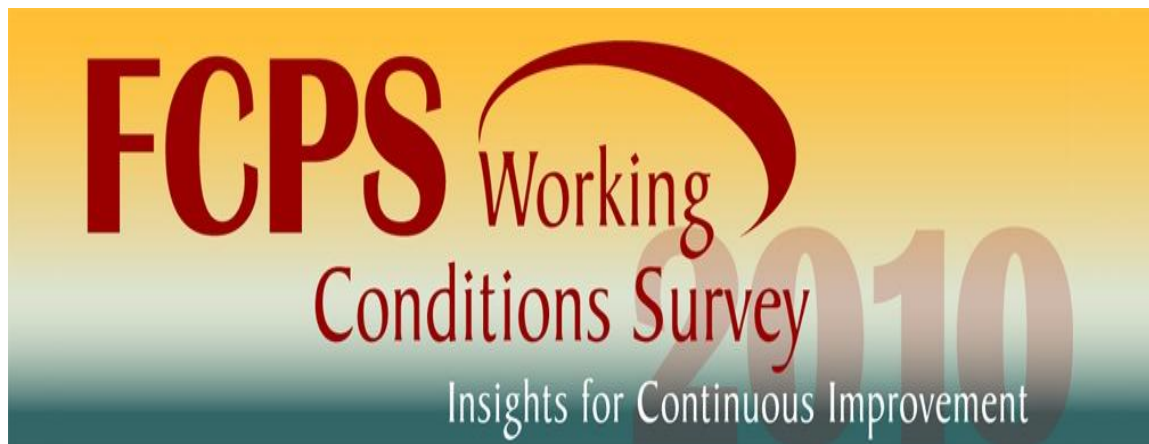


# 2010 FCPS Working Conditions Survey Individual Item Prompts Empowerment Construct

---



## Table of Contents

### Individual Item Discussion Prompts – Empowerment

5.1A Teachers are involved centrally in decision making about educational issues.....	2
5.1B Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction. ....	4
5.1C Teachers are respected as educational experts. ....	6
5.1D Teachers in this school are confident they will be able to motivate their students.....	8
5.1E The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems. ....	10
5.1F In our school, we use data/evidence to inform our decisions and teaching practices. ....	12
5.1G The school provides professional staff formal opportunities to take on leadership roles.....	14
5.1H Teachers pursue opportunities to participate in school leadership roles .....	14
5.1I Teachers are leaders in this school.....	16

### ***5.1A: Teachers are involved centrally in decision-making about educational issues.***

---

Including teachers into the decision-making process about educational issues in the school is an important part of teacher empowerment and developing an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect in the school. Teachers bring the experiences of working on the “front lines” with students, providing a unique understanding of how policies affect classroom practice and student learning. When teachers are included in the decision-making process, they are more personally vested in and willing to support the outcome.

Including teachers in the process can be challenging. Ensuring the vast array of teachers’ perspectives are included and finding time to include teachers (or representatives of the faculty) in the process can be difficult. Consider what systems your school has in place currently to include teachers in the decision-making process and reflect on whether they are effective.

#### **Table Group Activity**

- Where possible, include an administrator in each group to have both perspectives represented.
- Assign a recorder.
- The following pages provide question prompts on the survey item discussed above. Read and discuss the prompts as a group.
  - Try and capture both administrator and teacher perspective on the prompts
- Use the Item Analysis tools to record important points brought up in your discussion.

# 5.1A: Reflections

---

What systems are currently in place to help include teachers in the decision-making process? Are those systems effective?

- Do teachers feel included in the process? How do you know?
- Do all teachers feel included? Are some teachers more likely than others to participate? Why? What is the impact on decisions made and school culture?
- Are there ways to make the decision-making process more transparent?
- Are there areas of decision-making that teachers want to have more say?
- What kinds of follow through are in place to keep teachers apprised of the process?

Where are decisions being made unilaterally?

- Are those areas where teachers would prefer to have more say in the process?
- How are those decisions communicated? Do teachers have the knowledge and/or expertise to participate in any of these decisions?
- Can adjustments be made to the process that would allow more teacher input?

How does the aspect of time impact these decisions?

- What adjustments can be made to better accommodate teachers into the process?
- How are faculty meetings used? What role do committees or other groups with teacher representation play in decision-making?

### ***5.1B: Teachers are trusted to make sound professional decisions about instruction.***

---

Teachers' primary role within a school is to provide instruction to students. There are hundreds of decisions made every day by teachers about how to best assist them in learning. Schools invest substantially in professional development to ensure teachers are up to date on their instructional strategies. Efforts to standardize educational practice through shared standards, curriculum and instructional practice, no matter how well intentioned, can be viewed as constraining by some teachers. While new educators in particular may need more scripted and paced instructional support, veteran educators with demonstrated results can find them confining. Leaving some of the most qualified practitioners of our educational system out of instructional decisions not only removes an important voice in decision making process, it disenfranchises teachers in the school and district community.

#### **Table Group Activity**

- Where possible, include an administrator in each group to have both perspectives represented.
- Assign a recorder.
- The following pages provide question prompts on the survey item discussed above. Read and discuss the prompts as a group.
  - Try and capture both administrator and teacher perspective on the prompts
- Use the Item Analysis tools to record important points brought up in your discussion.

## 5.1B: Reflections

---

At your school, where are teachers actively engaged in decisions about instruction?

- Do teachers know these opportunities are available? Do all teachers? Are the most accomplished practitioners engaged in decisions about teaching and learning?
- Do teachers view this as an empowering activity?

Where do teachers at your school feel they could be better integrated into instructional decisions?

- What policies and practices are in place at the school that would lead teachers to not feel trusted? At the district, state or federal levels?
- What decisions are teachers free to make on their own in their classroom? in their grade or content?
- What are teachers' expectations about autonomy in teaching? Is there resistance to state standards? to the state's Voluntary Curriculum? to the instructional materials selected/made available? to working with other teachers in Professional Learning Communities or grade/content groups?

Are there places where teachers have been given opportunities to contribute to instructional decision-making, but they have not engaged?

- Why did this happen?
- When teachers do not engage in these opportunities, what effect does this have on school leadership?

Are opportunities for teachers to contribute to instructional decisions equitable?

### ***5.1C: Teachers are respected as educational experts.***

---

Teachers bring a wealth of knowledge to the classroom. With formal training in a wide variety of instructional delivery methods, comprehensive content knowledge, effective management skills, and continuous professional development, they are experts in the field of education. As experts, their primary role in education is to disseminate information to children in meaningful ways.

Often there is a difference between the actual educational acumen of teachers and the perception of teacher practice and capacity by those outside the teaching profession. Are teachers recognized by parents, administrators, and other professional organizations in the community as the educational experts they really are?

### **Table Group Activity**

- Where possible, include an administrator in each group to have both perspectives represented.
- Assign a recorder.
- The following pages provide question prompts on the survey item discussed above. Read and discuss the prompts as a group.
  - Try and capture both administrator and teacher perspective on the prompts
- Use the Item Analysis tools to record important points brought up in your discussion.

## 5.1C: Reflections

---

How are teachers perceived by others?

- Are there differences between the perceived expertise teachers have of themselves and how others perceive them? Why ?
- How are teachers perceived by school leadership? What evidence is there to support these perceptions?
- How are teachers perceived by parents/guardians?
- How are teachers perceived by the community? Across all aspects of community (business, media, etc.)?
- What may be driving those perceptions? What concrete actions, if any, are necessary to address the root cause of these perceptions?

How and for what are teachers recognized at your school?

- Are the recognitions based on criteria about teacher expertise? What are teachers' expectations for recognition? What are their preferences?
- Are there ways these forms of recognition could be put in place?

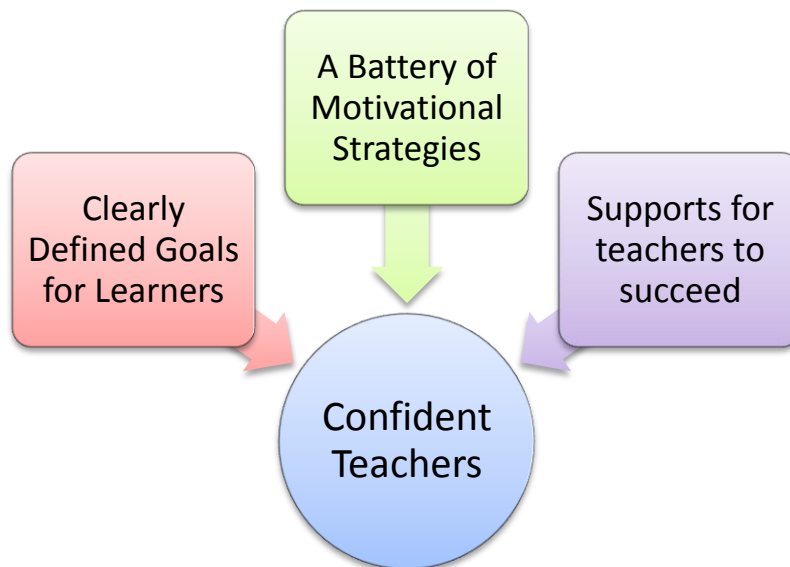
***5.1D: Teachers in this school are confident they will be able to motivate their students.***

---

Addressing this question requires a faculty to think carefully about a number of factors. First, the staff must consider and define their ultimate collective goals. Are they interested in a specific high student achievement level? Can student expectations be set on a specific level of growth? Are there different goals for different subjects and/or grade levels? Are there different goals for different kinds of learners?

Are there specific strategies and tactics teachers can employ throughout the year to properly motivate students? What are those motivators and what supports, resources, and systems need to be in place to help teachers provide them to their students?

Finally, consider those elements that need to be in place for a teacher to feel confident in the process. Certainly defining outcomes for children and having a variety of instructional strategies in place are important steps towards developing teacher confidence. What other components may be needed? Do teachers have the necessary staff development and resources to successfully develop a level of confidence? Do they thoroughly know their content and maintain high expectations of their students? What sorts of supports can colleagues and administrators provide to promote confidence in the staff?



**Table Group Activity**

- Where possible, include an administrator in each group to have both perspectives represented.
- Assign a recorder.
- The following pages provide question prompts on the survey item discussed above. Read and discuss the prompts as a group.
  - Try and capture both administrator and teacher perspective on the prompts
- Use the Item Analysis tools to record important points brought up in your discussion.

# 5.1D: Reflections

---

What are the school's goals for its students?

- Are goals common across all students, or differentiated to meet a variety of needs?
- Are the goals common across all teachers, or should there be different goals depending on subject?
- Are school goals in common with district and state expectations, or different?
- How are those identified goals measured?

What are the motivators to meet those goals?

- What strategies can teachers take to motivate students to achieve the goals?
- What resources, materials, and supports do teachers need to provide these motivators?
- Are motivators different for different subjects?

What supports are needed for teachers to succeed?

- Do teachers thoroughly know their content?
- Do teachers maintain high expectations for all of their students?
- What staff development may be required?
- Do new teachers need additional support or more time?
- How can colleagues support each other?
- What is the role of administrator in the process?
- How will the effectiveness of these supports be monitored?

What is a confident teacher?

- What behaviors do confident teachers exhibit?
- How will confidence be measured?

### ***5.1E: The faculty has an effective process for making group decisions and solving problems.***

---

All schools have processes for solving problems, but these may not be viewed as effective by the entire faculty. Many educators may not be able to clearly articulate that process, may not know what outcomes have occurred, or may not believe that those outcomes truly address the problem at hand. Having a transparent and equitable system for solving problems can greatly contribute to the relationship between site administrators and teachers.

Identifying and sharing problems can be challenging in schools where teachers and administrators do not share a trusting relationship. If there is not a healthy trust and mutual respect between teachers and administrators, there may be a number of problems in the school that are not getting addressed because teachers are not willing to bring those problems up with leadership. Often, there are differences in perception between teachers and administrators on what is a problem in the school, as well as whether efforts made have actually solved the problem.

A key to addressing this condition is clear communication. A safe and efficient process must be in place to identify problems. There needs to be an inclusive dialog about how those problems are addressed. Follow through must occur after a decision is made to make sure the problem is resolved and the results should be communicated to the faculty.

### **Table Group Activity**

- Where possible, include an administrator in each group to have both perspectives represented.
- Assign a recorder.
- The following pages provide question prompts on the survey item discussed above. Read and discuss the prompts as a group.
  - Try and capture both administrator and teacher perspective on the prompts
- Use the Item Analysis tools to record important points brought up in your discussion.

## 5.1E: Reflections

---

What system is currently in place to solve problems in the school?

- Do both teachers and administrators see that system the same way?
- Is the system working for both groups?
- Is it equitable?
- What is effective about the current system?
- What is not working with the current system?

From the teachers' perspective, what would the ideal system look like?

- Where are teachers included in the process?
- Are there problems teachers do not need to be involved in?
- Are there problems teachers need to be involved in but are not?
- How does time impact what parts of the process teachers can be included in?
- What barriers are in the way to effective communication with administration about this process?

From the administrators' perspective, what would the ideal system look like?

- Are there places teachers should be included, but they are not engaging in the process?
- Are there problems administrators feel they should address unilaterally?
- What barriers are in the way to effective communication with teachers about this process?

### ***5.1F: In our school, we use data/evidence to inform our decisions and teaching practice.***

---

Too often educators—due to a lack of timely data or the time and skills to utilize it effectively—rely on intuition or supposition to guide their decision making practice which results uneven results.

To engage in decision making and teaching practice that is grounded in data, the data being utilized must be accurate, easily accessible, and in a format that faculty can understand. Where many educators struggle in this process is designing and utilizing systems for data collection. What assessment data is available? Is it accessible? Is it provided in a timely fashion to inform instructional practices?

Do teachers have the knowledge and skills to be able to use data and integrate it into effective practice? Is there professional development that could be provided to enhance teacher effectiveness in assessment design or use of data? What supports are in place for new teachers? Are there opportunities for teacher and administrator collaboration and discussion about teacher practice?

### **Table Group Activity**

- Where possible, include an administrator in each group to have both perspectives represented.
- Assign a recorder.
- The following pages provide question prompts on the survey item discussed above. Read and discuss the prompts as a group.
  - Try and capture both administrator and teacher perspective on the prompts
- Use the Item Analysis tools to record important points brought up in your discussion.

## 5.1F: Reflections

---

How is data being gathered?

- Are formal assessments accurately representing intended student learning outcomes? How do you know?
- What are some advantages and disadvantages of common assessments across subjects or grade levels?
- What informal assessments are being made and included in the refinement of decision making?

Is data from formal and informal assessment processes accessible to educators in a timely manner?

- If not, what steps can be taken to make that turnaround process more efficient?

Are educators adequately trained in the effective use of data?

- Have teachers been taught effective data collection strategies?
- Have teachers and administrators been provided staff development on incorporating data in to teaching practice?
- What supports are in place for beginning teachers?
- Could different professional development be provided to veteran teachers to enhance their practice?
- Do teachers have time and sufficient resources to engage in this process in a meaningful way?

***5.1G: The school provides professional staff formal opportunities to take on leadership roles.***

***5.1H: Teachers pursue opportunities to participate in school leadership roles.***

---

Schools often have many informal opportunities when teachers willingly or sometimes have to take on more leadership responsibility, but these instances are not the same as formal roles. Leadership roles can be an important motivator for teacher growth and development. They can function as acknowledgment of excellent teaching practice or serve in some cases as a reward system. Additionally, formal leadership roles can develop new skills in teachers which can bring enhancements to their classrooms, collaborative settings, and school activities.

### **Table Group Activity**

- Where possible, include an administrator in each group to have both perspectives represented.
- Assign a recorder.
- The following pages provide question prompts on the survey item discussed above. Read and discuss the prompts as a group.
  - Try and capture both administrator and teacher perspective on the prompts
- Use the Item Analysis tools to record important points brought up in your discussion.

# 5.1G, H: Reflections

---

What opportunities are available for teachers to take on leadership roles?

- Are there informal leadership opportunities that could be formalized and enhance the number of opportunities teachers have?
- Do teachers know these opportunities exist? How do you know?
- What systems are in place to develop leadership in school staff?

How are teachers selected?

- How are teachers identified and eventually selected for the leadership roles?
- Is the process equitable?
- Are the opportunities open to all faculty?
- Are these roles permanent, or temporary?
- Is there a rotation policy in place to allow for more teachers to participate in the process?
- Is time allocated for teachers to assume these new responsibilities, or must they find time in their existing schedules?

What leadership opportunities are teachers gravitating to in the school and why?

- Can conditions in that opportunity be replicated in other areas?
- How are different leadership opportunities perceived by faculty? How do you know?

## ***5.II: Teachers are leaders in this school.***

---

Teachers can take on a variety of formal and informal leadership roles in school. Informally, teachers take leadership responsibility all the time in their own classrooms, moving around the school building, supporting other teachers in collaborative settings, and interacting with parents.

Formally, teachers also have many opportunities to take leadership responsibility at their schools. Coaching sports, chairing departments or academic teams, providing professional development, mentoring beginning teachers, and participating in school improvement teams are just some of the ways teachers can be active in leading in their schools. They may also be asked to participate in the design of school student behavior plans, scheduling, student placements, and designing curriculum.

While the informal leadership teachers engage in is important, having a wide variety of formal leadership roles is critical for teacher development and school culture.

### **Table Group Activity**

- Where possible, include an administrator in each group to have both perspectives represented.
- Assign a recorder.
- The following pages provide question prompts on the survey item discussed above. Read and discuss the prompts as a group.
  - Try and capture both administrator and teacher perspective on the prompts
- Use the Item Analysis tools to record important points brought up in your discussion.

## 5.1I: Reflections

---

What formal leadership roles are available for teachers to participate in?

- Do all teachers know these opportunities exist?
- Are those opportunities available to all teachers or only a few?
- Are those leadership roles short or long term and how does this impact the accessibility of leadership roles for others?

Are the leadership opportunities in your school perceived as an opportunity by the faculty?

- How do you know?

Are there leadership opportunities teachers would like to engage in that are not offered to them?

Is the work teachers put forth in leadership roles acknowledged?

- In what ways?
- Are there other ways to acknowledge them?