

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

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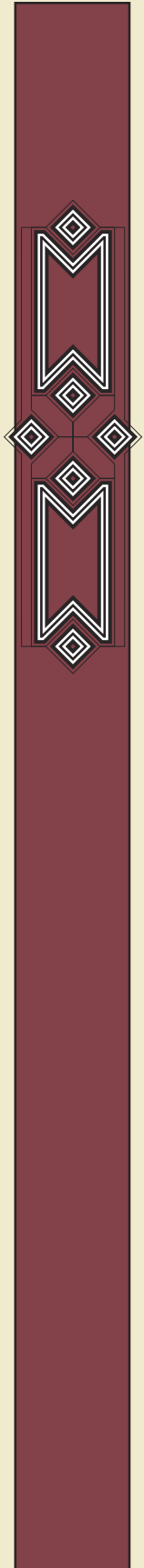
Nona Prestine

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

Year Four Report

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Evaluation of the Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards

Year Four Report

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The Evaluation of the Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards Project has been 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 fourth and final fiscal year of operation on August 20, 2002. This report contains the findings of the fourth and final year of the study and a summary for the entire grant period.

The study has two components:

1. Survey of Practitioners. During Year Four, 2,642 teachers in a stratified random sample of 61 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 137 building principals. The Administrator Survey was used to assess principals' perceptions of ILS implementation.
2. Qualitative Component. In Year Four, 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 nine schools selected from the six districts that agreed to participate in this study include three elementary schools, three middle/junior high schools, and three high schools. Over the past year, more than 20 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, ten site visits and twelve telephone interviews were conducted with “High-Performance, High-Poverty” schools for the purpose of identifying successful strategies for ILS implementation. These schools were selected on the basis of high ISAT scores as well as high-poverty indices. 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 four 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 Survey of Practitioners and the Qualitative Study are summarized:

❖ **Implementation has remained steady during the past year.**

For the first time since 1999, there was no 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 is consistent with 2001 Survey findings. 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 the majority (56%) of the schools surveyed received an average score that placed them within Level Two Implementation (Awareness and Exploration of an ILS-Led System), total scores on several dimensions of implementation were more characteristic of Level Three practice. For example, the dimensions of Affective Response ($M = 3.23$), Curriculum Development ($M = 3.36$), District/School Infrastructure ($M = 3.20$), Instruction ($M = 3.17$), and Professional Development ($M = 3.44$) all had means that placed them well into Level Three. One school in the sample (1.6%) was found to be at Level Four Implementation.

Elementary and middle schools exhibited similar levels and patterns of implementation. High schools continue to show lower implementation than the other levels ($M = 2.57$).

These findings would seem to indicate that, statewide, schools have remained steady in their progress toward implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards during the past year. 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, who consider them to be 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.

Data from our site visits and longitudinal case studies indicate that principals and teachers in many Level Three schools are generally satisfied with their progress and do not have either a clear sense of how to further ILS implementation or a strong desire to do so. The benefits and consequences associated with further implementation are not apparent. Level Four Implementation implies that ILS form the basis of instructional and local assessment decisions, are used routinely to represent and communicate student performance, and are well understood by parents and students. Only one school in our survey sample displayed this level of implementation. The question at this point becomes: Should we expect the majority of schools to reach the highest levels of implementation, or does Level Three “meet standards?” If the state wants to promote greater emphasis of ILS at the local level, efforts must be made to create a system of rewards for implementation and clear directions and support for doing so.

The emphasis on standards throughout the P-16 system continues to increase as institutions of higher education were perceived to be playing a larger role in professional development on standards implementation for teachers and administrators. We also found more evidence indicating that colleges and universities were expanding their role in standards implementation to include consideration of ILS in preservice teacher preparation programs. Preschools have also begun to examine ILS as they shift to a more academic program focus.

❖ 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 percentage of teachers reporting access to ILS professional development continued to increase. More than 70% of teachers reported that curricular change was occurring in their schools as a result of ILS implementation. Teachers associated the adoption of the following with ILS implementation: expansion of after-school tutoring (26%), increased summer school options (26%), and block scheduling (20%). These

percentages represent a slight decline from last year, again suggesting that implementation may have reached a plateau. Teachers' attitudes about ILS and motivation to implement them (Affective Response, $M = 3.23$) and the impact of ILS on instruction ($M = 3.17$) were also reflective of Level Three.

❖ 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 ($M = 1.43$) at all levels (elementary, middle, high, and special). Respondents indicated that parents, school boards, and the community had limited 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 understandable.

❖ Relationships between ISAT performance and ILS implementation are beginning to emerge.

In the initial years of this evaluation, limited range of ILS implementation and changes in the state testing program prevented us from conducting a thorough investigation of the relationship between ILS implementation and ISAT performance. In Year Three, no significant statistical relationship was evident, but our qualitative findings began to suggest that the connection between ILS and student performance was becoming more apparent to teachers and administrators.

This year, we have begun to identify significant correlations among overall ILS implementation and certain dimensions and student ISAT performance in specific content areas.

Regression equations using 2002 ILS implementation to predict 2001 ISAT scores and controlling for poverty and mobility revealed some significant relationships. Students attending schools with higher overall ILS implementation levels scored higher in grade 3 reading, grade 5 math, and grade 8 math. Likewise, schools with higher district and school infrastructure supportive of ILS produced greater numbers of students in meets and exceeds categories in grade 3 reading and grade 5 writing. Finally, greater professional development is associated with lower performance of students in

grade 5 writing. In the latter case, it may be that schools with lower-scoring students may be instituting more professional development in an effort to raise writing ISAT scores.

❖ **Stakeholders identify four effects of standards implementation.**

By far, the most significant and most frequently mentioned effect of efforts to implement ILS is that the standards have brought a new focus and clarity to school improvement efforts. The focus is critical as it promotes serious systemic alignment, helping to bring all elements of schooling into a cohesive, comprehensible, connected whole. The ILS have also allowed the focus of improvement efforts to move to instructional issues rather than the plethora of distractors that can undermine change.

ILS implementation has also promoted more meaningful involvement and engagement of teachers' and administrators' work toward the goal of student learning. As teams of educators worked to align local curriculum with ILS, they developed a greater understanding of the “big picture” of student learning and a stronger commitment to shared goals. Respondents also associated ILS implementation with a growing acceptance and understanding of standards-based reform. As indicated by both the survey and qualitative findings, resistance to ILS is low among educators. There is a general acceptance and appreciation of ILS. The state’s relative stability and constancy concerning the ILS has provided legitimacy and credibility to implementation efforts at district and local levels.

Finally, local educators report that ILS provide a means of assuring a more equitable education for all students by asserting that schools are accountable for certain levels of content mastery for all their students. We have found many examples of the use of ILS to identify equity concerns for student learning. Unfortunately, adequate means for addressing the concerns remain elusive.

❖ **Local implementation efforts face pressing challenges.**

Major areas of concern within school and district implementation efforts include: understanding and using data, changing curriculum and instructional practices, and addressing parent and community awareness. Local educators need support directed at increasing their capacity to understand and interpret complex data and to engage in data-driven decision making on a systemic basis. They also

express concern that although district and school curricula are now aligned with standards, changes in classroom instruction and assessments have not followed suit. Content has changed, but instruction has not. Finally, local stakeholders acknowledge that parent and community awareness of ILS is low and do not see a clear course of action to improve it.

❖ **Concerns regarding ISAT, ISBE, and teacher preparation hinder local implementation.**

For many of the educators we surveyed and interviewed, there currently exists a tenuous relationship between ILS and ISAT. Most schools and districts in the study were struggling to understand how ISAT and PSAE data relate to the learning standards and benchmarks. In addition, the timeline and format for reporting results create perceived barriers to local use of test results. ISAT and PSAE results are viewed as having significant consequences by local educators, yet their credibility and utility are questioned.

The cancellation of the Quality Assurance program, numerous personnel changes, and other ISBE actions have been perceived by local educators as threatening to the standards reform movement in Illinois. Though ISBE's "stay the course" stance on ILS was acknowledged, recent turmoil at the state agency has given our respondents doubts about the future of the standards.

Finally, although survey data indicate that teacher education programs are beginning to incorporate ILS into preservice curricula, local administrators still report that novice teachers are not well versed in ILS.

Recommendations

In the past, we have advised the state to "stay the course" with regard to ILS implementation. Qualitative and survey findings in the early years 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 2001 suggest that the "wait and see" attitude had given way to more enthusiasm for and commitment to ILS. In 2002, although positive attitudes concerning ILS prevailed, implementation did not increase significantly. 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. We continue to recommend that ISBE stay the course with ILS, set explicit expectations for local ILS implementation, assist local educators in data use, and clarify the relationship between state assessments and ILS.

❖ The state should continue to promote the central role of ILS in state accountability and assessment.

As new leadership takes the helm at ISBE, it is important for state leaders to communicate to districts and schools that the ILS are still central to the state’s educational accountability system. Stressing the role of ILS in school improvement and other initiatives such as Title I and Reading First will reinforce this centrality.

❖ The state should set explicit expectations for local ILS implementation.

Considerable numbers of schools have made sizable gains in ILS implementation over the last four years, but few have reached the highest levels of implementation. 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, and many are satisfied at their current level. The Indicators of Implementation that serve as the basis for this study have demonstrated utility to measure progress. The ten characteristics of advanced implementation schools that were developed in the Year Three Report provide benchmarks for implementation. It may be time for the state to use these resources to set clear expectations for “acceptable” levels of local ILS implementation. Using an assessment analogy, it may be time to identify schools that “meet or exceed” the standards for ILS implementation and target those districts that do not for special assistance.

❖ The state should foster and support capacity building at the local level for effective standards implementation, focusing on data-based decision making and instructional change.

If schools and districts are to move to higher levels of ILS implementation, they will require assistance in the collection, analysis, and use of student performance and other relevant data to guide decision making. They also need assistance in understanding the ways in which instruction should

change to promote student learning and how to achieve those instructional changes on a widespread basis. These topics should feature prominently in any professional development or leadership training sponsored by the state.

❖ The state should clarify the relationship between state assessments and ILS.

Although ISAT/PSAE performance is widely recognized by local educators as a means of judging school quality, the relationship between the state assessments is not clear to them. To clarify the relationship between ISAT/PSAE, the state should:

1. Publish the results of content validity studies that demonstrate alignment between ISAT/PSAE and ILS;
2. Make clear to LEAs the areas in which local assessments must address ILS not covered by the state assessments;
3. Revise the ISAT/PSAE reporting strategies to align more closely with ILS.

II. Evaluation of the Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards

Report of the Year Four Survey of Practitioners

Evaluation of the Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards

Report of the Year Four Survey of Practitioners

Overview and Purpose

The report describes the methodology and findings associated with the Year Four 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, *Evaluation of the Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards: Report on the Year One Survey of Practitioners*.) 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

Levels	Indicators of Implementation
Level One: Maintenance of a Non-ILS-Led System	<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)
Level Two: Awareness and Exploration of an ILS-Led System	<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)

Levels	Indicators of Implementation
<p>Level Three: 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 subsidies (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: 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)

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)

Levels	Indicators of Implementation
Level Four (continued):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central consideration of the ILS when teachers are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Choosing materials (CD) ⇒ Developing local assessments (SL) ⇒ 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 began 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 all subsequent years.

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.

Sample

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

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

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 in Year Three. In 2002, 52 out of the 71 schools that participated in the Year Three study agreed to participate in Year Four. We selected 9 additional schools, ensuring 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 61 schools was used to determine the statewide level of ILS implementation.

Over-Achieving and High Performance-High Poverty Samples. At the recommendation of the Evaluation Advisory Committee, we continued to survey purposeful samples of schools with high ISAT scores to better examine the relationship between ILS implementation and ISAT achievement. Schools in the over-achieving sample were nominated by superintendents from Illinois' top thirty urban over-achieving districts (as identified by ISBE). The superintendents from these 30 districts were contacted by mail to nominate their best schools. 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. Eleven superintendents submitted schools. These 20 schools formed the over-achieving sample and were sent surveys.

In addition, the High Performance-High Poverty (HP-HP) sample was taken from the 96 schools identified by the Illinois State Board of Education as High Performance-High Poverty schools. The principals from 9 HP-HP schools were invited by mail to participate in the study. Enclosed with the principals' letter was a form to be mailed or faxed back to us with the number of surveys needed if they chose to participate. The 6 schools that indicated a willingness to participate formed the HP-HP sample and were sent surveys.

As shown in Table 3, there were no significant differences between HP-HP schools and those from the representative sample with regard to ILS implementation. Over-achieving schools scored significantly lower in terms of ILS implementation than the schools in the representative sample. Survey data from the over-achieving and HP-HP schools were not used to compute state-level implementation, but are used in shaping our findings and recommendations about ILS implementation.

Table 3: Comparison of Mean Scores for the Seven Dimension of ILS Implementation for Over-Achieving, HP-HP, and Representative Four-Year Samples, 2002

Dimension	ILS Implementation (Range = 0 – 5)					
	Over-Achieving N = 182		HP-HP N = 69		Representative N = 1044	
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.
Affective Response	3.01	0.40	3.09	0.50	3.23	0.39
Community & Stakeholder	1.22	0.45	1.28	0.28	1.43	0.43
Curriculum	3.25	0.37	3.22	0.42	3.36	0.36
District/School Infrastructure	2.88 *	0.49	3.06	0.42	3.20	0.44
Instruction	2.90	0.48	3.10	0.48	3.17	0.41
Professional Development	3.25*	0.54	3.11	0.38	3.44	0.47
Student Learning/Assessment	2.43*	0.48	2.72	0.47	2.75	0.39
Overall ILS Implementation	2.60*	0.37	2.72	0.33	2.84	0.36

* Significant difference between over-achieving and representative samples, $p \leq .05$

Recruitment

During the first week of February, we contacted the principals of the representative, over-achieving, and HP-HP 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 (87.1% of schools sampled) representing 2,642 teachers and 137 principals, including 9 case-study schools. A total of 1,044 Teacher Surveys (39.5% of teachers sampled) were returned and analyzed. There were 498 surveys returned from high schools, 249 from middle schools, and 297 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 68 Administrator Surveys (49.6% of administrators sampled) were returned and suitable for analysis. Twenty-eight Administrator Surveys were analyzed from high schools, 20 from middle schools, and 20 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 1,044 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. Therefore, in Year Four, we also calculated implementation levels using a rounding procedure. In other words, the school ILS implementation level was rounded to determine levels. We report both truncated and rounded levels in tables throughout this report.

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

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 1,044 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.

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 1,044 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 the 2000, 2001, and 2002 surveys.

The ILS/ISAT sample included 36 schools and represented 571 teachers. Table 4 shows the number of schools and the 2000-2002 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. 17, Table 6).

Table 4: Number of Schools and 1999-2002 Average ILS Implementation for ILS/ISAT Sample by School Type

	Implementation Score								
	2000			2001			2002		
Level	N	Mean	s.d.	N	Mean	s.d.	N	Mean	s.d.
High	12	2.43	(.44)	11	2.62	(.32)	11	2.63	(.21)
Middle	9	2.79	(.31)	8	2.94	(.15)	8	2.95	(.20)
Elementary	23	2.85	(.42)	22	2.85	(.34)	17	3.02	(.42)
Overall	44	2.72	(.44)	41	2.80	(.32)	36	2.87	(.43)

In Year Four, we compared ISAT meets and exceeds scores to average ILS implementation scores using correlation and regression techniques controlling for poverty and mobility. Specifically, we used ILS implementation scores to predict reading, math, and writing meets/exceeds scores for Grades 3, 5, and 8. Findings from this analysis are represented in Table 13 on page 40.

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 remained steady during the past year.**

As shown in Table 5, 55.7% of the schools in the survey were judged by teachers to be in Level Two, the second stage of implementation as described by our five-level model.

Table 5: Frequency and Percentage of Schools by Level of Implementation—Teacher Survey (N = 61 schools), 2002

Level of Implementation	Number of Schools	Percent of Schools
Level One	0	0
Level Two	34	55.7
Level Three	26	42.6
Level Four	1	1.6
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 were in 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; and
- Beginning community awareness of ILS.

Two percent of the schools we surveyed were in Level Four Implementation: Emerging New Infrastructure to Support an ILS-Led System. These schools were characterized by:

- Routine use of student performance data to make instructional and curricular changes;
- Support structures and resources for ongoing support of ILS implementation are put into place, including formalized policies and goal setting, committee structures and responsibilities, job assignments of central office and building administrators, consequences attached to implementation and student performance, and consultation and continuing education;
- ILS are central considerations when choosing materials, developing local assessments, evaluating student work, choosing teacher inservice or board credit classes, lesson planning, giving student feedback, and evaluating teachers;
- Widespread reference to ILS when discussing academic issues among administrators, teachers, and school staff;
- Widespread student awareness of ILS; and
- Widespread reference to ILS when discussing academic issues with parents and in media.

There were no schools in Level Five Implementation.

As shown in Figure 1a on page 18, there has been no appreciable change in the percentage of Level Two and Three schools from 2001 to 2002. Implementation appears stable across the past year. There has been an increase of 27.6% (from 15% to 42.6%) of schools in Level Three Implementation from 1999, the first year of the study (Figure 1b). Figure 2a on page 20 compares mean implementation scores for 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002 by school type, as shown in Table 6. Although elementary, middle, and high schools demonstrate no significant increase in ILS implementation from 2001, they all demonstrated a significant increase in average ILS implementation from 1999 to 2002 (Figure 2b). Middle schools and high schools showed the largest increases, more than 1 full standard deviation from 1999. Across the total sample of schools, there was a significant increase in ILS implementation from 1999 to 2000, from 2000 to 2001, from 2000 to 2002, and from 1999 to 2002.

Table 6: Comparison of Average ILS Implementation Scores from 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2002 by School Type

	Average ILS Implementation							
	1999 N = 1268		2000 N = 910		2001 N = 845		2002 N = 1044	
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.
High Schools ^{cde}	2.16	.32	2.29	.26	2.56	.34	2.57	.19
Middle Schools ^{bce}	2.43	.41	2.62	.35	2.85	.30	2.89	.23
Elementary Schools ^{bc}	2.63	.40	2.77	.39	2.86	.36	2.95	.41
Total ^{acde}	2.44	.43	2.61	.40	2.77	.36	2.84	.36

a indicates significant increase from 1999 to 2000, @ $p \leq .05$
 b indicates significant increase from 1999 to 2001, @ $p \leq .05$
 c indicates significant increase from 1999 to 2002, @ $p \leq .05$
 d indicates significant increase from 2000 to 2001, @ $p \leq .05$
 e indicates significant increase from 2000 to 2002, @ $p \leq .05$

Figure 1a
Percent of Schools by Level of Implementation from 1999 Through 2002
Representative Sample

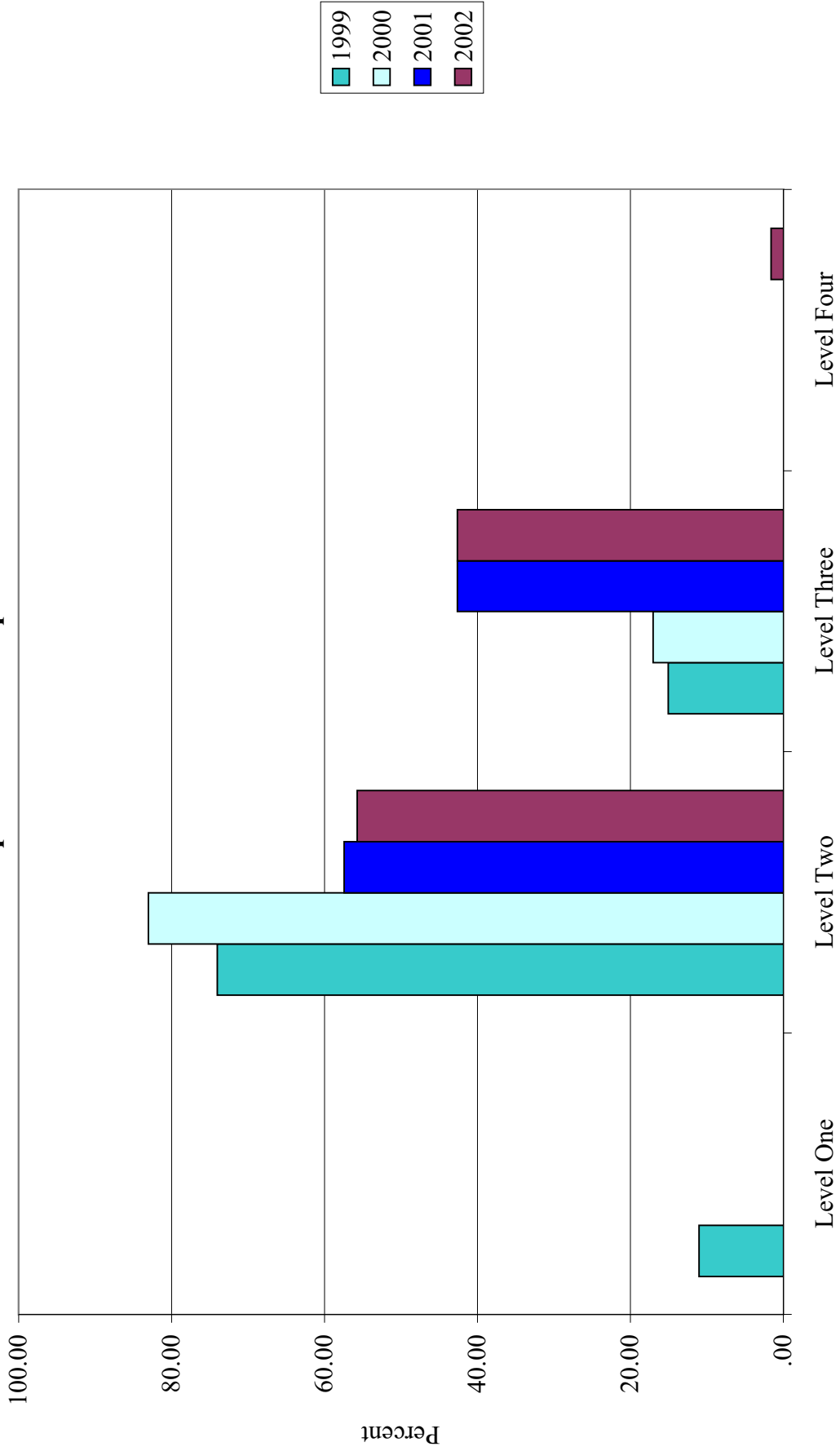


Figure 1b
Percent of Schools by Level of Implementation, 1999 and 2002
Representative Sample

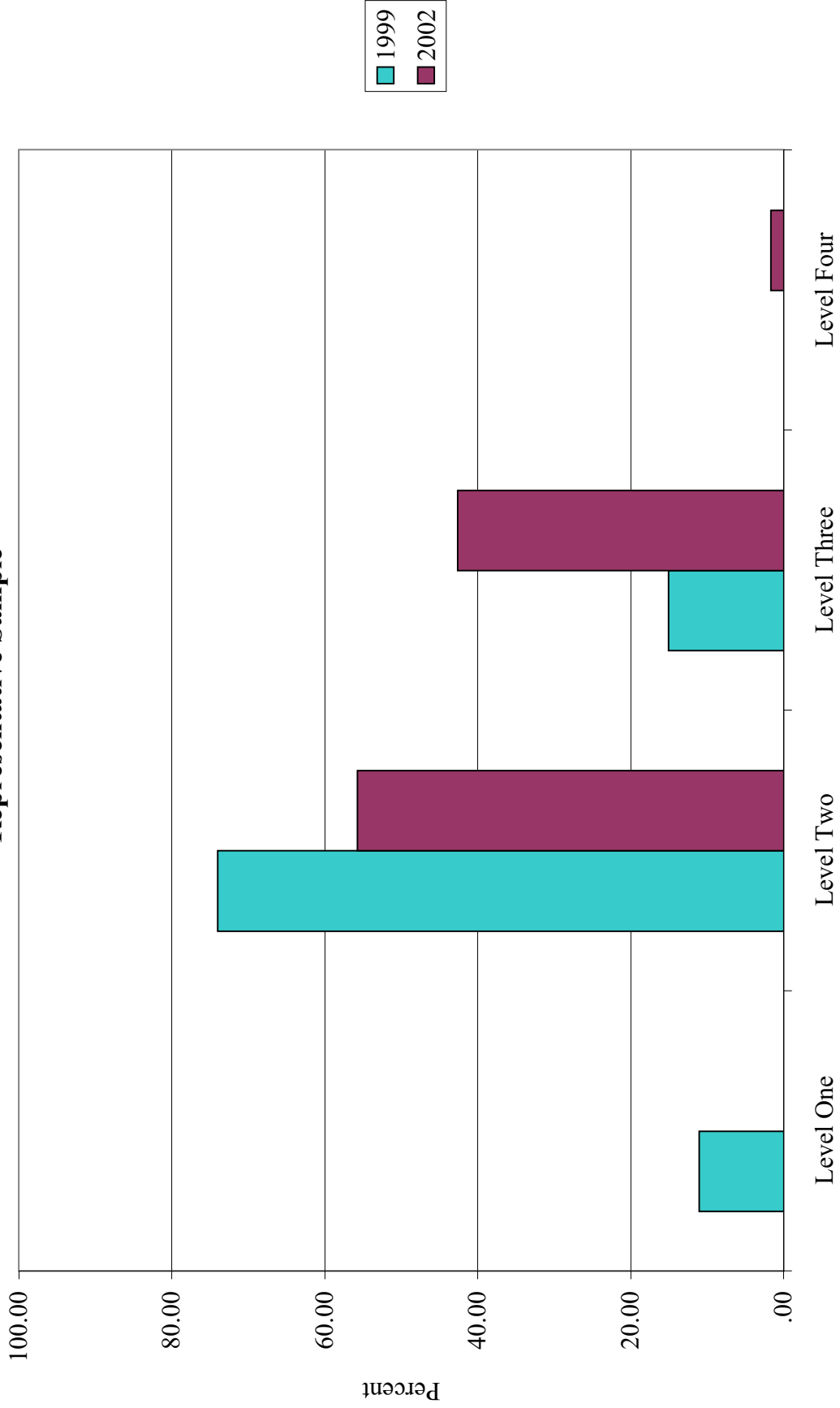


Figure 2a
Average ILS Implementation Levels from 1999 Through 2002
By School Type
All Schools in Survey

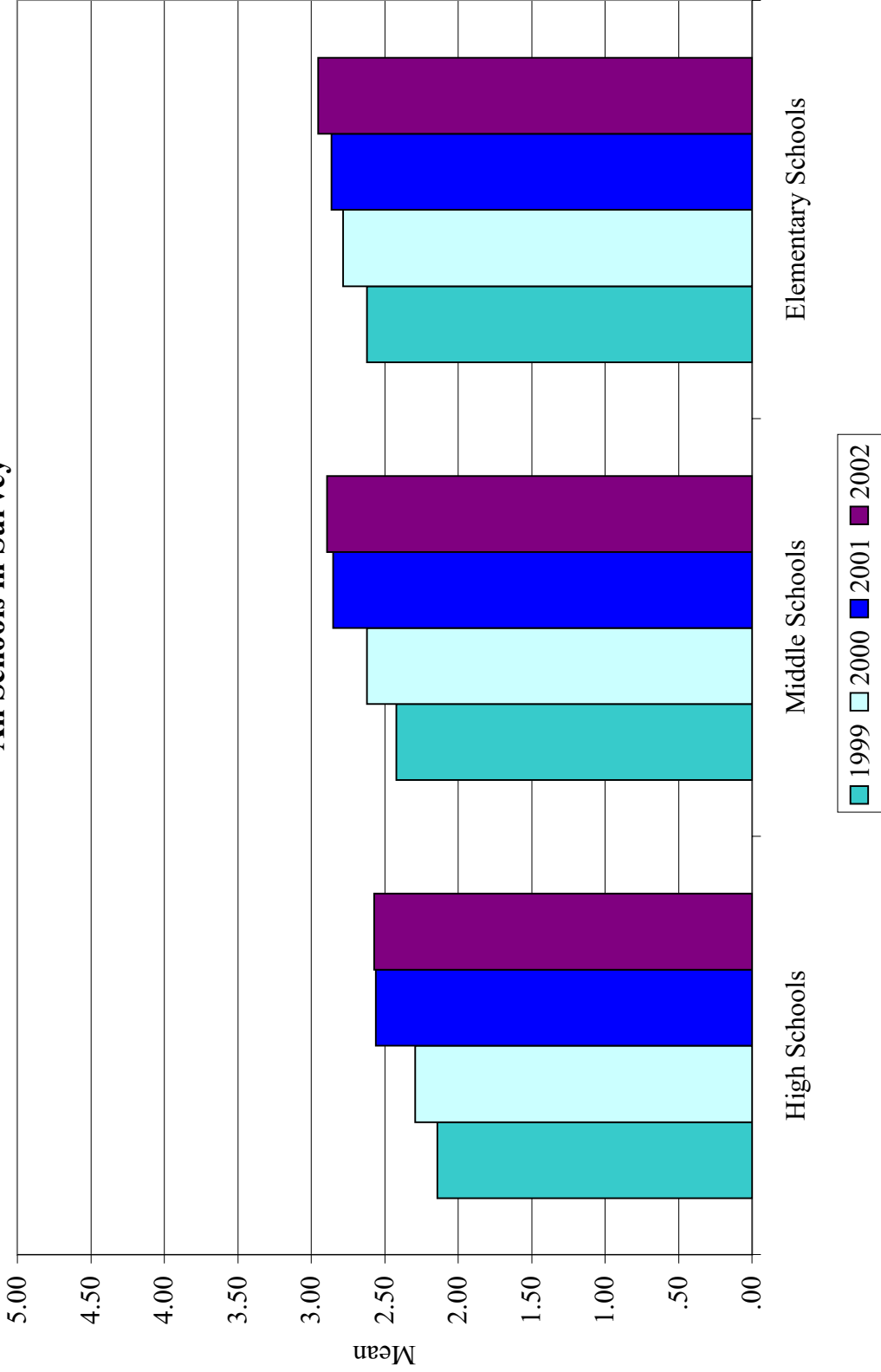
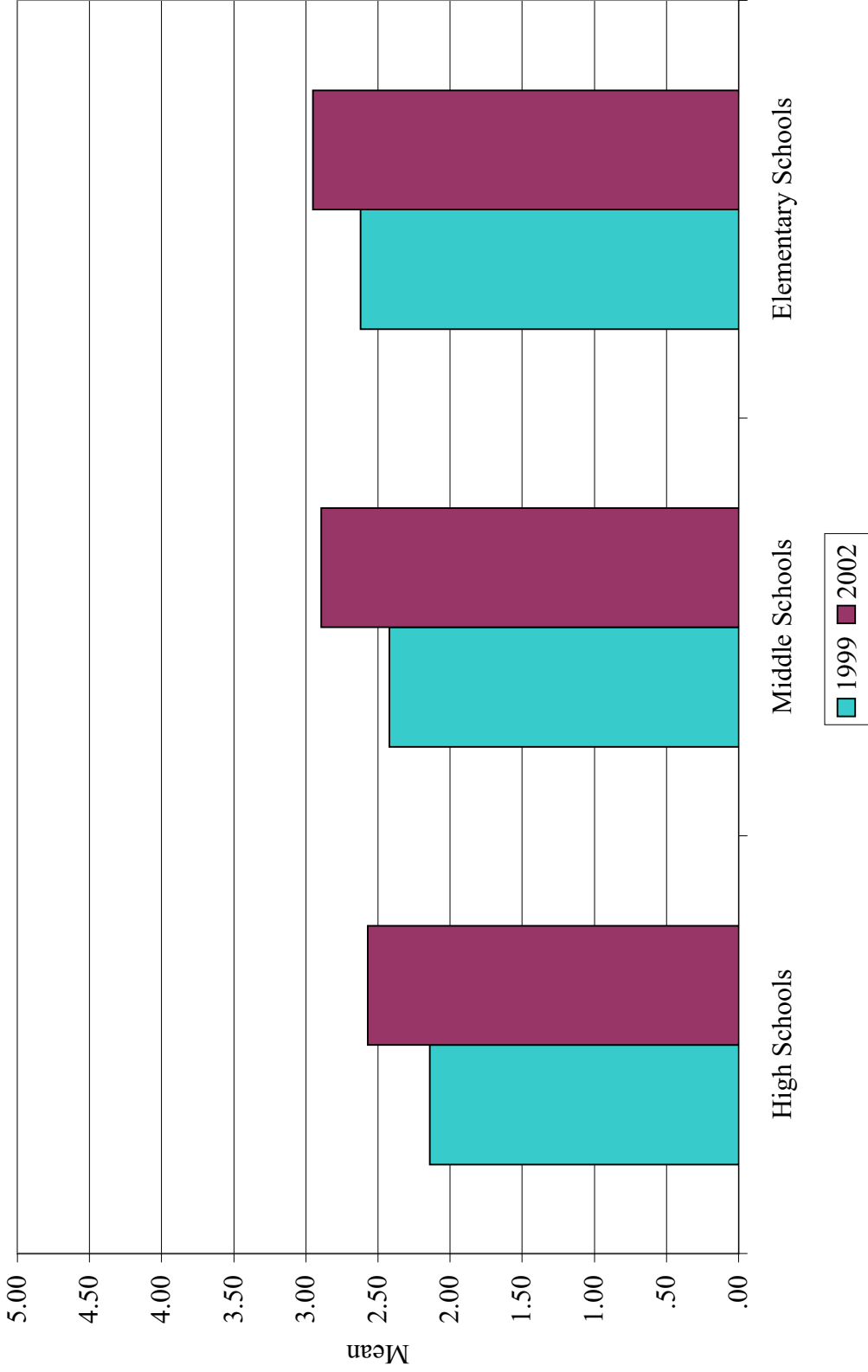


Figure 2b
Average ILS Implementation Levels, 1999 and 2002
By School Type
All Schools in Survey



Presenting Profiles of ILS Implementation Across
Seven Dimensions Associated with Implementation

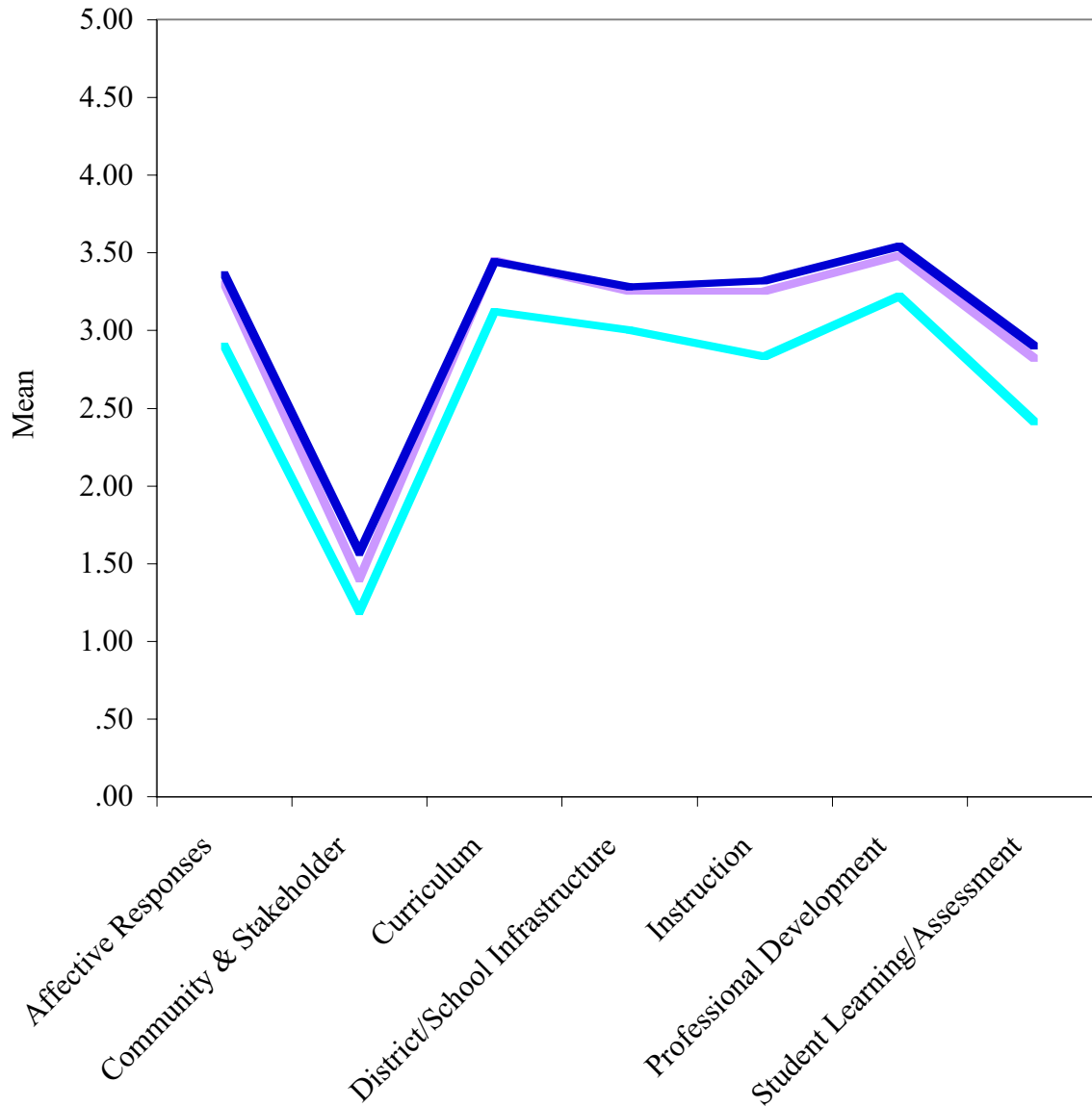
❖ **The profile of ILS implementation reveals a strong emphasis on professional development, curriculum, and district/school infrastructure.**

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 7, these are further disaggregated by school level: elementary, middle, and high. The results are presented graphically in Figure 3, page 23.

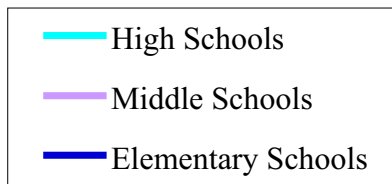
Table 7: Summary of Mean Scores for the Seven Dimensions of Implementation by School Type Based on the Results of the Teacher Survey (N = 1044), 2002

Dimension	Elementary (N = 297)	Middle (N = 249)	High (N = 498)	Total (N = 1044)
Affective Response	3.36 (0.43)	3.30 (0.23)	2.90 (0.19)	3.23 (0.39)
Community/Stakeholder Involvement	1.57 (0.48)	1.40 (0.35)	1.19 (0.28)	1.43 (0.43)
Curriculum Development	3.44 (0.37)	3.45 (0.28)	3.12 (0.30)	3.36 (0.36)
District/School Infrastructure	3.28 (0.50)	3.25 (0.38)	3.00 (0.31)	3.20 (0.44)
Instruction	3.32 (0.45)	3.25 (0.25)	2.83 (0.28)	3.17 (0.41)
Professional Development	3.54 (0.51)	3.48 (0.38)	3.22 (0.39)	3.44 (0.47)
Student Learning and Assessment	2.90 (0.42)	2.82 (0.25)	2.41 (0.20)	2.75 (0.39)
Total Implementation	2.95 (0.41)	2.89 (0.23)	2.57 (0.19)	2.84 (0.36)

Figure 3
Profiles of Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards for
Elementary, Middle, and High Schools, Representative Sample
Teacher Survey, 2002



Seven Dimensions by School Type



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 Assessment reflected the upper end of 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 and middle 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. However, elementary and middle schools scored significantly higher than high schools in ILS implementation.

❖ **Profiles are similar for Level Two and Level Three schools.**

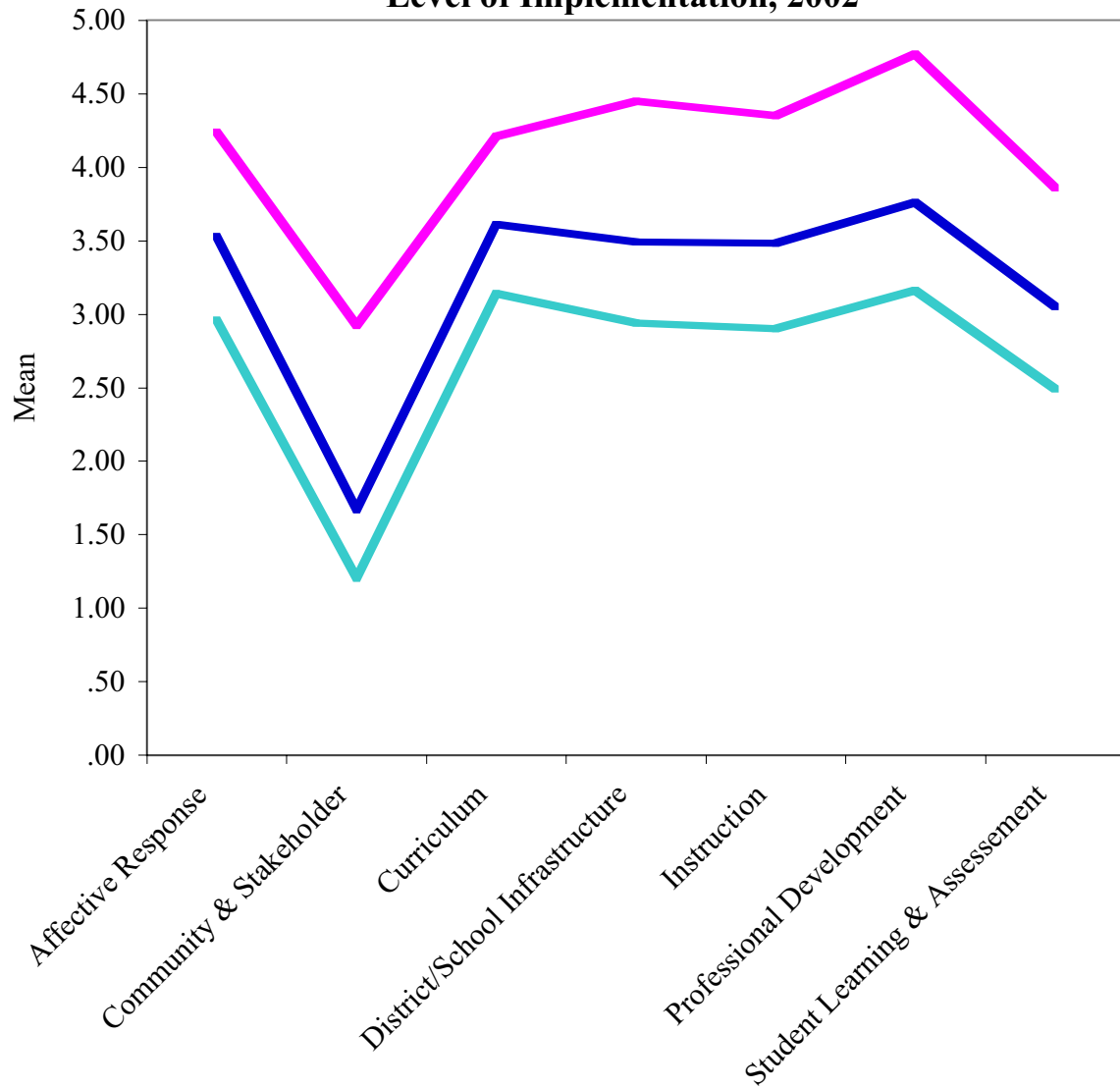
In general, the profile of implementation is similar for Level Two and Level Three schools, with higher ratings in Affective Response, Professional Development, District/School Infrastructure, Instruction, and Curriculum; more moderate activity in Student Learning and Assessment; and low Community/Stakeholder 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 8, which follows, presents profiles of schools at each level of implementation, using the seven dimensions. Figure 4 on page 26 presents the same findings graphically.

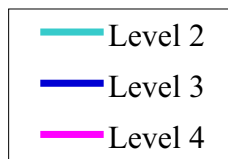
Table 8: Summary of Mean Scores for the Seven Dimensions by Level of Implementation Based on the Results of the Teacher Survey (N = 1044), 2002

Dimension	Level One	Level Two N = 688	Level Three N = 349	Level Four N = 7	Total Sample N = 1044
Affective Response	-	2.96 (0.22)	3.53 (0.24)	4.24 (0.15)	3.23 (0.39)
Community/Stakeholder Involvement	-	1.20 (0.27)	1.67 (0.36)	2.92 (0.26)	1.43 (0.43)
Curriculum Development	-	3.14 (0.26)	3.61 (0.23)	4.21 (0.14)	3.36 (0.36)
District/School Infrastructure	-	2.94 (0.32)	3.49 (0.29)	4.45 (0.23)	3.20 (0.44)
Instruction	-	2.90 (0.22)	3.48 (0.30)	4.35 (0.26)	3.17 (0.41)
Professional Development	-	3.16 (0.37)	3.76 (0.22)	4.77 (0.15)	3.44 (0.47)
Student Learning and Assessment	-	2.49 (0.23)	3.05 (0.25)	3.86 (0.20)	2.75 (0.39)
Total Implementation	-	2.58 (0.19)	3.13 (0.17)	4.03 (0.14)	2.84 (0.36)

Figure 4
Profiles of Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards for All
Schools Grouped by
Level of Implementation, 2002



Seven Dimensions by Level of Implementation



❖ 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.

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 all dimensions from 1999 to 2002.

Figure 5a on page 29 compares the mean scores for each dimension for four time periods, Spring 1999, Spring 2000, Spring 2001, and Spring 2002. As shown in Table 9 on page 28, mean levels of implementation did not increase significantly from 2001 to 2002. However, mean levels of implementation increased significantly ($p \leq .05$) 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. Additionally, mean levels of implementation increased significantly ($p \leq .05$) between 1999 and 2002 in all dimensions. Between 1999 and 2002, the largest differences were in Instruction, Affective Response, Curriculum, and Student Learning (Figure 5b on page 30).

Table 9: 1999-2002 Comparison of Average ILS Implementation by Dimension, Teacher Survey

Dimension	ILS Implementation							
	1999 N = 1268		2000 N = 910		2001 N = 845		2002 N = 1004	
	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.	Mean	s.d.
Affective Response ^{acde}	2.65	(.44)	2.92	(.46)	3.11	(.43)	3.23	(.39)
Community & Stakeholder ^{bce}	1.16	(.42)	1.25	(.48)	1.34	(.44)	1.43	(.43)
Curriculum ^{acde}	2.79	(.50)	3.11	(.44)	3.27	(.39)	3.36	(.36)
District/School Infrastructure ^{cd}	2.95	(.53)	3.05	(.47)	3.24	(.45)	3.20	(.44)
Instruction ^{acde}	2.55	(.48)	2.86	(.49)	3.04	(.45)	3.17	(.41)
Professional Development ^{acd}	3.01	(.63)	3.31	(.49)	3.52	(.45)	3.44	(.47)
Student Learning /Assessment ^{acde}	2.20	(.44)	2.46	(.45)	2.62	(.42)	2.75	(.39)
Overall ^{acde}	2.44	(.43)	2.60	(.40)	2.77	(.36)	2.84	(.36)

^aSignificant increase from 1999 to 2000, $p \leq .05$.

^bSignificant increase from 1999 to 2001, $p \leq .05$.

^cSignificant increase from 1999 to 2002, $p \leq .05$.

^dSignificant increase from 2000 to 2001, $p \leq .05$.

^eSignificant increase from 2000 to 2002, $p \leq .05$.

Figure 5a
Average ILS Implementation Levels from 1999 Through 2002
by Seven Dimensions
All Schools in Survey

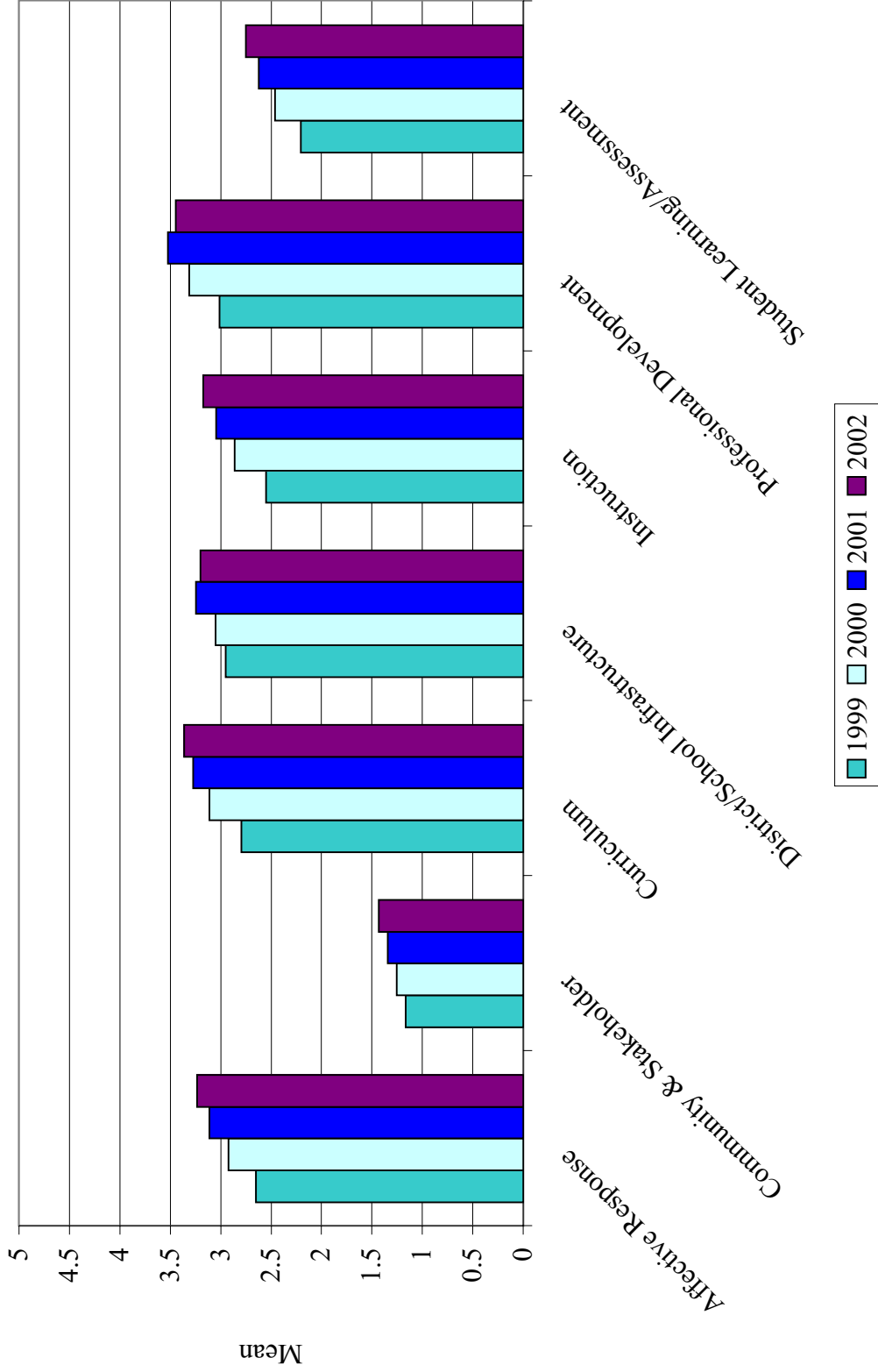
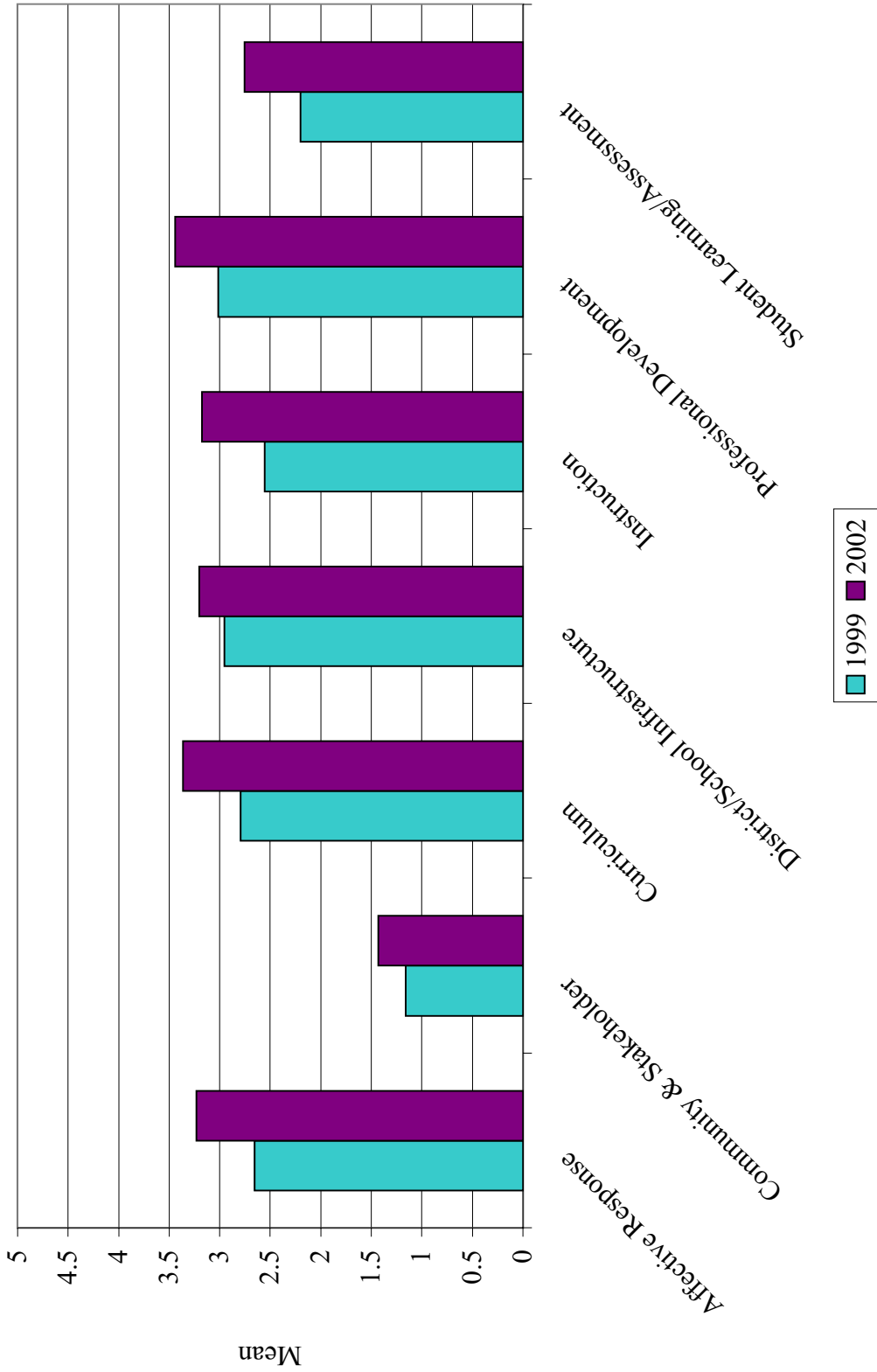


Figure 5b
Average ILS Implementation Levels, 1999 and 2002
by Seven Dimensions
All Schools in Survey



Although District/School Infrastructure did not increase significantly from 1999-2000, a significant increase was seen from 2000-2001 and from 1999-2002. 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 and progress reports with ILS and other feedback to students and parents;
- Incorporation of ILS into lesson planning and personnel evaluation; and
- Articulation of policies and procedures across elementary, middle, and high school levels.

Current levels of Community/Stakeholder Involvement are significantly higher than those of 1999. It appears that local educators are beginning to involve parents and 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 13. For example, the 28 schools in the Low Will/Low Capacity category had below average scores for both will and capacity; the 26 schools in the High Will/High Capacity category had above average scores on both dimensions.

Table 10: Comparison of Mean ILS Implementation Scores by Will and Capacity Designation and Frequency of Schools in Each Category

Designation	ILS Implementation											
	1999			2000			2001			2002		
	n	Mean	S.D.	n	Mean	S.D.	n	Mean	S.D.	n	Mean	S.D.
Low Will/Low Capacity	46	2.04	.24	26	2.34	.17	24	2.48	.27	28	2.54	.18
High Will/Low Capacity	7	2.40	.08	6	2.58	.01	9	2.83	.40	4	2.80	.05
Low Will/High Capacity	7	2.42	.05	7	2.66	.11	5	2.78	.12	3	2.91	.14
High Will/High Capacity	45	2.85	.21	22	3.00	.33	23	3.06	.19	26	3.16	.26
Overall	105	2.44	.43	62	2.60	.40	61	2.77	.36	61	2.84	.36

In Table 10 on page 31, mean ILS implementation scores from spring 2002 were compared with those from spring 1999, 2000, and 2001 for schools grouped by will and capacity. The same data are presented graphically in Figures 6a and 6b on pages 33 and 34. Although teachers in Low Will/Low Capacity schools reported the lowest implementation in all four years, it should be noted that this group demonstrated the largest increase (.30) from 1999 to 2000 and continued to make progress (+.14) in 2001 and (+.06) in 2002. 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 all four years, but demonstrated the smallest change in implementation. These schools' average implementation was at Level Three in 2000 and showed little increase in 2001 and in 2002. 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 curriculum alignment related to ILS implementation.**

Teachers associated a variety of activities in their schools with the implementation of ILS. As seen in Table 11 on page 35, in 1999 more than 60% of teachers reported that curriculum was being aligned to ILS in their schools. In 2002, this activity increased noticeably to 72%. However, the only noticeable increase from 2001 to 2002 (+ 4.2%) was the adoption of block scheduling. According to teachers' reports, schools appear to have reached a plateau in ILS-related changes.

Figures 7a and 7b on pages 36 and 37 report the same information graphically.

Figure 6a
Average ILS Implementation Levels from 1999 Through 2002
by Will and Capacity Designation
All Schools in Survey

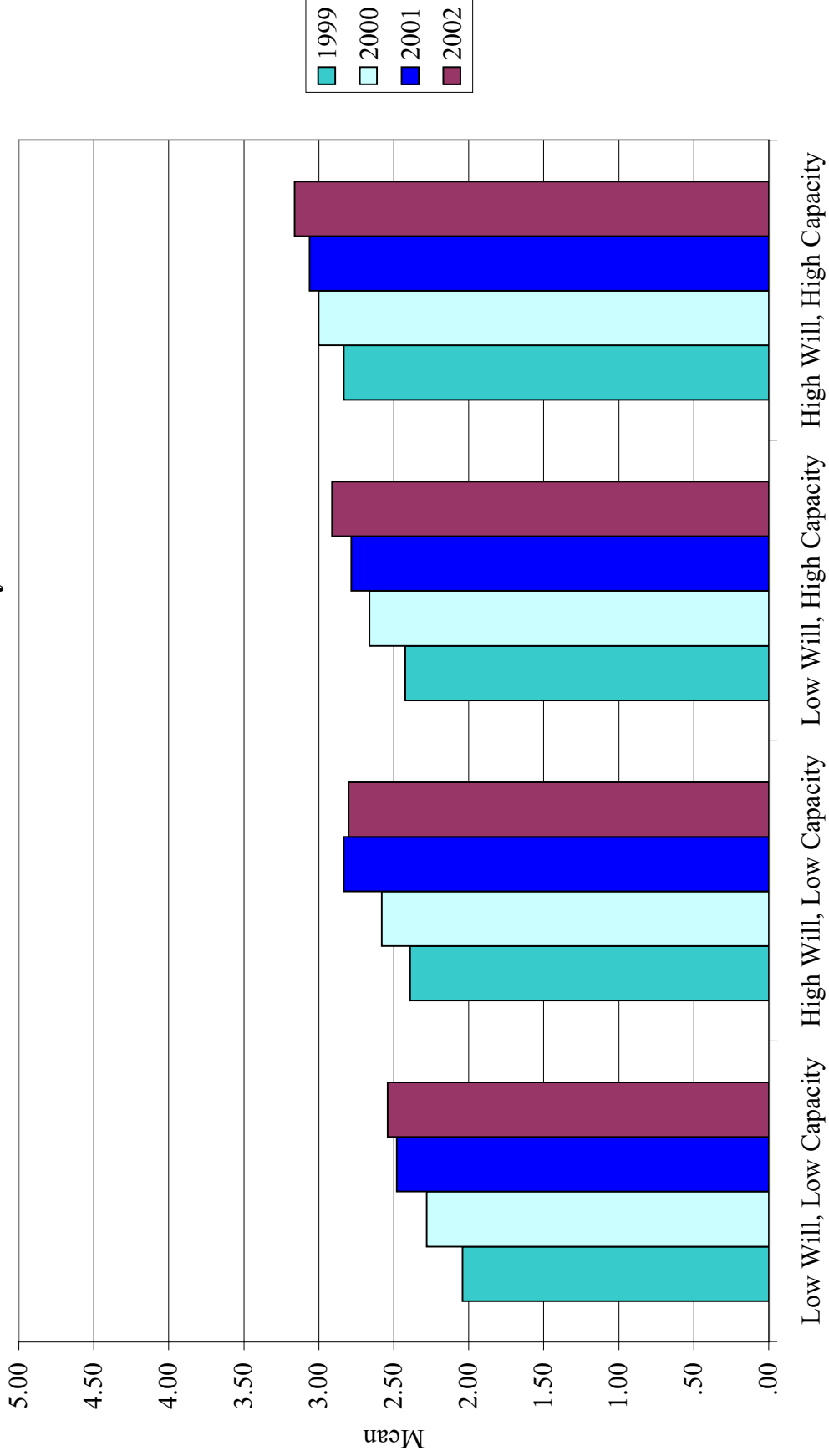


Figure 6b
Average ILS Implementation Levels, 1999 and 2002
by Will and Capacity Designation
All Schools in Survey

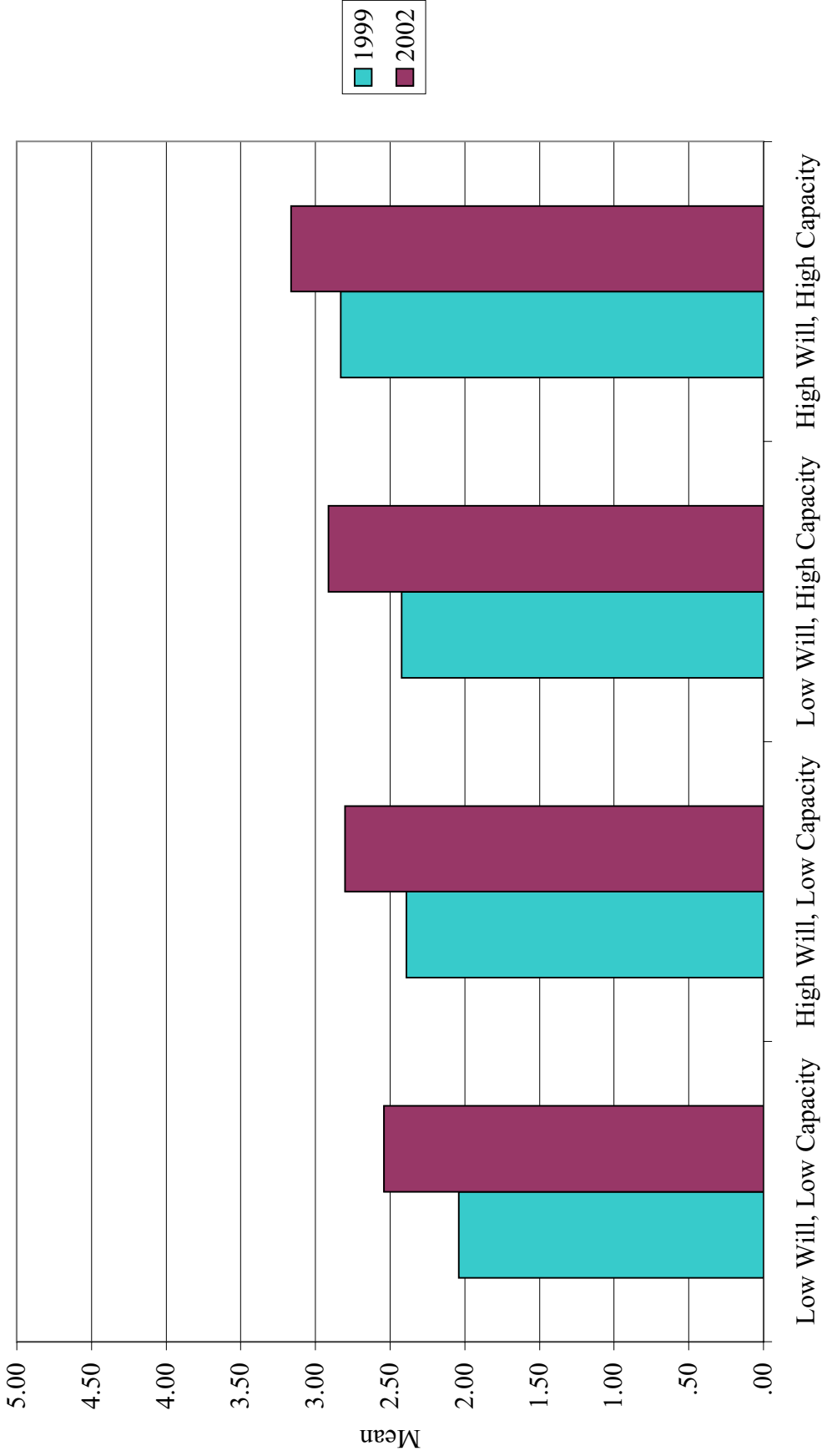


Table 11: Percentage of Teachers Indicating Changes in Activities Related to ILS Implementation at their Schools, 1999-2002

Activity	Percentage of Teachers Reporting			
	1999 N = 1268	2000 N = 910	2001 N = 845	2002 N = 1044
Increase Teacher Planning Time	10.0	11.7	11.9	9.0
Adopt Block Scheduling	21.5	21.4	20.5	24.7
Align the Curriculum to ILS	60.7	66.7	74.3	72.0
Increase Summer School Options	26.2	26.4	28.0	20.6
Expand After-School Tutoring	25.4	25.6	36.3	26.2
Add Transition Grades	4.8	4.0	6.1	5.3
Adopt Balanced Calendar	3.6	4.6	4.2	4.5
Reduce Class Size	11.4	13.4	13.9	12.6
Lengthen School Day	4.8	5.0	2.9	3.4
Lengthen School Year	3.6	2.9	2.4	1.9
Change Report of Student Performance	13.5	12.6	12.7	11.9
Increase Standardized Testing	12.0	13.8	17.5	18.0
Revise Personnel Responsibilities	11.7	11.8	13.9	13.6

Figure 7a
Percent of Teachers Indicating Changes in Activities at Their Schools
Related to ILS Implementation from
1999 Through 2002

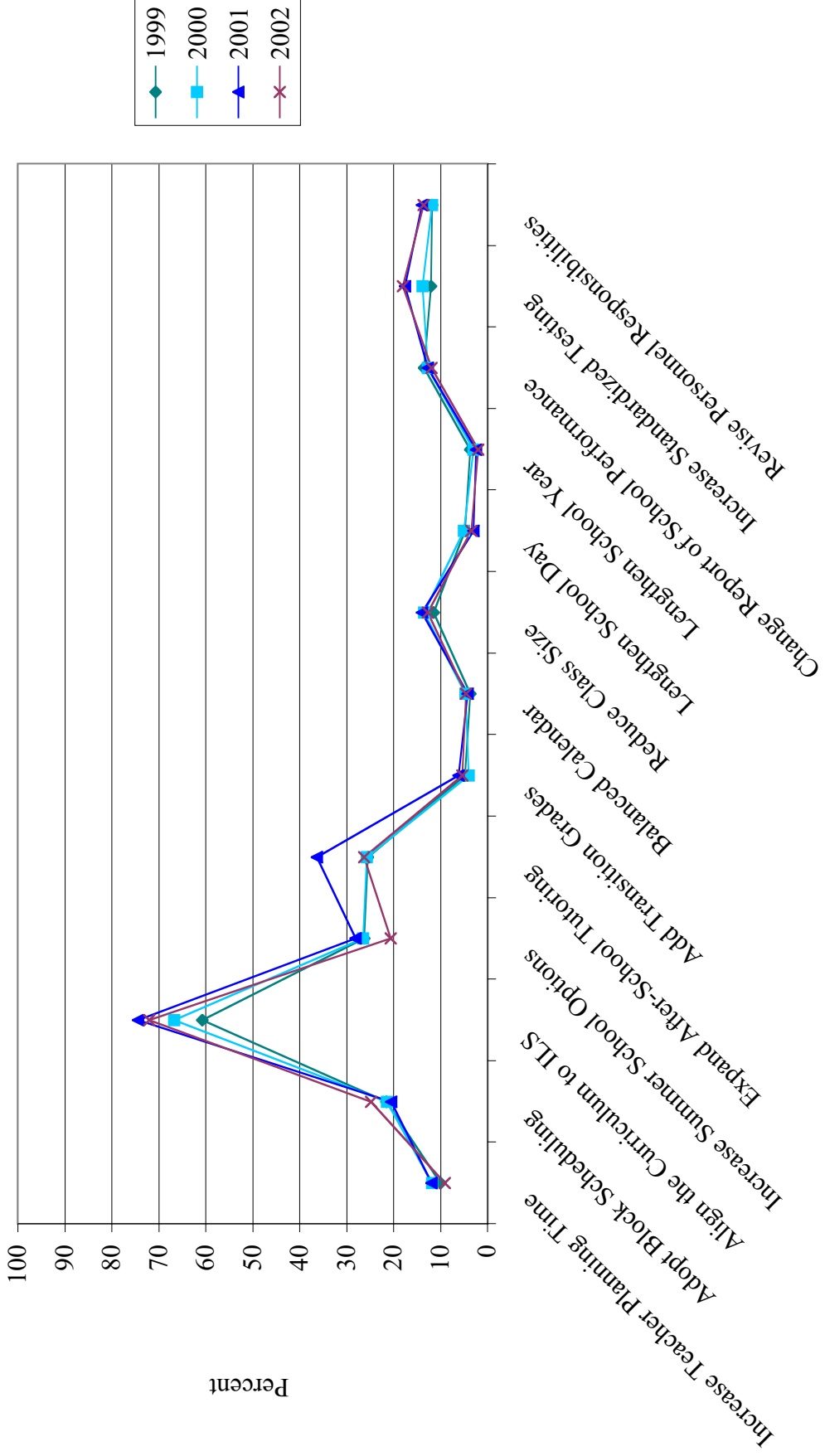
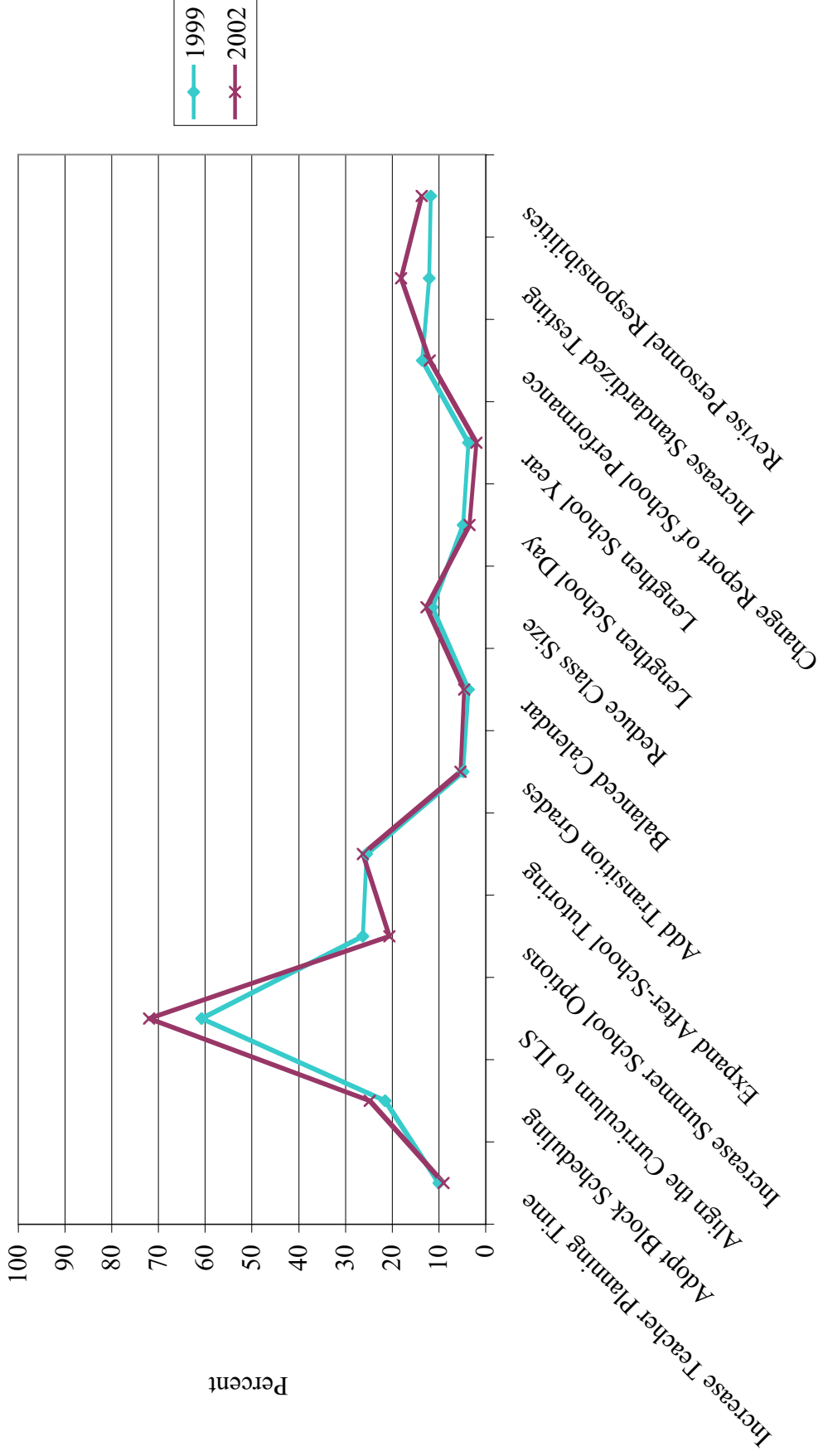


Figure 7b
Percent of Teachers Indicating Changes in Activities at Their Schools
Related to ILS Implementation
1999 and 2002



❖ 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 steadily increased from 69.2% in 1999 to 76.1% in 2000, to 78.3% in 2001, and to 81.4% in 2002. Teachers noted a variety of professional development sources as shown in Table 12.

Table 12: Percentage of Teachers Reporting Availability of ILS Professional Development by Source, 1999-2002

Activity	Percentage of Teachers Reporting			
	1999 N = 1268	2000 N = 910	2001 N = 845	2002 N = 1044
State-Sponsored Workshops and Inservices	36.5	41.9	48.2	53.2
Regional Offices of Education	46.5	46.8	56.3	58.9
District-Sponsored Inservices	47.9	54.2	59.3	62.6
School-Sponsored Inservices	46.5	57.1	59.2	61.9
Outside Consultants	25.2	28.6	33.3	36.6
Colleges and Universities	18.8	23.5	32.9	38.7
Professional Conferences	35.9	32.9	48.6	50.7

The most widely available source of professional development on ILS was district-sponsored inservices, with more than half (62.6%) of all teachers indicating its availability. A similar percentage of teachers (61.9%) reported the availability of school-sponsored inservices. State-sponsored workshops, ROE workshops, and professional conferences were also available to a significant percentage of teachers, although the increases from 2001 were less than 5%. Outside consultants, colleges, and universities were available to more than a third of the teachers, but this number once again increased from the previous year, particularly for colleges and universities with the highest increase from 2001 (5.8% increase), indicating that institutions of higher education are

becoming more involved in ILS implementation. In fact, the largest increase over the study (from 1999–2002) is for colleges and universities (19.9%). 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 Years Three and Four, more schools were at Level Three, but the range of implementation was still very small. Because schools have slowed in their ILS implementation, it is still difficult to examine the relationship between ILS implementation and ISAT performance.

❖ Relationships between ISAT performance and ILS implementation are beginning to emerge.

Given the restricted range of ILS implementation, no relationship can be determined between changes in ISAT scores and changes in ILS implementation levels during Years Three or Four. 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. Regression equations using change in ILS implementation to predict change in ISAT score and controlling for poverty and mobility also found no significant relationships.

However, regression equations using 2002 ILS implementation to predict 2001 ISAT scores and controlling for poverty and mobility revealed some significant relationships. Students attending schools with higher overall ILS implementation levels scored higher in grade 3 reading, grade 5 math, and grade 8 math. Likewise, schools with higher district and school infrastructure supportive of ILS produced greater number of students in meets and exceeds categories in grade 3 reading and grade 5 writing. Finally, greater professional development is associated with lower performance of students in grade 5 writing. In the latter case, it may be that schools with lower-scoring students may be instituting more professional development in an effort to raise writing ISAT scores.

Table 13: Significant Regression Equations Using 2002 ILS Implementation to Predict 2001 ISAT Scores Controlling for Mobility and SES

Criterion	Significant Predictors	Standardized Beta	<i>p</i>
Grade 3 Reading Meets/Exceeds	Overall ILS Implementation	0.20	.01
	District/School Infrastructure	0.39	.03
Grade 5 Math Meets/Exceeds	Overall ILS Implementation	0.19	.02
Grade 5 Writing Meets/Exceeds	District/School Infrastructure	0.47	.04
	Professional Development	-0.46	.03
Grade 8 Math Meets/Exceeds	Overall ILS Implementation	0.27	.02

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

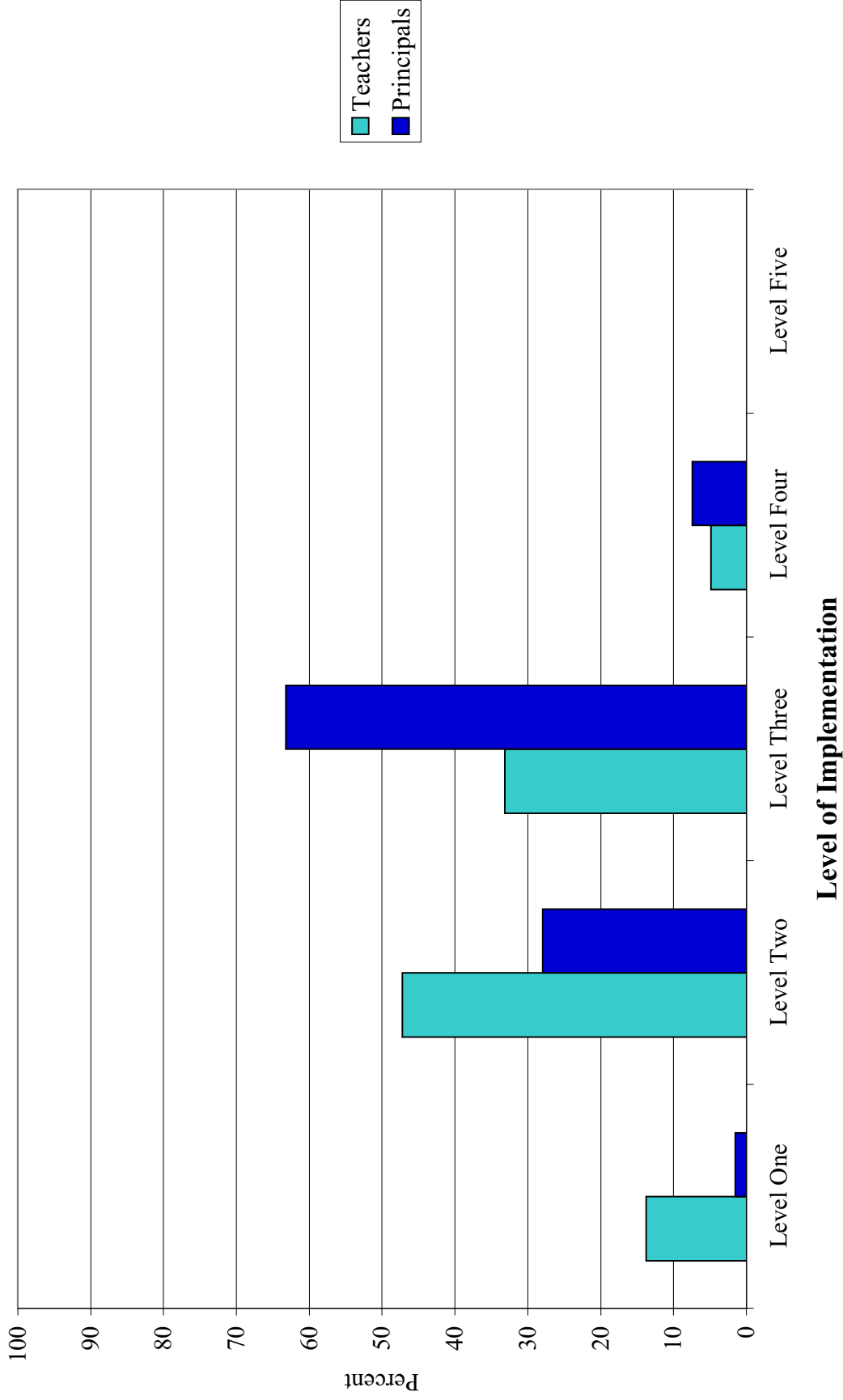
❖ **In general, principals reported higher levels of ILS implementation than teachers.**

The modal level of implementation, as reported by principals, is shown in Table 14; 63.2% 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; 27.9% of the schools were judged by their principals to be in 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 42 presents these findings graphically.

Table 14: Percentage of Responses by Levels of Implementation—Teacher and Administrator Surveys, 2002

Level of Implementation	Level Determined by Truncation		Level Determined by Rounding	
	Teachers (N=1044)	Principals (N = 68)	Teachers (N=1044)	Principals (N = 68)
Level One	13.7	1.5	4.6	0.0
Level Two	47.2	27.9	30.7	8.8
Level Three	33.1	63.2	48.6	58.8
Level Four	4.8	7.4	14.8	32.4
Level Five	0.0	0.0	1.1	0.0

Figure 8
Percent of Responses for Teacher and Principal Surveys by Level of Implementation 2002



Presenting Profiles of ILS Implementation Across Seven Dimensions

❖ **The profile of ILS implementation is similar across teachers and principals.**

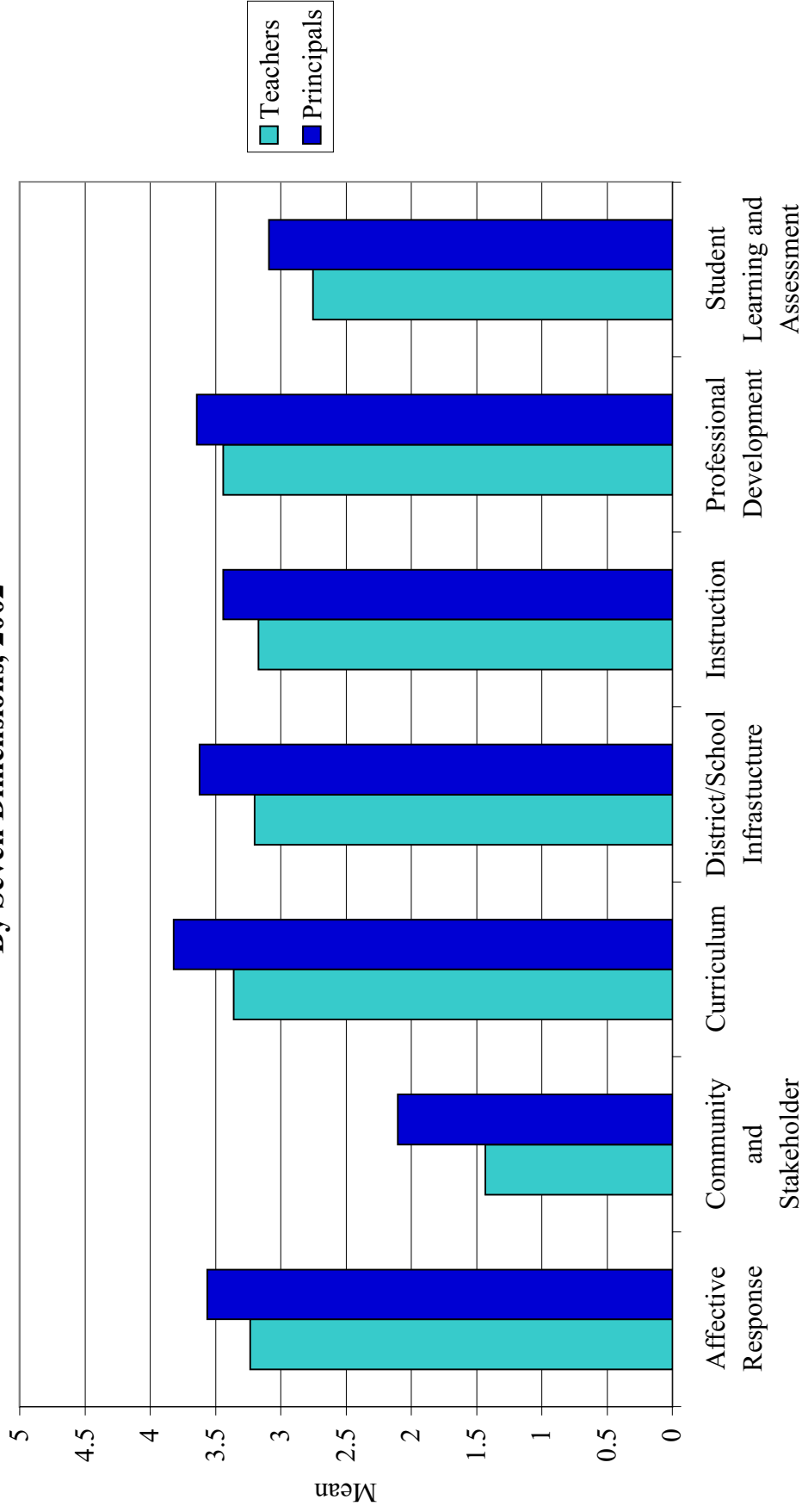
Table 15 presents profiles of implementation for each school level using the seven dimensions. Figures 9 and 10, which follow, present the same findings graphically.

Table 15: Summary of Mean Scores for the Seven Dimensions of Implementation by School Level for Teachers and Principals, 2002

Dimension	Teachers N = 1044		Principals N = 68	
	mean	s.d.	mean	s.d.
Affective Response	3.23	(.39)	3.56	(.50)
Community/Stakeholder Involvement	1.43	(.43)	2.10	(.89)
Curriculum Development	3.36	(.36)	3.82	(.54)
District/School Infrastructure	3.20	(.44)	3.62	(.64)
Instruction	3.17	(.41)	3.44	(.59)
Professional Development	3.44	(.47)	3.64	(.60)
Student Learning and Assessment	2.75	(.39)	3.09	(.60)
Overall	2.84	(.36)	3.24	(.52)

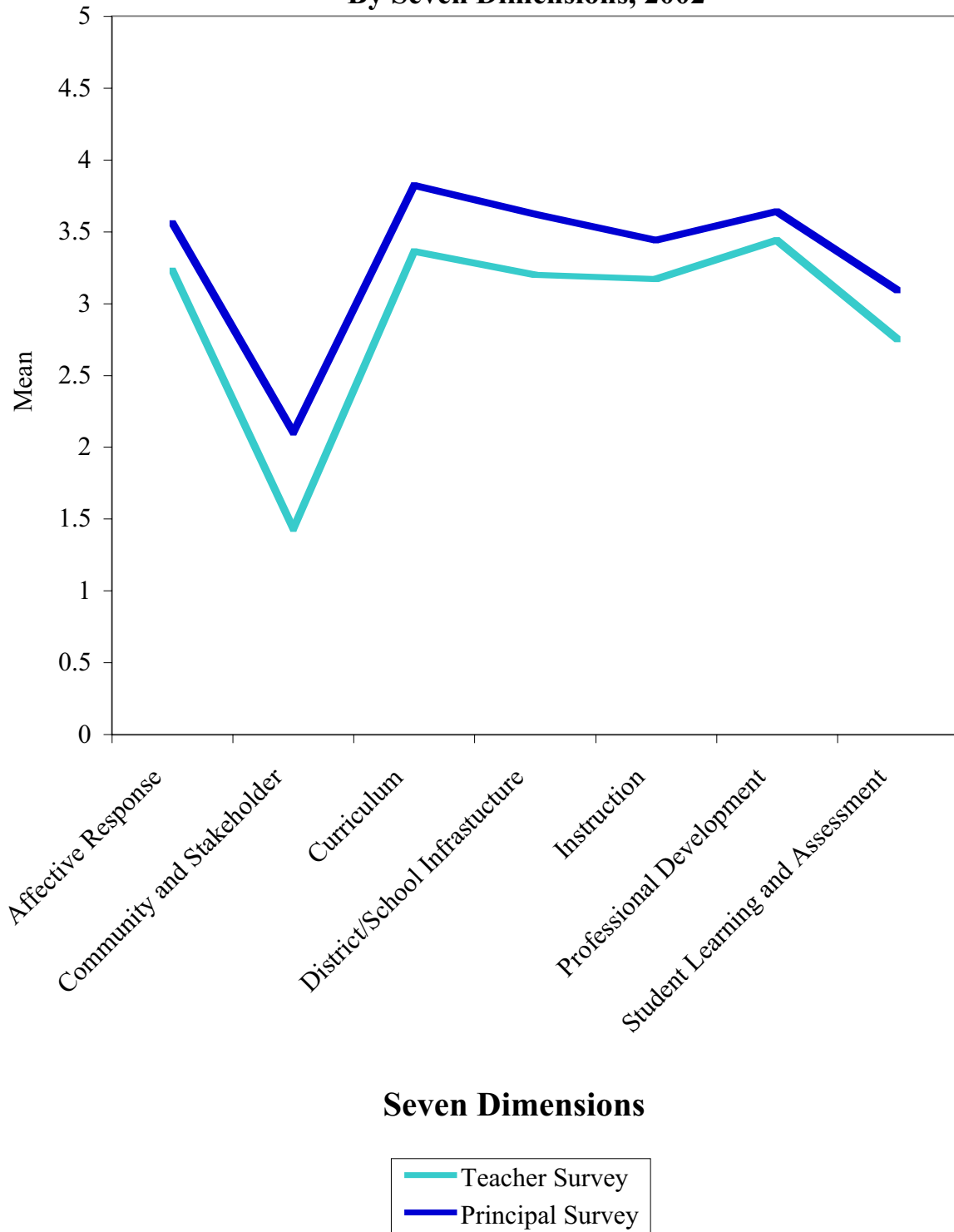
Despite differences in perception of level of implementation, the profile of implementation is similar across teachers and principals. For both groups, Curriculum Development, Professional Development, Affective Response, and District/School Infrastructure were the most highly rated dimensions. All groups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

Figure 9
Average ILS Implementation Levels
Teacher, Principal, and Superintendent Surveys
By Seven Dimensions, 2002



Seven Dimensions

Figure 10
Average ILS Implementation Levels
Teacher and Principal Surveys
By Seven Dimensions, 2002



Summary

Findings from the administration of the 2002 Teacher and Administrator Surveys indicate the following:

- As a state, Illinois appears to have reached a plateau as it nears Level Three Implementation (Transition to an ILS-Led System), with 43% of the schools now at Level Three and 55.7% at Level Two. A small percentage of schools have reached Level Four Implementation.
- Elementary and middle schools exhibit similar levels of implementation, while high schools have lower implementation.
- 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 remains low.
- ILS implementation has increased significantly across all 7 dimensions from 1999 to 2002. ILS implementation has not increased substantially during the past year.
- Teachers reported changes since 1999 in practice related to ILS implementation, such as curriculum alignment, block scheduling, increase in summer school options, and expansion of after-school tutoring.
- Teachers reported increased availability of professional development regarding ILS from a wide variety of sources from 1999 to the present.
- ILS implementation is associated with ISAT performance. Specifically, ILS overall implementation and district/school infrastructure scores are positively related to student performance on ISAT. ISAT performance is negatively correlated with professional development, indicating that poor performing schools may be more actively involved in professional development.
- 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 (v4.1)**

SCHOOL NAME

This 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/PSAE.

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.

FOR SCHOOL IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES,

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE THIS PAGE.

THANK YOU!

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

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal
33. 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/PSAE 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

District/school code

Survey Questionnaire—Part II School Environment

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Do not know
34. At my school, the ILS influence decision making about how we teach.	1	2	3	4	5	8
35. Our school improvement plan is aligned with the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
36. ILS are discussed at faculty meetings.	1	2	3	4	5	8
37. My school is making progress in its efforts to implement the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
38. ILS are used as one dimension of our teacher evaluation plan.	1	2	3	4	5	8
39. Our district curriculum is aligned to the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
40. Data from ISAT/PSAE testing and the School Report Card are used to make school improvement decisions at my school.	1	2	3	4	5	8
41. My school is stalled in its efforts to implement the ILS.	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	Do not know
43. My students are more prepared for the ISAT/PSAE 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. My school has seen increases in student achievement as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
46. Parents are aware of the expectations of the ILS for their child's performance.	1	2	3	4	5	8
47. There are inservice opportunities on the content and use of the ILS at my school.	1	2	3	4	5	8
48. Faculty meetings are used to discuss implementation of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
49. My school concentrates on creating a vision and defining goals for student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	8
50. My school uses measurable feedback to track student progress toward learning outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5	8
51. My school reflects on where we are now compared to our vision and student learning goals.	1	2	3	4	5	8
52. My school has determined what actions are needed to reach our vision and student learning goals.	1	2	3	4	5	8
53. My school is implementing the actions needed to reach our vision and student learning goals	1	2	3	4	5	8
54. 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
55. My school/district has a timeline for implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
56. Faculty at my school/district know the timeline for implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
57. My school/district has a committee for implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
58. My district is making progress in its efforts to implement the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
59. Results from ISAT/PSAE 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. Our district has seen increases in student achievement as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
63. My school/district requires all teachers to receive training in the use of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
64. Parents have been involved in aligning the curriculum to the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
65. Information sessions on the ILS have been offered to parents and community members at the school/district level.	1	2	3	4	5	7
66. Training sessions are provided for parents and community members about the ILS in my school.	1	2	3	4	5	7
67. Our school/district newsletter to parents contains details about the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
68. Our school/district web site contains details about the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Don't know
69. Information sessions on the ILS have been offered to parents and community members at the district level.	1	2	3	4	5	7
70. The ILS have changed parents' expectations of classroom activities.	1	2	3	4	5	7
71. The ILS have changed parents' expectations of student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	7
72. Our school board is involved in implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
73. Our school board makes decisions for educational policy based on the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
74. Our school board has allocated resources to implement the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
75. Members of the business community are involved in implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
76. Implementation of the ILS has changed the community's expectations of student performance.	1	2	3	4	5	7
77. Our district is stalled in its efforts to implement the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7

	Yes	No	Don't know
	1	2	6
78. 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	Do not know
79. In general, the above technical assistance programs include information on using data to improve curriculum and instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	7

80. 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
81. 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

82. List any other changes that you have made in response to implementation of ILS.

83. What are considered best practices at your school for school improvement regarding the implementation of the ILS?

84. What are some of the barriers to implementing the ILS in your school/district?

85. What are some of the supports for implementing the ILS in your school/district?

86. Please use the space below to discuss other issues and additional information about the Illinois Learning Standards within your school or your district:

Thank you for completing this survey.

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 (v4.1)**

SCHOOL NAME

This 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/PSAE.

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.

FOR SCHOOL IDENTIFICATION PURPOSES,

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE THIS PAGE.

THANK YOU!

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

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal
33. 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/PSAE 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

School/District Code

Survey Questionnaire—Part II School Environment

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Don't know
34. At my school/district, the ILS influence decision making about how teachers teach.	1	2	3	4	5	8
35. Our school improvement plan is aligned with the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
36. ILS are discussed at faculty meetings.	1	2	3	4	5	8
37. My School is making progress in its efforts to implement the ILS.						
38. ILS are used as one dimension of our teacher evaluation plan.	1	2	3	4	5	8
39. Our district curriculum is aligned to the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
40. Data from ISAT/PSAE testing and the School Report Card are used to make school improvement decisions at my school.	1	2	3	4	5	8
41. My school is stalled in its efforts to implement the ILS.	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/PSAE 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. My school has seen increases in student achievement as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
46. Parents are aware of the expectations of the ILS for their child's performance.	1	2	3	4	5	8
47. There are inservice opportunities on the content and use of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
48. Faculty meetings are used to discuss implementation of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	8
49. My school concentrates on creating a vision and defining goals for student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	8
50. My school uses measurable feedback to track student progress toward learning outcomes.	1	2	3	4	5	8
51. My school reflects on where we are now compared to our vision and student learning goals.	1	2	3	4	5	8
52. My school has determined what actions are needed to reach our vision and student learning goals.	1	2	3	4	5	8
53. My school is implementing the actions needed to reach our vision and student learning goals	1	2	3	4	5	8
54. 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
55. My school/district has a timeline for implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
56. Faculty at my school/district know the timeline for implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7 (or N/A)
57. My school/district has a committee for implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
58. My district is making progress in its efforts to implement the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
59. Results from ISAT/PSAE 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. Our district has seen increases in student achievement as a result of implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
63. My school/district requires all teachers to receive training in the use of the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
64. Parents have been involved in aligning the curriculum to the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
65. Information sessions on the ILS have been offered to parents and community members at the school/district level.	1	2	3	4	5	7
66. Training sessions are provided for parents and community members about the ILS in my school.	1	2	3	4	5	7
67. Our school/district newsletter to parents contains details about the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
68. Our school/district web site contains details about the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7

	Not at all		To some extent		A great deal	Don't know
69. Information sessions on the ILS have been offered to parents and community members at the district level.	1	2	3	4	5	7
70. The ILS have changed parents' expectations of classroom activities.	1	2	3	4	5	7
71. The ILS have changed parents' expectations of student learning.	1	2	3	4	5	7
72. Our school board is involved in implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
73. Our school board makes decisions for educational policy based on the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
74. Our school board has allocated resources to implement the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
75. Members of the business community are involved in implementing the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7
76. Implementation of the ILS has changed the community's expectations of student performance.	1	2	3	4	5	7
77. Our district is stalled in its efforts to implement the ILS.	1	2	3	4	5	7

	Yes	No	Don't know
	1	2	6
78. 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
79. In general, the above technical assistance programs include information on using data to improve curriculum and instruction.	1	2	3	4	5	7

80. 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
81. 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

82. List any other changes that you have made in response to implementation of ILS.

83. What are considered best practices at your school for school improvement regarding the implementation of the ILS?

84. What are some of the barriers to implementing the ILS in your school/district?

85. What are some of the supports for implementing the ILS in your school/district?

86. Please use the space below to discuss other issues and additional information about the Illinois Learning Standards within your school or your district:

Thank you for completing this survey.

III. Evaluation of the Implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards

Report of the Year Four Qualitative Component

Evaluation of the Implementation of Illinois Learning Standards: Report of the Year Four Qualitative Component

“The primary standard used by most policymakers, media editors, administrators, and researchers is to ask whether a [reform’s] intended goals were achieved. Have you done what you said you were going to do and can you prove it?”

—Cuban, 1998

“To interpret learning outcomes and to relate them to possible determinants, it is necessary to examine the implementation of an innovation separately.”

—Fullan & Pomfret, 1977, as quoted in Synder, Bolin & Zumwalt, 1992

“A fundamental truth of implementation: There is no universally best way to implement policy.”

—Berman, (1980)

Introduction

If, as Berman (1980) contends in the above quotation, there is no universally best way to implement policy, then surely a fundamental truth of implementation evaluation is that there is a universally best way to evaluate implementation efforts. As the literature on curriculum implementation attests, there are multiple perspectives or lenses through which to view this process, including, but not limited to, those studies focused on different phases of the curriculum (i.e., planned, actual, and experienced) and those focused on processes (i.e., implementation, adaptation, and institutionalization). Within the implementation process studies alone there are again a number of different approaches from which to choose.

There are at least three major approaches to curriculum implementation research. The first of these and by far the most frequently used is research that assumes a *fidelity* approach. As Fullan and Pomfret (1977) noted, “The main intent is to determine the degree of implementation of an innovation in terms of the extent to which actual use of the innovation corresponds to intended or

planned use and to determine which factors facilitate and inhibit such implementation” (p. 340). The second perspective used in implementation research is that of *mutual adaptation*. This approach is related to the fidelity approach and was first explicated by Berman and McLaughlin in the well-known and highly influential RAND Change Agent studies (1978) they conducted. Since then, this approach has steadily grown in popularity among those interested in studying reform implementation. The focus of this approach is on the policy/reform itself and pays special attention to the interaction of these policies within specific implementation contexts. At the heart of these studies lies the contention that the policy itself is changed as much by the context into which it is introduced as it changes the context toward which it is directed—that is, there is a “mutual adaptation” between the policy and context (Knapp, 1997). *Curriculum enactment* is the third and most recently developed perspective. This approach shifts the focus from studying either the implementation or the adaptation of proposed curricular reforms to studying how curriculum is shaped in the classroom through the evolving constructs and understandings of teachers and students (Snyder, Bolin, & Zumwalt, 1992).

While all three of the above perspectives represent valid approaches to studying curriculum implementation, in an evaluative context such as that within which this study is framed, the first of these approaches, the fidelity approach, appears to be the most valid and justifiable. The mutual adaptation approach focuses more on the policy itself and, especially, the interaction of policy and context. Contextual factors, by their very nature, vary wildly and widely across schools and districts. While this approach is most useful for analysis of implementation for a given site, whether school or district, it tends to lose its potency and explanatory power when looking for across-site, state-wide analyses. The third approach, curriculum enactment, again is a valid and productive approach for those studies focused on and interested in understanding the intimate

dynamics of individual classrooms and especially in exploring the interactions between content, teachers, and students.

We chose to use the fidelity approach to report the findings for this, the fourth and final report on the evaluation of the implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards (ILS). This selection was made because this perspective focuses on those elements of greatest concern in assessing the progress and status of a state-wide policy implementation process: What is being implemented? Why is this being implemented? What have been the intended/expected consequences of the implementation? What have been the unintended/unexpected consequences? What factors have promoted implementation efforts? What factors have hindered implementation efforts? And finally, and of most significance in this particular study: What has been the overall effect of the implementation of the ILS? These are the questions that guided this study.

Methodology

Problem

As with previous yearly reports, this fourth year study of the implementation of the state learning standards was bounded by the parameters of implementation qua implementation and, therefore, is not inclusive of the end intent of the learning standards causing significant improvement in student achievement. This narrowness is again justified by the assumption that a school must first implement the ILS (or at least must be well along in the process) before significant changes in student learning will be evident. Although the ILS have been around since 1997, implementation efforts have been uneven across schools and districts, and many have only begun serious efforts at implementation in recent years. The reasons for this are discussed more fully in the text of this report. Nonetheless, this report attempts to present a more complete understanding of what has happened in schools and districts attempting to implement the standards. Throughout

the four years of this study, the strategies taken and tactics used were assessed by using the indicators of implementation that were first established four years ago at the beginning of this study of implementation efforts.

This study sought to assess the implementation process by focusing on schools and districts over a four year period of time. Specifically, this fourth year report sought to answer the question—What have been the effects of districts and school efforts to implement the Illinois Learning Standards?—by addressing the following questions: What approaches, methods, or tactics have been used in efforts to implement the Illinois Learning Standards? What have been the consequences (either intended or unintended) of these efforts? What have been internal areas of concern that have hindered your efforts? What have been external factors that have hindered your efforts? How would you assess the overall impact of the Illinois Learning Standards? What do you see as the future of the ILS?

Site Selections

Four districts with one or two schools from each district have participated in the longitudinal part of this study for the past four years. In addition to this, another large urban district and another small rural district were added in Year 3 of this study, bringing the total to 6 districts. Respondent participation was completely voluntary at both the district and school levels. To briefly reiterate site selection criteria, since the focus of this study was on developing an understanding of implementation efforts, several organizational variables were thought to be of importance and were considered in site selection. The districts selected for inclusion varied in size as measured by student enrollment, district organization patterns, community size, and geographic location. Specifically, one district was a unit district (K-12) that serves a largely urban population and is located in the southern part of the state. Current student enrollment is just over 11,000 students.

A second is an elementary district (K-8) located in a mid-sized city in central Illinois and has a student enrollment of approximately 4100 students. The third district is a high school district (9-12) located in a suburban community in the northern part of the state. Student enrollment is approximately 2800 students. The fourth district is also a unit district (K-12) and is located in a small rural community in central Illinois. Student enrollment is just over 1000 students. The 9 schools from the 6 districts that agreed to participate in this study included: three elementary schools, three middle/junior high schools, and three high schools.

Data Collection

Investigation of the implementation of the state learning standards in these districts and schools was based primarily on documents gathered and interviews conducted with district and school-level administrators and teachers from each of the selected schools.

Several forms of documentary and archival evidence were requested from each participating district and/or school site: professional development plans and budgets for all four years; district committee assignments and committee responsibilities/charges; school committee assignments and committee responsibilities/charges; IGAP scores from 1997 and 1998; ISAT scores from 1999 to 2001; school report cards from 1996 to 2001; district and school improvement plans from 1997 to 2001; curriculum guides by subject and/or grade level; teacher evaluation instrument; principal evaluation instrument; district assessment plans (other than ISAT/IGAP); curriculum crosswalks; and any external review reports from 1997 through 2001.

Over the past year, more than 20 site visits to district offices and individual schools were conducted. Intensive open-ended interviews and follow-up focused interviews were a primary means of data collection. A varied number of key respondents at each site were identified and interviewed. These included superintendents, associate superintendents, curriculum coordinators,

building principals, deans, department chairs, grade-level chairs, and district curriculum committee members. In all cases, the interviews were completely voluntary and completed on-site at the convenience of the respondent.

Data Analysis

Overall, a qualitative, thematic strategy of data analysis was employed to organize the data, make judgments about the meaning and importance of the lines of inquiry, and allow the focus of inquiry to be a cross-case perspective (Merriam, 1998; Rist, 1982). Preliminary data analysis was first completed at the individual district level. In essence, single case studies of the districts and schools emerged from this process. These analyses were then shared with respondents from each of the individual districts and schools to reconcile any differences in understanding, incorporate clarifications or insights, and develop a consensus agreement of interpretation. Because of confidentiality agreements with the districts and schools, the singular case profiles of each are not included in this study. It is acknowledged that this in no small way detracts from the sense of immediacy and vibrancy contributed by the single cases. A cross-case analysis was employed to preclude this preliminary analysis from being seen as a preemptive and summative judgment of any of the individual districts' or schools' efforts in what remains an on-going implementation effort. At this time, the individual districts and schools themselves must remain the primary beneficiaries of the single-case analyses.

From the single cases, then, data were aggregated across all districts and schools for assessing the implementation process and searching for commonalties and shared themes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through triangulation of data, potential problems of construct validity were addressed, as multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures of the same phenomena (Rist, 1982).

Findings/Results

This section looked across the schools and districts involved in this study to determine the answers to the following questions: What has been the overall effect of standards implementation efforts? What has been most encouraging about work centered on standards implementation? What has been most discouraging or problematic about this work? What might be the future of the ILS in the schools?

Overall Effects of Standards Implementation

Across respondents in all the schools and districts, four major factors emerged from the data as significant effects of their efforts to implement the Illinois Learning Standards. These factors included giving focus and clarity to school improvement efforts, promoting meaningful involvement and engagement in student learning issues, advancing acceptance and understanding of standards-based reform, and using standards as a means of ensuring equity in student learning.

It is important to remember that these themes, while significant in their own right, are also inherently interconnected and interrelated. Thus, many of the same ideas and concepts wend their way through more than one of these.

Giving Focus and Clarity to School Improvement Efforts

By far, the most significant and most frequently mentioned effect of efforts to implement the Illinois Learning Standards related to the fact that the standards have brought a new focus and clarity to school improvement efforts. This unanimity extended across sites (rural, suburban, urban) and through all respondents (superintendents, principals, teachers). A suburban high school principal noted, “I think it’s helped us kind of gather some thoughts and adjust curriculum to reflect those standards....The standards have given us a rallying point. I think they have given us a focus to talk about and to set a goal and set a bar, to say our goal is to get our curriculum in line

with the state standards, which we did.” A teacher in an urban elementary added, “I think the children are more on task in this building as [a] whole. I know the teachers are on task. We’re doing what we’re supposed to do. So, I know the teachers are focused, and I think that has to make each of the kids in the classroom more focused than they would have been. They understand that there’s a reason why they are learning what they are learning.” A superintendent in an elementary district said, “From my perspective, I think it was a good thing for us to go through. I think that it [the standards] provided targets. And if we’re really going to get at school improvement and student performance in particular, we’ve got to have targets.” An urban district superintendent concurred. “I think the Illinois Learning Standards really have been *the piece, the* driving force, to cause us to really focus on a core set of educational expectations. These have given us something to rally around and believe in.”

This focus is critical to the school improvement process as it promotes serious systemic alignment, bringing all elements of schooling into a cohesive, comprehensible, and interconnected whole. This kind of alignment is a key factor in standards-based reform as it unites and unifies school improvement efforts rather than allowing these kinds of efforts to remain dissipated, fragmented, and volitional or, as Elmore (2000) so aptly phrased it, school improvement as “purely voluntary acts among consenting adults” (p. 7). Because this ‘volunteerism’ aspect has tended to dominate previous improvement/change efforts, Elmore noted that “Schools are consequently almost always a-boil with some kind of ‘change,’ but they are only rarely involved in any deliberate process of *improvement*, where progress is measured against a clearly specified instructional goal” (p. 7). The ILS have dramatically altered this and effectively countered this criticism. As one superintendent noted, “Number one, it [the standards] gave us a more comprehensive focus than what we had before, and that focus allowed us to set meaningful targets for

teachers and for kids and to set up an assessment program under which both students and teachers could tell you how they were doing. Second, it allowed us to take the support systems in the district, the programs that support the regular programs, the staff development program[s] that support them, and align them in such a way that they were focused on those learning standards and the process for measuring performance of those.” An elementary principal added, “I think the standards have had a positive overall effect. What it’s done is to give us a format administratively that we can use to talk to teachers about curriculum and instruction issues. In the past, there was never any accountability, any follow-up for curriculum work or revisions. At least the standards and the assessment give us an opportunity first of all, to recognize that we have a set of standards, and these are not up for debate. So, now, let’s figure out what they are and what they mean for our teaching.” A middle school teacher noted, “For the first time I feel connected to everything else. The standards really forced us to find out what’s going on in other grade levels, in other classrooms. It’s not like you are this little kingdom unto yourself anymore. I never really knew what was going on in 6th grade or 8th grade, and they didn’t know what I was doing except in a general kind of way, you know? Now our grade-level learning objectives connect each of us to everyone else. It’s kind of scary in a way, and some still feel threatened by it. But, hey, it’s here. Deal with it.”

The ILS have also allowed the focus of improvement efforts to move to instructional issues. As noted above by one of the respondents, curriculum as an issue open for debate and contention is off the table. Now, efforts can be concentrated and focused in on instructional, pedagogical concerns. An urban elementary teacher noted, “I think the standards have really brought a focus to our curriculum....And this has given us areas that we can really focus our teaching and in-

struction on now, and it also has allowed us to do a much better job of communicating to our parents and our students what they need to know.”

As one respondent neatly summarized it, “I hate to keep using the same word, ‘focus,’ but doggone—it’s focused the whole state.”

Promoting Meaningful Involvement and Engagement

As the learning standards have focused the work in which to be engaged at the school and district levels, this new clarity has also promoted and demanded a more widespread, deeper involvement in this effort. As an elementary teacher noted, “One of the best things has been the buy-in of all grade levels. I mean, everybody here understands that it’s not just the 3rd grade teacher, or not just the 4th grade teacher, or the 5th grade teacher who are on the line here. Everybody has to work together, and we all know it.”

As well illustrated in the above quote, standards-based reform demands that everyone in schools be involved and every part of schooling be enlisted in working toward the goal of improving student learning. Without meaningful involvement and engagement of nearly everyone involved with the schooling enterprise, significant improvement is simply not likely to occur. As well, a greater degree of involvement appears to lead directly to deeper understanding of the process and ultimately to the engagement and commitment of the participants to the efforts. As a superintendent of an elementary district noted, “I’ve been pleased with the number of teachers who are not reluctant at all to set student achievement performance goals. And that’s something that 10 years ago, our teachers would have been very hesitant to do. They would be worried that their evaluation was going to be negative if they didn’t score well. But the culture of the district, I think, is such now that people don’t worry about that, and they’re willing to go for it.”

The schools and districts that have moved the furthest in standards implementation understood this connection earlier and more clearly than others and focused their efforts to promote this kind of involvement. As one superintendent noted, “I think we have seen, over at least the last 3 to 4 years, the development of a meaningful relationship between standards, assessment, instruction and school improvement, in general. And we seem to have those things all kind of headed down the same direction. And everyone seems to be seeing the big picture. It took a while for that big picture to come into focus, but it’s becoming clearer and clearer. We found that the closer you are to involvement with any part of it, the better able you are to see that clear picture. And that’s what we want.” Along the same lines, a first grade teacher in an urban elementary school noted, “One thing I think it’s help us do is to understand what the kids were supposed to know by the time they got to us, and what they needed to know as they left us. The standards work helped us understand where we are right now. I used to think, ‘Oh, they [the students] must have never had this before.’ And then I found out that, well, they did have this in kindergarten. Or maybe I thought they had this and never did have it in kindergarten. It [the standards work] helped me understand better, and this all came from aligning our curriculum with the standards. It gave me a better, a bigger picture of the curriculum and where I was in it.”

While administrators, especially at the district level, have traditionally been privy to the “big picture” of school improvement, those in succeeding levels have enjoyed less panoramic views. These perspectives tended to be bounded by the school or the classroom, and this tended to give a narrow, restricted, and myopic view of what was actually happening. The ILS appear to have given a new accessibility to and understanding of the “big picture” of efforts to improve student learning. As a middle school teacher commented, “Both teachers and the kids need to know that this is important, and it is important beyond my classroom. It’s connected to the outside world.

It's just not what's going on within these four walls or even in this school. We're all a part of something much bigger. There is a connection to all the levels and the outside world, and everyone needs to understand that they are accountable for student learning no matter what. Once you understand that, then it doesn't seem so scary. At least you can see where we are headed."

Growing Acceptance and Understanding of Standards-Based Reform

All respondents noted a growing acceptance of the learning standards. Resistance, at least active resistance, has substantially diminished as schools and districts have engaged in standards-based reform efforts and personnel have become more familiar with the substance of learning standards. A superintendent noted, "I think there has been an acceptance of the standards, and I don't mean that in a negative way. I think there's just an acceptance of them. I think that, at first, they were viewed as an interference. It was somebody trying to tell us what to do when we knew best what to do anyway. And then, I would guess, over time there's been a realization that teachers had a lot of input into these standards and that a lot of thought went into these and, well, gosh, you know, they're pretty good."

Fear of the unknown has slowly dissipated as teachers and administrators have gained familiarity, begun to engage in serious implementation work, and seen positive results as a consequence of those efforts. A high school principal noted that, "I've had discussions where some teachers have said, 'When we started this, I didn't think much of it. I thought it was another hoop to jump through and I didn't like the idea of a state curriculum, and dah, dah, dah, dah, dah.' But more teachers than not have seen the value of having a direction to go with curriculum and can see the positive results that we have." A superintendent from a different district added, "The most encouraging aspect is the result—the fact that sometimes you work hard on something and you don't see positive trends. And we have had three years of continuously improving results,

and that's been very encouraging." While not all schools or districts in this study have yet experienced that kind of improvement, nonetheless all see value to their standards implementation work and the promise of improved student learning.

In one of the most telling instances, an urban elementary school, since beginning its concerted efforts at standards implementation, has seen its ISAT score improve to the point where the school managed to move off the academic watch list. This incontrovertible evidence swung around even the school's dyed-in-the-wool skeptics. As one teacher noted, "Nothing succeeds like success. I'm not sure if our standards work alone brought about the improvement in scores. We've been doing a lot of things, but it sure was a part of it. How can you argue with that?" Another noted, "We work so hard in this school. It's really a boost to finally get some recognition for all our efforts." A third teacher added, "I think in the beginning a lot of teachers were thinking, 'Oh, this is just something that's going [to] come and go.' And now, we've seen that they [the standards] are really here to stay and that we're really being tied to them and being held accountable, you know, with the student testing for them. There's no option—we've got to work out ways to get them into our curriculum and to be teaching them and to make the kids well aware of it. I mean, test scores went up, and we're off the watch list."

Along with the improvements in student learning, acceptance has grown as schools and districts have seen that standards implementation is not as another useless exercise that will be abandoned as the next big thing rolls around. "Teachers have accepted the fact that the standards are going to be here; they are not going away. And so, they have, over time, come to accept the fact that the standards are here, and they are not going away, at least in their tenure. As a result of that, they have gradually accepted the change process and started to actually work with the standards." In a state-policy environment frequently noted for abrupt and disruptive changes in

mid-course, the relative stability and constancy of the ILS has provided legitimacy and credibility to implementation efforts at the district and school levels.

Using Standards as a Means of Ensuring Equity in Student Learning

There is a growing awareness that implementation of the ILS provides a means of ensuring a more equitable education for all students. Clearly, the standards themselves are designed and written to be applicable to all students—to ensure that all students receive equitable educational opportunities. They hold all schools, regardless of the characteristics or demographics of the student population served, to the same levels of content mastery.

Interestingly, the two instances that best illustrate the use of the learning standards as a means of exposing and addressing equity issues occurred in two districts that are exceptionally different from each other. One is a large urban district located in downstate Illinois. The other is a suburban high school district located north and west of Chicago.

The large urban district has been grappling for years with increasingly complex problems including, but not limited to, a shrinking tax-base and budgetary shortfalls, declining student population numbers and resulting school closures and growing numbers of low-income and minority students. In spite of this, the newly appointed superintendent, who was previously first a principal and then an associate superintendent in this district, has a clear and compelling vision of the role of standards in this district and is using his position to move this vision forward.

It's not by chance that I firmly believe in the standards. I believe that as a parent bringing your child to school, to kindergarten, they should ask, 'Well, what should my child be able to know and do at the end of the year?' And we should be able to tell our parents in our community exactly that. Our kids in this particular community were not measuring up across the state or even compared to our own region. As a result of that and knowing and believing that, really, all kids can learn, maybe to differing degrees, but all kids can learn, there are things that we need to do in order to have our students find success. This community is

a community that has a high poverty rate. I have a firm belief, growing up in poverty myself, that education and learning and knowledge are the only ways out of poverty. And if I hold that belief true for myself, then I have that conviction for this community....So, to me, this is bigger than just about implementing the standards or increasing a few kids' test scores. It's about the quality of life of this whole community. So rather than just say it's my job to educate all kids, it's also our job as educational leaders to partner with people in this community, to embrace education as a key to the welfare of the community.

The other striking instance of standards as equity measure resided in a suburban high school district that is, in many ways, the direct antithesis of the urban community just mentioned. The district, however, was troubled when, in the fall, the *Chicago Tribune*, ranking area schools by their Prairie State scores, showed the district to fall about in the middle of the pack. For a district that has long prided itself on providing a superior education, sending nearly 70% of its students on to higher education, as well as posting a number of National Merit Scholarship finalists each year, the ranking was somewhat of a shock. As one of the principals investigated further, he discovered a bimodal distribution of scores. Students in the honors and advanced tracks scored exceptionally well; students in the regular and basic tracks scored exceptionally poorly. Thus, the overall mid-range ranking for the school. As the principal noted:

I've showed our faculty this data, the breakdown of the scores. And I can tell you, all hell is breaking loose in the departments. I have a lot of teachers already upset because you're questioning what they're doing in class, and this is going to be tough. It's clear from this data that there have not been a lot of expectations at the basic and regular levels. The students in honors math, English, science, and social studies scored at 100% at the meets or exceeds level. My advanced track students scored at the 93% meets or exceeds level. By the time I get to the regular track kids, I'm down to 40% at meets or exceeds levels. My basic group, well, the best was in reading and English and that 8.8% were at the meets or exceeds level. That means that 6 out of 68 met or exceeded standards, only six of them! So what does this say? It says that we are giving a top-notch, first-rate education to the upper 60% of our students, and the rest are getting a substandard experience. And this is intolerable, and it's got to change. Clearly these students [regular and basic track] are not

expected to master the content that the learning standards lay out. It's been an eye-opener, and I have to say a lot of the faculty are pretty uncomfortable right now. Good! I've always suspected that something like this was the case, and now I have the evidence.

Both of these instances reflect the use of the learning standards to identify equity concerns for student learning. However, in each case, the districts have yet to find adequate means to satisfactorily address these situations. In both cases, equity concerns remain a sticky issue and far from resolved.

Within-School Areas of Continuing Concern in Implementation Efforts

While, clearly, significant progress is being made in implementing the learning standards, respondents also identified areas of continuing concern in their efforts. The concerns discussed here focus on the relatively bounded (internal) area of problems and/or issues identified as residing within district and schools and do not consider those that result from interactions with the larger environment (external), including both community and state. While these two sets of issues or concerns are clearly related, they are discussed separately here for heuristic purposes, and the external issues are discussed in a later section.

The major areas of concerns within school and district implementation efforts included: understanding and using data, changing curriculum and instructional practices, and addressing parent and community awareness.

Understanding and Using Data

As schools and districts have grappled with understanding and incorporating concepts of standards-based reform like alignment, continuous improvement, and performance-based assessment, a factor that has been a significant hindrance to their efforts has been a lack of understanding of how to interpret and use data not only to address the implementation of the ILS but, even more significantly, to change instruction. This is a most significant problem as issues of

alignment, performance-based assessment, and certainly continuous improvement efforts all hinge on the ability to understand and interpret data results and to engage in data-driven decision making on a systemic basis.

Most schools and districts found themselves especially ill-prepared for this task. In discussing his district's implementation efforts, one superintendent noted, "One thing this all brought to light (and this was good) was an awareness that a majority of staff, teachers, and building administrators had difficulty understanding two things: first, that there was more to assessment than just an end-of-the-year test and, second, that data need to inform instruction. I would say that well over 70% of our staff really needed help and support with understanding and using data and the multiple assessment idea. We had no idea that the problem was that vast." An associate superintendent in a large urban district added, "The assessment scores and data have not been the focal point of our conversation, as bizarre as that sounds. We wring our hands about it, but we don't spend any time talking about what it means. I just think this system is still very early in understanding that they have to be accountable for the data, and that means we have to understand and be able to use the data to change instruction."

The requirements of standards-based reform simply demand a greater level of sophistication and fluency with data. Such adeptness is, however, not come by easily. For years, most administrators and teachers did little with test scores and simply relied on "eye-balling" the data and little else. As a veteran teacher in one school noted, "We always got test results back, like from the Iowa, but it wasn't really of much consequence. The guidance counselor filed these away in student folders. I cannot even remember seeing back then any school or district results. I do remember an instructor in one of my graduate classes back in the 80s telling us *not* to look at previous

test data so we wouldn't build up preconceived ideas about children's abilities. Now everyone is aflutter with data, data, data, but no one tells us how we're supposed to make sense of it."

Until this issue of data usage is attended to in a systemic and systematic way, it appears unlikely that significant standards-based reform will occur. At present, the lack understanding of data and its uses significantly fragments and dilutes serious improvement efforts as data-driven decision making represents a major link in the chain of logic involved in standards-based reform. A high school principal summed up the prevailing situation well. "I don't think that our standards work has changed the use of assessment data in planning instruction at all. I know we've looked at it [data] harder, and we've looked at it more. I see some benefits to this, but only if we look at the data and *then use it*. But so many times, we look at the data, and then we put it in the drawer. I don't think we have mastered the use of data correctly. *I think we're 'data-driven' only in the sense that we look at our test score rankings and not from the standpoint of how this can help us teach more effectively* [my emphasis]." This seems to fairly well capture the understandings and use of data in most districts and schools.

If the problem is as pervasive and widespread as it appears, then concerted efforts must be made to update the knowledge and skills of practitioners at all levels of the system. As one principal candidly admitted, "I'll be honest with you. I don't understand numbers; there's a certain mysterious quality to them, and I'm hesitant to talk about this with my faculty because I'm not real knowledgeable about teaching and learning, and certainly not about data analysis. I think I'm a good principal, and I do my job well, but I also recognize my shortcomings. And, frankly, I don't want to create a controversy in my school, you know. It will upset the teachers, and that makes everything more difficult." To get past avoidance techniques in order to move standards-

based reform forward, the issues and problems surrounding data and their use in schools must be addressed.

Changes in Curriculum and Instructional Practices

By far, the most pressing and complex of the concerns/issues mentioned by respondents were those related to changes made or not made in curriculum and instructional practices. This is a critical area of concern in standards-based reform. As Linn and Herman (1997) noted, “Ultimately, classroom curriculum and instruction should be aligned with standards and assessments. In the absence of such alignment, students cannot acquire the knowledge and skills they need to achieve the standards” (p. 17).

Overall, there is good news and there is bad news—although the bad outweighs the good. The good news is that district and school curriculums have changed to align with the learning standards. The bad news is that there is little to no evidence of any significant changes in instructional practices. However, this brief synopsis belies the complexity and interconnectedness of the issues that are examined in greater detail below.

Across respondents it is clear that there have been changes to the formal curriculum in response to the ILS. The most widespread and common changes have involved relatively minor tweakings—additions, deletions, rearranging—of the existing district curriculum guides to align them with the learning standards and, especially, ISAT. As one principal noted, “It changed the curriculum, but not as much as you might think.” Another echoed this. “There’s been some change, but not as much as I would like to see.” Finally, another superintendent noted, “If anything, the standards have changed the sequence of the curriculum more than the scope of it. It makes no sense to have not covered curriculum that’s going to be on the ISAT. So we’ve had to adjust the sequence in order to have kids ready for the ISAT.” This work, for the most part, has

taken place at the district level (though usually involving committees of teachers and administrators) and involved formal, written revisions to the established curriculum. These efforts, for the most part, have been largely symbolic and, thus, superficial in nature—a written documentation of compliance with the state standards and benchmarks (see Cuban, 1992; Elmore, 2000; Elmore & Sykes, 1992).

The more telling, substantive, and encouraging changes are those witnessed at the classroom level and that involve the gradual erosion of the domination of textbooks in classroom practices. Significantly, while this was noted by respondents across the board—teachers, principals, and superintendents—teachers were most vocal about this change. One teacher noted, “Instead of just saying, ‘Well, here’s the 3rd grade textbook. I’m going to teach whatever is in here,’ we are looking at the 3rd grade textbook and saying, ‘What do 3rd graders need to know and be able to do? What do they need to know that maybe is not in the textbook and that I have to cover?’” Another teacher in a different district added, “For a long time we used to make or design instruction or lessons plans based upon trying to finish the textbook....Now we are basing our instruction on the standards, and then also looking at data to see where our students are with respect to how well they have accomplished the standards. Why teach kids something that they already know? Why use time that way? Focus it more on skills and knowledge that they do not have or information that they have not mastered.” A third teacher, again in a different district, noted, “Our work with the standards [translating them to grade-level learner objectives] made just a huge difference. Way back when, we would chose a math series, for example, and not even think about learning standards. We didn’t look for that; we didn’t care about that. What we wanted to look at was: Was the layout nice and pretty? Were the pages attractive to the students? What was the setup? Those were the most important things. It’s like a whole complete change from what we

are focusing in on now.” Finally, a superintendent summed it up well. “One of the best things to happen [as a result of standards implementation] is that you can’t teach chapter after chapter after chapter after chapter. You have to think about what you’re teaching, and then you chose any of a variety of different resources. And it does make teaching more difficult because for those people who were so adept at just using that wonderfully prepared textbook and doing Chapter 1 and when they’ve finished, then doing Chapter 2, and thinking, ‘Well, there are 24 chapters, and if I get them all in during the year, I’ve covered the territory.’ You can’t just follow the book anymore or teach just the things that you like.”

While the move from textbook-dominated classrooms is certainly heartening and a step in the right direction, these and other curriculum changes, for the most part, have not been accompanied by concomitant changes in instructional practices. All respondents reported, to greater or lesser degrees, a disjuncture between curriculum changes and instructional changes. A high school principal noted, “I don’t think teachers have really changed their practices. I think they have incorporated the standards into their curriculum, but not instructional approaches. So I cannot say that I have seen much of a change.” An elementary principal echoed this sentiment. “Teachers are doing a better job of knowing what it is they have to teach, and they are starting to do a better job of assessing whether or not the student understands it. In the past, they would open the beginning of their book and start teaching from the beginning of their book, depending on what the publisher felt should be taught first, or they would teach their favorite unit. Now, they’re not necessarily doing that any more. There have been a lot of changes based on *what* is taught. There is little change on *how* they teach. There’s still a lot of direct instruction.” The manner in which the relationship between curriculum and instruction is defined shapes, to a large extent, how knowledge is represented and how learning is organizing (Elmore & Sykes, 1992).

In its most simplistic (and, enticingly, least complicated) interpretation, standards implementation involves nothing more than content. In bare-bones terms—either the content is present or it isn't. The more difficult and demanding (and ultimately rewarding) road links changes in curriculum to those in pedagogy. However, few schools have ventured very far down this path; even those few report only scattered individual classroom changes whose sustainability and viability is still questionable. Otherwise, nothing approaching systemic change is yet on the horizon.

Addressing Parent and Community Awareness

Over the four years of this implementation study, the area of community and stakeholder awareness has consistently scored the lowest on the survey (see DeStefano & Prestine, 1999, 2000, 2001). Because of this, and because of ISBE's continuing interest in this area, respondents were deliberately asked to comment on this particular implementation indicator and explain, if possible, why this has consistently remained the lowest rated area.

[A cautionary note to the reader: This particular area was not mentioned spontaneously by any of the respondents interviewed as either a hindrance or help to their standards implementation work. Again, respondents were intentionally queried about this implementation factor.]

For the most part, respondents felt this particular implementation indicator had relatively little significance for their efforts. When asked why this particular factor always is rated the lowest, one superintendent commented, "This is a tough one. And the reason it's a tough one is because you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. I would say our results tell us people don't know about the standards, but I would also tell you that we present many, many opportunities for them to do so. They just have to take the opportunity, and the challenge is: How do you get them to take that opportunity?"

One possible explanation for the seeming indifference of the community toward the standards may be that if even the fundamentals, let alone the implications, of the standards are difficult for educators to get a solid grasp of and understand well (and this seems to be the case), then they are well beyond the ken of average citizens. As an associate superintendent commented, “I don’t think the community knows anything about it, and all they know is that there is a list [schools’ ISAT results] that gets published. So, from the awareness that there is a list that’s tied to some standards and goals about which they don’t really know, but they know somebody set it—that’s about as far as awareness goes. An awareness of what it all really means—I wish someone would tell me. The community hasn’t a clue.” Slanted from a slightly different perspective, the standards and benchmarks are simply too far-removed to touch their immediate concerns. As one teacher put it with regard to parent awareness, “It’s only when *their* kid struggles or when *their* kid is immediately affected that they have an interest. They don’t have an interest in the school goals or the district goals. They have an interest in their child.”

Unfortunately, it seems likely that standards implementation efforts suffer from the same dilemmas that other school initiatives that look to active parent and community involvement also confront. Most respondents agreed with a middle school principal who noted, “We would like more parent involvement. We have parents on our school leadership teams; we try to put parents on all of our study committee task force groups. And it’s always the same people. Unfortunately, I would tell you, we don’t get the people who need to be here. We get the same people whose children are already wonderfully enriched, and they do add richness to our programs, but when you’re looking for opinions and options, we need diversity, and that’s very hard to get.”

Finally, the superintendent of a small rural district added a different perspective on this issue of community awareness/involvement. “I personally think there’s way too much emphasis on

this. The thing is, if the organization is running well, and everybody is satisfied, the community stakeholder involvement doesn't have to be high because they are happy with it. When it [community involvement] gets high, that is when they're not happy with what's happening. That's when they come in. So I think a good, well-run organization doesn't have a lot of community involvement."

External Areas of Continuing Concern in Implementation Efforts

Respondents also identified several areas external to schools and districts that caused continuing concern in their implementation efforts. Not surprisingly, the majority of these complaints were related to perceived problems with the assessment instrument, the ISAT. As the focus of this evaluation is not the ISAT, these responses have been condensed into four main areas of contention rather than presenting a more exhaustive listing. In addition to the ISAT, ISBE also was named by numerous respondents as a factor that has caused concern. Finally, and a bit unexpectedly, teacher preparation programs were also mentioned.

The Trouble with ISAT

From the perspective of the respondents, there currently exists at best a tenuous, perhaps even dubious, relationship between ILS and ISAT. As adduced from the earlier section on using data, expectations about the use of data to improve and guide decision making for school improvement purposes have generally not been realized yet. Under the best of circumstances, getting from "here is how our students are performing on these items" to "here is what we have to do about it" is an enormous and daunting task. Tied directly to this, most of the schools and districts in this study were still struggling with understanding how the ISAT data relate to the ILS and benchmarks. It seems evident that the relationship is still not clear to most. Until it is, it is unlikely that ILS will be viewed with as much concern or be considered as important as the ac-

countability test. As a superintendent noted, “If the assessment itself doesn’t provide adequate feedback to administration, teachers, students, and parents, then the learning standards are useless, and that is the state of things. I do not believe the state assessment is helpful to either the school improvement process or the Illinois Learning Standards adoption.” A high school principal added, “Right now, I’ve been working on implementing the standards, but, in point of fact, I don’t know how well my kids are doing on any particular standard. I don’t know what standards tested on the PSAE my kids have exceeded, met, or are below. We all agree with the learning standards—okay? They are good things. But then, tell me how my kids did on them. You’re holding me to a standard, and yet you won’t give me the information to help me as to, ‘Did I meet it, or do I need to work harder on it?’”

At least two technical issues associated with results reporting were mentioned that appear to have a direct impact on the perceived validity and legitimacy of the ISAT among respondents. These are directly related to the concerns expressed above and focus on continuing problems that still bedevil the ISAT. One of these concerns relates to the fact that while ISAT is administered in the spring, schools and districts do not receive their ISAT results until the fall after a new instructional year has begun. One of the superintendents expressed the feelings of many others when he noted, “It is tremendously frustrating that our kids just now completed their ISAT tests and we won’t know anything until the fall. That’s meaningless. They [the State Board of Education] talk about school improvement, but we can’t get the data to do it until the new school year has started. Our school goals need to be set when school starts, and we need the summer to develop the plans to know what we’re going to do during the year. We’ve got to have that data back in the spring. And I know that’s what they’re working on, but it’s an imperative. Right now, it’s the worst part of the whole thing.” This concern echoes what Massell (2001) also found in

her study of standards-based reform, that “late returns of state assessments often stymie local ability to make effective changes before students or teachers move to other venues” (p. 166).

A second technical issue, although noted by fewer respondents, seems to be one of at least equal importance. This issue relates to usability of the data results when schools and districts do finally receive them. Although this may appear to be a relatively minor issue, it is often the cumulative effect of these relatively minor problems that lead to frustration and anger for those who are forced to deal with them on an on-going basis. This issue, again, is relatively technical in nature and, thus, the length of the following quote is necessary to adequately explain the problem. An associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction explained the issue as follows:

Let me whine a little. ISAT tests in the first two years that they were administered, the ISBE themselves admitted that they were piloting the process. And since that time, they have created the procedure where they decide what the intervals [cut scores] are after the test data are back and they have looked at it. So they change the cut scores for those intervals every year after the data is back. Now on top of that, they provide me the data back—the summary data from NCS Pearson, who does the scoring for the ISAT—on a diskette. The diskette is a comma-delimited text file that has the summary data. This isn’t even student data. This is the summary data for every building in the district for each of the tests and the district as a whole for each of the assessments. The comma-delimited file has 620-some odd cells, locations in each of the records. There is no readily available software that costs less than \$1000 that can import any more than 256 columns in a record. And the State had not, as far as I could tell, even thought about that as a problem. So I called and told them my situation and their response was, “Well, there’s nothing we can do. The only thing that I can tell you is that you’ll have to buy one of the statistical packages that can handle the data.” So I said, “Have you thought about the consequences of what you’re trying to achieve? Of sending out data to school districts that the school districts cannot access? You’re modeling for them that the data are worthless, because otherwise, you would have figured out a way for them to be able to even see it.” And he said, “Well, you know that is not my area.”

In addition to these difficulties, in point of fact, the ILS are perceived as quickly becoming the poor relation of the assessment instrument rather than part of a co-equal, working tandem. With near unanimity, respondents report that substantive consequences (for good or ill) are perceived as falling only from ISAT results, not from standards implementation. In point of fact, there are no direct consequences for schools for either implementation or non-implementation of the ILS, because there is no direct assessment of implementation. As the research noted, if the mechanisms for enforcing compliance are weak or nonexistent, then variability of response will increase, and conformity will likely be superficial (Donaldson, Geiser, & Berman, 2000; Elmore, 1997, 2000)—such as adopting a diluted form of the ILS to fit local needs or for ceremonial conformity. This could be disastrous for standards-based reform efforts in the state and steer schools and districts toward focusing instruction on and using even greater amounts of classroom time for test prep. There are already clear warning signs that this is happening in some schools. As a suburban high school principal noted, “Now, it’s not only the learning standards, but it’s ACT. I mean, we’re going to be doing ACT prep here like it’s never been done before; there’s no doubt in my mind. Because those are the rules of the game. We may not like the rules, but those are the rules, and we’re going to play by the rules. I know what I have to do to get a better score.”

Part of the dilemma is that, for schools and districts, literally everything rides on this single, one-shot test. As an elementary principal noted, “The ISAT is *the* measurement. We can have students who do wonderful work in class, and it’s all in their portfolios. But we have no way to communicate that to our community. And what the community looks at is our ISAT scores. So that ability to do all of these other things that are creative and maybe even help kids sometimes be lifelong learners will be put aside to do these things so they’ll do well on that test.” Another principal noted, “I have no problem with the standards. I would like, though, to have a fairer way

of evaluating a school. I mean, we have all of these multiple measures of assessment for students, but, in point of fact, it's only the ISAT that counts. That's what gets made public, and no matter how well students do on our assessments or what they have in their portfolios, there's no way to present that as counter information or even as a another piece of the [assessment] picture to the public. For example, if you were here 10 years ago, you would have seen traditional parent-teacher conferences. Now all we do are student-led conferences where the students explain the work in their portfolio to their parents and show them what they have learned and what they still have to master. That is a true measure of what's happening within this school, but it doesn't get taken into account."

Across respondents, there is perception of an inherent unfairness in the use of a single test to label school and district instructional efforts. Comments from three respondents below well illustrate the overall tenor of comments by other respondents. A suburban principal noted, "You can't tell me this number [the ISAT score] tells me everything, because some schools are up against it a lot harder than others. And it's unfair to judge them that way. And socio-economics, whether you like it or not, come into play. I have a family here—they have six computers in their home. They have a couple of kids at Northwestern right now, and the older one went to Harvard. Were those kids given a step up to start with in this life? Yes, they were." From an elementary district superintendent: "I really do believe in accountability, and I believe that the survival of public education is going to be dependent on schools' ability to show results. I think that the learning standards provide a structure for doing that. I would hope that the learning standards will allow districts to be viewed by the state in terms of continuous improvement rather than meeting a certain bar, because it makes a heck of a lot of difference if you're teaching in Pekin, Illinois, versus Dunlap, Illinois, as to what your focus is going to be. And I think that educators

need to understand that...if you are moving in the right direction and improving, you should be rewarded for it, not penalized.” Finally, from an urban elementary principal: “I think a lot of legislators fail to realize or understand the holistic picture of home, student, parents—the outside factors that we have no control of make a big difference in what goes on here....The frustrating part is when you can’t address some of the weaknesses, such as home life or the parent not getting kids to school, or nobody making sure homework is done, or those types of things. We don’t function in a vacuum, and I’m not sure if the folks at ISBE realize that. The sad fact is that our test scores do not always reflect the amount of work that we have done, and that is tremendously discouraging for the whole staff.”

Credibility Issues and ISBE

Respondents, sometimes in scathing terms, castigated the state educational agency as being its own worst enemy. As one respondent noted, “I think there are some really competent, able people there [at ISBE]. But there are others who have pulled some real boneheaded, embarrassing stuff. It makes them all look like fools and incompetents. And I can tell you, it destroys their credibility with school folks. It becomes harder and harder to convince folks that they have to take seriously anything that comes from them.” Another respondent added, “I think that teachers and the administration felt that this [the learning standards] is just another ISBE initiative which will be ‘Revised, Revisited, and then Replaced.’ Those are the real “three R’s” in Illinois education. So our attitude is: Work with it while it is here—forget it when it is gone!” Too many blunders, too many missteps, too many abrupt course reversals have inflicted serious damage on the credence accorded ISBE policy; the credibility with which its pronouncements are received; and, perhaps most importantly, with its ability to exert influence in schooling matters through any means other than forced compliance.

Because of a legacy of “here-today-gone-tomorrow” initiatives and abrupt 180 degree course changes, the ILS faced an up-hill battle from the start. Several respondents candidly noted that they resisted and delayed standards implementation more because of from where the standards came than from any objective assessment of their relative worth or merit. For some at least, resisting and fighting ISBE policy, mandates, and decisions has become a knee-jerk reaction—a way of life. And this stance is largely because of their own past experiences with previous ISBE policy demands. As one respondent noted, “I’ve been down that road before. In the early 90s we were supposed to develop LAPs, and we made a multitude of change/improvements to align with the IGAP (Illinois Goals Assessment Program, the state accountability test that was the predecessor to ISAT). So we did all this and made huge investments of time and financial resources over a 4 to 5 year period. We completely re-wrote our curriculum guides to align. Then the LAPs were gone, and then the Goals were gone, and the state switched to Standards and Benchmarks and ISAT! We were demoralized.” Another respondent added, “The State Board is notorious for changing things. Every time we start implementing one thing, the rules of the game are changed, and we are required to start over with something else.” A third added, “There is an overall feeling among the staff that the ILS will not last. Too many members of our faculty have been ‘burned’ by the ISBE decisions of the past.” And finally, “Just how long do you suppose ILS will be around? Just about the time we’ve invested all kinds of time, sweat, and money and finally have what they want—then! Then is when they’ll change the requirements to something else. I remember way back when we had the D.L.O’s, and we sweated over that because those were supposed to be *the* answer. Are they still stacked up gathering dust some place in Springfield?”

The four-year time span that covers efforts to implement the learning standards also is co-terminus with an exceptionally volatile era for the state agency. The timing could not have been worse as far as standards implementation was concerned. The volatility and near chaos surrounding and sweeping through the state agency affected everything, including standards implementation efforts. An especially telling incident was the abrupt cancellation of the Quality Assurance program: For many respondents, this just reinforced all their worst fears about the lifespan of the learning standards. As one of the principals noted:

Right now, it looks like we're moving into the bloody Civil War stage. You know? The learning standards—no one really knows if these are going to be around. Is this just one more thing they (ISBE) are going to quit anyway somewhere down the road? That could happen—just like Quality Review [sic], which is long gone. And that was a great process. I mean, we, as a school, really benefited from that and the North Central review. I even went to Springfield and got the training for Quality Review [sic] so I could [go] out on these visits. And then, you know what? They (ISBE) just dropped the whole thing without any fanfare or announcement. I mean, I did not even get a letter on it! And I was one of those who were supposed to go out on [a] school visit! Never even got a letter that said, "Sorry, we won't need your services anymore because we're not doing it." I mean, nothing—it just died. So, you know, when enough of that happens, how much credence do you think people at the grassroots level are going to put into anything that comes from them? Your attitude becomes—just let them do whatever they do there, and we'll do what we feel is best here. All that makes it difficult to keep the fires fanned about standards. So we give some lip service to standards, like, "Tell me how the learning standards match with what you're teaching." But that's it, for the most part.

A superintendent echoed this perception. "The process seems to be continuously changing, and you never know for sure what's going to happen. We were told we were going to get a Quality Assurance visit last September, and then 3 months before, we got a letter that said, 'We've cut people, and we're not going to do it'...I guess those things should be expected, but when you're spending a considerable amount of human and physical resources and have set up

everything in this district for a Quality Assurance visit and then don't get it, it's kind of demoralizing. Our teachers were like, 'Well, that was a lot of work for nothing.' It hurts our [the district administration's] credibility with them [the teachers] as well, because we were the ones pushing all this work. And now, it's all for naught."

Teacher Preparation

Interestingly, and a bit surprisingly, several administrators mentioned that teacher candidates fresh out of their preparation programs appear to be largely uninformed about and ill-prepared to incorporate the Illinois Learning Standards. Since four years have elapsed since the promulgation of the ILS, it would seem reasonable to expect that by now, most if not all teacher preparation programs would have incorporated standards-based ideas into their curriculums. However, several respondents felt this was clearly not the case. As a superintendent of a rural K-12 district asserted, "As a matter of fact, the universities, in my opinion, are doing a terrible job of preparing teacher candidates on this whole standards-based system. I'd say 9 out of 10 times, when we ask candidates what they know about the Illinois Learning Standards—how it affects, instruction, how it affects curriculum—they have no answer."

The exact extent of this problem and whether it extends to all, most, or only a few teacher preparation institutions is not clear. Nonetheless, it was a serious concern cited by the respondents and one that would also seem to be relatively remediable. With large turnovers in teaching staff predicted for the near future, it seems essential that those preparing to assume teaching positions be well versed in the learning standards and understand the implications for instructional practice. As a middle school principal noted, "I would hope that the universities, the education schools, and the universities are becoming more involved in working with future teachers so that they have an understanding [of the standards] before they come out. It's very difficult for these

young teachers if they don't have any kind of background to get onboard with what we are doing here. We're fortunate in this district that we do a pretty good job with our teacher induction program. But I have a daughter who's a first-year teacher. She didn't have a whole lot of preparation in the university she was at, and she has really floundered, had a tough time of it. I just hope that universities are beginning to take up the slack and doing a good job of adding this to the education curriculum."

Conclusions

While there is a striking variability of response to the implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards, several themes emerge from the longitudinal data. A deeper analysis of the data findings reported above reflects the fact that there is good news, and there is bad news.

❖ **Consistency and coherence at the state policy levels directly affect district and school implementation efforts.**

On the positive side, there is little doubt that the Illinois Learning Standards are much more of a "presence" in schools and districts today as compared to four years ago. To the credit of the Illinois State Board of Education, they have "stayed the course" over the past four years and have not revisited, revised, or substantively altered the state learning standards. As Timar noted in 1989 when discussing the relationship between state policies/politics and local school restructuring/reform efforts:

There is increasing evidence that schools are products of the political cultures of states and districts. An atomized state policy and political culture will reproduce similar conditions at the local level. Hence, an integrated response to restructuring at the school level is not likely to occur in politically balkanized and programmatically fragmented districts and states. Since a school's political culture is derivative, it cannot create coherence in an environment where none exists. (p. 274)

The Illinois Learning Standards represent an instance where policy consistency and stability were maintained, and the evidence is that schools and districts have and are responding to this and are continuing to place standards implementation work as an on-going priority. This finding is consistent with a similar study conducted by Goertz (2001) in Maryland, who found that “respondents in the Maryland districts stressed that the persistence of the state’s accountability program and its consistent focus are a major incentive for changing practice” (p. 52). The arenas of Illinois state-level policy by respondents most criticized were those wherein policy has consistently waffled or inexplicably and dramatically changed course, e.g., ISAT reporting, the PSAE, and the Quality Assurance program.

The remarkable steadfastness demonstrated by the State Board with regard to the ILS has had, in effect, at least two dramatic consequences. First, it convincingly nullified one of the earliest concerns expressed by practitioners—that the ILS would be another here-today-gone-tomorrow policy (see DeStefano & Prestine, 1999). This initial conservatism or, perhaps, cynicism on the part of administrators and teachers prompted many to delay any kind of serious implementation effort and adopt a wait-and-see attitude. This procrastination also meant that not everyone was off and running with the standards at the beginning of 1998 but, in fact, began serious implementation efforts a good deal later. This, in part, may also explain why implementation efforts state-wide have not proceeded further and deeper than they have.

Second, this steadfastness also provided the necessary stability needed by the active-adopter schools to move forward with some of the most dramatic and systemic instances of standards-based reform and change. One of the abiding ironies of the change process is that change requires stability (Prestine, 1992). Schools or any organization, for that matter, require a firm platform or foundation from which to amass and marshal the energies, resources, and vision neces-

sary to leverage significant changes. A school organization tossed about in a turbulent environment and pulled this way and that by conflicting and/or constantly changing policy mandates and dictums is not likely to choose to embark on a course of action that will place them in an even more perilous position. They are more likely to simply hunker down and ride out the storm, relying on superficial and symbolic displays of compliance, rather than attempt to mount a significant change effort likely to increase the turbulence, conflict, and travail already being experienced. While the early adopter schools/districts were the first to recognize and capitalize on this relatively rare instance of policy stability, the evidence clearly indicates that others are now also coming to the same realization and moving in this direction.

What this all implies is that state level policymakers can and do have an effect on what happens at district and school levels. As Fuhrman (2001), in summarizing a number of studies focusing on standards-based reform noted, “The bottom line is that these findings offer hope for continued educational improvement if enough political stability can be created to sustain the standards agenda...” (p. 277). The interesting piece is that the state’s major influence comes not through punitive measures or bully-pulpit tactics, but rather from clear vision setting and a steady hand holding the course set.

❖ Change is progressing slowly and incrementally at the district, school, and classroom level.

While no one sees the Illinois Learning Standards as unimportant or insignificant (or at least will not admit to such beliefs), practitioner conceptions of how and in what ways implementation of the standards should be reflected in schooling practices remain relatively limited and bounded by conventional schooling structures, ingrained processes and practices, established roles and relationships, and deeply held beliefs about teaching and learning. Curriculum crosswalks and curriculum mapping activities are the most frequently encountered and are, frankly, the most

simplistic and unobtrusive responses to standards implementation. Some schools/districts have moved beyond these approaches; others have not. Change is proceeding in most schools and districts in an incremental fashion, apparently following the very path about which Elmore (2000) and others have warned. “It is possible that the practice of public schooling will respond to standards-based reform in the same way it has responded to virtually every other large-scale reform in the twentieth century. It may, in other words, try to bend the logic of the policy to the logic of how the existing institutions function, making the policy unrecognizable upon its arrival in the classroom” (p. 4).

While acknowledging Elmore’s well-founded concerns, the more salient point, at least at this time, appears to be that although schools and districts are not involved in massive efforts to reinvent themselves in a Madonna-like fashion, they are indeed changing. While these changes are relatively incremental in nature, this does not necessarily mean that they are insignificant. Tyack and Cuban (1995), in fact, point out that “changes in schools will be more gradual and piecemeal than the usual either/or rhetoric of innovation might indicate” (p. 109). As noted in the previous section, changes are being implemented at all levels. At the district level, strategic plans, policy changes, and institutional procedures are being based on system alignment with the learning standards. At the school level, school improvement plans and professional development now clearly reflect the conceptions of the standards. In classrooms, there is a distinct movement from didactic teaching based on textbooks and direct instruction techniques to more constructivist approaches that are grounded in performance-based standards. While varying from district to district, school to school, and even classroom to classroom, these changes are important and, if the state policy environment remains relatively stable with a strong focus on the learning standards

as the foundation for school improvement, the changes' cumulative effect across time could be considerable.

❖ **Difficulty exists in establishing tighter linkages between policy structures, administrative practices, and daily classroom instructional activities.**

Part of the logic of standards-based reform is aimed at eliminating the “loose coupling” (Weick, 1976, 1982) that has plagued systemic, school-change efforts in the past (Elmore, 2000). Institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1983) holds that while the structural and bureaucratic elements of school organizations tend to be tightly coupled (i.e., controlled and monitored through administrative oversight in order to ensure that they meet specific requirements), other more core and central elements of schooling, those decisions directly related to classroom instruction, like what should be taught, when should it be taught, and how should it be taught and assessed, are only loosely coupled to administrative control and reside, for the most part, in individual classrooms with individual teachers. That is, these core elements are not subject to close inspection or control by the organization, but rather go their own way largely at the discretion of the individual teacher. As Cuban (1992) explained it, teachers work “as solo practitioners, teaching for long period[s] of time without inspection from their supervisors” (p. 240). Principals, dependent upon their teachers' efforts and good will to achieve any degree of school effectiveness, in turn, tend to avoid close inspection and to buffer teachers and classrooms from interference from external forces. All this serves to maintain a “logic of confidence” (Meyer & Rowan, 1978) with external audiences that all is proceeding as it should while almost completely decoupling daily delivery of instruction from any administrative oversight or direction. This makes any large-scale change, especially in the area of instructional practices, nearly impossible. As Elmore (2000) noted, “loose coupling explains why schools continue to promote structures and to engage in practices that research and experience suggest are manifestly not productive”

and “why manifestly successful instructional practices that grow out of research or exemplary practice never take root in more than a small proportion of classrooms and schools” (p. 6).

Standards-based reform aims to correct these difficulties attributable to loose coupling through three foundational and interrelated elements—standards, assessment, and accountability. In this view, there are identified *standards* (content knowledge) that encompass those things *all* students should know and be able to do. Contention over content as to what should be taught—and when—is rendered a moot point. *Assessment* is the valid form of evidence used to verify and substantiate mastery of content, and through this means, schools and teachers are held directly *accountable* for their students achieving those standards. Those who perform well are rewarded; those who do not face some form of sanction. Thus, classroom practices are no longer a black box wherein through mysterious and hidden processes, some students appear to learn and gain mastery while others do not. Instructional practices become subject to inspection and public scrutiny, and teachers and administrators are held accountable for results. In its premises, at least, standards-based reform would “tighten” the connections or couplings between policy, administration, and classroom practices.

While standards-based reform presents a compelling logic, the practicality and pragmatism of the practitioners’ world often confounds its implementation. Building-level administrators, especially, are placed in an uncomfortable and near-schizophrenic position in relation to their staff. On the one hand, standards-based reform calls for principals to be “instructional leaders” for their schools and to facilitate, support, involve, and nurture their staffs toward changes in instructional practices and increased student learning. On the other hand, educational institutions continue to place traditional demands on these individuals. As an area superintendent from a large, urban district noted, “The state can beat us over the head all they want to, but as an organi-

zation, we still aren't ready for standards. We hire principals to be 'in charge,' and you know—it's a joke, but it's not a joke—we measure the success of the principal on how many out-of-control parent calls I get. So we tell this person who is supposed to be in control and in charge, 'Get control of that situation out there.' And then, in the same breath, we turn around and say, 'But we want you also to engage in this open-ended conversation about teaching and learning, and you will need to kind of facilitate things along.' They have no idea what the heck you are even talking about."

Figuring out exactly what this new "instructional leadership" role for principals encompasses is not an easy task. Partly, this is because it violates many long-standing cultural norms that have defined the relationship between principal and teachers as to what areas are open for discussion and what areas are not. With standards-based reform, principals must push into areas upon which they have never before trespassed. These are changes not easily assimilated by either principals or teachers. An elementary principal reflected on the changes she has had to make, why she made them, and her understandings of what "instructional leadership" really means. The saliency of this quotation will hopefully excuse its length.

We are a very disciplined school, and we have to be. We have 700 students in this building, and half of them come from very unstructured homes. We find that we have to do these things. We talk a lot about hands-off, hand-to-yourself, and you'll find a lot of teachers are very consistent in what they do and why [they] do it because the kids, they thrive on that consistency and discipline. When you walk around here, there are times within some of those classrooms where kids are doing a lot less teacher-directed thing. And then, there are other times when they are in rows, and they are all doing similar things. I think you have to have a little bit of both. You can't have all one or the other. And I think that is hard, because for a while, I think teachers thought it was bad to be doing teacher-directed things. And so some moved all the way over to the opposite approach, and we had a lot of discipline problems in the classroom. I know some say that you can have control of your room if it's high interest and all. That's a

bunch of bologna. It doesn't work. You can't do that. With 700 kids, we are probably more structured than I would normally like to be, but I can see no other way.

Well, we have had a problem with our writing scores for some time. In fact, we've been focusing on improving writing for 3 years. The first year we just sort of studied it. The second year we had someone from [a nearby university] come over, and we spent \$8000 on subs and consulting fees. I set up time for the grade levels to meet and talk about writing. Then we got our scores in the fall and again they were miserable, and then people finally admitted that they really hadn't done anything and were still giving like only 3 writing projects all year. And so, I was like, 'Okay, now someone needs to take charge.' So I kind of laid down the law (and I don't usually do that). I said, 'You know what? You are going to teach writing.' Because we had everything else in place. We had put together a really nice teacher rubric. There are five areas on it that all relate to writing and scores scale going from one to three. The ideal we identified on the rubric would be writing daily for an hour. Well, I decided, 'If that's the ideal on the rubric, then that's what we're going to do.' So we became more structured. We pulled our teams of teacher[s] together and created writing lessons. And I insisted that teachers turn their checklists in to me so everybody was held accountable for that writing. I had to do that. And it goes against the way I want to interact with teachers. I mean, I hate that, but I had to do that. We spent two years *talking* about writing, and I saw what that accomplished. And so I had to say, 'Okay, you have to teach writing.' And I did. And then, I started collecting lesson plan books! I never collected lesson plan books before. This year, I collected them. And I not only collect them, but I write in them. It's almost always nice little stuff just to let them know that I looked at it. But sometimes I'll ask questions about something. It's holding them accountable and I have to do that."

By taking on this role [elementary principal], I am [being] accountable for doing my job. This [is] my 10th year in administration, and I've learned a lot. And I still really, really enjoy it, and I think teachers are the best people to work for and the most compassionate...I still treat people with respect and I want them to treat me with respect, but I also expect them to do things. And I'm much clearer with my expectations, and I'm much clearer with the consequences of the expectations. I have to tell them when they're not doing their job, and this is *really* uncomfortable. But they put me in this position. I have no choice, if I am doing my job.

If school organizations are to become less “loosely coupled,” such changes, however uncomfortable, seem imperative, and administrative roles, especially, will need to change. As Elmore (2000) noted, “The skills and knowledge that matter in leadership...are those that can be connected to, or lead directly to, the improvement of instruction and students’ performance” (p. 14).

❖ **Hidden Complexities Exist in the Implementation of Standards.**

On the surface, the implementation of standards appears to be relatively straight forward. This, however, belies an underlying complexity that confounds naïve and simplistic approaches and renders these superficial and incomplete. As Porter and Smithson (2001) noted, “The challenge...is translating language contained in documents describing the standards into a clear picture of desired classroom practice...This leaves a good deal of room for interpreting just how instruction should look in a specific classroom on a day-to-day basis. If the target is fuzzy, determining the extent of standards implementation will also be fuzzy” (p. 66). In point of fact, implementation of standards-based reform is highly sophisticated and intricate work that demands a depth of knowledge of curriculum and instructional issues as well as organizational understandings and skills that extend far beyond the usual (Cuban, 1992; Elmore, 2000). As an associate superintendent in a large urban district candidly noted, “My honest answer is: I don’t know if the state standards can bring about improvement in schools. I’m not so sure that they even really offer a place where we can begin from. Maybe I’m dead wrong, but in starting with the standards, it seems to me that assumes that you understand a lot more about teaching and learning than most people do. At least in this district, we don’t value those kinds of conversations, and we don’t create environments in our schools where it’s ok to do that. And until we do, standards are never going to impact us, or at least not much. What does impact us is something much more tangible and concrete—‘Your scores suck. How are [you] going to make them better?’”

One of the issues involved with standards implementation efforts is the fact that while the standards themselves give the appearance of solidity and concreteness, this is, in fact, largely illusory. Ambiguity—a lack of clarity—surrounds the standards and makes implementation much more difficult than might first be expected (Porter, Smithson, & Osthoff, 1994) and limits their impact. As one assistant superintendent noted, “Now, standards are necessary, but they are not sufficient. In fact, it’s nearly impossible to teach to standards. They are abysmally general. That’s why standards proponents have had to add benchmarks and performance criteria, etc. In some ways, it’s a Russian Nesting Doll problem. Every time one clearly defines a standard/benchmark/performance criterion, the top wiggles off, and out pops a smaller one. Pretty soon you’re down to daily lesson plans based on direct instruction of sub-sub-sub-skills. And that is exactly what standards-based teaching is supposed to avoid. That’s what I find most problematic about “standards-based” anything: You can’t get students’ or a teacher’s mind around anything as huge as a standard, but there’s no place to stop subdividing. Teachers tend to hop off wherever they’re comfortable—which, incidentally, is where they were to begin. No change.” As Tyack and Cuban (1995) noted, “If the aims of reforms seem vague, contradictory, or unattainable, educators often respond by turning them into something they have already learned how to do” (p. 64).

From the point of view of the schools, the ambiguity surrounding the standards also made an assessment of their technical efficiency nearly impossible. This matter of technical efficiency refers to the alignment of the standards and the assessment: that is, implied means-ends relationship between the standards and the state accountability instrument, the ISAT. Simply stated, the relationship implies that the standards are aligned with the assessment—that if one implements the standards, then students will do well on the assessment. As Snyder, Bolin, and Zumwalt

(1992) noted, “The greater the understanding of the goals and what is to be gained from adoption, the greater the degree of implementation” (p. 416). In point of fact, because so much ambiguity and uncertainty surrounded the standards as well as their relationship to the state assessment, schools were unable to make individual assessments of the efficacy of the learning standards on merit. As Fuhrman (2001) has noted, “A larger problem...is the lack of alignment between the [standards-based] curriculum and the assessments...But it’s an even more serious problem if the test and the standards have so little in common that the assessments used are not a fair measure of whether the standards (either a part or all) are being taught and learned” (p. 266). Across the four years, it still remains unclear to most schools what kind of return can be expected from implementation of the standards and whether the outcomes promised are illusion or fact. In the pragmatic, even cynical, view of many administrators who had been burned by other mandated initiatives of a similar nature that came upon the scene with great fanfare, burned brightly for a while, and then were extinguished, the answer seemed clear. Especially in the first two years, few were willing to throw themselves and their districts/schools into the fray and commit to full-fledged effort to implement the standards.

The implied relationship between the learning standards and the state accountability measure has always been based largely on what Levitt and March (1988) called “superstitious learning” (p. 325). That is, while the surface logic of the association may have some merit, the actual causal linkages between specific actions (implementing the learning standards) and specific outcomes (raising student scores) are not clearly specified or are mis-specified. As Wilson and Rossman noted, “These intuitive causal models are embedded in the specifics of a reform...however, there is little monitoring of either the implementation of the required reform or its outcomes. Scant attention is paid to whether the causal model works” (p. 161). Because of the

huge variability across schools and districts in their implementation efforts, because of an enormous variability across schools and districts in an almost infinite list of contributory, mediating variables (like socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, parental education, and facilities, to name a very few), this kind of causal relationship is unlikely to ever be substantiated. As Payzant (1994) noted, “The dilemma is that, in formulating policies with clear goals and unambiguous specifications for attaining them, it is easy to ignore the complexity caused by the many variables that teachers and students encounter, even when those focused policies have the ‘authority and power’ of the state behind them” (p. 204).

This translates to the fact that standards are being decoupled from assessment. This state of affairs will be exacerbated if a nationally normed assessment is adopted in place of the current ISAT. As Goertz (2001) has cautioned, there is an abiding concern as to “whether and how well norm-reference tests are aligned with state standards, and whether they are appropriate measures of student performance on challenging standards” (pp. 55–56). In spite of all its weaknesses, the ISAT clearly is more closely linked to the Illinois Learning Standards than any assessment commercially produced for a national market. Assessment, and especially the preparation for assessment, now consumes the actual activities of many schools, often under the guise of standards implementation work. The original conception of systemic or standards-based reform was a triumvirate of assessment, accountability, and standards—all equally important—all equally necessary for serious school improvement efforts. For all intents and purposes, accountability and assessment appear to be merging as one—leaving the standards the odd man out. This trend, if unchecked, will likely end any serious standards-based reform in schools.

Summary—Where Are We? Where Are We Going?

In visiting schools and districts and talking with principals, teachers, and administrators, it is clear that there is no single best way to implement the learning standards. In agreement with Berman's (1980) earlier observations, this study as well found that those schools and/or districts that have been more successful do not necessarily present mirror images of those who have not been successful. What Berman noted then holds true now—"Successful processes do not seem robust, but rather consist of fragile concentrations of events, people, and ideas at the right times and in the right places" (p. 270). Nonetheless, implementation of the Illinois Learning Standards has progressed and is progressing, albeit more slowly than first anticipated. Consonant with findings by other researchers in other states (see, for example, Fairman & Firestone, 2001), it appears that these implementation efforts are clearly having an effect on content and, to a lesser extent, on pedagogy. It is only now, four years into the process, that commitment and engagement with standards-based reform is evident across schools rather than confined to isolated instances. As well, there is a growing consensus that the standards are important and meaningful. Yet, clearly, most districts and schools are still in the relatively initial stages of their implementation work. As an elementary teacher noted, "It [standards implementation] is making a difference, but it's hard to see yet. Right now, we're right in the middle of implementing everything, and realizing the standards, and posting the standards, and aligning all of our curriculum, and there's just so much hard work going into it that I'm just focusing on the hard work, getting into it, and not really what the outcome is yet. You know, that's the honest truth for me. I'm not looking at outcomes yet. I'm just looking at making sure we're doing what we're supposed to be doing and—you know, it's a lot of work."

As also noted above, it is evident that many schools, especially those serving especially needy student populations, are using the learning standards as another weapon in their arsenal.

However, precise measure of the learning standards' impact on student achievement is difficult, if not impossible. In the words of an urban elementary principal, "It's hard to say because [this school] has gone through so many processes that I feel are all interrelated. I mean, we do shared decision making. We were already a Title I school-wide school, and then we added the accelerated schools process. So, a lot of things have all come at the same time as the learning standards. We've been a Project Success school since its inception. So, it's very difficult to separate things out. When I talk to the accelerated schools people, they want to an answer to 'Well, did this cause this, or did this cause that?' Well, I cannot say. No one can. How can you possibly separate one thing out from everything else that's going on and say, 'This definitely had this effect'? It's a total package here." Schools have progressed beyond initial implementation stages, and this study has documented promising changes in instructional practices. It may be time to focus evaluation activities on examining the link between these practices and actual outcomes (Porter & Smithson, 2001). As Patton (1997) noted, policy failure can be attributed to either failure of the implemented changes to attain desired outcomes or failure to actually implement the policy. This four-year study would seem to indicate that the second alternative will not likely be the case. Implementation is proceeding, if differentially and variably, across schools and district. While it is important and necessary to know the extent to which a reform effort attained its intended outcomes and met participants' needs, it is essential for future evaluations to explore what occurred in these efforts that can be reasonably linked to student outcomes.

Finally, respondents in this study were asked to engage in some prognostication as to the future of the learning standards. Perhaps these responses were tainted a bit because they were talking to researchers interested in the standards or perhaps respondents were simply airing their own convictions, but there was unanimity of opinion that the learning standards are here to stay

and that this is a positive thing. A middle school principal noted, “As long as it [learning standards] doesn’t get caught up in politics, I think the learning standards—I hope they will be constantly evaluated and updated, changed, just like everything should be as time and the years move by—but I think they’re here to stay. At least, that’s what I’m telling my people. And I’m also telling my people, ‘That means, it’s time to make sure you get onboard. You don’t want to get run over by the bus.’” A final comment from an urban superintendent: “I think in another 4 years, standards will be commonly accepted practice, whereas, there’s still some doubt out there now, and I’m not just looking at [this community]. I’m looking at it in a general situation. We aren’t the only school district that has struggled to accept the standards and embrace the standards. But I think we will reach a point where we will internalize them. We will know they’re there, but we won’t have to focus directly on them. It’s sort of like driving. You know the rules of the road; you know when you’re supposed to stop. You know all that—you’ve internalized these things, so you don’t have to think about them on a day-to-day basis. After a while, it all just becomes a normal thing to do without prompting. I would hope that that is where we will be.”

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