



Colorado  
Teaching Conditions  
School Improvement Guide

*Participant's Packet*



# Day / Night Partners

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**Day**



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**Night**

### ***Construct Reflections Connector***

Read the Construct titles below, and spend five minutes reflecting on how well these working conditions are in place in your own school.

Rate each construct on a 4 scale, with 4 being the highest, then **write a brief explanation** as to why you believe this is true.

- 4 – These conditions are strongly beneficial to effective teacher practice and promote student learning at high levels
- 3 – These conditions are beneficial to effective teacher practice and promote student learning
- 2 – These conditions do not benefit effective teacher practice or promote student learning
- 1 – These conditions hinder effective teacher practice and student learning

CONSTRUCT	#	RATIONALE	
		Positive Aspects	Negative Aspects
TIME			
FACILITIES AND RESOURCES			
COMMUNITY SUPPORT			
MANAGING STUDENT CONDUCT			
TEACHER LEADERSHIP			
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP			
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT			
INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AND SUPPORT			

## ***Effectively Using the Survey Results***

Because teaching conditions matter for students, for teachers, and *understanding* that not everyone sees them the same way is important in developing strategies and policies for school improvement.

This unique dataset represents the perceptions of those who understand these conditions best—the educators who experience them every day. Assessing teaching conditions along with other more neutral and quantifiable data points (e.g., student test scores, class size) provides a more complete body of evidence of teaching and learning in Colorado’s schools. Getting honest, authentic input and engaging in dialogue—especially in schools where the basic building blocks of positive conditions (e.g., trust, time, and leadership) are not in place—can be challenging. Using survey results in a positive way toward school improvement is critical.

Consider the following concepts when analyzing and using the results of the TELL Colorado Survey.

### **1. Teaching conditions data are an area for school improvement, not accountability of an individual.**

- Because educator working conditions are about schools, no one individual should be held solely accountable for the status of the school culture.
- Rather, data gathered should be used to guide school improvement planning with schools, which are then assessed on their progress toward implementing collectively developed reforms.
- This survey should serve as one of multiple data artifacts for creating and implementing data-driven strategies to improve educator teaching conditions as part of the school improvement plan.

### **2. Teaching conditions are not about any one individual and it will take a community effort to improve.**

- The principal holds a unique and important place within the school community and can have a significant impact on the professional culture in which educators work.
- However, many aspects of educator working conditions are beyond the principal’s control.
- Broader social trends and federal and local policies influence how educators operate within their school and classroom.
- Working conditions are about schools, not about individuals.

**3. Perceptual data are real data.**

- The survey collects perceptual data from educators about the presence of important teaching conditions.
- These results are “valid” and as significant as other data sources. Students’ learning conditions are a reflection of educators’ working conditions.
- Perceptions of the culture and context of the school have been linked in a number of studies to student learning, future employment plans, efficacy and motivation. Analyzing and using this information to improve schools is critical.
- However, other data (e.g., instructional expenditures, proportion of teachers working out of field, teacher/pupil ratio) should be used to triangulate these findings and provide a better understanding of the data.

**4. Conversations need to be structured and safe.**

- Data-driven dialogue about the findings of the survey deserves structure, facilitation, ground rules and the ability to separate issues from individuals.
- Discussing the root causes of identified problems and determining viable solutions are not always easy.
- These conversations can become difficult if they are not approached in a systematic and predictable fashion where all staff can participate in a meaningful and safe way.

**5. Identify and celebrate positives as well as considering areas for improvement.**

- Educators have tremendous pride in the work they do and all want to work in a school that allows them to do their best work.
- All schools have successes to draw upon as they assess and improve their context.
- Ensuring that positives are acknowledged and celebrated, while issues are identified and addressed, is an important part of moving forward.

**6. Create a common understanding of what defines and shapes teaching conditions.**

- Many factors influence educators’ perceptions of teaching conditions.
- Research shows that broader social trends, media coverage, respect for the profession and local and state policies can play a part in teachers’ perceptions of their conditions. In turn, this influences their motivation and efficacy as educators.
- The survey gathers input on a variety of important research-based teaching conditions. In addition, other areas may be worthy of further investigation, such as teaching assignments, curricular support, assessments and accountability, and parent and community support.
- The survey results are a starting point, not an ending point for understanding what is important to ensuring that educators have access to the conditions to do their best work.

**7. Focus on what you can solve.**

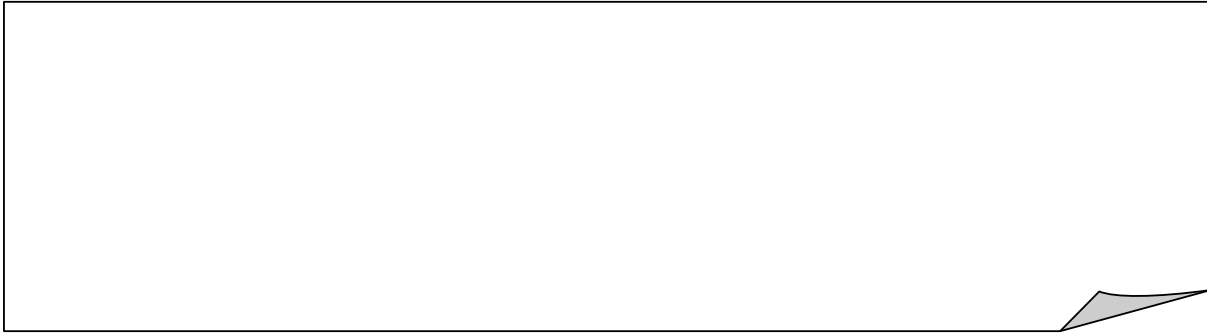
- Many issues that shape teaching conditions within a school or district are outside of your control (e.g., federal and state assessment policies, funding).
- School improvement planning should focus on areas that can be addressed by the school community.
- District barriers to school-based solutions should be identified and constructive conversations across schools should occur locally.
- Other influences (e.g., federal and state policy, broader social and community context) are areas for the school to think about in partnership with others.
- A plan with proposed solutions that cannot be reached through the efforts of the school community is not likely to be successful.

**8. Solutions can be complex and long term.**

- Teaching and learning conditions are cumulative and engrained. It took many years to create them.
- It may take a similar amount of time to change them.
- Some solutions may be inexpensive and simple to address, like having a more consistent means of communicating amongst the faculty; while others are resource intensive (e.g., class size reduction, integration of technology) or long range (e.g., building trust, creating authentic Professional Learning Communities).
- A school improvement plan must pay attention both to short and long term issues to successfully improve the school environment.

***“Effectively Using the Survey Results”  
Take Aways and Reflections***

Which items did you view as being *most critical* for your success? Explain how they fit *your* context.



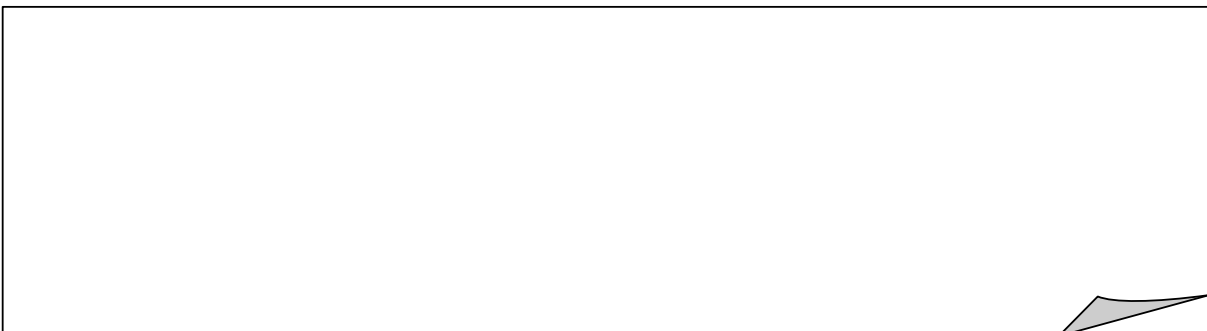
Were there any sections that you disagreed with? What was the main source of conflict for you?



Which item do you think would be the easiest to implement at your school? Why?



Which item do you think would be the most difficult to implement at your school? Why?



## ***TELL Vocabulary List***

- **TELL**—Teaching, Empowering, Leading and Learning
- **Teaching and Learning Conditions**—the systems, relationships, resources, environments and people in your school that affect your ability to teach (or learn) at a high level
- **Construct**—a grouping of several specific questions, all dealing with the same topic.
  - Time, Facilities and Resources, Community Support and Involvement, Managing Student Conduct, Teacher Leadership, School Leadership, Professional Development, Instructional Practices and Support, and New Teacher Support
- **Item**—a specific individual question
- **Individual Item Prompts**—a series of questions that help guide a group in thinking about the data associated with one specific question
- **Drill down**—breaking the data into smaller pieces to analyze it for the purpose of changing one specific working condition
- **Rate of Agreement**—the percentage of people who said they agreed or strongly agreed that a working condition was in place
- **Neither Agree nor Disagree**—the percentage of people who did not feel the working condition was or was not in place. They could be ambivalent, they may not have understood the question, or they may not have experience in that arena

### Construct Indicator Questions

QUESTION	School S	Level L	District D	State St	Priority
<b>TIME 2.1d:</b> The Non-Instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.		S-L	S-D	S-St	
<b>FACILITIES AND RESOURCES 3.1a:</b> Teachers have sufficient access to appropriate instructional materials and resources.		S-L	S-D	S-St	
<b>COMMUNITY SUPPORT 4.1e:</b> This school does a good job of encouraging parent/guardian involvement.		S-L	S-D	S-St	
<b>MANAGING STUDENT CONDUCT 5.1e:</b> Administration support teachers’ efforts to maintain discipline in the classroom.		S-L	S-D	S-St	
<b>TEACHER LEADERSHIP 6.1b:</b> Teachers are relied upon to make decisions about educational issues.		S-L	S-D	S-St	
<b>SCHOOL LEADERSHIP 7.1k:</b> The school leadership consistently supports teachers.		S-L	S-D	S-St	
<b>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 8.1g:</b> Professional development enhances teachers’ ability to implement instructional strategies that meet diverse student needs.		S-L	S-D	S-St	
<b>INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES 9.1j:</b> Teachers are encouraged to try new things to improve instruction.		S-L	S-D	S-St	

### Time Indicator Questions

QUESTION	School S	Level L	District D	State St	Priority
<b>2.1a</b> Teachers have reasonable class sizes.					
		S-L	S-D	S-St	
<b>2.1b</b> Teachers have sufficient instructional time to meet the needs of all students.					
		S-L	S-D	S-St	
<b>2.1c</b> Teachers have time available to collaborate with colleagues.					
		S-L	S-D	S-St	
<b>2.1d</b> The non-instructional time provided for teachers in my school is sufficient.					
		S-L	S-D	S-St	
<b>2.1e</b> Efforts are made to minimize the amount of routine paperwork teachers are required to do.					
		S-L	S-D	S-St	
<b>2.1f</b> Teachers are protected from duties that interfere with their essential role of educating students.					
		S-L	S-D	S-St	
<b>2.1g</b> Teachers are allowed to focus on educating students with minimal interruptions.					
		S-L	S-D	S-St	

## Colorado Indicator Questions

QUESTION	School S	Level L	District D	State St	Priority
		S-L	S-D	S-St	
		S-L	S-D	S-St	
		S-L	S-D	S-St	
		S-L	S-D	S-St	
		S-L	S-D	S-St	
		S-L	S-D	S-St	
		S-L	S-D	S-St	
		S-L	S-D	S-St	

***What Is Working/Not Working—EXAMPLE***



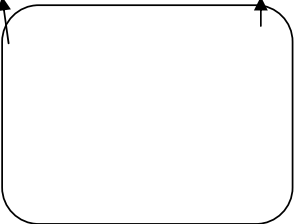
***What Is Working/Not Working***

ITEM TO EXAMINE	POSITIVE FACTORS	EFFECT ON SCHOOL/MY TEACHING	MOVING FORWARD

EFFECT ON SCHOOL/MY TEACHING

MOVING FORWARD

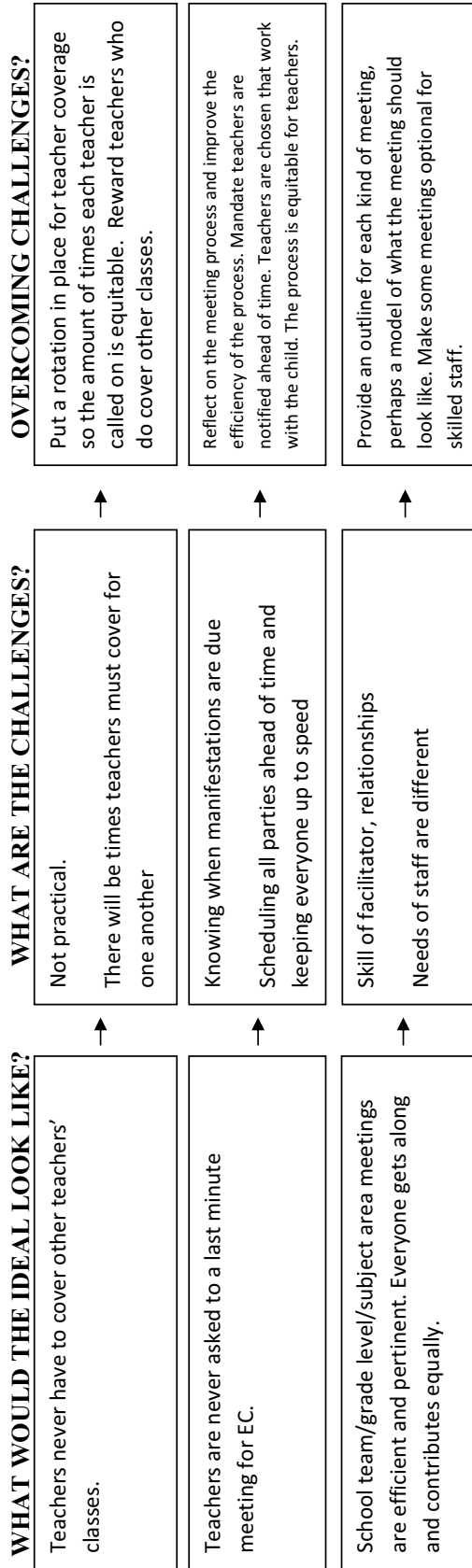
CHALLENGING FACTORS



***What Is Ideal? What are the Challenges?—EXAMPLE***

**Item:**

2.1 C: Teachers have time available to collaborate with their colleagues.



*What Is Ideal? What are the Challenges?*

<b>Item:</b> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>	<b>WHAT WOULD THE IDEAL LOOK LIKE?</b>				
	<b>WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?</b>				
	<b>HOW DO WE OVERCOME THE CHALLENGES?</b>				

***Graffiti Wall Ideal***

**Item** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>CHALLENGE 1</b>	<b>CHALLENGE 2</b>	<b>CHALLENGE 3</b>
<b>Ways to Overcome</b>	<b>Ways to Overcome</b>	<b>Ways to Overcome</b>

***Item Prompt Discussion Record***

<b>Reflective Question</b>	<b>Key Facts</b>	<b>What is in our Control?</b>	<b>Moving Forward</b>

**School Improvement Initiative—EXAMPLE**

<b>Objective:</b> Teacher’s planning time is held sacred for PLC work.				
<b>What does success look like?</b> All Teachers will meet daily and uninterrupted in their subject or grade level PLC to plan differentiated, rigorous daily and unit plans, analyze student work, and create assessments.				
<b>What steps are needed?</b>	<b>What must be included for success?</b>	<b>How will we know we succeeded?</b>	<b>What resources are needed?</b>	<b>By when? With whom?</b>
Understand clear meeting structure and processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A facilitator, reporter and recorder</li> <li>• An agenda for each meeting</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everyone feels the time was well spent</li> <li>• A log of agendas</li> <li>• Everyone participates equally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PLC facilitator training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team leaders take the Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> facilitator’s training offered by the district</li> </ul>
Create a coverage schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All teachers must participate</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No teacher has covered more than 1 class a month</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Someone to make the schedule</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administrative assistant, by Oct.1.</li> </ul>
Create a set meeting place and schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• time before or after the meeting for personal needs and student mini-conferencing</li> <li>• time for content/grade level, EC meetings parent conferencing, and administrative business</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We have a place to meet and a set schedule that we adhere to for 2 months in a row.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Space</li> <li>• Someone to make the schedule</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal will assign the place for all meetings</li> <li>• Admin. Assistant will create meeting schedule with dept. chairs</li> </ul>
<b>How will we maintain our success? We all pledge to honor our meeting times and to create true professional learning communities.</b>				

*School Improvement Initiative*

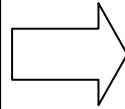
<b>Objective:</b>					
<b>What does success look like?</b>					
<b>What steps are needed?</b>	<b>What is included?</b>	<b>How will we measure success?</b>	<b>What resources are needed?</b>	<b>By when? With whom?</b>	
<b>How will we maintain our success?</b>					

***Sample—Change an Ideal Situation into an Objective***

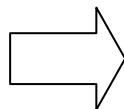
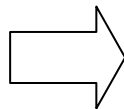
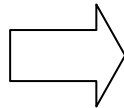
Ideal Situation

Objective

Ex. Teachers never have to cover other teachers’ classes.



Ex. Teachers’ planning time is held sacred for PLC work.



## **2 + 2 = 4 Goal Setting**

Thinking about our objective, what one step is most critical to our success in making this goal a reality?



Find someone with a different idea and record it below.



Now, share your two ideas with a new partner, and record their two ideas.



***Meeting Evaluation***

Your feedback is important to continuously improve our dialogue and address teaching and learning conditions.

Please rate the following from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree:

- 1. The presentation was clear and easy to understand. SA A N D SD
- 2. The presenters were prepared. SA A N D SD
- 3. We utilized the FCPS Working Conditions Survey data to engage in data driven dialogue. SA A N D SD
- 4. All educators were engaged in the dialogue and activities. SA A N D SD
- 5. Presenter/participant interaction was sufficient. SA A N D SD
- 6. The materials provided were easy to understand. SA A N D SD
- 7. I was given enough time to do the activities. SA A N D SD

Some things I thought were very helpful:

Some things I thought could use improvement:

Additional Comments or Additional Support the District Could Provide:

## About the New Teacher Center

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The New Teacher Center is a national organization dedicated to improving student learning by accelerating the effectiveness of teachers and school leaders. NTC strengthens school communities through proven mentoring and professional development programs, online learning environments, policy advocacy, and research. Since 1998, the NTC has served over 49,000 teachers, 5,000 mentors, and touched millions of students across America.



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