Nine Characteristics
of High-Performing Schools

Second Edition -- Resource List

Becoming a high-performing school takes many years of hard work. There is no silver bullet—no single thing a school can do to ensure high student performance. Research has found that high-performing schools have a number of common characteristics. A school may be doing well in some areas but need help in others.

The second edition of the Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools maintains the original characteristics and definitions. It adds information from about 120 new research and professional references, as well as relevant OSPI documents, to help educators deepen their understanding of the characteristics, and it provides additional strategies for expanding implementation.

This resource list provides the names of key websites, books, reports, and articles that can be used to help schools improve in each of the characteristics of high-performing schools. Information about various characteristics is often embedded throughout these resources. After assessing the areas that need the most attention, review and then discuss the materials mentioned in this resource list in order to focus your school improvement efforts. Good luck!

G. Sue Shannon, Ed. D.
Senior Researcher
Assessment and Student Information
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Contents

Introduction

Starting Points

Characteristics

1. A Clear and Shared Focus
2. High Standards and Expectations for All Students
3. Effective School Leadership
4. High Levels of Collaboration and Communication
5. Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessments Aligned with State Standards
6. Frequent Monitoring of Learning and Teaching
7. Focused Professional Development
8. Supportive Learning Environment
9. High Levels of Family and Community Involvement

Appendix A: Bibliography and analysis matrix

   National Research Reports
   Washington State Research Reports
Introduction

The second edition expands and deepens the discussion of the Nine Characteristics. The introduction provides an overview of several concepts:

- Effective processes for improving schools
- Expanded perspectives on effective leadership
- Relational trust (i.e., trusting relationships among person in an organization)
- Quality instruction, grading practices, and monitoring
- Professional learning communities
- Cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching
- Family and community engagement in schools
- High school improvement
- District improvement
- Need-based allocation of resources (funding, staffing, and support)
References


Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction.


___ (2005). *Washington State English Language Development Instructional Materials Review*

___ Washington State English Language Development (ELD) Content Standards


SELECTED RESOURCES AS STARTING POINTS

Some resources discuss several of the nine characteristics of high-performing schools. The books in the following list provide an effective starting point for busy educators who have limited time for reading. These resources are also useful for school study groups.


1. A clear and shared focus

Everybody knows where they are going and why. The focus is on achieving a shared vision, and all understand their role in achieving the vision. The focus and vision are developed from common beliefs and values, creating a consistent direction for all involved.

References

(* indicates those cited in the complete Resource)


http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/reengineering/keyissues/leadership.shtml Leadership and Organizational Vitality

http://www.efffectiveschools.com


2. High standards and expectations for all students

Teachers and staff believe that all students can learn and meet high standards. While recognizing that some students must overcome significant barriers, these obstacles are not seen as insurmountable. Students are offered an ambitious and rigorous course of study.

References

(* indicates those cited in the complete Resource)

http://www.rand.org/multi/achievementforall/  
Research Areas – Education

http://www.mcrel.org/topics/products/105  
Raising the Achievement of Low Performing Students

http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu/  

Issue Reports. No. 8. Spring 1995 “Issues in Restructuring Schools”

http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/dtm/  
Dispelling the Myth: High Poverty Schools Exceeding Expectations

http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v5n10.html  
Cultural Differences and the Construction of Meaning: Implications for the Leadership and Organizational Context of Schools, Robert A. Pena, Arizona State University.

http://www.naec.org/achieve/2.html  
Improving Black Student Achievement. See chapter 2: School-Related Factors and Teacher Behavior that Contribute to Low Self-Image in Students, and worksheet B: Teacher Behaviors That Support a Positive Self-Concept among Minority Students.


3. Effective school leadership

Effective instructional and administrative leadership is required to implement change processes. Effective leaders are proactive and seek help that is needed. They nurture an instructional program and school culture conducive to learning and professional growth. Effective leaders have different styles and roles -- teachers and other staff, including those in the district office, often have a leadership role.

References

(* indicates those cited in the complete Resource)

http://www.naesp.org/comm/prss10-29-01.htm Leading Learning Communities: What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do


http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/reengineering/keyissues/leadership.shtml Leadership and organizational vitality

http://www.wasa-oly.org/ Washington Association of School Administrators

http://www.awsp.org/ Association of Washington School Principals

http://www.aasa.org/ American Association of School Administrators

http://www.naesp.org/ National Association of Elementary School Principals


http://www.nhsa.net/ National High School Association

http://www.nmsa.org/ National Middle School Association

http://www.pdkintl.org/ Phi Delta Kappa International

http://www.nea.org/ National Education Association

http://www.aft.org/ American Federation of Teachers


4. High levels of collaboration and communication

There is strong teamwork among teachers across all grades and with other staff. Everybody is involved and connected to each other, including parents and members of the community, to identify problems and work on solutions.

References

(* indicates those cited in the complete Resource)

http://www.naesp.org/comm/prss10-29-01.htm Leading Learning Communities: What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do

http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues61.html Professional Learning Communities, “Constructing communities of cooperation”

http://www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues91/4.html Addressing the Challenges, What are we learning?


5. Curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with state standards

The planned and actual curricula are aligned with the essential academic learning requirements (EALRs). Research-based teaching strategies and materials are used. Staff understands the role of classroom and state assessments, what the assessments measure, and how student work is evaluated.

References

(* indicates those cited in the complete Resource)

http://www.k12.wa.us/  Washington State Guidance for Selection of Instructional Materials to meet District and State Standards

http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs  Research you can use.


http://www.wested.org/  Brief for Practitioners: Turning Around Low Performing Schools--Implications at the School, District, and State Levels.

http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu  Authentic Pedagogy: Standards that Boost Student Performance


___ (2007) *Washington State Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program Guidelines*  
___ (2005) *Washington State English Language Development Instructional Materials Review*  
___ *English Language Development (ELD) Content Standards*  


6. Frequent monitoring of learning and teaching

A steady cycle of different assessments identifies students who need help. More support and instructional time are provided, either during the school day or outside normal school hours, to students who need more help. Teaching is adjusted based on frequent monitoring of student progress and needs. Assessment results are used to focus and improve instructional programs.

References

(* indicates those cited in the complete Resource)

http://www.mcrel.org/products/assessment/designing.asp Designing a Sustainable Standards-Based Assessment System


7. Focused professional development

A strong emphasis is placed on training staff in areas of most need. Feedback from learning and teaching focuses extensive and ongoing professional development. The support is also aligned with the school or district vision and objectives.

References

(* indicates those cited in the complete Resource)

http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/pd0cont.htm    Finding Time For Professional Development; Evaluating Professional Growth And Development

http://www.nsdc.org                               National Staff Development Council

http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/          No Child Left Behind

*http://www.nsdc.org/educatorindex.htm               Standards For Staff Development (revised 2001)

http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/rpl_esys/pdlitrev.htm Results-oriented professional development by Thomas Guskey

http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/sirs/6/cu12.html          Staff development. Adult Learning and Change by Jocelyn Butler

http://www.teachers.net

http://www.ncrel.org/pd/toolkit/lftb/index.htm      Professional Development. Learning from the Best


8. Supportive learning environment

The school has a safe, civil, healthy and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Students feel respected and connected with the staff and are engaged in learning. Instruction is personalized and small learning environments increase student contact with teachers.

References

(* indicates those cited in the complete Resource)

http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/reengineering/rycu/index.shtml
  Research You Can Use to Improve Results

http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu/

  Every Child Learning: Safe and Supportive Schools

http://www.wested.org/policy/pubs/full_text/pb_ft_csr23.htm
  Policy Brief 23, Class Size Reduction: Lessons Learned from Experience

http://www.prrac.org/additup.pdf
  Add It Up: Using Research to Improve Education for Low-Income and Minority Students.

http://www.ed.gov/pubs/ClassSize/practice.html#student
  Class Size and Students at Risk – Instructional Practice and Student Behavior

http://staff.washington.edu/sdrg/
  Social Development Research Group, University of Washington, D. Hawkins & R. Catalano

http://www.nwrel.org/

http://www.safetyzone.org/
  National Resource Center for Safe Schools; National Mentoring Center

http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/
  School Mental Health Project, H. Adelman & L. Taylor
http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v9n30.html

Committing to Class-Size Reduction and Finding the Resources to Implement It: A Case Study of Resource Reallocation


9. High level of family and community involvement

There is a sense that all have a responsibility to educate students, not just teachers and staff in schools. Families, as well as businesses, social service agencies, and community colleges/universities, all play a vital role in this effort.

References

(* indicates those cited in the complete Resource)

http://www.k12.wa.us/cisl/  Center for Improvement of Student Learning
www.waparentlearn.org  Office of the Education Ombudsman, Office of the Governor
http://www.centerforparentleadership.org  Center for Parent Leadership at the Pritchard Committee
http://www.cipl.org  Institute for Parent Leadership
http://www.cppsofseattle.org/  Community & Parents for Public Schools of Seattle
http://www.publiceducation.org  Public Education Network (PEN)
http://www.pta.org/  National Parent Teacher Organization
http://www.partnership4learning.org  Partnership for Learning
http://www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/standards/index.asp  National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs
http://www.wastatepta.org/resources/Family_involvement_guide.PDF

Family Involvement Guide

http://www.ncrel.org/sdr/areaspa0cont.htm

Family & Community Pathways

http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000

Family, school, and community involvement.

http://www.edletter.org/past/index.html

Harvard Education Letter, past issues.

http://www.ed.gov/pubs/Reform/

School based reform. Role of parents and community in school reform


Studies in Education Reform: Parent and Community Involvement in Education

http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/reengineering/keyissues/schoolfamily.shtml

Students at the Center. School, Family, and Community Partnerships

http://www.prrac.org/pubs_aiu.php

Add It Up: Using Research to Improve Education for Low-Income and Minority Students


*Nine Characteristics Resource List*
Appendix A: Bibliography and analysis matrix

Twenty-five national and Washington state research studies comprise the research base for the nine characteristics of high-performing schools. OSPI researchers reviewed and analyzed the studies to confirm the rigor of the nine characteristics. The appendix lists the bibliography of these studies. (A matrix that reflects the analysis follows in the complete Resource document.)

National Research Reports


Stories of Mixed Success: Program Improvement Implementation in Chapter 1 Schools, Catherine George, James Grisson, and Anne Just (California Department of Education), Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk, 1(1), 77-93, 1996.


Washington State Research Reports


Making Standards Meaningful: High School Reform Efforts in Washington State, Sara Taggart and Mary Beth Celio, Center on Reinventing Public Education (University of Washington), October 2001. (A summary of this publication is published by the Partnership For Learning.)

Making Standards Stick: A Follow-Up Look at Washington State’s School Improvement Efforts in 1999–2000, Robin Lake, Maria McCarthy, Sara Taggart, and Mary Beth Celio, Center on Reinventing Public Education (University of Washington), April 2000. (A summary of this publication is published by the Partnership For Learning.)

Making Standards Work: Active Voices, Focused Learning, Robin Lake, Paul Hill, Lauren O’Toole, and Mary Beth Celio, Center on Reinventing Public Education (University of Washington), February 1999. (A separate publication with the same name is published by the Partnership For Learning.)

Organizing for Success (Updated): Improving Mathematics Performance in Washington State, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, July 2000. (This updated edition includes results from the original Organizing for Success published in July 1999.)


Washington State Elementary Schools on the Slow Track Under Standards-Based Reform, Maria McCarthy and Mary Beth Celio, Center on Reinventing Public Education (University of Washington), October 2001. (A summary of this publication is published by the Partnership for Learning.)