This report from the Literacy Organizational Capacity Initiative (LOCI), an initiative at NORC at the University of Chicago, provides data on your (district/school)'s instructional capacity (the resources in your system to improve teaching and learning) relative to national benchmarks. Survey responses from your teachers are compared to national benchmarks, within a research-validated framework of the assets common to high capacity districts. Use this framework to help understand the strengths and weaknesses of your (district/school)'s professional learning system, and to identify specific opportunities to increase the coherence, ownership, and effective implementation of your instructional vision.

To learn more about the Capacity Assets Framework and the research behind it, including detailed examples of what each of the 11 assets looks like in practice, we invite you to download our white paper: A Leader's Guide to Building Instructional Capacity: http://www.literacycapacity.org/library/white-papers/District-Capacity-White-Paper.pdf

About NORC-LOCI: LOCI works with schools and districts to build their internal capacity for growth in literacy teaching and learning. Our work focuses on developing research-tested literacy strategies and the organizational capacity assets needed to sustain them. Our services include benchmarking and strategic planning, instructional leadership development, virtual and in-person literacy professional development for teachers, literacy-intensive summer learning labs for teachers and students, grant support, and program evaluation.

LOCI is a project of *NORC*, an independent research center at the *University of Chicago* that delivers reliable data and rigorous analysis to guide critical programmatic, educational, business, and policy decisions. Since 1941, NORC has conducted groundbreaking studies, created and applied innovative methods and tools, and advanced principles of scientific integrity and collaboration.
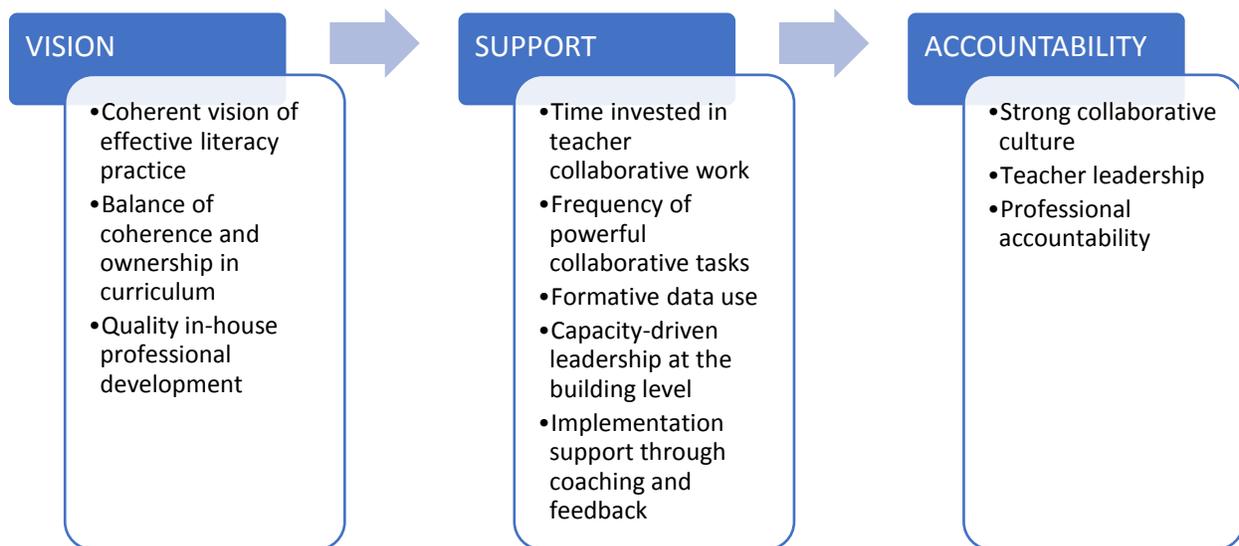
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What's in the report?

Based on six years of research and practice with districts, including 4 national surveys and 2 intensive qualitative studies, LOCI has found that districts with the capacity for continuous improvement have professional learning systems that do the following things:

- Build educator knowledge and skills around a specific <u>vision</u> of effective literacy teaching and learning;
- <u>Support</u> educators in the implementation of that vision (through coaching and structured collaboration); and
- Ensure <u>accountability</u> for transfer of effective practices to classrooms and continuous improvement of those practices.

Within the overall frame of vision/support/accountability, we have identified and created benchmarks for 11 specific assets:

VISION
- Coherent vision of effective literacy practice
- Balance of coherence and ownership in curriculum
- Quality in-house professional development

SUPPORT
- Time invested in teacher collaborative work
- Frequency of powerful collaborative tasks
- Formative data use
- Capacity-driven leadership at the building level
- Implementation support through coaching and feedback

ACCOUNTABILITY
- Strong collaborative culture
- Teacher leadership
- Professional accountability

This report has two main sections

I.   **Capacity Assets**
II.   **Instructional Confidence in Literacy**

In the **Capacity Assets** section, we briefly define each of the 11 assets and then present your (district/school)'s data on each, relative to the levels in your (state/district) as whole and relative to two national benchmarks:

- The national average
- The performance of high capacity districts nationally

The "high capacity districts" benchmark was constructed by identifying the top quartile of respondents in our national teacher survey who reported the highest levels of district success in implementing improvements in literacy instruction. The literacy

implementation index included questions addressing district progress in implementing standards, teachers being personally well prepared to teach the standards, and benefits to students. Having identified those successful districts, we then looked at what was distinctive about their professional learning systems. The 11 capacity assets are the aspects of professional learning most strongly correlated with improvements in teaching and learning. We further validated the role of these assets in the district case studies described in the white paper: A Leader's Guide to Building Instructional Capacity.

The **Instructional Confidence in Literacy** section presents data on the confidence of your teachers at each instructional level in specific literacy instruction skills most relevant to their teaching assignment. The data in this section can be used to identify specific content needs for teacher professional development in literacy; the data on capacity assets can be used to design the most effective professional learning supports to meet those needs.

How to Use this Report: This tool was designed to support the development of a strategic and systemic professional development plan with the twin goals of organizational capacity building and expert instructional practice. The data is *formative,* intended to support a continuous improvement process in which needs assessment leads to leadership coaching and support, design of a capacity building professional development plan, and ongoing monitoring and support for implementation.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT | COACHING | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT | IMPLEMENTATION

We encourage this report be discussed within a distributed leadership structure to build system wide agreements about and ownership for needs and solutions. Pay close attention not only to areas where your system has identified needs but also assets which can serve as resources to support continued growth. When identifying areas of weakness, you want to ensure that the plan you develop improves not only instructional confidence and expertise but collaboration, trust, and coherence within the system. When we facilitate such meetings either virtually or on the ground, we find that using a protocol helps ensure all voices get heard and that conversation sticks closely to observable patterns in the data.
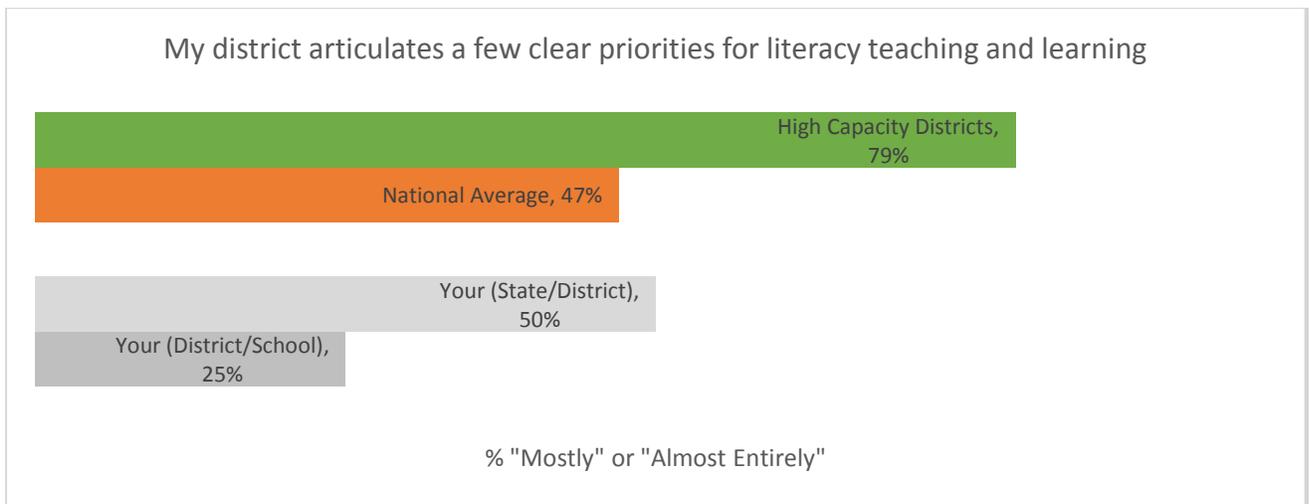
Asset 1: Coherent Vision of Effective Literacy Practice

What is it? *Shared agreement at all levels of the system about what effective teaching and learning in literacy looks like, at a level that is concrete and specific enough to guide everything from daily classroom practice to broad curriculum frameworks to investments in professional development.*
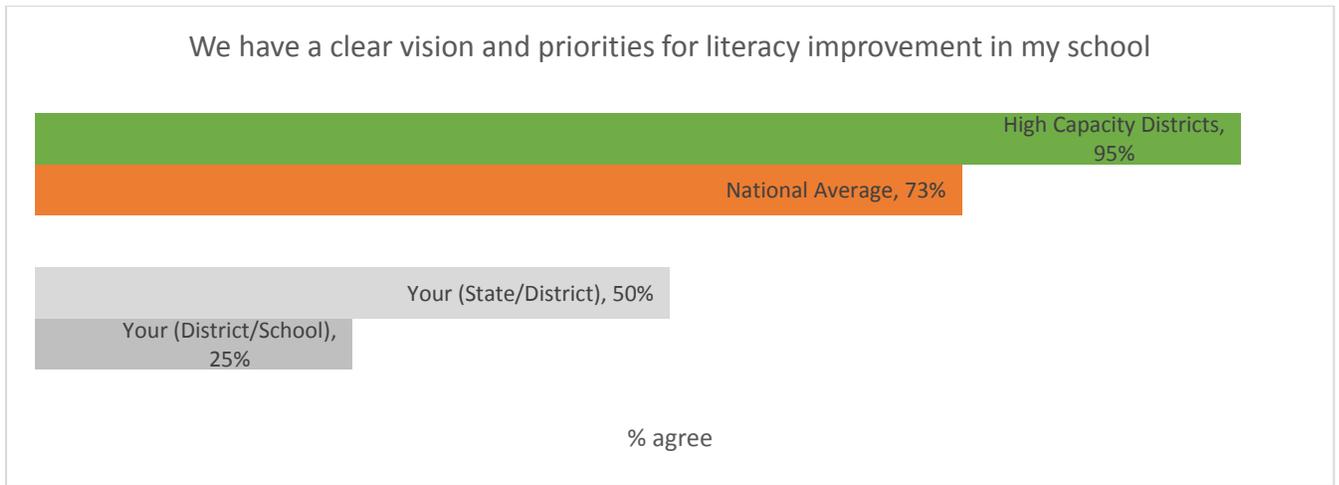
Having a coherent literacy vision is important at both the district and school level, but much easier to achieve by individual schools. Nationally, 73% of teachers reported that their school had a clear literacy vision, but just 47% said that was true at the level of their district. It is in achieving district-level coherence, a focus on a few clear priorities that everyone can articulate, that the high capacity districts look most different from the norm.

Use the charts below to see how your (district/school) compares:

DISTRICT LEVEL COHERENCE

My district articulates a few clear priorities for literacy teaching and learning

High Capacity Districts, 79%

National Average, 47%

Your (State/District), 50%

Your (District/School), 25%

% "Mostly" or "Almost Entirely"

SCHOOL LEVEL COHERENCE

We have a clear vision and priorities for literacy improvement in my school

High Capacity Districts, 95%

National Average, 73%

Your (State/District), 50%

Your (District/School), 25%

% agree

CONSIDER…

→ How do you communicate your literacy priorities, not just at the level of a mission statement, but how that vision gets translated into more specific choices about curriculum and instruction?

→ How well does what you prioritize through assessment align with your vision?

→ Where and when do educators from different levels and locations have conversations about the literacy vision?

## Asset 2: Balance of Coherence and Ownership in Literacy Curriculum

What is it? *A vision of effective literacy practice that is coherent but not static. Coherence is achieved through an ongoing, multi-level dialogue about what the vision looks like in practice. Within a clear, shared framework, teacher teams operate as expert professionals who work to adapt and apply the vision to the needs of their particular students. Teams of teachers continually engage the vision as they translate it into specific choices about curriculum and pedagogy.*

LOCI's survey-based measure of this asset consists of an index of four statements, all of which receive significantly higher levels of teacher agreement in high capacity districts:

- (My district) focuses on what we are trying to accomplish in literacy and supports schools in figuring out how
- (My district) trusts the professional judgment of teachers
- (My district) balances clear curriculum guidance and access to quality materials with flexibility to choose what works best for my students
- The (school-level) literacy priorities were developed collaboratively with teachers.

The chart below shows the index or average of these four statements. See Appendix for levels of agreement to each individual statement.

Values on the index range from a maximum of 4.75 (if teachers answered all 3 district-level statements "Almost entirely" and the school-level statement "Strongly Agree") to a minimum of 1 (if teachers answered all 3 district-level statements "Not at all" and the school-level statement "Strongly Disagree").
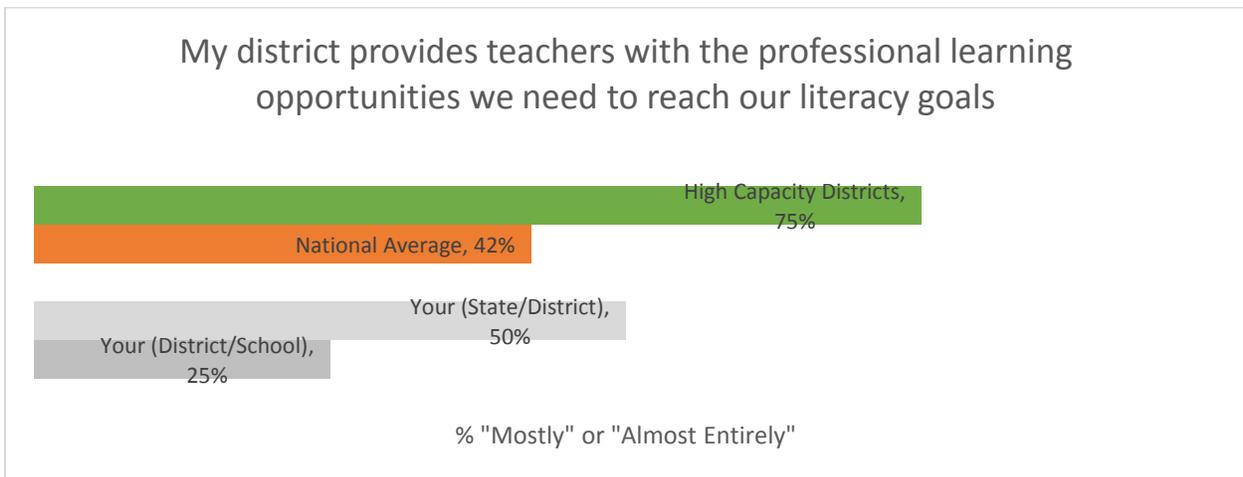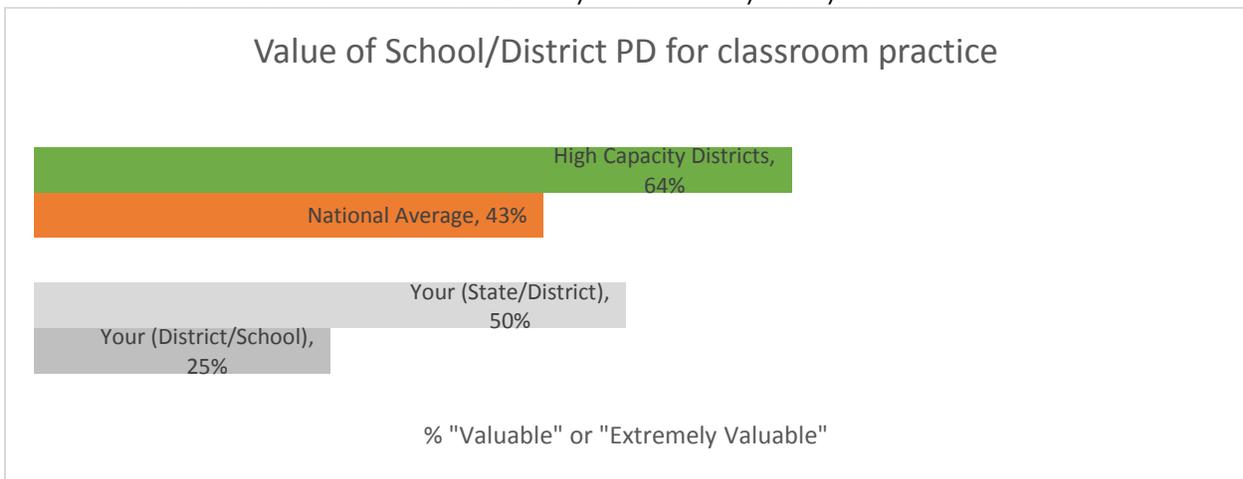

Balance of Coherence and Ownership Index
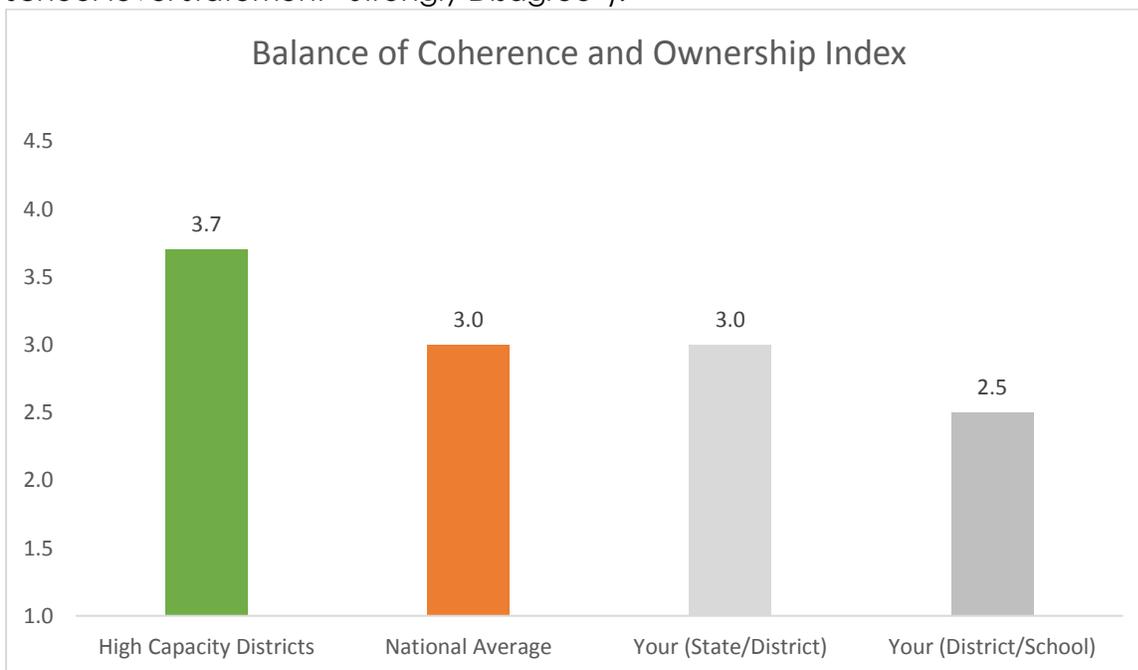
CONSIDER…

→ How are teachers involved in developing literacy priorities?
→ What messages do you send about trust in the professional judgment of teachers, especially when it comes to assessment, accountability, and teacher evaluation systems?
→ Do teachers and administrators have a shared understanding of what curriculum guidance is core and where teachers have more flexibility to adapt?
→ How do you acknowledge and celebrate teachers who adapt instruction in response to the needs and interests of their students?

Asset 3: Quality In-House Professional Development

What is it? *A professional learning system that promotes the development and use of home-grown expertise. Professional learning is closely connected to daily practice, often takes place in context, and is part of a continuous cycle of learning, application, reflection, and revision.*

In our most recent national survey, fewer than half of teachers reported that the professional development provided by their school or district was valuable or agreed that their district provided teachers with the professional learning opportunities needed to reach their literacy goals.   In our high capacity quartile, two-thirds to three-fourths of teachers reported that school/district provided PD was valuable and meeting their needs. How do teachers rate the PD they receive in your system?

Value of School/District PD for classroom practice

High Capacity Districts, 64%

National Average, 43%

Your (State/District), 50%

Your (District/School), 25%

% "Valuable" or "Extremely Valuable"

My district provides teachers with the professional learning opportunities we need to reach our literacy goals

High Capacity Districts, 75%

National Average, 42%

Your (State/District), 50%

Your (District/School), 25%

% "Mostly" or "Almost Entirely"

CONSIDER…

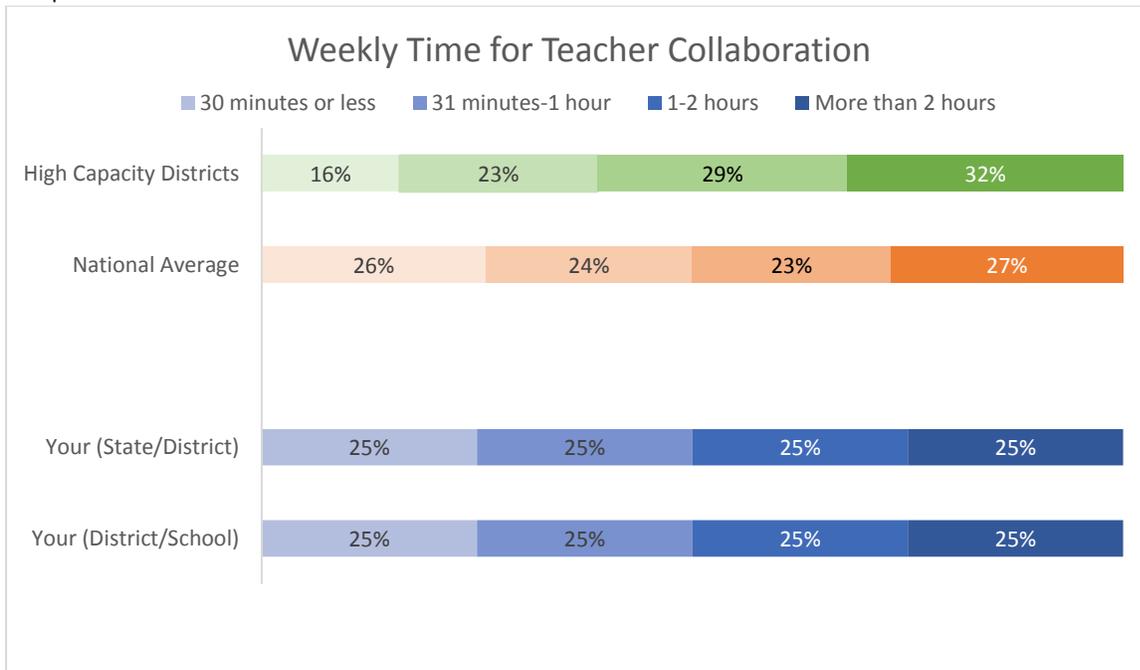→ How do you ensure that PD topics are clearly connected to your instructional vision?

→ What kinds of expectations and supports are in place to help teachers successfully implement what they learn in PD?

→ How are you developing and featuring internal expertise in your PD?

Asset 4: Time Invested in Teacher Collaborative Work

What is it? *Regular time (at least weekly), vigilantly protected from interruptions, for teams of teachers to engage in core professional work such as planning and reflecting on instruction, making curricular decisions, and analyzing student data or work. Because the time is consistently provided and demonstrably valued by school leaders, it becomes an essential element of how educators do their job.*

Time is a precious resource in schools, so how districts choose to invest time says a lot about their priorities. Our research has consistently found that high capacity districts invest more of it in teacher collaboration. Not only do they put collaboration time on schedules, they ensure that the time is protected from interruptions and that it is used well.

The first chart for this asset shows the amount of dedicated time teachers report having for professional collaboration each week:

Weekly Time for Teacher Collaboration

Legend: 30 minutes or less · 31 minutes-1 hour · 1-2 hours · More than 2 hours

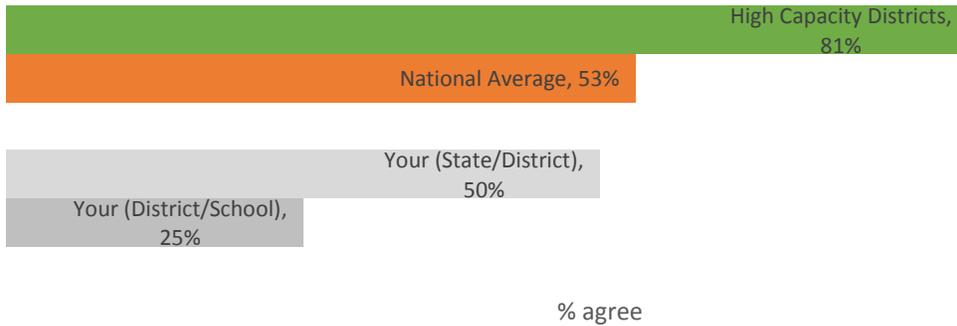|	30 minutes or less	31 minutes-1 hour	1-2 hours	More than 2 hours
High Capacity Districts	16%	23%	29%	32%
National Average	26%	24%	23%	27%
Your (State/District)	25%	25%	25%	25%
Your (District/School)	25%	25%	25%	25%

The other two items in Asset 4 speak to how well the time allocated is actually used, reporting teacher agreement to the following:
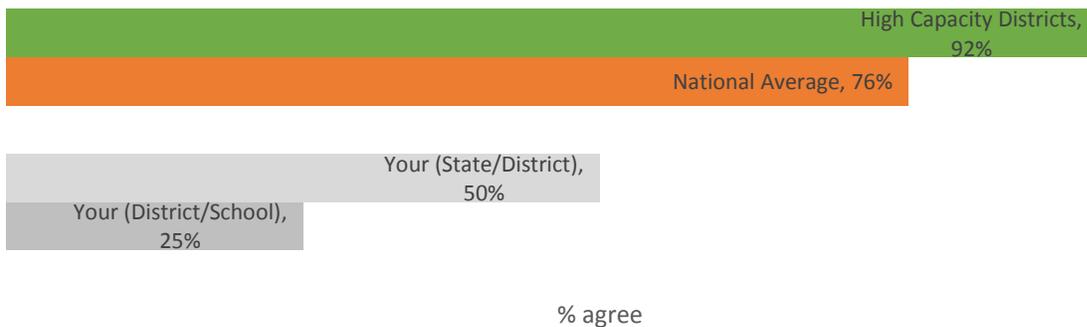- The time of teacher teams to work together on literacy is protected from scheduling intrusions and other tasks.
- We stay focused and use time well.

Collaboration time protected

High Capacity Districts, 81%

National Average, 53%

Your (State/District), 50%

Your (District/School), 25%

% agree

Time used well

High Capacity Districts, 92%

National Average, 76%

Your (State/District), 50%

Your (District/School), 25%

% agree

CONSIDER…

→ Do teachers value team collaboration as a time when they get their "real work" done or is it seen as "a meeting"?

→ What do leaders do to reinforce the value of collaboration time and support its effective use?
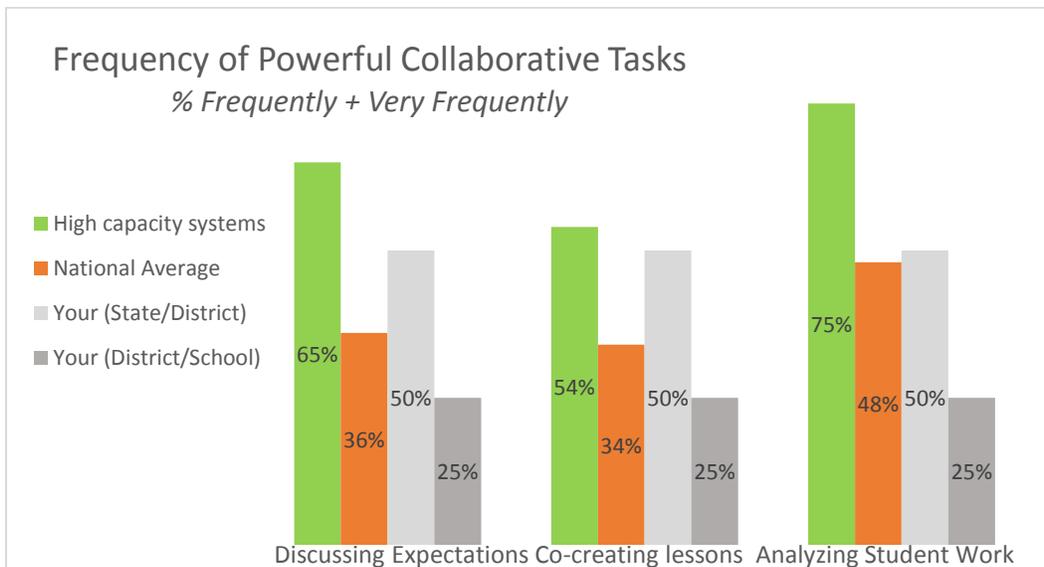
Asset 5: Frequency of Powerful Collaborative Tasks

What is it? *Collaborative time is not only consistently provided, but used effectively on tasks that support the close examination and continuous improvement of teaching and learning. Collaboration time and classroom time are woven together in a cycle of co-creation of lessons and assessments, reflection on the resulting student learning, and development of instructional implications.*

In both our national surveys and qualitative research, we have looked inside the "black box" of collaborative time to find out how it used in the highest capacity schools. The LOCI inventory asks teachers how often they engage in eight specific collaborative tasks with grade-level or subject-area colleagues. The prevalence of all eight is significantly greater in high capacity districts, but in our qualitative research we found three tasks in particular that were especially common among teams having the greatest impact on instruction:

→ Exploring what literacy expectations look like across grade levels or subjects
→ Co-creating instructional materials, and
→ Examining student work.

How often do teams in your (school/district) report engaging in such collaborative work?

Frequency of Powerful Collaborative Tasks
% Frequently + Very Frequently

See the appendix for the reported frequency of all eight powerful collaborative tasks in your system relative to benchmarks.

CONSIDER…

→ Do teachers see collaboration time as time to talk or time to work?
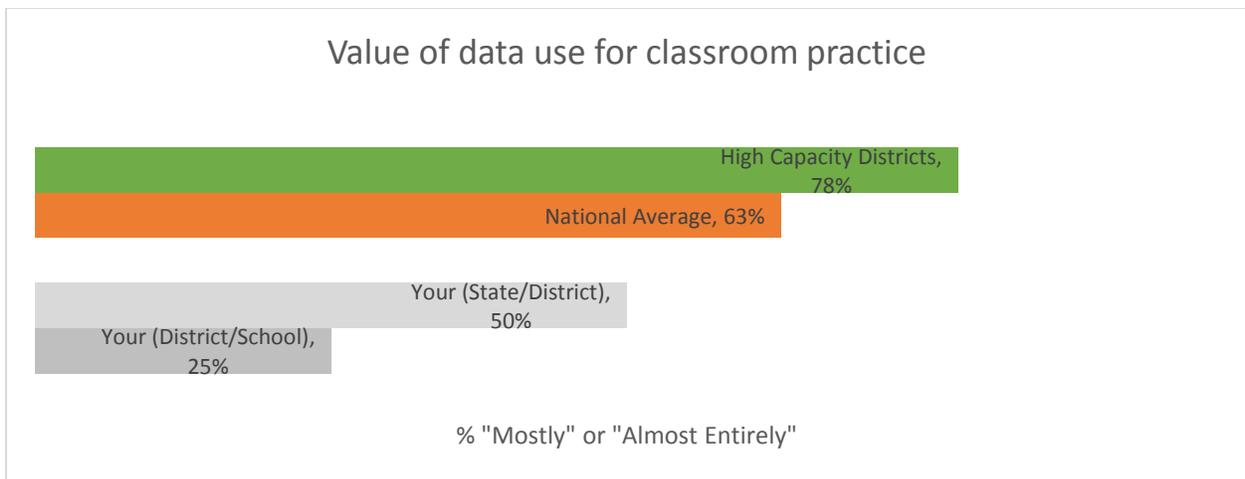
→ Is collaboration in your system consistent enough to become part of the instructional cycle

Asset 6: Formative Data Use

What is it? *Collaborative analysis of student data is a routine part of the instructional cycle. Data is defined broadly to encompass many forms of evidence of student learning, including not only standardized assessments but teacher-developed assessments and student work products. The emphasis is on short-cycle use for the development of immediate instructional implications.*

As shown in the section on powerful collaborative tasks, collaborative teams in high capacity districts use data more frequently. LOCI research shows that the difference is not just in the frequency of data use, but in what data teams use and how they use it. Compared to periodic standardized benchmarks, teachers find more utility in looking at formative data they can use immediately to give feedback to students and revise their own instruction. How valuable do the teachers in your system find the way they use data?

Value of data use for classroom practice

High Capacity Districts, 78%

National Average, 63%

Your (State/District), 50%

Your (District/School), 25%

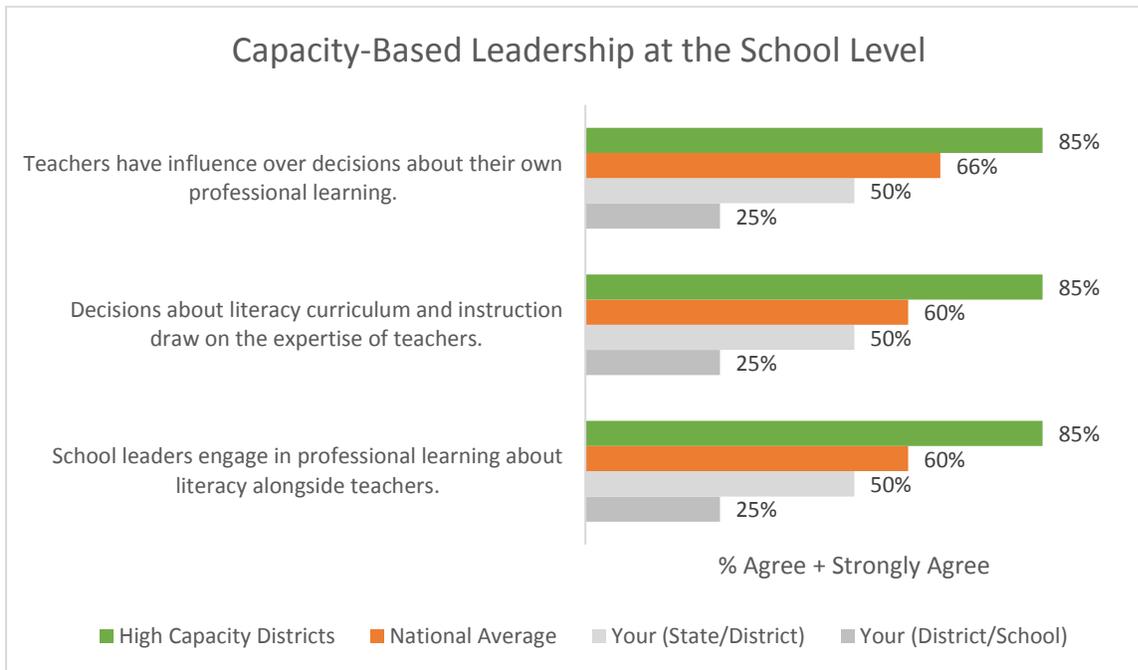% "Mostly" or "Almost Entirely"

CONSIDER…

→ What counts as data in your system?
→ Do teachers have access to data that is timely for their instructional decision making?
→ How can leaders in the system support and model instructional data use?

Asset 7: Capacity-Driven Leadership at the Building Level

What is it? *Capacity-driven school leaders invest in and protect time for teacher collaboration and model collaboration in their own leadership and decision-making. They frequently engage in learning and collaboration with teachers, offering their expertise and support while respecting teacher expertise and ownership of their work. They provide clear expectations and the resources to meet them, leading through motivation and opportunities, not mandates and accountability.*

LOCI research has found that building-level leadership has some unique characteristics in high capacity districts. In those districts where literacy improvement is going most successfully, teachers report that their voice is heard in school-level decisions about the implementation of curriculum and about the professional learning teachers need to make change successful. Often this is because instructional leaders learn and collaborate alongside teachers. How does your system stack up in terms of school-level leadership practices that build capacity?

Capacity-Based Leadership at the School Level

Teachers have influence over decisions about their own professional learning.
- 85%
- 66%
- 50%
- 25%

Decisions about literacy curriculum and instruction draw on the expertise of teachers.
- 85%
- 60%
- 50%
- 25%

School leaders engage in professional learning about literacy alongside teachers.
- 85%
- 60%
- 50%
- 25%

% Agree + Strongly Agree

■ High Capacity Districts ■ National Average ▨ Your (State/District) ▨ Your (District/School)

CONSIDER…

→ How familiar are leaders with the professional learning they are expecting teachers to implement?

→ What upcoming decisions or processes would benefit from more teacher voice?
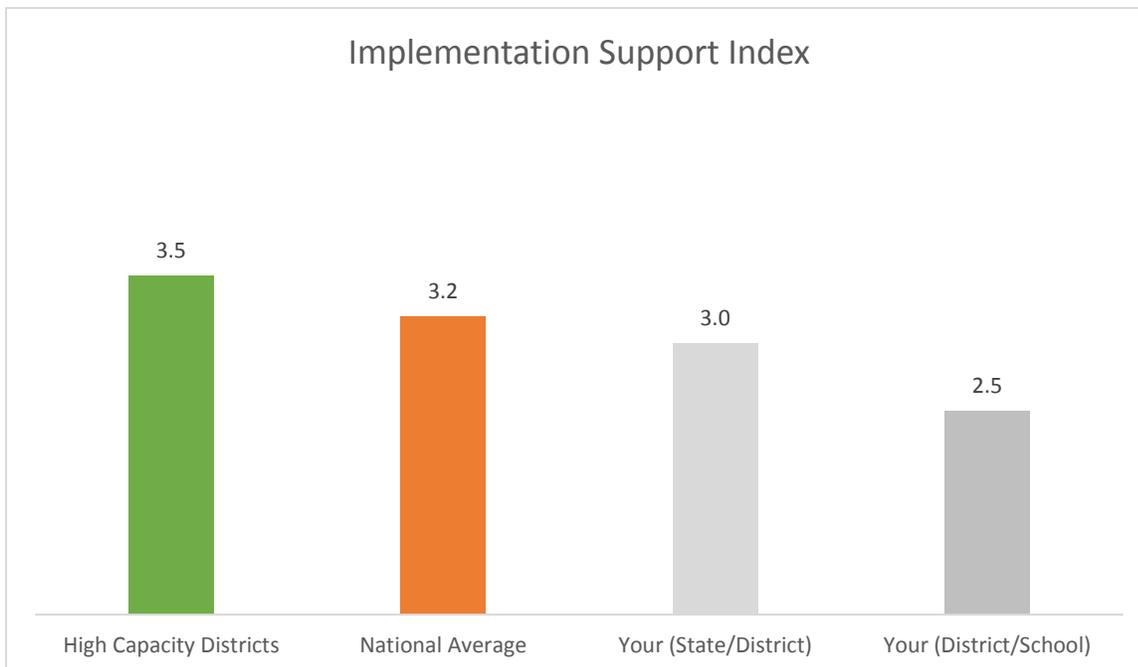
Asset 8: Implementation Support through Coaching and Feedback

What is it? Coaching and feedback that build not just individual but collective capacity attend to the coherence of instructional approaches in a school and district. Capacity-building coaching focuses on assets, not deficits, and is carefully separated from evaluation and accountability systems. By proactively promoting two-way communication across multiple levels in an instructional system (district-teacher, principal-teacher, teacher-teacher), coaches help to build and connect of nodes of capacity, accelerating the dissemination of best practices across the network. Frequent opportunities to both give and receive peer observation provides valuable perspective on instructional practices and another conduit for best practice to spread.

In high capacity systems, teachers get frequent feedback on their teaching, both from designated coaches and through participating in peer observations, and are more likely to report that when they receive such feedback it is valuable for their instruction. The LOCI index of Implementation Support includes measures of

- Agreement with the statement "My district has systems in place to provide me useful feedback on my teaching and help me learn from my practice."
- Frequency of coaching
- Value of coaching
- Frequency of peer observation
- Value of peer observation
  See values for each component of the index in the Appendix

Implementation Support Index

| High Capacity Districts | National Average | Your (State/District) | Your (District/School) |
| 3.5 | 3.2 | 3.0 | 2.5 |

CONSIDER…

→ How often do teachers in your system receive non-evaluative feedback on their practice?

→ Are teachers in your system comfortable giving and receiving formative feedback on their teaching?

→ Ask teachers how they get feedback on their practice and how they would like to.
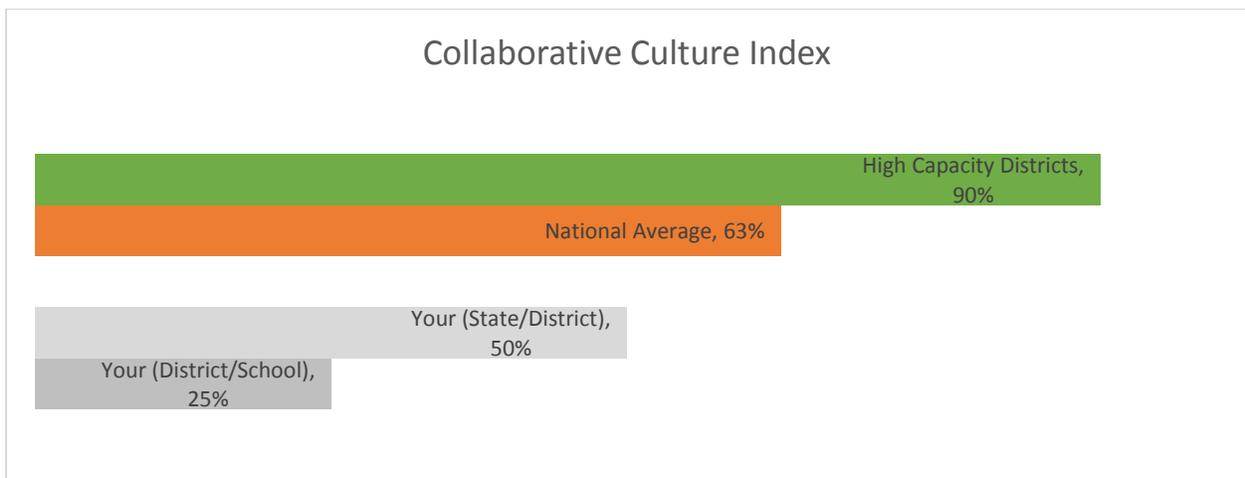
Asset 9: Strong Collaborative Culture

What is it? *Strong collaborative cultures are characterized by high degrees of trust among teachers and between teachers and administrators. Trust manifests itself in an open door approach to sharing instructional plans and practice and willingness to ask questions, admit uncertainty, and seek feedback. Educators speak in the plural not the singular about "our work" and "our students."*

Teacher collaboration is a key engine of change in the districts best able to implement and sustain literacy improvement. It is around the table where grade-level and subject-area colleagues meet that the nitty-gritty work and learning of implementation happens. Districts channel the power of teams by protecting their meeting time and supporting its effective use, but the true sign that teams are capable of functioning as engines of change is their collaborative culture. The LOCI index of collaborative culture includes a range of factors strongly correlated with district capacity, including:

- Shared agreements about effective instruction
- Challenge/hard conversations
- Professional trust
- Comfort sharing evidence

How strong is the collaborative culture in your (District/School)?

Collaborative Culture Index

High Capacity Districts, 90%

National Average, 63%

Your (State/District), 50%
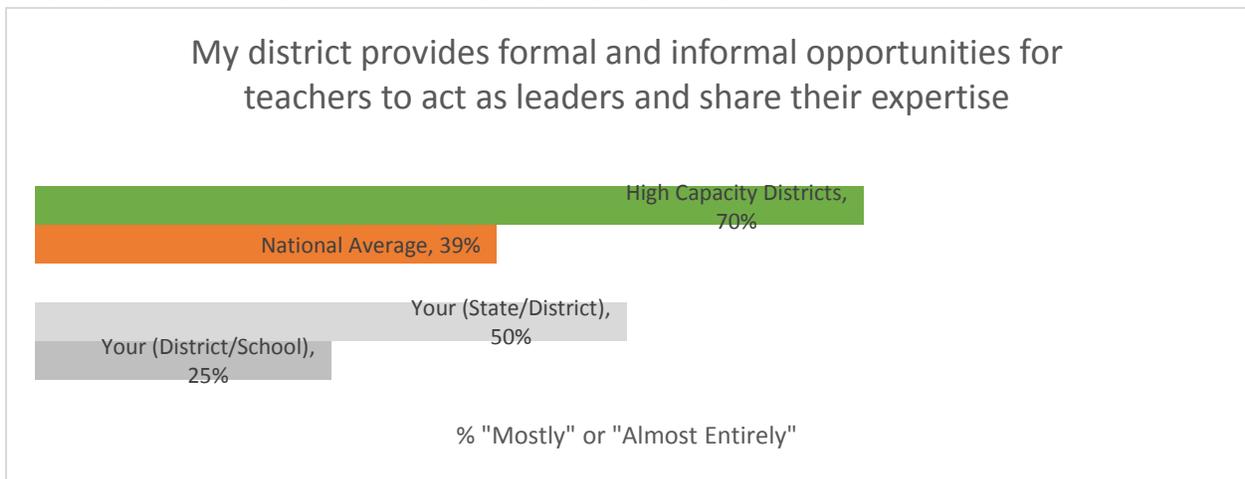
Your (District/School), 25%

CONSIDER…

→ Do teachers have training and protocols on asking questions and providing feedback without judgment?

→ Is there a norm of sharing classroom evidence? And so does it extend beyond best practices to problems that need collegial input?

→ How can you create a culture that values failure as an opportunity to learn?
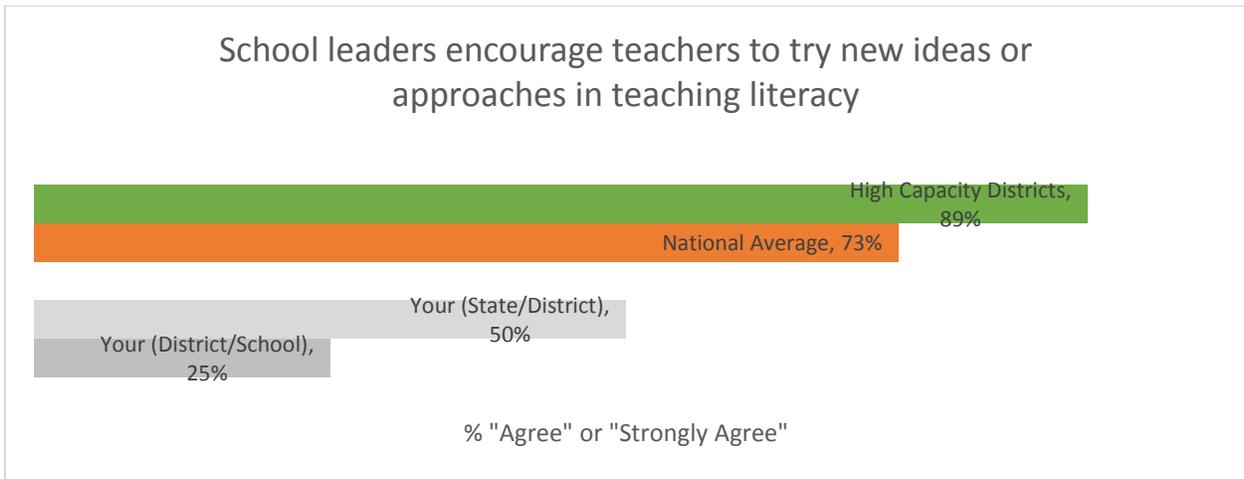
Asset 10: Teacher Leadership

What is it? *Capacity-driven systems provide both formal and informal opportunities for teachers to act as leaders in their domain of expertise: curriculum, instruction and assessment. Teacher involvement in decisions about their core work goes beyond representation or voice. The system is open to teachers defining and enacting new leadership roles which allow expertise to be spread.*

High capacity systems are distinguished by the formal and informal opportunities they provide for teacher leadership at both school and district levels. At the school level, in addition to formal positions such as department chair or team leader, teachers have the opportunity to lead by exercising their professional judgment about instruction. Meaningful teacher leadership opportunities are rarer at the district level, and it is here that practices in high capacity districts diverge most from the national norm.

DISTRICT LEVEL TEACHER LEADERHSIP OPPORTUNITIES

My district provides formal and informal opportunities for teachers to act as leaders and share their expertise

High Capacity Districts, 70%

National Average, 39%

Your (State/District), 50%

Your (District/School), 25%

% "Mostly" or "Almost Entirely"

SCHOOL LEVEL TEACHER LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

School leaders encourage teachers to try new ideas or approaches in teaching literacy

High Capacity Districts, 89%

National Average, 73%

Your (State/District), 50%

Your (District/School), 25%
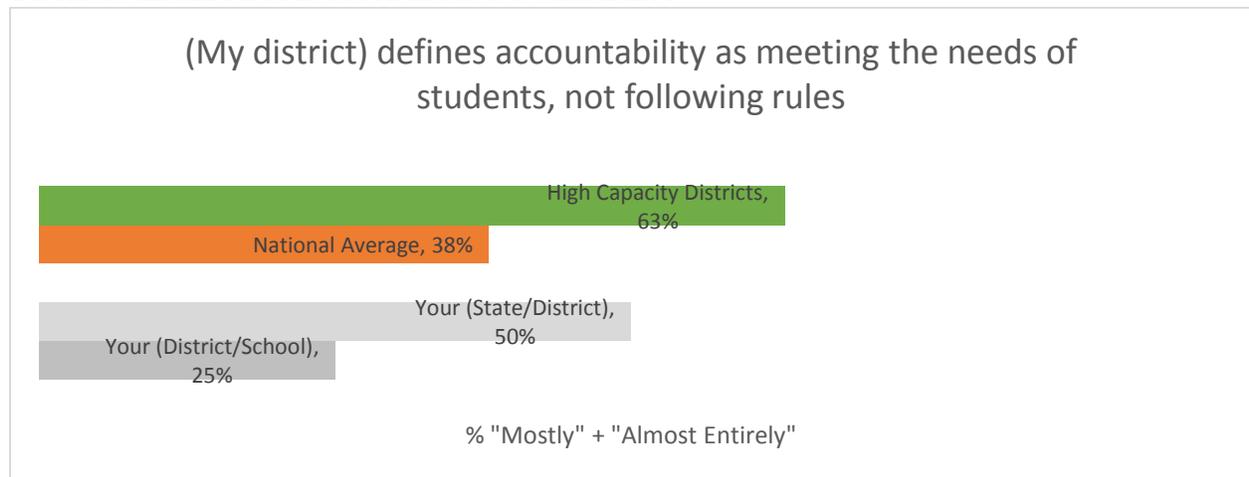
% "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"

CONSIDER...

→ Are there examples in your system of teachers creating leadership opportunities on issues they care about (as opposed to signing up for pre-existing committees)? How can you open space for more such leaders?

→ How do your strongest teachers use and share their expertise while remaining full-time teachers?
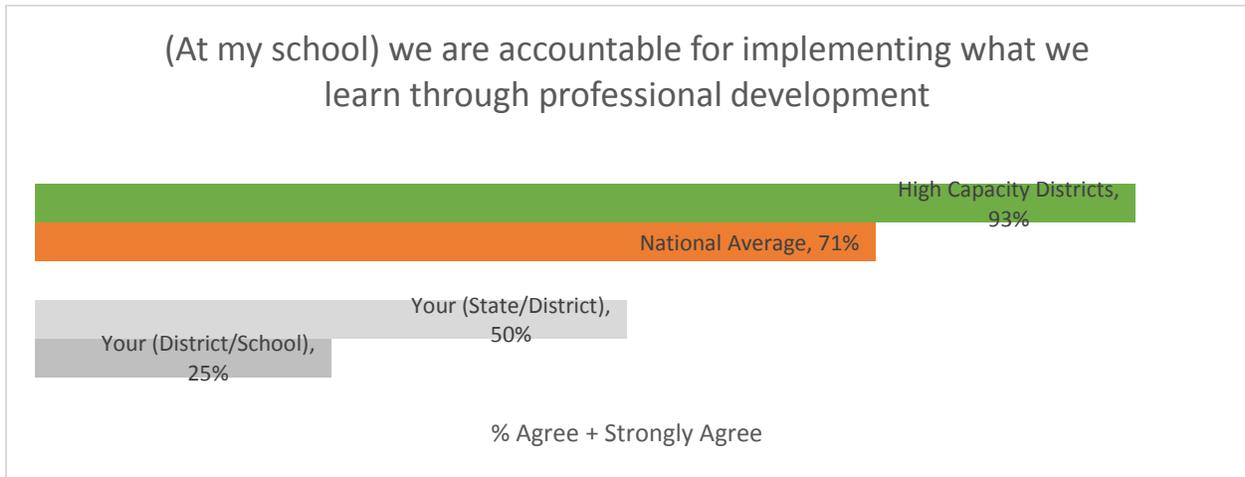
Asset 11: Professional Accountability

What is it? *Professional accountability emerges from a shared commitment to practices that are most effective for students. Rather than being accountable to rules or procedures, teachers are accountable to each other for following through on their collective decisions about curriculum, instruction, and assessment. They are accountable not just for implementing practices but for measuring their impact, learning from them, and modifying what doesn't work for students.*

In high capacity systems, accountability is constructive, rooted in practice, and held collectively. This contrasts sharply with the more common approach to accountability that is punitive, test-driven, and focused on individuals. The LOCI index of accountability demonstrates that in high capacity systems, this more professional vision of accountability shows up at every level, from district, to school, to team.

DISTRICT-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY
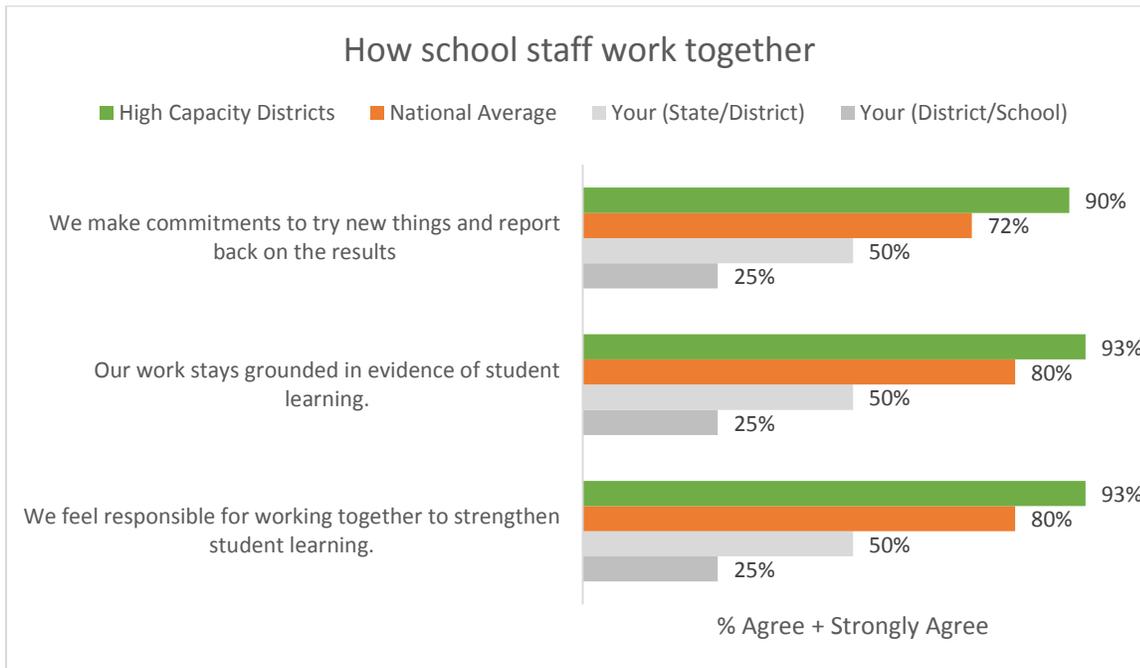

(My district) defines accountability as meeting the needs of students, not following rules

High Capacity Districts, 63%

National Average, 38%

Your (State/District), 50%

Your (District/School), 25%

% "Mostly" + "Almost Entirely"

SCHOOL-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

(At my school) we are accountable for implementing what we learn through professional development

High Capacity Districts, 93%

National Average, 71%

Your (State/District), 50%

Your (District/School), 25%

% Agree + Strongly Agree

TEAM-LEVEL PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

How school staff work together

■ High Capacity Districts ■ National Average ▩ Your (State/District) ▩ Your (District/School)

We make commitments to try new things and report back on the results
- 90%
- 72%
- 50%
- 25%

Our work stays grounded in evidence of student learning.
- 93%
- 80%
- 50%
- 25%

We feel responsible for working together to strengthen student learning.
- 93%
- 80%
- 50%
- 25%

% Agree + Strongly Agree

CONSIDER…

→ What connotation does "accountability" have in your system?

→ What messages do your assessment and teacher evaluation systems send about the meaning of accountability?

→ How can leaders model accountability as commitment to what works for studen

This final section of the inventory moves from measures of your resources for getting better (the capacity assets) to specific improvement needs (current levels of teacher confidence in the instructional skills most relevant to their grade level/subject area). You can use the data in this section to identify specific needs for teacher professional development in literacy; the data on capacity assets can help you think through how best to provide the professional learning supports teachers need.

Teachers identified themselves as belonging to one of 4 groups in terms of the context of their literacy instruction and then rated themselves on a 5-point confidence scale in terms of literacy teaching skills most relevant to their instructional context. The four groups for reporting are:

1. Early childhood/lower elementary
2. Upper elementary
3. Middle or high school ELA specialist
4. Middle or high school, other subject

For each skill we report the average confidence rating of teachers in your School/District, on a 5-point scale (1= Not Confident, 2= Somewhat confident, 3= Fairly confident, 4= Confident, 5= Very Confident), with comparison data from your broader District/State and the National Average.

Instructional Confidence of Early childhood/lower elementary teachers

How confident are you that you can design instruction that accomplishes each of the following?	Mean Confidence Level (1-5 scale)		
	Your school/District	Your District/State	National Average
	N=	N=	N= 538
Builds students' motivation and engagement in reading			4.0
Builds students' motivation and engagement in writing			3.6
Supports students in using strategies for comprehending classroom texts			3.9
Integrates oral language and vocabulary development into content-area learning			4.0
Supports students in synthesizing ideas from multiple sources			3.6
Supports productive student-led discussions based on text (small group and peer to peer)			3.7
Supports students as writers for a range of purposes and audiences.			3.5
Engages families in literacy learning			3.4
Utilizes formative assessment data about student literacy learning			3.8
Is differentiated based on my students' literacy needs			4.0
Includes interventions for struggling readers			4.0
Meets the needs of English Language Learners			3.6
Effectively incorporates small group literacy work			4.0
Helps students become fluent readers			4.0
Helps students develop phonological and phonemic awareness			4.1

LOCI Report: Instructional Confidence in Literacy

Instructional Confidence of Upper Elementary teachers

How confident are you that you can design instruction that accomplishes each of the following?	Mean Confidence Level (1-5 scale)		
	Your school/District	Your District/State	National Average
	N=	N=	N= 389
Builds students' motivation and engagement in reading			3.8
Builds students' motivation and engagement in writing			3.6
Supports students in using strategies for comprehending classroom texts			3.9
Builds the academic vocabulary students need to read grade-level texts			3.8
Supports students in synthesizing ideas from multiple sources			3.7
Supports productive student-led discussions based on text (small group and peer to peer)			3.7
Supports students as writers for a range of purposes and audiences.			3.5
Engages families in literacy learning			3.1
Utilizes formative assessment data about student literacy learning			3.9
Is differentiated based on my students' literacy needs			3.9
Includes interventions for struggling readers			3.9
Meets the needs of English Language Learners			3.5
Effectively incorporates small group literacy work			3.9
Helps students become fluent readers			3.9

Instructional Confidence of Middle or High School ELA specialists

How confident are you that you can design instruction that accomplishes each of the following?	Mean Confidence Level (1-5 scale)		
	Your school/District	Your District/State	National Average
	N=	N=	N= 173
Builds students' motivation and engagement in reading			3.9
Builds students' motivation and engagement in writing			3.8
Supports students in using strategies for comprehending classroom texts			4.1
Builds the academic vocabulary students need to read grade-level texts			3.9
Supports students in synthesizing ideas from multiple sources			3.9
Supports productive student-led discussions based on text (small group and peer to peer)			3.8
Supports students as writers for a range of purposes and audiences.			3.9
Engages families in literacy learning			2.7
Utilizes formative assessment data about student literacy learning			3.8
Is differentiated based on my students' literacy needs			4.0
Meets the needs of English Language Learners			3.5
Effectively incorporates small group literacy work			3.9
Helps students become fluent readers of grade level texts			3.7

Instructional Confidence of Middle or High School, non-ELA specialists

How confident are you that you can design instruction that accomplishes each of the following?	Mean Confidence Level (1-5 scale)		
	Your school/District	Your District/State	National Average
	N=	N=	N= 672
Builds students' motivation and engagement in reading			3.4
Builds students' motivation and engagement in writing			3.3
Supports students in using strategies for comprehending classroom texts			3.5
Builds the academic vocabulary students need to read discipline-specific texts			3.7
Supports students in synthesizing ideas from multiple sources in my discipline			3.5
Supports productive student-led discussions based on text (small group and peer to peer)			3.5
Supports students as writers for a range of discipline-specific purposes and audiences.			3.3
Is differentiated based on my students' literacy needs			3.3
Meets the needs of English Language Learners			3.1
Helps students become fluent readers of discipline-specific texts			3.3
Builds students' motivation and engagement in reading			3.4