

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: Teacher Working Conditions Survey

Type of Executive Summary:

- Action
- Action on First Reading
- Discussion
- Information

Policy Implications:

- Constitution _____
- General Statute # _____
- SBE Policy # _____
- SBE Policy Amendment
- SBE Policy (New)
- APA # _____
- APA Amendment
- APA (New)
- Other

Presenter(s): Ann McArthur (Teacher Advisor to Governor Mike Easley)

Description:

In the spring of 2008 more than 104,000 teachers and administrators across our state completed the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey. The survey responses have provided valuable data at the state, district, and school level to help policymakers improve teacher retention and student achievement. Information will be presented about the findings from the 2008 survey, the Teacher Working Conditions Conference held in December 2008 and the Real D.E.A.L. schools.

Resources:

NA

Input Process:

NA

Stakeholders:

Students, Teachers, Principals, Superintendents

Timeline For Action:

NA

Recommendations:

NA

Audiovisual equipment requested for the presentation:

- Data Projector/Video (Videotape/DVD and/or Computer Data, Internet, Presentations-PowerPoint preferred)
Specify: PCD Projector
- Audio Requirements (computer or other, except for PA system which is provided)
Specify:
- Document Camera (for transparencies or paper documents – white paper preferred)

 Motion By: _____ Seconded By: _____
 Vote: Yes _____ No _____ Abstain _____
 Approved _____ Disapproved _____ Postponed _____ Revised _____

*Person responsible for SBE agenda materials and SBE policy updates: Carolyn McKinney (807-3424)

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina Office of the Governor

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Contact: Sara Clark
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GOV. EASLEY ANNOUNCES 2008 TEACHER WORKING CONDITIONS SURVEY RESULTS *Governor-Elect Perdue Recognizes 15 Schools For Excellent Teacher Working Conditions*

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley today announced results of the 2008 Teacher Working Conditions Survey. A record number of more than 104,000 educators from every public school in the state completed the survey last spring. The survey helps shape state education policy, strengthen classroom working conditions and enhance the learning environment for students. Findings from the survey were released during the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Conference held today in Cary. Also at the conference, Governor-elect Beverly Perdue recognized 15 schools for excellent teacher working conditions and student learning conditions.

“Six years ago, we administered the first Teacher Working Conditions Survey to make sure when educators speak, North Carolina listens,” said Easley. “Each year, participation has increased and teachers have shared valuable opinions that have shaped policy, improved student learning and secured North Carolina’s position as a leader in education innovation.”

"The survey is a critical tool to figuring out what we need to do in North Carolina, and in America, to make sure that every teacher understands that they are the most valuable professional in this country," said Governor-elect Bev Perdue.

The online, anonymous survey gives teachers the opportunity to share their opinions on professional development, facilities and resources, school leadership, use of time and teacher empowerment in their schools and school districts. In 2002, North Carolina became the first state in the nation to implement a teacher working conditions survey. Today, more than 20 states have implemented similar initiatives and in 2007, the national magazine *Education Week* named the survey as an indicator of quality on state education report cards.

An initial analysis of data from the 2008 Teacher Working Conditions Survey and previous years’ surveys found strong and significant connections between positive teacher working conditions and student achievement. In particular, survey results showed that schools with strong, supportive leadership and schools with sufficient resources had students performing at higher levels. The report also found that an adequate amount of planning time, atmosphere of trust and effective School Improvement Teams are connected to student performance and teacher retention. A complete report on the results of the 2008 Teacher Working Conditions Survey compiled by the New Teacher Center at the University of California in Santa Cruz will be available at www.ncteachingconditions.org in January 2009.

Fifteen schools were recognized by Governor-elect Beverly Perdue at the conference as Real D.E.A.L. (Dedicated

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Educators, Administrators & Learners) winners for demonstrating excellent working and learning conditions. Receiving the 2008 Real D.E.A.L. school awards from Perdue were: Ellendale Elementary School (Alexander County); Chocowinity Primary School (Beaufort County); Harry M. Arndt Middle School (Catawba County); Peachtree Elementary School (Cherokee County); Graham Elementary School (Cleveland County); 71st Classical Middle School (Cumberland County); New Bridge Middle School (Onslow County); South Topsail Elementary School (Pender County); Sunny View Elementary School (Polk County); Laurel Hill Elementary School (Scotland County); Stanly Early College High School (Stanly County); Carpenter Elementary School (Wake County); Panther Creek High School (Wake County); Wilkesboro Elementary School (Wilkes County) and Meadowlark Elementary School (Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools.)

“Not only does this conference demonstrate just how dedicated our educators are, it also shows Governor-elect Perdue is a dedicated education governor as well,” said Easley.

Represented among these 15 schools were high schools, middle schools and elementary schools from urban and rural areas of the state. For additional information on the winning schools, visit www.ncteachingconditions.org.

The conference is funded by the National Education Association and AT&T.

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Highlights from the 2008 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey

Since 2001, Governor Easley and the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission have made a sustained commitment to listening to educators and reforming schools to improve the working conditions necessary for student and teacher success. With four iterations of the working conditions survey completed, analyses have been consistent and clear. The conditions teachers face in schools and classrooms are essential elements to student achievement and teacher retention.

In 2008, 104,249 educators responded to the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (87 percent), the highest proportion since the advent of the statewide survey in 2002. Every traditional public school and school district in the state of North Carolina reached the minimum response rate (40 percent) necessary to have valid data, providing information needed to gauge the successes and areas of concerns in their own school community. School, district, and statewide data were made available in May at www.ncteachingconditions.org. This is especially important for all schools because:

- The new School Executive: Principal Evaluation Instrument relies on the Teacher Working Conditions Survey as an essential data artifact for educators to reflect on whether they are meeting state standards.
- The Teacher Working Conditions survey results are being integrated into a newly crafted School Improvement Planning process as required by the State Board of Education.

While a final report is expected in late January, analyses of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey data have been completed. With four iterations of the survey completed, analyses have been consistent and clear. The conditions teachers face in schools and classrooms are essential elements of student achievement and teacher retention.

Teacher Working Conditions are Student Learning Conditions

- Statistical models demonstrate that the presence of supportive school leadership and sufficient facilities and resources (instructional resources and technology, office equipment, etc.) are significant factors in explaining student achievement at all school levels. The models explained as much as 80 percent of the variance in school level achievement—as measured by the overall performance composite—with working conditions factors accounting for as much as 24 percent of the difference. Almost nine in ten educators at the highest performing schools agreed their school is a good place to work and learn compared to two-thirds in the lowest performing.

- The amount of time available to plan and collaborate and the ability of teachers to focus on students without interruption and additional duties were significant in explaining student achievement at the elementary and high school levels.
- Eight in ten teachers at the highest performing elementary schools report that there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in their school compared to six in ten in the lowest performing schools. Teachers in high performing schools at all levels were significantly more likely to report working in safe, trusting environments with supportive, effective school leadership and strong School Improvement Teams.
- Teaching conditions also impact school-wide growth in student learning. In analyzing whether schools exceeded growth expectations, several working conditions areas were found to be important.
 - For every one point increase in the school leadership factor average, elementary schools were 85 percent more likely to exceed growth expectations. Schools were 82 percent more likely to exceed growth expectations for every one point increase in school factor averages in the area of time (collaboration, planning, sufficient class size, etc.).
 - For every one point increase in the facilities and resources factor average, middle schools were 98 percent more likely to exceed growth expectations. Middle schools with higher teacher turnover, higher class sizes and higher poverty students were less likely to exceed growth expectations in middle schools.
 - School leadership and facilities and resources were statistically significant in explaining whether schools met growth expectations at the high school level. For every one point increase in the facilities and resources factor average, high schools were 97 percent more likely to exceed growth expectations. High schools were 92 percent more likely to exceed growth expectations for every one point increase in the school leadership factor average.

Teacher Working Conditions are Essential for Keeping Teachers

- As found in previous surveys and corroborated by other research, the presence of working conditions is strongly connected to the future employment plans of North Carolina teachers and actual attrition. Teachers in the lowest turnover schools are significantly more likely to note the presence of an atmosphere of trust, effective school leadership and effective School Improvement Teams.
- Statistical models demonstrate that different working conditions are significant at different school levels in explaining teacher attrition.
 - At the elementary school level, school leadership was statistically significant in explaining school level turnover. Higher percentages of fully licensed teachers and the proportion of educators with advanced degrees were also significant.

- At the middle school level, the role of teachers in making decisions—from teaching and classroom to school-wide practices—were significant in explaining teacher turnover. Teachers in lower turnover schools were significantly more likely to play a large role in making various decisions. Smaller middle schools, those with higher proportion of licensed teachers and those serving less diverse students were more likely to have lower turnover.
- For high schools, those with higher factor averages in the area of facilities and resources were significantly more likely to have lower teacher attrition. The proportion of fully licensed teachers and school size were significant influences as well.
- Teachers who indicate that they want to remain teaching in their current school are almost three times more likely to report that the School Improvement Team is effective and almost twice as likely to report that teachers play at least a large role in school improvement planning. In looking at actual attrition, the greatest differences between the highest and lowest turnover schools at all levels is the overall perception of the school being a good place to work and learn, the effectiveness of the School Improvement Team, the presence of an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, and the ability of leadership to shield teachers from disruption.

Additional Findings

- For the fourth consecutive iteration of the survey, educators were more positive about their working conditions. On virtually all questions and in all of the major survey areas, North Carolina educators were more likely to agree that they work in trusting, supportive environments.
- Principals and teachers have differing perceptions on whether working conditions are present and whether school leadership is making a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about their school environment. For example, about 6 out of 10 teachers agree that teachers are centrally involved in educational decision making compared to 97 percent of principals. The greatest disparity between principals and teachers is in the areas of educator and school leadership, the working conditions North Carolina educators perceive are most important to student learning and teacher retention.
- In 2008, principals were asked questions for the first time about the support they receive from districts. About 8 out of 10 principals indicate that they have sufficient staffing, are actively engaged in decisions at the district level that impact their school, and that professional development is both available and effective. Like teachers, principals report needing more time. Only half of principals report having sufficient time to focus on instructional issues, and 6 out of 10 report spending less than three hours in an average week working with teachers on instructional planning.

- Principals who receive support from their district are more likely to provide positive working conditions for teachers. For example, principals trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction in the district are significantly more likely to provide trusting environments for teachers, to provide training to teachers to fully utilize instructional technology and to provide effective professional development to teachers

- Although 9 out of 10 new teachers (those with three years experience or less) report being assigned a mentor, one-third of new teachers report never planning during the school day or planning instruction with their mentor. New teachers who plan to stay in their school, however, report receiving more frequent mentoring support than those who want to move to a new school or leave the profession. Three-quarters of new teachers mentored report that it made at least some contribution to their success as a beginning teacher and about half agree that their mentoring experience was important in their decision to continue teaching at their school.

- Elementary educators are more positive about their working conditions than those at the secondary level in all areas except time. Almost half of elementary educators disagree that the non-instructional time—time to plan and collaborate--they receive is sufficient compared to three out of ten teachers at the secondary level. Forty-eight percent of elementary teachers report receiving three hours or less of non-instructional time in an average week, compared to 37 percent of middle school teachers and 35 percent of high school teachers.