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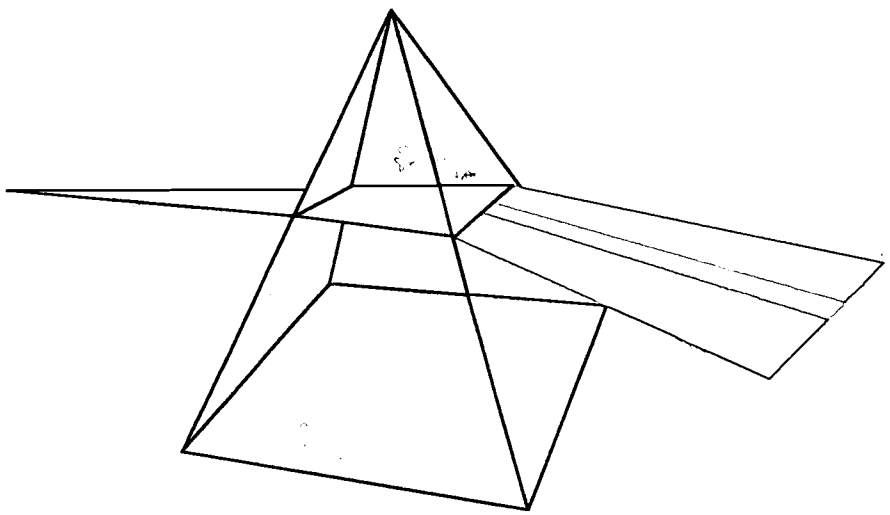
ABSTRACT

A technical assistance project in a rural Virginia school district included the goal of building professional learning communities among the district's teachers. Three instruments that measure various elements of a learning community culture were scheduled to be administered to teachers at the beginning, midpoint, and end of the 4-year project. This report examines results from spring 1997--the first administration of the measures, which assess school effectiveness, feelings of empowerment among staff, and perceptions of the schools as learning communities. The instruments were completed by 71 of the district's 89 professional staff. The results provide a picture of a school division that was grappling with daunting challenges but was equipped with a number of strengths. The staff believed they were good teachers, believed they worked with good teachers, and wanted to make a difference in children's lives. The staff wanted to grow professionally, but it was difficult for staff to function as a professional learning community because structures within the schools did not support decision-making models that maximize teacher input and power. Teachers were not meaningfully engaged in school decision-making, were ambivalent about the existence of a strong and shared vision, reported only modest collaborative activity among teachers, and lacked a collective focus on student learning. Recommendations are offered for development of the professional learning community. Appendices include the survey instruments. (Contains 41 references, 19 data tables, and 12 figures.) (SV)

# Assessing Pre-Intervention Capacity for Change In a High-Need Rural School District



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# Assessing Pre-Intervention Capacity for Change in a High-Need Rural School District

by

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AEL's mission is to link the knowledge from research with the wisdom from practice to improve teaching and learning. AEL serves as the Regional Educational Laboratory for Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. For these same four states, it operates both a Regional Technology Consortium and the Eisenhower Regional Consortium for Mathematics and Science Education. In addition, it serves as the Region IV Comprehensive Technical Assistance Center and operates the ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

AEL staff members are working with the Rural County Public Schools*, a small district in south-central Virginia to develop a technical assistance framework that will support school efforts to improve student performance on Virginia's Standards of Learning (SOL) assessments. To support the improvement of student learning, one purpose of the project is to build professional learning communities among teachers in the school division. To measure progress toward the realization of learning communities, AEL staff selected three instruments that were hypothesized to capture the various elements of a learning community culture. These instruments are scheduled to be administered at the beginning of the project, at the project's midpoint, and at the end of the four year project. During the spring of 1997, prior to the delivery of technical assistance, AEL administered three instruments to the faculty of the three public schools in the district in order to establish a baseline measure of several facets of school functioning, which, when aggregated, provide a broad picture of the depth and breadth of the learning community culture within each school. More specifically, these instruments assessed school effectiveness, feelings of empowerment among staff members, and perceptions of the schools as professional communities.

The three instruments were administered en masse at after-school faculty meetings at which the curriculum alignment project was explained. A total of 89 professional staff members were employed by the district at that time. Eighty educators completed the survey instruments. The final sample included in this report consisted of the 71 respondents who indicated that they worked in only one of the three school buildings. Half of the sample worked at the elementary school, and the other half were split evenly between the middle and high schools.

**Findings**

Two significant findings emerged from the analyses of demographic variables and the overall measures. Respondents with more education rated their school lower on the professional community instrument. Second, more experienced teachers believed their school was more effective than did the teachers who were newer to the profession.

Teacher empowerment was measured through six subscales: decision-making authority, status with colleagues, self-efficacy, professional growth, autonomy, and impact. Teachers at the elementary school reported significantly stronger feelings of empowerment than did the teachers at the high school, with the middle school teachers reporting a similar level of empowerment to that of the elementary school teachers (but their scores were not significantly different from the high school teacher scores). An interesting follow-up to this significant difference was that there were no significant differences among the faculties when the subscales were analyzed.

The School as Professional Community survey was composed of five subscales: shared sense of purpose, collaborative activity, collective focus on student learning, deprivatization of practice, and reflective dialogue. Sense of professional community did not differ significantly among the three schools. Many teachers were uncertain whether they and their colleagues shared a sense of purpose about the mission and vision of the district, nor did many believe that there was a strong focus on student learning. In addition, while some collaborative activity was occurring, very little integrated and team teaching were occurring, nor were curricula being co-developed. Some teachers were attempting to reflect on their practice with their peers, but there seemed to be little structural support for such

* Rural County is used throughout this report to preserve the identity of the actual subject school division in Virginia.

critical group reflections. Finally, very little peer observation and feedback was taking place in the schools at that time.

Perceived organizational effectiveness also did not differ significantly among the schools, although the middle school teachers reported slightly higher effectiveness schools than did the teachers from the other schools. The scores on the items assessing preparedness for crises were higher than the scores on items assessing ability to prepare and plan for future events.

**Conclusions**

Improving student performance in the long term takes enormous effort that is difficult to sustain over time. According to Michael Fullan, writing in Phi Delta Kappan in 1996, "To put it bluntly, existing school cultures and structures are antithetical to the kinds of activities envisioned by systemic reform. Thus, until these more basic conditions begin to change, the best networking efforts will fall short...Systemic reform mainly involves strategies that help develop and mobilize the conceptions, skills, and motivation in the minds and hearts of scores of educators" (p. 422). The results from the surveys administered to the staff of the three Rural County Public Schools provide a picture of a school division that is grappling with daunting challenges but also is equipped with a number of strengths. In the spring of 1997, the Rural County Public Schools were composed of staff who believed they were good teachers, who believed they worked with good teachers, and who wanted to make a difference in children's lives. The staff wanted to grow professionally. However, structures within the schools were making it difficult for staff to function as a professional learning community because the structures did not support decision-making models that maximized teacher input and power.

The teacher empowerment measure administered in Rural County captured six components associated with empowerment. Teachers generally believed that four out of the six elements were present. Specifically, they held status with colleagues, participated in staff development and believed it was important, felt self-efficacious as educators, and believed they were having an impact on school life. These teachers did not have autonomy in scheduling their workday. This characteristic of empowerment is not necessarily essential, however. Most importantly, teachers experienced a lack of empowerment when defined as meaningful engagement in decision making. Without the power to make decisions concerning their work environment and student learning, teachers are not likely to develop a sense of ownership over the notion of turning the school into a high functioning learning community, and will be less committed to improvement initiatives.

Engaging teachers in decision making leads to the co-construction of the district's mission and purpose (Marks & Louis, 1997). This finding from previous studies is supported here. Teachers were ambivalent about the existence of a strong and shared vision. The school must achieve a critical mass of staff dedicated to the achievement of a common vision (Fullan, 1996). Most of the high school teachers confirmed that there is an accepted shared sense of purpose at the high school. Results from the SWPC Survey suggest that teachers at the elementary and middle schools were not as uniform or committed to their belief in a shared school mission.

An essential practice in a professional learning community is collaborative activity. Collaboration can and should exist at multiple levels. At the most manifest and frequent level is collaboration between teachers to share curricula and activities. In Rural County, only a modest amount of such collaborative activity was taking place during the 1996-97 school year. Teachers agreed with the general statement that there was a "great deal of cooperative effort among staff." However, when asked about specific collaborative activities, there was far lower agreement that such activities were occurring. No more than two-thirds of teacher respondents at any school agreed that any specific collaboration effort was occurring. Collaboration during common planning periods appear to have been especially rare.

One way in which effective school districts utilize collaborative activity to their advantage is to advocate the coordination of course content across schools. In an increasing number of states, such coordination of content is becoming necessary as a means of responding to mandated standards, such as Virginia's Standards of Learning. As districts evaluate their curricula, teachers across grade levels and schools must learn to work together in developing K-12 curricula in which student skills and knowledge build upon each other as students progress through higher grades. In Rural County, half of the elementary school teachers (54%) reported on the SWPC Survey that they consciously attempt to coordinate course content across schools. However, only 44% of middle school teachers, and 33% of high school teachers reported coordinating course content across schools. Although teachers may have not reported high levels of coordination because there is only one school of each level in the division, there is also the likelihood that such coordinated activity was simply not occurring.

The results from the Deprivatization of Practice subscale of the SWPC indicated that very little cross-fertilization of idea was occurring in the schools. The modern teacher is confronted with complex and difficult tasks as he or she prepares an increasingly diverse population of students for a competitive and technologically sophisticated world. There is simply too much for one teacher to know.

According to Marks and Louis (1997), professional learning communities help faculties to develop a collective focus on student learning, and this focus directly predicts gains in student achievement. The teachers in the Rural County schools need to focus on developing their sense of collective responsibility for student learning. The ambivalence toward the statements concerning developing higher order and creative thinking skills in students is particularly disturbing. Although 74% of the elementary school teachers reported a focus on these skills, the percentages of middle and high school teachers who agreed that these were important learning goals in the district were much lower (between forty-five and sixty-one percent).

Obviously, Rural County faces challenges in the coming years. There are many changes that need to be made in order to bring the school division, and its teachers and students, well-prepared into the new century. The results from the SPES and SWPC Survey send a loud and clear message to administrators that the teachers believe they make curriculum decisions, and that they want to learn how to improve their teaching. These teachers highly value professional development and participate in staff development activities when given the opportunity. They also feel empowered to make decisions in their own teaching.

## Recommendations

These perceptions form a good foundation for developing a professional learning community. However, several additional steps must occur.

- District and school leaders should consider providing time and establishing expectations for teachers to work together to make decisions about the K-12 curriculum and instruction.
- Teachers need to ensure that they are teaching the higher level skills by incorporating these skills into the curriculum. Without developing higher-level skills, it is unlikely that Rural County students will pass the Standards of Learning assessments and certainly will not be prepared to enter the workforce of the twenty-first century.
- School administrators need to focus on developing opportunities for collaboration between themselves and teachers, and supporting teachers' efforts to collaborate with their peers both

within their school and between schools to develop a shared vision for the district or to plan for improvement.

- As Rural County responds to the state guidelines in order to maintain accreditation, teachers and administrators must develop the skill of collaborating with other teachers in other schools in order to improve types of activities and curriculum elements offered Rural County students so that they can perform successfully on the Standards of Learning assessments.
- School structures and processes that encourage teachers to share ideas and learn from one another are essential and need to be put in place in RCPS.
- There is a need for administers to provide common planning periods so that teachers can collaborate on themes, materials, activities, lesson plans within schools and grade levels to increase consistency and equity of curriculum and instruction experienced by students.
- Administrators and others need to lead teachers toward a collective focus on student learning.

# INTRODUCTION

For almost two decades, efforts to reform American public schools have recognized the importance of focusing efforts at the school level instead of at individual students or teachers (Coleman, 1966; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). According to Newmann and Wehlage (1995) from the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, successful school reform efforts have, as one goal, the establishment of professional communities within schools. It is not sufficient to just align curricula, raise standards and expectations, or alter decision-making structures. While all of these, as well as many other factors, are necessary, none is sufficient for raising and sustaining continuous improvement in student achievement. Schools are far too complex as organizations to be fixed with unidimensional solutions. In keeping with the underlying theme of schools as organizations, many researchers are taking a close look at many different aspects of the school environment in efforts aimed at unpacking the layered levels of variables that influence student achievement.

Practitioners, on the other hand, can quickly become overwhelmed by the complicated reform initiatives that are proposed as solutions to the complex and diverse problems faced by school improvement teams. In their efforts to nurture schools, many state departments of education are establishing technical assistance role frameworks and systems that are genuinely responsive to the complex needs of local school districts.

During the past decade, the Commonwealth of Virginia took significant steps to measure and increase student achievement by crafting the Standards of Learning (SOLs). However, several schools and school districts across the state did not have the capacity to make all the changes required by the state. AEL, Inc. set out to assist Virginia by conducting research to learn more about providing technical assistance to high-need schools. In 1996, project staff collaborated with the Virginia Department of Education to identify and select a high-need school district willing to serve as a development site where project staff would devise and test elements of a technical assistance system to improve student academic performance. Project staff work closely with AEL's resident director in Virginia to share the knowledge learned from the development site with similar districts.

The goals of this study were to explore the characteristics of and interrelationships among the three instruments that were employed to measure the latent construct of "organizational capacity," and to create a quantitative baseline description of the three Rural County Public Schools before intensive site work began.

## The Rural County Public School District

The Virginia State Project was designed to target high-need schools, which were defined as those where the initial pass rate on Virginia's Literacy Passport Test (LPT) fell below 50 percent, and which met certain other socio-demographic criteria. Schools that were likely to not pass the LPT were located in rural regions defined by high poverty levels (22% of children in poverty compared to 16% in districts that passed the 50% mark); low educational attainment of adults (48% lacking high school equivalency); and almost twice as many children (7.4% versus 3.9%) identified as being at risk, which is defined by the National Center for Education Statistics as living in a single-parent household in which the adult lacks a high school diploma and has an income below the poverty line (as cited in AEL, 1995).

The Rural County Public Schools[1] (RCPS) fit the description of a high-need district that was willing to work with AEL. Rural County is a small county in southern central Virginia, accounting for only .13% of the state's population (Quality Education Data, 1997). During the 1996-97 school year, the Rural County school district enrolled 1,300 students and employed 89 teachers. The three public schools in the county include Rural Elementary School, which encompasses Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade; Rural Middle School, which houses sixth through eighth grades; and Rural Senior High School, with grades nine through twelve.

Since the Rural County Project began three years ago, RCPS has experienced personnel changes that may have an impact on school improvement. In addition, a new superintendent was appointed in the summer of 1998, replacing the superintendent who had negotiated the technical assistance agreement with AEL. There is a new principal at the high school and several teachers who had participated in the initial curriculum alignment training sessions are no longer working in the school district.

## Project Background and Purpose

The overarching purpose of this project is to learn more about the technical assistance process of assisting high-need schools to develop the organizational capacity to support effective school performance and to enhance the intellectual quality of student learning (AEL, 1998).

The Virginia State Project has two main goals:

Goal 1: To gain an understanding about how to best support high-need schools to develop the organizational capacity to support effective school performance and enhance student performance on the Virginia Standards of Learning[2].

Goal 2: To recommend to the Virginia Department of Education a system/framework to provide technical assistance that will support high-need schools to develop the organizational capacity to support effective school performance and enhance student performance on the Virginia Standards of Learning.

The administration of the three instruments reported here was part of the initial effort to achieve Goal 1: to know if the approach AEL used was successful at increasing the capacity of the school district to support effective school performance.

AEL project staff are collaborating with RCPS in developing and testing a technical assistance model that builds local capacity to support continuous improvement in student performance. If the evaluation shows that the approach is effective, then it will become an approach that will be recommended to the AEL Resident Director. Following a needs assessment and strategic planning conference in RCPS, most of the work to date by the AEL project director has been toward aligning the curriculum with classroom instruction and the new statewide Standards of Learning (SOLs). Using David Squires of Yale University as the lead consultant on this effort, the English curriculum was aligned during the 1997-98 school year. During the 1998-99 school year Dr. Squires has been working with teams of RCPS teachers on aligning the mathematics curriculum.

During the design phase early in the project, project staff at AEL decided to measure a variety of teacher- and building-level constructs for baseline data collection. AEL project and evaluation staff,

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[1] Rural County is used throughout this report to preserve the identity of the actual subject school division in Virginia.

[2] The original Goal 1 indicated that a conceptual framework would be developed by a working group that included AEL, SEA, and LEA staff. In practice, the research literature guided the development of technical assistance locally.

in collaboration with Virginia Department of Education staff, met and selected three instruments to administer to all RCPS professional staff in a pre- and post-intervention design. The 12 constructs measured by these three instruments focused on (1) the capacity of the organization to engage in improvement initiatives, and (2) attributes that schools must possess to improve student achievement and sustain continuous improvement. Based on a survey of the school effectiveness, school improvement, and school change literature, project staff hypothesized that the schools' cultures would need to change dramatically in order to gain the organizational capacity to initiate and sustain continuous improvement at the close of the project. Teachers would need to be empowered to make important decisions about teaching and learning, the schools would need structures and procedures to support professional learning communities, so that teachers could develop new perceptions of their school as effective.

## Organizational Capacity

Organizational capacity is a rather vague term whose definition changes depending on both the nature of the referent organization and what exactly that organization needs the capacity to do. A frequent description of capacity has been teachers' capacity to teach in new ways as well as district administrators' capacity to support more challenging instruction. Capacity in schools can be thought of from a teaching and learning perspective. Schools with high capacity for change realize that in order for sustained improvement to occur, "teachers and others must change their minds in order to change their practice" (Spillane & Thompson, 1997, p. 186). Spillane and Thompson (1997) identified the salient features of capacity, including knowledge, commitment and disposition, professional networks, trust and collaboration, time, staffing, and materials. These researchers categorized the features into physical capital, human capital, and social capital. Physical capital, such as materials, funding, and time, are essential components of capacity to the degree they support the human and social capital.

In the Virginia State Project, capacity is being defined in human and social capital terms: the confluence of teacher empowerment, professional learning community, and the organizational effectiveness characteristics as measured by the instruments. Many researchers have examined the concept of teacher empowerment as a mechanism for improving the quality of education. The most common operationalization of empowerment has been participative decision-making structures (Weiss & Cambone, 1994). Teacher participation in decision making has been shown to lead to several positive outcomes. In two-thirds of the studies reviewed by Taylor and Bogotch (1994), participation resulted in higher teacher job satisfaction. Similar improvements were found by McCormack-Larkin (1985) and Casner-Lotto (1987). Empowering teachers is not an easy way to achieve school improvement. Shared decision making produces explicit conflict because it brings into the open conflict that had been latent. This conflict can be a sign that staff are confronting serious issues and beginning to unfreeze obsolete ways of working. In a study by Weiss and Cambone (1994), schools with committed administrators implemented somewhat more changes and more innovative changes in curriculum and scheduling than did schools with more status quo principals. Empowering teachers slowed down change, but had the advantage of defusing opposition. By the time changes were implemented in the Weiss and Cambone study, teachers had made it their own, and teacher acceptance of changes increases the probability of successful change.

Taylor and Bogotch (1994) found that teachers' feelings toward colleagues were not related to their involvement in decision making. Such a result suggests that attention might be given to ways of overcoming norms of classroom autonomy and isolation. Collegiality among all school staff is not an established norm in schools and has been more frequently discouraged by scheduling constraints than encouraged by empathetic administrators. It is possible that collegiality must be actively fostered in schools if it is to occur.

Although teacher empowerment—in the form of participative decision-making structures—is related to several positive outcomes, it has not been consistently linked to gains in student achievement (Marks & Louis, 1997). Several researchers have found participatory processes to be positively related to perceived school effectiveness (Likert, 1978; Miskel, Fevurly, & Stewart, 1979). Taylor and Bogotch (1994) did not find a significant relationship between teacher participation in decision making and student achievement. However, Rutter and colleagues (1979) found better achievement outcomes in schools where teachers reported feeling included in decision making.

In an interesting and methodologically rigorous study by Marks and Louis (1997), teacher empowerment was examined in relationship to both professional community and to student achievement. They found that when empowerment was related to improvements in student achievement, participatory decision-making councils had explicitly concentrated on issues of curriculum and instruction. To the extent that greater numbers of teachers participated in instruction-related decision making or that schools' professional cultures were strong, instructional improvement was more likely to occur. Others have also found that if empowerment is to be useful as a school reform strategy, it must focus on instructional vision and professional collaboration (Bryk et al., 1993; David, 1994; Smylie, 1994; Smylie et al., 1996). In other research focusing on the efficacy facet of empowerment, teachers with a high sense of their own efficacy were found to be more likely to adopt new classroom behaviors (Rosenholtz, 1989).

Marks and Louis (1997) suggest that empowerment of teachers influences student learning indirectly by supporting authentic instruction through effective school organization for instruction, which these researchers operationalized as professional community and collective responsibility for student learning. Specifically, they found that empowerment explained more of the variance in professional community among schools than within schools, implying that empowerment is not solely an individual-level construct, but also a school-level phenomenon. As an organizational characteristic, teacher empowerment is positively related to school faculties' collective responsibility for student learning—teachers taking ownership over the learning process for all students, not just those in their individual classrooms. In other words, faculty empowerment results in greater school-wide attention to instruction and student learning. Professional community and collective responsibility for student learning exert a strong influence on authentic instruction at the school level. Thus, empowerment works to the academic advantage of students only when it supports teachers in changing their instruction so that it becomes more involving and demanding for students.

In the learning organization literature, shared understandings about the purpose of the organization (or school) are integral to the development of learning organization thinking and are often referred to as shared mental models (Senge, 1991). More specifically, Bennett and Brown (1995) define mental models as sets of working assumptions about what drives the organization, the consumers' needs, and the dynamics of the larger social context. Holding congruent ideas about the mission, vision, and purpose of the school serves as an important staff factor in the development of schools that are capable of continuous improvement. Sharing vision is not just agreeing with each other's ideas. Staff in learning communities are encouraged not only to be involved in the process of developing a shared vision but to use that vision as a guidepost in making decisions about teaching and learning in the school (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1997).

The workplace is a powerful learning environment for teachers, although traditionally, teachers have not been encouraged to think of themselves as learners as well. Professional community among teachers, the subject of a number of recent major studies, is regarded as an ingredient that contributes to the improvement of schools (Bryk & Rallow, 1993). A professional learning community has been defined as "a place where critical inquiry is practiced by collegial partners who share a common vision and engage in shared decision making. *This continuous critical inquiry provides a basis for seamless*

*school improvement*" (Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, 1994, emphasis added). Community within schools is important for at least three reasons:

> "First, students need clear and consistent messages about the objectives and methods of learning...Second, academic learning is hard work, and school competes for students' attention with many other activities and concerns. If teachers simply leave it up to students to choose whether or not to learn, many students will be left behind. Instead, teachers must take active responsibility for student success. Finally, effective teaching is complicated and difficult. It usually requires information, expertise and support far beyond the resources available to the individual teacher working alone in an isolated classroom. Teachers who collaborate with their colleagues are more likely to be effective with students, because they will benefit from expanded resources" (Newmann, 1994, p. 1).

Schaffer and Anundsen (1993) summarize qualities that must be present for community to exist in the workplace on an ongoing basis. It is interesting to note the overlap between these eight qualities and the constructs subsumed within empowerment and professional community. Schaffer and Anundsen's qualities include the following:

1. Alignment of values between [the administration] and all employee levels,
2. Employee-based structure,
3. Teamwork and collaboration,
4. Open communication [between teachers and administrators],
5. Mutual support,
6. Respect for individuality,
7. Permeable boundaries [between classrooms, departments, schools], and
8. Group renewal [time set aside so that conflicts can be resolved, and values, vision and milestones can be discussed and celebrated] (as cited in Zemke, 1996, p. 30).

The research reported by Bryk and Rallow (1993) is grounded in the assumption that how teachers interact with each other outside of their classrooms may be critical to the effects of reform on students. The analysis focuses on the type of professional community that occurs within a school and investigates both the organizational factors that facilitate its development and its consequences for teachers' sense of responsibility for student learning. This sense of responsibility for student learning directly affects student achievement. The findings suggest that wide variation in professional community exists between schools, much of which is attributable to structural features and human resources characteristics, as well as school level.

Miskel, Fevurly, and Stewart (1979) summed up their research on effective schools by noting that schools that are perceived by teachers to be effective are characterized by (1) more participative organizational processes, (2) less centralized decision-making structures, (3) more formalized general rules, and (4) more complexity or high professional activity. Higher levels of perceived school effectiveness were found by Miskel and colleagues to be related to greater loyalty to the principal and to high job satisfaction. In a multinational study on what makes schools effective, Townsend (1994) found that certain conditions are common across effective schools in various countries. In particular, principals, teachers, parents, and students reported that effective schools have qualified and committed leadership and staff, sound policies, and a supportive environment in which staff, parents, and teachers are encouraged to work as a team toward common goals.

In a review of effective schools, Squires, Huitt, and Segars (1986) summarized the characteristics that are present in schools in which students excel academically but which are absent in schools whose students do poorly. These researchers identified seven characteristics of high

performing schools: (1) An emphasis on academics; (2) Skilled teachers, with inexperienced teachers consulting with their more experienced peers; (3) Teachers' actions in lessons, with teachers spending the majority of their time engaged in active instruction; (4) Rewards and punishments, where rewards are often given and punishments are recognized, accepted, and uniformly enforced; (5) Decent pupil conditions, including a safe and orderly environment; (6) Responsibility and participation of students in school positions of leadership and in their own learning; and (7) Staff organization emphasizing collaboration on course planning, adequate clerical help, active leadership, and shared decision making.

By reviewing the literature on effective schools, it becomes obvious that much of the factors identified as important elements of the effective school can be found in the constructs of professional learning community, teacher empowerment, and adaptability and flexibility. Taken together, the three instruments measure many of the identified aspects of effective schools.

# METHODOLOGY

This section presents a brief description of the Rural County Public Schools (RCPS) professional staff members in the project, descriptions of the three instruments used for the pre-intervention data collection, the data collection procedures, and the data analysis processes employed.

## Description of the Population

The population of professional staff members in RCPS included 82 teachers, four guidance counselors, two library/media specialists, and one curriculum supervisor, all of whom were working in the three public schools in Rural County, Virginia, during the 1996-1997 school year. The schools included one elementary school serving grades PK through 5, a middle school with grades 6 through 8, and a grades 9 to 12 high school. Not all staff members were housed in a single building; a number of specialty teachers and other certified staff worked across schools. Of the 89 individuals who were eligible to participate in this data collection, 80 completed surveys. Three sets of surveys were deleted due to missing demographic information, and 6 survey sets were deleted because the respondents worked in more than one school building. The final sample included in this report consists of 71 respondents: 68 classroom teachers, 2 counselors, and one librarian.

The demographic information asked for in each of the three instruments that were administered differed yet contained some overlap. Several demographic items were redundant across the three instruments so demographics were reduced to one set for the 71 participants. In the sample reported here, 58 (82%) were female, and 13 (18%) were male. The ages of the teachers and other professional staff ranged from 21 years old to 61 years old, with an average age of 40, and half of the sample was 38 years old or younger. One respondent had an educational attainment of vocational school, one was an educational specialist, two-thirds of the sample had bachelors degrees, and 22 (31%) had masters degrees.

Almost half of the sample (n=35) taught at the Rural County Elementary School. The remainder of the respondents were equally spread between the middle school (n=18) and the high school (n=18). The sample had been teaching for an average of 11 years, but there was great variation within the district (standard deviation = 8.65 years), with forty percent having been in the teaching profession for 5 years or less, while twenty-two percent had been teachers for 20 years or more. The teachers had been working in the Rural County Public Schools for an average of 8½ years, ranging from less than one year to 28 years in the district.

## Data Collection Instruments

Three instruments were administered to the professional staff of the three public schools in Rural County, Virginia. The surveys were selected as a cost-effective way to collect valid and reliable information on teachers' impressions of the environment and effectiveness of the schools in which they worked. As a whole, the instruments provide a comprehensive baseline measure of the organizational capacity of the three faculties to engage in ongoing school improvement efforts intended to raise student achievement on the Virginia Standards of Learning. In other words, the instruments assessed whether attitudes, skills, and structures were present within the schools for serious work toward improvement. Table 1 displays the instrument names, the subscale names, the number of items in each subscale, and their Alpha reliability estimates in the current administration.

School Participant Empowerment Scale (Short & Rinehart, 1992): The original School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) was developed by researchers Short and Rinehart in 1992. However, their use was with a small sample of teachers at one grade level only. In 1995, Klecker and Loadman used

the Short and Rinehart instrument with a large sample of 4,091 teachers in 183 restructuring schools in Ohio. Based on their more representative sample, Klecker and Loadman refactored the original 38-item instrument into six factors (the same number but slightly different names from Short and Rinehart). The six new factors are (1) Status, (2) Professional Growth, (3) Self-Efficacy, (4) Decision-Making, (5) Autonomy in Scheduling, and (6) Impact (See Table 1).

The response options on the SPES were presented as a 5-point strongly disagree to strongly agree Likert-type format. In prior work at AEL, one of the subscales, professional growth, was found to have unsatisfactory reliability scores, so one item was deleted and two new items were added (Meehan & Cowley, 1998). Thus, the version used in this project consisted of a total of 39 scale items plus 7 demographic items. Four of the demographic items were the same as in the original instrument; the three added items were (1) grades taught, (2) subjects taught, and (3) years taught in any school. The SPES was renamed the "Teacher Questionnaire" and was printed on both sides of one sheet of 8½ x 11 paper.

**Table 1: Subscales and Alpha Reliability Estimates for the Instruments Administered in Virginia's Rural County School District.**

| Instrument Name | Subscale Name | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Estimate |
|---|---|---|---|
| School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) | Decision Making | 8 | .65 |
| | Status with Colleagues | 6 | .82 |
| | Professional Growth | 5 | .64 |
| | Self-Efficacy | 12 | .91 |
| | Autonomy in Scheduling | 3 | .87 |
| | Impact | 5 | .71 |
| School-Wide Professional Community (SWPC) | Shared Norms and Values | 5 | .79 |
| | Collaboration | 6 | .78 |
| | Collective Focus on Student Learning | 6 | .80 |
| | Reflective Dialogue | 6 | .83 |
| | Deprivatization of Practice | 5 | .84 |
| Index of Perceived Organizational Effectiveness (IPOE) | Total Scale | 8 | .84 |

School-Wide Professional Community (SWPC) Survey (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996): The second instrument administered in Rural County was an instrument on school-wide professional community that was developed based on work and items published by Louis, Marks and Kruse (1996). The concept of a school-wide professional community (Louis, Kruse, and associates, 1995), or

professional learning community (Hord, 1997), is a rather new topic in the research literature. The idea is that the school is an ongoing learning organization much different from the individualist, close-the-door-and-leave-me-alone approach dominant in many schools. Based on Louis and colleagues' (1996) original paper, staff at AEL developed a 22-item instrument with a 5-point Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree response option for each item. Low subscale Alphas were found in prior studies (Meehan & Cowley, 1998), so six new items were added, totaling 28 in the version used in Rural County. The five elements of practice on this instrument include (1) Shared norms and values, (2) Collaboration, (3) Collective focus on student learning, (4) Deprivatization of practice, and (5) Reflective dialogue. Also, an average total professional community score was computed. The SWPC Survey was renamed the "School Questionnaire" and printed on both sides of one 8½ x 11 sheet.

Index of Perceived Organizational Effectiveness (Mott, 1972): The third instrument administered was the Index of Perceived Organizational Effectiveness (IPOE) about school efficiency, effectiveness, and ability to innovate and respond to emergencies. Organizational researcher Paul E. Mott described his effectiveness instrument in his 1972 book. Although nearly 30 years old, it is still being cited and used in studies and textbooks (Hoy & Miskel, 1987; Loup & Ellett, 1995; Miskel, Fevurly, & Stewart, 1979). It is a short, eight-item questionnaire with 5-point Likert-type response options. Mott's instrument assesses five dimensions of organizational effectiveness: (1) quantity and (2) quality of product, (3) efficiency, (4) adaptability, and (5) flexibility. In previous research at AEL, high internal reliability estimates—.85 and above—were found (Meehan & Cowley, 1998). The directions and items relate the schools' products and services to the above-named five constructs. After the effectiveness items, the staff at AEL added six typical demographic items (age, gender, role, full/part time, education level, and years employed in the district). It was renamed the "School Organization Questionnaire" and printed on both sides of one sheet of 8½ x 11 paper. Scoring Mott's instrument yields a single score ranging from 8 to 40 points.

## Data Collection Procedures

The three instruments were administered to professional staff members in the Rural County Public Schools in April 1997. In order to increase the rate of return over that expected from mailed surveys, the principals invited all professional staff to one of two meetings (one at the elementary school, the other for the secondary teachers) immediately after the school day in order to explain the purpose of the new project. The project director from AEL distributed the survey instruments at that time and collected the completed forms as the teachers exited the meeting. A total of 80 educators completed the instruments. This is the baseline data collection with total staff in the three schools. Teachers were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and that results would only be reported at the school level.

## Data Analyses

The data sets for the three instruments were merged and cleaned. Because the instruments measured school building-level concepts, respondents who reported working in more than one building or who did not specify in which building they worked were deleted from the analyses, leaving a total of 71 respondents in the sample. Descriptive statistics are reported at the individual school level and not aggregated to the district level. Simple analysis of variance procedures were run to compare the scale means of teachers at the elementary versus the middle versus the high school in order to explore the differences among the three schools in Rural County. Only significant differences are reported. Correlational statistics were produced to examine the relationships among the scales comprising the three instruments. Finally, the results for each school are presented in school "portraits."

**Intended Audience**

This report is intended to be used as a "pre-intervention" snapshot of the organizational capacity in the schools. Thus, it is expected that the report will be most useful to the AEL project manager and staff and evaluators, and to administrators in the Rural County Public Schools. However, other researchers and evaluators working in the broad area of school improvement might be interested in this report as a secondary audience.

# FINDINGS

This section presents the findings from administering the three instruments to Rural County school professional staff members in the spring of 1997. The findings are presented at the level of each individual school because each of the three measures focused on the organizational capacity of schools—not individuals—to engage in improvement activities. The final samples included 35 elementary school teachers, 18 middle school teachers, and 18 high school teachers. First, the demographic variables and organizational capacity are studied. Then, in the pages to follow, the results are organized according to instrument and subscale, with results disaggregated by school (elementary, middle, high) when appropriate. Following the presentation of results from the three instruments, correlations among the SPES and SWPC subscales and the IPOE are displayed. The final part of this section describes brief summaries, or portraits, of each school.

## Demographic Variables and Organizational Capacity

The first analyses conducted looked at possible relationships between the demographic variables and the three major concepts that comprised organizational capacity in this project: teacher empowerment, professional community, and school effectiveness. Very few demographic variables were associated with organizational capacity to a significant degree.

School-wide Professional Community scores differed according to the level of education held by the teacher respondent ($r=-.39$, $p<.01$). The higher the teacher's educational attainment, the less likely he or she was to report a strong professional learning community at the school. For example, the average teacher with a bachelor's degree ($n=30$) had a professional community score of 3.39 (on a 5-point scale where a 5 indicates strong elements of a learning community). The 13 teacher respondents with master's degrees averaged 3.05 on the professional community instrument, and teachers with a master's degree and additional educational units ($n=9$) rated their schools as having a professional community score of 2.72.

Number of years of teaching experience was correlated with perceived school effectiveness ($r=.25$, $p<.05$). More experienced teachers perceived their school to be more effective than did teachers who were newer to the profession. The relationship between perceived school effectiveness and the number of years teachers had been teaching in Rural County was similar, $r=.26$, $p<.05$.

## School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES)

### Decision Making Subscale from the SPES

The Decision Making subscale of the School Participant Empowerment Scale consists of 8 items tapping the participation of teachers in critical decisions that directly affect their work. In their large Ohio study, Klecker and Loadman (1996) found the six items in their version of the Decision Making subscale to have an alpha reliability estimate of .85. In previous administrations of this instrument in AEL evaluation studies, alpha reliability estimates were much lower, so two items were added. As Table 1 indicates, a Cronbach's alpha reliability estimate of .65 was found for the eight-item scale. Further analysis indicated that the reliability of the subscale could be raised by the deletion of the following item: "I make decisions about the selection of other teachers for my school" (alpha if item deleted = .70). No teacher at any of the three schools agreed with this item.

The eight items comprising the Decision Making subscale were combined to form an average subscale score for each participant. The participants' scores were then aggregated to the building level to create mean subscale scores for each of the three schools. Descriptive statistics for the Decision Making subscale and items are presented in Table 2.

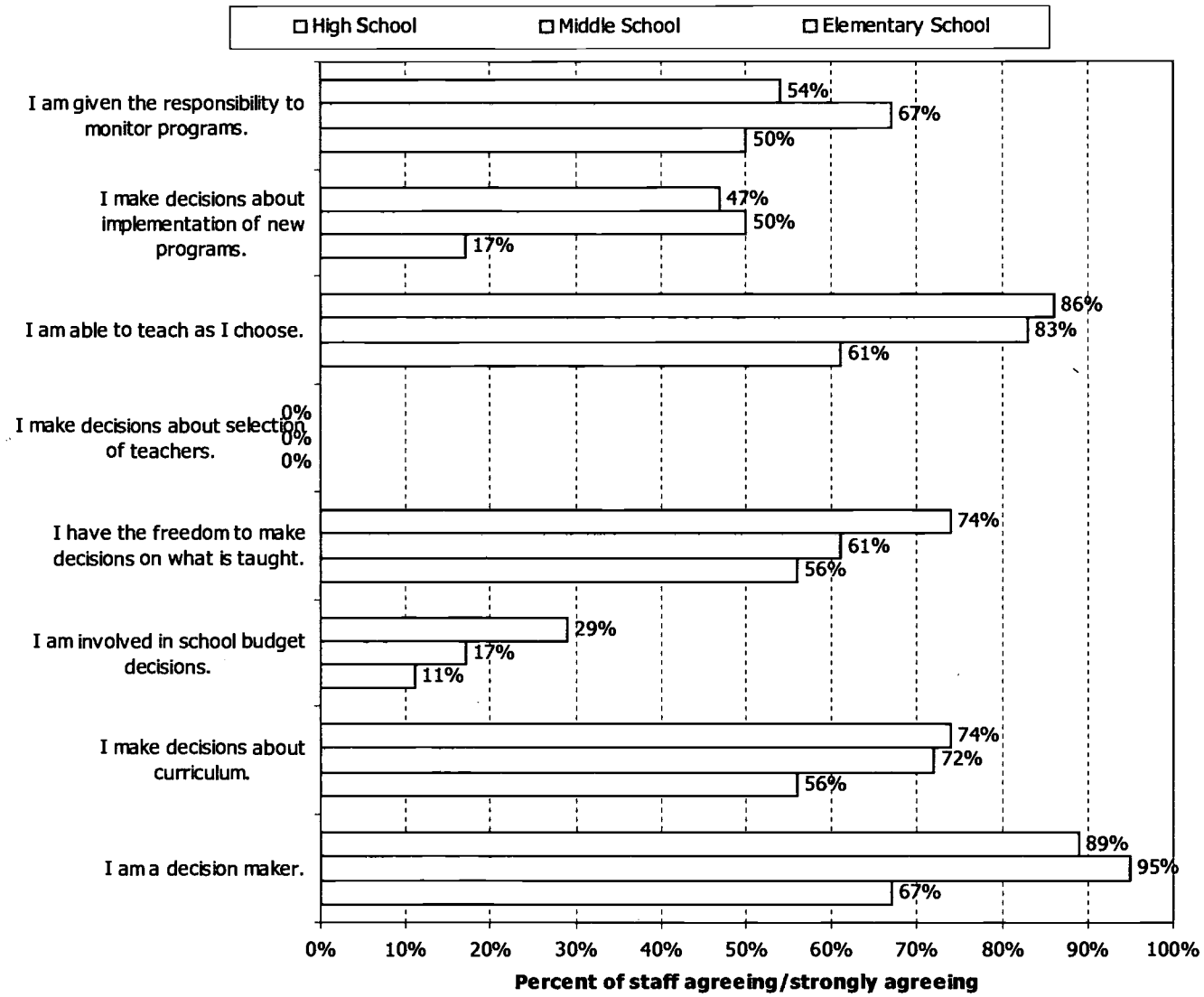
As can be seen by comparing mean scores across building levels, there are suggestive differences among the schools. Results suggest that the elementary and middle school teachers perceive themselves to have more decision-making authority than the high school teachers in all aspects except in being able to teach as they choose, and in freedom to make decisions on what is taught. These items were agreed with most often by elementary teachers. These mean scores were found not to differ significantly among buildings. Thus, even though it appears that the high school teachers experienced less decision making authority than the elementary or middle school teachers, such a statement cannot be supported by statistical inference. One other note of interest pertains to the item about involvement in school budget decisions. There was a great deal of variance in the responses from elementary teachers, and quite a bit of variance overall among all teachers' responses.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics on the Decision Making Subscale from the SPES.**

| Items | School | Mean | St. Error of the Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I am given the responsibility to monitor programs. | Elementary | 3.37 | .18 | 1.06 |
| | Middle | 3.71 | .21 | 0.85 |
| | High | 3.39 | .20 | 0.85 |
| I make decisions about the implementation of new programs at school. | Elementary | 3.24 | .17 | 0.99 |
| | Middle | 3.33 | .21 | 0.91 |
| | High | 2.72 | .23 | 0.96 |
| I am able to teach as I choose. | Elementary | 4.23 | .13 | 0.77 |
| | Middle | 4.06 | .19 | 0.80 |
| | High | 3.56 | .18 | 0.78 |
| I make decisions about the selection of other teachers for my school. | Elementary | 1.37 | .12 | 0.69 |
| | Middle | 2.00 | .18 | 0.77 |
| | High | 1.89 | .20 | 0.83 |
| I have the freedom to make decisions on what is taught. | Elementary | 3.89 | .15 | 0.90 |
| | Middle | 3.67 | .21 | 0.91 |
| | High | 3.67 | .23 | 0.97 |
| I am involved in school budget decisions. | Elementary | 2.46 | .21 | 1.22 |
| | Middle | 2.72 | .21 | 0.89 |
| | High | 2.33 | .23 | 0.97 |
| I make decisions about curriculum. | Elementary | 3.86 | .14 | 0.85 |
| | Middle | 3.61 | .16 | 0.70 |
| | High | 3.61 | .18 | 0.78 |
| I am a decision maker. | Elementary | 4.14 | .12 | 0.69 |
| | Middle | 4.11 | .11 | 0.47 |
| | High | 3.50 | .23 | 0.99 |
| **Decision Making Subscale: Overall Scores** | **Elementary** | **3.32** | **.08** | **.50** |
| | **Middle** | **3.40** | **.11** | **.46** |
| | **High** | **3.08** | **.10** | **.41** |

Figure 1 presents the percentage of staff members from each school who agreed or strongly agreed with each item on the Decision Making subscale. In approximately half of the aspects of decision-making authority, it appears that the elementary school teachers were more likely than teachers at the higher levels to believe that they had the power to make decisions affecting their day-to-day jobs in the classroom. This finding is in keeping with previous work that elementary teachers have relatively more autonomy to make decisions in their classrooms. The high school teachers, on the other hand, appeared to agree with these items less often than did the teachers from lower grade levels.

**Figure 1: Comparison among Schools on the Decision Making Subscale from the SPES.**




## Status with Colleagues Subscale from the SPES

The Status with Colleagues subscale of the School Participant Empowerment Scale (SPES) consists of six items referring to teachers' perceptions that they have professional respect and admiration from colleagues. Klecker and Loadman (1996) found the six items of the Status subscale to have an alpha reliability estimate of .84. The current study showed an acceptable internal reliability of .82.

The six items comprising the Status with Colleagues subscale were combined to form an average subscale score for each participant. The participants' scores were then aggregated to the building level to create mean subscale scores for each of the three schools. Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics for the Status with Colleagues subscale. Correlation coefficients among the six items ranged from .14 to .66. As can be seen by comparing mean scores across building levels, there are differences among the schools. It appears from the mean item scores that teachers at the middle

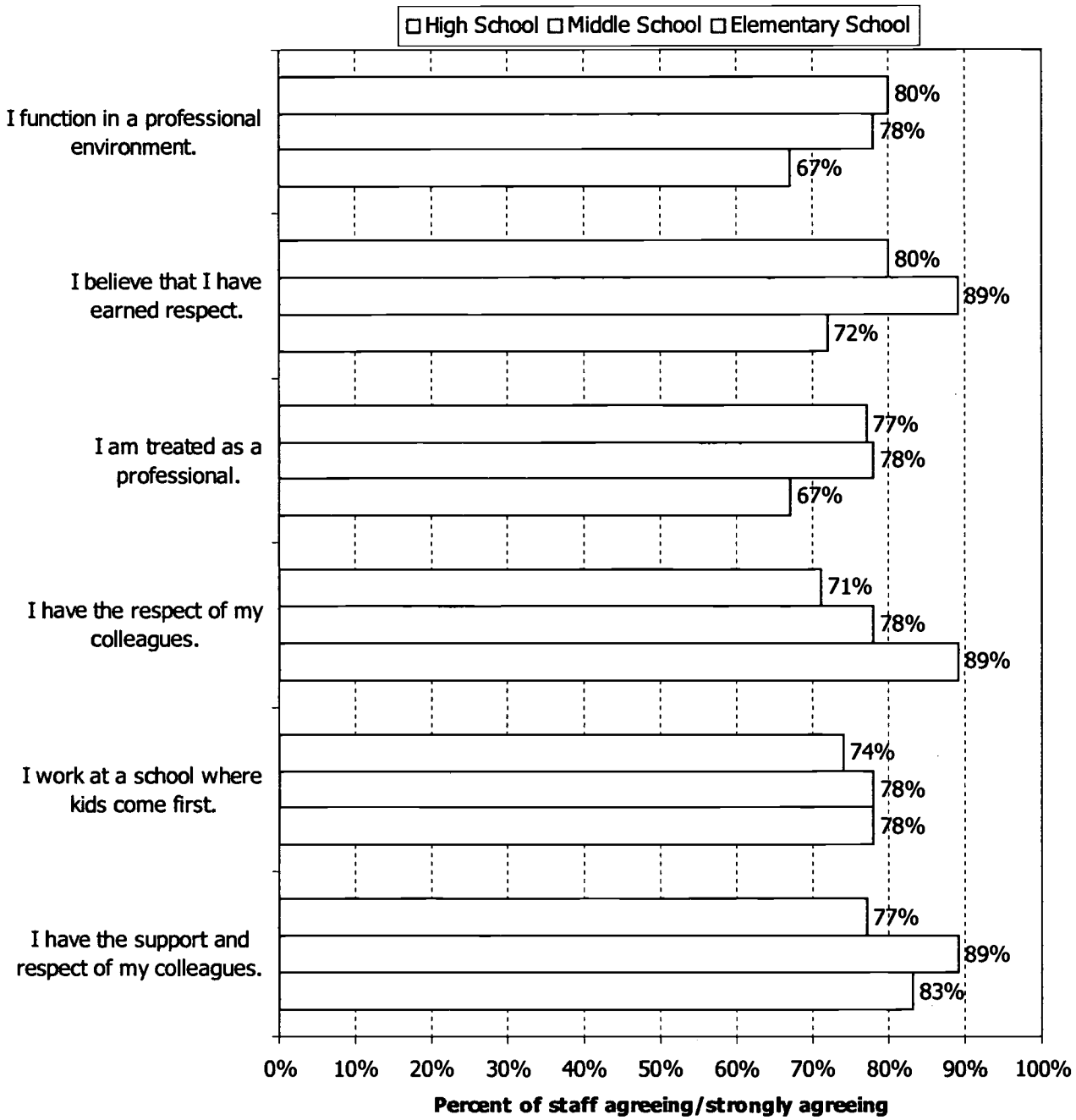
school were more likely than teachers at the elementary or high schools to perceive themselves as having the support and respect of colleagues. The high school teachers were less likely than the other teachers to perceive themselves as being treated as a professional, but as a group, the high school teachers showed more variability in their scores on this item than did the teachers from the other two schools.

**Table 3: Descriptive statistics on the Status with Colleagues Subscale from the SPES.**

| Item | School | Mean | St. Error of the Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I function in a professional environment. | Elementary | 3.83 | .13 | .75 |
| | Middle | 3.78 | .19 | .81 |
| | High | 3.78 | .15 | .65 |
| I believe that I have earned respect. | Elementary | 3.91 | .10 | .56 |
| | Middle | 4.17 | .15 | .62 |
| | High | 3.67 | .18 | .77 |
| I am treated as a professional. | Elementary | 3.80 | .11 | .68 |
| | Middle | 4.17 | .19 | .79 |
| | High | 3.61 | .26 | 1.09 |
| I have the respect of my colleagues. | Elementary | 3.74 | .10 | .61 |
| | Middle | 4.06 | .17 | .73 |
| | High | 4.06 | .17 | .73 |
| I work at a school where kids come first. | Elementary | 3.74 | .13 | .74 |
| | Middle | 3.89 | .18 | .76 |
| | High | 3.72 | .18 | .75 |
| I have the support and respect of my colleagues. | Elementary | 3.80 | .08 | .47 |
| | Middle | 4.17 | .15 | .62 |
| | High | 3.94 | .17 | .73 |
| **Status with Colleagues Subscale: Overall Scores** | **Elementary** | **3.80** | **.07** | **.42** |
| | **Middle** | **4.04** | **.13** | **.57** |
| | **High** | **3.80** | **.14** | **.59** |

As with the Decision Making subscale, the responses from middle school teachers show a positive trend on this subscale. However, the subscale score for the middle school teachers is not significantly higher than the elementary and high school teacher scores. This may reflect a true lack of difference among the three schools, or may be a function of the small sample sizes in the middle and high schools (it is more difficult to achieve significant differences when sample sizes are small). Figure 2 presents the percentage of staff members from each school who agreed or strongly agreed with each item on the Status with Colleagues subscale. There was generally a high level of agreement with these items, suggesting a strong sense of collegiality and respect among teachers, a good foundation upon which to build school improvement.

**Figure 2: Comparison among Schools on the Status with Colleagues Subscale from the SPES.**



**Professional Growth Subscale from the SPES**

The Professional Growth subscale is made up of five items measuring teachers' perceptions that the school in which they work provides them with opportunities to continuously increase their skills and knowledge as professionals. When Klecker and Loadman (1996) administered this instrument to the Venture Capital Schools in Ohio, they had four items in the Professional Growth subscale, which yielded an internal reliability alpha of .70. In an effort to increase the reliability of the subscale items, AEL staff added two items, "I have grown professionally during the past year," and "I believe in the value of professional development for teachers." Due to a typographical error in the survey, one of these items was omitted: "I am given the opportunity to continue learning." With five items constituting the subscale, an alpha of .64 was obtained. This alpha can be considered, at best, marginally acceptable. However, this administration of the SPES did not include a large enough number of respondents to serve as a validity or reliability check on the instrument. The ratio of respondents to survey items was less than 2:1.

Correlation coefficients among the five items comprising the Professional Growth subscale ranged from -.02 to .51. The items were combined to form an average subscale score for each participant. The participants' scores were then aggregated to the building level to create mean subscale scores for each of the three schools. Table 4 displays the descriptive statistics for the Professional Growth subscale.

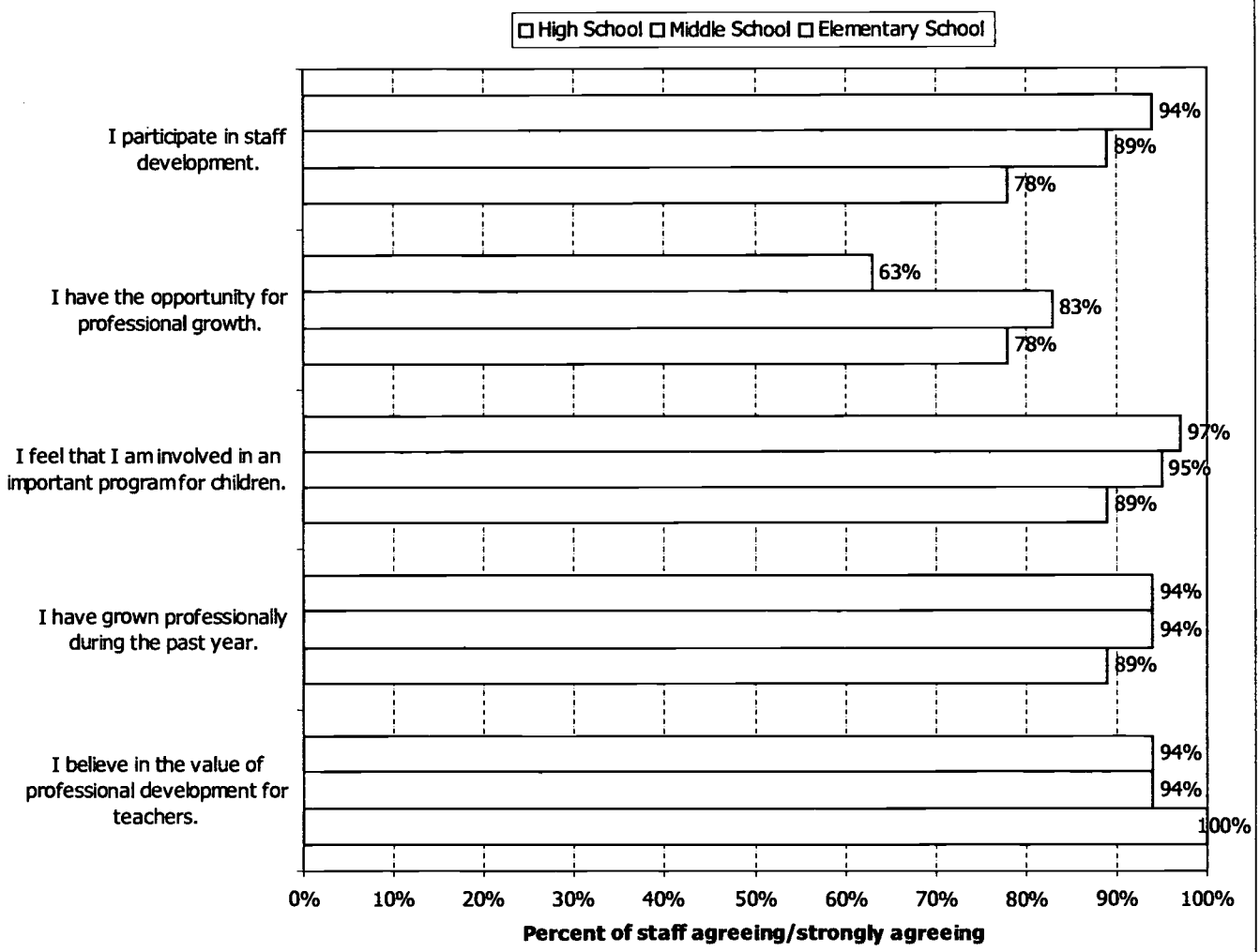
**Table 4: Descriptive statistics on items from the Professional Growth Subscale from the SPES.**

| Item | School | Mean | St. Error of the Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I participate in staff development. | Elementary | 4.11 | .08 | .47 |
| | Middle | 4.17 | .15 | .62 |
| | High | 3.83 | .17 | .71 |
| I have the opportunity for professional growth. | Elementary | 3.49 | .17 | .98 |
| | Middle | 4.06 | .19 | .80 |
| | High | 3.94 | .19 | .80 |
| I feel that I am involved in an important program for children. | Elementary | 4.49 | .10 | .56 |
| | Middle | 4.22 | .13 | .55 |
| | High | 4.22 | .15 | .65 |
| I have grown professionally during the past year. | Elementary | 4.34 | .10 | .59 |
| | Middle | 4.17 | .12 | .51 |
| | High | 3.89 | .18 | .76 |
| I believe in the value of professional development for teachers. | Elementary | 4.51 | .15 | .61 |
| | Middle | 4.44 | .12 | .62 |
| | High | 4.44 | .12 | .51 |
| **Professional Growth Subscale: Overall Scores** | **Elementary** | **4.19** | **.07** | **.41** |
| | **Middle** | **4.21** | **.10** | **.44** |
| | **High** | **4.07** | **.10** | **.42** |

Unlike the Decision Making and Status with Colleagues subscales, the Professional Growth scale showed no significant differences among school levels. The availability and value of professional growth opportunities had the agreement of almost all of the teachers in this study.

Figure 3 presents the percentage of staff members from each school who agreed or strongly agreed with each item on the Professional Growth subscale. It is clear from the responses that teachers felt strongly about the importance of professional development. However, the chart suggests that opportunities for professional growth differed from school to school.

**Figure 3: Comparison among Schools on the Professional Growth Subscale from the SPES.**




## Self-Efficacy Subscale from the SPES

There are twelve items comprising the Self-Efficacy subscale on this survey. Klecker and Loadman (1996) described this subscale as teachers' perceptions that they have the skills and ability to help students learn, are competent in building effective programs for students, and can effect changes in student learning. These researchers found all 12 items contributed to an overall reliability of .89. An investigation of the internal consistency of the self-efficacy items in the present study provided reliability estimates that were acceptable, as was reported in Table 1.

Out of 66 correlations among the twelve items, only two correlation coefficients were not statistically significant. The twelve items comprising the Self-Efficacy subscale were combined to form an average subscale score for each participant, then aggregated to the building level to create mean subscale scores for each of the three schools. Table 5 displays the descriptive statistics for the Self-Efficacy subscale. Notice that most of the mean scores at all buildings are at 4.0 or above, which indicates a lot of agreement with the self-efficacy items. The majority of mean scores lower than 4.0 were from the high school teachers.

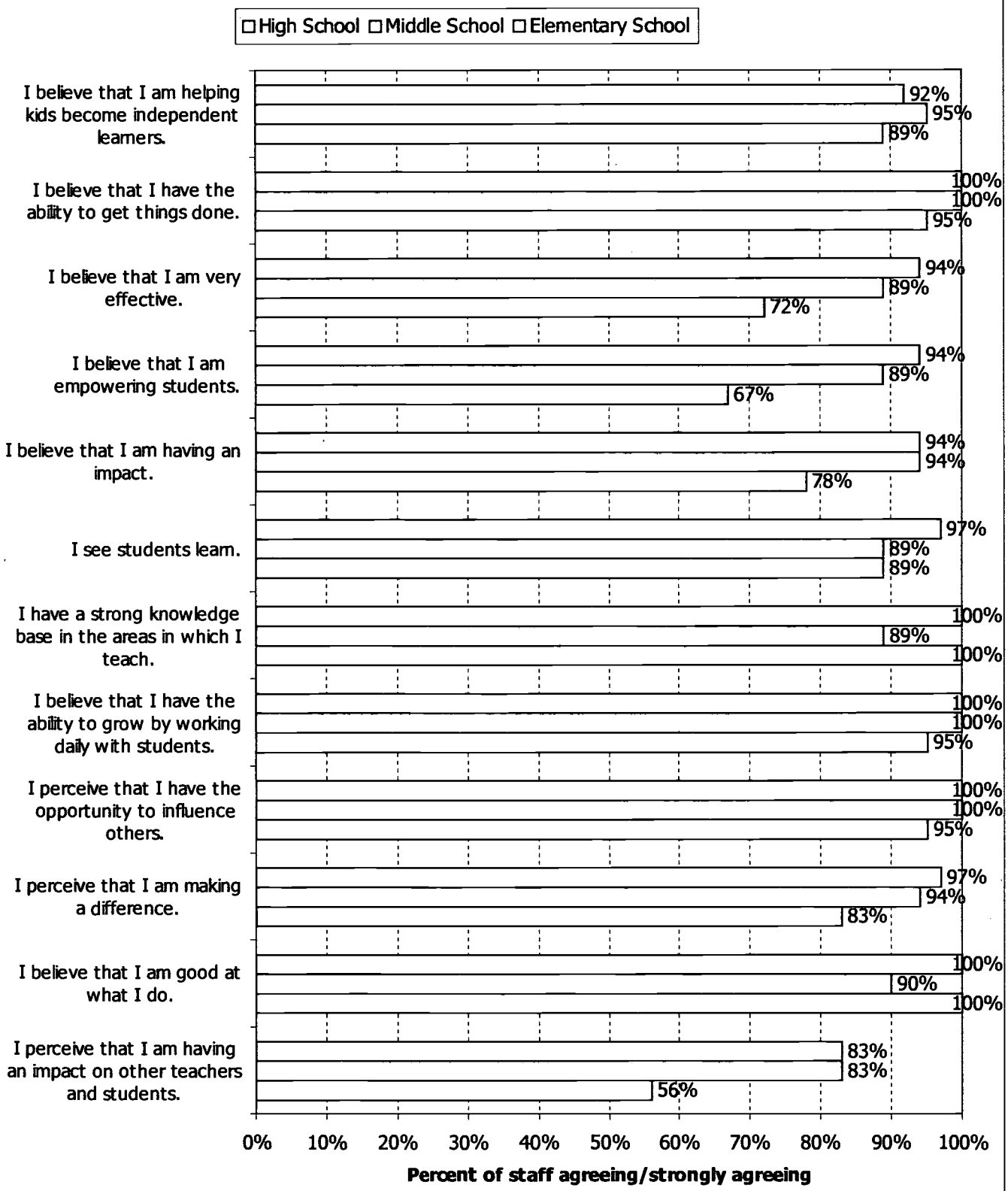
**Table 5: Descriptive statistics on items from the Self-Efficacy Subscale from the SPES.**

| Item | School | Mean | St. Error of the Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I believe that I am helping kids become independent learners. | Elementary | 4.34 | .11 | .64 |
| | Middle | 4.22 | .13 | .55 |
| | High | 3.89 | .14 | .58 |
| I believe that I have the ability to get things done. | Elementary | 4.37 | .08 | .49 |
| | Middle | 4.28 | .11 | .46 |
| | High | 4.22 | .13 | .55 |
| I believe that I am very effective. | Elementary | 4.23 | .11 | .65 |
| | Middle | 4.11 | .14 | .58 |
| | High | 3.78 | .13 | .55 |
| I believe that I am empowering students. | Elementary | 4.23 | .09 | .55 |
| | Middle | 4.06 | .13 | .54 |
| | High | 3.61 | .14 | .61 |
| I believe that I am having an impact. | Elementary | 4.31 | .10 | .58 |
| | Middle | 4.17 | .12 | .51 |
| | High | 3.83 | .17 | .71 |
| I see students learn. | Elementary | 4.34 | .09 | .54 |
| | Middle | 4.18 | .13 | .53 |
| | High | 3.89 | .18 | .76 |
| I have a strong knowledge base in the areas in which I teach. | Elementary | 4.51 | .09 | .51 |
| | Middle | 4.06 | .13 | .54 |
| | High | 4.33 | .11 | .49 |
| I believe that I have the ability to grow by working daily with students. | Elementary | 4.66 | .08 | .48 |
| | Middle | 4.33 | .11 | .49 |
| | High | 4.22 | .13 | .55 |
| I perceive that I have the opportunity to influence others. | Elementary | 4.37 | .08 | .49 |
| | Middle | 4.28 | .11 | .46 |
| | High | 4.06 | .10 | .42 |
| I perceive that I am making a difference. | Elementary | 4.34 | .09 | .54 |
| | Middle | 4.17 | .12 | .51 |
| | High | 3.89 | .16 | .68 |
| I believe that I am good at what I do. | Elementary | 4.46 | .09 | .51 |
| | Middle | 4.22 | .15 | .65 |
| | High | 4.17 | .09 | .38 |
| I perceive that I am having an impact on other teachers and students. | Elementary | 3.91 | .10 | .61 |
| | Middle | 3.89 | .11 | .47 |
| | High | 3.50 | .19 | .79 |
| **Self-Efficacy Subscale: Overall Scores** | **Elementary** | **4.34** | **.06** | **.38** |
| | **Middle** | **4.16** | **.09** | **.38** |
| | **High** | **3.95** | **.09** | **.37** |

As we inspected the results among building levels, the teachers' feelings regarding their ability to do a good job declined as the grade levels within the school rose. However, these scores are not significantly different so they can only be thought of as an interesting point of discussion or as an area for further research.

Figure 4 presents the percentage of staff members from each school who agreed or strongly agreed with each item on the Self-Efficacy subscale. Agreement with these items was very high, with all or almost all teachers agreeing with each item. The high school teachers were the exception, in that they were more likely than elementary or middle school teachers to disagree with a number of different items on the subscale questions.

**Figure 4: Comparison among Schools on the Self-Efficacy Subscale from the SPES.**

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**Autonomy in Scheduling Subscale from the SPES**

The Autonomy in Scheduling subscale purports to measure the teachers' sense of freedom to make decisions that control certain aspects, such as scheduling, of their work life. Klecker and Loadman (1996) reported a reliability of .84 on the Autonomy in Scheduling subscale. In their study, the reliability coefficient would have risen to .87 with the deletion of the item, "I have control over daily schedules."

All three items in the Autonomy in Scheduling subscale correlated with each other at significant levels ($p<.05$). The three items comprising the Autonomy in Scheduling subscale were combined to form an average Autonomy subscale score for each participant. The participants' scores were then aggregated to building level subscale scores. Descriptive statistics for the subscale are presented in Table 6. As can be seen, there was a lot of variability within schools as to how much freedom teachers perceived themselves to have to schedule their work day (standard deviations ranging from .93 to 1.21). In addition, there was great variability between schools regarding autonomy in scheduling. It should be noted that the highest score of 3.66 (Elementary score on "I have control over daily schedules") was still far from the highest possible score of 5.0.

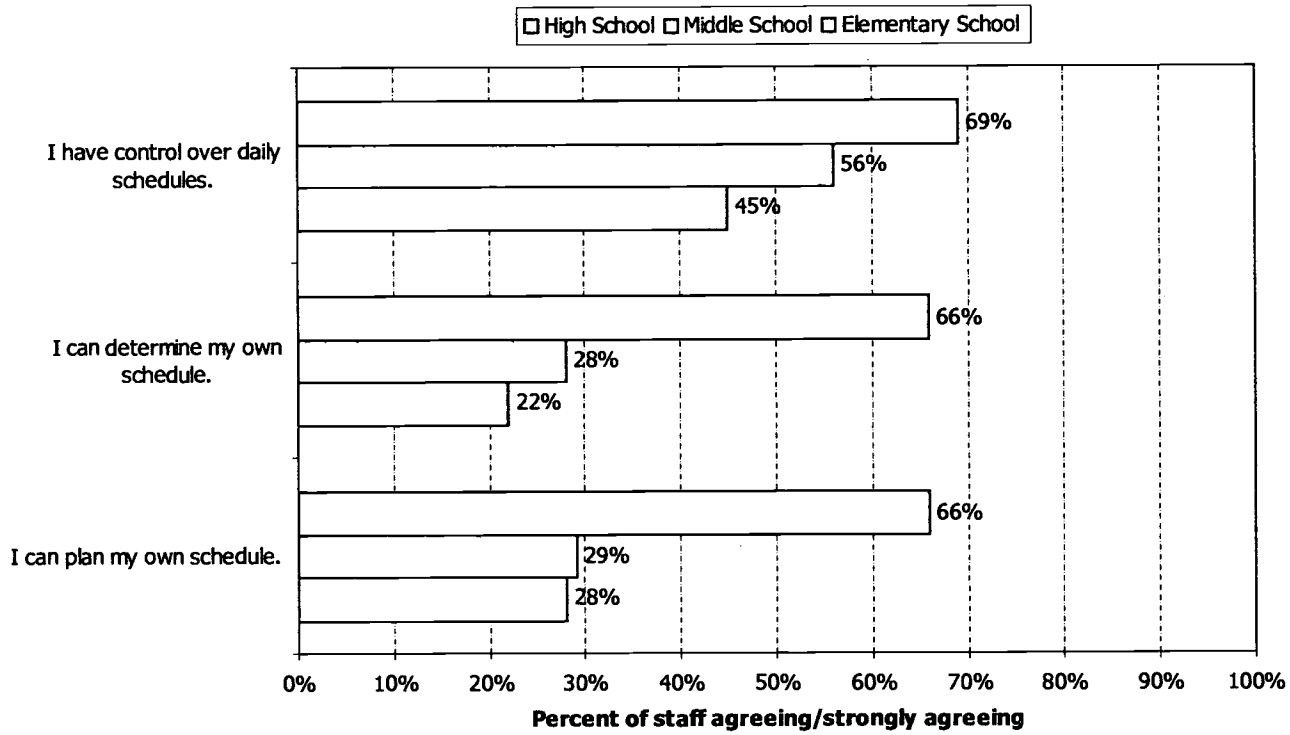
These results suggest that teachers at the high school level perceived much lower levels of autonomy in scheduling than did their peers teaching lower grades. Not suprisingly, the elementary level teachers experienced the most autonomy in scheduling. An interesting note is that there was a great amount of variation among teachers' responses at each level.

**Table 6: Descriptive statistics on the Autonomy in Scheduling Subscale from the SPES.**

| Item | School | Mean | St. Error of the Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I have control over daily schedules. | Elementary | 3.66 | .15 | .91 |
| | Middle | 3.39 | .23 | .98 |
| | High | 2.94 | .29 | 1.21 |
| I can determine my own schedule. | Elementary | 3.51 | .20 | 1.20 |
| | Middle | 2.83 | .25 | 1.04 |
| | High | 2.56 | .27 | 1.15 |
| I can plan my own schedule. | Elementary | 3.60 | .16 | .95 |
| | Middle | 3.12 | .22 | .93 |
| | High | 2.83 | .28 | 1.20 |
| **Autonomy in Scheduling Subscale: Overall Scores** | **Elementary** | **3.59** | **.15** | **.90** |
| | **Middle** | **3.09** | **.18** | **.78** |
| | **High** | **2.78** | **.26** | **1.08** |

Figure 5 presents the percentage of staff members from each school who agreed or strongly agreed with each item on the Autonomy in Scheduling subscale. It is clear from the responses that teachers at the elementary school felt that they had a lot of autonomy in scheduling their workday. This finding makes sense given the structure of elementary schools, in which teachers typically have one set of students all day.

**Figure 5: Comparison among Schools on the Autonomy in Scheduling Subscale from the SPES.**




## Impact Subscale from the SPES

The Impact subscale, which consists of five items, measures the teachers' sense that they have an effect and influence on school life. The individual items refer to opportunities for networking, whether others solicit one's advice, and whether one has the opportunity to teach other teachers. The Ohio Study (1996) reported an alpha of .71, identical to the reliability estimate obtained here.

The five items comprising the Impact subscale were combined to form an average Impact subscale score for each participant, then aggregated to the building level. Descriptive statistics for the Impact subscale are presented in Table 7. Item-level responses do not present any clear differences among the schools. Most teachers seemed to agree that they had opportunities to collaborate with other teachers. However, high school teachers agreed less often with the exchange of advice items than did teachers at lower grade levels.

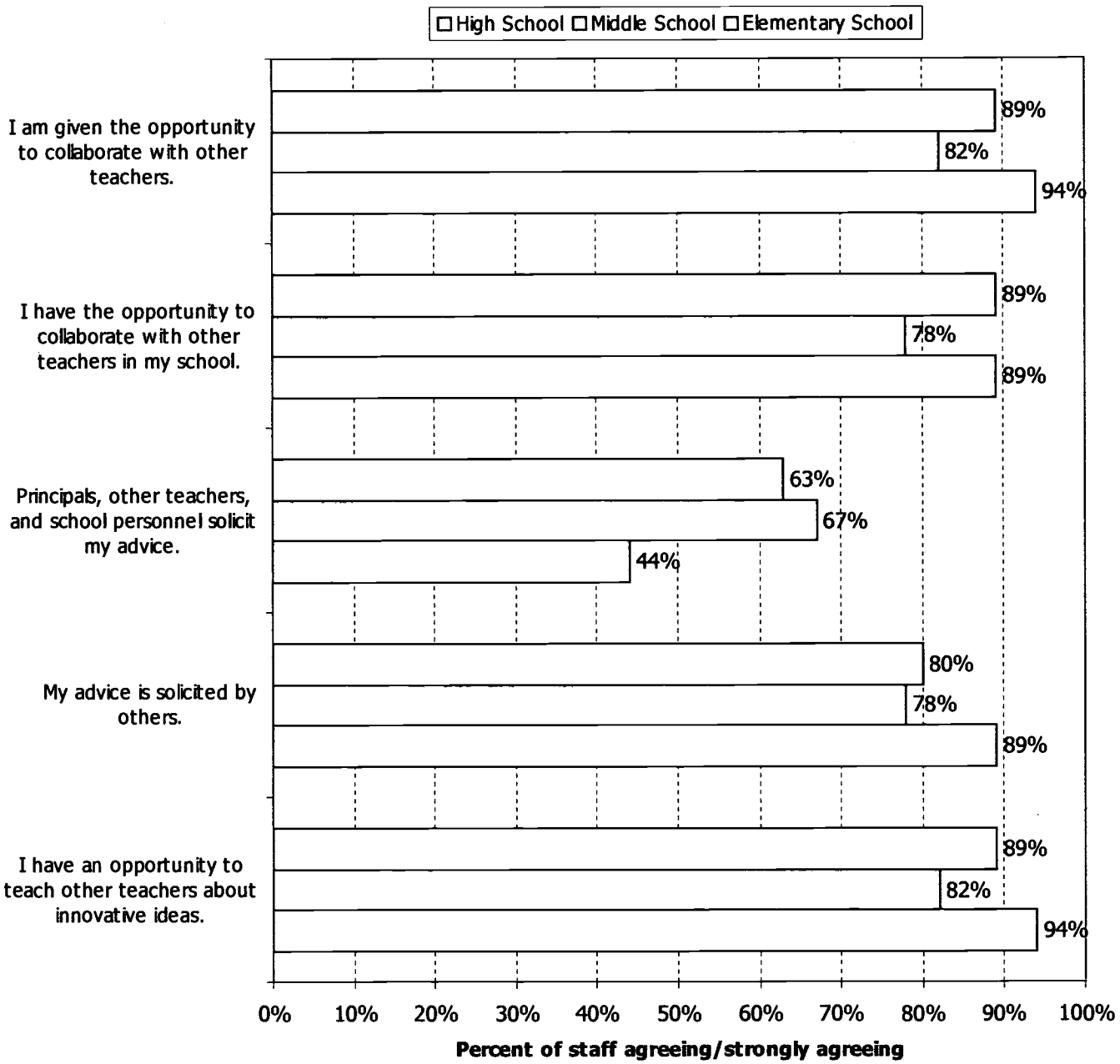
These results suggest that there were no differences in perceived impact among the teachers from these three schools as measured here. However, it is worth noting that the average scores leave room for greater perceived impact. The means range from 3.57 to 3.72, but the highest average score possible is a 5.0.

**Table 7: Descriptive statistics on items from the Impact Subscale from the SPES.**

| Item | School | Mean | St. Error of the Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I am given the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers. | Elementary | 3.94 | .13 | .76 |
| | Middle | 3.94 | .18 | .75 |
| | High | 4.06 | .10 | .42 |
| I have the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers in my school. | Elementary | 3.83 | .13 | .79 |
| | Middle | 3.72 | .18 | .75 |
| | High | 3.94 | .15 | .64 |
| Principals, other teachers, and school personnel solicit my advice. | Elementary | 3.43 | .14 | .85 |
| | Middle | 3.78 | .15 | .65 |
| | High | 3.28 | .18 | .75 |
| My advice is solicited by others. | Elementary | 3.56 | .15 | .86 |
| | Middle | 3.83 | .15 | .62 |
| | High | 3.33 | .16 | .69 |
| I have an opportunity to teach other teachers about innovative ideas. | Elementary | 3.15 | .16 | .93 |
| | Middle | 3.39 | .20 | .85 |
| | High | 3.22 | .15 | .65 |
| **Impact Subscale: Overall Scores** | **Elementary** | **3.59** | **.09** | **.55** |
| | **Middle** | **3.72** | **.12** | **.53** |
| | **High** | **3.57** | **.11** | **.45** |

Figure 6 presents the percentage of staff members from each school who agreed or strongly agreed with each item on the Impact subscale. Teachers at different school levels responded very differently depending on the individual item. For instance, almost all of the responding high school teachers agreed that they had opportunities to teach others about innovative ideas, whereas high school teachers had the lowest levels of agreement with the statement, "Principals, other teachers, and school personnel solicit my advice."

**Figure 6: Comparison among Schools on the Impact Subscale from the SPES.**



## SCHOOL-WIDE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY SURVEY

### Shared Sense of Purpose Subscale from the SWPC

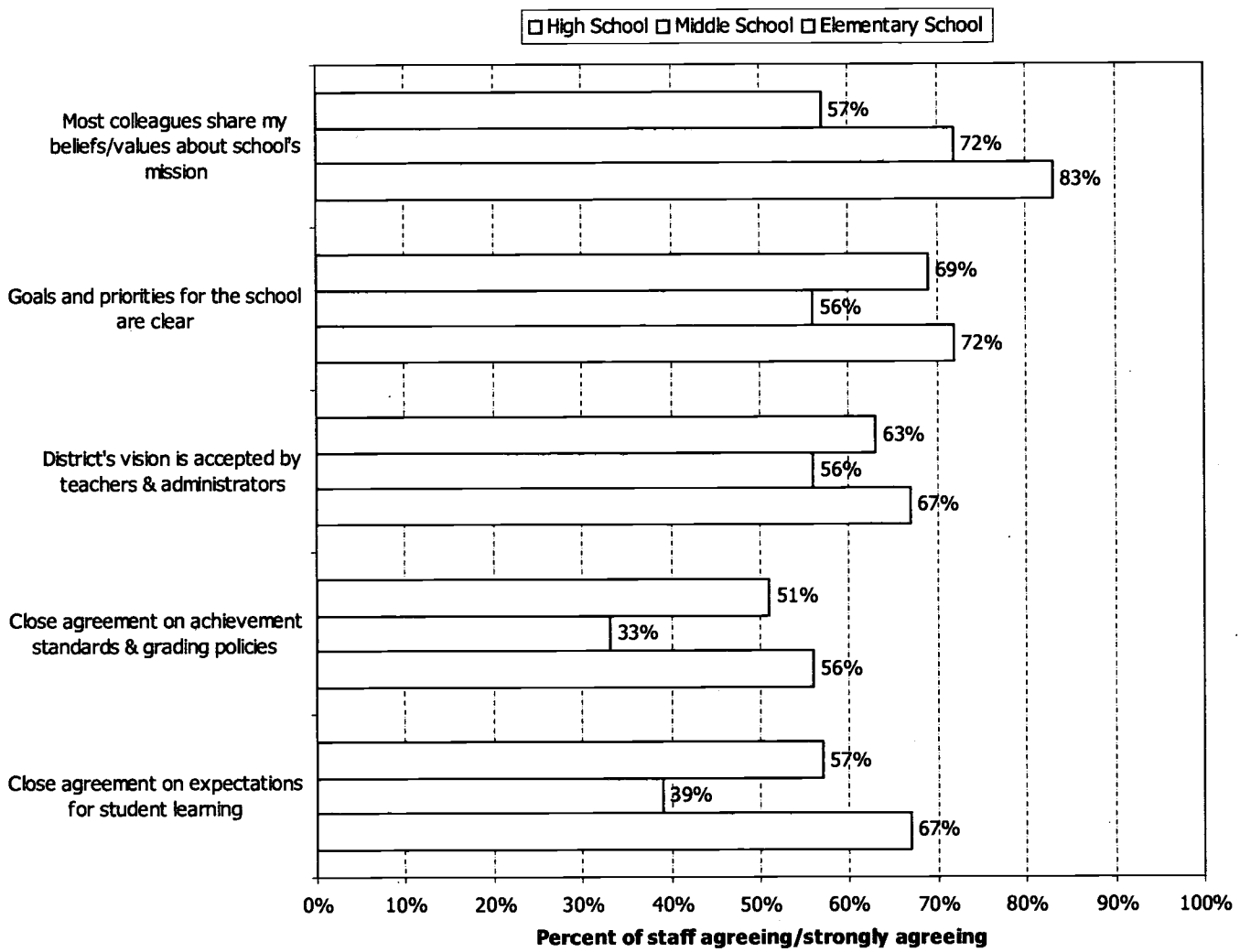
The Shared Sense of Purpose subscale from the School-Wide Professional Community (SWPC) Survey consists of five items measuring the extent to which staff agree on and accept the central mission of the school. The five items comprising the Shared Sense of Purpose subscale were combined to form an average subscale score for each participant. The participants' scores were then aggregated to the building level to create mean subscale scores for each of the three schools. Descriptive statistics for the Shared Sense of Purpose subscale and its items are presented in Table 8. In the current study, a reliability estimate of .79 was found for this subscale. The alpha reliability estimate would have risen to .81 if the item about staff agreement concerning the central mission of the school were deleted. Louis, Marks, and Kruse (1996) found an alpha reliability of .74, while previous work at AEL found an alpha of .57 for this subscale (Meehan & Cowley, 1998). Correlations among the five items ranged from .22 to .63, with all but the lowest correlation coefficient (.22) being significant at the $p<.05$ level.

**Table 8: Descriptive statistics on the Shared Sense of Purpose Subscale from the SWPC.**

| | School | Mean | Standard Error of Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be. | Elementary | 3.57 | .18 | 1.07 |
| | Middle | 3.67 | .14 | .59 |
| | High | 3.78 | .22 | .94 |
| Goals and priorities for the school are clear. | Elementary | 3.63 | .14 | .81 |
| | Middle | 3.56 | .17 | .70 |
| | High | 3.72 | .25 | 1.07 |
| The district's vision for its schools is accepted by teachers and administrators. | Elementary | 3.66 | .14 | .80 |
| | Middle | 3.39 | .22 | .92 |
| | High | 3.67 | .20 | .84 |
| In the district's schools, the teachers and the administration are in close agreement on achievement standards and grading policies. | Elementary | 3.31 | .20 | 1.21 |
| | Middle | 2.94 | .21 | .87 |
| | High | 3.33 | .20 | .84 |
| There is close agreement among teachers and administrators on expectations for student learning in this district. | Elementary | 3.49 | .17 | .98 |
| | Middle | 2.94 | .24 | 1.00 |
| | High | 3.44 | .26 | 1.10 |
| **Shared Sense of Purpose Subscale: Overall Scores** | **Elementary** | **3.53** | **.13** | **.79** |
| | **Middle** | **3.30** | **.13** | **.57** |
| | **High** | **3.59** | **.14** | **.60** |

Figure 7 presents the percentage of staff members from each school who agreed or strongly agreed with each item on the Shared Sense of Purpose subscale. The pattern of responses suggests that the high school teachers were more likely than teachers at lower grades to believe that they and their colleagues shared a common vision about the purpose of education at their school. Middle school teachers appear to have agreed less often with items on the Shared Sense of Purpose subscale. Another interesting finding is the low scores among staff from all three schools on most of the items. This suggests that there is work to be done to help teachers at the three schools develop shared understandings of the district's mission.

**Figure 7: Comparison among Schools on the Shared Sense of Purpose Subscale from the SWPC Survey.**



## Collaborative Activity Subscale from the SWPC

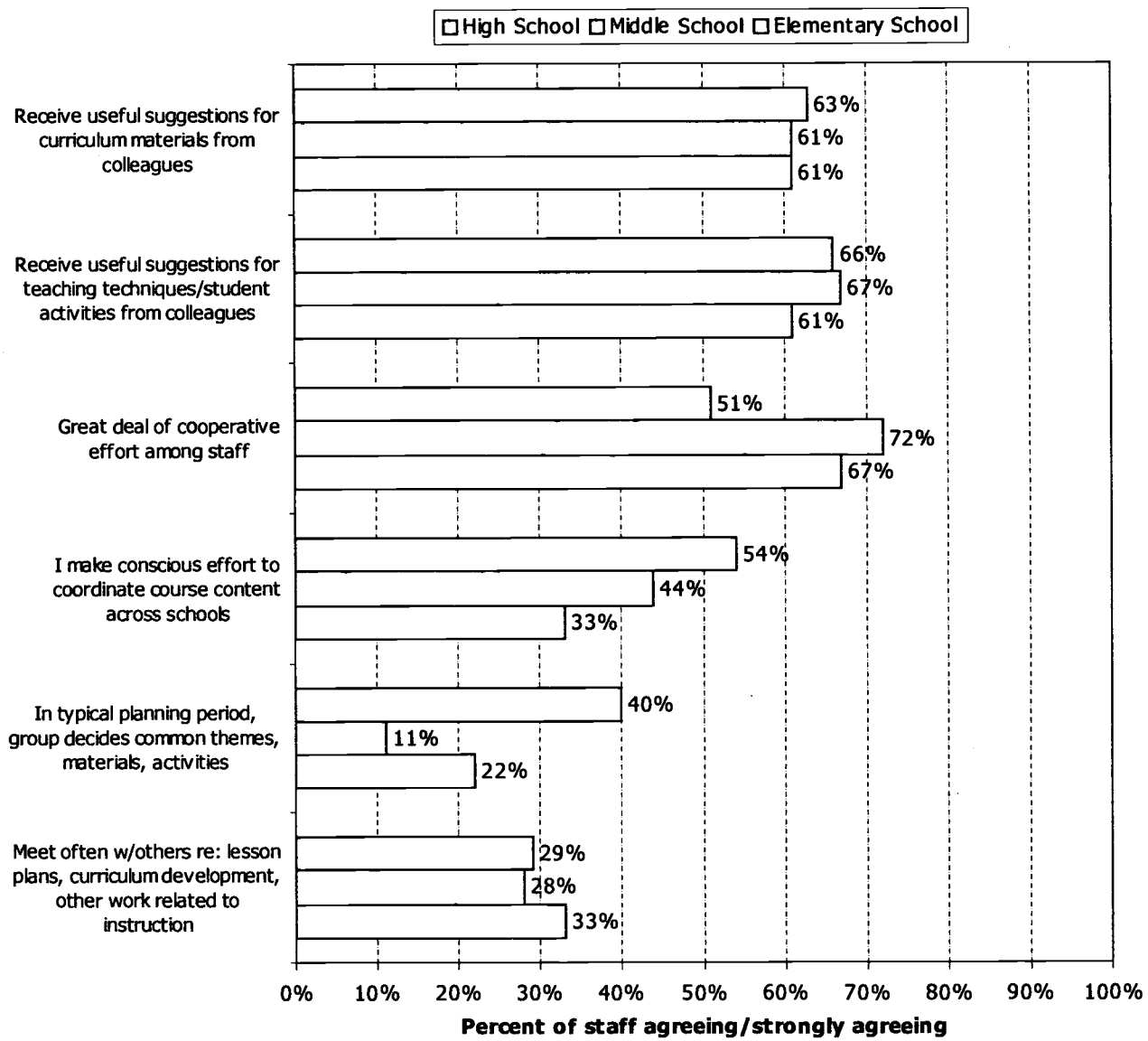
The Collaborative Activity subscale from the School-Wide Professional Community (SWPC) Survey measures the extent to which staff within a school and between schools share and coordinate curricula and activities. Previous studies have found reliability estimates of .68 (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996) and .57 (Meehan & Cowley, 1998). In this survey administration, an alpha reliability estimate of .78 was reached. Internal consistency would have been strengthened with the deletion of the item assessing coordination of course content across schools. The six items comprising the Collaborative Activity subscale were combined to form an average subscale score for each participant. The participants' scores were then aggregated to the building level to create mean subscale scores for each of the three schools. Descriptive statistics for the Collaborative Activity items and subscale are presented in Table 9. Mean score comparisons suggest that there may not be differences among RCPS schools in the efforts at collaboration. Correlation coefficients among the 6 items comprising the Collaborative Activity subscale ranged from -.02 to .79. The item measuring curriculum coordination only correlated to a statistically significant degree with one other item: group decision making regarding common themes, materials, and activities. Correlations among the remaining four items reached statistical significance.

**Table 9: Descriptive statistics on the Collaborative Activity Subscale from the SWPC.**

| Item | School | Mean | Standard Error of the Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I receive many useful suggestions for curriculum materials from colleagues in my department, unit, or district. | Elementary | 3.57 | .17 | 1.01 |
| | Middle | 3.50 | .17 | .71 |
| | High | 3.61 | .20 | .85 |
| I receive many useful suggestions for teaching techniques or student activities to share from colleagues in my department, unity, or district. | Elementary | 3.57 | .17 | .98 |
| | Middle | 3.61 | .14 | .61 |
| | High | 3.67 | .21 | .91 |
| There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members in my department, unit, or district. | Elementary | 3.43 | .20 | 1.17 |
| | Middle | 3.72 | .25 | 1.07 |
| | High | 3.67 | .20 | .84 |
| I make a conscious effort to coordinate the content of my courses across the district's schools. | Elementary | 3.54 | .17 | .98 |
| | Middle | 3.50 | .19 | .79 |
| | High | 3.22 | .19 | .81 |
| In a typical planning period w/others in my district, the group decides common themes and suggests related materials & activities to guide instruction. | Elementary | 3.11 | .20 | 1.18 |
| | Middle | 2.56 | .20 | .86 |
| | High | 2.82 | .25 | 1.01 |
| I meet often with others in my district regarding lesson planning, curriculum development, guidance and counseling, program evaluation, or other collaborative work related to instruction. | Elementary | 2.77 | .22 | 1.29 |
| | Middle | 2.72 | .24 | 1.02 |
| | High | 2.80 | .25 | 1.04 |
| **Collaborative Activity Subscale: Overall Scores** | **Elementary** | **3.33** | **.13** | **.78** |
| | **Middle** | **3.27** | **.14** | **.61** |
| | **High** | **3.32** | **.16** | **.66** |

Figure 8 presents the percentage of staff members from each school who agreed or strongly agreed with each item on the Collaborative Activity subscale. The most striking finding on this graph vividly displays the low levels of reported common planning that was occurring among teachers at the time of this survey administration. On many collaboration items, less than half of the teachers agreed that such activities were occurring. Although many teachers perceived a generally positive atmosphere and desire for collaboration (note the percent of agreement with the item concerning cooperative effort), very few reported the occurrence of the more challenging and critical types of collaborative activity, such as developing common curricula and integrating across subject areas.

**Figure 8: Comparison among Schools on the Collaborative Activity Subscale from the SWPC Survey.**



**Collective Focus on Student Learning Subscale from the SWPC Survey**

The Collective Focus on Student Learning subscale items were designed to measure the degree to which teaching activities are geared toward instilling high level, authentic skills in students. Previous studies have found reliability estimates of .60 (Meehan & Cowley, 1998) to .61 (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). The subscale held together well in the current study with an internal consistency alpha of .80.

Correlation coefficients among the six items comprising the Collective Focus on Student Learning subscale ranged from .06 to .85. The items assessing student learning goals of critical thinking and creative thinking were highly correlated (.85). However, the creative thinking item only significantly correlated with one other item, which focused on a clear school vision for student learning (.59). The six items were combined to form an average subscale score for each participant with these scores then aggregated to the building level. Descriptive statistics for the Focus on Student Learning subscale and its items are presented in Table 10.

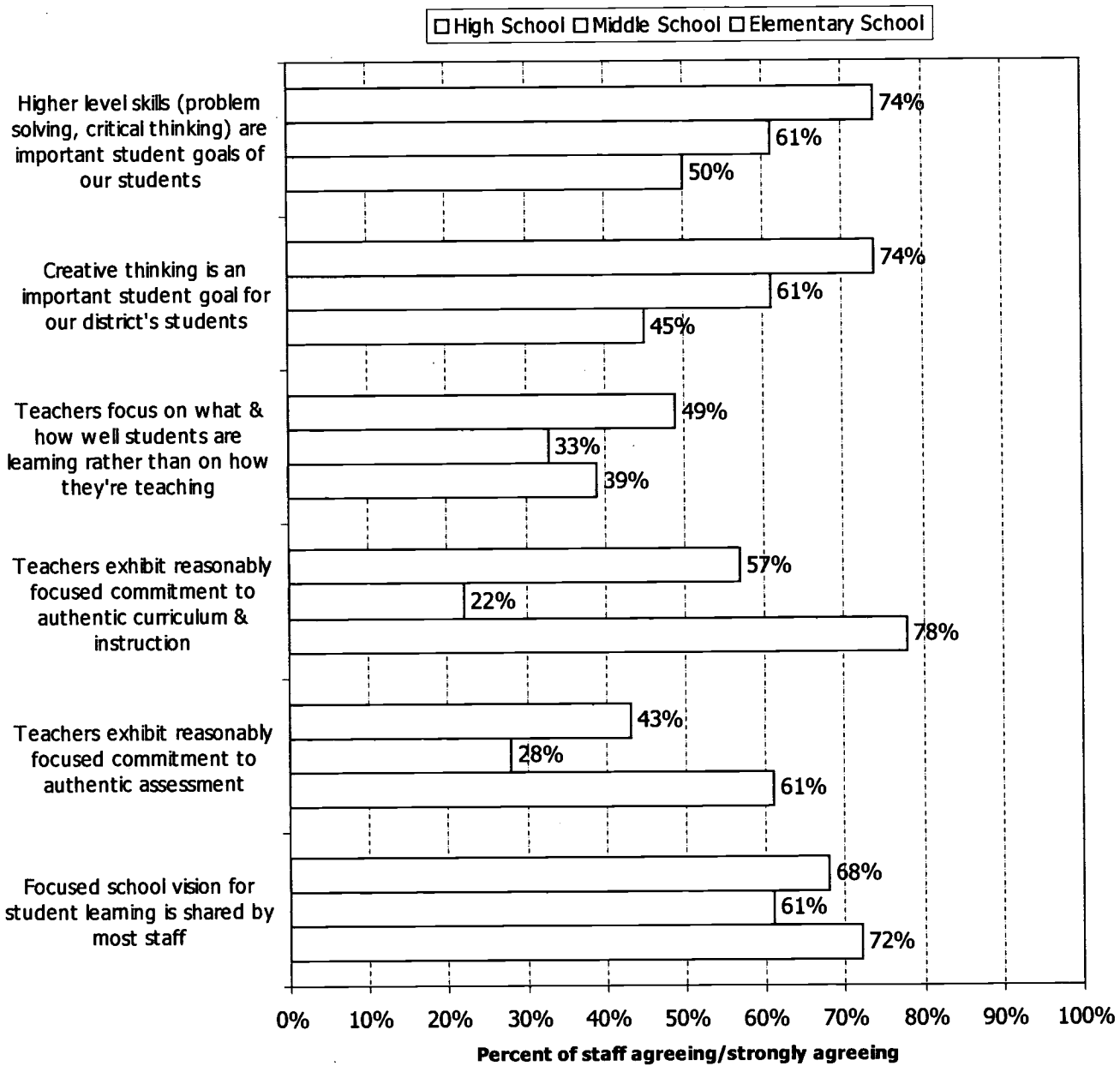
An analysis of variance comparing the mean subscale scores among the three schools indicated that the middle school teachers rated their school as having a significantly lower collective focus on student learning (mean=3.10) than the elementary school teachers believed of their school (mean=3.58), $F(2,68)=3.14$, $p<.05$.

**Table 10: Descriptive statistics on the Collective Focus on Student Learning Subscale from the SWPC.**

| Item | School | Mean | Standard Error of the Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Higher level skills (reasoning, problem solving, critical thinking) are important student goals of our district's students. | Elementary | 3.94 | .14 | .84 |
| | Middle | 3.33 | .26 | 1.08 |
| | High | 3.11 | .28 | 1.18 |
| Creative thinking is an important student goal for our district's students. | Elementary | 4.03 | .13 | .75 |
| | Middle | 3.39 | .27 | 1.14 |
| | High | 3.33 | .27 | 1.14 |
| Teachers in our district focus on what and how well students are learning rather than on how they are teaching. | Elementary | 3.34 | .16 | .97 |
| | Middle | 2.89 | .25 | 1.08 |
| | High | 3.17 | .20 | .86 |
| Teachers in our district exhibit a reasonably focused commitment to authentic instruction. | Elementary | 3.37 | .15 | .88 |
| | Middle | 2.78 | .25 | 1.06 |
| | High | 3.72 | .14 | .57 |
| Teachers in our district exhibit a reasonably focused commitment to authentic assessment. | Elementary | 3.23 | .13 | .77 |
| | Middle | 2.89 | .24 | 1.02 |
| | High | 3.50 | .17 | .71 |
| A focused school vision for student learning is shared by most staff in the schools in our district. | Elementary | 3.57 | .16 | .95 |
| | Middle | 3.33 | .23 | .97 |
| | High | 3.61 | .20 | .85 |
| **Collective Focus on Student Learning Subscale: Overall Scores** | **Elementary** | **3.58** | **.10** | **.61** |
| | **Middle** | **3.10** | **.18** | **.75** |
| | **High** | **3.41** | **.15** | **.65** |

Figure 9 presents the percentage of staff members from each school who agreed or strongly agreed with each item on the Collective Focus on Student Learning element. The elementary school was judged by its faculty to have a stronger focus on student learning than did the other schools. One exception was in the area of authentic instruction, which was reported to be occurring more at the high school than in the lower grades. The middle school teachers perceived their school as less focused on student learning than did the other schools.

**Figure 9: Comparison among Schools on the Collective Focus on Student Learning Subscale from the SWPC Survey.**



**Deprivatized Practice Subscale from the SWPC Survey**

The concept of deprivatized practice is strongly related to the concept of the cross-fertilization of ideas—sharing teaching methods and strategies, "tricks of the trade" and other forms of formal and tacit knowledge and skills among colleagues within the school and in other schools. Louis, Marks, and Kruse (1996) described the five-item Deprivatized Practice subscale as follows:

> "In professional communities, teachers move behind the classroom door of their colleagues to share and trade off the roles of mentor, advisor, or specialist...Peer coaching relationships, teamed teaching structures, and structured classroom observations are methods used to improve both the classroom practice and collegial relationships" (pp. 760-761).

Previous administrations of the SWPC have found reliability estimates for this subscale ranging from .62 (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996) to .65 (Meehan & Cowley, 1998). However, in the current study, the subscale held together quite well, with an alpha of .83. All five of the items were correlated to a statistically significant degree of $p<.01$, with correlation coefficients ranging from .35 to .68. The five items comprising the Deprivatized Practice subscale were combined to form an average subscale score for each participant. The participants' scores were then aggregated to the building level to create mean subscale scores for each of the three schools. Table 11 displays the descriptive statistics for the Deprivatized Practice subscale and its items.

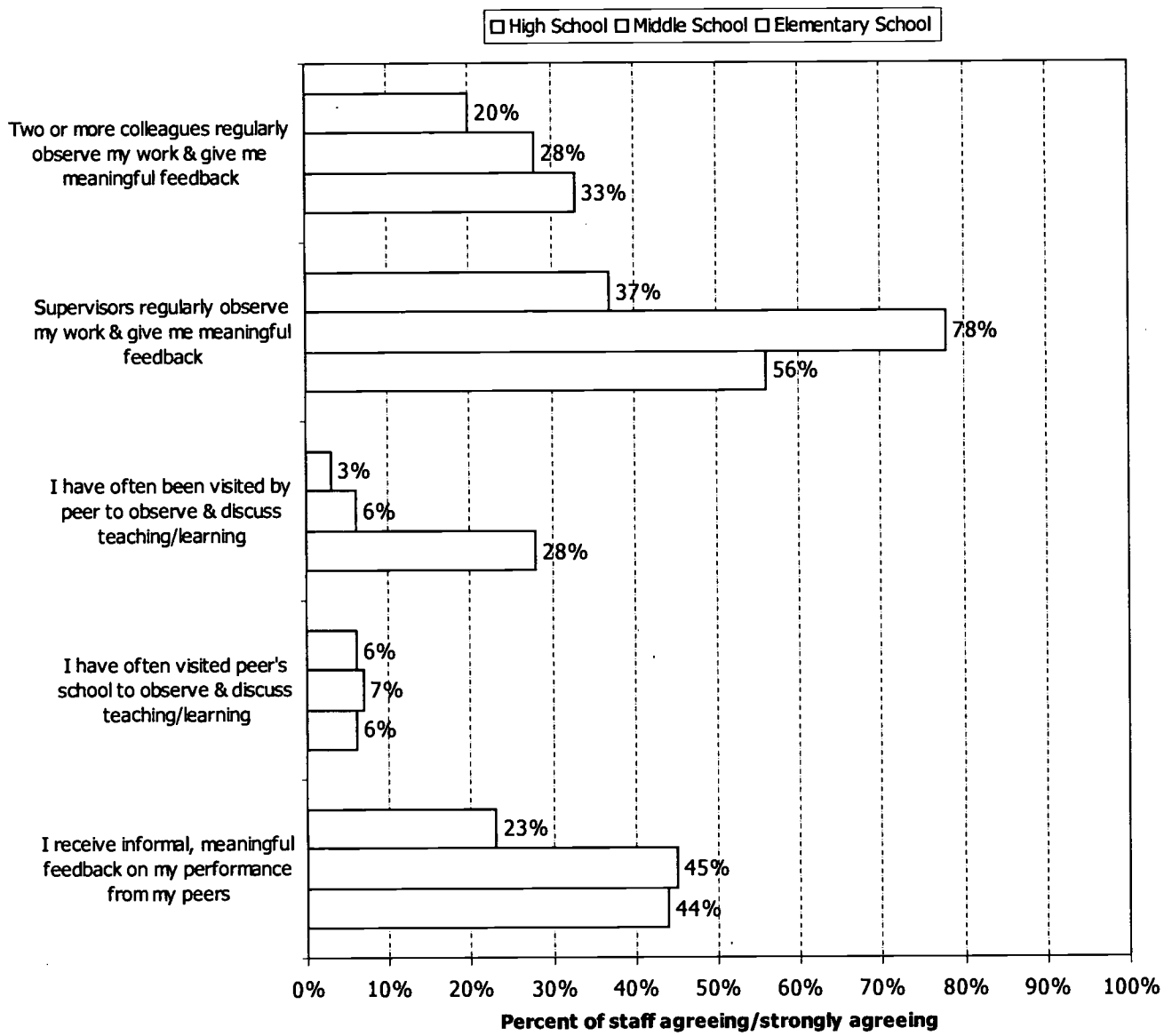
An analysis of variance comparing the subscale scores of the three groups of teachers showed a significant difference among the three sets of faculty, $F(2,68)=2.15$, $p<.05$. A Tukey post hoc examination of these differences indicated that the middle school teachers believed themselves to be engaging in significantly more sharing of practice than did the elementary school teachers (mean scores of 2.83 versus 2.27). All three schools' staff reported generally low levels of deprivatization of practice, with average item means rarely in excess of 3.0 on the five-point scale.

**Table 11: Descriptive statistics on items from the Deprivatized Practice Subscale from the SWPC.**

| Item | School | Mean | Standard Error of the Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Two or more colleagues in the building regularly observe my work in schools and give me meaningful feedback. | Elementary | 2.26 | .19 | 1.12 |
| | Middle | 2.78 | .24 | 1.00 |
| | High | 2.56 | .28 | 1.20 |
| Other than formal evaluation, my supervisor(s) regularly observe(s) my work in schools and give(s) me meaningful feedback. | Elementary | 2.77 | .21 | 1.26 |
| | Middle | 3.83 | .17 | .71 |
| | High | 3.11 | .27 | 1.13 |
| I have often been visited by a peer from another school to observe and discuss my teaching/learning situation. | Elementary | 1.83 | .16 | .95 |
| | Middle | 2.17 | .23 | .99 |
| | High | 2.61 | .28 | 1.20 |
| I have often visited a peer's school to observe and discuss his/her teaching /learning situation. | Elementary | 1.89 | .15 | .90 |
| | Middle | 2.17 | .22 | .92 |
| | High | 2.06 | .21 | .87 |
| I receive informal, meaningful feedback on my performance from my peers. | Elementary | 2.60 | .17 | 1.03 |
| | Middle | 3.22 | .24 | 1.00 |
| | High | 2.94 | .27 | 1.16 |
| **Deprivatized Practice Subscale: Overall Scores** | **Elementary** | **2.27** | **.13** | **.79** |
| | **Middle** | **2.83** | **.17** | **.70** |
| | **High** | **2.66** | **.21** | **.88** |

This subscale stands out from the others in that teachers at all three schools reported very low levels of agreement with the items comprising the subscale. Note for instance, in Figure 10 that teachers in the RCPS reported virtually no activity aimed at letting teachers observe and learn from one another by visiting other classrooms. One very noticeable exception occurred at the middle school, where supervisors were reported to have regularly observed teachers and to have given them meaningful feedback on their teaching.

**Figure 10: Comparison among Schools on the Deprivatization of Practice Subscale from the SWPC Survey.**



**Reflective Dialogue Subscale from the SWPC Survey**

The Reflective Dialogue subscale examined the extent to which teachers spent time thinking about and discussing their work and their ideas about teaching. The six items measuring the occurrence of professional discussions among staff centering on teaching, learning, and assessment held together well as a subscale, with an alpha reliability of .84.

Correlations among the six items comprising the Reflective Dialogue subscale ranged from .20 to .78. The highest correlation was found between the items concerning the occurrence of discussions centering on how students learn and on how to evaluate student learning (.78). Out of the 15 possible correlations among these items, only two correlations were found not to be significant. Both of these relationships had as one member the item, "In a typical planning period with other teachers, the groups discusses problems of specific students and arranges appropriate help."

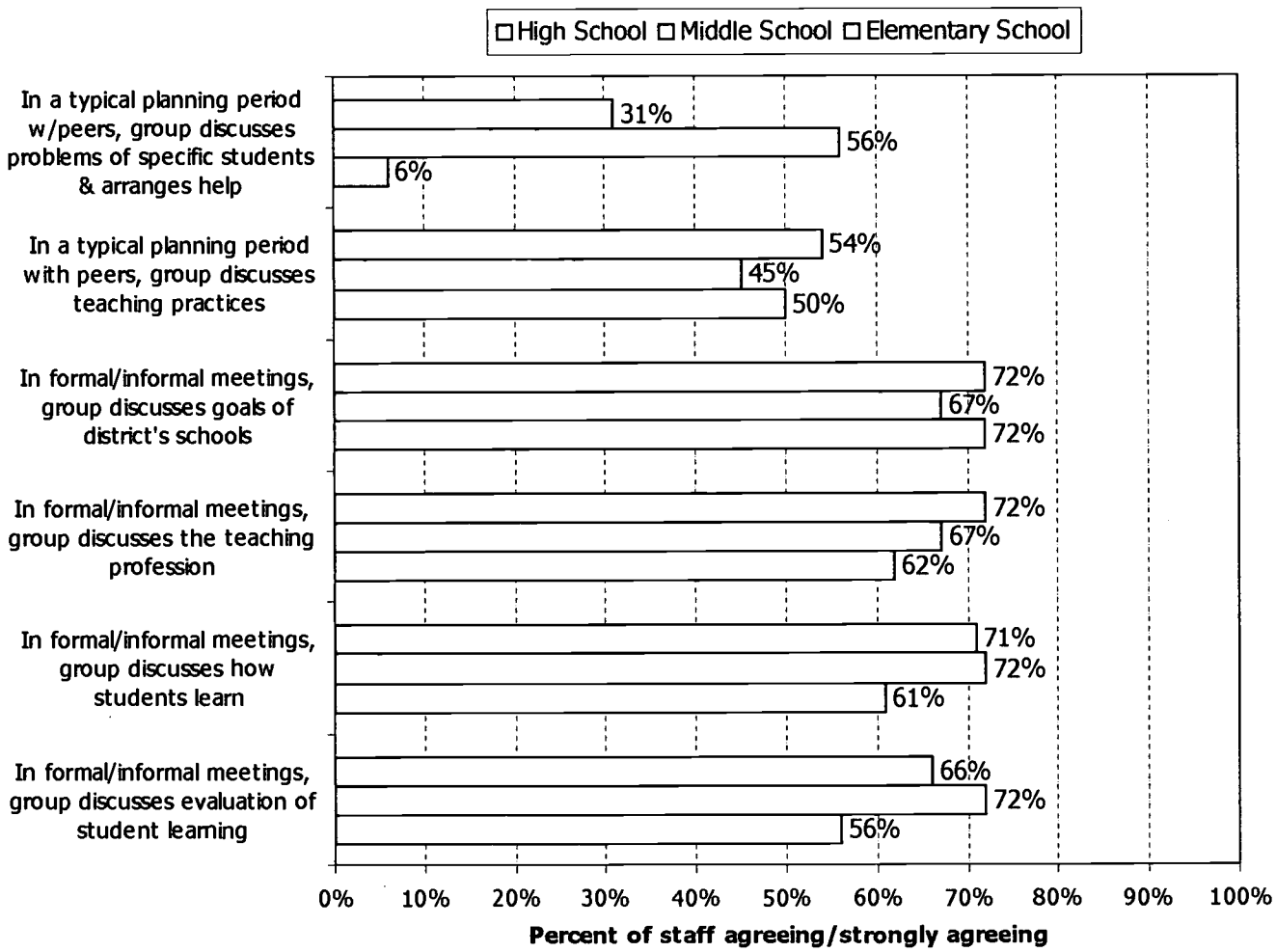
The items comprising the Reflective Dialogue subscale were combined to form an average Reflective Dialogue subscale score for each participant. The participants' scores were then aggregated to the building level to create mean subscale scores for each of the three schools. Table 12 displays the descriptive statistics for the Reflective Dialogue subscale and its items. Activities subsumed under the concept of reflective dialogue appear to have occurred most often at the middle school (mean=3.46), and least often at the high school (mean=3.16). As indicated by the teachers' responses, there was plenty of room for all the schools to spend more time on reflection.

**Table 12: Descriptive statistics on the Reflective Dialogue Subscale from the SWPC.**

| Item | School | Mean | Standard Error of Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| In a typical planning period with other teachers, the group discusses problems of specific students and arranges appropriate help. | Elementary | 2.69 | .18 | 1.08 |
| | Middle | 3.44 | .23 | .98 |
| | High | 2.56 | .18 | .78 |
| In a typical planning period with peers, the group discusses specific teaching practices and behaviors of team members in our district. | Elementary | 3.06 | .17 | 1.00 |
| | Middle | 3.39 | .20 | .85 |
| | High | 2.61 | .22 | .92 |
| In formal and informal meetings of peers, the group discusses the goals of the schools in our district. | Elementary | 3.44 | .15 | .89 |
| | Middle | 3.24 | .24 | .97 |
| | High | 3.33 | .18 | .77 |
| In formal and informal meetings of peers, the group discusses the teaching profession. | Elementary | 3.69 | .14 | .83 |
| | Middle | 3.50 | .19 | .79 |
| | High | 3.67 | .18 | .77 |
| In formal and informal meetings of peers, the group discusses how students learn. | Elementary | 3.66 | .14 | .80 |
| | Middle | 3.56 | .18 | .78 |
| | High | 3.39 | .24 | 1.04 |
| In formal and informal meetings of peers, the group discusses the evaluation of student learning. | Elementary | 3.59 | .15 | .86 |
| | Middle | 3.61 | .16 | .70 |
| | High | 3.39 | .18 | .78 |
| **Reflective Dialogue Subscale: Overall Scores** | **Elementary** | **3.35** | **.12** | **.71** |
| | **Middle** | **3.46** | **.13** | **.57** |
| | **High** | **3.16** | **.15** | **.63** |

Figure 11 presents the percentage of staff members from each school who agreed or strongly agreed with each item on the Reflective Dialogue subscale. Approximately half of the staff respondents at each school agreed that in planning periods they discussed specific teaching practices. There was also little variation between schools in how much time teachers spent discussing school goals: approximately 70% of teachers reported talking about school goals with peers. Teachers at the elementary and middle schools had a higher rate of agreement with three items compared to the high school teachers. High school teachers agreed less frequently with items assessing the occurrence of group discussions about how students learn and how to evaluate students.

**Figure 11: Comparison among Schools on the Reflective Dialogue Subscale from the SWPC Survey.**



## INDEX OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS (IPOE)

Descriptive statistics for the eight items on the Index of Perceived Organizational Effectiveness are presented in Table 13. Although the response format is unique to each of the 8 items, there is a common underthread to the survey. Higher scores on the 5-point Likert-type school indicate higher perceived organizational effectiveness.

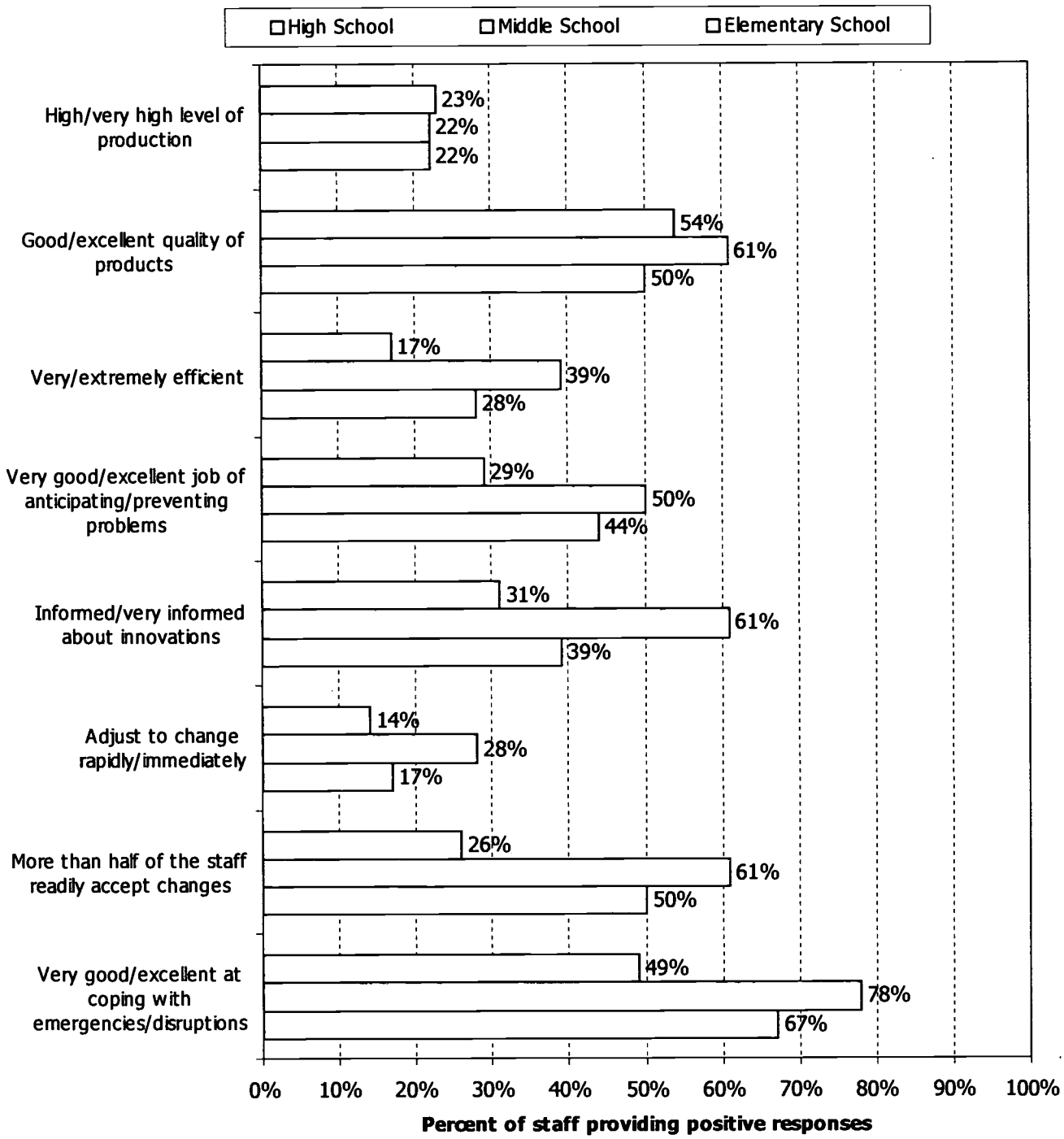
**Table 13: Item Statistics for the 1997 Administration of the Index of Organizational Effectiveness**

| School Level | # Staff Respondents | Minimum Score | Maximum Score | Mode | Median | Mean | Standard Error of the Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Elementary | 35 | 15 | 34 | 23 | 24 | 24.6 | 0.80 | 4.74 |
| Middle | 18 | 18 | 35 | 27 | 27.5 | 27.4 | 1.06 | 4.50 |
| High | 18 | 14 | 34 | 29 | 26.5 | 25.8 | 1.15 | 4.87 |
| Overall | 71 | 14 | 35 | 27 | 26 | 25.6 | 0.57 | 4.80 |

Perceived organizational effectiveness can be viewed as either a process variable indicating one facet of organizational readiness or capacity for change, or as an outcome measure providing a pre-intervention status report to compare to post-intervention perceived effectiveness. Both views have benefits. The pre-intervention picture indicates that the schools have plenty of room to grow in effectiveness from a curriculum alignment intervention.

As a measure of capacity, the effectiveness of each school provides an indicator of how the school will be able to cope with the stress and necessary demands of planned change activities. From this perspective, it is clear from Figure 12 that the items tapping adaptability and flexibility are the keys to effective change. According to its own staff, the middle school seemed to be in the best position for attempting change in the spring of 1997. However, even the middle school would need to focus on preparing staff for change ventures. The task of preparing staff for experimenting with a new change initiative would be even more of a challenge in the elementary and high schools, in which staff reported relatively low adaptability. The distribution of high scores and low scores across the effectiveness items suggests that the teachers had fallen into a pattern of reacting to stressors and disruptions on an as-needed basis—the philosophy of just getting by. Proactive change is more intimidating and will most likely be met with resistance, which is why strengthening the sense of community within the schools is essential.

**Figure 12: Comparison among Schools on the Index of Perceived Organizational Effectiveness (IPOE).**



## RURAL COUNTY OVERALL FINDINGS

The previous sections of this report have presented the results from each subscale of each instrument administered in the Rural County Public Schools in the spring of 1997. Table 14 presents the overall relationships among the three instruments used in this study. The results show significant correlations among the measures. Although it is impossible to ascertain causal relationships through correlations, there obviously is a connection between empowerment, professional community, and perceived school effectiveness. These relationships support the conception of organizational capacity as an amalgamation of these three constructs.

**Table 14: Correlation coefficients among the SPES, SWPC, and IPOE instrument scores.**

| | SPES | SWPC | IPOE |
|---|---|---|---|
| SPES | 1.00 | | |
| SWPC | .43** | 1.00 | |
| IPOE | .27* | .36** | 1.00 |

*$p$<.05.
**$p$<.01.

One interesting question was whether any significant differences existed between schools in their faculties' reported empowerment, professional community, or perceived school effectiveness. As schools begin to reflect on how to increase their capacity by raising the elements of capacity, staff will be able to share the characteristics of schools who reported higher levels of empowerment, community, or effectiveness, and learn what makes those schools "tick." To this end, school differences in the elements of capacity were examined. Professional community scores and perceived effectiveness did not differ among Rural County schools. Table 15 shows the following significant difference among teaching staff at the three schools: teachers at the elementary school reported significantly stronger feelings of empowerment (mean=3.88) than did the teachers at the high school (mean=3.62), with the middle school teachers reporting a similar level of empowerment (mean=3.86) to that of the elementary school teachers.

**Table 15: Analysis of Variance Results Comparing Total Empowerment Scores across Rural County Public Schools**

| Source of Variability | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Schools | .810 | 2 | .405 | 4.246 | .018 |
| Within Schools | 6.484 | 68 | .0954 | | |
| Total | 7.293 | 70 | | | |

The correlation matrix presented in Table 16 indicates the relationships among the SPES (empowerment) and SWPC (community) subscales and IPOE (effectiveness). The most interesting aspects of the correlation matrix in Table 16 are those relating the more process-oriented school level variables from the SPES and the SWPC, with the behavioral capacity variable of perceived school effectiveness (IPOE). The bottom row indicates that five process variables were significantly positively correlated with perceived organizational effectiveness. Specifically, teachers who believed that they had the esteem of their colleagues or who believed they are having an impact on school life were more likely to perceive their school as being effective. In addition, teachers who reported greater levels of the sharing of practice/ideas or high levels of reflective dialogue occurring in their schools also perceived greater school effectiveness. Although collective focus on student learning was not significantly correlated with perceived organizational effectiveness, it was related to staff sharing a

common purpose or vision (r=.66), collaboration (r=.44), and reflective dialogue (r=.52). Collective focus on student learning was significantly related to decision making, providing support for the hierarchical linear model proposed by Marks and Louis (1997). Taken together, these correlations suggest that additional variables may have to be accounted for in the model developed by Marks and Louis (1997). However, given the small samples in this study, true path analysis is prohibited.

**Table 16: Correlations among the subscales of the SPES and SWPC with the overall IPOE score.**

| | SPES-Decision Making | SPES-Status with Colleagues | SPES-Professional Growth | SPES-Self-Efficacy | SPES-Autonomy in Scheduling | SPES-Impact | SWPC-Shared Purpose | SWPC-Collaboration | SWPC-Focus on Student Learning | SWPC-Deprivatized Practice | SWPC-Reflective Dialogue |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| SPES-Status with Colleagues | .31** | 1.00 | | | | | | | | | |
| SPES-Professional Growth | .31** | .39** | 1.00 | | | | | | | | |
| SPES-Self-Efficacy | .35** | .15 | .54** | 1.00 | | | | | | | |
| SPES-Autonomy in Scheduling | .46** | .10 | .06 | .54** | 1.00 | | | | | | |
| SPES-Impact | .43** | .37** | .37** | .27* | .14 | 1.00 | | | | | |
| SWPC-Shared Purpose | .22 | .30* | .21 | .11 | .16 | .17 | 1.00 | | | | |
| SWPC-Collaboration | .40** | .20 | .02 | .20 | .16 | .49** | .38** | 1.00 | | | |
| SWPC-Focus on Student Learning | .28* | .18 | .27* | .23 | .20 | .22 | .66** | .44** | 1.00 | | |
| SWPC-Deprivatized Practice | .21 | .11 | .08 | -.08 | -.01 | .38** | .18 | .40** | .08 | 1.00 | |
| SWPC-Reflective Dialogue | .37** | .31** | .16 | .19 | .14 | .35** | .46** | .45** | .52** | .33** | 1.00 |
| IPOE Total Scale | .19 | .52** | .18 | -.08 | .02 | .37** | .23 | .25* | .16 | .33** | .30** |

*$p$<.05.
**$p$<.01.

## RURAL COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL STATISTICAL PORTRAITS

The results presented in the previous sections are reorganized here by school in order to give a picture of what each school was like before the technical assistance and curriculum work began in 1997. The specific data reported in each portrait can be found under the original subscale sections.

**Statistical Portrait of the Elementary School**

- During the 1996-97 school year, 47 teachers worked at the Rural County Elementary School.
  - Thirty-five of these teachers (74 percent) completed the three questionnaires.
  - Information on the elements of the surveys can be found in Table 17.

School Participant Empowerment Scale

- The elementary teachers reported high levels of agreement on some of the elements of empowerment yet low agreement on other elements.
- Half of the teachers felt they were given responsibility to monitor programs. Most (86 percent) believed they were able to teach as they chose and that they had the freedom to decide what they taught (74 percent). Although less than one-third reported being involved in school budget decisions, elementary teachers were about twice as likely to report budgetary participation than did teachers at higher grades.
- Teachers generally believed that they were respected by their colleagues and were treated as professionals.
- While 94 percent reported participation in staff development activities, only 63 percent believed they were provided with opportunities for professional growth. Almost all the teachers reported having grown professionally during the past year and valued professional development for teachers.
- Teachers felt high levels of efficacy in their jobs.
- Elementary teachers reported a great deal more latitude in determining their daily schedules than did teachers at the higher levels. Approximately two-thirds of the teachers reported agreement with schedule autonomy items.
- Elementary teachers believed they were having an impact on their school, with over 80 percent agreeing with these items. One exception is that slightly less than two-thirds (63%) of the teachers believed that principals, teachers, and school personnel solicit their advice.

School-Wide Professional Community

- Slightly more than half of the teachers agreed with items relating to a shared sense of purpose within the elementary school. Only 51 percent of the teachers believed there was close agreement on achievement standards and grading policies.
- Over half of the teachers agreed that they received useful suggestions, that there was a great deal of cooperative effort among staff, and that they made efforts to coordinate course content across schools. Less than half reported discussing common themes, materials, and activities (40%) or lesson plans, curriculum development, and other work related to instruction (29%).
- Over two thirds of the teachers reported that higher level skills (74%) and creative thinking (74%) were important goals. They also believed that staff shared a focused school vision for student learning. Fewer teachers reported that the teachers exhibit focused commitment to authentic curriculum and instruction (57%) and assessment (43%).
- Very few teachers reported sharing ideas and practices with other teachers. For instance, only one teacher reported having been visited by peers to observe and discuss teaching and learning. However, 37 percent reported that supervisors regularly observe their work and provide meaningful feedback.
- Over half of the staff reported that district goals (72%), student learning (71%), and student evaluation (66%) were discussed at meetings. Fifty-four percent of the teachers discussed teaching practices during typical planning periods.

Perceived Organizational Effectiveness

- The elementary school teachers rated their school as less effective than teachers at the other schools rated their own schools. Less than 20 percent of the teachers believed that the elementary school was very efficient or could adjust rapidly to change. Between one-quarter and one-half of the respondents reported that the elementary school had a high level of

production (23% positive responses), was very good at anticipating and preventing problems (29%), was informed about innovations (31%), or was very good at coping with emergencies and disruptions (49%). A quarter believed that at least half of the staff readily accepted changes. Fifty-four percent reported that the school produced high quality products.

**Table 17: Elementary School Teacher Response Summary**

| | Scores range from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | | | | Scale Range =8-40 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SPES-Decision Making | SPES-Status with Colleagues | SPES-Professional Growth | SPES-Self-Efficacy | SPES-Autonomy in Scheduling | SPES-Impact | SWPC-Shared Purpose | SWPC-Collaboration | SWPC-Focus on Student Learning | SWPC-Deprivatized | SWPC-Reflective Dialogue | IPOE Total Score |
| Average Score | 3.32 | 3.80 | 4.19 | 4.34 | 3.59 | 3.59 | 3.53 | 3.33 | 3.58 | 2.27 | 3.35 | 24.6 |
| Standard Deviation | .50 | .42 | .41 | .38 | .90 | .55 | .79 | .78 | .61 | .79 | .71 | 4.74 |

**Statistical Portrait of the Middle School**

- Eighteen teachers from Rural County Middle School completed the surveys.
- Information on the elements from the surveys can be found in Table 18.

School Participant Empowerment Scale

- Teachers from the middle school agreed more frequently with the decision-making items from the SPES than did teachers from the other schools, which would suggest that they may feel they have more decision-making authority than their peers. However, the overall scores on the decision-making subscale averaged 3.40, which falls between "neutral" responses and "agree" responses, so there is still quite a lot of neutrality and perhaps ambivalence toward the decision-making structure as presently instituted at the middle school. There was highest agreement with the statements, "I am able to teach as I choose" (83%), and "I am a decision maker" (95%). The least agreement was with the statements, "I make decisions about selection of teachers" (0%), and "I am involved in school budget decisions" (17%).
- Middle School teachers reported that they believe they have the respect and esteem of their colleagues. The mean score on the five-point scale for the Status with Colleagues subscale was 4.04, or a firm "agree." These teachers agreed most frequently with the statements, "I believe that I have earned respect" (89%), and "I have the support and respect of my colleagues" (89%).
- These teachers reported working in an environment that supports and provides opportunities for professional growth. The mean score on this subscale was 4.21, well above an average "agree" response, heading toward "strongly agree." While 83 percent of the teachers agreed with the statement, "I have the opportunity for professional growth, 94 percent believed in the value of professional development for teachers and reported having grown professionally in the past year.
- Middle School teachers reported almost as frequent agreement with Self-Efficacy statements as they had with the Professional Growth statements. In fact, between 83 percent and 100 percent of the teachers agreed with each of the 12 items tapping self-efficacy. The lowest frequency of agreement was with the statement, "I perceive that I am having an impact on other teachers and students," with which 83 percent of the teachers agreed.

- Teachers were neutral in their responses to items tapping autonomy in scheduling (mean=3.09). There was very little agreement with the statements, "I can determine my own schedule" (28%) and "I can plan my own schedule" (28%). The most agreement was with the statement, "I have control over daily schedules" (56%).
- Middle school teachers perceived themselves to be having slightly more of an impact on school life than did their peers at the elementary and high schools. They agreed most frequently with the items, "I am given the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers" (82%), and "I have an opportunity to teach other teachers about innovative ideas" (82%). The least agreement was found with the statement, "Principals, other teachers, and school personnel solicit my advice" (67%).

School-Wide Professional Community

- Of teachers at the three schools, middle school teachers had the lowest frequency of agreement with items tapping agreement and acceptance of the school's central mission. The mean score on this subscale was 3.30, or between "neutral" and "agree." They agreed most frequently with the statement, "Most colleagues share my beliefs and values about the school's mission" (72%), and least often with the statements, "There is close agreement on achievement standards and grading policies" (33%) and "There is close agreement on expectations for student learning" (39%).
- Professional learning communities typically exhibit more collaborative activity than was occurring at the middle school. While over half of the teachers agreed that they receive useful suggestions for curriculum materials (61%) and teaching techniques (67%) from colleagues, very few reported that they decided on common themes, materials and activities (11%) or lesson plans and curriculum development (28%).
- Middle school teachers had the lowest reported agreement with items comprising the Collective Focus on Student Learning subscale of the teachers at the three schools (mean=3.10, or "neutral"). The greatest number of teachers (61%) agreed with the statements, "A focused school vision for student learning is shared by most staff," and "Higher level skills, such as problem solving and critical thinking, are important goals of our students." The fewest teachers agreed with the statements assessing teacher commitment to authentic curriculum and instruction (22%) and authentic assessment (28%).
- More middle school teachers agreed with items assessing the sharing of practice among teachers (mean=2.83) than teachers at the other schools. However, even the highest average level of agreement was still low, between "disagree" and "neutral." For example, less than 10 percent of the teachers agreed that they had visited or been visited by a peer to observe the other's classroom practices. However, 78 percent of middle school teachers agreed that supervisors regularly observed their work and provided useful feedback.
- Middle school teachers did report that at least some reflective dialogue on teaching was taking place (mean=3.46). They reported the most agreement with items tapping discussion of how students learn and the evaluation of students (both 72%). This is an interesting finding given that teachers reported little agreement on *decisions* involving common themes, activities, lesson plans, or curriculum development (see collaboration results above).

Perceived Organizational Effectiveness

- Middle school teachers viewed their school as more effective than the teachers at the other schools perceived those schools to be.
- In particular, teachers believed that the middle school was very good at coping with emergencies and disruptions (78% positive responses), was well informed about innovations (61% positive responses), and provided very good quality products to their students (61%).
- However, only 22 percent of the teachers perceived a high level of production at the school, and only 28 percent believed that the staff could rapidly adjust to change.

**Table 18: Middle School Teacher Response Summary**

| | Scores range from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | | | | Scale Range =8-40 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SPES-Decision Making | SPES-Status with Colleagues | SPES-Professional Growth | SPES-Self-Efficacy | SPES-Autonomy in Scheduling | SPES-Impact | SWPC-Shared Purpose | SWPC-Collaboration | SWPC-Focus on Student Learning | SWPC-Deprivatized Practice | SWPC-Reflective Dialogue | IPOE Total Score |
| Average Score | 3.40 | 4.04 | 4.21 | 4.16 | 3.09 | 3.72 | 3.30 | 3.27 | 3.10 | 2.83 | 3.46 | 27.4 |
| Standard Deviation | .46 | .57 | .44 | .38 | .78 | .53 | .57 | .61 | .75 | .70 | .57 | 4.50 |

**Statistical Portrait of the High School**

- Eighteen high school teachers responded to the survey instruments.
- Information on high school teacher responses to the survey elements can be found in Table 19.

School Participant Empowerment Scale

- The high school teachers reported the least decision-making authority of teachers at the three schools. In particular, they were least likely to agree with the following statements: "I make decisions about the selection of teachers" (0%), "I am involved in school budget decisions" (11%), and "I make decisions about the implementation of new programs" (17%). Over half of the high school teachers agreed that they were able to teach as they chose (61%), have the freedom to make decisions about what is taught (56%), make decisions about curriculum (56%), and that they are decision makers (67%).
- High school teacher respondents were fairly certain that they had the respect of their colleagues. Although only two-thirds of the respondents agreed that they functioned in a professional environment, had earned respect, and were treated as professionals, almost all believed that they had the support and respect of colleagues.
- These teachers agreed that the high school provided them with opportunities to continuously increase their skills and knowledge as professionals. All of the respondents believed in the value of teachers' professional development. Almost all (89%) felt that they were involved in an important program for children and that they had grown professionally in the prior year.
- Despite a high average score, these teachers reported less self-efficacy than their peers at the other schools (mean=3.95). Fewer than 80 percent of the teachers agreed with the following statements: "I believe that I am very effective" (72%); "I believe that I am empowering students" (67%); "I believe that I am having an impact" (78%); and "I perceive that I am having an impact on other teachers and students" (56%).
- Not surprisingly given the traditional format of high school class scheduling, the high school teachers did not report much agreement with items tapping autonomy in scheduling. While 45 percent agreed that they had control over daily schedules, only 28 percent reported being able to plan their own schedule, and 22 percent being able to determine their own schedule.
- The teachers believed that they were having at least some impact on school life (mean=3.57). The most frequent agreement was with items concerning collaboration and sharing innovative ideas with other teachers. The least agreement was with the item, "Principals, other teachers, and school personnel solicit my advice" (44%).

School-Wide Professional Community

- High school teachers averaged between a "neutral" and an "agree" response on the items assessing the extent to which staff members accept the central mission of the school. There was the most agreement with the item, "Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about the school's mission" (83%). The least agreement was on the item tapping staff agreement on achievement standards and grading policies (56%).
- The teachers reported only a modest amount of collaboration occurring at the high school. Exchanging suggestions with peers occurred between slightly less than two-thirds of the respondents (61%). One-third of the teachers reported making conscious efforts to coordinate course content across schools and meeting often with others to discuss lesson plans, curriculum development and other work related to instruction. Twenty-two percent agreed that in a typical planning period, teachers decided upon common themes, materials, and activities.
- High school teachers were much more likely than teachers from the other schools to agree that they exhibited reasonably focused commitment to authentic curriculum and instruction (78% compared to Elementary=57% and Middle=22%). There was also significant agreement with statements concerning a shared and focused school vision (72%), and a focused commitment to authentic assessment (61%).
- Questions were asked concerning the extent to which the teachers shared their practices with each other. Approximately half of the high school teachers (56%) agreed that supervisors regularly observed their work and provided meaningful feedback. Forty-four percent received informal, meaningful feedback on their performance from peers. Twenty-eight percent reported being visited by peers who observed and discussed teaching, but the respondents rarely visited a peer's classroom (6%).
- High school teachers reported less reflective dialogue than did the other teachers (mean=3.16, or "neutral"). Almost three-quarters (72%) agreed that teachers discussed the district's goals. Sixty-one percent reported discussing how students learn, and 56 percent discussed evaluation of student learning in formal or informal meetings.

Perceived Organizational Effectiveness

- High school teachers reported that staff members were very good at *reacting* and coping with emergencies and disruptions (67% positive responses).
- However, *proactive* effectiveness was not rated as highly. For instance, 39 percent reported being informed about innovations, and 44 percent reported staff to be doing a very good or excellent job of anticipating and preventing problems.
- Half believed that the school was delivering good or excellent quality products to their students.
- Twenty-two percent reported high levels of production, and 28 percent believed that the staff worked efficiently.

**Table 19: High School Teacher Response Summary**

| | Scores range from 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree | | | | | | | | | | | Scale Range = 8-40 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SPES-Decision Making | SPES-Status with Colleagues | SPES-Professional Growth | SPES-Self-Efficacy | SPES-Autonomy in Scheduling | SPES-Impact | SWPC-Shared Purpose | SWPC-Collaboration | SWPC-Focus on Student Learning | SWPC-Deprivatized Practice | SWPC-Reflective Dialogue | IPOE Total Score |
| Average Score | 3.08 | 3.80 | 4.07 | 3.95 | 2.78 | 3.57 | 3.59 | 3.32 | 3.41 | 2.66 | 3.16 | 25.8 |
| Standard Deviation | .41 | .59 | .42 | .37 | 1.08 | .45 | .60 | .66 | .65 | .88 | .63 | 4.87 |

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The review and analysis of the data from the three surveys suggest that the schools in Rural County have some strengths to draw upon, but that there are areas in which the schools need to develop capacity if they are to succeed in their reform efforts.

## Conclusions

Improving student performance in the long term takes enormous effort that is difficult to sustain over time. According to Michael Fullan, writing in Phi Delta Kappan in 1996, "To put it bluntly, existing school cultures and structures are antithetical to the kinds of activities envisioned by systemic reform. Thus, until these more basic conditions begin to change, the best networking efforts will fall short...Systemic reform mainly involves strategies that help develop and mobilize the conceptions, skills, and motivation in the minds and hearts of scores of educators" (p. 422). The results from the surveys administered to the staff of the three Rural County Public Schools provide a picture of a school district that is grappling with daunting challenges but also is equipped with a number of strengths. In the spring of 1997, the Rural County Public Schools were composed of staff who believed they were good teachers, who believed they worked with good teachers, and who wanted to make a difference in children's lives. The staff wanted to grow professionally. However, structures within the schools were making it difficult for staff to function as a professional learning community because the structures did not support decision-making models that maximized teacher input and power.

The teacher empowerment measure administered in Rural County captured six components associated with empowerment. Teachers generally believed that four out of the six elements were present. Specifically, they held status with colleagues, participated in staff development and believed it was important, felt self-efficacious as educators, and believed they were having an impact on school life. These teachers did not have autonomy in scheduling their workday. This characteristic of empowerment is not necessarily essential, however. Most importantly, teachers experienced a lack of empowerment when defined as meaningful engagement in decision making. Without the power to make decisions concerning their work environment and student learning, teachers are not likely to develop a sense of ownership over the notion of turning the school into a high functioning learning community, and will be less committed to improvement initiatives.

Engaging teachers in decision making leads to the co-construction of the district's mission and purpose (Marks & Louis, 1997). This finding from previous studies is supported here. Teachers were ambivalent about the existence of a strong and shared vision. The school must achieve a critical mass of staff dedicated to the achievement of a common vision (Fullan, 1996). Most of the high school teachers confirmed that there is an accepted shared sense of purpose at the high school. Results from the SWPC Survey suggest that teachers at the elementary and middle schools were not as uniform or committed to their belief in a shared school mission.

An essential practice in a professional learning community is collaborative activity. Collaboration can and should exist at multiple levels. At the most manifest and frequent level is collaboration between teachers to share curricula and activities. In Rural County, only a modest amount of such collaborative activity was taking place during the 1996-97 school year. Teachers agreed with the general statement that there was a "great deal of cooperative effort among staff." However, when asked about specific collaborative activities, there was far lower agreement that such activities were occurring. No more than two-thirds of teacher respondents at any school agreed that any specific collaboration effort was occurring. Collaboration during common planning periods appear to have been especially rare.

One way in which effective school districts utilize collaborative activity to their advantage is to advocate the coordination of course content across schools. In an increasing number of states, such coordination of content is becoming necessary as a means of responding to mandated standards, such as Virginia's Standards of Learning. As districts evaluate their curricula, teachers across grade levels and schools must learn to work together in developing K-12 curricula in which student skills and knowledge build upon each other as students progress through higher grades. In Rural County, half of the elementary school teachers (54%) reported on the SWPC Survey that they consciously attempt to coordinate course content across schools. However, only 44% of middle school teachers, and 33% of high school teachers reported coordinating course content across schools. Although teachers may have not reported high levels of coordination because there is only one school of each level in the district, there is also the likelihood that such coordinated activity was simply not occurring.

The results from the Deprivatization of Practice subscale of the SWPC indicated that very little cross-fertilization of idea was occurring in the schools. The modern teacher is confronted with complex and difficult tasks as he or she prepares an increasingly diverse population of students for a competitive and technologically sophisticated world. There is simply too much for one teacher to know.

According to Marks and Louis (1997), professional learning communities help faculties to develop a collective focus on student learning, and this focus directly predicts gains in student achievement. The teachers in the Rural County schools need to focus on developing their sense of collective responsibility for student learning. The ambivalence toward the statements concerning developing higher order and creative thinking skills in students is particularly disturbing. Although 74% of the elementary school teachers reported a focus on these skills, the percentages of middle and high school teachers who agreed that these were important learning goals in the district were much lower (between 45 and 61 percent).

Obviously, Rural County faces challenges in the coming years. There are many changes that need to be made in order to bring the school district, and its teachers and students, well-prepared into the new century. The results from the SPES and SWPC Survey send a loud and clear message to administrators that the teachers believe they make curriculum decisions, and that they want to learn how to improve their teaching. These teachers highly value professional development and participate in staff development activities when given the opportunity. They also feel empowered to make decisions in their own teaching.

## Recommendations

These perceptions form a good foundation for developing a professional learning community. However, several additional steps must occur.

- District and school leaders should seriously consider providing time and establishing expectations for teachers to work together to make decisions about the K-12 curriculum and instruction.
- Teachers need to ensure that they are teaching the higher level skills by incorporating these skills into the curriculum. Without developing higher-level skills, it is unlikely that Rural County students will pass the Standards of Learning assessments and certainly will not be prepared to enter the workforce of the twenty-first century.
- School administrators need to focus on developing opportunities for collaboration between themselves and teachers, and supporting teachers' efforts to collaborate with their peers both within their school and between schools to develop a shared vision for the district or to plan for improvement.

- As Rural County responds to the state guidelines in order to maintain accreditation, teachers and administrators must develop the skill of collaborating with other teachers in other schools in order to improve types of activities and curriculum elements offered Rural County students so that they can perform successfully on the Standards of Learning assessments.
- School structures and processes that encourage teachers to share ideas and learn from one another are essential and need to be put in place in RCPS.
- There is a need for administrators to provide common planning periods so that teachers can collaborate on themes, materials, activities, lesson plans within schools and grade levels to increase consistency and equity of curriculum and instruction experienced by students.
- Administrators and others need to lead teachers toward a collective focus on student learning.

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# APPENDIXES

A: "Teacher Questionnaire" (School Participant Empowerment Scale)

B: "School Questionnaire" (School-Wide Professional Community Survey)

C: "School Organization Questionnaire" (Index of Perceived Organizational Effectiveness)

D: Evaluation Standards Checklist

APPENDIX A

"Teacher Questionnaire"

(School Participant Empowerment Scale)

# Teacher Questionnaire—B*

Last Four Social Security Numbers: ___ ___ ___ ___ Date: _____

**Directions:** This questionnaire concerns your perceptions of how you view your teaching role. There are no right or wrong responses. Please read each numbered statement carefully. Then respond by circling one of the responses on the scale of Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA). Please do not skip any statements.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SD | D | N | A | SA |

1. I am given the responsibility to monitor programs.
   SD D N A SA

2. I function in a professional environment.
   SD D N A SA

3. I believe that I have earned respect.
   SD D N A SA

4. I believe that I am helping kids become independent learners.
   SD D N A SA

5. I have control over daily schedules.
   SD D N A SA

6. I believe that I have the ability to get things done.
   SD D N A SA

7. I make decisions about the implementation of new programs in school.
   SD D N A SA

8. I am treated as a professional.
   SD D N A SA

9. I believe that I am very effective.
   SD D N A SA

10. I believe that I am empowering students.
    SD D N A SA

11. I am able to teach as I choose.
    SD D N A SA

12. I participate in staff development.
    SD D N A SA

13. I make decisions about the selection of other teachers for my school.
    SD D N A SA

14. I have the opportunity for professional growth.
    SD D N A SA

15. I have the respect of my colleagues.
    SD D N A SA

16. I feel that I am involved in an important program for children.
    SD D N A SA

17. I have the freedom to make decisions on what is taught.
    SD D N A SA

18. I have grown professionally during the past year.
    SD D N A SA

19. I believe that I am having an impact.
    SD D N A SA





(over)

20. I believe in the value of professional development for teachers.

SD D N A SA

1. I am involved in school budget decisions.

SD D N A SA

2. I work at a school where kids come first.

SD D N A SA

3. I have the support and respect of my colleagues.

SD D N A SA

24. I see students learn.

SD D N A SA

25. I make decisions about curriculum.

SD D N A SA

26. I am a decision maker.

SD D N A SA

27. I am given the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers.

SD D N A SA

28. I believe that I have the ability to get things done.

SD D N A SA

29. I have a strong knowledge base in the areas in which I teach.

SD D N A SA

30. I believe that I have the ability to grow by working daily with students.

SD D N A SA

31. I perceive that I have the opportunity to influence others.

SD D N A SA

32. I can determine my own schedule.

SD D N A SA

33. I have the opportunity to collaborate with other teachers my school.

D N A SA

34. I perceive that I am making a difference.

SD D N A SA

35. Principals, other teachers, and school personnel solicit my advice.

SD D N A SA

36. I believe that I am good at what I do.

SD D N A SA

37. I can plan my own schedule.

SD D N A SA

38. I perceive that I am having an impact on other teachers and students.

SD D N A SA

39. My advice is solicited by others.

SD D N A SA

40. I have an opportunity to teach other teachers about innovative ideas.

SD D N A SA

41. What grade(s) do you teach?

_____

42. What subject(s) do you teach?_____

43. Counting this year, how many years have you taught in any school? _____

44. Counting this year, how many years have you taught in *this* school? _____

45. Check the *one category* that describes how many degrees and credits you have now.

____Bachelors ____Masters
____Bachelors +15 ____Masters +15
____Bachelors +30 or more ____Masters +30 or more
____Education Specialists Degree
____Doctors Degree
____Other (Explain)_____

_____

46. Check one: ____Female ____Male

47. Your age is _____ years.

*Source: Klecker, B. & Loadman, W. E. (1996, April). *An analysis of the school participant empowerment scale (Short & Rinehart, 1992) based on data from 4091 teachers in 183 restructuring schools.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Ameri-

APPENDIX B

"School Questionnaire"

(School-Wide Professional Community Survey)

# School Questionnaire—C*

Last Four Social Security Numbers: ___ ___ ___ ___ Date: _____

**Directions:** This questionnaire concerns your perceptions of how much your school is a community. There are no right or wrong responses. Please read each numbered statement carefully. Then respond by circling one of the response options on the scale of Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA). Please respond in terms of this school, its staff, and students.

| Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither Disagree nor Agree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SD | D | N | A | SA |

Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be.

SD D N A SA

2. Goals and priorities for the school are clear.

SD D N A SA

3. The district's vision for its schools is accepted by teachers and administrators.

SD D N A SA

4. In the district's schools, the teachers and the administration are in close agreement on achievement standards and grading policies.

SD D N A SA

5. There is close agreement among teachers and administrators on expectations for student learning in this district.

SD D N A SA

6. I receive many useful suggestions for curriculum materials from colleagues in my department, unit, or district.

SD D N A SA

7. I receive many useful suggestions for teaching techniques or student activities to share from colleagues in

8. There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members in my department, unit, or district.

SD D N A SA

9. I make a conscious effort to coordinate the content of my courses across the district's schools.

SD D N A SA

10. In a typical planning period with others in my district, the group decides common themes and suggests related materials and activities to guide instruction in the district's schools.

SD D N A SA

11. I meet often with others in my district regarding lesson planning, curriculum development, guidance and counseling, evaluation of programs, or other collaborative work related to instruction.

SD D N A SA

12. Higher level skills (reasoning, problem solving, critical thinking) are important student goals of our district's students.

SD D N A SA

13. Creative thinking is an important student goal for our district's students.

SD D N A SA

14. Teachers in our district focus on what and how well students are learning rather than on how they are teaching.

SD D N A SA

15. Teachers in our district exhibit a reasonably focused commitment to authentic curriculum and instruction.

SD D N A SA

16. Teachers in our district exhibit a reasonably focused commitment to authentic assessment.

SD D N A SA

17. A focused school vision for student learning is shared by most staff in the schools in our district.

SD D N A SA

18. Two or more colleagues in the building regularly observe my work in schools and give me meaningful feedback.

SD D N A SA

19. Other than formal evaluation, my supervisor(s) regularly observe(s) my work in schools and give(s) me meaningful feedback.

SD D N A SA

20. I have often been visited by a peer from another school to observe and discuss my teaching/learning situation.

SD D N A SA

21. I have often visited a peer's school to observe and discuss his/her teaching/learning situation.

SD D N A SA

22. I receive informal, meaningful feedback on my performance from my peers.

SD D N A SA

23. In a typical planning period with other teachers, the group discusses problems of specific schools and arranges appropriate help.

SD D N A SA

24. In a typical planning period with peers, the group discusses specific teaching practices and behaviors of team members in our district.

SD D N A SA

25. In formal and informal meetings of peers, the group discusses the goals of the schools in our district.

SD D N A SA

26. In formal and informal meetings of peers, the group discusses the teaching profession.

SD D N A SA

27. In formal and informal meetings of peers, the group discusses how students learn.

SD D N A SA

28. In formal and informal meetings of peers, the group discusses the evaluation of student learning.

SD D N A SA

29. Check one: _____Female _____Male

30. Your age is _____ years.

31. What grade(s) do you teach, administer or supervise?

_____

32. What is your job title for 51% or more of your time?

_____

_____

33. Counting this year, how many years have you taught, administered, or supervised in *any* school?_____

34. Counting this year, how many years have you *taught* in *this* school district? (Skip if not applicable)

_____

35. Check the *one category* that describes how many diplomas, degrees, and credits you have now.

____Bachelors ____Masters

____Bachelors +15 or more ____Masters +15 or more

____Education Specialists Degree

____Doctors Degree

____Other (Explain)_____

_____





*Source: Louis, K. S. & Marks, H. (1996, April). *Does professional community affect the classroom? Teachers' work and the student experiences in restructuring schools.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Asso-

APPENDIX C

"School Organization Questionnaire"

(Index of Perceived Organizational Effectiveness)

# School Organization Questionnaire—VA

**Last Four** Social Security Numbers: ___ ___ ___ ___ Date: _____

**Directions:** These questions concern your perceptions of your school's overall effectiveness. There are no right or wrong answers. Every educator and staff member produces something during their work in the school. The following "products" and services are just a few of the things that result from schools' work:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Lesson Plans | Student Learning | Co-Curricular Activities |
| Curriculum | Community Projects | Parent Involvement |
| Art & Music Programs | Instruction. | Clean Schools |

Please indicate your response to each of the first eight numbered questions by **circling a number** from 1 (low) to 5 (high) on the scale provided under the question or by **marking an "X"** on scale.

1. Of the various things produced by the people you know in your school(s), how much are they producing?

| Low Production | Fairly Low Production | Moderate Production | High Production | Very High Production |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

2. How good is the quality of the products or services produced by the people you know in your school(s)?

| Poor Quality | Low Quality | Fair Quality | Good Quality | Excellent Quality |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

3. Do the people in your school(s) get maximum output from the available resource (money, people, equipment, etc.)? That is, how efficiently do they do their work?

| Not Efficiently | Not Very Efficiently | Fairly Efficiently | Very Efficiently | Extremely Efficiently |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

4. How good a job is done by the people in your school(s) in anticipating problems and preventing them from occurring or minimizing their effects?

| A Poor Job | An Adequate Job | A Fair Job | A Very Good Job | An Excellent Job |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |





5. How informed are the people in ur school(s) about innovations at could affect the way they do their work?

| Uninformed | Somewhat Informed | Moderately Informed | Informed | Very Informed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6. When changes are made in methods, routines, or equipment, how quickly do the people in your school(s) accept and adjust to the changes?

| Very Slowly | Rather Slowly | Fairly Rapidly | Rapidly | Immediately |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

7. How many of the people in your school(s) readily accept and adjust to the changes?

| Few, if Any | Less than Half | About Half | More Than Half | Almost Everyone |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

8. How good a job do the people in your school(s) do in coping with emergencies and disruptions?

| A Poor Job | An Adequate Job | A Fair Job | A Very Good Job | An Excellent Job |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

9. What is your role in the school(s)? **(check only one)**

____Community Organization Representative
____Student
____I participated as a parent
____Principal/Assistant Principal
____Counselor/Psychiatrist
____Classroom Teacher
____Teacher's Aide
____Itinerant Teacher (not at Bldg. full time)
____Title I Teacher
____School Staff (secretary, custodian, cook)
____Assistant Superintendent
____Curriculum Supervisor
____Department Head/Chair
____Other (Explain: _____)

10. Do you teach full time or part time? (Mark one; skip if not applicable)

_____Full Time _____Part Time

11. Counting this year, how many years have you taught, administered, or supervised in *this* school district? (Skip if not applicable)

_____ years

12. Check the *one category* that describes how many diplomas, degrees, and credits you have now.

____High School
____Bachelors
____Masters
____Bachelors +15
____Masters +15
____Bachelors +30
____Masters +30
____Bachelors +45
____Masters +45
____Bachelors +60
____Masters +60
____Education Specialists Degree
____Doctors Degree
____Other (Explain)_____

_____

13. Check one:

____Female ____Male

r age is _____ years.

## APPENDIX D:

## Evaluation Standards Checklist

# Citation Form

*The Program Evaluation Standards* (1994, Sage) guided the development of this (check one):

_____ request for evaluation plan/design/proposal
_____ evaluation plan/design/proposal
_____ evaluation contract
__XX__ evaluation report
_____ other: _____

To interpret the information provided on this form, the reader needs to refer to the full text of the standards as they appear in Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation, *The Program Evaluation Standards* (1994), Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

The *Standards* were consulted and used as indicated in the table below (check as appropriate):

| Descriptor | | The Standard was deemed applicable and to the extent feasible was taken into account. | The Standard was deemed applicable but could not be taken into account. | The Standard was not deemed applicable. | Exception was taken to the Standard. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| U1 | Stakeholder Identification | XXXXX | | | |
| U2 | Evaluator Credibility | XXXXX | | | |
| U3 | Information Scope and Selection | XXXXX | | | |
| U4 | Values Identification | XXXXX | | | |
| U5 | Report Clarity | XXXXX | | | |
| U6 | Report Timeliness and Dissemination | | XXXXX (No evaluator assigned until 1999) | | |
| U7 | Evaluation Impact | XXXXX | | | |
| F1 | Practical Procedures | XXXXX | | | |
| F2 | Political Viability | XXXXX | | | |
| F3 | Cost Effectiveness | XXXXX | | | |
| F4 | Service Orientation | XXXXX | | | |
| P2 | Formal Agreements | | | XXXXX | |
| P3 | Rights of Human Subjects | XXXXX | | | |
| P4 | Human Interactions | XXXXX | | | |
| P5 | Complete and Fair Assessment | XXXXX | | | |
| P6 | Disclosure of Findings | XXXXX | | | |
| P7 | Conflict of Interest | XXXXX | | | |
| P8 | Fiscal Responsibility | XXXXX | | | |
| A1 | Program Documentation | XXXXX | | | |
| A2 | Context Analysis | XXXXX | | | |
| A3 | Described Purposes and Procedures | XXXXX | | | |
| A4 | Defensible Information Sources | XXXXX | | | |
| A5 | Valid Information | XXXXX | | | |
| A6 | Reliable Information | XXXXX | | | |
| A7 | Systematic Information | XXXXX | | | |
| A8 | Analysis of Quantitative Information | XXXXX | | | |
| A9 | Analysis of Qualitative Information | | | XXXXX | |
| A10 | Justified Conclusions | XXXXX | | | |
| A11 | Impartial Reporting | XXXXX | | | |
| A12 | Metaevaluation | XXXXX | | | |

Name Kristine L. Nilsen (typed) Date: August 5, 1999

Kristine L Nilsen (signature)

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Relation to Document: Author
(e.g., author of document, evaluation team leader, external auditor, internal auditor)

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