

Success at the Core: **How Teams and Teachers Transform Instruction**

Summary of Findings from Second User Survey

**Prepared by Inverness Research
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Inverness Research has conducted a series of evaluation studies of *Success at the Core (SaC)*.¹ Each study has a distinct scope, focus and purpose, and yet all of them are intended to assess the quality, value, utility, and impact of *SaC*, as well as to promote further insight into the nature of *SaC* as a tool for educators. In October 2010, four months after the official launch of *SaC*, Inverness conducted a user survey of *SaC* registrants. A second user survey was conducted in the latter half of May 2011. Two hundred forty-five (245) *SaC* members (6.2% of total members) responded to the May survey.² While this response rate is low, these results are congruent with findings from other studies, which gives them weight. This report offers a summary of the second *SaC* user survey results and discusses some implications.

Synthesis

QUALITY

The quality of *SaC* continues to stand out as being higher than other online or video-based materials for survey respondents (84% judge *SaC* materials to be of higher quality than other available materials, including 46% who say they are much higher in quality). While *SaC* videos are still the most-used components, substantial proportions of users use other *SaC* materials. Importantly, users in different organizational contexts tend to gravitate toward different components beyond the videos, which suggests that the variety of components contributes to the flexibility of the tool for the range of users.

¹ For Executive Summaries, see Research page of the *SaC* site: http://www.successatthecore.com/about_research.aspx

² The number of respondents to the fall survey was almost exactly the same; however, because there were only 1,450 registered users in October, the response rate in October 2010 was considerably higher.

USABILITY

Respondents working within and consulting for many different kinds of educational organizations—schools, districts, state education agencies, non-profits, even some universities—are using *SaC*. Also, they are using it in multiple contexts, including teacher teams, school-wide teams, district teams, for coaching, and in a wide range of meetings, trainings, and workshops for teachers and administrators. These findings underscore the utility and flexibility of *SaC* as a tool for these respondents.

POSITIVE BENEFITS

Respondents continue to identify a number of important benefits to *SaC* usage, including strengthening of their own knowledge and teaching or leadership practice, improvements to professional dialogue and community, and contributions to organizational agendas for instructional improvement. Notably, those users who responded to both surveys report increased benefits in many areas since October 2010. This result shows that these users experienced benefits immediately and continued to experience additional benefits through continued use. Most respondents also continue to expect additional benefits in the future.

ENTHUSIASM

Nearly all respondents say they intend to continue using *SaC* materials in the future, and over half of non-users say they plan to use them. Furthermore, and just as importantly, most are recommending *SaC* to several other people who occupy multiple positions in education, and a good number of respondents are helping others to use the materials. The implication here is that current users who are enthusiastic about *SaC* are acting as “carriers” of *SaC* and are serving informally as coaches for new users.

SUPPORTS FOR EFFECTIVE USE

This survey also provides valuable perspective on what respondents believe would enable them to be even more effective in their use of *SaC*. Many say that context conditions of collegial interaction and administrative support are important. A good proportion also says that additional online support materials such as links to reform issues and stories of effective use would help them. These results suggest directions for further development of *SaC* for the purposes of promoting initial and sustained use, spread, and community building around *SaC* including: tapping the energy and know-how of enthusiastic users and facilitating their professional person-to-person networking; and developing online resources that exemplify and promote familiarity with and usage of *SaC*.

***SaC* Use Research Design**

This survey, like the October 2010 use survey, focuses on the naturalistic use of *SaC* among members. It aims to document the extent to which and the ways in which *SaC* members make use of the materials, benefit from the materials, and help to sustain and spread usage of the materials. The survey, conducted in the latter half of May 2011, contains nearly all of the same questions as the October survey and includes a small number of new items. All registered *SaC* members received invitations to complete the survey, with a reminder email sent halfway through the 17-day period the survey was posted.

SaC Use Research Findings

Two hundred and forty-five registered SaC members (6.2%) responded to the survey; forty-nine respondents took both the May 2011 and October 2010 surveys. Of the respondents who indicated their professional role, 53% work in a school setting, 22% work at the district level, and 26% work elsewhere (state education associations, non-profits, and other settings such as consulting on school improvement and university teacher education). Of the respondents who indicated their locale, 69% are from Washington state and 31% from elsewhere.

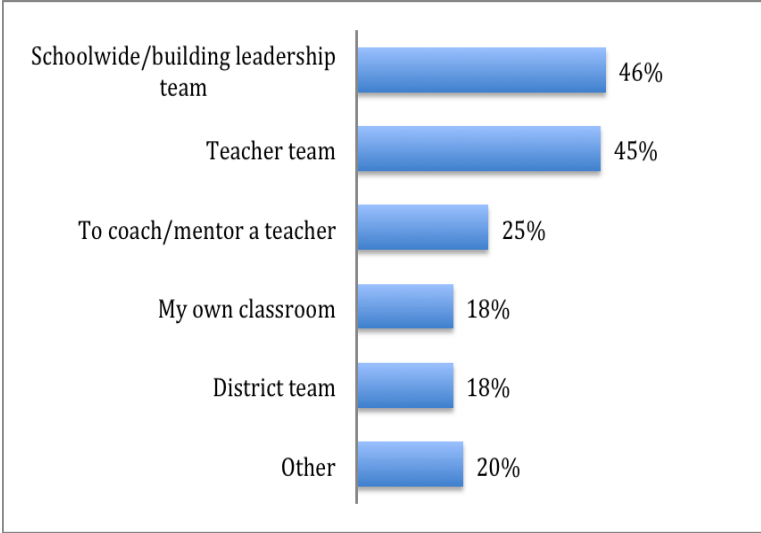
OVERALL LEVEL OF USE

Close to three-quarters of those who responded (72%) have used SaC materials. Usage among Washington state respondents is significantly higher than among respondents in other states: 80% in Washington have used the materials compared to 53% in other states. Eighty percent of the “repeat respondents” (i.e., the 49 individuals who responded to both surveys) had used materials. These results suggest those Washington-based respondents and those who responded both times might represent SaC’s most positive users.

USE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MODULES

Sixty-one percent of survey respondents had used the Leadership Development modules. The average user of the modules has used two or three modules. The three most widely used modules are *Common Formative Assessments*, *Leadership Teams* and *Quality Instruction*, and *Using Data Effectively*. The modules are being used most often in the context of school-wide/building leadership teams, teacher teams, and coaching/mentoring.

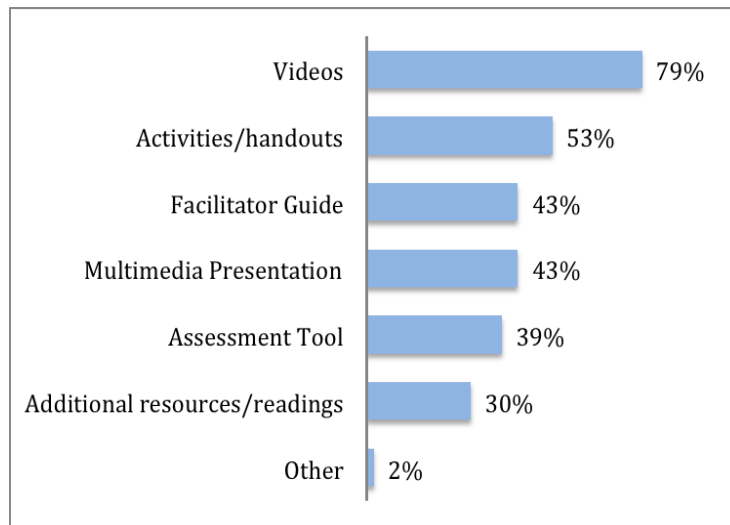
Figure 1. Multiple team and individual contexts for Leadership Development module usage



School-based users are about equally likely to use modules in the context of teacher teams (67%) as in school-wide/building leadership teams (60%). District-based educators are more likely to have used modules in the context of a district team (41%), though 35% say they have used them in building teams. Half of the respondents who work in organizations other than schools and districts said they have used modules in contexts other than those listed on the survey including: teacher education courses, workshops and conference presentations, informal meetings with colleagues, or simply individual professional growth/background for the user. These results strongly affirm that a wide range of users find the LD materials to be relevant and valuable in a broad array of professional development settings.

Typically, *SaC* members (79%) have used selected materials/parts of the modules rather than the full modules; the average survey respondent has used about three different parts of the modules.

Figure 2. Specific parts of the Leadership Development modules used by respondents



These results are consistent with other studies showing that LD Modules allow for flexible use and that all components are of value to the field. Notably, the least used component—additional resources—is still used by at least 30% of all users. This suggests that all module materials have utility and value; none are superfluous.

The majority of module users (74%) have used the materials more than once. This high level of repeated use implies that, for a good majority of users, the LD materials are both feasible to implement and valuable.

USE OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

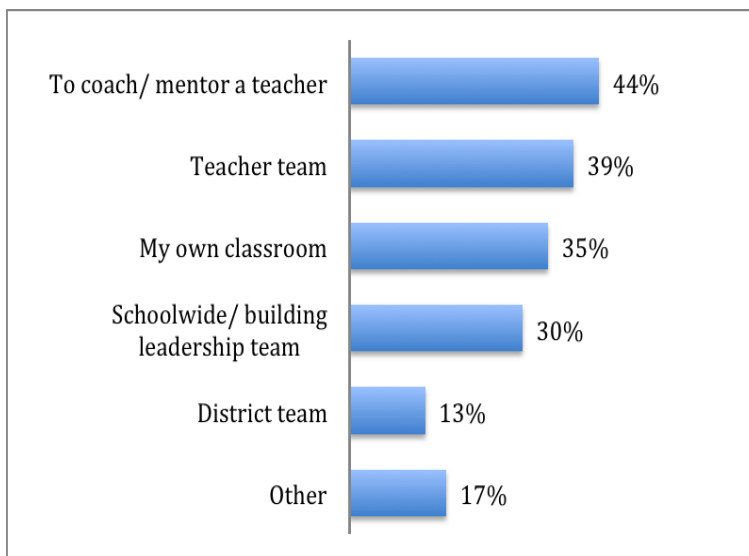
Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the users of *SaC* materials have used Teacher Development strategies. Usage at the district level is higher than at the school level: 91% of district-based educators have used them, compared to 77% of school-based educators and 71% of other educators. These results suggest that the TD materials—especially the videos, which are used by almost everyone—are providing district leaders with a resource for supporting instructional

improvement that may not be readily available to them: demonstrations of effective teaching that can be returned to time and again.

Of those who have used TD Strategies, 43% have used one or two strategies, 37% have used three or four, and 19% have used 5 or more. Interestingly, “other” educators have used significantly more TD strategies than school- and district-based educators. This relatively high level of usage by others implies that TD strategies are valued as components of professional development programs. Among the repeat survey respondents, more say they have used Teacher Development strategies in May 2011 than in October 2010, and they say they have used more of them. This strongly implies sustained interest and use over the year.

Among all survey respondents, Teacher Development strategies were used, on average, for one or two purposes: most often to coach/mentor a teacher, as part of a teacher team, in their own classroom, and/or in the context of a school-wide/building leadership team. These results affirm the flexibility and utility of the materials.

Figure 3. Context of Teacher Development strategies usage

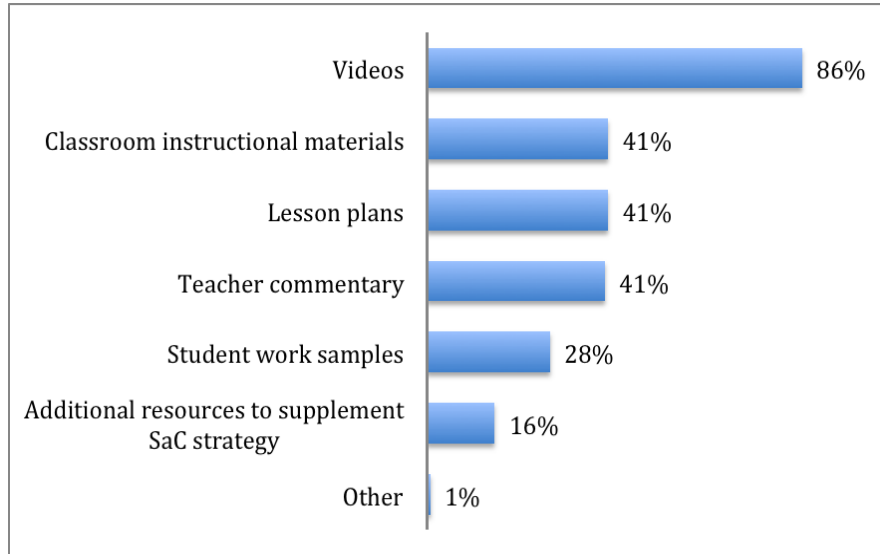


When use of the Teacher Development materials was broken down by user groups, school-based educators, district-based educators, and other educators use Teacher Development Strategies in different contexts. School-based educators are most often using them in their classrooms (61%) and as part of a teacher team (48%). District-based educators have used them most often to coach/mentor teachers (55%), and about a third have used them as part of work with various kinds of teams. Other educators have used them most often to mentor/coach teachers (60%) and as part of teacher teams (43%) or other work not included in the response options (also 43%). Other uses included *SaC* awareness workshops, training mentors, teacher preparation, and new teacher support.

Far and away the most frequently used component of the Teacher Development strategies was the videos, used by 86% of those who used the strategies. Of the other components, 41% used each of classroom instructional materials, lesson plans, and teacher commentary; 28% used student work samples; and 16% used additional resources to supplement *SaC* strategies. Just as with the LD

modules, these results suggest that while the videos remain the most-used component, substantial proportions of users use other components, and no component seems superfluous.

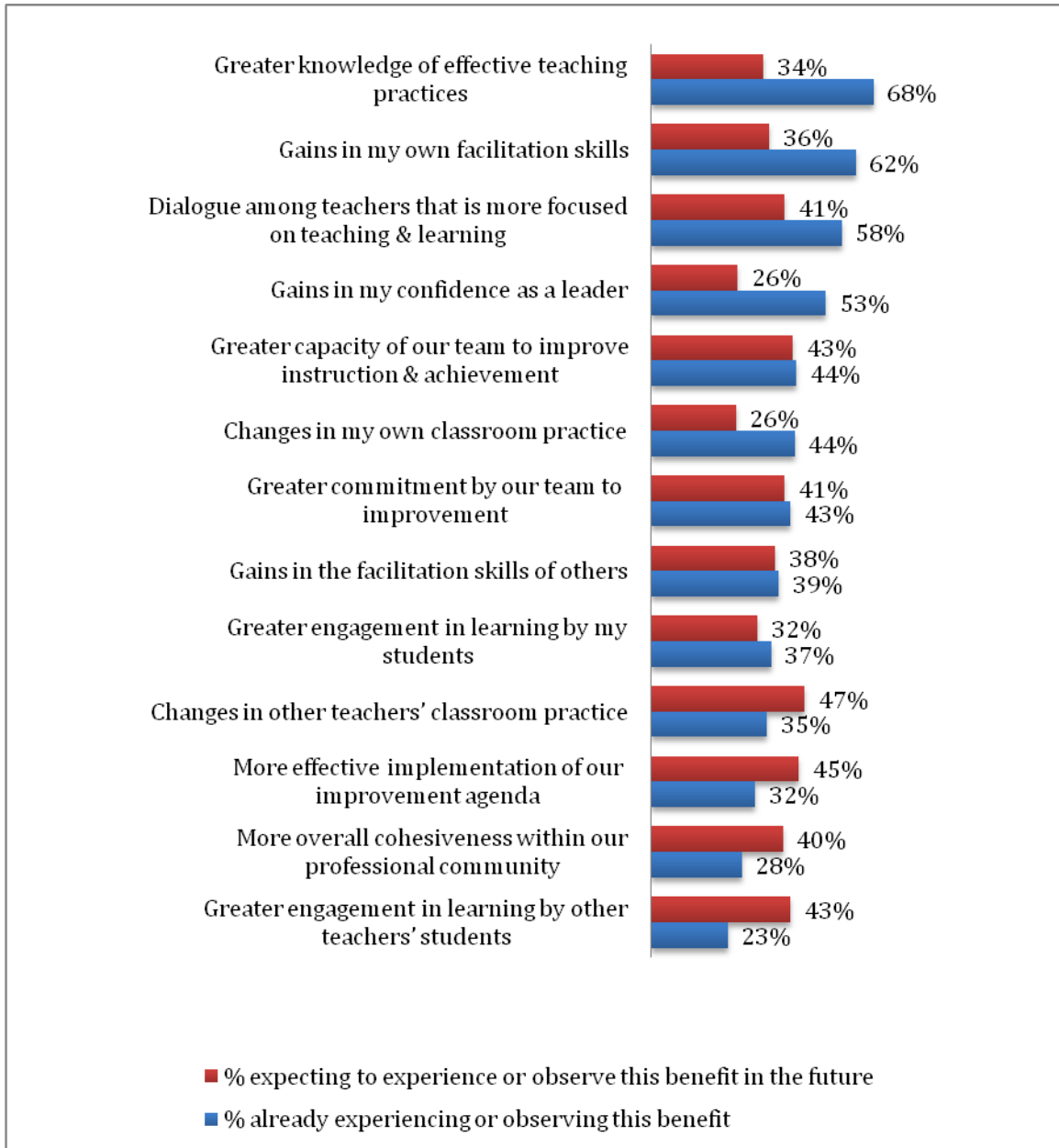
Figure 4. Specific parts of Teacher Development strategies used by respondents



POSITIVE BENEFITS

SaC users have begun to experience or observe a number of benefits from use of the materials, with the largest proportion citing the following benefits to date: greater knowledge of effective teaching (68%), gains in their own facilitation skills (62%), dialogue among teachers that is more focused on teaching and learning (58%), and gains in their own confidence as a leader (53%). The benefits most frequently experienced are those that are vitally important contributors to capacity building for instructional improvement: knowledge of effective instruction, leadership skill and confidence, and strengthening of professional learning community.

Figure 5. Percent of *SaC* users who have experienced or observed benefits and/or expect to in the future



Educators who responded to both the October 2010 and May 2011 surveys have continued to benefit in new ways over the year. Educators have seen increased benefits: in others teachers' classrooms (observed by 41% by May, up from 15% in October, more than doubled); in their team's capacity to improve instruction and achievement (observed by 51% in May, up from 26% in October); and in their own knowledge of effective teaching practices (experienced by 77%, up from 54%). These results strongly suggest that continued use generates continued and additional benefits.

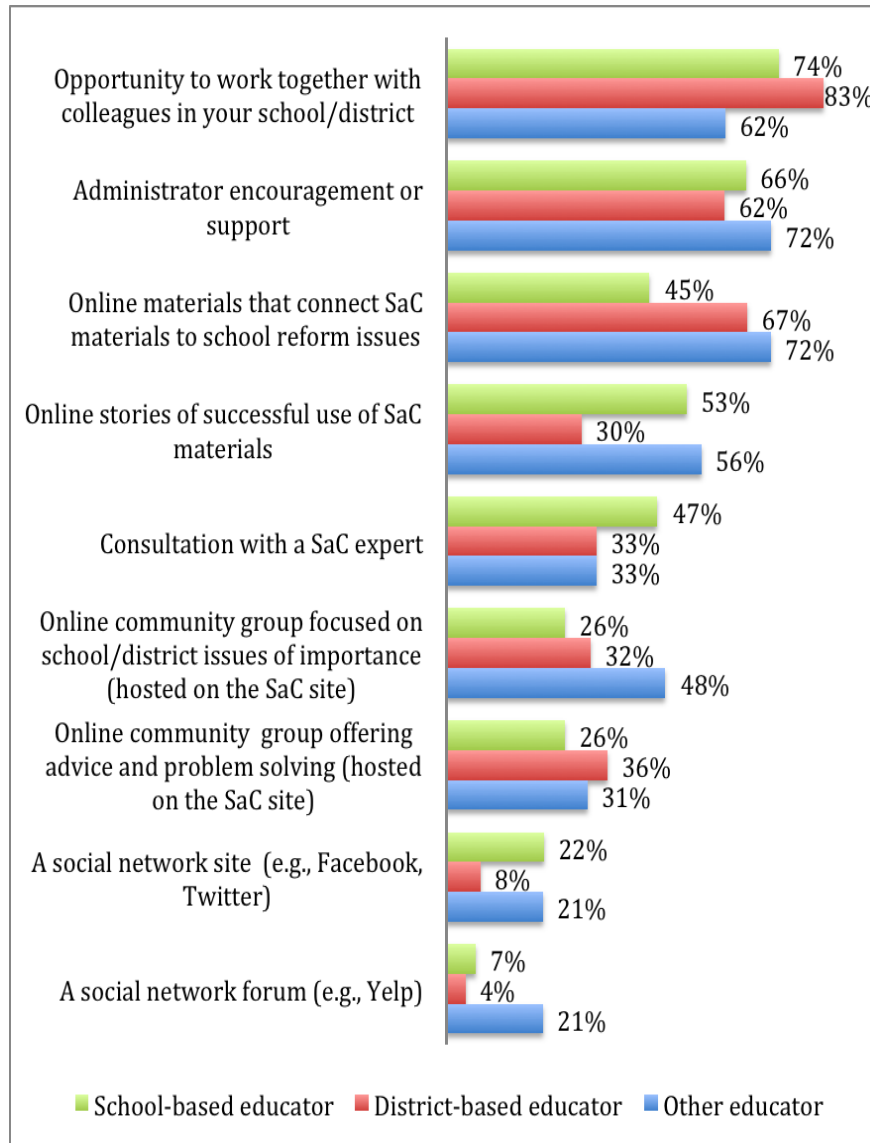
ENTHUSIASM

Eighty-nine percent of all survey respondents plan to continue to use *SaC* and most are recommending the materials to several other people who occupy a variety of positions in education. The majority of respondents who use *SaC*—in different educational contexts, in Washington and elsewhere—have helped others use the materials. This suggests that active users can facilitate the expansion and the reach of *SaC*.

SUPPORTS FOR EFFECTIVE USE

A new item added to the May survey asked respondents to identify what kinds of supports would enable them to make more effective use of *SaC*. Two-thirds or more of all respondents believe that collegial collaboration or administrator support would strengthen use of *SaC*. School-based educators are more enthusiastic than their colleagues about the potential usefulness of an opportunity to consult with a *SaC* expert. They and educators who work elsewhere than at the district level are more positive about the potential usefulness of success stories; district-level educators are less certain of their value. Educators who work beyond the school level are more interested than school-based educators in online materials that tie *SaC* materials to school reform issues. Those not school- or district-based are most interested in a hosted online group.

Figure 6. Supports that would enable more effective use of *SaC* materials



Sixty-nine survey respondents (28% of the total) have not yet used the *SaC* materials. In responding to why they have not used them, they most often report that they haven't familiarized themselves with the materials yet (65% cite this reason). Lack of time is the other most-cited barrier to use, though this barrier affects a minority of non-users: 29% say there isn't time to learn about the materials, and 20% say there is not adequate time to use or apply them. Fifty-five percent of non-users intended to use the materials later in the future, including 58% of the school-based educators, 59% of district-based educators, and 47% of other educators.

Implications for Further Development

Together with lessons learned from other studies, these results suggest directions for further development of *SaC* for the purposes of promoting initial and sustained use, spread, and community-building around *SaC*. The directions include: tapping the energy and know-how of

enthusiastic users and facilitating their professional person-to-person networking; and developing online resources that exemplify and promote familiarity with and usage of *SaC*. The results also imply avenues for further research, primarily focusing on the nature of use and contexts of use among those other than teachers. In particular, future research could examine what patterns of usage—including combinations of LD modules and TD strategies—are optimal for the purposes that administrators, coaches, professional development leaders/consultants, and teacher education professors bring to their usage of *SaC*.