

High School for Teaching and the Professions

FINAL REPORT



New York City Department of Education External School Curriculum Audit | August 2011

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Introduction

About This Report

This final report is the result of an external school curriculum audit (ESCA) of the High School for Teaching and the Professions conducted by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research. This audit was conducted in response to the school being identified as in need of improvement under the New York State Education Department differentiated accountability plan, pursuant to the accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. The ESCA process was developed for and carried out under the auspices of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of School Development, within the Division of Portfolio Planning.

About the High School for Teaching and the Professions

Located in the Bronx, the High School for Teaching and the Professions (X433) is a high school with 485 students in Grades 9–12. The school population is 32 percent black, 65 percent Hispanic, 1 percent white, and 2 percent Asian. The student body includes 17 percent English language learners (ELLs) and 20 percent special education students¹. Approximately 40 percent of the students are boys. The average attendance rate for the 2009–10 school year was 72 percent. One hundred percent of the student population is eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (New York State Board of Education, 2011).

In 2009–10, the High School for Teaching and the Professions did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in English language arts (ELA), math, and the graduation rate for all students. The school's Hispanic/Latino subgroup and economically disadvantaged subgroup did not meet AYP in ELA or math².

The mission for the High School for Teaching and the Professions is as follows:

It is our mission to encourage all members of the school community to become independent thinkers, not simply gleaners of information, so they can choose wisely the course of their lives³.

Audit Process at the High School for Teaching and the Professions

The ESCA approach employed at the high school level examines six topic areas: student engagement, academic interventions and supports, support for incoming students, classroom instruction, professional development, and courses and extracurricular activities. Data were collected at the school level via teacher surveys, administrator interviews, classroom observations, and an analysis of documents submitted by the High School for Teaching and

¹ http://schools.nyc.gov/documents/teachandlearn/sesdr/2009-10/sesdr_X433.pdf Accessed on August 15, 2011

² <https://www.nystart.gov/publicweb-rc/2010/26/AOR-2010-321000011433.pdf>. Accessed on August 15, 2011.

³ http://hstnp.newvisionsk12.org/site_res_view_template.aspx?id=649876c4-51f2-455c-94ca-92846560d927 Accessed on August 15, 2011.

the Professions in March 2011. From these data, Learning Point Associates prepared a series of reports for the school's use.

These reports were presented to the school during a co-interpretationSM meeting that was held on May 19, 2011. During this meeting, 11 stakeholders from the High School for Teaching and the Professions community read the reports. Through a facilitated and collaborative group process, they identified individual findings and then developed and prioritized key findings that emerged from information in the reports.

The remainder of this report presents the key findings that emerged from the co-interpretation process and the actionable recommendations that Learning Point Associates developed in response. Please note that there is not necessarily a one-to-one connection between the key findings and the recommendations; rather, the key findings are considered as a group, and the recommended strategies are those that we believe are most likely to have the greatest positive impact on student performance at the High School for Teaching and the Professions.

Key Findings

After considerable thought and discussion, the co-interpretation participants determined a set of key findings. The wording of the key findings matches the wording developed and agreed on by the co-interpretation participants at the meeting. These key findings are detailed in this section.

Critical Key Findings

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 1:

Student engagement was inconsistently observed with instances of students being dismissive of teachers, student tardiness, inappropriate student behavior, and wasted time.

Critical Key Finding 1 is supported by data from classroom observations. Although all observed classrooms were rated in the mid to high range on student engagement, in classrooms where student engagement was inconsistent (i.e., in the mid range), some students were dismissive and/or disrespectful of their teachers. In some instances, students were completely disengaged. Tardiness and behavior were the most prevalent classroom disrupters, each leading to wasted time and lost productivity.

CRITICAL FINDING 2:

There are inconsistencies in the opportunities offered to students to solve complex problems and engage in higher-order thinking.

Critical Key Finding 2 is supported by responses to the teacher survey. Two thirds of the observed classrooms were rated in the low or mid range on analysis and problem solving, indicating that opportunities for students to engage in complex problem solving and higher-level thinking were infrequent or inconsistent. A majority of the teachers indicated that having students answer textbook or worksheet questions was a daily classroom activity.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 3:

Teachers reported that there is a schoolwide behavior plan that is consistently enforced across classrooms. However, classroom observations in one third of the classrooms indicate that tardiness and wasted time were major disruptors that led to a loss of productivity.

Critical Key Finding 3 is supported by data from the teacher survey and classroom observations. Seventy-seven percent of the teachers agreed or strongly agreed that a schoolwide behavior plan was in place and enforced within classrooms. However, 40 percent of the respondents indicated that they had minimal to no access to student discipline referrals, and 56 percent of the teachers reported reviewing student behavior data anywhere from never to only a few times each semester.

Classroom observations contradict the perception that the behavior plan is being enforced. Although no classrooms were rated in the low range on positive climate during the classroom observations, tardiness and behavior were the most prevalent classroom disrupters, each leading to wasted time and lost productivity in the classrooms where such behavior was

observed. It is possible that teachers do not view tardiness as a behavior problem because late students do not create negative climates. Based on conversations with staff while on-site, it is also possible that the staff believe that there are acceptable reasons for being late or that it is simply unavoidable. This suggests that the teacher responses to the survey item about a school behavior plan may not be based on school behavior data but instead on their perceptions of student behavior in their own classes.

Positive Key Finding

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 1:

High School for Teaching and the Professions provides all incoming 9th-grade students with an extra period of ELA and math that includes advisory and an introduction to preteaching. The school uses multiple computer programs to track progress.

Positive Key Finding 1 is supported by data from the document review and interviews. The school uses Achieve 3000, an online differentiated literacy program, to address the needs of special education students and ELLs. The 9th-grade curriculum is designed to give students an extra period of English language arts and/or math if they are deficient in these areas.

Recommendations

Overview of Recommendations

During the co-interpretation process with the stakeholders from the High School for Teaching and the Professions, the participants identified three critical issues (Critical Key Findings 1, 2, and 3) where additional focus could lead to improved student achievement. They also identified one positive area (Positive Key Finding 1) where it was critical to maintain their focus. The improvement areas are student engagement, inconsistencies in rigorous classroom instruction, and student tardiness and behavior. One of the school's top investments is to maintain the extra supports offered to all 9th-grade students in ELA and math.

Although some level of student engagement was observed in nearly all classrooms, co-interpretation participants agreed that it was inconsistent and was an area needing focus. During classroom observations, we noticed minimal efforts to engage quiet, nondisruptive students, especially those seated in the back of classrooms. The following research-based recommendations illustrate that engagement can be improved by a more rigorous and engaging curriculum, another priority that emerged from the co-interpretation session.

Classroom observations, responses to the teacher survey, and the research-based recommendations substantiate the need for a more rigorous and engaging classroom instruction, which can lead to improved student achievement. Although our observations revealed some strengths in this area, the fact that two thirds of the classes were ranked in the low to mid range means this is an important area of focus for the entire faculty to improve in those classes. By including all faculty members in this work, the school can also ensure that teachers who are succeeding in this area maintain their effectiveness.

Improving student engagement and instructional rigor in the classroom can contribute to improved behavior. However, it is clear that behavior and tardiness must also be addressed. Because teachers believe the behavior plan is being enforced and the overall classroom climates were not negative, it is possible that teachers are not critically considering how behavior and tardiness can impact student achievement, particularly if it is not contributing to a negative classroom environment. In considering the implementation of the behavior plan, it is important that teachers consistently document all incidences of tardiness and behavior. During our observations, we consistently observed a lack of attention to documenting tardiness and, therefore, suggest that a focus on data collection for all ranges of behavior incidences is critical. However, if teachers are not regularly reviewing data, this documentation will have less impact. The positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) recommendation for this finding highlights the importance of using data. Because the school already has a very good data system in place, we believe the school can be successful in improving in this area.

THE THREE RECOMMENDATIONS

With these issues in mind, Learning Point Associates auditors developed the following three recommendations:

1. Initiate a schoolwide process for increasing student engagement and creating a sustainable and supportive learning environment. The aim is to improve student attendance, enhance participation, reduce boredom, end negative behaviors and the associated classroom management issues, and increase student achievement in academic and social skills.
2. Implement instructional strategies that increase opportunities for higher-order thinking, analysis and problem solving, and deeper content understanding.
3. Develop and implement a schoolwide positive behavior policy and system with clearly established standards for safety, discipline, and respect. The policy and related system should include concise social expectations and a continuum of supports, interventions, incentives/rewards, and consequences, including a clear delineation of activities and programs that students are entitled to versus those that are privileges.

These three recommendations are discussed on the following pages. Each recommendation provides a review of research, specific actions the school may wish to take during its implementation process, examples of real-life schools that have successfully implemented improvement strategies, and online resources for additional information. All works cited, as well as suggestions for further reading, appear in the References section at the end of this report.

Please note that the order in which these recommendations are presented does not reflect a ranking or prioritization of the recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Student Engagement

Initiate a schoolwide process for increasing student engagement and creating a sustainable and supportive learning environment. The aim is to improve student attendance, enhance participation, reduce boredom, end negative behaviors and the associated classroom management issues, and increase student achievement in academic and social skills.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Student engagement provides an essential foundation for increasing achievement levels. “Educators must work to build engagement levels if they hope to support students in meeting higher standards” (Learning Point Associates, 2005, p. 2).

Literature about middle school reform acknowledges the importance of an academically challenging and supportive environment to engage young adolescent learners. Student motivation, a meaningful curriculum, and student choice also are important factors for engaging middle-level learners (Caskey & Anfara, 2007; Learning Point Associates, 2005; Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1995).

In a report on the 2009 High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE), which was taken by 42,754 students, Yazzie-Mintz (2010, pp. 2–3) describes a spectrum of student disengagement—from temporary boredom to dropping out—and attributes this disengagement to the following: uninteresting and irrelevant material, work being too challenging or not challenging enough, no interaction with the teacher, not liking the school or the teacher, not seeing value in the assigned work, adults at the school not caring about the student, safety and bullying concerns, schoolwork not connecting to real world or real work, feeling little connection with any adult at the school, teacher favoritism, ineffective instruction or instructional methods, feeling unheard and not responded to or respected, and feelings of frustration and disconnection.

When students feel marginalized or alienated at school, they lose interest and become disengaged. Yazzie-Mintz (2010, p. 17) concludes that there are considerable gaps not only in academic achievement but also in student engagement and suggests the integration of engagement data with academic data as a useful tool for school planning and decision making.

Factors that would increase student engagement, according to the surveyed students (Yazzie-Mintz, pp. 18–23) are as follows: supportive and nurturing schools; increased individualization; classes that are more fun as well as interactive, experiential, and relevant; a schoolwide belief in relationships, respect, and responsibility; coaching and modeling for the staff of good student engagement practices; reflection on and response to student ideas; adult understanding of student skills, strengths, and interests and having these qualities inform instruction; experiential learning and interdisciplinary studies; and opportunities for students to work together on finding solutions to real-world problems and issues.

Students need to build a sense of self-efficacy (Alvermann, 2003) in an inclusive environment in which they can achieve competence. They should be engaged in authentic and personally meaningful work, using a culturally relevant curriculum with an appropriate level of difficulty and challenge—one that requires problem solving (Voke, 2002). In addition, Gordon (2006)

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Center for Mental Health in Schools (Website)

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (Website)

<http://www.casel.org>

Illinois Learning Standards for Social/Emotional Learning (Website)

http://isbe.state.il.us/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility (Website)

<http://www.morningsidecenter.org>

suggests the recognition and leveraging of individual student strengths and recalls a typical student response from the 2005 Gallup Youth Survey (pp. 77–80):

“My teacher understood the way that I learned and worked. I was never criticized for my ideas or feelings, but I was met with questions and ideas that could change the way I looked at something.” —Jessica, 17, Waverly, IA (p. 77)

A rubric titled the “Partnership Guide for Culturally Responsive Teaching” (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000, pp. 185–187) offers a list of engagement activities (establishing inclusion, developing a positive attitude, enhancing meaning and engendering competence) and assessment tools. The Executive Summary of *Engaging Schools* (National Academy of Sciences, 2003) provides 10 recommendations for reaching “the goals of meaningful engagement and genuine improvements in achievement” for high school students (pp. 4–9). Easton (2008) discusses engaging struggling high school students by using experiential learning, essential questions and a whole-child perspective in curriculum development, instructional strategies, professional development, and teacher evaluations. “If there is a secret to motivation in the classroom,” says Gordon (2006, p. 80), “it lies in the interaction between the teacher and the student.”

“There is a growing consensus that whatever else is done, schools must also become places where it is easier for students and teachers to know one another well and for students to connect to the school and its purposes, says Sergiovanni (2000, p. 58). “Schools in other words must be caring and learning communities.”

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS: WHOLE-SCHOOL PRACTICES

Incorporating student engagement practices should be part of the annual school improvement process. Whole-school practices such as building a safe and supportive school environment are part of this process. Students can learn effectively only in environments in which they feel safe and supported and where their teachers have high expectations for their learning. Implementation of a schoolwide positive behavior plan that is based on pro-social values, social competencies, incentives, and positive peer relationships will lay the foundation for classroom-level work and must occur before the classroom work can begin.

The following guidelines were developed by the Victoria Department of Education and Early Child Development (2009) for implementation of effective student engagement strategies across whole schools at the building level:

1. Create a positive school culture.

Teachers and staff must recognize students as individuals by acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of the student population. The school must find ways to connect students to school (through clubs, sports, student council, and other activities) so they develop a sense of belonging. The school should provide transition programs and practices at different stages of schooling that will minimize anxiety, increase resilience, and ensure that students develop a readiness to enter their new environment and make successful transitions between year levels.

2. Encourage student participation.

Giving students a voice is not simply about the opportunity to communicate ideas and opinions; it also is about having the power to influence change. Incorporating meaningful involvement of students means validating and authorizing them to represent their own ideas, opinions, knowledge and experiences throughout education to improve the school.

3. Proactively engage with parents/caretakers.

Keys to successful partnerships with parents/caretakers and families include strong two-way communication, volunteer opportunities, curricula-related collaborations, shared decision making, community-based partnerships, and efficacy building.

4. Implement preventative and early interventions.

The school needs to determine how it will intervene when students exhibit disengaged behaviors—specifically poor attendance and anti-social behaviors. Prevention strategies should target the whole school and should be designed to reduce any risk factors that may contribute to attendance or behavioral issues.

5. Respond to individual students.

The school should have a process in place to identify and respond to individual students who require additional assistance and support. It is imperative to coordinate early intervention and prevention strategies that utilize internal as well as external support services in order to identify and address the barriers to learning that individual students may be facing.

Schools also can implement major changes to their structures that can make it easier to develop positive learning relationships, including small learning communities, alternative scheduling, team teaching, teaching continuity, school-based enterprises, and professional learning communities.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS: CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Keeping students focused and engaged in the classroom is quite a challenge amid the entire complex changes—physical, intellectual, emotional, and social—that they experience during this phase of their lives. Adolescence represents a critical period during which youth struggle to take on new responsibilities and learn decision-making skills while concurrently establishing a sense of self and identity. This period also marks a stage where adolescents are learning to regulate their behavior, which can present a challenge to keeping them on-task in the classroom. (Zimmer-Gembeck and Collins, 2003).

1. Relate lessons to students' lives.

A relevant curriculum relates content to the daily lives, concerns, experiences, and pertinent social issues of the learners. Teachers can gain insight into student concerns by taking periodic interest inventories, through informal conversations, and from classroom dialogue (Learning Point Associates, 2005). These issues and topics then can be incorporated into units, lesson plans, and further classroom discussions.

2. Make the learning authentic.

Newmann et al. (1995) advocate for authentic instructional practices to engage learners and offer three criteria for authentic instructional practices: construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond the school.

The first criterion for authentic instructional practices is to facilitate the construction of knowledge by acknowledging students' existing understanding and experience. Identifying students' preconceptions and initial understanding is critical to the learning process. "If students' preconceptions are not addressed directly, they often memorize content (e.g., formulas in physics), yet still use their experience-based preconceptions to act in the world" (Donovan & Bransford, 2005, p. 5).

The second criterion for authentic instructional practices is to facilitate disciplined inquiry through structured activities; the inquiry process is critical to the construction of knowledge (Marzano, 2003; Newmann et al., 1995). This process consists of building on the learner's prior knowledge to develop a deeper understanding, integrating new information, and using the knowledge in new ways.

The third criterion for authentic instructional practices is value beyond school (Newmann et al., 1995). This criterion may entail connecting content to personal or public issues as well as the demonstration of understanding to an audience beyond the school. Examples of such activities include writing persuasive letters to the city council to advocate for a skate park, interviewing community elders for an oral history project, or communicating the impact of a development project using scientific concepts.

3. Give students choices.

Finally, providing choice in high school classrooms will engage learners. Providing opportunities for students to select a topic or text acknowledges young adolescents' need to exercise more decision-making power. Giving students ownership in their learning process increases motivation and keeps interest levels high. Students who have a strong interest in a specific subject may wish to pursue an independent project. These projects may be used as a differentiated way to explore the curriculum. (See "Regard for Adolescent Perspectives in the Classroom" on the following page.)

Regard for Adolescent Perspectives in the Classroom

Following are some suggestions for showing regard for adolescent perspectives. These ideas are based on the work of Smutny, Walker, and Meckstroth (1997) and Tomlinson (1999).

- Independent projects will extend learning beyond the curriculum in the textbook and develop enthusiasm, commitment, and academic skills in addition to allowing students to develop deeper relationships with subject matter.
- “Brainstorming with...children on what kinds of projects they could do may also generate ideas teachers may never have thought of on their own” (Smutny, 2000, p. 7).
- Surveying students’ interests in the beginning of the school year will give teachers direction in planning activities that will ‘get students on board’ from the start.
- Surveying again at key points during the year will inform teachers of new interests that develop as their students grow.
- Interest centers are designed to motivate students’ exploration of topics in which they have a particular interest. They are usually comprised of objects that students can explore, such as shells, leaves, maps, or projects, and are centered around broad topics. Students can choose from the menu and note their choices accordingly. Teachers decide how many items on the menu (minimum) that each student is required to complete. This is adjusted to meet instructional needs on an individual basis.

Examples of Student Engagement

The National Center for School Engagement (2007) compiled the following examples of student engagement best practices from school districts across the United States:

Factor in Math Fun: In Oswego, New York, a Factoring Fan Club was created for 9th grade math students to get them excited about factoring, to keep it fresh in their minds, and to be “good” at factoring. Source: Oswego School District, Oswego, NY

Celebrate Pi Day on 3/14: This event was created to help students enjoy math by offering a fun-filled day honoring pi. Events included a pie eating contest, measuring the diameter and circumference of round objects to calculate pi, and other games related to circles. Source: Independence School District, Independence, VA

Mobilize Community: Community Now! is an asset-based community development tool of the Connection Institute. It uses asset-based language and planning to bring the community together to discover what values the community shares as a whole. It then works to mobilize community members around its assets and shares values to become proactive in its planning rather than reactive. Source: Kittery Children’s Leadership Council, Kittery, ME

Collaborate with Higher Education: In Mesquite, Texas, a local college delivers 3.5 hours of continuing education courses (“Educational Opportunities”) to truant students and their families. The curriculum includes the negative consequences associated with poor school attendance and the positive consequences associated with scholastic achievement. Discussion of transition from high school to college is discussed and a tour of the college is provided. Source: Dallas Independent School District, TX

Offer Incentives: As a reward, a lunch-time soccer game is organized for students with good attendance by school staff. Source: Summit School District, Frisco, CO

Support Positive Behavior: Jacksonville School District adapted the principles of *Got Fish?* (a book to build business morale) for the classroom. Principles include: being there, play, choosing your behavior, and make their day. Students are recognized when observed “living” each of the principles. Source: Jacksonville School District, Jacksonville, FL

Create Student-Generated Classroom Rules: In Eugene, Oregon, students create a list of classroom rules to be followed. Each student signs off on the rules and is held accountable by fellow students. In addition, they developed their own “honor roll”, in which students are recognized for doing their best, following directions, and not talking out more than 3 times a day. Source: Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District, Eugene, OR

Facilitate Positive Student-Teacher Connections: Some schools in Oregon encourage students to sign up for a one-on-one lunch with their teacher during school time. The teacher uses this time to get to know the student and offers them encouragement and praise. Children and youth benefit when their teachers demonstrate that they care about student well-being in addition to academic success. Source: Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District, Eugene, OR

Reprinted from *21 Ways to Engage Students in School*, available online at <http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/21WaysToEngageStudentsInSchool.pdf>. Copyright © 2007 National Center for School Engagement. Reprinted with permission.

Recommendation 2: Instructional Rigor

Implement instructional strategies that increase opportunities for higher-order thinking, analysis and problem solving, and deeper content understanding.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Instruction that pushes students to engage in higher-level thinking leads to deeper learning for students (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Pashler et al., 2007). Too often, particularly in schools where students are struggling, instruction focuses on lower-level thinking skills, basic content, and test preparation. Teachers of struggling student groups or tracks usually offer students “less exciting instruction, less emphasis on meaning and conceptualization, and more rote drill and practice activities” than do teachers of high-performing or heterogeneous groups and classes (Cotton, 1989, p. 8). Yet this focus on basic skills does not necessarily improve student achievement.

Several research studies were completed from 1990 to 2003 “which demonstrated that students who experienced higher levels of authentic instruction and assessment showed higher achievement than students who experienced lower levels of authentic instruction and assessment” (Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007, p. vii). These results included higher achievement on standardized tests (Newmann et al., 2001). It is also important to note that these results “were consistent for Grades 3–12, across different subject areas (mathematics, social studies, language arts, science), and for different students regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status” (Newmann et al., 2007, p. vii).

Teachers need to provide structured opportunities and time for students to take on higher-level cognitive work (Tomlinson, 2003). In discussing the gradual *release of responsibility model*, Fisher and Frey (2008) stated that “the cognitive load should shift slowly and purposefully from teacher-as-model, to joint responsibility, to independent practice and application by the learner” (p. 2). This process allows students to become what Graves and Fitzgerald (2003) call “competent, independent learners” (p. 98).

There are several steps to ensure that students are being asked to complete this type of intellectually challenging work, which also increases test scores and improves performance on authentic assessment measures. Newmann et al. (2001) define *authentically challenging intellectual work* as the “construction of knowledge, through the use of disciplined inquiry, to produce discourse, products, or performances that have value beyond school” (p. 14). Daggett (2005) agreed, stating that all students should be pushed “to achieve academic excellence, which ultimately boils down to applying rigorous knowledge to unpredictable, real-world situations, such as those that drive our rapidly changing world” (p. 5). Disciplined inquiry, which occurs in the classroom, requires that students “(1) use a prior knowledge base; (2) strive for in-depth understanding rather than superficial awareness; and (3) express their ideas and findings with elaborated communication” (Newmann et al., 2001, p. 15).

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Doing What Works: Providing
Research-Based Education
Practices Online (website)

<http://dww.ed.gov/>

*Organizing Instruction and
Study to Improve Learning*
(publication)

[http://ies.ed.gov/
ncee/wwc/pdf/
practiceguides/20072004.
pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/20072004.pdf)

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

1. Cultivate schoolwide high expectations for students.

- Align instruction with the New York State P–12 Common Core Learning Standards. According to NYCDOE (2011), schools in New York City are set to have fully adopted the P–12 Common Core Learning Standards for students to take aligned assessments during the 2014–15 school year. These standards are internationally benchmarked and rigorous; they clearly explain what students at each grade level are expected to know and be able to do. Some schools were involved in pilot programs in 2010–11.
- Develop a shared understanding of instructional rigor through collaborative curriculum planning, design, and/or redesign. When developing or revising curriculum maps, identify opportunities for formative assessment tasks that encourage higher-level thinking for each unit of study.
- Through teacher collaboration, develop common student assignments that ask students to perform rigorous and authentic tasks.
- Through teacher collaboration, develop common student assessments that include rigorous and authentic summative assessment tasks.
- Monitor the implementation of expectations through classroom observations, lesson plan reviews, and student achievement results on common formative assessments.

2. Provide professional development for teachers on instructional strategies that push students to engage in higher-order thinking.

- Provide ongoing professional development for teachers that describes the importance of pushing students to do higher-level thinking and provides strategies for how to do so. This training may be provided through ongoing professional development sessions and/or the support of an instructional coach.
- Create clear expectations regarding how teachers should implement this professional development in the classroom (e.g., one strategy employed each day as reflected in lesson plans or authentic assessments at the end of each unit).
- Identify how this professional development can be incorporated into scheduled teacher collaboration sessions.
- Monitor implementation of professional development through classroom observations, lesson plan review, and student achievement results on common formative assessments.

3. Develop examples of authentic intellectual work.

The following example can be used to help school leaders and teachers understand what authentic intellectual work might look like.

Examples of High-Scoring and Low-Scoring Measures of Authentic Intellectual Work

The research report *Improving Chicago's Schools: Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict or Coexistence?* by Newmann et al. (2001) gave examples of two sixth-grade writing assignments: one that scored high and one that scored low on measures of authentic intellectual work. The authors concluded each example with a commentary of why the assignment received the score that it did.

High Scoring Writing Assignment

Write a paper persuading someone to do something. Pick any topic that you feel strongly about, convince the reader to agree with your belief, and convince the reader to take a specific action on this belief.

Commentary

In this high scoring assignment, demands for construction of knowledge are evident because students have to select information and organize it into convincing arguments. By asking students to convince others to believe and act in a certain way, the task entails strong demands that the students support their views with reasons or other evidence, which calls for elaborated written communication. Finally, the intellectual challenge is connected to students' lives because they are to write on something they consider to be personally important.

Low Scoring Writing Assignment

Identify the parts of speech of each underlined word below. All eight parts of speech—nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections—are included in this exercise.

1. My room is arranged for comfort and efficiency.
2. As you enter, you will find a wooden table on the left.
3. I write and type.
4. There is a book shelf near the table.
5. On this book shelf, I keep both my pencils and paper supplies.
6. I spend many hours in this room.
7. I often read or write there during the evening.

Commentary

This assignment requires no construction of knowledge or elaborated communication, and does not pose a question or problem clearly connected to students' lives. Instead it asks students to recall one-word responses, based on memorization or definitions of parts of speech.

Reprinted from page 24 of *Improving Chicago's Schools: Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict or Coexistence?* by Fred M. Newmann, Anthony S. Bryk, and Jenny K. Nagaoka, available online at <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p0a02.pdf>. Copyright © 2001 Consortium on Chicago School Research. Reprinted with permission.

Perrysburg High School

Perrysburg High School in Perrysburg, Ohio, serves students in Grades 9–12. Perrysburg is a suburb of Toledo.

Perrysburg is the sole high school in the Perrysburg Exempted Village District in Wood County. Nate Ash teaches physics to eleventh and twelfth graders. Ash has taught professional development programs at the Northwest Ohio Center of Excellence in Science and Mathematics Education, and at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He acts as a mentor to new science teachers.

Ash teaches physics using an inquiry approach. Students do lab activities and solve problems together to understand key concepts in physics. In each lesson he poses higher-order questions to help his students build explanations: How do you know that? What would happen if we changed this variable? How is this similar or different? Ash uses whiteboards in a number of ways: for group problem solving, representing a phenomenon with pictures, and student presentations.

Each new unit/topic is introduced with a hands-on activity. Ash presents a physical situation to students, has them manipulate the variables, and then narrows down their list of variables to design an experiment. Every experiment is introduced with an open-ended question (What would happen if...? What happens when...?). Students work in small groups to describe what happens with graphs, pictures, mathematical equations, and written expression. When they are finished, students present their work to the class in “whiteboard sessions.”

Ash explains how the whiteboard sessions give important insights into student thinking: “We can really see if the students understand on every different level how that problem works or how that situation works. And if there is a disjoint between any of those representations, that gives us someplace to go, that gives us something to talk about, something to work through.”

Students appreciate being in charge of their own learning, having the opportunity to challenge their peers, and develop critical thinking skills as they explain their ideas in front of a group. As Ash says, “Students really like this approach because, instead of just giving them the answer, it gives them a chance to explain to each other what’s going on. And I like it because all the times that I have done physics problems on the board and gone through the answers, I got pretty good at doing physics problems but my students never got any better at all.”

Ash has found that with this approach his students are no longer trying to find equations that fit the problems, but working to develop a deep understanding of the underlying concepts.

Excerpted from the *Doing What Works* website at http://dww.ed.gov/media/CL/OIS/TopicLevel/case_perrysburg_52708rev.pdf

Recommendation 3: Positive Behavior Management System

Develop and implement a schoolwide positive behavior policy and system with clearly established standards for safety, discipline, and respect. The policy and related system should include concise social expectations, and a continuum of supports, interventions, incentives/rewards, and consequences, including a clear delineation of activities and programs that students are entitled to versus those that are privileges.

LINK TO RESEARCH

One of the greatest obstacles within urban schools is the large number of students whose behavior interferes with their achievement or the achievement of others. Often, these students have behaved in a manner that disrupts the educational climate of the classroom and the school. One key element for changing this pattern is the implementation of a schoolwide behavior program that is developed with the input and support of parents and staff.

Effective schoolwide behavior programs have clearly established standards for safety, discipline, and respect. Students need a secure and orderly environment that promotes their personal well-being and supports learning. Rules should also be fair and stress the student's responsibility to the school community, their parents, and themselves. All students in the school need to be aware of the rules, the reasons for the rules, and the consequences for breaking the rules. Effective discipline programs are based on praise and encouragement for positive behavior and clear, consistent consequences for misbehavior (Chicago Public Schools, 1998).

Effective schools build and maintain a positive social culture. Successful students are safe (do not hurt themselves or others), respectful (follow adult requests and get along with their peers), and responsible (arrive to class on time and complete assignments). These foundational skills are essential for a safe and orderly school environment. In addition, members of a positive social culture use higher-order skills, such as impulse control, anger management, conflict resolution, empathy, and drug and alcohol use resistance and prevention. Research studies consistently show that schools that establish a positive social culture also achieve the best academic gains (California Services for Technical Assistance and Training, n.d.).

Positive behavior interventions, used correctly by teachers, administrators, and parents, encourage or strengthen desirable behavior and reduce inappropriate behavior. Positive interventions have a greater likelihood of enabling a student to change his or her behavior in a way that does not interrupt learning. Effective interventions encourage praise and recognition of positive behavior and demand clear and consistent responses to misbehavior. Children and youth tend to respond to positive techniques. In some cases, however, more restrictive interventions may be necessary to control and change extremely inappropriate and aggressive behavior (Chicago Public Schools, 1998).

School-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) is based on the research-based application of lessons learned from over 7,000 schools currently implementing successful changes in their school environment. It evolved from valid research in the field of special education. SWPBS is not a curriculum, an intervention, or a practice; it is a decision-making framework that guides

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Alcott Middle School
Behavior Expectations and
Related Teaching Materials
(video) http://www.pbis.org/swpbs_videos/alcott_mid.aspx

"Discovering School-Wide
PBS: Moving Towards
a Positive Future" from
Florida's Positive Behavior
Support Project (video)
http://www.pbis.org/swpbs_videos/pbs_video-discovering_swpbs.aspx

the selection, the integration, and the implementation of the best evidenced-based behavioral practices for improving important academic outcomes for all students (Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, 2011).

Researchers have only recently begun to study the effects of schoolwide behavioral management systems and what it takes to effectively implement these systems. Although it is too early to offer “recipes for success,” the work of key researchers and their school-based colleagues are providing some encouraging developments. There are different variations of schoolwide systems of behavioral support, but most have certain features in common. The emphasis is on consistency—both throughout the building and across classrooms. The entire school staff is expected to adopt strategies that will be uniformly implemented. As a result, approaches necessitate professional development and long-term commitment by the school leadership for this innovation to take hold. The school-based models featured in the Quick Links on the previous page have been selected to show how different features of a schoolwide behavioral management system can apply across urban, suburban, and rural locations. These schools understand that change is incremental and are approaching implementation of their schoolwide systems slowly and over an extended time period.

The common features of schoolwide behavioral management systems are as follows (Center for Effective Collaboration and Practice, 2011):

- A total staff commitment to managing behavior, whatever approach is taken
- Clearly defined and communicated expectations and rules
- Consequences and clearly stated procedures for correcting rule-breaking behaviors
- An instructional component for teaching students self-control and/or social skill strategies

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Guiding Principles. The Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (2011) has established the following six SWPBS guiding principles:

- 1. Develop a continuum of scientifically based behavior and academic interventions and supports.** If not already established, a well-articulated schoolwide behavior policy/student code inclusive of positive expectations, minor and major infractions, and related area must first be in place. Clarity around expectations for staff handling of in-class behaviors is important here. Authentic faculty feedback and participation are important throughout the policy and system development processes.
- 2. Use data to make decisions and solve problems.** Data on both minor and major behavior incidents should be collected, tracked, analyzed, and used in decision making by the team and faculty on a monthly basis at minimum. Data should be presented in a user-friendly format.

- 3. Arrange the environment to prevent the development and occurrence of problem behavior.** This is inclusive of three to five positively stated, overarching, and schoolwide social expectations that are visibly posted around the school building, particularly in problematic areas.
- 4. Teach and encourage prosocial skills and behaviors.** Students should be introduced/taught the schoolwide expectations, rules for specific settings, the reward/consequence system, and related interventions/supports. Staff should be trained on how to present expectations to students. Ongoing communication and collaboration with families and the community are very important.
- 5. Implement evidenced-based behavioral practices with fidelity and accountability.** Interventions should be multitiered, increasing in levels of intensity and inclusive of evidence-based programs or strategies. The primary level (all students) is the overall behavior management plan. The secondary level (some students) is for a targeted group or focused on individual plans for those who did not respond to the first level. The tertiary level (few students) includes highly individualized plans for students who did not respond to the first two levels.
- 6. Screen universally and monitor student performance and progress continuously.** There should be a plan for collecting data to evaluate PBS outcomes, wherein data are collected as scheduled and used to evaluate effectiveness for future adjustments.

Building a Team. Florida's Positive Behavior Support Project (2005) outlines a SWPBS process that can provide a systematic structure and formalized procedures that can be implemented over the summer. The initial steps to be taken should be to establish and get all staff to buy in. Establish a schoolwide leadership team or behavior support team. The suggestion is to not develop yet another group but to fold SWPBS into the roles and responsibilities of an already established team. Members of the team should include administrators (i.e., principal, assistant principal, or dean), counselors, social workers, regular education teachers, special education teachers, members with behavior expertise, and a coach/district representative. It is vital that the administration supports the process, takes an active role as does the rest of the team, and/or attends most meetings.

Determining School Capacity. Other important implementation consideration points center around gauging and developing the school's individual and collective capacities to implement a comprehensive program. Related initial key questions include the following:

- What are the schoolwide social expectations, routines, and related processes?
- Who at the schoolwide level has the unique disposition necessary to both firmly hold students accountable and support them as they attempt to adjust with fidelity?
- What are the procedural expectations of teachers for managing in-class behaviors?
- What manageable recourses do teachers have for patterns of and/or extremely disruptive and disrespectful instances of behavior "in the moment" (i.e., immediate referrals to a dean/counselor/administration, in-school "timeout room," or other and the criteria for reentry)?
- What is the specific, realistic, and manageable continuum of interventions and supports?

- What is the specific, realistic, and manageable continuum of consequences for patterns of disruptive in-class behavior?
- How will the efficacy of chosen interventions and supports be intermittently monitored and adjusted as needed in a data-driven manner? Who is responsible for this?
- What are the mechanisms for notifying and collaborating with students' parents/ caregivers in the process early and often? Who is responsible for this (i.e., teachers, counselors, social workers, deans, or administrators)?
- What are the thresholds for more severe consequences/privilege losses for patterns of disruptive behaviors?
- What outside resources are available to support students and families struggling with issues that are affecting students' behavior but well outside of the school's capacity to address?
- What privileges and incentives (i.e., extracurricular activities, athletics, field trips, social activities, and related routines) are currently in place that can serve as points of leverage?
- Does more need to be identified or developed?
- How are students who actively exhibit established desirable social behaviors formally recognized?
- Perhaps most importantly, how are those actively attempting to make sustained social adjustments formally recognized and supported (without stigmatizing)?

Positive Behavior Support in the Classroom

- Classroom is arranged to minimize crowding and distraction.
- Classroom has explicit routines and directions that are linked to schoolwide routines and direction.
- Post three to five positively stated expectations and teach and reinforce them.
- Provide frequent acknowledgement of appropriate behaviors.
- Students have multiple opportunities to respond and participate during instruction.
- Teacher actively supervises class during instruction.
- Ignore or provide quick, direct, explicit reprimands/redirections in response to inappropriate behavior.
- Multiple strategies are in place to acknowledge appropriate behavior (e.g., points or praise) linked to schoolwide strategies.
- Specific feedback is given in response to social and academic errors and correct responses.

Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support in an Urban High School: A Case Study

A study to examine impact of SWPBS was conducted by the Chicago Public Schools over three years, with the implementation high school serving an estimated 1,800 students during the first year of the study. The school served a diverse student body with the following racial and ethnic composition: 36 percent black, 36 percent Hispanic, 16 percent Asian American, 8 percent Caucasian, 2 percent Native American, and 2 percent other, with 21 percent demonstrating limited English proficiency. In addition, 89 percent qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, and 20 percent were identified as students with disabilities.

The results of the study revealed that it took about two years for the school to fully implement all the components of the SWPBS plan. However, by the third year, the average rate of daily discipline referrals had been reduced by 20 percent. Successful implementation strategies cited by the school included the following:

- Convening a PBS team with various stakeholders from the school (e.g., administrator, educator, parents, and students) for a day of training and to develop an action plan
- Conducting a summer trial intervention with about 100 students during a summer activity to test teaching systems using positive behavior expectations
- Providing teachers with key products, such as sample copies of social skills lesson plans, posters reflecting schoolwide behavior expectations, and sample syllabi
- Conducting grade-level assemblies to introduce rationales for the expected behavior and provide opportunities to practice positive and negative examples of specific behaviors (i.e., respectful walking in the hallway)
- A system of rewards, including redeemable “acknowledgment” tickets that could be awarded to individual students for exhibiting positive behavior
- Holding schoolwide celebrations that were contingent on the overall reduction of disciplinary referrals

(Retrieved August 15, 2011, from http://www.redorbit.com/news/education/596879/schoolwide_application_of_positive_behavior_support_in_an_urban_high/)

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