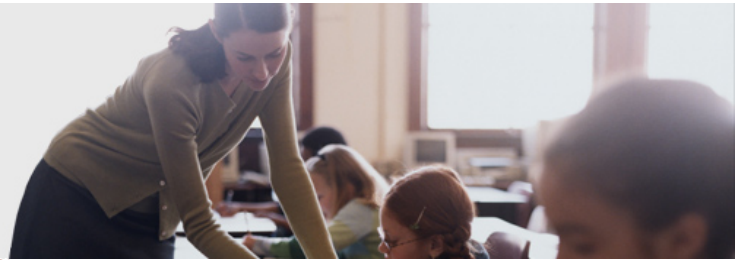




## Georgia BellSouth™ Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Initiative

"For every student in Georgia, a knowledgeable, skilled, compassionate teacher... a star in every classroom"



### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2005

Georgia’s educators and the students they teach every day deserve the best. They should teach and learn in premier learning and teaching environments that support and encourage them in their critically important work. Thanks to the funding and support of BellSouth and a dedicated state-level Steering Committee, school and business leaders in ten Georgia school districts now have the chance to listen to the people who know—the teachers themselves. Through the BellSouth Quality Learning and Teaching Environments (QLTE) Survey, teachers and professional school staff revealed what they need in their classrooms and schools to help children learn better.

With more than 7,000 educators from the ten pilot school districts responding, the QLTE Survey response rate exceeded 83%. The pilot school systems are supported by six community-school partnerships and were selected to serve as pilot sites for the survey based on criteria that included geographic and demographic diversity in addition to school district and community leadership. These Systems include some 157 schools from northwest to southeast Georgia, ranging from urban to rural and large to small school profiles. These districts educate nearly 96,000 students, where district demographics range from 10% to 85% minority populations and 38% to 92% children in poverty.

This executive summary report is based on an analysis of results from the ten pilot school districts: Baker County Schools, Bibb County Schools, Dougherty County Schools, Floyd County Schools, Hall County Schools, Lowndes County Schools, Montgomery County Schools, Toombs County Schools, Valdosta City, and Vidalia City Schools. While the ten volunteer districts do not necessarily constitute a representative sample of the diverse school systems across the state or indicate the perceptions of all of Georgia’s educators, the report does underscore many emerging trends along with learning and teaching implications for Georgia’s educational system.

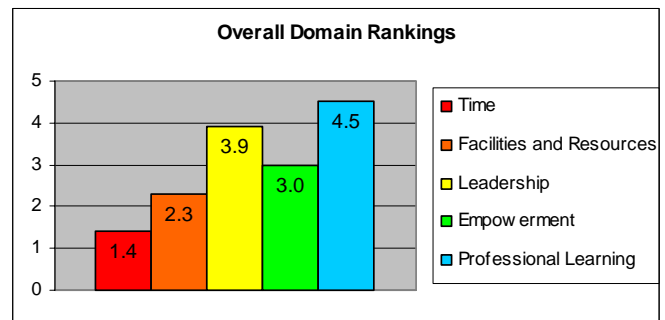
#### QLTE SURVEY

The Survey questions focused on five domains—Time, Facilities and Resources, Leadership, Empowerment, and Professional Learning—and ended with two overall summary questions. This report provides an analysis of overall trends that districts can use as they examine their specific results. Implications are based on the relative ranking of questions and domains within districts. Many of the responses raise new questions which will be explored further through focus groups, meetings of the pilot districts, analysis of open-ended

questions, and additional data collected as more districts participate in the QLTE Survey.

Implications are based on the relative ranking of questions and domains within districts. See Appendix for a list of questions which districts consistently ranked high or low within their domains. Chart 1 displays the overall domain rankings.

Chart 1



#### TIME

*Time was the area of greatest concern, with educators in eight of ten districts rating this domain lowest.* While educators were in general agreement that their leaders worked to address time concerns, which included student learning time and time for professional learning (continuing education), they expressed concern about their lack of time during the school day to collaborate productively with colleagues and about not having student loads which afford them time to meet the needs of all students.

*Many educators are making up for their lack of time by spending unpaid hours outside the regular school work day.* Planning time is critical to the educator’s central responsibility of teaching children, yet six of every ten teachers reported having less than one hour a day for planning during the school day. Teachers must have lessons planned, materials ready, and activities prepared when students enter their classrooms each day. They must have papers graded on time and grades averaged at regular reporting intervals. In order to accomplish this prioritized responsibility, high percentages of teachers report spending additional unpaid time outside the normal instructional day. More than half reported spending more than three unpaid hours a week on activities such as planning, grading, and holding parent conferences. Of these, one in ten reported spending *more than 10 additional unpaid hours* on such tasks.



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Educators are also expected to work with students in a variety of other school-related activities, such as sponsoring clubs, supervising field trips, and tutoring. Across all districts, more than one-quarter of educators reported spending an additional one to five unpaid hours per week fulfilling these responsibilities.

Additionally, educators report spending even more unpaid time on school-related activities such as serving on school and district committees and school leadership teams. Approximately half reported spending one to five hours per week on these responsibilities.

The low rating for the Time domain reflects that educators are not provided sufficient time within the school day to carry out the responsibilities placed upon them. Be it planning for teaching and learning, meeting with parents, working with students on extracurricular activities, tutoring, or participating on school improvement teams/district committees, educators indicate that they spend high amounts of their personal time fulfilling their professional responsibilities.

### FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

**Educators consider Facilities and Resources as highly important for promoting student learning and are specific about what they need.** On a day-to-day basis, educators need equipment, materials, and supplies to be readily available to facilitate student learning and to maximize their valuable time. Waiting for a phone, for copies to be made, or for a broken machine to be repaired not only causes frustration but also decreases the time educators have for their students. Depending on the school, educators indicated needs for professional space and access to adequate supplies, office equipment, phones, and email.

Providing adequate facilities and resources is important to educators and their students. In nine of ten districts, educators ranked Facilities and Resources as first or second in importance for their efforts to promote student learning. They also considered this a significant factor in making decisions about whether to remain at their schools.

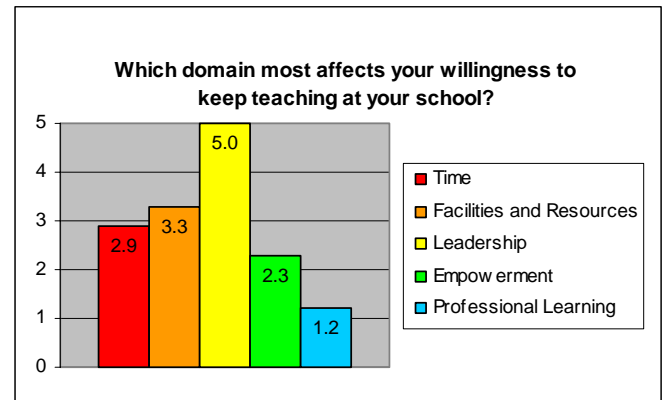
**Educators perceive their schools as being safe and clean places to work.** Despite outsiders' perceptions of unsafe, disorderly schools, the "insiders"—teachers, counselors, media specialists, paraprofessionals, and administrators—were generally positive about school safety, cleanliness, and leadership efforts to make the most of their resources.

### LEADERSHIP

**Leadership is critical for educator retention.**

Educational leaders play a decisive role in creating a school environment leading to success for students, teachers, and staff. School leaders influence school climate and conditions as they develop strategic plans, establish relationships, manage performance, and communicate with students, staff, families, and communities. Educators, both professional staff and their leaders, ranked Leadership as *the most important factor* in their decision to keep teaching at their schools. See Chart 2 below.

Chart 2



**Overall, educators are pleased with their School Leadership.** Leadership was ranked as the highest or second highest overall domain by seven of ten districts, and educators gave their school leaders high marks for maintaining high professional standards, evaluating their performance consistently, and implementing rigorous academic standards. However, educators were less positive about parent and community involvement, consistent enforcement of rules for student conduct, and implementation of school councils.

### EMPOWERMENT

**Educators were positive about their roles in improving schools and instructing students.** Within the Empowerment domain, questions concerning teacher participation in the school improvement plan and teachers and staff working together to improve teaching and learning were frequently ranked in the top of the domain.

**Educators were least positive about their opportunities for advancement within the teaching profession.** Educators in all ten districts ranked this question in the bottom three questions in the domain.



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## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Educators agreed on the quality and quantity of the Professional Learning they received. Eight districts ranked this domain in the top two. Georgia educators are required to earn a certain number of credits through college courses, professional learning, or continuing education every five years in order to renew their certificates. Over 96% of educators reported participating in professional learning activities within the last two years, and generally believed that their school emphasized focused, ongoing professional learning throughout the school year. The highest percentage of educators reported receiving their professional learning through activities sponsored by their schools or Regional Education Service Agencies (RESAs).

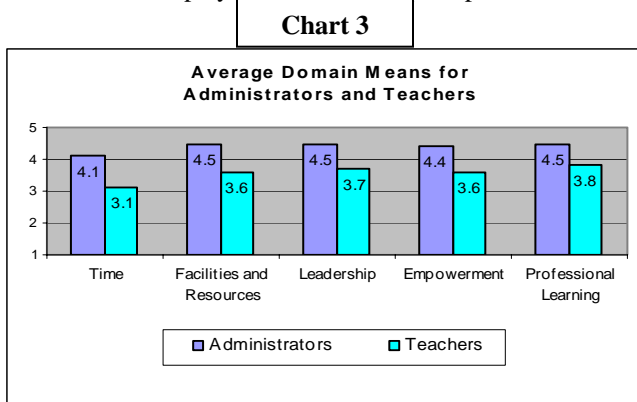
However, Professional Learning did not necessarily provide collaborative learning opportunities. Educators were least positive about their opportunities to learn from one another. Educators in all 10 districts ranked this item as the lowest within the domain.

Paraprofessionals, in particular, value Professional Learning. Paraprofessionals overall ranked Professional Learning more highly than teachers did, by a wide margin. Paraprofessionals considered Professional Learning to be very important for retention and for student achievement.

## OVERALL FINDINGS

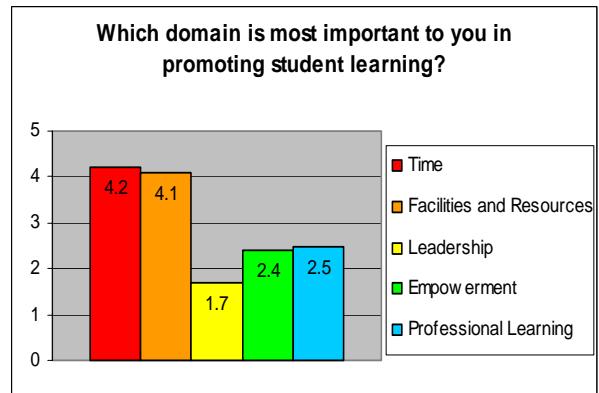
Some trends appeared which crossed over all domains.

Teachers and administrators view their learning and teaching environments differently. Administrators across all districts were consistently more positive in their ratings for all domains, particularly about the amount of time educators have. Chart 3 displays these different perceptions.



Educators are district-specific about what will help them promote student learning. Depending on the district, educators in some districts chose Time, Facilities and Resources, Empowerment, or Leadership as the most significant factor for improving student achievement. Chart 4 displays the relative importance of each domain.

**Chart 4**



Educators do not believe that their work environments support them as true professionals. A number of questions across domains targeted areas which are considered hallmarks of a "profession," among them opportunities for collaboration with colleagues and for advancement within their profession. Educators were dissatisfied with their opportunities to work collaboratively, to learn from one another, and to advance professionally. In addition, while more than 96% of educators reported participating in professional learning in the last two years, less than half reported receiving professional learning that focused on enhancing their leadership skills.

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

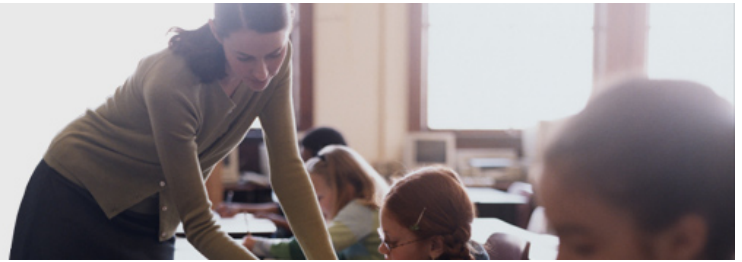
The true experts have spoken. The QLTE Survey provides community and school leaders from the pilot districts with valuable information about what teachers and students need to optimize their work. Leaders in the pilot districts and at the state level have pledged to listen intently to these voices. By analyzing survey results, leaders will be able to target areas of need, build on areas of strength, and work together on intensive plans to provide premier learning and teaching environments to Georgia's deserving teachers and students.

## APPENDIX



**Georgia BellSouth™ Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Initiative**

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**QUESTIONS RATED HIGH OR LOW WITHIN DOMAINS**

Participating districts frequently rated certain questions high or low within their domains. **Table 5** displays those questions which 60% or more of the districts rated in the top two or three questions within their domains. **Table 6** displays those questions which 60% or more of the districts rated in the bottom two or three questions within their domains.

**Table 5: Questions Rated High Within Domains**

| Questions Rated High   | Percentage of districts rating question high |
|--|--|
| <b>TIME</b>  |  |
| Student learning time is rarely interrupted and is protected by school leaders.                                  | 100%   |
| Adequate time for professional learning is built into the contract school year.                                  | 100%   |
| The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about the use of time in my school.   | 90%  |
| <b>FACILITIES AND RESOURCES</b>  |  |
| My school provides a safe environment for teaching and learning  | 90%  |
| Teachers and staff work in a school environment that is clean and well maintained.                               | 70%  |
| The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about school facilities and resources | 70%  |
| <b>LEADERSHIP</b>  |  |
| Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.                                     | 100%   |
| The procedures for teacher performance evaluations are consistent.   | 70%  |
| My school is making steady progress in implementing rigorous academic standards.                                 | 60%  |
| <b>EMPOWERMENT</b>   |  |
| Teachers and staff work together to improve teaching and learning.   | 90%  |
| School administrators involve teachers in developing and implementing the school improvement plan.               | 80%  |
| <b>PROFESSIONAL LEARNING</b>   |  |
| My school emphasizes focused, ongoing professional learning throughout the school year.                          | 80%  |

**Table 6: Questions Rated Low Within Domains**

| Questions Rated Low  | Percentage of districts rating question low |
|--|---|
| <b>TIME</b>  |   |
| Teachers have time during the school day to collaborate productively with their colleagues.                                | 90%   |
| Teachers have student loads which afford them time to meet the educational needs of all students.                          | 90%   |
| Teachers have class sizes which afford them time to meet the educational needs of all students.                            | 70%   |
| <b>FACILITIES AND RESOURCES</b>  |   |
| Teachers have enough supplies to support student learning in the classroom.  | 70%   |
| Teachers have adequate professional space to work productively.  | 60%   |
| <b>LEADERSHIP</b>  |   |
| Parents and community members are involved in school decisions.  | 90%   |
| School administrators consistently enforce rules for student conduct.  | 70%   |
| The school council operates effectively at my school.  | 70%   |
| <b>EMPOWERMENT</b>   |   |
| Opportunities for advancement within the teaching profession (other than school level administration) are available to me. | 100%  |
| <b>PROFESSIONAL LEARNING</b>   |   |
| Teachers in my school are provided opportunities to learn from one another.  | 100%  |