



Achieving Inclusive Schools: The Teachers' Perspective April 2019

Job Reference: 349918/CM/RT



Research Objectives and Methodology



Why?

To gather data on second-level teachers' work with students with additional and special education needs (SEN).



How
Many?

1,319 which represents a response rate of 12% - a strong response. (Sample of 10,941 members). The margin of error from this sample size within this population is +/- 2.7%.



Who?

ASTI members who are classroom teachers, Special Education Teachers and guidance counsellors.



When? 6th – 19th March 2019.



How?

Online questionnaire, sent by RED C Research to ASTI members on email database.



Context

- / In September 2017, a new model for the allocation of teaching resources to schools for students with special educational needs (SEN) commenced. This model provides a single unified allocation to schools based on their school educational profile. The rationale underpinning the model is to support greater inclusion for SEN students in mainstream classrooms. While the model has resulted in increased teacher allocations to schools as well as greater certainty about the availability of such resources over a longer period of time, a number of problematic professional and implementation issues have quickly emerged and need to be addressed.
- / The core professional issue is that classroom teachers have not had training for the new model. The failure to roll out a national training programme for all teachers is deeply problematic as the new model prioritises classroom teaching over the withdrawal of SEN students for one-on-one/small group tuition. Classroom teachers are being asked to contribute to preparing educational support plans for SEN students and plan for a range of pedagogical strategies – typically called ‘differentiation’ – to make sure that the full range of students’ needs are met in the mainstream classroom.



Context

- / The core implementation issue is the lack of consistent administrative structures in schools to co-ordinate planning for SEN students. Planning for special educational needs comprises two key dimensions, namely, planning at whole-school level and planning for individual students. Both processes require high levels of professional expertise, dedicated time (including time to engage with external agencies and professionals as well as parents) and, crucially, access to ongoing professional development. The Department of Education and Skills has advised schools that some of the additional resources made available can be used for SEN co-ordination but that time spent on co-ordination should be kept to a minimum. The latter injunction is proving deeply problematic at school level.



Principal Findings - 1

- / 68% of respondents are employed exclusively as teachers of mainstream classes. Only 5% of these teachers have a SEN qualification while only 22% have participated in SEN training in recent years. Workload and lack of information about access to training are key reasons for non-participation.
- / At the same time, *“support from subject teachers in the classroom”* is one of the key strategies in schools to support SEN students; 81% of respondents said this is practiced in their school.
- / Almost half of all respondents – 49% – were asked to participate in individual educational planning for SEN students since the start of the 2018/19 school year. Of those who are employed as teachers of mainstream classes, 37% had participated in SEN planning.
- / The biggest challenge for teachers who participated in individual education planning for SEN students was timing and training. When asked about their SEN planning experiences, 55% of teachers of mainstream classes said they found the process time consuming, while 50% said they did not have adequate training. Amongst teachers with a SEN role, 79% said they found the process time consuming, while 30% said they did not have adequate training.



Principal Findings - 2

- / While co-ordination of SEN planning is sometimes delegated to Assistant Principals, it frequently becomes an unpaid duty for classroom teachers. Of the 36% of teachers who claim to have unremunerated duties; 29% say that this involves SEN co-ordination.
- / While 62% of teachers rate current SEN provision as either very good or good, class size is strongly identified as a key barrier to the delivery of inclusive education. 68% of respondents said smaller classes would be better for students with additional and special needs. The best ways to assist teachers in the delivery of inclusive education are smaller classes and access to training.
- / When asked about their workload, 96% of teachers say their work intensity has increased since the start of the decade.
- / Job satisfaction amongst second-level teachers has remained stable this year with just 50% of teachers expressing job satisfaction compared to 51% in 2018. However, in 2009 77% of teachers rated their job satisfaction as either good or very good.



The background features a dark blue field with numerous colorful, stylized hands reaching upwards. The hands are in various colors including red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, with a watercolor-like texture. In the top left corner, there is a circular graphic consisting of several colored segments (red, orange, yellow, green, blue) arranged in a ring, with a larger red arrow pointing clockwise.

Teachers' Profile

The ASTI logo is contained within a white circle. It features a small, colorful, curved line above the text "ASTI" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below "ASTI" is the tagline "A century of service" in a smaller, lighter font.

ASTI
A century of service

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Profile of Sample

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

72% of all teachers were female which is broadly reflective of the gender breakdown within the ASTI and nationally (69% female; 31% male). 74% have been teaching over 11 years and the majority (93%) are teaching full-time hours.



Q: How many years are you teaching? / Please select your gender

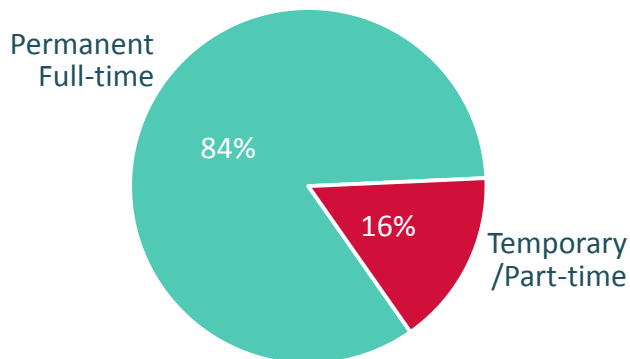


Employment Status

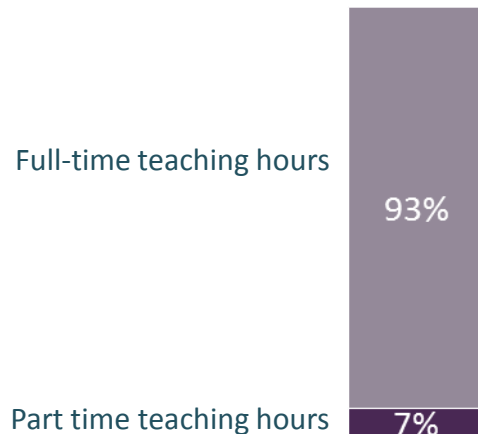
(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

84% of all teachers are in permanent teaching positions with full time hours.

Employment status



Hours Timetabled to Teach*



**= Figures have been rounded to the nearest %*

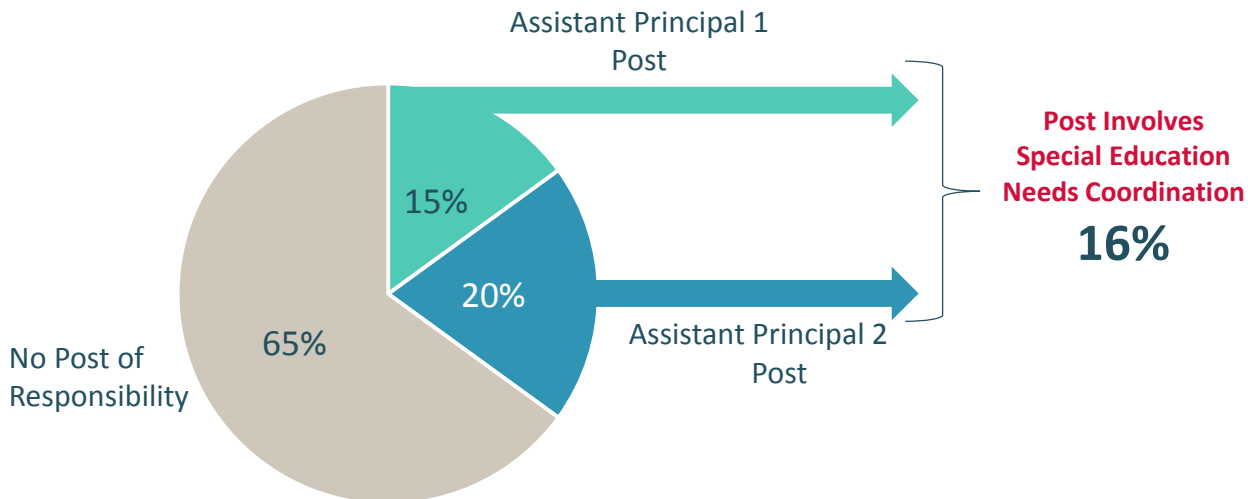
Q: What is your employment status?

Q: How many hours are you timetabled to teach? Please include timetabled hours with class groups, resource teaching hours with small groups/individual students.

Posts of Responsibility

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

Close to 2 in 3 teachers don't have a post of responsibility.



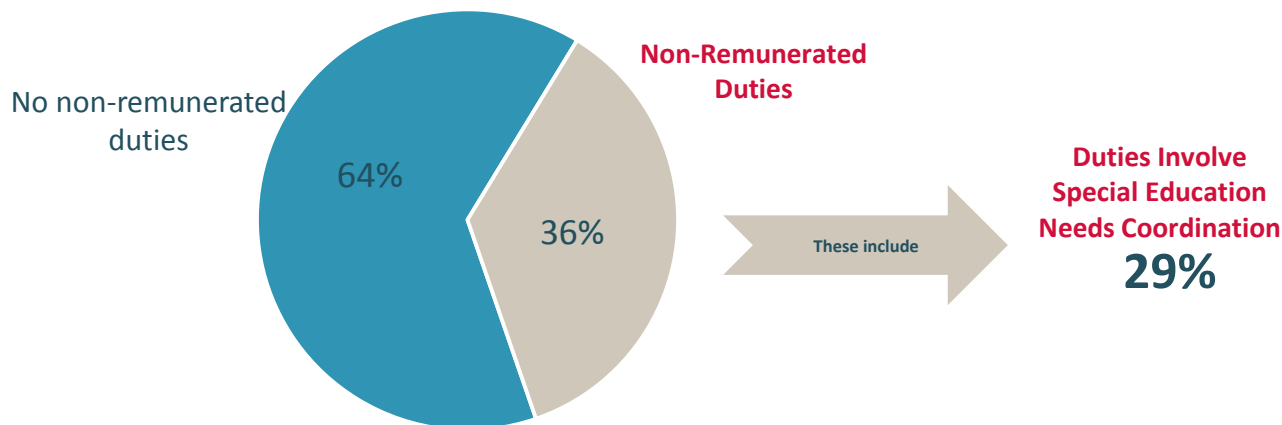
Q: Do you have a Post of Responsibility as follows:

Q: Does this Assistant Principal post include duties in relation to special education needs coordination?

Non-Remunerated Special Needs Education Duties

(Base: All Teachers Without a Post of Responsibility - n=861)

36% of teachers undertake a non-remunerated post outside the schedule of posts. Of these teachers, 29% state their non-remunerated duties include Special Education Needs coordination.



Q: Do you have non-remunerated duties outside of the schedule of posts in your school? (e.g., ICT co-ordinator, Literacy & Numeracy co-ordinator)

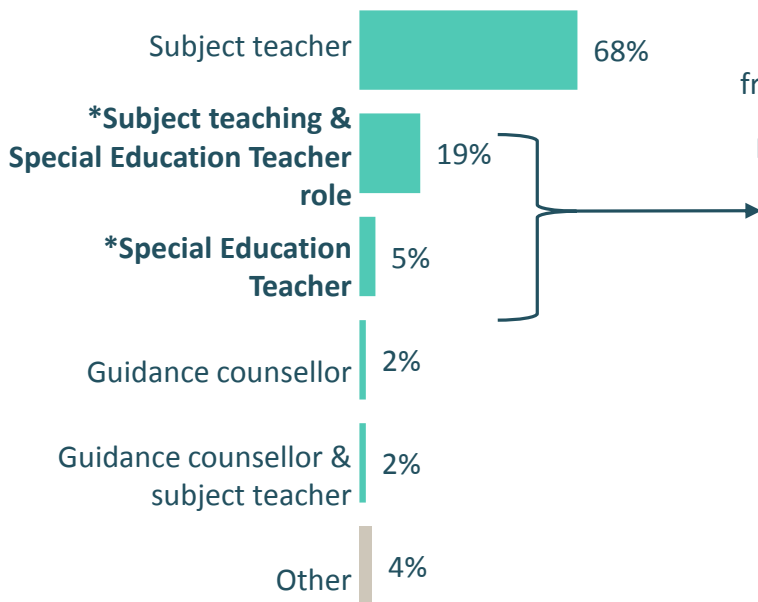
Q: If yes, do these duties include Special Education Needs coordination duties?

Special Education Teachers

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

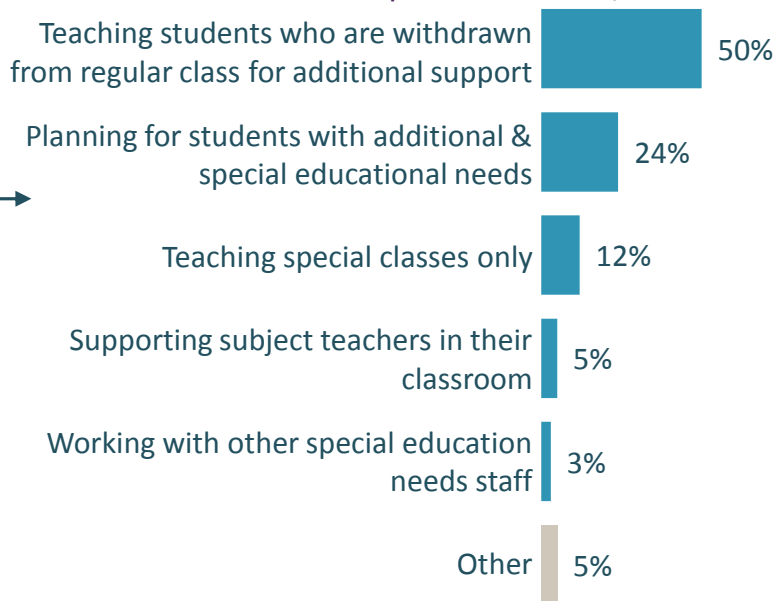
Around 1 in 4 teachers describe their professional role as either subject teaching with Special Education Teaching or solely Special Education Teaching. Half of their time as Special Education Teachers is spent on teaching students who are withdrawn from regular class for additional support.

Professional Role



Most Time Spent On Tasks (Rank 1st)

Base: All Special Education Roles, n=317



*Mainstream teachers are teachers who exclusively teach subjects in mainstream classes. Mainstream teacher/SEN role are teachers who teach subjects in mainstream classrooms who also have a Special Educational Needs teaching role, e.g., teaching students withdrawn from classrooms for individual and/or small-group tuition. Special Education Teachers are teachers who exclusively work with students with special education needs, e.g., teaching students withdrawn from classrooms for individual and/or small-group tuition and co-teaching alongside mainstream teachers in mainstream classrooms.

Q: What best describes your professional role?

Q: If you are a Special Education Teacher, please rank tasks below in terms of the overall time spent on each with 1 representing the most amount of time and 5 the least.

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Provision for Students with Additional/Special Educational Needs In Your School

The ASTI logo is located in the bottom right corner. It consists of a white circle containing the word "ASTI" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Above the letters "ASTI" is a small, colorful, curved line. Below the word "ASTI" is the tagline "A century of service" in a smaller, grey, sans-serif font.

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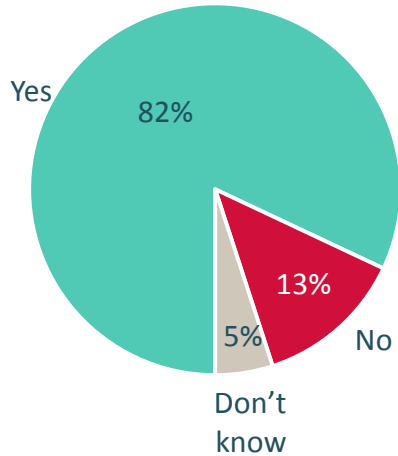
REDC

Provision for Special Education Needs in your School

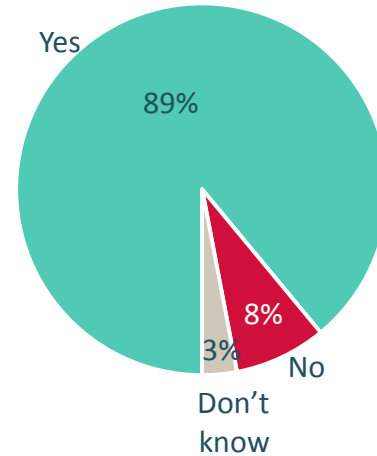
(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

82% of teachers state that there is a special education needs team in their school and 89% of them have a designated Special Education Needs Co-ordinator.

Special Education Needs Team In School



Designated Special Education Needs Coordinator



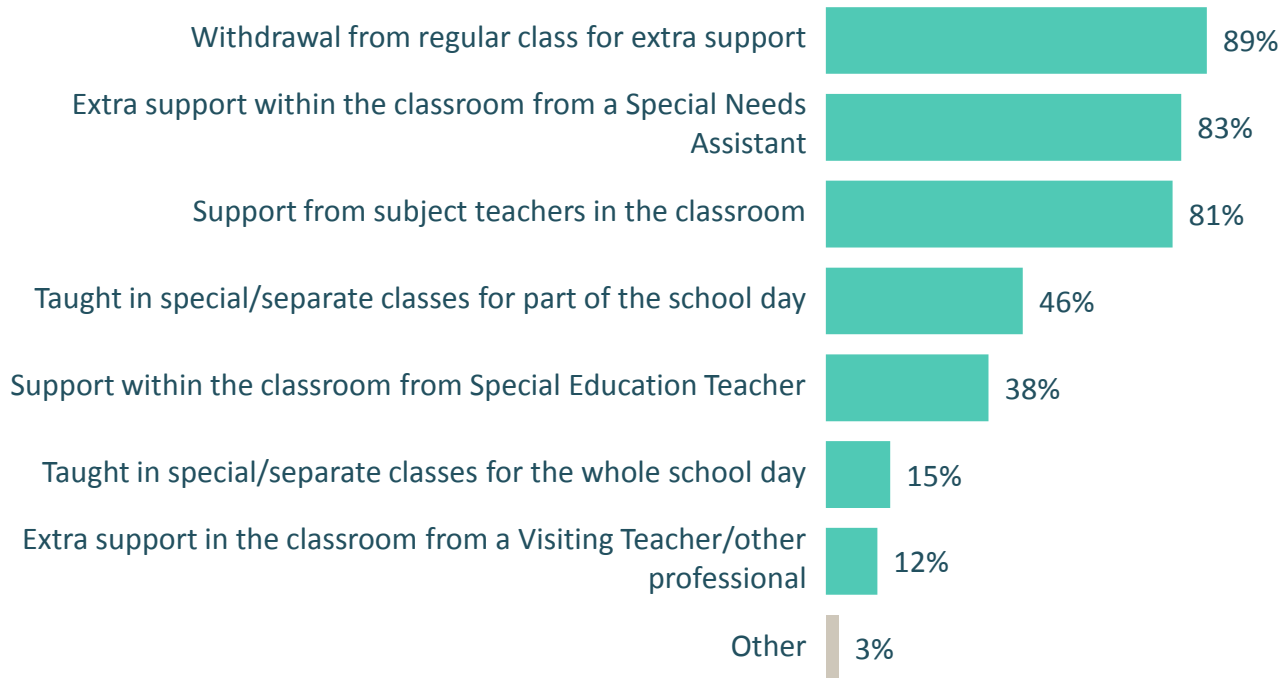
Q: Does your school have a designated Special Education Needs Co-ordinator?

Q: Is there a Special Education Needs team in your school?

Strategies for Inclusion

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

Common arrangements made in schools to support students with special education needs, as cited by teachers, include withdrawal from regular class for extra support, extra support within the classroom from a SNA and support from subject teachers in the classroom.



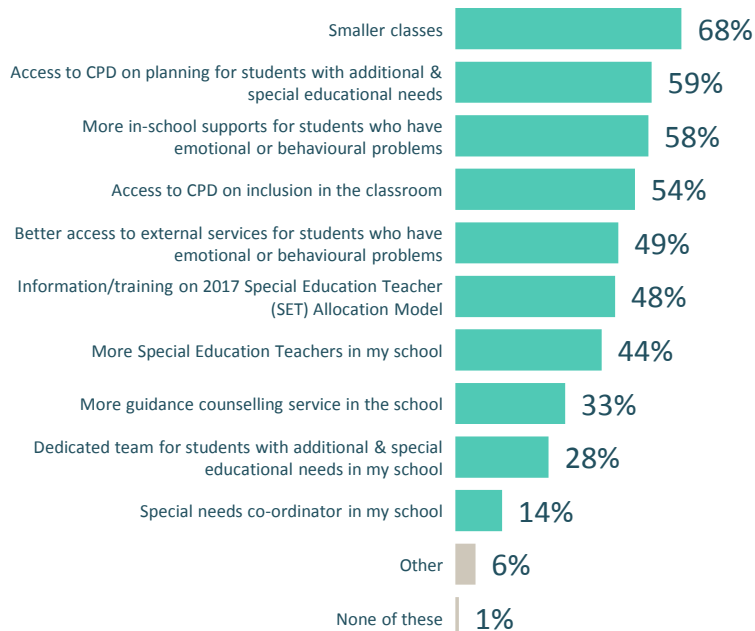
Q: Which of the following arrangements are used to provide support for students with additional & special educational needs in your school?

What Would Improve Education for Students With Special Educational Needs?

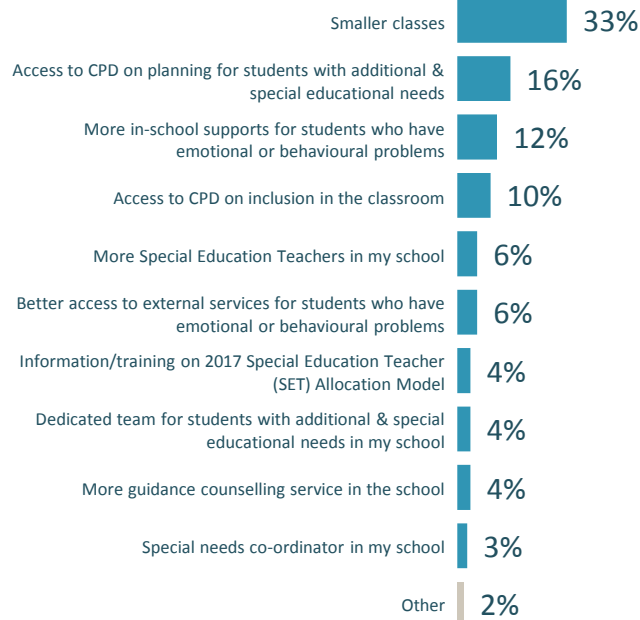
(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

Smaller classes and access to CPD on planning would best meet the needs of students according to the teachers and these are also the areas where the teachers believe they need most assistance.

Meeting the Needs of Students



Main Area Teachers Need Assistance On



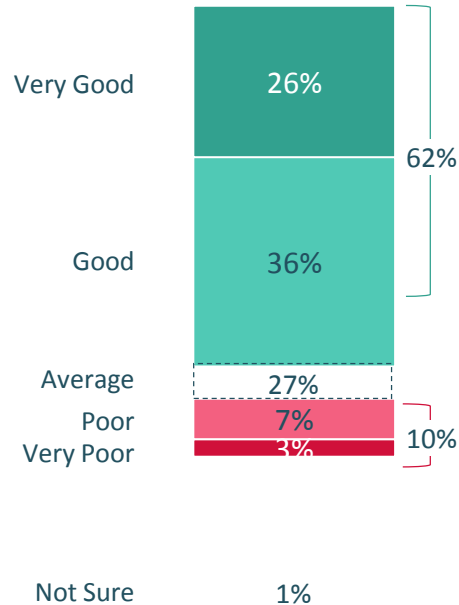
Q: Which of the following would best meet the needs of students with additional & special educational needs in your school?

Q: As a classroom teacher, which one of the options below would assist you most?

Current Provision For Students With Special Educational Needs

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

62% of teachers rate the current provision for students with additional and special needs in their schools as Very Good/Good.



Q: How would you rate the current provision for students with additional & special educational needs in your school?

The background of the slide features a dark blue field filled with numerous colorful handprints in shades of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. In the upper left corner, there is a circular graphic composed of several colored segments (red, yellow, green, blue) with a white arrow pointing clockwise.

Students With Additional/ Special Educational Needs & Classroom Teaching

The ASTI logo is contained within a white circle. It features a stylized, multi-colored swoosh above the acronym "ASTI" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the acronym, the tagline "A century of service" is written in a smaller, grey, sans-serif font.

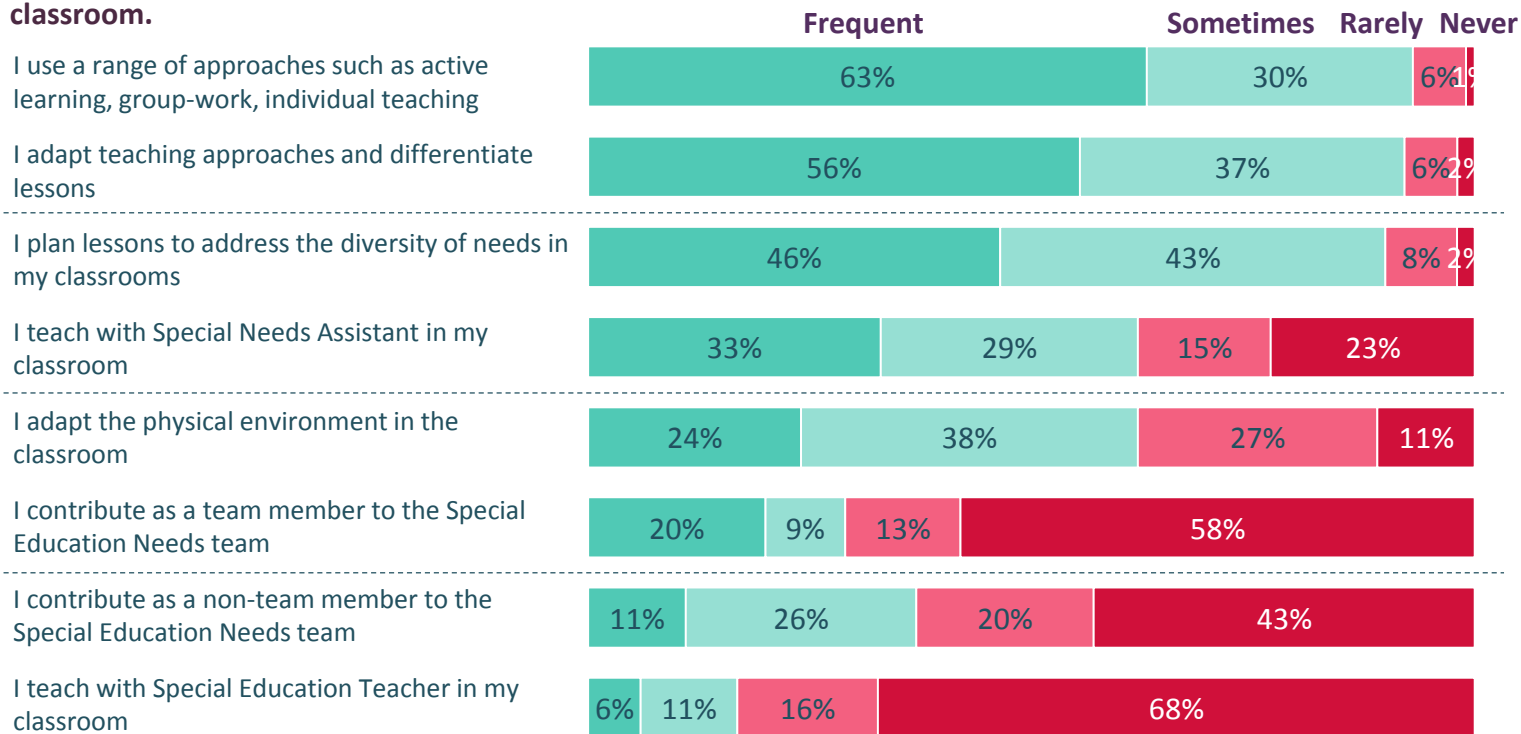
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Inclusion Activities Employed by Classroom Teachers

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

Active learning, group work, individual teaching as well as adapting teaching approaches and planning lessons to address classroom diversity are the most frequent activities that teachers engage in, to ensure inclusion in the classroom.

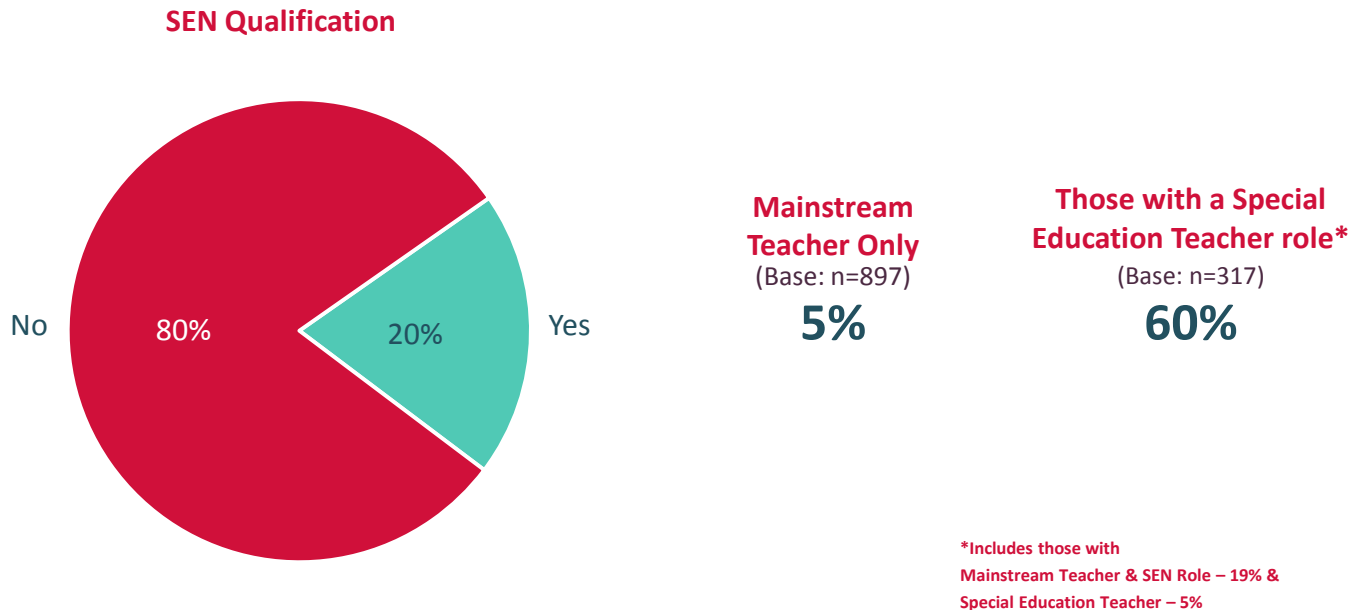


Q: How frequently do you engage in the following activities to ensure that the needs of the students with additional & special educational needs are met in your classroom?

Teachers with Special Educational Needs Qualification

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

Only 20% of all teachers have a qualification in special educational needs. Only 5% of teachers whose role is exclusively classroom teaching have a SEN qualification. Among those teachers who have a mainstream classroom teaching/SEN role and Special Education Teachers the figure is 60%.



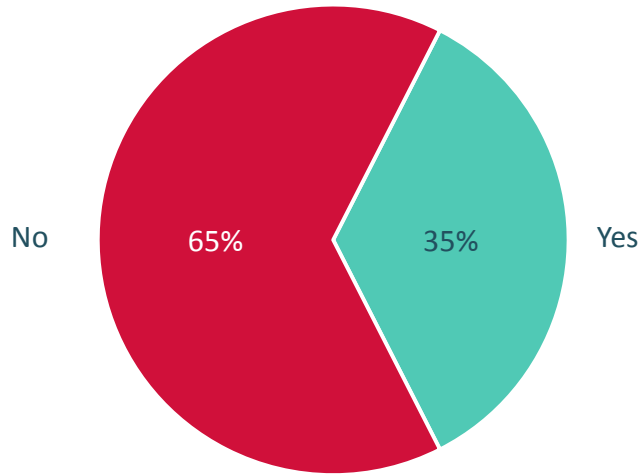
Q: Do you have a qualification relevant to teaching students with additional & special educational needs?

Teachers with Special Educational Needs Training

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

Just over one-third – (35%) – of all teachers have recently participated in training. Among those teachers whose role is exclusively classroom teaching the figure is 22%. This compares to 68% of teachers with mainstream teaching/SEN role and Special Education Teachers.

Participated In Training



Participation Amongst Teachers

(Base: All Teachers- n=1,319)

**Mainstream
Teacher Only**
(Base: n=897)

22%

**Those with a Special
Education Teacher role***
(Base: n=317)

68%

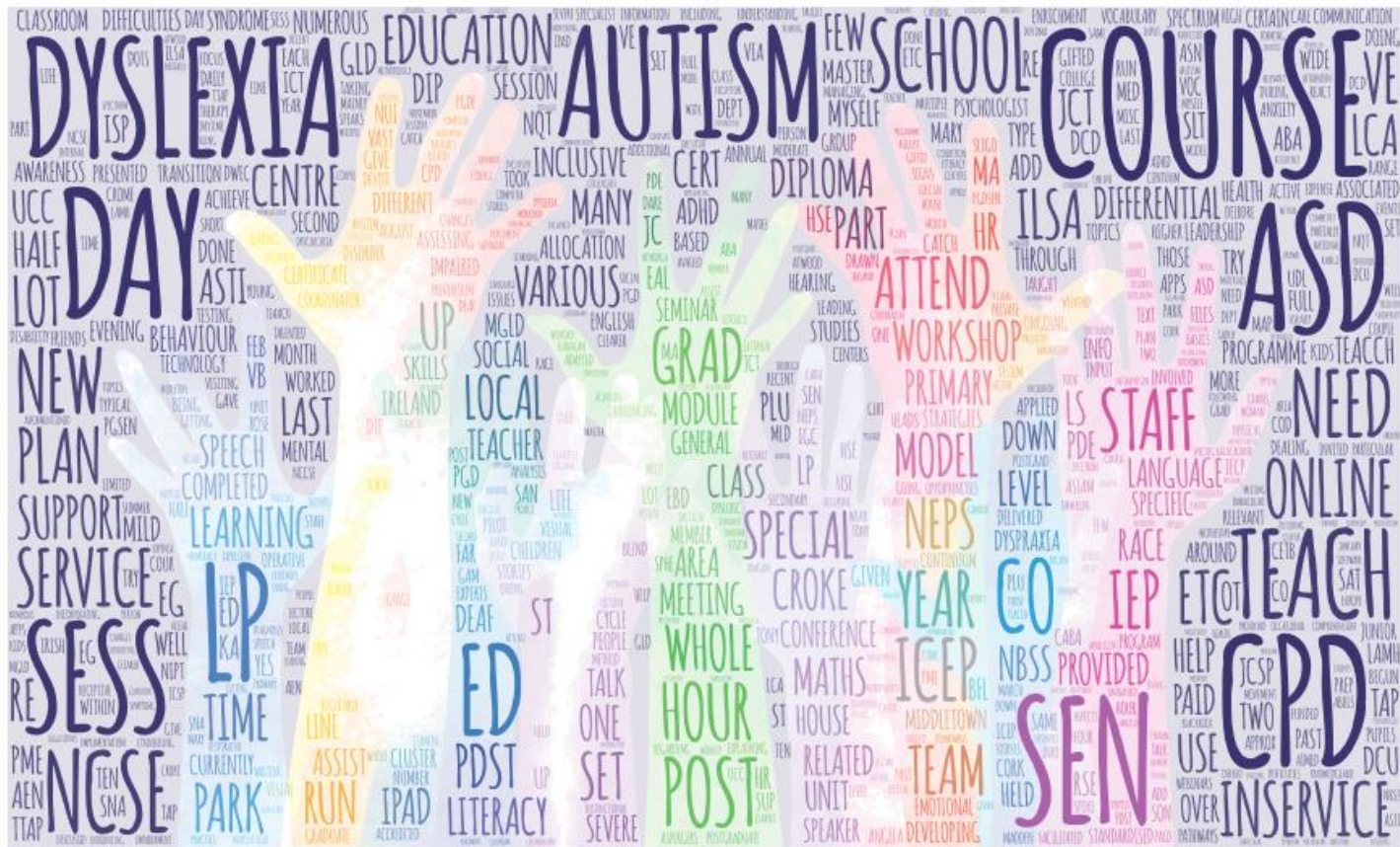
*Includes those with
Mainstream Teacher & SEN Role – 19% &
Special Education Teacher – 5%

Q: In recent years, have you participated in training for teaching students with additional & special educational needs?

Relevant Qualification Teachers Hold



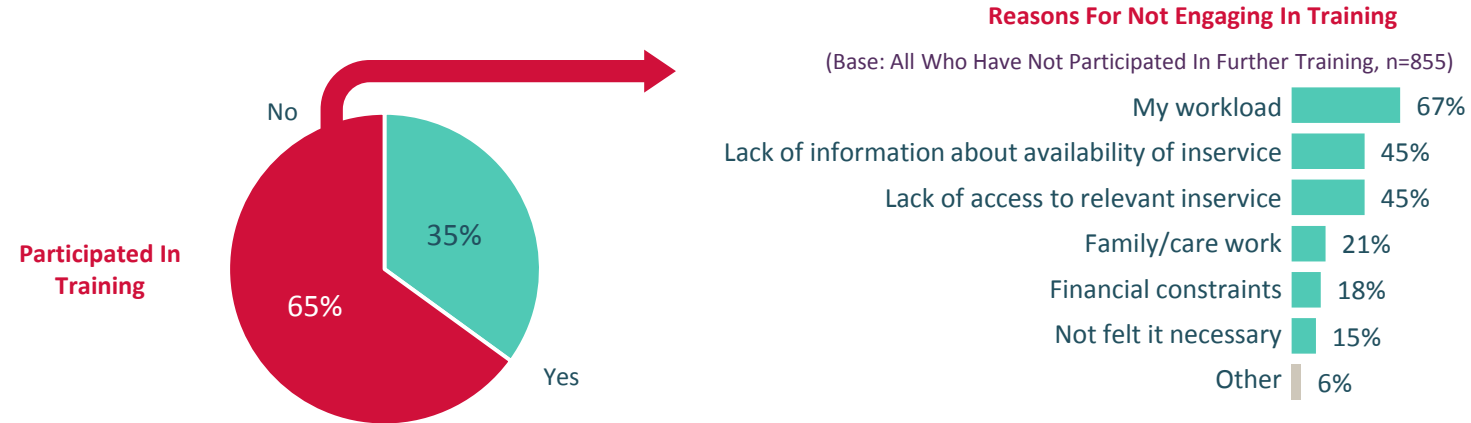
Further Training Teachers Participated In



Participation in Training

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

65% of teachers have not participated in training for teaching students with special education needs in recent years. Key reasons for having not engaged in training include teachers' workload, lack of information about availability/lack of access to relevant inservice.



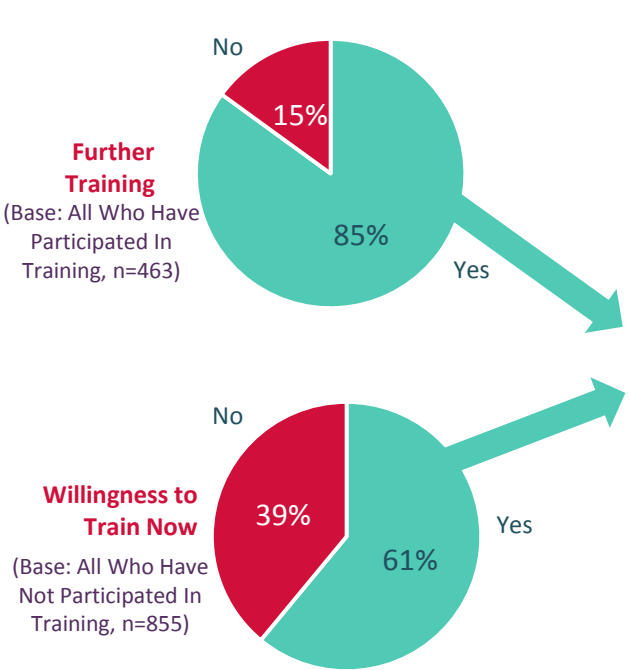
Q: In recent years, have you participated in training for teaching students with additional & special educational needs?
Q: What were the main reasons why you have not participated in training for teaching students with additional & special educational needs?



Willingness to Engage in Training

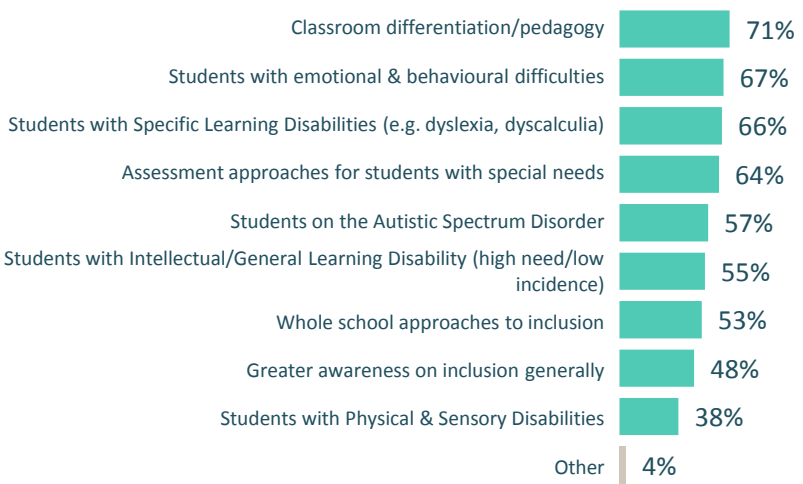
(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

Of those who have not participated in training to date, 61% said they would be willing to do so. Some of the useful training areas cited by teachers include classroom differentiation, students with emotional / behavioural difficulties and Specific Learning Disabilities.



Areas Useful For Training

(Base: All Who Would Like To Engage In Further Training For Teaching Students With Additional & Special Educational Needs, n=914)



Q: Would you like to engage in further training for teaching students with additional & special educational needs?
Q: Which of the following areas of training would be most useful to you at present?

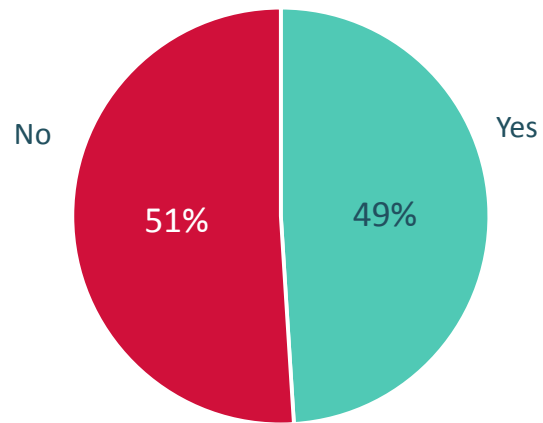


Engagement with Educational Planning for Students with Additional/Special Education Needs

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

Almost half of teachers have been asked to participate in planning for students with special education needs in the current school year. This is higher amongst those with a Special Education Teacher role – (81%).

Response to Participation



Participation Amongst Teachers

(Base: All Teachers- n=1,319)

Mainstream
Teacher Only
(Base: n=897)

37%

Those with a Special
Education Teacher role*
(Base: n=317)

81%

*Includes those with
Mainstream Teacher & SEN Role– 19% &
Special Education Teacher – 5%

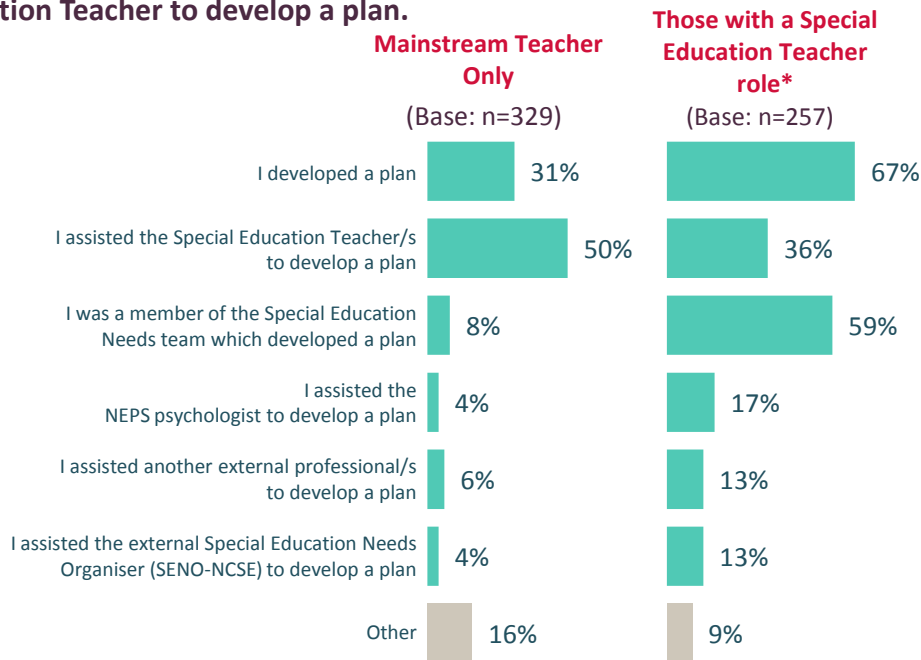
Q: During the current school year, have you been asked to participate in planning for students with additional & special education needs using Individual Education Plans, Student Support Files/Profiles, Individual Action Plans or equivalent?



Nature of Participation in Planning for Students with Additional and Special Educational Needs

(Base: All Who Have Participated In Planning For Students With Additional And Special Educational Needs, n=648)

Participation levels are different depending on teachers' role. However, most are developing a plan or assisting the Special Education Teacher to develop a plan.



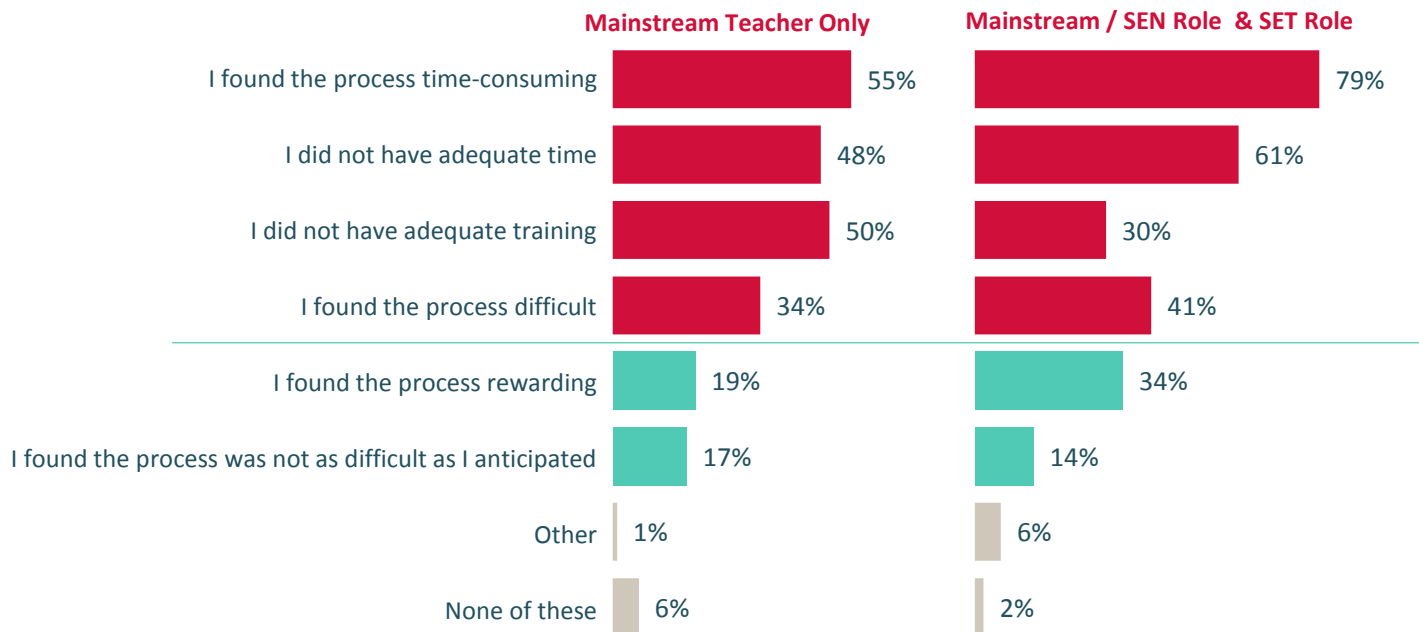
*Includes those with
Mainstream Teacher & SEN Role – 19% &
Special Education Teacher – 5%

Q: Please indicate the nature of your participation.

Perceptions of Participation in Planning Process

(Base: All Who Have Participated In Planning For Students With Additional & Special Educational Needs, n=648)

For the majority, the process of participation in planning for students with special education needs is time consuming.

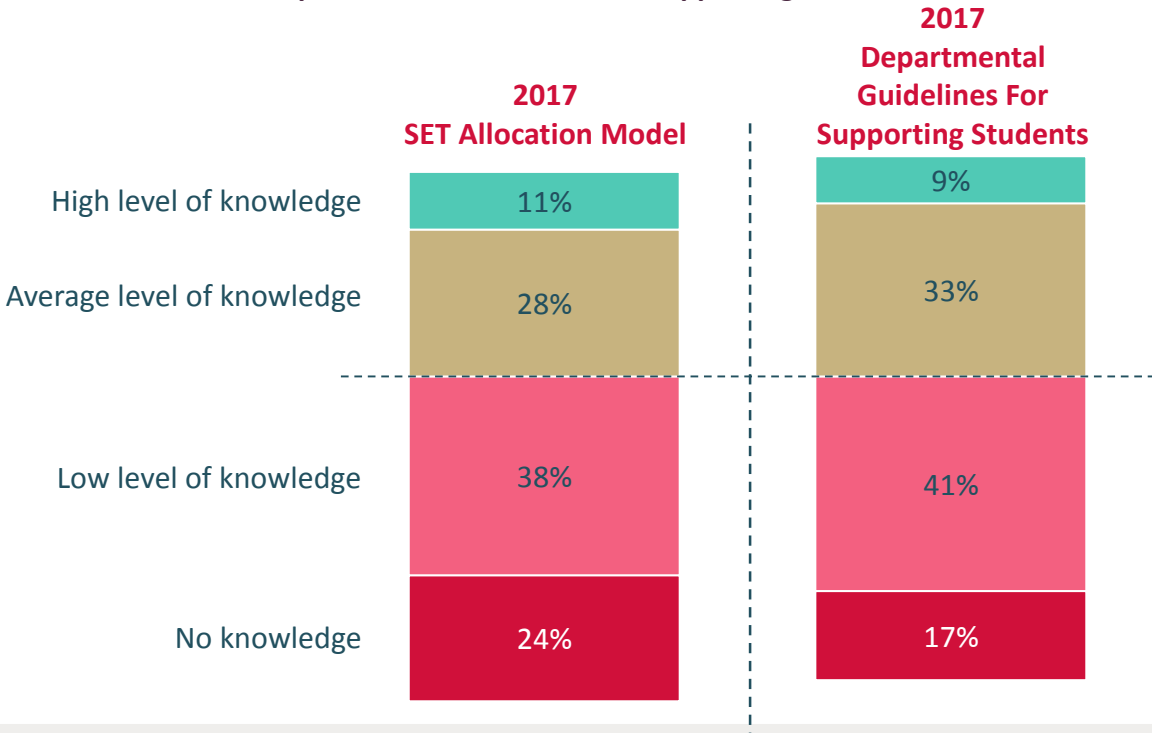


Q: Please select which of the below, if any, applied to you in relation to your participation in planning for students with additional & special education needs?

Knowledge of Special Education Teacher Allocation Model & Guidelines

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

Only 2 in 5 teachers claimed to have high/average level of knowledge with regard to the 2017 SET Allocation Model as well as the 2017 Departmental Guidelines for Supporting Students.



Q: How would you rate your knowledge of the 2017 Special Education Teacher (SET) Allocation Model?

Q: How would you rate your knowledge of the 2017 Departmental Guidelines for Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs in Mainstream?



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Reflecting on Job Satisfaction & Work Intensity

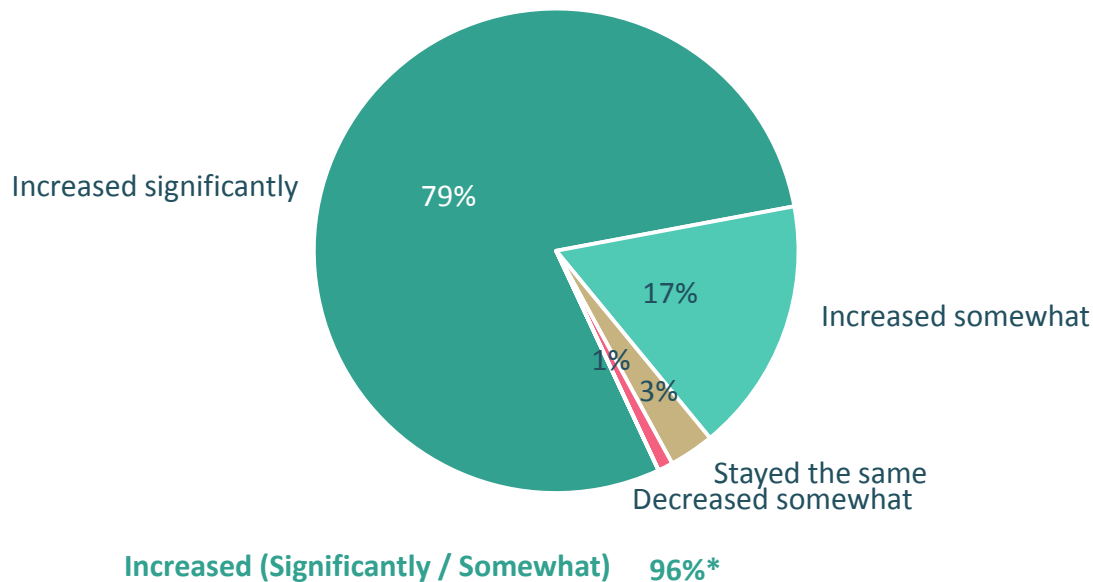
The ASTI logo is located in the lower right area of the slide. It consists of a white circle containing the word "ASTI" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Above the letters "ASTI" is a small, multi-colored swoosh. Below the word "ASTI" is the tagline "A century of service" in a smaller, grey, sans-serif font.

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Intensity of Teachers' Work

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

96% of teachers claim their work intensity has increased since the start of the decade.



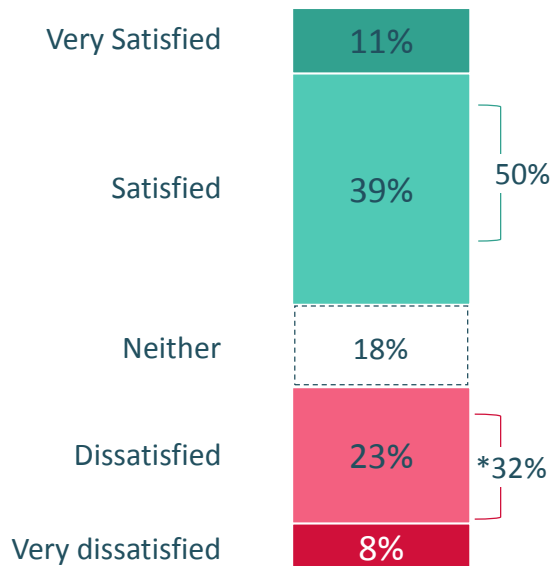
**= Figures have been rounded to the nearest %*

Q: Thinking back to your work as a teacher at the start of the decade (2010/2011), would you say that the intensity of your working week has increased, decreased or stayed the same?

Overall Job Satisfaction

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

About half of the teachers are satisfied with their job.



**= Figures have been rounded to the nearest %*

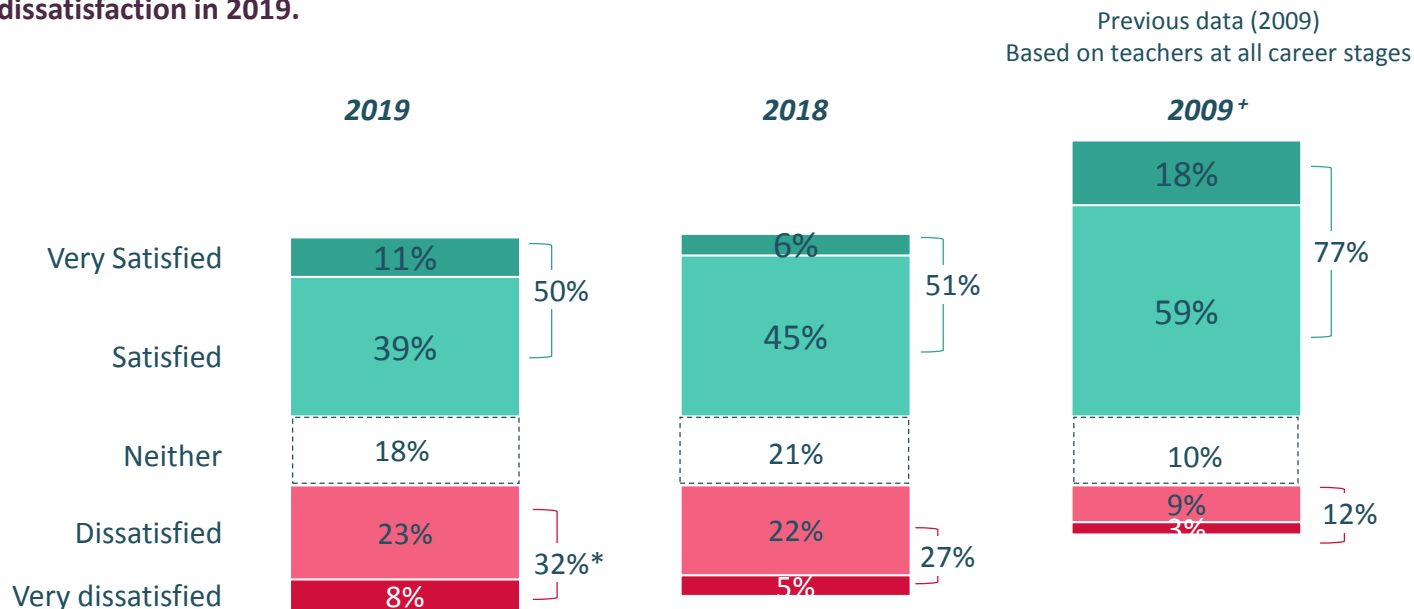
Q: Taking into account your current work duties and work environment, how satisfied or not satisfied are you with your job?

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Overall Job Satisfaction

(Base: All Teachers - n=1,319)

Overall job satisfaction has remained fairly steady since 2018 but there are a higher number of teachers expressing dissatisfaction in 2019.



(+Source: Millward Brown/ASTI 2009)

**= Figures have been rounded to the nearest %*

Q: Taking into account your current work duties and work environment, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your job?

REDC

The background features a dark blue field with numerous colorful, stylized hands reaching upwards. The hands are in various colors including red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple, with a textured, watercolor-like appearance. In the top left corner, there is a circular graphic consisting of several colored segments (red, orange, yellow, green, blue) arranged in a ring, with a white arrow pointing clockwise.

Reflecting on Their Work

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What Teachers Are Saying...

A lot of time is needed to plan for differentiation in classes and no time is given for (subject) departments to meet.

SEN Co-ordinator role is extremely busy and seems to have no end of duties and deadlines.

The work load has increased dramatically – very little opportunity to access CPD and time to plan.

The SEN department in my school is brilliant.

I am in a school where teachers take their responsibilities with regard to SEN very seriously and do a great job.

I'm one hundred percent in favour of an inclusive model of education but I believe it is not being resourced.

Please limit class size so we can cater for all students. 30 in a class makes it impossible to meet all needs.

External supports such as CAMHS and other bodies need to provide more support and external programmes for students.

The enormous wait that students suffer through before they get seen for consistent counselling outside of school is very worrying. There is a sharp rise in anxiety among students.

Dyslexia is a huge area of concern, with almost no teachers trained in effective SSP training (Systematic Synthetic Phonics).

Change being brought in without adequate supports in multiple areas so it's difficult not to feel overwhelmed at times.

If Guidance Counsellors were adequately resourced they could do great work with students with SEN around goal setting and transition.

I have no problem in providing differentiated learning for my students but have no time to organise and prepare for this.

What Teachers Are Saying...

New junior cert is more inclusive to students especially with learning difficulties.

I applied to do the Diploma in Special Education in 2017 – 2018 and was refused by the Principal on the basis that she would not be able to find a sub for me to cover block release to attend College.

Impossible to get substitute teachers for absent colleagues (sick or on maternity) so classes have to be grouped together for supervision purposes.

My workload has certainly increased, my teaching job while still enjoyable and rewarding has become more pressurised.

Respect, meaningful inclusion and a determination to work with each individual to help them achieve their goals needs to be the driving forces behind SEN provision. It needs to be child centred, not some generic model.

I love working in SEN, it is a real privilege but the administration and co-ordination that it requires in a big school can be overwhelming at times.

Smaller classes would allow teachers more time for differentiation.

Great work is being done however class size, time are difficulties.

Special needs CPD is essential for classroom teachers as we are dealing with students with very serious emotional and educational needs. The lack of support has resulted in increasing levels of stress and everyone suffers.

I really enjoy working in our Special Educational Needs Unit in our School.

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Summary & Conclusions

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Thematic Summary

Developing teachers' professional capacities

A strongly positive theme emerging from teachers' comments is the commitment to the goal of inclusive education. This normative commitment is evidenced in particular in the deep concern expressed by many teachers that they felt inadequately prepared for teaching SEN students. This was a continuing source of anxiety for teachers both at work and at home. Teachers repeatedly stated that they wanted more training. The key areas for training are (i) pedagogies for classroom teaching, including assessment strategies to support and record students' learning and (ii) responding to students with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Co-ordination of SEN planning

Teachers with SEN co-ordination roles repeatedly referred to the range and time-consuming nature of SEN planning activities. Given that an estimated 18% - 25% of the student cohort will have special educational needs, this finding is not unsurprising. Duties include liaising with a significant number of external agencies; administration and record-keeping; submission of applications for specific schemes such as exemptions from studying Irish and supports to sit the state certificate examinations (RACE scheme); compilation of assessment and test data to secure continuity of supports for the school as a whole (the school profile) and for specific categories of SEN students; communication with classroom teachers on individual student plans; meetings with parents. All such teachers stated that they needed dedicated time to adequately discharge their duties.



Thematic Summary

Supporting students in the classroom

A dominant theme from teachers' comments was the impact of class size on their capacity to use a range of methodologies in the classroom. Large classes of up to 30 pupils leaves little space for the kind of differentiated strategies necessary to support the diversity of learning needs. Teachers invariably described this experience as stressful as they felt that they were not doing their best for either SEN students or the class as a whole. Many described this feeling of stress as permeating not just their working day but as something which they 'took home'.

School leadership

Many of the concerns and stresses underline the need for more promotional posts. A consistent issue was the lack of promotional posts for teachers involved in SEN co-ordination. Teachers doing un-remunerated duties in this area were highly critical of their status and felt that their range of duties merited an Assistant Principal post. Another aspect of school leadership was the inadequate communication processes in some schools whereby mainstream teachers were not provided with sufficient information on students' learning needs, e.g., assessment reports or support plans. In this regard, many noted confusion at school level in relation to GDPR issues. A number of teachers stated that school leadership should be more pro-active in creating a common understanding of inclusive education across the teaching staff. In the same school, teachers can have different – even conflicting – understandings of what inclusion means in practice. While this in itself was not seen as negative, it did sometimes result in lack of whole-school approaches to inclusion.



Conclusion

Inclusive education is at the centre of contemporary education policy. Several analyses have noted the increased investment in special educational needs in the education system. Schools are making huge commitments to ensuring that, insofar as is possible, all students with special educational needs are educated in inclusive classrooms. This is a really positive development in Irish education. At the same time, it is clear from this survey that schools are not being fully supported in their efforts. Teachers have not been trained to any significant degree and adequate resources, in particular dedicated time, have not been provided to ensure effective whole-school planning.



**THANK
YOU**

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