



**A PROGRESS REPORT:
School Improvement
In The Detroit Public Schools**

Phase II

Teacher Survey

November 2002

This report was commissioned by
New Detroit, with financial support from the Skillman Foundation

The research contained in this report is the product of
Michigan State University
Urban Affairs Programs and the Department of Family and Child Ecology



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The Mission of New Detroit

To work as the coalition of Detroit area leadership addressing the issue of race relations by positively impacting issues and policies that ensure economic and social equity.

“Every Community Has A Conscience”

It is an unspoken sense of right and wrong that people share: a fair agreement about how people ought to be treated.

A community’s conscience knows that people are fragile, especially children.

Our community’s conscience knows that children ought to have schools where they can achieve their best and learn how to succeed in life: where hard work in school translates into a productive future after graduation . . .

But somehow or another, our community has become disconnected from its conscience.

Otherwise, we could not tolerate such a gap between the way things ought to be and the way they really are.

Letter to the Community

November, 2002

This summary of surveys completed by Detroit Public School teachers in May 2002 is the 18th report New Detroit has issued on the Detroit Public Schools since 1990. As we indicated in our last report, New Detroit is taking a different approach in assessing the quality of our schools. Rather than pointing fingers, we are inviting all parties that impact the quality of education in our city to share their perspectives of the progress being made in the implementation of the School Improvement Plan, the guiding document of the school reform effort currently underway.

Phase II provides the reader with information regarding the demographics of the current Detroit Public School teaching staff, their assessment of the status of reform as of May 2002 and their opinions on influences related to academic achievement and recommendations for improvement. The work involved in creating and distributing this survey began in February 2002.

Completion of this survey was voluntary. Thus the return rate is considered phenomenal. Of the 8087 active teachers who could have potentially completed this survey, more than half, 4249, did so. In compliance with standards of research, 4,024 surveys were deemed useable. The cooperation of Detroit Public School teachers in this effort has resulted in one of the largest teacher databases in the country.

We are encouraged to learn that Detroit teachers are educated to a level exceeding the national norm, yet we also note that approximately 40% indicate a need for more training related to the needs and learning styles of children in urban environments. In the narrative section of the survey, where teachers were encouraged to address issues of importance to them, there is consistent comment requesting early assessment of children's special academic and socio-economic needs.

Caregivers may be encouraged that in the narrative section of the survey much is said about the important role of the child's parent or caregiver. Teachers recognize that home lays the foundation for the learning experience and significantly influences the attitude and attendance of young people. In general, teachers indicate an openness to outside support from all segments of the community.

While acknowledging that their work requires the assistance of others, 88% indicated that teachers are responsible and accountable for insuring that every child achieves to their maximum potential. Only 3.8% disagreed, with many of those indicating that the task was impossible without additional caregiver and community support.

Overall this report demonstrates that Detroit teachers are highly educated and willing and eager to upgrade their skills for the benefit of our children. Further, they are eager to be asked for their opinion of what works and does not work within their building and their classroom. Finally they see themselves as part of a team that requires the full participation of all its members --- parents, caregivers, community, churches and business. Again, the message is clear. We each have a role to play. We all share a stake in the outcome. So let's all keep working . . . together.

Shirley R. Stancato
President & CEO

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Introduction

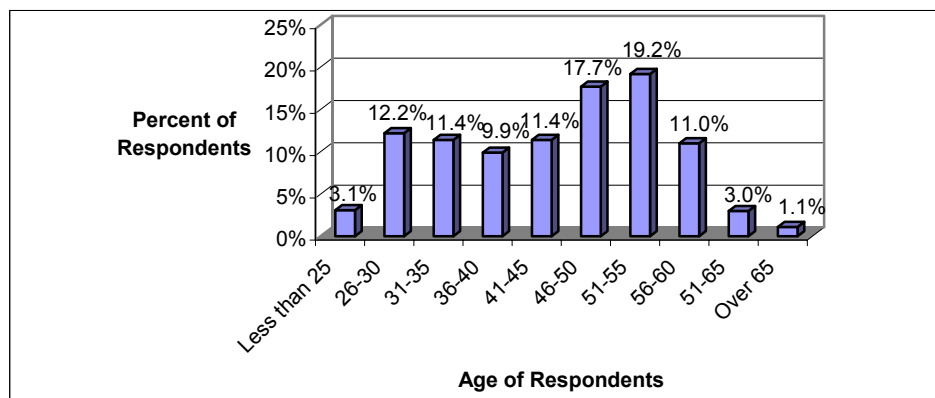
Teachers are a critical partner in efforts to reform schools. This may be particularly true in major urban districts, such as Detroit, which face numerous challenges in their effort to raise the achievement level of all students. Information regarding the age, training, certifications and years of teaching not only provide a snapshot of the current workforce but also raise issues that effect future planning.

The perceptions of teachers were solicited in order to assess their views of progress toward reform in Detroit as of May 2002, as well as to identify areas in which teachers see a need for additional effort. Several key findings emerge from the Teacher Survey; these findings and subsequent recommendations are summarized below.

Teacher Demographics

- **Key Finding:** A large share of Detroit teachers are approaching retirement age over the next decade. This circumstance presents the district with both a challenge (in needing to hire a substantial number of replacements) and an opportunity (to seek out and hire teachers whose skills and qualifications give them ideal preparation to assist in raising student achievement).

Survey Question: What is your age?

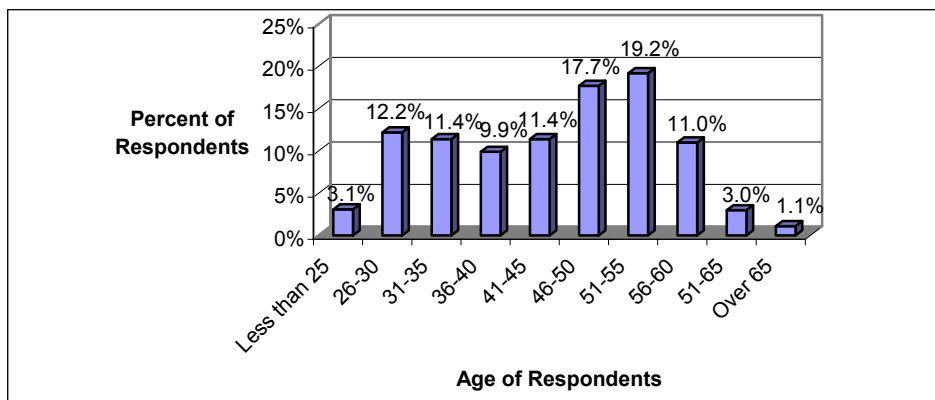


Analysis: A substantial share of teachers in the Detroit Public Schools are at or nearing retirement age, with more than one-third (34.3%) at least 51 years of age. This indicates that the district faces both a challenge and an opportunity in needing to replace a substantial portion of its teaching force over the next decade. The need to replace teachers is not unique to Detroit, as 29.4% of teachers nationwide, and 33.2% of those in Michigan, were at least 50 in 1999-00 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a:49). Given the tremendous challenge facing Detroit in terms of raising student achievement, however, the issue of replacing retirement-age teachers takes on added significance, and the district should devote considerable thought in the near future to what kinds of training and other qualities will be necessary to meet this challenge.

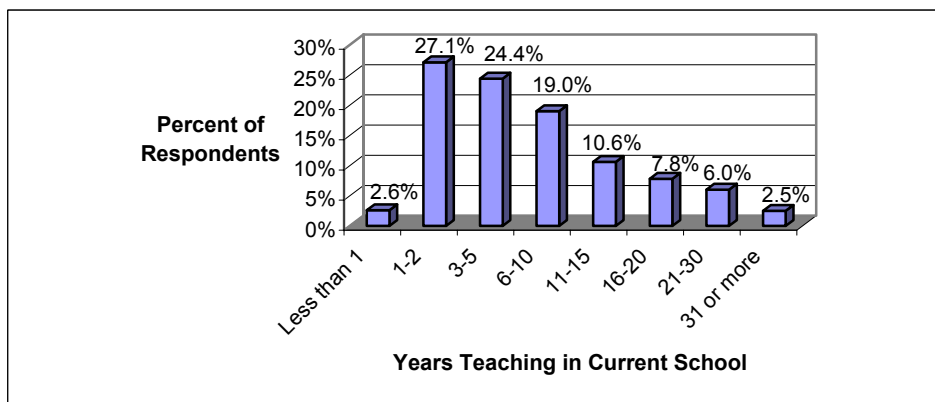
- **Recommendation:** The district should take this opportunity to review desired traits for its “next generation” of teachers, and may also wish to develop this “wish list” in conjunction with a review of teacher training institutions in Michigan, where the vast majority of Detroit teachers will continue to receive their education.

- **Key Finding:** Many Detroit teachers have taught in the district for a long time, but have spent significantly less time in their current schools.

Survey Question: How many years have you been a teacher in the Detroit Public Schools?



Survey Question: How many years have you been a teacher in your current school?



Analysis: Nearly half (45.6%) of Detroit teachers have taught for at least 16 years, with more than one in ten having worked in the profession for at least 31 years. A slightly smaller share of teachers (40.5%) has taught in Detroit for at least 16 years. A much smaller share of Detroit teachers, however -16.3% - reports having taught in their current school for at least 16 years; more than half (54.1%) have been in their current school five years or less.

- **Recommendation:** It may be useful to examine the relationships between policies and teacher mobility, focusing on the goal of maintaining optimal stability of the teaching force, while allowing mobility to continue to the extent that it maintains infusion of energy and dissemination of effective teaching practices.

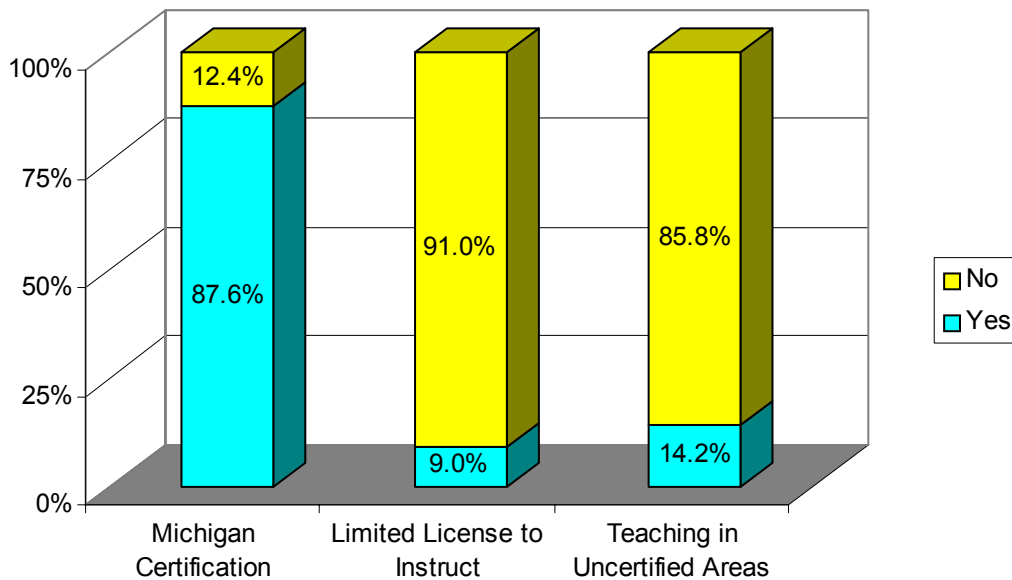
- Key Finding:** Detroit teachers are highly educated. Most hold certifications received from colleges and universities in Michigan, and few hold a Limited License to Instruct or are teaching in areas in which they are not certified. (Note: A limited license to instruct is a special program between Wayne State University and Detroit Public Schools which “fast tracks” selected individuals seeking teacher certification)

Survey Question: What is your highest earned degree?



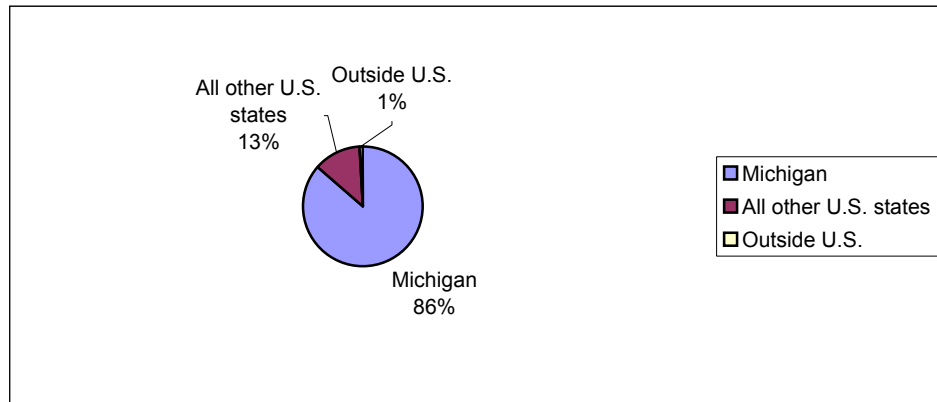
Analysis: Detroit teachers are comparatively well-educated. 63% have earned a Master’s degree or higher. By comparison, 46.7% of teachers nationwide held a Master’s degree or higher in 1999-2000 (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a:79).

Survey Questions: Do you hold certification to teach in Michigan?
 Do you have a limited license to instruct?
 Are you currently teaching any course for which you are not certified?



Analysis: Nearly nine in ten Detroit teachers (88%) report that they hold certification to teach in Michigan. Fewer than one in ten (9%), report that they hold a license to instruct. The vast majority of Detroit teachers (86%) are currently teaching a course for which they hold certification. 14% report teaching courses for which they are not certified.

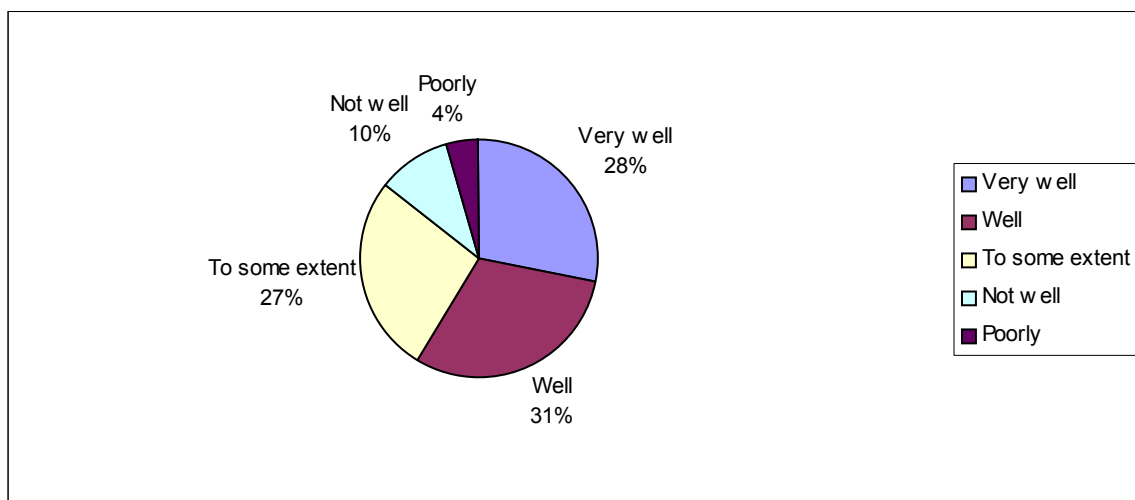
Survey Question: In which state did you earn your highest degree?



Analysis: The vast majority of Detroit teachers earned their highest level of educational credentials in Michigan. Other states in which at least 1% of Detroit teachers earned their highest degree included Ohio (1.7%), Alabama (1.6%), and Massachusetts (1.0%).

- **Key Finding:** Staff development seems to be a major concern and need for many teachers who responded to the questionnaire. Although 60% of teacher felt that their training adequately prepared them to teach in an urban setting, 40% felt that their training in schools of education was not adequate. In responding to the open-ended questions, many teachers indicated that when they found themselves teaching in an urban setting, such as Detroit, they needed additional training in the core areas of reading and math instruction and ways to cope with diverse learning styles of their students.

Survey Question: To what extent did your educational training prepare you for teaching in an urban environment?



Analysis: Detroit teachers were somewhat divided regarding the extent to which their educational training had prepared them for teaching in an urban environment. Well over half (58.4%) indicated that their training had prepared them either “very well” or “well,” but more than one-fourth marked the “to some extent” category and nearly 15% indicated either “not well” or “poorly.” While a majority of teachers rated their training highly, nearly half did not, and the district may wish to evaluate teacher training programs and identify a set of characteristics most conducive to success in Detroit schools.

Through their written responses, teachers articulated the need for DPS to employ and utilize professional consultants as well as highly skilled DPS staff to assist teachers in improving the quality of instruction in reading and math and support for more effective classroom management.

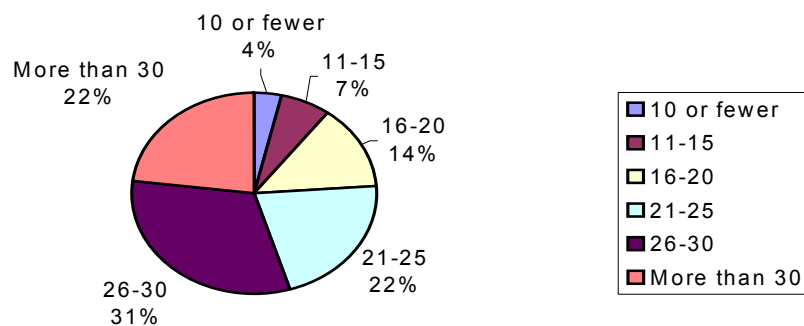
- **Recommendation:** The district should review the quality of teacher training available, particularly in Michigan schools where the majority of Detroit teachers receive their training and work with teacher training institutions to identify areas in which programs might be improved in terms of preparing teachers for urban environments.

These findings suggest that deans of colleges of education in Michigan should be brought together by the Detroit Board of Education and New Detroit, to discuss ways in which current teacher training could be strengthened.

Teacher response regarding class size

- **Key Finding:** A substantial portion of Detroit teachers report large class sizes (26 or more students).

Survey Question: How many students are in your class? If you teach several classes per day, please indicate your average class size.



Analysis: Class sizes in the Detroit Public Schools as reported by teachers vary considerably. While one-fourth of teachers report average class size of 20 or fewer, over half (53%) indicate that there are at least 26 students in their classes. By comparison, average class sizes at the elementary level in Michigan and the U.S. in 1999-2000 were 22.0 and 21.2, respectively, and 17.1 for secondary schools in the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, 2002a:55). As indicated previously, comparatively high class sizes in Detroit defy

a substantial body of research that has documented the positive effects of smaller class sizes, particularly for disadvantaged and low-performing students in early elementary grades, and also stands in contrast to class size reduction efforts at the state and national levels.

Recommendation: Additional research is needed in Detroit to document relationships between class size, teacher characteristics, and student demographics and performance.

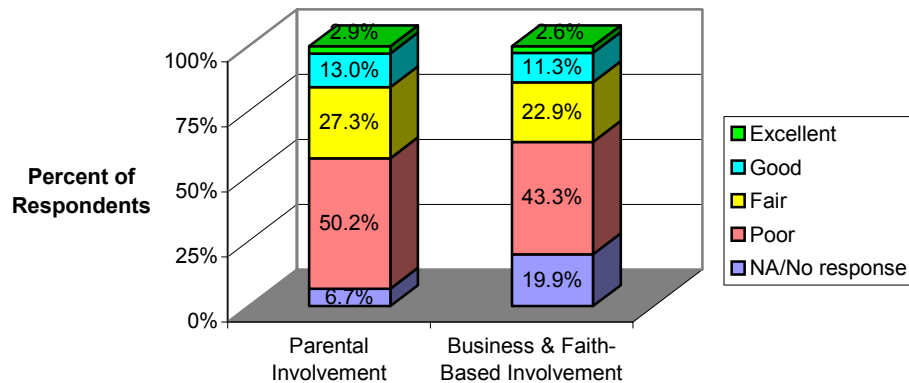
There is room for improvement in reducing class sizes. More should also be known about the distribution of class size: variations by school type (elementary vs. middle and high schools), student characteristics (low income vs. less disadvantaged students), and student performance (high vs. low-performing schools) to ensure that class size reduction efforts are targeted at the schools where they are needed the most.

Teacher response regarding caregiver and community involvement

- **Key Finding:** Teachers perceive room for improvement in terms of involvement by parents, faith-based institutions, and the community in general within Detroit schools.

Survey Questions: In your classroom, how would you rate the level of parental involvement related to raising student achievement?

How would you rate the level of support given to your classroom from the business and faith-based communities to help raise student achievement?



Analysis: Teachers report much room for improvement in terms of involvement by parents and the business and faith-based communities. Half of all teachers rated parental involvement as “poor,” while another 27% rated it only “fair.” Only 16% indicated that parental involvement related to raising student achievement was “excellent” or “good.” Involvement on the part of the business and faith-based communities was perceived similarly; two-thirds (66%) of teachers felt that their involvement was either “poor” or “fair,” while only 14% perceived it as “excellent” or “good.”

- **Recommendation:** The district should formulate strategies for promoting the active involvement of these key partners and implement such strategies accordingly.

Teacher response regarding testing and attendance

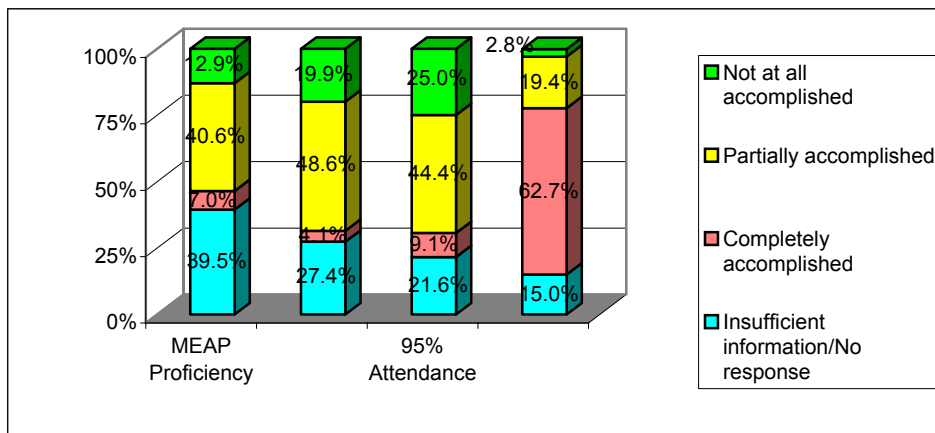
- **Key Finding:** Teachers believe that moderate progress is being made toward academic achievement goals. A larger percentage of teachers believed that progress was being made in creating a learning-centered environment and promoting school safety. Teachers indicate that much work remains to be done in improving school services.

Survey Questions: All students in grades four, five, seven, and eight, district-wide and in each school, will perform at the proficient level on the state’s assessment instrument (the Michigan Educational Assessment Program, or MEAP). To what extent has this been accomplished in your school?

All students in grades 1 through 10, district-wide and in each school, will perform at or above grade level in reading, mathematics and science on a nationally recognized test. To what extent has this been accomplished in your school?

The average daily attendance of all students, district-wide and in each school, will equal or exceed 95 percent. To what extent has this been accomplished in your school?

Detroit Public Schools will continue to implement the Essential Skills Achievement Test (ESAT) in grades one through 11. To what extent has this been accomplished in your school?



Analysis: A substantial portion of teachers (40.6%) feel that the goal of proficient performance on the MEAP test has been only partially accomplished in their school, with a share nearly as large (39.5%) having insufficient information to respond or providing no response. More than two-thirds of teachers feel that the goal of having Detroit students at or above grade level on a nationally-recognized test has been accomplished either not at all (19.9%) or only partially (48.6%). Detroit teachers also perceive significant work yet to be done in terms of improving student attendance in their school. One-fourth of teachers feel that the goal of having average daily attendance of 95% has not been accomplished at all, with an additional 44.4% indicating only partial accomplishment of this goal. Fewer than one

in ten (9.1%) indicate that this goal has been completely accomplished. Almost two-thirds (62.7%) of teachers indicate that implementation of the Essential Skills Achievement Test (ESAT) has been completely accomplished in grades 1-11 in their school; only 2.8% felt that this goal has not been accomplished at all. (NOTE: ESAT has been replaced by the Measuring Instructional Progress (MIP) test).

- **Recommendation:** The District should place primary emphases on improving MEAP scores for all students, improving student scores on nationally standardized tests, and continuing to boost pupil attendance rates.

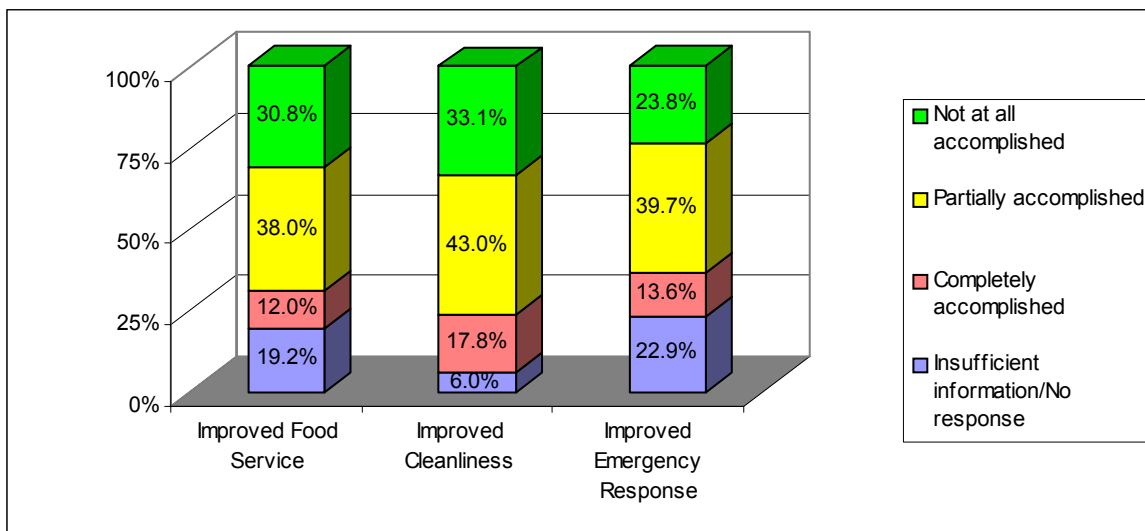
Teacher response regarding school services

- **Key Finding:** Much work remains to be done, according to teachers, in improving school services. Less than 18% of teachers felt that each of the following goals had been completely accomplished.

Survey Questions: Food service quality should be improved. To what extent has this been accomplished in your school?

Detroit Public Schools will improve school cleanliness. To what extent has this been accomplished in your school?

Detroit Public Schools will improve emergency response procedures, training and capabilities. To what extent has this goal been met in your school?



Analysis: Teachers indicate that considerable work remains in terms of improving the quality of food service, school cleanliness, and emergency response procedures. Nearly one-third of teachers (30.8%) feel the goal of improved food service has not been accomplished at all, and an additional 38% perceive only partial accomplishment. Only 12% feel this goal has been completely accomplished. School cleanliness represents another area in which Detroit teachers perceive substantial progress yet to be made. Almost one-third (33.1%) indicate that this goal has not been accomplished at all, and another 43% perceive only partial accomplishment. Emergency response procedures, training, and capabilities are a third area in which Detroit teachers perceive significant work yet to be

done. Only 13.6% view this goal as having been completely accomplished, with 23.8% perceiving it as not at all accomplished and another 39.7% only partially accomplished.

- **Recommendation:** The Detroit Public Schools administration should place an emphasis on improving the quality of food service, school cleanliness, and emergency response services.

Teacher response regarding student’s ability to learn

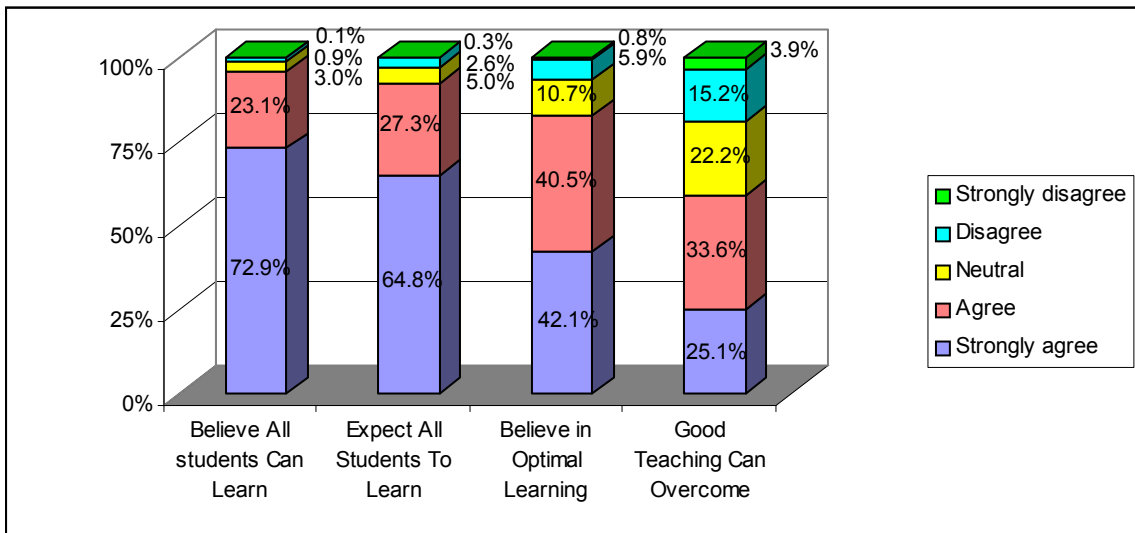
- **Key Finding:** Almost three out of four (72.9%) DPS teachers strongly agree with the statement that all students can learn, whereas 65% said they strongly agree with the statement “I expect that all students will learn”. Despite confidence in students’ ability and teachers’ expectation level, almost 20% disagree or strongly disagree that good teaching can overcome students’ adverse personal and family experiences.

Survey Statements: I believe that all students can learn.

I expect that all students will learn.

I believe that I can teach every student in a way that will result in optimal learning.

Good teaching can overcome the impact of students’ adverse personal and family experiences.



Analysis: Large majorities of Detroit teachers believe and expect that all students can learn, and that they can teach students in ways that result in optimal learning. A significantly fewer number of teachers believe that good teaching can overcome personal and family-related adversities that students face. Nearly all teachers (96%) strongly agree or agree with the statement of “I believe that all students can learn,” and 92.1% are in agreement with the statement that “I expect that all students will learn.” It is true, of course, that teachers’ stated beliefs on a survey do not always match their classroom practices, and that slogans such as “I believe all students can learn” can become meaningless without changes in practice. More than eight in ten teachers (82.6%) either agree or strongly agree that they can teach every student in a way that will result in optimal learning.

A somewhat smaller share of teachers (58.7%) are in either strong agreement or agreement with the statement that “good teaching can overcome students’ personal adversities.” While fewer than one in five (19.1%) disagree or strongly disagree with this statement, another 22.2% are neutral, meaning that more than four of every ten teachers (41.3%) do not agree that good teaching can overcome students’ personal adversities. This finding is somewhat troubling, particularly when considered in conjunction with teachers’ views of the sources of school problems.

- **Recommendation:** DPS administrators and teachers should establish and support a culture emphasizing the belief that all students will learn. Professional development activities should focus on research-validated practices that have demonstrated classroom strategies focused on managing contextual/family concerns.

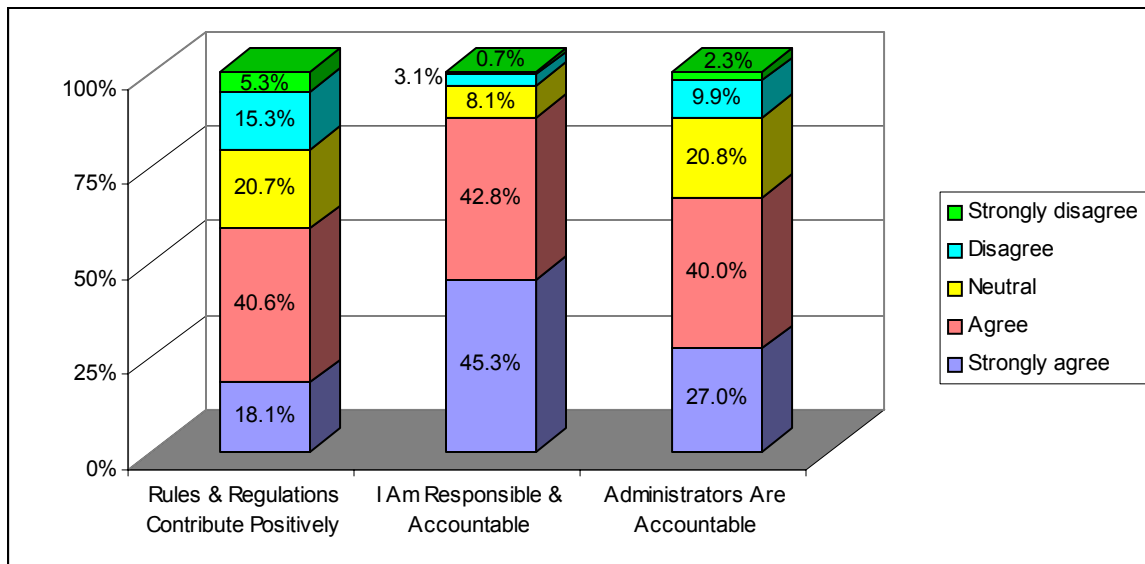
Teacher response regarding accountability

- **Key Finding:** More than 88% of teachers either agree or strongly agree that they are personally responsible for children reaching their maximum potential. However, 67% of teachers either agree or strongly agree that administrators are responsible for each child reaching his/her maximum potential.

Survey Statements: The rules and regulations in my school contribute positively to students’ educational outcomes.

I am responsible and accountable for ensuring that every child in my classroom achieves to his/her maximum potential.

Administrators should be held accountable and responsible for ensuring that every child achieves to his/her maximum potential.



Analysis: Teachers are generally supportive of the notion that rules and regulations contribute in a positive way to educational outcomes; 58.7% either agree or strongly agree with this statement, while 20.6% disagree or strongly disagree. A large majority of teachers (88.1%) also agrees that they (teachers) are responsible and accountable for ensuring that every child achieves to his/her maximum potential; only 3.8% disagree. This finding,

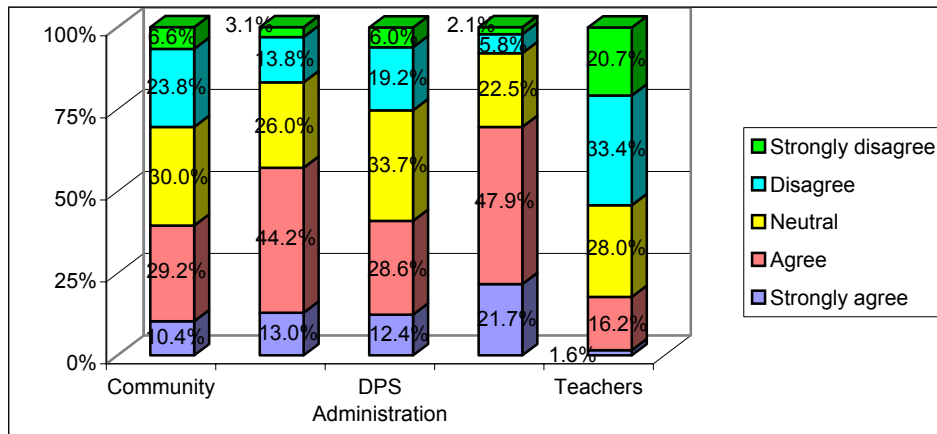
however, stands at least somewhat in contrast to some teachers' skepticism that good teaching can overcome barriers to learning, and the finding that many teachers view students and their home lives as the primary cause of problems in their school. Teachers also agree that administrators should be held accountable for student achievement, with 67% either agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement.

- **Recommendation:** Detroit Public School administrators and teachers should work together to develop and support rules that lead to positive educational outcomes, encouraging everyone to be responsible and accountable.

Teacher response regarding cause of school problems

- **Key Finding:**

- Survey Statements:**
- Problems in my school are caused by the community surrounding the schools.
 - Problems in my school are caused by students.
 - Problems in my school are caused by DPS administration.
 - Problems in my school are caused by families and students' home life.
 - Problems in my school are caused by teachers.



Analysis: Teachers' view the factor most responsible for problems in their school, as measured by the total share that indicated either "agree" or "strongly agree," is the home life of families and students (69.6%). Students themselves rank second as a perceived source of problems, at 57.2%, followed by DPS administration (41%), the community surrounding the schools (39.6%) and teachers (17.8%). More than half of teachers (54.1%) either disagree or strongly disagree with the notion that they themselves (teachers) are the cause of problems in their school.

As discussed above, these findings are a cause for concern, given a substantial portion of teachers appear to contradict their stated belief that all children can learn and that they (teachers) are in fact accountable for student performance by placing blame for school

problems on students' home lives, students themselves, DPS administration, and the community.

- **Recommendation:** Despite the stated belief in the ability of all children to learn and their own accountability for student performance, many teachers appear to be skeptical about the prospects of overcoming non-school barriers to student learning. This suggests that research-validated practices for accomplishing this goal should become a greater focus of future professional development activities.

Findings from the Detroit teacher survey, in summary, suggest both areas of progress and areas in which improvement and greater focus are needed as the district continues its attempt to improve student achievement. The perceptions of teachers offer important areas for consideration. No effort to improve student achievement will succeed without the input and active participation of the teaching staff.

Teacher Comments

Introduction

The following summarizes answers written by teachers in response to two open-ended items on the questionnaire:

- What important questions do you wish we would have asked you in the survey regarding the academic achievement of students you instruct?
- Is there anything else that you want to tell us about academic achievement in the Detroit Public School system?

The dominant themes highlighted below, were extracted from the collected data and represent the views of some DPS teachers. The dominant themes identified are as follows: parent accountability, student accountability, teacher morale, principal and administrative leadership, multiculturalism, discipline and safe environments, services for students with special needs, standardized testing, lack of resources, and ongoing staff development.

Parent Involvement

Teachers stated that some parents need to be more actively involved in their children's education. Teachers recommended the following:

- Expose students to the foundations for learning, such as ABC's
- Make sure children attend school regularly
- Visit the school at least once during the school year and make an effort to attend school conferences
- Be actively involved with students and teachers regarding learning goals and objectives
- Be accountable for child's social behavior and returning class assignments
- Request and review reports form between report cards. Maintain an awareness of child's performance

Teachers further suggested that some parents do not seem to recognize the connection between a child's home environment and their ability to learn. Teachers suggested that some parents need to provide their children with a nutritional breakfast, clean clothes, and give their children their medication when necessary.

Student Accountability

From the responses given by teachers, student accountability is a dominant theme. Teachers stated that students need to value education and believe in the educational process by taking ownership for their academic success or failure. Teachers indicated that this could be accomplished by students making an effort to reduce the number of classes skipped, be on time and improve attendance. Teachers felt that excessive absenteeism and tardiness interfere with instruction and greatly decrease students' ability to learn material. Many teachers suggested that DPS should enforce an attendance policy.

Teacher Morale

From a review of teachers' responses, the data suggested that some DPS teachers were not only calling for greater principal and administrative leadership, but they were also suggesting that there needed to be an assessment of the nature of the relationship between DPS administration and its teachers. In an effort to create an environment that was more conducive to teachers' success and development, teachers suggested that DPS teachers needed to:

- Be respected
- Know that they have a voice in the school system
- Be treated fairly
- Be rewarded for good performance, and
- Be removed if determined to be ineffective and unable to carry out work responsibilities

Principal and Administrative Leadership

In an effort to increase teacher retention, teachers suggested that principals and administrators mentor and provide incentives and professional development to new teachers in the early stages of their tenure.

Additionally, teachers felt that there is a need for central administrative leadership to do a thorough assessment of the technological, structural, and organizational capabilities of DPS. Teachers suggested that this could be done if the administrators were more hands-on and spent more time within the respective schools assessing needs and level of functioning. Teachers suggested a need for DPS to hire leadership that could not only effectively run the schools but have the vision and skills to implement innovative programs and curriculums, which can increase student academic performance and improve teacher morale. Teachers suggested that principals and administrators need to reduce class size and re-evaluate the impact overcrowding has on student climate, academic performance, and teacher-student interaction.

In regards to training and hiring, teachers felt that DPS should not only hire certified teachers, but should also be active in providing training that assists teachers in becoming better teachers.

Multiculturalism

A dominant theme within the teacher's responses suggested that there is a need for the development and implementation of cultural enrichment programs as well as assessment of programs to assist bilingual students in DPS. Furthermore, teachers consistently stressed the importance of teachers being aware of the socio-cultural realities of urban students.

Discipline/Safe Environment

Discipline is a reoccurring theme in teacher comments. Teachers articulated that they spend too much time on discipline, and that discipline problems interfere with their ability to teach. Many teachers felt that the inability of DPS to enforce a code of conduct has resulted in many teachers feeling unsafe due to student unruliness and harassment.

Additional concerns articulated by the teachers indicated that there is a need for DPS to provide a safe environment for teachers through the administration's having more direct contact with the schools and reevaluating student discipline.

Students with Special Needs

Many DPS teachers, felt that the needs of special education, poor and low-achieving students were unmet by DPS. Teachers in the study consistently expressed a need for teachers and administrators to be abreast of, and address the academic and socio-economic disparities among DPS students.

Many suggested that early assessment and intervention for these students could improve test scores and students ability to perform at their current grade level. Teachers also felt that there needs to be an effort made to work collaboratively with social workers and other human service professionals to adequately monitor the progress of these students once they are identified and assessed. Thus, DPS teachers recommended that all teachers be trained in identifying and working with students, who are in special education, come from disadvantaged backgrounds or are performing at lower levels academically.

Testing

Teachers consistently stressed that DPS needs to de-emphasize the importance of standardized tests. Teachers articulated that this emphasis on testing not only creates an atmosphere of fear for those whose jobs may be in jeopardy because their students are not performing well, but it also effects the quality of education that the students receive. Teachers suggested that, by only focusing on standardized tests, students miss out on a breadth of knowledge and are not exposed to all material covered in a specific subject. Furthermore, teachers articulated that this overemphasis on testing not only disrupts the implementation of DPS curriculum, but creates a good deal of stress for students who feel over tested.

Lack of Resources

Many teachers felt that DPS' resources were grossly inadequate and the distribution of resources reflected a good deal of disparity among schools. Teachers also expressed concern regarding the lack of timely distribution. Teacher responses also indicated the following concerns regarding resources:

- The use of updated technology in the classroom
- Updated textbooks
- Funding for security and custodial staff to provide a safe and clean environment
- Supplies for students and teachers to reduce the amount of personal money that teachers have to spend for educational materials
- Improvement of buildings and grounds at all DPS schools

Staff Development

A dominant and consistent theme for many of the teachers in the DPS system was a need for ongoing professional development and training. Although 60% of teachers reported that their education prepared them “very well” or “well” to teach in an urban setting, teachers still expressed a strong need for staff development. Teachers articulated the need for DPS to employ and utilize professional consultants as well as highly skilled DPS staff to assist teachers in improving the quality of instruction in reading and math and support for more effective classroom management.

Summary

Teachers have clear and positive ideas about how to foster the accomplishment of school improvement goals in the DPS in several areas including: parent accountability, student accountability, teacher morale, principal and administrative leadership, multiculturalism, discipline and safe environments, services for students with special needs, testing, lack of resources, and ongoing and consistent staff development. Teachers indicate that some parents need to be more accountable and more involved in their children’s education.

Although many of the DPS teachers have master’s degrees, they still articulate a need for professional development and training in an effort to deal with children from urban or disadvantaged backgrounds.

One of the most consistently mentioned themes was the perceived over-emphasis on testing. Teachers indicated that this over-emphasis greatly impacts not only teacher morale, but the teachers ability to implement DPS curriculum.

The data gleaned from teacher responses articulates a challenging picture for DPS students; lack of resources, low parental involvement, and high numbers of disadvantaged young people. Detroit Public School demographics, however, indicate that several schools have created school environments conducive to academic success. There is a need to examine these high achieving schools for strategies that could be implemented district-wide.

New Detroit's Involvement – History of the Report

The mission of the New Detroit Coalition embodies a commitment to the provision of quality public education. Beginning in 1990, New Detroit annually convened an independent panel of area citizens to review the management and academic achievement levels of Detroit Public Schools and issued an annual Performance Report on the district. Each year the results were disappointing. It was determined that the New Detroit Coalition should take a more proactive role.

In 1997, at the invitation of the school district, New Detroit convened a group to conduct an independent and impartial operational review of the school district's organizational, financial, administrative and support systems. In July 1997 New Detroit issued "A Plan for Fundamental Change" which was adopted by the Board of Education. Subsequently, the Board of Education asked New Detroit to spearhead an Implementation Team organized to facilitate the restructuring recommended in the plan.

By the end of 1998 the New Detroit Coalition concluded that efforts at reform, attempted by several Superintendents and elected Detroit Boards, were not sustainable and that the barriers to the restructuring and reform of the District were systemic. As a result, the majority of the Coalition supported legislation that allowed for a Mayoral appointment of School Board members. Board members were appointed to staggered terms in 1999.

In an effort to ensure that concerned citizens receive an objective report on the progress of our community in securing quality public education, the Skillman Foundation agreed to support a New Detroit assessment of reform. New Detroit retained the services of a team of Michigan State University researchers to assess various aspects of the reform and restructuring process.

The first phase of this assessment was released in January 2002. Evaluators reported survey results from Elementary School Principals, Middle School Principals, and High School Principals regarding progress toward school improvement in the Detroit Public Schools. In addition, the report contained the results of interviews with Dr. Kenneth Burnley, CEO of the Detroit Public Schools and several members of the Detroit Board of Education concerning progress toward implementing the School Improvement Plan.

Further, that report provided an analysis of MEAP and MAT scores as well as graphs reviewing four years of statistical comparisons of these two tests.

The second phase, represented by this report, focuses on information and perceptions from a survey of Detroit Public School Teachers.

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