


# Listening to the Experts

## *A Report on the 2004 South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey*

THE SOUTHEAST CENTER FOR
TEACHING QUALITY SECTQ
www.teachingquality.org

The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality improves student learning by shaping policies through developing teacher leadership, building coalitions, and conducting practical research. To accomplish this mission, SECTQ strives to shape policies that ensure:

- **Students**, no matter what their background or where they go to school, are ready to learn; with
- **Teachers** who are caring, qualified, and competent with vast content knowledge and the ability, through quality preparation and ongoing development and support, to ensure that all children can learn; in
- **Classrooms** that have adequate resources and provide environments conducive to student learning; in
- **Schools** that are designed to provide teachers with sufficient time to learn and work together in collaboration with a principal who respects and understands teaching; in
- **Districts** that have policies and programs that support the recruitment, retention and development of high quality teachers in every school; in
- **States** that have well-funded systems that include rigorous preparation and licensing with evaluation tools that ensure performance based standards are met; in a;
- **Region** that works collaboratively, using common teaching quality definitions, sharing data, and working across state lines to recruit, retain and support high quality teachers; in a
- **Nation** that views teaching as a true profession and values teachers as one of its most important resources.

SECTQ is a regional organization with a national agenda to ensure that all students have access to high quality teaching. SECTQ was established in 1999 and is located in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. To learn more about SECTQ's work, please visit our web site at www.teachingquality.org.

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# Acknowledgments

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# Executive Summary

For virtually any business or organization, the conditions in which employees work drive their satisfaction and productivity. Yet, while businesses often focus on employee satisfaction, many schools struggle to address critical working conditions—isolating teachers in classrooms with closed doors, denying them basic materials to do their job, inundating them with non-essential duties, providing them with little input into the design and organization of schools, and offering little opportunity for career advancement and professional growth. Such conditions are closely related to difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers.

Under the leadership of State Superintendent of Education Inez Tenenbaum, with the support of the South Carolina Department of Education's Division of Teaching Quality (DTQ) and the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA), South Carolina became only the second state in the nation to study teacher working conditions statewide by surveying those whose opinion matters most on these issues—teachers themselves. In Spring 2004, teachers were asked questions about time, facilities and resources, empowerment, leadership, professional development, and mentoring and induction; all of which have been shown to have an impact on whether teachers stay in schools and most importantly, whether students learn.

Analysis of the approximately 15,200 survey responses (from teachers working in 90 percent of South Carolina schools and all school districts)[1] demonstrates that working conditions are critical to increasing student achievement and retaining teachers. Teachers' responses on the Working Conditions Survey were significant and powerful predictors of whether or not schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and also predictive of performance on the Palmetto Achievement Challenge Test (PACT), both in terms of improvement and absolute ratings. Working conditions responses were also connected to teacher retention.

Of the various data implications from the survey, six primary findings from the analysis of the teacher working conditions data are included in this report:

1. Teacher Working Conditions Are Important Predictors of Student Achievement
2. Teacher Working Conditions Make a Difference in Teacher Retention
3. Teachers' Perceptions of Working Conditions Reflect Actual School Conditions
4. Teacher and Principal Perceptions of Working Conditions are In Synch
5. Teachers, Regardless of their Background and Experience, View Working Conditions Similarly
6. Many Aspects of Working Conditions have "Ripple Effects"

More in-depth analysis of each of the six working conditions areas—time, empowerment, facilities and resources, leadership, professional development, and mentoring and induction—is also provided within the body of this report. From these findings and the domain analysis, the following recommendations for schools, districts and the state of South Carolina are offered to enhance efforts to improve teacher working conditions:

1. Provide funding for the design, dissemination, and analysis of teacher working conditions, either as a stand alone survey or to be incorporated into other data gathering and assistance efforts.
2. Document and disseminate successful strategies to reform working conditions and ensure resources are made available for schools and districts to improve.
3. Invest in what matters most for improving teacher working conditions – high quality leaders who can empower teachers to be included in decision making about instruction and create learning communities that help all students succeed.
4. Consider reforms that directly address teachers' greatest concerns about their working conditions.
5. Address inequities in the quantity and quality of support that new teachers receive across the state.

Findings from this report support the importance of identifying and discussing teacher working conditions. Significant and compelling connections between working conditions and student achievement were documented. 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 and sustained efforts to improve teacher working conditions, much of the state's notable school reform efforts could go unfulfilled.

# Introduction

For virtually any business or organization, the conditions in which employees work drive their satisfaction and productivity. Unfortunately many South Carolina schools face persistent teacher working condition challenges that are closely related to chronic difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers.

In South Carolina, approximately one-quarter of teachers leave the profession within the first three years of teaching.[1] This attrition requires that the state hire almost 5,000 teachers every year.[2] Yet, given the production of new teacher education graduates, South Carolina has had to rely on retirees, alternative route candidates and those from out-of-state, and even out of the country, to fill these positions. According to the U.S. Department of Education, South Carolina is one of ten states to report more than 40 percent of initial licenses being awarded to individuals prepared in another state.[3] During the 2003-2004 school year, almost 400 positions remained vacant at the end of September and more than 250 positions were occupied by long-term substitutes.[4] Teacher turnover comes at great expense, in terms of both the negative cumulative effect on student achievement and the financial drain to the state and districts that repeatedly prepare, recruit, and support teachers for the same position.

National research also demonstrates the importance of addressing school conditions to improve teacher retention. Teachers who leave schools cite an opportunity for a better teaching assignment, dissatisfaction with support from administrators, and dissatisfaction with workplace conditions as the main reasons they seek other opportunities.[5] National surveys of teachers indicate that a positive, collaborative school climate and support from colleagues and administrators are the most important factors influencing whether they stay in a school. In these surveys, teachers identified excessive workload, lack of time and frustration with reform efforts as areas in need of focus and reform.[6]

Addressing working conditions is essential given the connections between these critical factors and efforts to reorganize schools and establish a sense of trust among educators, both of which have been linked to greater teacher effectiveness.[7] The most extensive examination of working conditions data demonstrates "a clear but difficult lesson: if we want to improve the quality of our teachers and schools, we need to improve the quality of the teaching job."[8]

## Development of the South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Initiative

The South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Initiative was based on a similar effort conducted in North Carolina in 2002, and again in 2004. The North Carolina Professional

Teaching Standards Commission conducted research and focus groups to develop 30 working condition standards in five broad categories: time, empowerment, professional development, leadership, and facilities and resources.[9] These standards informed Governor Easley's first Working Conditions Survey, a 39-question survey of every licensed public school educator in the state. The findings from that survey demonstrated a level of dissatisfaction across the state with teacher working conditions, particularly related to the amount of time available for teachers to perform their jobs. The survey results indicated that the collective perception of principals was far more positive than teachers' collective perception. Elementary teachers and teachers in smaller schools were more likely to rate their work environment positively.[10]

The survey was conducted for a second time in North Carolina in 2004, with some important changes. The survey was administered online, allowing teachers more time and privacy to complete the survey. The online format allowed the survey to be expanded from 39 to 72 questions on working conditions and eight demographic questions.[11] The survey also added a series of questions that gathered information on actual conditions as well as many based on teachers' perceptions of their school. These questions were added to better document basic realities facing teachers, such as the number of hours of professional development they receive in critical areas and the number of hours worked outside of the school day. The survey drew a number of these new questions from the questions previously asked and validated by the national School and Staffing Survey from the National Center for Education Statistics.

South Carolina used the second survey as the basis for its own initiative, with several important changes:

- Questions were customized to fit the South Carolina context;
- Several questions were dropped due to perceived repetition and replaced with new questions of interest to the state. A majority of questions in the survey remain identical to those asked in North Carolina;
- A separate survey form was designed for administrators to clarify that the intent of the instrument was to assess their perception of teacher working conditions, not their own conditions of work; and, most importantly
- A new domain was added to the survey to assess perception of teacher induction and mentoring. Those with three years experience or less were asked six, multi-part questions on the support they received, and those who indicated that they had served as a mentor were asked similar questions.

## Methodology

The survey was offered online across South Carolina from April-May 2004. Codes were disseminated to all school-based licensed personnel through each school's Teacher of the Year. Codes ensured that responses could be linked to the school of employment and that educators could fill out the survey only once. All teacher responses on the survey are anonymous. Upon receiving the survey results, a statistical factor analysis was conducted not only to ensure that the survey was well constructed, but also to create domain averages that included only questions that truly explained the working conditions area described. To ensure that questions of greatest concern to teachers were not eliminated by the factor analysis, a stakeholder survey of 30

teachers, administrators and policymakers was conducted. Fortunately, virtually the same questions were identified by both the stakeholder survey and factor analysis as best explaining the working conditions domains. As a result, questions that may have been included in the "time" section of the survey, were either included in the time domain average, moved to another domain that they more aptly described, or entirely dropped from the construction of the domain average.[12]

A domain average for mentoring and induction was not created for a variety of reasons. The number of respondents to questions in this domain varies tremendously by school depending on the number of new teachers and mentors. Additionally, the wording and measurement of the mentoring questions is different from the other five domains. Rather than positive statements about working conditions, to which teachers agree with varied intensity, the mentoring and induction questions are reality based questions regarding the induction experiences of mentors and mentees. Therefore, a similar 1-to-5 scale was not appropriate.

For the purposes of the state summary report, a single mentoring question that was deemed representative and significant was selected and reported on. For the state analyses, only the five consistent domains were included in the statistical models, while mentoring and induction are examined in the in-depth domain analysis of the report.

SECTQ used the Teacher Working Conditions Survey, as well as multiple state data sources, to conduct the analyses described in this report. Individual teacher working conditions surveys (15,202 surveys from teachers working in 90 percent of the state's schools and every school district) were used throughout the analysis, particularly when examining the influence of teacher experience, background and other demographic data. To analyze connections to student achievement, teacher retention, and other data provided by the South Carolina Department of Education, a school-level working conditions average was created for the 519 schools with a 28 percent response rate or greater (the state response rate average). The threshold was set to ensure that only school averages sufficient to extrapolate to the entire school would be used. Linear regression and logistic regression models were created to examine the impact of working conditions based on connections found using simple correlations.[13]

The schools with sufficient response rates for inclusion in the analysis appear to be representative of schools throughout the state of South Carolina (Table 1). The 519 schools included in the analysis serve a slightly more diverse and higher poverty group of students than the student population in the rest of the state. But teacher characteristics within the schools are similar, including education, salary and proportion of qualified teachers. Teacher retention and school principal or director experience at the school are also similar between the schools with a sufficient response rate and the rest of the state.

**Table 1. Comparison of Sample Schools to Overall Population**

| | Schools Included in the Teacher Working Conditions Analysis | All Other Schools in South Carolina |
|---|---|---|
| Number | 519 | 581 |
| Percent Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch | 55.8% | 50.3% |
| Percent Non-White | 52.2% | 48.6% |
| Average Daily Membership | 572 | 697 |
| Per-Pupil Expenditure | $6,146 | $6,396 |
| Student-Teacher Ratio | 18.7 | 20.0 |
| Percent Highly Qualified Teachers | 92.8% | 91.2% |
| Percent of Teachers with Advanced Degrees | 50.6% | 49.5% |
| Percent of Teachers with Emergency or Provisional Certificates | 4.3% | 5.9% |
| Teacher Retention Rate | 85.2% | 85.0% |
| Average Teacher Salary | $40,608 | $40,576 |
| Percent of Continuing Contract Teachers | 84.8% | 82.1% |
| Principal's Years of Experience at School | 5.6 | 5.3 |

## About the Report

This report demonstrates that working conditions are critical to increasing student achievement and retaining teachers. Teachers' responses on the Working Conditions Survey were significant and powerful predictors of whether or not schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and performed well on the state's PACT tests both in terms of achieving high growth and absolute ratings on the school accountability reports. Teacher working conditions also help to explain teacher retention. Six primary working conditions findings are documented in the report:

1. Teacher Working Conditions Are Important Predictors of Student Achievement
2. Teacher Working Conditions Makes a Difference in Teacher Retention
3. Teachers Perceptions of Working Conditions Reflect Actual School Conditions
4. Teacher and Principal Perceptions of Working Conditions are In Synch
5. Teachers, Regardless of their Background and Experience, View Working Conditions Similarly
6. Many Aspects of Working Conditions have "Ripple Effects"

In addition to the general findings, in-depth analysis of each of the five working conditions domains is also provided. Teachers responses are explored and general trends are presented and broad recommendations for improvement are offered.

The report concludes with recommendations for the state, districts and schools to improve teacher working conditions. Ultimately, the success of the South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Initiative hinges on schools and districts using the findings highlighted in this report to prompt discussions with local community stakeholders and make improvements identified as necessary by their own teaching corps. The recommendations are intended to help the state, schools and districts to develop and implement data-driven working conditions reforms, that are integrated with broader teaching quality improvement efforts.

This report documents that efforts to achieve working conditions reform will prove worth considerable time and resource allocation, given the importance of teacher working conditions to student learning and teacher retention. Ensuring a qualified teacher for every student is not enough to close the achievement gap. Teachers must have the resources and supports they need to serve all students well. Without comprehensive and sustained efforts to improve teacher working conditions, much of South Carolina's notable school reform efforts could go unfulfilled.

# What Has Been Discovered About Teacher Working Conditions

> *If I am allowed to utilize my teaching expertise—to draw from what I know will engage and stimulate my students—then students will achieve at levels no one could dream of. If I am hampered…then I can't do what I do best.*
> —Member, Teacher Leaders Network in a discussion of teacher working conditions[1]

Given the unique nature of individual schools, the challenges and likely solutions to improving teacher working conditions involve school and district as well as state policies. This analysis provides evidence that identifying and addressing these issues is essential to building schools that can help all students learn. In considering the six primary findings from the initiative, policymakers and stakeholders across the state can develop a more complete understanding of how teacher working conditions affect student achievement and teacher retention; how teachers' perceptions of working conditions relate to the realities facing schools; how teachers and principals are in synch in understanding their schools; how divergent teacher groups view working conditions similarly and how a single working condition has a "ripple effect" on conditions throughout a school.

## Finding One: Teacher Working Conditions Are Important Predictors of Student Performance

Teachers are clear about the working conditions that they need in order to be successful with students (Figure 1). Given sufficient time (24 percent) and control over what they do (empowerment at 29 percent), teachers believe that they can help students learn. Teachers reported that working conditions more associated with overall school context like leadership and facilities were less important than the aspects most directly affected their classroom. These findings are not unique to South Carolina educators. A similar question asked of more than 34,000 North Carolina teachers yielded virtually identical results.[2]

Teachers have more positive perceptions of working conditions in schools that made Adequate Yearly Progress (Table 2). For all five working conditions domains, there was a statistically significant difference in the school average, with the greatest difference in the area of empowerment—the area teachers identified as the most important to improving student learning. Schools that made AYP had a smaller proportion of emergency certified teachers and a smaller minority population. Slight differences are found—albeit statistically significant—in the proportion of highly qualified teachers, student-teacher ratio, and teacher salaries in schools that made AYP.

**Figure 1. Teacher's Perception of Which Aspect of Working Conditions Is Most Important in Promoting Student Learning**

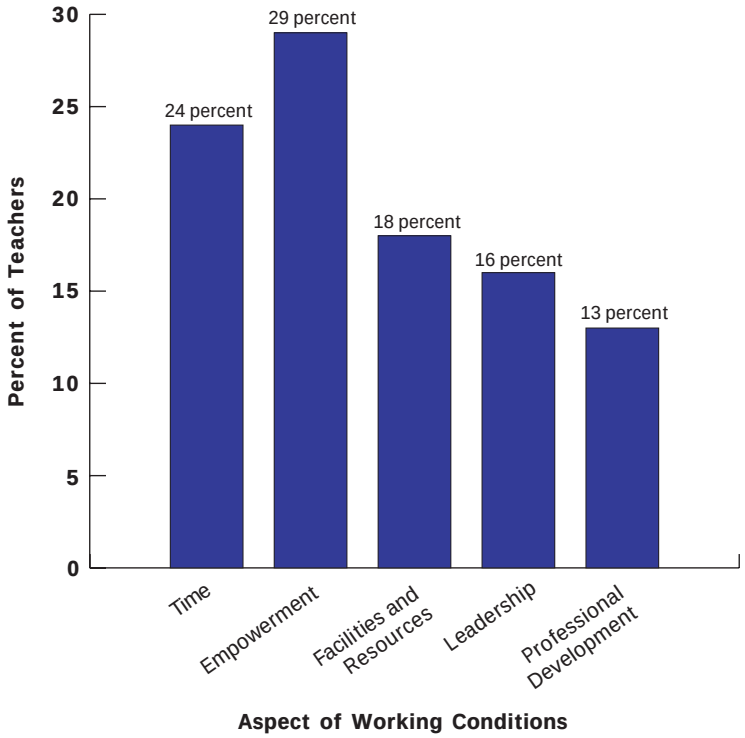



**Table 2. Teaching Variable Means in Schools Achieving AYP Status**

| Area | AYP Status | |
|---|---|---|
| | Met | Not Met |
| Time | 3.21 | 3.09 |
| Facilities and Resources | 3.89 | 3.68 |
| Leadership | 3.89 | 3.69 |
| Empowerment | 3.47 | 3.20 |
| Professional Development | 3.91 | 3.70 |
| Non-White | 45.4% | 51.3% |
| High Qualified Teachers | 93.9% | 91.1% |
| Emergency Certification | 2.98% | 6.48% |
| Continuing Teachers | 86.4% | 82.16% |
| Average Teacher Salary | $41,124 | $40,183 |
| Student/Teacher Ratio | 19.59 | 20.80 |
| Free/Reduced Lunch | 55.72% | 61.45% |

*All differences significant at the p<.01 level (two-tailed test)

The relationship between working conditions and ratings on the state assessment are less clear (Table 3). Large discrepancies in the domain average in schools rated good to excellent and average or below are evident. Domain averages for leadership, empowerment and facilities and resources were all higher in schools with higher absolute ratings. The same is true of time and professional development, but at far lower levels. Schools achieving a good to excellent rating had a higher proportion of veteran teachers, fewer emergency certified and more highly qualified teachers. These schools were also less likely to serve higher minority, more impoverished students.

**Table 3. Teaching Variable Means in Schools by Accountability Rating**

| | Absolute Rating | | | Improvement Rating | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Area** | **Below Average to Unsatisfactory** | **Average** | **Good to Excellent** | **Below Average to Unsatisfactory** | **Average** | **Good to Excellent** |
| Time Score | 3.13 | 3.12 | 3.18 | 3.12 | 3.16 | 3.21 |
| Facilities and Resources Score | 3.47 | 3.78 | 3.91 | 3.79 | 3.76 | 3.88 |
| Leadership Score | 3.56 | 3.75 | 3.91 | 3.81 | 3.83 | 3.82 |
| Empowerment Score | 3.14 | 3.31 | 3.47 | 3.37 | 3.37 | 3.40 |
| Professional Development Score | 3.79 | 3.85 | 3.84 | 3.86 | 3.79 | 3.80 |
| Non-White | 81.83% | 56.48% | 34.45% | 49.23% | 47.44% | 44.39% |
| High Qualified Teachers | 89.32% | 92.62% | 93.88% | 93.29% | 91.74% | 92.64% |
| Emergency Certification | 10.11% | 4.29% | 2.85% | 3.59% | 4.59% | 5.08% |
| Continuing Teachers | 75.32% | 83.98% | 87.79% | 85.21% | 84.53% | 85.25% |
| Average Teacher Salary | $39,498 | $40,145 | $41,121 | $40,755 | $40,394 | $41,047 |
| Student/Teacher Ratio | 17.97 | 19.63 | 20.81 | 19.64 | 20.79 | 20.61 |
| Free/Reduced Lunch | 81.91% | 67.77% | 46.71% | 60.75% | 57.90% | 52.41% |

*Difference significant at the .01 level for all comparisons (two-tailed test)

School improvement ratings, while statistically and significantly different, do not appear to be highly correlated with working conditions and many other characteristics. The mean differences between school working condition domain averages in different rating categories were very small. Few differences were found in other teaching quality variables between lower and higher performing schools in the area of improvement, meriting further analyses around the improvement rating.

Although these correlations, particularly when examining AYP and Absolute Ratings, indicate that there is a significant relationship among working conditions—as well as other key indicators—and student achievement, they do not speak to the more important question of whether or not working conditions actually help cause greater student achievement. Only by controlling for as many of the multitude of factors that contribute to student learning as possible, was the analysis able to isolate the relationship with teacher working conditions and identify causal connections.

SECTQ analyzed the Teacher Working Conditions Survey results and other critical variables against these measures of student learning. The following section summarizes the findings from the statistical analysis relative to the impact of teacher working conditions on student achievement after controlling for a key set of variables (see appendix).[3]

### *Teacher Working Conditions and AYP Status*

- Survey results for ***empowerment*** were a significant predictor of AYP status for South Carolina schools, more so than a school's Absolute Rating on the PACT. For every one point increase on the survey, schools are 4.75 times more likely[4] to achieve AYP.

- For every one point increase on the survey in all schools on the ***professional development*** domain average, South Carolina schools were 2.5 times more likely to achieve AYP.

- At the high school level, schools were 9.4 times more likely to make AYP for every one point increase in the school average in the area of ***time***.[5]

Other factors also had a statistically significant impact on AYP, including the proportion of highly qualified teachers, percentage of faculty on emergency or provisional certificates and the proportion of minority students within the school. All of these variables, however, had smaller effects than empowerment and professional development.

### *PACT Student Performance: Improvement Ratings[6]*

- Schools were 1.9 times more likely to be rated good or excellent on school improvement ratings for every one point increase on the Teacher Working Conditions Survey in the area of ***time***. The effects are far greater for high schools, which are 64.6 times more likely to be rated good or excellent for every one point increase on the survey.[7]

- ***Professional development*** was by far the greatest predictor of Improvement Rating status at the middle school level, more so than the proportion of poor and minority students or AYP status. Middle schools were 44 times more likely to be rated good or excellent.

### *PACT Student Performance: Absolute Rating[8]*

- ***Leadership*** had a significant and positive impact on student performance. For every one point increase in the area of leadership on the Teacher Working Conditions Survey, schools were 2.65 times more likely to receive a good or excellent absolute accountability rating.[9]

### *Leadership and the Unique Relationship with Student Learning Documented in the Study*

Leadership was a significant predictor of student achievement using all three achievement measures, but higher performance on two of the measures was actually more likely to occur in schools where teachers held more negative perceptions about school leadership. This finding runs against a mounting body of research demonstrating the importance of school leadership to school and student success, and also counters the findings of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Initiative.[10]

Most importantly, leadership had a clear and significant impact on Absolute Rating. And, while the statistical models point to a lower odds ratio for schools with higher leadership domain scores relative to meeting AYP criteria, Table 2 casts some doubt on the finding. The mean leadership domain score is significantly higher in schools making AYP than those that do not. Three hypotheses are offered to explain the findings from the model.

1. The small size of the sample, particularly at the high school level, and a lack of variance in school working conditions averages in the area of leadership may be causing anomalies. Few schools may not have made AYP or meet improvement targets, leading to a smaller sample of schools in those categories which could significantly influence the odds ratio calculations.

2. Questions on the survey in the area of leadership focus more on school leadership's ability to communicate policies and address teacher concerns than on the specific role school principals and other leaders play in guiding instruction. The number of questions used to calculate the leadership domain average (19, more than double any other domain) could be including aspects of leadership that are important to organizing a successful school, but have less of an effect on instruction and ultimately achievement.

3. Absolute Rating saw higher, more positive gains connected to leadership as it is comprised not just of student achievement, but other factors—graduation rate, first time passage of the high school exit exam, etc.—over which school leadership may have greater control.

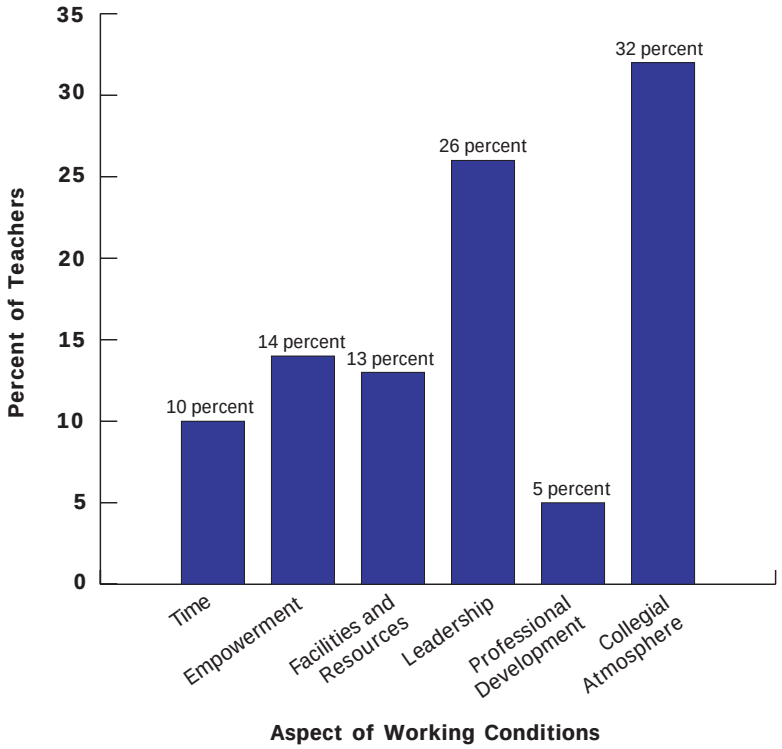
The overall findings from the analysis of the impact of teacher working conditions on student achievement provides compelling evidence to support the notion that teacher working conditions are student learning conditions. ***Teachers responded that time and empowerment both were essential to achieve the student learning gains necessary for all South Carolina students to reach high standards. Statistical modeling demonstrated that data regarding the reality facing schools matches teachers' perceptions.*** Providing more time to work with colleagues in schools where teachers are involved in making decisions that impact classroom instruction is an essential part of enhancing student achievement.

Given that working conditions are significant predictors of student achievement, if policymakers, educators, and communities across South Carolina expect students to achieve at high levels then teacher working conditions—particularly in the area of time and empowerment—should be addressed and improved.

## Finding Two: Teacher Working Conditions Make a Difference to Teacher Retention

While teachers indicated that time and empowerment were central in their abilities to help students learn, a collegial atmosphere (32 percent) and being led by a principal with a strong instructional emphasis (26 percent) mattered most in teachers' decisions about whether or not to stay in the school in which they work (Figure 2).[11] Teachers value school settings where they are not isolated, working together with leadership that supports their efforts. As one accomplished teacher described during an online conversation about teacher working conditions, "My darkest hours of teaching were when I had no one else to talk to about student achievement and effective instruction. It was in those days I made covert plans to find somewhere else to teach."

**Figure 2. Working Conditions Teachers Believe Are Most Important in Deciding Whether to Stay in a School**




There are significant connections between three out of the five working conditions analyzed and teacher retention (Table 4). Correlations between the working conditions domains and the teacher retention rate for the 2003-04 school year were statistically significant for leadership, empowerment and facilities and resources. Time and professional development—the areas teachers identified as the least important to them in deciding whether to stay in a school—were not correlated with retention.

The connections between teacher attrition and working conditions domains were statistically significant, albeit at lower levels than expected, especially when compared to other critical factors. Higher attrition rates are most strongly correlated with average teacher salary and the proportion of under prepared teachers. These connections between attrition and teacher salaries and qualifications were stronger than connections between attrition and the proportion of high minority and impoverished children served.

To better understand the relationship between teacher retention and working conditions, SECTQ conducted statistical modeling to isolate connections and determine whether a causal relationship exists. As was the case with the student achievement analysis, a few notable challenges had to be addressed. Many of the working conditions domains, due to their interconnectedness, are less likely to impact retention significantly. The correlations between working conditions areas were particularly strong between leadership and both empowerment (.788) and professional development (.753) (see Table 7). While this interconnectedness was accounted for in the analysis, the close relationship among all five domains may have "lessened" the significance of each individual working conditions area.

**Table 4. Correlations of Working Conditions with Teacher Retention**

| Variable | Correlation Coefficient with Teachers Returning from the Previous Year (2003-04) |
|---|---|
| Average Teacher Salary | .44* |
| Percent of Teachers with Emergency or Provisional Certificates | -.42* |
| Percent of Non-White Students | -.36* |
| Percent Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch | -.31* |
| Percent of Teachers with Advanced Degrees | .24* |
| Student-Teacher Ratio | .19* |
| Percent of Highly Qualified Teachers | .18* |
| Principal's Years of Experience at the School | .16* |
| Leadership Domain Average | .15* |
| Empowerment Domain Average | .14* |
| Facilities and Resources Domain Average | .12* |
| Per Pupil Spending | .12* |
| Professional Development Days Provided | .04 |
| Professional Development Domain Average | .01 |
| Student Enrollment | .01 |
| Time Domain Average | -.01 |

* Statistically significant at the p<.01 level
**Note:** The closer to one (or negative one), the greater the connection between the variable and teacher retention rates.

Also, while many important pieces of data were made available, even the collective impact of all factors considered cannot tell the complete story of why teachers decide to leave schools. The model and factors considered only account for about one-third of the proportion of the variance in retention. So while the model can identify which factors are causally related, even these relationships exist outside the presence of many issues and concerns that contribute to teachers' decisions to leave schools.[12]

Even with these difficulties, some working conditions proved to be significantly connected to teacher retention (see appendix). ***Greater agreement (higher satisfaction levels) with the leadership questions on the survey had a significant impact on teacher retention in South Carolina schools.*** A significant connection between retention and ***time*** was also documented.[13] Teacher salaries and the proportion of emergency certified teachers also were significant predictors of teacher retention rates.

As was the case with student learning, what teachers said mattered most to them on the survey was supported by the statistical analysis. Leadership, identified by more than one-quarter of teachers as the most crucial working condition in making their decisions about whether to stay in a school, was significantly predictive of teacher retention. The other working condition

teachers reported as crucial to attrition was collegial atmosphere. Unfortunately, collegial atmosphere could not be included in the analysis, as there was no specific section of the survey that addressed the concept (although some empowerment and leadership sections addressed collegial atmosphere).

## Finding Three: Perceptions of Working Conditions Are Reflective of Actual School Conditions

Questions on the South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey are designed to capture educators' perceptions of working conditions in their schools. Most questions assess how strongly educators agree with statements about positive aspects of school climate in the five domain areas.

***These perceptions appear to be well grounded in the realities of schools.*** Teachers' views of working conditions are different, depending on what they actually experience in their schools. So while this may be an "opinion survey," it can provide great insight into the actual design and conditions in a school. Consider the following:

- The relationship between teachers' perception of time and the amount of planning time provided are significantly correlated. Teachers receiving more planning time had more positive views of working conditions.[14]

- School ratings on the facilities and resources domain were significantly correlated with a lower proportion of portable classrooms. Parents' satisfaction with a school's social and physical environment (as reported on the state's school report card from parent surveys) was also strongly correlated with teacher perceptions of the facilities and resources domain on the South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey. [15]

- There were strong correlations between the domain averages in professional development, as well as empowerment and leadership, with teachers who agreed that they assist in determining the content of in-service professional development.[16]

- Strong correlations were also present between teachers who agreed they played a role in hiring and determining school budgets and the empowerment domain average.[17]

## Finding Four: Teacher and Principal Perceptions of Teacher Working Conditions are in Synch

Limited difference between principals' perceptions of teacher working conditions and those of teachers were evident in comparing results on the South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (Table 5). This finding was surprising given analysis of findings from North Carolina in both 2002 and 2004. There were considerable differences documented in North Carolina, particularly regarding the amount of time teachers have and how empowered they are to make decisions about education issues (the areas where the South Carolina findings are the strongest in terms of linking working conditions and student achievement).[18]

**Table 5. Teacher and Principal Perception of Working Conditions Issues**

| Working Condition Domain | Teacher Average (N=13,499) | Principal Average (N=192) | Difference |
|---|---|---|---|
| Time | 3.11 | 3.17 | .06 |
| Empowerment | 3.30 | 3.43 | .13 |
| Facilities and Resources | 3.78 | 3.81 | .03 |
| Leadership | 3.74 | 3.91 | .17 |
| Professional Development | 3.74 | 3.89 | .15 |

Some disparity in perceptions between school leaders and teachers on these measures might be expected, as would be the case with most business or other organizational surveys regarding working conditions. But, while principals were more positive about working conditions in all areas, the differences were small especially when assessing teachers' struggles with time and the amount and quality of the facility and resources available within a school.

This finding is particularly positive for South Carolina. It is not the case generally, as was documented in North Carolina, that teachers often have critical concerns about their time and decision making authority that goes unrecognized by school leaders. ***The fact that school leaders and teachers are in synch regarding the extent to which conditions of work are problematic makes achieving some consensus around, and impetus for reforming these issues, mush more likely.*** Unfortunately, the low principal response rate to the survey (under 20 percent) calls into question the extent to which this apparent consensus can be generalized across the state.

## Finding Five: Teachers, Regardless of their Background and Experience, View Working Conditions Similarly

***Teacher responses to the South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey were remarkably similar.*** Race, gender, highest degree earned, means of preparation (alternatively versus traditionally prepared) and National Board Certification status do not appear to affect teacher perceptions of any working conditions domain at meaningful levels. Teacher background and experience also did not affect overall satisfaction with their school or the aspects of working conditions they believed to be most important in retaining teachers and improving student learning.[19]

While background does not appear to influence teacher's perceptions of their working conditions, the school level in which they teach does (Table 6). Elementary teachers had more positive perceptions of working conditions than secondary teachers, particularly those at the high school level.

Professional development and empowerment were the domains where the greatest disparities between elementary and secondary teachers existed. The finding is troubling given the consistent findings about the importance of empowerment in improving student achievement. Time was consistently identified as an area of concern across all school types.

**Table 6. Working Conditions Averages by School Level***

| Working Condition Domain | Elementary | Middle School | High School |
|---|---|---|---|
| Time | 3.15 | 3.03 | 3.06 |
| Empowerment | 3.48 | 3.15 | 3.00 |
| Facilities and Resources | 3.91 | 3.62 | 3.62 |
| Leadership | 3.88 | 3.60 | 3.51 |
| Professional Development | 3.94 | 3.62 | 3.38 |

***** One-Way ANOVA (analysis of variance) test run on teacher responses for school types (elementary, middle, high, other) and all five domains at each level and found significant at the $p < .01$ level for all models.

## Finding Six: Many Aspects of Working Conditions Have "Ripple Effects"

Teacher working conditions are all positively and significantly correlated with one other (Table 7), meaning that ***schools are likely to have teachers who feel generally positive or negative overall about working conditions.*** If satisfaction is high in one area, particularly leadership, it is likely to be high across the board.

**Table 7. Correlations Between Teacher Working Condition Domains**

| Working Condition Domain | Time | Empowerment | Facilities and Resources | Leadership | Professional Development |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Time | —— | .360 | .386 | .458 | .406 |
| Empowerment | .360 | —— | .569 | .788 | .753 |
| Facilities and Resources | .386 | .569 | —— | .561 | .539 |
| Leadership | .458 | .788 | .561 | —— | .753 |
| Professional Development | .406 | .753 | .539 | .753 | —— |

All correlations significant at the $p < .01$ level.
**Note:** The closer to one (or negative one), the greater the connection between the two items.

- Leadership and empowerment are strongly correlated. Teachers who felt empowered to make decisions about their classrooms and school work have positive views of their school leader.

- Empowerment and leadership are closely connected with professional development. Many of the critical issues within the professional development area involve principals acting as strong instructional leaders, prioritizing, providing resources and allowing teachers to direct their own learning.

This interconnectedness could pose challenges to schools looking to focus on particular working conditions areas in hopes of making improvements. However, the correlations also indicate that improving one area could have a "ripple effect" on others and cause teachers' overall satisfaction with their school climate to increase and thereby improve student learning.

# In-Depth Analysis of Teacher Working Conditions Domains

*"If I had more impact I would feel more invested! That is the erosion that occurs over 38 years of teaching. That is what eats away at some of the classroom fulfillment . . . I must convince each new principal that I am a professional because so many decisions are 'out of the hands of teachers' – even though I am a department chair. Think how the beginning teacher must feel! I try not to allow this to erode my pride and feeling of professionalism."*

—Member of the Teacher Leaders Network

While the Teacher Working Conditions Survey results point to areas in need of improvement—particularly in providing teachers sufficient time to teach, collaborate and plan with colleagues—the findings are generally positive, particularly in the areas of professional development, leadership and facilities and resources. In this section of the report, each domain is examined in-depth with a brief explanation of its importance, a summary of findings, and broad issues to consider while discussing and examining potential program and policy reform.

## Time: Ensuring Teachers Can Work Collaboratively and Focus on Teaching All Students

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.

In many European and Asian countries, teachers spend no more than half their time in classroom instruction. They spend 17-20 hours per week teaching and devote the remainder of their 40-45 hour work weeks to planning, collaboration, meeting with students, and observation of other teachers.[1] Because American teachers are so busy teaching, they often lack the opportunity to step back and evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction.

## *Trends Regarding Time from the 2004 South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey*

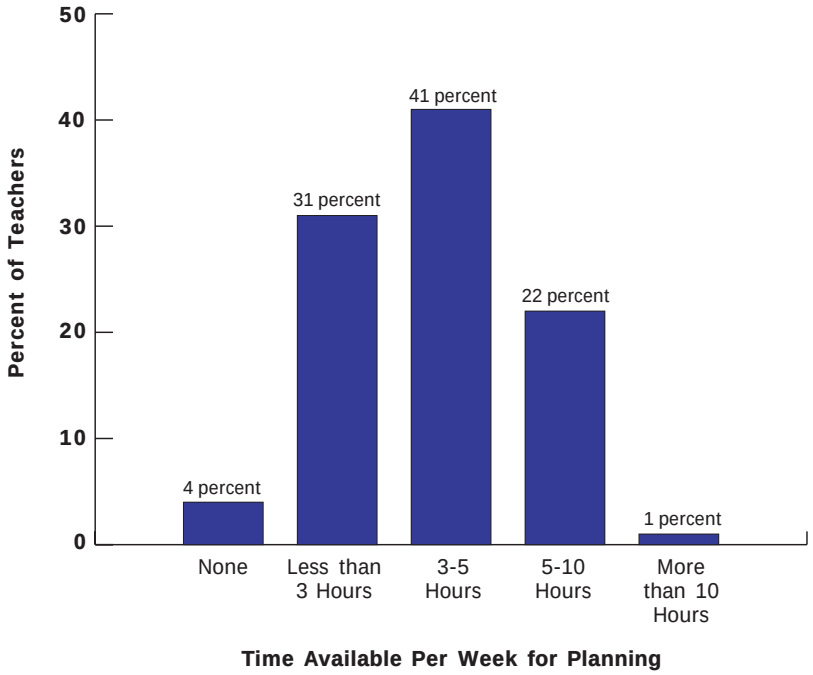
Time was the domain with the lowest overall satisfaction on the South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey, receiving an average rating of 3.11, significantly lower than ratings of leadership, professional development, and facilities and resources. Teachers' negative perceptions appear to be driven not only by the inability of schools to provide opportunities for teachers to plan and meet during the day, but also by the amount of time being spent after school on school-related activities.

**1. Teachers are not satisfied with the amount of time they receive.**

Teachers do not believe they have sufficient time to meet the educational needs of all of their students. This perception appears to be related, at least in part, to the amount of time they have during the day to plan and work collaboratively (Figure 3). More than one-third of South Carolina teachers report receiving less than three hours of planning time per week (35 percent), and over three-quarters (76 percent) report having five hours or less.

Because of the important relationship between teacher learning and student learning, the National Staff Development Council recommends that teachers spend at least one-quarter of their work time on collaboration and professional development that is embedded throughout the school day. Only one percent of South Carolina educators indicate that they receive this recommended amount of time for collaboration and development.

**Figure 3. Time Available per Week for Planning Within the Normal Instructional Day**



**2. It appears that teachers attribute the time dilemma to teaching load and non-instructional duties.**

Despite efforts in the state to decrease class size since the Education Accountability Act of 1998, South Carolina educators still believe that their class sizes are too big and that they have too many students to teach. About half of teachers believe that they can meet the educational needs of all students with their current class sizes (47 percent) and student loads (51 percent). Even at the elementary level, which class size reduction efforts have targeted, time is listed as the area of greatest concern. It is the only working conditions domain in which elementary teachers share the same level of frustration as middle school and high school teachers (see Table 6).

Teachers also expressed frustration with non-instructional duties that often make it more difficult to focus on student learning. Only half of the state's teaching corps (52 percent) believe that they are protected from duties that interfere with their role of educating students; one-sixth (15 percent) strongly disagree that they are protected.

**3. Teachers are solving the time dilemma by working on school-related activities outside of the school day.**

Given the lack of time available to teachers during the school day to plan, assess student performance and collaborate, many are working nights and weekends (Table 8). Almost one-third of South Carolina teachers spend more than 10 hours per week (32 percent) on school-related activities such as grading, parent conferences and meetings. Two-thirds (66 percent) work at least five additional hours weekly complete their work.

Many teachers work with students outside of school hours as well, coaching, tutoring, running before and after school programs, etc. Only one-fifth (19 percent) do not work with students after school hours. More than one-quarter of teachers are working directly with students for at least five hours per week outside of the school day. Most of these additional duties, however, are voluntary. About three-quarters of teachers working with students outside of school hours report that the activities are voluntary.

When those hours are added to additional time spent on grading, conferences, meetings, etc. a significant proportion of South Carolina educators are working well beyond the instructional day, potentially leading to burnout and negative perceptions of their working conditions and school environment.

**Table 8. Time Spent Outside of the Regular School Day on School-Related Activities per Week**

| | School-Related Activities Involving Student Interaction (tutor, coaching, clubs, etc.) | Other School-Related Activities (grading, conference, meetings, etc.) |
|---|---|---|
| None | 19% | 1% |
| Less than 3 Hours | 40% | 11% |
| 3 to 5 Hours | 19% | 23% |
| 5 to 10 Hours | 13% | 34% |
| More than 10 Hours | 10% | 32% |

### *Issues to Consider*

Time remains the greatest challenge to improving working conditions according to South Carolina teachers. The following broad issues are suggested for consideration by educators and policymakers. These recommendations are discussed in much greater detail, along with online resources that provide examples of schools using these strategies successfully, checklists and other action tools, and research demonstrating their effectiveness, at www.teacherworkingconditions.org.

- Structure the school day to allow sufficient time for direct planning, productive collaboration with colleagues, and overlapping time for mentors and mentees, all embedded within the school day. Consider scheduling reforms which decrease the number of classes taught and preparation necessary for teachers, involve school and district administrators in teaching, and maximize the use of paraprofessionals and permanent substitutes to assist teachers in order to make time available for collaboration and individualized instruction;

- Protect teachers from non-essential duties that interfere with teaching by creating a system that allows community members, administrators, or other qualified adults to assume some of the extra-curricular duties traditionally performed by teachers;

- Structure the school/district calendar to allow for meaningful professional development activities embedded throughout the school year; and,

- Create school processes and infrastructure that are responsive to teacher concerns about time and impediments that limit available time to meet the educational needs of all students (such as class size and student loads).

## Empowerment: Ensuring Those Who Are Closest to Students Are Involved in Making Decisions that Affect Them

Teaching has historically been a profession which granted practitioners some degree of autonomy in their classrooms, but larger institutional decisions affecting their work were still controlled by administrators and policymakers. Everything from hiring, budgeting, scheduling, textbook and technology selections to professional development and curriculum are often in the hands of others. As noted by Richard Ingersoll, in his 2003 book *Who Controls Teachers' Work?: Power and Accountability in America's Schools*, "Those who are entrusted with the training of this next generation are not entrusted with much control over many of the key decisions in their work." He notes that in schools where teachers are more empowered, there is "less conflict between staff and students and less teacher turnover."

The importance of teacher empowerment in key education areas cannot be underestimated. When teachers believe that their knowledge of teaching and learning (and the very students they teach) is considered a valuable factor in decision making, they become connected to their schools and districts in powerful ways. This connection can help improve the retention of those teachers in their classrooms and, ultimately, the success of the students they teach.

### *Trends Regarding Empowerment from the 2004 South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey*

Empowerment, regarded by teachers and identified in the statistical analyses as crucial to improving student learning, received a 3.30 average in the state. This average is higher than time, but lower than the other three working conditions areas.

1. **While 70 percent of teachers agree that they are recognized as educational experts, this expertise appears to be limited to classrooms and instruction.**

Teachers in South Carolina are positive about school leadership and community perceptions relative to their leadership in the classroom. Three-quarters of teachers agree that they are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction and student progress (38 percent strongly agree) and 70 percent agree that they are recognized as educational experts.

This expertise, however, has limits. Few teachers are able to exert their expertise in critical areas that directly impact school climate. Consider the following:

- Only 29 percent of South Carolina teachers agree that they have a role in the hiring of new teachers at their school, with only 10 percent strongly agreeing. And more than one-third of teachers (39 percent) strongly disagree that they are involved in hiring new faculty.

- One-third of teachers agree that they have a role in deciding how the school budget will be spent. Only 7 percent strongly agree that they have a role and another one-third "strongly disagree" that they are involved in school budgeting.

- About half (53 percent) of teachers indicate that they assist in determining the content of in-service professional development. Less than one-fifth (17 percent) strongly agree that they help in selecting what professional development is offered.

2. **The areas where teachers indicated broad agreement in the empowerment section of the survey have more to do with leadership than empowering teachers.**

Many positive aspects of school working conditions were in response to questions found in the empowerment section of the survey:

- Three-quarters of teachers agree that they are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction and student progress (75 percent);

- 58 percent of teachers agree that reasoned educational risk-taking is encouraged and supported (only 8 percent of teachers in the state strongly disagree that this is true in their school);

- Two-thirds agree that there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in their school (64 percent);

- Teachers indicate that they feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them (58 percent);

Interestingly, the statistical analysis of the South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey showed that the responses to these questions were more likely to explain the notion of "leadership" than empowerment.[2] Factor analyses showed that these questions, although listed in the empowerment section of the survey, were more closely associated with questions addressing leadership. As previously discussed, leadership and empowerment are intertwined, but it appears that positive aspects of empowerment have as much, if not more, to do with principals and school leadership than teacher empowerment.

3. **Empowering teachers has ramifications for not only teachers and student learning, but also parent satisfaction with school conditions.**

Empowering teachers also means empowering parents and increasing their satisfaction. School averages on the teacher empowerment domain on the survey were significantly correlated with the percentage of parents attending parent-teacher conferences.[3] Further, parent satisfaction with the school learning environment, social and physical environment, and home and school relations was most strongly correlated with empowerment, more so than with how teachers rated leadership or facilities and resources.[4] When teachers, so often the primary point of contact for the community to a school, are empowered to make important school-based decisions, parents are more satisfied with that school environment.

### *Issues to Consider*

Teachers should be provided opportunities that allow a wide range of involvement in decision making. Involvement should be meaningful while still respecting the need for teachers to expend the greatest amount of time and energy in the classroom with their students and allowing decisions to be made at the level which might be required by statute. These factors should be recognized but should not be used as excuses to marginalize the role of teachers in consequential decisions affecting their school. Specifically, educators, policymakers and the school community should consider:

- Providing teachers access to resources (finances, time, opportunity, etc.) to identify and solve problems related to their classrooms in order to ensure they can help all students learn.

- Creating opportunities—both formal and informal—for teachers to influence, design, create, and implement school and district policies and procedures. Consider that 17 percent of teachers indicated that they are not given an opportunity to elect representatives or participate in planning for school improvement.

- Encouraging the inclusion of teachers in community, school, district, and state level discussions related to the welfare and ability of all students to academically achieve at the highest levels.

## Facilities and Resources: Ensuring Teachers Have the Resources to Help All Children Learn

A growing body of research confirms that the quality of facilities contributes directly to teacher turnover rates and student performance. A study by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1998) found that student attitudes about education directly reflect

their learning environment, and other studies have shown that clean air, good light, and a quiet, comfortable, and safe learning environment are essential for academic achievement.[5]

Despite increased expenditures for school facilities, many education and community leaders, along with policymakers, remain unprepared for and unresponsive to the facility and resource needs of schools. One reason is that, although more than 80 percent of principals surveyed in New Jersey considered themselves well trained for providing academic leadership and ensuring teacher quality, fewer than half thought they were well prepared for facilities management.[6]

On the national level, schools on the cutting edge of the reform movement in facilities and resource management are creating smaller learning communities; delivering instruction through innovative and emerging technologies; reconsidering and redesigning the traditional school spaces to create smarter designs of teacher working and student learning spaces; and integrating community strengths and resources in partnerships with a wide array of public, civic, and private organizations.

### *Trends Regarding Facilities and Resources from the 2004 South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey*

Overall, teachers were positive about the facilities and resources in South Carolina, with a domain average of 3.78, the highest of any of the five areas. Elementary teachers were particularly satisfied, but both middle and high school teachers ranked this domain highly as well.

1. **Teachers are consistently positive about the facilities and resources available to them.**

Most teachers were positive about facilities and resources. Consider the following:

- Two-thirds (64 percent) agree that they have adequate space in their classroom to work productively;
- Seventy percent of teachers say they have convenient access to reliable communication technology, office equipment such as copy machines, and even more agree that their school provides sufficient access to instructional supplies (78 percent);
- About two-thirds of South Carolina educators have access to a broad range of educational support personnel (tutors, social workers, nurses, etc.) (66 percent), and current instructional technology for classrooms (65 percent);
- Three-quarters agree that they work in a school environment that is clean and well maintained; and
- Eighty-four percent agree that their school environment is safe.

2. **Teachers are more likely to strongly agree that their resources are sufficient, and less likely to strongly disagree than in other working conditions areas.**

More teachers "strongly" agreed than "somewhat" agreed with many of the facilities questions related to access to equipment and communications technology, and especially safety. Forty percent of teachers felt strongly that their school environment is clean and half of teachers

strongly agreed that their school is safe. Alternatively, only four percent felt strongly that their school environment was not safe, eight percent strongly disagreed that the school was clean and well maintained, and only five percent strongly disagreed about having sufficient access to instructional materials.

3. **Facilities and resources, while rated highly generally, vary more than other working conditions domains.**

In general, South Carolina educators agree that they have sufficient facilities and resources. However, there appear to be variations across schools and districts in the state that may require closer attention. The responses for facilities and resources were more likely to be significantly higher or lower than the average (in statistical terms, the domain has a greater "standard deviation"). So, while the domain had the highest average, it also had the greatest number of schools with an average response that was far above or far below that average.[7]

Some interesting findings may occur when examining the disparity of teacher perceptions across individual schools and districts. There was a statistically significant positive correlation between the facilities and domain average and the proportion of students on free and reduced lunch. Teachers in schools serving poorer children had higher ratings of facilities; however, educators were significantly more negative about their facilities and resources in schools serving a greater number of minority students.[8]

### *Issues to Consider*

As a working condition that is more easily identified and under direct control of the school district and state, the physical building of a school and its related resources should be considered and treated as much more than an institutional backdrop. Facilities and resources provide an opportunity to significantly improve teacher working conditions, student learning conditions and student achievement. Consider the following suggestions for addressing facilities and resources:

- Provide clean, safe, and well-maintained school environments that promote learning;
- Provide more convenient and consistent access to instructional and communication technology;
- Ensure adequate professional space for teachers and paraprofessionals in school facilities; and
- Ensure sufficient access to support personnel (tutors, family specialists, mental health professionals, nurses, psychologists and social workers).

## Leadership: Ensuring Schools Have Strong Leaders Who Support Teaching and Learning

School improvement is not possible without skilled, knowledgeable leadership that is responsive to the needs of all teachers and students. A recent report by the Wallace Foundation revealed that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school, and leadership effects are usually largest where and when they are needed most. School leaders must combine appropriate pressures and supports as they develop an environment that encourages professional learning communities and continuous school improvement.

The Wallace report indicated that three sets of practices constitute the basic core of successful leadership: setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization.

National studies analyzing teacher survey results, like the School and Staffing Survey from the National Center for Education Statistics, have found that teachers leaving because of job dissatisfaction frequently indicate lack of administrative support and low salaries as the top reasons for their departure. Teachers from high minority, high poverty schools were even more likely to report that the lack of administrative support was the primary reason for leaving. School leadership has been documented to have an impact on the overall school culture and teacher job satisfaction. Consequently, principal development will prove essential in reducing the high teacher turnover rates and creating professional learning communities within schools.

### *Trends Regarding Leadership on the 2004 South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey*

The analysis of working conditions' impact on student achievement demonstrates the considerable significance of school leadership. Teachers' own perceptions about the role of leadership in their decisions about where to work makes the need for strong school leadership even more clear. Fortunately, teachers rate leadership highly (3.75). Three-quarters of South Carolina teachers (77 percent) agree that their principal supports them when they need it, and half strongly agree.

1. **Leadership is rated highly, particularly on issues related to communicating policies, expectations and standards for evaluation and instruction.**

School leadership is given high marks by teachers in several areas, especially as it relates to communication. Consider:

- Two-thirds (66 percent) believe school administrators and support personnel are available and give priority to supporting teachers, and two-thirds (66 percent) believe that the school leadership make efforts to address teacher concerns (31 percent strongly agree);

- Three-quarters (73 percent) of teachers agree that faculty and staff have a shared vision, that policies are communicated effectively (78 percent) as are expectations (82 percent) and standards for delivering instruction (88 percent); and

- Most teachers are positive about evaluation and the feedback they receive. Seventy-seven percent agree that they are recognized for professional accomplishments and 71 percent say they receive helpful feedback for improving teaching and learning.

Despite these positive findings, according to teachers, school leadership is less successful addressing issues related to time (Table 9). A majority of teachers disagree that leadership reduces routine administrative duties and paperwork that often affects teachers' perception of time.

**Table 9. School Leadership and Efforts to Improve Working Conditions**

| Leadership Questions | Percent of Teachers Indicating Agreement |
|---|---|
| Q.17. The school leadership makes an effort to minimize required administrative duties or paperwork that interferes with the job of teaching. | 47% |
| Q. 28. The leadership effectively communicates local, state and national educational policies and initiatives and how they affect teaching and learning. | 78% |
| Q. 30. The school leadership makes an effort to address teacher concerns. | 66% |
| Q. 35. Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching and learning. | 81% |
| Q. 62. The school leadership makes a sustained effort to provide quality professional development in my school | 73% |

Teacher concerns about school leadership are most often addressed by the school principal. More than half of teachers (58 percent) indicate that the principal or school head makes a sustained effort to address leadership concerns. Only two percent of teachers indicated that the director of curriculum or other central office personnel help to address teachers' leadership concerns.

About one-fifth (19 percent) of teachers indicated that neither the principal, vice principal, department chair (or grade level leader), school or district-based curriculum specialist nor other central office staff address leadership concerns. Further study should be conducted to better assess whether teachers responding "None of the Above" to the question believe that others are addressing school leadership concerns (for example, Superintendent, School Board Member, etc.) or that leadership concerns are not being addressed at all. Given the importance of teachers' perception of leadership documented in the findings section, ensuring that teacher concerns about leadership are addressed must be a priority for districts to attract and retain high quality teachers.

**2. Leadership is central to addressing teacher working conditions.**

Leadership is highly correlated with all working conditions, particularly professional development and empowerment. A substantial number of questions, while designed to examine issues in other working conditions domains, were more closely related to leadership. Twenty-seven questions on the South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey pertained to leadership (compared to the second most prominent at eleven in the area of professional development).

School leadership is often the "gateway" working condition to improving others. Strong, supportive, instructional leaders empower teachers and involve them in decisions about their own professional growth and the direction of the school. They help identify time for, and encourage teachers to work collaboratively. Given the importance of school leadership to the other working conditions areas, it should come as no surprise that it was found to significantly impact teacher retention as well as enhance a school's likelihood to attain a higher school accountability rating.

### *Issues to Consider*

The word leadership can no longer evoke images of the lone principal who commands authority over all decisions made in a school. It is time to rethink what school leadership means. These issues focus on the need for principals to continue their own learning and professional development, which in turn requires restructuring the traditional principal workload to provide time for collaboration with other school leaders. Strong communication between teachers and principals must occur so that teachers are simultaneously led in the right direction and supported in their efforts to improve student learning. Educators, policymakers and community members should consider:

- Creating a system where principals have meaningful professional development that enhances their knowledge and skills as effective instructional leaders serving students and teachers;

- Reexamining and modifying the work of principals, allowing them sufficient time for effective and ongoing communication with teachers. Communication should include a shared vision for success, clear performance expectations of the school community and regular updates on emerging policies and initiatives shaping education;

- Ensuring the formal evaluation system is based on student learning and professional development that enhances teachers' knowledge and skills;

- Ensuring that principals and other school personnel are effectively supporting teachers and responding to primary concerns that prohibit teachers from improving student learning. Teacher support should be accessible, proactive, and collaborative in nature; and

- Providing teachers opportunities not only to advance in teaching, but also to explore and pursue the principalship.

## Professional Development: Ensuring Teachers Can Continually Enhance Their Knowledge and Skills

Not all professional development is created equal. Research indicates that high quality professional development is essential for high quality teaching. 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 a diverse student population, effectively use data and become active agents in their own professional growth.

The most effective professional development focuses on the specific content students will learn and the specific difficulties students encounter in learning the content. Therefore, professional

development should not focus on generic teaching behaviors, but on the analysis of curriculum and student responses to it. Offering "in-service" for teachers on the new student standards is insufficient to the task at hand. Teachers need vehicles for analysis, criticism, and communication of ideas and practices.

### *Trends Regarding Professional Development in the 2004 South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey*

The South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey provides evidence that teachers are generally satisfied with the professional development that they receive. These perceptions are particularly important given the strong connections found between professional development and Improvement Ratings on the PACT and attaining AYP status. The average rating for professional development was 3.75, virtually identical to the highest rated working conditions domains of leadership (3.75) and facilities and resources (3.78).

About three-quarters of teachers (71 percent) agree that enhancing teacher knowledge and skills is prioritized as the most important strategy to improve student achievement (only six percent strongly disagree). Teachers believe there are sufficient resources, administrative support (68 percents) and time (69 percent) to find and take advantage of professional development opportunities. Additionally, three-quarters of teachers (73 percent) believe that they are provided opportunities to learn from one another.

**1. Most Teachers Do Not Receive Significant Professional Development in Critical Areas.**

Less than half of South Carolina teachers received at least ten hours of professional development over the past two years in virtually all areas of their professional learning (Table 10). Only in teacher content area (50.3 percent), methods of teaching (46.0 percent) and reading strategies (38.3 percent) did more than one-third of South Carolina teachers receive an average of five hours of professional development annually.

**Table 10. Percentage of Teachers Receiving at Least 10 Hours of Professional Development by School Type**

| Area | All Teachers | Elementary | Middle | High |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Special Education – Students with Disabilities | 14.1% | 12.8% | 15.2% | 16.0% |
| Special Education – Academically Gifted | 7.2% | 5.3% | 10.9% | 9.0% |
| Limited English Proficiency | 3.8% | 3.8% | 3.9% | 3.4% |
| Closing the Achievement Gap | 14.2% | 15.8% | 17.0% | 13.2% |
| Your Content Area(s) | 50.3% | 49.1% | 52.5% | 50.7% |
| Methods of Teaching | 46.0% | 47.0% | 46.3% | 44.0% |
| Student Assessment | 28.7% | 29.7% | 27.4% | 26.9% |
| Classroom Management Techniques | 22.0% | 21.5% | 22.5% | 22.3% |
| Reading Strategies | 38.9% | 50.9% | 28.6% | 18.3% |
| Mentoring Strategies and Skills | 8.8% | 8.4% | 9.0% | 9.6% |

In particular, working with diverse learners does not appear to receive much emphasis. A scant 3.8 percent of teachers received at least ten hours over the past two years in working with Limited English Proficient students, and few teachers participated in professional development to work with special populations—gifted or students with disabilities. One-quarter (22 percent) of South Carolina teachers indicated that they do not feel well prepared—and only 28 percent felt strongly that they were prepared—to work with students on Individualized Education Plans (special education students), yet only 14 percent received at least ten hours of professional development in this area. A greater proportion of South Carolina teachers identify working with special education and Limited English Proficient students as a priority than received professional learning opportunities (22 percent prioritized vs. 14 percent received and 15 percent prioritized vs. 4 percent received respectively).

Other trends to note in the professional development received by South Carolina teachers:

- Elementary teachers were far more likely to have professional development in reading strategies than secondary teachers. Despite growing literacy challenges at the high school level in South Carolina and across the nation, less than one-fifth of high school teachers averaged five hours annually in professional development to enhance their knowledge and skills in teaching reading.

- Despite No Child Left Behind's call for greater content mastery through preparation or professional development, only half of the state's teachers at all school levels have had ten plus hours of professional development in their content area(s) over the past two years.

- The greatest gap between professional development desired and received by far was in the area of "Closing the Achievement Gap." Only 14 percent of teachers received at least ten hours over the past two years in this area, but 43 percent of survey respondents listed it as a professional development priority.

- New teachers were likely to prioritize more areas of professional development than more veteran educators. The most significant gap was in the area of classroom management. About one-third of teachers with one to three years experience (34.8 percent) received significant professional development in classroom management compared to 22.2 percent for those with four to ten years experience and 19.2 percent for those with 11-20 years in teaching.

- Alternatively prepared teachers were more likely to receive professional development in classroom management and less likely to have significant opportunities in reading strategies.[9]

**2. Teachers Receive Professional Development Predominantly through In Service Activities, but Other Delivery Methods are Viewed as More Beneficial**

Most teachers participating in professional development do so through workshops and conferences. National Board Certification, the delivery method most valued by teachers who participated, is the method least likely to be available to and taken advantage of by educators. Graduate courses, taken during the last two years by 70 percent of South Carolina teachers responding to the survey, were more likely to be considered beneficial than the more frequently attended workshops and conferences.

Substantial research, as well as the definition of high quality professional development under No Child Left Behind, demonstrates the need for job-embedded, ongoing professional development opportunities. According to South Carolina teachers, these activities were the least likely to be of the greatest benefit. Further investigation should be conducted to better understand what types of job-embedded opportunities are offered and assess whether they conform to research-based practice and national standards.

**Table 11. Method of Professional Development Delivery and Effectiveness**

| Method | Percentage of Teachers Participating over Past Two Years | Percentage Participating Who Indicated that it was the MOST Beneficial |
|---|---|---|
| Workshops, Institutes or Academies | 92% | 48% |
| Attendance at Conferences or Professional Meetings | 82% | 44% |
| Informal, Job-embedded Professional Development Activities | 79% | 29% |
| Graduate Courses | 70% | 55% |
| Participation in Coaching or Mentoring | 38% | 17% |
| National Board Certification | 14% | 66% |

**3. Teachers often do not play a role in selecting the professional development opportunities available to them.**

Sixty-nine percent of teachers agreed that adequate and appropriate time is provided for professional development, and three-quarters (73 percent) agreed that the school leadership makes a sustained effort to provide quality professional development. More than two-thirds (68 percent) believe that sufficient resources and support are available to allow teachers to take advantage of professional development activities.

While resources appear sufficient for most teachers, control over professional development content is not. Only half (53 percent) of teachers agree that they "assist" in determining the content of in-service professional development. Teachers were also much more likely to "somewhat agree." Only 17 percent of teachers strongly agree that they help choose professional development program offerings. Teachers who did play a role in determining content had higher overall ratings of professional development (as well as empowerment and leadership).[10]

## *Issues to Consider*

Above all, professional development should provide educators the knowledge and skills to work with all students and should also enhance their capacity for analyzing and interpreting data. The following issues to consider are meant to encourage a data-driven process in deciding what professional development opportunities to provide, implementing the system, and evaluating its impact on student learning. In order to provide high quality professional development to all teachers, stakeholders should consider:

- Ensuring professional development provides teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to work with all learners;

- Providing extensive resources—including time for professional development design, implementation and evaluation—and conducting an assessment of current spending;

- Providing opportunities for teachers to assume responsibility for their own professional development through formal and informal means;

- Developing partnerships that provide expertise and resources to support student success and teachers' learning;

- Planning professional development, based on state standards, that is aligned with school and district goals and promotes follow up and evaluation of the effectiveness of the support on teaching and learning; and

- Enhancing the capacity for teachers, principals and district administrators to analyze and interpret data to ensure that professional development opportunities are based on the needs of students and teachers.

## Induction and Mentoring: Ensuring that New Teachers Receive Sufficient Support to Be Successful and Stay in Teaching

A comprehensive induction program is one of the most effective methods for retaining quality teachers. While mentoring is often equated with induction, it is actually only one piece of a comprehensive induction program, which provides a framework of support and guidance for new teachers.

A growing body of research demonstrates that comprehensive induction—networking, release time, full-time mentor coaches, etc.—can cut attrition rates by 50 percent.[11] Yet, only one percent of beginning teachers nationally are receiving comprehensive induction. Other professions, like medicine, have comprehensive induction frameworks, while educators are often placed in classrooms with little guidance or support and expected to perform as if they have been teaching for years.

High minority and high poverty schools must rely on disproportionate numbers of inexperienced teachers, thereby making comprehensive induction even more vital in those schools. Well-crafted induction programs can improve teaching quality and stem high rates of teacher attrition and in doing so, substantially decrease the overall costs of teacher recruitment and retention.

South Carolina's ADEPT system sets standards and guidelines for districts in supporting new teachers.[12] Several training models have been developed and guidelines offered to districts. All new teachers participate in the induction program (it is optional for experienced out-of-state teachers) to support incoming teachers during their initial years in the profession.

### *Trends Regarding Induction and Mentoring in the 2004 South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey*

As discussed previously, given the design and scaling of the induction and mentoring questions, it was not possible to generate a "domain average" similar to the other five working condition

areas studied. Further, given the limited number of new teachers or mentors in some buildings, a school level average could not be generated to run correlations against critical school level variables such as student achievement and teacher retention. Therefore, much of the analysis in this section focuses on the descriptive statistics available.

**1. Mentors and Mentees Have Different Perceptions About the Quality and Duration of Mentoring Received**

Mentors and mentees share different perceptions about the frequency of critical components of high quality induction (Table 11).[13] In particular, the gap between mentees claiming that they never plan with their mentor, observe their teaching or are observed is significantly different than what mentors report. A gap of more than 20 percent exists between mentees who claim that they never plan during the school day with their mentor (37.6 percent) and mentors who report the same phenomenon (16.6 percent). The gap is even larger between the two groups in whether they meet at least once per week (one-third of mentees versus over half of mentors). The only area where mentors and mentees appear to be on the same page is reporting on how often they discuss mentees' teaching practices.

While a gap between mentors and mentees in reporting similar events has been documented, the disparity seen on the South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey is particularly large.[14] There may be some dispute as to whether a meeting that occurred really was a meeting. For example, a mentor asking a mentee how they are doing in the context of informal conversation (coffee, teachers' lounge, etc.) may be reporting that a meeting occurred, whereas a mentee, not receiving the support they needed, would not. But even an extremely straightforward measure, such as observation of teaching, yielded significant gaps between mentors and mentees.

**2. There are Substantial Gaps in the Implementation of the Induction and Mentoring Program, Particularly at the Secondary Level**

There are many positives documented in the quality of induction and mentoring in South Carolina schools. About half of mentees (49.2 percent) and three-quarters of mentors (72.6 percent) report meeting at least once per week. These meetings appear to focus on mentees' teaching practices, as about half of mentees (46.4 percent) and mentors (56.1 percent) report weekly discussions of mentees' teaching.

However, these frequent meetings are offset by the high proportion of new teachers indicating that they never receive support from their mentor. Almost half of new teachers (45.8 percent) never saw their mentor teach. Additionally, one-third of new teachers report that they never plan instruction with their mentor during or outside of the school day.

Mentoring occurs less frequently at the secondary level (Table 12). New high school teachers were, in particular, less likely to plan instruction with their mentor. The gaps between mentors and mentees in their perception of induction were pervasive across all school types. New alternative route teachers received more frequent contact with their mentor than newly prepared traditional teachers. About 10 percent fewer new alternatively prepared teachers indicated that they never plan with their mentor during the school day or work collaboratively to plan instruction.[15]

While about half of mentees (48 percent) report having release time to observe other teachers, few receive additional resources and support to help ensure high quality induction. Only five

percent of teachers had a reduced teaching schedule and nine percent received a reduced number of classes for which to prepare. One-quarter received extra classroom assistance (i.e. teacher aides and specialists) to help them transition into teaching.

**Table 12. Mentor and Mentee Reporting of the Frequency of Key Characteristics of Induction**

| Position | Percent indicating at least once a week | Percent indicating several times a month to less than once a month | Percent indicating never |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Planning During School Day* | | | |
| Mentees (N=1,520) | 31.4% | 31.1% | 37.6% |
| Mentors (N=2,972) | 55.5% | 27.9% | 16.6% |
| *Observing Mentee's Teaching* | | | |
| Mentees | 5.5% | 76.1% | 18.5% |
| Mentors | 13.6% | 56.5% | 29.9% |
| *Observing Mentor's Teaching* | | | |
| Mentees | 4.4% | 49.8% | 45.8% |
| Mentors | 13.4% | 59.8% | 26.8% |
| *Planning Instruction* | | | |
| Mentees | 25.6% | 36.7% | 37.7% |
| Mentors | 43.2% | 36.7% | 20.1% |
| *Discussing Mentee's Teaching* | | | |
| Mentees | 46.4% | 47.9% | 5.7% |
| Mentors | 56.1% | 35.6% | 8.3% |

**Table 13. Frequency of Critical Mentoring Components by School Level**

**Elementary**

| Position | Percent once a week or more | | Percent never | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mentee | Mentor | Mentee | Mentor |
| Planning During School Day | 35.1% | 61.4% | 35.2% | 15.2% |
| Observing Mentee's Teaching | 5.2% | 15.5% | 14.5% | 27.2% |
| Observing Mentor's Teaching | 4.4% | 14.8% | 42.2% | 24.3% |
| Planning Instruction | 31.7% | 52.1% | 34.2% | 17.2% |
| Discussing Mentee's Teaching | 50.4% | 62.7% | 4.3% | 7.0% |

**Middle**

| Position | Percent once a week or more | | Percent never | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mentee | Mentor | Mentee | Mentor |
| Planning During School Day | 33.1% | 52.3% | 39.0% | 15.2% |
| Observing Mentee's Teaching | 6.2% | 12.6% | 27.7% | 35.0% |
| Observing Mentor's Teaching | 4.2% | 12.5% | 51.8% | 31.0% |
| Planning Instruction | 25.1% | 38.2% | 39.7% | 20.2% |
| Discussing Mentee's Teaching | 46.4% | 51.1% | 7.5% | 8.6% |

**High**

| Position | Percent once a week or more | | Percent never | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mentee | Mentor | Mentee | Mentor |
| Planning During School Day | 19.9% | 44.5% | 43.2% | 21.4% |
| Observing Mentee's Teaching | 5.6% | 10.2% | 21.9% | 31.7% |
| Observing Mentor's Teaching | 4.7% | 11.2% | 50.2% | 28.6% |
| Planning Instruction | 12.2% | 27.1% | 42.0% | 26.1% |
| Discussing Mentee's Teaching | 39.0% | 46.2% | 7.9% | 10.8% |

### 3. Mentoring and Induction Appear to be Disconnected from Other Teacher Working Conditions Areas

Finding six, which indicates that all working conditions are interconnected, does not apply well to induction and mentoring. Correlations were run between the five working conditions domains and critical components of induction, from the perspective of both the mentor and mentee. In all cases, weak connections were found. But while weak, the correlations were statistically significant and similar for all areas. Increases in the frequency of planning, observation and discussion as part of an induction program were negatively correlated with all working conditions.[16] In other words, more intensive mentoring is significantly connected with poorer perceptions of time, leadership, empowerment, professional development and facilities and resources.

A few hypotheses are offered to explain this unique finding related to higher quality induction:

- The quality of mentoring and induction is more grounded in the preparation and relationship of the mentor and mentee than the working conditions of the school where they teach. Mentor selection and training as well as the readiness level of the new teacher all may be more important than school climate and leadership and other professional development opportunities available.

- The findings are correlations, indicating that there is a significant connection (albeit small) between the frequency of induction offered and working conditions. This connection, however, may be explained by many factors. Only more sophisticated analyses that control for other factors can explain what may be driving the relationship.

- The finding relates to the frequency of mentoring components, not the quality. While there may be more frequent meetings and observations in schools with lower working conditions ratings, it does not necessarily imply that they are better in terms of being helpful to the new teacher in improving practice and acclimating to the teaching profession.

The good news is that improvements in induction and mentoring can occur even without significant improvements in teacher working conditions. While reforming leadership, empowering teachers and providing additional time may all contribute to creating a school context where new teachers will stay and thrive, they may not all be necessary to achieve to see marked improvement in the duration and quality of mentoring being provided.

## *Issues to Consider*

Given the retention challenges documented in the introduction section of the report, South Carolina needs to attend to variation in the quality of implementation of the induction and mentoring guidelines currently being considered by the state. Too many new teachers are not benefiting from high quality induction, rarely meeting and never observing, planning and discussing teaching. Yet, other new teachers enjoy the benefits of frequent, high quality support. Educators, policymakers and stakeholders should consider the following in addressing the consistency and quality of induction and mentoring:

- Ensuring sufficient resources are available to support mentor training, including release time to observe and plan during the school day. Different schools and districts may require different funding levels to meet the needs of their specific teaching population. For example, alternative route teachers may need additional support based on their limited amount of preparation and hard-to-staff schools with a high proportion of new teachers may require different mentoring models and assistance.

- Providing flexibility and guidance through different mentoring models to South Carolina districts, while requiring minimal components and standards that research has proven effective.

- Gathering data on not only the design, but also the implementation of induction and mentoring models in schools and district to ensure all new teachers have the support they need to acclimate to and stay in the teaching profession.

# Conclusion

> *While I'd love to be paid more, no amount of money could make me teach if these conditions [effective school leaders, professional flexibility and a culture of collaboration] are not present in the schools where I work.*
>
> —Member of the Teacher Leaders Network

The considerable benefit of the South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Initiative is that the state has started to shine a bright light on an issue that has been largely ignored or overlooked in schools across the state and around the nation. The good news is that the light has shown some positive elements of teacher working conditions, particularly in the area of leadership and professional development.

The analysis of survey results also indicate that the state, districts, schools and communities can and should do considerably more to improve teacher working conditions. This report reveals that successful undertakings to improve teacher working conditions could significantly improve student achievement and help to stem teacher turnover. Given the chronic teacher retention problems facing South Carolina, especially in hard-to-staff districts and schools, and the overwhelming interest in holding students to higher achievement standards, a systemic and sustained effort to improve teacher working conditions is a necessary investment for education stakeholders.

Broad recommendations are offered at the state level. Ultimately, however, working conditions reform must be data-driven and will be unique to each school and district as they face different challenges, bring different assets, and will need to invest differently in improving school climate. Therefore, the recommendations focus broadly on gathering working conditions data and providing assistance and resources for schools that look to improve student learning conditions by investing in schools that are organized for success.

1. *Provide funding for the design, dissemination, and analysis of teacher working conditions, either as a stand alone survey or to be incorporated into other data gathering and assistance efforts.*

South Carolina educators and students are fortunate that State Superintendent Tenenbaum and CERRA undertook the initiative to explore a topic so crucial to teaching and learning. Given the significant connections between working conditions and student achievement, more needs to be done to ensure that the survey will continue over time, eventually providing the state with information necessary to help ensure a positive school climate for teachers and students. The Department of Education, CERRA or another entity should conduct and report on the findings on a regular basis. These findings should be included in broader reporting

on the success of recruitment and retention efforts undertaken by the state. Further analysis should be conducted on the survey results to provide information on other issues being examined by the state such as the quality of professional development as well as recruitment and retention in hard-to-staff schools.

If the survey is to continue, greater efforts must be made to improve participation in the initiative. Efforts to improve the methods of disseminating, publicizing, and conducting the survey should be considered.

2. *Document and disseminate successful strategies to reform working conditions and ensure resources are made available for school and districts to improve.*

South Carolina should examine school level data to identify schools where teachers report positive working conditions in order to conduct further research that documents their success. Case studies that delve deeply into the catalysts, barriers and costs of pursuing successful strategies to improve working conditions should occur. State funds—through a venture capital or reserve fund, as has been proposed by Governor Mike Easley in North Carolina—should be made available to help schools and districts undertake research-based working conditions reform efforts informed by the best practices documented throughout the state. These funds should be competitive, prioritize toward hard-to-staff and low performing schools and require evidence of ongoing monitoring and success.

3. *Invest in what matters most for improving teacher working conditions—high quality leaders who can empower teachers to be included in decision making about instruction and create learning communities that help all students succeed.*

The findings from the study demonstrate that leadership is at the core of improving working conditions in schools. Professional development and empowerment, the two other areas of greatest significance in improving results, are dependent on high quality principals who engage teachers in decision making. The state should examine the preparation, induction and continuous support of school leaders and ensure that all principals understand the important role of teacher working conditions and have the knowledge and skills to make their schools places where all teachers want to work and students can learn. Given the importance of teacher empowerment on student achievement and parental satisfaction, principals should not only be strong instructional leaders in their own right, but able to involve teachers in decisions which impact students, classrooms and schools.

4. *Consider reforms that directly address teachers' greatest concerns about their working conditions.*

Teachers are the most negative about the time available to them and their ability to participate in decisions that directly affect teaching and learning. State investments in: class size reduction efforts, reductions in teaching load (particularly for new teachers), time for planning and to work collaboratively, and high quality professional development may help improve teachers' perceptions of their school environment, and ultimately student success. Models that document successful examples of teacher empowerment should be created so that educators can better understand and implement reforms that create distributed leadership and shared instructional decision making.

*5. Address inequities in the quantity and quality of support new teachers receive across the state.*

A substantial proportion of new teachers do not receive the type of support that will encourage them to remain in the profession. The state, while keeping the flexibility necessary for schools and districts to customize different induction and support models to meet the needs of their teaching corps, should ensure, at the very least, that critical basic components such as mentor training and release time for observation and planning, are not only planned and reported, but implemented consistently across all schools.

Findings from this report support the importance of identifying and discussing teacher working conditions. Significant and compelling connections between working conditions and student achievement have been documented. Ensuring a qualified teacher for every student is not enough to close the achievement gap. Teachers must have the resources and supports they need to serve all students well, and without comprehensive and sustained efforts to improve teacher working conditions much of the state's notable school reform efforts could go unfulfilled.

# Appendix. Statistical Models Analyzing the Connection Between Teacher Working Conditions, Student Achievement and Teacher Retention

**Adequate Yearly Progress Status**
**(Binary Logistic Regression)**

| | All (n=519) | Elem. (n=322) | Middle (n=105) | High (n=57) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable Included | Odds Ratios (of making AYP) | | | |
| Leadership | .366* | | | |
| Empowerment | 4.749 | | | |
| Time | | | | 9.359** |
| Professional Development | 2.461* | | .029** | |
| Facilities & Resources | | | | .175** |
| Improvement Rating | | | 25.053* | |
| Absolute Rating | 4.739 | 5.446 | | |
| % Free or reduced lunch | | | | |
| % Students non-white | 1.020 | 1.024* | | |
| % Emergency or provisional certificates | .946* | | | |
| % Highly qualified | 1.053 | | | |
| Average teacher salaries | | | | |

p<.01 unless otherwise designated, *p<.05, **p<.10

**Improvement Rating on South Carolina's School Accountability Report (Binary Logistic Regression)**

| | All (n=519) | Elem. (n=322) | Middle (n=105) | High (n=57) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable Included | Odds Ratios (of making Good or Excellent) | | | |
| Leadership | .465* | .329* | | |
| Empowerment | | 4.521 | | |
| Time | 1.872 | | | 64.560* |
| Professional Development | | | 44.017** | |
| Facilities & Resources | | | | |
| AYP Status | | | 12.133* | |
| Absolute Rating | 6.205 | 1.975** | 28.087* | |
| % Free or reduced lunch | | | | |
| % Students non-white | 1.013 | | 1.067** | |
| % Emergency or provisional certificates | 1.084 | | 1.169** | 1.390** |
| % Highly qualified | | | | |
| Average teacher salaries | | | | |
| % Continuing contract | | | | |

p<.01 unless otherwise designated, *p<.05, **p<.10

**Absolute Rating on South Carolina's School Accountability Report (Binary Logistic Regression)**

| | All (n=519) | Elem. (n=322) | Middle (n=105) | High (n=57) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Variable Included | Odds Ratios (of making Good or Excellent) | | | |
| Leadership | 2.647** | | | |
| Empowerment | | | | |
| Time | | | | |
| Professional Development | .154 | .148* | .004* | |
| Facilities & Resources | | | 10.096** | |
| AYP Status | 6.190 | 5.950 | | |
| Improvement Rating | 11.749 | 4.728 | | |
| % Free or reduced lunch | .925 | .914 | .886 | |
| % Students non-white | | .980** | | |
| % Emergency or provisional certificates | | | .780** | |
| % Highly qualified | | 1.078** | | |
| Average teacher salaries | | | | |

p<.01 unless otherwise designated, *p<.05, **p<.10

## Average Percentage of Teachers Returning for the 2003-2004 School Year (Multiple Linear Regression)

| | All (n=519) | Elem. (n=322) | Middle (n=105) | High (n=57) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *% Variance explained* | *31%* | *21%* | *57%* | *52%* |
| **Variable Included** | ***Beta Values*** | | | |
| Leadership | .185 | | | |
| Empowerment | | | | |
| Time | -.078** | | -.178** | |
| Professional Development | | | | |
| Facilities & Resources | | -.116** | .189** | |
| AYP Status | | .100** | | |
| Absolute Rating | | | | |
| % Free or reduced lunch | | | | -.497 |
| % Students non-white | -.181 | -.276 | -.316* | |
| % Emergency or provisional certificates | -.239 | -.142 | | -.348* |
| % Highly qualified | .091* | | .189* | |
| Average teacher salaries | .302 | .344 | .323 | |

p<.01 unless otherwise designated, *p<.05, **p<.10

# Notes

## Executive Summary

1. At least one survey was returned from 990 of the state's 1,100 public schools. Surveys were returned from all school districts, including virtually all of the state's alternative schools and career centers.

## Introduction

1. As cited in The Governor's Commission on Teacher Quality, "Study of the Induction and Mentoring Program," May 2001 p. 1.

2. Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement-South Carolina (CERRA). *2003-2004 Fall Teacher Supply and Demand Survey*. Available online at www.cerra.org/files/0304FallTeacherSupplySurvey.pdf.

3. U.S. Department of Education. Office of Postsecondary Education, *Meeting the Highly Qualified Teachers Challenge: The Secretary's Third Annual Report on Teacher Quality*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. DOE, 2004. Available online at www.ed.gov/about/reports/annual/teacherprep/2004Title2-Report.pdf.

4. CERRA, *2003-2004 Fall Teacher Supply and Demand Survey*.

5. National Center for Education Statistics. *Teacher Attrition and Mobility: Results for the Teacher Follow-up Survey, 2000-01*. Washington, D.C.: NCES 2004-301, August 2004.

6. Hilary Loeb, Ana Elfers, Michael Knapp and Marge Plecki with Beth Boatright. "Preparation and Support for Teaching: Working Conditions of Teachers," *Working Paper #2*. Seattle, Wash.: Center for the Study of Teaching Policy at the University of Washington, May 2004.

7. For example, see Rosenholtz, S. J. (1989). *Teachers' workplace: The social organization of schools*. New York, N.Y.: Longman; Talbert, J., McLaughlin, M., & Rowan, B. (1993). *Understanding context effects on secondary school teaching*. Teachers College Record, 95(1), 45-68, and Bryk, A.S. and Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement*. New York. Russell Sage Foundation.

8. Richard M. Ingersoll. *Who Controls Teachers' Work?: Power and Accountability in America's Schools*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003.

9. For a copy of the North Carolina working conditions standards, see Southeast Center for Teaching Quality. *Teacher Working Conditions are Student Learning Conditions: A Report to Governor Mike Easley on the 2004 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey.* Chapel Hill, N.C.: SECTQ, 2005.

10. *Governor Mike Easley's Teacher Working Conditions Initiative: Preliminary Report of Findings from a Statewide Survey of Educators.* March 2003. Report Available at www.governor.state.nuc.us/Office/Education/_pdf/TWCPreliminaryReport.pdf

11. For a copy of the survey go to www.learnnc.org/sc/sctwc.nsf.

12. Domain averages were created by running a factor analysis on the survey responses. Questions with a .3 factor load were included in the domain. A listing of questions included in the domain average in the state summary report is available online at www.learnnc.org/sc/sctwc.nsf.

13. Those models are described in greater detail throughout the report. Some variables that had significant correlations with the dependent variable were ultimately dropped from the models as they did not appear to enhance the explanatory power of the models (variance explained remained virtually the same). As working conditions were the variables of greatest concern to this analysis, only data that enhanced the quality of the model were included beyond the five working conditions domains.

## What Has Been Discovered About Teacher Working Conditions

1. The Teacher Leaders Network (TLN), supported by the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality, is a group of approximately 300 teachers from 15 states building a professional community of highly skilled teachers who share a desire to apply what they know and can do in leadership settings. For more information on TLN see www.teacherleaders.org

2. Southeast Center for Teaching Quality. "Teacher Working Conditions are Student Learning Conditions: A Report to Governor Mike Easley on the 2004 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey." Chapel Hill, N.C.: SECTQ, 2005. Findings in the five domains were within three percentage points between states.

3. Logistic regressions were conducted as the student achievement data was dichotomous (i.e. met or did not meet). Logistic regressions produced logit coefficients converted to odds ratios. AYP was measured by whether or not the school had met all of the criteria necessary under NCLB for the 2003-04 school year. Improvement rating was run as a dichotomous variable (a rating of good or above vs. average or below). A similar variable was created for absolute rating: good or excellent vs. average or below. For more information on the PACT and the South Carolina accountability system, see www.sceoc.org. Models were run using working conditions survey domain averages at the school level for elementary schools (n=322), middle schools (n=105), and high schools (n=57) with greater than a 28 percent survey response rate.

4. Throughout the report, the terms "probability" or "times more likely to achieve" are used for clarity to the reader. Findings from binomial regressions are actually odds probability ratios.

5. This finding, as noted in the appendix, is at the p<.10 significance level and should therefore be examined with more caution than the other findings documented in the section that are at probabilities of p < .01 or p < .05.

6. Improvement ratings are based on the progress of longitudinally-matched, individual student data comparing PACT scores during the school year on which the report card is based on the previous year's to determine student academic growth. Ratings are calculated using a formula that results in improvement index based on performance in English/Language Arts and Mathematics for elementary and middle school and for high schools on the high school exit exam, the percentage of seniors qualifying for LIFE scholarships to a four-year institution and the graduation rate. For more information, please refer to the Annual Accountability Manual available on the Education Oversight Committee website at www.sceoc.org.

7. The effects at the high school are, in part, explained by the small number of high schools in the analysis (57) and the lack of variance in the sample.

8. Absolute ratings are based on the percentage of students meeting standards on PACT using a formula that results in an index reflecting the average performance level of students in the school. Ratings are calculated using a formula that results in improvement index based on performance in English/Language Arts and Mathematics for elementary and middle school and for high schools on the high school exit exam, the percentage of seniors qualifying for LIFE scholarships to a four-year institution and the graduation rate. For more information, please refer to the Annual Accountability Manual available on the Education Oversight Committee website at www.sceoc.org.

9. Professional development was a significant predictor of absolute rating, but higher professional development survey scores created greater odds of attaining a rating of average or below (see appendix). Not only was professional development strongly positive on the other two measures, but when re-running the statistical models to look only at the odds of being rated below average, the domain average was not found to be significant.

10. Southeast Center for Teaching Quality. *Teacher Working Conditions are Student Learning Conditions: A Report to Governor Mike Easley on the 2004 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey.* Chapel Hill, N.C.: SECTQ, 2005.

11. Collegial atmosphere was included as an option only on Q.63. While many questions in the survey address questions about collegiality, no section on the survey identifies it as an issue, nor did the factor analysis identify it as a major area of emphasis.

12. The variance explained in the model is moderate, ranging from 21 percent for elementary schools to over half (57 percent) for middle schools. For all schools, 31 percent of the variance is explained. When adding other variables, higher r-square values were attained, but additional variables had to be discarded due to multicolinearity.

13. As can be seen in the appendix, the connection with time for all schools is negative. Given the low correlation documented and the fact that the finding is significant at p < .10 level, this finding is not explained in the text in great detail. Findings for facilities and resources significant at the .1 level were also found.

14. Correlation of .07 statistically significant at the p < .01 level between Q. 13 on the amount of instructional planning time available during the school day and the time domain average for each educator respondent.

15. Correlation of -.20 between school level facilities and resources domain average and 2004 school level percentage of portable classroom significant at the p < .01 level. Correlation with parent satisfaction with school and physical school environment .45 and .47 for school learning environment, significant at the p < .01 level. Report card data (available at www.myscschools.org/reportcard/2004/data).

16. Correlation coefficients with Q. 48 on the Teacher Working Conditions Survey and professional development (.30), leadership (.31) and empowerment (.35) were all significant at the p < .01 level.

17. Correlations with Q. 49 and Q 50 and the empowerment domain average of all respondents were .42 and .38 respectively, statistically significant at the P < .01 level.

18. Southeast Center for Teaching Quality. *Teacher Working Conditions are Student Learning Conditions: A Report to Governor Mike Easley on the 2004 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey.* Chapel Hill, N.C.: SECTQ, 2005. There are statistically significant differences between the responses of teachers and principals on every single question on the survey in 2004, with differences between the groups as large as 1.2 on a five point scale on many questions.

19. Correlation coefficients between working conditions domains and demographic variables, including: gender, race, experience, means of preparation, degree, National Board status were all below .10 except the correlation between gender and empowerment (.15). Correlations with Q. 63, 64 and 65 were all below .08 for all demographics analyzed in total and at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

## In-Depth Analysis of Teacher Working Conditions Domains

1. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators.* Paris, France: OECD, 2003. Available online at http://www1.oecd.org/publications/e-book/9603061E.PDF.

2. As discussed earlier, the factor analysis of the survey instrument was used to not only validate the instrument but identify questions to be included in domains based on the cluster of questions in that domain. Questions 40, 41, 42, 43, 44 and 46, although listed under empowerment on the survey instrument, had greater explanatory power in the area of leadership (all with factor loads in that area above .3).

3. Correlation coefficient .20 between the empowerment domain and the proportion of parents attending conferences (reported on parent surveys and included as part of the South Carolina School Report Cards). See www.myscschools.org/reportcard/2004/data for more information on the indicator.

4. Correlations for empowerment and parent satisfaction with learning environment (.52), social and physical environment (.54) and home and school relations (.51) were all statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level and higher than those for leadership (.36, .38. and .40 respectively) and facilities and resources (.47, .48 and .33 respectively).

5. For example, see Cash 1993, Earthman and Lemasters 1996, Lemasters 1997, Lackney 1999, Schneider 2002.

6. Schneider, Mark. *The Educational Adequacy of New Jersey Public School Facilities: Results for a Survey of Principals.* Stony Brook, N.Y.: State University of New York at Stony Brook, May 10, 2004. Available online at http://edlawcenter.org/ELCPublic/elcnews_040510_PrincipalsSurvey.pdf.

7. Standard deviation for teachers in the domain was a .508, higher than all standard deviations except leadership (.522). For administrators, facilities and resources had the greatest standard deviation at a .526.

8. Correlation coefficients were somewhat low at .21 between the facilities and resources domain and percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch and -.20 for the domain average and the percentage of non-white students. Each correlation is statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level.

9. Correlation between the leadership domain average and Q.71 was .773, significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

10. Most recently, Center for Child and Family Policy at Duke University. "Professional Development Initiative: Proposal for Action" Durham, N.C.: Duke University, November 2004. For references to and websites of other studies see the PDI report pp. 9-10.

11. This finding would be expected and is likely contributed to by the fact that alternatively prepared teachers have less experience than traditionally prepared educators in the state and more teach at the high school level (where reading strategies activities were least likely to be offered).

12. Correlation coefficients between responses to Q. 48 (Teachers assist in determining the content of in-service professional development programs at this school) and professional development (.30), leadership (.31) and empowerment (.31) were all statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level.

13. Smith, T. & Ingersoll, R. 2004. "What are the Effects of Induction and Mentoring on Beginning Teacher Turnover?" *American Educational Research Journal 41*, No. 2, Summer.

14. For more information see www.scteachers.org/adept/adeptfaq.cfm.

15. Mentors and mentees are not matched by school, so it could be possible that mentee and mentor perception disparity is, at least in small part, due to being from different school populations. However, given the high number of respondents in each area and the size of the disparity in reported frequency of critical induction components, it is highly unlikely that these differences could be attributed solely to different school populations.

16. As reported in Olebe, "Can State Policy Mandate Teacher Reflection: Issues in Teacher Education." Fall 2001. *Journal of the California Council on Teacher Education 10,* No. 2, pp. 9-21. Olebe writes, "These items reveal a trend visible throughout the data sets. Support provider data invariably have yielded higher mean values than beginning teacher data, regardless of the item in question."

17. For example 17.0 percent of new alternative route teachers report never planning instruction versus 27.6 percent of those coming through traditional routes. 17.3 percent of traditionally prepared teacher were observed once per week versus 25.6 percent of those entering the professional through alternative routes.

18. Correlation coefficients ranged from -.04 to -.18. All statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level and all but two of the correlations (out of 50) significant at the $p < .01$ level.