

## North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Research Brief: Principal Working Conditions

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

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

- The new School Executive: Principal and Teacher Evaluation instruments rely on the Teacher Working Conditions Survey as an essential data artifact for educators to reflect on whether they are meeting state standards.
- The Teacher Working Conditions Survey results are integrated into the newly crafted School Improvement Planning process as required by the North Carolina State Board of Education.

Principals play a critical role in establishing school policies, setting the tone within the school and providing leadership. While most questions on the survey focus on school leadership (which includes but is not limited to the principal), in 2008 a newly designed series of questions only for principals were asked to better assess the support they receive from districts as school leaders. Almost 2,000 principals across North Carolina responded and provided their voice about whether school districts are giving them the supportive environments they need to create positive working conditions for their faculty.

- Four out of ten (38 percent) responding principals were in their first three years as a principal while over one-fifth (20 percent) have more than ten years' experience as a principal.
- Almost two-thirds of the respondents (62 percent) have been a principal in their school for three years or less and 95 percent have worked in their school for less than a decade. About half (45 percent) have been a principal in their current district for three years or less.

Principals in North Carolina are generally positive about most aspects of the support they receive that enable them to create positive working conditions in their schools. Consider the following:

- Eight out of ten principals (83 percent) agreed that their schools had a sufficient number of licensed staff to meet the educational needs of their students, and that their district Human Resources office provides highly qualified applicants for open faculty positions (84 percent). Two-thirds (67 percent) agree that they have a sufficient number of non-licensed staff to operate their school efficiently and effectively.
- Eight out of ten principals agreed that they are involved in decisions that directly impact the operations of their schools (79 percent) and are actively involved in district decisions about educational issues (78 percent). Principals noted that they and other school leaders play a large role in many decisions that influence teaching conditions such as evaluation (90 percent), establishing and implementing policies for student discipline (86 percent), and establishing the school schedule (87 percent), and school improvement planning (93 percent). Ninety-two percent of principals agreed that their schools are provided sufficient data and information to make informed decisions.
- Eighty-five percent of principals agree that their district encourages cooperation amongst schools and 84 percent report that the central office provides principals support when they need it. Three-quarters of principals agree that there is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within their district. Nine out of ten principals agree that their district clearly defines expectations for schools.

Principals' greatest concerns, like teachers, are in the area of time. About half (53 percent) of participating principals agree that they have sufficient time to focus on instructional leadership issues. Not surprisingly, six out of ten principals (59 percent) report spending more than ten hours in an average week on administrative duties and

four out of ten (43 percent) spend at least five hours in meetings with families and the community. Six out of ten principals (57 percent) spend three hours or less in an average week on instructional planning with teachers and one-quarter (26 percent) spend three hours or less observing and coaching teachers.

## Principal Support

Principals were positive about the professional development provided by districts. Two-thirds agree that professional development for principals is a district priority (66 percent) and that sufficient resources are available to take advantage of opportunities (67 percent). More than three-quarters (77 percent) agree that professional development provides principals with the knowledge and skills they need to be most effective.

This support is evident with a high proportion of principals reporting that they received at least ten hours of professional development over the past two years in instructional leadership (80 percent) and data-driven decision-making (62 percent). However, few principals report receiving professional development in scheduling (11 percent), staffing (13 percent), remediation/coaching (15 percent), and working with parents and the community (11 percent).

Despite receiving some professional development, principals most frequently cited needing additional professional development to be more effective in data-driven decision-making (40 percent) and instructional leadership (32 percent). Teacher remediation/coaching (32 percent) was also a needed area and one in which few principals had received support. Given the emphasis on coaching teachers necessary to implement the newly established North Carolina Teacher Evaluation System ([www.ncptsc.org](http://www.ncptsc.org)), the gap between principals receiving

and needing coaching support is a potential issue for ensuring teacher effectiveness.

Less than one-third (31 percent) of new principals—those with three years in the principalship or less—were assigned a mentor. When a mentor was assigned, new principals were positive about the impact in many areas such as instructional leadership, budgeting, school improvement planning, etc.

- Of those receiving a mentor, one-third (36 percent) were never observed in their school or did school improvement planning with their mentor (35 percent).
- About half (46 percent) of new principals who were assigned a mentor agreed it was important in their decision to remain a leader in their school and 60 percent agreed that it enhanced their effectiveness as a school leader.

## Impact of Principal Support

Analyses were conducted on the connections between the school faculty perception of support and the principal’s agreement that they have positive conditions within their district. Comparisons were made on select questions on the presence of working conditions in their schools between principals who reported positive supports and those who did not. It appears that principals who report more positive conditions themselves are able to provide better working conditions for their faculty in some areas. Consider the following:

- Principals reporting that central office provides them support when they need it are significantly more likely to have teachers in their school report that sufficient resources are available for teachers to take advantage of professional development.

TABLE 1. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDED AND RECEIVED BY NORTH CAROLINA PRINCIPALS

Professional Development Area	Percentage of Principals Agreeing	
	<i>Need Additional Support</i>	<i>10+ Hours Over Past Two Years</i>
Instructional Leadership	32%	80%
Student Assessment	30%	40%
Creating Positive Learning Environments	23%	37%
School Improvement Planning	24%	45%
Budgeting	28%	13%
School Scheduling	27%	11%
Staffing (hiring, etc.)	14%	13%
Teacher Evaluation	11%	31%
Teacher Remediation/Coaching	32%	15%
Data-Driven Decision-Making	40%	62%
Working with Parents and the Community	20%	11%

- Where a principal indicates that the district involves principals in decisions that impact the operation of their school, their teachers are more likely to report that they are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction and that sufficient resources are available for teachers to take advantage of professional development.
- Principals trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction in the district are significantly more likely to provide trusting environments for teachers, to provide training to teachers to fully utilize instructional technology and to provide effective professional development to teachers

Principals indicate that site-based decision making and principal empowerment are the most important aspects of their working conditions that enhance student achievement (40 percent) and affect their willingness to remain as a principal in their school (38 percent). Considering ways to appropriately empower school principals and provide them with the support they need to be effective may be an important strategy for principal retention.

Like teachers, principals need supportive conditions to provide the leadership necessary to create school environments where teachers want to stay and students learn.

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## About The New Teacher Center

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

New Teacher Center

*Improving Teaching and Learning in America's Schools*



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