

# YEP VOICES

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Mapping the Young Education  
Professional's Career Pathway





## YEP Voices 2015: Mapping the Young Education Professional's Career Pathway

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

"YEP Voices: Mapping the Young Education Professional's Career Pathway" is the second annual report from the Young Education Professionals (YEP), capturing the voice and perspectives of over 550 young education professionals from all sectors – policy, practice, and research – in all corners of the country.

The focus of this year's report is on our members' current career and professional aspirations: How do they access jobs? What do they most value in their careers? How long do they plan to stay in their current positions? Where do they see themselves in the future? What skills do they need to be prepared to take their next steps?

YEP's mission is to support and connect the next generation of education leaders – those who will be leading schools, running education-focused non-profits, serving as elected officials, innovating new education technology, and taking on other leadership roles in the years ahead. Through this survey and report, we aim to amplify young education professionals' collective voice and have their needs and interests heard by those in a position to better support tomorrow's education leaders.

Some of the key findings include:

- **Young education professionals find satisfaction in their jobs when they work in positive work environments and find opportunities to grow.** Over half of the respondents ranked "positive work culture" as the *most* important factor in their job satisfaction. Also highly ranked were "opportunity for growth," the ability to have a "positive social impact," and the jobs' "subject matter."
- **Young education professionals typically stay in their positions for one to three years, and many left their previous positions when they could not find growth opportunities or simply because they wanted to change professions.** Looking ahead, about 45% of respondents plan to leave their jobs within three years, with 15% planning to leave in the next year.
- **Today's education professionals want to be tomorrow's leaders, and they are looking for opportunities to grow their leadership and management skills.** Nearly 40% selected "organizational management" as one of the three skills they most want or need to develop to advance in their careers, with "policy knowledge" and "entrepreneurship" as the next two most valued skills.
- **Just about all young education professionals plan to stay in education in the next decade.** However, about two-thirds plan to shift careers within the field, with only 40% and 30% of those in "practice" or "administration" planning to stay in those sectors in the next ten years.
- **Those professionals with graduate degrees overwhelmingly found graduate school to be useful in helping them secure and prepare for their jobs.** Around 90% of respondents with graduate degrees found graduate school helpful in both getting and preparing them for their jobs. This held true across all degree programs, from Masters in Teaching and Education to Masters in Public Administration and Business.



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### INTRODUCTION

*“YEP Voices: Mapping the Young Education Professional's Career Pathway”* is the second annual report from the Young Education Professionals (YEP), capturing the voice and perspectives of over 550 young education professionals from all sectors – policy, practice, and research – in all corners of the country.

The focus of this year's report is on our members' current career and professional aspirations: How do they access jobs? What do they most value in their careers? How long do they plan to stay in their current positions? Where do they see themselves in the future? What skills do they need to be prepared to take their next steps?

Through this report, young education professionals can better understand how their own goals and ambitions align with peers from across the country and in different fields; we see this report as an important opportunity for these professionals to learn from each other.

Perhaps even more importantly is for current mentors, supervisors and hiring managers – as well as the entire education community – to read this report to understand the goals, needs and overall career pathways of young education professionals so that they can better support and retain them over time. Just as with any industry, attracting and retaining talent in education can be a major challenge, and this report provides key insights into what young professionals most want from their careers and professional development opportunities.

The report includes several sections. First, we discuss how respondents found and prepared for their jobs. Second, we identify trends about young education professionals' job tenure and explore the reasons they leave or stay in their jobs. Finally, we describe the skills and experiences that respondents most value for professional growth.



### WHO ARE YOUNG EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS?

YEP considers any professional in the early or middle stages of their career working in the education sector – whether in the classroom as a practitioner, in a think tank as a policy analyst, in a non-profit as a youth service provider, and so on – to be a “young education professional.” For this report, respondents were split evenly among those in practice and administration (42%) and policy/advocacy and research (42%), with the remaining respondents self-identified as “other.”



**Field of Education**

Practice: Classroom educator, school leader

Administration: Central office state, state education agency

Policy/Advocacy

Research

Education technology

Other

Not in education

### HOW DO YOUNG EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS LEARN ABOUT CAREER OPPORTUNITIES?

What We Asked:

- How did you first learn about your current job?

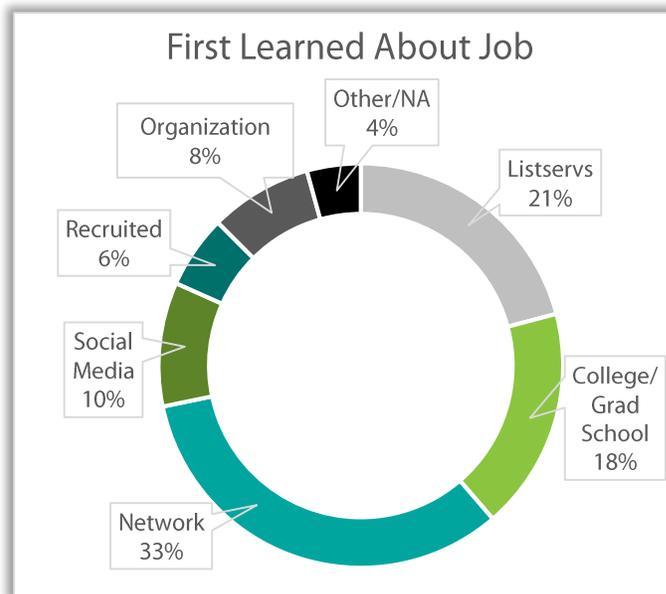
Despite common beliefs about young professionals reliance on social media and web-based tools, the most common way respondents learned about their current job was through their network of colleagues and friends (33%) with another 21% learning about their jobs through listservs (about a third of whom leveraged YEP chapters' listservs).

Only 10% of young education professionals used social media in their job search, half of whom used LinkedIn.

### HOW DO YOUNG EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS PREPARE FOR CAREERS?

What We Asked:

- Did you attend graduate school?
- What degree did you earn?
- How helpful was the degree and/or experience in getting you a job?
- How helpful was the degree and/or experience in preparing you for a job?
- Do you consider graduate school worth your investment of time and resources?





In total, 66% of respondents completed graduate school, with another 7.4% currently enrolled. Among those who already completed their program, 50.4% received a Masters in Education/Teaching, 26.4% in Public Policy/Public Administration, and the rest fairly evenly distributed among MBA's, JD's, PhD's, Masters of Arts, and those who received multiple or other professional degrees.

Of those who attended graduate school, over 90% found it somewhat (42.7%) or very (49.6%) helpful in *getting a job*. Similarly, respondents found it to be somewhat (47%) or very (44.3%) helpful in *preparing them for a job*. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that 82.6% believe graduate school was a good investment of time and resources. Despite the negative reviews schools of education and other advanced degree programs may receive, the findings were consistent across all degree programs.

### WHAT ARE THE CAREER PLANS OF YOUNG EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS?

What We Asked:

- How long have you worked in the education?
- How many jobs have you held since graduating college? How many of those jobs have been in education?
- How long have you been working at your current job/organization?
- How long did you work at your previous job/organization?

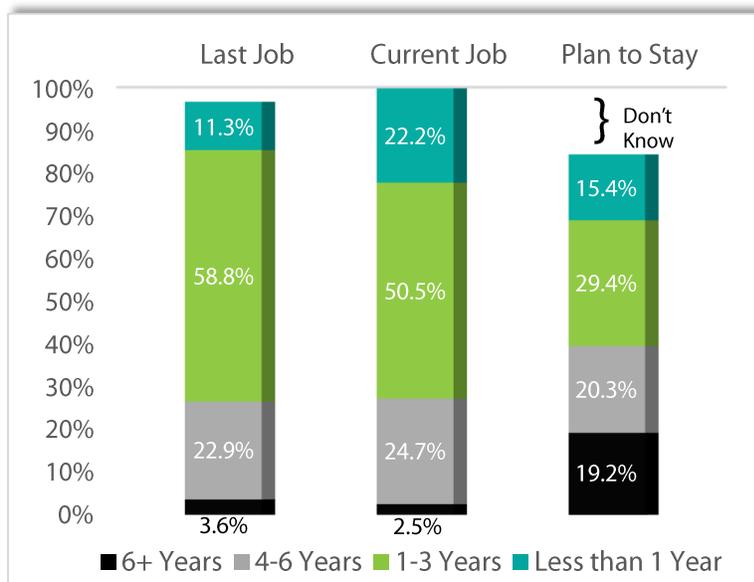
How Long Have You Worked in the Education Field?	
Less than 1 year	2.2%
1-3 years	19.4%
4-6 years	58.2%
7-9 years	13.4%
10+ years	5.9%

Most respondents have worked in the field of education for six years or less, with nearly 22% in their first three years of working in education. The majority of respondents have held three jobs, over the course of their career, with two of those in education.

Most respondents have been in their *current job* for at least a year; about a quarter have been in their current jobs for four or more years. Nearly half plan to leave their current job within three years, including about 15% who plan to leave in the next year. This is a slight departure from last year's survey, where a quarter of respondents planned to leave within a year.

How Long Do you Plan To Stay at Current Job/Organization?	All (n=558)	Practice (n = 101)	Administration (n=132)	Policy/Advocacy (n=131)	Research (n=100)
Less than 1 year	15.4%	15.8%	12.1%	18.3%	10.0%
1-3 years	29.4%	33.7%	34.1%	28.2%	21.1%
4-6 years	20.3%	21.8%	22.0%	18.3%	27.0%
6+ years	19.2%	14.9%	21.2%	17.6%	25.0%
I don't know	15.8%	13.9%	10.6%	17.6%	17.0%

Most respondents stayed in their previous positions for no more than three years, though about a quarter stayed for more than four years, suggesting an early trend among this group of changing jobs every few years.



These findings are also fairly consistent across education sectors, with those working in research slightly more likely to plan to stay for four or more years. In most sectors – practice, administration, and policy/advocacy – between 45% and 50% plan to leave their job/organization within the next three years.

### WHAT DO YOUNG EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS MOST VALUE ABOUT THEIR JOBS?

What We Asked:

- Why did you leave your last job?
- What are the most important factors to your job satisfaction?

The most common reason respondents left their previous position is that they wanted to change professions (19.5%), about a third of whom wanted to move into the field of education from a different field. Beyond that, the reasons young education professionals left their last job were somewhat varied, although about 20% left for a better opportunity or to grow professionally.

Even though nearly 70% of young education professionals only worked at their previous job for three years or less, it's an important to highlight that about 10% of all respondents felt they hit a ceiling on their ability to grow in their last job. Finally, 8.5% left because of their supervisor and 8.8% for a higher salary.

Why Did You Leave Your Previous Position?	
<i>I wanted to change professions</i>	19.5%
<i>I could not grow professionally within the organization</i>	11.6%
<i>I found a better opportunity elsewhere</i>	9.6%
<i>I went back to school</i>	9.6%
<i>I wanted to secure a higher salary</i>	8.8%
<i>I was not satisfied with my supervisor</i>	8.5%
<i>Position ended</i>	6.7%
<i>I was not satisfied with my colleagues</i>	5.8%
<i>I left for personal reasons, unrelated to the job</i>	5.8%
<i>I wanted a better work/life balance</i>	4.3%
<i>My job responsibilities changed</i>	2.7%
<i>Other</i>	2.5%
<i>I was not recognized for the work that I did</i>	1.6%
<i>Still in first job</i>	1.6%
<i>I wanted to start my own business</i>	1.3%



## YEP VOICES: In Their Words

### What Education Issue Do You Believe Is Not Getting Enough Attention?

*"Integrated student supports. [We] can have the best teachers and the best standards, but if kids are hungry, have a toothache, or suffer from PTSD because of their living conditions, they are not learning."*

*"The fact that guidance counselors are seen as a luxury and not a necessity."*

*"School calendar. We should not be doing a two month or more break in the summer, but instead spread out the breaks throughout the year. This leads to better performance, less exhausted students and teachers, and helps students retain information."*

*"Teacher preparation, retention and supports."*

*"Mental health in schools."*

*"Cultural competence of teachers and school staff."*

*"Everyone loves policy but success in education is 30% policy and 70% implementation. Implementation is the hard part because it takes so much time and isn't always sexy. But that's where the real work is."*

*"Cross-field communications - between ed tech, schools, administration, etc. We need to learn to talk to each other through consistent and transparent dialogue."*

### What Opportunities, If Any, Have You Had To Develop Key Skills?

*"I have had opportunities within my job to develop public speaking skills, though I still see it as an area I need to improve. My job does not provide me with nearly enough professional development on organizational management or staff management."*

*"A few workshops and volunteer experiences, but nothing formal, sustained, or highly effective."*

*"My Masters Program was incredible. It put me on track in all of the skill areas I needed to succeed. Of course, it was just a start, but it felt like a running start out of the gate that put me years ahead of where I would be otherwise both professionally and personally."*

*"YEP events"*

### What Opportunities Do You Have to Engage with Those Working in a Different Part of Education Field?

*"I work with our organization's instructional coaches, which provides a more ground-level perspective on what's happening in education. Outside of work, I use Twitter as a means of learning from teachers, professors at schools of education around the country, and policy analysts."*

*"I work on the leadership team for YEP-DC, which gives me a chance to network with other young professionals in areas of the education field."*

*"The opportunities are practically nonexistent with the exception of required training and email troubleshooting."*

*"I currently work in a group that does both Policy and Program work, so we routinely have a chance to engage with teachers and school leaders, [the] State Board of Education, [the] State Department of Education, etc. We don't necessarily seize these opportunities as frequently and aggressively as we should."*

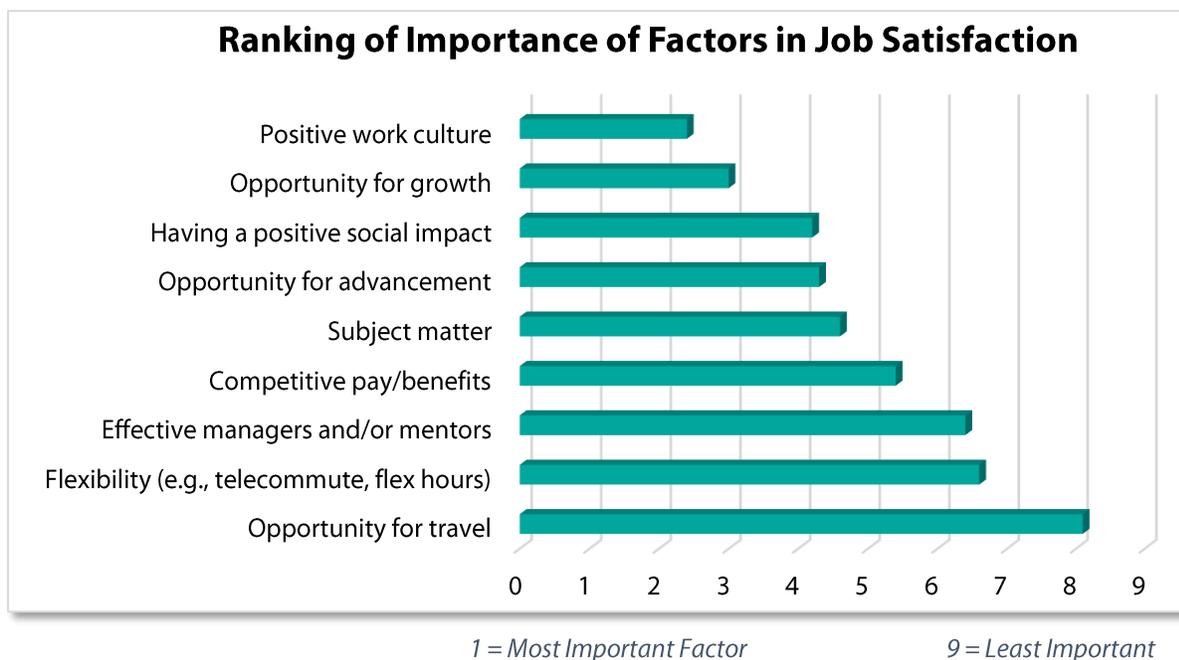


A “positive work culture” is overwhelmingly the most important factor contributing to a young education professional’s job satisfaction. Not only was it ranked highest among the nine options, about 56% of all respondents ranked “positive work culture” as the *most* important factor, with about 75% in total ranking it as one of their top three most important factors.

“Opportunity for growth” is also hugely important to young education professionals, with two-thirds of respondents ranking it in their top three factors for job satisfaction. The ability to have a “positive social impact” and the “subject matter” were also highly ranked.

Surprisingly low was “effective manager or mentors,” with fewer than 20% of respondents ranking it among their top three factors, although it is possible that managers (and colleagues) play greatly into the “work culture,” and were therefore addressed in those responses.

“Flexibility” and “opportunity for travel” were ranked the lowest in importance to job satisfaction, although desire for flexibility may likely grow as young education professionals move into the next phases of their careers and life.





### WHAT ARE YOUNG EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS' CAREER GOALS?

#### What We Asked:

- *Where do you see yourself in ten years?*

About a third of respondents see themselves in non-profit (25.3%) or for-profit (7.5%) leadership. Only 3.4% see themselves as classroom educators, less than half of the 8% of respondents who are currently teachers.

After non-profit leadership, the most common response was working for the government (18.1%) or in district leadership (11.3%). While few respondents saw themselves in the same type of position in ten years, respondents overwhelmingly planned to stay in the field of education. Those in practice were the most likely to plan to pursue an entrepreneurial endeavor, and those in administration were most likely to see themselves as elected officials within a decade.

Interestingly, about 65% of young education professionals plan to switch sectors in the next decade. For example, about 40% of those self-identified as being in “practice” (specifically classroom educators and school leaders) plan to stay in a school setting or move to district leadership. And, only about 30% of those in administration, which includes district and state education agency staff, see themselves staying in these roles, with almost 40% planning to move into non-profit or for-profit leadership. This underscores the fluidity of the field – and of young professionals’ ambitions – and the importance of offering professional development that provides meaningful opportunities for cross-sector engagement.

<i>Where Do You See Yourself in 10 Years?</i>	<i>All (n=558)</i>	<i>Practice (n=101)</i>	<i>Administration (n=132)</i>	<i>Policy/Advocacy (n=131)</i>	<i>Research (n=100)</i>
In non-profit leadership	25.3%	18.8%	28.8%	36.6%	12.0%
Working for the government	18.1%	9.9%	16.7%	23.7%	28.0%
As school district leadership	11.3%	9.9%	14.4%	7.6%	18.0%
In for-profit leadership	7.5%	4.0%	10.6%	7.6%	6.0%
As an elected official	7.0%	3.0%	12.1%	4.6%	7.0%
As an education entrepreneur	6.5%	11.9%	3.8%	3.8%	2.0%
As a researcher	5.4%	1.0%	0.8%	5.3%	19.0%
As a school leader	4.8%	15.8%	1.5%	0.8%	4.0%
As a classroom educator	3.4%	14.8%	0.8%	0.0%	1.0%
No longer working in education	1.4%	4.6%	0.8%	0.8%	0.0%
Other/I don't know	9.5%	10.0%	6.9%	9.2%	2.0%



### WHAT SKILLS DO YOUNG EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS MOST WANT AND NEED?

*What We Asked:*

- *What types of skills do you most want or need to develop?*
- *Which three skills do you most want to develop to help you advance in your career?*

Management skills are by far most in demand among young education professionals, with 55.9% of all respondents prioritizing those as the skills they most want or need to develop. Almost 20% prioritize leadership skills, with 13.4% and 9.1% selecting career development and job-specific technical skills, respectively.

These skills preferences largely match up with the individual skills young professionals believe they most need to advance in their careers – with nearly 40% selecting “organizational management” as one of the three skills they most want to develop. “Policy knowledge” and “entrepreneurship” were the next two most valued skills. “Networking” was rated very highly as well, along with other management skills such as “staff development,” “strategic planning” and “fundraising,” which round out the top selected skills.

Type of Skills	Among Top 3 Skills
<b>MANAGEMENT SKILLS</b>	
Organizational Management	39.4%
Staff development/management	24.7%
Strategic planning	23.8%
Project Management	19.0%
<b>LEADERSHIP SKILLS</b>	
Entrepreneurship	29.8%
Presentations/ public speaking	19.9%
<b>CONTENT KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT</b>	
Policy knowledge	30.1%
<b>JOB-SPECIFIC SKILLS</b>	
Fundraising	25.1%
Instructional strategies	17.7%
Classroom management	13.6%
Student development strategies	9.1%
Research skills	8.4%
Technology/software skills	7.0%
Writing skills	4.7%
<b>CAREER DEVELOPMENT SKILLS</b>	
Networking	28.7%
Resume/cover letter writing	4.8%



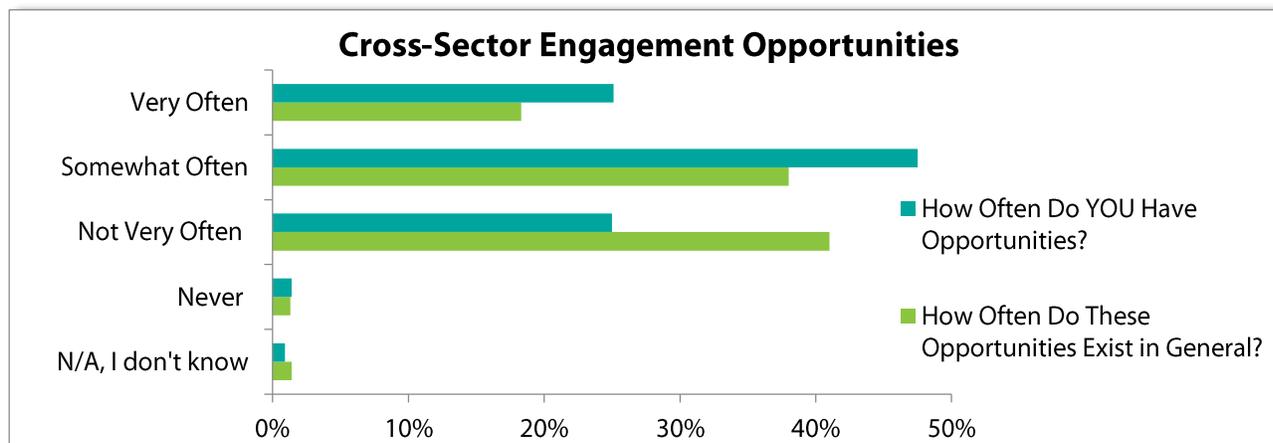
### CROSS-SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

#### What We Asked:

- *How important is it for those in the classroom and schools and those in policy and research to come together to discuss education issues?*
- *How often do you have opportunities to engage with individuals working in a different part of the education sector from you?*
- *How often do you think these cross-sector engagement opportunities exist among education professionals in general?*

Ninety-six percent of young education professionals believe opportunities for those in classrooms and schools and in policy and research to come together to discuss education issues are very or somewhat important. Yet only 25% of respondents “very often” have opportunities to engage with professionals in different sectors than their own, with another 47.5% saying they “somewhat often” have such opportunities.

As we found in the 2014 *YEP Voices* report, young professionals tend to believe these opportunities happen even less frequently more broadly within the field, with 41% saying that cross-sector engagement opportunities exist “not very often” among education professionals in general.



### CONCLUSION

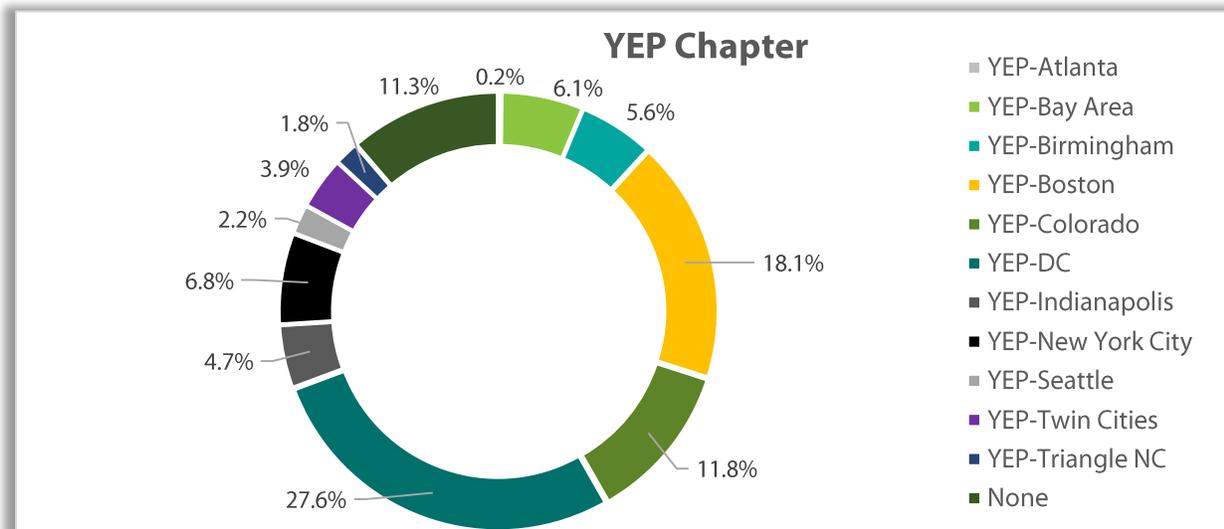
It’s not an understatement to say that education is a top issue of the day and one that deserves all of the attention it receives – and more – as the great equalizer for all students. With new policies, programs, and practices being implemented on a daily basis, the future of education is an ever-moving target. The voice of young education professionals is a vital one for those in the field to listen to as they prepare to lead our classrooms, school systems, and policy organizations in coming years and decades.

While *YEP Voices* addresses only a few of the many issues and challenges young education professionals are facing today, we hope it sparks meaningful conversations between those professionals and their employers, mentors, and colleagues to the betterment of their career pathways – and the entire education field.



### METHODOLOGY & DEMOGRAPHICS

YEP Voices is the result of an open, online survey, conducted from January 6-26, 2015, resulting in responses from 558 young education professionals. The average age of respondents was 29.8 years old, and 56.6% of respondents were female and 43.4% were male. Nearly 89% of all respondents self-affiliate with a YEP chapter.



About a quarter (23.5%) of the respondents self-identified as being in policy/advocacy; 18.1% as being in practice; 23.7% in administration; 17.9% in research; and the remaining 17.6% are in other sectors or are looking to enter the education field.

What Statement Best Describes You?	
I work at an education non-profit organization	36.0%
I work for a school district (e.g., central office)	12.0%
I work at an education for-profit organization	11.1%
I work in a school but not as a classroom teacher (e.g., guidance/career counselor, reading specialist)	9.3%
I am a teacher at a public, private and/or charter school	8.0%
I work for the government (state or federal)	8.0%
I work at an institution of higher education	4.8%
I am a school leader/administrator	2.3%
I am currently a student	2.0%
I do not work in education	2.0%
Other	1.3%
I am currently unemployed and looking for a job	0.7%

# YEP | Voices:

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## ABOUT YOUNG EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

Young Education Professionals (YEP) is a nonpartisan organization, created by and for young professionals, that connects tomorrow's education leaders through relationship-building, knowledge development, career and professional development, and community engagement. YEP National supports the now twelve YEP chapters in existence across the country, which reach over 10,000 young education professionals through the network. For more information, see [www.youngedprofessionals.org](http://www.youngedprofessionals.org)



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*YEP Voices: Mapping the Young Education Professional's Career Pathway* was the result of many months of work and the commitment of a number of YEP leaders.

Kate Blosveren Kreamer, co-founder and strategic advisor to YEP National, led the development of the survey, analysis of the data, and writing of the report. Robert Hanna, programming director of YEP National, helped set the vision for the survey and report, coordinated chapter communications, and provided editorial support throughout the development of *YEP Voices*. Carolyn Chuong, external relations chair of YEP-DC, contributed to the overall vision of the survey, and Jessica Bell, YEP-DC's graphic designer, provided the major design elements for the final report.

Finally, we would like to thank all of the YEP chapter leaders who helped promote the survey among their members, ensuring we could fully capture the YEP voice.