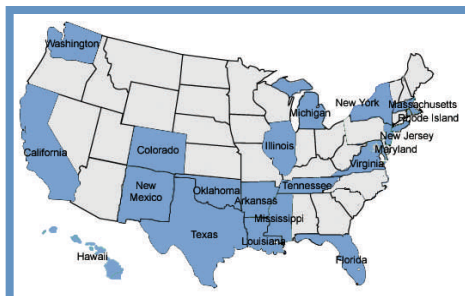


Just for the Kids

Best Practice Studies and Institutes: Findings from 20 States



Why are some schools helping more students reach higher standards than other schools?

To answer that question, we spoke with district leaders, principals, and teachers at high- and average-performing schools across the country. From Lunalilo Elementary School in Hawaii to Von Steuben Middle School in Illinois to Palm Bay Senior High School in Florida, our researchers examined the practices of educators in schools that were consistently outperforming their peers. Those practices are the subject of this report.

This report explores the possibility of reaching higher standards for all students in all schools and suggests the principles and practices for doing so. Of course, moving any school system from knowing what high-performing systems do, to doing what high-performing systems do is a complex process. Strong agreement about what high-performing systems do will begin to bring some order to that process.

Using the structure of the National Center for Educational Accountability's (NCEA) Best Practice Framework, this report presents the practices of high-performing schools in each state. Though a full report of our findings follows, we want to share an overview of just a few of those practices here.

One practice, which relates to the Framework theme of **Curriculum and Academic Goals**, is the pursuit of rigorous course content across a broad range of academic levels in high-performing schools. This includes higher expectations for the work of students characterized as "average" or "below average," more aggressive efforts to enroll borderline students in advanced classes, and more frequent access to the school's top teachers for average students. At Dr. Michael M. Krop Senior High School in Florida, educators said that the "culture of high expectations is applied to students at all performance levels, not just to the academically advanced." Students in all academic courses expect homework assignments that require approximately two hours of time each day to complete for each class.

Within the Framework theme of **Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building**, the quality of instructional collaboration was the most significant factor noted in high-performing schools. Selma High School in California has instituted "focus lesson meetings." During these meetings, administrators and teachers from at least two departments gather, and one staff member shares a lesson. The team discusses instructional strategies and materials that might enhance the lesson. This "Focus Lesson" is then delivered to all students in at least one of each participating staff member's classes. At the end of the lesson, a common assessment is given. Then the full group discusses the resulting student achievement data.

"Differentiation, not remediation" is a statement we heard continually when querying our high-performing schools about the Framework theme **Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements**. Using flexible grouping with an intense focus on individual learners, educators in New

York told us they had shifted from placing students in appropriate programs to providing appropriate [differentiated] instruction within every classroom. Another high-impact practice in some Oklahoma schools is “looping,” in which a teacher from one grade follows her students to the subsequent grade. Teachers told us that looping allows them to continue the successful approaches to meeting their students’ needs. Schools in Illinois and New Jersey also encourage looping.

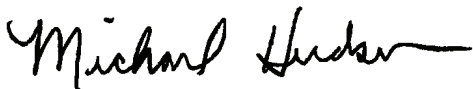
In New Jersey, Mullica Township Primary School places a strong emphasis on writing. Students begin daily journal writing in kindergarten and are proficient, confident writers by the time they reach third grade. The school has its own “post office,” and mail is delivered throughout the day. The principal occasionally uses student writing in faculty meetings, placing anonymous samples on the overhead projector to provide teachers with professional development in evaluating student writing samples. Teachers then share these evaluations with their students. Through peer evaluation and via the school’s mail system, students, teachers, and administrators are building their own learning community.

Though state assessments vary from state to state, and though most of the schools we studied use a wide variety of additional assessments, all of the high-performing schools we visited draw data from multiple assessments and use those data to inform every decision. These practices are described within the Framework theme of **Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data**. Educators in virtually every state gave examples of how their focus on data had altered curriculum and instruction in their schools.

Finally, to address the Framework theme **Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment**, we surveyed interviewees about their practices in response to student success or the need for additional assistance. Educators in California, Illinois, Florida, New York, and Texas told us that, with greater frequency, what they once considered “interventions” are now integral fibers of the primary structures and strategies in every classroom for every student.

We’ve described some of the highlights from the study, but there is much more in the following reports. As you read this work, you’re likely to find a school among these high-performers that is demographically similar to yours. And among the descriptions, you’re likely to find schools that share some of the concerns you have at your school or in your district. We encourage you to consider how some of these best practices might help you and your students achieve even the most ambitious of your academic goals.

Sincerely,



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The National Center for Educational Accountability is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (EIN 01-0577238) whose founding organizations include Just for the Kids, The University of Texas at Austin, and the Education Commission of the States.

High-Quality Instruction

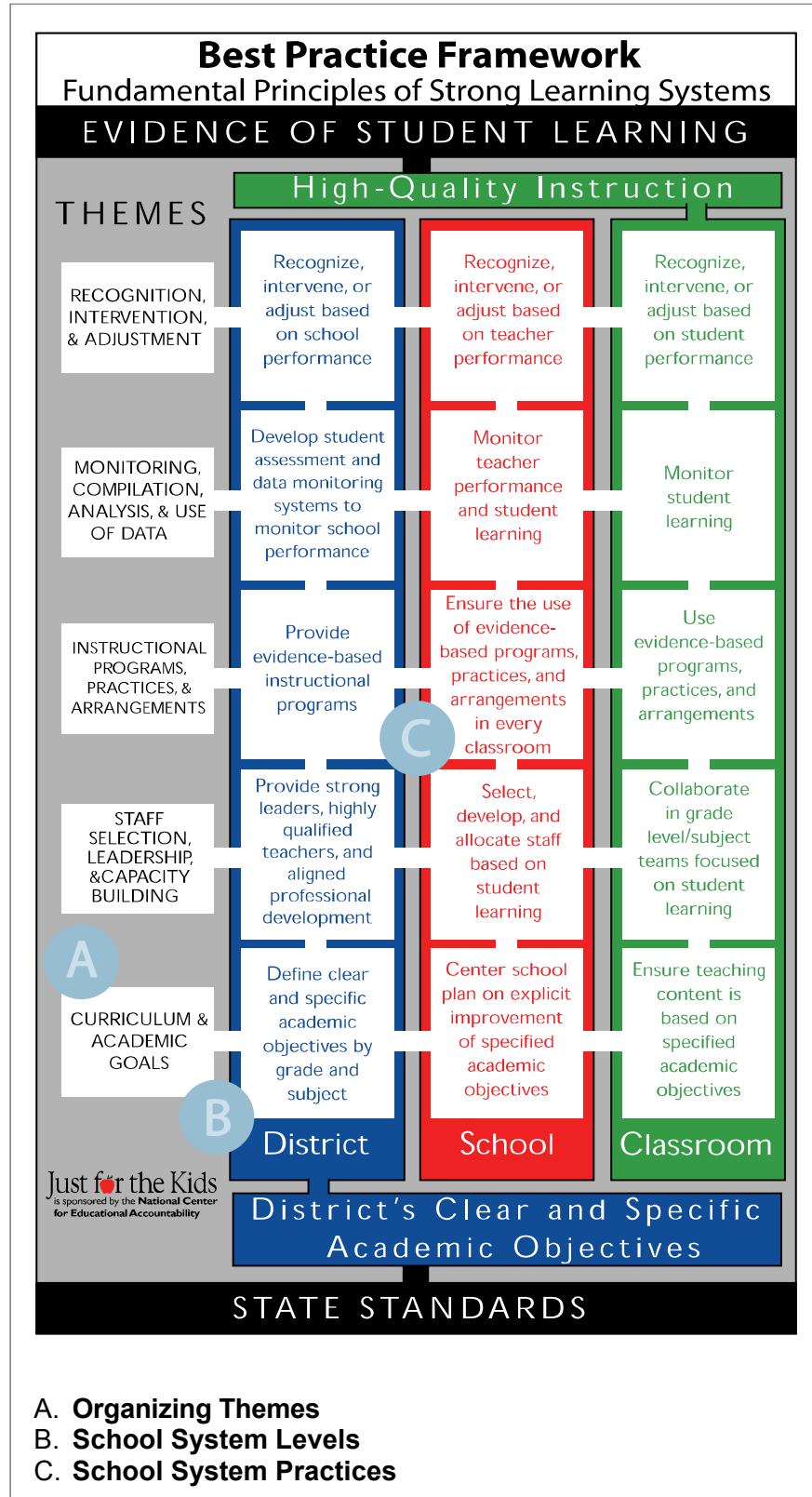
The placement of high-quality instruction across all school levels at the top of the Framework is significant and deliberate. Often, instruction is viewed solely as the concern of classroom teachers. In the Framework, quality instruction is supported systemically by district and school practices as well.

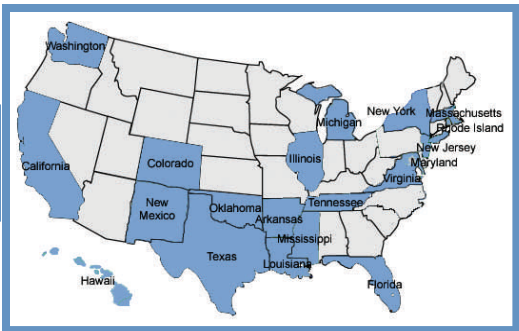
The Big Picture

It is important to remember that grasping the big picture helps us make sense of the individual pieces. Using a jigsaw puzzle analogy, knowing how any particular piece fits into the finished puzzle is often determined by studying the entire picture. In the absence of a *big picture* for a school system, each practice stands alone. And yet, the way these practices relate to, interact with, or reinforce one another is equally important. Therefore, the interconnectedness of practices is critical in the NCEA Framework.

Flexible Application

The Framework represents the general principles found in higher performing school systems more often than or in different quality than average-performing ones. Variability among districts, schools, and classrooms requires the flexible application of deep general principles; the NCEA Framework should not be interpreted as a prescriptive list of programs to adopt or strategies to employ.





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Best Practice Studies and Institutes: Findings from 20 States

Best Practice Studies compared the schools listed with three to five consistently average-performing schools in the same state. Best Practice Institutes included focus groups with only consistently higher performing schools.

Arkansas – Middle School Study

School	School District
Barton Junior High	El Dorado
Cabot Middle School South	Cabot
Hamburg Junior High	Hamburg
Harrison Middle	Harrison
L.A. Chaffin Junior High	Fort Smith
Lakeside Junior High	Lakeside
Nettleton Intermediate Center	Nettleton
Southwest Middle School	Searcy
Westside Middle School	Westside
Woodland Junior High	Fayetteville

Florida – High School Study

School	School District
Astronaut Senior High	Brevard County
Bayside Senior High	Brevard County
Design & Architectural Senior High	Miami-Dade County
Dr. Michael M. Krop Senior High	Miami-Dade County
Fort Walton Beach High	Okaloosa County
New Smyrna Beach High	Volusia County
Niceville Senior High	Okaloosa County
Palm Bay Senior High	Brevard County
Paxon School for Advanced Studies	Duval County
Pompano Beach High School Institute	Broward County

California – High School Study

School	School District
Bolsa Grande High School	Garden Grove Unified
Central Union High School	Central Union High
Cleveland High School	Los Angeles Unified
El Monte High School	El Monte Union High
Los Angeles Center for Enriched Studies	Los Angeles Unified
Marysville Charter Academy for the Arts	Marysville Joint Unified
Middle College High School	West Contra Costa Unified
Selma High School	Selma Unified
Sherman Oaks Center for Enriched Studies	Los Angeles Unified
Southwest High School	Central Union High

Hawaii – Elementary School Study

School	Complex Area
'Aikahi Elementary	Kailua-Kalaheo
'Aina Haina Elementary	Farrington-Kaiser
Lunalilo Elementary	Kaimuki-Kalani
Ma'ema'e Elementary	McKinley-Roosevelt
Momilani Elementary	Nanakulii-Pearl City-Waipahu
Nimitz Elementary	Aiea-Moanalua-Radford
Noelani Elementary	McKinley-Roosevelt
Solomon Elementary	Leilehua-Mililani-Waiialua
Waiakea Elementary	Hilo-Laupahoehoe-Waiakea

Colorado – Elementary School Study

School	School District
Haaff Elementary	Pueblo School District 60
Ignacio Elementary	Ignacio School District 11 JT
Ignacio Intermediate	Ignacio School District 11 JT
Lois Lenski Elementary	Littleton Public Schools
South Park Elementary	Pueblo School District 60

Best Practice Studies and Institutes: Findings from 20 States

Illinois – Elementary and Middle School Study

Elementary School	School District
Giant City Elementary	Giant City
Irving Elementary	Berwyn South
Sunset Hills Elementary	Pekin
Unity Point Elementary	Unity Point
Vienna Elementary	Vienna
Whittier Primary	Peoria
Middle School	School District
A.M. Jackson Math and Science Academy	East St. Louis
Central Junior High	Belleville
Edison Junior High	Pekin
Sullivan Middle	Sullivan
Von Steuben Middle	Peoria
West Junior High	Belleville

Michigan – Elementary Best Practice Institute

School	School District
C.L.K. Elementary	Calumet
Deckerville Elementary	Deckerville
Joyce Elementary	Detroit City
North Godwin Elementary	Godwin Heights
Randels Elementary	Carman-Ainsworth

Mississippi – Elementary Best Practice Institute

School	School District
Arthur W. Watson, Jr. Elementary	Claiborne
Columbia Primary	Columbia
East Corinth Elementary	Corinth
Power APAC Elementary	Jackson
Waynesboro Elementary	Wayne County

Louisiana – Elementary Best Practice Institute

School	School District
G.T. Woods Elementary	Jefferson Parish
Glendale Elementary	St. Landry Parish
Glynn H. Brock Elementary	St. Tammany Parish
Jessie D. Clifton Elementary	Calcasieu Parish
Sicity Island Elementary	Catahoula Parish

New Jersey – Elementary Best Practice Study

School	School District
Ann Street Elementary	Newark
Lillian M. Dunfee Elementary	Barnegat Township
Moorestown Upper Elementary	Moorestown Township
Mount Vernon Elementary	Newark
Mullica Township Primary	Mullica Township
Osage Elementary	Voorhees Township
Robert Treat Academy	Charter School
Roberto Clemente Elementary	Paterson
Watchung Elementary	Montclair
Woodrow Wilson Elementary	Union City

Maryland – Elementary Best Practice Institute

School	School District
Cromwell Valley Elementary	Baltimore County
Mars Estates Elementary	Baltimore County
Millington Elementary	Kent County
Ocean City Elementary	Worcester County
Seabrook Elementary	Prince George's County

New Mexico – Elementary Best Practice Institute

School	School District
Booker T. Washington Elementary	Las Cruces
Chimayo Elementary	Espanola
Dolores Gonzales Elementary	Albuquerque
Enos Garcia Elementary	Taos
Katherine Gallegos Elementary	Los Lunas

Massachusetts – Elementary Best Practice Institute

School	School District
Crocker Elementary	Fitchburg
Glenwood Elementary	Springfield
Hyannis West Elementary	Barnstable
Richard J. Murphy School	Boston

Best Practice Studies and Institutes: Findings from 20 States

New York – Elementary Best Practice Study

School	School District
Charles A. Upson Elementary	Lockport City
George M. Davis Elementary	New Rochelle City
Gotham Avenue Elementary	Elmont Union Free
Lawrence Avenue Elementary	Potsdam Central
Mannsville Manor Elementary	South Jefferson Central
Naples Elementary	Naples Central
Smallwood Drive Elementary	Amherst Central
Traphagen Elementary	Mount Vernon City
Ulysses Byas Elementary	Roosevelt Union Free
Webster Elementary	Syracuse City

Oklahoma – Elementary Best Practice Study

School	School District
Collins Elementary	Bristow
Grand View Elementary	Grand View
Huston Center Elementary	Blackwell
Jay Elementary	Jay
Lincoln Elementary	El Reno
Lookeba-Sickles Elementary	Lookeba-Sickles
Madison Elementary	Norman
McKinley Elementary	Enid
Owen Elementary	Tulsa
Pershing Elementary	Muskogee

Rhode Island – Elementary Best Practice Institute

School	School District
Bradford Elementary	Westerly
Chester W. Barrows School	Cranston
Francis J. Varieur School	Pawtucket
Hope Valley Elementary	Chariho Regional
Tiogue School	Coventry

Tennessee – Elementary Best Practice Study

School	School District
Hamilton Elementary	Memphis City
Hazelwood Elementary	Clarksville-Montgomery County
Norman Smith Elementary	Clarksville-Montgomery County
Riverview Elementary	Memphis City

Texas – High School Best Practice Study

School	School District
Hidalgo High	Hidalgo
Richardson High	Richardson
Tuloso-Midway High	Tuloso-Midway

Virginia – Elementary Best Practice Institute

School	School District
Bensley Elementary	Chesterfield County
Birdneck Elementary	Virginia Beach City
George Mason Elementary	Alexandria City
Lebanon Elementary	Russell County
Robert S. Payne Elementary	Lynchburg City

Washington – High School Best Practice Study

School	School District
Friday Harbor High	San Juan
Inglemoor High	Northshore
Lewis & Clark High	Spokane
Nathan Hale High	Seattle
Olympia High	Olympia

National Center for Educational Accountability

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