



KANSAS

Teaching, Learning & Leadership Survey

**Kansas Teaching, Learning & Leadership Survey:
An Interim Report**

Submitted to the Kansas State Board of Education and the Kansas
Department of Education

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Introduction

Policymakers, practitioners, and researchers have long realized that teaching quality is the most important variable for the success of students. Supportive school environments, where educators are valued, trusted, and have the time and ability to collaborate to improve instruction, are necessary for enabling teachers to be successful. Policymakers have paid little attention to the working conditions in schools (Hanushek & Rivken, 2007) that are so critical to teacher retention, teacher and student success. A growing body of research clearly demonstrates that assessing, understanding, and improving such conditions can have many benefits:

- **Improved Student Learning:** Teachers' success with students is facilitated by a positive school context, such as support from leadership and being in a collaborative working environment. Several statewide studies have demonstrated that the presence of positive work environments is significantly connected to increased student achievement (Hirsch & Emerick 2007, 2006). In particular, having strong, trusting relationships—both internally and externally (Bryk & Schneider, 2002)—and supportive school leadership are both essential to improving student achievement. A study of 88 urban public schools demonstrates the importance of communication networks for improving student achievement: in schools where teachers talked to each other the most about their jobs and where the principals did the best job of staying in touch with the community, students had noticeably higher reading and math test scores. These communication networks had a greater impact on test scores than the experience or credentials of the staff (Leana & Pil, 2006).
- **Improved Teacher Efficacy and Motivation:** Teachers' perceptions of their school are their reality; therefore, teachers' behavior and efficacy are a direct result of those views. In a recent literature review on teaching conditions, Leithwood (2006) found that teacher efficacy is significantly shaped by teaching conditions and that burnout and teacher engagement are critical to classroom performance and job satisfaction. He notes, "What teachers actually do in their schools and classrooms depends on how teachers perceive and respond to their working conditions."
- **Improved 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 why they seek other opportunities (NCES, 2004, Ingersoll, 2005, Marvel et al., 2006). 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 (Hirsch & Emerick 2007, 2006a,b). Research has linked teachers' negative perceptions of working conditions with their exit from schools. Factors such as facilities, safety, and quality of leadership have a greater effect on teacher mobility than salary (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2007). In particular, it appears that supportive school leaders who create trusting environments where educators are engaged in decision making impacts the latter group's decisions about where to work (Hirsch & Emerick 2007, 2006a,b).

- **New Recruitment Strategies to Entice Educators to Work in Hard-to-Staff Schools:** Teachers who are willing to teach in hard-to-staff schools indicate that strong supportive school leadership, an engaged community and parents, safety, and working conditions are all important factors when selecting where to work. Further, when Alabama educators were asked about incentives that would attract them to schools, non-financial incentives, such as guaranteed planning time and reduced class sizes, were found to be more powerful recruitment incentives than salary supplements and bonuses (Hirsch, 2006). Improving teaching conditions could also bolster the teacher supply pool because many educators who left due to poor conditions may come back if such conditions were enhanced. A survey of 2,000 educators from California found that 28 percent of teachers who left the profession before retirement indicated that they would come back if improvements were made to teaching and learning conditions. Monetary incentives were found to be less effective in luring them back (Futernick, 2007).

These results were corroborated by a similar statewide study of teaching conditions conducted in 2006 under the leadership of Governor Kathleen Sebelius and the Kansas National Education Association (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007). Collecting data from approximately 22,000 on questions about time, teacher empowerment, school leadership, professional development, and facilities and resources, significant connections between the presence of certain teaching conditions and student success on the state math assessment were documented. In particular, working with a faculty that is committed to helping all children learn in a safe and supportive environment with sufficient instructional resources contributed to student learning. Further the presence of several teaching conditions—most importantly supportive school leadership—was a key ingredient to teachers’ future employment plans. Finally gaps in perceptions about the presence of teaching conditions were found between teachers and administrators and those in schools serving a higher proportion of economically disadvantaged students.

About the Survey

To assess whether these conditions are present, the Kansas State Department of Education with the Kansas State Board of Education, in partnership with the Kansas National Education Association, and the United School Administrators of Kansas conducted a second statewide survey of teaching and learning conditions in 2008. The survey, which was administered through the New Teacher Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz in January and February 2008, was sent to all school-based, licensed educators throughout the state of Kansas. The Kansas Teaching, Learning and Leadership Survey provides data to schools, districts, and the state about whether educators have the supportive school environments necessary for them to continue working and be successful with students. By hearing directly from educators who intimately understand teaching conditions, policymakers will have the opportunity to make data-driven decisions to develop policies that make Kansas schools great places to work and learn. In the words of State Board President Bill Wagon, “This initiative will refocus much needed attention on how the conditions and climates of schools can better support effective leadership, encourage teacher retention and promote student learning needed for the 21st century.”

The Kansas Teaching, Learning and Leadership Survey included approximately ten¹ questions with multiple subparts, broken into six major sections: time, facilities and resources, decision-

making, leadership, professional development, and new teacher support. There were also questions covering the demographics of respondents, such as position held, years of experience, and educational background. Surveys were administered to teachers, principals, vice principals, and other education professionals (e.g., school counselors, psychologists, social workers, library media specialists, etc.). Most of the questions were asked of all respondents, though some were asked only of specific groups. Only teachers in their first year and those indicating that they served as mentors were asked about induction. Further, a set of questions about district support in creating positive teaching conditions was asked specifically of principals.

The survey instrument was based on the 2006 Kansas Teacher Working Conditions Survey, but revised by the New Teacher Center with input and guidance from the Kansas State Department of Education with the Kansas State Board of Education, Kansas National Education Association, and the United School Administrators of Kansas. The most significant change was the addition of a new, principal specific set of questions designed to assess whether principals receive the support they need from school districts to create positive teaching and learning conditions in their schools.

A set of core, validated questions from previous teaching conditions surveys in Kansas and across the country was utilized, while others were developed specifically for the state. The statistical analyses conducted included: a factor analysis of the findings that resulted in a reorganization of the survey areas into four major categories of responses: leadership, resources, workload, professional development and new teacher support. In addition, cross tabulations of findings by future employment plans, position held, school level, years of experience; as well as frequencies of all questions were conducted for this interim report.

Surveys were sent to all school-based licensed educators in the State of Kansas. ***More than 16,600 Kansas educators (42 percent) from across the state participated in the Kansas Teaching, Learning and Leadership Survey.*** This includes responses from 14,868 teachers, 474 principals, 133 assistant principals, and 1,179 other education professionals. Data is now available for 695 schools and 141 districts, thus providing critical information for making local and state level decisions to improve Kansas schools. Data is only released at the school and district levels if at least 40 percent of the school faculty responded to the survey. All data from both the 2008 and 2006 surveys is publicly available at www.kantell.org. This survey data is unique in that it represents the perceptions of those who understand Kansas teaching and learning conditions best—the educators who experience them every day.

Organization of this Report

While a final report is not expected until student achievement and other state-provided data are available for further analyses, several initial trends can be identified from the Kansas survey data. Major trends are highlighted across different groups of respondents.

First, a comparison of survey results between 2006 and 2008 was conducted to assess whether perceptions of teaching conditions in the state have improved. Second, the relationship between teaching conditions and teacher employment plans is explored. Third, differences in perceptions between teachers and principals are assessed. Fourth, trends in the perceptions of educators in different school levels and with varying years of experience are discussed. Finally, key findings

are presented in the following areas: leadership, resources, workload, professional development and new teacher support. Charts throughout the report highlight survey items where the greatest differences in perception about teaching and learning conditions emerged.

Key Findings

Finding 1: Perceptions of the Presence of Teaching Conditions in Kansas Appear to Have Improved Since 2006

In 2006, the first statewide survey of teaching conditions in Kansas noted the presence of many critical teaching conditions throughout the state and found that educators were more positive in their perceptions of working conditions than their peers in other states that had completed surveys such as Arizona, Ohio and Clark County, Nevada (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007). Given the investment of many stakeholder organizations and educators across the state in understanding and utilizing the 2006 survey data, assessing whether perceptions of teaching conditions improved over the past two years is important.

However, comparing the 2006 and 2008 survey findings is difficult for several reasons.

- *The population of survey respondents is different.* There were approximately 22,000 respondents in 2006 with almost 1,000 schools having a sufficient response rate to make data available. In 2008, roughly 16,600 educators responded producing data for almost 700 schools. Further, it appears that several schools included in the 2006 analyses did not have sufficient response rate in 2008. Ensuring that changes in teaching conditions are not a result of different schools participating at greater rates in the survey is necessary.
- *Respondents are anonymous.* As publicized during the survey, there is no way to know who in a school filled out the survey in either year. So, even when comparing responses in schools that had sufficient response for both survey iterations, there is no way to know if those who took the survey in 2006 also did so in 2008; or if an entirely different group of educators in that school participated. While setting a higher threshold for responses in a school (i.e. 75 percent or above) could help better mitigate these issues, they cannot solve them completely as many in the school may not have worked there during both survey iterations.
- *Not all questions were offered to all respondents across both years of the survey.* In 2008, a principal specific set of questions was offered. In order to make the length of the survey more manageable, several non-core teaching conditions questions were eliminated for principals in 2008 that had been utilized in 2006, changing the proportion of administrators responding on several items between 2006 and 2008.

In order to best address these challenges, comparisons were made on results only in schools with sufficient response rates—40 percent or more—for both the 2006 and the 2008 surveys. While this method cannot control for differences due to dissimilar educators within a school taking the survey, it at least ensures we are only comparing responses from those that had significant participation in both survey iterations.

Analyses compare survey results on identical question for 524 schools that had at least a 40 percent response rate for both the 2006 and 2008 survey iterations. Some notes about the survey respondents.

- There were 10,927 respondents from the comparative set responding to the 2006 survey compared to 10,528 in 2008 in those same schools.
- There were more administrators in the comparison pool in 2006 (which could skew the results from that year more positively given that administrators tend to view teaching conditions more positively). In 2006, 235 principals, 86 assistant principals, and about 1,000 other school-based administrators were in the set of comparison schools compared to 278 principals, 81 assistant principals and 708 other school-based administrators.
- The 2008 pool had more new educators (12.5 percent of teachers were in their first three years in 2006 compared to 13.9 percent in 2008) and less veterans with at least 20 years experience (34.4 percent in 2006 versus 33.4 percent).

Across virtually every question, survey respondents from 2008 were more positive about the presence of teaching conditions than those in 2006 (see Appendix A for a full breakdown of questions). In particular, questions from the decision making and professional development sections of the survey increased notably (Table 1).

Throughout the report, data is presented in terms of agreement that teaching conditions are present. This aggregates those respondents who indicated that they “agree” or “strongly agree”. Most survey questions were designed on a 1 to 5 likert scale, allowing educators to “neither agree nor disagree”. Please note in interpreting the data, that while percentage agreement is most often reported, it does not imply that all other respondents “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed,” as a significant proportion of respondents may be neutral on the question.

- ***A remarkable change in the perception of educators that teachers are recognized as educational experts occurred between 2006 and 2008.*** While only half (51 percent) of educators agreed with that statement in 2006, more than two-thirds agreed (69 percent) in 2008 across the 517 schools. Looking at the overall results of all survey respondents for both 2006 and 2008 verify the improvement (51 percent in 2006 versus 68 percent in 2008).
- ***Educators note that teachers are more supported and comfortable raising issues.*** More educators in 2008 noted that the community was supportive, that teachers are trusted to make decisions about instruction, and that teachers are comfortable raising issues than in 2006.
- ***Educators were more likely to agree that teachers are involved in decision making and that there are effective processes for making collaborative decisions.*** While less than half of educators agreed that teachers are centrally involved in decision about educational issues in 2006 (45 percent) more than half (56 percent) did in 2008.
- ***Educators agree that more time and resources are available for professional development.*** Ten percent more educators in 2008 in the 524 schools agree that sufficient resources are available to allow teachers to take advantage of professional development opportunities and eight percent noted they have sufficient time for professional development.

Table 1
Teaching Conditions with the Greatest Improvement between 2006 and 2008 across
Schools with Data for Both Surveys

Select Common Survey Questions	Percentage of Educators that Agree or Strongly Agree		
	2006 Survey	2008 Survey	Difference
Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	51.2%	68.6%	17.4%
Teachers are centrally involved in decision making about educational issues.	44.5%	55.6%	11.1%
Sufficient resources are available to allow teachers to take advantage of professional development activities.	59.0%	68.8%	9.8%
Teachers are supported by the community in which they teach.	59.7%	69.4%	9.7%
Teachers have time available to collaborate with their colleagues.	44.7%	53.9%	9.2%
Teachers have sufficient training and support to fully utilize the available instructional technology.	45.4%	54.3%	9.1%
An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development.	53.3%	61.6%	8.3%
Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine administrative paperwork that teachers are required to do.	31.2%	39.4%	8.2%
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	60.1%	68.2%	8.1%
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	57.0%	64.4%	7.4%
The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems.	50.8%	58.2%	7.4%

The only question where educators were more negative was about the number of work days necessary for teachers to meet expected professional responsibilities (Table 2). **Generally, questions in which the smallest increases occurred were on those in which educators were already positive about their teaching conditions.** While educators were only slightly more likely to agree that their school is safe, and that the faculty is committed to helping every student learn and that there is sufficient access to office equipment, in each of these areas at least three-quarters of educators in both survey iterations were positive about those teaching conditions. The only area to note is that perceptions of effort to improve teaching conditions and solve problems, generally in the school and on the part of school leadership to address concerns about professional development and facilities and resources, had some of the smallest increases.

Table 2
Teaching Conditions with the Least Improvement between 2006 and 2008 across Schools
with Data for Both Surveys

Select Common Survey Questions	2006 Survey	2008 Survey	Difference
The number of work days during the year is sufficient for teachers to meet expected professional responsibilities.	70.5%	63.1%	(7.4%)
Teachers and staff work in a school environment that is safe.	85.3%	86.3%	1.0%
Overall, the school leadership in my school is effective.	58.9%	60.6%	1.7%
The faculty is committed to helping every student learn.	87.2%	89.2%	2.0%
Teacher performance evaluations are fair in my school.	72.2%	74.7%	2.5%
Teachers have sufficient access to office equipment and supplies such as copy machines, paper, pens. etc.	76.1%	79.0%	2.9%
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about professional development	60.5%	63.4%	2.9%
Professional development provides teachers with the knowledge and skills most needed to teach effectively.	59.6%	63.2%	3.6%
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about facilities and resources	59.8%	63.6%	3.8%
In this school we take steps to solve problems.	67.7%	71.5%	3.8%

Initial analyses indicate that the most substantial increases in agreement that teaching conditions are present between 2006 and 2008 occurred at the high school level. More detailed analyses on changes from 2006 and 2008 related to the amount of planning time, hours worked outside of the school day, professional development needed and taken will be performed for the final Kansas TeLLS report. Additionally, more analyses on the respondents and set of comparison schools will be conducted.

Finding 2: Teaching, Learning and Leadership Conditions Have an Impact on Teachers’ Employment Plans

The impact of teaching conditions on retention and student learning bodes well for Kansas as, overall, Kansas educators believe that their schools are good places to work and learn. Most teachers are generally satisfied with their current workplace. *Three-quarters of Kansas educators² (78 percent) responding to this survey agree that their school is a good place to work and learn.* Nearly half of responding educators (45 percent) “strongly agree” with this statement and less than one in ten (8 percent) strongly disagree. Consider the following:

- ***Educators are positive about the commitment of the faculty in their school.*** Eighty-nine percent of educators believe that the faculty is committed to helping every student learn. Around three-quarters (72 percent) of Kansas educators believe that steps are taken in the school to solve problems.
- ***Kansas educators are positive about their facilities and resources.*** Three-quarters of Kansas educators note that they have sufficient instructional materials (75 percent), instructional technology (71 percent), and communications technology (83 percent). Educators also report working in schools that are safe (87 percent).

That perceptions of teaching and learning conditions are positive on the whole is significant for understanding the relationship between such conditions and teachers’ future employment plans.

The survey data demonstrates what individuals who work in schools already know: teaching conditions are a potentially powerful lever to help address teacher attrition. ***Overall, nine in ten teachers (89 percent) responding to this survey indicated that they want to “stay” teaching at their school.*** Six percent of respondents were “movers,” wanting to continue teaching but in a different school or district, while five percent were “leavers,” indicating that they plan to leave education all together.³

Factors Influencing Retention Decisions

The 2008 survey includes two major questions addressing future employment plans. The first question asks teachers to rate how strongly they agree or disagree that certain factors influence their decisions about future professional plans. Here, ***teachers most frequently cited their sense of effectiveness in teaching (87 percent), followed closely by teaching assignment (86 percent) and support from leadership (86 percent) as factors influencing their future employment*** (Table 3). Teachers were most likely to strongly agree that adequate support from school leadership influences their future employment plans.

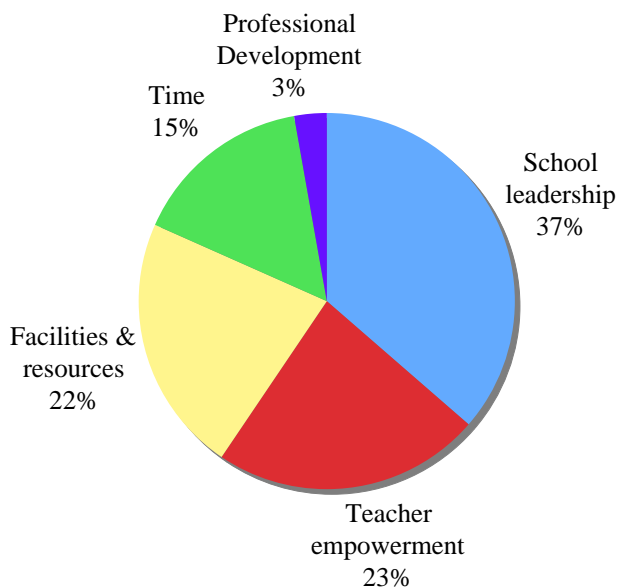
Table 3
Factors Influencing Teachers’ Future Employment Plans in Kansas

Factors Influencing Teachers’ Decisions about Their Future Intentions for their Professional Career	Percent Agreeing, Overall	Percent "Strongly Agreeing"
Effectiveness with the students I teach	87.1%	49.3%
Teaching assignment (subject, students)	86.2%	51.8%
Adequate support from school leadership	85.6%	53.5%
Collegial atmosphere amongst the staff	83.9%	47.3%
Empowerment to make decisions that affect my school and/or classroom	80.7%	39.5%
Personal reasons (health, family, etc.)	74.6%	42.0%
Salary	72.5%	35.1%

Table 3 is organized in descending order of those who agreed with statements about factors influencing respondents' decisions about their future plans. Salary, community factors, and personal reasons while important, were *less* likely to shape teachers' decisions about their future professional plans than other teaching conditions.

In a second question about employment plans, teachers were asked to select between the five conditions assessed on the survey that which *most* affects their willingness to keep teaching at the same school: time during the work day, school facilities and resources, school leadership, teacher empowerment, and professional development. ***Over one-third (37 percent) of all teachers ranked school leadership as the MOST important teaching condition to their willingness to continue working at their school, while 23 percent selected teacher empowerment, and 22 percent school facilities and resources.*** (Figure 1).

Figure 1
Teaching Condition Kansas Teachers Perceive as Being MOST Important to Continue Teaching in their School



These findings are similar to 2006 where 36 percent of educators noted that leadership was the most important factor compared to 21 percent selecting empowerment and facilities and resources respectively (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007, p.13).

Positive Perceptions of Teaching Conditions Are Linked to Staying

Evidence throughout the survey indicates that teachers with positive perceptions of their teaching conditions are much more likely to want to stay at their current school than teachers who are

more negative, particularly in the areas of leadership and empowerment (Table 4). Leavers are more positive than movers, likely because those who are leaving teaching do so not just due to dissatisfaction, but often for other non-teaching related causes (retirement, personal reasons, etc.).

Table 4
Differences in the Perceptions of Stayers, Movers and Leavers on Teaching Conditions Questions

Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey	Percent of Educators Agreeing		
	Stayers	Movers	Leavers
Overall, my school is a good place to work and learn.	81.1%	34.0%	65.0%
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within the school.	69.3%	27.2%	49.2%
The school leadership consistently supports teachers when needed.	69.7%	28.0%	51.8%
The school leadership communicates clear expectations to students and parents.	70.1%	31.2%	53.2%
In this school we take steps to solve problems.	73.4%	35.5%	56.1%
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	66.1%	28.3%	48.0%
Overall, the school leadership in my school is effective.	62.3%	25.5%	44.7%
Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching.	69.2%	33.0%	52.0%
Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	70.0%	33.8%	45.6%
The school leadership consistently enforces rules for student conduct.	61.8%	26.3%	46.1%
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	70.8%	35.5%	45.0%
Teacher performance evaluations are fair in my school.	76.1%	40.9%	61.7%

Table 4, organized in the order of the greatest difference between perceptions of stayers and movers across a variety of questions about teaching and learning conditions, shows that many of greatest differences in perceptions of teaching conditions are related to school leadership.

- ***Twice as many stayers agreed with positive statements about school leadership than do movers.*** Educators who want to stay in their school are more likely to believe their school is a good place to work and that school leadership is effective, particularly in the areas of communication and support.

- **Teachers are more likely to want to stay in trusting and supportive environments.** While one-quarter (28 percent) of movers agrees that “the school leadership consistently supports teachers when needed,” almost three-quarters (70 percent) of stayers agree with the same statement. Moreover only, one-quarter (27 percent) of educators wanting to move to a new school agreed that there was an atmosphere of trust in their school compared to seven out of ten (69 percent) of those who indicate that they want to remain teaching in their current setting.

The data shows that disparities between stayers and movers are visible not just in whether teaching conditions are present, but in whether or not school leadership makes efforts to improve such conditions. **Teachers who want to stay in their school are far more likely than those who want to move to believe that school leadership is working to improve teaching and learning conditions.** While about two-fifths of responding teachers who want to stay believe that leadership is addressing empowering teachers (57 percent), only two in ten movers believe the same statement to be true (20 percent). It is also notable that on all of these questions, only one-half to two-thirds of stayers (who are more positive than movers or leavers) agree with statements about leadership’s efforts to improve teaching and learning conditions in Kansas schools (Table 5).

Table 5
Differences in Perceptions of Stayers, Movers and Leavers about School Leadership Efforts to Address Teachers’ Concerns about Teaching and Learning Conditions

School Leadership Makes a Sustained Effort to Address Teacher Concerns About:	Percent of Educators Agreeing		
	Stayers	Movers	Leavers
Empowering teachers	56.8%	19.9%	36.5%
The use of time in my school	58.5%	24.5%	39.6%
Leadership issues	50.5%	17.7%	33.2%
Facilities and resources	64.3%	32.1%	46.6%
Professional development	64.0%	32.3%	47.0%
New teacher support	59.8%	28.8%	41.3%

Note: Responses are organized in the order of the greatest difference between perceptions of stayers and movers in response to this question on the survey.

School leadership, it appears, is important to teachers in terms of their future employment plans. Unfortunately, school administrators and teachers may not share similar perceptions as to whether teaching conditions are in place and efforts toward improvement occur.

While more sophisticated analyses will be conducted, these findings are similar to connections found in 2006 between teaching conditions and teachers’ future employment plans. According to that study, “effective leadership that provides sufficient planning time and empowers teachers in a trusting environment where they feel supported is the key ingredient to lowering teacher turnover and creating climates where all students can succeed.” (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007, p.18). Similar analyses will be conducted and findings will be compared to assess any differences in the importance of critical conditions to keeping teachers and student learning.

Finding 3: Teachers View Teaching, Learning and Leadership Conditions Differently from Administrators

While some differences in perceptions of working conditions can be expected between “bosses” and “employees” in any industry, the disparity between principals and teachers is notable in Kansas. This was also noted in 2006 (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007). *On all questions, the 474 principals responding to the survey were far more likely than the 14,868 teachers to note the presence of positive teaching conditions, such as leadership making efforts to improve conditions in their schools* (Tables 6 and 7).

- *Areas where large proportions of teachers and principals both **agreed** with statements of teaching, learning, and leadership conditions.* Over 80 percent of teachers and principals agreed that: (1) Teachers have access to reliable communication technology, including phones, faxes and email (83 percent of teachers and 89 percent of principals); (2) teachers and staff work in a school environment that is safe (86 percent of teachers and 98 percent of principals) (3) the faculty are committed to helping every student learn (89 and 94 percent, respectively).

Over 80 percent of teachers and principals also agreed on a number of factors that add to their overall workload: (a) aligning curriculum with the Kansas state assessments (81 percent of teachers, 85 percent of principals); (b) meeting diverse student learning needs in the classroom (83 and 84 percent, respectively); (c) meeting state and federal requirements (i.e., QPA, NCLB, IDEA, etc.) (81 and 95 percent, respectively); (d) getting students to expected levels of performance (91 and 97 percent, respectively).

- *Areas where large proportions of teachers and principals both **disagreed** with statements of teaching, learning, and leadership conditions.* At least one quarter of teachers and principals both disagreed with the following statements: (1) teachers have time available to collaborate with their colleagues (40 percent of teachers and 26 percent of principals); (2) the non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient (44 and 49 percent, respectively); (3) the number of work days during the year is sufficient for teachers to meet expected professional responsibilities (27 and 28 percent, respectively); (4) teachers have sufficient training and support to fully utilize the available instructional technology (35 and 29 percent, respectively).
- *Gaps between teachers and principals in perceptions of teaching, learning and leadership conditions.* The greatest gaps in perception between teachers and principals appear to be most common in the areas of school leadership and decision making – two of the most common areas that teachers said were most important to them in making decisions regarding their future employment plans (Figure 1).

Table 6
Teacher and Principal Perceptions of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership Conditions

Teaching and Learning Conditions Survey Questions	Percent Agreeing	
	Teachers	Principals
Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine administrative paperwork that teachers are required to do.	38.2%	79.3%
Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	66.6%	97.3%
Teachers are centrally involved in decision making about educational issues.	53.1%	93.7%
The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems.	56.3%	89.0%
The school leadership communicates clear expectations to students and parents.	66.9%	97.0%
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them.	62.9%	94.5%
The school leadership consistently enforces rules for student conduct.	58.9%	98.7%
The school leadership consistently supports teachers when needed.	66.3%	99.8%
Professional development provides teachers with the knowledge and skills most needed to teach effectively.	61.2%	91.4%

Table 6 is organized in order of the greatest difference between teachers and principals’ perceptions. These findings do not imply that principals do not want to address teaching and learning conditions in their schools, but rather that they do not perceive they are issues to the same extent as teachers. Therefore, it should be no surprise that more has not been done to prioritize these issues. Neither principals, nor teachers are right or wrong about whether teaching conditions exist. School level data, ideally, can help facilitate the kinds of dialogue where school faculty can build a greater consensus about the presence of teaching and learning conditions and collectively prioritize and address areas identified by the staff.

Principals are not only more likely to believe that positive working conditions are present, but also that school leadership—a concept that includes, but is not limited entirely to the principal—makes sustained efforts to address any teacher concerns that exist (Table 7).

Consider the convergence of findings related to school leadership:

- First, as previously noted, educators indicate that school leadership and teacher empowerment/decision making are critical influences on future employment plans (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

- Second, teachers believe that school leadership efforts to address working conditions are least likely to occur in the areas of leadership (48 percent), empowerment (54 percent), and time (55 percent) (Table 7).
- Third, the greatest gaps between teacher and principal perception about school leadership efforts to address teacher concerns are in the areas of leadership and teacher empowerment (42 percent difference in both cases) (Table 5). Principals are more likely than teachers to believe that sustained efforts are being made by the leadership to address such concerns.

Table 7
Teacher and Principal Perceptions of School Leadership Efforts to Address Teaching and Learning Conditions

School Leadership Makes a Sustained Effort to Address Teacher Concerns About:	Percent Agreeing	
	Teachers	Principals
Empowering teachers	53.5%	95.3%
Leadership issues	47.6%	89.5%
The use of time in my school	55.4%	92.8%
New teacher support	57.0%	91.3%
Professional development	61.2%	93.9%
Facilities and resources	61.5%	93.2%

Table 7 is organized in order of the greatest difference between teachers and principals’ perceptions. As was the case in 2006, the data here indicate a need to consider leadership and empowerment in school improvement planning. These findings also call for school-based, data-driven conversations of working conditions, as well as professional development for both principals and teacher leaders. Until all educators can agree on the relative presence of working conditions, sustained reforms to improve school climate will not be prioritized.

Finding 4: Teachers’ Perceptions of Teaching and Learning Conditions Do Not Significantly Vary by School Level and Years of Experience

School leadership clearly shapes teaching conditions in Kansas schools. Other factors too—years of experience and school level—often make a difference in respondents’ perceptions of whether or not critical teaching conditions are in place within a school. In 2006, educators new to the profession were found to be the most positive about their conditions of work than veteran educators (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007, p.21). Further, it was found that “teachers in elementary schools, in general, are far more likely to report that teaching and learning conditions are in place.” And that middle school teachers, while more negative than elementary educators were more likely to cite the presence of teaching conditions than high school teachers. The areas where the greatest differences were found were in school leadership and teacher empowerment, both critical to teachers’ future employment plans (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007, p.22). The most notable gaps across schools in Kansas were found in schools serving high minority and high poverty populations (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007, p.21-22).

As data was unavailable on student demographics at the time of the interim analyses, an assessment on whether similar differences by school type and years of experience were present in 2008 was undertaken.

Differences by School Level. Unlike in 2006, initial analyses of the 2008 survey data do not reveal many significant differences between elementary and secondary schools in whether working conditions are present. In general, elementary school educators are slightly more likely to note the presence of many important teaching and learning conditions in their school than middle and high school educators. The largest gaps in perceptions when assessed by respondents' school level appear to be around decision-making structures and school leadership, both areas critical to retaining teachers, but these gaps are smaller than typical relative to similar surveys conducted in other states. Further investigations will be conducted in the final report.

Differences by Teacher Experience. Initial analyses do not show many significant differences by number of years of teaching experience in whether working conditions are present. In general, the least experienced teachers are the most likely to agree that positive teaching and learning conditions are present in their school. On most questions, teachers in their first three years are slightly more positive than their colleagues about time, decision making, leadership, and professional development issues (with first year teachers usually having the most positive perceptions).

The final report will explore these findings in great detail when all data is available and more analyses on the population of survey respondents can be conducted. The findings from 2008 stand in stark contrast to what was found in the 2006 analyses.

General Trends within Each Survey Area

The following sections will further explore educators aggregated perceptions about leadership, resources, workload, professional development and new teacher support.

Leadership

- **School leadership is supportive in many arenas, but may need to do more to create trusting environments and address concerns about teaching conditions.**

When asked which teaching condition most affects your willingness to remain teaching at your school, one-third (36 percent) of Kansas teachers indicated that school leadership was the most critical, more than any other area (see Figure 1). Further, half (54 percent) of teachers said that having supportive school leadership was “extremely important” to them in considering future career plans, a higher percentage than those reporting that their salary (35 percent), and student behavior (31 percent) are extremely important (see Table 3).

Fortunately, educators are positive about several aspects of school leadership. Almost two-thirds (61 percent) believe that the school leadership in their building is effective. This is seen in several areas of the survey.

- Two-thirds of educators believe that they work in supportive environments where there is an atmosphere of trust (67 percent), that teachers can raise issues and concerns that are important to them (64 percent) and consistently get support when needed (68 percent).
- Educators believe that expectations are clear and well communicated. Almost nine in ten educators (89 percent) believe the faculty is committed to helping every student learn, and two-thirds agree that school leadership communicates clear expectations to students and parents (69 percent).

There are some concerns about the ability of school leadership to address teacher concerns. Only half believe that sustained efforts are made to improve leadership (50 percent), teacher empowerment (56 percent) and the use of time (57 percent). However, as noted, these efforts were noted as more likely to occur in 2008 than in 2006 across the state and within the sample of 524 comparison schools.

- **Teachers want to reassess their role in school level decision making.**

Teacher empowerment is viewed as critical to teacher success with students and their future employment decisions. More than one-quarter of educators believe teacher empowerment is the *most* important teaching condition in promoting student learning (29 percent), more than any other area surveyed. It was also the second most selected condition influencing whether teachers keep working at their current school (23 percent). Kansas educators, however, while Kansas

educators feel engaged on issues related to their teaching, they are less likely to note that they are meaningfully involved in other school-level decisions.

- About half (55 percent) of educators believe that teachers are centrally involved in decision making about educational issues. While almost three-quarters of educators believe that steps are taken to solve problems in their school (72 percent), fewer (58 percent) agree that there is an effective process for making collaborative decisions. However, as noted, teachers were more positive in each of these areas than was the case in 2006.
- Educators agree that teachers have influence in several important areas related to designing and delivering instruction, including devising teaching techniques (81 percent), selecting instructional materials (75 percent), and assessment practices (68 percent). But teachers are not influencing other decisions that influence their classroom and school. Less than half agree that teachers influence decisions about: the content of in-service professional development programs (40 percent), establishing and implementing student discipline policies (50 percent), establishing school budget priorities (13 percent), and the selection of new teachers (28 percent) and other building personnel (22 percent).

Teachers appear willing to take on more responsibility in school decision making as *less than half (43 percent) of Kansas educators agree that teachers have an appropriate level of influence on decision making in their school*, and only one in ten “strongly agree” with this statement about teacher influence.

Resources

- **Teachers believe they need more time to plan and work with colleagues.**

Less than half (46 percent) of educators believe the non-instructional time (time without student contact that could be used for planning, meetings, etc.) teachers receive is sufficient, and only 53 percent agree that teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues. Several issues identified within the survey help illuminate these time concerns.

- Only one-quarter (28 percent) of Kansas educators report receiving, on average, an hour per day of non-instructional time and an equal proportion (28 percent) receive three hours or less a week.
- Given paperwork and other duties, teachers may not be able to utilize non-instructional time to improve student learning. Only 40 percent believe efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork required of teachers. About half of teachers believe they are protected from duties (48 percent) and interruptions (54 percent) that interfere with educating students.

- **Teachers are positive about the resources they have to support instruction.**

As previously mentioned, Kansas educators believe that teachers have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials (75 percent), instructional technology (71 percent), office equipment and supplies (79 percent) and reliable communication technology (83 percent).

Workload

- **Getting students to expected levels of performance takes significant time.**

Kansas educators note that substantial time is required to address the needs of diverse learners and getting students to expected levels of performance. More than half (61 percent) of teachers “strongly agree” that getting students to expected levels of performance contributes to their overall workload. Meeting state (QPA) and federal (NCLB, IDEA, etc.) requirements were also noted as significant workload contributor (47 percent “strongly agree”). Addressing diverse student learning needs, student behavior, and aligning curriculum with the Kansas state assessments all are viewed as significantly contributing to teachers overall workloads as well.

Professional Development and New Teacher Support

- **Professional development is viewed positively, but may not be meeting the most pressing needs of Kansas educators.**

About two-thirds of Kansas educators report that there are sufficient resources for teachers to take advantage of professional development (68 percent) and that ultimately it provides teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to be effective (63 percent), both significantly higher than the proportion of educators agreeing in the 2006 survey.

Teachers were asked about both their professional development needs and the areas in which they actually receive support. When asked to identify areas of professional development *needed* to teach effectively, Kansas teachers were most likely to indicate training for closing the achievement gap (46 percent) and teaching students with disabilities (44 percent) (Table 8). These professional development needs are similar to the areas noted in 2006 (Hirsch and Emerick, 2007, p.31).

Table 8
Professional Development NEEDED by Teachers to Effectively Teach Their Students

Professional Development NEEDED to teach effectively	Percent Agreeing
Closing the achievement gap	46.4%
Special Education (students with disabilities)	43.7%
Literacy strategies	38.6%
Classroom management techniques	28.1%
Your content area	27.9%
Methods of teaching	27.8%

Student assessment	27.7%
Special Education (academically gifted students)	23.9%
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	9.7%

Teachers were also asked to cite areas where they *received* 10 hours or more of professional development in the past two years (Table 9). Only in literacy strategies did more than half of educators indicate that they received 10 hours or more of professional development in the past two years. In the areas where teachers most frequently cited a need for professional development support (closing the achievement gap and teaching students with disabilities), teachers less frequently noted receiving at least ten hours of support over the past two years (27 percent and 20 percent respectively).⁴

Table 9
Professional Development RECEIVED by Teachers over the Last Two Years

Professional Development RECEIVED (at least 10 hours over last 2 years)	Percent Agreeing
Literacy strategies	53.1%
Your content area	47.3%
Student assessment	45.5%
Methods of teaching	42.7%
Closing the achievement gap	26.6%
Classroom management techniques	22.9%
Special Education (students with disabilities)	20.4%
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	6.3%
Special Education (academically gifted students)	3.2%

Such gaps in learning needs and professional development received may be related to teachers' role in planning and delivering professional learning opportunities. ***Only four in ten educators (40 percent) report that teachers have influence on determining the content of in-service professional development programs.***

While almost two-thirds of Kansas teachers (64 percent) report that they have incorporated strategies from professional development into their instructional delivery and that it has proven useful in improving student achievement (61 percent), only one-third (36 percent) received follow up from professional development taken that helped them improve their teaching.

- **New teachers receiving additional support found it helpful.**

Almost 2,700 beginning educators answered specific questions about the support they receive. About two-thirds (69 percent) of these new teachers—those with three years of teaching experience or less—report receiving some additional support as a beginning educator (more than 800 respondents noted that they received no additional support). Mentoring was the most frequent way support was provided (86 percent), but many novices also received general support and encouragement (67 percent), seminars and professional development specifically for new teachers (64 percent) and common planning time with experienced colleagues (46 percent).

- Of those receiving additional support, about three-quarters believed it improved their effectiveness in following school and district procedures (79 percent) and required documentation (65 percent), developing classroom management and discipline strategies (73 percent) and instructional strategies (77 percent).
- Four-fifths (86 percent) attribute at least some of their success as a beginning teacher to the additional support they received, and almost half (45 percent) noted it helped “quite a bit” or “a great deal.”
- More than half (54 percent) of new Kansas teachers agree that the additional support they received was important to their decision to remain in teaching.

Conclusion and Next Steps

While more analyses remain, the initial examination of the survey data suggests that Kansas has a solid foundation of committed educators. Comprehensive, sustained efforts to improve teaching and learning conditions will ensure that the state's educators are able to help every child in Kansas learn.

The Kansas Teaching, Learning and Leadership Conditions Survey data can help the state, districts, and schools assess, understand and improve their teaching and learning conditions in order to foster improved perceptions, motivations and performance in schools. Ultimately, this will create positive school environments where all educators are supported, want to work and can thrive.

A final report, analyzing the findings of the survey relative to student learning and teacher retention, will be submitted in the fall 2008 after student achievement, teacher turnover and other state-provided data can be analyzed. For the final report, more in-depth analyses will occur in the following areas:

- In domain-specific analyses, we will delve into teachers' perceptions of leadership abilities and empowerment opportunities within their schools, with an understanding that these two areas are critical to teachers' future employment plans.
- Using student achievement data, we will further analyze how educators' perceptions of working conditions align with student learning.
- We will continue to explore how the time constraints on Kansas' teachers impact both their own job satisfaction and student learning. For instance, when issues affecting retention are considered, time ranks fourth in teachers' career decisions, but climbs to second behind empowerment when teachers are asked which working condition most greatly impacts student learning.
- Provide in-depth findings on the conditions school principals face in creating positive teaching conditions. Further, correlations will be run to better understand if district support of principals is a necessary component in creating positive teaching and learning conditions.

While some additional data will be provided in the final report, readers are encouraged to use these interim findings to begin the important conversations that will lead to improvement in the teaching and learning conditions in their schools. Having 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. We look forward to continuing our support of Kansas' most critical educational resource—its dedicated teaching corps.

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Appendix A: Comparison of 2006 and 2008 Survey Responses in Schools with Significant Response in Both 2006 and 2008

Select Common Survey Questions	2006 Survey	2008 Survey	Difference
Empowerment Section			
Teachers are recognized as educational experts.	51.2%	68.6%	17.4%
Teachers are centrally involved in decision making about educational issues.	44.5%	55.6%	11.1%
Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.	60.1%	68.2%	8.1%
In this school we take steps to solve problems.	67.7%	71.5%	3.8%
The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems.	50.8%	58.2%	7.4%
Parents and community members contribute to student success.	57.8%	63.6%	5.8%
Teachers are encouraged to participate in professional leadership activities.	63.1%	68.3%	5.2%
Teachers are supported by the community in which they teach.	59.7%	69.4%	9.7%
Facilities and Resources Section			
Teachers have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials and resources.	68.4%	75.6%	7.2%
Teachers have sufficient access to technology, including computers, printers, software and internet access.	65.4%	70.8%	5.4%
Teachers have sufficient training and support to fully utilize the available instructional technology.	45.4%	54.3%	9.1%
Teachers have access to reliable communication technology, including phones, faxes and email.	78.7%	82.9%	4.2%
Teachers have sufficient access to office equipment and supplies such as copy machines, paper, pens. etc.	76.1%	79.0%	2.9%
Teachers have sufficient access to a broad range of professional personnel.	66.3%	71.1%	4.8%
Teachers and staff work in a school environment that is safe.	85.3%	86.3%	1.0%
Teachers have adequate professional space to work productively.	62.4%	67.7%	5.3%
School Leadership Section			
There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within the school.	60.3%	66.3%	6.0%
The school leadership communicates clear expectations to students and parents.	63.1%	68.4%	5.3%
The faculty are committed to helping every student learn.	87.2%	89.2%	2.0%
Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns	57.0%	64.4%	7.4%

that are important to them.			
The school leadership consistently enforces rules for student conduct.	55.4%	61.0%	5.6%
The school improvement team provides effective leadership at this school.	55.9%	61.2%	5.3%
Teacher performance evaluations are fair in my school.	72.2%	74.7%	2.5%
Teachers receive feedback that can help them improve teaching.	62.1%	67.9%	5.8%
The school leadership consistently supports teachers when needed.	62.3%	67.7%	5.4%
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about leadership issues	43.5%	50.6%	7.1%
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about facilities and resources	59.8%	63.6%	3.8%
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about the use of time in my school	51.5%	58.5%	7.0%
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about professional development	60.5%	63.4%	2.9%
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about empowering teachers	48.9%	56.2%	7.3%
Overall, the school leadership in my school is effective.	58.9%	60.6%	1.7%
Professional Development Section			
Sufficient resources are available to allow teachers to take advantage of professional development activities.	59.0%	68.8%	9.8%
Professional development provides teachers with the knowledge and skills most needed to teach effectively.	59.6%	63.2%	3.6%
Teachers are provided opportunities to learn from one another.	55.7%	63.0%	7.3%
An appropriate amount of time is provided for professional development.	53.3%	61.6%	8.3%
Time Section			
Teachers have reasonable class sizes, affording them time to meet the educational needs of all students	53.7%	60.3%	6.6%
Teachers have time available to collaborate with their colleagues.	44.7%	53.9%	9.2%
The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.	38.8%	46.1%	7.3%
Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.	42.6%	49.0%	6.4%

Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine administrative paperwork that teachers are required to do.	31.2%	39.4%	8.2%
Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruption.	49.3%	54.0%	4.7%
Teachers have a reasonable number of students overall, affording them time to meet the educational needs of all students.	51.8%	57.8%	6.0%
The number of work days during the year is sufficient for teachers to meet expected professional responsibilities.	70.5%	63.1%	(7.4%)

Appendix B: Guide to Using the Data

It is important to consider the following when analyzing and using the Kansas Teaching, Learning and Leadership Conditions Survey results for your school improvement efforts.

- 1. Teaching Conditions are an area for school improvement, not accountability.** Because teaching conditions are about schools, no one individual should be held solely accountable for the status of the school culture. Rather, these data should be used to guide school improvement planning with schools and then assessed on their progress toward implementing collectively developed reforms.
- 2. Teaching conditions are not about any one individual and it will take a community effort to improve these conditions.** No one person should be viewed as responsible for creating or reforming school culture. Conditions are about schools, not about individuals. The principal can have a significant impact on the professional culture in which teachers work, but many aspects of teaching conditions are beyond the principal's control. Broader social trends, federal, state and district policies all impact how educators view and operate within their school and classroom.
- 3. Perceptual data are real data.** The survey results are based on educators' perceptions of the presence of important teaching conditions. Educators' perceptions of the culture and context of their schools have been linked in a number of studies to student learning, future employment plans, efficacy and motivation. Furthermore, given that educators base their decisions to stay in or leave teaching upon their perceptions, this data should help inform school improvement and reform efforts at the school, district and state levels. However, other data (e.g., instructional expenditures, teacher/pupil ratio, etc.) should be used to triangulate these findings and provide a better understanding of these perceptions.
- 4. Conversations need to be structured and safe.** Having data-driven dialogue about the findings of the survey, the root causes of educator perceptions, and potential reforms will require structure, facilitation, setting ground rules and the ability to separate the issues from individuals. Dialogue should occur so that all can participate in a safe and meaningful way.
- 5. Identify and celebrate positives as well as considering areas for improvement.** Educators have tremendous pride in the work they do and all want to work in a school that allows them to do their best work. All schools have strengths that should be acknowledged and celebrated during school improvement efforts at the same time as issues are identified and addressed.
- 6. Create a common understanding of what defines and shapes conditions.** Anything and everything might be considered a part of and influence on teaching conditions. The survey provides input from educators on a host of important research-based teaching conditions, which should serve as a starting point for understanding what is important to teachers for them to do their best work. Research shows that broader social trends, media coverage, respect for the profession, local and state policies, etc. can all influence teachers' perceptions of their conditions and ultimately their motivation and efficacy as educators. Other areas may be worthy of further investigation, such as teaching assignments, curricular support, assessments and accountability, parent and community support, etc.
- 7. Focus on what you can solve.** Many issues that shape teaching conditions within a school or district are subject to federal and state assessment policies, funding, etc. To be successful, school improvement planning should focus on areas that can be addressed by the school community. District barriers to school-based solutions, as well as challenges related to state or federal policy or broader societal concerns should be identified and used to facilitate cross-school conversations.
- 8. Solutions can be complex and long term.** Teaching conditions are cumulative and engrained over time. It took many years and faculty members to create them and it may take a similar amount of time to reform them. Some solutions may be inexpensive and simple to address, like improving the consistency of communication amongst faculty, while others are resource intensive (e.g., class size reduction, integration of technology) or long range (e.g., building trust, creating authentic professional learning communities). A school improvement plan must pay attention both to short and long term issues to successfully improve the professional context.

Endnotes

¹ The number of questions answered by any one respondent depended on their years of experience and their role in the school (teacher, principal, etc.). Educators may have answered up to 200 specific items about their school.

² “Educators” is used in this report only to refer to the aggregated responses all school-based licensed educators who responded to the survey. There were four groups of professionals completing this survey: teachers, principals, vice or assistant principals, and other school-based licensed education professionals.

³ 24,398 educators responded to a question about their future intentions for their professional career. “Stayers” were those who planned to continue working in their current school either as long as possible or until a better opportunity came along; “movers” planned to leave the school or district as soon as possible but to continue working in education; and, “leavers” planned to leave education all together.

⁴ One must be careful when making comparisons between the stated professional development needs of teachers and the areas where they noted receiving professional development. This is true for a number of reasons. One is that teachers might not always be aware that a certain kind of professional development was meant to cover the topics we asked about, like closing the achievement gap. Second, it is possible that the needs of respondents are actually underestimated: if teachers *received* professional development in a particular area, they might have decided not to indicate it as a *need*, even if they felt it was important. Alternatively, teachers may be confirming that they have a need for a particular kind of professional development that they are actually receiving.