

Governor Easley's Teacher Working Conditions Initiative

Recommendations



STATE LEVEL ACTIONS

1. **Provide state funding for the design, dissemination, and analysis of the Working Conditions Survey every other year.**

The North Carolina General Assembly should fund the survey and require a report of its findings. These findings should be included in broader reporting on the success of recruitment and retention efforts undertaken by the state. Further analysis should be conducted on the survey results to provide information on other issues to be examined by the state such as the quality of professional development as well as recruitment and retention in hard-to-staff schools.

2. **Provide assistance to school and district communities to ensure that they know about, access, understand and use the data from the survey to improve teacher working conditions.**

Governor Easley's Teacher Working Conditions Initiative will only be successful if communities use the data from the surveys to improve working conditions. The State Board of Education should establish a Teacher Working Conditions Advisory Board to oversee statewide distribution of the survey every two years, and dissemination of the research findings every two years.

The North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission should continue documenting strategies in schools with positive working conditions. Case studies that delve deeply into the catalysts, barriers and costs of pursuing these strategies should occur, as was the case after the 2002 analysis.

3. **Invest in high quality leaders who can empower teachers to be included in decision-making about instruction and create learning communities that help all students succeed.**

The findings from the study demonstrate that leadership is at the core of improving working conditions in schools. Professional development and empowerment, the two other areas of greatest significance in improving results, are dependent

on high quality principals who engage teachers in decision-making. The state should examine the preparation, induction and continuous support of school leaders and ensure that all principals understand the important role of teacher working conditions and have the knowledge and skills to make their schools places where all teachers want to work and students can learn.

4. **Consider reforms that directly address teachers' greatest concerns about their working conditions.**

Teachers believe the greatest room for improvement in working conditions is to increase the time available to them and their ability to participate in decisions that directly effect teaching and learning. State investments in class size reduction efforts, reductions in teaching load (particularly for new teachers), time for planning and to work collaboratively, and high quality professional development that meets the needs of the individual teacher may help improve teachers' perceptions of their school environment, and ultimately student success.

DISTRICT LEVEL ACTIONS

1. **Acknowledge that teacher working conditions matter and commit the time and resources necessary to providing teachers with the environment, resources and support they need to help all students learn.**

Districts create many of the policies that contribute to school working conditions, particularly in the area of facilities and resources and professional development. Districts should take the time to analyze working conditions results at the district level and within individual schools to assess the effectiveness of current policies and programs. Identifying policies in individual districts that act as catalysts and barriers to improved working conditions based on the survey results will help districts improve.

"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

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2. Provide specific opportunities and professional development to ensure that teacher working conditions data is disseminated, understood and ultimately used to inform and drive school reforms.

Districts should seek opportunities to engage their schools in conversations about working conditions.

Districts should seek opportunities to engage their schools in conversations about working conditions. For example, the Iredell-Statesville school district convened each of their school Teachers' of the Year to look at Working Conditions Survey results and create goals that will be included in their district improvement plan. The first step is to ensure that teachers in the district respond to the survey and be encouraged to do so honestly. Iredell-Statesville was able to host a convening of teachers because the district had a sufficient response rate in 32 out of its 34 schools and more than 60 percent across the district. Using existing school and district improvement planning and integrating the analysis of working conditions data along with other data points about students and faculty will help to ensure that working conditions are prioritized as a school reform strategy.

“As a local school superintendent, the conclusions drawn from the Teacher Working Conditions Survey are very valuable. The results should be seriously considered as a set of data that complement many other data used to evaluate school performance. I expect our principals and school leadership teams to pay attention to this important data and use it in their school improvement planning process.”
—Dr. Larry Price, Superintendent, Wilson County Public Schools

3. Consider specific district policy changes and resource allocations that can help individual schools being implementing strategies that respond to working condition areas of concern.

Each district should use its own data (<http://www.learnnc.org/gov/twc.nsf>) to assess which working condition is the greatest priority and to gauge which strategies may ultimately be most effective in creating an improved school climate. Examples of successful strategies, research and action tools for improvement can be found at www.teacherworkingconditions.org.

SCHOOL LEVEL ACTIONS

1. Analyze Teacher Working Conditions Survey results and have faculty conversations about their implications.

The power to improve working conditions is ultimately in the hands of the individual school, its faculty, and its parents and surrounding community. Results should be used to take a hard, objective look at school climate and design. Unfortunately this is not possible in half of North Carolina's schools. Those without data should not only focus on the opportunity to take the survey again in Spring of 2006, but either print, conduct and tabulate results independently or use the questions to discuss these important issues.

2. Consider specific policy changes and resource allocations that can help individual schools implement strategies that respond to working condition areas of concern.

Each school should use its own data to assess which working condition is the greatest priority and to gauge which strategies may ultimately be most effective in creating an improved school climate. Examples of successful strategies, research and action tools for improvement can be found at www.teacherworkingconditions.org. Many of these strategies not only involve school faculty, but the broader community and volunteers. Conversations and policy reforms should engage those audiences and draw upon their talents and resources.

3. Include strategies to address teacher working conditions into existing School Improvement Plans.

The types of reforms that need to occur to improve working conditions are not short, quick fixes. Finding time, empowering teachers and building a learning community with trust and mutual respect requires a long-term commitment to creating a new school culture. Prioritizing strategies, identifying short and long term goals, consistently evaluating progress and discussing results all must occur.