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North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey Interim Report

Submitted to Governor Mike Easley

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By

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Executive Summary

Since 2002, North Carolina, under the leadership of Governor Mike Easley and the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission, has worked to improve understanding of a critical factor in student learning and teacher retention: the conditions under which teachers work. Data from the previous surveys in 2002 and 2004 indicate that improving teacher working conditions—time, professional development, leadership, empowerment, and facilities and resources—will improve student learning conditions and help retain teachers.

About the Survey

In 2006, 66 percent (more than 75,000) school-based licensed educators responded to the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. More than 85 percent of the state's schools (1,985) reached the minimum response rate (40 percent) necessary to have valid data, providing information needed to gauge the successes and areas of concerns in their own schools and communities.

Findings

While a final report is not expected until student achievement, teacher turnover and other state data can be analyzed (February 1, 2007), several trends can be discerned from the survey data and are reported in greater detail in the full interim report.

Teacher Working Conditions in North Carolina Have Improved and Conditions are Better Than in Other States.

On most areas of the survey (the exception being professional development), the proportion of teachers noting positive conditions of work in their school has increased since 2004. Additionally, educators in North Carolina were more positive about working conditions than teachers in Kansas, Arizona, Ohio and Clark County, Nevada participating in similar initiatives using a core of identical working condition questions.

Teacher Working Conditions Have an Impact on Teacher Turnover.

In schools with the lowest turnover rates, teachers were more likely to report that positive working conditions were in place, particularly in the areas of leadership and empowerment. Additionally, teachers were asked about their future employment plans on the survey, allowing an immediate examination of whether teachers who want to leave their school (13 percent) had different perceptions of their working conditions. On all questions, those who wanted to keep teaching but move schools were far less likely to note the presence of important working conditions than those who plan on staying at their current school. Those who want to stay in their current school are much more likely to believe that leadership is making efforts to address working conditions.

Teachers and Administrators View Working Conditions Differently.

As was the case in 2004, principals and other administrators are more likely than teachers to believe that positive working conditions are present in their school. For example, while 51 percent of teachers believe that “teachers are centrally involved in decision making about important education issues,” virtually all (96 percent) principals agree that

they involve teachers.. Similarly, only 50 percent of teachers agree that there is time available to collaborate with colleagues, but 83 percent of principals believe that this time is available. Additionally, principals are much more likely than teachers to believe they are addressing these working conditions.

Teachers, Particularly Elementary Educators, Want More Planning and Collaborative Time.

As was the case in 2004, time was the working condition where educators were the most negative. This is particularly concerning as teachers indicated that time is the most important working condition for influencing student learning. While about one-third of elementary educators believe the non-instructional time they have for planning and collaboration is sufficient (37.2 percent), about three-fifths of middle school (57.2 percent) and high school (59.5 percent) agree they have enough time. Elementary teachers are also less likely than middle school educators (50.9 percent vs. 65.6 percent) to agree that they have time available to collaborate with colleagues. This perception exists due to the reality of time available. Elementary educators report receiving far less planning time than their middle and high school counterparts. A full 94 percent of elementary teachers report receiving, on average, less than an hour per day that could be used for planning (94 percent) compared to middle school (62 percent) and high school (57 percent).

Teachers are Positive about the Facilities and Resources Available.

Overall, facilities and resources was the working condition where educators were the most positive. However, it was also the area where the greatest disparity between the original 16 Disadvantaged Supplemental Student Funding (DSSF) districts and the rest of the state. Educators generally agree that their school is safe (83 percent), well maintained (73 percent) and also agree that there are sufficient instructional materials (73 percent), instructional technology (73 percent) and office equipment (70 percent). While these are positive trends, more than 20,000 educators who responded to the survey did not agree that they have sufficient instructional materials.

Teachers Do Not Feel Centrally Involved in Decision Making as They Do Not Participate in School-Level Decisions and Often Do Not Have an Effective Group Decision Making Process Available.

Only 53 percent of educators in North Carolina feel centrally involved in decision making and agree that there is an effective process for making group decisions (50 percent). These feelings about efficacy may be due to teachers playing a lesser role in setting direction around school policies (hiring, budget, in-service planning, improvement planning) than classroom decisions (grading, assessment, curriculum). The current School Improvement Team (SIT) statute may merit examination to ensure that SITs are an effective vehicle for representing teachers. Only 40 percent indicated they vote for members and 58 percent said the SIT provides effective leadership.

Teachers are Positive about Leaderships' Ability to Communicate, But Want More Support in Addressing Working Conditions.

Teachers were generally satisfied with their school leadership, particularly on issues related to communicating clear expectations, holding teachers to high professional standards, and handling teacher performance evaluations effectively. However, there were also shortcomings identified by educators in the survey related to leadership. School leadership (including, but not necessarily just the principal) was oftentimes considered less effective in enforcing discipline policies, shielding teachers from disruption and addressing the improvement of working conditions (particularly in the area of leadership and empowerment).

Teachers Were Positive about the Professional Development They Received, But Did Not Receive What They Needed Most.

Teachers believe they need the professional development around diversifying instruction; working with special education students (50 percent), Limited English Proficient students (43 percent), closing the achievement gap (41 percent) and working with gifted students (23 percent). However, it was in these areas where educators were least likely to have received at least ten hours of professional development over the past two years (17 percent, 9 percent, 21 percent and 8 percent respectively). About half of teachers believe that professional development provides them with the knowledge and skills they need to be effective (teachers are much more positive about specific opportunities they have received). Similarly, only about half of teachers agree that sufficient funds and resources are available to take advantage of professional development opportunities.

New Teachers are Generally Positive about Mentoring Received, but Many Educators Do Not Appear to Be Receiving Any Support.

New teachers (those with three years experience or less – roughly 10,000 respondents) indicate that mentoring was effective in several areas. In particular, mentors provided helpful general encouragement and social support (71 percent indicated it helped a lot or was critical). On most measures, about half of new teachers believed their mentors helped a lot or were critical, including the following areas: school/and or district procedures (57 percent); instructional strategies (55 percent); classroom management (53 percent); and curriculum and subject area taught (47 percent). However, many new teachers indicated that they never meet with their mentors. About one-third of new teachers said they never met with their mentor to plan instruction (34 percent) or met during the school day (31 percent) and one-fifth (21 percent) were never observed.

Next Steps

CTQ has released an analysis of working conditions in turnaround team high schools and re-designed high schools across the state. CTQ has also released customized briefs for each of the 16 districts who originally received DSSF funding. CTQ, the Principals Executive Program, the North Carolina Teacher Academy, the State Board of Education, and the Department of Public Instruction have worked with schools and districts across the state to analyze, understand and respond to working conditions data. CTQ, upon receipt statewide data on student achievement, teacher turnover and other school-level

data points will also conduct further analyses on the data to better understand the connections between teacher working conditions and student learning conditions.

Introduction

Research has consistently demonstrated that teachers make a greater difference in student achievement than any other single school factor. However, across North Carolina and throughout the nation, many districts struggle to find and keep the quality teachers necessary for all students to learn at high levels. The 2005-2006 state average district-level teacher turnover rate is 12.58 percent, and in many schools, more than 20 percent of teachers consistently leave the school to teach elsewhere or quit the profession altogether.

North Carolina data indicate that improving teacher working conditions – time, professional development, leadership, empowerment, and facilities and resources – will improve student learning conditions and help retain teachers. Findings from the 2004 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (analyses are underway for 2006) demonstrated that supportive school environments where teachers are partners in decision making with school leaders who have a strong instructional emphasis were critical to keeping teachers and improving student learning.

The 2004 data showed that schools where teachers agreed that these critical working conditions were in place were more likely to receive a top designation on the state's ABC student performance measure and make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) (when controlling for student poverty, school size, and other factors).¹ For example:

- High schools were 48 times more likely to be included in one of the top three ABC performance designations for every one point increase (on a one to five scale) on the leadership questions in the survey.
- Survey results for professional development have an impact on AYP status. For every one point increase on the survey questions in the area of professional development, North Carolina schools were four times more likely to make AYP.
- Facilities and resources were also significant and meaningful predictors of student achievement. Schools were three times more likely to be in one of the top ABC designation categories for every point increase on the facilities and resources questions. They were also three times more likely to achieve AYP.²

Teacher working conditions matter, and districts need to consider and respond to data from those whose perceptions matter most: their own classroom teachers, so that they can gauge the successes and areas of concerns in their own schools and communities. The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey continues to provide educators, stakeholders, policymakers and the community with this critical understanding of the status of working conditions in schools across North Carolina.

About the Survey

Governor Easley began the working conditions initiative in 2002 with a 39 question survey instrument to assess whether or not state working conditions standards developed by the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission were being met. The survey was redesigned and administered online across the state again in 2004.

In 2006, about two-thirds of school-based licensed educators (66 percent, or more than 75,000 educators) responded to the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. More than 85 percent of the state's schools (1,985) reached the minimum response rate (40 percent) necessary to have valid data, providing them with the information they need to gauge the successes and areas of concerns in their own schools and communities. This is the highest response rate achieved in a statewide working conditions initiative to date and far greater than the response than during the 2004 initiative (38 percent response rate with 34,000 respondents), allowing for valid and reliable data on working conditions for most of the state's schools and districts.

Findings

While a final report is not expected until student achievement, teacher turnover and other state-provided data can be analyzed (February 1, 2007), several trends can be discerned from the survey data (and are reported in greater detail in the interim report).

1. Teacher Working Conditions Have Improved and Are Better than in Other States

While it is difficult to compare findings in working conditions across iterations of the survey due to changes in the survey instrument and number of respondents, it is clear that educators were more positive about virtually all aspects of their conditions of work than in 2004.

- Teachers were more likely to note that they are protected from duties that interfere with teaching (40 percent in 2004 versus 47 percent in 2006) and efforts are made to reduce routine paperwork (47 percent versus 53 percent).
- While most responses to facilities and resources questions were similar, a greater proportion of educators noted that they have access to sufficient instructional materials (64 percent in 2004 versus 73 percent in 2006).
- Teachers were more likely to receive at least ten hours of professional development in three important areas: their content area (from 44 percent to 51 percent), methods of teaching (36 percent to 43 percent), and reading strategies (53 percent to 60 percent).

- Teachers, however, were slightly less likely to agree that they are centrally involved in educational decision making (57 percent in 2004 versus 54 percent in 2006) and that they are trusted to make sound decision about instruction (78 percent versus 72 percent)

These improvements are evident when working conditions in North Carolina are compared to other states who have replicated the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Initiative (Table 1 – see www.teachingquality.org for more information on other state initiatives). On most questions on the survey, teachers in North Carolina noted more positive working conditions than educators in Kansas, Arizona, Ohio and Clark County, Nevada (Las Vegas).

Table 1
Percentage of Teacher Agreeing With Working Conditions Questions

Percentage of Educators Agreeing to Teacher Working Conditions Questions	NC	KS	AZ	OH	Clark County, NV
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within the school	64%	62%	62%	50%	58%
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction	72%	61%	62%	56%	52%
The school leadership communicates clear expectations to students and parents	72%	63%	67%	56%	65%
The faculty are committed to helping every student learn	85%	87%	72%	82%	82%
Overall, the school leadership in my school is effective	64%	59%	62%	NA	58%
Teachers have sufficient access to instructional technology	74%	64%	62%	56%	70%
Teachers are centrally involved in educational decision making	53%	44%	38%	36%	35%

2. Teacher Working Conditions Have an Impact on Teacher Retention

The survey demonstrates what individuals familiar with the schools already know: teacher attrition is a serious problem facing many districts – and working conditions are a potentially powerful lever to help address the issue.

Most teachers are satisfied with their current workplace. Across the state, 78 percent (or almost 60,000 educators) agreed that their school is a good place to work and learn. These feelings are evident as 87 percent of teachers indicated that they want to “stay” teaching in their school. Thirteen percent want a new job, including 8 percent who are “movers,” wanting to stay in teaching but move to another school, and 5 percent who are “leavers,” indicating that they will leave teaching altogether.

Evidence throughout the survey indicates that teachers with positive perceptions about their working conditions are much more likely to stay at their current school than educators who are more negative about their conditions of work, particularly in the areas of leadership and empowerment (Table 2). Leavers are more positive than movers, most likely because those who are leaving teaching do so not just due to dissatisfaction, but other non-teaching related causes (retirement, personal reasons, etc.).

**Table 2:
Differences in the Perceptions Stayers, Movers, and Leavers
On Teacher Working Conditions Questions**

Teaching and Learning Survey Question	Percent of Teachers Who Agree		
	Stayers	Movers	Leavers
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school	66%	22%	44%
The faculty and staff have a shared vision	70%	31%	49%
In this school we take steps to solve problems.	67%	28%	47%
Opportunities are available for members of the community to contribute actively to this school’s success	71%	26%	48%
The school improvement team provides effective leadership in this school	70%	31%	49%
Professional development provides teachers with the knowledge and skills most needed to teach effectively.	67%	40%	47%

These disparities are not just in whether working conditions are present, but in whether or not school leadership makes efforts to improve them. Teachers who want to stay in their school are far more likely than those who want to move to believe that school leadership is working to improve. While about two-thirds of teachers who want to stay believe that leadership is addressing empowerment (62.5 percent) and leadership issues (61.6 percent), less than one-quarter of movers believe the same statement to be true (23.0 percent and 22.9 percent respectively.)

This influence on turnover can be seen on actual school turnover rates as well. In the school level averages for the 1,985 North Carolina schools with data, teachers were more likely to note positive working conditions in schools with the lowest turnover. While elementary schools are presented here (Table 3), findings were similar for middle and high schools as well.

Table 3
Teacher Working Conditions Averages and Statements of Agreement by 2005-2006
School Turnover Rate Quartiles

Teacher Working Condition Domain and Agreement with Individual Questions	Elementary School Level Turnover Rate			
	0-13.6%	13.7-19.1%	19.2-26.2%	Greater than 26.2%
Time	3.10	3.08	3.08	3.04
Facilities and Resources	3.66	3.64	3.62	3.57
Empowerment	3.51	3.44	3.39	3.32
Leadership	3.68	3.59	3.52	3.44
Professional Development	3.43	3.40	3.37	3.34
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within the school	68.1%	63.6%	60.4%	55.3%
Overall, the school leadership in my school is effective	68.3%	65.5%	62.0%	57.3%

The greatest disparities in the presence of these working conditions are in the areas of leadership and empowerment, the two conditions identified by teachers as being most critical to their future employment plans. The question with the most variation between schools with low and high turnover was the presence of an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, followed closely by teachers' feelings that they are supported and shielded from unnecessary interruptions.

3. Teachers and Administrators View Working Conditions Differently

As was the case in 2004, teachers and administrators view teacher working conditions differently. On all questions, the roughly 1,400 principals responding to the survey were significantly more likely to note that positive working conditions are in place, and that leadership was making efforts to address them (Table 4). Similar gaps in perception exist between teachers and other school-based licensed educators, but these differences are significantly smaller than the difference between teachers and principals. The gaps in

perception are greatest in the areas of leadership (a 1.07 gap on a one-to-five scaled domain average) and time (1.04 gap), the working conditions most important to turnover and achievement according to teachers respectively.

Table 4
Teacher and Principal Perceptions of Select Teacher Working Conditions Questions

Agreement on Select Working Conditions Questions	Teachers Agreeing	Principals Agreeing
The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient	45%	76%
Teachers and staff work in a school environment that is safe	65%	79%
Teachers are centrally involved in decision-making about educational issues	51%	96%
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within the school	62%	95%
The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems	56%	95%
Professional development provides teachers with the knowledge and skills most needed to teach effectively	63%	91%
Overall this school is a good place to work and learn	77%	92%

Additionally principals are far more likely to believe that school leadership—a concept that includes, but is not limited entirely to the principal— is addressing working conditions (Table 5).

Table 5
Teacher and Principal Perception of School Leadership Efforts
to Address Working Conditions

School leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about:	Teachers Agreeing	Principals Agreeing
The use of time in my school	60%	98%
Facilities and resources	68%	99%
Empowering teachers	58%	98%
Leadership issues	57%	97%
Professional development	69%	98%
New Teacher Support	62%	97%

Initial analyses are presented in each working conditions area. Given the passage of House Bill 1151 and its requirement that School Improvement Teams include plans to provide all teachers with an hour of non-instructional time per day for planning and collaborative work, a more in-depth presentation of working conditions data is presented in this report

Time

Quality teaching is time-dependent. Teachers need time to collaborate with their peers, discuss and observe best practices, and participate in professional development that prepares them for changing curriculum and the challenges of teaching a diverse population. Current school schedules demand that teachers spend the vast majority of their time in classroom instruction. Most teachers have little non-instructional time during the school day, and in that time they must prepare instructional materials, assess students, and communicate with parents. Additionally, teachers often must serve on school committees, staff various extra-curricular activities or cover hall or lunch duty. Such schedules do not allow adequate time for the continuous professional learning that is necessary for quality teaching.

Time is of particular importance to this analysis because of two significant findings:

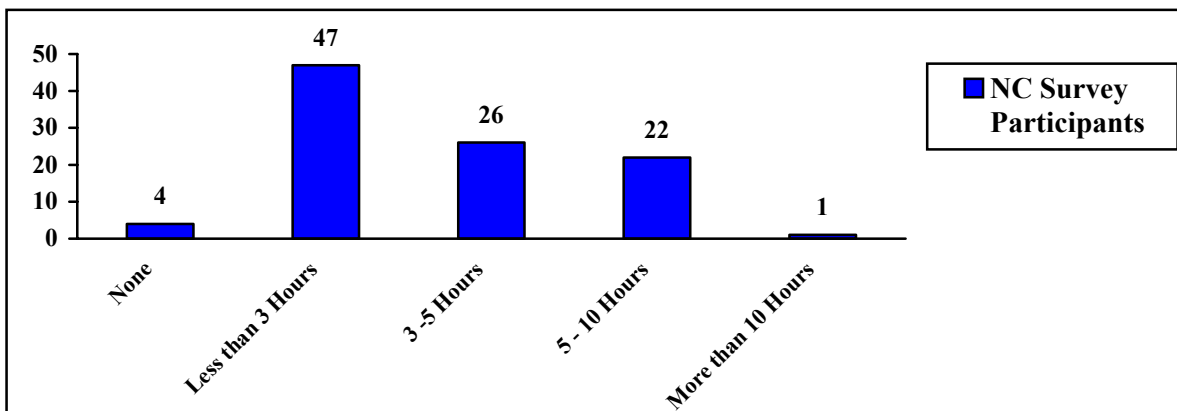
- Time was the working conditions that educators were most likely to note as most important for improving student learning (29 percent); and

- Time, as was the case in 2002 and 2004, was the working condition that was most problematic to educators across the state.

Teachers, particularly elementary educators, report the need for more planning and collaborative time. Less than half (almost 40,000 educators responding to the survey) of North Carolina teachers believe the non-instructional time they receive is sufficient to help them meet the needs of their students and improve instruction. The following trends were noted in analyzing 'educators' responses in the area of time.

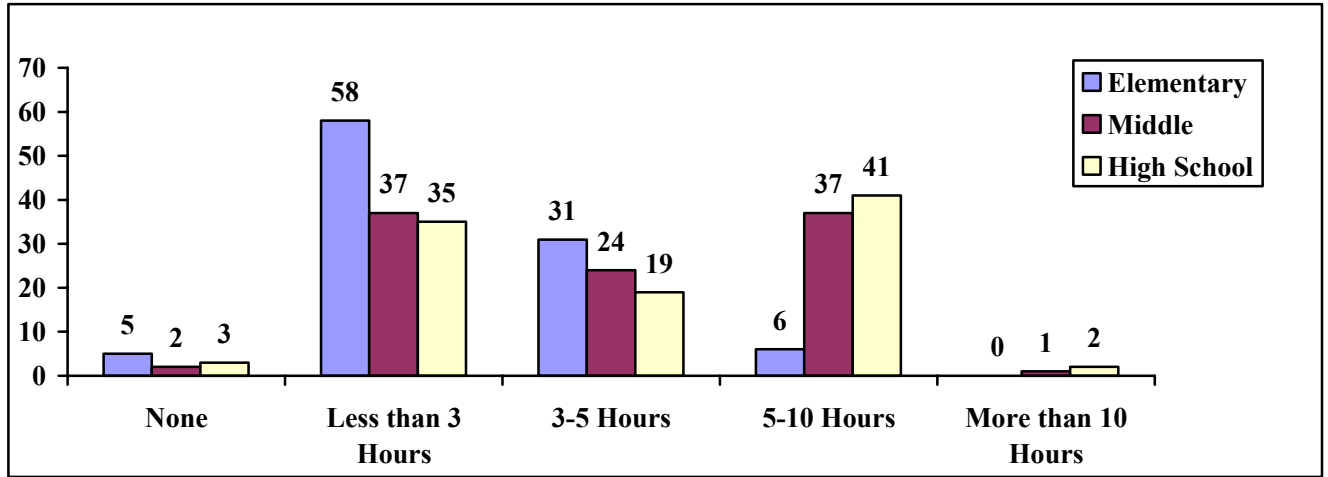
- **More than half of teachers receive less than three hours of time per week that could be used for planning during the school day.** Fifty-one percent of educators report having less than three hours of non-instructional time per week that could be used for planning or collaborative work with colleagues (Figure 1). More than three-quarters (77 percent) receive five hours or less per week.

Figure 1
Non-Instructional Time Available to Teachers in an Average Week of Teaching



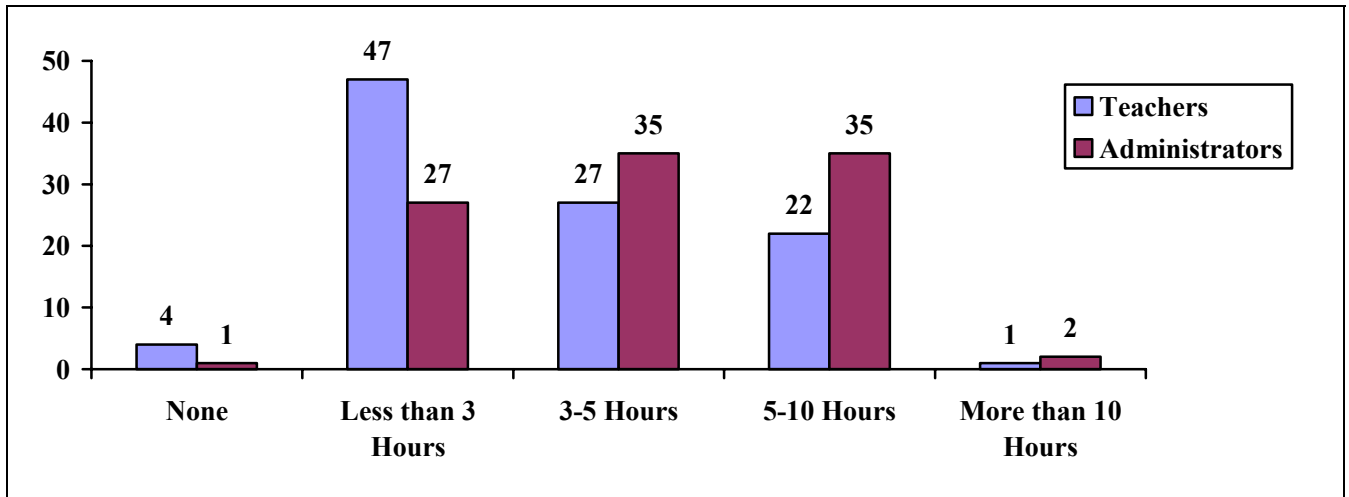
- **The problem is worse at the elementary school level.** Elementary school teachers were more positive about all working conditions areas, except for time, relative to their middle and high school counterparts. While about one-third of elementary educators believe the non-instructional time they have for planning and collaboration is sufficient (37.2 percent), about three-fifths of middle school (57.2 percent) and high school (59.5 percent) educators agree they have enough time. Elementary teachers are also less likely than middle school educators (50.9 percent vs. 65.6 percent) to report that they have time available to collaborate with colleagues. This perception exists due to the reality of time available (Figure 2). Elementary educators disproportionately report receiving less than an hour per day that could be used for planning (94 percent) compared to middle school (62 percent) and high school (57 percent). Almost two-thirds (63 percent) report receiving less than three hours per week at the elementary level compared to 39 percent at the middle school and 38 percent at the high school levels.

Figure 2
Amount of Time Available for Planning and Collaboration by School Type



- Administrators believe that teachers have more non-instructional time than teachers actually receive.** When asked to estimate the average amount of non-instructional time teachers receive in a week, principals, assistant principals and other licensed educators estimated a higher proportion of time available than teachers reported receiving (Figure 3). More than half of teachers (38,000 survey respondents) report having less than 3 hours of non-instructional time for planning, but less than one-third (31 percent) of administrators—principals, assistant principals and other licensed educators—believe that to be the case. Almost three-quarters believe that teachers have three hours or more while only half of educators report that much time.

Figure 3
Administrators vs. Teachers on Amount of Non-Instructional Time in an Average Week



- ***Non-instructional time is more likely to be used for individual planning than collaborative work.*** Teachers reported that the non-instructional time they receive is more likely to be used for individual planning than collaborative work with colleagues. This collaborative time is critical to discussing instructional strategies, students and planning across grades and content areas. This is particularly true at the high school level, where almost half (44.6 percent) report having no collaborative planning time and 88 percent had three hours or less in an average week, despite receiving significantly more non-instructional time than educators at other levels. One-quarter of elementary educators in North Carolina report having, on average, no time available to them to plan with colleagues (compared with 14 percent at the middle school level) and 92 percent report having less than three hours.
- ***Due in part to this lack of planning time, teachers work on school related activities outside of the school day.*** Fifty-seven percent of educators report working at least five hours a week, on average, on school related activities and almost one-third (29 percent) report averaging ten hours or more (Table 6). Administrators, however, are much less likely to think that teachers are putting forth this extra effort. Only about one-third of administrators (37.8 percent) believe teachers spend an hour day per more outside of the school day on planning, grading, conferences and other school-related activities.

Table 6
Teacher and Principal Reporting of Teacher Time Spent on School Related Activities Outside of the School Day

In an average week of teaching, how many hours do you/teachers spend on school-related activities outside the regular school day	None	Less than 3 Hours	3-5 Hours	5-10 Hours	10 Hours or More
Teachers	1.6%	17.3%	23.6%	28.5%	29.0%
Administrators	1.8%	29.4%	31.1%	26.0%	11.8%

Facilities and Resources

School facilities can have a significant impact on teaching and learning. The condition, location, and design of school buildings affect the health, safety, and morale of all who work and learn within them, in addition to facilitating the kind of educational experiences (such as hands-on or technology-based learning) necessary for students to succeed in the 21st century. Innovative school designs and uses of space also have the potential to integrate neighborhoods and schools, making the school a center of community activity and engagement.

North Carolina educators were more likely to agree that facilities and resources were in place in their school than other domains within the survey. In general, and across

different school levels, between two-thirds and three-quarters of educators reported that they have sufficient resources to do their job (Table 7). While these findings are positive, they also indicate that, in most cases, a significant proportion of teachers do not believe that their resources are sufficient. For example, while 73 percent agree that they have sufficient instructional materials, almost 20,000 survey respondents in the state did not believe their materials were sufficient.

Table 7
Perceptions of the Presence of Facilities and Resources by School Type

Facilities and Resources Areas	Elementary	Middle School	High School	TOTAL
Teachers have sufficient access to instructional materials and resources.	76%	72%	68%	73%
Teachers have sufficient access to instructional technology.	77%	70%	68%	74%
Teachers have adequate professional space to work productively.	67%	70%	58%	66%
Teachers have sufficient access to communication technology.	76%	74%	70%	75%
Teachers have sufficient access to office equipment and supplies.	71%	72%	68%	71%
The reliability and speed of Internet connections are sufficient to support instructional practices.	76%	73%	70%	74%
Teachers and staff work in a school environment that is safe.	88%	79%	78%	84%

More than four-fifths (83 percent) of educators agree that teachers and staff work in a school environment that is safe (with expected differences between elementary and secondary schools) and 74 percent agree that the school environment is clean and well-maintained. The only facilities and resources measure with less than 70 percent of North Carolina educators expressing positive agreement relates to professional space. Only 65 percent of educators agree that they have adequate professional space to work productively, and only 15 percent strongly agree with this statement.

As was the case in 2004, facilities and resources was the working conditions area where there were the greatest disparities between the 16 districts originally receiving Disadvantaged Supplemental Student Funding (DSSF) and other districts. On most questions, there were differences between the DSSF and non-DSSF districts, particularly

in the area of technology. Two-thirds of educators in DSSF districts agree that internet connections speeds are sufficient to support instructional practices versus three-quarters of non-DSSF districts. There were also differences on safety. While 77 percent of DSSF educators report that their school environment is safe versus 84 percent of educators in Non-DSSF districts.

Empowerment

Treating teachers as professionals, by entrusting them to make decisions about classroom instruction and offering opportunities for advancement throughout the teaching career, makes teaching more attractive to prospective teachers and encourages current teachers to stay in the profession.

North Carolina educators appear to be more involved in decisions related to their own teaching than the school as a whole (Table 8). Teachers feel positive about being recognized as education experts and trusted to make decisions regarding instruction in their own classroom, but much less empowered to influence important school decisions outside their classroom door. Of particular importance is the lack of influence educators have on their own continued development and learning. Almost half (44 percent) of educators indicate that teachers play a small role or no role at all in selecting in-service professional development opportunities available to them.

Table 8
Teachers Role in School Decision Making

Please indicate how large a role teachers have at your school in each of the following areas:	Role Indicated by North Carolina Educators				
	No role at all	Small role	Moderate role	Large role	Primary role
Selecting instructional materials and resources	3%	14%	31%	38%	14%
Devising teaching techniques	2%	9%	24%	43%	22%
Setting grading and student assessment practices	6%	15%	27%	36%	16%
Determining the content of in-service professional development	16%	28%	33%	20%	3%
Establishing and implementing policies for student discipline	18%	28%	29%	21%	3%
Deciding how the school budget will be spent	36%	32%	22%	10%	1%
School improvement planning	6%	19%	31%	35%	8%
Hiring new teachers	48%	28%	17%	7%	1%

This lack of influence over school level decisions such as hiring and budget may explain why half of educators in the state do not feel empowered. Overall, slightly more than

half of North Carolina educators (53 percent) agree that teachers are centrally involved in decision making, but only nine percent strongly agree with this statement.

A similar, but slightly higher percentage (57 percent), report that there is an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems in their school. This may be explained by the fact that one of the primary mechanisms intended to help empower teachers seems to miss the intended mark in many schools across the state. While North Carolina law requires the election of school improvement team members, only 40 percent of educators say the team is elected, 33 percent say they are not elected, and 27 percent do not know if members are elected. Further, only 58 percent of educators agreed that their School Improvement Team is effective (only 14 percent strongly agree).

Leadership

School improvement is not possible without skilled, knowledgeable leadership that is responsive to the needs of all teachers and students. A report from the Wallace Foundation (2004) revealed that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school and that leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most. Effective leadership is also essential for retaining quality teachers. Across states that have conducted a Teacher Working Conditions survey, educators consistently rank leadership as the most important factor affecting their willingness to remain teaching at their school.

North Carolina educators were generally positive about the concept of leadership in their respective schools. The domain average for leadership was 3.60 (on a one-five scale of satisfaction), ranking as the second highest of five working conditions, behind only facilities and resources.

Teachers were most positive about leadership on issues related to communicating clear expectations, holding teachers to high professional standards, and handling teacher performance evaluations effectively. Consider the following:

- About two-thirds (64 percent) of North Carolina educators agreed that school leadership was effective overall;
- Approximately 85 percent of educators agree that teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction;
- More than three-quarters (78 percent) of educators agree that teacher performance evaluations are handled in an appropriate manner; and
- Almost three-quarters (72.5 percent) of educators agree that school leadership communicates clear expectations to students and parents.

It is also important to note that questions in this section of the survey focused on school leadership, not necessarily the principal. In fact, less than half (45 percent) of educators

identified the principal as the person who most often provides instructional leadership. A full 15 percent of survey respondents said other teachers were the people most often providing instructional leadership. While the principal is essential, many other educators play critical roles in different aspects of school leadership.

Teachers were less positive in some areas of leadership, particularly related to consistent enforcement of conduct and shielding teachers from interruptions.

- Only 57.5 percent of educators agree that the school improvement team provides effective leadership in their school.
- A similarly low percentage of educators (57.2 percent) agree that school leadership consistently enforces rules for student conduct.
- And only 60.2 percent of teachers agree that school leadership shields teachers from interruptions.

The importance of leadership and its connection to retention was noted throughout the survey. When asked to select which of the working conditions studied most influenced your willingness to keep teaching at your school, leadership was by far the most important factor, selected as most important by 38 percent of educators. Empowerment was the second most important factor, selected by 21 percent of respondents.

Professional Development

Given the complexity of teaching and learning in today's schools, high quality professional development is necessary to ensure that all teachers are able to meet the needs of diverse student populations, effectively use data to guide reform, and become active agents in their own professional growth.

When teachers did receive professional development, they were relatively pleased with the results. About two-thirds of educators agree (64 percent) that professional development provides teachers with the knowledge and skills most needed to teach effectively. Teachers were much more positive about specific opportunities for which they received at least 10 hours of development over the past two years. In all areas of professional development provided, at least three-quarters of educators believe that the opportunity provided them with new instructional strategies and helped to improve student learning.

A remaining challenge may be the amount of funding and resources for professional development. Only half of teachers (50 percent) agree that sufficient funds and resources are available to allow teachers to take advantage of professional development activities and only 10 percent strongly agree with this statement.

Teachers in North Carolina want and need more professional development to reach diverse learners. Of all professional development areas, educators most often indicated

special education for students with disabilities as the area they need additional support (50 percent), followed by Limited English Proficiency (43 percent) and closing the achievement gap (41 percent). Unfortunately, serious problems remain across the state with the alignment between what educators say they most need in terms of professional development and what they ultimately receive. There are significant gaps between the percentages of teachers reporting a need for some aspects of professional development relative to the percentage receiving more than 10 hours of professional development in the areas of greatest need (Table 9).

Table 9
Differences in the Percent of Educators
Who Report Needing Versus Receiving Professional Development Support

Professional Development Area	Need Additional Support	10+ Hours Over Past 2 Years
Special Education – disabilities	50%	17%
Special Education – gifted	23%	8%
Limited English Proficiency	43%	9%
Closing the Achievement Gap	41%	21%
Your Content Area	12%	51%
Methods of Teaching	15%	43%
Student Assessment	17%	26%
Classroom Management Techniques	23%	24%
Reading Strategies	29%	60%

This disparity in the areas where teachers say they need additional support and the opportunities they receive could be due to the previously noted lack of influence teachers have on giving input into professional development opportunities made available to them. Few teachers indicate that they are involved in determining the content of in-service programs. Approximately 44 percent reported they played little or no role at all in determining the content of their professional development..

Mentoring and Induction

Mentoring questions were only asked of those North Carolina educators who indicated that they had served as a mentor or were new educators (three years of experience or less in the profession). Roughly 10,000 new teachers responded to these questions and over 18,000 educators serving as mentors. Several common questions about the frequency and effectiveness of induction were asked of both groups. As these questions were more

centered on actual mentoring experiences rather than perceptions and few were on the same measurement scale, no domain average was created.

New teachers indicate that mentoring was effective in several areas (Table 10). In particular, mentors provided helpful general encouragement and social support (71 percent indicated it helped a lot or was critical). Also, 64 percent indicated mentors helped a lot or were critical for completing products or documentation. On most measures, about half of new teachers believed their mentors helped a lot or were critical, including the following areas. However, a substantial proportion of new teachers believe that mentors are providing little or no help, particularly in curriculum and subject area taught (30 percent) and classroom management (24 percent). In general, it appears that mentoring is helping a significant number of new teachers, but that roughly one-quarter of new educators are not finding the assistance helpful to them.

Table 10
New Teacher Perceptions of Mentoring Effectiveness

My mentor was effective in providing support in the following areas	No help at all	Helped a little	Helped some	Helped a lot	Help was critical
Instructional strategies	9%	13%	23%	41%	14%
Curriculum and the subject content I teach	15%	15%	22%	34%	13%
Classroom management/discipline strategies	10%	14%	23%	38%	15%
School and/or district procedures	9%	12%	21%	40%	17%
Completing products or documentation required	8%	10%	17%	41%	23%
Completing other school or district paperwork	11%	11%	19%	39%	20%
Social support and general encouragement	6%	8%	14%	42%	29%

While more could be done to better support and prepare mentors themselves for their work with novice teachers, there are some positive data trends for mentor preparation. Slightly more than three-quarters (76 percent) of formally assigned mentors report receiving specific training as a mentor, 39 percent report having release time to observe their mentee(s), and 29 percent report having common planning time with mentee(s). While the numbers could be higher, they are a point of strength relative to other states.

As was the case with principals and teachers, mentors and mentees have vastly different perceptions of their respective induction experience (Table 11). Mentors report that they are able to provide more frequent support to teachers in many areas that new teachers do not indicate receiving.

Table 11
Differences in the Perceptions of Mentees and Mentors
Regarding Frequency of Mentoring Activities

Mentoring Activity	Mentees			Mentors		
	Never	Less than once per month to Several times per month	At least once per week	Never	Less than once per month to Several times per month	At least once per week
Planning during the school day	31%	40%	29%	15%	42%	43%
Mentor observing mentee	21%	70%	8%	7%	80%	13%
Mentee observing mentor	49%	44%	6%	29%	61%	9%
Planning instruction	34%	45%	22%	9%	56%	35%
Having discussions about teaching	6%	47%	47%	1%	32%	67%

The inconsistencies in the quality of mentoring efforts across the state are reflected in the split of data relative to the effectiveness of induction for retaining teachers. While 43 percent of new teachers who experience mentoring in North Carolina say it was important or very important in their decision to continue teaching in their school, almost as many teachers (42 percent) reported it was only slightly important or made no difference in their decision.

Next Steps

CTQ has released an analysis of working conditions in turnaround team high schools and re-designed high schools across the state. CTQ has also released customized briefs for each of the 16 districts who originally received DSSF funding. CTQ, the Principals Executive Program, the North Carolina Teacher Academy, the State Board of Education, and the Department of Public Instruction have worked with schools and districts across

the state to analyze, understand and respond to working conditions data. CTQ, upon receipt statewide data on student achievement, teacher turnover and other school-level data points will also conduct further analyses on the data to better understand the connections between teacher working conditions and student learning conditions.

Ensuring a qualified teacher for every student is not enough to close the achievement gap. Teachers must have the resources and support they need to serve all students well, and without comprehensive sustained efforts to improve teacher working conditions, much of the states notable school reform efforts could go unfulfilled.

¹ For more information these connections and a write up of the methodology used please see Center for Teaching Quality (formerly the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality). (2005). *Teacher Working Conditions Are Student Learning Conditions: A Report to Governor Mike Easley on the 2004 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey*. Chapel Hill, NC: Author.

² Ibid.