

[Teacher blogs](#) > [Teaching Now](#)

## New Survey Details How Teachers Use Their Own Money to Fill in Equity Gaps

By Madeline Will on November 16, 2016 7:54 AM

 Share 0

An overwhelming majority of educators agree that equity in education should be a national priority—but in the meantime, teachers report dipping into their own pockets to help fill in the gaps.

Scholastic, the education publishing company, surveyed 4,721 public school educators—a pool comprised of 3,694 teachers (including 76 school librarians) and 1,027 principals—over the summer for its [nationally representative report](#). Teachers and principals largely say that their students in both high- and low-poverty schools face barriers to learning that come from outside the school environment. To meet the personal needs of students, and to supplement classroom resources to enhance learning, teachers and principals feel obligated to use their own money.

These findings aren't necessarily surprising or new—teachers have been tasked with [funding their own classrooms](#) for years—but the scope of the survey sheds some light on what educators are prioritizing.

On average in the past year, teachers who were surveyed spent \$530 of their own money on classroom items. Teachers in high-poverty schools spent nearly 40 percent more—an average of \$672.

As the chart shows, 70 percent of responding teachers said they purchased food and snacks for their children. Sixty-five percent purchased cleaning supplies. And 26 percent of teachers who were surveyed said they bought clothing for their students.

Principals also used their own money—an average of \$683 over the past year—to pay for classroom or student supplies, and for principals in high-poverty schools, that figure increased to \$1,014. Seventy-nine percent of principals purchased food and snacks for students.

Just 46 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools receive discretionary funds from their school, district, or parent-teacher organizations, compared to 61 percent of teachers in low-poverty schools. The top five funding priorities identified by teachers in the survey are, in order: more staff to reduce class sizes; high-quality instructional materials and textbooks; classroom technology; higher salaries; and academic or social-emotional intervention initiatives and programs.

A slight majority of teachers (56 percent) have purchased their own books for their classroom. Most teachers have classroom libraries, but 31 percent of teachers have fewer than 50 books in their classroom. Elementary teachers have an average of 362 books, middle school teachers have 189, and high school teachers have 93. A majority of teachers—54 percent—report needing culturally relevant books. Teachers also want recently published books, books with diverse characters, books in languages other than English, and nonfiction books.

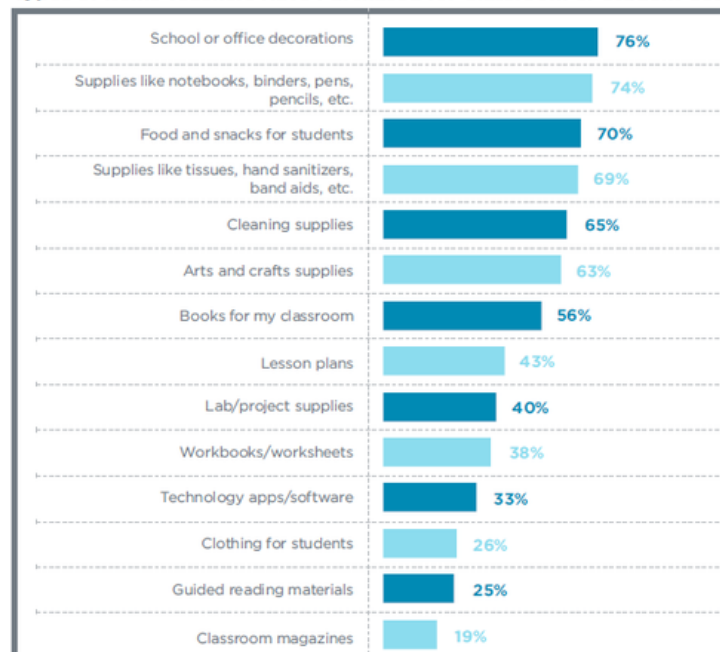
Educators in the survey stressed the importance of year-round and at-home access to books to increase student learning. Teachers reported funding their own classroom libraries so that their students could borrow the books to take home.

Teachers in the report mostly agreed that despite the challenges, they felt like their job was rewarding because of the satisfaction they get from working with students.

As one middle school teacher in Nevada put it: "I do what I do because I am passionate about giving every child the opportunity to reach their full potential and never be limited by their circumstances, environments, or disabilities."

Chart via Scholastic report

Types of Items Teachers Have Purchased for Classroom or Student Use



### Read More:

- [For New Teachers, Classrooms Aren't Just Blank Slates. They're Blank, Expensive Slates](#)
- [Teaching Secrets: Spend Less on School Supplies \(Opinion\)](#)

11/16/2016

New Survey Details How Teachers Use Their Own Money to Fill in Equity Gaps - Teaching Now - Education Week Teacher

- [Teaching Secrets: Spend Less on School Supplies \(Opinion\)](#)
- [Cardboard Creators: Reusing to Learn \(Opinion\)](#)



Follow [@madeline\\_will](#) and [@EdWeekTeacher](#) on Twitter.

Categories: [Equity](#) [Teaching Profession](#)

Tags: [classroom supplies](#) [equity](#) [money](#) [teachers](#)