

***EVALUATION OF THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF ILLINOIS
LEARNING STANDARDS
YEAR THREE REPORT***

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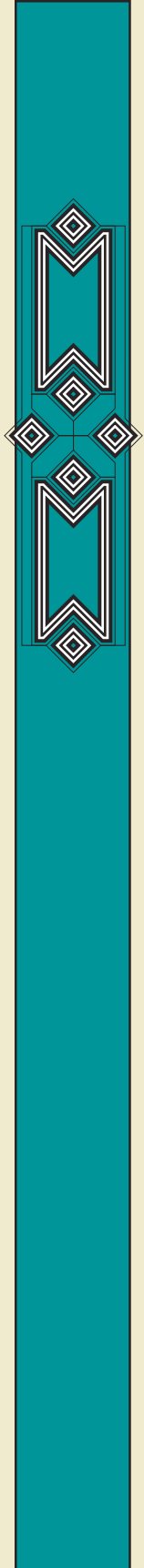
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**Report to the
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I. Evaluation of the Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards

Year Three Report

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Evaluation of the Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards

Year Three Report

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The Evaluation of the Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards (Reissued) Project is a four-year endeavor funded by the Illinois State Board of Education to assess the extent to which local districts are implementing Illinois Learning Standards (ILS), to identify factors which enhance or inhibit implementation, and to investigate the relationship between ILS implementation and student achievement. The project began on January 18, 1999, and ended its third fiscal year of operation on June 30, 2001. This report contains the findings of the third year of the study. The project will end on June 30, 2002.

The study has two components:

1. Survey of Practitioners. During Year Three, 2,422 teachers in a stratified random sample of approximately 71 schools were surveyed to determine the extent to which they were implementing ILS in their classrooms, schools, and districts. Teacher survey data were used to place schools at various levels of implementation, assess ILS implementation at the state level, and examine the relationship between ISAT performance and ILS implementation. A parallel Administrator Survey was developed and sent to 136 building principals. The Administrator Survey was used to assess principals' perceptions of ILS implementation.
2. Qualitative component. In Year Three, six districts with one to two schools from each district were selected for intensive case study. The districts selected for inclusion vary in student enrollment, district organization pattern, community size, and geographic location. Specifically, one district, located in the southern part of the state, is a unit district (K-12) that serves a largely urban population. Current student enrollment is just over 11,000 students. A second, an elementary district (K-8) located in a mid-sized city in central Illinois, has a student enrollment of approximately 4,100 students. The third is a high school district (9-12) located in a suburban community in the northern part of the state; student enrollment is approximately 2,800 students.

The fourth, also a unit district (K-12), is located in a small rural community in central Illinois and has a student enrollment of just over 1,000 students. A fifth, a unit district (K-12) that is part of a central Illinois metropolitan area, has an enrollment of approximately 5,700 students. The sixth district, a small rural district (K-12) in southern Illinois, serves just over 1,100 students. The ten schools selected from the six districts that agreed to participate in this study include three elementary schools, four middle/junior high schools, and three high schools. Over the past year, more than 30 site visits to district offices and individual schools were conducted for the purpose of data-gathering activities—especially intensive, open-ended, and focused interviews. Respondents included superintendents, associate superintendents, curriculum coordinators, building principals, deans, department chairs, grade-level chairs, and district curriculum committee members.

In addition to the longitudinal case studies, thirteen site visits and twelve telephone interviews were conducted with “best practice” schools for the purpose of identifying successful strategies for ILS implementation. Best practice schools were selected on the basis of extremely high implementation scores on the Survey of Practitioners. Data gathering activities on site visits included interviews with principals, teachers, and parents; classroom observations; and document review.

This report summarizes findings and offers recommendations based on the first three years of operation. Descriptions of procedures used and detailed findings are included in the two reports that follow this summary.

Findings

In this section, findings from both the Qualitative Study and the Survey of Practitioners are summarized:

Implementation Has Increased from a Year Ago, and as a State, Illinois Is Entering Level Three Implementation.

There was an increase in implementation activities of districts and schools during the past year—a finding confirmed by both the qualitative and quantitative components. From the survey data, it appears that forty-three percent of the responding schools were judged by their teachers to be in Level Three, the third stage of implementation as described by our five-stage model. This represents a 26% increase from 2000. Level Three is defined as “Transition to an ILS-Led System.” It is characterized by:

- Established plans, policies, and timelines for ILS implementation that are well known at district, school, and classroom levels;
- Apparent linkages between district curriculum and ILS;
- Teachers and administrators who are convinced that ILS are the “way to go” to improve student learning;
- Widespread ILS impact on teaching, lesson planning, evaluation of student work, textbook selection, resource allocation, and professional development;
- University preservice and continuing education programs that incorporate ILS;
- Evidence that new academic programs and policies are shaped by ILS;
- Beginning student awareness of ILS; and
- Beginning community awareness of ILS.

Although 57% of the schools surveyed (down from 83% in 2000) received an average score that placed them within Level Two Implementation (Awareness and Exploration of an ILS-Led System), their scores on several dimensions of implementation reflected Level Three practice. For example, among Level Two schools, the dimensions of Curriculum Development ($M = 3.03$), District/School Infrastructure ($M = 3.01$), and Professional Development ($M = 3.25$) were all

reflective of Level Three practice. Furthermore, between 2000 and 2001, mean levels of implementation increased significantly ($p < .05$) across all dimensions except Community/Stakeholder Involvement. No schools fell into Level One Implementation, nor were there any schools at Levels Four and Five.

Elementary and middle schools exhibited similar levels and patterns of implementation, with middle schools showing significant increases in implementation from 2000. High schools, although still showing lower implementation than the other levels, made the largest increase in implementation during the last year, substantially closing the gap that had existed. Survey data suggest that even the most resistant schools (as defined by measures of will and capacity) are responding to the ILS initiative and making progress.

These findings would seem to indicate that, statewide, schools have made considerable progress toward implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards during the past year. Most schools in the state are exhibiting strong evidence of transition to a standards-led system (Level Three) in most, if not all dimensions of implementation. In Level Three schools, standards are well known and accepted by most teachers and administrators as an effective means to raise student performance. Teachers have spent considerable time aligning district curriculum with ILS and have begun to change what and how they teach in consideration of the content and performance standards. In Level Three schools, most teachers are involved in implementation, and ILS serves as the basis for academic programs and personal evaluation. This is evident in lesson planning and textbook selection. While substantial changes in student learning are not detectable, teachers are beginning to reference ILS in their assessments and reports of student progress. Professional development concerning ILS implementation is available to and accessed by teachers and administrators in Level Three schools. Students and parents are developing an awareness and an understanding of ILS.

In contrast to last year, when ILS implementation was characterized at Level Two, in the past year, a substantial proportion of schools have moved from initial exploration of ILS and limited consideration of ILS in planning, programming, and policy making to the current context in which

ILS are evident, accepted, and clearly influencing much of what is going on in schools and classrooms.

The emphasis on standards throughout the P-16 system seems to be increasing as institutions of higher education were perceived to be playing a larger role in professional development on standards implementation for teachers and administrators. However, we found only limited evidence indicating that colleges and universities were expanding their role in standards implementation to include consideration of ILS in undergraduate admissions, preservice training programs, or outcomes assessment.

Professional Development, Curriculum Development, and District/School Infrastructure Are the Most Highly Implemented Dimensions. Instruction and Affective Response Also Reflect Level Three Implementation.

As evidenced by both survey findings and case study results, the predominant implementation activities were teacher professional development concerning ILS, curricular alignment, and integration of ILS into district or school policies and procedures. The case studies revealed that as teachers and administrators had more time to interact with ILS and with each other, they developed greater ownership of and more positive attitudes toward ILS. This was substantiated by the survey findings in terms of significant increases in the Affective Response domain, which represents teachers' attitudes toward and motivation to implement ILS. Both survey and qualitative results indicated that ILS were having a greater impact on instruction and assessment at the classroom level than in previous years. More than 74% of teachers reported that curricular change was occurring in their schools as a result of ILS implementation. Teachers also reported that ILS were becoming more central to lesson planning and personnel evaluation. Teachers associated the adoption of the following with ILS implementation: expansion of after-school tutoring (36%), increased summer school options (28%), and block scheduling (20%). Although changes in student learning and assessment were not yet at the level of curricular and instructional changes, increases were seen in this dimension as well.

Community and Stakeholder Involvement Is Low at All Levels, Though It Has Increased from 1999.

Survey and qualitative data revealed that community and stakeholder involvement in ILS implementation was low (Level One) at all levels (elementary, middle, high, and special). Respondents indicated that parents, school boards, and the community had only minimal awareness and understanding of the ILS and limited access to information and educational opportunities about them. In cases in which parents and the community were meaningfully involved in standards implementation at the local level, we found that the school staff often used grade-level objectives or some other translation of ILS to make the standards more accessible.

At This Time, No Significant, Statistical Relationship Can Be Detected Between Changes in ISAT Performance and Changes in ILS.

Although significant progress has been made in the past year, it has become clear that implementation of ILS takes a good deal of time. Such implementation is not likely to proceed in isolation from other school improvement efforts. Therefore, disentangling the unique contribution of ILS to improving student learning will likely be a near impossibility in a study of this scope and duration.

Nevertheless, a strong systemic focus on curriculum and instructional issues would lead one to expect such efforts to show up first in widespread changes in teacher behaviors and practices and, eventually, in student performance. Data from both the survey and the case studies show that teachers and principals from across the state are using state learning standards to focus and give meaning to their school improvement efforts. Teachers report that ILS are impacting professional development, curriculum selection, instructional approaches, scheduling, and classroom assessment practices. Although we have yet to detect a significant statistical relationship between ILS implementation and changes in ISAT scores and may never be able to do so, anecdotal information and teachers' perceptions suggest that such a relationship does exist and is growing stronger.

Advanced Implementers of ILS Can Be Characterized by Ten Themes.

After reading the findings of this study, the obvious question is, “How can we move more schools into higher levels of implementation?” While there is no one formula for standards implementation, we believe that much can be learned from those schools that are farthest along in the implementation process. The case studies of best practice schools identified ten themes that appeared to characterize schools acknowledged as “advanced implementers” of ILS:

1. High levels of teacher involvement in implementation. This involvement went beyond the usual district curriculum committee or school design team membership and work. Nearly all teachers in high implementation schools were a part of the actual work of examining the Illinois Learning Standards and adapting them to the school and its context. High degrees of collaboration, sharing, and communication were hallmarks of these efforts.
2. Ownership of the learning standards. High levels of teacher involvement had the effect of promoting ownership of the standards in advanced implementation schools. Because of their intimate work with defining and refining the standards, the Illinois Learning Standards became “their” standards and were thus seen not as something imposed or mandated from the state but rather as an expression of what a given school believed in and saw as appropriate for their students.
3. Strong professional development activities focused on aligning the learning standards, curriculum, assessment, and instruction. All of the high-implementation schools, at some point, made the decision that substantive investments of time, effort, and resources had to be made in order to implement the standards. Most often this was realized in the dedication of professional development activities and time to devote to learning standards work.
4. Development of assessments to evaluate student progress. Nearly all of the advanced user schools reported developing their own assessments to assess student progress in meeting the learning standards. While ISAT results were seen as important, they were only one way of gauging how well the school was progressing in implementing the learning standards. Local

assessments provided critical information that allowed teachers to assess their own pedagogy and classroom practices in ways that are not possible with ISAT.

5. System-wide alignment to the learning standards. Advanced implementer schools came to understand that their standards-based efforts had to extend beyond limited and narrow curricular concerns. Their standards work extended to and permeated all parts of their educational endeavors, including teacher evaluation, district goals and policies, and individual school improvement plans.
6. Reinterpretation of the learning standards as a school-wide vision of student learning. While high implementation schools all started with curriculum mapping and crosswalks, these were seen only as first steps. Nearly all of the advanced users reinterpreted the Illinois Learning Standards and benchmarks into individual, grade-level learner objectives. This moved the standards from the isolated concern of the “assessment grades” into an arena of shared concern and endeavor for all.
7. Changes in classroom instruction. To a greater or lesser extent, the high implementation schools have acknowledged that the standards auger changes not only in curriculum but also in instruction. There is a greater focus on problem-solving approaches and high-order thinking and a move away from rote memorization and basic skill drill.
8. Emphasis on continuous improvement. Advanced implementer schools see their efforts at implementation as on-going. To this end, most have developed evaluation procedures and activities to assist them in assessing what works and what doesn't. Thus, the implementation of the standards have become integrated into the school and district and are seen as defining school and district-level work.
9. Administrative support. Support at both district and school levels was seen as critical to these efforts. In high implementation schools, district and building administrators not only supplied the initial impetus to begin the implementation work but also provided the requisite resources needed for this work.

10. Building on what's there. All of the advanced implementer schools integrated their implementation of the learning standards with their context. Implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards was not seen as something separate from those activities in which they were already involved; it was seamlessly integrated with other on-going efforts. For example, some schools integrated the standards implementation with their Comprehensive School Reform efforts; others integrated it with their Baldrige work.

Recommendations

In the past, we have advised the state to “stay the course” with regard to ILS implementation. Qualitative and survey findings in Years One and Two of the study indicated that ILS implementation was hindered by a common perception among local educators that “this too shall pass” and the state would abandon standards-based reform as it had so many other reform initiatives. The data from Year Three suggest that the “wait and see” attitude has given way to more enthusiasm for and commitment to ILS. We have learned from our research that standards implementation takes time and demands focused and sustained attention on the part of educators, legislators, the Illinois State Board of Education, and institutions of higher education. If lasting change is to take place, we must stay the course and provide lasting support for change. Taking our own advice—to stay the course—our recommendations remain consistent with last year’s and emphasize concrete, sustained support for ILS implementation to district, school, and community stakeholders.

The State Should Foster and Support Capacity Building at the District Level for Effective Standards Implementation.

System-wide alignment to ILS, strong professional development, emphasis on continuous improvement, and administrative support were all characteristics of advanced implementation schools. These characteristics most often emanated from the district administration and provided the key impetus for school and classroom change. The importance of district-level involvement in standards implementation cannot be underestimated. It seems imperative that state policymakers do not ignore or fail to appreciate the critical role the district level will and does play in implementation.

While the school level may be the main focus of the state accountability measures, districts remain the legal and fiscal agents that oversee and guide schools and school personnel (Goertz, 2000; Massell & Goertz, 2000) and primary consumers of the Illinois State Board of Education. Districts are also the major sources of capacity building for schools—coordinating, channeling, and controlling access to professional development, curriculum materials, and new instructional ideas; making critical decisions regarding the quality as well as quantity of school staff; and maintaining and filtering relationships with various external agencies. From a variety of perspectives, districts have a powerful and immediate influence on what happens or does not happen in schools. The schools themselves are likely to need all the assistance they can get in successfully implementing learning standards, and a strong, reciprocal alliance between the state and district levels seems a most providential means of providing this.

We believe there is a strong argument for directing state policy attention and resources toward improving the capacity of districts to manage instructional improvements like standards implementation, because successful implementation of such policies at the school and classroom level will depend, in large measure, on district capabilities. One of the glaring deficiencies of the standards-based reform movement, in general, has been the neglect of systematic professional development for district and building level administrators (Goertz, 2000; Massell & Goertz, 2000).

The State Should Use the Levels of Implementation and the Themes Developed from the Best Practice Schools to Illustrate Specifics of Advanced Implementation at the District, School, and Classroom Levels.

Although considerable numbers of schools have moved from Level Two to Level Three during the past year, very few districts have attained the highest levels of implementation.

From our longitudinal case studies, it seems that some districts and schools simply do not have a clear idea of how to go about effective implementation once they move beyond the basics of curriculum alignment and professional development. Implementation of the learning standards is a highly complex and sophisticated activity that must encompass the district, school, and classroom levels. There is a continuing need to demystify the implementation process as much as possible—to

remove ambiguity, uncertainty, and confusion that is currently evident. Research consistently reports that the most effective and successful reforms provide mechanisms that help each level define, in fairly concrete terms, what they are supposed to do (Hannaway, 1993; Spillane, 1994). The Indicators of Implementation that serve as the basis for this study might serve as a content rubric to judge progress. The ten themes that characterize advanced implementation schools provide benchmarks for schools seeking to increase implementation. The state should disseminate these findings widely and use them as the basis for technical assistance and staff development. For example, our findings indicate that Level Four and Five schools have well developed local assessment systems to measure student progress in the ILS. These local systems consider ISAT results, but only as one source of evidence. Schools seeking to move ahead with ILS implementation can use this finding to analyze and develop their own local assessment, and the state agency should provide technical assistance and professional development support for them to do so.

Model Stakeholder and Community Involvement

Although community and stakeholder involvement in ILS implementation has increased since 1999, it was low in virtually all the schools we sampled. Since community/stakeholder involvement is viewed as a critical element in standards-based reform at both the state and local levels, it continues to be important for the state to demonstrate how parents and other stakeholders can be made aware of and involved in standards implementation. Since best practice schools with high parent involvement often provided parents with “translated” versions of ILS specific to their child’s grade level, we recommend that the state develop “translations” of the ILS for various stakeholder groups, including parents, school board members, and the business community.

Continue to Study the Progress and Impact of Standards Implementation

One thing that the study has shown is that implementation takes time. Three years ago we had no sense of how quickly schools might implement ILS or how much progress we might expect each year. Over the three years of the study, we have seen incremental growth in all the schools in our sample, with approximately 20-25% of the schools advancing into the next level each year. With only one year remaining in this study, we cannot hope to see what “mature” implementation

looks like in Illinois. That may take another 5 years. In fact, given the increase in the rate of implementation that we have seen from Year One to Year Two and Year Two to Year Three, we can assume that the momentum of ILS implementation is on the upswing in Illinois schools. To enable us to fully understand statewide implementation of standards-based educational reform, we recommend that the state agency continue to assess ILS implementation for an additional five year period. Assessment need not be annual, but it should be frequent enough to judge progress and guide state planning, policy making, and assistance to districts.

One objective of this study was to examine the relationship between ILS implementation and ISAT performance using statistical measures of association. Not surprisingly, given the complex nature of student achievement, state assessment, and standards implementation, we have not been able to demonstrate that a statistically significant relationship exists. Our qualitative data suggest, however, that such a relationship does exist and is growing stronger. To more fully explore the complex phenomena of student achievement, we recommend that ISBE conduct a study to identify the “intervenable” factors (including ILS implementation) associated with positive changes in student achievement. There are a number of ways such a study might be done. One of the most promising might be to identify a sample of schools that have experienced significant increases in student achievement and to investigate the factors associated with these changes.

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II. Evaluation of the Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards

Report of the Year Three Survey of Practitioners

Evaluation of the Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards

Report of the Year Three Survey of Practitioners

Overview and Purpose

The report describes the methodology and findings associated with the Year Three administration of the “Survey of Practitioners Evaluating the Implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards” Teacher and Administrator Editions. The Survey of Practitioners was designed to accomplish three purposes:

1. To assess the level of ILS implementation for a random sample of schools across the state as a means of estimating statewide implementation (Teacher Edition);
2. To present a profile of ILS implementation across the seven dimensions represented in the conceptual framework (Teacher and Administrator Editions) and identify factors associated with implementation; and
3. To examine the relationship between ILS implementation and ISAT performance (Teacher Edition).

Methods

Instrumentation

In this section, we will briefly review the development of the conceptual framework that undergirds this study, describe the revisions associated with the current Teacher Survey, and report upon the development of the Administrator Edition.

Development of a Conceptual Framework

The development of the conceptual framework for the study was based initially on the Framework for Standards Implementation developed by the Education Commission of the States (1997). Components of this framework shaped the initial set of questions that served as

the basis for a series of interviews and focus groups across the state. (For a more detailed description of this process, see the previous report, *Report of Year One Evaluation Study of the Implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards: Qualitative Component.*) During these focus groups and interviews, respondents were asked to react to the appropriateness of the expanded framework for evaluation of the implementation of ILS and to add indicators of standards implementation that they thought were valuable.

In this process, we created a set of indicators of ILS implementation and grouped them into seven dimensions: District/School Infrastructure, Curriculum Development, Student Learning and Assessment, Professional Development, Instruction, Affective Response, and Community Awareness.

The final set of indicators was once again shown to several groups of Illinois school administrators for validation. The validated list of indicators is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Indicators of the Implementation of ILS Organized by Seven Dimensions

1. District/School Infrastructure

- Formalized policies and goal-setting
- Established procedures
- Committee structure and assigned responsibilities
- Job assignments of central office personnel
- Clear consequences (both positive and negative) attached to implementation efforts
- Budget development and allocation of resources
- District/school timelines for implementation of learning standards
- District/school improvement plans
- District/school personnel evaluations
- District/school adaptation and alignment of internal norms and systems to the requirements of the state learning standards

2. Professional Development

- School/district inservice programs
- Extent of participation at both district and school levels
- Meeting agendas and topics of discussion

Table 1 (Continued)

- Continuing education units offered
 - Professional conferences and workshops offered and attended
 - Use of external consultants
- 3. Curriculum**
- Locally developed curriculum guides
 - Evaluation and revision of curriculum
 - Curriculum crosswalks
 - Classroom lesson plans
 - Design of special academic programs, e.g., gifted/special education, and/or extra curricular activities
 - Adoption and purchase of curricular materials
- 4. Instruction**
- Classroom context, e.g., posters, bulletin boards, verbal reinforcement, etc.
 - Selection of teaching strategies and instructional practices used
 - Teaching philosophy and beliefs
- 5. Student Learning and Assessment**
- Development of new/alternative forms of classroom assessment
 - Planning and preparation for ISAT and other standardized tests
 - Use of multiple measures of student performance
 - Evaluation of student performance
 - Student awareness of expectations of the learning standards
 - Parent involvement in student learning
 - Feedback provided to students and parents
 - Use of information about student learning/performances
- 6. Affective Responses**
- Engagement in standards work by the district and school leadership teams
 - Acceptance of and familiarity with the learning standards
 - Understanding of the applicability of the learning standards at the classroom level
 - Belief that implementation of learning standards will positively affect student learning outcomes
 - Staff involvement
 - Resolve to implement the learning standards
- 7. Community and Stakeholder Groups**
- Awareness and understanding of the Illinois Learning Standards
 - Availability of information and/or educational experiences for external constituencies.
 - Community participation

The second stage in the development of a conceptual framework was the organization of the indicators into a developmental model. Based on the review of literature and our qualitative data, we developed a five-level model as seen in Table 2. The letters following each indicator show the dimension(s) they represent.

Table 2: The Five Levels of ILS Implementation and Their Corresponding Indicators

<u>Levels</u>	<u>Indicators of Implementation</u>
<p>Level One: Maintenance of a Non ILS-Led System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present educational structure supported (AR) • Resistance to change to accommodate the ILS (AR) • Procedures for implementation of ILS do not exist (DI) • Non standards-based district or school policies and practices drive teaching, evaluation of student learning, professional development, curriculum development, and textbook choice (SL, CD, PD, I) • Lack of awareness and understanding of ILS among educators (PD) • Resistance to the intent of ILS among educators (AR) • Few teachers involved in implementation (DI, AR) • Apprehension and anxiety surrounding standards-based reform (AR) • No community awareness of ILS (CA)
<p>Level Two: Awareness and Exploration of an ILS-Led System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realization developing that change is necessary to improve learning for all students (DI) • Initial distribution and exploration of ILS by educators (DI) • Initial “cross walking” between ILS and district curriculum (DI, CD) • Implementation strategies are developed at district, school, and classroom levels (DI) • Local rationale for the ILS formulated at the district level (DI) • ILS seldom considered in teaching, evaluation of student learning (SL, I) • ILS sometimes considered in professional development, curriculum development, and textbook choice (PD, CD) • ILS are viewed as passing policy and as intruding into current district curriculum (AR) • Information about ILS made available to parents (CA)

Note. AR = Affective Response, PD = Professional Development, SL = Student Learning and Assessment, DI = District Infrastructure, CA = Community Awareness, I = Instruction, CD = Curriculum Development

Table 2 (continued)

<u>Levels</u>	<u>Indicators of Implementation</u>
<p>Level Three:</p> <p>Transition to an ILS-Led System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans, policies, and timelines for implementation in place and well known at district, school, and classroom levels (DI) • Linkages made between district curriculum and ILS (DI, CD) • Educators are convinced by research and practice that ILS is the “way to go” to improve student learning (AR, SL) • ILS beginning to impact teaching, lesson planning, evaluation of student work, textbook selection, resource allocation, and professional development on a widespread basis (PD, TM, CD, SL) • University preservice and continuing education programs incorporate ILS (PD, CA) • Academic programs and personnel are evaluated in terms of the ILS (I, CD) • Most teachers involved in implementation (DI, AR) • Establishment of new academic programs and teaching practices in terms of ILS (I, CD) • Efforts made to adapt ILS to fit school (district) structure (AR) • Dissonance between ILS and district standards/curriculum subsides (AR) • Beginning awareness of ILS among students (SL) • Beginning of a widespread community (school board, PTA, parent, business) awareness of a standards-based system (CA)
<p>Level Four:</p> <p>Emerging New Infrastructure to Support an ILS-Led System</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student performance data used routinely to make instructional and curricular changes (DI, SL, CD) • Support structures and resources for ongoing support of ILS implementation are put into place, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≡ Formalized policies and goal setting (DI) ≡ Committee structures and responsibilities (DI) ≡ Job assignments of central office and building administrators (DI) ≡ Consequences attached to implementation and student performance (DI) ≡ Consultation and continuing education (PD) • Central consideration of the ILS when teachers are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≡ Choosing materials (CD) ≡ Developing local assessments (SL)

Note. AR = Affective Response, PD = Professional Development, SL = Student Learning and Assessment, DI = District Infrastructure, CA = Community Awareness, I = Instruction, CD = Curriculum Development

Table 2 (continued)

<u>Levels</u>	<u>Indicators of Implementation</u>
Level Four (continued):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≅ Evaluating student work (SL) ≅ Choosing teacher inservice or board credit classes (PD) ≅ Lesson planning (I) ≅ Giving feedback (CA) ≅ Evaluated (PD) • Widespread reference to ILS when discussing academic issues among administrators, teachers, and school staff (CA) • Widespread awareness of ILS among students (SL) • Widespread reference to ILS when discussing academic issues with parents and in media (CA)
Level Five: Predominance of an ILS-Led System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous review and improvement of policies, programs, and practices with regard to ILS (DI) • Initial implementation timeline accomplished, and district moves on to second generation of implementation (DI) • On-going curriculum revision based on ILS (CD) • All new program development considers ILS (CD) • Classroom context and practice aligned with ILS (I, CD) • High level of engagement of all staff in implementation of ILS (AR, DI) • Students communicate about their learning in terms of ILS (SL) • ILS figures prominently in higher education admissions policies and procedures (SL) • ILS is the basis for teacher certification (PD) • Enthusiastic teacher and administrator commitment and support of ILS (AR) • Deliberate use of ILS in decision making by parents and community (CA)

Note. AR = Affective Response, PD = Professional Development, SL = Student Learning and Assessment, DI = District Infrastructure, CA = Community Awareness, I = Instruction, CD = Curriculum Development

The conceptual model and the indicators were once again validated with a focus group of local administrators and approved by the Evaluation Advisory Committee in April 1999.

Revised Teacher Survey

The original survey development proceeded directly from the indicators and the five-level model. Individual survey items were developed to represent each of the indicators. The items were designed on a five-point Likert scale, with each point representing a level in the model. Therefore, item scores of “1” were interpreted as indicating “Level One” implementation and so on, up the scale. The original draft survey was piloted and revised in three iterations. The 1999 version of the survey was approved by the Evaluation Advisory Committee in April, 1999. Internal consistency estimates (Cronbach’s alpha) for the Seven Dimensions of Implementation ranged from .86 to .95. Principal Components Analysis supported a seven factor structure. For a more complete description of the validation of the survey, refer to “Evaluation of the Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards: Report on the Year One Survey of Practitioners.”

For the 2000 administration, the original Teacher Survey was revised to improve the respondents’ understanding of the survey items and consequently result in an increase in the number of surveys completed at each school and a clearer interpretation of the data. We clarified the wording of several items and placed the demographics questions at the beginning of the survey. We also grouped items generally according to the teachers’ perspectives of the seven dimensions as described by the 1999 Principal Component Analysis. This process is described below.

Arranged Items According to Seven Dimensions as Perceived by Teachers. To aid in conceptual understanding, we grouped the 2000 Teacher Survey items into three parts. The 2000 Teacher Survey begins with “Part 1, Teaching Method, Curriculum, Assessment, and Teacher Response to ILS.” These items are similar in that they all begin with topics of which the teachers have direct knowledge, such as “I have heard of the ILS,” “ I believe . . . ,” and “I have made

changes in the way I . . . ,” and so forth. The teachers were not given the option to respond “Don’t Know” for this section. The principal component analysis we conducted in 1999 showed that teachers respond to these items similarly, and they load on Principal Components One and Four. “Part II, School Environment” contains items grouped into two principal components: School Infrastructure and Professional Development (Principal Component Two) and Student Performance (Principal Component Seven). Teachers were given the option to respond with “Don’t Know” for these items. The remaining items were placed in “Part III, School/District Administrative Decisions and Community Awareness.” These items grouped dimensions into the remaining three principal components: Community/Stakeholder Involvement (Principal Component Three), School Communications (Principal Component Five), and District Infrastructure (Principal Component Six).

The revised Teacher Survey was piloted in three schools during December, 1999. A copy of the revised Teacher Survey is included as Attachment A. This form was used in 2000 and again in 2001.

Development of Administrator Edition¹

Using the content and format of the Teacher Edition as a model, we constructed parallel forms of the survey for use with principals and other building administrators (Administrator Edition). The purpose of the parallel form was to compare perceptions of ILS implementation across the two groups. The Administrator Edition was piloted in Spring, 1999, revised, and piloted again in December, 2000. A copy of the Administrator Edition is included as Attachment B.

¹ A Superintendents’ Survey was developed and administered in 2000. For more information on the Superintendents’ Survey, see the Year Two Report.

Sample

This year's administration included Teacher and Administrator Editions of the surveys in the same mailing. Consequently, both surveys utilized the same sample of schools. Sampling procedures for Teacher and Administrator Editions are discussed below.

Procedure

State representative sample. Our state representative sample of schools was randomly selected in Year One to represent the population of all public schools in Illinois. Each subsequent year we included the set of schools that had participated in the previous year and added new schools to replace those that had dropped out. The new schools were selected to ensure that the sample continues to be representative of the state. In 2001, we included the 62 schools that participated in the Year Two study, of which 7 were case study schools. We selected 9 additional schools, including 3 new case study schools, to ensure that the sample adequately represented the population of schools in the state in terms of level (elementary, middle, and high), geographic distribution, percent low income, and past ISAT performance. This sample of 71 schools was used to represent the state in determining the level of ILS implementation.

Best practice sample. This year, at the recommendation of the Evaluation Advisory Committee, we added a purposeful sample of 103 schools for identifying best practices in implementing the ILS. Schools in this sample were nominated by superintendents who had reported a total implementation score in the top 20% of the 383 superintendent surveys returned in Year Two of the study. Superintendents in districts that had received the Baldrige Award also were asked to nominate schools for this best-practice sample, since a school district showing high ILS implementation in the qualitative component of this study was likely to be involved in quality management practices. Eighty-eight superintendents were contacted by mail to nominate

schools in their district that exemplified best practices in implementing the ILS. Enclosed with the superintendents' letter was a form to be mailed or faxed back to us with the names of the schools in their districts to be contacted for participation in the ILS implementation survey. Twenty-six superintendents submitted schools. These 103 schools formed the best practice sample and were sent surveys. Survey data from the best practice schools were used only to select schools for site visits and telephone interviews; they were not used to compute state level implementation.

Recruitment

During the first week of February, we contacted the principals of the representative and best practice schools by mail to solicit their participation in the survey. At this time, superintendents of the districts were also notified by mail of the study. Enclosed with the principals' letter was a consent form to be mailed or faxed back to us if they were willing to participate. We began mailing the surveys to the consenting schools in mid-February and continued through March as we obtained the consent forms. Each mailing contained Teacher Edition surveys for all teachers in the school and one Administrator Edition for each administrator in the school, along with a business reply envelope for each participant. We telephoned up to three reminders to schools that had not responded and continued data collection through June 15.

Response Rate

Teacher Survey. In the representative sample, we received permission from 61 schools (85.9% of schools sampled) representing 2,422 teachers and 136 principals, including 10 case study schools. A total of 845 Teacher Surveys (34.9 % of teachers sampled) were returned and analyzed. There were 414 surveys returned from high schools, 195 from middle schools, and 236 from elementary schools. The demographics of the survey respondents were comparable to those

of schools in the initial sample and the state as a whole. It should be noted that this is a longitudinal sample; that is, the same set of schools has been asked to participate each year for three years. When a school declined participation, it was replaced by a matched school, which then became part of the longitudinal sample. The attrition and response rates were typical of those in a longitudinal survey study. Although just slightly more than a third of the teachers surveyed responded, valid school-level scores were obtained for all 61 schools that participated in the survey (see p. 12 for a description of the requirements for a valid school-level score).

Administrator Survey. In the statewide sample, a total of 49 Administrator Surveys (36.0 % of administrators sampled) were returned and suitable for analysis. Twenty-one Administrator Surveys were analyzed from high schools, 10 from middle schools, and 18 from elementary schools.

Analysis of Teacher Survey

This section describes the statistical methodology used to address the three purposes of inquiry (p. 1) using the responses on the Teacher Edition of the survey from the representative sample of schools. Methods used to analyze Administrator Surveys are also discussed in this section.

Assessing ILS Implementation at the State Level

The extent to which the ILS were implemented in each school was assessed according to the responses on the Teacher Edition of the survey. Each school was assigned a level of implementation by first using a two-stage averaging procedure. Recall that the survey was written with responses for each question scaled from “1” (no ILS implementation) to “5” (predominance of an ILS-led system). In the first stage, we used this scale to derive an implementation value reported by each of the 845 teachers in our data set. To derive this value,

we simply averaged all item responses for each teacher questionnaire. We obtained a school average by averaging the implementation value for all teachers in a school.²

In the second stage of the averaging procedure, the school average was then truncated to the ones place, providing a single value to represent the ILS implementation level for that school. Schools with a truncated mean of 1 were assigned to Level One implementation; those with a truncated mean of 2 were assigned Level Two implementation, and so on. This represents a very conservative means of estimating level of implementation.

Presenting a Profile of ILS Implementation Across the Seven Dimensions Represented in the Conceptual Framework and Factors Associated with Implementation

Seven dimensions affecting level of ILS implementation are described in Table 1. Survey items were assigned to each of the seven dimensions on the basis of content and principal components analysis. The item responses provided information about the level of implementation the teachers and administrators perceived for the seven dimensions.

An average for each of the seven dimensions was derived for each school using a two-stage averaging procedure. First, we derived a value for the seven dimensions for each of the 845 teachers in our survey by averaging all item responses within the seven dimensions for each teacher survey. Next, we averaged the teacher values for each school, resulting in an average value for each of the seven dimensions for each school.

The school dimension averages were used to derive a grand mean for each of the seven dimensions for the entire state representative sample.

Responses from the objective questions relating to factors associated with implementation were summarized using descriptive statistics. Open-ended responses were transcribed and analyzed using major theme identification.

² Schools with less than 10% of teachers reporting or fewer than five surveys returned were excluded from analysis.

Determining the Effect of Will and Capacity on ILS Implementation. We also explored will and capacity issues regarding ILS implementation. The will to implement the ILS was defined by the questions attributed to the Affective Response dimension and the additional survey question asking the extent to which the respondent had heard of the ILS. The capacity to implement was defined by all other survey questions.

Averages for will and capacity issues were derived for each school using the same two-stage averaging procedure used to analyze the seven dimensions. We first derived two values for each of the 845 teachers who responded, one representing the will dimension for each teacher and the other representing the capacity dimension. To derive this value, we simply averaged all item responses within the will dimension and all the item responses within the capacity dimension for each teacher survey. We averaged the teacher will and capacity values for all teachers in a school to obtain school scores.

The averages for each school were used to derive grand means of will and capacity issues for the entire sample. High will and capacity was defined as scoring above the grand mean. Low will and capacity was defined as scoring below the grand mean.

Examining the Relationship Between ILS Implementation and ISAT Performance

The method we have developed to derive the relationship between ISAT scores and ILS implementation levels includes only schools that participated in both the 2000 and the 2001 surveys.

The 2000 and 2001 sample included 45 schools and represented 432 teachers. Table 3 shows the number of schools and the 2000 ILS implementation average for each school type for schools in the ILS/ISAT sample. The matched sample means by level do not differ significantly from those of the full sample (p. 19, Table 5). In Year Three, we compared changes in ISAT

Table 3: Number of Schools and 1999-2001 Average ILS Implementation for ILS/ISAT Sample by School Type (N = 44)

Level	N	Implementation Score					
		1999		2000		2001	
		Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.
High School	12	2.09	(.24)	2.43	(.44)	2.62	(.32)
Middle School	9	2.61	(.34)	2.79	(.31)	2.94	(.15)
Elementary	23	2.68	(.34)	2.85	(.42)	2.85	(.34)
Overall	44	2.51	(.41)	2.72	(.44)	2.80	(.32)

scores to changes in average ILS implementation scores using correlation and regression techniques. This method controls for differences in the rate of ILS implementation for schools with dissimilar characteristics, such as past academic performance.

Analysis of Administrator Survey

Procedures used to analyze data from the Administrator Survey were the same as those used for the Teacher Survey (see preceding section). Comparisons were made across Teacher and Administrator Survey results to assess similarities in perceptions of ILS implementation across the two groups and discuss the implications for technical assistance or other ISBE action.

Results of the Teacher Survey

Assessing Levels of ILS Implementation

Implementation Has Increased Significantly in the Past Year, with a Large Percentage of Schools Moving into Level Three

As shown in Table 4, which follows, 57.4% of the schools in the survey were judged by 600 teachers to be in Level Two, the second stage of implementation as described by our five-level model.

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage of Schools by Level of Implementation—Teacher Survey (N = 61 schools), 2001

Level of Implementation	Number of Schools	Percent of Schools
Level One	0	0
Level Two	35	57.4
Level Three	26	42.6
Level Four	0	0
Level Five	0	0
Total	61	100

Level Two is defined as “Awareness and Exploration of an ILS-Led System.” It is characterized by:

- A developing realization that change is necessary in the present system in order for improvement in learning to occur for all students;
- Initial distribution and exploration of ILS by teachers and administrators;
- Beginning discussions and development of implementation strategies at the district, school, and classroom levels;
- Formulation of rationale and procedures for introducing ILS to parents and community members;
- Minimal consideration of ILS in instruction, evaluation of student learning, and communication with parents;
- Some consideration of ILS in professional development, curriculum development, and textbook choice;
- View of state standards as passing policy and possible intrusion into district standards or curriculum; and
- Establishment of parent and community group information sessions.

Forty-three percent of the schools we surveyed, representing 245 teachers, were in the Level Three Implementation: Transition to an ILS-Led System. These schools were characterized by:

- Established plans, policies, and timelines for ILS implementation that are well known at district, school, and classroom levels. School/District infrastructure adapts to ILS.
- Linkages between district curriculum and ILS. Dissonance subsides.
- Teachers and administrators who are convinced that ILS are the “way to go” to improve student learning.
- Widespread ILS impact on teaching lesson planning, evaluation of student work, textbook selection, resource allocation, and professional development.
- University preservice and continuing education programs that incorporate ILS.
- Program and personnel evaluation that reflects ILS.
- New academic programs and policies shaped by ILS.
- Beginning student awareness of ILS.
- Beginning community awareness of ILS.

There were no schools in Level Four or Five Implementation.

As shown in Figure 1 on page 17, there has been a significant increase of 25% (from 18% to 43%) of schools in Level Three Implementation from a year ago. Figure 2 on page 18 compares mean implementation scores for 1999, 2000, and 2001 by school type as shown in Table 5. Elementary, middle, and high schools all demonstrated a significant increase in average ILS implementation from 2000 to 2001. High schools showed the largest increase, almost a full standard deviation from the previous year. Across the total sample of schools, there was a significant increase in ILS implementation from 1999 to 2000 and from 2000 to 2001.

Figure 1
Percent of Schools by Level of Implementation, 1999-2001
All Schools in Survey

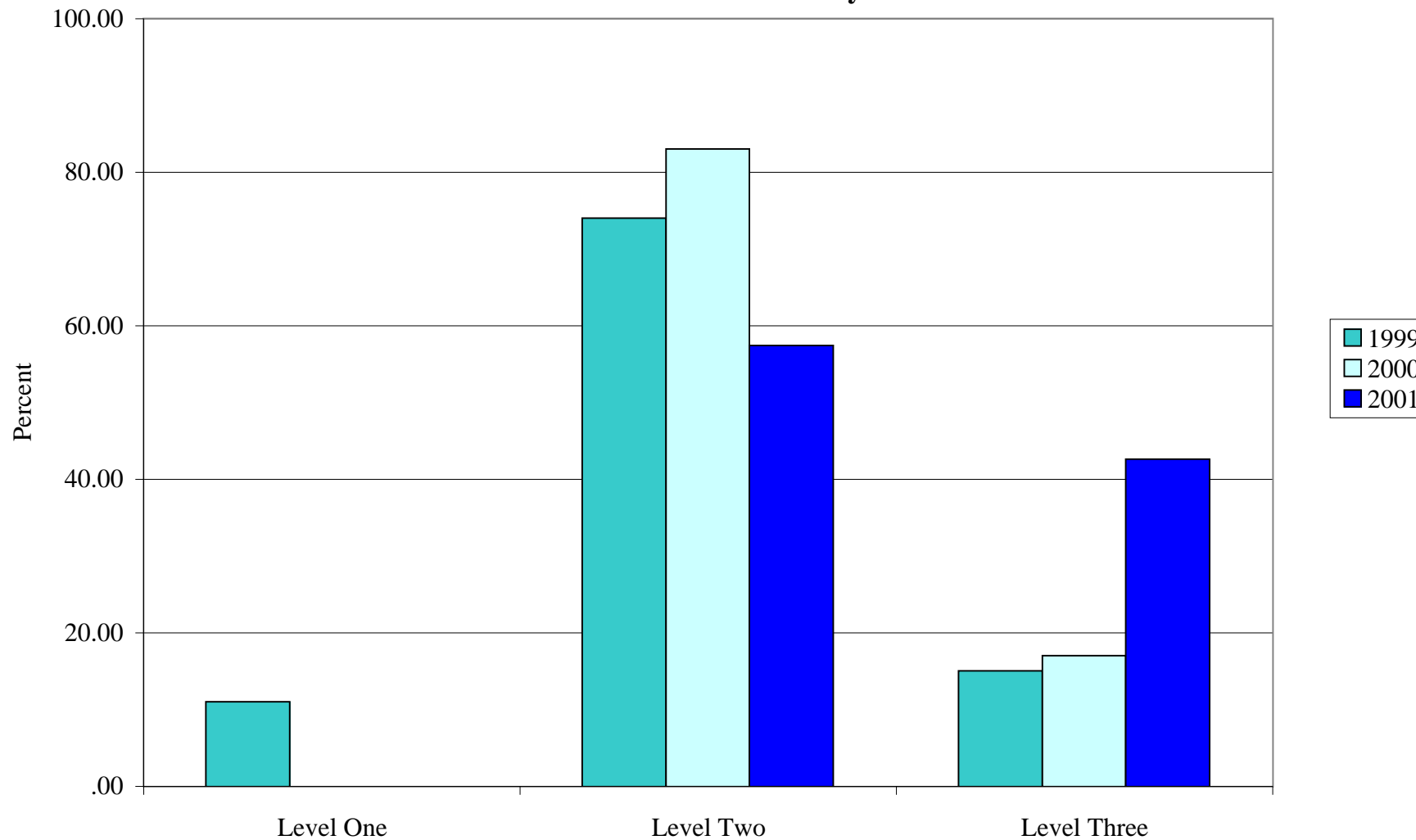


Figure 2
Average ILS Implementation Levels, 1999-2001
By School Type
All Schools in Survey

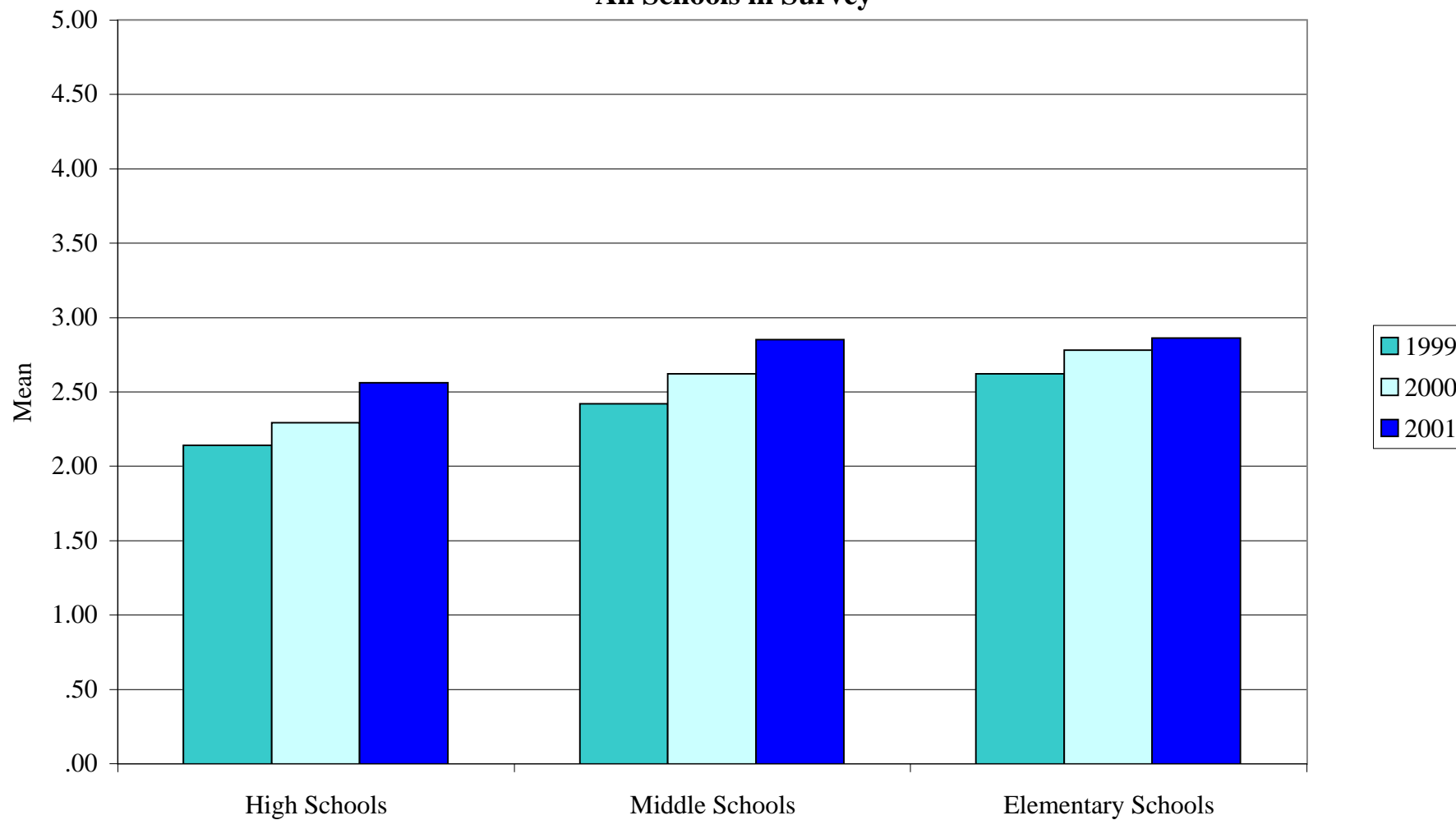


Table 5: Comparison of Average ILS Implementation Scores from Spring 1999, Spring 2000, and Spring 2001 by School Type

	Average ILS Implementation					
	1999 N = 1268		2000 N = 910		2001 N=845	
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.
High Schools*	2.16	.32	2.29	.26	2.56	.34
Middle Schools***	2.43	.41	2.62	.35	2.85	.30
Elementary Schools***	2.63	.40	2.77	.39	2.86	.36
Total**	2.44	.43	2.61	.40	2.77	.36

*indicates significant increase from 2000 to 2001, @ p A.05

**indicates significant increase from 1999 to 2000 and from 2000 to 2001, @ p A.05

***indicates significant increase from 1999 to 2001, @ p A.05

Presenting Profiles of ILS Implementation Across Seven Dimensions and
Factors Associated with Implementation

The Profile of ILS Implementation Reveals a Strong Emphasis on Professional Development, Curriculum, and District/School Infrastructure

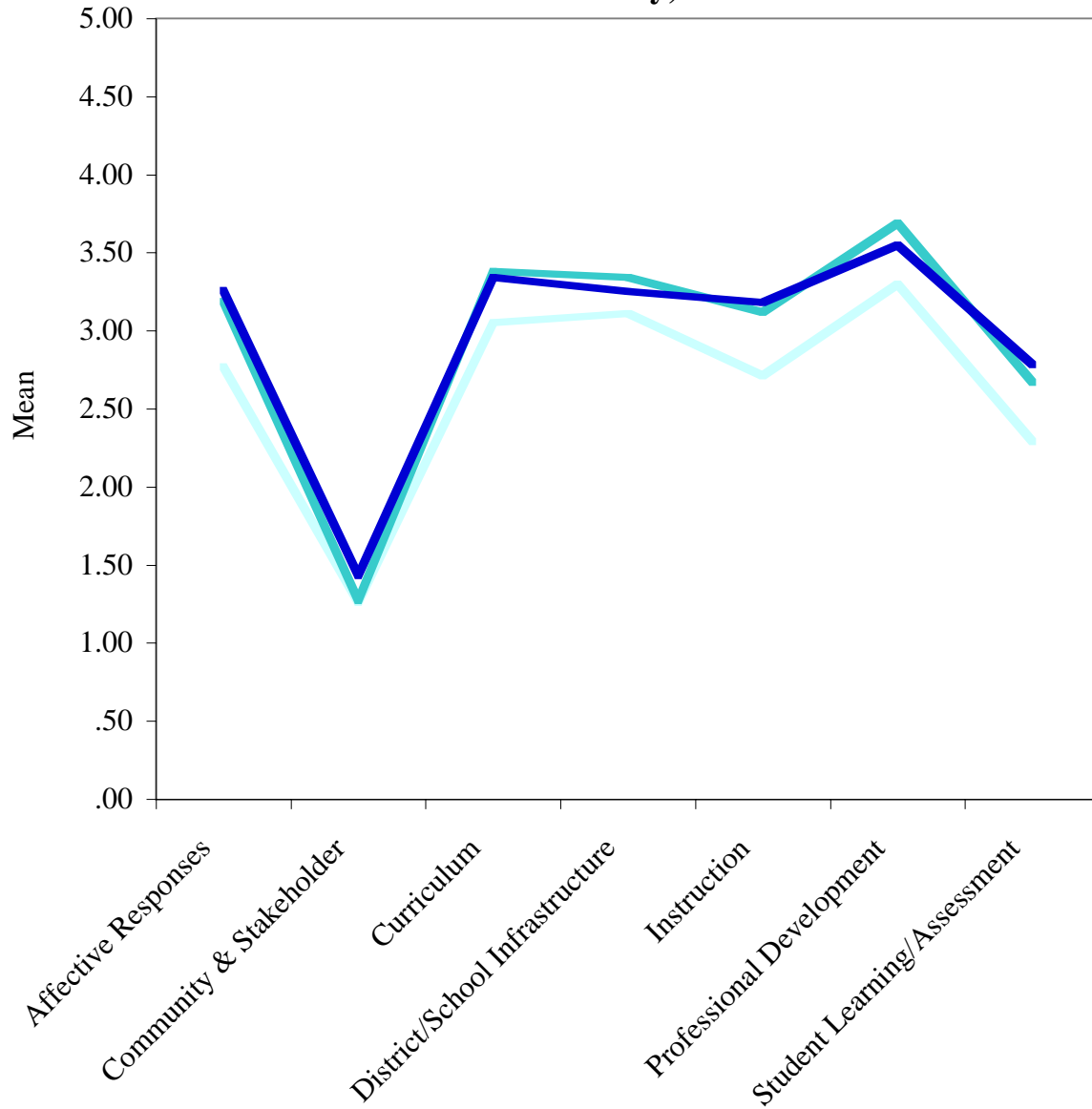
In order to conduct a more detailed analysis of patterns of ILS implementation across the state, we developed profiles using the seven dimensions of implementation: Affective Response, Community/Stakeholder Involvement, Curriculum Development, District/School Infrastructure, Instruction, Student Learning and Assessment, and Professional Development. In Table 6, these are further disaggregated by school level: elementary, middle, and high. The results are presented graphically in Figure 3, page 21.

Table 6: Summary of Mean Scores for the Seven Dimensions of Implementation by School Type Based on the Results of the Teacher Survey (N = 845), 2001

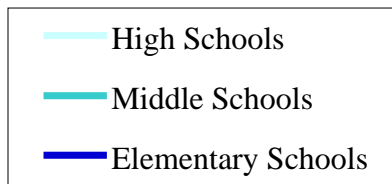
Dimension	Elementary (N = 236)	Middle (N = 195)	High (N = 414)	Total (N = 845)
Affective Response	3.26 (0.39)	3.19 (0.41)	2.77 (0.32)	3.11 (0.43)
Community/Stakeholder Involvement	1.43 (0.47)	1.27 (0.42)	1.26 (0.41)	1.34 (0.44)
Curriculum Development	3.34 (0.43.34)	3.38 (0.39)	3.05 (0.41)	3.27 (0.39)
District/School Infrastructure	3.25 (0.49)	3.34 (0.36)	3.11 (0.47)	3.24 (0.45)
Instruction	3.18 (0.44)	3.12 (0.43)	2.71 (0.28)	3.04 (0.45)
Professional Development	3.55 (0.46)	3.69 (0.35)	3.30 (0.45)	3.52 (0.45)
Student Learning and Assessment	2.78 (0.45)	2.67 (0.29)	2.29 (0.31)	2.62 (0.42)
Total Implementation	2.86 (0.36)	2.85 (0.30)	2.56 (0.34)	2.77 (0.36)

Across levels, Professional Development, Curriculum Development, and District/School Infrastructure were the most highly implemented dimensions, scoring well into Level Three. Most schools appear to be emphasizing standards implementation in their professional development activities. They have revised or aligned curriculum to the ILS and have established district and school policies and procedures that support ILS implementation. Perceptions of implementation in the area of Instruction were lower than Professional Development, District School Infrastructure, and Curriculum Development, but also reflective of Level Three implementation where teachers are considering the ILS in their lesson planning and changing instruction in relation to the ILS. Affective Response, i.e., teachers’ motivation and enthusiasm for the standards, was also indicative of Level Three, as more teachers and administrators are convinced that standards are the “way to go” to improve student learning. Student Learning and

Figure 3
Profiles of Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards for
Elementary, Middle, and High Schools
Teacher Survey, 2001



Seven Dimensions by School Type



Assessment reflected Level Two implementation. At this stage, students are beginning to become aware of the ILS, and teachers are beginning to design classroom assessments reflective of ILS and to use multiple measures of student performance. It appears that the changes we see in curriculum and instruction have yet to fully impact student learning and how it is assessed. Community/Stakeholder Involvement, which was uniformly low, will be discussed in a later section.

The Implementation Gap is Closing for Elementary, Middle, and High Schools

In previous years, elementary schools scored higher than either middle schools or high schools in terms of ILS implementation. As can be seen in Figure 3, elementary and middle schools are virtually identical in their implementation profiles. High schools, though lower in implementation, had the largest increase in implementation of the three groups (Figure 2).

Profiles are Similar for Level Two and Three Schools

In general, the profile of implementation is similar for Level Two and Level Three Schools, with higher ratings in Affective Response, Professional Development, District/School Infrastructure, Instruction, and Curriculum, more moderate activity in Student Learning and Assessment, and low Community/Stakeholder Involvement. This suggests that there are not substantive differences in implementation between Level Two and Level Three schools. Their pattern of implementation is the same; they are just at different levels of activity. Given this finding, it is likely that Level Two schools will become Level Three schools with further work.

Table 7, which follows, presents profiles of schools at each level of implementation, using the seven dimensions. Figure 4 on page 24 presents the same findings graphically.

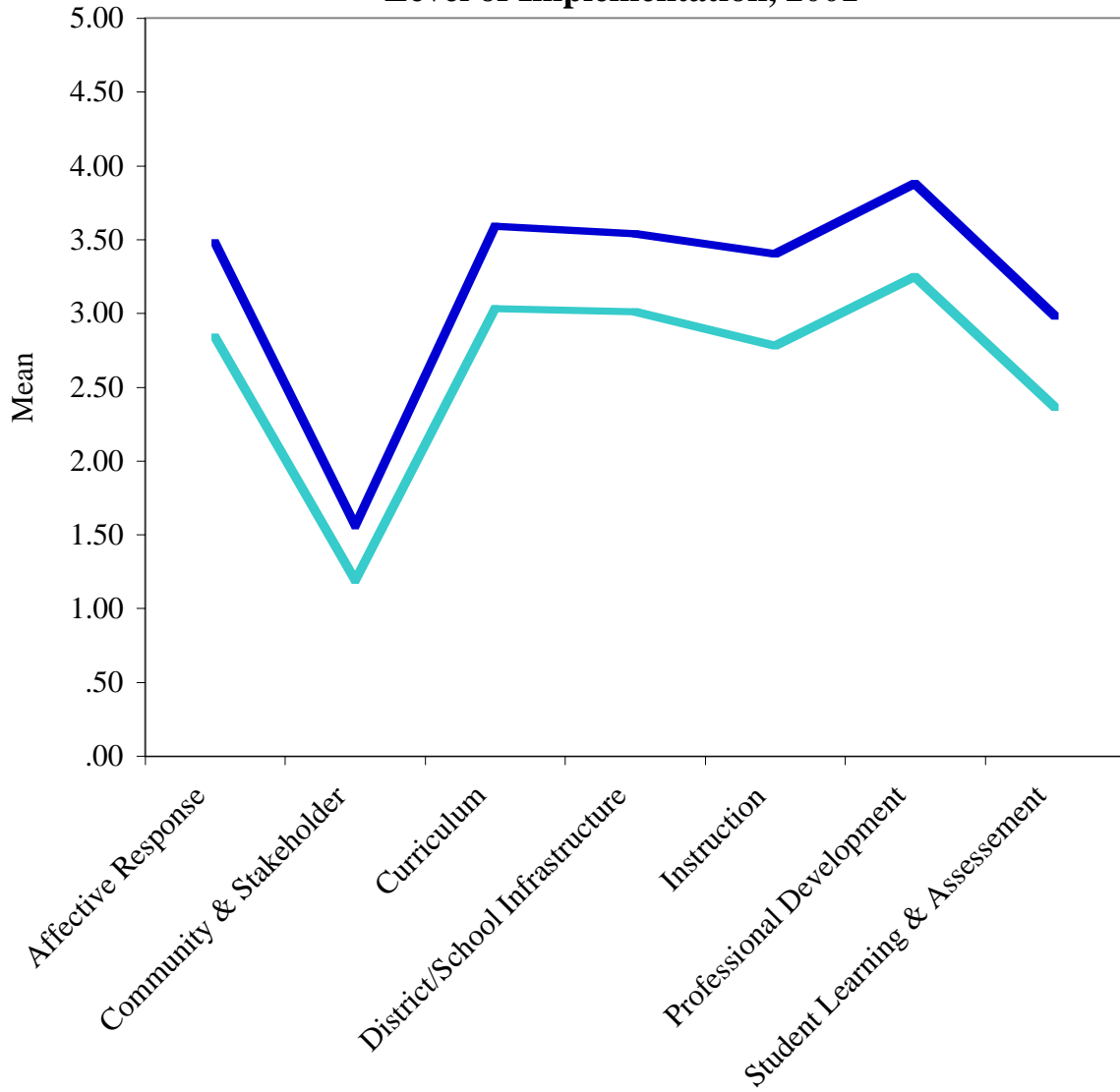
Table 7: Summary of Mean Scores for the Seven Dimensions by Level of Implementation Based on the Results of the Teacher Survey (N = 845), 2001

Dimension	Level One	Level Two N = 600	Level Three N = 245	Total Sample N = 845
Affective Response	-	2.84 (0.31)	3.48 (0.27)	3.11 (0.43)
Community/Stakeholder Involvement	-	1.18 (0.34)	1.56 (0.47)	1.34 (0.44)
Curriculum Development	-	3.03 (0.32)	3.60 (0.20)	3.27 (0.39)
District/School Infrastructure	-	3.01 (0.43)	3.54 (0.28)	3.24 (0.45)
Instruction	-	2.78 (0.29)	3.40 (0.36)	3.04 (0.45)
Professional Development	-	3.25 (0.37)	3.88 (0.25)	3.52 (0.45)
Student Learning and Assessment	-	2.36 (0.27)	2.98 (0.32)	2.62 (0.42)
Total Implementation	-	2.54 (0.26)	3.10 (0.19)	2.77 (0.36)

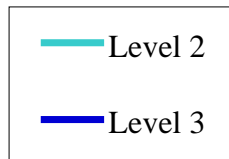
Community and Stakeholder Involvement Is Exceedingly Low

Survey and qualitative data revealed that community and stakeholder involvement in ILS implementation was quite limited. In Level Two schools, respondents indicated that parents, school boards, and the community had little awareness and understanding of the ILS and limited access to information and educational opportunities about them. Level Three schools had significantly higher involvement, but it still lagged behind the other dimensions. In both the Survey and Qualitative Component, we found only a few examples in which parents and the community were meaningfully involved in standards implementation at the local level.

Figure 4
Profiles of Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards for All
Schools Grouped by
Level of Implementation, 2001



Seven Dimensions by Level of Implementation



In the site visits to high implementation schools it was noted that parents had a higher awareness and understanding of grade level expectations, learning outcomes, and objectives than was apparent in the representative sample. These grade level objectives, which were measured and evaluated through district-developed evaluations and/or commercial standardized tests, were tied to the ILS at all schools in which they were present. However, parents were much more interested in grade level objectives (as opposed to ILS) because the objectives were a much more immediate and direct way of representing what their child was doing in school. In general, it seems that even in schools where the ILS are mentioned at conferences and in newsletters, parents find grade level or other “translated” versions of ILS more meaningful. Representing ILS in a way that is meaningful to parents enhances their awareness and involvement.

ILS Implementation has Increased Across Most Dimensions from 2000 to 2001

Figure 5 on page 26 compares the mean scores for each dimension for two time periods, Spring 1999, Spring 2000, and Spring 2001. As shown in Table 8 on page 27, mean levels of implementation increased significantly ($p < .05$) between 1999 and 2000 and again between 2000 and 2001, except in the dimensions of District/School Infrastructure and Community/Stakeholder Involvement. Between 1999 and 2000, the largest differences were seen in the dimensions of Curriculum, Instruction, and Professional Development. Between 2000 and 2001, the most significant changes were Affective Response, Instruction, Professional Development, and Student Learning and Assessment. This is consistent with the transition from Level Two to Level Three. As linkages between district curriculum and ILS are strengthened, more teachers learn about ILS and become involved in implementation, and ILS significantly impacts Professional Development and Instruction.

Figure 5
Average ILS Implementation Levels, 1999-2001
by Seven Dimensions
All Schools in Survey

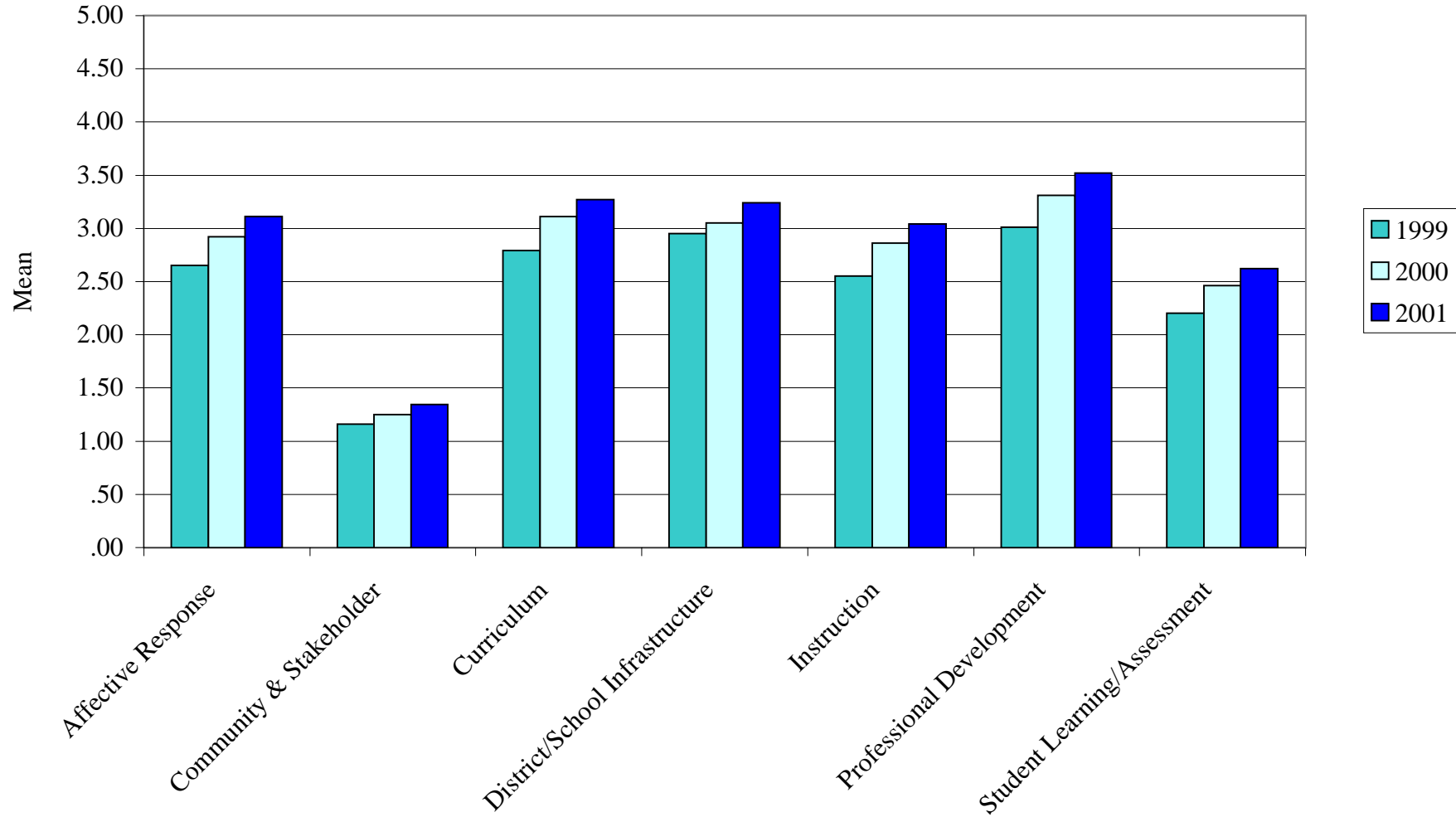


Table 8: 1999-2001 Comparison of Average ILS Implementation by Dimension, Teacher Survey

Dimension	ILS Implementation					
	1999 N = 1268		2000 N = 910		2001 N = 845	
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.
Affective Response*	2.65	(.44)	2.92	(.46)	3.11	(.43)
Community & Stakeholder***	1.16	(.42)	1.25	(.48)	1.34	(.44)
Curriculum*	2.79	(.50)	3.11	(.44)	3.27	(.39)
District/School Infrastructure**	2.95	(.53)	3.05	(.47)	3.24	(.45)
Instruction*	2.55	(.48)	2.86	(.49)	3.04	(.45)
Professional Development*	3.01	(.63)	3.31	(.49)	3.52	(.45)
Student Learning /Assessment*	2.20	(.44)	2.46	(.45)	2.62	(.42)
Overall*	2.44	(.43)	2.60	(.40)	2.77	(.36)

*Significant increase from 1999 to 2000 and from 2000 to 2001, p A.05.

** Significant increase from 2000 to 2001, p A.05.

***Significant increase from 1999 to 2001, p A.05

Although District/School Infrastructure did not increase significantly from 1999-2000, a significant increase was seen from 2000-2001. From the site visits, we learned that some schools have begun to develop higher order policies and procedures, such as:

- Development of standing committees to analyze student performance in relation to ILS and make curricular changes.
- Alignment of report cards, progress reports, and other feedback to students and parents with ILS.
- Incorporation of ILS into lesson planning and personnel evaluation.
- Articulation of policies and procedures across elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Community/Stakeholder Involvement also did not increase from 1999 to 2000 or from 2000 to 2001, but current levels are significantly higher than in Year One. It appears that local educators are beginning to involve parents and the community members in ILS implementation efforts with positive results, but progress is slow.

Local Will and Capacity Affect Implementation

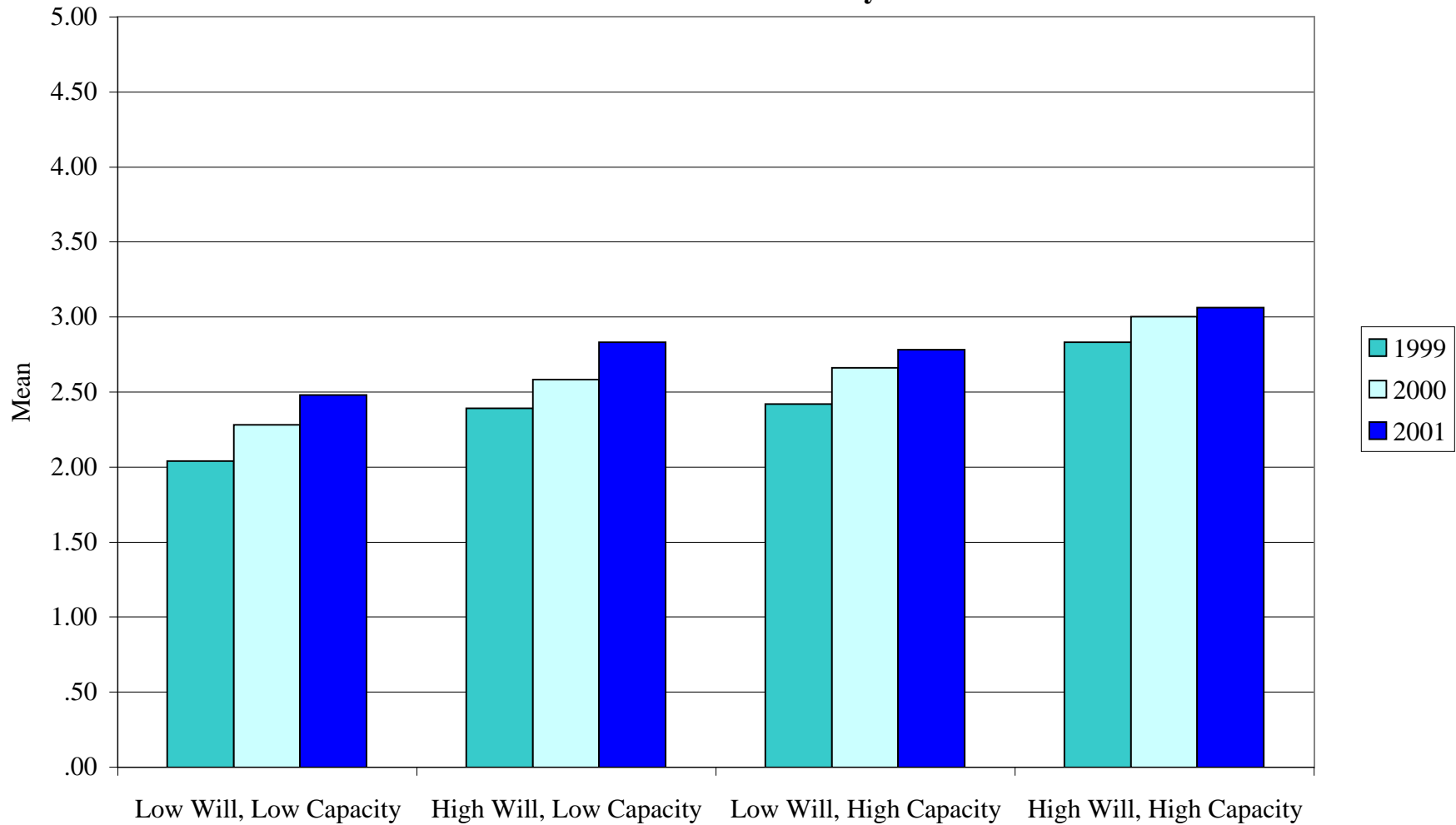
For this analysis, schools were grouped according to their scores on Will and Capacity Dimensions as described on page 14. For example, the 24 schools in the Low Will/Low Capacity category had below average scores for both will and capacity; the 23 schools in the High Will/High Capacity category had above average scores on both dimensions.

In Table 9, mean ILS implementation scores from spring 2001 were compared with those from spring 1999 and 2000 for schools grouped by will and capacity. The same data are presented graphically in Figure 6 on page 29. Although teachers in Low Will/Low Capacity schools reported the lowest implementation in both years, it should be noted that this group demonstrated the largest increase (.30) from 1999 to 2000 and continued to make progress

Table 9: Comparison of Mean ILS Implementation Scores by Will and Capacity Designation and Frequency of Schools in Each Category

Designation	ILS Implementation								
	n	1999 Mean	S.D.	n	2000 Mean	S.D.	n	2001 Mean	S.D.
Low Will/Low Capacity	46	2.04	.24	26	2.34	.17	24	2.48	.27
High Will/Low Capacity	7	2.40	.08	6	2.58	.01	9	2.83	.40
Low Will/High Capacity	7	2.42	.05	7	2.66	.11	5	2.78	.12
High Will/High Capacity	45	2.85	.21	22	3.00	.33	23	3.06	.19
Overall	105	2.44	.43	62	2.60	.40	61	2.77	.36

Figure 6
Average ILS Implementation Levels, 1999-2001
by Will and Capacity Designation
All Schools in Survey



(+ .14) in 2001. This indicates that even the most resistant schools are responding to the ILS initiative and making measurable progress. At the other end of the continuum, teachers in High Will/High Capacity schools reported the highest levels of implementation for both years, but demonstrated the smallest change in implementation. These schools' average implementation was at Level Three in 2000 and showed little increase in 2001. It may be that the institutionalization and incorporation of ILS characteristic of movement to Level Four take longer to achieve than some of the activities associated with Levels One through Three and result in smaller annual change. It may also be that these schools need extra incentives to improve in ILS implementation. Given the small sample size, it is difficult to interpret the trends associated with the Low Will/High Capacity and High Will/Low Capacity groups. However, it is interesting to note that the largest increase from 2000-2001 was made by the High Will/Low Capacity group (+ .25).

Teachers Reported Changes in Practice Related to ILS Implementation

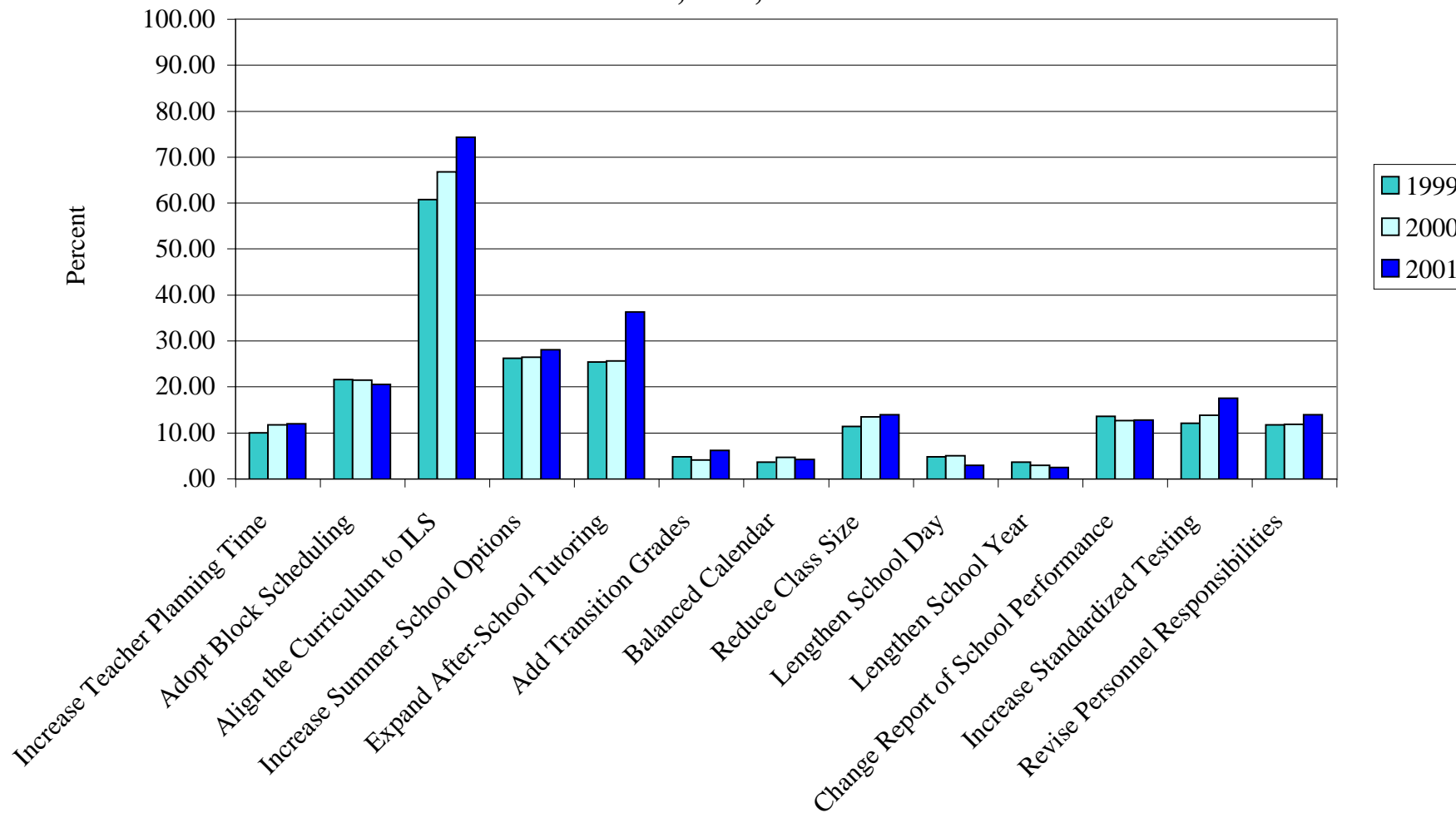
Teachers associated a variety of activities in their schools with the implementation of ILS. As seen in Table 10, which follows, in 1999 and 2000 more than 60% of teachers reported that curriculum was being aligned to ILS in their schools. In 2001, this activity increased noticeably to 74.3 %. However, the activity that saw the largest increase in percentage of teachers reporting from 2000 to 2001 was after-school tutoring (10.7% increase). Other activities associated with ILS implementation reported by more than 20% of teachers included: adopting block scheduling, and increasing summer school options.

Figure 7 on page 32 reports the same information graphically.

Table 10: Percentage of Teachers Indicating Changes in Activities at their Schools Related to ILS Implementation, 1999-2001

Activity	Percentage of Teachers Reporting		
	1999 N = 1268	2000 N = 910	2001 N = 845
Increase Teacher Planning Time	10.0	11.7	11.9
Adopt Block Scheduling	21.5	21.4	20.5
Align the Curriculum to ILS	60.7	66.7	74.3
Increase Summer School Options	26.2	26.4	28.0
Expand After-School Tutoring	25.4	25.6	36.3
Add Transition Grades	4.8	4.0	6.1
Adopt Balanced Calendar	3.6	4.6	4.2
Reduce Class size	11.4	13.4	13.9
Lengthen School Day	4.8	5.0	2.9
Lengthen School Year	3.6	2.9	2.4
Change Report of Student Performance	13.5	12.6	12.7
Increase Standardized Testing	12.0	13.8	17.5
Revise Personnel Responsibilities	11.7	11.8	13.9

Figure 7
Percent of Teachers Indicating Changes in Activities at Their Schools
Related to ILS Implementation
1999, 2000, and 2001



Teachers Reported Increased Availability of Professional Development Regarding ILS from a Wide Variety of Sources

The percentage of teachers who reported that professional development on ILS was available to them increased from 69.2% in 1999 to 76.1% in 2000 and to 78.3% in 2001. Teachers noted a variety of professional development sources as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Percentage of Teachers Reporting Availability of ILS Professional Development by Source, 1999-2001

Activity	Percentage of Teachers Reporting		
	1999 N = 1268	2000 N = 910	2001 N = 845
State-Sponsored Workshops and Inservices	36.5	41.9	48.2
Regional Offices of Education	46.5	46.8	56.3
District-Sponsored Inservices	47.9	54.2	59.3
School-Sponsored Inservices	46.5	57.1	59.2
Outside Consultants	25.2	28.6	33.3
Colleges and Universities	18.8	23.5	32.9
Professional Conferences	35.9	32.9	48.6

The most widely available source of professional development on ILS was school-sponsored inservices, with more than half (59.2%) of all teachers indicating its availability. This source showed the greatest increase from 1999 to 2000 (10.6%) and the smallest increase from 2000 to 2001 (2.1%). From 2000 to 2001, professional conferences saw the largest increase (15.7%), the only activity to show a decline (-3%) the previous year. District- and state-sponsored workshops were also available to a significant percentage of teachers. ROE workshops were available to 56.3% of all teachers reporting, a notable increase of 9.5% over the previous year. Outside consultants, colleges, and universities were available to about a third of the teachers, but this

number once again increased from the previous year, particularly for colleges and universities (9.4% increase), indicating that institutions of higher education are becoming more involved in ILS implementation.

It appears that professional development on ILS is widely available from a variety of sources, and that availability continues to increase.

Examining the Relationship Between ISAT Performance and ILS Implementation

In 2001, the third year of this study, we began an analysis of the relationship between change in school-level ISAT scores and change in school ILS implementation levels. The relationship between ISAT scores and ILS implementation levels could not be derived in the first year of ISAT data availability for two reasons. First, ISAT scores at a given school depend on many variables, including the school's previous academic performance. Schools that have performed well academically in the past have not necessarily implemented the ILS at the same rate as lower performing schools. An inverse relationship between the rate at which different types of schools began to implement the ILS and their prior academic achievement can distort the relationship between ISAT scores and ILS implementation levels. For this reason, we are basing our analysis on changes in ISAT and ILS levels rather than a direct comparison of scores.

During Year Two, most schools had just begun to implement the ILS—a second reason why the relationship between ISAT scores and ILS implementation levels could not be derived after only one year of ISAT data. The modal implementation level for the benchmark year was 2 on a 5-point scale. This created a severely truncated range for the ILS implementation variable, lowering correlations and reducing statistical power. In Year Three, more schools were at Level Three, but the range of implementation was still very small. As ILS implementation increases and more schools enter Levels Three, Four, and Five, it will be more possible to detect any

relationship between ILS implementation and ISAT performance than it is today. Therefore, we expect to repeat the analysis in future years. We will report on our 2001 findings, however.

At This Time, No Relationship Can Be Detected Between Changes in ISAT Performance and Changes in ILS Implementation.

Given the restricted range of ILS implementation, no relationship can be determined between changes in ISAT scores and changes in ILS implementation levels during Year Three. Table 12 illustrates that no significant correlations were found across all subjects and grade levels of the ISAT in a direct correlation of changes in ILS with changes in ISAT scores using a matched sample of schools.

Table 12: Change in ILS (2000-2001)/Change in ISAT (1999-2000) Correlations by Grade and Content Area

Grade	Students	Content Area	Correlation	p
3	All	Reading	-.19	.41
		Math	-.30	.18
	Non-IEP	Reading	-.14	.56
		Math	-.27	.24
5	All	Reading	.22	.32
		Math	.15	.50
	Non-IEP	Reading	.35	.11
		Math	.28	.20
8	All	Reading	.19	.60
		Math	-.15	.68
	Non-IEP	Reading	-.15	.67
		Math	-.17	.64

Regression equations using ILS implementation to predict ISAT score and controlling for poverty and mobility also found no significant relationships.

Results of Teacher and Administrator Comparisons

To gauge the extent to which principals’ perceptions of ILS implementation were consistent with those of teachers, we compared the results of the two groups in terms of level and profile of implementation.

Assessing Levels of ILS Implementation

In General, Principals Reported Higher Levels of ILS Implementation Than Teachers.

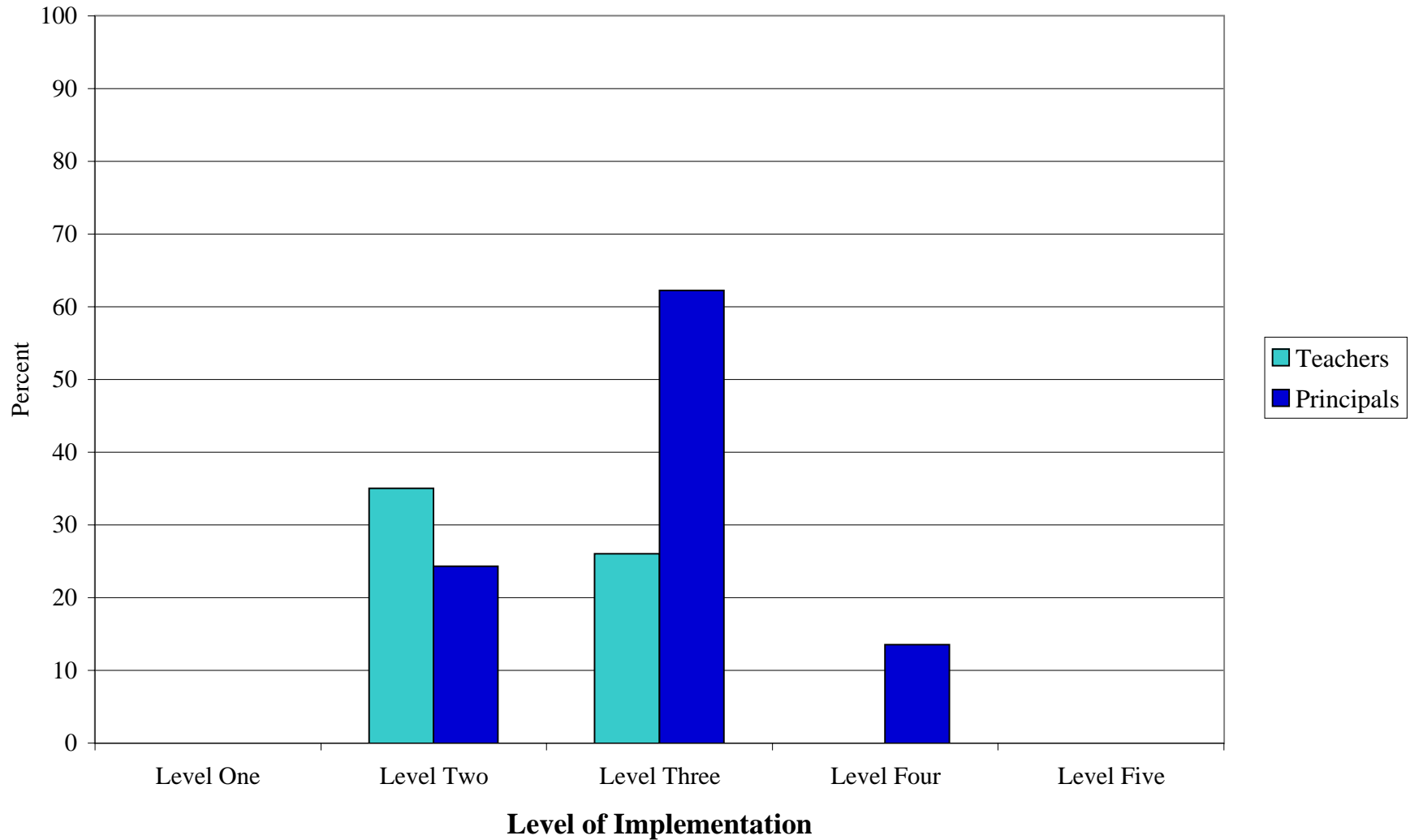
The modal level of implementation, as reported by principals, is shown in Table 13; 62.2% of the principals represented in the survey judged their schools to be in Level Three, the third stage of implementation as described by our five-level model; 24.3% of the schools were judged by their principals to be in the Level Two. Principals reported substantially higher levels of implementation than teachers, for whom the modal level of implementation was Level Two.

Figure 8 on page 37 presents these findings graphically.

Table 13: Percentage of Responses by Levels of Implementation–Teacher and Administrator Surveys, 2001

Level of Implementation	Teachers N = 845	Principals N = 49
Level One	0.0	0.0
Level Two	57.4	24.3
Level Three	42.6	62.2
Level Four	0.0	13.5
Level Five	0.0	0.0

Figure 8
Percent of Responses for Teacher and Principal Surveys by Level of Implementation, 2001



Presenting Profiles of ILS Implementation Across Seven Dimensions

The Profile of ILS Implementation is Similar Across Teachers and Principals

Table 14 presents profiles of implementation for each school level using the seven dimensions. Figures 9 and 10, which follow, present the same findings graphically.

Table 14: Summary of Mean Scores for the Seven Dimensions of Implementation by School Level for Teachers and Principals, 2001

Dimension	Teachers N = 845		Principals N = 49	
	mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.
Affective Response	3.11	(.43)	3.55	(.58)
Community/Stakeholder Involvement	1.34	(.44)	2.14	(.60)
Curriculum Development	3.27	(.39)	3.84	(.49)
District/School Infrastructure	3.24	(.45)	3.80	(.62)
Instruction	3.04	(.45)	3.33	(.67)
Professional Development	3.52	(.45)	3.78	(.62)
Student Learning and Assessment	2.62	(.42)	3.13	(.61)
Overall	2.77	(.36)	3.29	(.50)

Despite differences in perception of level of implementation, the profile of implementation is similar across teachers and principals. For both groups, Curriculum Development, Professional Development, and District/School Infrastructure were the most highly rated dimensions. All groups perceived Community /Stakeholder Involvement to be very low.

Figure 9
Average ILS Implementation Levels
Teacher, Principal, and Superintendent Surveys
By Seven Dimensions, 2001

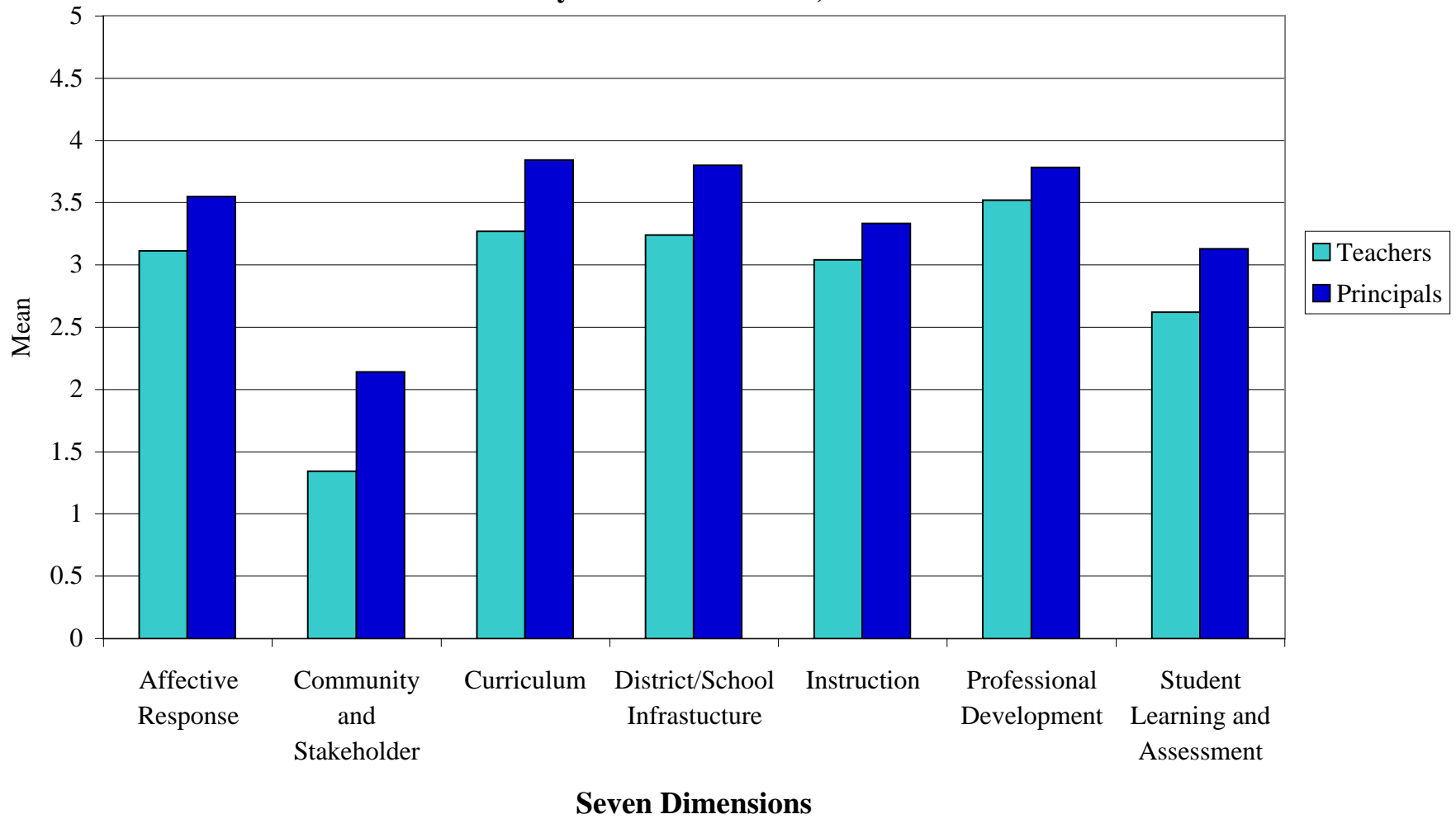
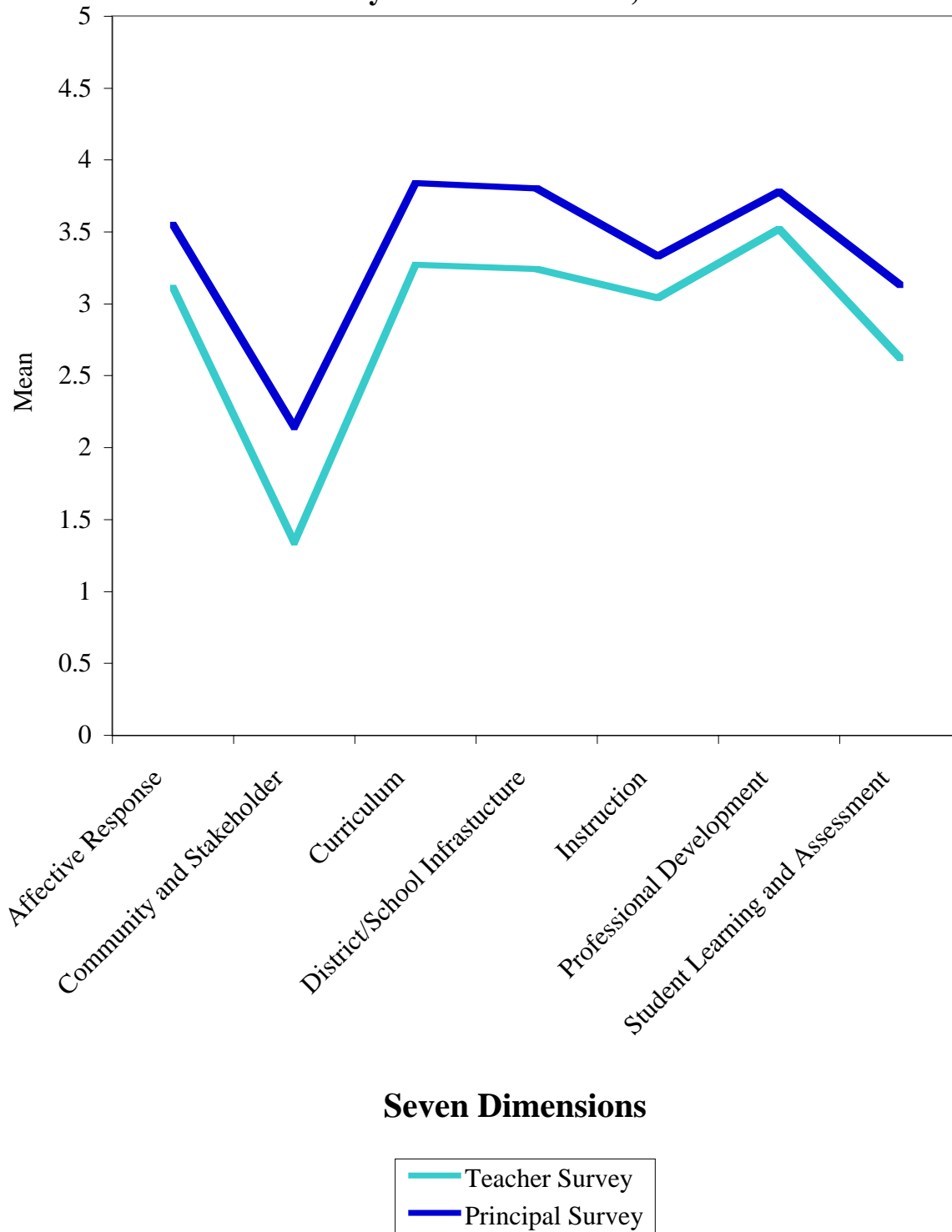


Figure 10
Average ILS Implementation Levels
Teacher and Principal Surveys
By Seven Dimensions, 2001



Summary

Findings from the administration of the 2001 Teacher and Administrator Surveys indicate the following:

- As a state, Illinois appears to be moving out of Level Two implementation (Awareness and Exploration of an ILS-Led System) and into Level Three (Transition to an ILS-Led System), with 43% of the schools now at Level Three.
- Elementary and middle schools exhibit similar levels of implementation. High schools have lower implementation, but are closing the gap, with the largest increase in implementation of the three groups for 2001.
- Professional Development, Curriculum Development, and District/School Infrastructure are the most highly implemented dimensions. Instruction and Affective Response also reflect Level Three Implementation.
- Community and Stakeholder Involvement in ILS implementation is exceedingly low.
- ILS implementation has increased significantly across 6 dimensions from 2000 to 2001. Community involvement did not increase over the past year, although it is significantly higher than in year one.
- Teachers reported changes in practice related to ILS implementation, such as curriculum alignment, adopting block scheduling, increasing summer school options, and expanding after-school tutoring.
- Teachers reported increased availability of professional development regarding ILS from a wide variety of sources.

- At this time, no statistically significant relationship can be detected between changes in ISAT performance and changes in ILS implementation.
- In general, principals reported higher levels of ILS implementation than teachers, although the profile of implementation is similar.

Attachment A

Survey for Evaluating the Implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards

Teacher Edition

**SURVEY FOR EVALUATING THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS
TEACHER EDITION (v3.1)[›]**

The following questionnaire explores the extent to which teachers and administrators are implementing the Illinois Learning Standards (ILS). The Standards were adopted and distributed by the Illinois State Board of Education during the 1997–98 school year. They include:

1. State Goals for Learning in seven learning areas (English & Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Physical Development & Health, Fine Arts and Foreign Languages)
2. Learning Standards for each of the State Goals
3. Learning Benchmarks, which define progress at five developmental levels (early elementary, late elementary, middle or junior high, early high, and late high school) for each Standard.

This survey will be used to derive: 1) the extent to which the Illinois Learning Standards are being implemented, 2) effective strategies for implementation, 3) factors that inhibit or facilitate implementation, and 4) the relationship between implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards and student achievement as measured by the ISAT.

You have been selected to participate in this survey, which should take approximately 25 minutes to complete. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty. You are also free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. The results of the individual surveys will be kept strictly confidential, and your name will never be associated with the survey results. A general summary of the results will be sent to the Illinois State Board of Education for use at the state level. A summary of school results that strictly maintains teacher confidentiality will be sent to principals.

If you have questions, please contact Lizanne DeStefano (destefan@uiuc.edu) George Stanhope (gstanhop@uiuc.edu) at the University of Illinois (217-244-9482). Thank you for your cooperation.

[›] Questions were added to the survey in year three to examine the concept systems perspective, which is hypothesized to be positively correlated to ILS implementation.

Teacher Demographics

Your answers to the following questions will support our analysis of the ILS implementation process. Your responses are completely confidential.

TD0. How many years of teaching experience have you had? _____

TD1. What is the highest degree you have received? Please circle one answer.

- a. Bachelor Degree
- b. Bachelor Degree, plus _____ hours
- c. Masters Degree
- d. Masters Degree, plus _____ credits
- e. Ph.D.

TD2. What grade level(s) do you presently teach? _____

TD3. My primary teaching assignment(s) for this year is (are):

- a. general Elementary School class
- b. English/Language Arts
- c. Mathematics
- d. Science
- e. Social Studies
- f. Special Education
- g. Other (please list) _____

TD4. Is (are) your primary teaching assignment(s) in an area where you hold certification?
_____ yes _____ no

Survey Questionnaire—Part I
Teaching Method, Curriculum, and Assessment,
and Teacher Responses to ILS

For each of the following statements, circle the number that best represents your answer.

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal
1. I have heard of the Illinois Learning Standards (ILS).	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have read the ILS subject content for my primary teaching assignment(s).	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am involved in our curriculum alignment efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I consider the ILS when selecting curriculum materials for my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have made changes in the way I teach as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I have made changes in the way I test students as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have made changes in the way I evaluate students' overall performance as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I have made changes in the materials I use as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have made changes in the way I give feedback to students as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I have made changes in the way I give feedback to parents as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I have eliminated activities and units previously taught in the classroom because they are not aligned with the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
12. All grade level/content area curriculums are aligned with ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I have materials that help me implement the ILS in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Aligning the curriculum to the ILS has changed the instructional materials I use in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
15. My students are aware of the expectations of the ILS for the subjects and classes I teach.	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal
16. I have reduced the redundancy within the curriculum as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I consider the ILS when grading the students.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I consider the ILS when developing classroom assessments.	1	2	3	4	5
19. ILS have caused me to change teaching methods.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I believe the ILS promote a higher level of student learning than previous State Goals for Learning.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I consider the ILS when choosing teaching methods.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I use a greater variety of teaching methods as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I align my class lessons with the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I am in agreement with the content of the ILS for my primary teaching assignment(s).	1	2	3	4	5
25. I discuss the ILS at parent-teacher meetings and conferences.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I am more confident in teaching as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
27. I am eager to implement the ILS in my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I take every advantage to learn more about the use of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I have personal goals for implementing the ILS in my school/district.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I have been involved in implementing the ILS in my school/district.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I believe that implementing the ILS has had a positive effect on the teaching and learning at my school.	1	2	3	4	5
32. I am satisfied with the content of the ILS for the grade levels and subjects I teach.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I keep current on educational research and trends	1	2	3	4	5
34. I follow the information in the media on learning standards in education.	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal
35. I use data from the following sources to make instructional decisions in my classroom.					
a. Classroom work	1	2	3	4	5
b. Classroom tests	1	2	3	4	5
c. District-Made tests	1	2	3	4	5
d. Standardized tests	1	2	3	4	5
e. ISAT testing	1	2	3	4	5
f. Student input	1	2	3	4	5
g. Parental input	1	2	3	4	5
h. Other:	1	2	3	4	5

Survey Questionnaire—Part II School Environment

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Don't know
36. At my school, the ILS influence decision making about how we teach.	1	2	3	4	5	8
37. Our school improvement plan is aligned with the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
38. ILS are discussed at faculty meetings.	1	2	3	4	5	8
39. ILS are used as one dimension of our teacher evaluation plan.	1	2	3	4	5	8
40. Our district curriculum is aligned to the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
41. Data from ISAT testing and the School Report Card are used to make school improvement decisions at my school.	1	2	3	4	5	8
42. The teachers at my school have been directed to align their curriculum content area to the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
43. My students are more prepared for the ISAT as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
44. Student report cards reference the ILS when reporting performance information to parents.	1	2	3	4	5	8

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Don't know
45. Parents are aware of the expectations of the ILS for their child's performance.	1	2	3	4	5	8
46. There are inservice opportunities on the content and use of the ILS at my school.	1	2	3	4	5	8
47. Faculty meetings are used to discuss implementation of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
48. Faculty at my school keep current on educational research and trends						
49. Faculty at my school follow the information in the media on learning standards in education.	1	2	3	4	5	8
50. My school concentrates on creating a vision and defining goals for student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	8
51. My school uses measurable feedback to track student progress toward learning outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5	8
52. My school reflects on where we are now compared to our vision and student learning goals.	1	2	3	4	5	8
53. My school has determined what actions are needed to reach our vision and student learning goals.	1	2	3	4	5	8
54. My school is implementing the actions needed to reach our vision and student learning goals	1	2	3	4	5	8
55. My school continuously scans the environment for change (community, legislation, educational trends).	1	2	3	4	5	8

Survey Questionnaire—Part III
School/District Environment and Community Awareness

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Don't know
56. My school/district has a timeline for implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
57. Faculty at my school/district know the timeline for implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
58. My school/district has a committee for implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
59. Results from ISAT testing and the School Report Card are used at the district level to plan and make policy and administrative decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	7
60. The implementation of the ILS affects funding for curricular materials in my school.	1	2	3	4	5	7
61. Our locally selected standardized testing instruments are consistent with the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
62. My school/district requires all teachers to receive training in the use of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
63. Parents have been involved in aligning the curriculum to the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
64. Information sessions on the ILS have been offered to parents and community members at the school/district level.	1	2	3	4	5	7
65. Training sessions are provided for parents and community members about the ILS in my school.	1	2	3	4	5	7
66. Our school/district newsletter to parents contains details about the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
67. Our school/district web site contains details about the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
68. Information sessions on the ILS have been offered to parents and community members at the district level.	1	2	3	4	5	7
69. The ILS have changed parents' expectations of classroom activities.	1	2	3	4	5	7

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Don't know
70. The ILS have changed parents' expectations of student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	7
71. Our school board is involved in implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
72. Our school board makes decisions for educational policy based on the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
73. Our school board has allocated resources to implement the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
74. Members of the business community are involved in implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
75. Implementation of the ILS has changed the community's expectations of student performance.	1	2	3	4	5	7

	Yes	No	Don't know
	1	2	6
76. Illinois Learning Standards inservice and technical assistance programs and courses are available in my area through:			
a. State-sponsored workshops & inservices	1	2	6
b. The Regional Office of Education	1	2	6
c. District-sponsored inservice	1	2	6
d. School-sponsored inservice	1	2	6
e. Outside consultants	1	2	6
f. Colleges or Universities	1	2	6
g. Professional conferences (i.e. ASCD, AIMS)	1	2	6
h. Content area professional organizations (i.e. NCTM, NCTE, NSTA, ACS, AAPT, AABT)	1	2	6

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Don't know
77. In general, the above technical assistance programs include information on using data to improve curriculum and instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	7

78. List any other sources of available inservice and technical assistance programs.

For the following question, please indicate whether or not these activities are a part of the proposed changes at your school and in your district:	Not considering this change	Considering this change	Currently making this change	Already made this change	Don't know
79. My school/ district is considering the following changes to implement the ILS:					
a. Increasing teacher planning time	1	2	3	4	6
b. Adopting block scheduling	1	2	3	4	6
c. Aligning the curriculum	1	2	3	4	6
d. Increasing summer school options	1	2	3	4	6
e. Adopting/expanding after-school tutoring	1	2	3	4	6
f. Adding transition grades	1	2	3	4	6
g. Changing to a balanced calendar (year round school)	1	2	3	4	6
h. Reducing class sizes	1	2	3	4	6
i. Lengthening the school day	1	2	3	4	6
j. Lengthening the school year	1	2	3	4	6
k. Changing the way we report school performance	1	2	3	4	6
l. Increasing standardized testing	1	2	3	4	6
m. Revising personnel responsibilities	1	2	3	4	6

Attachment B

Survey for Evaluating the Implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards

Administrator Edition

SURVEY FOR EVALUATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS ADMINISTRATOR EDITION (v3.1)[›]

The following questionnaire explores the extent to which teachers and administrators are implementing the Illinois Learning Standards (ILS). The Standards were adopted and distributed by the Illinois State Board of Education during the 1997–98 school year. They include:

1. State Goals for Learning in seven learning areas (English & Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Physical Development & Health, Fine Arts and Foreign Languages)
2. Learning Standards for each of the State Goals
3. Learning Benchmarks, which define progress at five developmental levels (early elementary, late elementary, middle or junior high, early high, and late high school) for each Standard.

This survey will be used to derive: 1) the extent to which the Illinois Learning Standards are being implemented, 2) effective strategies for implementation, 3) factors that inhibit or facilitate implementation, and 4) the relationship between implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards and student achievement as measured by the ISAT.

You have been selected to participate in this survey, which should take approximately 25 minutes to complete. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty. You are also free to decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. The results of the individual surveys will be kept strictly confidential, and your name will never be associated with the survey results. A general summary of the results will be sent to the Illinois State Board of Education for use at the state level. A summary of school results that strictly maintains teacher confidentiality may be sent to principals upon request.

If you have questions, please contact Lizanne DeStefano (destefan@uiuc.edu) or George Stanhope (gstanhop@uiuc.edu) at the University of Illinois (217-244-9482). Thank you for your cooperation.

[›] Questions were added to the survey in year three to examine the concept systems perspective, which is hypothesized to be positively correlated to ILS implementation.

Administrator Demographics

Your answers to the following questions will support our analysis of the Illinois Learning Standards (ILS) implementation process. Your responses are completely confidential.

AD0. How many years of administrative experience have you had? _____

AD1. What is the highest degree you have received? Please circle one answer.

- a. Masters Degree
- b. Advanced Certificate
- c. Ph.D. or Ed.D.

Survey Questionnaire—Part I
Teaching Method, Curriculum, and Assessment,
and Teacher/Administrator Responses to ILS

For each of the following statements, circle the number that best represents your answer.

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal
1. I have heard of the Illinois Learning Standards (ILS).	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have read the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am involved in our curriculum alignment efforts.	1	2	3	4	5
4. ILS are considered when selecting curriculum materials for the classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Teachers have made changes in the way they teach as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Teachers have made changes in the way they test students as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Teachers have made changes in the way they evaluate student overall performance as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Teachers have made changes in the materials they use as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Teachers have made changes in the way they give feedback to students as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Teachers have made changes in the way they give feedback to parents as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Teachers have eliminated activities and units previously taught in the classroom because they are not aligned with the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
12. All grade level/content area curriculums are aligned with ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Teachers have materials that help them implement the ILS in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Aligning the curriculum to the ILS has changed the instructional materials that teachers use in the classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Students are aware of the expectations of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal
16. Teachers have reduced the redundancy within the curriculum as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Teachers consider the ILS when grading the students.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Teachers consider the ILS when developing classroom assessments.	1	2	3	4	5
19. ILS have caused teachers to change teaching methods.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I believe the ILS promote a higher level of student learning than previous State Goals for Learning.	1	2	3	4	5
21. Teachers consider the ILS when choosing teaching methods.	1	2	3	4	5
22. Teachers use a greater variety of teaching methods as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
23. Teachers align their class lessons with the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I am in agreement with the content of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
25. ILS are discussed at parent-teacher meetings and conferences.	1	2	3	4	5
26. Teachers are more confident in teaching as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
27. Teachers are eager to implement the ILS in their classrooms.	1	2	3	4	5
28. I take every advantage to learn more about the use of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5
29. I have personal goals for implementing the ILS in my school/district.	1	2	3	4	5
30. I have been involved in implementing the ILS in my school/district.	1	2	3	4	5
31. I believe that implementing the ILS has had a positive effect on the teaching and learning at my school.	1	2	3	4	5
32. Teachers are satisfied with the content of the ILS for the grade levels and subjects they teach.	1	2	3	4	5
33. I keep current on educational research and trends.	1	2	3	4	5
34. I follow the information in the media on learning standards in education.	1	2	3	4	5

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal
35. I use data from the following sources to make administrative decisions in my school.					
a. School budget	1	2	3	4	5
b. District budget	1	2	3	4	5
c. Classroom observations	1	2	3	4	5
d. District-Made tests	1	2	3	4	5
e. Standardized tests	1	2	3	4	5
f. ISAT testing	1	2	3	4	5
g. Teacher input	1	2	3	4	5
f. Student input	1	2	3	4	5
g. Parental input	1	2	3	4	5
h. Other:	1	2	3	4	5

**Survey Questionnaire—Part II
School Environment**

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Don't know
36. At my school/district, the ILS influence decision making about how teachers teach.	1	2	3	4	5	8
37. Our school improvement plan is aligned with the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
38. ILS are discussed at faculty meetings.	1	2	3	4	5	8
39. ILS are used as one dimension of our teacher evaluation plan.	1	2	3	4	5	8
40. Our district curriculum is aligned to the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
41. Data from ISAT testing and the School Report Card are used to make school improvement decisions at my school.	1	2	3	4	5	8
42. The teachers at my school have been directed to align their curriculum content area to the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Don't know
43. Students are more prepared for the ISAT as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
44. Student report cards reference the ILS when reporting performance information to parents.	1	2	3	4	5	8
45. Parents are aware of the expectations of the ILS for their child's performance.	1	2	3	4	5	8
46. There are inservice opportunities on the content and use of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
47. Faculty meetings are used to discuss implementation of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
48. Faculty at my school keep current on educational research and trends	1	2	3	4	5	8
49. Faculty at my school follow the information in the media on learning standards in education.	1	2	3	4	5	8
50. My school concentrates on creating a vision and defining goals for student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	8
51. My school uses measurable feedback to track student progress toward learning outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5	8
52. My school reflects on where we are now compared to our vision and student learning goals.	1	2	3	4	5	8
53. My school has determined what actions are needed to reach our vision and student learning goals.	1	2	3	4	5	8
54. My school is implementing the actions needed to reach our vision and student learning goals	1	2	3	4	5	8
55. My school continuously scans the environment for change (community, legislation, educational trends).	1	2	3	4	5	8

Survey Questionnaire—Part III
School/District Environment and Community Awareness

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Don't know
56. My school/district has a timeline for implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
57. Faculty at my school/district know the timeline for implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7 (or N/A)
58. My school/district has a committee for implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
59. Results from ISAT testing and the School Report Card are used at the district level to plan and make policy and administrative decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	7
60. The implementation of the ILS affects funding for curricular materials in my school/district.	1	2	3	4	5	7
61. Our locally selected standardized testing instruments are consistent with the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
62. My school/district requires all teachers to receive training in the use of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
63. Parents have been involved in aligning the curriculum to the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
64. Information sessions on the ILS have been offered to parents and community members at the school/district level.	1	2	3	4	5	7
65. Training sessions are provided for parents and community members about the ILS in my school.	1	2	3	4	5	7
66. Our school/district newsletter to parents contains details about the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
67. Our school/district web site contains details about the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
68. Information sessions on the ILS have been offered to parents and community members at the district level.	1	2	3	4	5	7
69. The ILS have changed parents' expectations of classroom activities.	1	2	3	4	5	7

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Don't know
70. The ILS have changed parents' expectations of student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	7
71. Our school board is involved in implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
72. Our school board makes decisions for educational policy based on the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
73. Our school board has allocated resources to implement the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
74. Members of the business community are involved in implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
75. Implementation of the ILS has changed the community's expectations of student performance.	1	2	3	4	5	7

	Yes	No	Don't know
	1	2	6
76. Illinois Learning Standards inservice and technical assistance programs and courses are available in my area through:			
a. State-sponsored workshops & inservices	1	2	6
b. The Regional Office of Education	1	2	6
c. District-sponsored inservice	1	2	6
d. School-sponsored inservice	1	2	6
e. Outside consultants	1	2	6
f. Colleges or Universities	1	2	6
g. Professional conferences (i.e. ASCD, AIMS)	1	2	6
h. Content area professional organizations (i.e. NCTM, NCTE, NSTA, ACS, AAPT, AABT)	1	2	6

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Don't know
77. In general, the above technical assistance programs include information on using data to improve curriculum and instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	7

78. List any other sources of available inservice and technical assistance programs.

For following question, please indicate whether or not these activities are a part of the proposed changes at your school and in your district:	Not considering this change	Considering this change	Currently making this change	Already made this change	Don't know
79. My school/ district is considering the following changes to implement the ILS:					
a. Increasing teacher planning time	1	2	3	4	6
b. Adopting block scheduling	1	2	3	4	6
c. Aligning the curriculum	1	2	3	4	6
d. Increasing summer school options	1	2	3	4	6
e. Adopting/expanding after-school tutoring	1	2	3	4	6
f. Adding transition grades	1	2	3	4	6
g. Changing to a balanced calendar (year round school)	1	2	3	4	6
h. Reducing class sizes	1	2	3	4	6
i. Lengthening the school day	1	2	3	4	6
j. Lengthening the school year	1	2	3	4	6
k. Changing the way we report school performance	1	2	3	4	6
l. Increasing standardized testing	1	2	3	4	6
m. Revising personnel responsibilities	1	2	3	4	6

III. Evaluation of the Implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards

Report of Year Three Qualitative Component

Evaluation of the Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards

Report of the Year Three Qualitative Component

Taking a somewhat different tack from previous years, the qualitative portion of this evaluation in Year Three focused on three pivotal questions. The first remains one of on-going concern: Is there evidence at the district and school levels that the Illinois Learning Standards (ILS) are being implemented? In addition, two other questions were addressed: What practices, policies, and actions seem most fruitful in efforts to implement the Illinois Learning Standards? What issues and challenges to implementation can be identified? To address these questions, the report is divided into three sections: 1) identification of what appear to be best practices in learning standards implementation, 2) an intensive case study of one district's efforts at standards implementation, and 3) a discussion of issues and challenges in implementing the ILS.

Several means of data collection were used in addressing the questions of interest. First, data were again gathered from the longitudinal case study schools and districts in continuing efforts to map the courses of these districts and schools through the implementation of ILS. Second, based on data from the statewide teacher survey, schools that appeared to be further along in the implementation process were identified; these schools then served as mini-case study sites. Each of these schools was visited, and a variety of respondents, including principals, teachers, parents, district office personnel, and others, were interviewed or participated in focus groups. These efforts were aimed primarily at garnering information related to identifying best practices in learning standards implementation and to inform policymakers at the state, district, and school levels of perceived impediments to implementation efforts.

Part I: Best Practices from High Implementation Schools

This section identifies and discusses the crosscutting themes that emerged from the data gathered from those schools identified as having high levels of implementation of the ILS. Both site visits and telephone interviews were used to collect these data. The thirteen schools that received site visits were the highest scoring schools from the survey on the overall average score and/or on the seven dimensions (district/school infrastructure, professional development, curriculum, instruction, student learning assessment, affective responses, and community and stakeholder groups). Twelve of the site visit schools were elementary schools; one was an elementary/middle school. They were identified by having scores that were 1 to 2 standard deviations above the mean on the overall average score and/or a number of dimensions that were either 1 to 2 standard deviations above the mean. The telephone interview schools scored lower on the survey and were selected because of their representation of school type. The schools selected included 4 elementary, 5 middle, and 3 high schools. In total, there were 13 site visit schools as well as the 12 telephone interview schools.

Before examining the findings, it is important to elaborate a few points that may be helpful in understanding the findings. First, the data findings presented below are representative only for these particular schools. Only schools that participated as part of the sample of Illinois schools that received and returned the teacher survey were eligible to be selected for either a site visit or a telephone interview. It is not unreasonable to believe that there are other schools that are making notable progress in implementing the ILS who were simply not part of our survey sample and, thus, were not eligible for selection for site visits.

Second, the schools identified as high implementers and receiving site visits were, with the exception of one elementary/middle school combination, all elementary schools. While this is

somewhat distressing, it is not necessarily unexpected. The research literature has consistently shown elementary schools to be more open to and likely to engage in change/reform efforts, especially in the areas of curriculum and pedagogy. Middle and high schools face a different set of issues (subject area specialization, departmentalization, organizational size and complexity, etc.) that tend to further complicate and slow efforts at systemic reform, like the implementation of learning standards (see Siskin, 1994a; 1994b). Thus, in an attempt to get a more representative picture of implementation efforts, the schools identified for telephone interviews were identified by type (elementary, middle and high school) rather than simply by implementation scores from the survey. The middle and high schools identified and contacted did have survey scores that were the highest for their type of school, but these scores were consistently lower than the high-scoring elementary schools. Again, the caution applies—it is probable that there are middle and high schools in the state that are making notable progress in implementation but were not part of our original sample of schools.

What is heartening is that the twelve elementary schools receiving site visits were highly diverse in important ways. We visited rural, urban, and suburban schools. Some of the elementary schools were fairly large, with one serving over 800 students; others were quite small with one serving fewer than 100 students. Some of the schools resided in communities of high socioeconomic status, considerable wealth, and an abundance of social and cultural resources; others were located in high-poverty communities, where concerns about violence, drugs, and gangs were ever present. Some of the schools' ISAT scores were near the top; other schools were struggling. Some had fairly stable homogeneous populations; others had high mobility rates and ethnically diverse populations. *In spite of this diversity, we found an amazing consistency across the schools in the stories they had to tell about their efforts to implement the Illinois Learning*

Standards. These are reported in the themes that emerged from the data which follow. What these themes may fail to capture, though, is the enormous enthusiasm, pride, and eagerness with which the respondents across the schools shared the stories of their progress—the successes, the failures, and the work yet to be done. In relating their work on learning standards implementation, principals and teachers were unabashedly eager to share not only their stories but documents and artifacts, including teaching units, school improvement plans, curriculum frameworks, and student work. This factor is of no small import and deserves mention. It seems likely that an environment wherein schools are regularly under the gun and scrutinized for what is wrong has left many hungry to be recognized as doing something right.

Data analysis identified ten emerging themes that appeared to characterize schools identified as “advanced implementers” of the ILS. As mentioned above, there was an amazing consistency across the schools in what they identified as work undertaken to implement the ILS. While these commonalities are important to know and identify, they should not be taken as prescriptive nor as a strict template for implementation. Each of these schools also followed distinct and different paths sensitive to their contexts, cultures, and capabilities. Some were more advanced in certain areas but lagged in others. It seems clear that there is no “one best way” to implement the ILS and that schools need a fair amount of latitude and flexibility in finding their own ways. Nonetheless, the broad themes identified below were expressed in different ways and to different extents at each of the schools.

High levels of teacher involvement in implementation. One of the most pervasive and universal themes to emerge from the data was depth and breadth of teacher involvement in standards implementation in these schools. This involvement went beyond the usual district curriculum committee or school design team membership and work. Nearly all teachers were a

part of the actual, hands-on work of examining the ILS and adapting them to the school and its context. As one teacher commented, “The only way to go is to get everybody involved. Everyone needs to have a responsibility, a piece of the thing so they understand this well. Then they can share this with everyone else.” A principal added, “We have very strong leadership in our district’s curriculum office. But they couldn’t carry it off alone. I am fortunate to have high quality teachers who have been part of the process at the district level. The district looks for cross-representation of grade levels and buildings. And I have people who have participated in all of it. Over the years, the teachers in this school have participated in almost every fundamental learning area at one time or another, either in developing the essential learner outcomes, or the assessment, or whatever.”

These high levels of involvement were reflected in concomitantly high levels of collaboration, sharing, and communication. Simply “talking” seems to be a critical factor. One teacher noted, “We spent a lot of time when we did this, talking with the grade level before and after us to make sure that we weren’t all hitting one specific thing and omitting something else that we *assumed* that the grade level before or after was going to do. And when we wrote our particular building standards and benchmarks, we made sure that the wording was very specific to what we did at our grade level so that the next grade could build on it.” Another noted, “We’ve had a lot more communication between teachers. Like, if you and I taught first grade—in the past, you taught your 1st grade and I taught my 1st grade. And maybe we talked about it in the hall. Now, it’s—this is what the expectations are in the 1st grade. How do we meet those in our own particular manner? So, I feel that the learning standards just kind of help in that regard, in starting to take a look at things. We talked about best practices, so the district implemented a lot of workshops that we have gone through. These were grade-level workshops,

and all this was initiated by teachers. I think that one of the things that teachers are really craving for is real communication at their grade level to learn about what's going on at other places." The following dialogue from a teacher focus groups sums it up well:

Researcher: What factors do you think are critical for implementing the learning standards?

Teacher #1: Well, I think just talking.

Teacher #2: Communication, yeah.

Teacher #3: All the way through—talking to other teachers, talking to students, parents, people from other districts, everybody you can talk to about it to make sure that you understand it.

Teacher #4: I think working on the standards forced us to talk about things that I suppose parents would assume that we've all talked about a million times before, you know. And we hadn't until then.

Teacher #5: Writing would be an example. Nothing was really written down because we didn't have a textbook for writing. You just kind of assumed when the kids came into your class that they had certain skills. And we'd never really talked about what the expectations were for each grade level.

One of the overall effects of the increased levels of communication—of talking—was to increase the teachers' levels of understanding of and comfort with the learning standards. Being conversant with the content of the standards seems a necessary prerequisite to informed implementation. These teachers came to see the standards and benchmarks as a means—a tool to use in achieving their ends of increasing student learning. Once they gained familiarity and facility with that tool, they felt comfortable in moving it into use in their classrooms and schools.

“Now people actually pay attention to what the curriculum says and have conversations about curriculum. ‘Why do kids need to know that?’ And behind that is the larger question—‘I know if they need to know it, I will have to teach it to them, so why do they have to know it?’ So instead of shutting down the conversation on curriculum, the standards have actually encouraged debate and conversation about what we teach and why. This work [on standards implementation] has actually brought our conversation to a deeper level.” Another teacher from the same school added, “It’s a lot different than having a textbook selection committee every year on a 7-year cycle. Now you have to ask questions like, ‘Why are we doing this? Why are we going about it this way?’ We’re really examining our lessons from what we are trying to accomplish and then working backwards.”

As Clune (2001) has noted, one of weakest links in standards-based reform has been the absence of model curricula, availability of appropriate materials, and performance standards. This has been remedied somewhat by the newly issued performance standards, the ISBE website linkages to appropriate teaching resources, and other means. But to put what these schools have accomplished in perspective, these resources were simply not available when these schools began work on implementation of the learning standards. That meant that the teachers and schools had to interpret and piece together for themselves what the standards meant with content standards alone providing guidance. High levels of dialogue and involvement were critical to this effort.

Ownership of the learning standards. The high levels of teacher involvement reported above promoted a sense of ownership of the standards. For teachers and principals, it appears that over the course of their intense conversations and collaborative work in defining and refining the standards, the ILS became “their” standards. “These aren’t the ‘state’ standards; they’re our

standards. We took the document from the state and translated that into our grade level curriculums through a lot of hard work. We don't even really talk about the 'state standards' here. We talk about our grade level learner objectives." From another school: "We have the Essential Learner Outcomes. We wrote them using the Illinois Standards, but the ELOs are [the name of the school]." Thus, these schools have appropriated and transformed the learning standards, often even changing the terminology used to discuss them. In the best instances, the standards came to be seen not as something imposed or mandated from the state but rather as an expression of what a given school believed in and saw as appropriate for their students.

This sense of ownership produced levels of commitment that appeared to significantly lessen the burden of work required to implement the standards. The following comments from teachers in different schools illustrate this well. "It was really tough work, and at the very end, I told [another teacher] , 'Now I can give birth!' But it was really cool to do that, to know we had a part in that instead of just being *given* what to teach." "The curriculum is being revised in so many different areas, so you constantly have to be redoing things. But this is a challenge, not a negative. It's a good thing, because when teachers are invested in the creating, in making new lesson plans, and incorporating new ideas in their curriculum, it's a lot more vibrant and there are a lot better lessons." "It's a lot more work . . . but it's so much more fun to teach. It's a lot more work to plan. It's a lot more work at home and meeting before and after school, but it's worth it."

Ownership through involvement also appealed to the professionalism of the teachers, and their intense involvement with the implementation work sharpened their sense of expertise. As one teacher noted, "We are lifelong learners, and we need to model that for our students. To be a teacher in this district doesn't mean you walk in that classroom and teach. You're a practitioner, but you're also a researcher and a learner. I have a sister who teaches in a downstate school, and

she says they talk about learning standards and some people look at it as an imposition on their way of teaching that they've always done. We have an openness here; and it's not just this building; it's in this district. We don't look at the learning standards as an imposition; it's a framework that helps us drive instruction." Another commented that ownership also leads to advocacy. "We had teams of teachers writing the curriculum and field testing it, and they were in agreement that this is what we should be doing. So now, if you sit down at a grade level meeting, chances are that you have someone there who's been a part of writing the curriculum or part of field testing the curriculum, and that person serves as an advocate and expert."

Development of assessments to evaluate student progress. Nearly all of the advanced-implementer schools reported developing their own assessments to assess student progress in meeting the learning standards. For most, this seemed to be a logical progression from the development of aligned curriculum to aligned assignments. "Once you've developed standards, aligned curriculum and lessons plans, you have to begin working on developing assessments that really measure progress or the quality of what you're doing. We found the Stiggins book on quality assessment and standards-aligned assessment to be helpful in doing this." This extension of the learning standards to assessment activities represents a more ambitious interpretation of the standards and moves implementation from mere curriculum or content considerations to encompass wider pedagogical implications (Elmore & Sykes, 1992).

While ISAT results were seen as important, they were only one way of gauging how well the school was progressing both in implementing the learning standards and improving student learning. In spite of the vagueness of the learning standards, these schools, at least, did not turn to the state assessment to determine the specifications for curriculum. As one teacher noted, "We've developed assessments for the curriculum. If the scores are good, then we're teaching

the curriculum and the curriculum is aligned with the standards. We use the ISAT as an external measure. I think those results present a pretty significant correlation to how well the standards are being implemented. I look at writing. I think that's an excellent test. The reading has gotten much better. The math test is pretty much aligned with the standards. So this gives us another view of how we're doing in implementing the standards." An administrator commented, "An argument I keep getting is that the students still have to take the ISAT, the SAT, or whatever, and we have to make sure that they perform well on those tests. And I've always said, 'It doesn't matter. Our kids will do fine on those tests as long as we're teaching to the standards, teaching the conceptual understanding and how to use it.' So we are doing what we are doing with the belief [that] it will improve ISAT scores in the long run, but they cannot—should not be our exclusive focus."

In a few of the advanced implementer schools, the locally developed assessments also provided critical information that allowed teachers to assess their own pedagogy and classroom practices in ways that are not possible with ISAT because the local assessments are directly tied to the grade level curriculums. Thus, knowing what the learner expectations are at specific grade levels allows for assessment of those expectations. This information can then be used to modify or change instructional approaches. It can also start schools on the road to becoming "data-driven." A central office administrator from one of the longitudinal districts being followed in this study explained the use of local assessments well. The length of the quotation will hopefully be excused by its salience.

A big problem is that a lot of folks just don't understand the difference between formative and summative assessments. To a lot of teachers, a test is a test. If it looks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck. End-of-chapter tests are summative.

ISAT is a summative test and that's just fine. Take it for what it is. What we recognized we needed to do at the district level, though, was to develop formative tests that we could use to assess student progress throughout the year—so we wouldn't be waiting in the dark [as to how the students were doing] until ISAT results whacked us over the head. If you do that, then there's no chance to remediate, to re-teach concepts that were missed. We already know the "what"—the content we are responsible for at each grade level. Now we needed continuous assessment so we could see how well we are [doing] in achieving that and what we need to do and with whom. That led to the development of our formative assessments. We put together teams of teachers for each of the content areas and they did yeoman's work in pulling these assessments together for each grade level. Now, we use those tests at three different points during the school year, and the data they generate drive our instruction. It's pretty hard for a teacher to say, 'But I taught that standard or that benchmark' when the data are staring you in the face that 80% of your students did not meet that objective. And if you get that information, say, in November, you have a chance to correct this. That's a formative assessment. It tells the teacher and student where they are now, what's already been mastered, where they need to go, and what they need to do to get there. It's not part of the student's grade or permanent record or anything else. It's a tool, a means for telling us as a classroom or as a school that this is where we need to focus our energies either individually or as a grade level or as a building.

Strong professional development activities focused on aligning the learning standards, curriculum, assessment, and instruction. At some point, all of the schools made the decision that

substantive investments of time, effort, and resources had to be made in order to implement the standards. Most often this was realized in the dedication of professional development activities and time for learning standards work. The word most consistently used by participants to describe the intersection of learning standards implementation and professional development was “focus.” As one teacher noted, “We came together and planned as a team. We made the decision to focus our staff development on the state standards.” From another school a teacher commented, “We made the upfront decision to first focus on the standards, because you cannot make sure that people learn anything, even if you follow the Wiggins and McTighe¹ model, until you know what it is you want them to learn. It became clear then that our professional development was going to be dedicated to this. Everything else became ancillary to this.”

Interestingly, this focus was reciprocal. It helped to clarify and assist the schools’ work with implementing the learning standards, but the implementation work also gave focus to the professional development. “I think the standards have given us a clearer focus, and that’s the main key. It’s really given us direction for staff development. Before, it was kind of, you know, what’s the flavor of the day? Where do you want to go? What do you want to do? It was pretty hit and miss. I think the learning standards have really focused our staff development activities on the curriculum. Actually, it brought everything into focus—assessment, curriculum, and instruction.”

While all of these schools clearly made use of professional development, nearly all also bemoaned the paucity of appropriate activities that were not also prohibitively expensive. As one principal noted, “You know it would be nice if I could send some of my staff to Cape Cod for a

¹ Respondents at several of the schools referred at various times to the Wiggins & McTighe book, *Understanding by Design*, or indicated that they have participated in Understanding by Design workshops. This model for pedagogical change in classrooms appears to be fairly well known and accepted.

week to listen to Grant Wiggins, but that is not a reality for this district. It's not going to happen here. So a lot of what we have done for staff development has been kind of cobbled together from whatever was available and reasonably priced." A different principal noted, "It seemed like the state and ROEs were always behind where we were. They were offering things that related to ground that we had already covered. When it came to stuff that we really needed to know about, there was nothing."

More and more, these advanced implementers are looking toward developing their own internal expertise in critical areas related to standards-based reform efforts. Rarely is this expertise found in the central office; rather, it is peppered across schools in the district. It is the teaching staff rather than administrators or curriculum coordinators who specialize in critical areas and skills. This in-house expertise has the advantage of being well tailored to the specific context and conditions of the given school and/or district. It also has the advantage of "just-in-time" availability; when you need it, it is readily accessible. It can be tailored to address the specific problems, conditions, and concerns the school or district is currently confronting. It is also an outstanding example of the kind of capacity building so widely recognized as essential for successful implementation (Fuhrman, 2001; Fairman & Firestone, 2001).

System-wide alignment to the learning standards. These schools are all making efforts to extend their standards-based efforts beyond limited curricular concerns. Their standards work has extended to and touched upon other areas of their educational endeavors. Specifically mentioned areas included teacher evaluation, district goals and policies, individual school improvement plans, and technology integration.

In particular, the implementation work has impacted how several of these schools now select curriculum materials. "Within our school improvement team, when we develop a mission and

vision and core beliefs for our school, we start from the state learning standards. And now when we start looking for any kind of updating of our social studies or math materials, the first thing we want to know is whether it will meet the criteria of the state learning standards at each grade level. And that's where the committee a lot of time starts their research. They figure out what needs to be done. They figure out what they need. Then they start looking at the material that is going to match that. And the state standards are part of that. If the materials don't meet that criteria, then we don't even look at it." Another teacher noted, "We used to have a rotating system of looking over curriculum materials and going through adoption. So a checklist was used for reviewing the different vendor materials that came. And in those vendor materials, of course, they're marketing geniuses, and they market in Illinois to the ILS. And they market in California to the California Learning Standards. But now we don't just leave it to them telling us how in alignment they were. We actually went through the materials and looked for the alignment."

Reinterpretation of the learning standards as a school-wide vision of student learning. While these schools all started with curriculum mapping and crosswalks, these were seen only as first steps. Nearly all of the advanced-implementer schools either had reinterpreted the ILS and benchmarks into individual, grade-level learner objectives or were actively involved in this effort. One principal noted, "We went through every standard and benchmark and figured out what we needed to do to meet it instructionally. We did it by grade level first of all, and then we went back through with all K-3 teachers and then all 4-6 teachers looking for consistencies or inconsistencies."

This practice has moved the standards from the isolated concern of the "assessment grades" wherein ISAT is administered into an arena of shared concern and endeavor for all. As one

principal noted, “This [development of grade level objectives] has made the teachers more standards-focused. When I hear conversations, I’m still kind of surprised because our teachers talk about standards and relating things to the standards. I’ve seen teachers really grow in not only examining what it is they do but how they do it. They’re more focused on best practices as well as trying to always improve what they do.” A teacher added, “All the revising of our curriculum is based on the ILS. We’ve done one subject area each year. Social studies is done; math is done; and next year we’ll begin on literacy. The curriculum gets field tested the year after revision and then implemented the following year.” A teacher from another district noted, “Textbooks are not the curriculum anymore. What we are doing instead of getting textbooks and teaching page by page is looking at the learning standards, the benchmarks, [and] the objectives we’ve developed for each grade level and then choosing resources that match these. The curriculum starts with the learning standards, not textbooks.”

The construction of learning standards or objectives by grade level has also facilitated work to involve students in their own learning. While this venture is more erratic in its development across the schools, nonetheless, there is evidence that at least for some schools, this is becoming a primary concern. As one teacher noted, “I think another thing that’s come out of this is, at least for me personally, the students are well aware of what my expectations are, much more so than they were in my earlier years of teaching. They know what the goals are. They know what it is I want them to be—to accomplish. So, it’s not just teaching random content. It’s also that students understand why you are teaching it and what you are looking for as far as outcomes are concerned.” A principal added, “We deconstructed the state’s standards from their benchmark grades into grade level learner objectives. The teachers now understand the flow of these and how they feed into the standards and benchmarks of the state. The standards and attention to

what needs to be taught is a whole lot clearer than it was three years ago. You can go into any classroom and kids know what they're learning and why and how it relates to the curriculum.”

Changes in classroom instruction. To a greater or lesser extent, the high implementer schools have acknowledged that the standards auger changes not only in curriculum but also in instruction. There is a greater focus on problem solving approaches and high order thinking and a move away from rote memorization and basic skill drill.

One of the ways this instructional focus has manifested itself is in the growing emphasis on exploring instructional best practices. While these schools vary considerably in the amount of effort and time they have put into identifying best practices, the concern for such is evident across all schools. Some are still struggling to move from textbook-dominated, didactic methods. “You know there is such a mindset with some teachers. ‘Here’s the book.’ It’s very difficult for some of them to get past teaching from the book. I said to them, ‘Look, you’ve got this—we did the standards. You know now what your curriculum is. Now, look at your book and pick out what you need.’ You cannot simply start at the front of the book and go to the back and expect to cover everything. And now that we’re emphasizing writing more and expecting kids to express how they manage to figure out a problem, we have to teach differently. That has to be our next piece.” Other schools are much more advanced and have relatively sophisticated systems in place for integrating best practices. As one administrator explained:

Let me give you an example of our process. Two years ago we constructed the math objectives for the district and the grade-level objectives. We took the state standards and benchmarks and the ISAT test and then we deconstructed them from the benchmark assessment years to every previous year. Then we piloted them [the grade level objectives] for a year—everyone had to teach them using the old materials. So

we understood what they meant and what it will take to teach them. In the meantime, the curriculum study task force reviewed the literature on best practices. We got those from MCREL and NCREL and from the learned societies, NCTM, ASCD, and other places and looked at what they had identified as best practices. We looked at what was behind the identified best practices and then began putting them together to identify what we saw as being the ones supportive across the whole. We defined these as our best practices. We floated these out for teachers to critique and give feedback. Then when we look to select new curriculum materials we take our grade level objectives [based on the state standards] and the best practices we've already identified and agreed upon, and a task force goes through and evaluates each series on a scale of one to five on how well they support the teaching of every learning objective at every grade level, using what we've identified as best practices. That way we can make a reasonably valid decision as to whether the materials actually support our curriculum and our best practices. But you have to first know what it is you want to teach and how you will go about this. Otherwise, the tail [curriculum materials, textbooks] is wagging the dog.

Two prominent external influences appear to have prompted instructional changes or attempts at instructional changes. Clearly, the instructional approaches called for in the *Understanding by Design* ideas of Wiggins and McTighe have had a great deal of influence. While not all the schools mentioned or referred to this framework, a significant number did, and, of the high implementers, these schools tended to be furthest along. Some of these insights and sentiments are reflected in the following comments. "I think definitely the hard part was that we as teachers had to learn a new curriculum and had to think about a new way of

teaching—teaching to the enduring understandings Wiggins and McTighe talk about instead of teaching to facts.” “We made the upfront decision to first focus on the standards, because you cannot make sure that people learn anything, even if you go after Wiggins and McTighe, until you know what it is you want them to learn. The very first thing they [Wiggins and McTighe] talk about is what is a meaningful learning; what is it to know something. So that’s where we started. You can’t figure out how to teach something or what constitutes best instructional practice until you can recognize what it looks like when you get it.” “We wanted to be teaching universal skills, something beyond the repetition of content, to push students to understand the conceptual structure of the subject areas, the kinds of things Wiggins and McTighe want you to go after. We are using the state’s standards and benchmarks as proxies for those kinds of things for two reasons. First, they are broad enough; and I think they are actually designed to be those kinds of learning; and two, it doesn’t make any difference—it’s the state curriculum anyway.” It seems evident that, for at least some of the high-implementer schools, the ideas of Wiggins and McTighe are quite influential in their standards implementation efforts and in the instructional changes being made.

The other external influence prompting serious reexamination and change of instructional practices was the ISAT, or at least parts of the ISAT. As one teacher noted, “I think that the performance items on the ISAT, you know, the open-ended questions, the ones that call for students to explain their reasoning or the steps they took in solving a problem, more than anything else have forced teachers to do more thinking and explaining and communicating. They have put more of a focus on problem solving across the curriculum, more of a focus on critical thinking, and more of a focus on integrating technology across the curriculum. I think instructionally there’s been a big shift.” The teachers interviewed report that they are changing

how they teach. The biggest difference appears to be that they are asking students to explain their thinking and reasoning more than ever before. Some of the instructional changes reported include moving from “what” questions to a greater emphasis on “how” and “why” questions that require students to reflect on their thinking; greater use of manipulatives, cooperative work groups, and hands-on materials; and the student use of rubrics for reflection and to gauge their own learning.

Emphasis on continuous improvement. These schools see their efforts at implementation as on-going. To this end, most have developed evaluation procedures and activities to assist them in assessing what works and what doesn't. Thus, the implementation of the standards has become integrated into the school and district and is seen as defining school- and district-level work. As one teacher noted, “I think we are very aware of what the state standards are. But our curriculum is a work in progress. I don't think it's ever going to be—‘Well, you're done with that.’ I don't think the state standards are even set up to be like that.” Another commented, “ I think teachers need the opportunity to take a look at the standards and figure out what they really mean to them, how they will implement them. Then we need time to work out the kinks. So we're all learning together. Some people just embrace it faster than others, but we're all making progress.” This is a common theme across the schools. Some are getting it, and some aren't. This kind of variation in response to reforms is not new or unexpected. Generations of researchers looking at reform and implementation have noted similar results. What both principals and teachers report is that they need time to continue their efforts at change, especially instructional change. “You know it is easier just to follow the textbook. What comes next in the book is a much easier way to teach. You know that; we know that. But we also know we're not going to makes changes over time unless we're putting our money where our mouth is. We can't just say, ‘We're standards based,’

if we [are] continuing to do the same old things. All this won't change overnight, but we have to keep plugging away at it." "No one said this was going to be easy. Yes, we have resisters, those who say, 'This too shall pass.' But it's not going to. The standards are not going away, and our message to those dragging their feet has to be, 'Get onboard, or get off, because we are moving ahead.'"

If implementation is to be effective, it will entail adaptation over time. The clearest illustration of this is the fact that most of these schools have already adapted and rewritten the state standards and benchmarks to fit their local context and understandings and translated them to grade-specific objectives. This appears to be a reasonable and appropriate action. The state standards and benchmarks as published are largely "un-implementable." As one administrator so eloquently and succinctly put it, "The standards do not speak." And this also is entirely appropriate. In order for the standards to "speak," local units must wrestle and struggle and debate and mull over their curricular and instructional implications. In order to be "implementable," the standards must be interpreted by local districts and schools in terms of, "What does this mean for what *we* teach and how *we* teach it?"

The necessity of this kind of adaptation and the length of time changes take, however, can cause reform efforts to go off track, leading to dead ends or meaningless meanderings. Some of the high-implementer schools have recognized this and have built in evaluations of the implementation strategies they are attempting. One administrator noted, "We evaluate everything we do. Nothing is written in stone here. We get feedback from teachers, from students, from parents. For example, there is not a professional development activity undertaken in this district that is not evaluated and scrutinized. What went well? What didn't pay off? How can we change that? It's what we ask teachers to do in their classrooms with kids all the time. We just take that

continuous assessment process into all our school and district work as well. How else can you know when things aren't going well and a course adjustment is needed?" This kind of evaluation/correction during implementation seems a necessary component for continuous improvement in schools' change efforts.

Administrative support. Support at both district and school level was seen as critical to these efforts. The overall importance of administrative efforts and actions in promoting standards implementation has been discussed in earlier reports (see *Report of Year Two Evaluation of the Implementation of the ILS*). However, data from the high-implementer schools present a more elaborate portrait of "administrative support." Three categories emerged that related to the broad theme of administrative support. Briefly, these indicate that the initial impetus to begin the implementation work came from administration. Administration performs a critical role in providing the requisite resources needed for this work, and the actions and words of administrators served to legitimize the efforts of the front-line implementers as valid and important.

There was nearly uniform agreement across the schools that a necessary prerequisite to effective implementation was the degree to which individual administrators both at the district and school levels understood and agreed with the intent of the state standards. As one principal noted, "Clearly, this district, this building is where it is because of district leadership. Although I can't just say it's just district leadership, because there are six buildings in this school district, and I don't think you'd see the same levels of implementation at the other buildings." Another noted, "I believe in this [standards implementation]. I really do, and I'm not just saying that because Nona's here. You know me better than that. With the [student] population we serve—this is just what I needed to help convince teachers that they have to have high

expectations for all students and to focus our work on literacy and numeracy. And we have come so far in the past three years.” A third principal added, “Well, it was external review that really forced us to step up to the plate. There was no dodging the feedback we got. But I think that the building leader makes a difference in the extent to which teachers are responsible for the information or responsible for the related planning. And because I have the expectation that ‘we are going to do this,’ that makes a difference.” In the same vein, another commented, “A principal has to be willing to say, ‘This is what we have to do, and we’re going to do it this year.’ But then, as a principal, you have to be willing and able to back that up. You have to provide the support that’s needed, whatever it is—money for conferences, release time, whatever. You have to consistently let teachers know that you are supporting them. That means, if we try something and it doesn’t work—hey, that’s fine. We’ll take a look at it and see what went wrong and change it the next time. Behind all that is the message that ‘this is best for kids, and we are moving ahead.’ I believe that you have to be willing to do that.”

In addition to supplying the necessary impetus to begin the learning standards work and the requisite resources needed, the other primary function of administrators was to legitimize the implementation work both to teachers and to external public stakeholders. As one teacher noted, “The district supports this, in that it’s important enough that they are willing to pay teachers to *think* about this. That says a lot. There are all kinds of things we are just expected to do. Or, if they do pay for release time or a couple of weeks in the summer, they want to immediately see “something” come out of it. But they are putting their money where their mouth is on this because, really, a lot of time has to be spent just thinking and brainstorming and working through things, arguing things out. And they understand this and are allowing us to do that. They are taking this [standards work] seriously, so so are we.” A principal noted, “For the past three years,

I've been constantly talking standards and benchmarks to parents whenever they came in. I used to get these blank looks, but now they hear the same thing from teachers and their kids. It's on our website; it's in the school newsletter. It's everywhere. But you can't just 'talk the talk.' You have to make sure your school is also 'walking the walk.'" Another principal noted, "I don't know that parents are that informed yet. I think part of that is that we've just kind of figured out this stuff ourselves. No one felt really comfortable saying much before when you were still swimming in mud yourself. As our own levels of comfort and facility with this grows, it will reach out into the community more."

Finally, a couple of administrators mentioned ideas of "distributed leadership" that appeared to further define and refine the process of implementation. As an assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction explained, "I like the idea of distributed leadership. If you have distributed leadership—if it's going to work—someone has to own the problem and take leadership to solve it. My problem is getting the right people to take responsibility for a problem. I used to think my problem was low test scores. It's not. I cannot directly do a thing about low test scores. My problem is to get the teachers to see that the low test scores are their problem. My part of the organization is the only thing I can be responsible for, but I have to make sure that my part of the organization is conducive to everyone being able to do what they need to do in order to advance the test scores."

Building on what's there. All of these schools integrated their implementation of the learning standards with their context. Implementation of the ILS was not seen as something separate from what the schools were already involved in doing. Thus, in these instances of high implementation, there was a seamless integration of the learning standards work with other on-going efforts. "It's important to have continuity. You can't just "herky-jerky" stop one thing and

begin something else. So we emphasize continuing staff development, and we continue to team in the building collaboratively, because most of the good stuff that you want for current practice for kids is not just in a textbook. It's in people's heads. And one of the issues that any building administrator would deal with is keeping that in place, because that can go in a heartbeat as you have staff turnover. So keeping what you have and building on it—that's a real important issue."

Keeping what is good and building on that was a theme reiterated across the schools. "If we had not started this process way back in 1985 with the original learning goals, we probably would not be where we are today with actual standards and benchmarks in place. With those standards, we've done a few things. We have established exit goals for each grade level, and we've also done backward mapping so that we can see what comes before and what comes after. And we see all this just as [an] extension of what we have been doing all along." In some cases, this involved maintaining a tradition of being at the forefront, the cutting-edge of educational innovation. "We're a school that is part of a district that's very progressive. We don't wait around for things to happen to us. We take the initiative. When we were preparing for external review, we had a real chance to stand back and get a different perspective on where we were and where we are headed. And that's [when] we decided to move on developing learning standards and benchmarks for the district."

Many of these schools were simultaneously involved with major change initiatives other than learning standards implementation. For some, it was Accelerated Schools; for others, it was Comprehensive School Reform; for others, it was district-level involvement with the Baldrige Award. In all cases, the schools were able to successfully integrate the initiatives with their focused work on the learning standards implementation. This was largely possible because they deliberately sought out complementary aspects. As one of the principals noted, "There's an

amazing fit between the state standards and the accelerated schools model we've adopted. I mean, one of the main tenets of accelerated schools is powerful learning, and that fits so well the intent of the learning standards. Accelerated schools is giving us a process for grounding the standards in our instructional practices as well as [in our] curriculum." An urban elementary principal added, "We've accomplished so much here. We were at the bottom of the pile in ISAT scores for this district, and we have made real, real progress over the past three years, and that's in spite of the fact that our demographics show that we are now serving an even greater number of disadvantaged children. A lot of our work has been possible because of the CSR grant and some others from the state that gave us some of the resources we needed to do things. And the standards and benchmarks fit right in. I don't think I could tell you where CSR left off and standards began."

Part II: Case Study

The second part of the report presents a single case study of one district that has achieved a high degree of implementation of the ILS. This is presented as one example of standards implementation and what it might look like at the district and school levels. Other schools and districts have chosen different approaches that are also effective, and the following is not intended as a blanket endorsement but rather as an interesting and revealing instance of learning standards implementation.

Pekin District #108 is an elementary school district covering grades K-8. The district is organized into ten schools: 6 elementary (K-3), 2 intermediate (4-6), and 2 junior high (7-8). The district has 15 administrators and 262 teaching staff who have an average of 17.3 years of experience. Student enrollment in #108 is just over four thousand students, 38% of whom are listed as low income.

Pekin District #108 has five formal goals: 1) to improve student performance through the school improvement process; 2) to increase collaboration and communication among students, schools, families, and community to facilitate an exchange of human and other resources; 3) to secure adequate human and fiscal resources and allocate them to fulfill our mission; 4) to provide an innovative, comprehensive educational program that realizes each student's potential; and, 5) to provide a safe, respectful learning environment. Each goal contains a vision statement, a values statement, and an action strategy for accomplishing the goal. Annual school improvement plans are developed for each building in the district by School Instructional Leadership Teams (SILTS). These school improvement plans guide instruction for the school year with modifications made at tertiary intervals. The development of the yearly school improvement plans is a part of the Standards-Assessment-Instruction (SAI) framework.

Standards, Assessment, Instruction: The SAI Model

(Written in collaboration with Chuck Bowen, Assistant Superintendent, Pekin #108)

Overview of the Structure of SAI. Overall, the Pekin SAI model can be summed up by their slogan: Everybody 1) knows what students must learn, 2) takes responsibility for student learning, and 3) uses data when making decisions about learning. The SAI model was developed by the district for assisting the district and schools to use the ILS as a means of assessing student learning and improving instruction. In a larger perspective, the purpose of each of the three strands is alignment: 1) alignment of the district to the state learning standards, 2) alignment of the schools with the district, and 3) alignment the classrooms with the school. “The whole concept of SAI is to know what your standards are, assess, and use that information for instruction. That’s why it’s S-A-I.” The order is important and gives an insight into the internal logic of how the model is structured and the ideas upon which it is predicated.

The *S* or *Standards* is first because educators must first know *what* they want students to know and be able to do—in other words, the content. This is where the state learning standards figure most prominently. The ILS were translated into specific learner objectives for each grade level.

The second strand is the *A* or *Assessment*. Assessments were developed for each of the grade level objectives. There are two parts to this. The first of these is procedural and formative and predicated on the idea that you must know with some degree of specificity what students do know and what they are able to do. In this sense, the Assessment piece provides real-time information that helps students and teachers plan for learning. The second part of Assessment is structural and also plays a part in establishing the Standards. “By figuring out ‘what it looks like when done well,’ we clarify what the standards mean. Even though we must write the standards

before we can design the assessments, as we write the assessments we come up against questions and conundrums that force us to clarify the standards. For example, will we allow 3rd grade students to use line graphs to display all types of data, or will we insist that they learn the correct uses of line and bar graphs right away? This cycle rotates again when we actually administer the assessments. We inevitably have to go back and improve the standards. That’s why I take at least 2 years to write the standards and assessments. Year one is our first best shot. Then after we’ve used the assessments, we can see what’s wrong with the objectives and modify them. Of course, that requires us to modify the assessments too.” Thus, an iterative process is established whereby standards first inform assessments, with assessments then informing and further refining the standards.

Third is *I or Instruction*—that is, you design instruction so that the learners have multiple opportunities to learn what you expect them to know and be able to do. This is where all three elements of the SAI model come together as both the Standards and the Assessment parts inform and drive Instruction. Most importantly, this is also where the local standards (and by proxy, the state learning standards) and assessments connect (or not) with student learning.

A more elaborate discussion of the SAI model follows. One of the real difficulties is in representing this comprehensive system in a manner that does it justice. It is important to keep in mind that each of the three areas has components which overlap with or connect to components in others. Many of the “pieces” of each of the three SAI strands appear in more than one strand. While this is clearly a strength of the model, it makes discussion of it appear somewhat disjointed. Readers are encouraged to take a complete “tour” of the SAI model, available at the Pekin #108 website: <http://www.pekin.net.pekin108/sai/index.html>.

Standards (SAI)

The first strand, *Standards*, is based on the ILS. The SAI model “deconstructed” the state’s standards and benchmarks into grade-level learner objectives that serve as the district’s curriculum. However, the *Standards* strand is more than just a curriculum framework. It also encompasses the development of performance rubrics, *I Can Do It* sheets, and the selection of curriculum materials. Thus far, the SAI model covers only the content areas of mathematics and language arts. This year, the district will start work on science and social studies

An example is helpful in illustrating the *Standards* strand of SAI. State goal 6 in mathematics states that students shall “demonstrate and apply a knowledge and sense of numbers, including numeration and operation (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division), patterns, ratios and proportions.” State Learning Standard 6.A narrows this to “demonstrate knowledge and use of numbers and their representations in a broad range of theoretical and practical settings.” State benchmark 6.A.3 for middle school assessment level (8th grade) narrows this even further: “Represents fractions, decimals, percentages, exponents, and scientific notation in equivalent forms.”

Using this middle/junior high school benchmark, the district curriculum team then created objectives for each grade level that led directly toward the designated benchmark assessment year. The final step was to convert the State Benchmark into language that students and parents could understand, e.g., “Use numerals up to 10-digits and 4 decimal places, and write place values as powers of 10. Compare and convert common fractions, decimals, and percents.” Thus, each State Goal, Standard, and Benchmark has corresponding learner objectives at each grade level.

These learning expectations are communicated not only to teachers but also to students and parents through a unique feature of SAI, the *I Can Do It* sheets. These forms contain all the language arts and mathematics objectives for learners at their grade level and are given to each student as a checklist, a means for teachers and students to talk about learning. The *I Can Do It* sheets are a structured interaction between the teacher and the student . . . The whole reason for the *I Can Do It* sheet is to help teachers help kids become reflective learners.” Through these sheets as well as classroom posters, the intent is to communicate explicit expectations derived from the state standards and benchmarks to the students and to make them responsible for their own learning. As well, all assignments, activities and assessments are tied to identifiable and identified learner objectives. There is no guessing by students as to the *why* of the work they are doing. “We believe that clear objectives translate into clear expectations, and this means that students don’t have to guess about what the expectations are, about what they will be accountable for.”

Assessment (SAI)

The second strand, *Assessment*, is comprised of several parts. The most prominent of these are the locally developed set of formative, grade-level tests, based on the grade-level learner objectives. These are administered at the beginning of each of three cycles, beginning in the fall, winter, and spring. The SAI assessments are formative and are used for informing teachers, parents, and students of the learner objectives a student has mastered and what learner objectives still need work. The assessments consist not only of multiple choice items, but also incorporate complex, multi-stage problem-solving activities and writing activities. The results of SAI assessments are provided to teachers in the SAI report, which visually displays where each child in a classroom successfully met the grade-level learner objectives. Because the assessments are

now given at the beginning of each cycle (fall, winter, and spring), they serve formative functions that guide instruction, gauge learning, and direct planning for professional development for the remainder of the cycle. The reports were designed and data were displayed in such a way that made them easy to use and understand.

Another component of *Assessment* is the use of student portfolios. In each classroom, there are two or three large blue tubs filled with hanging files. The tubs are used for storing samples of student work collected over each of the three SAI cycles. While classroom teachers are free to contribute to these portfolios of student work, student ownership of the content is emphasized. For the most part, students decide what work represents their best efforts and provides clear evidence that they have mastered learner specific objectives. These “exhibits” then become another measure of progress toward meeting specific learner objectives.

Tied directly to both the SAI assessments and the student portfolios are the *I Can Do It* sheets. At the end of each cycle, students go through their portfolios and identify their best work. After examining their work samples from the “blue tubs” and other daily classroom assignments and teacher-made tests, students mark on the *I Can Do It* sheet whether they feel they have successfully mastered the objectives listed for the cycle.

At the end of the fall and winter cycles teachers come together at the building level to analyze data from all sources and evaluate their instructional plans. Grade-level teams then meet and develop professional development plans, network for best practices, and identify areas of weakness. This allows instruction and professional development needs to be designed in ways that are informed by data.

Instruction (SAI)

The final strand, *Instruction*, guides decisions about classroom teaching and learning practices. The guiding logic is that by providing a clear view of what students should know (the standards/learner objectives) and comparing that with what the students do know (through multiple means of assessment), all teachers in the district should be able to modify their instruction to better meet the needs of students and improve learning.

The *Instruction* strand of SAI calls for teachers to review current data on student knowledge and begin planning instructional units using research that identifies best instructional practices. District level teams of teachers and administrators review current data on student knowledge and begin planning instructional units that incorporate best instructional practices. The overall tenets considered as instructional “best practices” and which guided each teams efforts included such concepts as engaged learning, constructivist learning, conceptual understandings, discovery learning, and complex problem solving.

Building-level SAI teams then were convened for an intensive two-day professional development session with the district-level team, to help them become knowledgeable about and skilled in these instructional approaches and techniques. The building-level teams became the primary carriers of this information to individual teachers in each of the schools. Overall responsibilities of these teams were wide-ranging and included translating SAI into the school’s culture by helping staff be mindful of the state standards, developing staff competency and comfort with a variety of student assessments, assisting teachers in using data to make instructional decisions, as well as providing guidance in instructional practices.

Instruction remains the least developed of the three parts of SAI but work in this area is steadily increasing. Teachers are now involved in developing performance rubrics that will

provide an elaboration of the levels of mastery as well as continued work in identifying and implementing best practices.

Summary

SAI is only one approach to implementing standards-based reform. It is also among the more thoughtful, comprehensive, and well articulated approaches we have seen. Interestingly, it incorporates, in one way or another, all the “best practices” identified in the previous section. While districts and schools clearly do need the flexibility to find their own ways in implementing standards-based reform, models such as this may be of some assistance in helping others think about thorny but commonly experienced issues and problems in different ways.

Part Three: Issues and Challenges

While some schools and districts are clearly making progress in implementing the state learning standards and benchmarks, others appear to be stalled or at least proceeding very slowly in their efforts. This third and final section of the report examines some of the issues and challenges still surrounding learning standards implementation. These issues appear to fall into two main categories—policy problems and school/district agency problems. Finally, this section concludes with some recommendations and suggestions for further research and investigation.

Policy Issues. First, there continues to be an undercurrent of doubt among many schools that the state learning standards and the state accountability assessment (ISAT) are really aligned. In other words, these schools are not convinced that implementing the ILS will forward or assist them in raising student achievement as measured by the ISAT. Especially at high school levels with the institution of the new Prairie State Exam, respondents had significant doubts that the state standards had more than a casual relationship to the assessment.

This seems to be a critical factor—for implementation efforts at the schools level as well as for policymakers at the state level. If the alignment that underpins or provides the rationale for standards implementation does not really exist, then one cannot really measure the effects of the reform (Goertz, 2001). Many of the high implementer schools simply skirted this issue by developing their own assessments that measured their own locally drafted standards or learner objectives. They view the ISAT as one external measure (albeit, an important one) of what they do but they tend to assess student learning and make instructional changes based on data from locally developed assessments. There is a disturbing tendency among schools that do not score well on ISAT to use that assessment to drive their curriculum rather than the state learning standards and benchmarks. As Porter and Smithson (2001) have noted, “Assessments have the

advantage of presenting clear indication of what content is considered important as well as the level of knowledge of students with regard to that content” (p. 66). This may be part of the explanation of why so many schools continue to look to ISAT results rather than to ILS for guidance.

Second, a major challenge for the implementation of the ILS has been the variability in response. District response to the ILS has ranged from outright resistance, to *pro forma* compliance, to a kind of “mutual adaptation” (McLaughlin, 1987; 1991), to a proactive use of the standards to achieve internal strategic goals. The same kind of variability is reflected among schools within districts and even classrooms within individual schools. Researchers (see Fuhrman, 2001) have suggested that such variation in response should be expected, as standards-based reforms are enormously complex. However, expecting variability and understanding it in ways that will assist both policymakers and local implementers are quite different things. State policymakers may wish to consider at least two areas of concern:

1. The specificity of the standards and their elaboration into curriculum. In the early years of the ILS, most of the high implementer schools were able on their own to translate the state standards and benchmarks into a coherent and relatively specific curriculum. Other districts and schools floundered in this or did not even attempt such efforts. While there is much more guided assistance in the form of model curricula, new materials, and model teaching units now available to schools, the early deprivation has yet to be overcome. There is evidence that those schools that did not get on the standards bandwagon early on are not availing themselves now of the aids and assistance available.
2. The alignment of assessments, curriculum, and standards. As mentioned previously, the legitimacy of the ISAT as a measure of the ILS continues to be an issue for many

practitioners. Part of this problem is that, for the most part, data analysis of the ISAT does not offer schools the degree of specificity needed for changing classroom instructional practices. Deriving the instructional implications of data is no simple task. Schools may know they did not do well but the ISAT is largely silent on *why* they did not do well or *how* they can change to improve. It is not clear that schools should even attempt to use the ISAT for such fine grain analyses as this can lead to frustration and/or scapegoating, i.e., it's the students, the parents, the community, etc. As demonstrated by the high implementer schools, local assessments appear to present much more likely paths to such data analysis and instructional change.

School/district agency issues. It is also clear that much of the variation in implementation stems from how the ILS were interpreted by individuals at different levels of the system with differing skills and beliefs. No matter how well conceived, any state level policy attempting to influence student learning outcomes must wind its way through a long and tortuous path to classrooms. Along the way it is subject to multiple interpretations, permutations, and even distortions. Thus, differing district and school level capacity issues are of some import in explaining and understanding variability in the implementation of the ILS.

Districts have both design and support functions to play in implementing the learning standards and benchmarks. They must create policy systems and provide personnel and material that help schools improve instruction. The district also mediates between state policy and schools. We consistently found, for the most part, that schools achieving high levels of implementation were in districts that openly valued and validated the learning standards and benchmarks. District-level capacity to interpret and tailor the ILS to their own particular settings

and internal goals and objectives was vital. As has been noted in previous years reports, district level commitment is essential to the implementation process.

Capacity at the school and classroom levels is even more critical. Evidence from the high implementer schools shows that it is absolutely critical that principals and teachers believe or come to believe 1) in their own abilities to implement standards-based changes, and 2) in the abilities of their students to reach high standards and expectations. In addition they must have the requisite knowledge and skills as well as sufficient material resources to achieve these goals. This is no small order but all this need not be in place all at once. Especially at the school level, principals and teachers must see standards implementation as a continuous learning and improvement process. If the implementation efforts is clearly articulated from one level to the next and if realistic, attainable goals are set and appropriate resources provided, it is likely that progress will be evident. As noted in some of the high implementer schools, there is a critical and pressing need for constant evaluation and assessment of the implementation efforts as well as evaluation and assessment of the impact of the implementation strategy on student learning.

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