

Findings on the 2014–15 Citywide Instructional Expectations

AN ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP, COLLABORATION,
AND TRUST IN THE “FIVE PERCENT”

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for the NYC Department of Education Office of Instructional Policy

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Summary

Five percent of NYCDOE schools have “well developed” ratings while serving a high-poverty population

What are some common traits of these schools?

- Staff are more likely to be **satisfied** and feel a high sense of **trust**.
- At the most “**culturally collaborative**” of these schools, an even higher portion of teachers are satisfied and feel trusted.
- These schools have a culture of **exploration**, in which teaching is viewed as a process of **experimentation** and **adaptation**.

How do they do it?

- **Leaders** create space for trust to grow by valuing **mistakes**, low-stakes **observations**, and teacher responsibility to adapt **curriculum**.
- **Teachers** reflect on their own **development** and **share mistakes** with colleagues.
- **Collaboration** is driven by **scheduling** the time for it, identifying teachers’ **developmental needs**, and building **structures** that enable follow-up.
- In teams, teachers **drive** the work, use data to **anchor** reflection, and receive external support to act as **ambassadors** of learning.

Overview

- ▶ What is so special about the Five Percent?
- ▶ Leaders create space for trust to grow
- ▶ Teachers reflect on learning
- ▶ Leaders provide structure for self-guided teams
- ▶ Teachers use data and deliverables to drive work in teams

▼ What is so special about the Five Percent?

High Poverty + High Ratings

High Satisfaction + High Trust

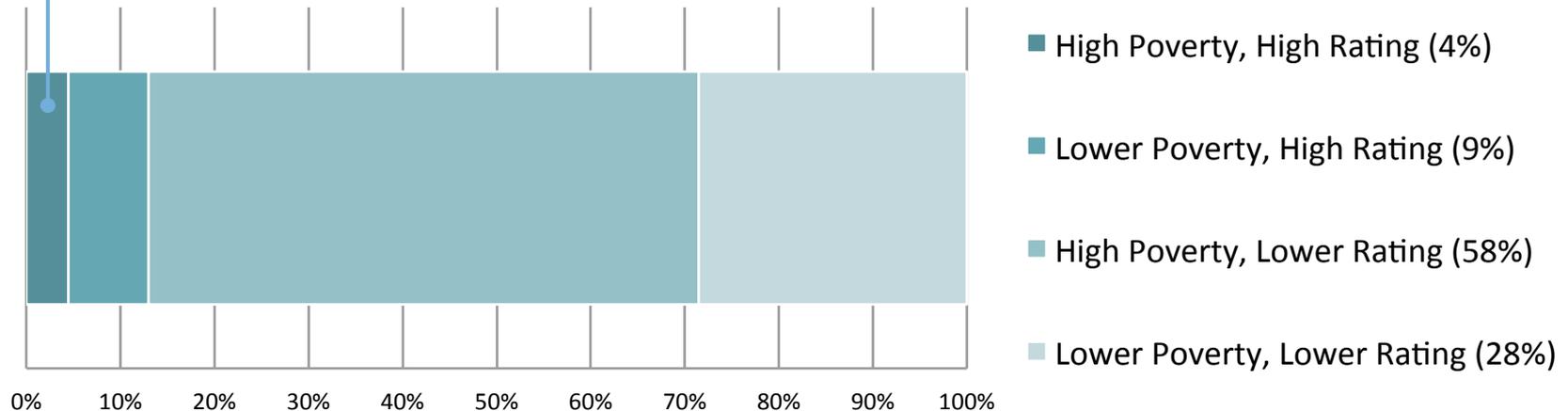
Culture of Exploration

WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE FIVE PERCENT?

High poverty and high ratings: Schools with “well developed” rating and high Title I population

The 11 schools included in the study were among the **5%** in New York City rated “**well developed**” (**WD**) in their Quality Reviews while also working with an unscreened population of students of whom **70% or more are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch**.

Quality Review Ratings, by Poverty Level



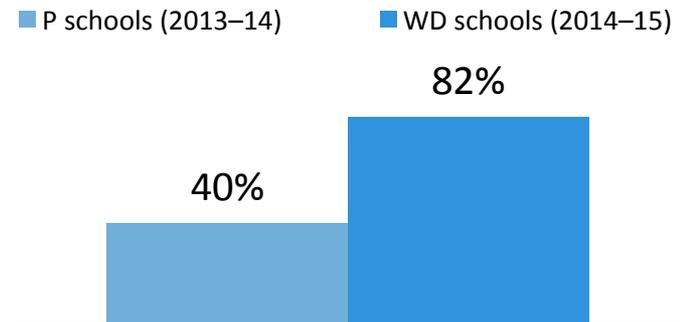
Data from 2012–13 and 2013–14 school years

WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT THE FIVE PERCENT?

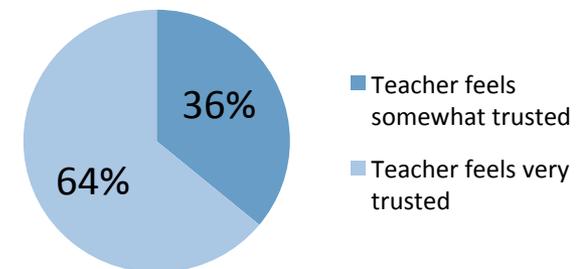
High satisfaction and high trust: Staff are likely to be satisfied and feel a high sense of trust

- In the Five Percent, teachers were broadly satisfied with their work: **82%** said they either felt **good or great**.
- In comparison, in the 2013–14 study (involving 6 schools rated “proficient” [P]), **only 40%** of teachers reported feeling **good or great**.
- In the Five Percent, **100%** of teachers said they felt somewhat or very trusted, with **64%** reporting they felt **very trusted**.

Teacher Satisfaction with Work



Teacher Perceptions of Trust



Interviews for 2013–14 study were conducted in Dec/Jan 2013–14; interviews for 2014–15 study were conducted in Nov/Dec 2014.

Culture of exploration

In the Five Percent, teaching is viewed as a process of constant experimentation, adaptation, and exploration:

- “As a teacher you *have* to be constantly reflective on your practices. It cannot be, ‘This is the way I’ve done it,’ and that’s it. And despite the fact that I have 23 years in the system, I still believe that **teaching is an endless process. You’re constantly learning.... And you’re constantly developing your craft.**” —*11th-grade global history teacher at Willard*
- “Sometimes I even tweak it from class to class ... so **I’m constantly stopping and self-evaluating.**” —*5th-grade math teacher at Paul*
- “**Everything is always a new experience, and that’s what’s so great about teaching,** because it’s never the same thing, it’s never static, it always keeps you on your toes. And I like that!” —*Pre-K teacher at Escalante*

▶ **What is so special about the Five Percent?**

▼ **Leaders create space for trust to grow**

Attitude toward Mistakes

Attitude toward Evaluation

Attitude toward mistakes: Leaders highlight the importance of mistakes

Language of leaders in the Five Percent often highlighted the importance of staff's ability to **admit** and **learn from mistakes**. Meanwhile, leaders delicately balanced **clear expectations** with **leeway** to meet those expectations.

- “We have a really strong philosophy in hiring, where we really try to hire teachers **who are open to the fact that they might be wrong** about something.” —*Middle school principal at Pinker*
- “I may come in with a great idea and we’ll leave with a totally different idea.” —*Elementary school principal at Mayer*
- “**You can tell teachers to be risk-takers if they trust you** enough to know that if something goes wrong, ‘I’m not going to be penalized.’” —*Elementary school principal at Grandin*
- “**It’s okay to be wrong....** What’s not okay is to be content at being wrong.” —*High school principal at Sotomayor*

Attitude toward evaluation: Leaders provide flexibility around formal evaluation

The teacher evaluation process was a central locus for trust building. Participants noted the importance of intentionally not rating some observations.

Fear of a bad review can squash the incentive to take risks in the classroom. An accessible approach to teacher evaluation—knowing that observations don't always result in a formal rating—reduces this risk for teachers. This echoes findings from Eskolta's 2013–14 study, in which a supportive environment appeared more often to connect with frequent but low-stakes observations.

- “I’ve never written up a bad lesson on the first look. I will always come back. If you’re bad, we’ll talk about it.” —*High school principal at Sotomayor*
- “There’s a sense of trust here. I can go to my administration and I know that they’ll support me with it, instead of going back and rating me on it.” —*4th-grade general education teacher at Escalante*

▶ What is so special about the Five Percent?

▶ Leaders create space for trust to grow

▼ Teachers reflect on learning

Teachers Learn about Their Own Development

Teachers Share What They Try

Teachers Are Open to Sharing for Different Reasons

The Most Culturally Collaborative Schools

Teachers Experiment & Principal Highlights

Teachers learn about their own development

All but one teacher reported learning something substantive and useful from the experience of trying something new in their classrooms.

- **55%** learned primarily about **adult development**.

“What you do one year may not be what you do the next year, depending on your students.” —*3rd- & 4th-grade English teacher at Mayer*

“I’ve learned that I’m not perfect. I’ve learned that part of being smart and intelligent is that it’s okay to make mistakes, but it’s not okay to make the same mistakes over and over again.” —*Kindergarten & 2nd-grade teacher at Mayer*

- **43%** learned primarily about their **students’ development**.

“[Kids] really want to make you proud. So even though it’s difficult for them to step outside of that comfort zone of ‘It’s easier not to try,’ once they [do], they have that feeling of pride.” —*3rd- & 4th-grade students with disabilities teacher at Escalante*

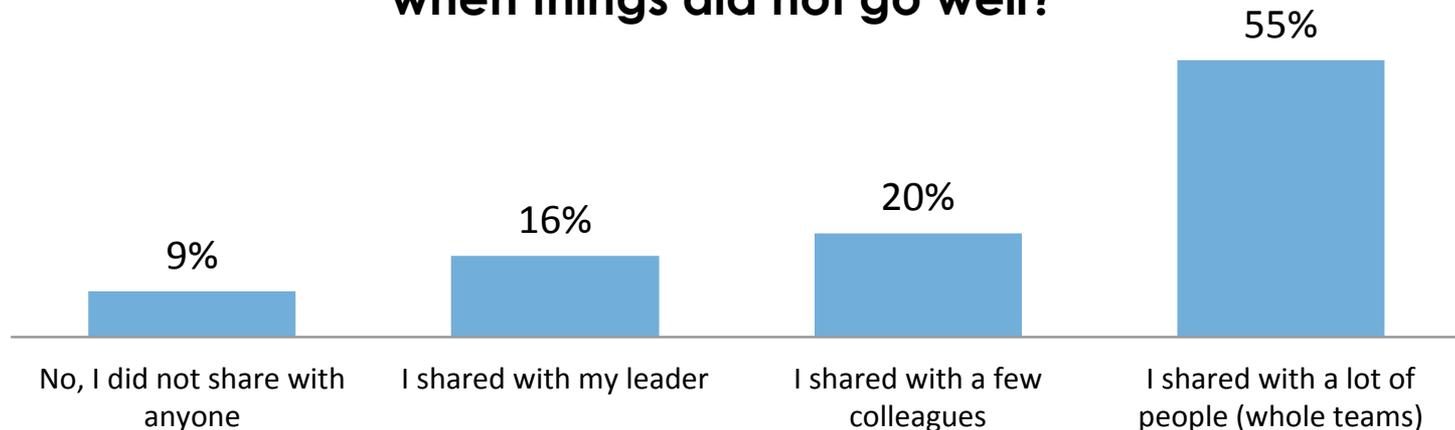
“We thought he was just struggling and didn’t like to write. But in actuality, he struggled with the way he grips the pencil, and it’s hard for him to write. When it came for him to type, he was way more motivated.” —*1st-, 2nd- & 4th-grade English and math teacher at Paul*

Teachers share what they try with colleagues

When asked whether their colleagues were aware of what they were trying in their classrooms when things did not go well, teachers at the Five Percent overwhelmingly volunteered that they are.

- “I think it’s good to bounce ideas off your colleagues.... I think most people here are very receptive and helpful. People don’t feel threatened; people don’t feel like you’re going to be less of anything.” — *8th-grade math and science teacher at Pinker*

Did your colleagues know what you were doing when things did not go well?

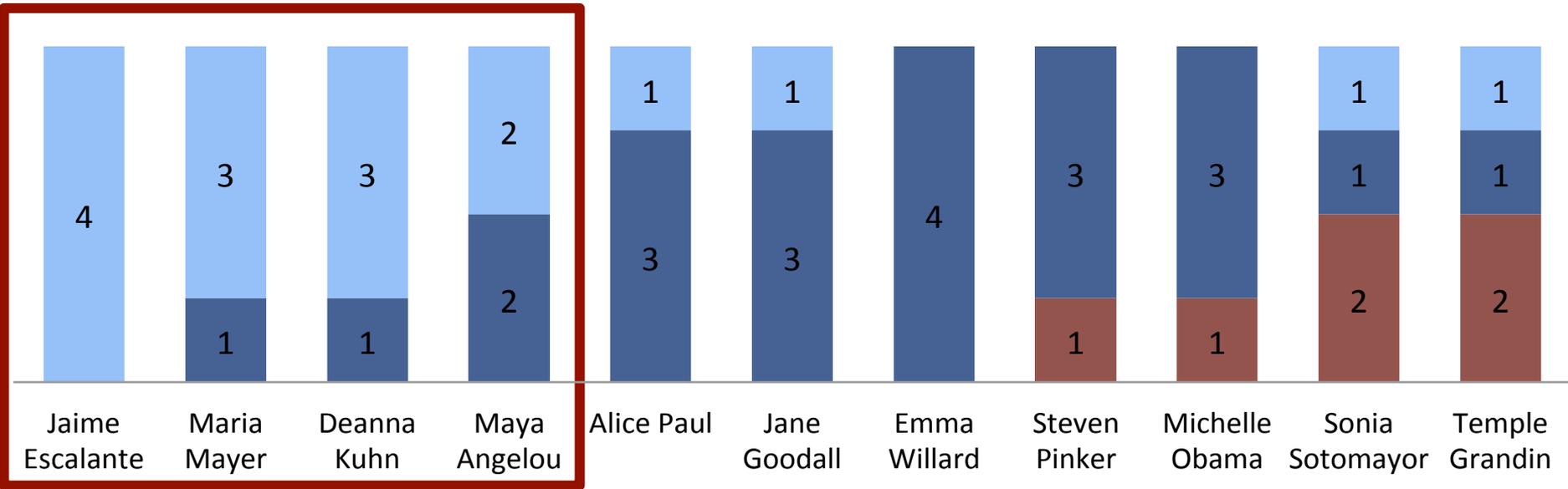


The most culturally collaborative schools

At a subset of schools, all of the participants said that the teachers at the school are **open to sharing with colleagues about new things they've tried that did not go well**. At these schools, at least half of these teachers also declared that they do so because there is a culture of collaboration at the school. We call these schools the “most culturally collaborative schools.”

Cultural Collaboration by School

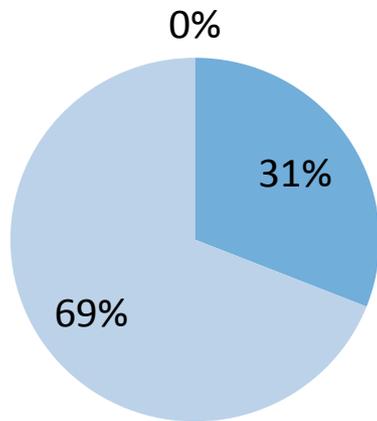
■ Not Open ■ Personal relationships ■ Culture



The most culturally collaborative schools: Highly satisfied

Teachers at these culturally collaborative schools were particularly positive (and even excited) **about professional collaboration** compared to teachers at the other schools in this sample.

**Perception of Collaboration:
Culturally Collaborative Schools**



Teacher feels negative about collaboration

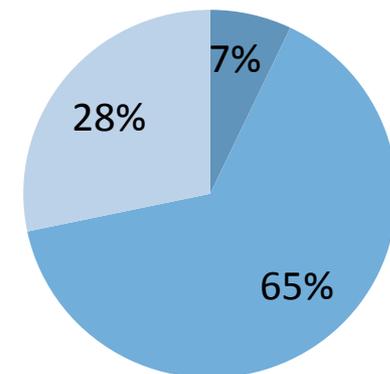


Teacher feels somewhat positive about collaboration



Teacher feels very positive/excited about collaboration

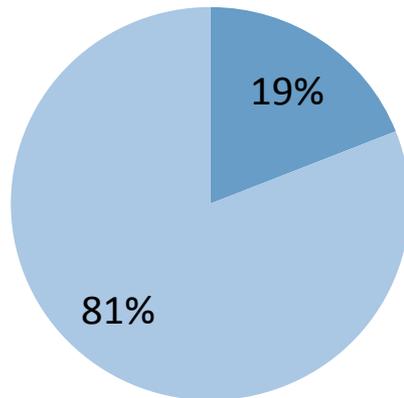
**Perception of Collaboration:
Everyone Else**



The most culturally collaborative schools: Teachers feel very trusted

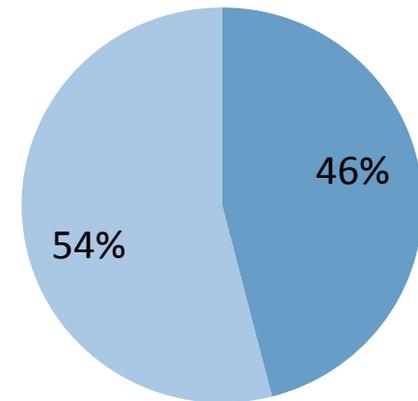
More teachers at these culturally collaborative schools felt “very trusted” by leadership than did teachers at the other schools in our sample.

Culturally Collaborative Schools



- Teacher feels somewhat trusted
- Teacher feels very trusted

Everyone Else



The most culturally collaborative schools: Example

At schools with a strong cultural commitment to collaboration, a pattern emerges in which: first, a teacher tries something new, then the principal uses collaborative time to highlight it, then colleagues try the practice and reflect on what they have learned.

First Teacher Tries

“Today it’s about questioning and exploring, you know, problem finding, problem solving. I’m seeing the question in a bigger light. One of the new things that I’m trying, last year I did Socratic seminars. That was a new thing.”

—7th- & 8th-grade social studies teacher at Kuhn

Principal Uses Collaboration to Highlight

“It was interesting for the teachers to think about their own questioning and discussion techniques, and the questioning and discussion techniques they’d seen in the other classes, versus what they’d seen in the Socratic seminar and the level of student participation.”

—Principal at Kuhn

Another Teacher Tries After Seeing Her Colleague’s Lesson

“I tried a Socratic seminar so that after they read a complex text or an information text, they could learn from their peers and see how other people interpreted the same passage.”

—7th-grade English teacher at Kuhn

The Other Teacher Reflects on Her Learning

“I realized there’s such a wide range of ability in my room, ... how other kids, given the same assignment, could manipulate it differently or understand it differently.”

—7th-grade English teacher at Kuhn

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 - ▼ **Leaders provide structure for self-guided teams**

Collaboration Begins with Scheduling

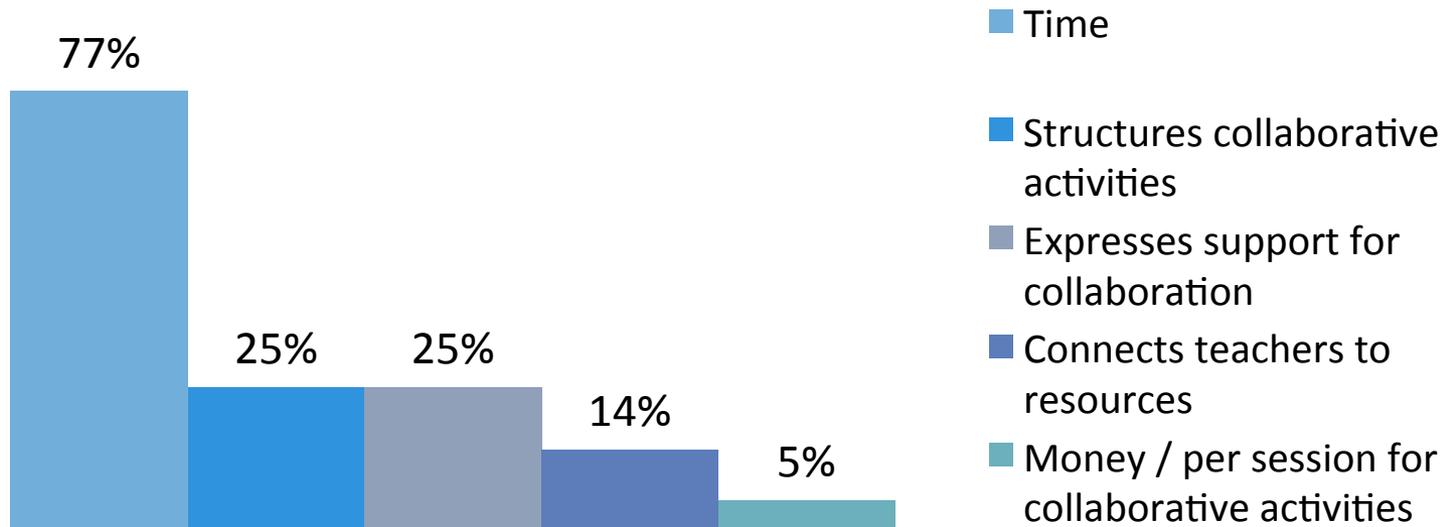
Structure Yields More Satisfaction and Follow-Up

Understanding Teachers' Interests

Collaboration begins with scheduling

The most commonly reported way principals support teacher collaboration is by **giving time** for collaboration.

Administrative Support for Collaboration, Teacher Perspective



Note: Because teachers provided more than one answer, the total is greater than 100%.

Collaboration begins with scheduling: Structuring the time

Almost all principals talk about intentionally setting up their schools in a way that supports teacher collaboration. Teachers found this time productive as well.

- **80%** of interviewed teachers cite these **preplanned teams** as their **most effective collaborative experience**.
- “We try to structure our entire school, curriculum development, and professional development around a system of collaborative teams. Our programs and schedule are designed so that it is never one person teaching a particular subject in a particular grade.” —*Middle school principal at Pinker*
- “One of the practices I implemented early on was making sure teachers have planning time together.” —*Elementary school principal at Angelou*
- “I think that those structures ... because they have been in place here for a number of years ..., teachers naturally collaborate here. They call each other up. They will meet.” —*Elementary school principal at Paul*

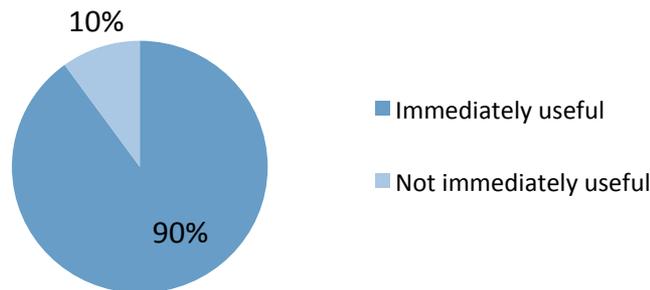
Structure yields more satisfaction and follow-up

At schools where meetings were **routinely planned and structured**, there was more evidence of immediate follow-up and satisfaction.

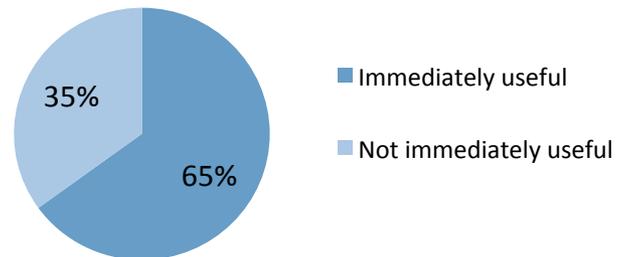
- **90% of preplanned** meetings vs. **65% of responsive** collaborations were tied to **immediately useful deliverables**.
- In nine instances teachers reported looking at data during their most effective collaboration. In all of these cases, the collaboration was a **preplanned meeting**.

"[Looking at data together] is now just a part of our practice. Without data inquiry, you're looking at things and saying, 'I think that went well.' ... it's nice to have numbers... [you can say] 'I know this went well.'" — 4th-grade general education teacher at Escalante

Deliverables from Preplanned Meetings



Deliverables from Responsive Meetings



Understanding teachers' developmental needs

The “sweet spot” of teaming is where the principal **creates a collaborative structure** and **assigns people to teams** but then **lets the teachers drive** what happens in these carved-out times. This starts by ensuring that teachers' developmental needs are known.

- **Principals at all but one school** said that they administer teacher **PD surveys** or **otherwise talk to teachers** about what they want and need to improve, and some of them go to great lengths. One principal explains her process:

“I have what we call a personality inventory that I put together.... It generally lets me know each teacher's strengths, challenges. And from there I garner information.”

“We have what we call a journey-line experience, [where] they have an opportunity to choose a time in their professional life that they want to share where they saw was a turning point. As they share their turning points, I am observing what makes them tick, and where they are passionate.”

“How do you build capacity? I am always alert, and listening, and watching what really moves my teachers to the point where they want to share and they want to be part of something greater.” —*Elementary school principal at Grandin*

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Drivers

Anchors

Ambassadors

Drivers: Teachers drive the work in teams

Once principals carved out time and identified key areas for growth, teachers were given license to pursue solutions and support to take action.

- “Oftentimes the spark comes from colleague to colleague. So we might kind of just set the ball rolling, but then kind of leave it. Because I think they own it a lot more than us constantly telling them or guiding them to something.” — *Elementary school principal at Escalante*

Example: At Sotomayor, the Algebra II teachers worked together to reduce the number of students failing the Regents exam. The principal explains:

“I was pleased to see professional pride kicked in. The team started to meet not once a week; they met almost every day to look at ‘What can we do differently?’”

“As a result of that, we gave the Algebra II kids two more periods of Algebra instruction. Initially the students were a little bit resentful, but by the end of the term they were begging to go to the Algebra II lab.”

“Teachers had a chance to look at the data themselves, and do their own comparative analysis... At the beginning I was part of those meetings, but once I saw that professional pride in the outcomes was really focusing their conversations, I didn’t need to be there anymore.” —*High school principal at Sotomayor*

Anchors: Teachers learn as a team

Teachers are able to access past ideas and data through the structures routinely used in their teams.

- “What we’re finding, particularly with math, children are having a difficult time with annotating the text as it relates to word problems, extracting the facts and details. And the humanities folks have been able to go back and provide support for the math folks around ways that they’re working with students to annotate the text. That’s been very helpful. It’s been an anchor for the rest of the school, particularly the work that’s being done around humanities, around providing kids with clear strategies.” —*Middle school principal at Kuhn*
- “It allowed teachers to get an earlier look at where the weaknesses were. We all use the same assessment, and after that assessment we did item analysis on how students performed. We’re not waiting for the Regents item analysis.” —*High school principal at Sotomayor*

Ambassadors: External support is turned around to provide internal support

- One hypothesis in this study, based on past research, was that colleagues would turn to each other more than outside resources for support.
- While this was true, external support still played a valuable role for educators to share learning and act as ambassadors bringing lessons back to colleagues.
- This made external support a form of **recognition rather than remediation.**

“I was going to meetings and bringing back information. Two years ago I was the lead teacher and they sent me to a lot of network meetings where we were doing our close reading work. There were times when she would cover me to turnkey the training to the other teachers, so she felt that I had a valuable contribution to make.” —*5th-grade math teacher at Paul*

“The end result [of letting teachers go to external PD] is incredible. When they come back they’re excited about it, they start implementing some of the strategies the presenters have shared.” —*Principal at Angelou*

“[The administration] don’t come to check, ‘Did you turnkey to anyone?’ They just understand that just happens when we have grade meetings.” —*2nd-grade general education teacher at Angelou*

Findings are based on 55 interviews with teachers and leaders at 11 New York City public schools

Demographic composition of participating schools							
Pseudonym	Grades Served	Approximate Enrollment	% Hispanic	% Black	% Title I Eligible	% ELL	% IEP
Jaime Escalante	ES	500	>85%	>10%	>90%	>20%	>10%
Jane Goodall	ES	800	>45%	>10%	>70%	<10%	<10%
Alice Paul	ES	500	>40%	>25%	>70%	<10%	>30%
Temple Grandin	ES	500	>30%	>40%	>80%	<10%	>10%
Maya Angelou	ES	600	>45%	>10%	>75%	>20%	>10%
Maria Mayer	ES	900	>45%	>10%	>75%	>20%	>10%
Steven Pinker	MS	200	>60%	>30%	>80%	<10%	>10%
Deanna Kuhn	MS	200	>65%	>30%	>90%	>10%	>10%
Emma Willard	HS	400	>10%	>85%	>75%	<10%	>10%
Michelle Obama	HS	300	>70%	>20%	>90%	>25%	>30%
Sonia Sotomayor	HS	2,000+	>70%	>20%	>80%	>25%	>30%