Handout 1: Teaching and Learning Conditions[[1]](#footnote-1)

Handout 2a: Overview of Anonymous Surveys

Anonymous surveys of educators are one macro-level approach for obtaining feedback on teaching conditions. Educators complete either a paper-and-pencil survey or an online survey.

Such surveys provide a level of anonymity, which allows educators to be more open and honest about their perceptions of the teaching conditions. Furthermore, using surveys can generate massive amounts of data, which can provide multiple levels of analysis and results. Survey results provide end users with a wealth of information to consider for school improvement planning. For example, because multiple teaching conditions are assessed through surveys, the teaching conditions that are in the most need of improvement can be identified.

A number of valid and reliable surveys currently are available, or a survey can be developed to fit the local context. Example surveys include the New Teacher Center’s Teaching, Empowering, Leading, and Learning (TELL) Survey; Johnson’s School Working Conditions; Cleveland Municipal School District and AIR’s Conditions for Teaching Survey; and the University of Chicago’s 5Essentials, to name a few.

To find more surveys, visit the following sites:

* GTL Center’s *Guide to Evaluation Products* at <http://resource.tqsource.org/gep/>
* National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments’ *School Climate Survey Compendium* webpage at <http://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/topic-research/school-climate-measurement/school-climate-survey-compendium>

Handout 2b: Anonymous Survey of Educators Activity

**Directions:** The goal of this activity is to begin thinking about how to use anonymous surveys to improve the teaching conditions within the school. However, it is not enough to think only of data; you also must consider the context in which the teaching conditions take place. In this activity, you will go through a series of steps to think about the data presented and then think about how you would improve the teaching condition if that data were presented to you in your context. Follow these steps to complete the task:

* **Step 1:** Assign a recorder/reporter/facilitator for this activity (if more than one group is assembled).
* **Step 2:** Read the context information (see below), **Handout 2d: School Descriptions**, and **Handout 2e: Raw Data**.
* **Step 3:** Use the information provided to complete **Handout 2c: Recording Organizer**. In the Recording Organizer, be sure to answer the guiding questions for each school.
* **Step 4:** After completing the Recording Organizer, you will complete **Handout 6: Next Steps**. In the Next Steps, you will think about what you would do if you were given these data. Think about other data you would want to collect, as well as other policy levers that you could use to improve the teaching condition.

## Context

The district wants to increase teacher voice and empowerment in the school decision-making process. A school committee has been assigned the following work:

* Review the data of your schools and determine which items provided from the dashboard apply to the initiative that the district wants to address.
* Compare district-level averages with school-level averages and their relative differences.
* Identify areas of strength across the district.
* Identify areas of challenge across the district.
* Focus your work specifically on schools A, C, and E (see Handouts 2c, 2d, and 2e).
* Read the basic contextual information provided about each school (see Handout 2e).
* Have a conversation about the first steps you might consider taking toward the initiative.
* Consider what supports may be needed to help your school.

Handout 2c: Recording Organizer

**Directions:** Use the following organizer to help you determine how to use the teaching conditions data to improve a specific teaching condition.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Topic or  Guiding Question | School A | School C | School E |
| Primary strengths |  |  |  |
| Primary challenges |  |  |  |
| Anticipated supports |  |  |  |
| What approach would you take with the school leadership? |  |  |  |
| How might you engage the faculty in the process? |  |  |  |
| What additional information would you want to collect? |  |  |  |
| What contextual information may make your implementation process difficult? |  |  |  |

Handout 2d: School Descriptions

**Directions:** Read the school descriptions for this activity.

**School A** is a magnet school for visual and performing arts. The school serves a high percentage of minority students, and its socioeconomic status is considerably higher than that of the district average. Student achievement rates for the last several years have been well above the district average in both mathematics and reading. The school enjoys a stable veteran faculty and leadership team.

**School C** is structured using a traditional school model. The school serves a population commensurate with the district average in minority status and socioeconomic status. Student achievement rates have been proficient, with a slight decline in the last two years. The core of the faculty is experienced, with about 10 percent turnover annually. A new principal was introduced this year.

**School E** is structured using a traditional school model. The percent minority population of the school is similar to other schools in the district, but the school’s socioeconomic status is much lower. Student achievement at this school is traditionally low performing. Forty percent of faculty members are in their first two years of teaching. A seasoned, retired principal was asked to take over the school this year.

Handout 2e: Raw Data

**Directions:** Review the raw data for schools A, C, and E.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Selected Survey Items  From a District Survey | Percentage of Respondents Indicating *Agree* or *Strongly Agree* | | | | | | | |
| District Average | School A | School B | School C | School D | School E | School F | School G |
| Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions. | 51% | 84% | 57% | 84% | 76% | 17% | 59% | 95% |
| The noninstructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient. | 51% | 79% | 49% | 61% | 68% | 72% | 48% | 100% |
| Parents or guardians support teachers, contributing to their success with students. | 57% | 100% | 27% | 89% | 78% | 17% | 74% | 95% |
| The community we serve is supportive of this school. | 70% | 95% | 39% | 94% | 82% | 13% | 95% | 100% |
| Students at this school follow rules of conduct. | 45% | 95% | 33% | 74% | 89% | 4% | 26% | 100% |
| School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct. | 54% | 94% | 92% | 59% | 93% | 17% | 67% | 71% |
| The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions to solve problems. | 63% | 48% | 81% | 72% | 85% | 13% | 70% | 77% |
| There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in this school. | 60% | 89% | 83% | 85% | 72% | 8% | 70% | 86% |
| Teachers feel comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them. | 61% | 89% | 83% | 79% | 76% | 13% | 71% | 91% |
| Teachers are assigned classes that maximize their likelihood of success with students. | 50% | 95% | 65% | 66% | 73% | 15% | 71% | 88% |
| Teachers have autonomy to make decisions about instructional delivery (i.e., pacing, materials, and pedagogy). | 65% | 100% | 42% | 34% | 53% | 13% | 73% | 90% |

*Key for cell color percentages:* Red = below proficient; Yellow = proficient; Green = above proficient

Handout 3a: Overview of Teaching Conditions Continuum

The second macro-level approach for obtaining feedback on teaching conditions is the placement of teaching conditions on a practice rubric or continuum. Evaluating teaching conditions on a developmental continuum allows you to consider where a school is at developmentally on providing positive teaching conditions. The basis of this approach comes from the teaching conditions standards work adopted by North Carolina and Kentucky. The practice rubric approach supports the interpretation and application of standards and also prepares school educators for school improvement planning.

The more people who participate in the process, the more complete your understanding of the teaching conditions will be, as experienced by educators across your site. Inclusion of all educators in participation is very important for using the results to drive school improvement planning and obtaining buy-in on next steps.

The difference between this method and the anonymous survey is that the rubric provides further description about what the teaching condition looks like in a school at each rubric level. Thus, there is more common understanding among raters about what each score means when completing the rubric compared with a survey. Also, in the survey method, differences are identified quantitatively. Although the rubric also provides quantitative information, differences in rubric scores are defined by the presence of specific conditions, which helps to more easily identify next steps and where challenges may lie.

Each of the eight teaching conditions defined by the New Teacher Center consists of multiple elements, which are defined on a four-point rubric scale: *developing*, *proficient*, *accomplished*, and *distinguished*. This rating scale applies to the school site (not the individual educator). Thus, raters will score the school at the element level. Before diving into the rubric, it is generally suggested that raters think about which element should be the focus of analysis.

Handout 3b: Directions for the Teaching Conditions Continuum Activity

In this activity, we will look only at the Time portion of the rubric (see **Handout 3d: Teaching Conditions Rubric—Time**). The process presented, however, can apply to any of the teaching conditions areas. But for the sake of time, we are reducing this part of the work to just the area of Time.

* **Step 1:** Reflect on your school’s teaching conditions related to the area of Time.
  + Use **Handout 3c: Teaching Conditions Proficiency—Time** to examine the four elements from the Time teaching condition.
  + Place your school either *at*, *above*, or *below* the proficiency level of each element by marking an “X” in the appropriate box in Handout 3c.
* **Step 2:** Determine one element on which to focus.
  + Which element is below proficient (from Handout 3c)?
  + If more than one element is below proficient, where should the focus be made?
  + If no element is below proficient, which area is the most relevant to your school’s current improvement planning?
  + After you decide the element, review the rubric for that element in Handout 3d.

Handout 3c: Teaching Conditions Proficiency—Time

Schools protect teachers’ time to plan, collaborate, and provide effective instruction.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| School Proficiency Level | | | Element | Indicator(s) of Proficiency |
| **Below-** | At | Above |
|  |  |  | 1a. Teachers’ class sizes facilitate high-quality instruction. | * Teachers have time to plan in order to meet the diverse learning needs of students because they have appropriate class sizes, course loads, and assignments that match training. |
|  |  |  | 1b. Teachers have sufficient time to provide all students with effective instruction. | * Teachers have minimum sufficient uninterrupted instructional time. * School leadership determines daily or weekly instructional schedules for teachers and supports teachers with regard to protecting instructional time. * School leadership seeks teachers’ input on ways to limit the full range of interruptions in instruction experienced by teachers and students. |
|  |  |  | 1c. Teachers have time during the school day to plan and collaborate. | * Minimum sufficient time is provided during the school day for short- and long-term planning. * Minimum sufficient time is available for teachers to work collaboratively to develop common plans and share effective lessons. * There are limited interruptions to the noninstructional time provided to teachers. Teachers have the state minimum time to plan and collaborate (duty-free lunch and a planning period). |
|  |  |  | 1d. Schools make efforts to streamline processes to increase instructional time and decrease required paperwork. | * School leadership makes some effort to minimize completion of school business during instructional time, target essential assessments, and reduce the amount of associated paperwork. |

Handout 3d: Teaching Conditions Rubric—Time

| **Element** | **Developing School** | **Proficient School** | **Accomplished School** | **Distinguished School** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1a. Teachers’ class sizes facilitate high-quality instruction. | Teachers’ time to plan in order to meet the diverse learning needs of students is insufficient because of the demands of large class sizes, heavy course loads across a wide range of content areas, or assignments mismatched with training. | Teachers have time to plan in order to meet the diverse learning needs of students because they have appropriate class sizes, course loads, and assignments that match training. | Teachers routinely plan in order to meet the diverse learning needs of all students because of the coordinated design of class sizes, course loads, and student placement practices. | Teachers have maximum time to plan in order to meet the diverse learning needs of all students because of a schoolwide systematic approach to designing class sizes, course loads, and student placements. |
| 1b. Teachers have sufficient instructional time to provide all students with effective instruction. | Teachers do not have enough uninterrupted instructional time. | Teachers have minimum sufficient uninterrupted instructional time. | Teachers have sufficient uninterrupted instructional time to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. | Teachers have ample uninterrupted instructional time to provide instruction throughout the curriculum in ways that meet all students’ diverse learning needs and ensure advancement in learning. |
|  | School leadership determines daily or weekly instructional schedules for teachers and supports teachers with little regard to protecting instructional time. | School leadership determines daily or weekly instructional schedules for teachers and supports teachers with regard to protecting instructional time. | School leadership actively involves teachers in the design of daily or weekly instructional schedules for teachers, supports teachers, and provides instructional supports (i.e., media, technology) to ensure the protection of instructional time. | School culture is focused on ensuring that each student receives maximum uninterrupted instructional time matched to his or her needs to promote advancement in learning. |
|  | There are frequent interruptions during instructional time that require teachers or students to respond to office communications and complete school business. | School leadership seeks teachers’ input on ways to limit the full range of interruptions in instruction experienced by teachers and students. | School leadership engages with teachers and support staff to ensure maximum instructional time and minimum interruptions in learning for all students. | School leadership, teachers, and support staff consistently use and refine systems for maximizing instructional time in ways that advance student learning. |
| 1c. Teachers have time during the school day to plan and collaborate. | Little or no time is provided during the day to plan lessons. | Minimum sufficient time is provided during the school day for short- and long-term planning. | Time is available throughout the week for teachers to engage in lesson planning that includes careful design of differentiated instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of students. | Time is provided during the school day and throughout the school year (i.e., early dismissal days) for teachers to plan, review, and improve differentiated lessons that advance learning for all students. |
|  | Little or no time is available during the day for teachers to collaborate with colleagues for lesson planning. | Minimum sufficient time is available for teachers to work collaboratively to develop common plans and share effective lessons. | Time is available for consistent collaboration among teachers, instructional support staff, and school leadership to plan and coordinate instruction to meet the needs of all students. | The culture of the school supports full engagement in schoolwide collaboration to facilitate comprehensive planning to ensure the full range of students receive the highest quality education. |
|  | Planning time is often interrupted by meetings or unanticipated duties. | There are limited interruptions to the noninstructional time provided to teachers. Teachers have the state minimum time to plan and collaborate (duty-free lunch and a planning period). | School leadership, teachers, and support staff collaborate to ensure that planning time is protected and uninterrupted. | Teachers have sufficient uninterrupted noninstructional time that allows them to engage in regular professional learning communities to support the continuous improvement of student learning and teacher practice. |
| 1d. Schools make efforts to streamline processes to increase instructional time and decrease required paperwork. | School leadership makes little or no effort to minimize associated paperwork. | School leadership makes some effort to minimize completion of school business during instructional time, target essential assessments, and reduce the amount of associated paperwork. | School leadership’s efforts to streamline school business and effectively implement targeted assessments result in increased instructional time and reduced associated paperwork. | Schoolwide efforts allow for teachers to provide effective instruction that is free from constraints resulting from school business, required assessments, and other associated paperwork. |

Handout 4a: Overview of Collaborative Discussions Using a Graphic Organizer

One method to navigate conversations on a specific teaching condition is to guide them with graphic organizers. Graphic organizers help systematize the thought process and facilitate connections between the various components of the process. In addition, they can be used in tandem with individual or group settings to capture evidence of teaching conditions.

When talking about school climate and teaching conditions, it is important to remind people that they currently are doing things that facilitate positive environments. The first question in the graphic organizer focuses on what the school is doing well, why that aspect of the teaching condition is doing well, and what strategies will ensure that it continues. In addition, the school committee discusses the challenges, the impact those challenges have on teachers’ work, and how to move forward from those challenges.

After going through what is working, we ask the school committee to continue using the same teaching condition element they reviewed in the first part to discuss ways to improve. However, the focus of the conversation is on the ideal, and strategies to reach the ideal, keeping focus the focus on what is possible, rather than the negative.

Handout 4b: Directions for Collaborative Discussions Activity Using a Graphic Organizer

In this activity, we will examine notes taken from a group of middle school teachers and administrators who engaged in a conversation on the degree to which their teachers had time available to collaborate with their colleagues. They used some graphic organizers to guide their work.

In order to do this, we will be reviewing a collaborative conversation with teachers and administrators about teachers’ time available to collaborate with their colleagues. The first page, **Handout 4c: What Is and Is Not Working**, has the committee focus on what is and what is not working. The second page, **Handout 4d: What is Ideal? What Are the Challenges?**, contains those ideas that educators thought would be ideal for their school (in the first column), those things that might be preventing them from realizing their ideal (in the second column), and some suggestions for overcoming those challenges (in the last column).

* **Step 1:** Review Handouts 4c and 4d.
* **Step 2:** Discuss with your group the following questions:
  + What might be some next steps the leadership could take to begin to operationalize some the thoughts of its faculty?
  + What obstacles do you see as potential challenges to this implementation?
  + In what ways can you empower others within the school to take on leadership roles in some of this work?
  + How will you evaluate the effect of your efforts along the way to monitor progress, give feedback, and make adjustments?
* **Step 3:** Review the blank Handouts 4e and 4f.

Handout 4c: What Is and Is Not Working

The district gives protected workdays and half days for professional learning communities.

Dedicated, protected group planning time

Expand my interaction to include folks from other schools to get more input and ideas.

Be prepared to maximize this planning time.

The front office is good about turning away parents who come unannounced.

My time is protected. I have more time to plan with colleagues.

Sincerely thank the front office staff for their help.

The administration does a good job of calling meetings only when it is absolutely necessary and gives us notice.

The meetings are more engaging and welcomed. My time is protected.

Thank the administration. Reinforce the steps it is taking. Be committed to engaging in the meetings when they are called.

I am not using my time as efficiently as I could be.

Not using my time effectively is causing me to need more protected time than necessary to accomplish goals.

Chart what I am doing with my time to determine where I am inefficient. Work with veteran teachers and administrators to consider different approaches.

Subs are not available, so we often have to cover other classes during our planning time.

Covering other classes is often unexpected and really hurts my planning time and scheduling of important activities with colleagues.

Can we develop a rotating system within the school so we know better when we will be asked? Is it equitable?

During my planning time, kids are coming to me to get additional help.

It is helping the kids but hurting my planning and preparation with colleagues.

Designate specific days of the week as off-limits to students.

Teachers have time available to collaborate with their colleagues.

**ITEM TO EXAMINE**

**POSITIVE FACTORS**

**EFFECT ON SCHOOL/MY TEACHING**

**MOVING FORWARD**

**CHALLENGING FACTORS**

**EFFECT ON SCHOOL/MY TEACHING**

**MOVING FORWARD**

Handout 4d: What Is Ideal? What Are the Challenges?

Teachers never have to cover other teachers’ classes.

Not practical.

There will be times teachers must cover for one another

Put a rotation in place for teacher coverage so the number of times each teacher is called on is equitable.

Reward teachers who do cover other classes.

Teachers are never asked to a   
last-minute meeting for a child study or a local screening meeting.

It is difficult to know when manifestations are due.

It is difficult to schedule all parties ahead of time and keep everyone up to speed.

Reflect on the meeting process and improve the efficiency of this process. Mandate that teachers are notified ahead of time. Teachers are chosen that work with the child. The process is equitable for teachers.

School team, grade-level, and subject area meetings are efficient and pertinent. Everyone gets along and contributes equally.

The success of the meetings depends on the skill of the facilitator and the group members’ relationships.

The needs of staff are different.

Provide an outline for each kind of meeting, perhaps a model of what the meeting should look like. Make some meetings optional for skilled staff.

Teachers have time available to collaborate with their colleagues.

Item:

**WHAT WOULD THE IDEAL LOOK LIKE?**

**WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?**

**OVERCOMING CHALLENGES?**

Handout 4e: What Is and Is Not Working

**ITEM TO EXAMINE**

**POSITIVE FACTORS**

**EFFECT ON SCHOOL/MY TEACHING**

**MOVING FORWARD**

**CHALLENGING FACTORS**

**EFFECT ON SCHOOL/MY TEACHING**

**MOVING FORWARD**

Handout 4f: What Is Ideal? What Are the Challenges?

Item:

**WHAT WOULD THE IDEAL LOOK LIKE?**

**WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?**

**OVERCOMING CHALLENGES?**

Handout 5: “Love It or List It” Action Planning

The following chart shows topics you should consider when conducting action planning. Also think about these questions:

* Where might you be able to apply one or more data-gathering methods in your work?
* How might output from one of these methods enhance your work?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Collecting Snapshot Data of Teaching Conditions | |
| Anonymous Survey of Educators | Placement on a Continuum of Practice |
|  |  |
| Guided Discussion With Graphic Organizers | |
|  | |

Handout 6: Next Steps

**Directions:** Now imagine that this school and district are within your state and you want to help improve teacher leadership and empowerment within your state. Think about three things. First, think about what other types of data you have available that could help determine the level of teacher voice within your state. Second, think about the policy levers that could affect that specific teaching condition. Finally, think about the next steps you could take to improve the teaching condition if this were your state. Specifically, think about the actions you would modify policies that would affect the teaching condition and ensure that you have a continuous improvement cycle in place.

## Other Sources of Data

1. What other sources of data should be collected (e.g., teacher surveys, retention data, attrition data, student disciplinary data, teacher and school leadership structures, student disciplinary policy, teacher evaluations, principal evaluations, parent and community surveys, student surveys)?
2. What do these data say about the teaching conditions in your state?

## Policy Levers

1. What policy levers affect this teaching condition (e.g., teacher and school leadership structures, academic year calendar, school-day calendar, professional development requirements, student disciplinary policy, building, budget, school climate initiatives, bullying prevention, school safety initiatives)?
2. How do these policy levels affect the teaching condition?

## Actions for Improvement

1. What can be done to improve the specific condition at the school (e.g., policies, initiatives, professional learning)?
   1. State level:
   2. District level:
   3. School level:
2. What can be done to ensure there is a continuous improvement cycle in place?
   1. What other data will you collect? How often?
   2. How will these data be used to improve the teaching and learning conditions?

1. Definitions adapted with permission from the New Teacher Center (<http://teachingconditions.org/constructs>). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)