Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools
Second Edition

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Presentation Overview

- Review the revision process of the Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools Resource
- Highlight areas of new discussion
- Examine implementation ideas for the characteristics
  - Present key ideas & talking points
  - Suggest group participation using modified jigsaw
Nine Characteristics Resource -- 2nd Ed.
Review Process

- Reviewers examined original document & suggested revisions & new resources.
- Author reviewed recent research studies & professional literature.
- Author revised document to expand & deepen the discussion of the characteristics.
- OSPI documents were added to pertinent characteristics.
- Reviewers read & commented on second edition.
Conclusions from review

- The original research-base has not changed; nine characteristics are still viable, thus maintained.
- Characteristics are explained and developed for deeper understanding.
- Implementation ideas are expanded using current research and professional literature.
- Graphic illustrates relationships between & among characteristics.
- School improvement cycle of inquiry is suggested.
- Schools and districts must move beyond planning to doing to close the “knowing-doing gap.”
Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools

1. A clear & shared focus
2. High standards & expectations for all students
3. Effective school leadership
4. High levels of collaboration & communication
5. Curriculum, instruction & assessments aligned with state standards
Nine Characteristics (continued)

6. Frequent monitoring of learning & teaching
7. Focused professional development
8. A supportive learning environment
9. High levels of family & community involvement
Relationships among characteristics

School/Community

Goals
1. Clear and shared focus
2. High standards and expectations

Processes
4. Collaboration and communication
5. Alignment with state standards
6. Monitoring of learning and teaching

State

Supports
7. Focused professional development
8. Supportive learning environment
9. Family and community involvement

District

Nation
Second Edition: Expanded Concepts

1. Effective processes for improving schools
2. Expanded perspectives on effective leadership
3. Relational trust
4. Quality instruction, grading practices, monitoring
5. Professional learning communities
Expanded Concepts (cont.)

6. Cultural competence & culturally responsive teaching
7. Family & community engagement in schools
8. High school improvement
9. District improvement
10. Need-based allocation of resources (funding, staffing, & support)
1. A Clear & Shared Focus

- A core purpose -- focus on student learning
  - Creates shared emphasis for direction
  - Includes vision and specific goals
  - Involves school and community

- Improvement cycle
  - Data analyzed to set goals and objectives
  - Identify & implement activities, programs
  - Evaluate & renew efforts to sustain improvement

- Leaders establish & maintain focus
2. High Standards & Expectations for All Students

- Content standards, performance standards, expectations:
  - Standards – academic purpose of school & high quality achievement
  - Expectations – confidence that students will meet the content and performance standards
  - Required knowledge & skills for workplace & college have converged

- Teacher expectations conveyed through practices:
  - Collaborative practices—common lessons, assessments, looking at student work
  - Effective questioning strategies
  - Authentic pedagogy, minds-on student engagement
  - Fair & equitable treatment of students
3. Effective School Leadership

- Leadership includes administrators, teachers, & others in school & districts
- Leadership depends upon relationships & shared goals
- Effective leadership is
  - Distributed
  - Sustainable
  - Collaborative across schools & districts
- Effective leadership builds and involves
  - Relational trust, the “social glue” for school improvement
  - Changes in attitudes, beliefs, & values about student learning
- Collaborative professional learning communities—a culture for school improvement & changing practices
4. High Levels of Collaboration & Communication

- **Staff collaboration includes**
  - Talking about practice
  - Observing each other
  - Working on curriculum
  - Teaching each other

- **Professional Learning Communities promote**
  - A climate of support, respect, cycle of feedback
  - Identification & commitment to common learning standards
  - Common lessons and assessments
  - Capacity of staff & increased teacher efficacy
  - Caring and positive relationships among staff and student
  - Higher quality of student learning
Effective family, community, and school collaboration and communication requires:

- Schools to take responsibility for communication to include:
  - Listening to the public & creating dialogue
  - Ensuring two-way regular, clear communication
  - Building partnerships to promote the well-being of students
  - Providing multiple means for communicating with stakeholders, e.g., newsletters, home visits, electronic communications
5. Curriculum, instruction & assessments aligned with state standards.

- Alignment of curriculum, instruction & assessment adds coherence & effectiveness – levels the playing field for students
- Deep alignment includes
  - Matching topics
  - Matching cognitive demand in the standards (EALRs & GLEs)
  - Matching contexts (instructional conditions & tasks)
Alignment of state standards—cont.

- Curriculum is subject matter; textbooks are tools, not the curriculum

- Washington curriculum includes
  - Essential academic learning requirements
  - Grade level expectations

- Curriculum planning processes, e.g.,
  - Understanding by design
  - Unwrapping standards
  - Universal design for learning
Effective instruction has greatest influence on student achievement.

Effective instruction -- interactions among teachers & students around content within a specific context or environment.

Teaching can be improved by understanding & using:

- Frameworks of attributes & behaviors of effective teachers & teaching
- Dimensions & principles of learning
- Standards for authentic pedagogy
- Instructional strategies & structures
- Culturally responsive teaching and cultural competence
Alignment of state standards—cont.

- Assessment must align with learning targets (standards) and purposes
  - Assessments should focus on key knowledge & complex learning
- Assessments FOR learning are formative, not summative
  - Formative assessments guide further student learning & teaching
- Assessments methods include
  - Selected response
  - Essay
  - Performance assessments
  - Personal communication
Alignment of state standards—cont.

- Grading and reporting practices in a high standards system
  - Align with the principles of standards-based reform
  - Link appropriately with criteria in EALRs & GLEs
  - Communicate individual student achievement accurately
    - Grades should not reflect other topics such as behavior, absences, attitude, or participation
6. Frequent Monitoring of Learning & Teaching

- Monitoring is “analyzing what we are doing against the results we are getting” & wanting (Schmoker, 1996)
  - Measures provide feedback to teachers, learners & stakeholders about learning & school & class processes

- Effective monitoring is non-threatening, occurs frequently, provides continuous feedback for improvement

- For assessments to effectively monitor student learning, consider
  - Assessment standards, purposes & methods
  - Measurement tools
  - Assessment FOR learning
  - Student-involved assessment
  - Scoring guides or rubrics
  - Evidence of learning
Frequent monitoring of learning & teaching—cont.

- Monitoring & communicating student learning require
  - Coherent grading & reporting practices
    - Use grades to communicate an accurate picture of real student achievement
    - Grade only on achievement of pre-specified targets
    - Rely on most current, available information
    - Keep grading practices separate from discipline
    - Advise students on grading practices in advance
Frequent monitoring of learning & teaching—cont.

- Monitoring school & classroom processes includes
  - Collecting information
  - Examining progress toward school goals
- Effective monitoring requires
  - Trusting relationships
  - Safe & secure environment
  - Explicit valuing of individuals
  - Attention to student learning needs
- Critical questions for school teams to ask:
  - What is it we want all students to learn?
  - How will we know when each student has learned it?
  - How will we respond when students are experiencing difficulty? (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, 2004)
Frequent monitoring of learning & teaching—cont.

- Monitoring & Reflection tools
  - STAR Search – skills/knowledge, thinking, application & relationships
  - Classroom “walk-throughs” – reciprocal, reflective, designed to support thinking about practice
    - Characteristics of walk-throughs:
      - Short, focused, yet informal observation
      - Identify possible area for reflection
      - Have curriculum & instructional focus
      - Follow-up occurs occasionally, not after every visit
      - Informal & collaborative, not inspection
7. Focused Professional Development

- High standards require teachers to develop deeper knowledge & new skills
- Effective professional development should be evaluated in relation to impact on student learning & improvement of teaching
- Learner-centered professional development is
  - Focused on what students are to learn
  - School-based, integral to daily work, job-embedded
  - Identified by teachers and often developed by them
  - Continuous, on-going, with follow-up & support
  - Evaluated by multiple sources of information on outcomes for students, not only participant satisfaction
- Washington Professional Development IN ACTION
  - A career-long continuum reflecting teacher capacity
  - Linked to impact on student learning
Focused professional development—cont.

- Approaches for professional development:
  - Mentoring & peer support
  - Teacher inquiry—study groups, action research
  - Lesson study & looking at student work
  - Walk-throughs

- Professional learning communities tend to
  - Reduce teacher isolation
  - Increase commitment
  - Build shared responsibility
  - Increase understanding of content & good practice
  - Lead to more satisfaction, professional renewal
  - Help make significant advances into adapting teaching to students’ needs

- Specific OSPI program professional development ideas
8. Supportive Learning Environment

- Positive school climate & culture is marked by:
  - Reasonable expectations for behavior
  - Consistent & fair application of rules & regulations
  - Caring responsive relationships among adults & students
- Warm, inviting classrooms—teachers as “warm demanders”—high standards with sufficient support
- Safe & personalized learning environments tend to:
  - Communicate high expectations
  - Provide time & opportunity for students to achieve
  - Attend to students’ interests, problems, accomplishments
  - Communicate caring & build rapport with students
  - Use culturally responsive pedagogy
  - Help students understand effort-based ability
Support learning environment—cont.

- Skillful classroom management contributes to positive climate & makes good intellectual work possible
- Positive relationships & productive learning communities seem to impact classroom climate to greater degree than discipline policies alone
- Effective classroom management strategies include
  - Teaching & reinforcing positive behaviors & skills
  - Appropriate physical layout
  - Specific, clear classroom routines & procedures
    - Explain, rehearse, reinforce classroom routines
    - Planned transitions between activities
  - Consistent standards across the school
9. High Level of Family & Community Involvement

- Education is the shared responsibility of all stakeholders
- Family involvement is a key factor in students’ improved learning
- “Authentic partnerships” – significant engagement of families, schools, and communities
- Partnerships need to be culturally relevant & build on “common ground”
High level of family & community involvement—cont.

- Schools offer multiple ways for stakeholders to participate, including these types of involvement:
  - Communicating—regular, meaningful two-way communication
  - Parenting—promoting & supporting family skills
  - Student learning—assisting student learning
  - Volunteering—supporting & assisting students & schools
  - School decision making & advocacy
  - Collaborating—using community resources
High level of family & community involvement—cont.

- Schools have responsibility to take the lead & help parents & families to
  - Understand they SHOULD be involved
  - Know they are CAPABLE of making a contribution
  - Feel INVITED by the school & their children.

- Community involvement benefits students, schools & families through
  - formal partnerships
  - informal relationships & activities

- Involvement resources are plentiful
School Perception Surveys

- Perception surveys are designed for school & district use
  - They capture respondents’ thinking at a point in time
  - They provide one type of data for school improvement planning

- Surveys include
  - School Staff Survey of School Characteristics
  - Student Surveys—High School grades, Middle grades, Elementary grades
  - Parent/Community Survey
Group Participation
Modified Jigsaw

- Organize in small groups by grade level or content areas
- Read assigned sections from the Nine Characteristics Resource
- Jigsaw discussion
- Use sample questions to guide discussion & apply to school setting
- Follow-up reflection
Discussion Questions

- What are one or two compelling ideas in the section?
- What are the implications of these ideas in our/your classroom or school?
- What potential obstacles are there to implement the ideas? What will it take to overcome the obstacles?
- What ideas need more investigation? What is an unanswered question?
“Jumpstart” School Improvement by focusing on Implementation of Nine Characteristics

Try using short meetings of teams, grade level teachers, or faculty, with suggested agenda:

- Before the meeting --
  - Develop an agenda; name facilitator, timekeeper, recorder
- During the meeting --
  - Desired outcomes for meeting (1 minute)
  - Strategies that worked (5 minutes)
  - Chief challenges (3-5 minutes)
  - Proposed solutions (8-10 minutes)
  - Action plan (10 minutes)
    - Specific solutions to focus on between now & next meeting.
    - Determine who is responsible for specific tasks
- After the meeting – document team’s focus
  (Schmoker, Results: The Key to Continuous School Improvement, 1999)