Washington State Board of Education

STUDY OF STATE AND LOCAL BARRIERS TO RAISING ACHIEVEMENT DRAMATICALLY FOR ALL STUDENTS

FINAL REPORT

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NWREL
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

Washington State Board of Education

STUDY OF STATE AND LOCAL BARRIERS TO RAISING ACHIEVEMENT DRAMATICALLY FOR ALL STUDENTS

Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Washington State Board of Education (SBE) contracted with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) to conduct a study of the salient policies and procedures that created barriers to improving student achievement for struggling schools in Washington.

The SBE is tasked by the state legislature with creating a statewide accountability system that enables the state to target resources in radically different ways. The state law requires the SBE to adopt criteria to identify schools and districts that are successful, in need of assistance, and those where students persistently do not meet the state's standards. The SBE seeks new ways to make a difference, particularly in districts with schools that consistently underperform. The research is replete with information regarding factors that have been shown to be positively related to improvements in student achievement. What has been lacking is information regarding which Washington state policies and practices are perceived as barriers by districts and schools who are seeking to make transformational changes in areas such as school management and classroom instruction that will help students achieve at considerably higher levels.

The purpose of this study was to learn about the perceived barriers from the perspectives of different education stakeholders. The study focused specifically on obtaining the professional insights and perceptions of policymakers and policy implementers regarding district practices and the policy environment in which districts are implementing school improvement efforts (e.g., collective bargaining agreements, human resource policies and practices, allocation of funding and other resources among schools within a district, local and state school boards and other district policies).

This study provides a systems approach to the perceived policy barriers that need to be addressed as the SBE moves ahead with its efforts to help the state's priority schools dramatically improve student achievement. The scope of the study focused data collection on the perceptions and professional judgments of Washington state's key policy makers and shapers, and school personnel. The findings of this study are both informed by and limited by the scope.

Methodology

NWREL staff members first conducted a systematic review of the current research literature to identify a list of policies and procedures that researchers have found to be salient barriers to increasing student achievement. This list of 16 barriers was incorporated into the protocols used during the data gathering phase of the study, which consisted of telephone interviews with key education stakeholders and onsite focus groups and interviews with staff members representing seven school districts around the state. District staff members, who were interviewed, included teachers, principals, and central office administrators.

The focus on the key education stakeholder interviews was to confirm that specific policies and procedures were in fact barriers for Washington districts and schools, and to determine the extent to which either the state or district had the ability to eliminate those barriers. Thirty-four key stakeholders, selected from the legislature and organizations such as the Office of

Superintendent (OSPI), Office of Financial Management (OFM), Washington Education Association (WEA), the Association of School Principals (AWSP), the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA), and the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA), participated in the interviews. NWREL staff members conducted onsite visits to the following seven school districts: Everett, Moses Lake, Seattle, Sedro-Woolley, Shelton, Vancouver, and Yakima. These districts were selected because of their high percentages of minority students, level of student performance on the WASL and AYP, and range of student enrollment and staff size (high, medium, and low).

Findings

Consistent and divergent barrier perceptions held by the different participant groups (key stakeholders, teachers, principals, and district staff members) are presented in the findings section of this report. The 16 barriers are presented in a Barrier Impact Prioritization Matrices, which arranges these policies and procedures in order of their perceived impact on student achievement (high, medium, or low) and the ability to eliminate the barrier (high, medium, or low).

Based on the findings from the study, all of the identified barriers should be addressed on some selected priority order. The following four barriers were of particular note because they were widely recognized as having potential impact on student achievement if removed, and within the state's ability to remove them.

1) Insufficient and impermanent resources
2) Time for professional development and teacher collaboration
3) Inflexibility in allocating resources to higher need areas to improve student achievement.
4) Coherent systems that support the entry, development, and retention of quality staff members

Policy-related findings were identified, and included the need for greater intrastate educational agency coordination resulting in enhanced program coherence, and stability of funding for school improvement. Also noted was the need for the state to structure funding so that it is targeted to reach underperforming schools or schools serving greater-needs student populations.

Significant differences between different district and school personnel groups were reported, especially around the issues of class size, the use of differential pay as incentives, the degree to which the removal of some collective bargaining agreement provisions could positively impact student achievement, and the value of National Board teacher certification.

All of the barriers examined were judged as removable by state policymaker stakeholders. This judgment was offered after they acknowledged the difficulty in the removal of the barriers. Almost all of the barriers were judged to require a joint effort between the state and the district/schools, with the primary role being played by the state.

Implications

The state of Washington may wish to:

1. Coordinate the efforts of the various state educational agencies and policy-making bodies to increase program coordination and the perception of program coherence when viewed from the district and building level
2. Develop and maintain a stable funding source for school improvement that educators can count on over time
3. Establish and provide additional time – allowing teaching staff and administrators the opportunity to focus on student achievement through collaboration and professional development
4. Find ways to remove or moderate restrictive provisions of the collective bargaining agreement in a manner that strengthens building teams and provides adequate teacher participation in critical decisions

Findings and themes for consideration are presented in the spirit of collaboration, recognizing that dramatically increasing student achievement is very hard work and will require the joint efforts of many partners. This study should place Washington state in a strong position for developing a statewide accountability framework for a new partnership between the state and local districts, and help districts and schools make transformational changes to assure that student achievement is dramatically increased.

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INTRODUCTION

In March 2008, the Washington State Board of Education (SBE) contracted with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) to conduct a study of the salient policies and procedures that created barriers to improving student achievement for struggling schools in Washington. During April-May 2008, NWREL staff members verified the extent to which national, regional, and local barriers cited in the latest research literature were also problematic for Washington schools through a series of telephone interviews with representatives from governmental, educational, and community agencies and onsite visits to seven school districts across the state.

The SBE is tasked by the state legislature with creating a statewide accountability system that enables the state to target resources in radically different ways. The state law requires the SBE to adopt criteria to identify schools and districts that are successful, in need of assistance, and those where students persistently do not meet the state's standards. The SBE seeks new ways to make a difference, particularly in districts with schools that consistently underperform. The research is replete with information regarding factors shown to be positively related to improvements in student achievement. What has been lacking is information regarding which Washington state policies and practices are perceived as barriers to districts and schools seeking to make transformational changes in areas such as school management and classroom instruction that will help students achieve at considerably higher levels.

The purpose of this study commissioned by the SBE was to learn about the perceived barriers from the perspectives of different education stakeholders including members of legislature, educational agencies and associations, university faculty, business groups, and nonprofit partners, as well as district and building school personnel.

The scope of the study focused specifically on obtaining the professional insights and perceptions of policymakers and policy implementers regarding district/school practices and the policy environment in which efforts to implement school improvement occur (e.g., collective bargaining agreements, human resource policies and practices, allocation of funding and other resources among schools within a district, local and state school board and other district policies).

The report findings are limited to the accuracy reflected in the cumulative professional judgment and perceptions of the key stakeholder and educational practitioner groups who participated in the Barrier Study.

In addition, the findings of the study are used to inform suggested revisions to the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 180-16-220 regarding school improvement plans.

NWREL staff members first conducted a systematic review of the current research literature to identify a list of policies and procedures that researchers have found to be salient barriers to increasing student achievement. This list of 16 barriers was incorporated into the protocols used during the data gathering phase of the study, which consisted of telephone interviews with key education stakeholders and onsite focus groups and interviews with staffs representing seven school districts around the state.

The focus of the key education stakeholder interviews was to confirm that specific policies and procedures were in fact barriers for Washington districts and schools, and the extent to which either the state or district had the ability to eliminate those barriers. Thirty-four key stakeholders, selected from the legislature and organizations such as the Office of Superintendent (OSPI), Office of Financial Management (OFM), Washington Education Association (WEA), the Association of School Principals (AWSP), the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA), and the Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA), participated in the interviews.

During the same two-month timeframe, NWREL staff conducted onsite visits to the following seven school districts: Seattle, Vancouver, Everett, Yakima, Moses Lake, Sedro-Woolley, and Shelton.

These districts were selected because of their high percentages of minority students, student performance on the WASL and AYP, and range of student enrollment and staff sizes (high, medium, and low). As a group, these districts account for just over 11 percent of the state's students and staff members. Focus groups and interviews were conducted with a sample of teachers, principals, and district staff members who were asked about their perceptions of the impact of specific barriers on student achievement.

Consistent and divergent barrier perceptions held by the different participant groups (key stakeholders, teachers, principals, and district staff) are presented in the findings section of this report. The 16 barriers are presented in a Barrier Impact Prioritization Matrices which arranges these policies and procedures in order of their perceived impact on student achievement (high, medium, or low) and the ability to eliminate the barrier (high, medium, or low).

METHODOLOGY

Literature Review

In this literature review, we identified barriers to student achievement at the state and local levels and sought to answer the question: What constrains schools and districts from improving student achievement, especially for the traditionally underperforming students? Because of the breadth of research, we narrowed results by identifying common themes or patterns which could be acted upon. We began our study using the University of Washington's School for Public Affairs 2008 report, *Performance Pressure and Resource Allocation in Washington* (De Wys, Bowen, Demeritt, & Adams, 2008) because of its current focus on Washington educators. In reporting the research, we used several terms to describe the strength of the evidence. "Strong evidence" is defined as findings from experimental research using random assignment (causal). "Weak evidence" describes non-causal research (correlational and descriptive) that converges around common findings.

De Wys, et al., (2008) conducted a cross-sectional study of Washington school districts that represented 1) a heavily Hispanic rural district performing better than predicted, 2) two innovative urban districts using decentralized decision-making, 3) a high-performing wealthy suburban district, 4) a matched high-performing district beating the odds academically, and 5) a matched low-performing district not beating the odds. The research team conducted interviews with board chairs, district superintendents and administrators, human resources, finance, and academic/curriculum officers, teachers, union representatives, and two to six principals per district. Interviews were supplemented by an analysis of policy documents, court decisions, newspaper articles, and researcher studies.

General themes emerging from this study were used as an initial framework for searching the educational literature and identifying research for analysis, while remaining open to the emergence of new themes. We collected studies covering a wide range of potential policy barriers and grouped them thematically into five categories. Themes are presented in the following sections.

1. Assistance for school and district improvement designed to bring all students to standard, but especially those underperforming students from struggling schools

Rapidly changing demographics have placed great stress on educators. These demographic changes can be seen in the influx of English language learners speaking multiple languages, school-age children from immigrant families, families in poverty, and in the achievement gap between these groups and the dominant population. Moreover, the general population is increasingly getting older and does not have school age children (Crouch, 2007). These demographic dynamics present significant educational and cultural challenges to addressing the needs of all students. According to the UCLA's Center for Mental Health in Schools (2005), improvement planning falls short of addressing these challenges, as educators generally do not plan strategically, support staff work in isolation, and tend to offer services that are fragmented to students most in need. Common characteristic of struggling schools that manage to turn around low performance have been identified in the research literature, although the evidence is not strong.

Educators in these schools "set common goals, look at data to plan, and monitor progress" (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2008, p. 14). Operationally in these schools, a clear alignment is established between student need, research evidence, professional development, instruction, and assessment. If systemic changes need to be made to facilitate goal attainment, then appropriate changes are implemented and supported over time, without losing focus on student needs.

2. Financial and Data Resources

School district personnel generally appear constrained in efforts to allocate resources in systematic and aligned ways that are directly linked to student outcomes. They face such issues as limited resources, inconclusive research evidence to guide decisions, continuous political pressures, and a wide variety of local, state, and federal requirements and demands (Roza, 2008; Plecki, Alenjano, Knapp, Lochmiller, & 2006). The lack of a coherent system for student data collection, as well as how to use the data once collected, has also proven a significant barrier to helping school districts improve student outcomes. De Wys et al. (2008) identified poor district-wide alignment, limited understanding of resource allocation, and a lack of capacity to design and conduct assessments of resource use, as common themes in their study of Washington school districts. Moreover, when additional resources are needed to improve instruction, districts and schools seek grant and categorical program funding that often contains restrictions and/or requirements that confound efforts to create program coherency focused on student learning (Honig & Hatch, 2004). New programs often contain conflicting theories of action to existing work already underway in schools. For example, a school may be using student centered cooperative learning and inquiry-based learning principles and then receive a grant to implement direct instruction. Other barriers related to data collection and use include such areas as a limited capacity to use systemwide achievement data, failure to engage key stakeholders, limited capacity for facilitated and effective communication, and poorly aligned improvement planning (Madda, Halverson, & Gomez, 2007). Sometimes, research provides strong evidence for statewide changes to teaching and learning that cannot be ignored, but has great financial consequences, such as the research on class size. Strong evidence indicates that reducing class size to around 15 students to one teacher per classroom in grades K-3 has a positive impact on student outcomes. But most importantly, the effects continue through high school, affecting college-going aspirations, especially for the traditionally low achieving groups (Konstantopoulos, 2008; Finn & Achilles, 1999, Nye, Hedges & Konstantopoulos, 1999, Krueger & Whitmore, 1999). However, reducing class size to within the limits cited in the research comes at a great cost in terms of staffing, materials, and/or physical space (Mitchell, Beach & Badarak, 1989).

3. People Issues

In an international study of 25 school systems, teacher quality emerged as the top barrier to student achievement (Barber and Mourshed, 2007). Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, and Birman (2002), in their longitudinal study of the effects of professional development on teacher's instruction, found that improving the quality of teacher instruction benefited students who are most educationally at risk. Careful attention to hiring, deploying, training, and retaining quality teachers can positively influence student outcomes (Aos, Miller, & Pennucci, 2007). However, existing policies can constrain the recruitment and retention of high quality teachers in the following ways:

- Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality teachers (Loeb, Bryk, & Hanushek, 2007).
- Lack of coherent plans for interviewing and recruiting teachers, especially problematic in rural districts (Nichols, 2004).
- Inability to fire ineffective teachers (Loeb et al., 2007).
- Lack of incentives to attract and retain quality teachers (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006)

Attracting and retaining high-quality teachers is an important policy goal for school districts since teacher quality improves student outcomes (Koedel, 2007; Darling-Hammond, 1999). On the other hand, this goal is constrained by a lack of teacher financial incentives, such as increases in salary schedules, differential pay for an assignment working with struggling schools, systems of pay for performance, and the inability to implement such incentives (Honowar, 2008; Aos, Miller, & Pennucci, 2007; Podgursky & Springer, 2007). In addition, state salary policies constrain hiring the best teachers in critical subject areas and for struggling schools (De Wys et al., 2008).

One area often mentioned as an impediment to school improvement is teacher unions. However, little evidence supports this belief. Research evidence suggests unions have a differential effect on learning showing achievement gains for most students in unionized schools is greater than in non-union schools. But in low- and high-performing schools, the opposite holds true (Carini, 2002). Further, teacher evaluation has been shown to be a factor in improving the effectiveness of teachers (Brandt, Mathers, Oliva, Brown-Sims, & Hess, 2007). But using evaluation for improvement is fraught with challenges because the summative nature of evaluations tends to mitigate against using results for improving instruction.

In efforts to improve teaching quality, most districts implement professional development. But districts face challenges such as a lack of plans based on research, limited funding, lack of time, and sometimes lack of teacher motivation (De Wys, et al., 2008). Many districts, both in Washington and elsewhere, commit considerable resources to professional development, but lack coordinated strategies (Odden, Borman, & Fermanich, 2004; Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). Desimone, et al., (2002), in their three-year longitudinal study, found evidence that when professional development focuses on specific teaching practices, there is greater likelihood that teachers will use the practices in the classroom. They also found that collective participation improved the effectiveness of professional development. But finding time for collective participation has proven difficult because state policy too often lacks flexibility regarding the school calendar (Warner-King & Price, 2004) and/or administrators do not know how to obtain policy waivers or lack incentive and motivation. Research has also shown that in struggling districts, there is a lack of alignment between professional development and research-based practices, a failure to provide a systematic framework to support good instruction, and no coherent strategies aligned with district and school goals (Togneri, 2003).

4. Use of Time

How schools use time depends on state policy guidelines. State policy mandates the number of instructional and professional days. Traditionally, this has followed an agrarian model of fall to spring schooling

and efforts to modify this pattern often face local opposition and thus require careful involvement of stakeholders in the planning. Cooper, Valentine, Charlton, and Melson (2003) conducted an extensive review of the literature on the effects of modified school calendars. They found that modified calendars have their greatest impact on struggling schools or students from disadvantaged homes, but overall, the evidence is not strong because the research is quite uneven (Harris, 2004; Silva, 2007).

In addition, funding formulas that emphasize seat time and Carnegie units can be barriers to helping students satisfy requirements for early graduation as well as constraining the creation of personalized learning structures for students (Warner-King & Price, 2004). If a school wants to arrange class schedules differently, the school may risk losing funding if students are not enrolled a certain number of hours per day and days per year. However, some efforts have been made to extend the amount of time students attend school, such as extending the day and/or extending the school year (i.e., summer school and after school programs). Efforts have also been made to eliminate summer break to counteract knowledge loss between spring and fall. Collectively, the evidence is inconclusive, as no experimental studies have been reported. The evidence that is available has many qualifications but generally supports the following:

- Effects are differential, favoring poor and underachieving students.
- Effects are cumulative over multiple years of implementation.
- Effects are greater for elementary school samples than high school samples.
- Effects are greater for suburban and rural programs than urban.
- Summer schools are an effective intervention to help struggling students (Harris, 2004).

5. State and/or Local Barriers to Achievement (Policy)

Educational policy, whether district, state, or federal, plays an influential role in student outcomes. The barriers relating to policy at all levels are far greater than what can be covered in this review. Some of the more familiar policy areas researchers have examined are attendance, student retention, funding, curriculum standards and assessment, and policies related to English language learners. A central and overarching area affecting many of these barriers relates to the capacity for creating school system coherence and alignment with student outcome goals (e.g., resources, curriculum, assessment, professional development, instruction, and staffing). More importantly, research evidence indicates that coherent systems improve student outcomes. (Olson, 2007; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003). Key dimensions of coherent educational systems that are improving student outcomes in low performing schools are:

- Systemwide leadership committed to instructional improvement (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003).
- Education perceived in terms of a P-16 aligned system (Dounay, 2008).
- Fostering norms of high expectations, caring for students, and instructional improvement (The Center for Public Education, 2008; Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003).
- Developing and maintaining a sustained focus on concrete student performance objectives; using data to set system wide goals for improvement that are directly linked to classroom instruction.

(Olson, 2007; Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003).

- Improving teacher quality that stays focused at the instructional level, on teaching and learning (AERA, 2005; Olson, 2007).
- Using research-based professional development strategies aligned to teachers' real work and improvement goals (AERA, 2005).
- Adopting a theory of action that links goals with district, school, and classroom actions (Olson, 2007).
- Providing adequate instructional resources (Corcoran & Lawrence, 2003).

This literature review could not possibly cover all the policy and management research literature on barriers to student achievement. Such an endeavor is well beyond the scope of this work. We narrowed our focus using existing research conducted in Washington state as a frame for initial identification of key barriers on the minds of Washington educators without restricting the possibility of additionally emerging themes. Out of our research review, an overarching theme emerged from studies conducted with districts and schools making positive difference in student outcomes, especially for struggling schools (Institute of Educational Sciences, 2008). These districts/schools focus their efforts on improving the quality of instruction and they develop coherent systems which focused energy and resources to that end. They do not let their work fade into the background, but monitor and assess results using student outcome data to continually make appropriate adjustments.

A question emerges from these data—how can policy not only serve to support successful schools, but help turn around more struggling schools? What emerges from the research is a conceptual framework for implementing strategies with the greatest potential for improving student achievement—a framework where strong visionary building leadership works in conjunction with a highly skilled and dedicated instructional staff to focus on improved student outcomes, and an educational team is provided with adequate resources and empowered to act decisively in improving the quality of instruction and learning. The subsequent data collected from school and district stakeholders was consistent with the findings from the research literature.

Quality and Usefulness of the Literature Review

The literature review identified potential barriers to school improvement. Evidence that shows how effectively this was accomplished comes from two sources. Stakeholder ratings of the entire list of barriers showed that those identified in the literature review were indeed barriers in Washington state, and that each held the potential to show moderate to high impact if they were successfully removed. Focus group and phone interviews provided the second source. At the end of each session, the participants identified additional barriers that, if removed, could help them improve student achievement. In all instances no additional policy barriers were offered.

In summation, there was broad consensus that the barriers identified by the review were important and that their removal had the potential to positively impact student achievement. At the same time, respondents contributed no additional policy barriers when prompted to do so.

Instrument Development

The following policy and procedural barriers, identified through the literature review, were used as the organizational structure for the seven protocols that were used in the study: key stakeholder interview, teacher focus group protocol and barrier rating sheets, principal focus group protocol and barrier rating sheet, and district staff interview protocol and barrier rating sheet (see Appendix B for copies of protocols):

1. Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.
2. Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.
3. Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school-year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instructional time.
4. Lack of school staff members with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.
5. Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.
6. Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction.
7. School and district financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
8. School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.
9. Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.
10. Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.
11. Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.
12. Inability to enact differential pay for staff.
13. Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.
14. Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.
15. Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.
16. Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.

Key Stakeholder Interviews

NWREL staff, in collaboration with the SBE staff, identified a sampling frame of 44 representatives from key legislative committees, governmental, educational and community agencies for participation in the study (see Appendix C for complete list of organizations). Introductory letters were first sent to each key stakeholder by the SBE. These introductory letters were followed by e-mails from NWREL staff members as part of the interview scheduling process. Interviews, which were approximately one hour in length, were successfully completed with 34 key stakeholders (a 77.3 percent response rate).

For each identified barrier, participants were asked whether they thought this policy or procedure was a problem for Washington schools. If their response was yes, participants were asked to rate, using a three-point scale (high, medium, or low), the ability of the state or district to eliminate this barrier.

Onsite District Visits

NWREL staff members, in collaboration with SBE staff, selected seven school districts to visit as part of the study: Everett, Moses Lake, Seattle, Sedro-Woolley, Shelton, Vancouver, and Yakima. These districts were selected because of their high representation of minority students, level of student performance on the WASL and AYP, and range of student enrollment and staff size (high, medium, and low). As a group, these districts account for just over 11 percent of the students and staff members within the state.

During the onsite visits, NWREL staff members conducted teacher focus groups, principal focus groups, and interviewed district staff members. Teacher focus groups were comprised of six teachers selected from the district's most struggling schools. Union representatives from each school district were invited to participate in a separate focus group. Focus group sessions were scheduled after school, and lasted approximately one hour. Honorariums were provided to teachers in order to encourage participation in the focus groups.

Principals from the same schools as the teachers participated in a principal focus group. Focus group sessions were also approximately one hour in length and explored staffing and financial issues in addition to the instruction-related barriers covered in the teacher focus groups. Superintendents and key district staff members were interviewed regarding barriers from a district perspective.

Focus group and interview participants were asked to verify that barriers identified through the literature review were applicable to their schools and districts. Follow up questions were asked to clarify what aspects of specific policies impeded raising student achievement.

During their focus group sessions, principals and teachers were asked to fill out a rating sheet that listed the 16 barriers and assess the level of impact (high, medium, or low) on student achievement that would be attained if the barriers were removed. A similar rating sheet was developed for superintendents who were attending a statewide superintendent conference in May 2008. Twenty-three surveys were completed by superintendents and returned to NWREL for analysis.

Descriptive statistics are primarily used in presenting study findings. Frequencies and percentages are calculated for the applicability of identified barriers, impact rankings on student achievement, and ratings on the state's ability to bring about policy change. An average score (impact and ability to change) from 2.25 to 3.00 is coded as "high," 1.66 to 1.85 as "medium," and 1.00 to 1.65 as "low" (Table 1).

TABLE 1
Range of Ratings as Determined by Mean Average Score

2.25 - 3.00 High	1.85 – 2.24 Medium	1.00 - 1.84 Low

Open-ended responses are grouped into categories—Assistance for School and District Improvement, Financial and Data Resources, People Issues, and Use of Time.

FINDINGS

Principal Rating

A total of 44 Principal Rating Forms and were returned (Table 2). Approximately 41 percent of the principals were from elementary schools, 32 percent from middle schools, and 18 percent from high schools.

Table 2
Principals: School Demographics

	Frequency	Percent
Elementary school	18	40.9
Middle school	14	31.8
High school	8	18.2
Both middle and high	1	2.3
K-12	3	6.8
Total	44	100.0

Teacher Rating

A total of 57 Teacher Rating Forms were returned (Table 3). Two-thirds (38) of the teachers were from selected teachers and one-third from union representatives (19). The top four highest ratings on the impact on student achievement when removing a barrier, and the state's ability to initiate policy changes to medicate that barrier, were the same.

Union representatives from each school district participated in a separate focus group and were invited to verify the consistency of findings. The ratings from selected teachers and union representatives were very similar. The descriptive statistics from union representatives can be found in Appendix D. Only the ratings of selected teachers were included in this study. Among the selected teachers, 36.8 percent were from elementary schools, 28.9 percent from middle schools, and 26.3 percent from high schools.

Table 3
Teachers: School Demographics

	Frequency	Percent
Elementary school	14	36.8
Middle school	11	28.9
High school	10	26.3
Both middle and high	1	2.6
Junior high (8-9)	1	2.6
K-12	1	2.6
Total	38	100.0

Superintendent Rating

A similar rating sheet was developed for superintendents who were attending a statewide superintendent conference in May 2008. Twenty-three surveys were completed by superintendents and returned to NWREL for analysis.

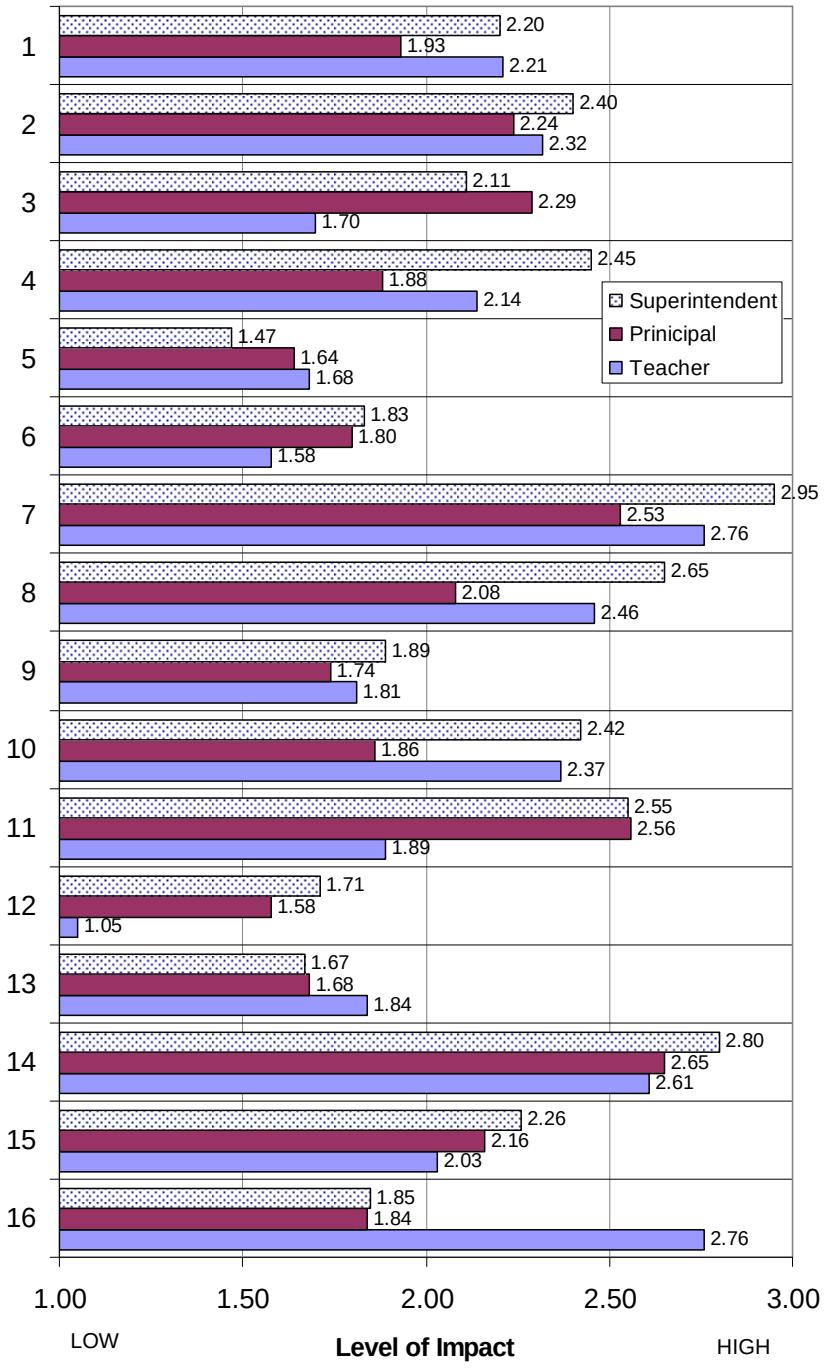
Level of Impact on Student Achievement if Barriers are Removed

The perceptions of teachers, principals, and superintendents regarding of the level of impact on student achievement if the barriers are removed are presented in Figures 1 to 4. Stakeholders' perceptions regarding the level of impact on student achievement and the state's ability to eliminate the barriers are discussed in the next section and are presented in Figures 5 and 6, respectively. The descriptive statistics for all participants can be found in Appendix D.

FIGURE 1

Barriers:

1. Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.
2. Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.
3. Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.
4. Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.
5. Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.
6. Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction
7. School and district financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
8. School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.
9. Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.
10. Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.
11. Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.
12. Inability to enact differential pay for staff.
13. Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.
14. Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.
15. Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.
16. Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.

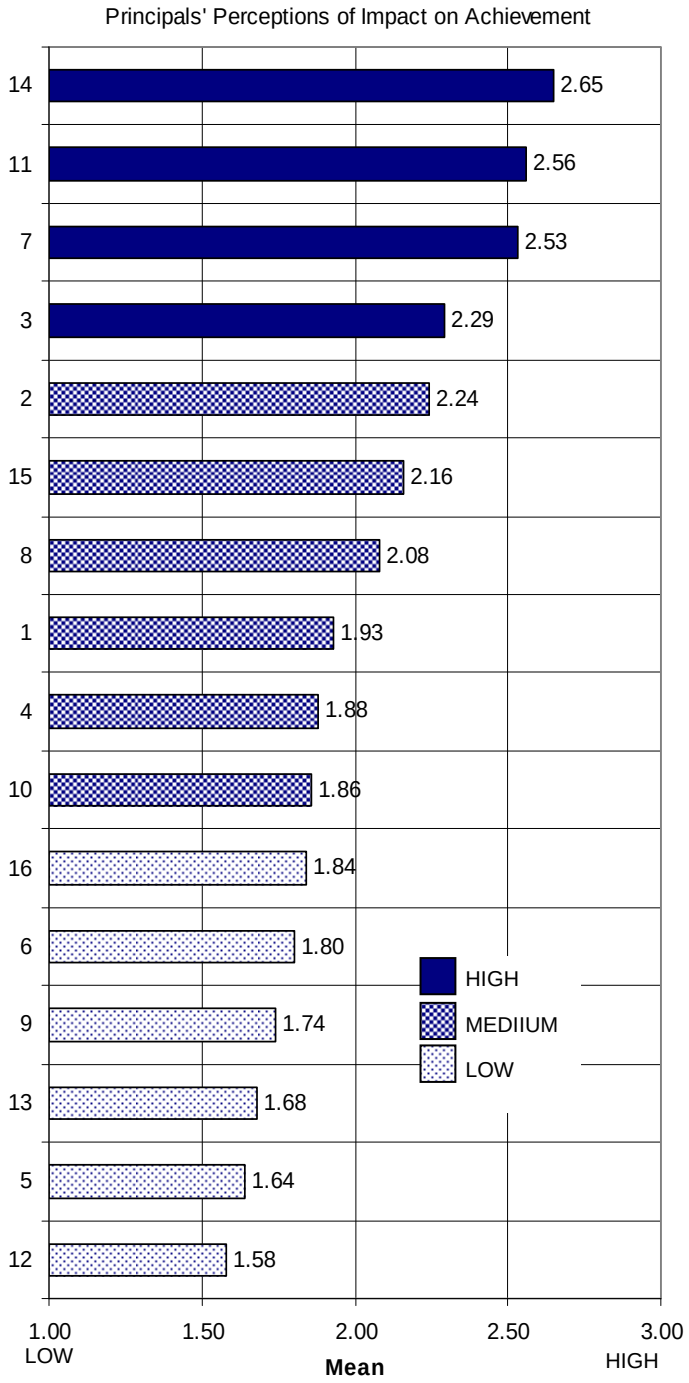


Comparison of Respondents' Perceptions of the Level of Impact on Student Achievements if Barriers are Removed

FIGURE 2

Barriers:

14. Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.
11. Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.
7. School and district financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
3. Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.
2. Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.
15. Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.
8. School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.
1. Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.
4. Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.
10. Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.
16. Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.
6. Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction
9. Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.
13. Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.
5. Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.
12. Inability to enact differential pay for staff.

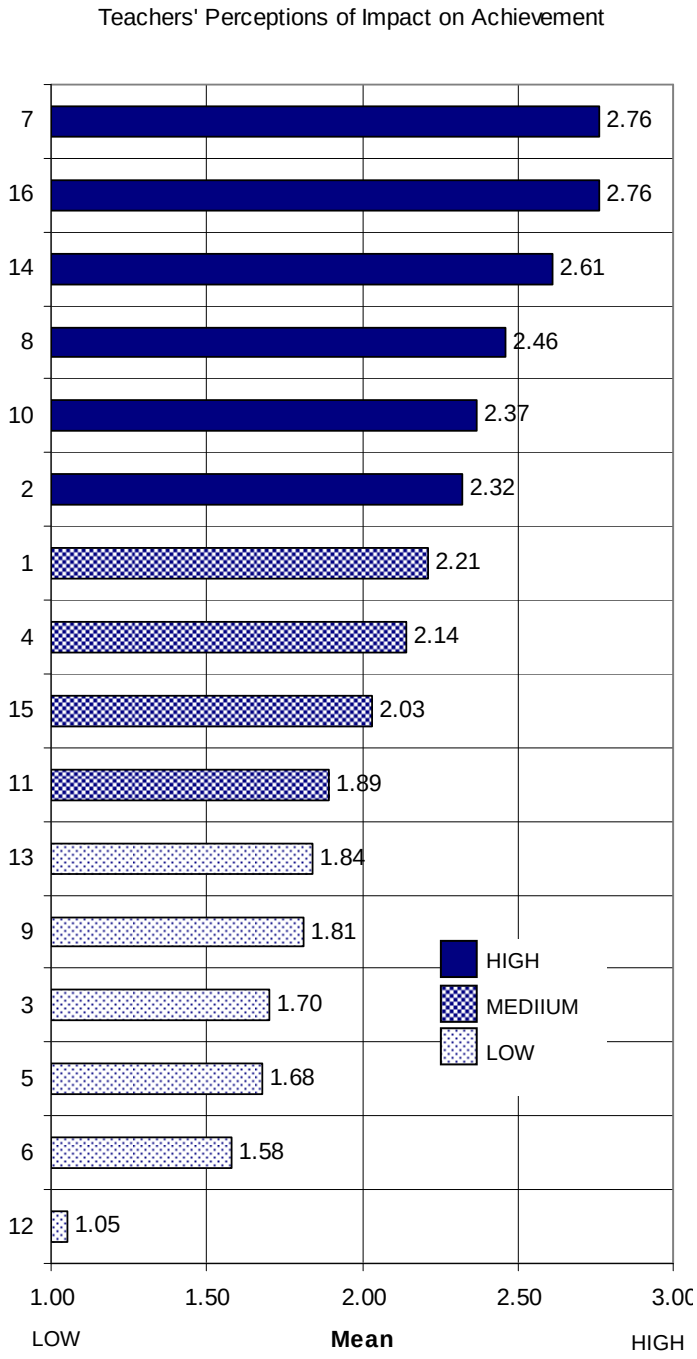


Principals' Perceptions of the Level of Impact on Student Achievement if Barriers are Removed

Figure 3

Barriers:

7. Schools and districts financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
16. Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.
14. Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.
8. School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.
10. Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.
2. Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.
1. Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.
4. Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.
15. Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.
11. Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.
13. Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.
9. Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.
3. Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.
5. Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.
6. Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction
12. Inability to enact differential pay for staff



Teachers' Perceptions of the Level of Impact on Student Achievement if Barriers are Removed

FIGURE 4

Barriers:

7. School and district financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
14. Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.

8. School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.
11. Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.

4. Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.

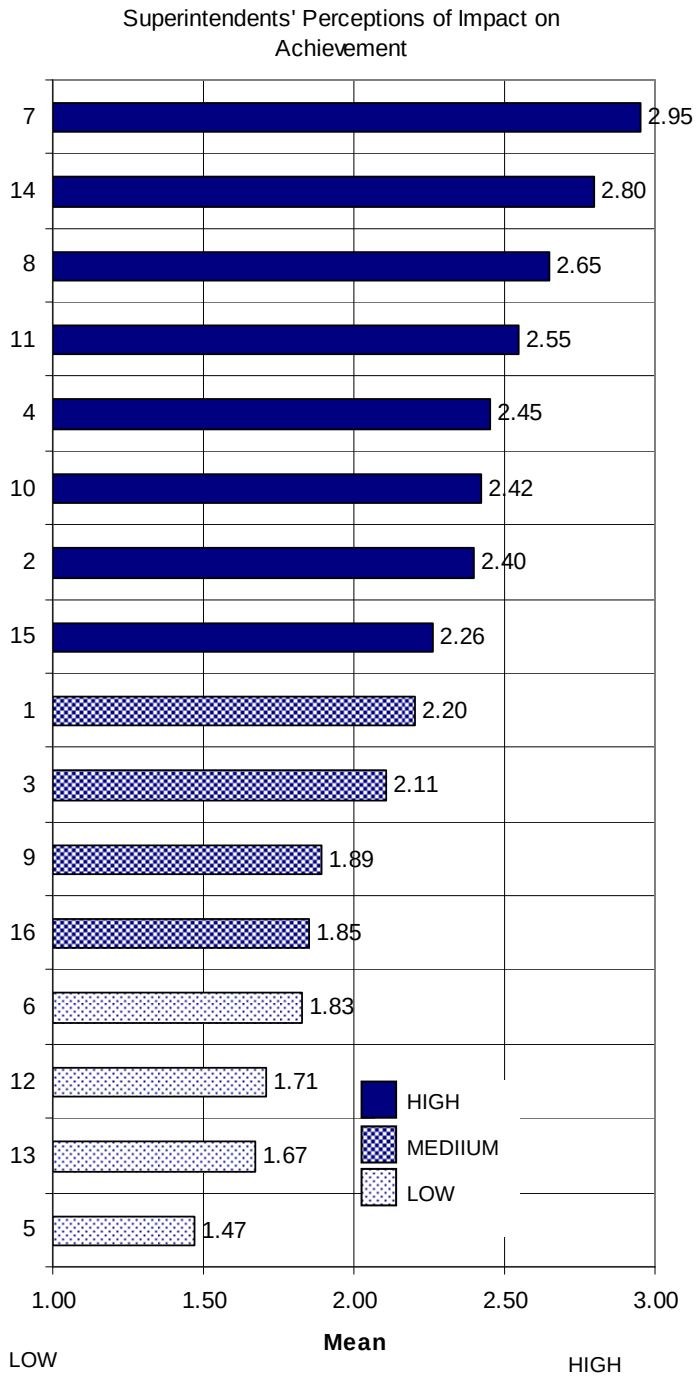
10. Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.

2. Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services.
15. Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.
1. Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.
3. Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.
9. Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.
16. Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.
6. Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction

12. Inability to enact differential pay for staff.

13. Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.

5. Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.



Superintendents' Perceptions of the Level of Impact on Student Achievement if Barriers are Removed

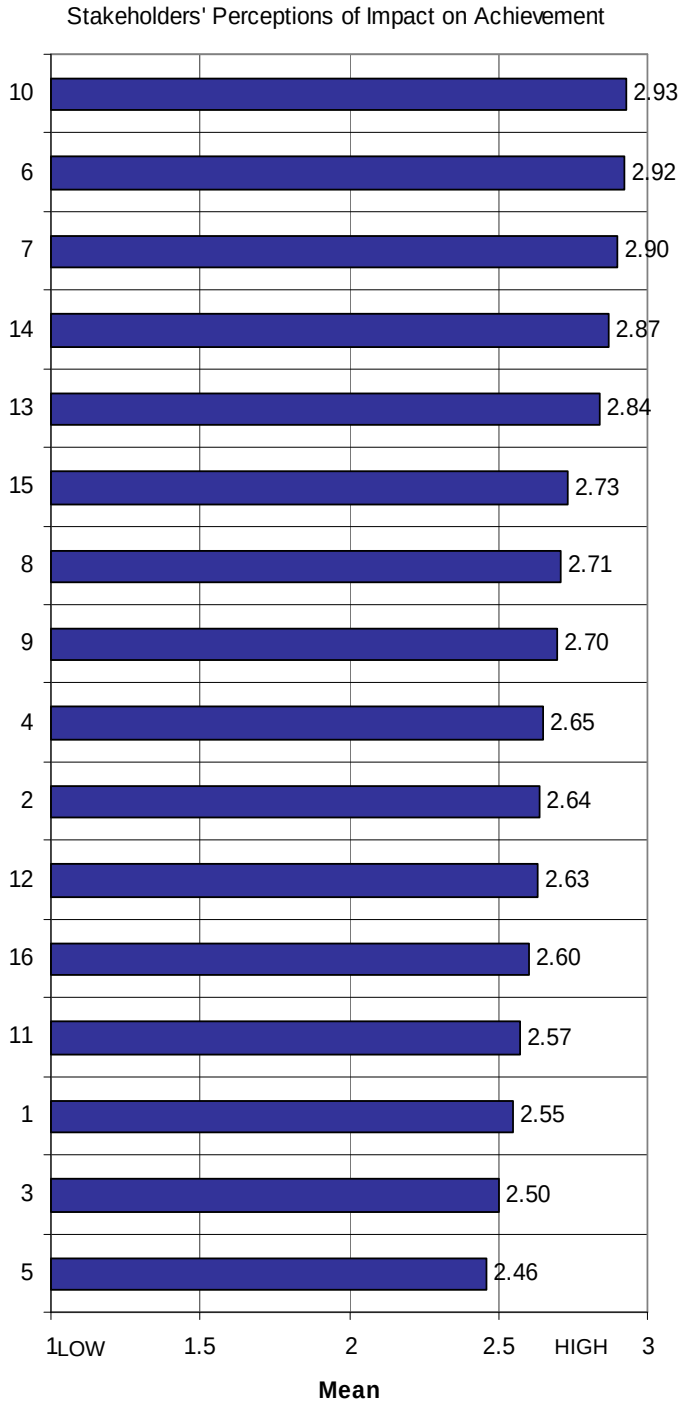
Key Stakeholder Interviews

A total of 34 stakeholders were interviewed in April and May 2008. They were asked to rate the level of impact a policy has on student achievement, and the level of the state's ability to reduce that barrier by changing current policy. (Barriers, ordered by highest to lowest mean average score, are shown in Figures 5 and 6.)

FIGURE 5

Barriers:

10. Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.
6. Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction
7. School and district financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
14. Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.
13. Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.
15. Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.
8. School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.
9. Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.
4. Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.
2. Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.
12. Inability to enact differential pay for staff.
16. Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.
11. Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.
1. Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.
3. Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.
5. Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.

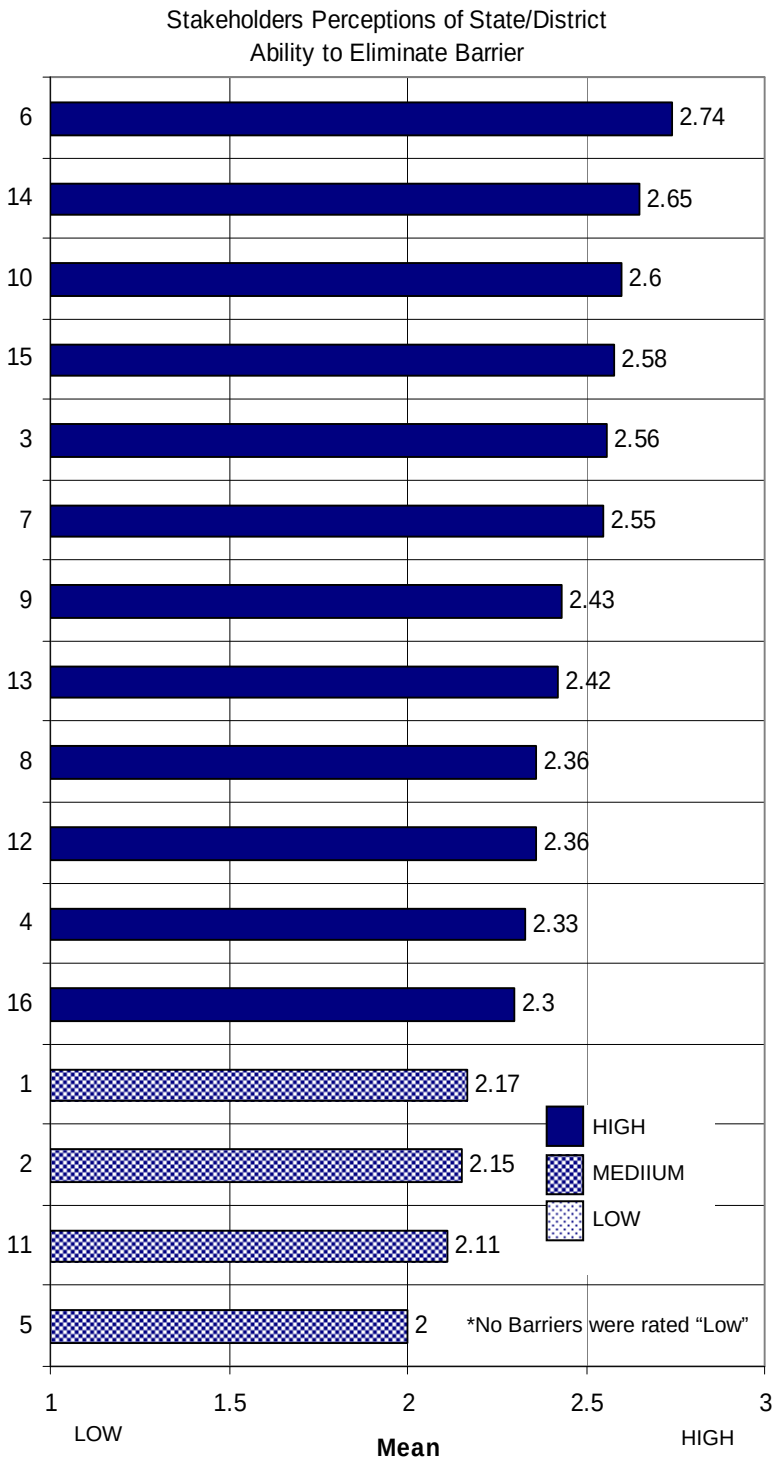


Key Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Level of Impact on Student Achievement if Barriers are Removed

Figure 6

Barriers:

6. Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction
14. Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.
10. Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.
15. Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.
3. Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.
7. School and district financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
9. Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.
13. Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.
8. School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.
12. Inability to enact differential pay for staff.
4. Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.
16. Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.
1. Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.
2. Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.
11. Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.
5. Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.



Key Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Ability of States or Districts to Eliminate Barriers

Responsibility

The stakeholders were also asked who (state or district) should be responsible for each barrier. A majority of the respondents reported that the **state** should be responsible to remove the following barriers (Figure 7):

- Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively (88.2%).
- School and district financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level (83.3%).
- Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction (73.1%).
- Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools (68.0%).
- Inability to enact differential pay for staff (65.2%).
- School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement (61.9%).
- Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000-hour school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective (56%).
- Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time (52.4%).
- Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change (51.7%).
- Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff (51.7%).

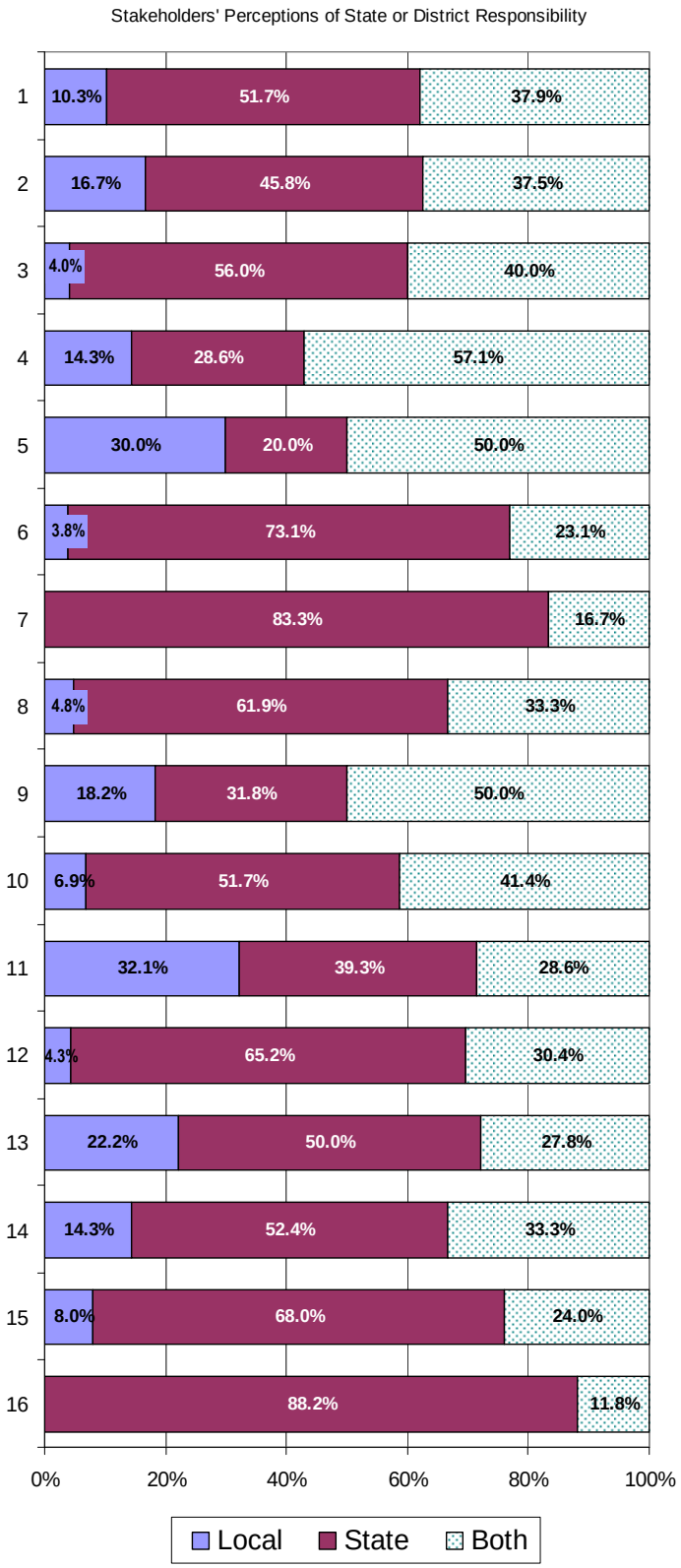
On the other hand, a majority of the respondents reported that both the **state and district** should be responsible to remove the barrier:

- Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts (57.1%).

FIGURE 7

Barrier:

1. Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.
2. Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.
3. Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.
4. Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.
5. Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.
6. Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction
7. School and district financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
8. School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.
9. Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.
10. Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.
11. Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.
12. Inability to enact differential pay for staff.
13. Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.
14. Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.
15. Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.
16. Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.



Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Who (State or District) is Responsible for the Barriers

Barrier Impact Prioritization Matrix

Key stakeholder and school district ranking responses were integrated into a **Barrier Impact Prioritization Matrix** (Figure 8). The purpose of the matrix is to develop a prioritized list of policies that participants feel provide both the greatest opportunity for increasing student achievement and the highest likelihood for policy change. The matrix consists of six cells across two dimensions, the level of impact a policy has on student achievement, and the level of the state's ability to reduce that barrier by changing current policy. Using a 3-point scale—low, medium, and high— school and district participants were asked to rate the impact of each barrier on student achievement and key state policymakers were asked to rate the state's ability to initiate policy changes to medicate that barrier. Each barrier was located in the appropriate matrix cell based upon its rating coordinates (impact and changeability.

All barriers were placed in the appropriate matrix cell. The policies and practices that fall within the cell representing a high–high rating (shaded area) were highlighted for future policy considerations.

FIGURE 8

Barriers:

1. Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.
2. Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.
3. Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.
4. Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.
5. Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.
6. Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction.
7. Schools and districts financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
8. School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.
9. Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.
10. Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.
11. Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.
12. Inability to enact differential pay for staff.
13. Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.
14. Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.
15. Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.
16. Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.

Stakeholders' Perception of State/District Ability to Remove Barrier

Teachers' Perception of Impact of Removal of Barrier on Achievement	High	Medium	Low
High	7; 8; 10; 14; 16	2	
Medium	4; 11; ,15,	1	
Low	3; 6; 9; 12; 13	5	

Stakeholders' Perception of State/District Ability to Remove Barrier

Principals' Perception of Impact of Removal of Barrier on Achievement	High	Medium	Low
High	3, 7, 14	11	
Medium	4; 8, 10; 15	1,2	
Low	6; 9; 12; 13; 16	5	

Stakeholders' Perception of State/District Ability to Remove Barrier

Superintendents' Perception of Impact of Removal of Barrier on Achievement	High	Medium	Low
High	4, 7, 8; 10; 14; 15	2; 11	
Medium	3; 9; 16	1	
Low	6; 12, 13	5	

Stakeholders' Perception of State/District Ability to Remove Barrier

Stakeholders' Perception of Impact of Removal of Barrier on Achievement	High	Medium	Low
High	3; 4, 6; 7, 8; 9; 10; 12; 13; 14; 15; 16		
Medium	1; 2; 11; 5		
Low			

Barrier Impact Prioritization Matrix Reflecting the Perceptions of Each Respondent Group

From a **teacher's** perspective, the following barriers were rated as high on the level of impact a policy has on student achievement, and a high on the level of the state's ability to reduce that barrier by changing current policy:

- School and district financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
- School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.
- Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.
- Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.
- Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.

From a **principal's** perspective, the following barriers were rated as high on the level of impact a policy has on student achievement, and high on the level of the state's ability to reduce that barrier by changing current policy:

- Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000-hour school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.
- School and district financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
- Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.

From a **superintendent's** perspective, the following barriers were rated as high on the level of impact a policy has on student achievement, and a high on the level of the state's ability to reduce that barrier by changing current policy:

- Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.
- School and district financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
- School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.
- Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.
- Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.
- Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.

From a **key stakeholder's** perspective, the following barriers were rated as high on the level of impact a policy has on student achievement, and a high on the level of the state's ability to reduce that barrier by changing current policy:

- Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000-hour school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.
- Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.

- Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction.
- School and district financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
- School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.
- Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.
- Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.
- Inability to enact differential pay for staff.
- Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.
- Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.
- Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.
- Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.

The policies and practices that fall within the cell representing a **high–high rating** across teachers, principals (high–medium), superintendents, and stakeholders are:

- School and district financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.
- Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.

Those barriers not achieving consensus status (high-high), but rather "high-high" in *most* groups include:

- School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.
- Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.

Summary of Findings from School District Staff Member, Principal, and Teacher Focus Groups

Assistance for School and District Improvement

School and district planning. School district staff members and principals reported that schools are struggling with how to do a better job with school planning, and that currently it is a struggle for some schools to complete the School Improvement Plan. These respondents agreed that state level requirements help to get districts into compliance; but while, in some cases, a school could have different plans, generally there should only be one plan per building. Some respondents indicated that the School Improvement Plan needs to be on a template.

There was a universal agreement from principals that detailed School Improvement Plan guidelines from OSPI were sufficient, but they were not seen as user- friendly or aligned to district plans. There was a wide difference of opinion among principals whether there was an alignment between district and building plans. On the other hand, although district staff members agreed that OSPI guidelines were not always helpful, they felt that the articulation of district and building improvement plans was good. The extent of district participation in planning varies at the building level.

From the teachers' perspective, there was no complete agreement regarding the extent of involvement teachers had in developing school improvement plans, nor about the level of subsequent buy-in related to the plan. In some districts, the initial efforts were seen as having building-wide, staff member participation, but many teachers perceived that updates were governed by only small groups of staff members. One district staff member reported that in the district, school plans were used on an ongoing basis, but only sparingly. Often new individuals joining the school staff didn't know of the existence of the plans. With very few exceptions, district administrators reported that schools didn't use the plans regularly.

School improvement assistance program. There was a mixed report from district and school administrators regarding the quality and capability of School Improvement Facilitators (SIF) and the school improvement assistance program provided by OSPI. According to their response, the success of the program depends upon who the school improvement facilitator is. Some school principals felt that the state's effort is "one size fits all." Several principals agreed that when they have a well-qualified school improvement facilitator, they are satisfied with the quality of services that are provided. The less skilled the school improvement facilitator is, the less successful is service to the district. One school principal reported having a "terrible" experience with inflexibility on the part of one SIF.

Program coordination. In one school district, where there were multiple math grants, the district administrator report that it was difficult for its teachers to coordinate, and that the district was unable to do the training it needed for the proposed outcomes. Principals of schools that were moving to the later stages of "needing improvement" commented that although they liked the program in the earlier years of their grants, they now felt that they were being abandoned by the state. With the end of the grant, there would be no one providing the resources, and the impact of the program would stop.

Principals reported that any request that could be handled by "a single touch" was handled well by the state or district. However, ongoing support or multifaceted problems were not addressed well by either the state or district.

District staff members also agreed that programs offered by state agencies needed to be articulated and coordinated. Two examples illustrating this issue were the new state math graduation requirements and the need for discussion regarding improvement in math achievement within the state. Districts perceived an intrinsic conflict between OSPI's focus on the NCLB mandate—that all students will graduate from high school—and the SBE's draft core of 24 credits for graduation initiative, which many feel could lower graduation rates.

Multiple stakeholders reported that schools were receiving mixed messages regarding the new revisions in math and science standards regarding timelines and curriculum, creating anxiety of how to plan for professional development and WASL preparation. One strategy put forth for addressing this problem was the implementation of a state taskforce, comprised of representatives from all of the state agencies (OSPI, SBE, etc.) to develop consistent statewide policies regarding training needs, resource requirements, and appropriate standards for students.

Financial and Data Resources

School improvement budget. There was a universal consensus from all participants that schools are not supplied with enough resources and funds from the legislature.

There was an equal agreement about the need for more money, time, and for flexibility on how to spend the resources that were provided. There was consensus by all district and school administrators that school improvement budgets are not determined based on individual school improvement needs. Most principals expressed a desire for, in their words, the "fulfillment of the state constitution's requirement to fund basic education." One superintendent said, "The state expects us to deliver a world-class education system with a sub-standard budget." Another superintendent commented, "The state needs to redefine basic education to include all costs. There is a need for more funds for education from the state."

Financial resources. One district administrator pointed out that Washington state ranks 47th in expenditure for education, right behind Mississippi and Idaho. Administrators commented that school districts are left to find their own funds for such things as transportation and special education. Administrators noted that most extra funding is "soft money," which is temporary and has too many strings attached. Resources are provided for a short period of time, and then they are gone. Teachers observed, ironically, that once a school district shows that it is successful in implementing a program, the money is taken away, and the school district falls back again.

Two programs mentioned by participants that are illustrative of this barrier are OSPI's School Improvement Facilitator (SIF) and Promoting Academic Success (PAS) Programs. A number of district and school staff mentioned that they were just beginning to make progress in improving student achievement when the grant period ended, putting a stop to the needed resources. One superintendent mentioned that when schools in his district had achieved student reading scores "a little above standard," needed "funds were taken away." In most cases the result of losing SIF funds was declining WASL scores, because the improvements could not be sustained without the additional resources.

The PAS Program was initiated by the legislature to allocate resources to schools to provide assistance to students who failed the 10th-grade WASL. However, a principal mentioned that after his district had geared up to provide students with assistance, the legislature shut down the PAS Program.

Resource flexibility. One school district reported that it has the operating flexibility it needs, but does not have sufficient resources. Another administrator cited a lack of flexibility in using funds. One principal said, "There seems to be extreme accountability at the state level that has caused the district to be more top down." Another principal commented, "Educational policies are being made by legislatures who don't know the student populations they serve and they think they are doing the right thing. It is not proper for the legislature to be making education policy. OSPI should be the agency where this gets done." Another principal commented, "We are trying to be high tech schools and we are using the 1950s model of administration." The principals would like to see funds given to schools based on needs, as defined by the needs and profile of students—special education, English language learners, socio-economic status. Some principles reported that the building-based, decision-making model in place in their districts, which requires staff member and parent input, was an impediment to administrative flexibility.

Data resources. There was a wide degree of opinion by principals about the effectiveness and usefulness of data systems that are in place. Many principals felt that they lacked time to review and use the data for school improvement. Most principals felt it would be helpful for the state to adopt and provide schools with a data system that met their needs. Comprehensiveness of data systems

in place vary across buildings, and the multiple systems in place are often not compatible with each other. As a result, systems cannot communicate and work together. Some district staff members were critical of the state data system, and had adopted their own data systems, which they used successfully to meet their needs. Finally, one principal reported that he had used the OSPI Web page for checking data and test items and found that the data in the Web page did not match current data in the district.

Teachers observed that the state has good data to offer, but the system around it is inadequate and does not provide information that can be used for ongoing assessment of student skills and improvement of teaching practices. There are gaps in assessing literacy. Teachers commented that the WASL is a very rich problem-solving test, but the state needs to identify testing companies that can provide problem-solving formative measures, so that schools and teachers can better judge if they are getting students to where they need to be.

Most principals and teachers stated that schools need to receive the WASL data sooner, and that it needs to be more predictive of student skills and more aligned to the curriculum. Most teachers are grateful that students are being identified as not meeting standards, but they agree that they need this information sooner in order to plan for the next school year. Teachers acknowledge that the schools are getting summative data, but they need help with formative data that is incremental. Some districts have chosen to use the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measure of Academic Progress (MAP), an assessment tool that teachers use to measure ongoing student progress more effectively.

People Issues

Recruitment of qualified teachers. The perceptions of district administrators and principals about the ability to recruit quality teachers varied by location. From their responses, there appears to be less of a problem at the elementary level than at secondary schools and in specialty areas. One school principal reported that because of a district practice, the school was unable to recruit early enough to be competitive with other schools for the best candidates. Many principals and superintendents indicated that identifying and recruiting highly qualified teachers in certain content areas is problematic; specifically, principals mentioned a need to do better job in recruiting math teachers. Principals also mentioned that districts are responsible for teacher placements and sometimes, because of certification, a placement is not what the building needs. Principals feel that this district practice needs to be changed.

There is a strong consensus from all respondents that the effectiveness of the teachers is the single most important educational determinant. Principals and district staff members agreed that recruitment and retention of educators in high-needs schools (rural, low-performing and high-poverty) and hard-to-staff subjects (math, science, and special education) is necessary in order to increase student performance and help close the achievement gap. Some principals and teachers suggested financial incentives, changes in collective-bargaining agreements, loan forgiveness programs, tuition reimbursement, signing bonuses, salary adjustments, induction programs, and mentoring opportunities, as effective strategies in teacher recruitment. They also agreed that such efforts aim not only to bring more people into the teaching profession, particularly in high-need subjects such as science and mathematics, but also to encourage more well-qualified

teachers to teach in the most challenging schools. Both teachers and principals mentioned that compensation plays a key role in the recruitment and retention of teachers. However, this relationship is not a simple one. Most teachers said that, in some cases, supportive working conditions may trump salary as a factor in teacher retention.

Principals mentioned that teacher attrition is most severe among beginning teachers, but that the likelihood of a teacher leaving declines significantly after he or she has been in the classroom for four to five years. District staff members reported that schools with greater administrative support and teacher autonomy have lower teacher attrition. Teachers indicated that providing them with adequate autonomy is another effective strategy for retention.

Staffing system. Some principals and district staff members mentioned that the district staffing system is not effective for "high needs" schools. Because of provisions within their collective bargaining agreements, teachers can request where they want to transfer, which results in more teachers going to high-end schools. In one school, 75 percent of the teaching staff had turned over in the last eight years. However, despite these staffing issues, participating principals did not feel that there was a gap in quality between their staff and the staffs of other schools.

Professional development. Principals and district staff members clearly feel that funding for professional development is insufficient. Some feel that contract and bargaining issues interfere with what the schools and districts require in the delivery of professional development. Principals and school district staff members emphasized that professional development should be focused on teaching and learning. However, participation in professional development is a teacher's option, and principals report that some members of their staffs are reluctant to participate or prefer to participate in training of their own choice. Principals saw this as a limitation in turning schools around. Principals feel that they do not have sufficient professional development budgets. Even if they have a vision for where they want the building to go, they report lacking resources to do it. And, because teachers decide the content area of the professional development in which they choose to participate, principals also are not able to designate that funds be used in areas where they perceive improvement is needed. One principal mentioned that some teachers are motivated to get certification because of the higher salary it brings, but not to become better teachers.

Dismissal of low-performing staff. Principals and district staff indicated that it is extremely difficult to dismiss ineffective staff members. It requires a tremendous amount of effort to remove teachers—sometimes taking more than one year to remove a low-performing teacher. Union intervention makes removing a teacher very difficult and slows the process. One principal said "we have the ability to remove 'F' teachers, but it is almost impossible to remove 'C-'teachers."

Differentiated compensation. Principals and district staff members reported that there were relatively few instances where differentiated compensation had been provided to teachers; in those cases where differentiated compensation *had* taken place, it was dependent upon the availability of local funds. Some principals supported differentiated compensation, whereas *all* teachers rejected the idea.

Collective bargaining agreement. Almost universally, principals agreed that some provisions of their present bargaining agreement inhibit their ability to act decisively. This was especially true regarding: 1) procedures for removing

staff—making it difficult, but not impossible; 2) seniority provisions, which reduced administrative flexibility; and 3) the prescriptive evaluation model in the collective bargaining agreement.

District staff members and principals expressed the need for more flexibility in the policies governing how teachers are paid, hired, fired, or assigned. According to some principals, such flexibility is constrained by collective bargaining between teacher unions and school districts. Seniority is the primary basis for transfers, reductions, and reassignments; and some collective agreements require that teachers be paid extra for training that takes place outside the workday, including at conferences.

However, some district staff members and principals cautioned against placing blame on labor agreements for poor student achievement. Such a response distracts the school district from addressing the fundamental issues that these schools are dealing with, such as not having the infrastructure, learning materials, sufficient funding, and technology for the students in the school districts.

Class size. There is a universal agreement among teachers about the importance of reducing class sizes. In fact, the issues they cite as most important to school improvement are "class size, more money, and more time for teachers to collaborate." Teachers were also in agreement that class size should be smaller in "high needs" schools.

Use of Time

School calendar. The current calendar is viewed by most respondents, in all roles, as a barrier to student and teacher learning. Some teachers indicated that the use of time within the current calendar does not focus on school improvement; however, there was not consensus for a single solution for change. Some suggested a longer year, longer day, and a variety of block scheduling. Some principals and teachers suggested that the school calendar needed to go beyond 180 days. Many thought that the school day was too short for struggling students.

Some district staff members and principals indicated that the conventional school calendar of nine months in school, followed by a three-month summer vacation, is an outdated school model. Teachers also said that the traditional school calendar doesn't correlate with children's learning patterns. The long summer break interferes with retention of material, particularly for younger children and for students whose families cannot afford summer enrichment activities. Most teachers suggested that the schools need to restructure the time teachers now spend in the classroom and focus on teacher training.

District staff members agreed that it is of little value to add days to the calendar without a concrete plan for using the time to enhance instruction. Adding more days to the school calendar is no guarantee that additional time will be used for better education. Moreover, principals and district staff indicated that changing the school calendar might generate controversy. Common challenges cited by the all respondents were funding for teacher salaries, supplies, transportation, child-care concerns, and scheduling facilities. Not every respondent agreed that extending the school day or year was the best way to improve education. District staff members and principals indicated that every hour and every day added to the school calendar incur a significant expense above and beyond existing budgets.

However, there was a widely held opinion across groups that the state should shift from focusing on instructional time based

upon a Carnegie unit (seat time) to proficiency based outcomes.

Collaboration time. Some teachers reported that the lack of instruction time was not the most pressing problem, but rather the lack of collaboration time. There is agreement that there is not enough time for teachers to get together to plan and collaborate, and that more time for collaboration should be provided during the school day.

Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 180-16-220 Modifications. Two issues emerge regarding the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 180-16-220 and the present school improvement process.

First, there was an agreement among many administrators that although the present *School Improvement Planning Process Guide* from OSPI was comprehensive, it was not seen as user friendly. At 170 pages, the present *School Improvement Planning Process Guide* contains a wealth of planning information and step-by-step planning aids. However, all school groups reported that they desired a more simplified process template, possibly some type of computerized template to use in developing their school improvement plan.

Second, many of the participants reported that once the plans were developed they were infrequently used on an ongoing basis. Presently, WAC 180-16-220 requires each school in a district to be approved annually by the school district board of directors. The specific language of this requirement in the administrative code is as follows:

> *(a) Each school in the district shall be approved annually by the school district board of directors under an approval process determined by the district board of directors.*
>
> *(b) At a minimum the annual approval shall require each school to have a school improvement plan that is data driven, promotes a positive impact on student learning, and includes a continuous improvement process that shall mean the ongoing process used by a school to monitor, adjust, and update its school improvement plan.*

A number of districts have interpreted this language to mean that "there is no requirement that the school board approve each school's plan. Instead, the requirement is only that the school board ensure that the plans are in existence." This interpretation may contribute to lessening the importance of integrating the plan into the organizational life of the school. One strategy to address this issue would be to modify the WAC to require school boards to submit an annual report certifying and illustrating the use of SIP plans by schools and the progress made in accomplishing specified plan outcomes.

Context for Policy Findings

Consistent with the emergent educational research literature, a framework for strategies with the greatest potential for dramatically improving student learning in underperforming schools includes the existence of strong visionary-building leadership, accompanied by a skilled, cohesive, and dedicated teaching force. The teachers and administration should work together as a team focused on improving student achievement. Systems should be designed to empower these building-level educators with adequate resources and the ability (freedom/authority) to act decisively in improving the quality of instruction and learning.

It is little wonder, then, that both of the consensus barriers and others with near high-high status, where all (most) groups felt the greatest improvement could occur and policymakers felt could be removed, aligned themselves directly to portions of this framework. For example, the recognition of the importance to remove the

barrier of insufficient resources speaks directly to providing adequate resources to building staff members, as does inflexibility to determine how funds are spent. The recognition that not having adequate time for building staff members to meet, plan, and confer speaks to resources to fund this time, but also for leadership to insure the time is used wisely. Finally, the barrier posed by a lack of systems to support the entry, development, and retention of highly qualified staff members directly links to the existence of strong leadership and a skilled, cohesive, and dedicated teaching force.

This study can not answer all of the implementation questions that will arise as Washington state undertakes it effort to turn around historically underperforming schools. However, it can point the way. Based on the literature and the professional judgment of Washington educators and policy makers, it is clear that all of the barriers identified were currently inhibitors to some degree in Washington schools. It was the consensus that their removal would favorably improve student learning from a moderate to a high degree. It was also a consensus that the barriers with the greatest potential to improve learning were the ones seen as barriers to achieving this framework.

Primary Policy Findings

Lack of Program Coherence

Although participants were hard pressed to cite specific state policies that they could identify as barriers, they did agree that there existed a statewide lack of program coherence. While the estimated impact of removing barriers to program coherence was judged moderate to strong, the theme repeatedly emerged among all educator groups. In their view, it was common to receive multiple inputs from various educational policy-making bodies within the state, and that these could emanate from any of several sources, including the SBE, the Legislature, the Governor's Office, as well as OSPI. Each input came with a different, and often incompatible, emphasis and set of requirements. In the respondents' words "the State needs to get its act together and decide who is in charge of program initiation, especially related to school improvement."

Implications. This barrier seems to rest clearly within the control of the state. It is recommended that clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations be established among the various educational policy-making bodies in Washington state, and that some mechanism be established to insure program consistency and congruence. In addition, some thought should be given to making the various programs not only compatible, but also to appear to work together when viewed from a district and building perspective, and to be clearly linked to student outcomes.

Perceived Funding and Program Impermanence

This is not a category of barrier by itself, but rather a subset of the lack of program congruence described above. The effects of perceived funding impermanence are profound on the attitudes and actions of school personnel. From the perspective of Washington's schools and districts, funding streams are not only fragmented, but also transitory. In their words "We implement a funded program and in a couple of years, just about the time its impact is expected to be felt, the funding is removed and the program is lost." Such a perception constitutes a threat and barrier to any coordinated effort to improve underperforming schools. Moreover, to sustain progress made from a terminated funding source often forces district and school personnel to seek additional funding, which contributes to the level of incongruity. School improvement requires intensive and sustained effort by school

personnel. It makes good sense to ensure adequate funding and program support as a requisite to asking for this kind of effort.

Implications. When funding school improvement programs, the state should create a very stable funding stream. It is reasonable to expect that the time to convince school personnel that the funding and programs they support are not going to go away will take several years.

Conclusions and assumptions based on past history require demonstration that things will be different this time. Washington will only remove this barrier by demonstrating a commitment to maintain targeted resources and a willingness to stay the course in this effort. Talk will not suffice.

Time for Professional Development and Teacher Collaboration

The absence of such time was judged universally by almost all groups to be a barrier that, if removed, held the potential for highly impacting student achievement. This particular barrier was one that was mentioned time and time again at the end of the interview when individuals and groups were asked to articulate additional or particularly policies or practices that inhibited student learning.

The establishment and use of time for regular staff development and collaboration is both a resource and leadership issue. An appropriation of the current time for this purpose is not practical given the state's current annual minimum instructional time requirement. Additional time must be added to the day or the year in order to allow for these types of activities, which are so universally regarded as beneficial.

Implications. The state should allocate for additional staff time. The time provided should routinely be used to focus on student instructional needs and, as for building staff members to plan together how to address those needs. It would be wise to insure that as part of their pre-service or in-service training, building principals demonstrate skill in group facilitation and display a commitment to help their staff members use this time wisely. This is important in order to maximize the benefit of any additional time allocated.

Need for Operating Flexibility

Unlike the consensus around the need for time to collaborate, the perceived need for operational flexibility differed by wide margins between groups of educators. Principals felt that many of the policies or practices currently in place inhibited them from taking action to improve student achievement. They cited provisions commonly contained in collective bargaining agreements, particularly in regard to personnel management (compensation, teacher assignment, dismissal and evaluation) and the use of time (school calendar). Teachers did not share this perception, and felt that increasing operational flexibility, especially if they impacted or removed the provisions of a collective bargaining agreement, would have low affects on student achievement.

It should be recognized that a dynamic tension exists around the value and usefulness of collective bargaining agreement provisions. On the one hand, principals are clearly calling for their removal in order to strengthen their hand to act decisively. However, decisive action is only one aspect of the framework that emerges from the literature. Equally important is the existence of a skilled, cohesive, and dedicated instructional work force. If adequate staff participation in deciding working conditions and levels of staff participation in building management is not maintained, it is not reasonable to expect there to be a skilled, cohesive, and dedicated teaching force working with the principal as a cohesive team. Systems to

address historically underperforming schools should address both requirements simultaneously.

Implications. It is important that efforts to improve historically underperforming schools consciously strike a balance by removing the provisions of the collective bargaining agreement in ways that maintain teacher support and team cohesiveness. This is clearly a difficult task and one whose details will need to be addressed in any plan adopted by the state focused on turning around historically underperforming schools.

Systems that Support the Entry, Development and Retention of Quality Staff Members

This is a multifaceted barrier dealing with how Washington can initially attract and then retain high quality administrative and teaching personnel. In addition, it also addresses development of capacity and expertise of existing staff members. It is obvious that Washington schools would be well served by increasing their ability to attract and retain the best teachers in the nation. It is, however, necessary to recognize that all of the other states compete in the marketplace for the better teachers. Every state tries to increase its competitive position and improve it teaching and administrative work force. In this world of stiff competition Washington must renew its ongoing efforts and work smarter and harder if it is to attract the very best.

Once in place, adequate support for new teachers increases the chance they will remain in the profession and develop to their full potential. The development of teachers while on the job remains a challenging task. Creating appropriate learning experiences for adult learners and delivering them effectively in ways practicing teachers find practical and helpful, is key to development of the state's existing teaching staff.

Implications. Specialized professionals have worked productively with states, helping to attract and retain a strong teaching work force. Washington state is aware of, and has utilized, these strategies in its recruiting efforts. Washington might also consider reviewing its certification requirements to see if it is possible to streamline interstate transfer of experienced teachers. This might help attract teachers to the state and increase competitiveness nationwide. Increased funding and program development could also be undertaken around programs to mentor and support new and less experienced teachers.

Secondary Policy Findings

All Barriers Judged Removable

Stakeholders universally rated the state's and district's ability to remove barriers as modest or high. This is good news in that there does not seem to be some particular set of barriers that were judged intractable. When questioned, stakeholders tended to articulate a list of reasons why the removal of some barriers would be difficult or costly; but after they had done that, they ultimately judged that, given sufficient political will, effort, and persistence, all barriers could be removed.

Implications. Key policymakers in the state acknowledged that the state could do anything (remove any barrier), but it could not do *everything* (remove all of the barriers). Because of limits on time, money, and effort, it is important to develop a prioritized list to guide barrier removal. Finding a confluence of those with greatest potential impact along with Washington's ability to remove them is a useful strategy to guide this prioritization process.

Discretion in Resource Allocation

Left to their own devices, many school districts display an inability or unwillingness to distribute discretionary funds in differential ways to address academic needs. The reasons and mechanisms for this behavior remain unclear at this point, but this fact is undeniable, given the universal practice of equal funding to buildings described by the educator groups. Given enough digging by the investigators, some schools were able to cite examples of schools in greater academic need receiving additional funds, but these were judged as small in magnitude and relatively inconsequential.

Implications. While school personnel consistently prefer funding practices that retain maximum building and district discretion on how resources are spent, it is important to establish a mechanism that helps them distribute at least a portion of state funds in a manner designed to address varying needs among buildings.

Self-Sufficient Focus

Our sample of Washington educators, as a group, responded to the survey and questions in a manner that reflected an internal focus. In general, they expressed confidence that given adequate resources, they were up to the task of dramatically improving student achievement. This was documented by examining the list of barriers they judged would have higher impact if they were removed. Removal of these barriers would result in more resources, more flexibility to spend these resources, more time to collaborate with each other, and finally more time spent with each student in the form of smaller class size. Recognition of the need for outside help and needed increases in capacity resulting from more knowledge or capabilities—such as how to analyze and use data—were relegated to lower estimated impacts.

Implications. The orientation of Washington educators around self-sufficiency was unmistakable, and reflected confidence. However, the reality of this position remains uncertain. Is it true that, given enough resources, they will successfully turn around chronically underperforming schools? This remains to be demonstrated. In many ways, the current study is not designed to examine this issue or make this estimate. However, it remains for Washington state to make this determination. The strategy for school improvement should consciously be structured around a calculated estimate of the reality of this orientation.

Significant Differences Existing Between Groups

Some areas of consensus did exist between all groups. These were especially centered on the four barriers whose impact of removal was uniformly judged to be high and simultaneously judged by the stakeholder group as having a high ability to be removed. However, on many of the other barriers, the groups differed sharply. Particularly striking were the differences in perception between teachers and the groups with more system-level responsibilities within districts (these included superintendents, central office personnel, and principals) around the issues of:

(1) **Class size**—Teachers rated the potential impact of the removal of large class size as very high, while other groups rated it moderate or lower.

(2) **The use of differential pay** to entice teachers to choose to work with disadvantaged student populations or in underperforming schools—teachers were skeptical that this strategy would be effective, while principals and central office administrators were more optimistic.

(3) The degree to which the **removal of provisions of the collective bargaining agreement** could affect student achievement—principals and central office administrators felt this would have a potentially greater positive affect than did teachers.

In most cases, one's role in the educational enterprise determined how one gauged the potential impact the removal of the various barriers would have.

Implications. While there is no clear recommendation coming from this observation, it is advisable to acknowledge at the start that whatever model of school improvement is ultimately selected, it will be viewed differently by the various groups. No effort or priority list around removing barriers will satisfy all groups.

Barrier Removal Recognized as a Joint Responsibility

There was a recognition among stakeholders that the responsibility to remove most barriers rested primarily with the state. However, imbedded within the answers was the concept that districts and schools share some of the ability and responsibility to remove the barriers.

Implications. When the state determines to remove or reduce a barrier, it should systematically examine how its effort can be coordinated with districts and schools. A joint agreement articulating roles and responsibilities should be established as part of the planning.

Different Opinions about National Board Certification

As noted earlier, on almost all measures and opinions, the teacher group and the teacher union representatives groups concurred. The one principle difference was around the topic of National Board teacher certification. The difference was so pronounced that it deserves mention here. Teachers in general were very positive and hopeful about the potential for increased skills and financial rewards associated with national certification. Many of the teachers selected to participate in the study were currently enrolled in, or finished with, National Board teacher certification.

Union representatives in general held a different opinion of National Board certification. They were skeptical about the quality of the certification process either producing or certifying truly improved teaching skills. They were also resentful of the financial reward available to teachers finishing the certification and not available to older, more experienced teachers who chose not to submit to the certification process.

Principals expressed a strong interest in National Board certification and were hopeful that the level of teaching expertise would rise as a result. They were also very hopeful that the $5,000 stipend, available as an incentive to motivate nationally certified teachers to work in schools serving population in greater need or demonstrating lower academic achievement levels, would actually result in these schools receiving more experienced and better prepared teachers.

Implications. Washington state might monitor and document the effectiveness of nationally certified teachers, and determine if the financial incentive inherent with the certification process is sufficient to induce certified teachers to choose to work in lower SES or underperforming schools. If this proves to be true, and student achievement rises as a result, the state may wish to adopt similar incentives.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

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APPENDIX B

PROTOCOLS

- Study Of State And Local Barriers Questionnaire
- Focus Group Protocol

STUDY OF STATE AND LOCAL BARRIERS TO RAISING ACHIEVEMENT DRAMATICALLY FOR ALL STUDENTS 4/17/2008

My name is ____. I am with the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. We are conducting a study for the Washington State Board of Education on policies and procedures that impede schools and districts from increasing student achievement. A review of the current research literature has identified a number of potential barriers that are faced by that many schools and districts. While we are also talking to teachers, principals and central district office personnel about perceived barriers, we also wanted to get your opinion as a key leader interested in education issues. I would like to ask you about your opinions about these barriers as they relate particularly to Washington's schools. Are there any questions?

Research suggests that the following areas are major barriers to student achievement. We are defining student achievement as meeting or exceeding grade level expectations.

Structural Issues

1. **Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.**

   a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

   If No, go on to next question.

   b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

   c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

   d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

   e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

2. **Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.**

   a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

   If No, go on to next question.

   b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

   c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

   d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

   e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

3. **Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instructional time.**

   a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

   If No, go on to next question.

   b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

   c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

   d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

   e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

4. **Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.**

a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

If No, go on to next question.

b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

5. **Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.**

a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

If No, go on to next question.

b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

6. **Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction.**

   a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

If No, go on to question 8.

b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

<u>Financial Resources</u>

7. **Schools and districts financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.**

   a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

If No, go on to question 6.

b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

8. **School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.**

a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

If No, go on to next question .

b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

<u>People Resources</u>

9. **Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.**

a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

If No, go on to next question

b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

10. **Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.**

a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

If No, go on to next question

b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

11. **Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.**

a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

If No, go on to next question.

b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

12. **Inability to enact differential pay for staff.**

a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

If No, go on to next question.

b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

13. Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.

a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

If No, go on to next question.

b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

14. **Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.**

a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

If No, go on to next question.

b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

15. Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.

a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

If No, go on to next question.

b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

16. **Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.**

a. Do you agree that this is a problem in Washington schools and districts?

O	**Yes**	**O**	**No**

If No, go on to next question.

b. Would you like to say more about this barrier?

c. If this barrier could be removed, what would be the impact on increased student achievement?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

d. Is this a state or local responsibility?

e. How would you rate the (State's or District's) ability to eliminate this barrier?

O	**High**	**O**	**Medium**	**O**	**Low**

Thank you for participating in our study.

Teacher Focus Group Protocol

4/14/08

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this focus group to identify barriers to school/district improvement. As you probably already know, we are collecting information from teachers, principals and district staff members about the important work you are doing in your schools. Specifically, the State Board of Education has contracted with NWREL to conduct a study of barriers—policies and practices—that hinder efforts in districts and schools to substantially increase student achievement. While we recognize that there are numerous factors that may impact student achievement, we are charged with focusing on barriers that arise from local, state, and federal policies or lack thereof.

Before we get started, it's important to let you know that your identity will not be revealed and comments you make will not be directly attributed to you personally, though the input you provide will be used in a report to the state board of education. Any questions?

1. How long have each of you been working as a teacher? How long have you been working as a teacher in this school, and what is your current role?

2. School Improvement Plan and Special Areas of Program Focus to Address Student Achievement

a. The state requires schools to develop a school improvement plan to address student achievement.

- What was the process for developing your school's improvement plan?
- Is your building plan as currently written, focused on changing things that you feel hold the potential to improve student achievement?

Possible probing questions

- Describe the process for getting 'buy-in' or consensus on the plan?
- How engaged are teachers/administrators in using the plan to guide teaching/learning or making important decisions?

b. Think about the outside programs or assistance that your school is currently using (e.g. OSPI, a university, a consulting group, etc.) to help with your school improvement efforts.

- What are these programs or kinds of assistance that your school is using?

Possible probing questions

- Do partners appear to be working in a coherent way in support of your school improvement plan?
- How effective would you rate each of these efforts and why?
- Are there any curriculum-related barriers that keep you from increasing student achievement?
- How do you keep students engaged and motivated to learn? Which policies or programs currently support these efforts? Are there others you would suggest that are not in place?

3. Financial, Data, and Assessment Resources

a. Think about the ways in which your school's budget is being spent.

- How does current spending support student learning? Create barriers to improving student learning?
- Some educators feel that teachers teaching fewer students at a time can provide better help for students and more effective instruction. Are budgets sufficient to reduce class size to an effective student/teacher ratio? How would lower student-teacher ratios overall result in more effective classroom teaching and learning?
- What data resources are available to you at the school and district level to evaluate gaps in student skills and knowledge? What systems are in place to actively monitor student learning?

Possible probing questions

- How has your school used such data in planning school improvement?
- Does your school use formative/diagnostic assessments in its classrooms to monitor student achievement? If yes, are these assessments routinely utilized in all classrooms in the school? All classrooms across the district? How have these assessments impacted classroom instruction and student achievement?
- What data would be useful, in addition to what you already have, in assisting you to meet the needs of all students?

4. People

a. Please consider the leadership/management structure in your building.

- Instructional leadership is an important ingredient in school improvement – how does it help or hinder efforts in your school/district?
- What changes would you make in the leadership/management structure to facilitate school improvement and student learning? What authority or other tools are missing?
- How does your school/district address teacher hiring and retention? How does teacher mobility affect your efforts to improve student learning?
- What incentives would be effective to prevent teacher turnover?
- In what ways have your personnel evaluations helped improve your teaching? If they have not, how could the evaluation or the process be improved?
- Are there *incentives* that you believe would make working in a low-performing school worthwhile? (Additional pay; loan forgiveness; more responsibility; collaboration with other like-minded educators; involvement in new models of reform)

5. Time

a. Think about your school's academic calendar and daily schedule.

- How is the time in the school year and day determined?– by the principal, by the contract, by consensus reached through leadership or curricular teams?
- What are some ways that time could be used differently or more effectively to increase student achievement in your school? For example, would changing the school day or calendar year help to improve student achievement in your school? What other ways of using time differently would you expect to have a positive impact on student learning?
- How much time do teachers at your school have for meeting with the principal and other staff for planning, analyzing student work, and devising appropriate response and interventions for specific students or for underserved curricular areas? If you had more time to collaborate with other teachers, how would you suggest it be used to more effectively increase student achievement in your school?

6. State or Local Policy Barriers to Student Achievement

a. Think about state and local policy barriers to student achievement

- What is the one policy the state or district could change that would help you in your work to improve student achievement?

APPENDIX C

List of Key Stakeholders

List of Key Stakeholder Representatives

	role
Glenn Anderson	Representative
John Aultman	OSPI, Asst Supt. Career and College Readiness
Don Barlow	Representative
Twyla Barnes	ESD 112
Bill Williams Laura Bay Kim Howard	WA State PTA
Terry Bergeson	OSPI, Superintendent
Ben Cabildo	AHANA
Laurie Dolan	Governor's Office, Policy Office Director
Dan Goldhaber	University of Washington
Jane Gutting	ESD 105
Kathy Haigh	Representative
Bob Harmon	OSPI, Special Programs
Judy Hartman	Governor's Office, Senior Policy
Ross Hunter	Representative
Bill Keim	ESD 113
Curtis King	Senator
Gary Kipp	Director, Wash School Principals (AWSP)
Frank Kline	WA Assn of Colleges for Teacher Ed (WACTE)
Chris Korsmo	League of Education Voters
Martharose Laffey Marilee Scarerough	WA State School Directors (WSSDA)
Mary Lindquist	WA Education Assoc (WEA)
Lisa Macfarlane	League of Education Voters
Rosemary McAuliffe	Senator
Rich McBride	ESD 171
Corrine McGuigan	OSPI Research and Ed Dev
Stephen Mullin	Washington Roundtable
Janell Newman	OSPI, District and School Improvement
Jennifer Priddy	OSPI, Financial Resources
Skip Priest	Representative
Dave Quall	Representative
Paul Rosier	WA State School Admin (WASA)
Rodney Tom	Senator
Kevin Washington	Tabor 100
Deborah Wilds	College Success Foundation

APPENDIX D

Study of Barriers Summary Statistics

Table D-1
Teachers' Perception of Level of Impact on Student Achievement if Barrier is Removed

Item	Barrier	Low	Medium	High	Mean	Standard Deviation
16	Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.	4.2% (2)	10.4% (5)	85.4% (41)	2.81	0.491
7	Schools and districts financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.	8.7% (4)	19.6% (9)	71.7% (33)	2.63	0.645
10	Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.	10.6% (5)	29.8% (14)	59.6% (28)	2.49	0.688
14	Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.	16.7% (8)	25.0% (12)	58.3% (28)	2.42	0.767
2	Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.	19.1% (9)	25.5% (12)	55.3% (26)	2.36	0.792
8	School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.	22.2% (10)	20.0% (9)	57.8% (26)	2.36	0.830
1	Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.	12.5% (6)	50.0% (24)	37.5% (18)	2.25	0.668
4	Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.	40.0% (18)	22.2% (10)	37.8% (17)	1.98	0.892
15	Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.	35.6% (16)	31.1% (14)	33.3% (15)	1.98	0.839
13	Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.	38.3% (18)	38.3% (18)	23.4% (11)	1.85	0.780
9	Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.	46.8% (22)	29.8% 14)	23.4% (11)	1.77	0.813
11	Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.	50.0% (24)	27.1% (13)	22.9% (11)	1.73	0.818
5	Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.	47.9% (23)	33.3% (16)	18.8% (9)	1.71	0.771
3	Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.	48.9% (23)	36.2% (17)	14.9% (7)	1.66	0.731
6	Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction	57.4% (27)	21.3% (10)	21.3% (10)	1.64	0.819
12	Inability to enact differential pay for staff.	91.3% (42)	4.3% (2)	4.3% (2)	1.13	0.453

Table D-2
Union Teacher Representatives' Perception of Level of Impact on Student Achievement if Barrier is Removed

Item	Barrier	Low	Medium	High	Mean	Standard Deviation
16	Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.	--	--	100(19)	3.00	.000
7	Schools and districts financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.	5.9%(1)	11.8%(2)	82.4%(14)	2.76	.562
10	Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.	10.5%(2)	31.6%(6)	57.9%(11)	2.47	.697
2	Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.	21.1%(4)	21.1%(4)	57.9%(11)	2.37	.831
1	Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.	5.3%(1)	57.9%(11)	36.8%(7)	2.32	.582
8	School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.	31.6%(6)	15.8%(3)	2.6%(10)	2.21	.918
14	Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.	36.8%(7)	26.3%(5)	36.8%(7)	2.00	.882
13	Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.	42.1%(8)	42.1%(8)	15.8%(3)	1.74	.733
6	Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction	52.9%(9)	29.4%(5)	17.6%(3)	1.65	.786
5	Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.	52.6(10)	31.6%(6)	15.8%(3)	1.63	.761
3	Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.	52.6%(10)	36.8%(7)	10.5%(2)	1.58	.692
15	Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.	64.7%(11)	17.6%(3)	17.6%(3)	1.53	.800
9	Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.	72.2%(13)	5.6%(1)	22.2%(4)	1.50	.857
4	Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.	76.5%(13)	11.8%(2)	11.85(2)	1.35	.702
11	Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.	78.9%(15)	15.8%(3)	5.3%(1)	1.26	.562
12	Inability to enact differential pay for staff.	88.9%(16)	--	11.1%(2)	1.22	.647

Table D-3
Principals' Perception of Level of Impact on Student Achievement if Barrier is Removed

Item	Barrier	Low	Medium	High	Mean	Standard Deviation
14	Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.	10.8% (4)	8.1% (3)	81.1% (30)	2.70	0.661
11	Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.	10.8% (4)	29.7% (11)	59.5% (22)	2.49	0.692
7	Schools and districts financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.	13.5% (5)	24.3% (9)	62.2% (23)	2.49	0.731
3	Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.	22.2% (8)	27.8% (10)	50.0% (18)	2.28	0.815
15	Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.	27.0% (10)	27.0% (10)	45.9% (17)	2.19	0.845
2	Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.	30.6% (11)	22.2% (8)	47.2% (17)	2.17	0.878
8	School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.	37.1% (13)	20.0% (7)	42.9% (15)	2.06	0.906
1	Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.	29.7% (11)	43.2% (16)	27.0% (10)	1.97	0.763
6	Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction	47.4% (18)	18.4% (7)	34.2% (13)	1.87	0.906
10	Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.	48.6% (18)	16.2% (6)	35.1% (13)	1.86	0.918
4	Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.	48.6% (18)	21.6% (8)	29.7% (11)	1.81	0.877
9	Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.	51.4% (19)	24.3% (9)	24.3% (9)	1.73	0.838
13	Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.	52.6% (20)	23.7% (9)	23.7% (9)	1.71	0.835
16	Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.	52.6% (20)	23.7% (9)	23.7% (9)	1.71	0.835
12	Inability to enact differential pay for staff.	54.1% (20)	29.7% (11)	16.2% (6)	1.62	0.758
5	Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.	56.8% (21)	32.4% (12)	10.8% (4)	1.54	0.691

Table D-4
Superintendents' Perception of Level of Impact on Student Achievement if Barrier is Removed

Item	Barrier	Low	Medium	High	Mean	Standard Deviation
7	Schools and districts financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.	0.0% (0)	5.0% (1)	95.0% (19)	2.95	0.224
14	Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.	10.0% (2)	0.0% (0)	90.0% (18)	2.80	0.616
8	School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.	15.0% (3)	5.0% (1)	80.0% (16)	2.65	0.745
11	Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.	15.0% (3)	15.0% (3)	70.0% (14)	2.55	0.759
4	Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.	20.0% (4)	15.0% (3)	65.0% (13)	2.45	0.826
10	Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.	21.1% (4)	15.8% (3)	63.2% (12)	2.42	0.838
2	Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.	20.0% (4)	20.0% (4)	60.0% (12)	2.40	0.821
15	Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.	36.8% (7)	0.0% (0)	63.2% (12)	2.26	0.991
1	Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.	25.0% (5)	30.0% (6)	45.0% (9)	2.20	0.834
3	Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.	36.8% (7)	15.8% (3)	47.4% (9)	2.11	0.937
9	Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.	47.4% (9)	15.8% (3)	36.8% (7)	1.89	0.937
16	Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.	55.0% (11)	5.0% (1)	40.0% (8)	1.85	0.988
6	Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction	50.0% (9)	16.7% (3)	33.3% (6)	1.83	0.924
12	Inability to enact differential pay for staff.	52.4% (11)	23.8% (5)	23.8% (5)	1.71	0.845
13	Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.	61.1% (11)	11.1% (2)	27.8% (5)	1.67	0.907
5	Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.	68.4% (13)	15.8% (3)	15.8% (3)	1.47	0.772

Table D-5
Stakeholders' Perception of Whether the Barrier is a Problem in Washington Schools and Districts

Item	Barrier	Yes	No	Not Applicable
1	Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.	88.2% (30)	11.8% (4)	--
2	Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.	88.2% (30)	11.8% (4)	--
3	Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.	73.5% (25)	26.5% (9)	--
4	Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.	66.7% (22)	33.3% (11)	--
5	Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.	41.2% (14)	55.9% (19)	--
6	Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction	79.4% (27)	20.6% (7)	--
7	Schools and districts financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.	91.2% (31)	8.8% (3)	--
8	School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.	64.7% (22)	29.4% (10)	5.9% (1)
9	Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.	73.5% (25)	23.5% (8)	2.9% (1)
10	Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.	94.1% (32)	5.9% (2)	--
11	Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.	87.9% (29)	9.1% (3)	3.0% (1)
12	Inability to enact differential pay for staff.	72.7% (24)	21.2% (7)	6.1% (2)
13	Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.	57.6% (19)	33.3% (11)	9.1% (3)
14	Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.	67.6% (23)	26.5% (9)	5.9% (2)
15	Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.	84.8% (28)	12.1% (4)	3.0% 91)
16	Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.	60.6% (20)	39.4% (13)	--

Table D-6
Stakeholders' Perception of Impact on Student Achievement if the Barrier is Removed

Item	Barrier	Low	Medium	High	Mean	Standard Deviation
10	Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.	0.0% (0)	6.7% (2)	93.3% (28)	2.93	0.254
6	Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction	0.0% (0)	7.7% (2)	92.3% (24)	2.92	0.272
7	Schools and districts financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.	0.0% (0)	10.0% (3)	90.0% (27)	2.90	0.305
14	Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.	0.0% (0)	13.0% (3)	87.0% (20)	2.87	0.344
13	Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.	0.0% (0)	15.8% (3)	84.2% (16)	2.84	0.375
15	Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.	3.8% (1)	19.2% (5)	76.9% (20)	2.73	0.533
8	School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.	0.0% (0)	28.6% (6)	71.4% (15)	2.71	0.463
9	Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.	0.0% (0)	30.4% (7)	69.6% (16)	2.70	0.470
4	Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.	39.1% (9)	56.5% (13)	4.3% (1)	2.65	0.573
2	Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.	3.6% (1)	28.6% (8)	69.7% (19)	2.64	0.559
12	Inability to enact differential pay for staff.	8.3% (2)	20.8% (5)	70.8% (17)	2.63	0.647
16	Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.	10.0% (2)	30.0% (6)	60.0% (12)	2.60	0.688
11	Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.	10.7% (3)	21.4% (6)	67.9% (19)	2.57	0.690
1	Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.	6.9% (2)	31.0% (2)	62.1% (3)	2.55	0.632
3	Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.	8.3% (2)	33.3% (8)	58.3% (14)	2.50	0.659
5	Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.	15.4% (2)	23.1% (3)	61.5% (8)	2.46	0.776

Table D-7
Stakeholders' Perception of Whether the Barrier is a State or Local Responsibility

Item	Barrier	Local	State	Both
1	Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.	10.3% (3)	51.7% (15)	37.9% (11)
2	Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.	16.7% (4)	45.8% (11)	37.5% (9)
3	Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.	4.0% (1)	56.0% (14)	40.0% (10)
4	Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.	14.3% (3)	28.6% (6)	57.1% (12)
5	Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.	30.0% (3)	20.0% (2)	50.0% (5)
6	Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction	3.8% (1)	73.1% (19)	23.1% (6)
7	Schools and districts financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.	0.0% (0)	83.3% (25)	16.7% (5)
8	School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.	4.8% (1)	61.9% (13)	33.3% (7)
9	Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.	18.2% (4)	31.8% (7)	50.0% (11)
10	Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.	6.9% (2)	51.7% (15)	41.4% (12)
11	Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.	32.1% (9)	39.3% (11)	28.6% (8)
12	Inability to enact differential pay for staff.	4.3% (1)	65.2% (15)	30.4% (7)
13	Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.	22.2% (4)	50.0% (9)	27.8% (5)
14	Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.	14.3% (3)	52.4% (11)	33.3% (7)
15	Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.	8.0% (2)	68.0% (17)	24.0% (6)
16	Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.	0.0% (0)	88.2% (15)	11.8% (2)

Table D-8
Stakeholders' Perception of the Ability of the State or District to Eliminate the Barrier

Item	Barrier	Low	Medium	High	Mean	Standard Deviation
6	Schools do not have sufficient data or sufficient capacity to access and analyze data on individual student performance to improve instruction	3.7% (1)	18.5% (5)	77.8% (21)	2.74	0.526
14	Lack of time for professional development and teacher collaboration time.	8.7% (2)	17.4% (4)	73.9% (17)	2.65	0.647
10	Lack of a coherent system for supporting the entry, development, and retention of quality staff.	10.0% (3)	20.0% (6)	70.0% (21)	2.60	0.675
15	Inadequate incentives for the best qualified staff to go to the highest-need schools.	3.8% (1)	34.6% (9)	61.5% (16)	2.58	0.578
3	Lack of flexibility in the 180-days and 1,000 hours school year requirements to design school days and the school year calendar in ways that would result in more effective instruction time.	8.0% (2)	28.0% (7)	64.0% (16)	2.56	0.651
7	Schools and districts financial resources are insufficient to assure that all students achieve at grade-level.	12.9% (4)	19.4% (6)	67.7% (*21)	2.55	0.723
9	Lack of administrative capacity to effectively focus improvement efforts.	17.4% (4)	21.7% (5)	60.9% (14)	2.43	0.788
13	Lack of strategic alignment between professional development and school/district goals.	10.5% (2)	36.8% (7)0	52.6% (10)	2.42	0.692
8	School and district financial resources are inflexible to target funding where highest needs are to improve student achievement.	22.7% (5)	18.2% (4)	59.1% (13)	2.36	0.848
12	Inability to enact differential pay for staff.	22.7% (5)	18.2% (4)	59.1% (13)	2.36	0.848
4	Lack of school staff with expertise in how to focus school improvement efforts.	23.8% (5)	19.0% (4)	57.1% (12)	2.33	0.856
16	Classes are too large for teachers to be able to teach effectively.	15.0% (3)	40.0% (8)	45.0% (9)	2.30	0.733
1	Lack of coherence across multiple initiatives or programs to sustain an orderly, organized strategy for school change.	27.6% (8)	27.6% (8)	44.8% (13)	2.17	0.848
2	Student support systems, such as counseling, academic remediation, and dropout prevention and intervention services, are fragmented and conducted on an ad hoc basis.	29.6% (8)	25.9% (7)	44.4% (12)	2.15	0.864
11	Inability to dismiss ineffective staff.	29.6% (8)	29.6% (8)	40.7% (11)	2.11	0.847
5	Lack of enough knowledgeable and willing partners from outside the school district to work with schools in their school improvement efforts on a regular and on-going basis.	30.8% (4)	38.5% (5)	30.8% (4)	2.00	0.816