



PLACE at Five Years

**A Report on the Growth of the
New Hampshire Learning Initiative's Performance
Learning and Assessment Consortium for Educators**

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Purpose of This Report

This report documents how NHLI’s PLACE project has grown stronger over the last five years. It centers PLACE as a living professional learning network that strengthens competency-based learning, performance assessment, teacher leadership, instructional practice, student agency, and local district capacity. PLACE remains an essential foundation, but the focus of this report is what PLACE has become and what it is making possible for New Hampshire educators and students today.

*“PLACE has really moved the
needle for my organization to
be more competency based.”*
— Educator Survey Response



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The Growth of a Network

Executive Summary

Over the last five years, PLACE has grown from a continuation of New Hampshire’s performance assessment legacy into a stronger, more practical, and more classroom-centered professional learning network. Led by NHLI, the Performance Learning and Assessment Consortium for Educators now supports educators in designing meaningful performance assessments, aligning evidence to competencies, calibrating expectations for proficiency, strengthening student agency, and spreading performance learning practices within local districts.

The growth of PLACE matters because competency-based learning requires more than written competencies or isolated assessment tasks. It requires a system of practice. Educators need opportunities to define meaningful outcomes, design authentic demonstrations of learning, use rubrics and feedback effectively, examine student work with colleagues, calibrate evidence of proficiency, design learning for inquiry, reasoning, and sense-making, and help students understand and monitor their own progress. PLACE provides the structure, facilitation, tools, and professional community for that work.

The 2025-2026 PLACE survey provides evidence that the network is influencing teacher learning and classroom practice. Across 71 survey responses, educators reported growth in assessment design, instructional practice, collaboration, student ownership, and professional confidence. Thirty-four respondents reported significant changes in practice, and 26 reported moderate changes. The most frequently reported assessment shifts were increased use of performance assessments, stronger alignment to competencies or learning targets, and greater use of formative assessment strategies.

A central reason PLACE has grown stronger over the past five years is its investment in teacher leadership. PLACE is not built around one-time professional development or externally designed tools; it is built around educators who design together, examine student work, calibrate expectations, and bring practices back to their local teams. Over the past five years, 95 percent of PLACE teacher design leads and 95 percent of PLACE learning community leads have remained in their districts and in the profession. In addition, 90 percent of these teacher leaders were original teacher leaders in NH PACE between 2014 and 2020. This continuity has allowed PLACE to sustain the professional expertise developed through PACE while adapting it to a more district-centered, teacher-led model of performance learning.

This report presents PLACE as the central story. PACE showed that New Hampshire educators could build rigorous, competency-aligned

“The more that I participate in PLACE, the more confident and competent I feel with performance learning and assessment. I truly hope that it continues beyond this year, because it is incredibly valuable for educator growth and student learning.”

— Educator Survey Response

performance assessment systems as an alternative accountability system. PLACE has carried that knowledge forward and expanded it into a five-year model for teacher-led performance learning, local implementation, and sustainable professional growth.

The federal evaluation of the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority (IADA) confirmed that NH PACE was not simply a promising idea; among the first five IADA systems studied, New Hampshire was the only system that clearly began the demonstration period ready to administer an operational assessment within a year. It also helps explain why PLACE was the right next phase: PACE proved the model was viable, while PLACE created a more sustainable, district-centered way to preserve the strongest parts of that work through teacher leadership, performance learning, calibration, and local capacity-building.

PLACE has also reinforced the importance of a balanced assessment system. Statewide assessments can provide broad system-level information, but they cannot fully capture the depth, transfer, and day-to-day evidence of learning that competency-based education requires. Through PLACE, educators apply formative assessment practices as they design, calibrate, and refine classroom-based performance assessments that provide timely, meaningful, and instructionally useful evidence of what students know and can do. This work underscores that teacher-designed classroom assessments are not separate from a strong assessment system; they are an essential part of the balance.



PLACE at Five Years: A Stronger Network for Performance Learning

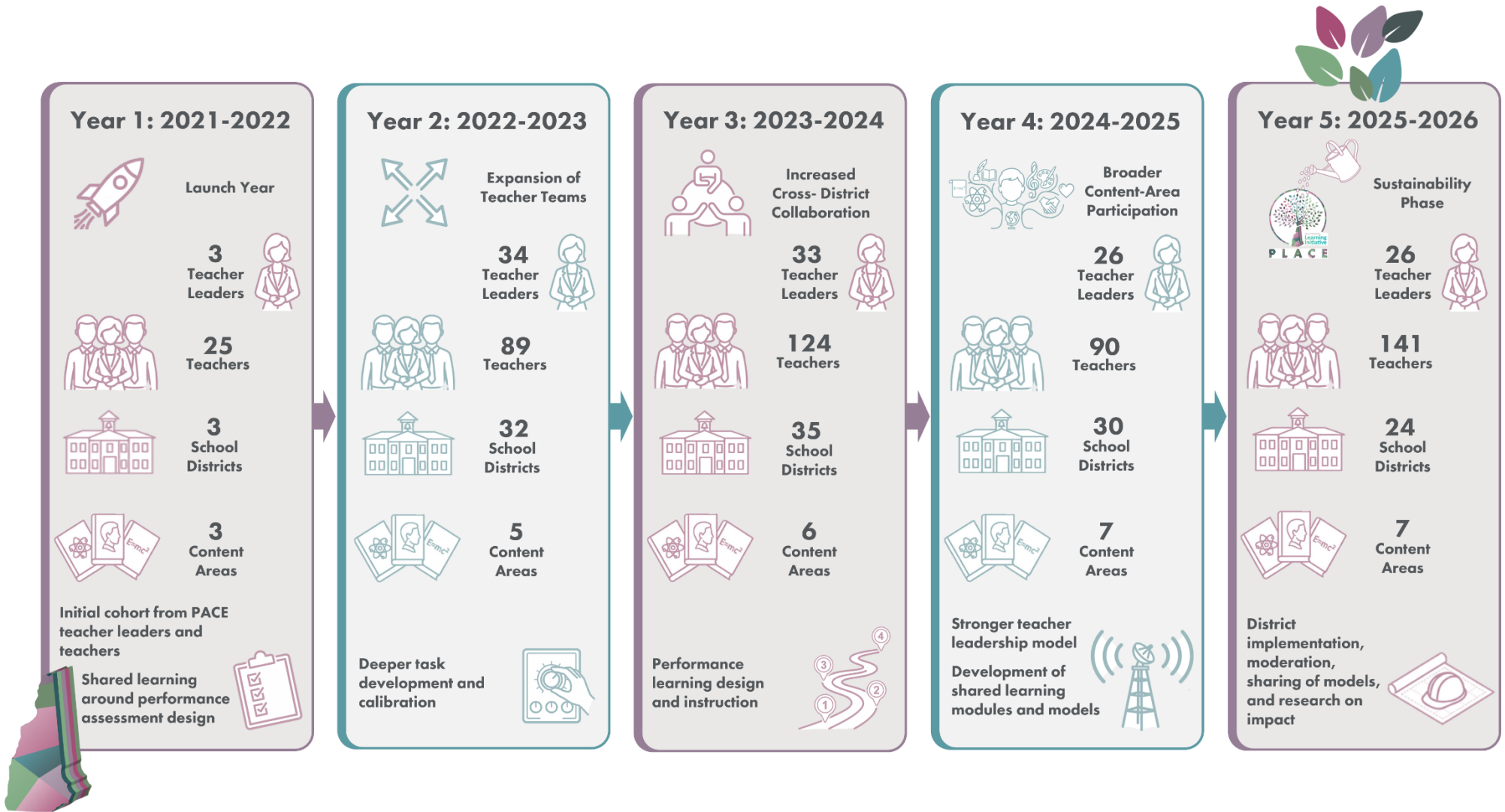
PLACE has matured over five years into a statewide network that supports both the design of high-quality performance assessments and the instructional shifts needed for students to succeed through them. The project began with a foundation in PACE teacher leadership and performance assessment design. It has grown into a broader performance learning network focused on competency-based evidence, calibration, student agency, instructional design, and local district spread.

This growth is visible in the way participating educators describe the work. Teachers are not only building tasks; they are rethinking what counts as evidence, how students understand quality, how feedback supports revision, and how performance assessments can generate evidence of both academic competencies and Portrait of a Graduate outcomes.

Growth Across the Five-Year Project Period

The five-year participation plan documents the reach and growth of the PLACE network across teacher leaders, participating teachers, districts, and content areas. The chart also names the focus of work in each phase, showing how the project has expanded from a launch cohort into a broader teacher-led network focused on performance learning, calibration, instructional shifts, student agency, and sustainability.

This growth matters because PLACE is designed to build durable capacity. As content teams expand, teachers develop expertise in performance learning and assessment and increasingly serve as coaches, facilitators, and models for colleagues in their own districts. The project has become stronger because each phase has deepened the professional learning network and increased the capacity of teachers to lead the work in their own districts.



Content areas represented over the five-year period include ELA, mathematics, science, social studies, BEST, interdisciplinary teams, world language, special education, and English Language Learners (ELL).



The Infrastructure of Change

Teacher leadership is the infrastructure that allows PLACE to grow and sustain its impact over time. PLACE is not built around one-time professional development, external tools, or mandates. It is built around educators designing together, learning from student work, calibrating expectations, and bringing new practices back to local teams. Teachers serve as task designers, reviewers, facilitators, coaches, and local leaders who help make performance learning real in classrooms.

A defining strength of PLACE has been its investment in teacher leadership as a long-term capacity-building strategy. Over the past five years, 95 percent of PLACE teacher design leads and 95 percent of PLACE learning community leads have remained in their districts and in the profession. This is a significant outcome at a time when many schools and districts are facing educator turnover. PLACE has helped sustain a stable and experienced group of teacher leaders who continue to contribute both to their local districts and to the statewide performance learning network.

95% of PLACE teacher leaders were original teacher leaders in the NH PACE project between 2014 and 2020.

This continuity is especially important because PLACE did not begin from scratch. Ninety percent of PLACE teacher leaders were original teacher leaders in the NH PACE project between 2014 and 2020. These educators carried forward deep experience in performance assessment design, calibration, student work analysis, and competency-based learning. Their continued participation helped preserve the professional knowledge developed through PACE while adapting it to the new context of PLACE.

The teacher leadership model strengthens both individual practice and system capacity. Teachers learn by doing the real work of competency-based assessment: clarifying outcomes, designing tasks, creating and revising rubrics, gathering feedback from students, examining student work, calibrating expectations, and revising instruction. Over time, this creates a network of educators who can support performance learning beyond the original PLACE sessions.

“I not only feel like I am able to apply my learning to develop high quality performance assessments, but I feel like I can teach my PLC as well. PLACE has really moved the needle for my organization to be more competency based.

— Educator Survey Response

“It is always a gift to collaborate with colleagues across the state, as my perspective is broadened, I pick up new tools, and I develop strong contacts for future correspondence and collaboration.”

— Educator Survey Response

Teacher leaders bring credibility because they lead, from classroom experience. They understand the challenges of designing meaningful assessments, supporting students through complex tasks, managing feedback and revision, and aligning evidence to competencies. They also help translate the larger vision of performance learning into practical classroom routines, rubrics, tasks, and instructional shifts. In this way, they support coherence across districts without requiring uniformity. They help create shared expectations for quality while allowing tasks and learning experiences to reflect local context.

The PLACE teacher leadership model also strengthens sustainability. Design leads and learning community leads do more than participate in professional learning; they help shape it. They support task development, facilitate collaboration, guide calibration, respond to teacher needs, and help spread the work in their own districts. As these leaders remain in the profession and continue serving their districts, they become an enduring source of local capacity.

*Teacher leadership is not a support structure for the project; it is
the infrastructure that makes the project possible.*

The retention of PLACE teacher leaders also suggests that this work contributes to professional purpose. Teachers remain engaged when professional learning is meaningful, connected to their students, and respectful of their expertise. PLACE provides opportunities for educators to collaborate across districts, deepen their craft, exercise professional judgment, and lead work, that matters. In this way, PLACE has not only strengthened assessment practice; it has also created a leadership pathway that helps experienced educators stay connected, challenged, and professionally renewed.

This is one of the clearest lessons from the five-year growth of PLACE: teacher leadership is not a support structure for the project; it is the infrastructure that makes the project possible. The fact that so many design leads and learning community leads have remained in their districts and in the profession, and that most began as original PACE teacher leaders, shows that PLACE has successfully sustained and advanced a powerful professional learning legacy in New Hampshire.

“Before PLACE, I was already using elements of workshop and rubric-based assessment, but PLACE helped me name and refine what I was doing. I now feel more precise in how I design competencies, align them to instruction, and assess student work in a way that prioritizes growth over completion.”

— Educator Survey Response

Competency-Based Learning Made Visible

PLACE has grown stronger by helping educators make competency-based learning visible in classroom practice. Competencies define the larger outcomes students are working toward. Performance assessments generate evidence of what students know and can do. Rubrics make expectations clear. Calibration builds shared understanding of proficiency. Student reflection helps learners understand their progress and next steps.

This shift is one of the strongest findings from the survey. Teachers describe moving away from task completion and toward evidence of transferable learning. They are revising rubrics, aligning assessments to competencies, and focusing more intentionally on the skills students are expected to demonstrate. Teachers report the shift to deeper learning and rigorous performance assessments results in increased student engagement.

“I have been able to shift my classroom assessments from task-based to skill-based, which has catalyzed a systemic conversation regarding performance indicators and the use of competency-based rubrics.”

— Educator Survey Response

What Has Grown Stronger

Evidence of Competency

Teachers are focusing more on transferable skills, proficiency, and quality evidence.

Rubric Clarity

Rubrics are becoming more measurable, student-facing, and connected to competencies.

Calibration

Teachers are building common expectations by examining student work together.

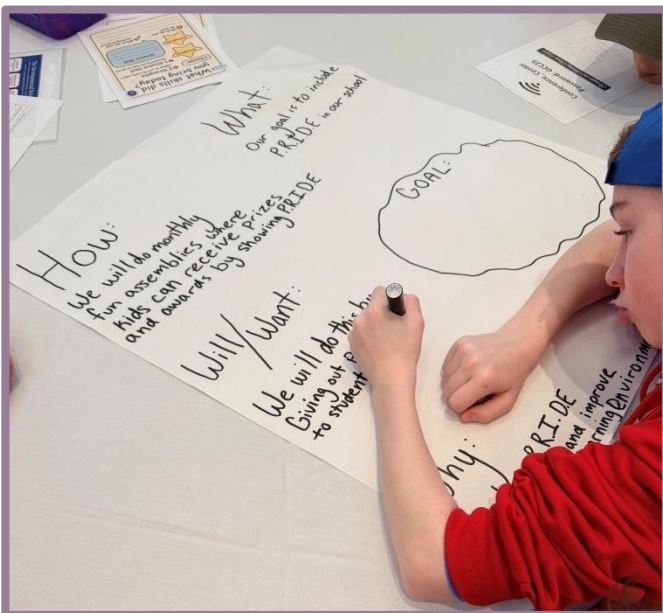
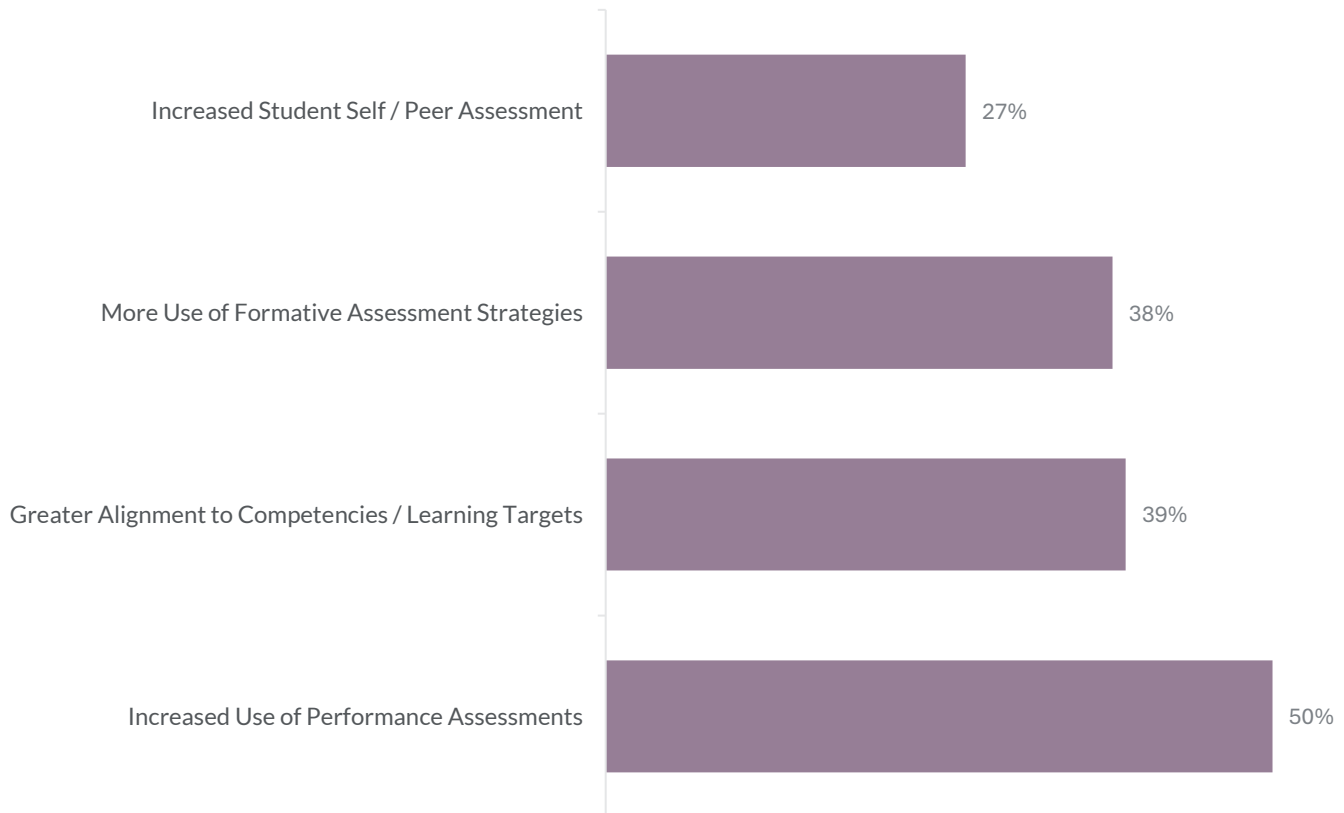
Formative Assessment

Feedback, revision, and student reflection are becoming more central to the learning process.

Local Spread

PLACE practices are beginning to influence PLCs, departments, and district conversations.

How Assessment Practices Evolved



How Assessment Practices Evolved

PLACE helped teachers move from **measuring completion** to **gathering evidence of competency**. Teachers reported increased use of performance assessments, stronger alignment to competencies and learning targets, and greater use of formative assessment. Across 71 responses, **50 teachers reported increased use of performance assessments**, **39 reported stronger competency alignment**, and **38 reported more formative assessment strategies**.

Key takeaway: Assessment became more connected to instruction, feedback, revision, and evidence of proficiency.

From Performance Assessment to Performance Learning

PLACE has become stronger because it has expanded the focus from performance assessment design to performance learning. A high-quality performance task is important, but the task alone is not enough. Students need learning experiences that help them inquire, reason, collaborate, practice, receive feedback, revise, reflect, and transfer learning to new situations.

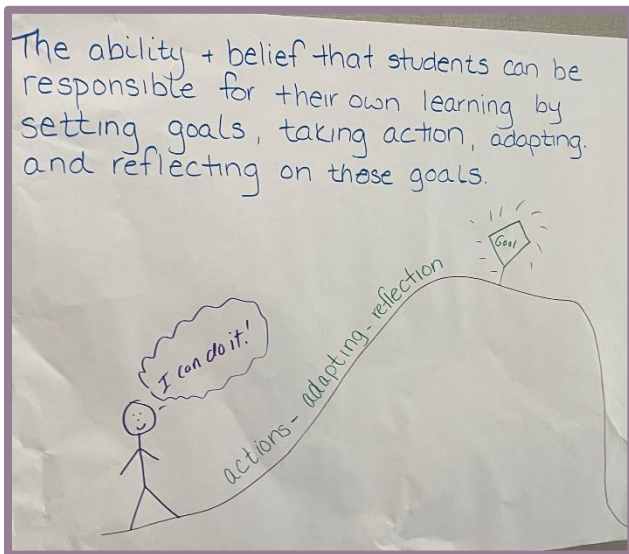
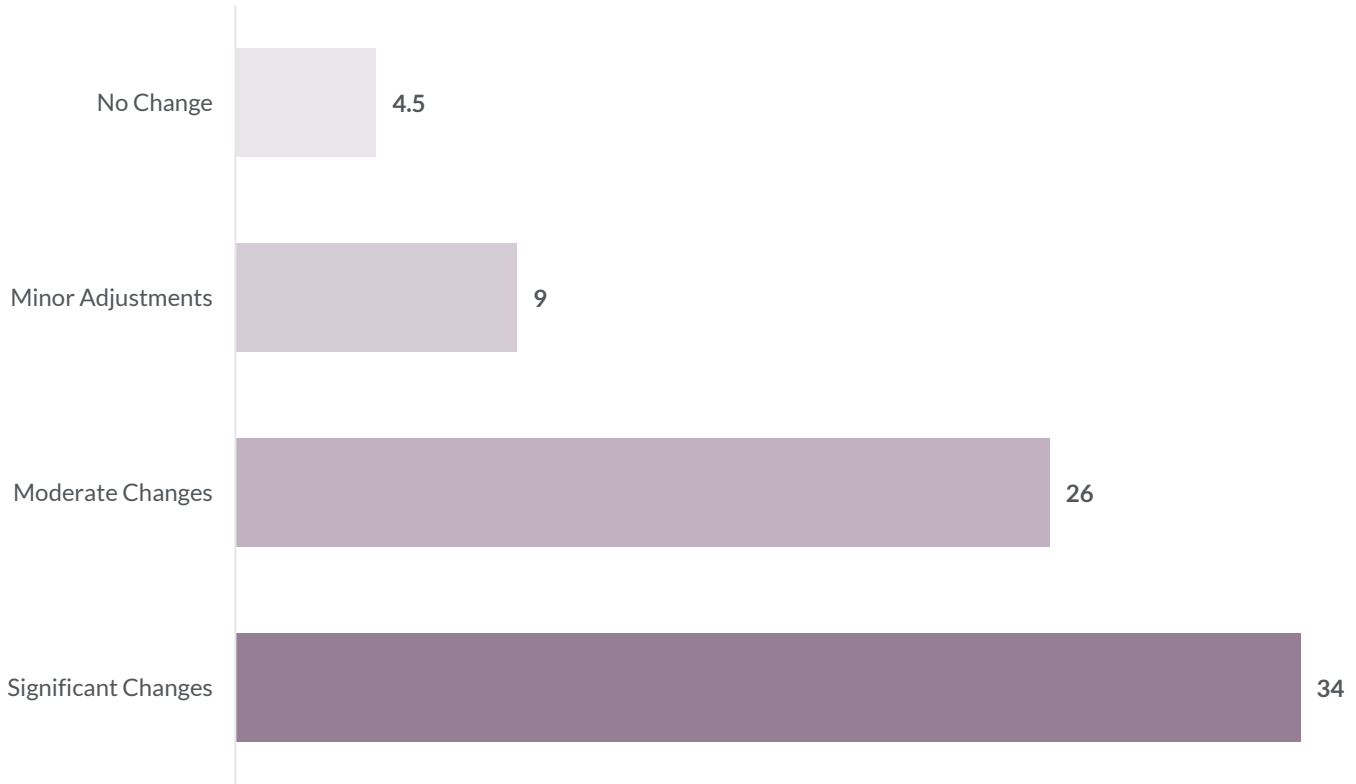
Survey responses show that PLACE is influencing the instructional core. Teachers describe more student-centered routines, more collaboration, more sensemaking, more use of rubrics and reflection, and more opportunities for students to carry the thinking. In science, teachers describe shifts toward phenomena, modeling, and NGSS-aligned sensemaking. In mathematics, teachers describe greater use of discourse, group problem solving, vertical workspaces, and discovery-oriented routines. In ELA and interdisciplinary contexts, teachers describe clearer transfer of skills through writing, evidence, argument, and reflection.

“I spent many years teaching in Florida and the major emphasis on state testing pushed my teaching practices to be more test-focused rather than learning-focused. Participating in PLACE has helped me to shift my thinking, teaching, and evaluative practices to better support my students learning science rather than just learning how to pass a test.”
— Educator Survey Response



“I am beginning to shift my focus from traditional, procedural teaching to student-centered, collaborative practices.”
— Educator Survey Response

Reported Instructional Practice Change



Reported Instructional Practice Change

PLACE influenced day-to-day instruction, not just assessment design. Across 71 responses, **34 teachers reported significant changes** in instructional practice, and **26 reported moderate changes**. Teachers described shifting toward more student-centered, collaborative, inquiry-based, and competency-based learning.

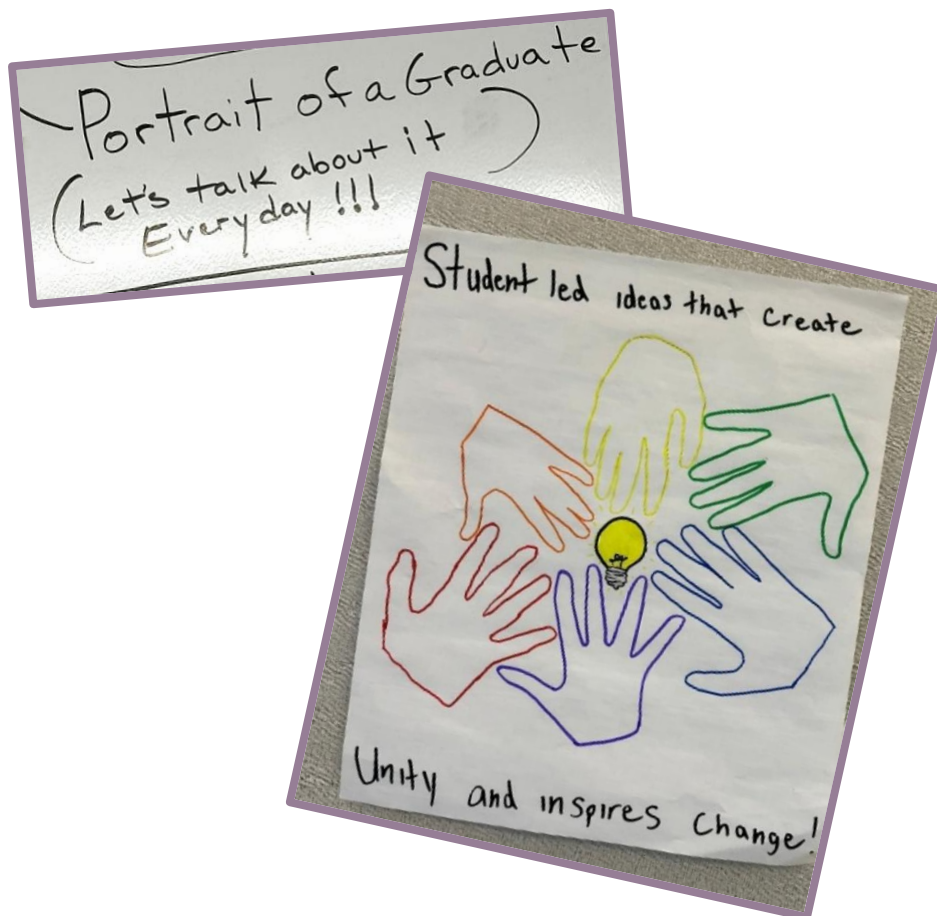
Key takeaway: Teachers are not simply adding performance tasks; they are redesigning the learning experiences that prepare students to demonstrate competency.

Student Agency and Portrait of a Graduate Evidence

PLACE has grown stronger by making student-agency and broader readiness outcomes more explicit. Performance learning gives students opportunities to understand expectations, use rubrics, self-assess, revise, present evidence, and explain their growth. These practices move student agency from an aspiration to a set of classroom routines.

PLACE also gives districts a practical way to make Portrait of a Graduate outcomes visible. Communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, self-direction, and civic responsibility are competency-based by nature. They require evidence. Through performance learning, students can demonstrate academic content and transferable skills in the same learning experience.

“My students have demonstrated a far greater ability to articulate the transfer of skills, such as argumentative writing skills: gathering evidence and articulating rebuttal.”
— Educator Survey Response



“I've seen my students take more ownership of their proficiency by self-reflecting based on rubrics.”
— Educator Survey Response



The Evidence of Impact

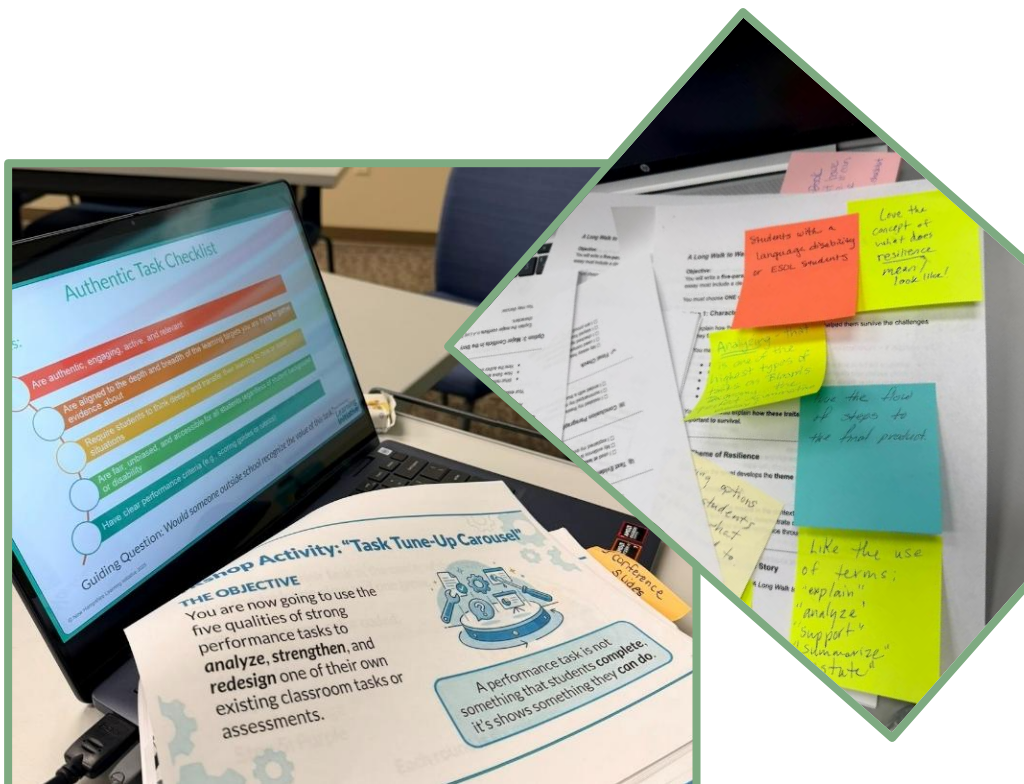
Survey Evidence from 2025-2026 PLACE Participants

The 2025-2026 PLACE survey provides a participant-centered evidence base for the five-year report. Across 71 responses, participants represented multiple content areas and years of experience in PLACE. The data show that educators value collaboration, practical design time, resources and tools, new instructional strategies, and opportunities to try strategies in classrooms and return to the network for reflection and refinement.

The survey shows that PLACE is functioning as both a professional learning network and a design space. The strongest themes include increased teacher confidence, stronger competency alignment, student-facing clarity, cross-district collaboration, and early evidence of local spread into PLCs and district systems.

“It has significantly improved my competence. Performance learning and assessment is forever evolving so it is essential to collaborate and learn from colleagues around the state.”

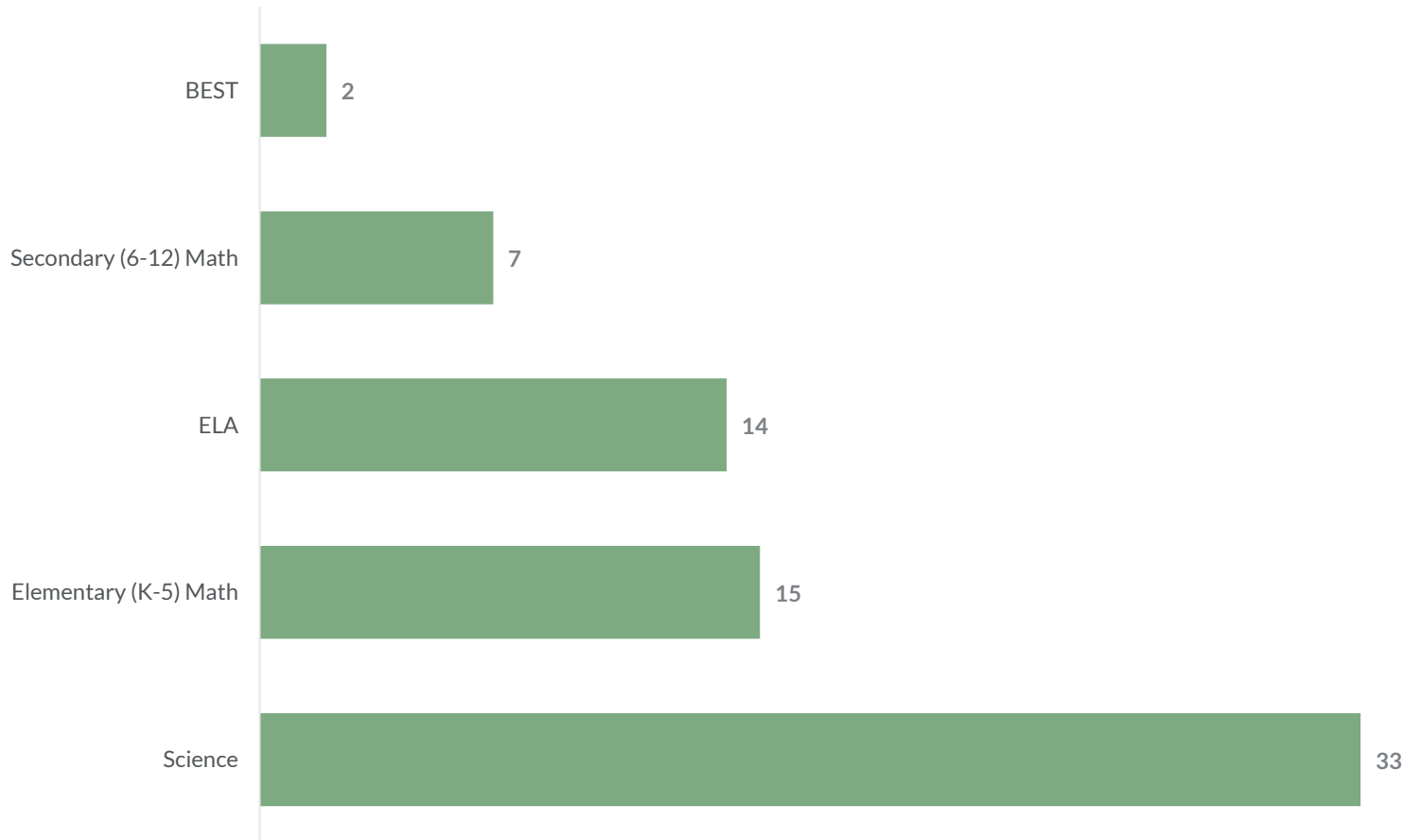
— Educator Survey Response



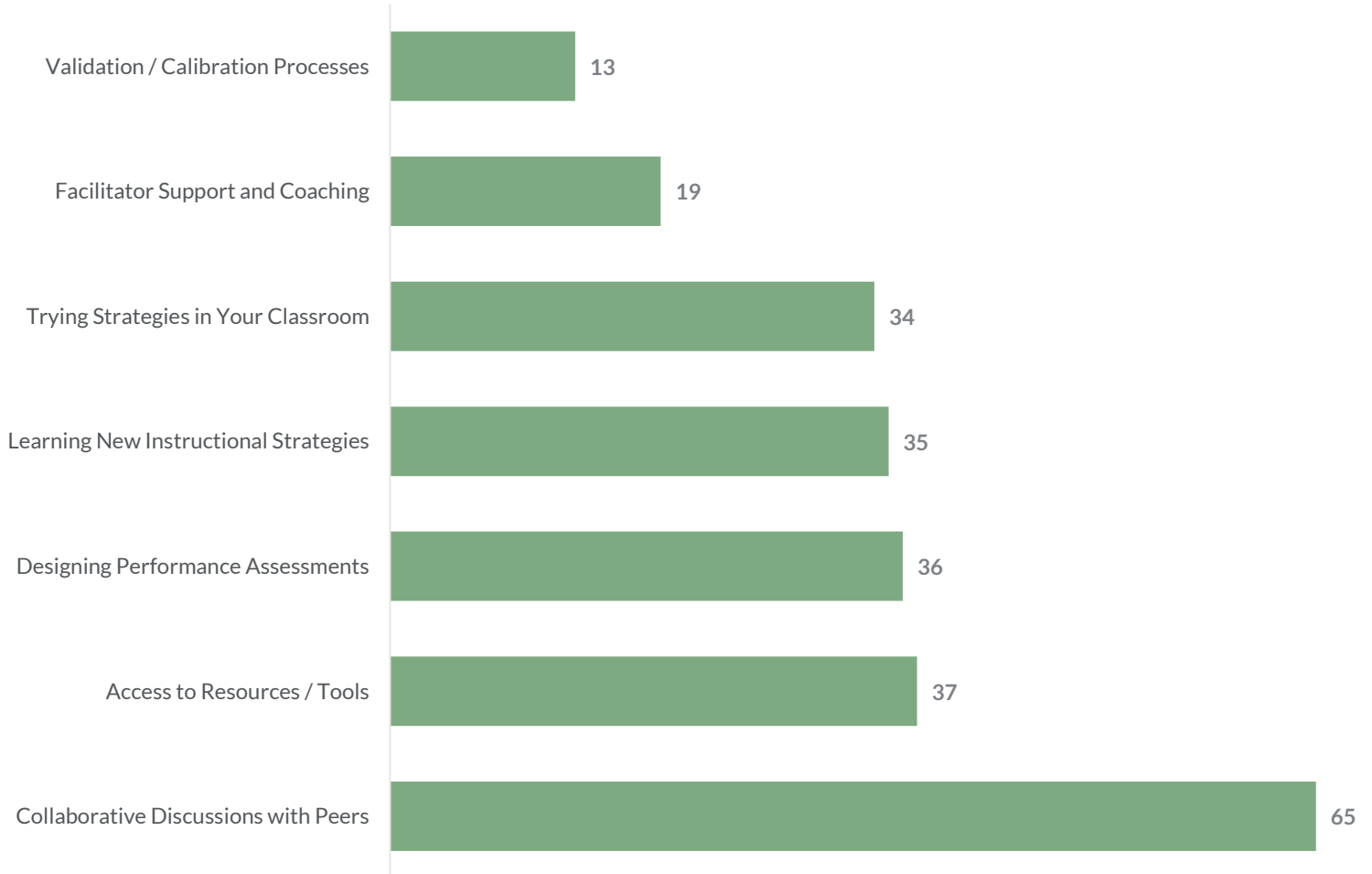
“The main benefit of PLACE has been time: time to collaborate with educators at different levels, create unit modifications, and organize resources so reuse of the unit year to year becomes easier.”

— Educator Survey Response

2025-2026 PLACE Content-Area Participation



Most Impactful Aspects of PLACE



Most Impactful Aspects of PLACE

The most impactful aspect of PLACE was collaboration. **64 respondents selected collaborative discussions with peers**, making it the highest-rated component of the project. Teachers also identified designing performance assessments, access to resources and tools, learning new instructional strategies, and trying strategies in classrooms as especially valuable.

Key takeaway: PLACE works because it combines a professional learning community with practical design time and classroom application.

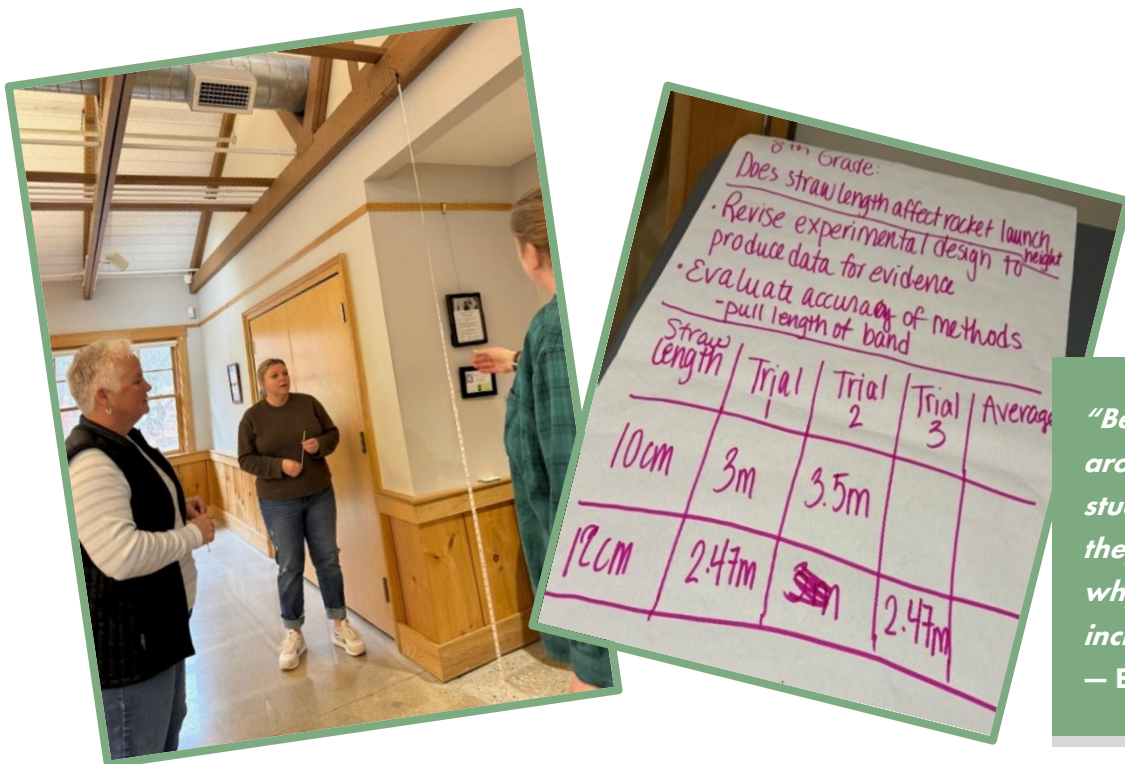
Implementation Conditions and Next-Phase Priorities

The survey also identifies the conditions that are challenges for districts and must be addressed for PLACE to continue growing sustainably. Teachers most often named time constraints, limited collaboration time, curriculum or pacing pressures, student readiness or resistance, and misalignment with grading and reporting systems as implementation barriers. These findings help explain why a five-year model and continued network support are necessary.

Participants also identified clear priorities for the next phase of PLACE. They want continued support with high-quality performance assessment design, competency alignment, calibration and scoring student work, feedback, student agency, student self-assessment, AI and technology, and interdisciplinary learning.

“As a person who has been teaching for decades, it was nice to learn about something new that felt important, accessible, and meaningful. Knowing that even a veteran teacher can make a shift like this has been invigorating.”

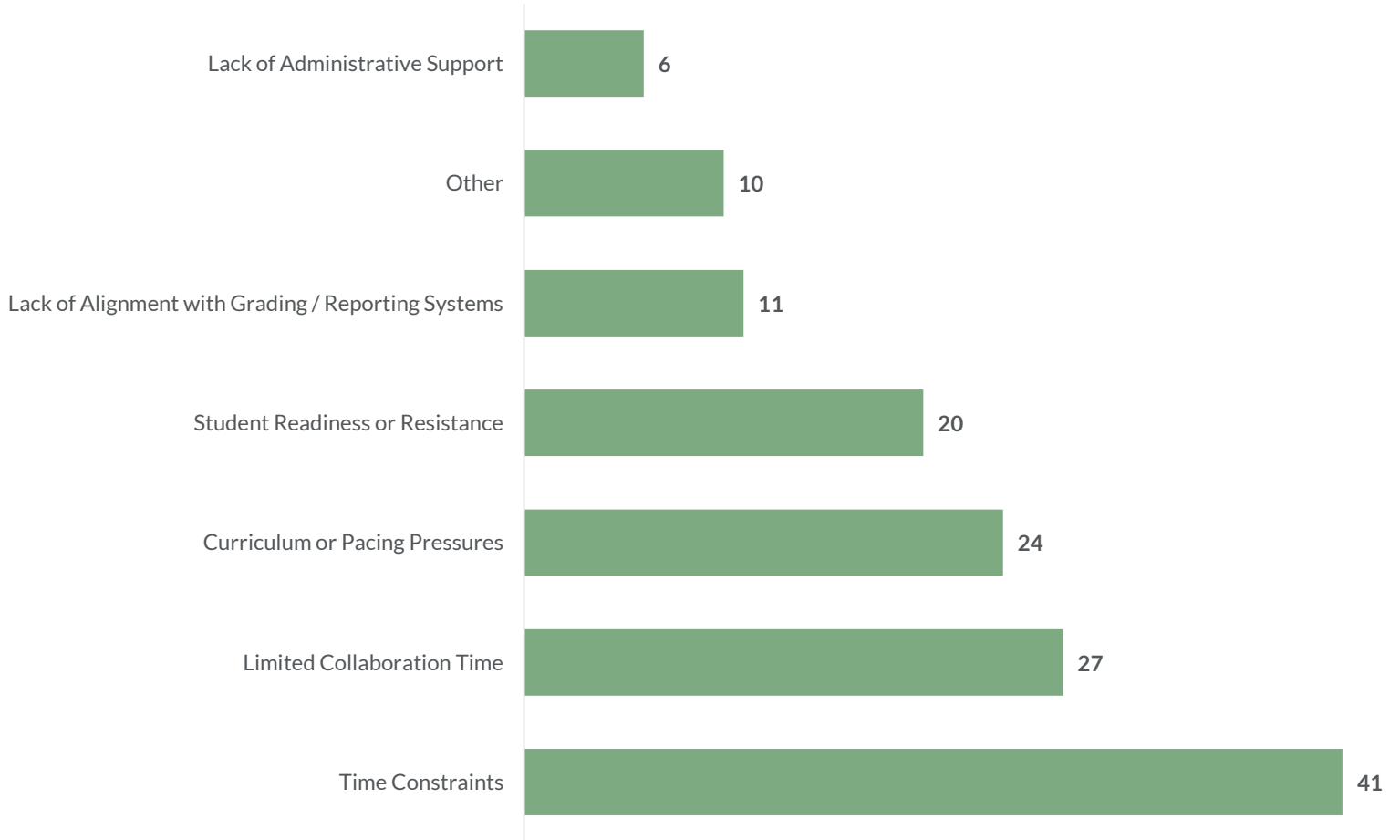
— Educator Survey Response



“Because learning is framed around clear competencies, students understand what they are working toward and why. That clarity has increased engagement.”

— Educator Survey Response

Implementation Conditions at the District Level to Address

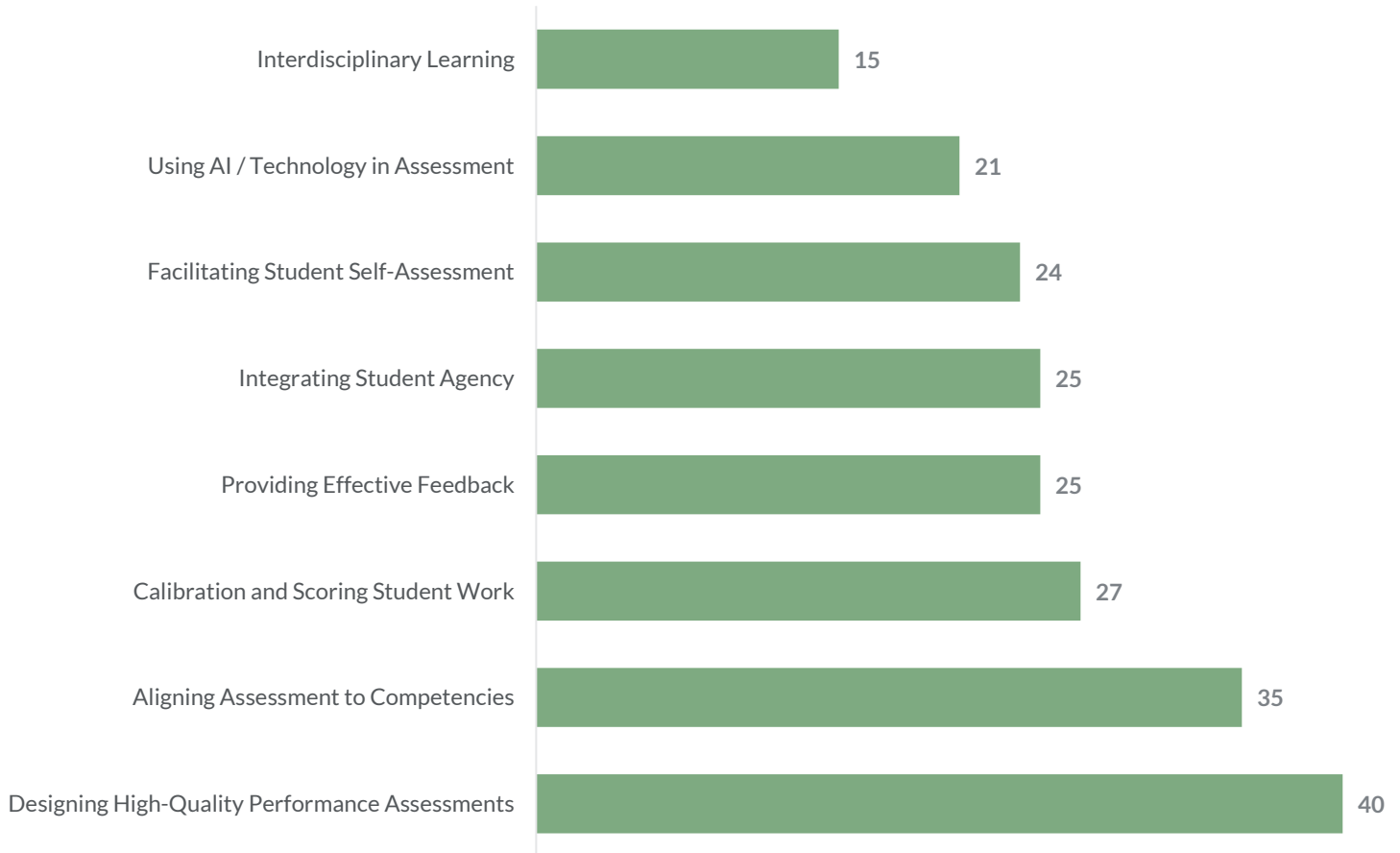


Implementation Conditions at the District Level to Address

Survey responses show that teachers value PLACE but need the right conditions to implement the work well. The most common barriers were **time constraints, limited collaboration time, curriculum or pacing pressures, student readiness or resistance, and misalignment with grading and reporting systems.**

Key takeaway: PLACE will grow strongest where districts protect collaboration time, integrate performance tasks into curriculum design, support student agency, and align grading/reporting to competency-based evidence.

Requested Support for the Next Phase



Requested Support for the Next Phase

Teachers want to deepen and refine the work. The most requested supports included **designing high-quality performance assessments, aligning assessments to competencies, calibrating and scoring student work, providing effective feedback, strengthening student agency, supporting student self-assessment, and using AI or technology in assessment.**

Key takeaway: The next phase should focus on moving from implementation to refinement: stronger task design, clearer competency alignment, deeper calibration, better feedback, and greater student ownership.

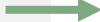
The Federal IADA Evaluation: The Value of PACE and the Need for PLACE

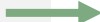
The federal evaluation of the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority provides important context for understanding both the value of NH PACE and the reason the work needed to evolve through PLACE. IADA was created in response to a long-standing challenge: statewide assessments are expected to support accountability, but educators and policymakers also want them to better inform instruction. Traditional end-of-year assessments often arrive too late to guide teaching and provide limited detail about student learning needs. PACE directly addressed this challenge by embedding performance assessments within curriculum and allowing teachers to use assessments when students were engaged in related content.


The evaluation also confirms that New Hampshire was unusually advanced in this work. Among the first five IADA systems studied, NH PACE was the only system that clearly began the demonstration period ready to administer an operational assessment within a year. The report notes that New Hampshire had completed nearly all major planning, preparation, administration, post-administration, and continuous improvement activities before IADA and had administered PACE operationally as early as 2014-15 under a federal waiver. By the end of 2020-21, New Hampshire was also the only IADA system to have administered an operational assessment and engaged in post-administration and continuous improvement activities.


These findings show why PACE was worth doing. It built technical capacity, educator expertise, and a working model of curriculum-embedded performance assessment that was more closely connected to classroom instruction than traditional state testing. At the same time, the evaluation also clarifies why the work needed to move into a new phase. The report identifies common barriers to IADA implementation, including district readiness, time, coordination, professional development, and the difficulty of scaling complex assessment systems statewide within federal timelines. For New Hampshire, expansion was hampered in part because some districts did not feel ready to adopt the new practices or set aside the time required for PACE.


PLACE builds directly from these lessons. Rather than losing the professional learning and performance assessment capacity created through PACE, NHLI carried the work forward in a model better suited to district implementation. PLACE preserves the strongest parts of PACE - teacher leadership, curriculum-embedded performance assessment, calibration, student work analysis, and competency-based evidence - while shifting the focus from state accountability compliance to performance learning, instructional improvement, and sustainable local capacity.

<p style="text-align: center;">FEDERAL FINDING</p> <p>Traditional state assessments often provide information too late to guide instruction and too broadly to pinpoint student needs.</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">PACE SYSTEM PROOF</p> <p>PACE responded to a real national assessment problem by tying evidence more closely to curriculum and classroom timing.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PLACE STRATEGY</p> <p>PLACE keeps the focus on assessment that improves learning, not assessment as a separate event.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">FEDERAL FINDING</p> <p>NH PACE used performance tasks embedded throughout the curriculum, with teachers playing a large role in administration timing and scoring.</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">PACE SYSTEM PROOF</p> <p>Teacher leadership, professional judgment, and curriculum-embedded assessment were central features of PACE.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PLACE STRATEGY</p> <p>PLACE sustains these features through teacher-led design, calibration, and communities of practice.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">FEDERAL FINDING</p> <p>New Hampshire was the only early IADA system clearly ready to administer an operational assessment within a year.</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">PACE SYSTEM PROOF</p> <p>PACE was more developed than other early innovative assessment systems and had already built significant technical and professional capacity.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PLACE STRATEGY</p> <p>PLACE protects and extends that capacity after the state accountability structure ended.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">FEDERAL FINDING</p> <p>New Hampshire was the only system to administer an operational IADA assessment and complete post-administration and continuous improvement activities by 2020-21.</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">PACE SYSTEM PROOF</p> <p>PACE was not theoretical; it had moved into implementation and improvement cycles.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PLACE STRATEGY</p> <p>PLACE carries forward the improvement cycle in a more flexible, district-centered model.</p>
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<p style="text-align: center;">FEDERAL FINDING</p> <p>IADA, scale-up was challenged by district readiness, time, coordination, professional development, and stakeholder expectations.</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">PACE SYSTEM PROOF</p> <p>The accountability structure alone could not ensure sustainable statewide growth.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PLACE STRATEGY</p> <p>PLACE addresses these conditions through professional learning, teacher leadership, district implementation, and local spread.</p>
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Source note: Troppe et al., Evaluating the Federal Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority, Institute of Education Sciences, 2023. Key evidence appears in the report's discussion of IADA goals, NH PACE assessment features, readiness, operational assessment implementation, and implementation challenges.

The bottom line is clear: PACE proved that a competency-based, curriculum-embedded performance assessment system could be built and used for accountability. PLACE made that legacy more sustainable by moving the strongest elements of the model into a teacher-led, district-centered performance learning network.

PLACE and the Importance of a Balanced Assessment System

One of the most important lessons from PLACE is that a strong assessment system cannot rely on a single measure of student learning. Standardized assessments can provide useful system-level information, but they are not designed to capture the full range of what students know and can do in daily classroom learning. This is especially true when schools are working toward competency-based learning, student agency, transfer, and Portrait of a Graduate outcomes.

PLACE has helped strengthen the classroom-based side of a balanced assessment system. Through the project, teachers design performance assessments that are connected to the curriculum, aligned to competencies and priority standards, and embedded in the learning process. These assessments allow students to demonstrate understanding through writing, problem solving, inquiry, presentation, collaboration, reflection, and revision. Because teachers design and use these assessments within instruction, the evidence is timely, actionable, and directly connected to next steps for student learning.

The PLACE work also shows that teacher-designed assessments are strongest when they are supported by shared processes. Teachers work together to clarify learning goals, develop rubrics, review tasks, examine student work, and calibrate expectations for proficiency. This helps ensure that classroom assessments are not isolated or inconsistent, but part of a coherent system of evidence. In this way, PLACE builds both teacher assessment literacy and greater confidence in the quality of classroom-based evidence.

A balanced assessment system includes multiple forms of evidence, each serving a different purpose. State assessments can offer broad snapshots of student performance across schools and districts. District or common assessments can support shared expectations across classrooms or grade levels. Teacher-designed classroom assessments can provide rich, immediate, and meaningful evidence of student growth, competency, and transfer. PLACE has helped make this balance more visible by showing how classroom assessments, when well-

designed and collaboratively calibrated, can play a central role in understanding and improving student learning.

This is one of PLACE's most important contributions to New Hampshire's ongoing assessment conversation. The project does not position teacher-designed assessment as a replacement for every other measure. Instead, it demonstrates that classroom-based performance assessment must be part of a larger, balanced system if schools are serious about competency-based learning. Without this evidence, important student learning can remain invisible. With it, educators and students have a clearer picture of progress, proficiency, and readiness.



The PACE Foundation and the PLACE Future

PACE remains an important foundation for this report because it established New Hampshire’s national leadership in performance assessment, competency-based learning, calibration, and educator-designed evidence systems. PACE proved that educators could design rigorous performance tasks, use common criteria, examine student work, and build shared expectations across districts.

PLACE is the next chapter. It preserves the strongest elements of PACE while shifting the center of gravity from state accountability to district meaningful assessment and performance learning. PLACE has grown into NHLI’s living network for helping educators build the classroom practices that make competency-based learning visible, actionable, and sustainable.

PACE showed what was possible. PLACE has made the work practical, teacher-led, and sustainable in classrooms and districts over time.

PLACE THEORY OF ACTION

Supporting Highly Effective Educators
A Student-Centered, Ambitious Teacher and Learning Framework



Professional Inclusive Community of Practice

A professional, inclusive community of practice means that educators know each student deeply and actively seek to partner with their community in setting long and short-term goals for the district.



Ambitious Teaching in Assessment and Instruction

Educators who engage in rigorous performance learning and assessment discover their transformative qualities of such work in the classroom.



Embedded Student Expectations, Deeper Learning Skills

Embedded deeper learning skills is a necessary aspect of performance learning and assessment preparation for success; teacher and student agency driven by the development of essential skills is intentionally fostered in the learning design



Performance Learning and Assessment

Performance learning and assessment is the outcome of the practices, processes, and applications described above. These are the necessary that allow for learning to be rich and deep for ALL students who learn in varied ways.

Highly Effective Educators



The Teaching and Learning Framework provides the Highly Effective Educator learning

Conclusion: PLACE as NHLI's Living Performance Learning Network

Over the last five years, PLACE has grown stronger as a statewide professional learning network that supports meaningful performance assessment, competency-based learning, student agency, and local district capacity. The project has matured from assessment design into performance learning: a broader approach that strengthens the instructional conditions students need in order to demonstrate deep and transferable learning.

NHLI's leadership is central to this growth. PLACE provides the coherence, facilitation, tools, feedback structures, and cross-district professional community that individual districts often cannot sustain alone. It gives teachers a professional home for doing the complex work of designing, testing, revising, and sharing performance learning experiences.

The survey evidence confirms that PLACE is helping educators grow in confidence and competence, redesign rubrics and assessments, support student ownership, and bring competency-based practices into local PLCs and district conversations. The next phase of the work will depend on continued attention to implementation conditions, especially time, collaboration, calibration, grading alignment, and local leadership.

One of PLACE's most important contributions has been to strengthen the role of teacher-designed classroom assessment within a balanced assessment system. PLACE has shown that meaningful evidence of competency cannot come from one assessment alone. Students need opportunities to demonstrate learning through authentic tasks, receive feedback, revise their work, and reflect on their progress. Teachers need time and structures to design assessments, examine student work, and calibrate expectations. Through this work, PLACE has helped districts see classroom-based performance assessment as an essential source of evidence in a coherent system of learning, not an add-on or isolated classroom practice

The five-year growth of PLACE also shows the power of sustained teacher leadership. PLACE has remained strong because it is led by educators who understand the work from practice and can help translate performance learning into classroom routines, rubrics, tasks, calibration processes, and local professional learning. The fact that 95 percent of teacher design leads and 95 percent of learning community leads have remained in their districts and in the profession demonstrates that PLACE has built more than an assessment network; it has created a durable leadership pathway for educators. The fact that 90 percent of these teacher leaders began as original PACE teacher leaders from 2014–2020 further underscores the continuity from PACE to PLACE. NHLI did not simply preserve the work of PACE; through PLACE, it

sustained and strengthened the teacher leadership infrastructure needed to make competency-based performance learning practical, credible, and lasting.

PLACE now stands as one of NHLI's strongest examples of how teacher leadership, competency-based learning, and performance assessment can come together to improve the student learning experience. PLACE showed what was possible; PLACE has shown what becomes sustainable when teacher leadership, competency-based learning, classroom-based assessment, and district implementation are held together over time.

The survey shows that PLACE is not only helping teachers design better assessments; it is helping them redesign the learning conditions that make competency-based performance assessment possible.



Appendices

Appendix A: Survey Snapshot

Responses reviewed: 71.

Survey Area	Pattern
Content-area participation	Science (33), Elementary Mathematics (15), ELA (14), Secondary Mathematics (7), BEST (2).
Years in PLACE	One year (46), two years (12), three years (7), more than three years (6).
Practice change	Significant changes (34), moderate changes (26), minor adjustments (9), no change (2).
Top assessment shifts	Increased use of performance assessments (50), greater alignment to competencies/learning targets (39), more formative assessment strategies (38), increased self/peer assessment (27), and improved feedback (25).
Most impactful aspects	Collaborative discussions with peers (65), access to resources/tools (37), designing performance assessments (36), learning new instructional strategies (35), trying strategies in classrooms (34).
Common barriers	Time constraints (41), limited collaboration time (27), curriculum/pacing pressures (24), student readiness/resistance (20), grading/reporting alignment (11).
Requested future supports	High-quality performance assessment design (40), competency alignment (35), calibration and scoring (27), feedback (25), student agency (25), student self-assessment (24), AI/technology (21), interdisciplinary learning (15).

Appendix B: Source Notes

This report draws from the existing NHLI PACE-to-PLACE report draft, the NH PLACE framework/flipbook publication, and the PLACE 2025-2026 participant survey results. PACE research and technical documentation remain important background sources for understanding the performance assessment, calibration, comparability, and competency-based foundation that PLACE now carries forward.

Key source references include NHLI PACE-to-PLACE working report drafts; the NH PLACE framework/flipbook publication; the PLACE 2025-2026 participant survey results; NHDOE's Moving from Good to Great PACE overview; the HumRRO formative evaluation of NH PACE; Carla Evans' Education Policy Analysis Archives study of PACE achievement outcomes; the NH PACE Technical Manual; and the IES evaluation of the Innovative Assessment Demonstration Authority.

Additional source note: The IES IADA evaluation is used in this report to document PACE's national significance, readiness and operational implementation compared with other early IADA systems, and the implementation conditions that made the transition to NHLI-led PLACE both reasonable and necessary.

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