



Assessing and Improving Teaching Conditions to Maximize Teacher Effectiveness and Retention

Presentation to the National Coalition on Personnel
Shortages in Special Education and Related
Services

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NASDSE, Washington DC

What are the conditions in a school that are essential for special education teacher success?




- Working individually, make a list of the school conditions you feel need to be in place for teachers to succeed and students thrive
- Share your work with another person in the room

Core Constructs



The Teaching and Learning
Conditions Survey Initiative



"Information is what legislators
operate on, and this is great
currency for us."
—Rep. Rick Glazier (N.C.) about the state's
teaching and learning conditions initiative as
quoted in *State Legislatures* magazine
(Sept. 2009)

- Time
- Facilities and Resources
- Community Engagement and Support
- Managing Student Conduct
- Teacher Leadership
- School Leadership
- Professional Development
- Instructional Practices and Supports
- New Teacher Support

History and Evolution of the Survey



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- Survey first issued in North Carolina to assess presence of state working conditions standards to stem attrition
- Conducted multiple iterations in other states, providing cross-state comparisons and experience in understanding and improving working conditions
- NTC has gathered 415,500 surveys and provided 10,790 school reports across 10 states and 9 districts over the past three years

| State or District (2008-2010) | Educators Responding (* administered more than one time and only includes most recent iteration total) | Schools with Data | Website |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Maine | 5,136 | 150 | www.tellmaine.org |
| Kansas | 16,656 | 700 | www.kantell.org |
| Alabama | 28,188 | 1,000 | www.take20alabama.org |
| Massachusetts | 39,811 | 1,200 | www.masstells.org |
| West Virginia | 9,842 | 400 | www.westvirginiavital.org |
| North Carolina | 105,688 * | 2,500 | www.ncteachingconditions.org |
| Illinois | 2,977 | 100 | www.tellillinois.org |
| Fairfax County | 10,761* | 200 | www.fcpswcs.org |
| Vermont | 4,221 | 150 | www.vtteachingandlearning.net |
| Maryland | 43,400 | 1,000 | www.tellmaryland.org |
| Colorado | 23,108 | 625 | www.tellcolorado.org |
| TOTAL | 289,788 | 8,025 | www.newteachercenter.org |

Educators' Survey

Martin O'Malley, Governor Anthony Brown, Lt. Governor



[View Results](#) [Home](#)

Navigation

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Results

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Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning Maryland Survey

On March 4, 2010 Governor O'Malley released the final report on the TELL Maryland Survey and made public the school and district survey results. Click here to view the results of the more than 1,000 schools that had at least half the faculty participate and all school districts.



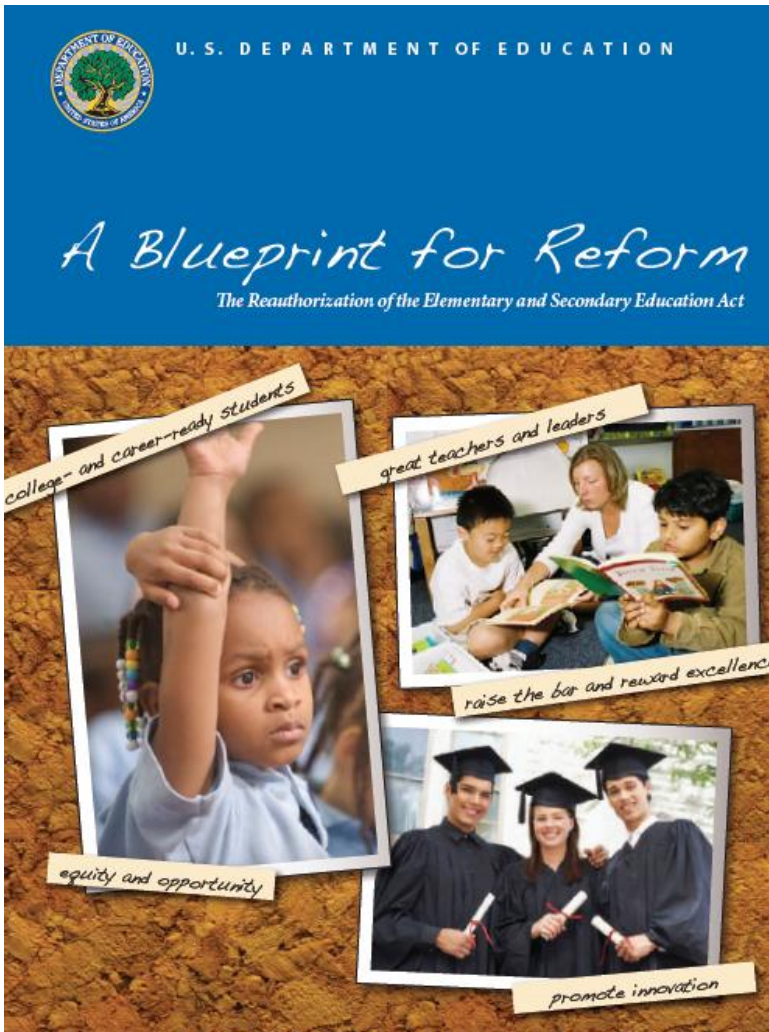
"As we work to protect and improve Maryland's # 1 ranked public school system, I want to urge all of our teachers and educators to participate in Maryland's first statewide teacher survey. Through the TELL Maryland Survey, Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning, our teachers will be able to provide anonymous firsthand feedback about how we continue to improve public education in Maryland."
- Governor Martin O'Malley

[Click here to view the survey results.](#)

Improving Teaching and Learning for All Students

TELL us about your school. Governor Martin O'Malley wants to ensure that all Maryland educators have the supportive environment necessary to help students achieve at the highest levels. The TELL Maryland Survey is a perceptual survey that will allow every educator to TELL Maryland if they have positive teaching and learning conditions that research has shown to be important to student achievement and teacher

ESEA Reauthorization Blueprint Calls for Survey Data on Conditions and Climate



- **Transparency of Data**
 - around the key indicators of whether students and schools have effective teachers and principals
 - whether teachers have the professional supports they need (teacher survey data on levels of support and working conditions in schools)
- **States and districts also to collect other information about teaching & learning conditions & climate**
 - student, teacher and school leader attendance; disciplinary incidents;
 - student, parent, or school staff surveys about their school experience

Previous Findings from State and District Working Conditions Initiatives



TELL Colorado
Creating Supportive School Environments to Enhance Teacher Effectiveness



TELL Maryland
Listening to Educators to Create Successful Schools



Massachusetts Teaching, Learning and Leading Survey

Creating School Conditions Where Teachers Stay and Students Thrive



The Vermont Teaching and Learning Conditions Initiative

Ensuring All Educators and Education Support Personnel Work in Great Public Schools



by Eric Hirsch, Casio Freitas, Kerri Church and Anthony Villar

by Eric Hirsch, Andrew Sieberg and Amy Germuth



- Teaching conditions influence school level student achievement results while controlling for student, teacher and school characteristics
- Teaching conditions influence future employment plans and teacher retention
- Not everyone in the school views working conditions similarly

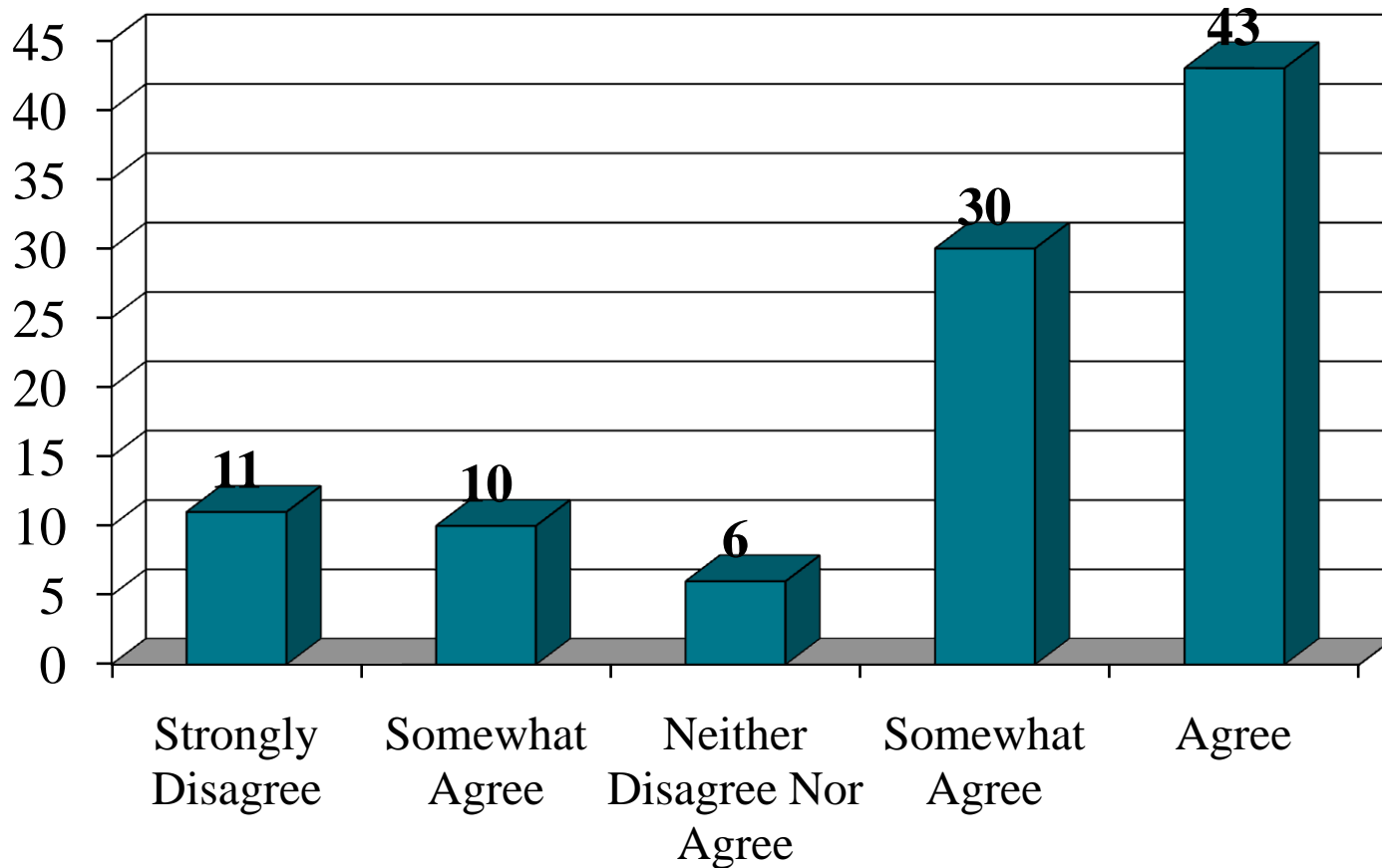
Teaching Conditions and Student Learning

- “There is good evidence to show that teachers’ working conditions matter because they have a direct effect on teachers’ thoughts and feelings—their sense of individual professional efficacy, of collective professional efficacy, of job satisfaction; their organizational commitment, levels of stress and burnout, morale, engagement in the school or profession and their pedagogical content knowledge. These internal states are an important factor in what teachers do and have a direct effect in what happens in the classroom, how well students achieve, and their experience of school.” (Leithwood, 2006)
- “Working conditions emerge as highly predictive of teachers’ stated intentions to remain or leave their schools, with leadership emerging as the most salient dimension. Teachers’ perceptions of their working conditions are also predictive of one-year actual departure rates and student achievement, but the predictive power is far lower... Taken together, the working conditions variables account for 10 to 15 percent of the explained variation in math and reading scores across schools, after controlling for individual and school level characteristics of schools.” (Ladd, 2009)

Utilizing Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey Data in Evaluations

- Systems accountability – ensuring educators are given opportunities to succeed as a “precondition” and that conditions are taken into account and understood
 - Teaching assignments, supportive environments, autonomy to make instructional decisions, student support, safe environment, etc. all impact the work, and potentially the success of teachers in accelerating student learning. District support of principals
- Working conditions are not an excuse, but a consideration in determining reasons for performance
- Data as one of multiple artifacts for evaluation to assess whether standards have been met
- Results are about schools, not individuals – multiple influences on perceptions of conditions; conditions are residual and cumulative and take time to reform

Maryland Educators Agree That Their School is a Good Place to Work and Learn



Disparities in Teaching Conditions: Elementary Math

| TELL Maryland Survey Factor | Lowest Quartile | Q2 | Q3 | Highest Quartile | Difference Between Highest and Lowest Quartile |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|------|------|------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Community Engagement | 3.63 | 3.86 | 4.08 | 4.33 | 0.70* |
| Student Conduct | 3.81 | 4.07 | 4.16 | 4.33 | 0.52* |
| Student Learning | 4.16 | 4.26 | 4.35 | 4.45 | 0.29* |
| Leadership Support | 3.72 | 3.84 | 3.91 | 4.00 | 0.28* |
| Leadership Effort | 3.62 | 3.73 | 3.77 | 3.88 | 0.26* |
| Decision Making | 2.72 | 2.80 | 2.81 | 2.96 | 0.24* |
| Resources | 3.74 | 3.86 | 3.80 | 3.88 | 0.14* |
| Time | 3.09 | 3.02 | 3.01 | 3.15 | 0.06 |
| Professional Development | 3.67 | 3.64 | 3.60 | 3.68 | 0.01 |

* Statistically significant difference between high and low performance on MSA at the $p < .05$ (two tailed)

Disparities in Teaching Conditions: Elementary Math by Quartile in Maryland

| TELL Maryland Survey Item | Percentage Agreement | | | | Difference Between Highest and Lowest Quartile |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------|------|------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| | Lowest Quartile | Q2 | Q3 | Highest Quartile | |
| Parents/Guardians are influential decision-makers in this school. | 38.0 | 53.2 | 65.6 | 79.0 | 41.0 |
| The community we serve is supportive of this school. | 54.8 | 70.5 | 82.3 | 91.4 | 36.6 |
| Students come to school ready to learn on a regular basis. | 43.6 | 51.1 | 62.7 | 78.8 | 35.2 |
| Students are caring towards one another. | 54.8 | 72.2 | 81.5 | 89.7 | 34.9 |
| Parents/Guardians and community members support teachers, contributing to their success with students. | 51.5 | 62.2 | 74.9 | 84.8 | 33.3 |
| Students at this school understand expectations for their conduct. | 72.9 | 84.6 | 86.9 | 92.6 | 19.7 |
| Teachers play a large or primary role in school improvement planning. | 36.4 | 84.6 | 57.1 | 55.6 | 19.2 |
| Teachers and staff work in a school environment that is safe. | 76.9 | 88.1 | 90.8 | 95.1 | 18.2 |

Teaching Conditions and Student Achievement



TELL Maryland
*Listening to Educators
to Create
Successful Schools*



by Eric Hirsch, Andrew Sioberg
and Amy Gemuth



- Teaching conditions explained 5-10% of the variance in school level achievement across subjects and level
- Teacher engagement in decision was statistically significant in explaining school level performance on the MSA and High School assessment while controlling for student, teacher and school characteristics
- Community Engagement and Student Conduct/Safety were also significant in explaining performance across elementary schools

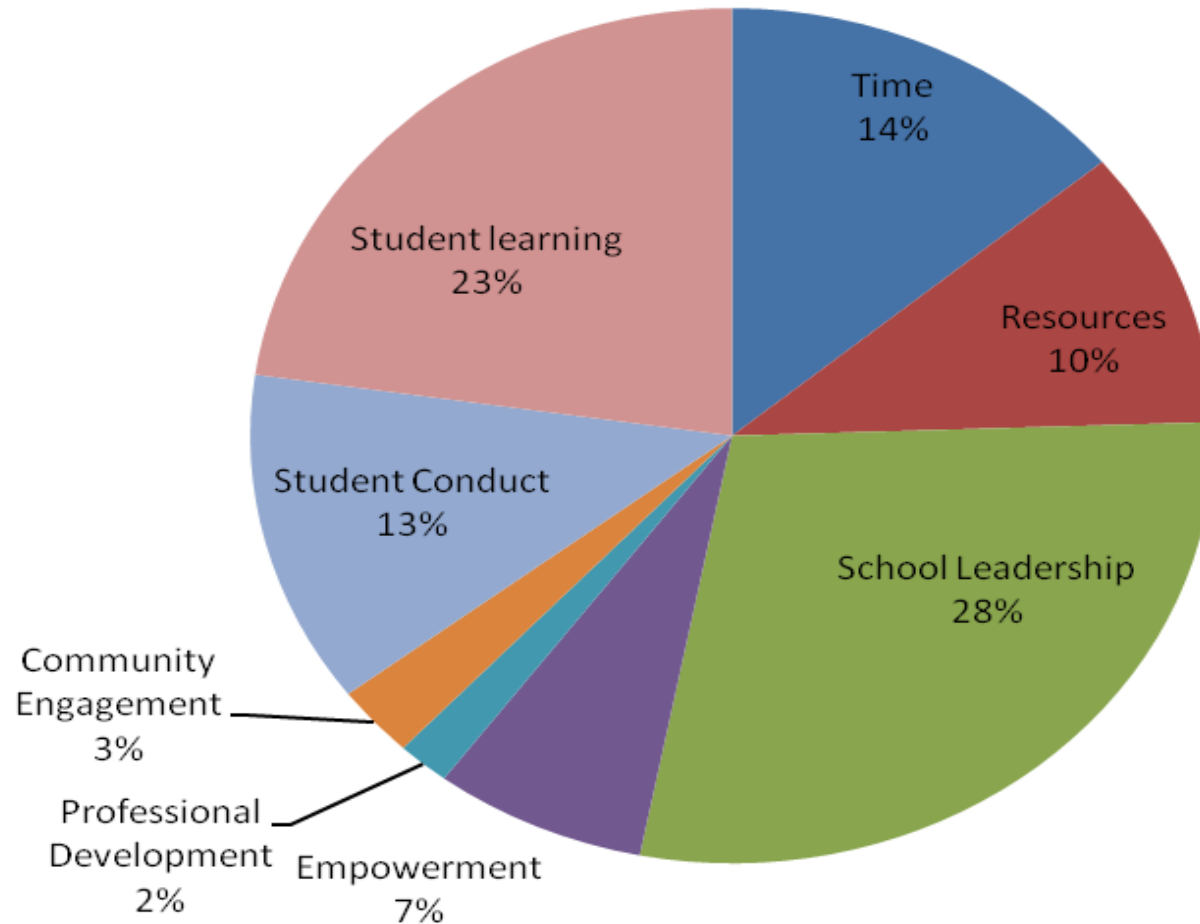
Teachers Do Not Feel Engaged in Decision Making about Education Issues

- 6 out of 10 educators agree that teachers are centrally involved in decision making about educational issues
- About three-quarters of educators believe that steps are taken to solve problems in their school and six out of ten agree that there is an effective process for making collaborative decisions
- 4 out of 10 educators agree that teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in their school. Less than 2 out of 10 agree for their district
- About one-third of educators indicate that teachers play a small or no role in school improvement planning, over half in selecting professional development and four out of ten in establishing student discipline procedures

Teaching Conditions and Retention

- “Finally, our analysis of teacher mobility showed that salary affects mobility patterns less than do working conditions such as facilities, safety and quality of leadership.” (Hanushek and Rivkin, 2007)
- “...working conditions factors, especially principal support, had more influence on simulated job choice than pay level, implying that money might be better spent to attract, retain or train better principals than to provide higher beginning salaries to teachers in schools with high-poverty or a high proportion of students of color.” (Milanowski et al., 2009)
- A survey of 2,000 educators from California found that 28 percent of teachers who left the profession before retirement indicated that they would come back if improvements were made to teaching and learning conditions. (Futernick, 2007)

Teachers' Perception of Conditions Most Important to Teacher Employment Plans in Maryland



Teaching Conditions and Estimated Retention

| TELL Survey Items | Percent of Educators Agreeing | | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | Stayers | Movers | Leave Classroom | Leave Education |
| Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn. | 76.4 | 37.3 | 75.6 | 75.9 |
| The school leadership facilitates an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within the school. | 68.3 | 30.6 | 67.6 | 67.7 |
| There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school. | 66.5 | 29.2 | 65.4 | 65.9 |
| Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them. | 62.2 | 26.5 | 61.3 | 61.6 |
| In this school we take steps to solve problems. | 76.3 | 41.9 | 75.5 | 75.8 |
| School leadership supports teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom. | 72.0 | 39.2 | 71.2 | 71.4 |

Teaching Conditions and Estimated Retention

- Teaching conditions explained 15-20% of the variance in estimated retention rates
- Leadership Support, Decision Making, Professional Development and Student Conduct/Safety were significant in explaining future employment plans at the elementary level and Student Conduct/Safety and Community Engagement for middle schools
- While no single factor was significant for high schools, teaching conditions variables explaining 20% of differences in expected teacher retention
- Leadership Support was the strongest predictor of employment plans for elementary schools, Community Engagement for middle schools and student poverty for high schools

Differences in Teacher and Principal Perception in Maryland

| TELL Maryland Survey Items | Percent Agreeing | | Difference in Perception |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------|--------------------------|
| | Teachers | Principals | |
| The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about leadership issues. | 47.1 | 93.2 | 46.1 |
| Teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in my school. | 39.6 | 84.5 | 44.9 |
| Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine administrative paperwork teachers are required to do. | 35.7 | 79.9 | 44.2 |
| The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about empowering teachers. | 54.7 | 97.3 | 42.6 |
| The school leadership shields teachers from disruptions, allowing teachers to focus on educating students. | 55.2 | 97.1 | 41.9 |
| The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about the use of time in my school. | 55.3 | 96.1 | 40.7 |
| Teachers are integrally involved in decision-making about educational issues. | 56.2 | 96.3 | 40.1 |
| Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them. | 58.1 | 96.1 | 37.9 |

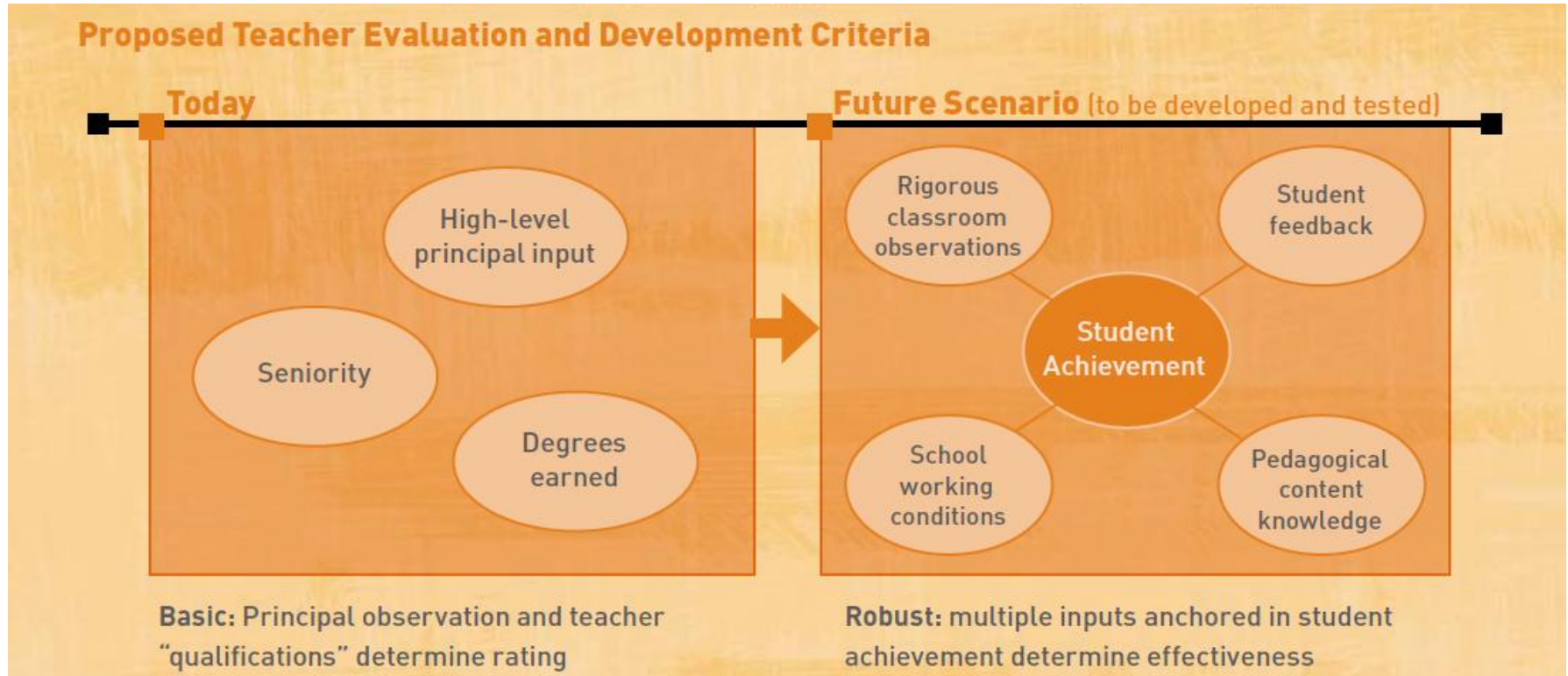
Differences in Teacher and Principal Perception in FCPS (2008)

| FCPS Working Conditions Survey Questions | Percent Agreeing | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| | Teachers | Principals |
| The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems. | 52.0% | 92.8% |
| The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school. | 51.6% | 92.1% |
| The school leadership enforces rules for student conduct in a consistent manner. | 54.0% | 93.4% |
| Efforts are made to reduce the amount of routine administrative paperwork that teachers are required to do. | 37.8% | 75.9% |
| The school leadership shields teachers from disruptions, allowing them to focus on educating students. | 54.5% | 92.1% |
| The school leadership consistently supports teachers when needed. | 59.5% | 95.8% |
| The faculty and staff have a shared vision. | 60.9% | 95.2% |
| There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within the school. | 63.4% | 95.8% |

Principals Are More Likely to Perceive School Leadership is Making Efforts to Address Concerns in FCPS

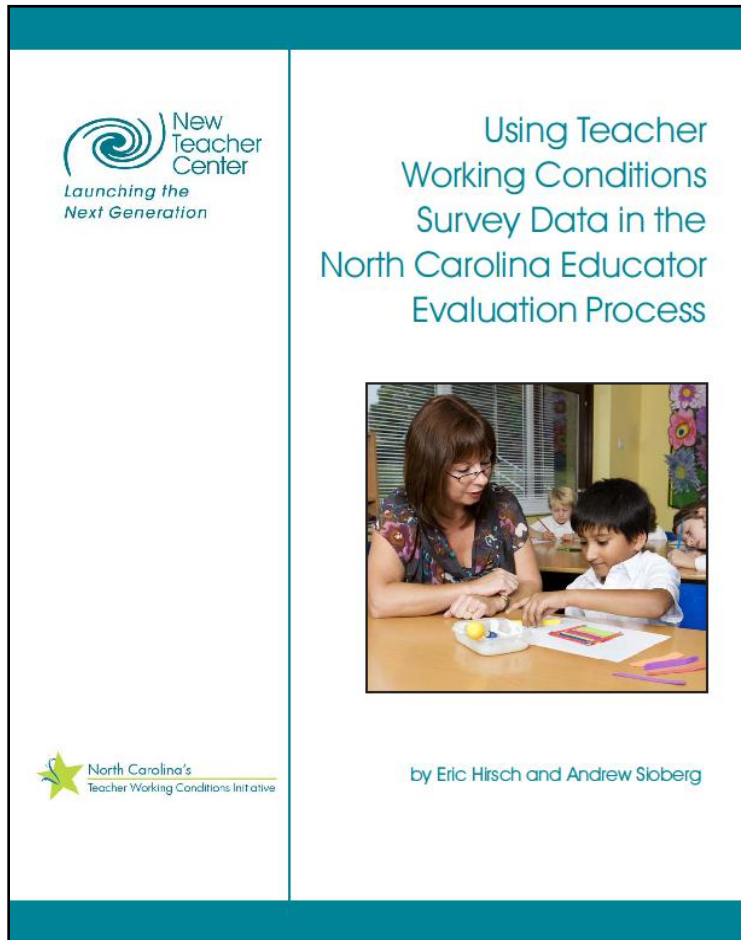
| School Leadership Makes a Sustained Effort to Address Teacher Concerns About: | Percent Agreeing | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|------------|
| | Teachers | Principals |
| Leadership issues | 44.3% | 89.0% |
| Empowering teachers | 53.4% | 94.5% |
| The use of time in my school | 48.9% | 89.0% |
| Professional development | 60.8% | 93.9% |
| Community support | 60.2% | 92.6% |
| New teacher support | 61.3% | 92.0% |
| Facilities and resources | 61.6% | 90.8% |

Working Conditions: The Context in Which Teachers Work Influences Inputs and Outcomes



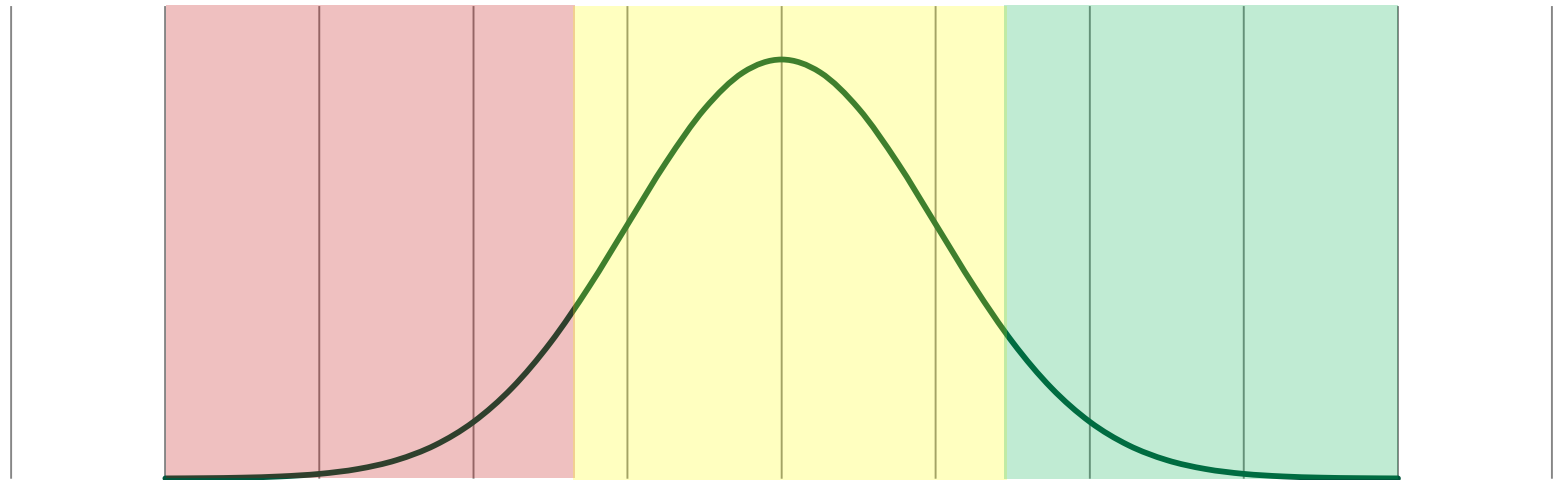
Source: Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Measures of Effective Teaching Project

Utilizing Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey Data in Evaluations: NC



- Aligned standards and rubrics for teachers, principals and superintendents developed
- Data as a recommended artifact across standards for self reflection and evaluation
- The data should be used as an indicator to assess progress toward achieving goals, not as a goal in and of itself
- First standard is that teachers are leaders and all leadership standards include survey as artifact

Consider Support and Impact on Effectiveness Across Schools



Negative Outlier: more intensive facilitation, support and assistance as the conditions do not exist for improvement

Typical School: provide tools and prioritize importance with clear standards and structures

Positive Outlier: further research, tap expertise and assess strategies for scale up

Data Use and Support

- **Positive Outliers:** Case studies to identify promising practice, drawing upon educators to assist other similar schools, conference profiling success
- **Typical Schools:** Online tools and guides, webinars, community of practice and other push out supports to assist schools in understanding and utilizing data for school improvement
- **Negative Outliers:** Direct support, ongoing facilitation to identify areas of reform and research-based strategies (face to face and virtual) etc.

Understanding and Improving Teaching Conditions

- Create tools and other materials to assist schools in utilizing data in school improvement planning
- Conduct analyses to show disparities in conditions in schools and support schools and districts in utilizing data
- Document schools that have positive and/or improved conditions
- Support local and state policymakers in using data to inform policies and practices

The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey A Parent Guide to School Improvement



What Is the Survey?

The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey provides information to schools, districts, and the state about whether educators have the supportive school settings necessary for them to do their jobs well and be successful with students. Schools with positive teaching conditions are schools with positive learning results.

As a parent, you can look up the responses from your school and see what teachers and faculty say about what they think of the conditions that will allow them to best serve your child. It can also be an important guide for you in determining where you may be able to help the work of the school and its educators.



North Carolina's
Teacher Working Conditions Initiative

New Teacher Center

North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey: Guide for School Improvement



Understanding and Improving Teacher Working Conditions

*An Activity Guide for
North Carolina
School District Leaders*



by Ann Maddock, Andrew Sieberg
and Eric Hirsch

Teaching Conditions Improve Through Data Driven Dialogue

| Influence on Change in Overall Teaching Conditions Improvement Between 2006-2008 (NC) | Correlation |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Principal Years of Experience | .089** |
| Improved rating on student growth | .057** |
| Improvement in proficiency on the performance composite | .089** |
| Percentage High Poverty | .014 |
| Change in school level turnover percentage | -.041 |
| 2008 student teacher ratio | -.067** |
| Percentage indicating a desire to remain teaching in their school | .306** |
| Change in the percentage indicating they use the data as a “school improvement tool” | .634** |

** Statistically significant at the .001 level (2-tailed ANOVA). Correlations range from -.1 to .1 with the closer to .1 meaning that there is a stronger connection

Schools Improving Working Conditions



Improving Teacher Working Conditions

*Lessons from
North Carolina Schools*



by Eric Hirsch and Andrew Sioberg
New Teacher Center
Jane Robertson and Kerri Church
Learn NC



- A sudden or dramatic event was a catalyst for change
- Influx of support and resources focused on instruction
- Faculty were brought together around improved student learning
- Strong community support
- Meaningful changes to school leadership and communication
- Teachers empowered to make key decisions
- Changes were made in the use of teacher time
- Used the survey and other data sources for change

Work Context Matters: Improving New Special Educators' Experience in Schools

- Consider the applicant's match for the job
- Encourage a sense of belonging
- Create a learning culture
- Support inclusive and collaborative practices in schools
- Provide support with curriculum and materials
- Support school wide expectations for behavior
- Support new teachers' work with paraprofessionals
- Support role clarity
- Provide “protected” status

Source: Billingsley (2010) “Work Contexts Matter: Practical Considerations for Improving New Special Educators' Experiences in Schools.” *JSEL*. V23, N1.



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