

# Who We Are

- **Public Agenda:**
  - **Nonpartisan, nonprofit**
  - **Opinion research and engagement**
  - **Focuses on the gaps between leaders and the public**

# Our Research

**Spring 2007**

**Public Agenda, commissioned by NCCTQ and aided by REL-Midwest, conducted:**

- **A national random sample of 641 1<sup>st</sup> year public school classroom teachers**
- **Four focus groups, three with first year teachers and one with education majors**
- **2 follow up e-mail questionnaires to selected respondents from our survey**

# Why 1<sup>st</sup> Year Teachers?

- **Can clearly recall their pre-service experience and coursework**
- **Can compare pre-service preparation to actual classroom experience**

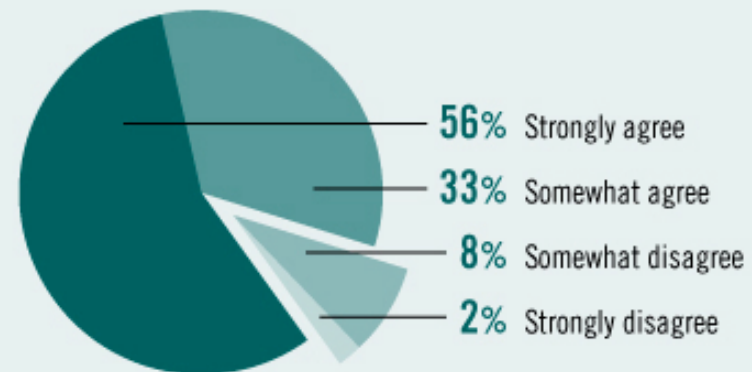
# Selected Findings

- **Teachers see their career as a calling... but do see drawbacks**
- **They feel prepared... but are challenged**
- **Teachers in high needs schools report more difficulty in some areas compared to other teachers**
- **Middle and high school teachers report more difficulties in more areas compared to elementary school teachers**

# Teaching is a Calling

89% of all first year teachers agreed that there is nothing else they would rather do than teach

Do you agree that teaching is exactly what you wanted—there's nothing you would rather be doing?

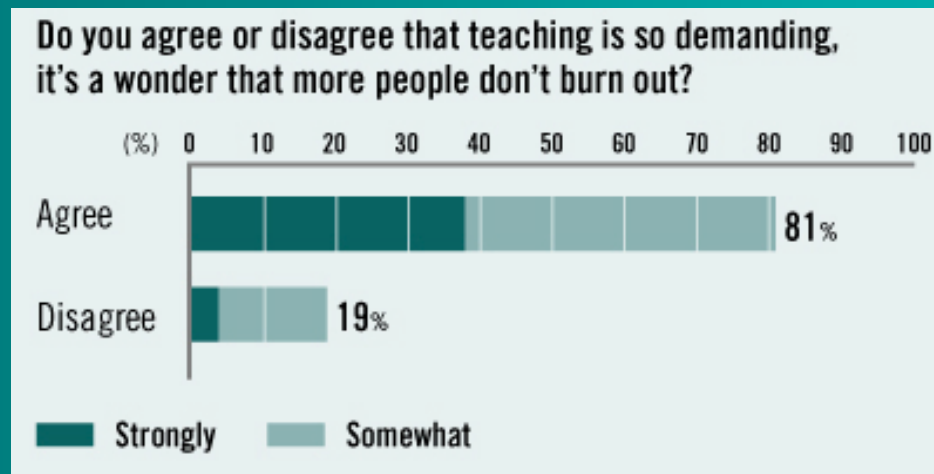


# But they are aware of drawbacks to this profession...

Majorities of New Teachers report the following as drawbacks to teaching:

- **87% say "So much testing and not enough freedom to be creative" (42% major drawback)**
- **81% say "Too many kids with discipline and behavior issues" (36% major drawback)**
- **80% say "Too many unmotivated students just going through the motions" (34% major drawback)**
- **78% say "Low salary and not much opportunity for growth" (33% major drawback)**

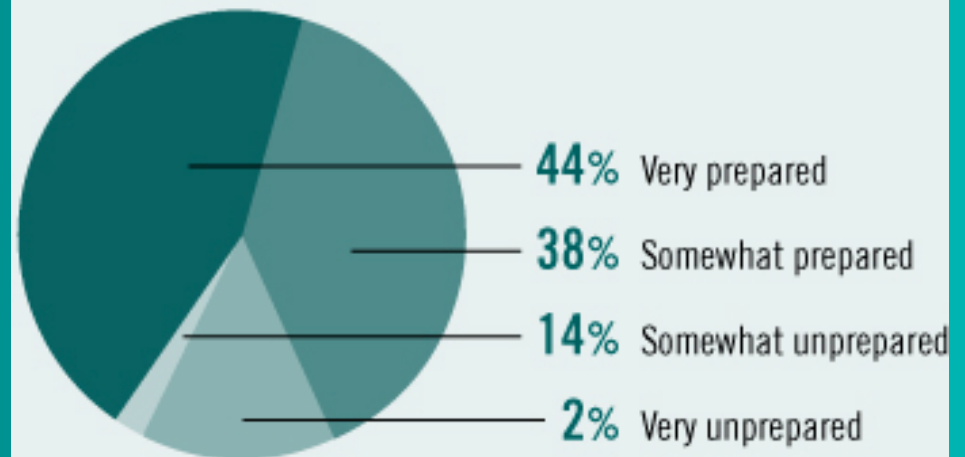
# ...And they do see a strong potential for burnout



# Most new teachers say they were prepared for their first year

More than 4 in 10 new teachers consider themselves “very prepared” and an additional 38% said they were “somewhat prepared” for this first year of teaching

Overall, looking back, would you say you were prepared or unprepared for this first year of teaching?



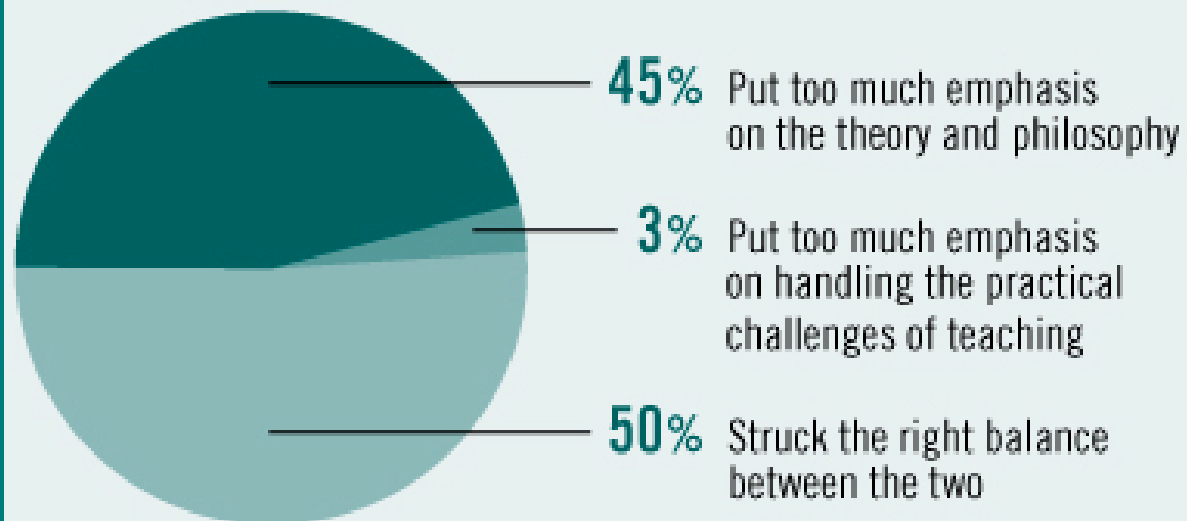
# **Much of their pre-service coursework was useful in the classroom...**

**More than 3 in 4 teachers report having the following subjects in their coursework, and more than 50% said learning this has helped a lot in the classroom:**

- **Direct instruction**
- **How to teach a specific subject**
- **Methods to personalize or differentiate instruction**
- **Classroom management and maintaining discipline**

# But more than 4 in 10 say much of their coursework was too theoretical

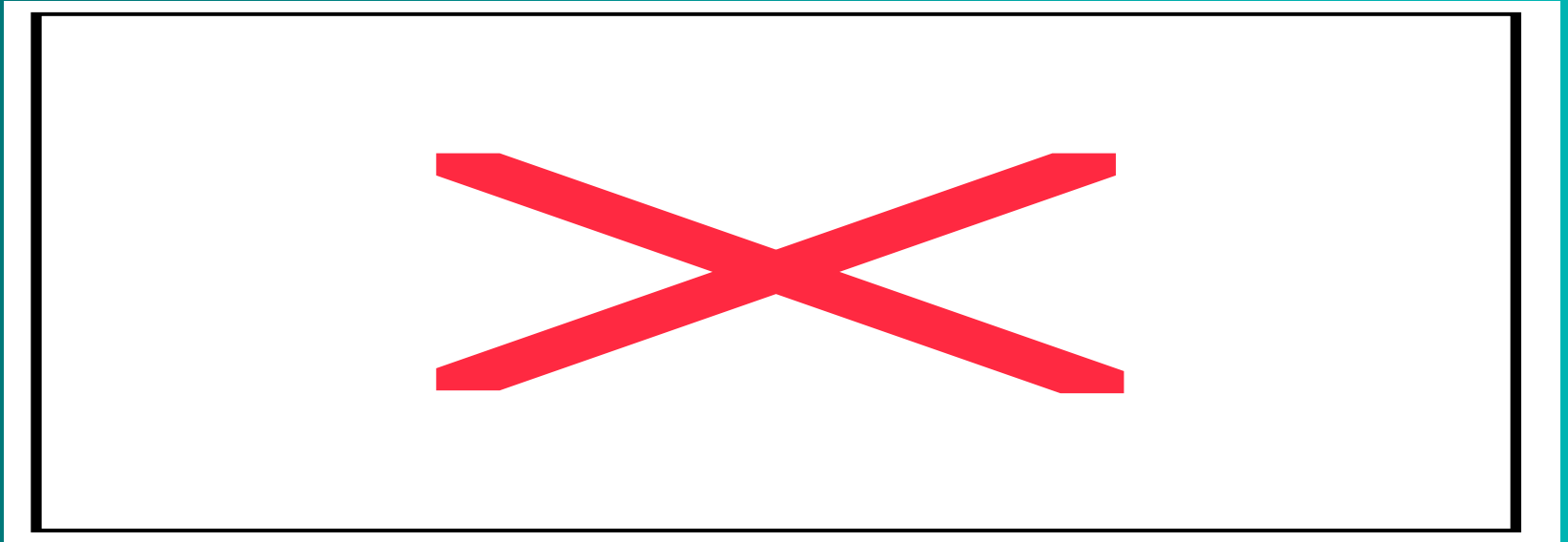
Do you feel that your teacher training ...



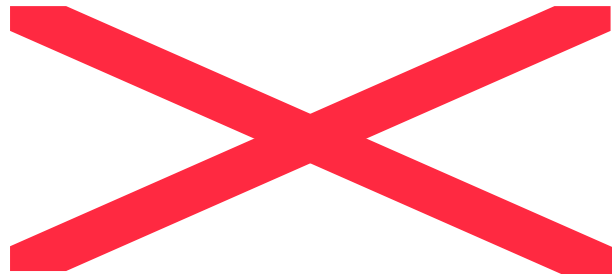
**As one elementary school teacher told us when asked what part of her job she felt least prepared for:**

“...management. It is so hard to know how to organize everything from the mundane things like attendance to the bigger issues like discipline.”

# More teachers in high-needs schools say they are assigned the hardest to reach students



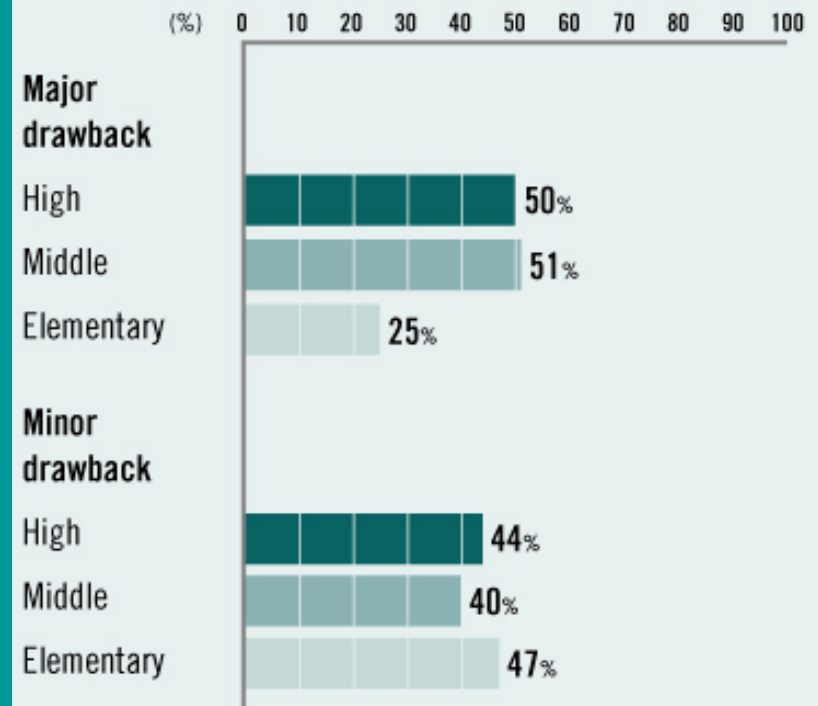
**And they need more support with  
parents and special needs students**



# Secondary teachers face other difficulties...

Secondary school teachers are much more likely to complain about unmotivated students

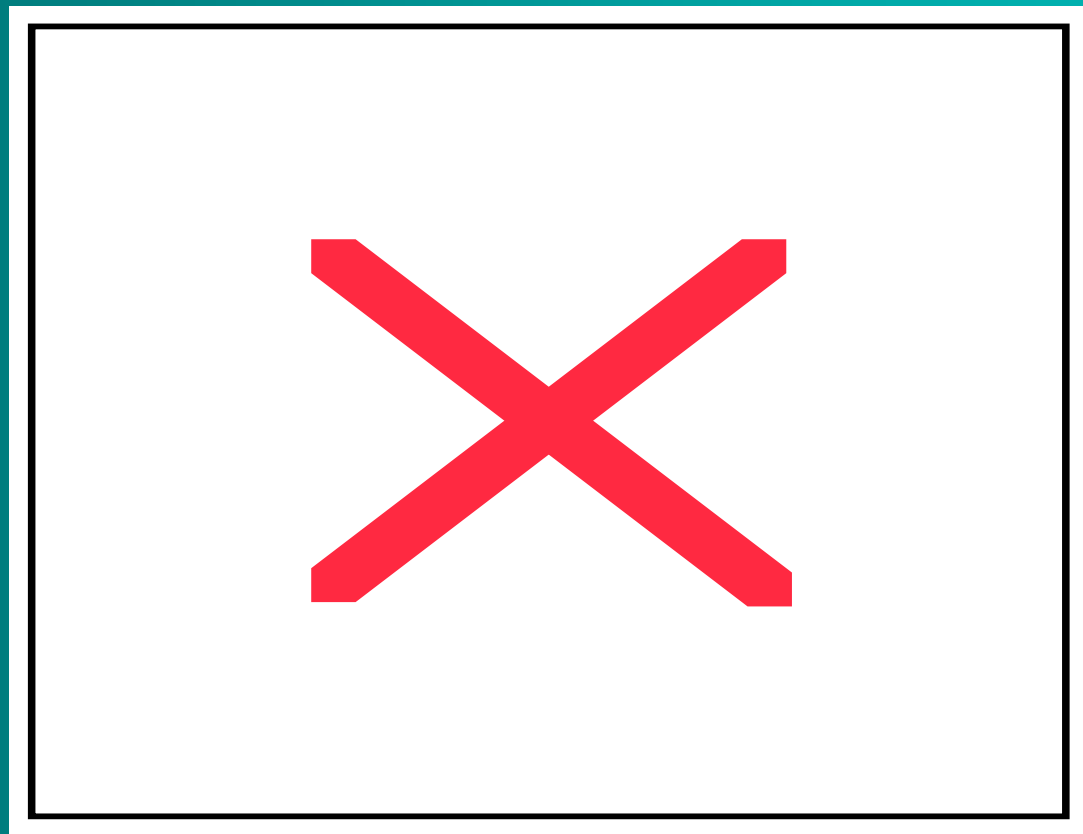
Is it a drawback to teaching that too many unmotivated students are just going through the motions?



## **As one middle school teacher said:**

**“Most students attend school to participate in after school athletics and to socialize. I often found myself standing at the front of the room yelling for their attention.”**

**And they thought their  
training was too theoretical**



## **As one high school teacher told us:**

**“I didn't feel very prepared for the discipline issues that I would face. I learned about rules I should make but not exactly what to do if they aren't enforced. I wish I would have known more about how to handle kids who are talking back and who just flat out refuse to do anything.”**

## **Secondary teachers reported lower scores in other areas as well**

Please see the report released this week:

“They’re Not Little Kids Anymore: The Special Challenges of New Teachers in High Schools”

at [www.publicagenda.org](http://www.publicagenda.org) or [www.ncctq.org](http://www.ncctq.org).

# Conclusions

- **Teachers see teaching as a lifelong dream,**
- **Yet, they acknowledge some drawbacks to the profession.**
- **They say their coursework is preparing them for the job,**
- **But coursework can be too theoretical**

## Conclusions continued

- **Teachers in high-needs schools say they are not as prepared for communicating with parents and working with special needs students**
- **Among other findings, middle and high school teachers have more trouble with handling their students and their coursework is too theoretical**