



Georgia BellSouth™ Quality Learning and Teaching Environments Initiative

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



2007 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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 seven Georgia school districts have had the chance to listen to the people who know—the teachers themselves—and to implement improvement plans based on what they heard from teachers. Through the 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. School and business leaders then developed and implemented action plans to address survey results. Many districts targeted time with specific actions such as changes to the bus and physical education schedules. They also provided additional early release time and expanded planning time. Some districts improved staffing in computer labs, reduced paperwork, or provided needed copiers and other supplies.

Ten Georgia school districts with over 7,000 educators participated in the first survey in January 2005, which had a response rate of 83%. Seven of these school districts and their supporting community/business partners analyzed their results, identified areas for improvement, and implemented clearly targeted action plans.

Seven Georgia school districts participated in the second QLTE survey, administered in November 2006. This survey had an 84% response rate from over 7,000 educators who teach over 93,000 students. Two-thirds of the respondents (67.5%) had taken the 2005 survey. The seven Systems include 148 schools from northwest to southeast Georgia, both urban and rural, large and small. District demographics range from 13% to 87% minority populations and 39% to 70% children in poverty.

This executive summary report is based on an analysis of results from the seven pilot school districts which participated in both surveys: Bibb County Schools, Dougherty County Schools, Floyd County Schools, Hall County Schools, Lowndes County Schools, Valdosta City, and Vidalia City Schools. While the seven 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.

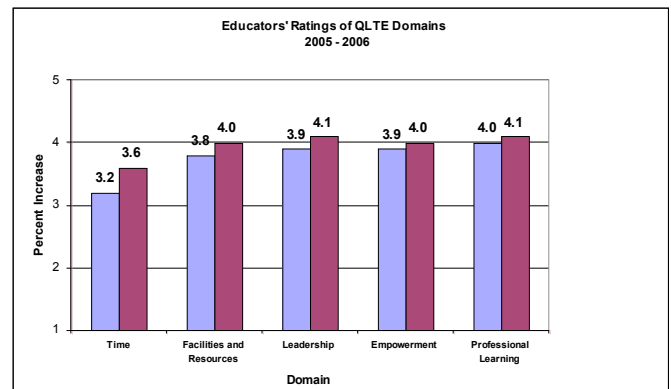
QLTE SURVEY

The Survey questions focused on five domains—Time, Facilities and Resources, Leadership, Empowerment, and Professional Learning—and ended with two overall summary questions. Educators were asked to rate positive statements about their working conditions on a scale of 1-5, with 5 representing “strongly agree,” and 1 representing “strongly disagree.” 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 and on change across time between the 2005 and 2006 surveys. See Appendix for a list of questions which districts consistently ranked high or low within their domains.

TRENDS/KEY FINDINGS

The majority of educators reported that learning and teaching environments have improved at their schools. Gains were reported across all domains when total responses from the first and second survey were compared. The relative ranking of the domains changed slightly, with gains in the Leadership domain outpacing gains in Empowerment. The Time Domain remained in last position. Teachers in all districts rated their working conditions as above average. On the 1-5 scale, the average rating is 3. A rating above 3 would be considered above average. See Chart 1.

Chart 1





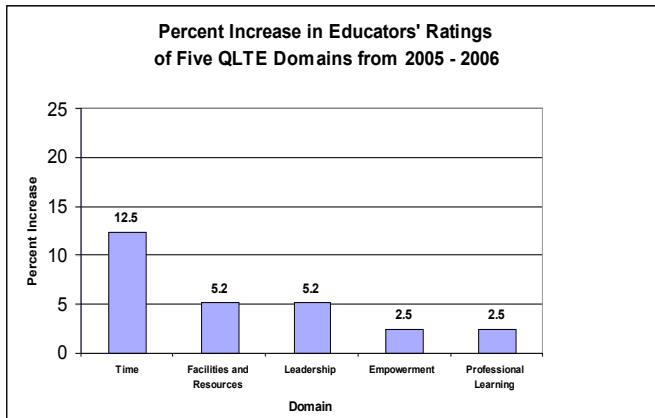
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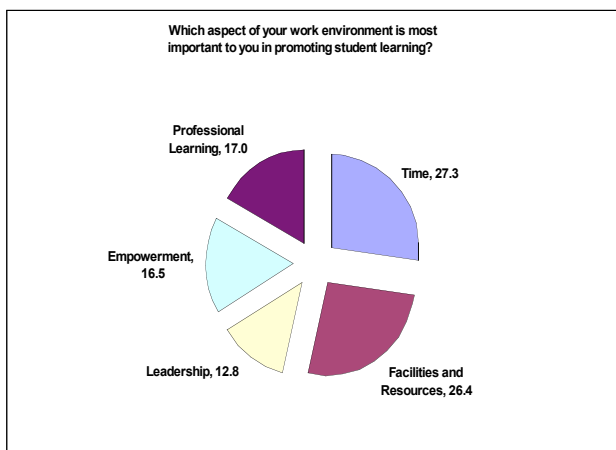
Educators reported that the time domain was the area of greatest improvement, with substantial gains. Educators indicated modest gains in Facilities and Resources and in Leadership and slight gains in Empowerment and Professional Learning. See Chart 2.

Chart 2



Educators are district-specific about what will help them promote student learning. Depending on the district, educators chose Time, Facilities and Resources, Empowerment, or Leadership as the most significant factor for improving student achievement. See Chart 3.

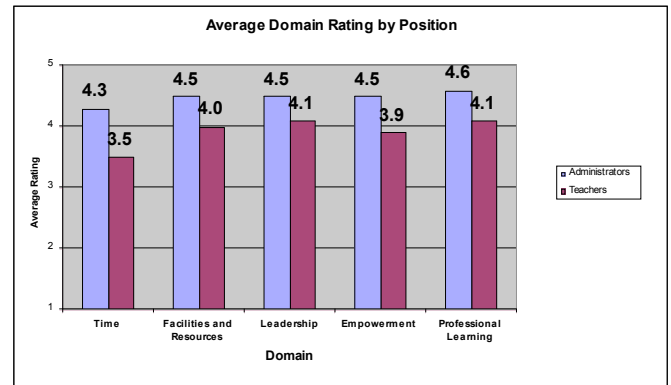
Chart 3



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 4 displays these different perceptions.

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 advancement within their profession and opportunities to learn from one another.

TIME

Time, the area of greatest concern in the first survey, showed the greatest improvement. Many district action plans targeted the time domain as the area needing most improvement, and results indicate clear progress. Across all districts, the mean for the time domain increased 12.5%. Two areas which educators pinpointed as areas of concern in 2005 showed major improvement in the 2006 survey: student loads and time during the school day to collaborate productively with colleagues. Educators also indicated substantial progress in the area of class size. While there were major gains in the time domain, it remained the lowest of the five domains.

Improvements in the Time domain are promising; however, educators still report spending numerous unpaid hours outside the regular school work day. Planning time is critical to the educator's central responsibility of teaching children. 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. Despite these demands, two out of three teachers reported having less than one hour a day for planning during the school day. See Chart 5.



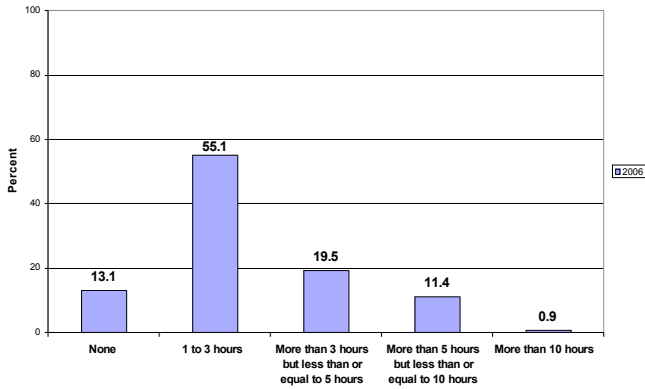
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Chart 5

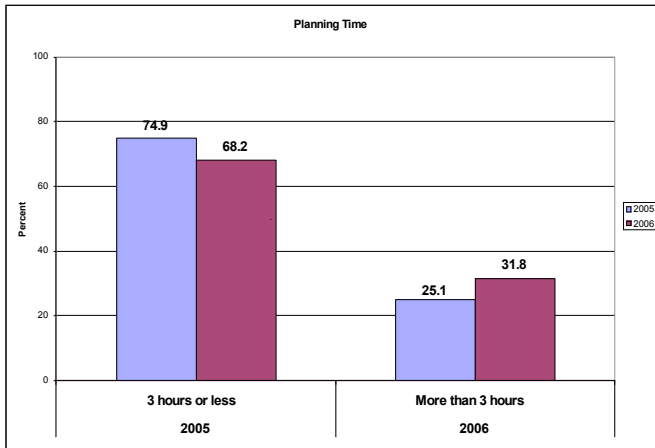
Time Planning



Teachers reports increases in their planning time during the instructional school day. From 2005 to 2006, the percentage of teachers reporting fewer than three hours a week for planning decreased, while the percentage of teachers reporting more than three hours a week for planning increased. See Chart 6.

Chart 6

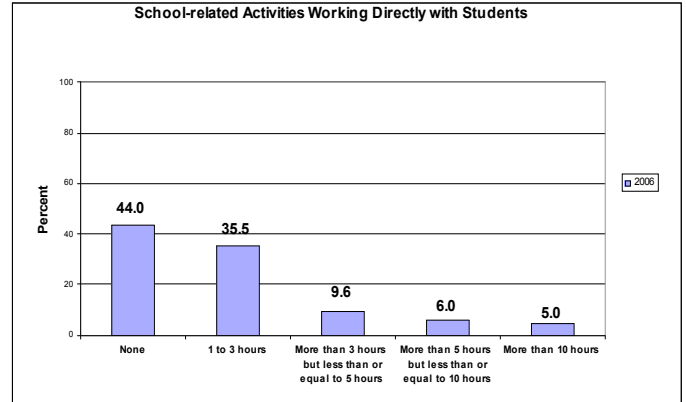
Planning Time



Despite improvements, the number of unpaid hours remains high. Teaching is a demanding profession, and dedicated educators often go above and beyond time included in the school day to fulfill their responsibilities and provide additional professional services to their students and schools. Most teachers reported spending unpaid hours each week on school-related activities working directly with students, such as field trips, tutoring, sponsoring clubs, and coaching as illustrated in Chart 7.

Chart 7

School-related Activities Working Directly with Students

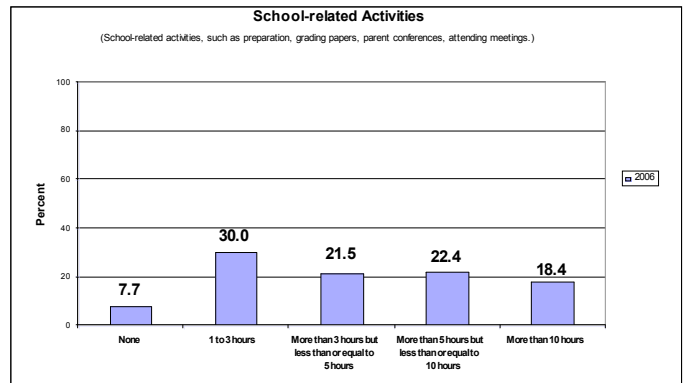


Educators also report spending unpaid time on school-related activities such as preparation, grading papers, parent conferences, and meetings. See Chart 8.

Chart 8

School-related Activities

(School-related activities, such as preparation, grading papers, parent conferences, attending meetings.)



In addition, many educators spend unpaid time on school-related activities such as serving on school and district committees and school leadership teams. Over half reported spending one or more unpaid hours a week on these responsibilities. See Chart 9.

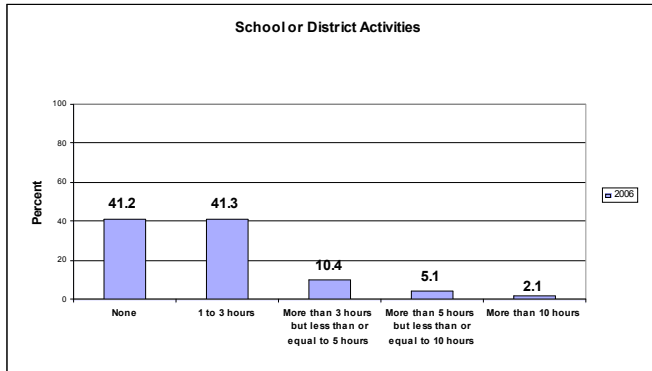


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Chart 9



While progress is encouraging, 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, are specific about what they need, and perceive that these needs are being addressed. In six of seven districts, educators ranked Facilities and Resources as first or second in importance for their efforts to promote student learning. Providing adequate facilities and resources is important to educators and their students. 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.

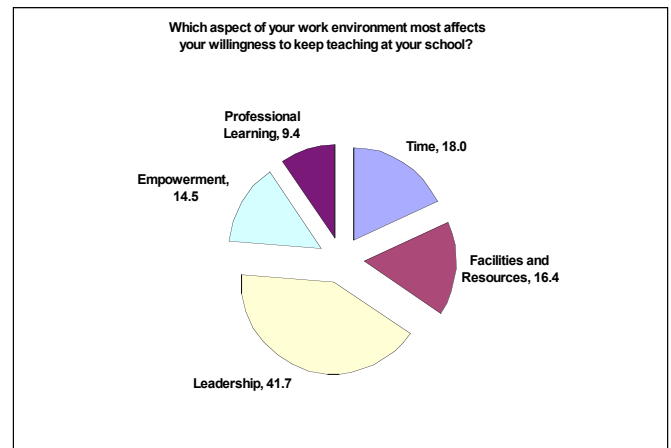
Educators believe that their districts and schools are addressing the specific needs they identified, but more work remains to be done. In the 2005 survey, educators indicated needs for professional space, adequate supplies, and convenient access to office equipment, phones, and email. Educators saw the most improvement in these areas. Despite these gains, these areas remained near the bottom within the Facilities and Resources domain.

As in the 2005 survey, educators were generally positive about school safety, cleanliness, maintenance, 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. The importance of leadership was a consistent finding in both surveys, with educators ranking Leadership as *the most important factor* in their decision to keep teaching at their schools. See Chart 10.

Chart 10



Overall, educators are pleased with their School Leadership and believe that Leadership is improving. Leadership was ranked as the highest or second highest overall domain in all seven districts. Educators reported a high degree of satisfaction with their Leadership in the first survey, and reported gains in this area on the second survey, with educators in six districts indicating that their School Leadership had improved. The greatest area of progress occurred in administrative enforcement of rules for student conduct. This question was rated lowest by 90% of the districts in the 2005 survey but showed the greatest improvement in the 2006 survey. Educators gave their school leaders high marks for maintaining high professional standards for teachers. Educators were less positive about parent and community involvement and implementation of school councils.



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EMPOWERMENT

Educators reported relatively little change in the Empowerment domain. As in the 2005 survey, 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.

As in the 2005 survey, 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.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional Learning was ranked highly by educators on both surveys. Seven of eight districts ranked this domain in the top two. Educators agreed that their school emphasizes focused, ongoing professional learning through the school year. Educators also indicated that their school leadership makes a sustained effort to provide quality professional learning. Educators reported only slight gains in this domain, with little change in the rankings for specific questions.

While Professional Learning did not necessarily include collaborative learning opportunities, there were some gains reported in this area. As on the 2005 survey, educators in 2006 were least positive about their opportunities to learn from one another. Educators in all 7 districts ranked this item as the lowest within the domain. However, this item also showed the most gain in 4 of the 7 districts.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The true experts have spoken. The QLTE Survey has provided 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 then went to work, targeting areas of need, building on areas of strength, and implementing intensive plans.

Their hard work has produced results. Leaders in the pilot districts have successfully improved the conditions in which educators teach and students learn and have committed to continue this work.

Leaders at the state level have pledged to listen intently to teacher voices in order for these voices to impact their actions. The door is open for other school districts to join the QLTE pioneers.



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**APPENDIX
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 57% or more of the districts rated in the top two or three questions within their domains. **Table 6** displays those questions which 57% 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
TIME	
Adequate time for professional learning is built into the contract school year.	71%
FACILITIES AND RESOURCES	
My school provides a safe environment for teaching and learning	100%
The school leadership makes a sustained effort to address teacher concerns about school facilities and resources	57%
LEADERSHIP	
Teachers are held to high professional standards for delivering instruction.	100%
EMPOWERMENT	
Teachers and staff work together to improve teaching and learning.	100%
School administrators involve teachers in developing and implementing the school improvement plan.	100%
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	
My school emphasizes focused, ongoing professional learning throughout the school year.	100%
My school leadership makes a sustained effort to provide quality professional learning in my school.	57%

Table 6: Questions Rated Low Within Domains

Questions Rated Low	Percentage of districts rating question low
TIME	
The school leadership works to reduce routing administrative duties and paperwork so teachers can focus on educating students.	57%
Teachers have student loads which afford them time to meet the educational needs of all students.	57%
FACILITIES AND RESOURCES	
Teachers have enough supplies to support student learning in the classroom.	57%
LEADERSHIP	
Parents and community members are involved in school decisions.	71%
The school council operates effectively at my school.	71%
EMPOWERMENT	
Opportunities for advancement within the teaching profession (other than school level administration) are available to me.	86%
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING	
Teachers in my school are provided opportunities to learn from one another.	100%