



# Improving School Culture in Simulated Workplaces: Workshop Series

## *Participant Workbook*

Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia at SRI International

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Leaders, teachers, and students participated in the pilot workshop series from which we developed these workshop materials.

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Table I-1. Aids for using the participant workbook

<b>Special icons and fonts indicate...</b>	
<p>A book icon indicates background information or information summarized in the accompanying slides for participants to read and refer back to later.</p>	<p>  Welcome to a workshop series on strengthening...                 </p>
<p>A conversation icon and italic font indicates instructions for workshop activities.</p>	<p>  <i>Let's start by reviewing the prompt below...</i> </p>

# Workshop 1: Introduction to School Culture Improvement

This is the first workshop in our three-part series focused on school culture. An overview of the first workshop is in table 1.

Table 1. Detailed overview of Workshop 1

<b>Preparing for Workshop 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No preparation needed.</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about positive school culture and the school culture survey.</li> <li>• Develop a sense of shared interest and purpose in improving school culture.</li> <li>• Become familiar with the steps in the improvement cycle.</li> <li>• Plan who will lead and participate in school culture improvement.</li> </ul>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant workbook and slides</li> <li>• Pens, name tags</li> </ul>
<b>Agenda and time required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total workshop time: 1 hour             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Welcome (5 minutes)</li> <li>- Opening activity: If my school were an animal (15 minutes)</li> <li>- Positive school culture and why it matters (10 minutes)</li> <li>- About the Simulated Workplace school culture survey (10 minutes)</li> <li>- Using a continuous improvement approach (5 minutes)</li> <li>- Who leads and participates in school improvement (10 minutes)</li> <li>- Looking ahead to Workshop 2 (5 minutes)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Welcome



Welcome to a workshop series on strengthening school culture in Simulated Workplaces. This workshop series was designed in a collaboration between the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) and the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Appalachia.

During the first workshop in the series, we will learn about:

- Positive school culture and why it matters.
- The Simulated Workplace school culture survey.
- The continuous improvement approach.
- Who can lead and participate in school improvement.
- What we will do in the second workshop.


## Opening activity: If my school were an animal



Let's get ready to learn about school culture by first considering our own. The focus of this workshop series is improving school culture, but what is school culture in general, and specifically, what is our school's culture?

After we address the prompt below in small groups, we will identify similarities and differences in how each group completed the prompt as a starting point to our work together.



 *Let's start by working together in small groups to review the sentence prompt below and complete it.*

**If my school were an animal, it would be a (an) \_\_\_\_\_**

**because \_\_\_\_\_.**

## Positive school culture and why it matters



School culture encompasses the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors that arise over time from how people treat and feel about each other, as well as how the school community faces challenges and celebrates successes (Peterson & Deal, 2009).


Everyone in a school contributes to its culture. Positive cultures arise from all parties deliberately choosing affirmative behavior such as maintaining high expectations for students; building meaningful staff-staff, staff-student, and student-student relationships; promoting trust and respect for all voices; and being open to give and receive constructive feedback.

Why is focusing on school culture important? Whether positive or negative, school culture affects how teachers, staff, and students interact with one another. Research has found a positive school culture renders benefits for both students and teachers (table 2).


Table 2. Benefits of positive school culture

Research shows positive school culture is associated with increased...	
Students	Teacher
Achievement (Geier et al., 2008)	Job satisfaction (Anderman, 1991)
Attendance (Kemple et al., 1999)	Commitment (Collie et al., 2012)
Engagement and empowerment (Ellis et al., 2018)	Collaboration (Hixson et al., 2012)
Social-emotional learning (Hixson et al., 2012).	

## About the Simulated Workplace school culture survey

 The focus on improving school culture in Simulated Workplaces arose from WVDE's efforts to realize its vision for Simulated Workplace's new, student-centered model of learning. As part of that effort, WVDE administers a school culture survey to all Simulated Workplace students, teachers, counselors, and administrators twice a year. Its purpose is to help schools better understand their culture and make improvements based on the results.

### *Positive school culture constructs*

 *Four constructs of positive school culture form the basis of the school culture survey. Individually review the constructs and examples on the next page. Then turn to page 7 and take some notes in response to the reflection questions.*



### Student engagement/empowerment

- Students have a say in how their Simulated Workplace programs are run.
- Students take ownership of their learning process and work.
- Students work with teachers to evaluate their work and discuss how to improve.
- Students contribute to creating a positive learning environment.



### Goal-setting/action planning

- Students contribute to setting personal and class-wide or program-wide goals.
- Students' courses help them set and achieve goals.
- Students get better at setting and achieving their goals.
- Students' Simulated Workplace experience helps them make career-related decisions.



### Attitude/openness

- Students find their work to be meaningful.
- Students feel comfortable learning unfamiliar things.
- Students see how their work connects to their future careers.
- Students celebrate success in their work.



### Collaboration

- Students work together to plan and do work.
- Students see the difference their contribution makes to the team.
- Students learn from peers and help peers learn.

## *Reflecting on our school culture*

*Which examples from the previous page align with strengths of your own school culture? Why do you think that?*

*Which examples from the previous page reflect something your school could improve on? Why do you think that?*

*How do the example statements you associate with strengths and areas for improvement relate to how you characterized your school when selecting an animal at the start of this workshop?*

## Using a continuous improvement approach


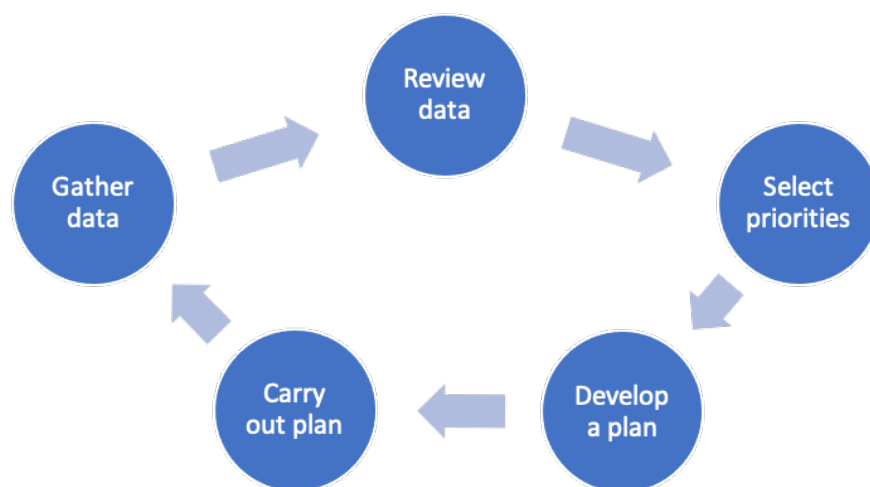
 In this workshop series, we will move through a continuous improvement cycle together. Just as businesses study their processes and results to improve over time, so can education institutions. Continuous improvement in education engages key stakeholders—such as school leaders, teachers, other staff, students, and families—to examine a specific problem of practice and engage in iterative cycles to test changes, gather data, and study the potential influence of these changes on outcomes of interest (Bryk et al., 2015).

Figure 1 shows the steps of the cycle:

- **Review and discuss data** from the school culture survey and other information you may want to gather.
- Build on that discussion to identify strengths and areas for improvement, and **select priorities to work on to strengthen school culture.**
- **Develop a plan** to pursue these priorities for improvement.
- **Carry out** the plan.
- **Gather data** to determine if the work is making a difference.

Figure 1. Continuous improvement cycle





## *How the school culture surveys inform school improvement efforts*

Survey data can play an important role in continuous improvement efforts for three reasons:

- Surveys can help you gather different perspectives on a given topic. Results can highlight how views differ and help identify areas around which there is broad agreement.
- Surveys with high response rates can provide an objective basis for in-depth discussion without singling out individuals or letting a few vocal people drive the agenda.
- Survey results can also help measure change in perceptions over time. Once you decide how you would like to strengthen your school culture, you can carry out these changes. Then you can administer the survey again to determine if your efforts resulted in the change you sought.

## Who leads and participates in school improvement?

 School culture impacts everyone in the school community. Everyone plays an important role in building a positive school culture. Therefore, before we tackle the next step in the school improvement process, we need to make sure we have the right mix of people at the table who can bring varied perspectives to this work.

 *Take a few minutes to jot down your own thoughts about the prompts below, and then discuss with your neighbors.*

*Are a variety of leaders with different roles involved in the school improvement effort, including teachers, students, and counselors?*

*Are leaders from the full range of Simulated Workplace programs at our school involved in this effort?*

*Are people with a range of experience involved in this effort, such as teachers at different career stages and/or students from different grades?*



## Looking ahead to Workshop 2



Thank you for your thoughtful engagement in this first workshop! Let's look ahead to the next workshop. In the next workshop, we will:

- Review and discuss state- and school-level school culture survey results.
- Practice making accurate statements about the survey results.
- Interpret the data-driven statements to celebrate strengths and begin to identify areas for improvement.

# Workshop 2: Review and Interpret School Culture Survey Data

This is the second workshop in our three-part series focused on school culture. An overview of the first workshop is in table 3.

Table 3. Detailed overview of Workshop 2

<b>Preparing for Workshop 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No preparation needed, although facilitators may ask participants to review survey reports in advance.</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review and discuss state- and school-level school culture survey results.</li> <li>• Practice making accurate statements about the survey results.</li> <li>• Interpret the data-driven statements to celebrate strengths and begin to identify areas for improvement.</li> </ul>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant workbook and slides</li> <li>• Numbered cards for “jigsaw groups”</li> <li>• Handouts of the most recent school survey report (teacher and student results only) and statewide survey report</li> </ul>
<b>Agenda and time required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total time: 1 hour 30 minutes             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Welcome back (2 minutes)</li> <li>- Recap of survey constructs and examples (5 minutes)</li> <li>- How to review and interpret school culture survey data (20 minutes)</li> <li>- Reviewing school and statewide survey results (45 minutes)</li> <li>- Deciding whether to gather additional information (optional) (15 minutes)</li> <li>- Look ahead to Workshop 3 (3 minutes)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Welcome back



Welcome to the second workshop in our series on strengthening school culture in Simulated Workplaces.

During the second workshop in the series, we will:

- Review state- and school-level culture data.
- Practice making accurate statements about survey data
- Interpret the data-driven statements to celebrate strengths and begin to identify areas for improvement.



Facilitator presentation



Slides 28–29



2 minutes

## Recap survey constructs and example statements



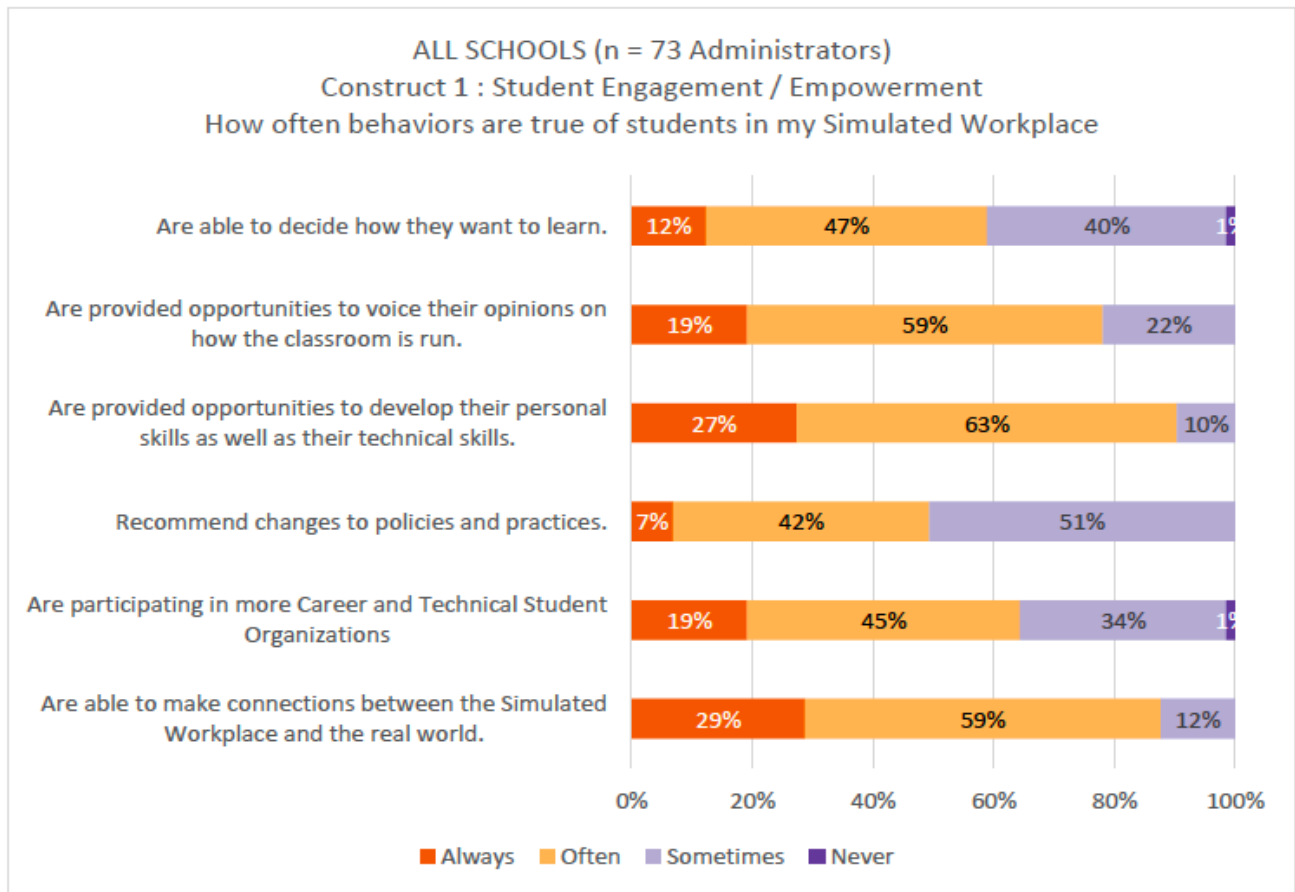
*Let's refresh our memory of the four main constructs in the school culture survey before we dive into the process of reviewing survey results. Turn back to page 6 to see the list of constructs and to page 7 to see notes from our discussion of possible strengths and areas for improvement.*

## How to review and interpret school culture survey data




Let's use the example of statewide survey results in figure 2 to learn how to read the survey report. These results show administrators' responses to one question. Responses from counselors, teachers, and students follow the same format.

Figure 2. Example of statewide school culture survey results




Source: Excerpted from WVDE School Culture Survey Report: Statewide Results, 2019

 The statewide survey report shows the results across the entire state Simulated Workplace system, from surveys completed by administrators, counselors, teachers, and students. Results from the statewide report will say ALL SCHOOLS at the top.

The results for each question are shown in the format you see above. At the top, you see the number and role of the people who responded to a given question—in this case, 73 administrators answered this question. You also see which construct the question is associated with—here, student engagement/empowerment. Directly below the construct is the question or statement for which the graphs shows results—in this example, “How often behaviors are true of students in my Simulated Workplace.” The bar graphs show the percentage of administrators who selected each possible response. See the key below the graph for the response options (in figure 2 the response options include *always*, *often*, *sometimes*, and *never*).

## Steps for reviewing and interpreting data

 The process we will practice today—reflect, interpret, and draw conclusions—is designed to help you thoughtfully review the survey results before you begin interpreting them (figure 3). In other words, we will carefully *step* to conclusions, rather than jump to conclusions!


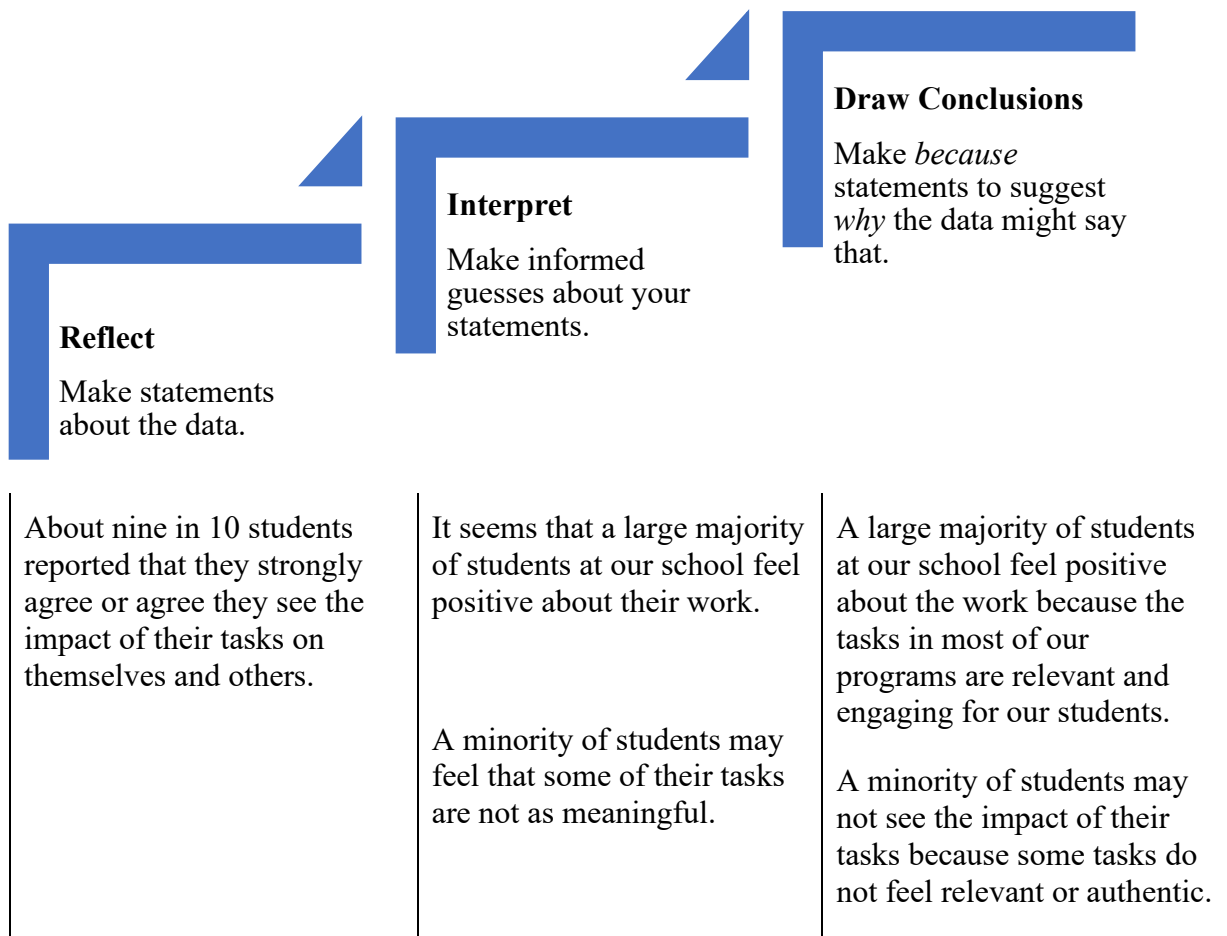

 *Let's practice with this example before we work with our own school results.*

Figure 3. Steps for reviewing and interpreting data



## Reviewing school and statewide survey data

### *Practice round*

 *As a whole group, choose a table or graph from your school survey report and complete each of the three steps in the review process: reflect, interpret, and draw conclusions based on what the data tell you. You can take notes under the example in table 4.*


As you **Reflect**, **Interpret**, and **Draw Conclusions**, consider the following:

- **Normal variation.** *It is normal that not everyone "strongly agrees" or "strongly disagrees" with every question on the survey. Determine which results reflect a positive culture and which indicate possible areas for improvement by noting where results seem generally positive or negative your survey report.*
- **Comparing results.** *Are your school results consistent with the statewide data? Are teacher and student responses similar or different on related questions?*
- **Confidence.** *You may be more confident about some conclusions than about others. Circle the conclusions you are less sure about. Write down questions you would want to answer to be more certain of those conclusions.*

Table 4. Reflect, interpret, and draw conclusions based on school data – Whole group discussion

<b>Reflect</b>	<b>Interpret</b>	<b>Draw Conclusions</b>
<p><i>Example: About nine in 10 students reported that they strongly agree or agree that they see the impact of their tasks on themselves and others.</i></p>	<p><i>It seems that a large majority of students feel positive about their work.</i></p> <p><i>A minority of students may feel that some of their tasks are not as meaningful.</i></p>	<p><i>A large majority of students feel positive about the work because the tasks in most of our programs are relevant and engaging for our students.</i></p> <p><i>A minority of students may not see the impact of their work because some tasks may not feel relevant or authentic.</i></p>

## *Reviewing data in small groups: Round 1*

 *In the next activity, you will split into small groups to discuss your school's results. After you complete the **Reflect, Interpret, and Draw Conclusions** process with your Round 1 small group, you will split into new groups to share key takeaways about the process with others.*

*In your Round 1 small group, select a question, with the related data presented as a table or graph, from your school's results to **Reflect** on. Once your group agrees on **Reflect** statement(s), move on to **Interpret** and **Draw Conclusions**.*


*Write down key points from your group's discussion in table 5 so you can share them with your new group in the next round.*



Table 5. Reflect, interpret, and draw conclusions based on school data – Round 1 small group discussion

<b>Reflect</b>	<b>Interpret</b>	<b>Draw conclusions</b>
<p><i>Example: About nine in 10 students reported that they strongly agree or agree that they see the impact of their tasks on themselves and others.</i></p>	<p><i>It seems that a large majority of students feel positive about their work.</i></p> <p><i>A minority of students may feel that some of their tasks are not as meaningful.</i></p>	<p><i>A large majority of students feel positive about the work because the tasks in most of our programs are relevant and engaging for our students.</i></p> <p><i>A minority of students may not see the impact of their work because some tasks may not feel relevant or authentic.</i></p>

## Reviewing data in small groups: Round 2



 Once you form your Round 2 groups, discuss what you learned from reviewing the data and the conclusions you drew in your Round 1 groups. Use your notes from table 5 as you share.

- Each person shares what their group discussed during Round 1 (7 minutes).
- After each person has shared, discuss and take notes in response to the prompts in table 6 (8 minutes).

Table 6. Notes from Round 2 group discussion

Discussion question	Notes
What was similar about the conclusions drawn by each of our Round 1 groups?	
What was different about the conclusions drawn by each of our Round 1 groups?	
Were we confident in our conclusions, or are there additional questions we could ask to learn more?	

## Deciding whether to gather additional information

 Successful improvement efforts depend on consensus and buy-in about what most needs improving, but perspectives may differ on where or how an improvement effort should begin. Gathering information from all potential stakeholder groups (such as teachers, students, parents, and administrators) helps to build support for a school improvement effort that takes multiple views into account and meets a range of needs. However, if not all perspectives are well-represented in your survey results, you may want to gather more information.

You may have low survey response rates overall or only in some groups surveyed. For example, if less than 85 percent of people in a particular role (e.g., teachers, students) responded to the school culture survey, you might not be able to consider the results representative of the views of that group (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Ideally, survey responses also reflect input from a high proportion of both teachers and students across all programs, as well as leader and counselor viewpoints.

If your school survey response rate was low, or if you are not confident about some of your conclusions, you may need to gather additional information to ensure your interpretation of survey data fairly reflects the views of all or nearly all in your school community.


 *In your Round 2 groups, refer back to your questions from the last row of table 6. Select one or two of those questions and enter them in the top left box in table 7. Then, generate some ideas about how you can gather additional information to answer them. Record the discussion in table 7 (5–7 minutes).*

Table 7. Notes for gathering additional information

<b>Questions about survey findings</b>	<b>Where and how to find the answer</b>	<b>Who will take next steps and by when</b>	<b>How and by when to share what we learn</b>
<p><i>Example: Do some students feel some tasks are less relevant and authentic?</i></p>	<p><i>Ask two students in each program at student leader meeting.</i></p>	<p><i>Susan will ask in the November meeting and take notes.</i></p>	<p><i>Susan will email what she learns to the group one week before Workshop 3.</i></p>
<p>Note here what you learn</p>			

## *Sharing information gathered before Workshop 3*



*Let's share the information we gathered in our small groups*

*When the members of your group are ready to share the additional information, remember to follow these steps:*

- *Review the question in table 7 your group was trying to address by gathering the additional information.*
- *Share the information you all gathered and how you gathered it.*
- *Explain how the information addresses the question from table 7.*
- *Explain whether the information changes or confirms the original conclusions from table 5.*

*With answers to these questions, the group will be ready to identify an improvement priority in Workshop 3!*

## Looking ahead to Workshop 3



Thank you again for your ongoing engagement in this workshop series! Let's look ahead to the next workshop. In Workshop 3, we will:

- Identify and agree on a priority for school culture improvement.
- Learn how evidence-based practices support improvement efforts.
- Review evidence-based practices in *Strengthening Simulated Workplace Culture: A Guide for Educators*.

## Workshop 3: Identify Priorities

This is the third workshop in our three-part series focused on school culture. An overview of the first workshop is in table 8.

Table 8. Detailed overview of Workshop 3

<b>Preparing for Workshop 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you planned to gather additional information after Workshop 2, you should complete that process and share what you learned with the group before attending Workshop 3. If you had no work between meetings, you can proceed directly to Workshop 3.</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and agree on a priority for school culture improvement.</li> <li>• Learn how evidence-based practices support improvement efforts.</li> <li>• Review evidence-based practices in <i>Strengthening Simulated Workplace Culture: A Guide for Educators</i>.</li> </ul>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants’ notes from Workshop 2</li> <li>• Notes on conclusions (as relevant) drawn or confirmed between workshops</li> <li>• Workshop 3 activities and slides</li> <li>• Poster paper, dry-erase whiteboard, or shared document</li> <li>• Markers</li> <li>• Copies of or a link for the <a href="#">Educator Guide</a></li> </ul>
<b>Agenda and time required</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total time = 1 hour 20 minutes             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Review progress and look ahead (5 minutes)</li> <li>- Review conclusions from data review (5 minutes)</li> <li>- Identify possible improvement priorities (45 minutes)</li> <li>- Explore and use evidence-based practices (5 minutes)</li> <li>- Introduce <i>Strengthening Simulated Workplace Culture: A Guide for Educators</i> (15 minutes)</li> <li>- Where do we go from here? (5 minutes)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

## Welcome back: Review progress and look ahead



Welcome! Objectives for the third workshop are to:

- Identify and agree on a priority for school culture improvement.
- Learn how evidence-based practices support improvement efforts.
- Review evidence-based practices in *Strengthening Simulated Workplace Culture: A Guide for Educators*.



Facilitator presentation



Slides 56–59



5 minutes

But first, let's take a minute to celebrate your progress so far! You have completed the **review data** step and will **select priorities** for improvement in this workshop!


## Review conclusions from data review



*In groups of three to five, review the handout summarizing conclusions drawn from the survey data and the additional information gathered after Workshop 2. Consider which conclusions resonate with your experience and which, if any, surprise you (5 minutes).*



## Identify possible improvement priorities

 *In groups of three to five, use the conclusions summary handout and other notes from Workshop 2 to complete the sentences below. You can use each prompt more than once. Using your notes will help ensure statements are based on data (10 minutes).*

*Be specific to focus your improvement ideas. For example, a statement such as "We have room to grow in our school culture" is not as useful as "We have room to grow in the way that we include student choice in our assignments."*

- **Strengths:** "It's great that we already \_\_\_\_\_ so well.  
We know this because \_\_\_\_\_."


- **Areas for improvement:** "We have room to grow in \_\_\_\_\_.  
We know this because \_\_\_\_\_."

*Share your sentences with the whole group to create a combined list of strengths and areas for improvement and discuss any trends you notice. You can take notes on the whole-group discussion in table 9 (15 minutes).*

Table 9. Notes on strengths and areas for improvement

<b>Strengths and areas for improvement</b>	
<b>Strengths</b>	
<b>Areas for improvement</b>	

## *Focusing the improvement work*

 *Next, we will need to select one or two priority areas for improvement to tackle first. When reviewing the list you generated in table 9, consider:*

- **URGENCY:** *You can work on some of these areas later. Are any more urgent than others?*
- **SPECIFICITY:** *Are the improvement areas described specifically enough that you can focus your efforts on them? If not, see if you can be more specific.*
- **IMPACT:** *Where is the biggest "bang for your buck," or where can you make the biggest difference with a small or medium effort?*
- **TIME FRAME:** *What could be a "quick win"? Where do you expect to see measurable improvement quickly? Do some priorities need to come before others in terms of the sequence of implementing changes?*
- **FEASIBILITY:** *Are any of the selected priorities more feasible, or easier, to address than others, for example, by using resources already available?*

List the improvement areas in table 10 and work together to rate each consideration (10 minutes).

- 1 = High priority
- 2 = Medium priority
- 3 = Low priority

Table 10. Considerations to determine high-priority improvement areas

Improvement area	Urgency	Specificity	Impact	Time frame	Feasibility

*Discuss implications of selected priorities*



Does a clear priority improvement area emerge? Once you have populated table 10 with your ratings, discuss the ratings to select an area to address for the remainder of this workshop (10 minutes). If several areas received similar ratings, you may need to reconsider where to focus improvement efforts.

## Making changes




 Now that you've selected an improvement priority, brainstorm potential changes you might make to address it and document your ideas in table 11. Note that some changes might involve a larger, and therefore less feasible, effort (for example, reviewing and revising tasks across programs), whereas some changes might be simpler and more feasible (for example, ensuring that leadership positions are distributed across programs and grades) (10 minutes).

Table 11. Notes from brainstorming session


Improvement priority	Possible changes that could address this improvement priority
<b>Example</b>	
Help all students feel their contributions matter.	Ensure that all tasks have rich opportunities for student input and leadership, and that their importance is clearly articulated so students know how each role contributes to supporting the Simulated Workplace.
	Share leadership positions and similar roles among students in different programs and grades.
<b>Your ideas</b>	

## Explore and use evidence-based practices


### *Why does evidence matter?*


 Now that you have identified your priority area of improvement and brainstormed some potential strategies related to that improvement area, how will you decide what course of action to take? How do you know what changes will make a difference? You want to know how well a program or practice works, for whom and under what conditions, **before** you adopt it, **while** you are doing it, and **after** you finish it. Evidence is critical at all stages of improvement work, including in the process of selecting practices to implement.

### *About evidence-based practices*

 Evidence-based practices are those that have been studied, tested, and proven effective. Practices or programs with *strong evidence* or *moderate evidence* of success are more likely to improve outcomes than programs without such evidence, especially if they were researched in settings similar to yours.

## Introduction to *Strengthening Simulated Workplace Culture: A Guide for Educators*

 *Strengthening Simulated Workplace Culture: A Guide for Educators* (the Educator Guide) provides information about evidence-based practices you might use in your improvement work. The guide is available at <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/appalachia/blogs/pdf/simulated-workplace-culture-educator-guide-508.pdf>

 *As you learn about how evidence-based practices can support your improvement work, and as you discuss the Educator Guide's evidence-based practices for Simulated Workplaces, consider the prompts below:*

- *Which practices from the Educator Guide are most relevant to the improvement priority you selected and the kinds of changes you brainstormed? Why do you find them relevant?*
- *If none of the practices seem relevant, how will you identify other evidence-based practices to address your improvement priority?*
- *If you are unable to find evidence-based practices relevant to the improvement priority, how will you decide which strategies or practices to implement?*

*Turn to your neighbor and share your thinking. You can take notes on your discussion in the space below (5 minutes).*

## Where do we go from here?



Thank you again for your ongoing engagement in this workshop series! As we conclude Workshop 3, you have:

- Identified an improvement priority.
- Brainstormed types of change to help meet that improvement priority.
- Identified evidence-based practices to help achieve goals for change.

You may need more support to do the following:

- Review the selected improvement focus.
- Plan for implementation and next steps.

The facilitator handbook has an appendix with supplemental materials to help your team take these next steps. The appendix includes an example improvement scenario, an action planning template and links to other relevant resources.



## References

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