

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

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

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

With four iterations of the survey completed, analyses have been consistent and clear. The conditions teachers face in schools and classrooms are essential elements of student achievement and teacher retention. This is particularly true in high schools where analyses from 2008 demonstrate that:

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

- Leadership and Facilities and Resources were statistically significant in explaining whether schools exceeded student achievement growth expectations. For every one-point increase in the Facilities and Resources Factor average, high schools were 97 percent more likely to exceed growth expectations. High schools were 92 percent more likely to exceed growth expectations for every one-point increase in the Leadership Factor average.
- For high schools, those with more positive working conditions in the area of Facilities and Resources were significantly more likely to have lower teacher attrition.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

TABLE 1. TEACHER WORKING CONDITIONS IN REDESIGNED HIGH SCHOOLS

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

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

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

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

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

References

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About The New Teacher Center

The New Teacher Center (NTC) was established in 1998 as a national resource focused on teacher and administrator induction. NTC implements and promotes induction best practices through a variety of innovative professional development opportunities and materials that assist educators and policy makers in supporting the next generation of education professionals. Using an integrated, collaborative approach, NTC strives to support essential research, well-informed policy, and thoughtful practice that encourage teacher development from pre-service throughout the career of a teacher.

New Teacher Center

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