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**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY (PLC) IMPLEMENTATION  
WCPSS 2006–07 BASELINE SURVEY RESULTS**

Authors: Rosemary Reichstetter, Ed.D., and Nancy Baenen

**ABSTRACT**

*Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are being developed in the Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) to promote continuous improvement and student success. Baseline results from a 2006-07 survey show strong support for PLC concepts/expectations among school staff (at least 88% rated themes as medium or high priority), with lower implementation levels (60–73%) per theme. Sustained implementation of PLCs was reported by 24–30% of staff for each theme. Results suggest training in PLC concepts and strategies should be well received in WCPSS, and that increased implementation is clearly possible.*

**BACKGROUND**

The Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) continuously seeks ways that its schools can become more effective, asking, “Are we doing enough of the right things to prepare our students for the 21st century world in which they live?” One of four strategic directives established by the school system’s superintendent, Dr. Del Burns, focuses on teaching and learning. A key strategy that has the potential to impact improvement of teaching and learning is the development and implementation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) throughout the district.

Through a literature review (Reichstetter, 2006) and discussion with principals, WCPSS defined a PLC as a team that regularly collaborates toward continued improvement in meeting learner needs through a shared curricular-focused vision. PLC team-based learning and working has been researched and made known as a way in which educational organizations can continuously improve and build student success (DuFour & Eaker,

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1998; Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). Over the last few years, WCPSS high schools have had training on aspects of PLCs, middle schools have developed data teams, and some individual schools at all levels have explored PLCs. However, this is the first districtwide emphasis on this strategy.

A survey developed by the Indiana-based Solution Tree group that addresses PLC concepts was administered during December 2006 and January of 2007 in order to gain a baseline view of the school system's current understanding of and implementation of PLCs in the schools. For each statement, respondents rated the priority of the item and either their disposition towards the item, or their level of implementation in their school. Through an annual administration of the survey, the tool can be used as one measure of systemwide PLC growth, indicating strengths and areas where additional resources and support are needed.

The survey includes 33 items that ask about:

- priority levels for all items,
- implementation stages (for 23 items), and
- personal and/or school dispositions, agreement level (10 remaining items).

The items can be considered as defining expectations of PLCs and, for this analysis, have been categorized using PLC themes from the school system's literature review. The five categories are:

- **Shared Goals/Vision:** Strong adherence to a vision ... that acts as a consistently articulated and referenced guidepost in making decisions about teaching and learning (Hord, 1997). The vision is accompanied by specific, strategic, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound goals.
- **Collaboration Efforts:** A team working together toward a common purpose, learning together and continually improving (DuFour & Eaker, 1998), and making decisions through collective challenging, questioning, and reflecting.
- **Team Practices:** Team members working in an interdependent and effective way and who understand expectations, roles, responsibilities, and relationships of each member in promoting effective instructional practices.
- **Goal Attainment Monitoring/Support Processes (Results Orientation):** Systems developed and in place that serve to regularly monitor and provide feedback on learning
- **Team Support Processes (Leadership and Conditions):** Facilitative leadership which provides extra time and support for teams to meet and talk.

The survey results provide the school system with baseline data as the system continues to build PLCs. Using available material, personnel, and organizational resources wisely, progress toward greater student success is taking place.

## OVERALL RESULTS

The survey was intended for distribution to all 8,487 elementary, middle, and high school teachers. However, one school responded by team and several others included teacher assistants in their surveys. In reviewing the survey results, the total responses across the system numbered 7,103 (3,602 from elementary schools, 1,547 from middle schools, and 1,954 from high schools).

Each of the themes was analyzed overall, by item, by a comparison between priority levels and dispositions toward specific concepts/expectations within the theme, and by a comparison between priority levels and levels of implementation related to the remaining concepts/expectations within the theme.

Caution should be exercised in interpreting results since some terms that are commonly used in other contexts have quite specific meanings within the PLC framework. Therefore, it is possible that some respondents may have indicated they value or are implementing PLC concepts more fully than they actually are. Additional caution is advised regarding the complex format of the survey and the possibility of its being misconstrued by respondents.

In reporting the results, graphs show respondent percentages attributed to each of four possible responses. (“Do Not Know” implementation responses were calculated, excluded in charts, but included in text where percentages are equal to or greater than 10%.) Response categories were re-labeled for consistency in reporting as shown in Table 1. Tables show combined responses for disposition (strongly agree and agree), for higher implementation stages (sustaining and developing), and for higher priority levels (high and medium). Patterns of responses are also shared for only the most positive responses (“highest”) when appropriate.

**Table 1**  
**Response Labels Used in Report Compared to Labels Used in Actual Survey**

REPORT LABEL	ORIGINAL SURVEY LABELS		
Response Descriptor	Priority Level (all 33 items)	Disposition (10 items: 1–3, 6–9, 23, 28–29 only)	Implementation Level (remaining 23 items)
Highest	High	Strongly Agree	Sustaining
High	Medium	Agree	Developing
Low	Low	Disagree	Initiation
Lowest	Not Important	Strongly Disagree	Pre-Initiation Do Not Know*

Note: \* = Excluded in graphs; included in text when equal to or greater than 10%.

Respondents were generally quite positive in their responses (see Table 2). All themes received high or medium priority by 88% or more of respondents. At least 60% of the respondents indicated positive dispositions and implementation levels towards all themes. Respondents gave more positive responses when rating the priority of the items than for disposition or implementation. By theme:

- The Shared Goals/Vision and Collaboration Efforts themes emerged with the greatest collective percentage of responses for high and highest priority (93-94%).
- The Shared Goals/Vision theme had the strongest positive disposition (90%).
- Collaboration Efforts surfaced as the theme with the highest implementation levels, with 73% indicating the two highest levels of implementation, and 30% indicating sustained implementation (the highest level and the ultimate goal).

**Table 2**  
**Percentage of All Respondents Giving High Ratings to PLC Themes**

Theme	Priority	Disposition	Implementation
<i>Percentages giving high and highest ratings combined</i>			
Shared Goals/Vision	93%	<b>90%*</b>	<b>60%†</b>
Collaboration Efforts	<b>94%*</b>	84%	<b>73%*</b>
Team Practices	92%	NA	66%
Goal Attainment Monitoring/Support Processes (Results Orientation)	90%	<b>69%†</b>	63%
Team Support Processes (Leadership and Conditions)	<b>88%†</b>	70%	<b>60%†</b>
<i>Percentages giving highest rating only</i>			
Shared Goals/Vision	<b>63%*</b>	<b>50%*</b>	<b>24%†</b>
Collaboration Efforts	61%	44%	<b>30%*</b>
Team Practices	55%	NA	26%
Goal Attainment Monitoring/Support Processes (Results Orientation)	54%	<b>21%†</b>	27%
Team Support Processes (Leadership and Conditions)	<b>51%†</b>	22%	27%

Note:  $n = 7,103$  Note - Priority level is based on all 33 items.

\* = highest percentage per category

† = lowest percentage per category

Table Interpretation Example: "Of all 7,103 respondents, 93% gave high or highest priority to the Shared Goals/Vision theme, 90% said they and/or their school held high or highest disposition levels toward the theme, and 60% reported their school was at the high or highest level of implementation with the theme."

The combined school level percentage of positive dispositions for three of the 10 items was almost universal:

- Respondents believe that the primary purpose of school is to ensure high levels of learning for all students (92%).
- Respondents are clear about what they are willing to do to create a school in which all students learn at high levels (92%).
- Respondents are willing to consider new strategies for achieving school and team goals (95%).

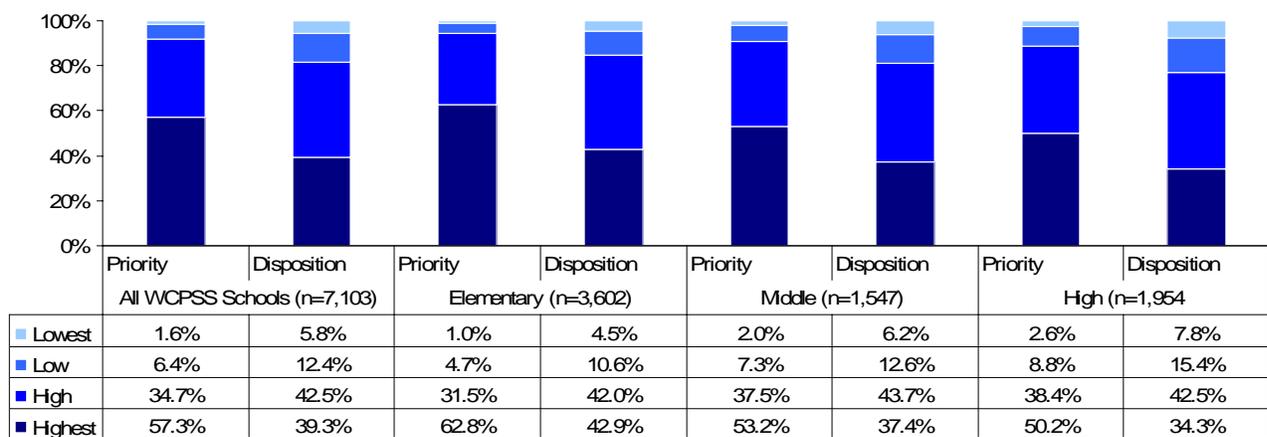
Figure 1 displays baseline percentages for four relevant themes combined, by each school level and by all WCPSS school levels combined. Response levels are shown, comparing priority levels to dispositions. At all school levels as well as for all school levels combined, it is evident that respondents viewed all themes at higher priority levels than their dispositions toward the PLC concepts.

Priority levels were compared to dispositions within four of the five themes. Patterns were generally the same across school levels: Most survey respondents (92%) placed a medium to high priority overall on the 10 items across the four themes that addressed dispositions, although fewer (82%) felt that they and/or their schools actually held a positive disposition within those themes. This difference was found with little variation within each of the school levels with a 10

percentage point difference between elementary and middle schools, and a 12 percentage point difference for high schools.

Over 80% of respondents reported a current positive disposition related to two themes (Shared Goals/Vision and Collaboration Efforts). A smaller percentage of respondents (70%) reported the same toward Goal Attainment Monitoring/Support Processes (Results Orientation) and Team Support Processes (Leadership and Conditions), while (60% to 73%) reported that their schools were at the higher (developing or sustaining) implementation levels for all themes.

**Figure 1**  
**All WCPSS Schools**  
**Themes Overall (10 Items)**  
**Comparing Priority Level to Disposition**



\*Note: The theme, Team Practices, did not include items pertaining to disposition.

Graph Interpretation Example: “While a majority (57%) of all WCPSS school respondents reported that, overall, the PLC concepts addressing dispositions were of highest priority, fewer (39%) reported they and/or their schools held a strong positive disposition toward those same concepts.”

In comparing priority levels to implementation stages of development, respondents tended to put a higher priority on all of the themes than their reported current level of implementation (see Figure 2). Overall, nearly all survey respondents (92%) placed a medium to high priority on each theme, although only 66% said they were at the higher implementation stages. Patterns remained generally the same across school levels. The PLC concepts were of medium to high priority for:

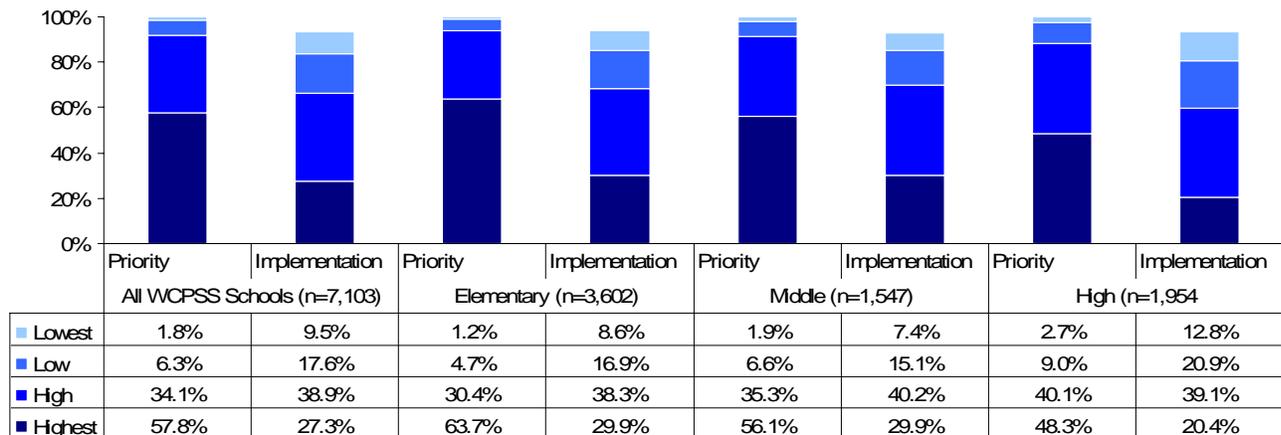
- 94% of elementary respondents, with 68% saying they were at the higher implementation levels,
- 91% of middle school respondents, with 70% saying they were at the higher implementation levels, and
- 88% of high school respondents, with 60% saying they were at the higher implementation levels.

While the percentage of respondents reporting high or medium priority levels was at 87% to 95% within the themes, those reporting they were at the higher stages of implementation within the themes was markedly lower (60% to 73%). Goal Attainment Monitoring/Support Processes (Results Orientation) showed the greatest difference overall between priority level and

implementation level at the middle and high school levels. However, Shared Goals/Vision and Team Support Processes (Leadership and Conditions) showed the greatest differences between priority level and implementation level at the elementary level.

At each school level as well as for all school levels combined, it is evident that higher level responses are more common for priority levels than for current implementation levels. This suggests that levels of practice are not at desired levels in the view of staff.

**Figure 2**  
**All WCPSS Schools**  
**Themes Overall (23 Items)**  
**Comparing Priority Level to Implementation Level**



Note: Graph Interpretation Example: “While a majority (58%) of all WCPSS school respondents reported that, overall, the PLC concepts addressing implementation were of highest priority, slightly more than one-fourth (27%) reported their schools were at the highest (sustaining) level of implementation.”

In terms of implementation of PLC concepts, elementary staff generally had more positive responses, then middle school staff, and then high school staff. Caution should be exercised in interpreting results, however, since some terms that are commonly used in other contexts have quite specific meanings within the PLC framework. Therefore, it is possible that some respondents may have indicated they value or are implementing PLC concepts more fully than they actually are.

Overall, respondents expressed high priority levels for the PLC concepts specified within the survey. Strengthening positive dispositions and higher implementation levels is the suggested next step.

### RESULTS BY THEME

Theme analysis compared priority levels to strength of agreement with disposition statements. Separately, priority levels were compared to current implementation levels. Patterns were similar across themes, with most respondents giving high or medium priority to the theme and its underlying concepts more often than they gave high ratings to the disposition or implementation levels. The Appendix provides these results overall and for each school level. Generally elementary schools were most positive, then middle schools, and then high schools. Interesting

patterns and exceptions to these patterns are described within each theme and after basic patterns.

The Shared Goals/Vision theme held the highest priority overall for the most (63%) school level respondents combined. This was true for about two thirds of the middle and the majority of high school level respondents as well, although slightly more (69%) elementary level respondents reported that the Collaboration Efforts theme was of highest priority. However, when merging both “High” and “Medium” priority level responses, the Collaboration Efforts theme was reported to be the greatest priority for nearly all (91%–97%) respondents from all school levels. The Team Support Processes (Leadership and Conditions) theme was the highest priority to 51% of respondents.

Results are given below for each item within each theme by all school levels overall and by each school level.

## **SHARED GOALS/VISION**

The theme, Shared Goals/Vision, includes five expectations, all of which were to be prioritized with a response ranging from “high priority” to “not important.” Three items pertain to disposition (with four possible responses ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”) while two pertain to implementation level (with five possible responses ranging from “do not know” to “sustaining”).

Table 3 shows the percentage of respondents reporting higher priority levels, positive dispositions, and higher implementation levels for each of the items within the theme expectations. Of respondents at all school levels combined, over 92% gave high to medium priority to four expectations within the theme:

- primary purpose of school is to ensure high levels of learning for all students (99%, with 92% saying it was a positive disposition),
- clarity about willingness to create a school in which all students learn at high levels (98%, with 92% saying it was a positive disposition),
- daily work driven by a few big ideas (92%, with 87% saying it was a positive disposition), and
- guidance by shared vision that all students can be helped to learn at high levels (97%, with 79% saying they were at the sustaining level of implementation).

Fewer respondents overall (78%) gave high to medium priority to the remaining expectation within the theme concerning identifying SMART goals as success indicators, with 41% (a difference of 36 percentage points) saying they were at the sustaining level of implementation with this concept. SMART goals are, by definition, strategic and specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time-bound. The lower percentage giving higher priority here may be due to a lack of awareness, as 27% of all respondents reported that they did not know the current implementation level for this expectation (specifically by school level, 30% of elementary, 28% of middle, and 20% of high school respondents). Thus, while all schools set goals, training in SMART goals specifically appears to be needed.

Percentage points differed only slightly (by 4–8 points) between higher priority levels and positive dispositions overall and by school level.

Larger differences were noted between higher priority levels and reported implementation levels. In comparing each school level, the range varied from 16 (Item #4: middle school) to 41 (Item #5: elementary school) percentage points, the greatest regarding identifying SMART goals.

**Table 3**  
**Shared Goals/Vision Expectations and Respondent Percentages**

Item No.	PLC Expectation	All Schools (n=7,103)		Elementary (n=3,602)		Middle (n=1,547)		High (n=1,954)									
		High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage				
1*	I believe that the primary purpose of school is to ensure high levels of learning for all students.	98.8%	91.8%			99.3%	93.4%			98.9%	91.1%			97.6%	89.2%		
2*	I am clear about what I am willing to do to create a school in which all students learn at high levels.	97.7%	91.6%			98.6%	93.5%			97.8%	91.7%			96.1%	88.0%		
3*	There are a few big ideas that drive my daily work at school.	91.9%	87.2%			94.0%	89.3%			92.1%	88.4%			87.7%	82.2%		
4**	Our faculty is guided by a shared vision that we can help all students learn at high levels.			96.5%	78.5%			98.0%	80.8%			96.6%	80.5%			93.8%	72.7%
5**	Our school staff has identified SMART goals that serve as indicators of our success.			77.6%	41.3%			78.6%	38.1%			76.4%	44.6%			76.5%	44.8%

Note: \* = Disposition  
\*\* = Implementation

Table Interpretation Example: “While 98.8% of all school level respondents reported that the Item No.1 PLC concept/expectation was of high or medium priority, 91.8% reported their schools strongly agreed or agreed with (held a positive disposition toward) the concept/expectation. Likewise, 96.5% of all school level respondents reported that the Item No. 4 PLC concept/expectation was of high or medium priority, while 78.5% reported their schools were at higher (sustaining or developing) levels of implementation.”

Slightly fewer school staff respondents reported positive dispositions compared to those reporting higher priority levels for the overall theme (see Appendix), while the percentage reporting higher implementation levels for the theme was distinctly lower than the percentage reporting it as higher in priority.

### COLLABORATION EFFORTS

The theme, Collaboration Efforts, includes 11 expectations to be prioritized. Four items pertain to disposition and seven pertain to implementation level.

Of the 7,103 respondents, over 93% gave high to medium priority to expectations within the theme with two exceptions (See Table 4). While still high, a slightly lower percentage of respondents (89%) gave higher priority to evaluating student achievement with similar criteria to other teachers like themselves and to applying agreed-upon assessment criteria in their practice.

A lower percentage of all respondents reported being at the higher implementation levels in:

- collaborative work teams making decisions based on best practice rather than opinion (70%), and
- evaluating the success of improvement strategies by their impact on student learning (68%).

Greater percentage point differences were observed between higher priority and higher implementation levels from high school respondents compared to elementary and middle school respondents.

**Table 4**  
**Collaboration Efforts Expectations and Respondent Percentages**

Item No.	PLC Expectation	All Schools (n=7,103)				Elementary (n=3,602)				Middle (n=1,547)				High (n=1,954)			
		High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage
6*	I am willing to consider new strategies for achieving school and team goals.	96.7%	95.0%			97.8%	96.2%			96.8%	93.8%			94.5%	93.6%		
7*	I work regularly with teachers who share the same course content/grade level/students.	94.3%	83.8%			96.5%	87.0%			93.2%	83.0%			91.3%	78.4%		
8*	I evaluate student achievement using the same criteria as other teachers who teach the same course/grade and/or students.	88.9%	78.8%			93.9%	85.3%			83.3%	73.4%			83.8%	71.1%		
9*	I practice applying student assessment criteria that I have agreed on with other teachers who teach the same course/grade and/or students.	89.0%	80.3%			94.1%	86.0%			83.4%	74.7%			84.0%	74.3%		
10**	Collaborative work teams in my school make decisions based on best practice rather than opinion.			93.4%	69.7%			96.1%	72.8%			92.0%	69.8%			89.6%	63.8%
11**	The success of improvement strategies is evaluated by their impact on student learning.			94.4%	68.1%			96.2%	70.8%			94.4%	70.4%			91.0%	61.5%
12**	Regardless of which teacher teaches the same course/grade that I do, students have the opportunity to acquire the essential learning outcomes.			95.4%	74.7%			96.8%	77.1%			95.0%	75.4%			93.1%	69.4%
13**	My school engages in continuous improvement: Verifying current levels of student achievement			95.6%	78.1%			98.0%	81.6%			95.7%	80.9%			91.1%	69.2%
14**	My school engages in continuous improvement: Generating strategies for improvement			96.6%	78.9%			97.9%	80.9%			96.6%	81.3%			94.2%	73.3%
15**	My school engages in continuous improvement: Implementing those strategies			96.2%	73.2%			97.6%	75.1%			95.8%	76.8%			93.9%	66.7%
16**	My school engages in continuous improvement: Assessing the impact of our strategies on students' achievement			95.7%	68.0%			97.5%	71.2%			94.7%	70.8%			93.0%	59.7%

Note: \* = Disposition  
\*\* = Implementation

In studying the theme's overall responses from lowest to highest, the percentage of respondents reporting their schools at higher priority levels was much greater than the percentage reporting higher implementation levels (see Appendix).

## TEAM PRACTICES

The theme, Team Practices, includes six expectations. No items pertain to disposition; all six pertain to implementation levels.

As shown in Table 5, over 93% of the 7,103 respondents gave high to medium priority to these expectations with one exception. A lower percentage of respondents (82%) gave a higher priority for having processes in place to document the effective use of team collaboration time. With a much lower percentage (ranging from 53% to 71% of respondents across the six items within the theme) reporting teams at the higher stages of implementation, one may surmise that a greater focus on improving an understanding of team expectations, roles, responsibilities, and relationships as well as how to work interdependently in an effective and efficient manner would be appropriate. Specifically, however, middle school level respondents reported being at higher stages of implementation regarding team practice expectations than other levels. It should be noted that 11% of respondents overall (as well as those at the elementary and middle school levels) reported that they did not know the current implementation level for the expectation within their school settings. Differences between higher priority and higher implementation levels for all school levels combined ranged from 23 to 29 percentage points. Elementary and high school level patterns closely matched this range, but the percentage point difference was less (17 to 21) for middle school level respondents.

**Table 5**  
**Team Practices Expectations and Respondent Percentages**

Item No.	PLC Expectation	All Schools (n=7,103)				Elementary (n=3,602)				Middle (n=1,547)				High (n=1,954)			
		High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage
17**	Teacher teams/groups understand: Expectations of each team member to promote effective practices		94.3%	70.9%			96.2%	71.7%			94.3%	76.5%			90.8%	65.0%	
18**	Teacher teams/groups understand: Roles of each team member to promote effective practices.		94.3%	68.6%			96.0%	69.5%			94.5%	73.8%			90.9%	62.6%	
19**	Teacher teams/groups understand: Responsibilities of each team member to promote effective practices.		94.5%	69.3%			96.1%	70.4%			94.5%	74.9%			91.4%	62.7%	
20**	Teacher teams/groups understand: Relationships of each team member to promote team practices.		93.2%	68.0%			95.1%	69.1%			93.4%	73.7%			89.4%	61.4%	
21**	Teacher teams work interdependently to achieve goals linked to school goals.		93.4%	68.1%			95.8%	71.4%			93.0%	73.2%			89.1%	57.9%	
22**	Processes are in place to document effective use of collaborative time by teams.		81.9%	53.0%			85.2%	52.1%			81.0%	60.0%			78.7%	49.3%	

Note: \*\* = Implementation

Of note, although the percentage of all school level respondents was reported being at higher priority levels, team practices at the higher implementation levels are visibly greater than implementation levels at each school level as well as for all school levels combined (see Appendix).

## **GOAL ATTAINMENT MONITORING/SUPPORT PROCESSES (RESULTS ORIENTATION)**

The theme, Goal Attainment Monitoring/Support Processes (Results Orientation), includes five expectations, all of which were to be prioritized. One item pertains to disposition and four pertain to implementation level. Table 6 provides details.

Of all respondents at all school levels combined, 94% gave high to medium priority to three of the five expectations related to the theme (with lower percentages [68%] indicating developing or sustained implementation):

- systems in place to monitor student attainment of essential learning outcomes,
- regular monitoring of student attainment, and
- extra help during the school day for students who need it

The percentage of respondents was slightly less in giving high to medium priority to the remaining two expectations within this theme:

- receiving information that compares students' achievement with other students in the same course or grade level, (84%, with 69% saying it was a positive disposition in their school), and
- having processes in place that provide teams with feedback regarding their work (85%, with 49% saying they were at the sustaining implementation level). Some respondents (11%) said they did not know the current implementation level for this expectation.

Patterns of responses within each of the school levels closely matched with two exceptions.

- Middle school responses showed a smaller difference between priority and implementation (9 percentage points compared to 15 to 18 points for elementary and high school level respondents, respectively) in terms of receiving student information that compares students' achievement from one teacher to that of teachers of other students in the same course or grade level.
- High school level respondents showed a greater percentage point difference between priority and implementation regarding the expectations of having systems in place and regular monitoring of student attainment using those systems.

These results may reflect the use of formative assessments by nearly all middle schools (managed through Blue Diamond Internet-based program), which provides comparisons of each teacher to the grade level in the school and across the system. High schools have fewer formative assessments available, and are just beginning to gather items and use Blue Diamond for their management.

**Table 6**  
**Goal Attainment Monitoring/Support Processes (Results Orientation)**  
**Expectations and Respondent Percentages**

Item No.	PLC Expectation	All Schools (n=7,103)				Elementary (n=3,602)				Middle (n=1,547)				High (n=1,954)			
		High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage
23*	The student information I receive compares my students' achievement to that of other students in the same course or grade level.	84.0%	69.3%			86.3%	70.9%			83.3%	74.7%			80.1%	62.0%		
24**	Our school has systems that monitor each student's attainment of essential learning outcomes.			94.3%	68.4%			96.8%	73.7%			94.8%	74.4%			89.2%	53.7%
25**	Our school regularly monitors each student's attainment of essential learning outcomes.			94.2%	67.9%			96.7%	73.4%			94.5%	72.2%			89.0%	54.1%
26**	Students who need extra help can get it during the school day.			94.4%	67.9%			97.4%	74.5%			93.5%	64.2%			89.4%	58.6%
27**	Processes are in place to provide teacher teams feedback regarding their work/products.			84.7%	49.1%			87.8%	50.0%			82.5%	52.8%			80.5%	44.3%

Note: \* = Disposition  
 \*\* = Implementation

**TEAM SUPPORT PROCESSES (LEADERSHIP AND CONDITIONS)**

The theme, Team Support Processes (Leadership and Conditions), includes six expectations, all of which were to be prioritized. Two items pertain to disposition and four pertain to implementation level, with results shown in Table 7.

Over 91% of the 7,103 respondents gave high to medium priority to three of the six expectations related to the theme:

- receiving timely information about the achievement of students (94%, with 78% reporting a positive disposition),
- having regular time for teams to meet during the school day (93%, with 70% reporting higher current implementation levels), and
- promotion of growth as a PLC (91%, with 70% reporting higher current implementation levels).

A lower percentage placed higher priority on three expectations (86% to team timelines for work-related product development, 85% to school celebration of team successes, and 82% to team-developed product archiving processes). The same held true for these three expectations regarding the disposition of celebrating team successes (62%) and regarding a sustaining implementation level of team timelines (55%) and archiving processes (46%). It was noted that some respondents reported they did not know the current implementation levels for team timelines (10% of combined school levels, 13% of middle school respondents), and archiving processes (15% of combined school and elementary levels, 16% of middle, and 13% of high school respondents).

**Table 7**  
**Team Support Processes (Leadership and Conditions)**  
**Theme Expectations and Respondent Percentages**

Item No.	PLC Expectation	All Schools (n=7,103)				Elementary (n=3,602)				Middle (n=1,547)				High (n=1,954)			
		High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage	High or Medium Priority	Strongly Agree or Agree	High or Medium Priority	Sustaining or Developing Stage
28*	I receive timely information about the achievement of my students.	93.8%	78.1%			95.3%	80.5%			93.9%	77.5%			90.9%	74.1%		
29*	My school celebrates the successes of my team.	84.7%	62.2%			87.4%	66.2%			84.6%	62.5%			79.7%	54.7%		
30**	Teacher teams/groups get regular time (not necessarily every day) to meet during the school day.			93.3%	69.7%			95.4%	72.7%			95.2%	83.2%			87.6%	53.4%
31**	Teacher teams receive timelines for development of specific products related to their team's work.			85.7%	54.7%			89.3%	56.7%			83.8%	57.2%			80.3%	49.1%
32**	Processes are in place to archive the products developed by my team.			81.9%	46.1%			84.2%	45.0%			78.0%	49.6%			80.6%	45.4%
33**	Growth as a Professional Learning Community is promoted.			91.1%	70.3%			92.7%	68.7%			90.7%	75.8%			88.3%	69.0%

Note: \* = Disposition  
 \*\* = Implementation

### IMPLICATIONS

WCPSS is forging an ever-stronger commitment throughout the system toward understanding, practicing, and implementing professional learning communities. All WCPSS staff members are in the process of being educated on PLC concepts and practices. Differences in survey results could be inversely related to awareness levels of PLC concepts. Some schools have been exposed to and have gained higher levels of knowledge regarding PLC concepts than others. Survey respondents from schools with higher levels of knowledge have perhaps subsequently reported lower personal and/or school dispositions and implementation levels based on their deeper knowledge of concepts and expectations and their awareness of improvement needs. High schools, for example, have been participating in extensive training and close-up examination of PLC concepts within their schools through the High Five Initiative (see page 15). Also, middle schools have been working under a team concept and with collaborative data teams during the past two years. Elementary schools are highly motivated and are beginning to establish their data teams.

Based on results from this first PLC survey, the following specific concepts stand out as weakest.

- Shared Goals/Vision:
  - All school levels – identifying SMART goals to serve as success indicators.
  - High school level – guidance by shared vision that all students can be helped to learn at high levels.
- Collaboration Efforts:
  - All school levels
    - Assessing the impact of strategies on student achievement.
    - Evaluating the success of improvement strategies by their impact on student learning.
    - Making decisions in collaborative work teams based on best practice rather than opinion.
    - Engaging in continuous improvement related to implementing agreed-upon strategies.
    - Providing students with agreed-upon essential learning outcomes.
  - High school level
    - Evaluating student achievement using the same criteria as other teachers who teach the same course/grade and/or students.
    - Applying team-based agreed-upon student assessment criteria.
- Team Practices:
  - All school levels
    - Documenting effective use of collaborative time by teams.
    - Understanding expectations, roles, responsibilities, and relationships of each team member in promoting team practices.
    - Working interdependently as teams to achieve goals linked to school goals.
- Goal Attainment Monitoring/Support Processes (Results Orientation):
  - All school levels
    - Putting team feedback processes in place.
    - Providing extra help during the school day for students who need it.
    - Developing systems to monitor student attainment of essential learning outcomes.
    - Monitoring student attainment of essential learning outcomes regularly.
    - Providing a system that gives relevant comparative student achievement information to teams.
- Team Support Processes (Leadership and Conditions):
  - All school levels
    - Developing processes for archiving team products.
    - Creating team timelines for of specific, work-related product development.
    - Celebrating team successes.
    - Providing regular time during the school day for teams to meet.
    - Promoting growth as a PLC.
  - High school level – providing timely information on student achievement.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT STEPS

One of the objectives for WCPSS is to continually learn how to be more effective in helping students learn and be successful. A deeper awareness of PLC concepts and team-based learning organizations continues to be a need. The following are suggestions for establishing ongoing collaborative cultures, avoiding a you-don't-know-what-you-don't-know superficiality, and avoiding the reinforcement of schools as autonomous units (Fullan, 2006).

- Develop a consistent, common vocabulary and understanding of the PLC concept across all schools and WCPSS overall.
- Develop a systematic plan for implementation.
- Align all training related to PLCs.

WCPSS is fortunate to have strong internal resources and access to other groups and organizations. Examples of resources within the system:

- motivation through emphasis placed on PLCs by district-level vision and leadership,
- within each school – staff members within and across teacher teams, and instructional leaders,
- schools from across the school system – those schools with strong positive dispositions and high implementation levels,
- central services departments – e.g., staff development, instructional services, area superintendents, and their special assistants,
- districtwide improvement plan for No Child Left Behind – includes training in data use, intervention alignment, and PLC concepts, and
- intranet Web sites and links as repositories.

Examples of resources outside the system:

- High Five—a partnership of five corporations with five school systems working together to raise the teaching and learning capacity for high schools—this year is branching its training and coaching efforts to include elementary and middle schools.
- Triangle Leadership Academy—formerly the Wake Leadership Academy—now expanded to include the High Five school systems, addresses issues around leadership and focuses on building learning organizations and developing leaders who improve student achievement through professional learning communities.
- National organizations supporting team-based, best practices PLC development.

Allowing for flexibility along the path of the change process toward a transparent, team-based way of working, no critical step should be cut short. Most important for success is establishing a clear vision and mission based on the system's identified core values (Collins, 1996). The rest of the work needs to center on creating alignment with the vision and mission while maintaining discipline in thought, people, and action. Kotter (1998) has outlined eight important steps for transforming an organization, including the importance of communicating the vision and then empowering others to act on that vision – through planning, consolidation of improvement, and institutionalizing the new approaches. The WCPSS survey results make it clear that school staff members place a high priority on the PLC concepts within the survey, and that they see a need for growth.

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## APPENDIX

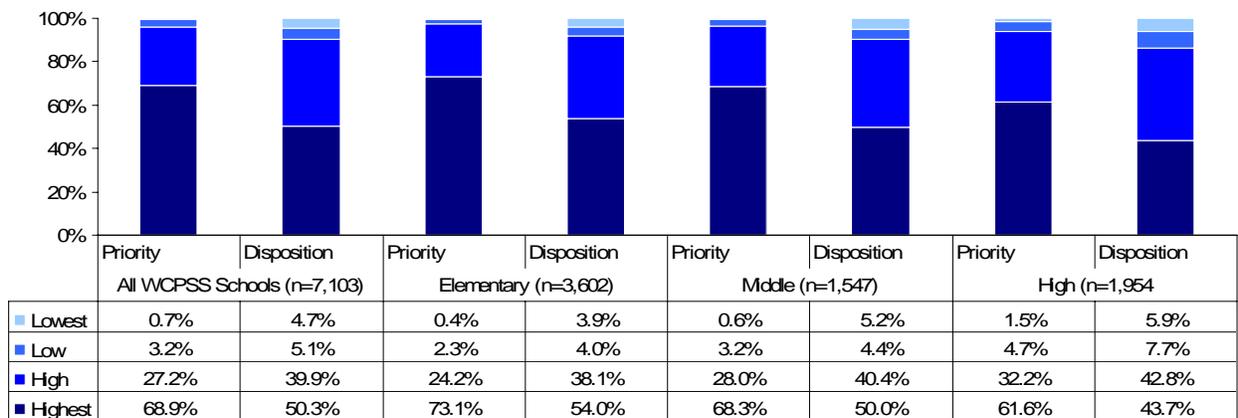
### COMPARISONS BY THEME OF PRIORITY WITH DISPOSITION AND IMPLEMENTATION

#### SHARED GOALS/VISION

##### Level of Priority Compared to Disposition

For all school levels combined, 96% of respondents placed a medium to high priority overall on disposition statements related to the theme, while 90% reported a positive disposition in place regarding the three statements. Higher priority level percentages are slightly greater (by five to seven percentage points) than the percentages reporting positive dispositions (see Figure 1a).

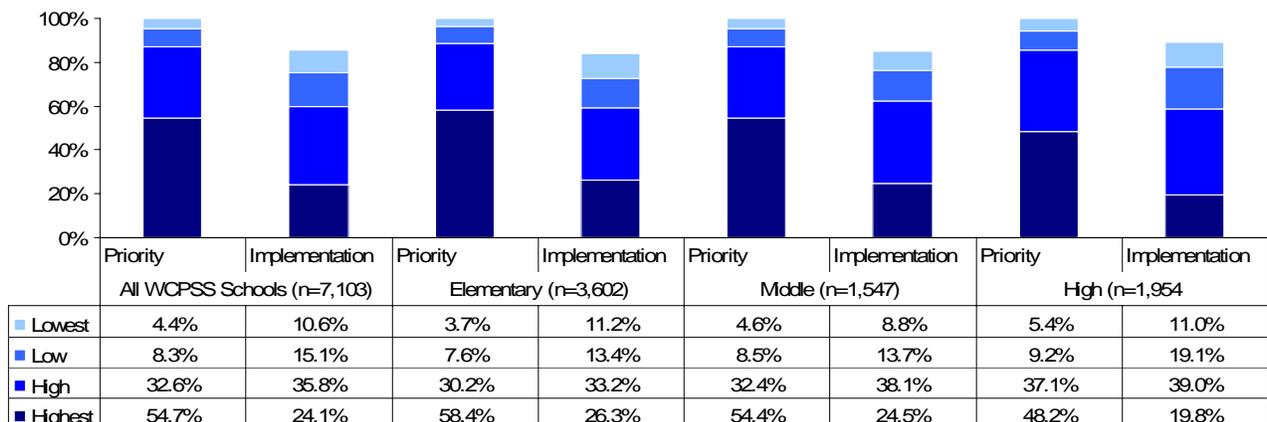
**Figure 1a**  
**Shared Goals/Vision (Items 1–3)**  
**Comparing Priority to Disposition**



##### Level of Priority Compared to Implementation

Of the 7,103 respondents, 87% placed a medium to high priority overall on the theme’s priority statements, and 60% reported a higher overall implementation level (see Figure 2a). Higher priority level percentages are noticeably greater (by 24 to 29 percentage points) than the higher responses related to implementation levels at all grade spans.

**Figure 2a**  
**Shared Goals/Vision (Items 4–5)**  
**Comparing Priority to Implementation**

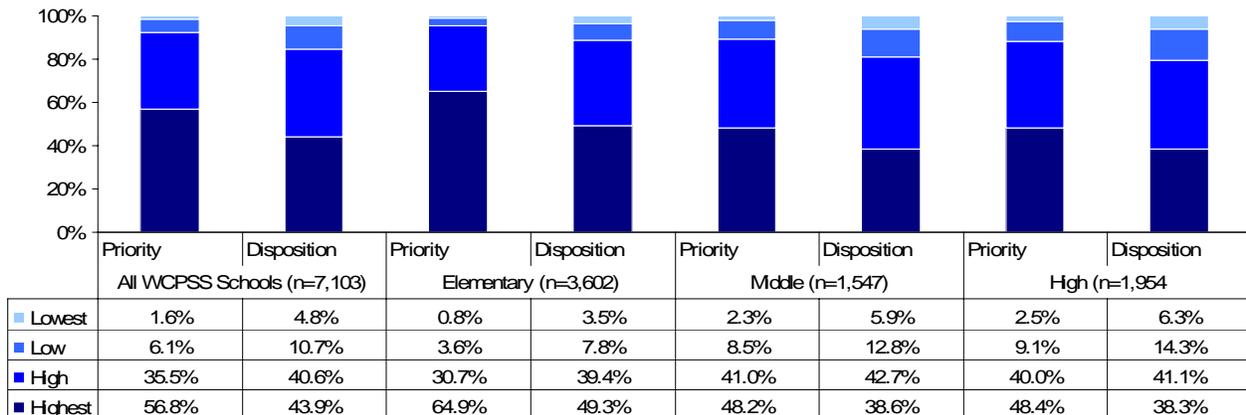


## COLLABORATION EFFORTS

### Level of Priority Compared to Disposition

A merging of all school levels showed 92% of respondents placed a medium to high priority overall on the four disposition statements within the theme, while 85% reported a positive disposition regarding the four statements (see Figure 3a). The most noticeable difference between highest priority and a strong positive disposition is seen at the elementary level (16 percentage points difference).

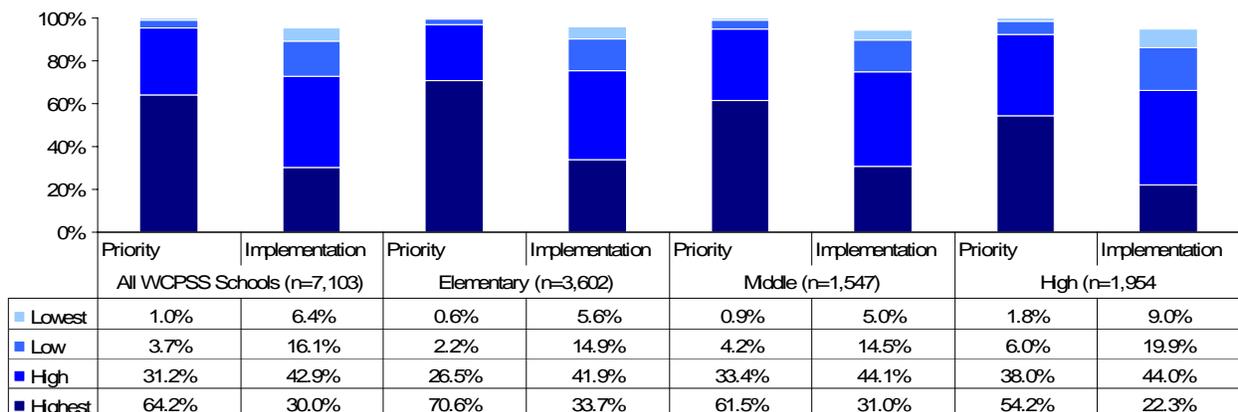
**Figure 3a**  
**Collaboration Efforts (Items 6–9)**  
**Comparing Priority Level to Current PLC Dispositions**



### Level of Priority Compared to Implementation

Combining all school levels showed 95% of respondents placed a medium to high priority overall on implementation statements within the theme, and 73% reported a higher overall implementation level for the theme (see Figure 4a). Results by each school level showed a similar discrepancy (20 to 26 percentage points) between the theme’s priority and implementation levels, the greatest of which is at the high school level.

**Figure 4a**  
**Collaboration Efforts (Items 10–16)**  
**Comparing Priority Level to Implementation Level**

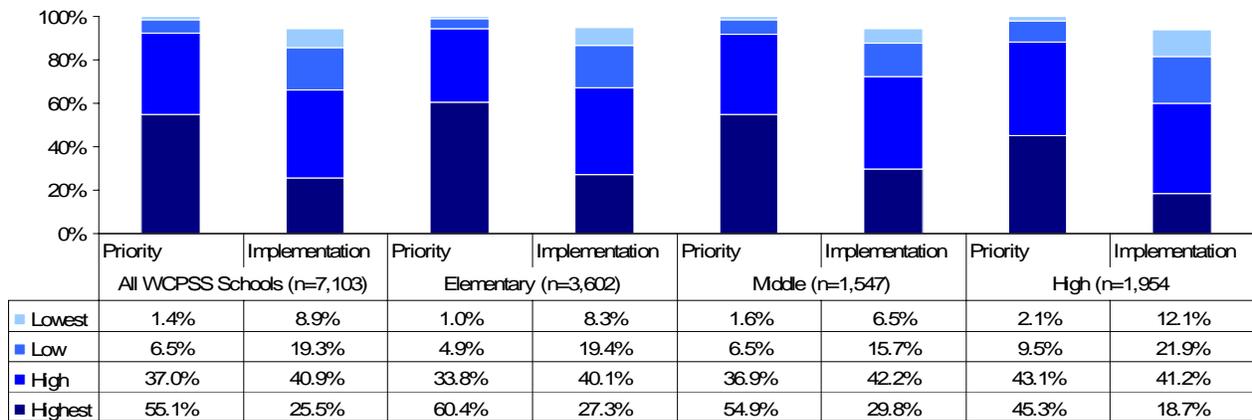


## TEAM PRACTICES

### Level of Priority Compared to Implementation

Of the 7,103 respondents, 92% placed a medium to high priority overall on this theme’s implementation statements and 66% reported a higher implementation level for the theme. Results by elementary and high school level respondents showed similar results and similar differences (by 27 to 29 percentage points, respectively) between the theme’s priority and implementation levels, while middle school level respondents showed less difference (20 percentage points). Higher priority level respondent percentages are obviously greater than percentages reporting higher implementation levels at each school level as well as for all school levels combined (see Figure 5a).

**Figure 5a**  
**Team Practices (Items 17–22)**  
**Comparing Priority Level to Implementation Level**



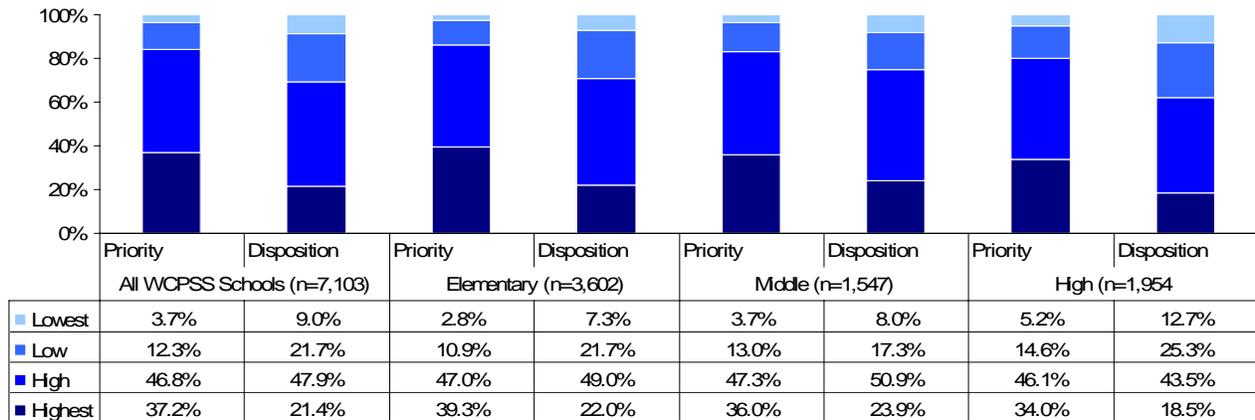
\*Note: The theme, Team Practices, did not include items pertaining to disposition.

**GOAL ATTAINMENT MONITORING/SUPPORT PROCESSES (RESULTS ORIENTATION)**

**Level of Priority Compared to Disposition**

Of all 7,103 respondents, 84% placed a medium to high priority overall on the one disposition-related statement, and 69% (a 15 percentage points difference) reported a positive disposition (see Figure 6a). While results by elementary and high school respondents showed similar results and similar discrepancies (15 to 18 percentage points respectively) between priority level and disposition, a narrower discrepancy of nine percentage points was observed with middle school respondents.

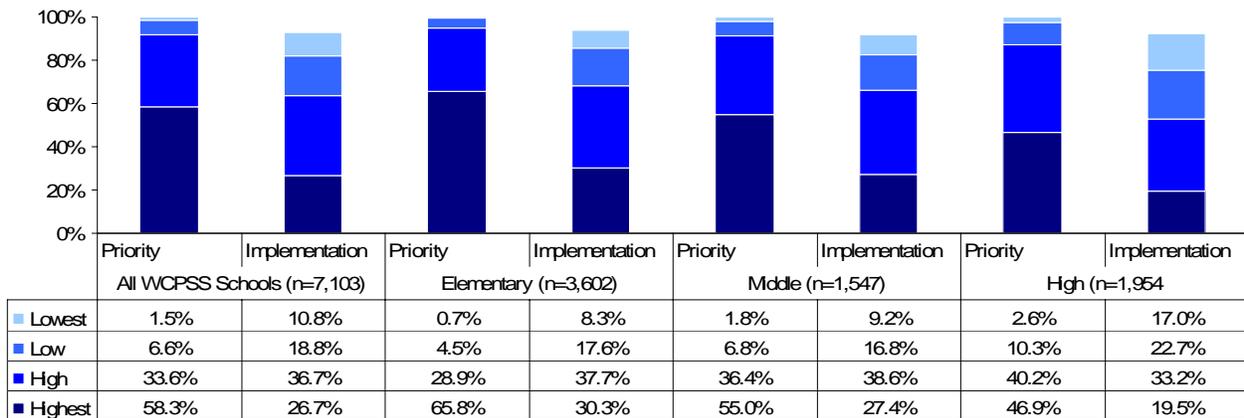
**Figure 6a**  
**Results Orientation (Item 23)**  
**Comparing Priority Level to Disposition**



**Level of Priority Compared to Implementation**

Combining all school levels showed 92% of respondents placed a medium to high priority overall on the theme’s implementation statements, and 63% reported a higher overall current implementation level for the theme (see Figure 7a). Results by each school level showed a similar discrepancy (20 to 34 percentage points) between the theme’s priority and implementation levels.

**Figure 7a**  
**Results Orientation (Items 24–27)**  
**Comparing Priority Level to Implementation Level**

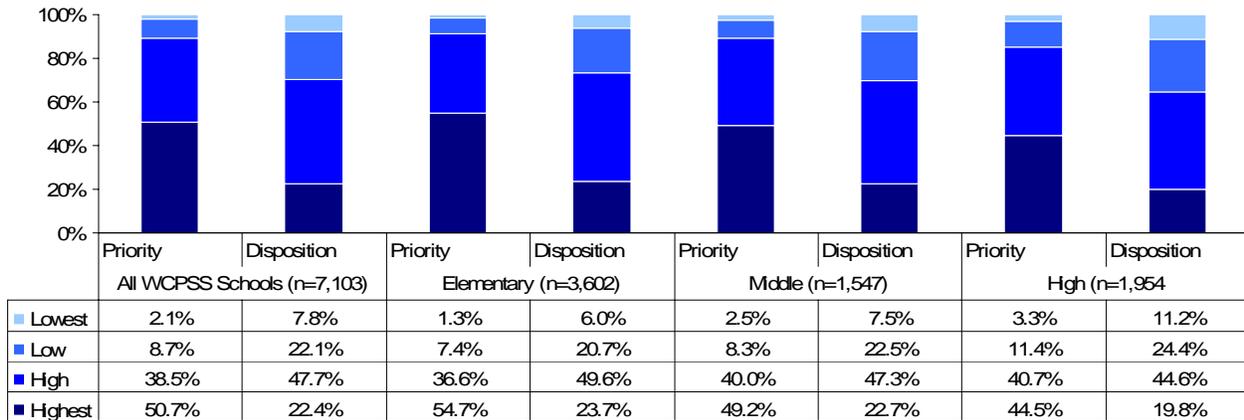


**TEAM SUPPORT PROCESSES (LEADERSHIP AND CONDITIONS)**

**Level of Priority Compared to Disposition**

Most (89%) combined respondents placed a medium to high priority overall on the theme’s two disposition-related concepts, and 70% reported their schools as having positive dispositions. For each school level, the percentage of respondents reporting higher priority levels exceeded the percentage reporting positive school dispositions by 18 to 21 percentage points (see Figure 8a).

**Figure 8a**  
**Team Support Processes - Leadership and Conditions (Items 28–29)**  
**Comparing Priority Level to Disposition**



**Level of Priority Compared to Implementation**

Of all respondents combined across school levels, 88% placed a medium to high priority on the implementation statements within the theme, and 60% reported a higher implementation level for the theme (see Figure 9a). At each school level as well as for all school levels combined, higher priority levels are clearly greater than the reported higher implementation levels.

**Figure 9a**  
**Team Support Processes - Leadership and Conditions (Items 30–33)**  
**Comparing Priority Level to Implementation Level**

