



**Teacher Working Conditions:**  
*Ensuring All Schools Have Environments  
Where Teachers Want to Work and Students  
Can Thrive*

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Pre-webcast Presentation  
Systems and Strategies to Address the Inequitable  
Distribution of Teachers

# Research on the Importance of Working Conditions

- ***Improved Student Learning:*** Teachers' success with students is facilitated by a positive school context, such as support from leadership and a collaborative work environment (Byrk & Schneider, 2002; Leana & Pil, 2006)
- ***Improved Teacher Efficacy and Motivation:*** Teacher behavior and efficacy are a result of their perceptions of their school and classroom conditions (Leithwood, 2006)
- ***Improved Teacher Retention:*** Teachers are in search of safe environments where they are engaged with supportive leaders that contribute to their success (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007; Johnson et al 2005)
- ***Enticement to Work in Hard to Staff Schools:*** Non-financial incentives are important to teachers and improvements in conditions could lure back those who left (Hirsch, 2006; Futernick, 2007)



# The New Teacher Center

Improving student learning by supporting the development of an inspired, dedicated and highly qualified teaching force

State or District Surveying in 2008-2009	Respondents	Schools with Sufficient Data	Website
Maine	5,136	150	<a href="http://www.tellmaine.org">www.tellmaine.org</a>
Kansas	16,656	700	<a href="http://www.kantell.org">www.kantell.org</a>
Alabama	28,188	1,000	<a href="http://www.take20alabama.org">www.take20alabama.org</a>
Massachusetts	40,030	1,200	<a href="http://www.masstells.org">www.masstells.org</a>
West Virginia	9,842	400	<a href="http://www.westvirginiavital.org">www.westvirginiavital.org</a>
North Carolina	104,249	2,300	<a href="http://www.ncteachingconditions.org">www.ncteachingconditions.org</a>
Illinois (16 districts)	2,977	100	<a href="http://www.tellillinois.org">www.tellillinois.org</a>
Fairfax County	8,642	200	<a href="http://www.fcpswcs.org">www.fcpswcs.org</a>
Vermont	4,221	150	<a href="http://www.vtteachingandlearning.net">www.vtteachingandlearning.net</a>
Maryland	43,400	1,000	<a href="http://www.tellmaryland.org">www.tellmaryland.org</a>
Colorado	Live	Live	<a href="http://www.tellcolorado.org">www.tellcolorado.org</a>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>263,341</b>	<b>7.200</b>	<a href="http://www.newteachercenter.org">www.newteachercenter.org</a>

# And the Survey Says...What We've Learned

1. **School Level Achievement is Higher in Schools Where Educators Report Positive Working Conditions**
2. **Working Conditions Influence Teachers Future Employment Plans**
3. **Not Everyone in the Building is on the Same Page about the Conditions in Which Educators Work**

# Teaching Conditions Questions by Elementary Math Achievement in Massachusetts

Teaching Conditions Question (Massachusetts)	Math Performance by Quartile: Elementary				
	I (Lowest)	II	III	IV (Highest)	Difference
Families help students achieve educational goals in this school	21%	40%	59%	76%	55%
Teachers are supported by the community in which they teach	36%	50%	61%	73%	37%
Teachers and staff work in an environment that is physically safe	61%	75%	78%	81%	20%
The school leadership consistently enforces rules of student conduct	46%	56%	58%	65%	19%
Teachers have access to reliable communications technology (phone, fax, email, etc.)	50%	58%	61%	68%	18%

# Select Findings on Working Conditions and School Level Student Performance

- Statistical models demonstrate that the **leadership** and **facilities and resources** factors are significant in explaining student achievement at all school levels as measured by the overall performance composite in North Carolina
- Perceptions of **leadership** had a stronger influence on school level student performance in Massachusetts than the proportion of Limited English Proficient students and percentage of teachers licensed in their assigned teaching area in models controlling for student, teacher and school characteristics. **Readiness** was also statistically significant

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Teaching Conditions Questions (Massachusetts)	Educators Agreeing	
	Stayers	Movers
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within the school.	65.3%	19.7%
In this school we take steps to solve problems.	65.1%	23.3%
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	59.7%	19.6%
Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	58.6%	19.8%
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	65.7%	29.4%
Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching.	65.8%	30.6%
Clear expectations are communicated to students and families.	74.4%	39.6%
Teacher performance evaluations are handled in an appropriate manner.	69.2%	35.7%
School leadership shields teachers from disruptions, allowing teachers to focus on educating students.	51.0%	18.9%
The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems.	46.0%	14.1%

# Teaching Conditions Affect Turnover

- In Massachusetts, **leadership** had the strongest influence on future employment plans, more than student, school and teacher characteristics
- **Leadership, workload and facilities and resources** were significant in explaining teacher desire to remain in their current position with leadership exerting the most influence in Massachusetts
- In North Carolina **leadership** was significant in explaining actual turnover at the elementary level, **teacher engagement in decision making** at the middle school level and **facilities and resources** across high schools

# Teaching Conditions Influence Employment Plans: Recruiting for Hard to Staff Schools

- Early retirement/additional years of service for each year taught and loan forgiveness, scholarship, or tuition assistance for advanced degrees were the incentives most likely to rated “extremely effective” in deciding to teach in hard-to-staff schools (51% and 50% respectively)
- Ensuring at least five hours of planning time per week (48%), reduced teaching load (46%) and providing additional support personnel for students (45%) would be “extremely effective” incentives
- Signing bonus (30%), retention bonus (38%), relocation reimbursement (32%) and assistance with housing (31%) rated as extremely effective, similar to recruitment with like-minded colleagues (31%), additional targeted PD (28%) and additional roles in classroom (39%) and school (26%) decisions

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Teaching Conditions Questions (MA)	Percent Agreeing	
	Teachers	Principals
The school leadership consistently enforces rules for student conduct.	47.5%	95.2%
Teachers are meaningfully involved in decision making about educational issues.	43.7%	90.8%
School leadership shields teachers from disruptions, allowing teachers to focus on educating students.	47.9%	93.0%
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	56.2%	95.8%
Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	55.1%	93.8%
In this school we take steps to solve problems.	61.4%	97.1%
The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems.	42.9%	78.1%
Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching.	62.5%	95.9%

# Are Teaching Conditions Different in High Poverty, Urban School Districts?

- In several areas of teaching conditions, there appear to be few systematic differences in perceptions across schools serving high poverty populations – professional development and time (in some cases perceptions are more positive)
- Greatest differences appear to be in the areas of facilities and resources, community engagement, leadership and empowerment (and these are the conditions most correlated with attrition and achievement)

# Working Conditions in NC by Poverty

Teacher Working Conditions Question (percent agree/strongly the condition is present in their school)	Lowest Poverty	II	III	Highest Poverty
Overall, my school is a good place to teach and learn	84%	81%	78%	70%
Teachers and staff work in a school environment that is safe	93%	91%	88%	80%
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within the school	75%	71%	70%	63%
Overall, the school leadership in my school is effective	69%	66%	65%	58%
Teachers have sufficient access to office equipment and supplies such as copy machines, paper, pens, etc.	79%	78%	75%	69%
The school leadership shields teachers from disruptions, allowing teachers to focus on educating students	75%	71%	70%	64%
Opportunities are available for members of the community to actively contribute to this school's success	89%	85%	83%	79%
The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school	71%	69%	68%	61%

# Working Conditions in MA by Poverty

Teaching Conditions Question (percent agree/strongly agree the condition is present in their school)	Highest Poverty	II	III	Lowest Poverty
Families help students achieve educational goals in this school	17%	31%	50%	74%
Teachers are supported by the community in which they teach	32%	45%	51%	68%
Teachers and staff work in a school environment that is physically safe	59%	74%	79%	81%
Teachers and staff work in a school that is environmentally healthy	37%	49%	54%	57%
Teachers have access to reliable communication technology including phones, faxes and email	51%	61%	66%	70%
Teachers and staff work in a school environment that is clean and well maintained	48%	60%	65%	67%
Teachers have sufficient access to instructional technology, including computers, printers, software, and internet access	47%	54%	58%	65%

# Improving Teacher Working Conditions (NC)

- *Positive working conditions are promoted* - The state has rewritten principal standards to incorporate teacher recruitment, retention and administration. Additionally, all new principals are required to take professional development funded by the state on creating positive working conditions. Funding was allocated to create a blueprint for School Improvement Teams in integrating survey results into school improvement planning, and conducting a state conference to share best practices.
- *Investments have been made in support of good educational practices* - Approximately \$2 million annually has been provided for professional development in high poverty schools. Turnaround plans are being analyzed in low-performing high schools to ensure survey data is incorporated in reform strategies. Professional development for new principals was created and provided

# Improving Teacher Working Conditions

- ***Master Teacher Designation and other Differentiated Roles for Teacher Leaders:*** Kansas has a teacher leadership designation and is part of a 5 state consortium that has created a leadership course. Fairfax County gave \$2.5 million in funding for Teacher Leadership Development grants to 24 schools to extend teacher contracts to have more time to develop strategies to enhance student learning
- ***Focus on extended learning time and professional development:*** Massachusetts Extended Learning Time pilot adds 300 hours to the school year in 26 schools with teachers engaged in decisions about use of time, etc. Lowell, MA engaging teachers in selecting PD aligned with learning goals
- ***Leadership support:*** Professional development for school leaders to build trusting, collegial environments



<http://www2.tqsource.org/strategies/het/ProfessionalContexts.pdf>

## Identifying Professional Contexts to Support Highly Effective Teachers

By Eric Hirsch

February 2008



# Improving Teacher Working Conditions: State Policies

- *Teacher effectiveness*: The context in which teachers work appear to impact their efficacy – are teachers supported and empowered to make decisions that influence instruction?
- *Equitable distribution of teachers*: The best way to recruit teachers to and retain teachers in hard to staff schools is to make them great places to teach and learn.
- *Comprehensive data systems*: what data does your school, district or state have on the presence of research-based teaching conditions?



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