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Research Reveals Teacher Working Conditions Key to Improving Student Achievement

Two New Reports Released: Data from new studies in both North and South Carolina demonstrate the link between teacher working conditions and student achievement.

Chapel Hill, NC – March 22, 2005 – While many businesses focus attention on employee satisfaction, many schools struggle to address critical working conditions – isolating teachers in classrooms with closed doors, failing to provide basic materials to complete their job, inundating them with non-instructional duties, allowing them limited input regarding the design of their own school and offering few opportunities for career advancement and professional growth. Such factors are closely related to challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers.

New research indicates that improving teacher working conditions—time, empowerment, professional development, leadership, and facilities and resources—significantly improves student achievement and helps stem teacher turnover. Access the full North and South Carolina reports at: <http://www.teachingquality.org/TWC.htm>

Data from Teachers Tells the Story

Under Governor Mike Easley's Teacher Working Conditions Initiative in North Carolina, the Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (SECTQ) analyzed more than 34,000 surveys from teachers and principals in 90 percent of the states' schools. A similar initiative was conducted in South Carolina with funding from the Department of Education's Division of Teaching Quality and the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (over 15,000 surveys were analyzed). In both studies, teachers' responses on the Working Conditions Survey were powerful predictors of whether or not schools made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and performed well on the states' respective school accountability model.

North Carolina:

- **Leadership** was the single greatest predictor of AYP status at the middle school level. For every one point increase (on a one-to-five scale of satisfaction) on the survey's leadership domain average, middle schools were 6.7 times more likely to have made AYP;
- Schools (all grade levels) were four times more likely to make AYP for every one point domain average increase on the survey in **professional development**;
- For every one point increase on the survey in the **facilities and resources** domain average, schools (all grade levels) were 2.8 times more likely to make AYP;

- **Professional development** was by far the greatest predictor of ABC status at the middle school level. Middle schools were more than 12.4 times more likely to move up one growth expectation category (not met to met, or met to exceed) for every one point increase on the professional development domain average;
- **Leadership** was a powerful predictor of whether a school was included in one of the top school designation categories (at least 80 percent of students at grade level making expected growth) for high schools. High schools were 48 times more likely to be included in one of the top designations for every one point increase on the survey domain average;
- Schools (all grade levels) were more than 10 times more likely to be in one of the top designations for every one point increase on the survey in the area of **professional development**; and
- Schools (all grade levels) were three times more likely to be in one of the top designation categories for every point increase in **facilities and resources**.

South Carolina

- Survey results for **empowerment** were a significant predictor of AYP status for South Carolina schools. For every one point increase on the survey, schools are 4.75 times more likely to achieve AYP;
- For every one point increase on the survey in all schools on the **professional development** domain average, South Carolina schools were 2.5 times more likely to achieve AYP;
- At the high school level, schools were 9.4 times more likely to make AYP for every one point increase in the school average in the area of **time**;
- Schools were 1.9 times more likely to achieve a rating of good or excellent on school improvement for every one point increase on the Teacher Working Conditions Survey in the area of **time**. The effects are far greater for high schools, which are 64.6 times more likely to be rated good or excellent for every one point increase on the survey; and
- **Professional development** was by far the greatest predictor of Improvement Rating status at the middle school level, more so than the proportion of poor and minority students or AYP status. Middle schools were 44 times more likely to be rated good or excellent.

Analyses in both states found that teacher working conditions had a significant impact on teacher retention. Other findings and recommendations are described in each report.

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 North and South Carolina's notable school reform efforts could go unfulfilled.

To read the full report, including an extensive description of all findings, research methodology and related SECTQ recommendations for the states, districts and schools to improve teacher working conditions, please visit: <http://www.teachingquality.org/TWC.htm>

About The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality

The Southeast Center for Teaching Quality (SECTQ) improves student learning by shaping policies through developing teacher leadership, building coalitions, and conducting practical research. SECTQ is a regional organization with a national agenda to ensure that all students have access to high quality teaching. SECTQ was established in 1999 and is located in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. To learn more about SECTQ's work, and to access the report, please visit www.teachingquality.org. An online toolkit is available to help policymakers, practitioners and communities respond to survey data and consider potential reforms at www.teacherworkingconditions.org.

Teacher Working Conditions are Student Learning Conditions – A Report to Governor Mike Easley on the North Carolina Working Conditions Survey was funded with the generous support of the National Education Association, the National Governors Association, the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission and the State of North Carolina.

Listening to the Experts: A Report on the 2004 South Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey was funded with the generous support of the South Carolina Department of Education's Division of Teaching Quality (DTQ) and the South Carolina Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention and Advancement (CERRA).

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