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**EVALUATION OF WCPSS CENTRAL SERVICES
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAMS (PLTs): SPRING 2011**

Andrew Jackl, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

The Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) Board policy indicates that central staff are to support school implementation of Professional Learning Teams (PLTs) and to participate in PLTs at the central level. Central Services supported PLT work in the schools in a variety of ways. The percentage of principals who saw this support as adequate dropped from 85% to 70% between spring 2010 and 2011. Within Central Services, 86% of survey respondents reported participating in at least one PLT. Of those responding to the Spring 2011 PLT survey, responses remained overwhelming positive about implementation and effectiveness. However, without exception, the strength of agreement decreased, with the percentage of respondents who “strongly agreed” dropping between 2010 and 2011.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLT CONCEPT AND POLICY

WCPSS first implemented Professional Learning Teams, originally called Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), in schools several years ago. PLC/PLTs are made up of members who regularly collaborate toward continued improvement in meeting student learning needs. These teams use data, professional experience, and best practice to work towards realizing a shared vision for a better learning environment.

The implementation of Professional Learning Teams has been emphasized district-wide as a key strategy for improving both learning and teaching over time (Reichstetter, 2008). The PLT concept was officially and formally endorsed by WCPSS with Board policy 3610/4510/5040, adopted July 21, 2009. The Board policy states that school and central services staff are expected to participate in PLTs. However, Central Services staff members have an additional responsibility dictated by the policy. In addition to functioning as active participants within their own PLTs, Central Services personnel are also charged with supporting PLT implementation within the schools. The Board policy also indicates that the implementation and impact of the policy are to be studied and reported periodically.

Contents	
Evaluation Methods.....	5
Central Support for School PLT Work.....	6
CSA Implementation	8
Summary.....	33
Recommendations.....	34

The author would like to acknowledge the support of Nancy Baenen with this study, as well as Amy Huebeler with data collection.

This report serves as an assessment of the current status of PLTs within Central Services, as well as an examination of changes in Central Services PLT implementation levels over time.

RESULTS

Central Services Support for Schools

Central staff continued to support PLTs in schools in a variety of ways; core activities are summarized later in this report. Survey data from principals in June 2011 documents that principals' perceptions of the adequacy of support provided for PLTs by Central Services varies by school level, with elementary principals expressing the lowest level of positive agreement, (70.3% agreed that the level of support was adequate) compared to 78.2% of middle school principals and 89.4% of high school principals. These data represent a notable drop from June 2010, when at least 85.0% or more at each school level agreed that they were receiving adequate support from Central Services.

PLT Participation

In 2010-11, PLTs at the Central Services level functioned within and across the various divisions and departments. The professional staff who do not attend Central Services Administrators (CSA) meetings were most likely to belong to at least one PLT (94.8%), followed by professionals who attend CSA meetings (88.0%) and administrators (77.9%). Combined, 85.9% of the survey respondents claimed membership in at least one PLT.

Slightly less than half (48.2%) of Central Services staff reported participating in two or more PLTs. The professionals who attend CSA meetings were most likely to belong to more than one PLT (60.0%), followed by administrators (48.5%) and professionals who do not attend CSA meetings (45.2%). When compared to the previous year, PLT participation within one important subgroup seems to have waned. Staff who attend CSA meetings were slightly less likely to be engaged in PLT work than the year before. The Spring 2011 data show that 20.5% of those attending CSA meetings do not claim membership in any PLT, compared to 14.0% in Spring 2010.

PLT Implementation and Impact

Survey results for CSA participants remained overwhelmingly positive in 2010-11, suggesting that most employees have embraced the PLT concept and are continuing to implement it. Based on respondents' primary learning team, positive responses (between 75% and 97%) were provided for each statement pertaining to one of the six core PLT implementation themes. Percentage agreement was below 90% for only about one third of the statements (8 of 28 statements). When results are grouped by core characteristics of PLTs, five of the six characteristics had at least 90% positive responses across items. Items on supportive conditions had the lowest percentage of agreement at 82%. Little change was evident from 2010 to 2011.

Table 1
Central Services PLT Responses by Characteristic, Spring 2010 – Spring 2011

Characteristic	2010		2011	
	% Agreement	Rank	% Agreement	Rank
Shared Vision	94%	1	94%	1
Focus on Results	92%	2	92%	2
Collective Inquiry	91%	3	92%	2
Supportive & Shared Leadership	90%	4	90%	5
Collaborative Culture	90%	4	92%	2
Supportive Conditions	82%	6	82%	6

Data Source: WCPSS analysis of Spring 2010 and Spring 2011 PLT survey data.

General Trends

When compared to the earliest possible baseline data (Fall 2008 or Spring 2009 depending on the item), an upward trend of positive agreement was evident. Of the 28 survey items, 25 of them document a net gain in positive responses when compared to their baseline. However, as summarized in Table 1, the Spring 2011 survey data did not differ dramatically from Spring 2010 when viewed thematically.

The most notable difference between the Spring 2010 and Spring 2011 PLT survey results was in the percentage of respondents indicating that they “strongly agree” with the survey items. The overall percentage of Central Services staff showing some level of positive agreement remained relatively stable, but more staff elected to “agree” with the survey items instead of “strongly agree” as they had done in the past. This downward data trend is not tantamount to a rejection of the PLT concept, but it is almost certainly a harbinger of diminishing enthusiasm.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Board policy supports PLT work, but conditions have changed. Central staffing levels have declined, especially in the last two years due to budget cuts. As PLTs move forward, central staff should address two critical issues:

- Reaffirm the nature of the commitment of WCPSS to PLTs by revisiting expectations for central services support of PLT work in schools in light of reduced resources, and share these revised expectations with central and school staff. Consider principals’ comments to inform these decisions and solicit additional feedback if necessary. Also consider whether the PLT Steering Committee should meet more often, or whether another committee could absorb leadership and monitoring of PLT work completion.
- Clarify expectations for Central Services staff in terms of the nature of their PLT work and who is expected to participate. Review survey comments and solicit additional input from central staff on ways to improve PLT implementation and effectiveness at the central office level. Additional training or resources may be necessary. Once plans are resolved, staff can decide on the best way to communicate and to implement improvement measures.

EVALUATION OF CENTRAL SERVICES PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TEAMS AS OF SPRING 2011

The Professional Learning Team (PLT) concept has become accepted by WCPSS education professionals as a “best practice” to increase student achievement, foster professional growth, and sustain school improvements. WCPSS first implemented Professional Learning Teams, originally called Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), in schools several years ago. Some of these efforts have been in collaboration with neighboring districts and local businesses through the High Five Consortium, and some have been independent WCPSS efforts. The work of DuFour and others (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2007) were key resources in this development process. While the effort focused exclusively on schools in the early years, central services involvement has increased over time.

The Wake County Board of Education moved to the name *Professional Learning Teams* for all school-based and central services learning teams in 2009 to enhance consistent communications and “to ensure that school PLC work and Central Services departmental learning team [PLT] work were held to the same standards of thoroughness and excellence” (Sudderth, 2009). By extension, the many Professional Learning Teams operating within the district’s network would now comprise a larger, all-inclusive Professional Learning Community.

A Board policy (3610, 4510, 5040) was adopted July 21, 2009 dictating that school and central services staff are expected to participate in PLTs. The policy states,

“A professional learning community is made up of members who regularly collaborate toward continued improvement in meeting student needs. Using data, professional experience, and best practice, the team works towards realizing a shared vision for a better learning environment. The primary focus of this work is on the support of learning and meeting the needs of all students.”

Central Services staff members have two roles in the policy. One role is to support schools; Central Services staff are to provide guidelines and resources, examples of research-based strategies, and implementation training. A second role is as participants, with Central Services staff expected to:

- Participate in regular PLTs.
- Identify goals for improvement in support of the learning environment and require evidence of improvement.
- Identify and share strategies.
- Assess the impact of the strategies and share the results.

For the central services level, this report addresses the last item, and serves both as a policy study and an examination of changes in central implementation levels over time. A similar study was completed last year (Baenen & Jackl, 2010). A full policy study for 2010-11 was completed last fall (Jackl & Baenen, 2010), with another school policy study update in process.

EVALUATION METHODS

To study Central Services support for schools as well as PLT participation, implementation, and impact, data were collected and analyzed from several sources. These included surveys, interviews, and document reviews.

Central Services PLT Surveys (Fall 2008, Spring 2009, Spring 2010, and Spring 2011):

The Spring 2011 Central Services PLT Survey was sent to all administrators and professional staff. Unlike the previous year, support staff members did not receive an invitation to participate in the survey. Overall, 54.7% of the invited staff members returned a response. Of those who did respond, 13.2% (42 out of 318) contradicted their Human Resources classification by claiming to be neither an administrator nor a professional. Of the respondents whose job classification was correctly understood, response rates were higher for Central Services administrators (51.3%) than for professional staff (44.3%). It should be noted that only 25 of the 140 professional staff members who responded to the survey reported that they regularly attend the Central Services Administrator (CSA) meetings.

Prior surveys had been administered in Fall 2008 and Spring 2009 (Jackl, 2009). The survey instrument administered in March 2010 had only minor modifications from the survey done in May 2009 to reflect items related to aspects of the new Board policy. In 2010, the method of distribution varied from prior years in that the survey was distributed and returned online rather than on paper. The 2011 deployment was virtually unchanged from 2010: the identical survey was deployed online.

Principals' Survey: In 2009-10, a short electronic survey utilized student response devices and Turning Point software to capture and display results during a principals' meeting. For 2010-11, the survey was expanded slightly to capture more qualitative data on the perceived benefits and challenges of school-based PLT implementation, as well as information on how Central Services can better support PLT work in the schools. The online survey was deployed in June 2011 to all of the district's principals. The survey window remained open for two weeks, with one reminder being sent at the midpoint. Ultimately, 89.9% of the principals responded to the survey.

Steering Committee Meetings and Interviews: The author of this report attended the Spring 2011 meeting of this group and gathered information about ongoing activities to support PLT work in WCPSS. Follow-up emails to key staff within the steering committee and other key personnel in Curriculum & Instruction, Communications, and Staff Development were also done in the spring to solicit input on activities completed to support PLTs during 2010-11.

Results from these sources are synthesized in this report. The primary focus, however, will be on the survey responses of those attending the CSA meetings (administrators and some professionals in leadership roles). Longitudinal comparisons are possible for this group, with many items asked across all four administrations of the survey. The charts and figures were designed to make it clear when each specific survey item was first deployed.

CENTRAL SUPPORT FOR SCHOOL PLT WORK

Principal surveys, interviews, and email correspondence provided information on the support provided by central staff during the 2010-11 school year. Central staff supported PLTs in schools in a variety of ways. Most principals (at least 70.3% from each school level) agreed that the level of support was adequate. While not exhaustive, some key Central Services activities included the following:

- Established an Instructional Services Division (ISD) goal for 2010-11 related to ensuring the PLTs were implemented with fidelity in 2010-11. The plan listed necessary resources, action steps, timelines, and measureable process checks.
- Continued to expand and update the district's "PLT Fishbone" (an electronic resource on the web) to help school-based and Central Services personnel access supplemental resources to support PLT implementation. For example, the Fishbone now contains additional information on PLT evaluation, links to recent PLT reports, and case studies of high-performing WCPSS PLTs spanning all school levels.
- Continued to feature and highlight PLT work in various district newsletters and communications.
- Provided training for secondary PLT leaders and others on managing PLTs. Customized PLT training was also offered to individual schools when requested, and time was provided at Instructional Resource Teacher (IRT) meetings to discuss successes and issues during the PLT time.
- Continued efforts by the Chief Academic Officer to visit PLTs periodically to check implementation, monitor progress, and become aware of any issues that arose. Unlike the previous year, the lack of a universal, protected meeting time made this undertaking more difficult since schools carved out time for PLT work in various ways and at various times in 2010-11.
- Continued to organize and facilitate monthly PLT meetings of school professionals who were "singletons" and therefore had no one else in a like role with whom to meet. Teachers in areas such as the arts, foreign language, career and technical education, English as a second language, and physical education met monthly to discuss unique issues and solutions in their areas.
- Reconvened the PLT Steering Committee to review the school-based PLT policy study received from Evaluation & Research (E&R) (Jackl & Baenen, 2010), and to discuss ways to respond to the suggestions contained within that report.
- Expanded the evaluation activities of E&R related to PLTs at the school and central levels. One aspect of the expanded evaluation was to create case studies of high-functioning PLTs, which were posted to the online Fishbone (mentioned above) as a supplemental resource.

Another was to continue and expand the correlational analyses exploring the relationship between successful PLT work and desired student outcomes.

- Participated in professional development related to PLTs that was sponsored by the Triangle High Five organization in order to further develop their skills to support school and central implementation. High profile PLT trainers, such as Rick and Rebecca DuFour, were enlisted to support this effort. Other trainings were also provided, such as Thomas Guskey's seminar on grading practices. Additionally, some staff also attended training through the Wake Leadership Academy or other venues.

As shown on Table 2, principals' survey responses were generally positive, but the strength of agreement was less than in 2009-10 and varied by school level.

- There was also a decrease in the number of principals who "strongly agreed" that support was sufficient; this figure decreased between 12.2 and 21.8 percentage points across the three grade levels.
- Elementary principals demonstrated the lowest level of positive agreement, with 70.3% reporting that the level of support was adequate. For comparison, 78.2% of middle school principals and 89.4% of high school principals agreed that support for PLT work was sufficient. This figure declined from June 2010; in the previous year, at least 85% or more at each school level agreed that they were receiving adequate support from Central Services.

Table 2
Principal Perceptions of Adequacy of Support on PLTs 2009-10 to 2010-11
 “I have received adequate support from central services about PLTs
 (e.g., resources, training, and/or informal support.”

Grade Level	2009-10		2010-11		Change
Elementary	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Strongly Agree	28	30.4%	7	8.6%	-21.8%
Agree	50	54.4%	50	61.7%	7.3%
Disagree	12	13.0%	20	24.7%	11.7%
Strongly Disagree	2	2.2%	2	2.5%	0.3%
No Response	0	0.0%	2	2.5%	2.5%
Totals	92	100%	81	100.0%	
Middle School	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Strongly Agree	11	37.9%	5	21.7%	-16.2%
Agree	15	51.7%	13	56.5%	4.8%
Disagree	3	10.3%	5	21.7%	11.4%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
No Response	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Totals	29	100%	23	100%	
High School	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	
Strongly Agree	5	22.7%	2	10.5%	-12.2%
Agree	15	68.2%	15	78.9%	10.7%
Disagree	2	9.1%	2	10.5%	1.4%
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
No Response	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Totals	22	100%	19	100%	

Source: WCPSS analysis of 2010 and 2011 Principals' PLT Survey data.

CENTRAL SERVICES PLT IMPLEMENTATION

Survey Response Rates

The overall response rate for the Central Services Survey was 54.7%, up from 53% in the previous administration (see Table 3). Administrators were more likely to respond than professionals (51.3% versus 44.3%). As noted earlier, all Central Services staff members classified by WCPSS Human Resources as either an “administrator” or a “professional” were invited to participate in the Spring 2011 Central Services PLT survey. Since the survey was anonymous, each respondent was asked to self-report whether he or she was classified as an administrator or a professional. The professional staff members were asked if they did or did not

attend the Central Services Administrator (CSA) meetings. Because 42 staff members contradicted their Human Resources classification by claiming to be neither an administrator nor a professional, those individual responses had to be removed when the survey results were disaggregated by job classification. However, their survey responses were included in all other analyses. The PLT Steering Committee elected not to include support staff in the most recent survey administration.

Table 3
Central Services Survey Response Rates by Job Group

Group	Number Sent	Responses	
		Number	Percentage
Administrators	265	136	51.3%
Professionals	316	140	44.3%
Other	0	42	
Total	581	318	54.7%

Data Source: WCPSS Human Resources and analysis of Spring 2011 survey data.

Note: This response rate includes all survey respondents, regardless of their self-reported job classification.

Note: Eight additional surveys sent but not deliverable.

Note: Of the 140 professionals who responded, 25 reported that they attend CSA meetings and 115 reported that they do not.

When the response rate was disaggregated by division the response rate for administrators varied considerably by department. These data, reported in Table 4, do not include the 42 respondents who failed to identify their job classification within Central Services. Of those that did, Communications Services had the highest response rate (72.7%), followed closely by Instructional Services (69.0%). Due to the relatively small number of professional staff serving in leadership roles (only 25 respondents identified themselves as professional staff who regularly attend CSA meetings), the percentages are more enlightening when the administrators are disaggregated from the larger group.

Table 4
Central Services Survey Response Rates by Division – Spring 2011

Central Services Administrators Only			
	Sent	Responses	Response Rate
Administrative Services	47	21	44.7%
Auxiliary Services	84	34	40.5%
Communications Services	11	8	72.7%
Instructional Services	84	58	69.0%
Superintendents' Office	20	5	25.0%
Technology Services	19	8	42.1%
No Response/Missing Data	0	2	
Total:	265	136	51.3%
Central Services Professional Staff Only			
	Sent	Responses	Response Rate
Administrative Services	11	4	36.4%
Auxiliary Services	0	14	
Communications Services	1	1	100.0%
Instructional Services	298	102	34.2%
Superintendents' Offices	6	1	16.7%
Technology Services	0	1	
No Response/Missing Data	0	17	
Total:	316	140	44.3%
Central Services Administrators and Professional Staff Combined			
	Sent	Responses	Response Rate
Administrative Services	58	25	43.1%
Auxiliary Services	84	48	57.1%
Communications Services	12	9	75.0%
Instructional Services	382	160	41.9%
Superintendents' Offices	26	6	23.1%
Technology Services	19	9	47.4%
No Response/Missing Data	0	19	
Total:	581	276	47.5%

Data Source: WCPSS Human Resources and analysis of Spring 2011 survey data.

Note: Only Central Services staff who self-reported their job classification to be an administrator or professional were included in this analysis.

PLT Participation

Central staff members did participate in PLTs. PLTs occurred within departments and across departments, and were organized in diverse ways. Examples include subject area PLTs (e.g., Biology, Algebra, Elementary Mathematics, etc.) as well as tightly-focused or issue-driven PLTs (e.g., Magnet Program Implementation, Cost Benefit Analysis, Testing, etc.). Other PLTs spanned several related topics; for example, one PLT on graduation rates included three subgroups to focus on suspensions, attendance, and dropout prevention.

When examined by job group, more than three-fourths of Central Services staff (85.9%) indicated that they participated in one or more PLTs as of Spring 2011. Professional staff, regardless of whether or not they attend CSA meetings, were more likely to participate in PLT work than administrators. Table 5 reports these data.

Table 5
Central Services Participation in One or More PLT

Group	Number of Responses	In One or More PLTs	
		n	Percent
Administrators	136	106	77.9%
Professionals who attend CSA Meetings	25	22	88.0%
Professionals who do not attend CSA Meetings	115	109	94.8%
Total	276	237	85.9%

Data Source: WCPSS analysis of Spring 2011 survey data.

Note: Only Central Services staff who self-reported their job classification to be an administrator or professional were included in this analysis.

As reported in Table 6 and Figure 1, just less than half (48.2%) of the Central Services staff reported participating in two or more PLTs. The professionals who attend CSA meetings were most likely to belong to more than one PLT (60%), followed by administrators (48.5%) and professionals who do not attend CSA meetings (45.2%). Professional staff who attend CSA meeting are the most likely to be involved in three or more PLTs (40.0%), compared to administrators (25.0%) and professionals who do not attend CSA meetings (24.3%),

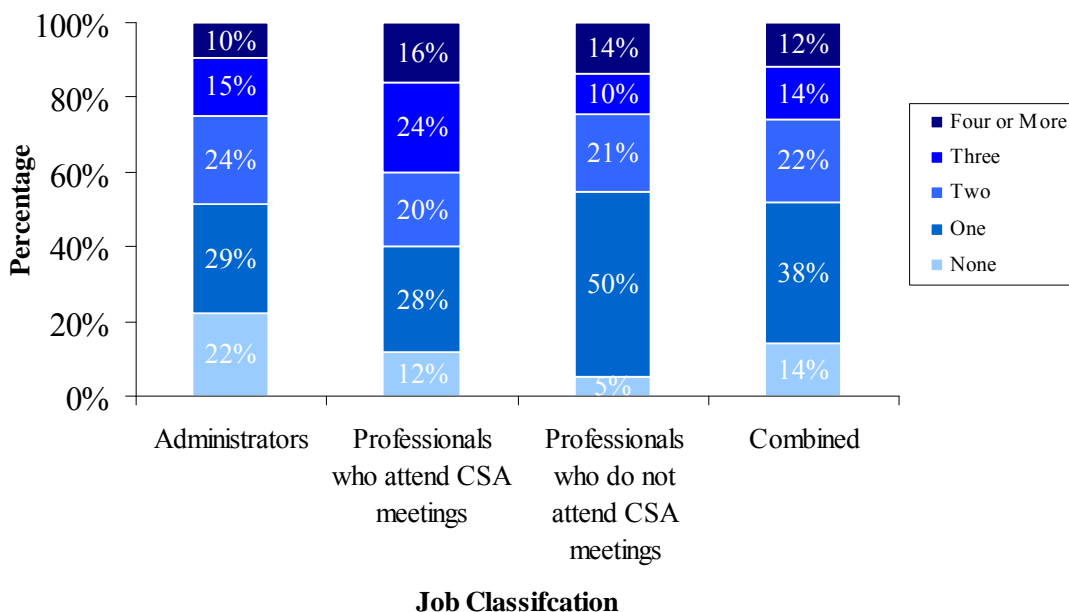
Table 6
Number of PLTs in Which Central Staff Participate, Spring 2011

Group	Number of PLTs	n	Percent
Administrators	None	30	22.1%
	One	40	29.4%
	Two	32	23.5%
	Three	21	15.4%
	Four or More	13	9.6%
Total		136	100.0%
Professionals who attend CSA meetings	None	3	12.0%
	One	7	28.0%
	Two	5	20.0%
	Three	6	24.0%
	Four or More	4	16.0%
Total		25	100.0%
Professionals who do not attend CSA meetings	None	6	5.2%
	One	57	49.6%
	Two	24	20.9%
	Three	12	10.4%
	Four or More	16	13.9%
Total		115	100.0%
Combined	None	39	14.1%
	One	104	37.7%
	Two	61	22.1%
	Three	39	14.1%
	Four or More	33	12.0%
Total		276	100.0%

Source: WCPSS analysis of Spring 2011 Central Services PLT Survey data

Note: Only Central Services staff who self-reported their job classification to be an administrator or professional were included in this analysis.

Figure 1
Participation in PLTs by Central Services Job Group – Spring 2011



Source: WCPSS analysis of Spring 2011 Central Services PLT Survey data

Note: Only Central Services staff who self-reported their job classification to be an administrator or professional were included in this analysis.

Administrator *n*=136; Professionals who attend CSA meetings *n*=25;

Professionals who do not attend CSA meetings *n*=115; Combined *N*=276

CSA participant responses are particularly important in this study because survey results from the prior year are available for comparison. The staff members who attend CSA meetings on a regular basis, whether classified as an administrator or a professional, compose the Central Leadership Group. As shown in Table 7, this subset shows lower PLT participation in Spring 2011 than it did in Spring 2010. The percentage of staff reporting that they do not belong to any PLT increased by 6.5 percentage points, moving from 14.0% in 2010 to 20.5% in 2011. While the number of respondents reporting that they belonged to three PLTs showed a modest increase of 1.8 percentage points, the reported percentages have dropped in all other categories. Based on these data, it is reasonable to conclude that PLT participation within Central Services has declined somewhat from the previous year.

Table 7
Number of Central Leadership Group PLT Memberships:
Spring 2010 versus Spring 2011

Central Leadership Group	Number of PLT Memberships					
	n	None	One	Two	Three	Four or More
Spring 2010	281	14.0%	34.0%	26.0%	15.0%	11.0%
Spring 2011	161	20.5%	29.2%	23.0%	16.8%	10.6%

Note: Analysis only includes administrators and professionals who attend CSA meetings.

Source: WCPSS analysis of Spring 2010 and Spring 2011 Central Services PLT Survey data

Survey Results by Characteristic

The first Central Services Administrators' Survey, deployed in October 2008, contained items related to three themes: a focus on a shared vision and values, the establishment of a collaborative culture and team processes, and the perceived level of support/resource allocation. The second survey included additional items to better assess the strategies and best practices being used, as well as the overall impact of the PLT concept. Recent training has organized PLT implementation and impact into six characteristics (which closely align with the themes used in 2010, with minor differences).

Almost all of the individual items from the Fall 2008 survey were redeployed in the Spring 2009 survey administration, and again in Spring 2010 and Spring 2011. The results of all survey administrations are presented together within this report to facilitate side-by-side comparisons.

Shared Vision and Values

The first theme, a focus on a shared vision and values, included items about team goals, member roles, team vision, and team work with key stakeholders. As in 2010, the amalgamated percentage of positive agreement for this theme was highest for this characteristic at 94% (see Table 1). As shown in Table 8, positive responses to individual items in 2011 ranged from a low of 90% (leadership/team members facilitate a vision for our team) to 97% (my team's goals are closely aligned with the goals of the district). Compared over time, there are some trends worth noting:

- When compared to the earliest possible baseline data (ranging from Fall 2008 to Spring of 2010, depending on the item), the statement "my team has established goals" declined by two percentage points. All other statements, however, increased between three and 14 percentage points since the item was first deployed. The most dramatic changes were in the items pertaining to the clarity of team goals and the collective vision for the team; these increased by 13 and 14 percentage points, respectively, from their Fall 2008 baseline.
- When 2011 data were compared to 2010, the survey statement "my team's goals are closely aligned with the goals of the district" increased by two percentage points. In all other cases,

the overall level of positive agreement declined between one and four percentage points from the previous year.

- When 2011 data were compared to 2010, there was a pronounced decline in the percentage of respondents indicating that they “strongly agree” with the survey statements (see Figure 2). More specifically, the percentage of Central Services staff returning a “strongly agree” response dropped between six and 12 percentage points from the previous year for every item.

Table 8
Changes in Shared Vision Items Over Time

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	% Positive	% Negative
My team has established goals.						
Fall 2008 and Spring 2009						
Spring 2010	55%	41%	3%	1%	97%	3%
Spring 2011	46%	49%	4%	0%	95%	4%
<i>Change from Spring 2010 to Spring 2011</i>	-9%	8%	1%	-1%	-2%	1%
Team goals are clear.						
Fall 2008	21%	59%	17%	3%	81%	19%
Spring 2009	32%	55%	12%	1%	87%	13%
Spring 2010	53%	42%	5%	1%	95%	5%
Spring 2011	41%	53%	6%	0%	94%	6%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	20%	-6%	-11%	-3%	13%	-13%
Leadership/team members facilitate the creation of a vision for our team.						
Fall 2008	29%	47%	19%	5%	76%	24%
Spring 2009	26%	55%	18%	2%	81%	19%
Spring 2010	45%	48%	5%	1%	94%	6%
Spring 2011	39%	51%	8%	0%	90%	8%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	10%	4%	-11%	-5%	14%	-16%
Team members work with key stakeholders on a regular basis.						
Fall 2008	26%	62%	10%	2%	88%	12%
Spring 2009	25%	54%	19%	2%	79%	21%
Spring 2010	44%	48%	7%	1%	92%	8%
Spring 2011	35%	56%	7%	1%	91%	8%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	9%	-6%	-3%	-1%	3%	-4%
My team's goals are closely aligned with the goals of the district.						
Fall 2008						
Spring 2009	36%	54%	9%	1%	90%	10%
Spring 2010	56%	39%	5%	0%	95%	5%
Spring 2011	47%	50%	1%	1%	97%	2%
<i>Change from Spring 2009 to Spring 2011</i>	11%	-4%	-8%	0%	7%	-8%

Fall 2008 n= 182; Spring 2009 n= 215; Spring 2010 n= 237-238; Spring 2011 n=267-272

Data Source for all Central Services Survey Tables:

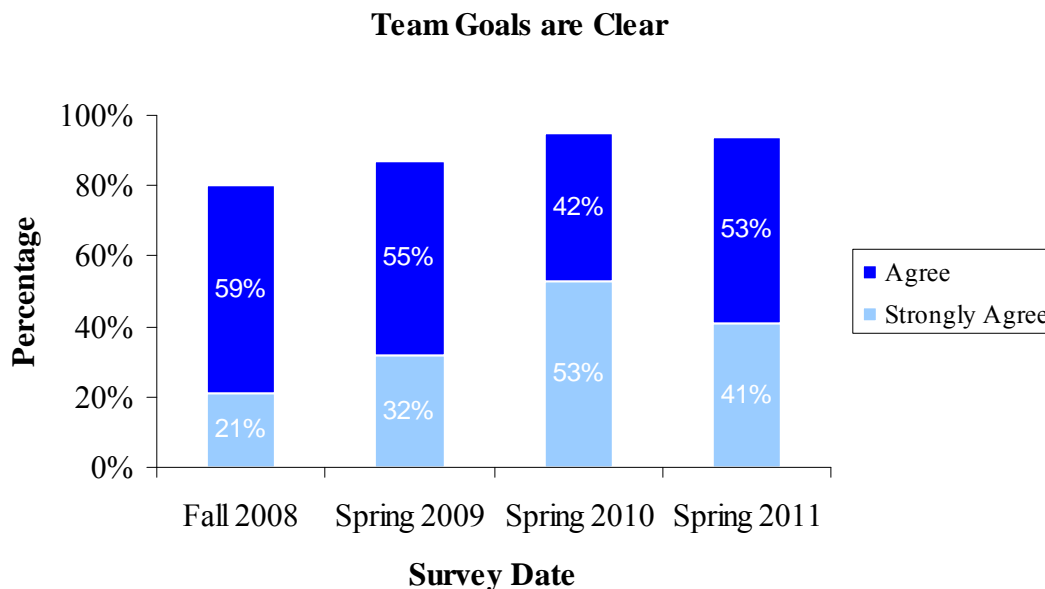
WCPS analysis of Fall 2008, Spring 2009, Spring 2010, and Spring 2011 Central Services PLT Surveys.

Notes for all Central Services Survey Tables:

SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree.

% Positive includes SA and A; % Negative includes D and SD.

Figure 2
Changes in Clarity of Team Goals, Fall 2008 to Spring 2011



Collaborative Culture

Working collaboratively represents a major paradigm shift from individual efforts to a cooperative team concept of working together toward a common purpose and learning together (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The nine items on the survey related to collaborative culture explored the communication and collaboration issues, as well as accountability issues. Eight of these items were germane to communication and collaboration within the team, but one item did ask about efforts to cross-collaborate with other teams. Because this characteristic had the greatest number of survey items, the results were split into two tables to differentiate between the communication and accountability statements.

The amalgamated percentage of positive responses to the collaboration items was 92% — an increase of two percentage points from the previous year. This raised the overall ranking of this theme into a three-way tie for second place; only the “shared vision” theme had a higher amalgamated ranking (see Table 1).

Positive responses for the items pertaining to communication ranged from 86% (“my team seeks to collaborate with other teams”) to a high of 96% (“problem solving is the responsibility of the team”). Some interesting trends were that:

- When compared to the earliest Fall 2008 or Spring 2009 baseline data, the percentage of positive responses increased between eight and 17 percentage points for every item. The two largest increases (+17 percentage points) pertained to team members being clear about their roles and communication within the team flowing freely.

- When the 2011 data were compared to the previous year, five of the six items showed modest improvement, with the percentage of positive responses increasing between one and three percentage points. However, the item asking if team members were clear about their role showed a relatively larger increase of six percentage points since Spring 2010.
- When Spring 2011 data were compared to Spring 2011, the percentage of respondents indicating that they “strongly agreed” with the survey statements decreased between five and nine percentage points across communication items.

Table 9
Changes in Collaborative Culture Items Over Time—Communication Items

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	% Positive	% Negative
Members of the team are clear about their role.						
Fall 2008	24%	54%	19%	3%	78%	22%
Spring 2009	20%	62%	16%	2%	83%	17%
Spring 2010	44%	46%	9%	1%	89%	11%
Spring 2011	36%	59%	5%	0%	95%	5%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	12%	5%	-14%	-3%	17%	-17%
Team meetings are productive.						
Fall 2008	28%	54%	15%	3%	82%	18%
Spring 2009	23%	60%	14%	3%	84%	16%
Spring 2010	42%	50%	7%	1%	92%	8%
Spring 2011	37%	56%	6%	2%	93%	8%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	9%	2%	-9%	-1%	11%	-10%
Communication within the team flows freely.						
Fall 2008	21%	56%	19%	4%	77%	23%
Spring 2009	30%	51%	15%	4%	81%	19%
Spring 2010	48%	45%	7%	1%	92%	8%
Spring 2011	39%	55%	5%	1%	94%	6%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	18%	-1%	-14%	-3%	17%	-17%
Problem solving is the responsibility of the team.						
Fall 2008	30%	56%	12%	2%	86%	14%
Spring 2009	38%	58%	3%	1%	96%	4%
Spring 2010	46%	47%	6%	0%	93%	7%
Spring 2011	40%	56%	4%	0%	96%	4%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	10%	0%	-8%	-2%	10%	-10%
My team seeks to collaborate with other teams.						
Fall 2008						
Spring 2009	25%	53%	19%	3%	78%	22%
Spring 2010	38%	46%	15%	2%	83%	17%
Spring 2011	30%	56%	12%	2%	86%	14%
<i>Change from Spring 2009 to Spring 2011</i>	5%	3%	-7%	-1%	8%	-8%
Team members work hard to motivate each other.						
Fall 2008	22%	52%	23%	3%	74%	26%
Spring 2009	27%	50%	21%	3%	77%	23%
Spring 2010	35%	52%	11%	2%	87%	13%
Spring 2011	30%	58%	10%	1%	88%	11%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	8%	6%	-13%	-2%	14%	-15%

Fall 2008 n= 182; Spring 2009 n= 215; Spring 2010 n= 231-238; Spring 2011 n=266-271

Viewed as a subset, the accountability-related items within the collaboration theme ranged from 90% (“team members hold each other accountable for team success”) to 97% (“I am willing to be held accountable for team results”). Some trends worth highlighting include:

- The statement “I am willing to be held accountable for team results” has remained markedly stable when compared to its Fall 2008 baseline; the Spring 2011 results returned a net gain of zero percent. The other two items, pertaining to resolving conflicts within the team and holding team members accountable, increased by 18 and 16 percentage points, respectively, over the same time period.
- When Spring 2010 data were compared to the previous year, the number of respondents responding positively increased between one and four percentage points. However, as before, the percentage of those indicating that they “strongly agree” with the survey statements decreased between two and seven percentage points for these items.

Table 10
Changes in Collaborative Culture Items Over Time—Accountability Items

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	% Positive	% Negative
Conflicts within the team are resolved successfully.						
Fall 2008	15%	62%	19%	4%	77%	23%
Spring 2009	23%	60%	14%	3%	82%	18%
Spring 2010	38%	56%	5%	1%	94%	6%
Spring 2011	33%	62%	4%	2%	95%	6%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	18%	0%	-15%	-2%	18%	-17%
Team members hold each other accountable for team success.						
Fall 2008	19%	55%	21%	4%	74%	25%
Spring 2009	20%	58%	19%	3%	78%	22%
Spring 2010	33%	53%	13%	1%	86%	14%
Spring 2011	31%	59%	10%	1%	90%	11%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	12%	4%	-11%	-3%	16%	-14%
I am willing to be held accountable for team results.						
Fall 2008	55%	42%	2%	1%	97%	3%
Spring 2009	35%	60%	4%	1%	95%	5%
Spring 2010	51%	45%	3%	1%	96%	4%
Spring 2011	44%	53%	2%	1%	97%	3%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	-11%	11%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Fall 2008 *n*= 182; Spring 2009 *n*= 215; Spring 2010 *n*= 231-238; Spring 2011 *n*=266-271

Collective Inquiry into Best Practice

Collective inquiry items related to the ability of the team to work together in finding best practices to support their work and become more effective. Items focused on working together to identify specific strategies to reach goals, sharing of knowledge and expertise, providing feedback towards improvement to one another, and doing jobs more effectively.

Overall, 92% of the responses were positive, which moves this theme into a second-place tie in positive responses among the six PLT characteristics (see Table 1). Three of the four items had positive responses above 90% (see Table 11). One item, “My teammates give me feedback and recommendations for improvement,” had 88% positive responses. Trends worth noting include:

- Over a three or four year period (Fall 2008 or Spring 2009, depending on when the item was first deployed), the percentage of positive responses has increased between two and 15 percentage points. The statement “my team has identified specific strategies needed to reach our goals” increased the most (15 percentage points) since Spring 2009. This was followed by “my teammates give me feedback and recommendations for improvement,” which showed an eight percentage point increase since Fall 2008.
- Viewed holistically, the overall percentage of positive responses changed little when Spring 2011 data were compared to the previous year; none of these items fluctuated more than two percentage points since Spring 2010.
- As in earlier cases, the number of respondents indicating that they “strongly agree” with the survey statements declined between one and nine percentage points across these items from Spring 2010 to Spring 2011. Nevertheless, the data still document a net gain in the number of respondents marking “strongly agree” of four to 14 percentage points since the items were first deployed in Fall 2008 or Spring 2009, despite the recent dip.

Table 11
Collective Inquiry into Best Practice Items

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	% Positive	% Negative
My teammates give me feedback and recommendations for improvement.						
Fall 2008	21%	59%	17%	3%	80%	20%
Spring 2009	25%	55%	17%	3%	80%	20%
Spring 2010	32%	55%	12%	2%	86%	14%
Spring 2011	31%	57%	10%	1%	88%	11%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	10%	-2%	-7%	-2%	8%	-9%
Being part of a learning team helps me do my job more effectively.						
Fall 2008						
Spring 2009	37%	52%	11%	1%	89%	12%
Spring 2010	44%	47%	8%	1%	91%	9%
Spring 2011	41%	50%	7%	2%	91%	9%
<i>Change from Spring 2009 to Spring 2011</i>	4%	-2%	-4%	1%	2%	-3%
My team has identified specific strategies needed to reach our goals.						
Fall 2008						
Spring 2009	23%	55%	21%	1%	78%	22%
Spring 2010	46%	46%	7%	1%	91%	9%
Spring 2011	37%	56%	6%	1%	93%	7%
<i>Change from Spring 2009 to Spring 2011</i>	14%	1%	-15%	0%	15%	-15%
My teammates willingly share their knowledge and expertise in regular team meetings.						
Fall 2008						
Spring 2009	39%	50%	8%	2%	89%	10%
Spring 2010	55%	39%	4%	1%	95%	5%
Spring 2011	47%	47%	5%	1%	94%	6%
<i>Change from Spring 2009 to Spring 2011</i>	8%	-3%	-3%	-1%	5%	-4%

Fall 2008 *n* =182; Spring 2009 *n*=215; Spring 2010 *n*=233-235; Spring 2011 *n*=267-271

Supportive Conditions

Supportive Conditions reflects the resources and support available to the teams and celebration of success. While 82% of respondents provided positive responses, this was the lowest percentage of agreement among the six characteristics (see Table 1). The percentage of positive responses in Spring 2011 ranged from a low of 75% (“my team regularly celebrates our successes”) to 89% (“division management supports the team”). Table 12 reports these data. Some trends worth noting include:

- In Spring 2011 most (89%) of respondents indicated that the division management supports their team. Responses to this item have improved since the Fall 2008 baseline by 10

percentage points, marking the largest increase of any item within this theme. Conversely, the item “my team regularly celebrates our successes” fell by six percentage points over the same four-year period.

- When Spring 2011 data were compared to the previous year, the number agreeing that “resources available to the team are sufficient” increased by three percentage points. The number agreeing that “division management supports the team” moved in the opposite direction, falling by two percentage points.
- The number of respondents returning a “strongly agree” response to the item “division management supports the team” dropped by 14 percentage points since Spring 2010; the other two items declined by seven percentage points from the previous year.

Table 12
Responses to Supportive-Conditions Items Over Time

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	% Positive	% Negative
Division management supports the team.						
Fall 2008	20%	59%	17%	4%	79%	21%
Spring 2009	25%	61%	12%	2%	86%	14%
Spring 2010	40%	51%	8%	1%	91%	9%
Spring 2011	26%	63%	9%	2%	89%	11%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	6%	4%	-8%	-2%	10%	-10%
Resources available to the team are sufficient.						
Fall 2008	18%	60%	19%	3%	78%	22%
Spring 2009	15%	62%	19%	4%	77%	23%
Spring 2010	26%	54%	18%	2%	80%	20%
Spring 2011	19%	64%	16%	1%	83%	17%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	1%	4%	-3%	-2%	5%	-5%
My team regularly celebrates our successes.						
Fall 2008	23%	58%	17%	2%	81%	19%
Spring 2009	22%	45%	27%	5%	67%	32%
Spring 2010	28%	47%	23%	2%	75%	25%
Spring 2011	21%	54%	23%	2%	75%	25%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	-2%	-4%	6%	0%	-6%	6%

Fall 2008 $n=182$; Spring 2009 $n=215$; Spring 2010 $n=232-234$; Spring 2011 $n=266-269$

Supportive and Shared Leadership

This characteristic included two items related to whether leadership within the team is shared, and whether team members are involved in key decisions. Overall, 90% of respondents had positive responses to items pertaining to this theme, which ranked this characteristic third among the six (see Table 1). The percentage of agreement was 92% regarding shared responsibility, and 88% regarding involvement of team members in key decisions (see Table 13). Some trends worth noting include:

- When compared to the Fall 2008 baseline data, the statement “leadership is a shared responsibility increased by 11 percentage points, albeit there was a drop of one percentage point from 2010.
- Similarly, the statement “team members are involved in key decisions” increased by nine percentage points since the Fall 2008 baseline, yet remained unchanged from the previous survey administration.
- Following a familiar pattern, the percentage of survey respondents indicating that they “strongly agree” with the statements declined between 10 and 11 percentage points from the previous year.

Table 13
Supportive and Shared Leadership

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	% Positive	% Negative
Leadership is a shared responsibility.						
Fall 2008	28%	53%	17%	2%	81%	19%
Spring 2009	31%	56%	11%	2%	87%	13%
Spring 2010	48%	45%	6%	1%	93%	7%
Spring 2011	37%	55%	6%	2%	92%	8%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	9%	2%	-11%	0%	11%	-11%
Team members are involved in key decisions.						
Fall 2008	28%	51%	18%	3%	79%	21%
Spring 2009	23%	57%	19%	1%	80%	20%
Spring 2010	42%	46%	10%	2%	88%	12%
Spring 2011	32%	56%	10%	2%	88%	12%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	4%	5%	-8%	-1%	9%	-9%

Fall 2008 n=182; Spring 2009 n= 215; Spring 2010 n= 234; Spring 2011 n=267-268

Overall Focus on Results/Use of Data

The final theme addressed the focus on results and use of data. Items related to the use of data to assess progress and make decisions, whether the team communicates and monitors progress towards goals, and whether efforts will ultimately benefit students. Overall, 92% of the responses were positive on this characteristic, placing it in a three-way tie as the second most positive among the six characteristics (See Table 1). As shown in Table 14, a high percentage of positive responses is evident for every item, ranging from a low of 89% (“my team monitors the progress it is making towards established goals”) to 97% (“our efforts to become a team-based learning district will benefit students”). Some trends worth noting include:

- When compared to the earliest available baseline data (Fall 2008 or Spring 2009) the percentage of positive responses increased between two and 15 percentage points for all items; the largest 15 percentage point increase pertains to the statement “my team has identified data to assess progress towards our goals.” In this case, the percentage of positive responses moved from 75% in Spring 2009 to 90% in Spring 2011.

- When the results were compared to the previous year, the variance was less dramatic. The largest decline was a decrease of two percentage points for the item “my team has identified data to assess progress towards our goals.” Conversely, the largest increase was two percentage points for the item “our efforts to become a team-based learning district will benefit students,” moving from 95% in Spring 2010 to 97% in Spring 2011.
- As with the other themes, the percentage of survey respondents who indicated that they “strongly agree” with these statements decreased between five and 10 percentage points from one year ago. The six percentage point decrease for the statement “our efforts to become a team-based learning district will benefit students” was enough to reverse the earlier gains, ending with 44% expressing the strongest level of agreement for this item in Spring 2011. This documents a drop of one percentage point from the 45% baseline from Spring 2009.

Table 14
Focus on Results/Use of Data Items

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	% Positive	% Negative
My team uses data to make decisions.						
Fall 2008						
Spring 2009	31%	54%	14%	1%	85%	15%
Spring 2010	46%	47%	7%	0%	92%	8%
Spring 2011	36%	56%	8%	1%	92%	9%
<i>Change from Spring 2009 to Spring 2011</i>	5%	2%	-6%	0%	7%	-6%
My team has identified data to assess progress towards our goals.						
Fall 2008						
Spring 2009	21%	54%	23%	2%	75%	25%
Spring 2010	43%	49%	7%	0%	92%	8%
Spring 2011	36%	54%	10%	1%	90%	11%
<i>Change from Spring 2009 to Spring 2011</i>	15%	0%	-13%	-1%	15%	-14%
Team members communicate about progress on a regular basis.						
Fall 2008	23%	58%	17%	2%	81%	19%
Spring 2009	29%	52%	17%	2%	82%	18%
Spring 2010	37%	53%	8%	1%	90%	10%
Spring 2011	32%	59%	8%	1%	91%	9%
<i>Change from Fall 2008 to Spring 2011</i>	9%	1%	-9%	-1%	10%	-10%
My team monitors the progress it is making towards established goals.						
Fall 2008						
Spring 2009	24%	53%	22%	1%	77%	23%
Spring 2010	34%	54%	12%	0%	88%	12%
Spring 2011	28%	61%	10%	1%	89%	11%
<i>Change from Spring 2009 to Spring 2011</i>	4%	8%	-12%	0%	12%	-12%
Our efforts to become a team-based learning district will benefit students.						
Fall 2008						
Spring 2009	45%	49%	4%	1%	95%	5%
Spring 2010	50%	44%	4%	1%	95%	5%
Spring 2011	44%	53%	3%	1%	97%	4%
<i>Change from Spring 2009 to Spring 2011</i>	-1%	4%	-1%	0%	2%	-1%

Fall 2008 *n* = 182; Spring 2009 *n* = 215; Spring 2010 *n* = 234-236; Spring 2011 *n* = 266-270

Qualitative Survey Data: Direct and Indirect Support for Student Learning

The current model of WCPSS Central Services PLT functioning has evolved from practices first used within the district's schools, as well as from academic research on learning organizations and how they best operate. Honig (2009) suggests that central office administrators engage in two broad categories of activities. First, a subset of administrators should go beyond coaching to work in meaningful assistance relationships with schools to provide direct, collaborative, and hands-on assistance to support teaching and learning improvements. Second, other administrators in more indirect support-type roles should collect evidence on an ongoing basis to ground their day-to-day decisions and actions. Both approaches result in data-based decisions to improve instruction, rather than decisions based solely on instinct or limited personal experiences.

As shown in Table 15, examples to support Honig's first model – using data to directly support student learning – appear to exist within Central Services, although whether the relationships transcend simple coaching efforts is less clear. Generally, central staff reported using data, research, and best practices information to determine the most effective ways to support student learning directly.

Examples of the second model Honig suggests abound. Within WCPSS, central staff use data to inform decisions about policies, practices, systems, and structures that may impact large segments of the WCPSS population. Table 16 reports some examples of these data culled from the open-ended items on the Spring 2011 Central Services PLT Survey.

Table 15
Examples of Central Services Team Responses on Use of Data:
Direct Support to Student Learning – Spring 2011

- One focus was looking at the 2nd to 3rd grade transition, and after looking at data and positive deviants, we are looking more closely at the K-2 and 3-5 cohorts.
- Each week we gather data regarding the strategies taught each week to better understand the success of our students. Each member identifies characteristics of the proficient, average and non-proficient students.
- Thanks to the achievement and ESL data we had reviewed and shared, we were able to place instructional support needed for ESL students in the school. For example after school programs and summer schools were implemented.
- We focused on the issue of LEP students not making 10th grade Math goal of participation under both Title I and Title III, and schools are now looking much more closely at scheduling to ensure that these students have taken Algebra I by the end of their sophomore year.
- Focus on Algebra I scores via our work with district PLTs and specific schools. Ongoing review of data to note progress. Proficiency scores increased. This was also done with Physical Science
- Based on an analysis of student data, we recognized a need for the development of a specific type of model lesson. Our work led to the development of sample lessons showing how to do direct, explicit instruction to teach a concept.
- Using data collection and observations, strategies were developed and implemented for a child with behavioral challenges. Steady progress was made towards self-regulation and he has become a contributing member of the class. More learning, less behavior intervention.
- Coaches have met with teachers weekly for a separate PLT where data [are] discussed and strategies and resources are shared for specific student needs. Feedback from teachers using materials and strategies has been positive.

Note: Respondents' wording is shown, with only minor punctuation and wording changes to improve sense [see brackets].

Table 16
Examples of Central Services Team Responses on Use of Data:
Less Direct Support to Student Learning – Spring 2011

- The team has noticed that we need to provide more training to help implement Math Talk in the schools.
- The team is more effective in making decisions about student placement and instructional needs.
- My team has used data to support changes that need to be made in order to better support students. We look at our monthly data and evaluate whether particular strategies are making an impact within the classroom.
- If we are able to obtain and train new math material, teachers will be able to better assess students' math needs and adjust instruction based on data.
- We have put new programs in place in response to data reflecting [financially] poor students' performance.
- Using data from surveys sent to teachers to identify additional needs for professional development support and then going to those groups of teachers and providing what they asked for on-site.
- Positive impact-providing input through data collected for students with IEP's
- Members were able to help each other on specific classroom issues with researched data. Members genuinely took time and sought resources that were helpful to the entire team at some point of the year. Improving teachers' ability to work effectively in their own PLTs, which in turn has the most direct impact upon student achievement.
- Review of students' data helped identify a problem in scheduling that had impact on student achievement.
- Analyzing student attendance data and adjusting practice to inform and encourage parents to be more diligent about attendance.
- Using walkthrough data to determine professional development focus for next year
- We are gathering data to assist with decisions for possible role solutions with numbers of referrals coming in.
- Two-thirds of the PLTs in which I'm involved have made instructional decisions that impact student growth guided by data. Based on a collection of data, instructional practice has been changed by classroom teachers that directly impacts student achievement. Looked at math walk-through data to determine needs in the classroom.

Note: Respondents' wording is shown, with only minor punctuation and wording changes to improve sense [see brackets].

Table 17 addresses the expected or actual impact or benefits of Central Services PLT efforts at the individual, group, and district levels. These examples help to illustrate the direct and indirect impact of central services staff efforts on students. Staff shared cases in which student participation, learning, and behavior improved as a result of their efforts.

Table 17
Central PLTs: Direct Benefits for WCPSS Students – Spring 2011

- We have reviewed several different Math assessments [for students with disabilities]. We have chosen a particular assessment and have recently purchased one assessment kit for each elementary school. Training will begin this summer.
- Our High School Team functions as a PLT and provides support for East Wake HS. This HS Team support has provided the skills I need to support the school-level teams at East Wake. In turn, those teachers are using differentiation strategies, infusing technology, and increasing rigor for students.
- Credit Recovery teachers have re-aligned their goals and their vision and taken on more responsibility for student success and have started to share strategies for student learning beyond the computer based program.
- Working with regional PE teachers to provide common strategies and modifications for students with disabilities to keep the focus on learning lifetime skills.
- New research-based information on children with anxiety, ADHD, and bipolar disorder was shared with the team. It was helpful in that it included strategies for supporting students in the classroom
- We are actively working to develop an assessment process to improve math scores with students with disabilities and align the process with math strands and standards.
- Enhancement of Dashboard to identify at-risk students.
- Increase in schools capacity to implement Response to Intervention for students at risk for learning difficulties
- District BOE policies were changed as a result of the Suspension PLT, school based attendance committees were established as a result of the work of the Attendance PLT

Note: Respondents' wording is shown, with only minor punctuation and wording changes to improve sense [see brackets].

In terms of less direct support, staff shared examples in which buildings will be cleaner, goals will guide efforts, and assessments will identify at-risk students early in their school careers. While some examples provide measurable results, others had not been underway long enough to measure benefits at the time of the survey. Table 18 reports these data.

Table 18
Central PLTs: Less Direct Benefits for WCPSS Students - Spring 2011

- The Student Services Attendance PLT developed realistic strategies for improving attendance, reducing drop out and improving attendance data collection.
- To provide support to parents by a group e-mail or blog with suggestions of ways to help their preschool child [who have] speech and language delays. It is our hope that parents would use the suggestions provided to them by e-mail or a blog [which] would help their child with speech and language delays.
- Our PLT is improving information & training for SPED teachers to improve SPED paperwork & processes. This is meant to provide better planning and documentation for supporting students.
- We have seen an uptick in [rise in children with] brain injuries; our PLT training addressed the needs for these kids.
- M&O [Maintenance and Operations] PLT that clarified inner department responsibilities so that we can work together more efficiently in order to provide a safe and comfortable learning environment.
- Developing methods to communicate bus stop and time to parents and students so they are better informed each year.
- Developing a county-wide work based learning symposium for high school students in grades 10-12. This involved 300 businesses [and institutions] providing opportunities to learn more about careers and college opportunities.
- Improving the delivery process for new school buildings
- We have developed a survey that will be submitted to schools where the data from the surveys will be used in [the] planning of school facilities.
- The Blackboard site our PLT maintains for our customers has been an extremely effective communication device. According to the data we printed out based on how many teachers visit the site, we were able to tell that it is one of the top used BB sites.
- Creating a clearer process in determining what students need support and intervention.

Note: Respondents' wording is shown, with only minor punctuation and wording changes to improve sense [see brackets].

PLT UNDERSTANDING

Two new items were added to the Spring 2011 Central Services PLT Survey, and although there was no baseline data for comparison, the results were nevertheless informative. Table 19 reports the summative data for both of these items, as well as results disaggregated by years of experience.

The first item asked if the staff member had an adequate understanding of PLT concepts and strategies. Viewed holistically, 83.7% of Central Services staff members expressed some level

of positive agreement, with 45% indicating that they “strongly agree” with the statement. When years of experience were considered, the level of positive agreement ranged from a low of 81.3% (those with more than 10 years but less than 15 years) to a high of 86.9% (those with more than one year but less than five years). It is worth highlighting the fact that 14.5% of the respondents declined to offer any response to this survey item, and those who elected to omit this item were counted as a negative response. Based on these data, it is reasonable to conclude that approximately 16.4% of central staff lack the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in PLT work.

The second item asked staff members if they understood the difference between a PLT meeting and a regular business meeting. Even though this survey item required the respondents to draw comparisons, the responses were nonetheless similar to the previous item. Viewed holistically, 82.7% of the respondents expressed agreement with the statement, with 47.8% indicating that they “strongly agree.” When experiences levels were considered, responses ranged from a low of 79% (those with 15 or more years) to a high of 86.9% (those with at least one year but less than five years).

As before, an unusually high percentage (14.8%) declined to respond to the survey statement, and in order to preserve the integrity of the data an omission could not be considered as a positive response. Ultimately, at this time it must be assumed that 17.3% of the survey respondents are unable to differentiate between a PLT meeting and a regular business meeting. Apparently the confusion is evident regardless of the employee’s experience level.

Table 19
Central Services Understanding of Basic PLT Concepts, Spring 2011

Statement	n	SA	A	D	SD	No Response	% Positive	% Negative
I have an adequate understanding of PLT concepts and strategies.								
Less than one year	40	45.0%	37.5%	2.5%	2.5%	12.5%	82.5%	17.5%
At least one year, but less than five years	84	47.6%	39.3%	2.4%	0.0%	10.7%	86.9%	13.1%
At least five years, but less than 10 years	86	43.0%	38.4%	1.2%	0.0%	17.4%	81.4%	18.6%
At least 10 years, but less than 15 years	64	43.8%	37.5%	1.6%	0.0%	17.2%	81.3%	18.8%
15 or more years	38	47.4%	36.8%	0.0%	0.0%	15.8%	84.2%	15.8%
Total	312	45.0%	38.7%	1.6%	0.3%	14.5%	83.7%	16.4%
I understand the difference between a PLT meeting and a regular business meeting.								
Less than one year	40	47.5%	35.0%	2.5%	2.5%	12.5%	82.5%	17.5%
At least one year, but less than five years	84	48.8%	38.1%	1.2%	0.0%	11.9%	86.9%	13.1%
At least five years, but less than 10 years	86	47.7%	32.6%	2.3%	0.0%	17.4%	80.3%	19.7%
At least 10 years, but less than 15 years	64	46.9%	34.4%	1.6%	0.0%	17.2%	81.3%	18.8%
15 or more years	38	47.4%	31.6%	5.3%	0.0%	15.8%	79.0%	21.1%
Total	312	47.8%	34.9%	2.2%	0.3%	14.8%	82.7%	17.3%

Data Source: WCPSS analysis of Spring 2011 PLT survey data.

SUMMARY

This report documents the following:

- Central Service staff have complied with Board Policy in terms of supporting PLT work within the schools in a wide variety of ways. In a recent survey, at least 70.3% of the principals at every grade level viewed the level of support as adequate. However, there was also a decrease in the number of principals who “strongly agreed” that support was sufficient; this figure decreased between 12.2 and 21.8 percentage points across the three grade levels;
- Central Services staff have complied with Board Policy in terms of PLT participation, with 85.9% participating in at least one PLT;
- For staff participating in at least one PLT, positive responses (between 75% and 97%) were provided for each statement pertaining to one of the six core PLT implementation themes. Percentage agreement was below 90% for only about one third of the 28 statements;
- When compared to the earliest possible baseline data (Fall 2008 or Spring 2009), an upward trend in positive responses was evident for 25 of 28 survey items;
- The Spring 2011 survey results did not differ dramatically from Spring 2010; no individual item showed more than a six percentage point increase, nor a four percentage point decrease, from the previous year;
- Fewer respondents indicated that they “strongly agree” with the survey statements in Spring 2011 than in Spring 2010. Compared to the previous year, the number of respondents returning a “strongly agree” response decreased by as many as 14 percentage points; and
- Approximately 83.7% of Central Services staff members agreed that they had an adequate understanding of PLT concepts and strategies, and 82.7% reported that they understood the difference between a PLT meeting and a regular business meeting.

In summary, support for the PLT concept within Central Services still remains high. However, the survey data points to some decline in the strength of PLT implementation and participation, as well as in the adequacy of support provided by central staff to PLTs. This may mean that PLT concepts were not embraced as enthusiastically as they were in prior years, that declining staff levels have limited time available for these activities, or that the lack of a consistent time for PLT activities makes it more difficult for central staff to support PLTs directly. Without intervention, these downward trends may continue.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Board Policy supports PLT work, but conditions have changed. Central staffing levels have declined, especially in the last two years due to budget cuts. As PLTs move forward, central staff should address two critical issues:

- Reaffirm the nature of the commitment of WCPSS to PLTs by revisiting expectations for central services support of PLT work in schools in light of reduced resources, and share these revised expectations with central and school staff. Consider principals' comments to inform these decisions and solicit additional feedback if necessary. Also consider whether the PLT Steering Committee should meet more often, or whether another committee could absorb leadership and monitoring of PLT work completion.
- Clarify expectations for Central Services staff in terms of the nature of their PLT work and who is expected to participate. Review survey comments and solicit additional input from central staff on ways to improve PLT implementation and effectiveness at the central office level. Additional training or resources may be necessary. Once plans are resolved, staff can decide on the best way to communicate and to implement improvement measures.

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Professional Learning Teams Central Services Administrator and Professional Staff Survey May 2011

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Professional Learning Teams Central Services Administrator and Professional Staff Survey May 2011



WAKE COUNTY
 PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

Page 1 - Heading

A Professional Learning Team (PLT) is made up of members who regularly collaborate toward continued improvement in meeting student needs. Using data, professional experience, and best practice, the team works toward realizing a shared vision for a better learning environment. The primary emphasis is on the support of learning and meeting the needs of all students. At the central services level, this support may be direct or indirect.

Page 1 - Question 1 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

[Mandatory]

Based on the definition above, in how many PLTs do you participate?

- None [Skip to 3]
- One
- Two
- Three
- Four or more

Page 2 - Heading

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. If you belong to more than one PLT, please respond according to your experience with your primary learning team.

Page 2 - Question 2 - Rating Scale - Matrix

General

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I have an adequate understanding of PLT concepts and strategies to participate effectively.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
I understand the difference between a PLT meeting and a regular business meeting.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4

Shared Vision

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My team has established goals.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Team goals are clear.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Leadership/team members facilitate the creation of a vision for our team.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Team members work with key stakeholders on a regular basis.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
My team's goals are closely aligned with the goals of the district.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4

Collaborative Culture

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Members of the team are clear about their role.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Team meetings are productive.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Communication within the team flows freely.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Conflicts within the team are resolved successfully.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Problem solving is the responsibility of the team.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
My team seeks to collaborate with other teams.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Team members work hard to motivate each other.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Team members hold each other accountable for team success.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
I am willing to be held accountable for team results.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4

Collective Inquiry into Best Practice

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
My teammates give me feedback and recommendations for improvement.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Being part of a learning team helps me do my job more effectively.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
My team has identified specific strategies needed to reach our goals.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
My teammates willingly share their knowledge and expertise in regular team meetings.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4

A Focus on Results/Use of Data

Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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My team has identified data to assess progress towards our goals.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
My team uses data to make decisions.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Team members communicate about progress on a regular basis.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
My team monitors the progress it is making towards established goals.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Our efforts to become a team-based learning district will benefit students.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4

Page 2 - Question 7 - Rating Scale - Matrix

Supportive Conditions

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Division management supports the team.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Resources available to the team are sufficient.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
My team regularly celebrates our successes.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4

Page 2 - Question 8 - Rating Scale - Matrix

Supportive Leadership

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Leadership is a shared responsibility.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4
Team members are involved in key decisions.	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3	<input type="radio"/> 4

Page 2 - Question 9 - Open Ended - Comments Box

Please provide one example of the positive impact your primary PLT has had on meeting student needs (directly or indirectly).

Page 3 - Heading

Please choose one response to each of the following background statements.

Page 3 - Question 10 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

[Mandatory]

I am a Central Services...

- Administrator
- Professional staff who attends Central Services Administrator meetings
- Professional staff who does not attend Central Services Administrator meetings
- Other, please specify

Page 3 - Question 11 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

If you are a professional staff member, what is your role?

- Coordinating teacher
- Teacher in Special Programs
- Other professional
- Not applicable (I am an administrator)

Page 3 - Question 12 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

I have been in central services for

- Less than one year
- At least one year, but less than five years
- At least five years, but less than ten years
- At least ten years, but less than fifteen years
- 15 or more years

Page 3 - Question 13 - Choice - One Answer (Bullets)

I am currently assigned to the following division/department:

- Auxiliary Services
- Instructional Services
- Administrative Services
- Technology Services
- Organizational Development & Support
- Communications Services
- Area Superintendents
- Superintendent's Office

Page 3 - Heading

This is the end of the survey. You may review or change your responses prior to clicking "Submit." Click the "Submit" button once to submit your survey response.

Thank You Page

Thank you for your participation!

Your responses have been saved, and you may now close this window.

Screen Out Page

Standard

Over Quota Page

Standard

Survey Closed Page

Thank you for your willingness to participate; however, this survey is now closed.

Please contact Andy Jackl (ajackl@wcpss.net or 850-1742) for further assistance.