



## Preliminary Findings

To do their best work with students, teachers need supportive school environments that maximize their opportunity to be effective. In a continuing effort to assess school working conditions, the North Carolina State Board and North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), in partnership with the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE), worked with the New Teacher Center (NTC) to administer the seventh iteration of the North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey (NC TWC Survey).

### About the Survey

In 1999, the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards Commission, with the support of the North Carolina State Board of Education, developed working conditions standards for schools in an effort to address issues driving teacher turnover. The presence of those standards across the state's schools has been assessed biennially since 2002 as part of the NC TWC Survey. The standards were revised and unanimously adopted by the State Board of Education in 2011 (available at [www.ncteachingconditions.org](http://www.ncteachingconditions.org)). Research has consistently demonstrated that the presence of these conditions can catalyze or constrain effective teaching and are a critical influence on teacher retention. A recently published peer review study analyzing a decade of student achievement and TWC survey results in Charlotte concluded that teachers who work in positive school environments improved student achievement 38 percent more than their peers with lesser supports after 10 years (Kraft and Papay, 2014).

**What the NC TWC Survey IS:** A statistically valid and reliable instrument to assess whether educators have working conditions in their school that support effective teaching.

**What the NC TWC Survey is NOT:** An assessment of the morale of North Carolina teachers or their happiness with specific policies. The survey does not provide information as to why teachers perceive conditions as they do, which is best ascertained through data-driven dialogue as part of the school improvement planning process.

The North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions Survey is a statistically valid and reliable instrument that assesses eight research-based teaching and learning conditions standards.<sup>1</sup> The following are the eight constructs that are empirically linked to student achievement and teacher retention: Time, Facilities and Resources, Community Support and Involvement, Managing Student Conduct, Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, Professional Development, and Instructional Practices and Support.<sup>2</sup> See Table 1 on the next page for descriptions of each construct. Additionally, the NC TWC Survey includes questions for novice teachers (those in their first three years in the profession) to assess induction support and for principals to assess district-level supports. Response options for core questions use a Likert scale and range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This brief summarizes results using a rate of agreement that combines the strongly agree and agree categories.

1. Swanlund, A. (2011). *Identifying working conditions that enhance teacher effectiveness: The psychometric evaluation of the Teacher Working Conditions Survey*. Chicago, IL: American Institutes for Research.

2. See endnotes for research.

TABLE 1. 2014 TELL NORTH CAROLINA SURVEY AREAS

- Time**—Available time to plan, collaborate, provide instruction, and eliminate barriers to maximize instructional time during the school day
- Facilities and Resources**—Availability of instructional, technology, office, communication, and school resources to teachers
- Community Support and Involvement**—Community and parent/guardian communication and influence in the school
- Managing Student Conduct**—Policies and practices to address student conduct issues and ensure a safe school environment
- Teacher Leadership**—Teacher involvement in decisions that impact classroom and school practices
- School Leadership**—Ability of school leadership to create trusting, supportive environments, and address teacher concerns
- Professional Development**—Availability and quality of learning opportunities for educators to enhance their teaching
- Instructional Practices and Support**—Data and support available to teachers to improve instruction and student learning

### Response Rate

The NTC administered the anonymous, full-population survey to all school-based licensed educators in spring 2014. Over 93,000 educators (89 percent) in the state responded (Table 2). This is an increase of 3 percentage points from the 86 percent responding in 2012. Response rates vary by school type. As Table 2 demonstrates, 92 percent of elementary school educators participated in the survey, 87 percent of middle school educators responded and 85 percent of high school educators responded. Additionally, 72 percent of educators assigned to schools such as alternative education settings (designated as “Special” in Table 2) responded.

TABLE 2. 2014 SURVEY RESPONSE RATE BY SCHOOL TYPE

School Type	Headcount	Responded	Percent Responded
Elementary	47,656	43,705	91.7
Middle	25,004	21,842	87.4
High	32,016	27,299	85.3
Special	460	332	72.2
Total	105,136	93,178	88.6

Approximately 97 percent of surveyed schools (2,519 of 2,597) met or exceeded the 40 percent response rate threshold required to receive an individual school-level data report. All results may be viewed online at [www.ncteachingconditions.org](http://www.ncteachingconditions.org).

**APPROXIMATELY 97 PERCENT** of surveyed schools met or exceeded the 40 percent response rate threshold required to receive an individual school-level data report.

## Preliminary Findings

The rates of agreement by item and survey area were reviewed, and results were compared between 2012 and 2014. Preliminary findings identify items across constructs with relatively high or low levels of agreement. Items and rates of agreement are reported below within select survey areas.

North Carolina educators' responses indicate that, overall, teaching conditions have remained stable since 2012. When looking at the survey data at the state level, educators report similar conditions across all eight constructs in 2014 and 2012. This finding is particularly encouraging in areas where educators consistently report positive conditions: the Community Support and Involvement and Teacher Empowerment constructs.

- More than nine out of 10 educators (93 percent) report that their faculty work in a school environment that is safe.
- Nearly 94 percent of respondents indicate that teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.
- Just over 94 percent of educators agree that school leadership facilitates using data to improve student learning.

The stability in responses from 2012 to 2014 also demonstrates that challenges reported by educators on the NC TWC Survey are still concerns. North Carolina educators report the lowest average rate of agreement across all areas on the Time construct for both the 2014 and 2012 surveys, with an average rate of agreement of 65 percent recorded in both iterations.

TABLE 3. SELECT ITEMS RELATED TO TIME

Select Items Related to Time	Percent Agree		2014-2012
	2014	2012	
The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.	62.79	59.31	3.48
Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do.	57.23	54.64	2.59
Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.	71.22	69.73	1.49
Class sizes are reasonable such that teacher have the time available to meet the needs of all students.	60.20	61.55	-1.35
Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions.	57.19	59.58	-2.39
Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.	65.99	69.85	-3.86
<b>Time Construct Overall Rate of Agreement</b>	<b>65.40</b>	<b>65.19</b>	<b>0.21</b>

**NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATORS'** responses indicate that, overall, teaching conditions have remained stable since 2012.

Overall stability does not necessarily indicate that no variation exists across schools and districts. Although survey responses from the majority of schools remained relatively stable, there

were schools in which the overall rate of agreement drastically increased or decreased, as compared with 2012.

FIGURE 1. RATE OF AGREEMENT BY GROWTH IN RATE OF AGREEMENT FOR TIME CONSTRUCT

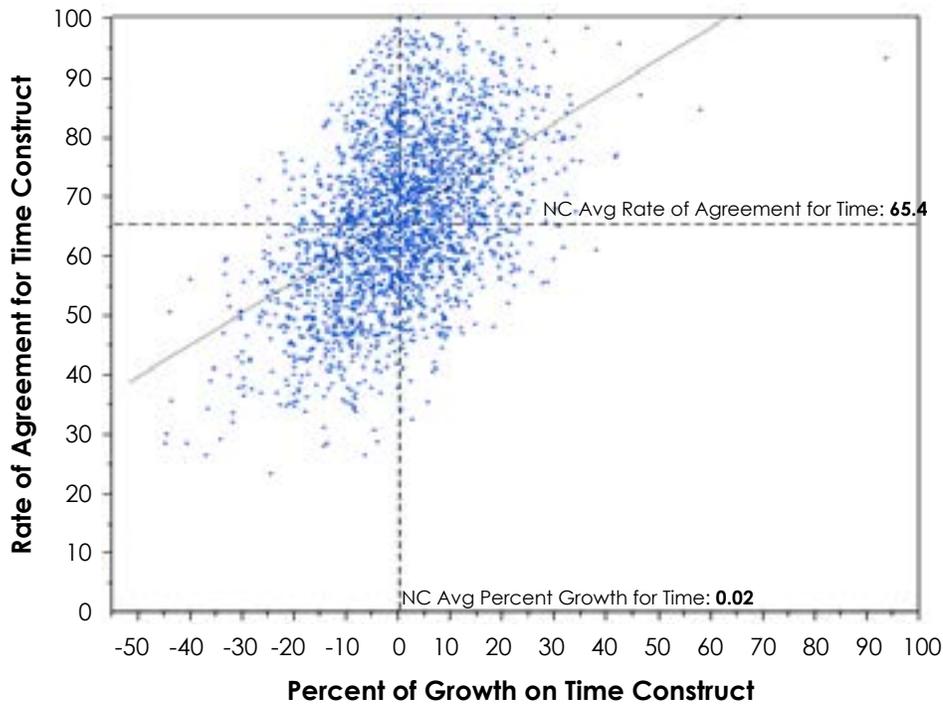
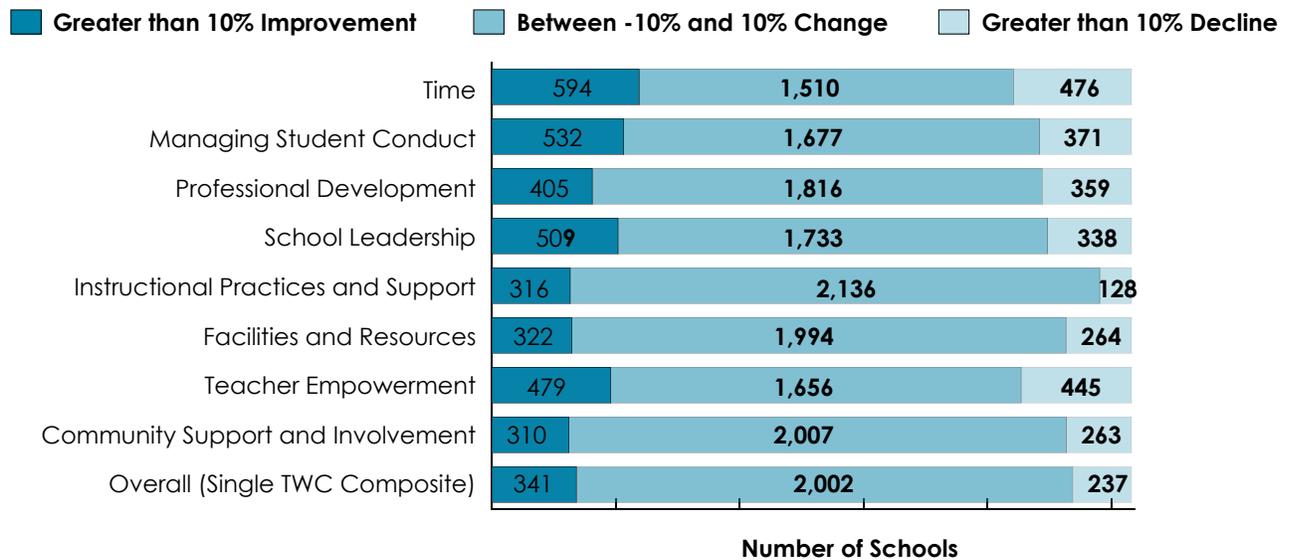


FIGURE 2. NUMBER OF SCHOOLS BY RELATIVE GROWTH FOR EACH CONSTRUCT AND OVERALL RATE OF AGREEMENT



**Declines were reported in several resource-related areas.** Agreement with issues related to resource-related intensive supports, such as instructional materials and professional development, declined from 2012 to 2014. Educators reported lower rates of agreement on 11 of 13 survey questions in the Professional Development construct in 2014 as compared to in 2012.

- Although in 2014 more than seven of 10 educators (74 percent) report that teachers have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials, this represents a 5 percent drop from 2012 (79 percent).
- The percentage of educators receiving 10 clock hours or more of professional development over the past two years declined in all 12 categories (Table 4).

TABLE 4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the past two years have YOU had 10 clock hours or more of professional development in the following areas?	Percent Agree		2014-2012
	2014	2012	
Your content area	63.94	67.25	-3.31
Common Core and essential standards	72.12	75.20	-3.08
Student assessment	45.34	47.91	-2.57
Differentiating instruction	39.81	44.16	-4.35
Special education (students with disabilities)	18.15	18.99	-0.84
Special education (gifted and talented)	11.98	12.33	-0.35
English Language Learners	14.91	17.48	-2.57
Closing the achievement gap	23.27	25.41	-2.14
Methods of teaching	41.55	43.22	-1.67
Reading strategies	50.23	53.71	-3.48
Integrating technology into instruction	50.65	53.23	-2.58
Classroom management techniques	21.57	22.24	-0.67

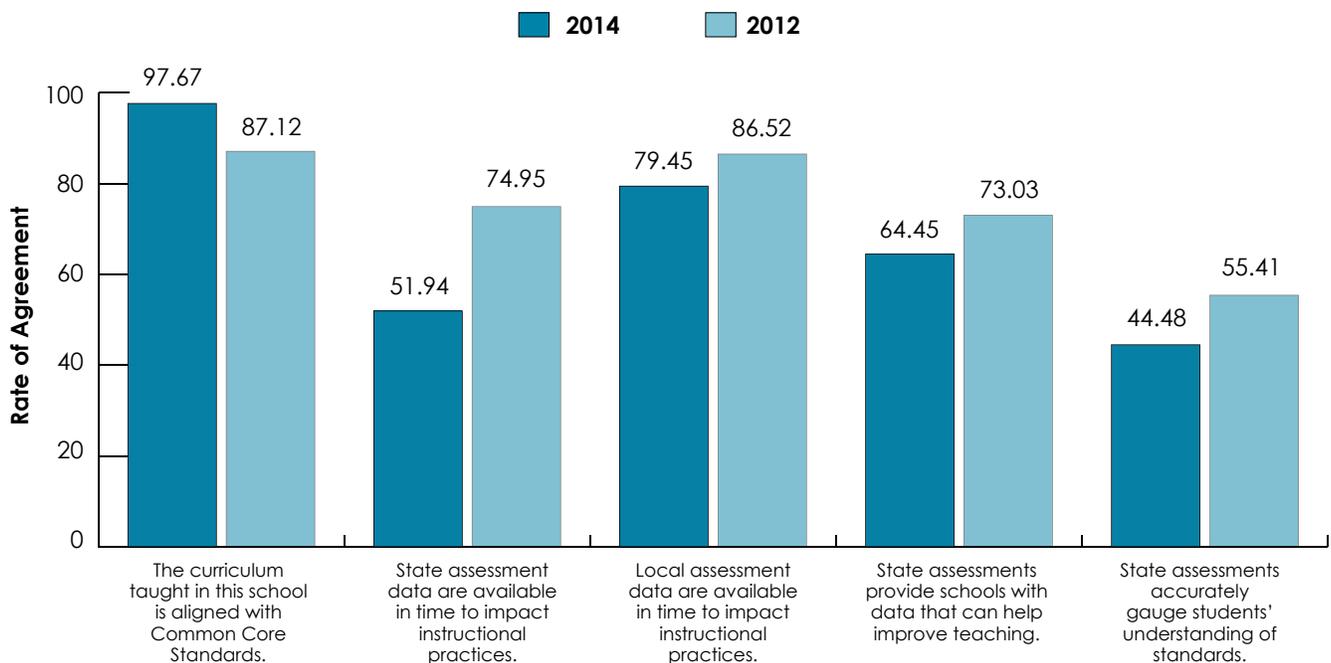
**EDUCATORS REPORTED lower rates of agreement on 11 of 13 survey questions in the Professional Development construct in 2014 as compared to in 2012.**

**North Carolina educators report concerns related to the timing and utility of student assessment data.** Multiple survey items related to student assessments in North Carolina indicate a drop in educator agreement in 2014 as compared to 2012. These results may be tied to the state’s recent adoption of College and Career Ready standards and development of new assessments. The 2012–2013 school year was the standard-setting year for the new standards in North Carolina and, as a result, there have been some delays with the delivery of student assessment data.<sup>3</sup> Nearly all respondents (98 percent) indicate that the curriculum taught in their school is aligned with the new standards. This represents a gain of 11 percent, which is the largest gain on any survey item between 2012 and 2014.

3. [www.dpi.state.nc.us/newsroom/news/2012-13/20130521-01](http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/newsroom/news/2012-13/20130521-01)

- About half of surveyed educators (52 percent) agree that state assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices, a drop of 23 percent in rate of agreement from 2012.
- Nearly eight of 10 teachers (79 percent) acknowledge that local assessment data are available in time to impact instructional practices; however, this rate is 7 percent lower than in 2012.
- Less than two-thirds of surveyed educators (64 percent) report that state assessments provide schools with data that can help improve teaching. This item also decreased from 2012, with 8 percent lower agreement.
- Less than half of respondents (44 percent) indicate that state assessments accurately gauge students’ understanding of standards, representing a decline of nearly 11 percent from 2012.

FIGURE 3. SELECT ITEMS RELATED TO STUDENT ASSESSMENT

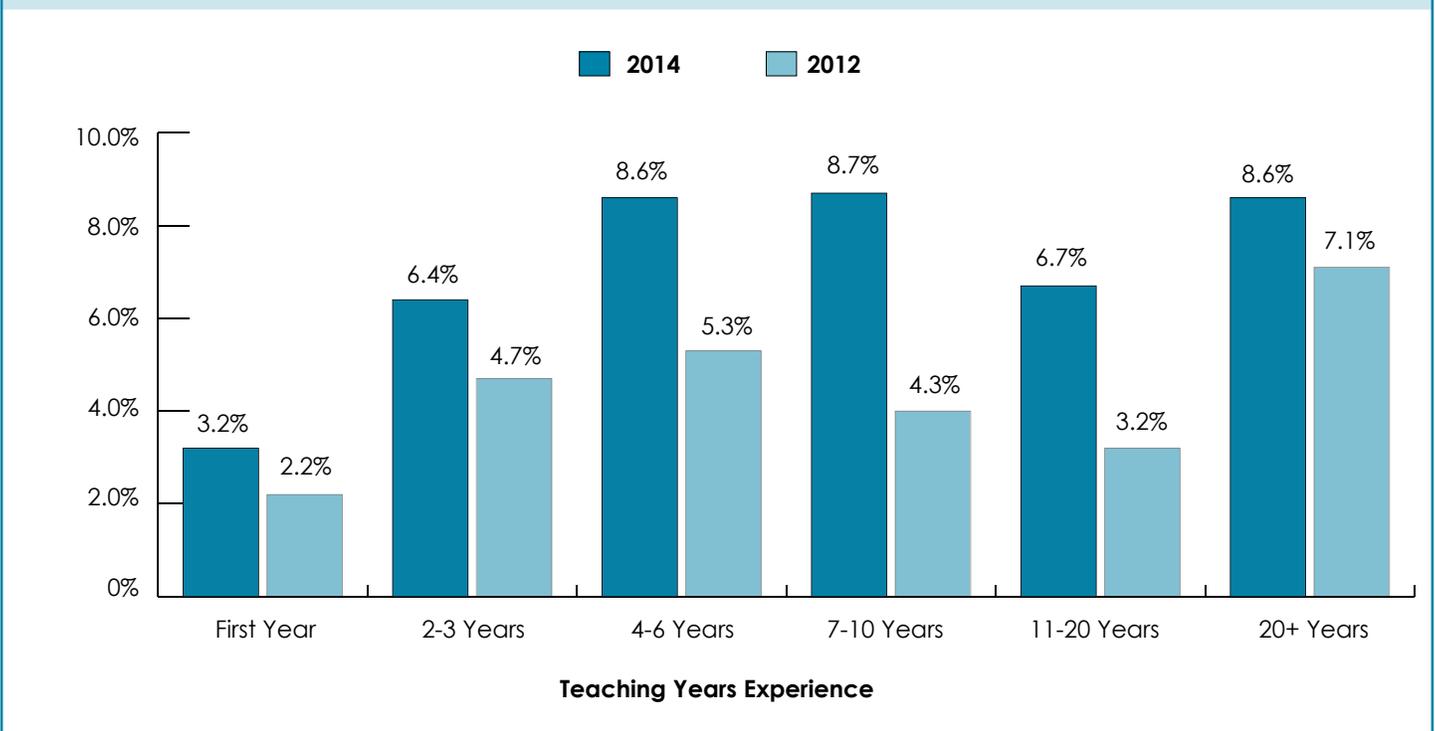


**More North Carolina educators report immediate plans to leave education.**

More teachers reported an intention to leave the field of education in 2014 compared to 2012. While a preponderance of teachers plan to remain teaching in their current school, 7.4 percent of responding teachers (6,095) indicate that they will leave teaching, compared to 4.6 percent (3,974) in 2012. In particular, it appears that teachers with some experience, but still in the earlier stages of a teaching career, are most likely to reconsider their education career (Figure 4).

- Educators with teaching experience between seven and 10 years are more than twice as likely to leave education entirely as compared to 2012 (8.7 percent in 2014 versus 4.0 percent in 2012).
- Educators with four to six years of teaching experience are more than 1.5 times as likely to leave education entirely in 2014 compared to 2012 (8.6 percent in 2014 versus 5.3 percent in 2012).

FIGURE 4. PERCENTAGE OF NORTH CAROLINA TEACHERS REPORTING IMMEDIATE PLANS TO LEAVE EDUCATION ENTIRELY BY YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE



**MORE TEACHERS REPORTED an intention to leave the field of education in 2014 compared to 2012.**

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## Summary

Working conditions in North Carolina remained relatively stable over the past two years. An overwhelming majority of North Carolina educators report positive working conditions across several areas that influence teacher retention and student learning, particularly Community Engagement and Support. Educators continue to struggle with issues related to Time—time to plan, collaborate and provide instruction—and were less likely to receive professional development opportunities. In 2014, educators noted issues related to the timing and utility of student assessments that were viewed significantly more positively in 2012. Collectively, these and other factors have contributed to an increase in the percentage of teachers who indicate a desire to leave the field of education.

Although the overall results suggest stable working conditions are present, variation exists among North Carolina schools across all constructs (Figure 2). As a result, looking at school- and district-specific results is critical to ensure that every teacher works in a school that gives them the best chance to be successful with students.

## Next Steps

To support and inform North Carolina educators, stakeholders and policymakers around the results of this survey, a number of resources and reports are being developed, including:

- A series of tools for schools and districts to use in facilitating dialogue on their teaching and learning conditions and how to use the survey results as an artifact to inform school improvement planning.
- Additional analyses and reports will be drafted examining working conditions across the state as well as their connection to key student outcomes and teacher retention.

All resources and reporting are available electronically at [www.ncteachingconditions.org](http://www.ncteachingconditions.org)

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***AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY of North Carolina educators report positive working conditions across several areas that influence teacher retention and student learning, particularly Community Engagement and Support.***

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## Endnotes

- Borman, G. & Dowling, N. (2008). Teacher attrition and retention: A meta-analytic and narrative review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 78(3).
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## About the New Teacher Center

New Teacher Center focuses on improving student learning by accelerating the effectiveness of new teachers. NTC partners with states, school districts, and policymakers to design and implement systems that create sustainable, high-quality mentoring and professional development; build leadership capacity; work to enhance teaching conditions; improve retention; and transform schools in vibrant learning communities where all students succeed.



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