

# Governor Easley's Teacher Working Conditions Initiative

## Executive Summary



Governor Easley's Teacher Working Conditions Initiative provides North Carolina schools and districts with a unique opportunity to make data driven decisions about improving teacher working conditions, helping to create a stable, high quality teaching force for every classroom across the state. By surveying teachers across the state, data has been gathered to provide customized reports to schools and districts about the status of working conditions in their respective schools. More than 34,000 educators responded to the 2004 survey, representing more than 90 percent of the state's schools and every school district. Since different schools face unique challenges, this data is essential for individual schools to develop their own distinct priorities for improving working conditions.

A statistical analysis was conducted using these survey results, along with other data sources (student achievement as indicated by AYP and ABC results, school size, teacher turnover, percent minority students, percent of students on free and reduced lunch). The analysis allowed researchers to make connections between working conditions, student achievement and teacher retention for the approximately 1,000 schools with a 40 percent response rate or greater on the survey.

The results underscore Governor Easley's assertion that "teacher working conditions are student learning conditions." Teacher 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 ABC school accountability model both in terms of growth and school designation. Working conditions responses were also connected to teacher retention. The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (SECTQ) documented six primary findings from the analysis of the teacher working conditions data (for a more detailed description of the findings, please visit: [www.teachingquality.org/2004\\_twc\\_report.htm](http://www.teachingquality.org/2004_twc_report.htm)). Consider some of the most significant findings from the report:

### TOP-LINE FINDINGS FROM 2004 TEACHER WORKING CONDITIONS SURVEY

#### Professional Development

- Survey results for professional development were a significant predictor of AYP status for North Carolina schools. For every one point increase on the survey, schools are four times more likely to achieve AYP.
- Professional development was by far the greatest predictor of ABC growth status at the middle school level, more so than school size, teacher retention or AYP status. Middle schools were 12.4 times more likely to move up one growth expectation category—either move from not met to meet, or from meet to exceed—for every one point increase in the professional development domain average.

#### Facilities and Resources

- For every one point increase on the survey in the facilities and resources domain average, schools were three times more likely to achieve AYP.
- Facilities and resources are also significant and meaningful predictors of student achievement in North Carolina schools. Schools were three times more likely to be in one of the top designation categories for every point increase on the survey.

*"Armed with this data, North Carolina will better meet the needs of teachers, and in turn, our students, because teacher working conditions are student learning conditions."*

*—Governor Mike Easley*

*By surveying teachers across the state, data has been gathered to provide customized reports to schools and districts about the status of working conditions in their respective schools.*

*Professional development was by far the greatest predictor of ABC growth status at the middle school level, more so than school size, teacher retention or AYP status.*

*Leadership was a powerful predictor of whether or not a school had high student achievement at the high school level.*

*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.*

## Leadership

- Leadership was the single greatest predictor of AYP status at the middle school level, more so than school size and teacher retention. For every one point increase on the Working Conditions Survey results in the area of leadership, middle schools were 6.7 times more likely to achieve AYP.
- Leadership was a powerful predictor of whether or not a school had high student achievement at the high school level. High schools were 48 times more likely to be included in one of the top three performance designations for every one point increase on the leadership domain average.

Along with these primary findings, a more in-depth analysis of each of the five working conditions areas was also completed. From the six findings and the domain analysis, recommendations for the state of North Carolina are offered to enhance efforts to improve teacher working conditions. These research-based recommendations ask state policymakers to consider the following:

1. Provide state funding for the design, dissemination, and analysis of the Working Conditions Survey every other year.
2. Provide assistance to school and district communities to ensure that they know about, access, understand and use the data to improve teacher working conditions.
3. Document and disseminating successful strategies to reform working conditions and ensure resources are made available for school and districts to improve.
4. Invest in what matters most for improving teacher working conditions—high quality leaders who can empower teachers in decision making about instruction and create learning communities that help all students succeed.
5. Consider reforms that directly address teachers' greatest concerns about their working conditions.

Ultimately, the report proves what individuals most familiar with schools already realize—that 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.

*“The data from the survey leads to an intuitive but significant conclusion—if we are truly committed to improving the achievement of our state's students, we must dedicate ourselves to dramatically improving the conditions and qualities of the job facing our state's most valuable employees—teachers.”*

—Eric Hirsch, The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality

Prepared by the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality for Governor Mike Easley