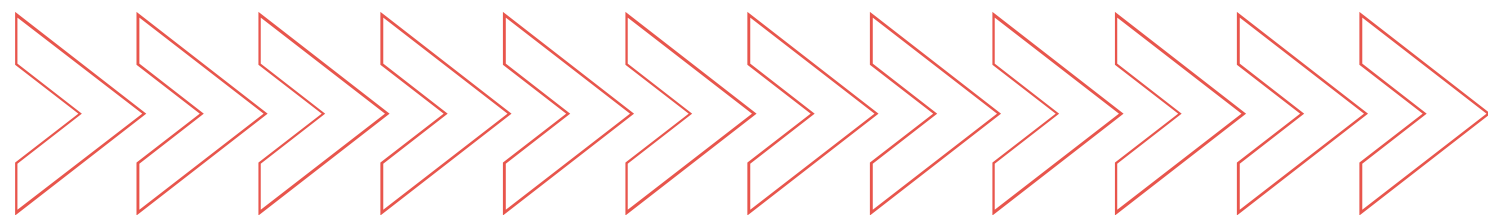


# Examining the Role of the Staff Development Teacher (SDT) in Supporting Professional and Operational Excellence

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**Shared Accountability**

Applied Research and Evaluation







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# The SDT's Role in Professional and Operational Excellence



## Executive Summary

### Evaluation Scope

During the 2022–2023 school year, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) assigned staff development teachers (SDTs) to each school. This allocation supports three pillars of the FY 2022–2025 Strategic Plan: professional and operational excellence, academic excellence, and wellness and family engagement. The 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff was fully released from teaching duties to support teachers and the school rather than alternating between teaching and staff development. This study investigated: 1) processes and structures used to enhance staff capacity to implement district-wide and school initiatives, 2) adjustments made to instructional practices, and 3) effects on teacher capacity, student learning experiences, and academic performance.

### Methods

Online surveys were used to collect information about the impact of SDT allocations on schools, staff, and students. The survey was sent to all SDTs (N=216), school-based administrators (N=515), and a sample of teachers (N=2,196). There were 165 responses from SDTs (76%), 356 responses from administrators (69%), and 827 responses from teachers (38%).

### Results

**The majority (>80%) of SDTs reported that activities of their fully released SDT position centered around direct teacher support and collaboration.** In their survey responses, more than 90% of administrators confirmed that SDTs concentrated their efforts on tasks such as developing the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and school Professional Learning Plans (PLPs), which were integrated into the SIP delivering professional learning and supporting data analysis. SDTs also stepped in as testing coordinators and substitute teachers, as indicated in open-ended comments from 31 SDTs and 90 administrators.

**Districtwide professional learning significantly benefited SDTs, with 80% noting the value of quarterly district-level sessions.** These sessions bolstered their preparedness, confidence, and adoption of new strategies, and aligned with their SIP priorities. The support provided by Learning and Achievement Specialists (LAS) played a pivotal role, with content strands such as SIP and data, equity, and coaching reported as the most beneficial.

**Schools established a robust system for school-level professional learning.** The vast majority of school district teams (91%) and administrators (80–86%) reported successful implementations of PLPs at their schools. PLPs were seamlessly integrated with other initiatives, fostering ongoing professional learning opportunities. Moreover, 75% of teachers reported actively participating in school-level professional learning opportunities, primarily focusing on collaborative planning, data analysis, and inclusive and culturally appropriate teaching methods to enhance student engagement and wellbeing.

# The SDT's Role in Professional and Operational Excellence



## Executive Summary

### Results

**In general, SDTs, teachers, and administrators reported that the 1.0 FTE SDT position positively impacted instruction, staff, and students.** SDTs reported that as a result of participating in PLOs, teachers routinely reflected on their strengths and opportunities for improvement (82%), revised instruction based on assessment and feedback (71%), incorporated different approaches that eliminated inequities (65%), and examined student work with colleagues and adjusted instruction (62%). Overall, open-ended responses from teachers (n=209) and administrators (n=181) indicated that the 1.0 FTE allocation and resulting school-level PLOs increased staff capacity, improved instructional practices, and promoted positive, student-centered experiences both in the classroom and in the school as a whole. The result was a more data-driven, student-centered, inclusive, and growth-oriented approach to instruction. In addition to being commended SDTs as an invaluable resource, administrators reported improved teacher efficacy, increased awareness of equity, and enhanced student learning experiences, academic growth, and social well-being.

**The optimal use of SDTs in alignment with planned responsibilities was impeded by several challenges.** These constraints included time limitations, ambiguous directives from the central office regarding districtwide projects, educator pushback against professional learning, addressing disruptive student conduct, and staffing constraints like shortages and classroom coverage requirements. These challenges impeded the optimal implementation of some aspects of the PLPs and related activities as intended.

**To maximize the effectiveness of SDTs and bolster professional learning,** elicited several recommendations. These included 1) strategically refining SDTs' roles, 2) providing clear directives on central office initiatives, 3) addressing class coverage challenges, and 4) offering targeted as well as subject specific professional development opportunities. Additionally, teachers emphasized the need for ongoing PLOs to enhance their data analysis skills, foster peer collaboration, and cultivate positive staff attitudes and practices that strengthen practices that promote inclusivity and equity.

### Conclusion & Recommendations

The findings demonstrated that allocating 1.0 FTE SDT per school positively impacted staff capacity, instruction, and students in key focus areas, including professional and operational excellence, academic excellence, and student and staff well-being. Successful implementation of PLPs and schoolwide PLOs drove progress in equity-centered and personalized learning, as well as new approaches to instruction. Some challenges arose in the utilization of the SDTs, highlighting the need to streamline the responsibilities refocusing on primarily on professional learning and instruction, and introducing school testing coordinators. Recommendations from the findings include systemwide guidance for consistency, subject-specific PLOs, and tailored professional learning at the school level as some ways to maximize the effectiveness of district and schoolwide efforts.



This evaluation examined how schools used the fully-released SDT during the 2022–2023 school year. The study focused on understanding how the 1.0 FTE allocation contributed to building staff capacity across districtwide focus areas outlined in the FY 2022–2025 Strategic Plan, which included academic excellence, staff and student well-being, and professional and operational excellence (MCPS, 2023). The evaluation assessed professional learning for SDTs and school staff based on the Thomas Guskey 2016 model. The study included the following aspects:

- Processes and structures used to enhance the capabilities of school staff in implementing districtwide and school initiatives.
- Changes or adaptations made by staff in their instructional practices as a result of the professional learning initiatives.
- Impact of these changes on students' learning experiences and academic performance.

The report includes the results from a survey administered to SDTs, school administrators, and a sample of Grade K–12 teachers in Spring 2023. The evaluation was not intended to assess or evaluate individuals serving in the SDT role.

## Purpose of Evaluation



The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of the staff development teacher (SDT) on:

- School staff capacity to implement district-wide and school initiatives,
- Teachers' instructional practices, and
- Student learning experiences during the 2022–2023

## Research Questions



How did schools use SDTs to implement district and schoolwide initiatives?

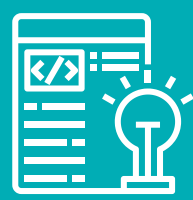
1. How much time did SDTs spend on various activities?
2. To what extent did the SDTs report implementing professional learning to staff, aligning it with the school's PLP and incorporating their learning from districtwide professional learning?



To what extent did administrators and teachers report receiving various forms of professional learning, coaching, feedback, and support from staff development teachers?



To what extent did staff attribute their acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes to having the support from a full-time SDT at the school and engaging with the school-level structures and processes relate to professional learning?



# Program Description

## Overview

MCPS allocated \$29 million to ensure a full-time equivalent (FTE) SDT was in every school in 2022–2023 (MCPS, 2022). As part of MCPS's commitment to professional and operational excellence (MCPS, 2023), the SDT was to be completely relieved of other teaching or administrative duties in order to support instructional staff and leverage the knowledge gained from their systemwide professional learning communities (PLCs). The SDTs were expected to facilitate a professional learning cycle within their schools by developing and implementing a Professional Learning Plan (PLP) that was integrated into the School Improvement Plan (SIP). A comprehensive support system was also expected, with all SDTs offering job-embedded support and school-wide professional learning. Allocating an SDT in every school aimed to enhance staff capacity to implement effective, equitable instructional practices, foster positive staff attitudes towards equity, and improve students' overall academic performance and well-being.

## Program Goals



Facilitate schools to create and implement the School Improvement Plans (SIP) and develop Professional Learning Plans (PLP).



Provide job-embedded professional learning and school-wide professional learning to school staff.



Foster the growth of professional learning communities, and support collaborative planning and data-driven decision-making.

## Program Components



**1.0 FTE fully-released SDT** in every school. The expectation was that SDTs would be fully released to support teachers rather than splitting their time between staff development and teaching. This would allow more time for direct support to staff.



**Systemwide professional learning for SDTs.** Professional learning comprised six content strands: **equity, trust, coaching, school improvement plans and data, professional learning communities, and facilitation.** Each SDT received a total of thirty hours of learning throughout the year. New SDTs were also provided an extra thirty hours of professional learning.



**Professional Learning (PL) for School Staff.** SDTs provided job-embedded teacher support and schoolwide professional learning. They assisted with PLPs, SIPs, collaborative planning, data-driven decision-making, and instructional planning.





A non-experimental design was used to examine the roles of the SDT and the resulting impact on schools, staff, and students. Changes in teacher practices and student experiences were measured using survey information. Following the Thomas Guskey framework for professional learning evaluations, data collection covered four key areas: SDTs and staff reactions to professional learning opportunities (PLOs), learning among teachers and SDTs, organizational support and change, and the application of new knowledge and skills by participants, resulting in observed changes in staff and student experiences (Guskey, 2016; Breslow, N & Bock, G 2020).

### Implementation Methods



#### Data and Measures

Staff surveys focused on:

1. Professional learning processes and structures used to enhance the capacity of school staff members to implement district-wide and school initiatives,
2. Adjustments made in instructional practices, and
3. Effects on instructional practices and student learning experiences .



#### Data Collection Methods

Online surveys were distributed through email on May 19, 2023, and closed on June 2, 2023. Three reminders were sent.



#### Samples and Response Rates

All school administrators (i.e., principals, assistant principals, and assistant school administrators, (N=515) and SDTs (N=216), as well as a random sample of K-12 teachers (N=2,196) were surveyed.

	SDTs	Administrators	Teachers
Number surveyed	216	515	2,196
Number of Responses	165	356	827
<b>Response Rate</b>	<b>76.4%</b>	<b>69.1%</b>	<b>37.6%</b>



#### Analysis Procedures

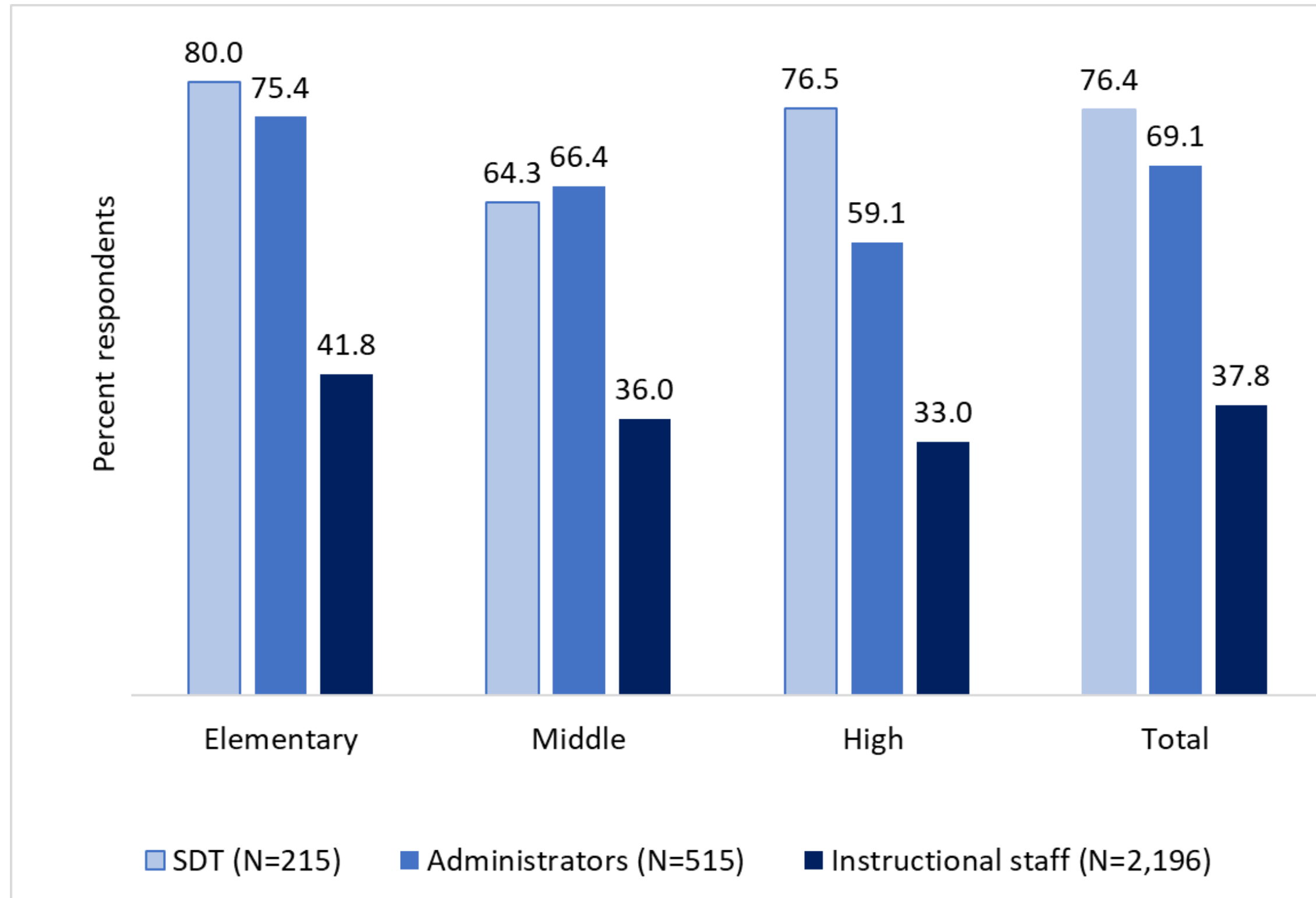
To address the evaluation questions, responses from the structured items on the staff surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Where applicable, analyses were conducted by school level. Analyses also included coding responses from open-ended survey items for common themes and categories. The themes reported for teachers and administrators were based on ideas from at least 20 respondents, while those for SDTs were based on at least 10 respondents.



# Survey Response Rates by School Level



## Findings

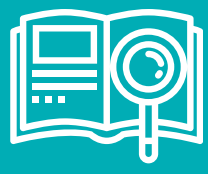


Among the three categories of respondents, elementary schools had the highest survey response rates. For SDTs, the response rate was 80% in elementary, while it was 64% in middle, and 77% in high schools.

For administrators, response rates were: 75% for elementary schools, 66% for middle schools, and 59% for high schools. Over half (n=185/52%) were assistant principals, 44% were principals (n=158), and the remainder were principal interns.

Response rates for instructional staff were 42% for elementary schools, 36% for middle schools, and 33% for high schools.

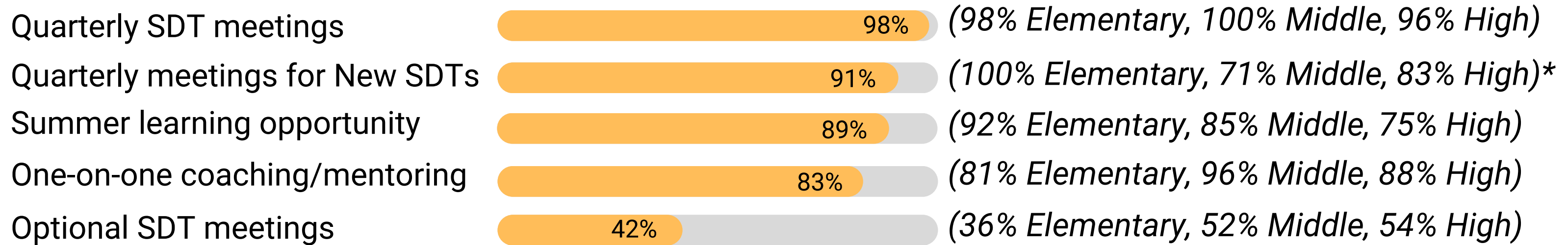




# Results: SDT Survey

## SDT Experiences with Professional Learning Opportunities (PLOs)

### Participation in PLOs 2022–2023 (N = 165)



\*Only new SDTs included in this line of data.

### SDT Reports of Most Beneficial Learning Formats



88% Face-to face learning



84% Quarterly SDT meetings



86% Other



67% One-on-one coaching or mentoring



### Findings

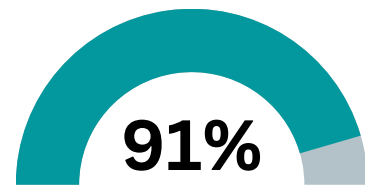
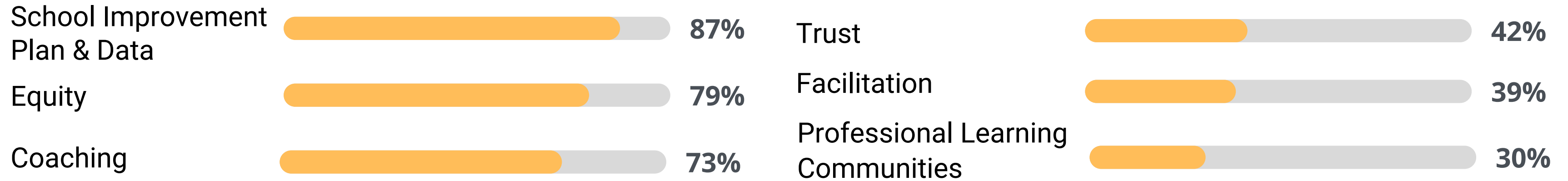
Nearly all SDTs across every level reported they attended quarterly SDT meetings (98%). Participation in other types of professional learning, however, varied widely among respondents, with middle school respondents engaging in one-on-one coaching and mentoring at a higher level (96%) than elementary (81%) or high school colleagues (88%). About half of the middle (52%) and high school (54%) SDTs reported participating in optional SDT meetings compared to 36% of elementary colleagues. Across all school levels, face-to-face learning opportunities (88%) and collaboration with other SDTs (86%) were consistently identified as the most beneficial aspects of the SDTs' professional learning. The majority also identified the quarterly SDT meeting format as the most beneficial (84%).



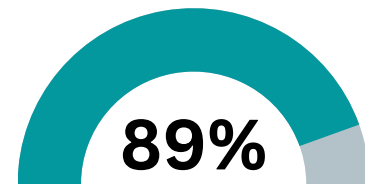
# Results: SDT Survey

## SDT Experiences with District-Level Professional Learning

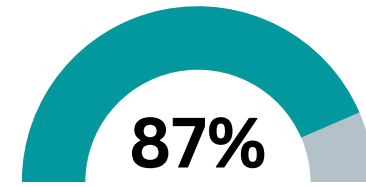
### Most Helpful Topics Covered at District-Level PLOs (N = 165)



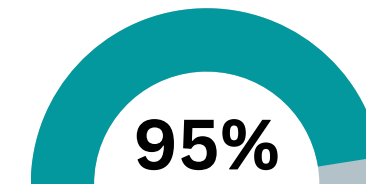
Agreed that district level PLOs adequately prepared SDT to deliver PL at their school



Agreed that district level PLOs provided new strategies for delivering PL at their school



Agreed that district level PLOs improved their confidence to deliver PL at their school



Agreed that district level PLOs had content that aligned with priorities of school's SIP

**Agreed = Strongly Agree or Agree**

### Findings

Data showed that the majority of respondents across various school levels found the topics of School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Data (87%), equity (79%), and coaching during district-wide SDT PLOs to be most helpful. At the same time, less than half of the respondents considered the topics of trust (42%), professional learning communities (PLC) (30%), and facilitation (39%) to be most helpful in preparing them to deliver school-level PLOs.

Professional learning sessions were positively perceived across all levels. SDTs acknowledged that the Professional Learning Opportunities (PLOs) for SDTs were aligned with their school's SIP (95%). Furthermore, the sessions adequately prepared them to deliver PL (91%), offered new strategies for delivering PL, and improved their confidence in delivering PL at their schools (87%).





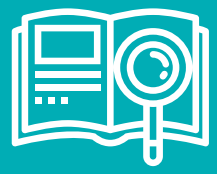
# Results: SDT Survey

## Suggestions for Professional Development in 2023—2024

In open-ended question, SDTs were asked **what topics/activities/strategies they would recommend be included in next year's professional development for SDTs**. One hundred seventeen (N=117) of the 215 SDTs **provided one or more responses**. The following themes emerged:

### Key Themes

- 1 SIP (School Improvement Plan), Action Plans, Data Collection, and Presentation (n=52):** SDTs seek support and guidance for the new SIP process, including developing action plans, models of delivering PD in large school settings, and creative ways to deliver PD when time is limited. They also reported a need to "deepen the work" with SIP and data analysis by focusing on street data collection strategies and successes, emphasizing PLPs and how best to address district initiatives through PLPs and action plans. Some also requested support in data analysis, making data digestible through charts, graphs, and other technology tools, and presenting data effectively to staff.
- 2 Equity and Anti-Bias/Anti-Racist Work (n=24):** SDTs emphasized the need for more work on equity, anti-racist leadership actions, instructional practices, anti-bias/anti-racist learning progressions, and addressing white supremacy culture with staff. Additionally, they are looking for exemplars and ready-to-use strategies for facilitating anti-bias/anti-racism professional learning and root cause analysis among staff.
- 3 Coaching and Peer Collaboration (n=26):** SDTs request more support and training on coaching, adult learning theory, facilitation skills, especially when dealing with difficult staff members, strategies on how to increase collaboration with literacy and math departments, as well as Department of English Learner and Multilingual Education (DELME), so staff can receive content and skills necessary to support professional learning targeting Emergent-Multilingual Learners (EMLs) and increasing access to Tier 1 instruction.
- 4 Systemwide Guidance and Support (n=18):** SDTs desire system-wide guidance, scope and sequence, and vetted professional learning materials to ensure consistency and professionalism. They also want best practices for facilitating meetings and differentiating learning based on experiences. Some specifically asked for learning around increasing support for curriculum study, shifting staff mindsets, and providing tools and strategies to support instruction. Finally, some SDTs expressed the need for strategies to balance SIP work with instructional needs and ideas for finding time for staff training without negatively affecting planning and collaboration.



# Results: SDT Survey

Frequency of SDT Activities, ES (N=110), MS (N=27), HS (N=24)

## How Often SDTs Spent Time on Delivering Professional Learning

None at all   Few times a year   Once a month   2-3 times per month   2-4 times per week   Daily

Level		Preparing and delivering professional learning to entire school	Preparing and providing job-embedded professional learning	Providing one-on-one coaching & reflective feedback to teachers
Most Common Frequency	ES	2-3 times per month (46%)	2-3 times per month (26%) Few times a year (26%)	2-4 times per week (39%)
	MS	2-3 times per month (44%)	2-3 times per month (30%)	2-4 times per week (41%)
	HS	Once a month (58%)	2-3 times per month (38%)	2-3 times per month (33%)



## Findings

Data presented show the frequency of specified professional development activities for school staff. Results indicated that the frequency varied by activity and delivering professional learning (44%) or providing job-embedded professional learning (30%) occurred 2-3 times monthly. The only exception was high school, where most SDTs reported delivering professional learning to the entire school once a month (58%). Elementary schools conduct job-embedded professional learning most frequently, 2-3 times per month/few times a year (26%), while middle and high schools conducted it 2-3 times monthly. One-on-one coaching and reflective feedback to teachers were most commonly performed 2-4 times per week for elementary and middle schools (39% and 41%, respectively) and 2-4 times per month for high schools (33%).





# Results: SDT Survey

Frequency of SDT Activities, ES (N=110), MS (N=27), HS (N=24)

## How Often SDTs Spent Time on School Improvement and Professional Learning Plans

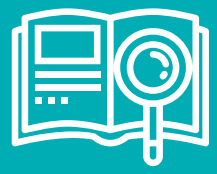
None at all
  Few times a year
  Once a month
  2-3 times per month
  2-4 times per week
  Daily

Level		Delivering professional learning to school's ILT	Collaborating with ILT to develop the SIP	Engaging/supporting data analysis for ILT to inform planning, aligning with SIP	Developing/monitoring PLP, including collecting data to inform PLP
Most Common Frequency	ES	Once a month (52%)	Once a month (38%)	Once a month (28%)	2-3 times per month (32%)
	MS	2-3 times per month (48%)	2-3 times per month (33%)	2-3 times per month (41%)	2-3 times per month (48%)
	HS	Once a month (50%)	Few times a year (38%)	2-3 times per month (33%)	2-4 times per week (29%)



## Findings

Data provided relates to the frequency that SDTs work on various activities related to the SIP and PLP across school levels. Most activities occurred either once a month or 2-3 times per month, depending on the type of activity and the level. The most frequently activities were delivering professional learning to the schools' Instructional Leadership Team and collaborating to develop the SIP occurred monthly or a few times a year. SDTs reported working more frequently on supporting data analysis for ILT and developing and monitoring the PLP 2-3 times per month. Middle school SDTs reported working more often on all activities 2-3 times per month.



# Results: SDT Survey

Frequency of SDT Activities, ES (N=110), MS (N=27), HS (N=24)

## How Often SDTs Spent Time Collaborating with Staff

None at all   Few times a year   Once a month   2-3 times per month   2-4 times per week   Daily

Level		Supporting data analysis at grade-level team meetings	Engaging/supporting data analysis with individuals	Participating in collaborative planning meetings (e.g., PLC	Supporting collaboration & coordination with other MCPS staff
		ES	2-4 times per week (39%)	2-4 times per week (36%)	2-4 times per week (45%)
MS	Few times a year (32%)	2-3 times per month (35%)	2-3 times per month (39%)	2-3 times per month (35%)	
HS	None at all (42%)	Few times a year (38%)	Few times a year (38%)	2-3 times per month (33%)	Few times a year (33%)



## Findings

The data provided focuses on the frequency of collaboration that SDTs had with school staff. Elementary SDTs reported higher frequencies of collaborative activities with staff; supporting data analysis at grade-level team meetings, supporting data analysis with individuals, and participating in collaborative planning meetings like PLCs were typically done 2-4 times per week at the elementary level, compared to 2-3 times per month or a few times a year at the middle (39%) and high school levels (38%). Middle school and high school SDTs reported a higher frequency of collaboration and coordination with other MCPS staff 2-3 times per month (33%) or a few times year (33% each) compared to elementary.





# Results: SDT Survey

Frequency of SDT Activities, ES (N=110), MS (N=27), HS (N=24)

## How Often SDTs Spent Time on Operations and Logistics

None at all   Few times a year   Once a month   2-3 times per month   2-4 times per week   Daily

Level		Covering classes for teachers	Providing direct services to students	Preparing and delivering communication to parents	Completing paperwork	
Most Common Frequency	ES	2-3 times per month (24%)	Few times a year (25%)	2-4 times per week (28%)	Few times a year (41%)	2-4 times per week (33%)
	MS	2-4 times per week (33%)	Daily (33%)	Few times a year (54%)	Few times a year (31%)	
	HS	Few times a year (33%)	Few times a year (29%)	None at all (33%)	Few times a year (46%)	

### Findings

The most reported frequencies for the specified activities activity varied by school level. Covering classes was most common at the middle school level, occurring 2-4 times per week (33%), while at the middle and elementary school levels, it happened less frequently. Providing direct services to students was most frequent at the middle school level, happening daily. In contrast, at the elementary level, it occurred 2-4 times month at the elementary level and at the high school level, a few times per year. Activities like completing paperwork and preparing parent communication were delivered less frequently across all levels.



# Results: SDT Survey

SDTs Report of Additional Activities They Engaged In During 2022–2023

SDTs were asked in an open-ended question to **list any other activities they engaged in to support their school** that were not included on the previous list. Almost all SDTs (n=162) who completed the survey answered this question. Overwhelmingly they reported taking on the school testing coordinator role. Additionally, many assumed other roles in the building and helped with administrative duties and tasks.

## Key Themes

- 1 Testing coordination and support (n=90):** Over half of SDTs report took on the responsibilities of School Testing Coordinator (STC), supporting the role or serving as back-up. Tasks included organizing, training, communicating, and managing various tests and assessments, covering makeup testing, and attending meetings and training related to testing. This often required a significant time commitment, particularly during specific testing seasons.
- 2 Other roles in the building (n=57):** About one-third of SDTs (35%) referenced other roles they performed in the building. **Most responses in this category (n=40) mentioned serving as a math content coach, which included planning math workgroups, delivering interventions or enrichment in math, and co-teaching math.** Other roles reported are acting as a liaison for gifted and talented programs and other content areas like science and social studies, serving as grading and reporting representative, and monitoring grading and reporting.
- 3 Administrative duties and tasks (n=35):** Many (22%) SDTs mentioned various administrative duties, such as managing grading and reporting timelines, serving as a liaison for different departments or programs, coordinating with the Parent-Teacher Association, managing curriculum materials, and overseeing school-wide initiatives. Other responsibilities included serving as a committee lead, managing sectioning of courses, attending Title 1 meetings, supporting administration, assisting with main office duties, providing security when short-staffed, escorting students, answering radio calls, and covering the front office during breaks.
- 4 Student behavioral and mental health support/crises responses (n=21):** SDTs reported serving as Restorative Justice coaches, coordinating and providing support for students with behavioral needs, including coordinating paraeducator support for IEP (Individualized Education Program) or EMT (Emotional Management Team), supporting discipline and in-school suspension, and implementing interventions. They also reported supporting students in crisis situations, including responding to calls for assistance when students are engaging in harmful behaviors.



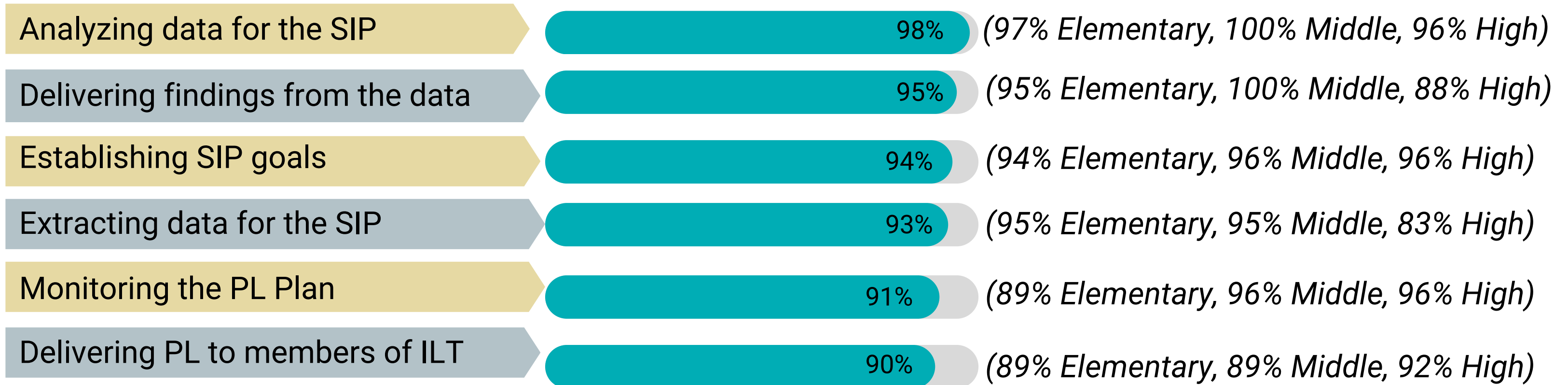
# Results: SDT Survey

Collaboration with Instructional Leadership Team

Scale used in survey:

- To a Great Extent,
- To a Moderate Extent
- To a Small Extent
- Not at All

## Involvement in Activities with School's Instructional Leadership Team to a Moderate or Great Extent (N=162)



## Findings

Overall, over 90% of the SDTs at all school levels reported active engagement in activities with the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) concerning the School Improvement Plan (SIP), data monitoring, and professional development, signifying their dedication to data-informed decision-making and ongoing improvement within their individual schools.

Notably, the middle school SDTs reported greater involvement in most activities with the ILT compared to elementary and high school respondents. However, delivering professional learning to ILT members was more common at the high school level (92%) compared with elementary (89%) and middle (89%).

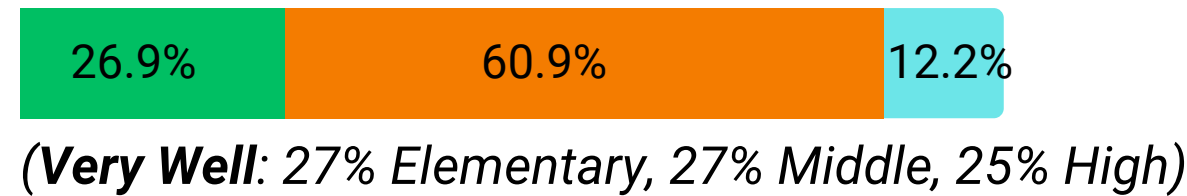




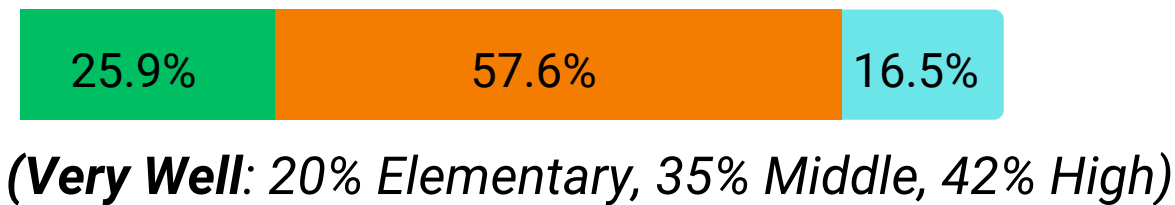
### Extent school has been able to (N = 158):

● Very Well ● Moderately ● Not Very Well

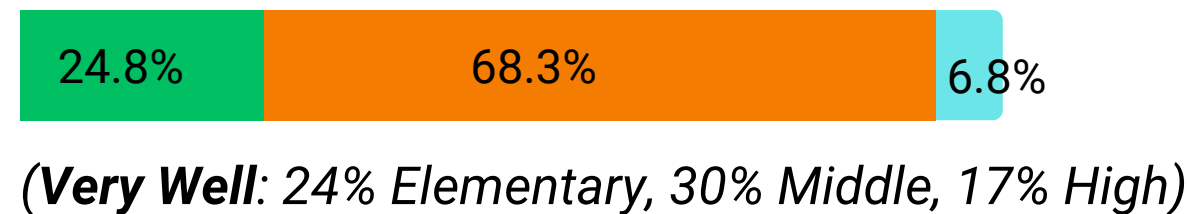
Integrate the goals of **PLP** with other MCPS initiatives



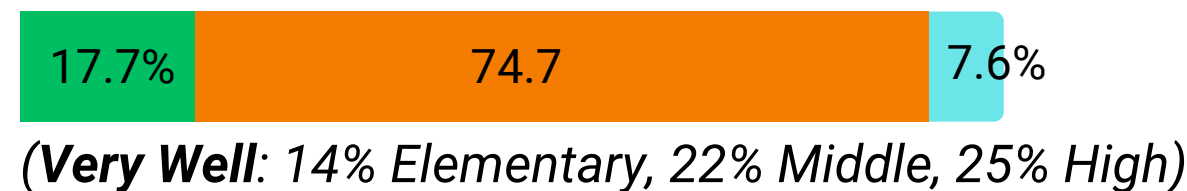
Monitor the **PLP** and make adjustments



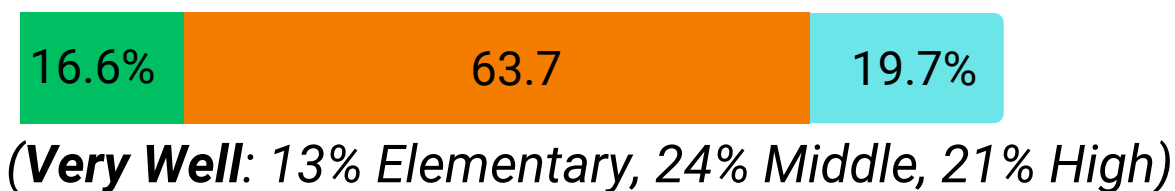
Integrate the goals of the **SIP** with other MCPS initiatives



Implement some components of **PLP**



Support the implementation of the school's **PLP**



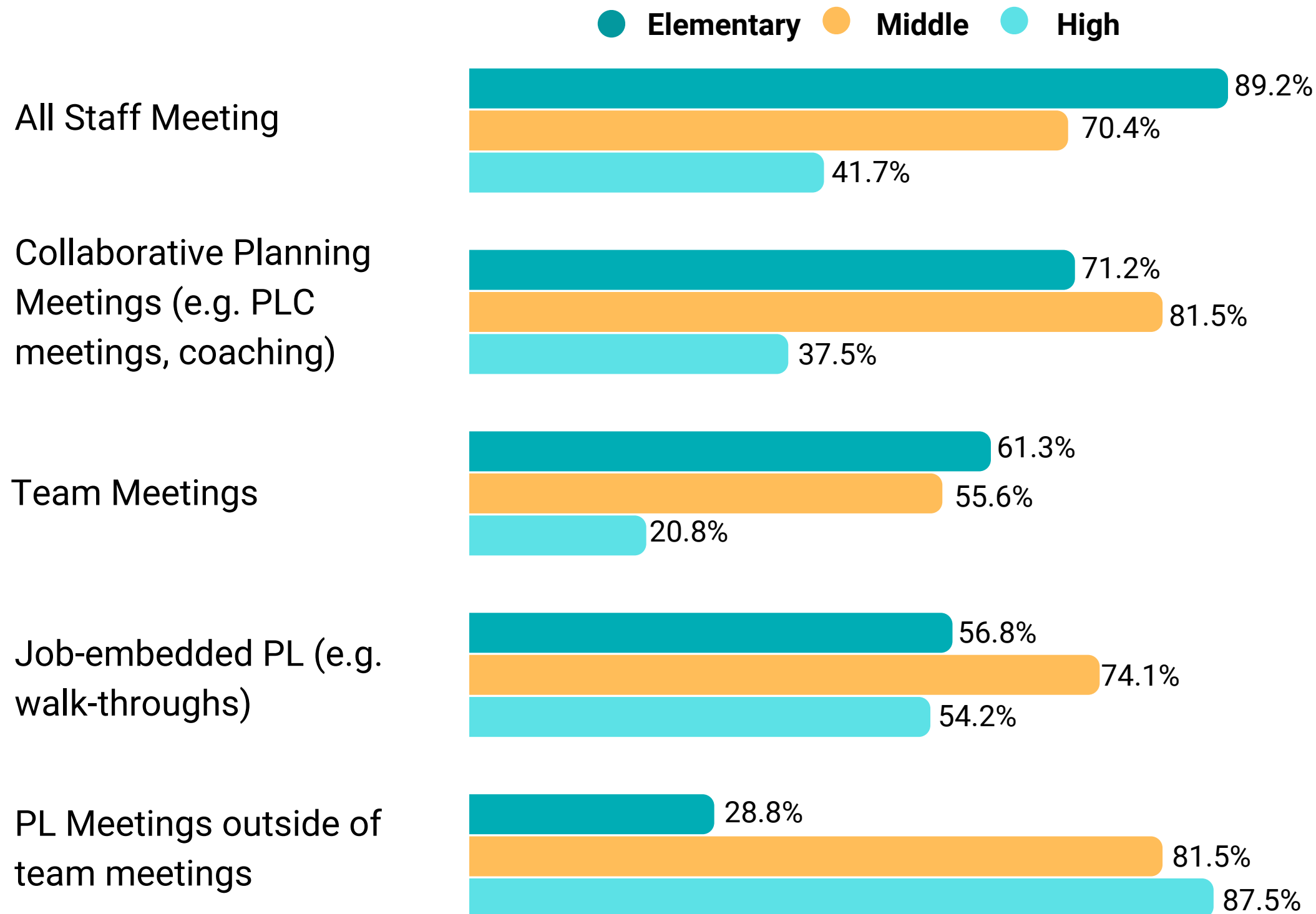
Overall, combined, the of SDTs reported that their school implemented various aspects of the PLP moderately (58% to 75%) or very well (17% to 27%). A great majority of SDTs (93%) reported that their school was able to **integrate the goals of the SIP with other MCPS initiatives very well or moderately well**. There was some variation by school level.

*Monitoring the PLP and making adjustments* showed the greatest variation in implementation, with 35% of middle school and 42% of high school teams reporting they were able to do this very well relative to 20% of elementary school respondents.

Twenty-two percent and twenty-five percent of middle and high school SDTs, respectively, indicated that **they were able to execute some components of the PLP very well**. Similarly, 24% and 21% of middle and high school SDTs reported that they were able to **support the implementation of their school's PLP very well**. In contrast, the percentage was comparatively lower for elementary SDTs, with only 14% and 13% reporting successful implementation of some components of the PLP and supporting the implementation of the school's PLP very well, respectively.



### How the PLP is Delivered to Staff (N = 165)



The ways in which the Professional Learning Plan (PLP) was delivered to school staff by the SDT varied by school level.

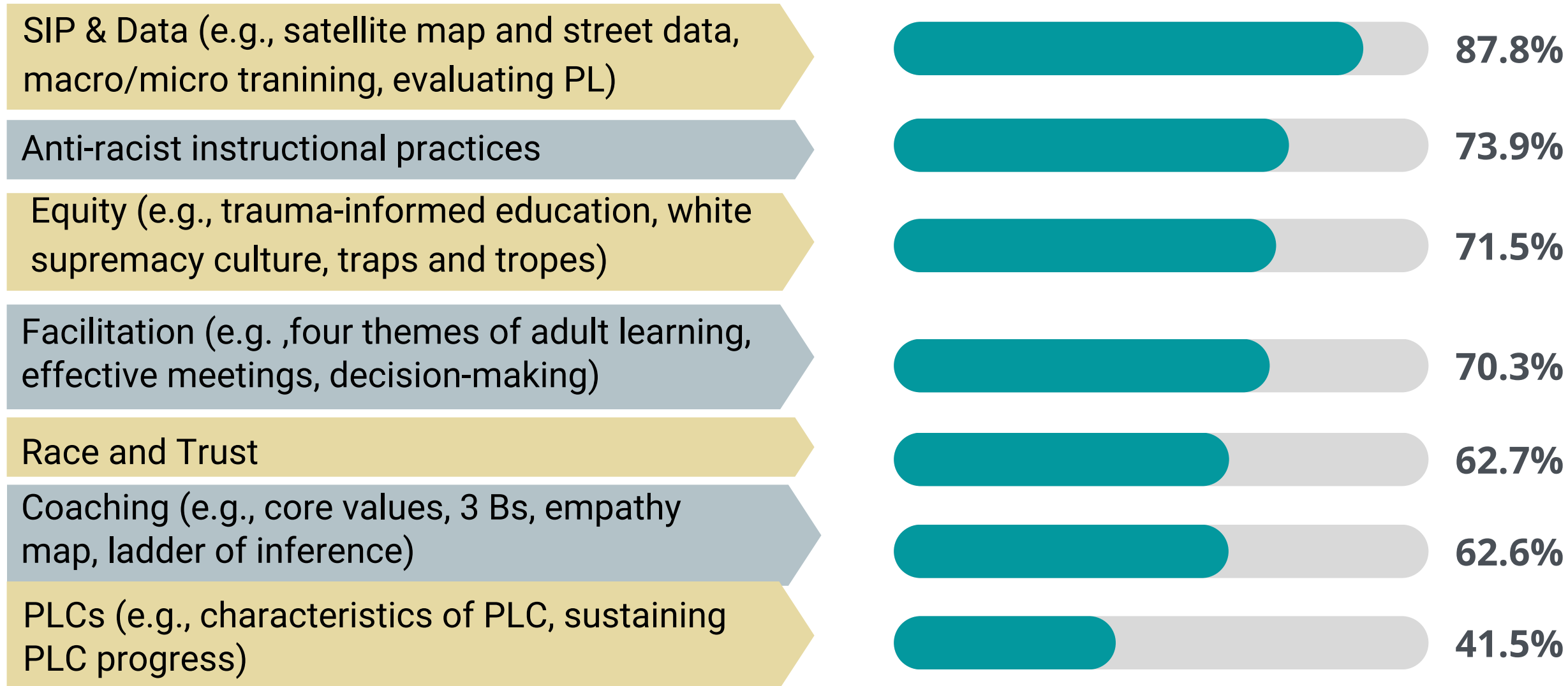
Among elementary schools, the most commonly reported method to deliver the PLP to staff was during an all staff meeting (89%) followed by a collaborative planning meeting such as PLC meetings or coaching (71%). The least used method of delivery of the PLP was at rolling PL meetings (29%).

Among middle schools, the most commonly reported method used to deliver the PLP was PL meetings outside of team meetings (82%) and collaborative planning meetings (82%), followed by job-embedded PL, such as walk-throughs (74%) and an all-staff appointment (70%).

Rolling PL meetings were by far the most common way (88%) in which high school SDTs delivered the PLP to school staff. The next most common way was through job-embedded PL reported by just over one-half (54%) of high school SDT's. The least method of delivery was at team meetings, reported by 21%.



### Extent of Focus on Specified Content at School-level PLOs to a Moderate or Great Extent (N = 165)



Scale used in survey:

- To a Great Extent,
- To a Moderate Extent
- To a Small Extent
- Not at All

## Findings

At the school-level PLOs, content and topics drawn from district-wide SDT PLOs were implemented to varying degrees. Seven of eight topics were implemented to a moderate or great extent by majority of respondents (63% to 88%). SIP and Data (88%) were the most implemented topics, followed by anti-racist instructional practices (74%), equity topics (72%), and facilitating adult learning (70%). In school-level PLOs, fewer than half of SDTs report implementing focusing on topic related to PLC (42%) or related content.





# Results: SDT Survey

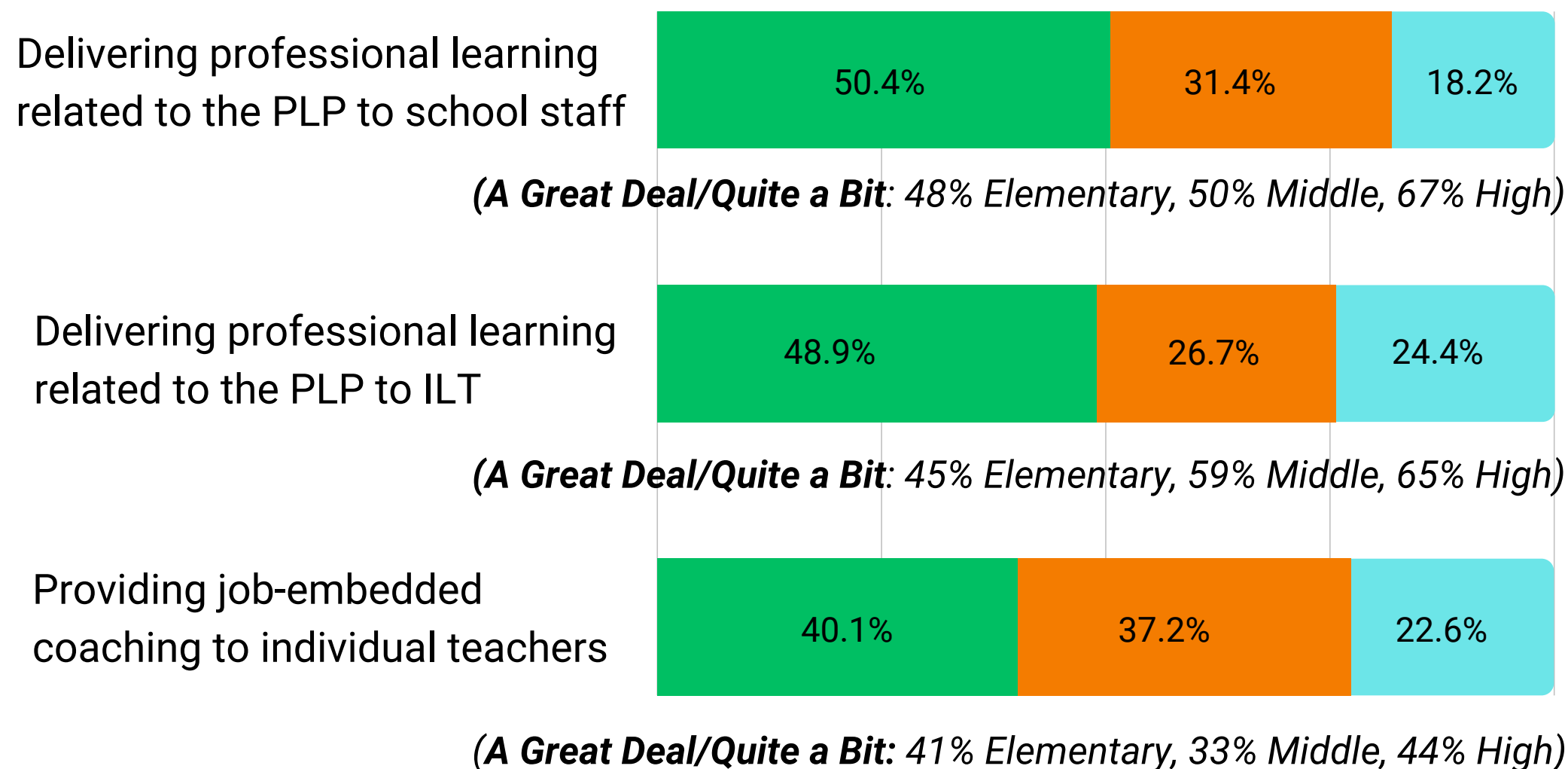
Increase in Activities from Prior Year



## Findings

### Level of Increase in Activities During 2022–2023 Compared to Previous Year (N = 137):

● A Great Deal/Quite a Bit ● Somewhat ● Very Little/Not at All



Overall, about one-half of SDTs reported that delivering PL related to the PLP to school staff and to the ILT increased A Great Deal or Quite a Bit compared to previous year.

Compared to the previous year, a higher percentage of high school SDTs reported that providing professional learning to the school staff increased A Great Deal or Quite a Bit in 2022–2023 (67% high vs. 48% elementary). Further, a greater percentage of middle and high school SDTs reported that PL delivery to the ILT increased A Great Deal or Quite a Bit compared to elementary (65% high, 59% middle, 45% elementary).

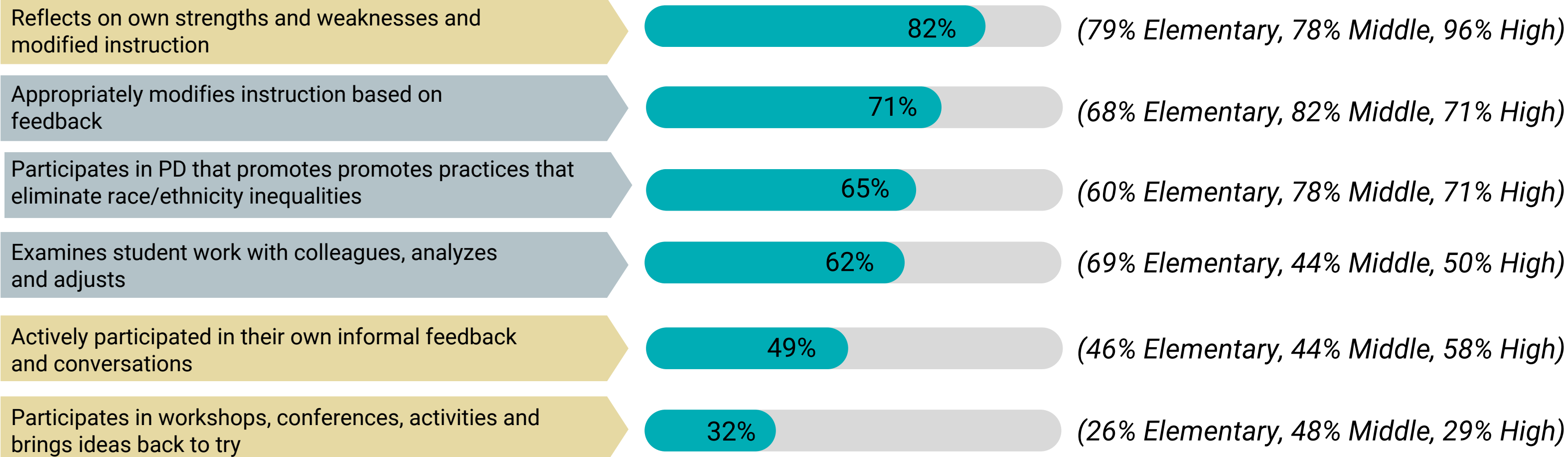
Only 40% of SDTs reported increased job-embedded coaching to individual teachers in 2022–2023 compared to previous year.



# Results: SDT Survey

## Instructional Changes following Professional Learning

### Changes in Instructional Practices Following Professional Learning (N = 165)



### Findings

The majority of respondents to this item (82%) reported that teachers at their schools routinely reflected on and modified their instruction after participating in PL; the responses varied by level, with almost all high school respondents stating that their teachers modified instruction based on PL (96%), as compared to 79% and 78% respectively for elementary and middle school respondents. In addition, 71% of SDTs reported that teachers modified instruction based on feedback (82% among middle school SDTs). SDTs in high schools reported higher percentages overall, except when examining student work with colleagues to make appropriate adjustments, where elementary SDTs reported a higher percentage (69%) compared to middle school and high school. In general, less than one-third of SDTs (32%) reported that teachers attended workshops, conferences, and activities and then shared their ideas with their colleagues.



# Results: SDT Survey

Factors that Supported the Work of the SDTs

In an open-ended question SDTs were asked "What factors best supported your work at the school?". One hundred twenty-six responded to this question. The following themes emerged:

## Key Themes

- 1 Over half of SDTs reported receiving support from their Learning and Achievement Specialists (LAS) (n=69).** In addition to coaching, feedback, and critical questions, the LAS provided resources and opportunities for professional development. Their services included acting as a sounding board, providing materials and assistance, and serving as a reflection partner.
- 2 Administrative support (n=26):** The role of the principal and administrative team was highlighted as crucial in supporting the work of SDTs. Principals who had a vision, set expectations, supported the SDTs' work, provided time for professional learning and collaboration, and kept the School Improvement Plan (SIP) at the forefront were mentioned as valuable supports.
- 3 Professional learning and resources (n=24):** The quarterly SDT meetings and trainings were mentioned multiple times as valuable and supportive. These sessions provided new learning opportunities, time to collaborate with other SDTs and LASs, and provided a platform for collaboration, sharing ideas, and refining practices. Also mentioned was the access to professional learning opportunities, including trainings on antiracist practices, data analysis, coaching, and adult learning, as valuable supports. SDTs also appreciated having resources and materials provided by LASs and attending district-wide PD sessions.
- 4 Collaborating with various professionals in the building (n=16):** SDTs reported collaborating with their administrators, reading specialist, guidance counselor, media specialist, LAS, instructional specialists, Assistant Principal, Instructional Leadership Team, and other SDTs. Collaboration with these individuals and teams provided support, guidance, resources, and opportunities for professional learning and growth.
- 5 Core Team collaboration (n=16):** Collaborating with the Core Team, which includes various professionals like reading specialists, math content coaches, and instructional coaches, was seen as beneficial. Working together with these team members allowed for sharing strengths, resources, and data-driven decision-making to improve instruction and student learning outcomes.
- 6 Building relationships and trust (n=14):** Establishing relational trust with staff members, developing strong relationships with the RS, administrators, and ILTs, and creating a culture of collaboration and trust were mentioned as important factors in supporting the SDTs' work.





# Results: SDT Survey

## Challenges Reported by the SDTs

SDTs were asked in an open-ended question to **list significant challenges they faced** when implementing the PLP or during other areas of work this year. The majority of SDTs (126 of 215) provided responses. The following themes emerged:

### Key Themes

1

**Time constraints (n=58):** SDTs consistently emphasized the difficulty of finding time for professional development and implementation due to **class coverage, limited planning periods, and competing priorities related to all tasks they had to attend to in real-time.** The reports indicate that lack of time hindered the ability to engage in meaningful learning and support teachers effectively.

2

**Inconsistent coordination and support from the central office (n=40):** SDTs who provided responses expressed frustration with the lack of coordination and communication among different departments and offices within the school system. They mention last-minute changes, delays in information, and a sense that the central office was reactive rather than proactive. They also expressed a need for more support from the central office and school administration. The need for more clarity, guidance, and streamlined approaches in implementing initiatives like the antiracist audit was mentioned as a challenge. SDTs expressed the need for clear models, templates, and expectations to facilitate effective implementation and progress.

3

**Staffing and coverage issues (n=31):** The shortage of staff, including substitutes, was a recurring challenge. SDTs mentioned being pulled to cover classes or other duties, which took away from their role as a staff development teacher (SDT). They also noted challenges in coordinating testing and supporting teachers during absences.

4

**Impact of other factors (n=30):** SDTs mentioned external factors that affect professional development, such as teacher burnout, student behavior issues, student trauma, and job satisfaction. Some mentioned resistance from teachers towards implementing the PLP and engaging in professional growth. These factors created barriers to participation and engagement in professional development opportunities. (n=30)

5

**Lack of support, leadership, and guidance (n=23):** Several SDTs expressed frustration with the absence of strong leadership, the unavailability of principals, and insufficient collaboration among school leaders. They expressed the need for more support, coaching, and guidance in implementing initiatives such as the PLP and addressing equity, inclusion, and antiracism issues. They mentioned a disconnect between administration and collective work and challenges in getting buy-in and collaboration from leaders and colleagues.



# Results: Administrator Survey

Activities Asked of SDTs (N=348)

Specified Tasks	All	Elementary	Middle	High
Collaborating with ILT to develop the SIP	97.5	97.6	96.6	98.0
Delivering professional learning to the entire staff	96.8	97.1	96.6	96.1
Engaging in or supporting data analysis for ILT to inform the SIP	96.8	96.5	96.6	98.0
Delivering job embedded professional learning	96.1	94.7	98.3	98.0
Developing the schoolwide Professional Learning Plan (PLP)	95.7	95.3	94.9	98.0
Collecting data to inform the Professional Learning Plan	93.9	92.9	94.9	95.9
Delivering professional learning to the ILT	91.7	90.5	91.5	96.0
Providing one-on-one coaching to teachers or staff	91.1	90.6	93.2	90.2
Supporting collaboration and coordination with other MCPS staff	90.7	91.8	89.8	88.2
Working with teachers to identify resources and tools that effectively optimize access to curriculum	90.6	92.2	91.5	84.3
Participating in collaborative planning with a professional learning community (content or grade level)	90.6	95.9	87.9	76.0
Engaging in or supporting data analysis at grade level or department meetings	88.6	93.5	83.1	78.4
Engaging the school in action research to help understand the impact of various activities in the school	71.7	66.5	77.6	82.4
Covering classes	42.9	35.9	59.3	47.1
Providing direct services to students	41.7	31.5	53.4	62.0



## Findings

Using a list of specified activities and processes, most administrators indicated that their schools used their SDT to oversee or work on a variety of activities. Overall, almost all respondents (>94%) reported asking the SDT to work on:

- Collaborating with the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) to develop the School Improvement Plan (SIP)
- Delivering professional learning to the entire staff
- Engaging in or supporting data analysis for ILT to inform the SIP
- Delivering job-embedded professional learning
- Developing the schoolwide Professional Learning Plan (PLP)
- Collecting data to inform the Professional Learning Plan
- Delivering professional learning to the ILT
- Providing one-on-one coaching to teachers and/or staff

Among the activities reported by the majority, but to varying extents, were activities related to action research (66–82%), providing direct service to students (53% for middle; 62% high school), and covering classes (middle school, 59%).

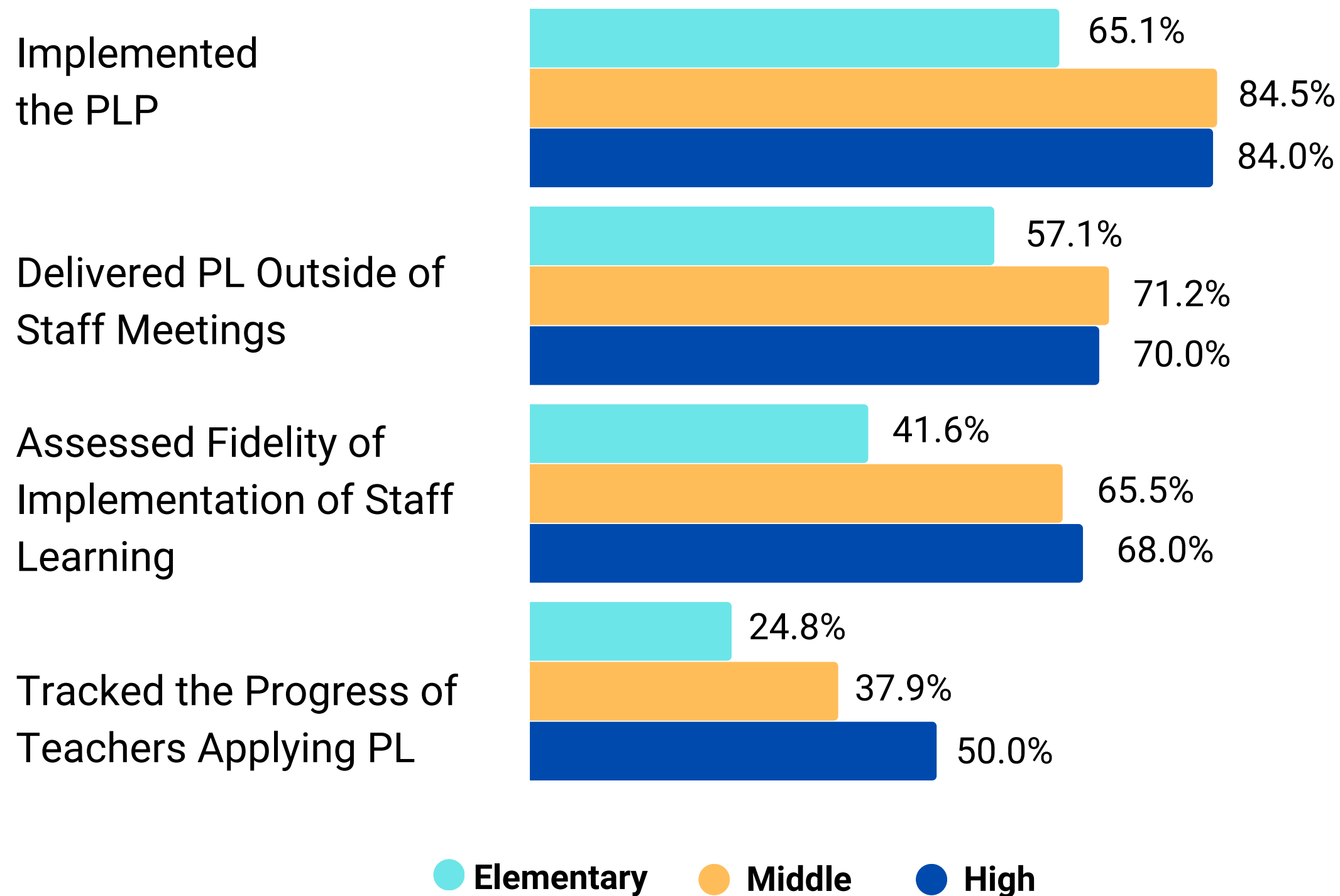
In their "other" comments (n=148), 75 respondents indicated the SDT served as school testing coordinator or was involved in tasks related to testing.



# Results: Administrator Survey

Professional Learning Implementation (N=348)

## Percentage of Administrators Reporting Full Implementation



## Findings

School administrators reported varying levels of implementation of specified activities and processes related to PLOs. High school respondents generally reported full implementation more often than middle or elementary school administrators.

- The majority of elementary-level respondents reported full implementation of their school's Professional Learning Plan (65%) and providing school-wide professional learning outside of staff meetings (57%).
- For middle school respondents, the majority reported full implementation in delivering school-wide professional learning outside of staff meetings (71%), implementing the Professional Learning Plan (85%), and assessing fidelity of staff learning (66%).
- At least one-half of high school respondents reported full implementation of the delivery of professional learning outside of staff meetings (84%), the implementation of the professional learning plan (70%), the assessment of staff learning from professional development (68%), and the tracking of teachers' progress in implementing professional learning (50%).

However, only 42% of elementary administrators reported fully implementing assessment of implementation fidelity, and only 25% of elementary and 38% of middle school respondents reported tracking teacher's progress in applying PL.





# Results: Administrator Survey

## Benefits of the 1.0 FTE SDT Position

(N=242)

### Enhanced Consistent PD and Coaching

- Conducting informal walk-throughs
- Coaching teachers (especially new teachers)
- Supporting grade-level teams with collaborative planning and data collection
- Availability to plan and offer PLOs for staff

### School Improvement and Strategic Planning

- SDTs supporting the SIP planning process and working closely with the principal to plan and assess progress
- Monitoring school-wide data and progress
- Leading root cause analysis with instructional leadership teams
- Facilitating collaborative planning and data analysis meetings

### Concerted Collaboration and Synergy

- Serving as a bridge between staff and administration; Acting as a thought partner for administration and "teacher -in-charge" in their absence
- Helped maintain focus on PL, leadership, and collaboration
- Facilitating collaboration among PLCs

### Enhanced Instructional Leadership

- Allowing more time for school leadership to observe and analyze teaching and learning
- Supporting the implementation of the SIP
- Strengthening instructional leadership by providing expertise and resources
- Serving as a backup and support for the instructional program and smooth operation of the school

### Improved Professional Learning

- Ensuring continuity and consistency in professional learning for staff supporting the implementation of a professional learning continuum
- Providing meaningful professional development aligned with the school's SIP
- Planning and delivery of PLP
- Leveraging instructional leadership and resources to enhance professional learning

### Instructional Support Focused on Student Outcomes

- Improving instructional practices and student outcomes through research-based plans
- Providing direct support to struggling teachers or those new to the profession
- Offering micro-level professional development and coaching to all staff members
- Supporting the implementation of research-based instructional practices
- Focusing on continuous, consistent job-embedded professional learning for staff



## Findings

Several themes emerged in response to the open-ended question **about the benefits of having a fully released 1.0 FTE (SDT) in the 2022–2023 school year**. Administrators reported many improvements in activities and processes due to the 1.0 FTE SDT allocation. This allocation enabled a strong emphasis on student outcomes, planning and delivery of PLP, fostering synergy, and concerted support throughout the school community. Additionally, instructional leadership was enhanced, and professional learning experiences were improved. By implementing collaborative and cohesive strategies, a more supportive and ongoing learning environment was established for students and staff.



# Results: Administrator Survey

## Administrator Comments on Benefits of 1.0 FTE SDT for Instruction, Staff, Students

*I wish we could have a 2.0 allocation; this would help support the professional learning and development of students, as teachers have benefitted from having a strong SDT, who is committed to our SIP, and the students she serves.*

*We do not have content specialists - the SDT is our content specialist - they have to know all the curricula and be able to support teachers in understanding all the standards.*

*Our SDT is amazing. She provides support with professional development, collaborative planning, instructional decision making, problem solving, data analysis, articulation, scheduling, and much more.*

*Having a full time person who knows the curriculum and standards for teaching practices that can help teachers to do better. Having a full time person to do testing so that the assistant principal can focus on observing teachers and supporting students.*

*Our SDT is integral for providing readily available support to staff and students. We rely on our SDT to assist with data collection that keeps an updated pulse on how staff and students are doing and what their needs are.*

*Our SDT supports students in classrooms, supports teaching and learning in classrooms, and provides feedback and coaching to staff. She also provides small-group instruction and interventions to students.*

*Our SDT is essential to our Core Team planning for SIP and helps to monitor our and delivers those consistently.*

*The greatest benefit is the ability to have the SDT readily available to meet staff and student needs at all times.*

*Our SDT is able to support all grade-level teams with their math planning and instruction. She provides enrichment opportunities for students and coaches teachers on the Tiers of Enrichment within their instruction. Our SDT regularly visits classrooms to support and provide informal feedback.*

*We could not do the school improvement work we do without her. She is also an individual coach to many staff and integral in weekly collaborative planning.*

*Our SDT is amazing. She provides support with professional development, collaborative planning, instructional decision-making, problem solving, data analysis, articulation, scheduling, and much more.*

*With a large high school staff and high numbers of EML and IEP students, at least one 1.0 fully-released staff member is needed to organize schoolwide professional learning to build our capacities and support instruction.*



# Results: Administrator Survey

## Impact of 1.0 FTE SDT on Instructional Practices and Staff

In response to the open-ended question **about the impact of a 1.0 FTE SDT in three areas (instructional practices, staff, and students)**, administrators reported they had observed various positive outcomes. Strategies such as enhanced technology integration and personalized learning were implemented. These changes resulted in reports of improved teacher efficacy, attitudes, and mindsets, as well as increased family awareness of equity.

### Observed Changes in Staff (N=181)

- 1 Equity and Antiracist Practices:** Increased awareness and implementation of antiracist practices, equity-focused professional development, and understanding the needs of diverse students.
- 2 Collaboration and Support:** Improved collaboration among staff, access to resources and support for planning and instruction, coaching conversations, and peer observation.
- 3 Knowledge and Skill Enhancement:** Increased knowledge of instructional strategies, grading practices, trauma-informed approaches, restorative justice practices, and data analysis for instructional adaptation.
- 4 Attitude and Mindset Shift:** Changes in attitudes and beliefs, including asset-based thinking, growth mindset, positive regard for students and parents, and willingness to address implicit bias.
- 5 Improved Teacher Efficacy:** Enhanced teacher confidence, improved teacher practice, increased accountability, and positive changes in skills, attitudes, and knowledge.

### Observed Changes in Instructional Practices (N=191)

- 1 Technology Integration:** Instructional practices have increasingly incorporated technology tools and resources to enhance learning experiences. This included the use of digital platforms, online resources, multimedia presentations, and interactive learning activities.
- 2 Personalized Learning:** There has been a shift towards personalized learning approaches, where instruction was tailored to individual student needs and preferences. This included differentiated instruction, adaptive learning systems, and student-centered activities that promote active engagement and self-directed learning.
- 3 Collaborative Learning:** Instructional practices emphasized collaboration among students, fostering teamwork, communication skills, and peer-to-peer learning. Group projects, discussions, and cooperative learning strategies became prevalent to encourage interaction and knowledge sharing among students.
- 4 Active Learning:** Traditional passive learning methods have been replaced with active learning strategies that promote critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical application of knowledge. Hands-on activities, real-world scenarios, simulations, and experiential learning approaches were being employed to engage students actively in the learning process.





# Results Administrator Survey

## Impact of 1.0 FTE SDT on Students—Continued

In response to the open-ended question about the impact of a 1.0 FTE SDT in the school, administrators reported they had observed various positive outcomes in students. They reported that students experienced improved academic growth, collaborative learning, and increased knowledge, skills, and confidence. This led to enhanced social well-being and a stronger sense of belonging among students.

### Observed Changes in Students (N=163)

- 1 Academic Growth and Achievement:** Students showed improvement in academic achievement and performance across various intervals and subjects; Increased access to enrichment and alignment of focus and strategies with standards and SIP contributed to improved skills and confidence; Academic gains were supported by tracking data and providing additional support to students who needed it.
- 2 Student Engagement and Voice:** Students demonstrated higher engagement, participation, and advocacy in their learning. They felt more connected, safe, and welcomed in classrooms and the school environment; Students expressed appreciation for new instructional strategies, opportunities to share their voices, and agency in the school's changes.
- 3 Social-Emotional Development and Well-being:** Students experienced positive changes in their attitudes, behaviors, relationships, and overall well-being; Implementation of restorative practices, equity-focused strategies, and social-emotional support contributed to improved SEL skills. Students benefited from the recognition of their cultural backgrounds and the inclusion of diverse perspectives in the curriculum; Increased access to enrichment and intentional alignment of instruction to student needs contributed to improved skills and confidence.
- 4 Differentiated Support and Inclusion:** Students received targeted instruction, interventions, and support based on their individual needs; The presence of staff who built their capacity and provided a trusted adult figure positively impacted students' academic progress and sense of belonging; The involvement of students in decision-making processes and the collection of their voice data led to positive changes in instructional practices and school experiences.



# Results: Administrator Survey

## Challenges Reported by the Administrators

(N=209)

The following themes emerged from the open-ended question that asked administrators, "Thinking about the goals you envisioned for implementing the PLP and using the 1.0 FTE SDT allocation this year. Please list the challenges (if any) in achieving those goals."

### Key Themes

- 1 Testing and administrative burden (n=146):** Testing requirements and testing-related administrative tasks, including being a testing coordinator, diverted time and resources from SDTs. In this way, SDTs were prevented from focusing primarily on their core responsibilities of professional development and instructional support.
- 2 Staffing shortages/teacher absences and class coverage issues (n=102):** Due to a limited pool of substitutes, SDTs were often required to cover classes during teacher absences, manage behavior issues, as well as cover lunch and recess.
- 3 Limited time conflated with unclear direction and communication from central office (n=90):** Limited time, coupled with unclear direction and communication from the MCPS Central Office, often made it difficult to utilize SDTs optimally. As a result of last-minute guidance and changes in district priorities, professional development and school culture were negatively affected with SDTs out the building to attend meetings. Also, school level PL was shifted because of competing county priorities - school safety communications, trainings, and anti-racist audits..
- 4 Overall workload handling and administrative tasks (n=85):** The survey reports indicated that SDTs face an excessive workload that includes administrative tasks, surveys, compliance work, county priorities, and meetings. Continual demands made it difficult for them to focus on important aspects like instructional planning and improvement.
- 5 SDT capacity and expertise to tackle all new district-level initiatives (n=36):** In terms of capacity and expertise, administrators reported that SDTs faced challenges, particularly in areas such as equity initiatives, data collection, and analysis, and anti-racist priorities. Administrators noted that SDT capacity and expertise might not align with all the new initiatives in the district, since SDTs themselves were still getting PD in these areas while also supporting schools in these areas.
- 6 Scheduling (n=25):** Despite having open days on the calendar, scheduling was challenging due to teacher absences and substitute shortages. The lack of substitutes or last-minute cancellations often prevented the use of scheduled PD time. Additionally, competing events and developments further complicated scheduling, making it difficult to allocate adequate time for professional learning.



# Results: Administrator Survey

## Suggested Changes to Optimize Use of SDTs

(N=209)

The following themes emerged from the open-ended question that asked administrators, "What changes, if any, would you recommend for your school and the district to ensure the effective utilization of the 1.0 FTE SDT allocation toward increasing teacher capacity and promoting academic excellence for all students."

### Key Themes

- 1 Alleviate SDTs' workload by making staffing adjustments (n=80):** The 1.0 FTE allocation to schools received high praise from administrators for its invaluable support to the school community. They strongly suggested maintaining or increasing the allocation, especially at the high school level. To reduce the workload on SDT members, they recommended staffing adjustments, such as hiring more employees for roles like GT coordinators, Math Content Coaches, and School Testing Coordinators (STC). They also suggested reducing the number of meetings and increasing the substitute pool.
- 2 Streamlining and clarifying the role of SDTs (n=65):** Administrators stressed the need to simplify and clarify the role of SDTs, particularly in elementary schools. It would entail concentrating solely on instructional programs and professional development. The main objective is to define clear guidelines and expectations for SDTs with two main outcomes in mind: 1) SDTs will not participate in unrelated tasks, and 2) a narrowed focus specified at the county level will allow elementary teachers to improve specific subject areas, implement PBIS, and engage effectively with parents and community partners.
- 3 Differentiated, current and enhanced professional learning offerings (n=57):** Administrators expressed the need for more targeted, useful, and differentiated professional development opportunities for SDTs. For example, professional development opportunities can be targeted to the needs of novice and veteran SDTs and principals based on local data; be meaningful and current; use of technology; they also stressed the importance of ongoing mentoring and professional learning communities.
- 4 Increased school-level support for equity initiatives (n=28):** Administrators called for increased support for diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, as well as restorative justice positions. They also requested additional support and coaching from central office for equity training to decrease the workload and demands on SDTs.
- 5 Increased collaboration with central office and improved timelines for system messaging about expectations (n=24):** Respondents stressed the importance of communication, accountability, and guidance for SDTs from central office. In addition, they emphasized the need for productive collaboration between SDTs, principals, and administrators to effectively utilize the expertise of SDTs.
- 6 Dedicated time and resources (n=16):** A number of administrators expressed a need for more summer days for SDTs, professional development allowances during the school year, and a separate position/fund for School Testing Coordinators to relieve testing workload.





# Results: Teacher Survey

## Emphasis of Specified PLO Activities and Processes

Specified Activity or Process	N	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
Collaborative planning with a Professional Learning Community (content or grade-level)	595	66.1	19.5	8.4	6.1
Data analysis (generating evidence of student learning)	599	58.4	31.1	7.8	2.7
Using available information to generate evidence of student learning	595	54.5	32.3	10.1	3.2
Anti-racist instructional practices (exploring, implementing or analyzing)	598	44.3	38.3	13.5	3.8
Racial equity issues or strategies (racial identity development, unconditional positive regard, etc.)	597	42.4	35.3	16.4	5.9
Opportunities to share best practices	591	30.5	40.1	20.3	9.1
Monitoring implementation of system-wide initiatives	594	21.4	38.0	23.4	17.2
Self-monitoring of your PDP or professional growth	589	16.6	24.4	23.1	35.8
Feedback on lesson planning	593	9.4	33.7	27.7	29.2
Working on individual PLPs	600	8.5	23.3	22.3	45.8
Peer visits with follow up reflection	598	7.0	30.1	32.1	30.8
Local school walkthroughs	583	3.9	20.9	31.2	43.9
1-on-1 coaching	594	3.5	18.0	26.3	52.2



## Findings

When asked about the emphasis on specific PLOs and processes during the 2022–2023 school year, teachers' responses revealed a range of experiences with variations across different activities. In general, less than a third reported any of the specified activities **were seldom emphasized** --so no clear pattern could be discerned. These are the findings for the reported activities most often emphasized, sometimes emphasized, or never emphasized.

### Most often emphasized:

- Collaborative planning with a Professional Learning Community (66%)
- Data analysis (generating evidence of student learning) (58%)
- Using available information to generate evidence of student learning (55%)

### Sometimes emphasized:

- Opportunities to share best practices: (40%)
- Anti-racist instructional practices: (38%)
- Monitoring implementation of system-wide initiatives (38%)

### Never emphasized:

- 1-on-1 coaching (52%)
- Working on individual Professional Development Plans (PDP) (46%)
- Local school walkthroughs (44%)
- Self-monitoring of your PDP or professional growth: (36%)



# Results: Teacher Survey

## Frequency of Participation in Specified PLO Activities

PLO Opportunities	N	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Quarterly	1 to 2 Twice	Never
Collaborative planning with a PLC (content or grade-level)	618	6.0	69.1	10.4	4.2	6.3	3.9
Data analysis and generating evidence of student learning	615	4.6	21.2	24.6	28.2	13.4	8.1
A PLC that was not collaborative planning	617	2.9	13.9	31.4	12.5	14.7	24.5
Highlighting effective instructional practices	617	5.1	13.8	24.4	20.9	23.9	11.9
School-wide professional learning outside of staff meetings	618	0.5	7.0	32.0	19.7	26.2	14.6
Mentoring from another staff member	607	2.8	6.8	7.8	7.5	21.4	53.8
1-on-1 coaching from another staff member	614	1.0	3.3	5.5	5.9	21.9	62.5
Action research	612	0.3	2.9	5.1	9.3	20.1	62.4
Working on individual PDP	613	1.1	2.5	6.7	11.1	24.2	54.4
Peer visits (visiting classrooms) with follow up reflection.	601	0.0	1.1	2.8	12.1	42.7	41.4
Professional Book Study	614	0.5	1.0	6.5	6.3	13.5	72.2
School walkthroughs	593	0.8	0.7	3.1	9.5	32.6	53.3



## Findings

When teachers were asked about the frequency of their engagement in activities at their school during the 2022–2023 academic year, their responses varied based on the type of activity. The following list presents the frequency of activities reported by teachers, arranged in descending order of frequency:

- Collaborative planning with a PLC (content or grade-level): 69% weekly and 10% monthly.
- Data analysis and generating evidence of student learning: 21% weekly, 25% monthly, and 28% quarterly.
- A PLC that was not collective planning: 31% monthly and 14% weekly
- Highlighting effective instructional practices: 24% monthly, 21% quarterly and 14% weekly.
- School-wide professional learning outside of staff meetings: 32% monthly and 20% quarterly.

The majority (53–72%) reported never being mentored or receiving 1-on-1 coaching from another staff mentor, participating in action research, professional book study, working on individual PDPs, or school walkthroughs at their school in 2022–2023.

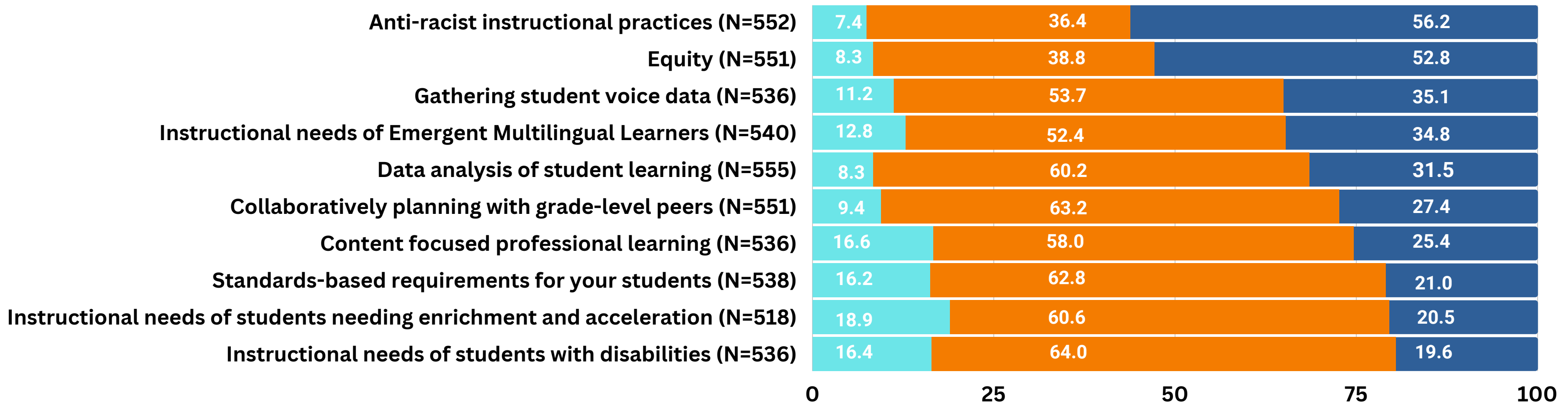


# Results: Teacher Survey

Engagement in PLO Compared to Last Year

## Percentage of Teachers Reporting Engagement in PLO In Specific Areas/Topics This Year Compared to Last Year

■ Less ■ Same ■ More



### Findings

The majority of teachers reported increased engagement in professional learning related to the specific areas and topics related to anti-racist instructional practices (36% same, 56% more) and equity (39% same, 53% more) in 2023 compared to 2022. Approximately one-third of teachers reported they engaged more in gathering student voice data (54% same, 35% more) and addressing the instructional needs of EMLs (52% same, 35% more) in 2022–2023 compared to the previous year. Conversely, a higher percentage of respondents reported decreased engagement in 2023 in activities related to content-focused professional learning, standards-based requirements, and addressing the needs of students with enrichment, acceleration, and disabilities, compared to the previous year. However, the levels of engagement in most other activities in 2022–2023 remained similar to the previous year, indicating a consistent focus.





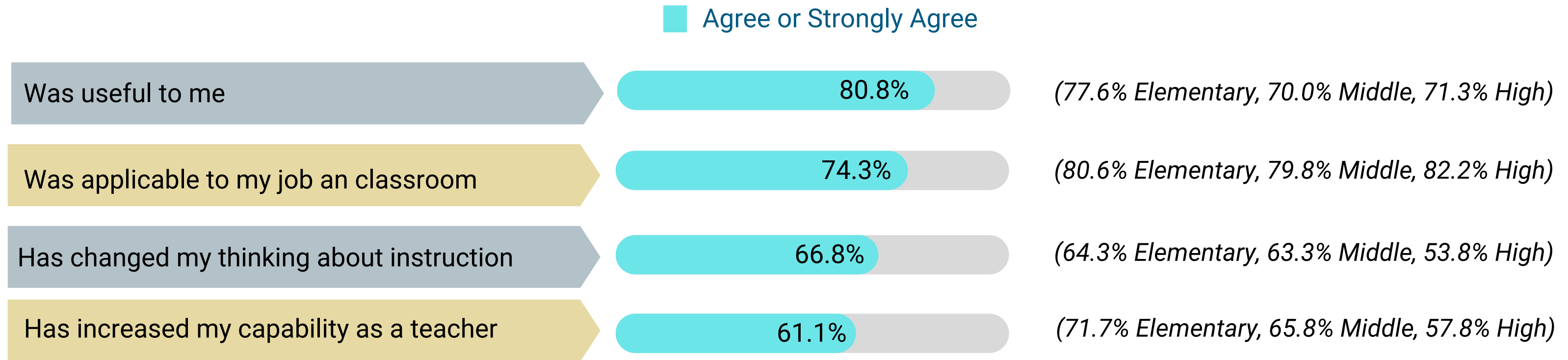
# Results: Teacher Survey

## Perceptions of School-Level PLO Content

Scale used in survey:

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

### Agreement with Statements About the Content of PLOs (N=582)



## Findings

In general, the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the content of the PLOs at their schools was useful (81%), applicable to their jobs and classrooms (74%), changed their thinking about instruction (67%), and increased their capability as a teacher (61%). At the same time, slight variations based on school level were observed. Elementary school teachers (72%) were more inclined to agree that the PLO content had increased their capability as a teacher compared to middle school (66%) and high school (58%) respondents.



# Results: Teacher Survey

Overview of Change in Skills, Knowledge, and Attitudes

Scale used in survey:

- Increased a Great Deal
- Moderate Increase
- Slight Increase
- No Increase

## Extent to Which Content of School-level PLOs Increased Skills (N=575)

Moderate or Great Increase

My ability to deliver learned instructional skills/techniques in the classroom.

46.3%

My ability to deliver learned instructional skills/techniques in the classroom.

45.5%

My confidence that I can apply the knowledge in my classroom.

44.3%

The knowledge of the content presented.

42.3%

## Findings

Asked to what extent their skills increased as a result of the content and focus of the school-level PLOs, just under half of the teachers (42–46%) indicated the following increased to a moderate or great extent:

- My ability to deliver learned instructional skills/techniques in the classroom: 46%
- My motivation to implement the content and techniques presented: 45.5%
- My confidence that I can apply the knowledge in my classroom: 44.3%
- The knowledge of the content presented: 42.3%

Similar patterns and percentages were observed across school levels.



# Results: Teacher Survey

## Reports of How Instruction Improved

(N=209)

In an open-ended question, teachers reported that their instruction has improved through school-level PLOs in several key areas. These include using assessment data to drive instruction, tailoring lessons to meet student needs, incorporating data-driven insights into planning, implementing supportive instructional practices, emphasizing equity and cultural responsiveness, and effectively utilizing instructional tools and technology. The themes summarized are included below **because 20 or more teachers** reported them.

### Key Themes

1

**Increased awareness of systemic issues and student needs (n=102):** Teachers reported PLOs helped develop awareness and a deeper understanding of systemic issues and their students' needs. As a result, they increasingly utilized data to inform their lesson planning, identifying areas of improvement and tailoring instruction to meet student requirements. Teachers diversified their instructional methods to accommodate various learning, delivery, and instructional styles, tried new strategies, and promoting inclusive learning environments. They were more focused on increasing student engagement, success, and choice and incorporating restorative justice practices.

2

**Embracing equity and cultural responsiveness approaches (n=76):** PLOs prompted teachers to address equity issues within their classrooms, ensuring fair opportunities and resources for all students. Teachers incorporated anti-bias practices and the use of culturally appropriate resources in their instruction. Many teachers reported an increased focus on equity, inclusivity, and student engagement.

3

**Increased collaboration and resource sharing with the SDT (n=53):** SDTs were instrumental in providing valuable ideas, suggestions, best practices, and support for instructional improvement. Some cited that collaborative planning with SDT and ELD teachers drew in resources and enrichment for students.

4

**Teachers experienced personal growth and learned from peers (n=45):** Teachers reported they became more reflective of their teaching practices and more aware of the needs and perspectives of their students. They embraced intentional and different approaches to engage students. Co-teachers and grade-level teams, and watching peers were reported to be very helpful for professional growth.

5

**More effective use of instructional tools and technology (n=21):** PLOs motivated teachers to incorporate technology into their lessons, enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. Teachers mentioned that the use of data analysis tools and interactive platforms like Flipgrid has improved instruction.





# Results: Teacher Survey

## What Teachers Were Doing Differently

(N=285)

In response to an open-ended question, teachers reported **what they were doing differently due to PLOs at their school**. These included: teachers using data, prioritizing student engagement and success, fostering an inclusive classroom environment, restructuring instruction, and focusing on personal growth. Others reported they were not doing anything different because they had minimal interactions with SDTs. The themes summarized are included because 20 or more teachers reported them.

### Key Themes

- 1 Increased focus on student engagement and success (n=131):** Teachers prioritized practices that support student engagement and success, such as literacy instruction, brain breaks, and using student feedback to improve lessons and instruction.
- 2 Emphasis on anti-racist/anti-bias values (n=89):** Teachers consciously considered their anti-racist/anti-bias values, incorporating strategies to increase student engagement, equity, and student voice in the classroom, and seeking engaging and creative ways to teach and ensure inclusivity.
- 3 Restructuring of instruction (n=66):** Teachers' responses indicated they made changes to their instructional practices, such as restructuring the math block to include small groups and implementing tier 1 interventions. They were also more thoughtful about the delivery of instruction.
- 4 Personal growth and reflection (n=62):** Teachers reported changes in their dispositions and approach to teaching, such as being more understanding, reflective, and open to different perspectives and more conscious of how they interacted with their students. They used feedback from students and peers, as well as data, to improve their lessons and instruction.
- 5 Limited interaction with SDT (n=48):** Some teachers expressed limited interaction with their SDT: At least 30 teachers reported having minimal interactions with the SDT, who in their schools were primarily focused on scheduling testing and assisting newer teachers. Others also reported that PLOs at their schools were not typically led by their SDTs, but they still received useful information and resources.
- 6 Increased planning with data (n=40):** Teachers reported they used data, including from pre-assessments and exit tickets, to inform their lesson planning and instructional strategies.



# Results: Teacher Survey

## Suggestions to Improve School-level PLOs

(N=285)

Teachers provided valuable insights and numerous recommendations in an open-ended survey question regarding improvements to optimize school-level PLOs. The suggestions encompassed a wide range of areas, highlighting the importance of accommodating differentiated and subject-specific professional learning, adopting a targeted approach to specific topics, broadening the scope of inclusivity and equity, reducing the number of mandatory meetings, fostering improved data analysis skills, and creating more opportunities for collaboration. The themes summarized were drawn from responses of 20 or more teachers.

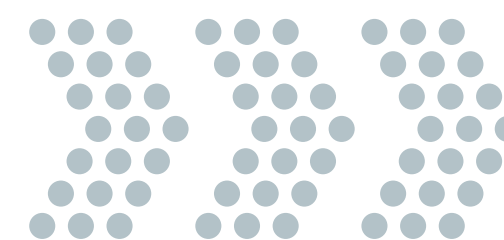
### Key Themes

- 1 Offer differentiated subject-specific professional learning (n=86):** Teachers want professional learning opportunities that are more relevant to their subject areas, allowing them to deepen their content knowledge and instructional practices immediately applicable in their classrooms.
- 2 Focus on specific topics (n=78):** Teachers expressed a desire for in-depth learning on specific areas such as classroom management, curriculum delivery, student support, student behavior, restorative justice, student accountability, best practices, enriching student understanding, and addressing the needs of students with emotional and behavioral challenges. They also desire access to a variety of relevant and resources to enhance student learning.
- 3 Increased opportunities for collaboration (n=56):** Teachers value opportunities for collaboration, idea-sharing, peer observation with reflection, and building relationships with colleagues across grade levels and disciplines and want these experiences included in the planning of school-level PLOs.
- 4 Individualized and flexible professional development (n=49):** Teachers desire more choice and flexibility in their professional development, with options that address their specific student and school needs and preferences. They want to be able to pursue their own learning goals at their own pace.
- 5 Broaden focus on inclusivity and equity (n=42):** Teachers emphasized the need for a broader approach to inclusivity, including considerations for gender, sexuality, religion, special needs, and other factors impacting student every day experiences. They reported a need for professional learning that supports them in creating inclusive environments for all students.
- 6 Decrease in mandatory meetings (n=30):** Teachers seek autonomy in choosing professional development activities, suggesting a reduction in mandated sessions, especially when they cover the same topic repeatedly. They reported they want more time to implement what they learn during professional development sessions and prefer using staff meeting time for collaboration and peer observations and the ability to attend external conferences and workshops.
- 7 Data analysis that informs personalized instruction (n=26):** Teachers want training in analyzing data such as attendance, grades, and testing to better understand student needs and improve instruction. They also seek support in using data to differentiate instruction, address individual student needs, and implement instructional strategies that align with the science of reading.



# Conclusions

## Summary of Key Findings



### Time Spent on Various Activities

**Findings showed that fully-released SDTs engaged most frequently in activities that involved direct support and collaboration with teachers, like collaboration with school teams, collaborative planning meetings, job-embedded coaching, and one-to-one coaching with reflective feedback.** In general, SDTs participated in these activities multiple times per week; elementary-level SDTs tended to engage in these activities more frequently than middle and high school SDTs. More than 94 percent of administrators reported that they asked SDTs to work with ILT to develop and implement SIPs and PLPs and to develop and implement school-level PLOs. About 40% of SDTs also reported that job-embedded coaching for individual teachers increased a great deal compared to the previous year. The majority of SDTs who responded (n=90) and administrators (n=75) said the SDT also served as the school testing coordinator or spent substantial time supporting testing; close to half of administrators (43%) said the SDT covered classes during teacher absences.

### District-Level Professional Learning for SDTs

**Districtwide professional learning for SDTs was perceived as very beneficial, and content strands from the professional learning were implemented at the school level.** At the district level, SDTs attended various professional learning opportunities (PLOs) five times during the year that were differentiated for new and veteran members. SDTs reported positive reactions regarding these sessions, with high levels of agreement about feeling adequately prepared (91%), being provided with new strategies (89%), improved confidence (87%), and that the content was aligned with their school's SIP priorities (95%). Over half of SDTs mentioned the support and guidance they received from their Learning and Achievement Specialist (LAS) as a key factor in supporting their work at the school. Six content strands were offered at the MCPS sessions, with the School Improvement Plan and Data, Equity, and Coaching content strands perceived as the most helpful by SDTs across school levels. At the school level, most teachers (75%) reported engaging in collaborative planning PLCs weekly. As compared with the previous year, most teachers reported they engaged in more professional learning related to equity (53%) and anti-racist instructional practices (56%) in 2022–2023.

### Professional Learning at Schools

**A strong system of ongoing school-level PLOs was established at the school level.** The level of SDT collaboration with the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) and the implementation of school Professional Learning Plans highlighted the integration of professional learning into school practices and initiatives. At all school levels, 90% or more of SDTs reported they were actively involved to a moderate or great extent with the ILT. Findings from the administrator survey corroborate these reports with over 90% of administrators reporting they asked the SDT to collaborate with ILT to develop the SIP, the PLP, and to deliver professional learning to the ILT.





### Professional Learning at Schools, cont'd

**Schools implemented various aspects of their Professional Learning Plan (PLP) moderately or very well, highlighting the integration of professional learning into school practices.** Over 90% of SDTs reported that their school implemented components of the PLP, and 88% were able to integrate the goals of the PLP with other initiatives moderately or very well. The majority of SDTs reported being able to support the implementation of the PLP (80%) and monitoring the PLP to make adjustments as needed (84%). A majority of administrators at the elementary (65%), middle (85%), and high school levels (84%) reported full implementation of their school's PLP. Regarding tracking teachers' progress in implementing professional learning, half of the high school administrators (50%) reported full implementation compared to 24% of elementary and 38% of middle school administrators.%, and high school levels (70%) reported full implementation of their school's PLP. Regarding tracking teachers' progress in implementing professional learning, half of the high school administrators (50%) reported full implementation compared to 24% of elementary and 38% of middle school administrators.

**When teachers were asked about the key foci of school-level PLOs during the 2022–2023 academic year, their responses varied depending on the type of activity.** The majority of teachers reported attending PLOs that often emphasized collaborative planning with a PLC (content or grade level) (66%), data analysis (58%), and using available information to generate evidence of student learning (55%). At the same time, over half of teachers reported never engaging in PLOs involving professional book study or receiving one-on-one coaching or mentoring from staff during the 2022–2023 school year.

### Effects of Professional Learning

**Teachers found professional learning opportunities useful, applicable to their classrooms, and enhanced their capability as teachers. In nearly half of the respondents, PLOs influenced students' ability, motivation, or confidence to apply what they learned in their classroom to a moderate or great extent.** Most teachers said they found the content of the PLOs relevant to their jobs (81%) and classrooms (74%), that they had changed their thinking about instruction (67%), and that they had become more effective teachers as a result (61%). However, there were slight variations based on the school level. Compared to middle school (66%) and high school (58%), more elementary school (72%) respondents found the content of school-level PLOs increased their capability as teachers. In light of the positive responses in general, it would appear inconsistent to find that less than half of the responding teachers (44–46%) reported that their competencies had changed to a moderate or great extent due to school-level PLOs; specifically, their ability to deliver instructional skills, motivation to implement content, and confidence to apply it to their classrooms. There is consensus, however, that a teacher's disposition to continue learning is part of what makes a competent teacher, as practitioners need time to practice new skills over time (Murray, 2021).



**Effects of Professional Learning**

**The results of professional learning opportunities (PLOs) included reports of an increased emphasis on student-centered, data-driven, inclusive practices in teaching.** After professional learning, most SDTs reported that teachers reflected on their strengths and weaknesses and adjusted instruction accordingly (82%). Over half of SDTs mentioned teachers modifying instruction based on feedback and collaborating with colleagues to analyze student work. Teachers and administrators also acknowledged these changes, noting increased use of assessment data to personalize lessons and implement supportive instructional practices, and improved staff collaboration. PLOs also fostered increased access to planning support, coaching conversations, and peer observations. Teachers reported they experienced personal growth and became more aware of student needs, embracing different approaches for effective engagement. PLOs promoted the integration of anti-racist and anti-bias values by incorporating strategies to increase student engagement and voices. These changes resulted in a more data-driven, student-centered, inclusive teaching approach. Administrators observed positive student outcomes, including academic growth, increased engagement and student voice, and a stronger sense of belonging.

**Challenges and Upgrades**

**SDTs and school administrators reported encountering various challenges that hindered the optimal utilization of SDTs.** An open-ended question to administrators (n=150) and SDTs (n=126) revealed some ongoing challenges. Several challenges were mentioned, including time constraints, such as the difficulty implementing PLPs due to short planning periods and competing priorities; unclear guidance from the central office caused last-minute changes, delayed information, and a shortage of substitutes and staff, so SDTs were used to cover classes. There were also scheduling conflicts, SDT capacity, and expertise that did not match all the districtwide initiatives due to the fact that the SDTs were still learning the work, teacher resistance to professional development, teacher burnout, student behavior problems, and trauma among students.

**In their quest to enhance teacher capacity and foster academic excellence among students, administrators and teachers offered valuable insights on optimizing the utilization of the 1.0 FTE SDT.** Administrators underscored the importance of **streamlining and clarifying the role of SDTs, advocating for increased allocation of resources and time, ensuring consistent guidance and messaging from the central office, and bolstering staffing and allocation for specialized roles within schools.** When questioned about potential improvements to school-level Professional Learning Opportunities (PLOs), teachers put forth a range of suggestions. These included advocating for differentiated and subject-specific professional learning sessions, a more focused approach to addressing specific topics, a broader scope of inclusivity and equity in the curriculum, reducing the number of mandatory meetings, honing data analysis skills, and creating more avenues for collaboration among educators.



# Recommendations



1

Maintain the 1.0 FTE SDT allocation to all schools

Survey reports from SDTs, administrators, and teachers indicated that having an additional 1.0 FTE SDT in schools led to improvements in teacher competencies, instructional practices, positive student experiences and improved academic skills. Based on this, most administrators recommended maintaining the SDT position in all schools, while others urged/proposed enhancing the allocation based on school size with one SDT per 100 teachers.

2

Structure school-level PLOs to include differentiated subject-specific professional learning

Survey respondents expressed a need for teachers to have access to professional development opportunities relevant to their subjects, so they can hone their instructional practices and deepen their content knowledge, and they can apply the new learning immediately in their classrooms. In addition to professional learning opportunities relevant to their subject areas, teachers need opportunities to practice and deepen their knowledge of content and instructional practices. Several open-ended responses (n=5) recommended using experts or invited guests to address specific content or topics.

3

Conduct a feasibility study to assess the viability of implementing a school testing coordinator (STC) in all schools

SDTs and administrators reported that their schools had no specific staff members assigned to testing logistics or administration. As a result, most administrators reported relying on the SDT to handle testing matters. About half of the SDTs confirmed this and reported being the school testing coordinator or spending considerable time supporting testing. Coordinating testing and fulfilling testing-related administrative tasks diverted SDTs' time from their core responsibilities, such as professional development and instructional support. Other studies on reading specialists (Wilson & Wolanin, 2023) and single school administrators (Price, 2023) also highlighted the need for school-level personnel dedicated to testing administration and logistics. Accordingly, a feasibility study would help the district determine the best approach to address this need and the appropriate FTE allocation for school testing coordinators based on school level and size.





# Recommendations



4

Review, streamline, and clarify the role of SDTs

The administrators confirmed they used SDTs in a variety and multiple ways. In addition, a number of SDTs expressed feeling overwhelmed and stretched thin as a result of their workload. Indeed, class coverage, a task that 43% of said they assigned to SDTs due to limited substitutes, is cited as a primary reason for teacher turnover (Epsy, 2022).

Although all SDTs have a similar job description, survey responses indicated a need for a simplified and clarified role due to the wide variety of tasks they are expected to perform. Setting clear expectations and guidelines would have two main advantages, according to administrators who responded to the survey: First, SDTs would avoid unrelated tasks, and second, their responsibilities would align with their intended purpose. Additionally, adding GT coordinators and Math Content Coaches to the staff, as well as increasing and sustaining a reliable substitute pool was suggested in order to reduce the workload of SDTs.

5

Provide consistent and timely guidelines and support from central office leadership charged with oversight over SDTs

In the midst of time constraints, SDTs and administrators reported challenges due to unclear communication and direction from MCPS central office\*. The reports indicated there was a lack of consistency in the directives provided regarding professional development and training due to last-minute guidance and shifting priorities. In turn, administrators and teachers reported this negatively affected the effectiveness of professional development and overall culture of the school. Moreover, SDTs have expressed the need for more guidance and streamlined approaches to implementing initiatives such as the antiracist audit. In addition, they need clear models, exemplars, and expectations for effective implementation.

**\*Note: The respondents-SDTs, and administrators- simply stated 'central office' without further information.**



## **CONTINUE IMPLEMENTATION**

Based on the results in this report, the allocation of a full-time Staff Development Teacher in all schools, should be continued. Findings demonstrated a bolstered staff capacity, improved instructional practices, and enriched student experiences, and align with the Academic Excellence pillar of the MCPS Strategic Plan.



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