

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Title:** 2008 Teacher Working Conditions Survey Data and Research

**Type of Executive Summary:**

- Consent
- Action
- Action on First Reading
- Discussion
- Information

**Policy Implications:**

- Constitution \_\_\_\_\_
- General Statute #115C0284(c2)(1)
- SBE Policy # \_\_\_\_\_
- SBE Policy Amendment
- SBE Policy (New)
- APA # \_\_\_\_\_
- APA Amendment
- APA (New)
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Presenter(s):** Mrs. Carolyn McKinney (Executive Director, North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission) and Mr. Eric Hirsch (Special Projects Director, New Teacher Center)

**Description:**

In the spring of 2008 more than 104,000 (87%) teachers and administrators across our state completed the NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey. 100% of the state’s traditional schools, 62% of charter schools and 81% of our special schools have reports online. Mr. Hirsch has completed the research from the 2008 survey. He will present a summary of the 2008 findings, including connections to student achievement and teacher retention, support for new teachers, tools for using data at the school level to inform school improvement conversations, principal working conditions, and support for the new teacher/principal evaluation instruments. The coaching-based supervision professional development assists principals in the evaluation of teachers. The NC Teacher Working Conditions Survey is a key artifact in the evaluation of principals.

**Resources:**

NA

**Input Process:**

NA

**Stakeholders:**

Students, Teachers, Principals, Superintendents

**Timeline For Action:**

NA

**Recommendations:**

NA

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**Audiovisual equipment requested for the presentation:**

- Data Projector/Video (Videotape/DVD and/or Computer Data, Internet, Presentations-PowerPoint preferred)  
Specify: \_\_\_\_\_
- 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 \_\_\_\_\_

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Person responsible for SBE agenda materials and SBE policy updates: Carolyn McKinney, 807-3424

## North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Research Brief: Summary of Findings

Eric Hirsch, *Director of Special Projects* with  
Keri Church, *LearnNC*

*Since 2001, the Office of the Governor, the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission and the North Carolina State Board of Education have made a sustained commitment to listening to educators and reforming schools to create the working conditions necessary for student and teacher success.*

In 2008, 104,249 educators responded to the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (87 percent), the highest proportion since the advent of the 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. The data was made available in May 2008 at [www.ncteachingconditions.org](http://www.ncteachingconditions.org). Having this data for all schools is essential as:

- The new School Executive: Principal and Teacher Evaluation instruments rely 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 integrated into the newly crafted School Improvement

Planning process as required by the State Board of Education.

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.

- o 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.).

The presence of working conditions is strongly connected to the future employment plans of North Carolina teachers and actual attrition.

- o 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.
- o 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 and 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.
  - o At the elementary school level, school leadership was statistically significant in explaining school level turnover. A higher percentage of fully licensed teachers and the proportion of educators with advanced degrees were also significant.
  - o At the middle school level, the role of teachers in making decisions—from teaching and classroom to school-wide practices—was 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 a higher proportion of licensed teachers and those serving less-diverse students were more likely to have lower turnover.
  - o 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 significantly more likely to agree that their 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 are the overall perceptions 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. Additionally, educators in North Carolina are more positive about working conditions than their peers in other states where the New Teacher Center has conducted similar surveys.
- 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 disparities between principals and teachers are in the areas of educator and school leadership—the working

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.

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 time to sufficiently 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.
  - o 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.

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- 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.

The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey data is a compilation of the voices of those who know schools best—the dedicated educators working in them each and every day. These findings and school reports should be used to begin conversations about perceptions of working conditions and be used by School Improvement Teams for planning within the state’s schools and districts. Positive working conditions, where educators are supported and empowered, are essential to creating schools where teachers and administrators want to work and students can learn.

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## About The New Teacher Center

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New Teacher Center

*Improving Teaching and Learning in America’s Schools*



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## North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey Brief: Teacher Working Conditions Are Student Learning Conditions

Eric Hirsch, *New Teacher Center* with  
Keri Church, *LEARN NC*

*Since 2001, the Office of the Governor, the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission and the North Carolina State Board of Education have made a sustained commitment to listening to educators and reforming schools to create the working conditions necessary for student and teacher success.*

In 2008, 104,249 educators responded to the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (87 percent), the highest proportion since the advent of the 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. The data was made available in May 2008 at [www.ncteachingconditions.org](http://www.ncteachingconditions.org).

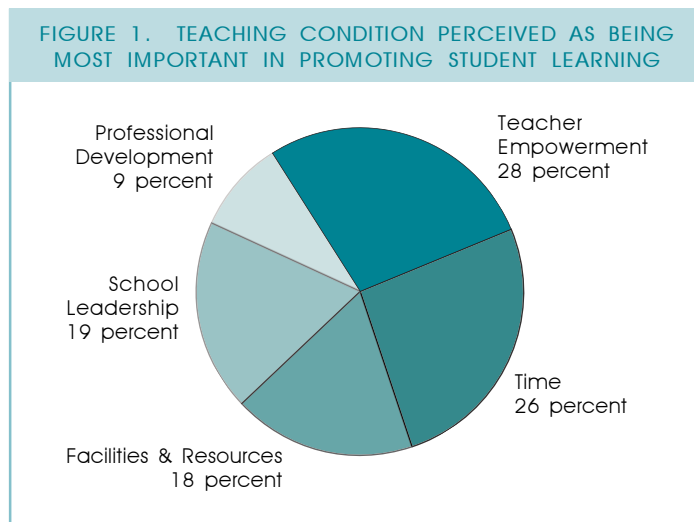
With four iterations of the survey completed, analyses have been consistent and clear. The conditions teachers face in schools and classrooms are essential elements of student achievement. Analyses from 2004 and 2006 demonstrate that (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007; Hirsch, 2005):

- Providing teachers with sufficient instructional materials that they can select and use in devising their own teaching techniques is significantly related to school level student achievement.
- Leadership is essential. School leaders that can empower faculty, create safe school environments, and develop supportive, trusting climates are more likely to be successful in promoting student learning.

With the 2008 survey data, the New Teacher Center analyzed the relationship between survey responses aggregated to the school-level and student performance as measured by the performance composite (the percentage of students at or above achievement level III/proficient) and whether or not schools met student learning growth targets set by the state. Supporting statistical documentation on the data utilized, survey questions included in the working conditions areas examined (leadership, decision making, professional development, time and facilities and resources) and statistical models developed are available in the research section of [www.ncteachingconditions.org](http://www.ncteachingconditions.org).

## Findings

On the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, teachers reported that empowerment issues—role in decision making, clarity and effectiveness of decision making processes, etc.—and time are the conditions most critical to promoting student learning (Figure 1). In 2008, teacher empowerment was the working condition teachers indicated as most essential to student learning cited (28 percent), compared to 2006 when time was reported most frequently (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007). Professional development was cited by only about one out of ten teachers.



In examining the correlations between working conditions and student achievement, Decision Making, Leadership, Time, and Facilities and Resources are significantly correlated with higher school level achievement for elementary, middle and high schools (Table 1). The connections appear to be strongest in the areas of Decisions Making and Facilities and

Resources and weakest in the areas of Time and Professional Development.

- Student characteristics, in particular poverty, are the strongest correlates with student achievement at all levels.
- Higher teacher turnover and the percentage of teachers on lateral entry licenses are correlated with lower student achievement as measured by the Performance Composite.

Individual survey item analyses help to better identify specific issues within the working conditions areas where educators have differing perspectives across schools based student performance levels. Schools were separated into quartiles based on the Performance Composite and percentage agreement for all questions was analyzed. Elementary level analyses are presented (Table 2).

Eight out of ten educators (78 percent) at the highest-performing elementary schools report that there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in their school compared to six out of ten in the lowest-performing schools (59 percent). 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. Almost nine in ten educators (86 percent) at the highest-performing schools agreed their school is a good place to work and learn compared to two-thirds (66 percent) in the lowest performing.

There were few differences across performance quartiles on several questions related to professional development.

Approximately two-thirds of teachers in the highest- and lowest-performing schools agree that professional development provided them with new instructional strategies and led to increased student learning. Professional development resources, time and followup is similar across elementary schools regardless of performance level.

To better understand the connections between working conditions and student achievement, statistical models were created for elementary, middle and high schools. This modeling moves beyond correlations by controlling for various factors to better determine whether there is a direct relationship between particular working conditions in light of the multitude of factors that influence student learning.

### *Elementary Level Student Performance*

The statistical model for elementary performance was robust, explaining 76 percent of the variance in school

level achievement. Leadership, Facilities and Resources, and Professional Development had a statistically significant connection to student achievement.

- Responses to the battery of questions comprising the Leadership Factor—including issues of trust and support—exerted roughly the same influence on the Performance Composite as the proportion of teachers on lateral entry licenses. Leadership was about twice as strong an influence on school performance as the teacher turnover rate.
- At the elementary (and middle school level), higher performing schools were less likely to note positive conditions for Professional Development. This same connection was noted in 2006 (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007) and has been found in other states as well. As many questions in the Professional Development Factor focus on the amount of funding and resources

TABLE 1. CORRELATIONS BETWEEN WORKING CONDITIONS AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT BY LEVEL

| Influences on Student Learning                            | Performance Composite     |                       |                     |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
|   | <i>Elementary Schools</i> | <i>Middle Schools</i> | <i>High Schools</i> |
| Leadership  | .340*                     | .230*                 | .298*               |
| Professional Development                                  | .079*                     | .087                  | .246*               |
| Time  | .141*                     | .159*                 | .199*               |
| Decision Making   | .347*                     | .301*                 | .380*               |
| Facilities and Resources                                  | .330*                     | .354*                 | .398*               |
| Percentage of Lateral Entry Teachers                      | -.305*                    | -.531*                | -.373*              |
| Student Teacher Ratio                                     | .050                      | .329*                 | .292*               |
| Average Daily Membership                                  | .236*                     | .299*                 | .155*               |
| Teacher Turnover Rate                                     | -.320*                    | -.349**               | -.248*              |
| Percentage of Limited English Proficient Students         | -.277*                    | -.341*                | -.250*              |
| Percentage of Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Lunch | -.808*                    | -.833*                | -.490*              |

**Note:** Data are correlation coefficients. The closer to 1.0 or -1.0, the stronger the connection between variables. In social sciences, a 0.3 is generally accepted as a meaningful connection.  
\* Significant at the p < .01 level (two-tailed)

available for professional development, poorer and lower-performing schools, often the beneficiaries of greater federal (Title I) and state investments, are more positive about the frequency and funding of opportunities for support.

- 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.).
- While working conditions areas significantly influence achievement, student background had the strongest

impact on school performance. Poverty was five times as predictive of elementary student performance as Leadership and was almost three times more influential than any other variable included in the model.

The proportion of minority and Limited English proficient students, percentage of minority educators, and reported acts of violence by students were also statistically significant in explaining elementary performance in addition to the variables discussed above.

### *Middle School Performance*

The statistical model for middle school performance explained 82 percent of the variance in school level achievement. Leadership, Facilities and Resources, and

TABLE 2. TEACHER WORKING CONDITIONS SURVEY QUESTIONS BY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PERFORMANCE QUARTILE

| North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Questions   |   |                    |                     |   |
|---|---|--------------------|---------------------|---|
|   | <i>Quartile I<br/>(Lowest<br/>Performing)</i> | <i>Quartile II</i> | <i>Quartile III</i> | <i>Quartile IV<br/>(Highest<br/>Performing)</i> |
| Overall my school is a good place to work and learn   | 66%   | 79%                | 81%                 | 86%   |
| There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within the school                                      | 59%   | 69%                | 70%                 | 78%   |
| The school leadership consistently enforces rules for student conduct                                     | 58%   | 66%                | 69%                 | 76%   |
| The school leadership support teachers' efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom                   | 64%   | 72%                | 76%                 | 82%   |
| The School Improvement Team provides effective leadership at this school                                  | 58%   | 67%                | 68%                 | 75%   |
| The faculty and staff have a shared vision  | 67%   | 75%                | 77%                 | 83%   |
| The school leadership shields teachers from disruptions, allowing teachers to focus on educating students | 61%   | 69%                | 71%                 | 77%   |
| The school leadership consistently supports teachers  | 65%   | 73%                | 75%                 | 81%   |
| In this school we take steps to solve problems  | 63%   | 70%                | 72%                 | 78%   |
| Overall, the school leadership in my school is effective  | 56%   | 65%                | 66%                 | 71%   |

Note: Items are ordered based on the greatest disparity between Quartile I (low performing) and Quartile IV (high performing) schools.

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Professional Development significantly affect student performance.

- Facilities and resources had the strongest influence of the working conditions variables for middle schools, affecting school level achievement about as much or more than any student, school or teacher characteristic except poverty. Facilities and Resources had three times the influence on achievement as the percentage of teachers with advanced degrees, reported acts of student violence, and teacher turnover. A five percent increase in the Performance Composite could be estimated for every one-point difference in the Facilities and Resources Factor mean score on the Teacher Working Conditions Survey.
- Leadership had twice as strong an influence on performance as the proportion of teachers with advanced degrees and teacher turnover.
- 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.

### *High School Performance*

The statistical model for high school performance explained 66 percent of the variance in school level achievement. Leadership, Facilities and Resources, and Time were statistically significant in explaining high school student performance.

- Time exerted the strongest influence of the working conditions areas on high school achievement, similar to the impact on the school-wide Performance Composite as the proportion of teachers on lateral entry licenses and reported acts of student violence.
- Leadership and Facilities and Resources were statistically significant in explaining whether schools met growth expectations. 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 Leadership Factor average.

The percentage of minority students, the percentage of students in poverty, school size (larger schools had higher performance levels) and student teacher ratio were also statistically significant in explaining student performance.

### Conclusion

Statistical models demonstrate that the presence of supportive school leadership and sufficient facilities and resources are significant factors in explaining student achievement at all school levels. Positive working conditions, where educators are supported and empowered, are essential to creating schools where teachers and administrators want to work and students learn.

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## References

Hirsch, E. and Emerick S. with K. Church and E. Fuller (2007). *Teacher Working Conditions are Student Learning Conditions: A Report on the 2006 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey*. Hillsborough, N.C.: Center for Teaching Quality.

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## North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey Brief: Working Conditions Influence Teacher Retention

Eric Hirsch, *New Teacher Center* with  
Keri Church, *LEARN NC*

*Since 2001, the Office of the Governor, the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission and the North Carolina State Board of Education have made a sustained commitment to listening to educators and reforming schools to create the working conditions necessary for student and teacher success.*

In 2008, 104,249 educators responded to the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (87 percent), the highest proportion since the advent of the 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. The data was made available in May 2008 at [www.ncteachingconditions.org](http://www.ncteachingconditions.org).

With four iterations of the survey completed, analyses have been consistent and clear. The conditions teachers face in schools and classrooms are critical to teacher retention. Analyses from 2004 and 2006 demonstrate that effective leadership that provides sufficient planning

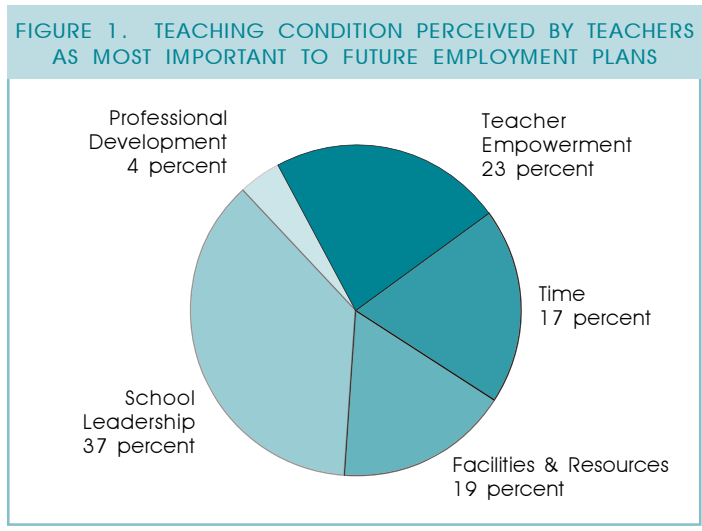
time and empowers teachers in trusting environments are essential to retaining teachers (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007; Hirsch 2005).

With the 2008 survey data, the New Teacher Center analyzed the relationship between working conditions and two measures of teacher retention: actual school level turnover and the future employment plans as self reported on the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. Supporting statistical documentation on the data utilized, survey questions included in the working conditions areas examined (Leadership, Decision Making, Professional Development, Time and Facilities and Resources) and statistical models developed are available in the research section of [www.ncteachingconditions.org](http://www.ncteachingconditions.org).

### Findings

On the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, more than one-third (37 percent) of teachers indicate that School Leadership is the most important working condition influencing their decision about where to work (Figure 1). About twice as many teachers selected Leadership as Facilities and Resources and Time.

Approximately one-quarter (23 percent) of teachers report that empowerment is most important in deciding whether to remain working in their current school.



Evidence throughout the survey indicates that North Carolina teachers with positive perceptions about their working conditions, particularly in the areas of school leadership and teacher empowerment, are much more likely to want to stay at their current school (Table 1).

- Issues related to teacher engagement in a clear and effective decision making process led by the School Improvement Team (SIT) influence teachers' decisions about where to work.* Three-quarters of those who want to continue working in their current school agree that members of the SIT are elected compared to four out of ten teachers (43 percent) who want to stay in the profession but work elsewhere. There are large and significant differences between teachers who want to stay and move on issues such as taking steps to solve problems, having an effective SIT, having an effective

decision making process, and teachers being centrally involved in decision making.

- Leadership that supports teachers is an important influence on where they work.* More than three-quarters (78 percent) of teachers who want to stay working in their school agree that school leadership consistently supports teachers compared to less than half (47 percent) of movers. Leadership's communication about expectations, enforcement of student conduct rules, and ability to shield teachers from unnecessary disruptions impact whether teachers want to remain in their school.

In looking at actual attrition, the greatest differences between the highest- and lowest-turnover schools at all levels are the overall perceptions 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.

To better understand the connections between working conditions and both actual attrition and future employment plans, statistical models were created for elementary, middle and high schools. This modeling moves beyond correlations by controlling for various factors to better determine whether there is a direct relationship between particular working conditions and teacher retention in light of the multitude of factors that influence where educators work.

- 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

of fully licensed teachers and school size were significant influences as well.

- *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

## Conclusion

Statistical models demonstrate that the presence of supportive school leadership, teacher engagement in decision making and the sufficiency of resources are significant factors in explaining teacher retention at all school levels. Positive working conditions, where educators are supported and empowered, are essential to creating schools where teachers and administrators want to work and students thrive.

TABLE 1. DIFFERENCES IN THE PERCEPTIONS OF STAYERS, MOVERS AND LEAVERS ON TEACHER WORKING CONDITIONS QUESTIONS

| North Carolina<br>Teacher Working Conditions Survey Questions   | Percentage of Educators Agreeing |               |                |
|---|----------------------------------|---------------|----------------|
|   | <i>Stayers</i>                   | <i>Movers</i> | <i>Leavers</i> |
| Members of the school improvement team are elected  | 75.7%                            | 42.9%         | 55.0%          |
| The school leadership consistently supports teachers  | 78.1%                            | 47.0%         | 58.8%          |
| In this school we take steps to solve problems  | 74.6%                            | 46.4%         | 56.5%          |
| The school leadership communicates clear expectations to students and parents                             | 71.0%                            | 43.6%         | 53.7%          |
| The faculty and staff have a shared vision  | 78.0%                            | 50.8%         | 59.5%          |
| The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems                      | 68.3%                            | 41.4%         | 51.2%          |
| The School Improvement Team provides effective leadership   | 68.5%                            | 41.6%         | 51.3%          |
| The school leadership consistently enforces rules for student conduct                                     | 76.2%                            | 49.7%         | 59.6%          |
| The school leadership shields teachers from disruptions, allowing teachers to focus on educating students | 66.6%                            | 40.8%         | 49.4%          |
| Teachers are centrally involved in decision making about educational issues                               | 66.3%                            | 41.1%         | 50.2%          |

Note: Items are ordered based on the greatest disparity between stayers and movers.

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## References

Hirsch, E. and Emerick S. with K. Church and E. Fuller (2007). *Teacher Working Conditions are Student Learning Conditions: A Report on the 2006 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey*. Hillsborough, N.C.: Center for Teaching Quality.

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## North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Research Brief: Supporting New Teachers

Eric Hirsch, *New Teacher Center*

*In 2008, more than 104,000 educators (87 percent) across North Carolina participated in the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, providing critical information for every traditional public school about whether or not the faculty perceives that the trusting, supportive environments necessary to enhance student learning and retain teachers are present.*

These conditions are especially important for new teachers entering the profession. High quality mentoring is dependent on the presence of many of these working conditions to be effective, including: a supportive environment, teacher engagement in decisions about instruction, school leaders who facilitate the creation of clear and predictable decision making processes, opportunities for mentor and new teacher professional development, and time for educators to work collaboratively.

In addition to general trends evident from the main sections of the survey, specific questions were designed to assess perceptions of the quality of mentoring across the state. Approximately 19,000 teachers in their first three years in the profession (about 7,000 in their initial year) were asked a series of questions about the support they received. About 26,000 North Carolina teachers reported serving as a mentor to new colleagues over the past three years and were asked about their perceptions

of the frequency of mentoring and any additional support they received.

### New Teachers Have Different Perceptions and Professional Development Needs

Beginning teachers report differing perceptions of the working conditions in their school and areas where they need additional support to improve. Consider the following:

- New teachers are more likely to agree that they have positive working conditions than mid-career and veteran teachers. On virtually all questions, teachers in their first year are the most likely to note the presence of positive working conditions, followed closely by those in their second and third years.
- In most professional development areas, new teachers are more likely to report needing additional opportunities to be more effective with their students. While there is little disparity based on years of experience in feelings of preparedness in their content area, closing the achievement gap and with English Language Learners, there are significant differences in the areas of classroom management, methods of teaching and student assessment. For example, while half (52 percent) of first year and one-third of teachers with two to three years experience (36 percent) indicate a need for more professional development in classroom

management, less than one-fifth of those with eleven or more years report a need.

Ideally, induction can build upon and foster new teachers' positive perceptions of supportive working conditions while also providing the additional support new teachers identify as necessary. However, it appears that not all beginning educators are receiving the support they need.

### Induction Support Does Not Reach all New Educators

Nine out of ten teachers report being assigned mentors for both their first year and/or their first and second year of teaching. And of the new teachers assigned a mentor, many do not receive the support that research demonstrates is necessary to improve performance and keep them in the profession (Table 1). One-third of new teachers assigned a mentor report never planning during the school day (32 percent) or planning instruction with their mentor (33 percent). One-fifth of new teachers indicate that they were not observed by their mentor.

New principals, like teachers, do not receive systematic support within the state. Less than one-third (31 percent) of new principals—those with three years in the principalship or less—were assigned a mentor. When a

mentor was assigned, new principals were positive about the impact in many areas such as instructional leadership, budgeting, school improvement planning, etc.

- Of those receiving a mentor, one-third (36 percent) of the principals were never observed in their school or did school improvement planning with their mentor (35 percent)
- Forty-six percent of principals who were assigned a mentor agreed it was important in their decision to remain a leader in their school, and 60 percent said it enhanced their effectiveness as a school leader

While many novice teachers are not being reached, those who were assigned a mentor and met with them more frequently indicate that the support they received was effective in many areas. Three-quarters of new teachers receiving mentoring agree that their mentor was effective in supporting instructional strategies (76 percent), classroom management/discipline (76 percent), school and/or district procedures (76 percent), Eighty percent report that their mentor supported their completion of required documentation and 85 percent of new teachers agree that their mentor provided effective general support and encouragement. Two-thirds report effective support from their mentor in their subject area.

TABLE 1. FREQUENCY OF MENTORING ACTIVITIES REPORTED BY NEW TEACHERS AND MENTORS

| Mentoring activity                               | Supported New Teachers |                  |                               |
|--|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
|  | <i>Never</i>           | <i>Sometimes</i> | <i>At Least Once Per Week</i> |
| Planning During the School Day                   | 32%                    | 38%              | 30%                           |
| Being Observed by My Mentor                      | 20%                    | 72%              | 8%                            |
| Planning Instruction with My Mentor              | 33%                    | 43%              | 24%                           |
| Having Discussions with My Mentor About Teaching | 4%                     | 45%              | 51%                           |

Note: The "sometimes" category includes responses ranging from "less than once per month" to "several times per month."

Mentors, like new teachers, are not receiving systematic support across schools and districts. While three-quarters (77 percent) of North Carolina educators serving as mentors to new teachers received some mentor training (i.e. seminars or classes), other supports are rare. About one-third of mentors report receiving release time to observe their mentee (38 percent), receiving common planning time with their mentee (31 percent), and regular communication with school administration (34 percent). Less than one out of ten receive release time to observe other mentors (7 percent) and virtually none receive a reduced number of preparations (2 percent) or teaching schedule (2 percent).

Four out of ten mentors report working with only one beginning teacher and seven out of ten (67 percent) work with two or less.

### Impact of Mentoring

Three-quarters of new teachers mentored report that it made at least some contribution to their success as a

beginning teacher (four out of ten report that their mentoring experience mattered quite a bit or a great deal). About half (45 percent) agree that their mentoring experience was important in their decision to continue teaching at their school.

On the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, all teachers were asked about their future employment plans: whether they wanted to “stay” teaching in their current school, remain teaching but “move” to a new school, or “leave” teaching altogether. New teachers who plan to stay in their school receive more frequent mentoring support than those who want to move to a new school or leave the profession (Table 2). In an examination of the self-reported future employment plans of new teachers who were mentored, those who want to stay in their school more frequently planned during the school day, planned instruction, had discussions about teaching and were observed than those who wanted to move to another school or leave teaching altogether.

TABLE 2. FUTURE EMPLOYMENT PLANS OF NEW TEACHERS AND FREQUENCY OF MENTORING ACTIVITIES

| Mentoring activity                               | Frequency of Mentoring as Reported by New Teachers |               |                |                |               |                |                        |               |                |
|--|--|---------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|------------------------|---------------|----------------|
|  | Never  |               |                | Sometimes      |               |                | At Least Once Per Week |               |                |
|  | <i>Stayers</i>                                     | <i>Movers</i> | <i>Leavers</i> | <i>Stayers</i> | <i>Movers</i> | <i>Leavers</i> | <i>Stayers</i>         | <i>Movers</i> | <i>Leavers</i> |
| Planning During the School Day                   | 28.5%  | 37.2%         | 37.8%          | 38.8%          | 37.7%         | 39.3%          | 32.7%                  | 25.1%         | 22.9%          |
| Being Observed by My Mentor                      | 18.1%  | 22.7%         | 23.1%          | 72.8%          | 69.1%         | 69.2%          | 9.1%                   | 8.2%          | 7.7%           |
| Planning Instruction with My Mentor              | 29.6%  | 38.6%         | 41.1%          | 44.1%          | 40.9%         | 41.1%          | 26.3%                  | 20.5%         | 17.8%          |
| Having Discussions with My Mentor About Teaching | 3.1%   | 5.1%          | 6.5%           | 43.4%          | 49.8%         | 49.9%          | 54.5%                  | 45.1%         | 43.6%          |

Note: The “sometimes” category includes responses ranging from less than one per month to several times per month.

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## Conclusion

A Mentor Task Force was established by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to develop recommendations to the North Carolina State Board of Education to inform school districts on the use of state funding for the design and approval of their induction program. The Task Force, meeting in fall 2008 and spring 2009, is considering new standards for mentor programs and mentors that align with the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards, a network of mentor programs, and the development and delivery of mentor training.

These state reforms may be necessary as educators in some schools indicate that induction issues are not being addressed. Two-thirds of teachers responding to the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey agree that school leadership makes sustained efforts to address concerns about new teacher support. Approximately one out of six teachers (17 percent) disagree that efforts are made. By comparison, 64 percent agreed efforts are made

to address concerns about leadership, 66 percent agreed efforts are made to address concerns about teacher empowerment, and 72 percent agreed efforts are made to address concerns about professional development and facilities and resources respectively.

Additionally, only half of principals (53 percent) agree that they have sufficient time to focus on instructional leadership issues. Six out of ten principals (57 percent) spend three hours or less in an average week on instructional leadership issues (nine out of ten spend 5 hours per week or less) and one-quarter spend three hours or less (26 percent) observing and coaching teachers.

Given the return on investment of supporting high-quality induction—\$1.66 for every \$1 invested according to a recent New Teacher Center study—and the gains in teacher retention and teacher effectiveness, policymakers and practitioners should do more to ensure that all new teachers are systematically supported across North Carolina.

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## North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Research Brief: Principal Working Conditions

Eric Hirsch, *Director of Special Projects*

*Since 2001, the Office of the Governor, the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission and the North Carolina State Board of Education have made a sustained commitment to listening to educators and reforming schools to create the working conditions necessary for student and teacher success.*

In 2008, 104,249 educators responded to the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (87 percent), the highest proportion since the advent of the 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. The data was made available in May at [www.ncteachingconditions.org](http://www.ncteachingconditions.org). Having this data for all schools is essential as:

- The new School Executive: Principal and Teacher Evaluation instruments rely 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 integrated into the newly crafted School Improvement Planning process as required by the North Carolina State Board of Education.

Principals play a critical role in establishing school policies, setting the tone within the school and providing leadership. While most questions on the survey focus on school leadership (which includes but is not limited to the principal), in 2008 a newly designed series of questions only for principals were asked to better assess the support they receive from districts as school leaders. Almost 2,000 principals across North Carolina responded and provided their voice about whether school districts are giving them the supportive environments they need to create positive working conditions for their faculty.

- Four out of ten (38 percent) responding principals were in their first three years as a principal while over one-fifth (20 percent) have more than ten years' experience as a principal.
- Almost two-thirds of the respondents (62 percent) have been a principal in their school for three years or less and 95 percent have worked in their school for less than a decade. About half (45 percent) have been a principal in their current district for three years or less.

Principals in North Carolina are generally positive about most aspects of the support they receive that enable them to create positive working conditions in their schools. Consider the following:

- Eight out of ten principals (83 percent) agreed that their schools had a sufficient number of licensed staff to meet the educational needs of their students, and that their district Human Resources office provides highly qualified applicants for open faculty positions (84 percent). Two-thirds (67 percent) agree that they have a sufficient number of non-licensed staff to operate their school efficiently and effectively.
- Eight out of ten principals agreed that they are involved in decisions that directly impact the operations of their schools (79 percent) and are actively involved in district decisions about educational issues (78 percent). Principals noted that they and other school leaders play a large role in many decisions that influence teaching conditions such as evaluation (90 percent), establishing and implementing policies for student discipline (86 percent), and establishing the school schedule (87 percent), and school improvement planning (93 percent). Ninety-two percent of principals agreed that their schools are provided sufficient data and information to make informed decisions.
- Eighty-five percent of principals agree that their district encourages cooperation amongst schools and 84 percent report that the central office provides principals support when they need it. Three-quarters of principals agree that there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within their district. Nine out of ten principals agree that their district clearly defines expectations for schools.

Principals' greatest concerns, like teachers, are in the area of time. About half (53 percent) of participating principals agree that they have sufficient time to focus on instructional leadership issues. Not surprisingly, six out of ten principals (59 percent) report spending more than ten hours in an average week on administrative duties and

four out of ten (43 percent) spend at least five hours in meetings with families and the community. Six out of ten principals (57 percent) spend three hours or less in an average week on instructional planning with teachers and one-quarter (26 percent) spend three hours or less observing and coaching teachers.

## Principal Support

Principals were positive about the professional development provided by districts. Two-thirds agree that professional development for principals is a district priority (66 percent) and that sufficient resources are available to take advantage of opportunities (67 percent). More than three-quarters (77 percent) agree that professional development provides principals with the knowledge and skills they need to be most effective.

This support is evident with a high proportion of principals reporting that they received at least ten hours of professional development over the past two years in instructional leadership (80 percent) and data-driven decision-making (62 percent). However, few principals report receiving professional development in scheduling (11 percent), staffing (13 percent), remediation/coaching (15 percent), and working with parents and the community (11 percent).

Despite receiving some professional development, principals most frequently cited needing additional professional development to be more effective in data-driven decision-making (40 percent) and instructional leadership (32 percent). Teacher remediation/coaching (32 percent) was also a needed area and one in which few principals had received support. Given the emphasis on coaching teachers necessary to implement the newly established North Carolina Teacher Evaluation System ([www.ncptsc.org](http://www.ncptsc.org)), the gap between principals receiving

and needing coaching support is a potential issue for ensuring teacher effectiveness.

Less than one-third (31 percent) of new principals—those with three years in the principalship or less—were assigned a mentor. When a mentor was assigned, new principals were positive about the impact in many areas such as instructional leadership, budgeting, school improvement planning, etc.

- Of those receiving a mentor, one-third (36 percent) were never observed in their school or did school improvement planning with their mentor (35 percent).
- About half (46 percent) of new principals who were assigned a mentor agreed it was important in their decision to remain a leader in their school and 60 percent agreed that it enhanced their effectiveness as a school leader.

## Impact of Principal Support

Analyses were conducted on the connections between the school faculty perception of support and the principal’s agreement that they have positive conditions within their district. Comparisons were made on select questions on the presence of working conditions in their schools between principals who reported positive supports and those who did not. It appears that principals who report more positive conditions themselves are able to provide better working conditions for their faculty in some areas. Consider the following:

- Principals reporting that central office provides them support when they need it are significantly more likely to have teachers in their school report that sufficient resources are available for teachers to take advantage of professional development.

TABLE 1. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED AND RECEIVED BY NORTH CAROLINA PRINCIPALS

| Professional Development Area           | Percentage of Principals Agreeing |                                      |
|---|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|   | <i>Need Additional Support</i>    | <i>10+ Hours Over Past Two Years</i> |
| Instructional Leadership                | 32%                               | 80%                                  |
| Student Assessment                      | 30%                               | 40%                                  |
| Creating Positive Learning Environments | 23%                               | 37%                                  |
| School Improvement Planning             | 24%                               | 45%                                  |
| Budgeting                               | 28%                               | 13%                                  |
| School Scheduling                       | 27%                               | 11%                                  |
| Staffing (hiring, etc.)                 | 14%                               | 13%                                  |
| Teacher Evaluation                      | 11%                               | 31%                                  |
| Teacher Remediation/Coaching            | 32%                               | 15%                                  |
| Data-Driven Decision-Making             | 40%                               | 62%                                  |
| Working with Parents and the Community  | 20%                               | 11%                                  |

- Where a principal indicates that the district involves principals in decisions that impact the operation of their school, their teachers are more likely to report that they are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction and that sufficient resources are available for teachers to take advantage of professional development.
- 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

Principals indicate that site-based decision making and principal empowerment are the most important aspects of their working conditions that enhance student achievement (40 percent) and affect their willingness to remain as a principal in their school (38 percent). Considering ways to appropriately empower school principals and provide them with the support they need to be effective may be an important strategy for principal retention.

Like teachers, principals need supportive conditions to provide the leadership necessary to create school environments where teachers want to stay and students learn.

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## North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey Research Brief: Redesigned and Early College High Schools

Eric Hirsch, *Director of Special Projects* with  
Keri Church, *LearnNC*

*Since 2001, the office of the Governor, the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission and the North Carolina State Board of Education have made a sustained commitment to listening to educators and reforming schools to create the working conditions necessary for student and teacher success.*

In 2008, 104,249 educators responded to the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (87 percent), the highest proportion since the advent of the 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. The data was made available in May 2008 at [www.ncteachingconditions.org](http://www.ncteachingconditions.org).

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. This is particularly true in high schools where analyses from 2008 demonstrate that:

- Leadership, Facilities and Resources, and Time were statistically significant in explaining student performance. Time exerted the strongest influence of the working conditions areas on high school achievement on the Performance Composite.

- Leadership and Facilities and Resources were statistically significant in explaining whether schools exceeded student achievement growth expectations. 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 Leadership Factor average.
- For high schools, those with more positive working conditions in the area of Facilities and Resources were significantly more likely to have lower teacher attrition.

In 2006, the North Carolina Business Committee for Education and the Center for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills supported an extensive study of teaching and learning environments in North Carolina's redesigned and early college high schools. The small size and culture in these high schools facilitated collaboration amongst faculty and staff and catalyzed relationship building with students, parents and the community. Additionally, principals empowered teachers and all were focused on instruction and providing educators with the resources and support to assist students in achieving rigorous, 21<sup>st</sup> century learning goals (Center for Teaching Quality, 2007).

As was the case in 2006, educators in redesigned and early college high schools were more likely to report positive working conditions (Table 1). Gaps between redesigned high schools and other high schools were greatest in the areas of leadership and empowerment

issues in 2006 (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007), but in 2008 the greatest disparity was evident in the area of professional development.

- *Educators in redesigned high schools are more likely to agree that professional development is effective.* Three-quarters (76 percent) of teachers in redesigned high schools report that professional development was useful in improving student achievement compared to half of educators in other high schools (52 percent). Educators in redesigned high schools were far more likely to report that professional development was effective, that it provided strategies that could be incorporated into instruction and that followup was provided.
- *Educators in redesigned high schools report more time and resources are available for professional*

*development.* Educators in redesigned high schools were more likely to agree that they were provided adequate time for professional development, that sufficient funds for professional development were available, and that teachers are provided opportunities to learn from one another.

- *Teachers in redesigned high schools report support in finding time to plan and collaborate.* Educators in redesigned high schools are more likely to agree that they have sufficient non-instructional time and that they are shielded from paperwork and duties that interfere with teaching.

Few differences between redesigned and early college high schools and other high schools were evident in some working conditions areas. Educators in redesigned high

TABLE 1. TEACHER WORKING CONDITIONS IN REDESIGNED HIGH SCHOOLS

| North Carolina Working Conditions Survey Questions  | Percentage of Educators Agreeing |                               |                   |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------|
|   | <i>Redesigned High Schools</i>   | <i>All Other High Schools</i> | <i>Difference</i> |
| Professional development has proven useful to you in your efforts to improve student achievement                        | 75.5%                            | 52.1%                         | 23.4%             |
| I participate in ongoing follow up from professional development opportunities that help me improve my teaching         | 82.0%                            | 62.2%                         | 19.8%             |
| Professional development has provided you with strategies that you have incorporated into your instructional delivery   | 66.2%                            | 48.2%                         | 18.0%             |
| Adequate time is provided for professional development  | 72.0%                            | 54.3%                         | 17.7%             |
| Teachers are provided with opportunities to learn from one another  | 74.1%                            | 57.5%                         | 16.6%             |
| Professional development provides teachers with the knowledge and skills most needed to teach effectively               | 81.4%                            | 65.1%                         | 16.3%             |
| Sufficient funds and resources are available to allow teachers to take advantage of professional development activities | 77.3%                            | 61.1%                         | 16.2%             |
| The school leadership tries to minimize the amount of routine administrative paperwork required of teachers             | 71.8%                            | 55.8%                         | 16.0%             |
| The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient   | 71.5%                            | 56.3%                         | 15.2%             |
| Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students                       | 71.8%                            | 57.5%                         | 14.3%             |

Note: Items are ordered based on the greatest disparity between redesigned and other high schools.

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schools report similar availability of instructional materials and technology, office equipment and communication technology. Educators in redesigned high schools and other high schools are equally likely to agree that they are centrally involved in decision making and take steps to solve problems.

It appears that teachers in redesigned and early college high schools are provided more frequent and higher quality professional development opportunities. Previous analyses found that the size, culture and focus of redesigned and early college high schools provided opportunities for more discussion and collaborative professional learning opportunities (Center for Teaching Quality, 2007). Further, through the North Carolina New Schools Project, these schools are provided with opportunities to share strategies and experiences with other schools implementing similar reforms. The state

should conduct a more systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of professional development in these schools and consider strategies to provide greater access to similar experiences to educators in all North Carolina high schools.

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