchester	Newcastle	Norwich	Nottingham	Oxford	Southampton
Number of respondents per city in the overall sample	125	125	105	96	125	125	123	125	109	62	65
Respondents who believe their students have had a positive* influence on their outlook on life	93%	97%	91%	95%	97%	94%	94%	91%	96%	94%	94%
Respondents who agree** they have learnt more about themselves from working with students than they ever thought they would	95%	97%	91%	92%	94%	91%	90%	90%	90%	91%	92%
Respondents who agree** that some of their most profound moments in teaching have been when a student has taught them something about themselves	82%	94%	87%	79%	92%	82%	78%	79%	85%	76%	77%
Respondents who agree** that learning life ‘lessons’ from their students makes them feel they’ve made the right decision to become a teacher	90%	93%	86%	90%	97%	87%	93%	84%	89%	84%	86%
Respondents who say some of the life ‘lessons’ their students have taught them have made them a better teacher	58%	50%	46%	61%	58%	56%	57%	40%	50%	53%	52%
Respondents who say some of the life ‘lessons’ their students have taught them have changed the way they approach certain situations	50%	44%	39%	47%	48%	54%	54%	36%	43%	52%	49%
Respondents who say some of the life ‘lessons’ their students have taught them have made them a better person	50%	42%	38%	44%	54%	45%	40%	30%	50%	42%	35%
Respondents who think one of the best aspects of their career in teaching to date is making a difference to the lives of young people	72%	54%	53%	74%	72%	74%	68%	50%	73%	63%	75%
Respondents who think one of the best aspects of their career in teaching to date is witnessing	63%	48%	50%	67%	63%	64%	74%	52%	67%	68%	71%

students' progress and develop over time											
Respondents who think one of the best aspects of their career in teaching to date is seeing students get excited about a subject that they love	54%	49%	47%	53%	58%	54%	57%	51%	47%	56%	51%

The regional statistical variations report:

Regional-based data	East Midlands	East of England	North East	North West	South East	West Midlands
<i>Number of respondents per region in the overall sample</i>	199	177	117	223	188	131
Respondents who believe their students have had a positive* influence on their outlook on life	96%	89%	94%	95%	93%	92%
Respondents who agree** they have learnt more about themselves from working with students than they ever thought they would	92%	89%	90%	90%	94%	95%
Respondents who agree** that some of their most profound moments in teaching have been when a student has taught them something about themselves	85%	79%	78%	81%	84%	82%
Respondents who agree** that learning life 'lessons' from their students makes them feel they've made the right decision to become a teacher	89%	84%	93%	88%	88%	90%
Respondents who say some of the life 'lessons' their students have taught them have made them a better teacher	49%	40%	56%	58%	58%	56%
Respondents who say some of the life 'lessons' their students have taught them have changed the way they approach certain situations	43%	37%	53%	51%	48%	52%
Respondents who say some of the life 'lessons' their students have taught them have made them a better person	47%	32%	39%	45%	41%	49%
Respondents who think one of the best aspects of their career in teaching to date is making a difference to the lives of young people	70%	47%	68%	74%	67%	71%
Respondents who think one of the best aspects of their career in teaching to date is witnessing students' progress and develop over time	62%	51%	74%	65%	70%	64%
Respondents who think one of the best aspects of their career in teaching to date is seeing students get excited about a subject that they love	47%	51%	56%	55%	55%	53%

* This finding combines respondents who said “Very positive” and “Fairly positive”

** This finding combines respondents who “Strongly agree” and “Somewhat agree”