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Accountability**

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Just for the Kids, Oklahoma Elementary School Best Practice Study, 2004-05

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

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Just for the Kids, Oklahoma

Elementary School Best Practice Study, 2004-2005

The Study

The Oklahoma Elementary School Study was part of a larger national research study to investigate the practices of schools that consistently outperform their peers. Research teams studied schools in 20 states to identify key practices of consistently higher performing schools in a variety of policy contexts.

In Oklahoma, research teams investigated 10 consistently higher performing and five average-performing elementary schools to determine the differences in practices between higher and average-performing elementary schools. Schools were identified through an in-depth analysis of academic achievement developed by the National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) using data publicly available from the state.

Conducted by the Oklahoma Commission for Educational Leadership, the 2004-2005 Oklahoma Elementary School Study received funding from The Oklahoma Business and Education Coalition, AT&T, State Farm, IBM, and The Broad Foundation.

Research teams used site-based interviews and observations, as well as the analysis of supportive documentation, to investigate the practices of each of the 15 schools in the study. District-, school-, and classroom-level practices were studied using the five themes of NCEA's Best Practice Framework: Curriculum and Academic Goals; Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building; Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements; Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data; and Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment.

The Summary

Research teams wrote individual case studies about each studied school. Summary findings across the cases are presented in this report. Major findings from each case are presented first to provide a brief picture of each higher performing school studied. The composite picture of Best Practice Findings in Oklahoma, based on differences detected between higher performing and average-performing schools, follows with examples from individual schools.

This report is a synthesis of findings including direct quotes and summary information drawn from case studies written by researchers with the Oklahoma Commission for Educational Leadership (OCEL). The JFTK Best Practice Framework, developed by NCEA, provides the structure for the findings. Information from the OCEL case studies that does not relate to any of the five themes of the JFTK Best Practice Framework is not represented in this report. **Boldfaced** attributes listed in the "Findings" section of this report represent inferences made by NCEA researchers during the evaluation of the case studies. Those attributes may not necessarily coincide with those inferred by OCEL researchers.



Just for the Kids, Oklahoma

Elementary School Best Practice Study, 2004-2005

The School Identification Process

To study the practices of consistently higher performing schools, one must first identify those schools and compare their practices with those in a group of average-performing schools with similar demographics. The contrast between the practices in the two groups of schools is the focus of this study.

NCEA used publicly available student achievement data from the Oklahoma State Department of Education to identify schools that consistently outperformed other schools with similar demographics in reading, mathematics, the arts, geography, U.S. History, and science in the 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04 school years. The analysis included data from the fifth-grade Oklahoma Core Curriculum Tests (OCCTs), as that was the only elementary grade that was tested statewide in those three years.

To identify the schools, NCEA conducted a separate analysis for each subject (reading, mathematics, U.S. History, and science) and year (2002, 2003, and 2004) to learn which schools outperformed their demographic peers on the percentage of students meeting the “Advanced”¹ standard on the state exam. NCEA used a Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analysis to compare each school’s percent of students meeting the standard with the percent that would be “predicted” or “typical” for a school in the state with the same demographics. The demographic and other variables used in this analysis were each school’s percentage of low-income, English Language Learner (ELL), African American, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian students; the size of the school; and the percentage of students tested in the subject and year in question. Normally, NCEA also prefers to take students’ prior year test scores and length of enrollment in the same school into account, but that longitudinal information was not available in Oklahoma.

NCEA ranked each school against the elementary schools in the rest of the state based on the extent to which it outperformed its “predicted” percent of students meeting the “Advanced” standard. For example, a school that outperformed 99% of the schools in “performance relative to predicted” in fifth-grade U.S. History in 2004 would receive a percentile rank of 99 for that subject and year. These ranks were averaged separately for each subject across the three years to produce an overall average performance rank by subject. To be selected as higher performing for the purposes of this study, schools had to have overall average percentile ranks above 75 in reading, mathematics, U.S. History, and science.

¹ The percent “Satisfactory and above” standard was used for U.S. History in 2002 since “Advanced” data were not available that year.



Just for the Kids, Oklahoma

Elementary School Best Practice Study, 2004-2005

The Higher Performing Schools Studied

School	District	2004 Enrollment		2004 School-Wide Demographics							
		Grade Span	No. of Students	African American	Hispanic	White	Asian	Native American	Other	Low Income	ELL
Collins Elementary	Bristow Public Schools	4-5	261	9.6%	1.1%	53.3%	0.0%	36.0%	0.0%	72.0%	3.1%
Grand View Elementary	Grand View Public Schools	K-8*	378	1.1%	1.9%	31.5%	0.5%	65.1%	0.0%	84.1%	7.9%
Huston Center Elementary	Blackwell Public Schools	4-5	222	0.0%	8.6%	41.0%	0.5%	50.0%	0.0%	67.6%	2.7%
Jay Elementary	Jay Public Schools	PK-5	833	0.6%	3.6%	35.4%	0.7%	59.7%	0.0%	82.5%	4.6%
Lincoln Elementary	El Reno Public Schools	PK-5	282	9.6%	18.8%	56.0%	0.4%	15.2%	0.0%	100.0%	17.4%
Lookeba-Sickles Elementary	Lookeba-Sickles Public Schools	PK-8*	154	0.0%	22.7%	61.7%	0.0%	15.6%	0.0%	63.6%	14.9%
Madison Elementary	Norman Public Schools	PK-5	516	12.4%	3.1%	68.2%	8.3%	7.9%	0.1%	62.2%	9.5%
McKinley Elementary	Enid Public Schools	PK-6	309	7.1%	15.9%	71.2%	1.0%	4.9%	0.0%	66.7%	10.7%
Owen Elementary	Tulsa Public Schools	PK-5	429	14.7%	22.1%	48.3%	0.7%	14.2%	0.0%	88.8%	15.4%
Pershing Elementary	Muskogee Public Schools	K-6	345	30.1%	2.0%	38.0%	2.3%	27.5%	0.1%	76.2%	5.2%

* Although Grand View and Lookeba-Sickles Elementary Schools contain eighth grades, they were identified as being consistently higher performing based on performance in fifth grade.

Student enrollment and most demographic data are taken from the Just for the Kids-OK 2004 website. Site visits were conducted in Spring 2005.



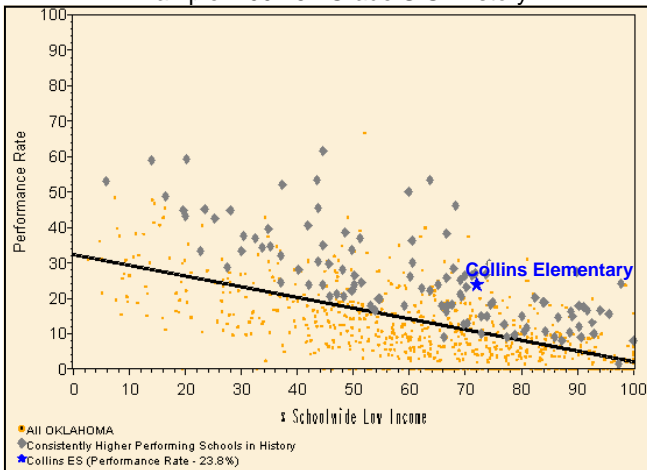
Collins Elementary School Bristow Public Schools

Just for the Kids, Oklahoma NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Collins Elementary School, which serves 261 fourth- and fifth-grade students, is one of two elementary schools in Bristow Public Schools (1,686 students). Collins's student population is 53.3% White, 36.0% Native American, 9.6% African American, and 1.1% Hispanic. Within this student population, 3.1% are English Language Learners, and 72.0% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 5th Grade U.S. History



Consistent Higher Performance

Collins Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in mathematics, reading, U.S. History, and science in an analysis that included all fifth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each grade and year, Collins Elementary School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 92.4 in mathematics, 90.5 in reading, 88.4 in U.S. History, and 92.7 in science.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	5	5	5	
Mathematics	90	99	89	92.4
Reading	78	98	95	90.5
U.S. History	67	98	99	88.4
Science	84	99	95	92.7

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

According to a Collins Elementary School teacher, "We *are* the curriculum; we create it, we revise it, we own it, and we blame ourselves when it doesn't work." Academic goals are identified horizontally by grade-level teams and vertically in content-area planning meetings that are initiated by the high school content area representative, but include active participation by all school levels. The principal (who has served the district for 31 years) and the teachers are closely tied to both the community and the students of Collins. A school priority is to maximize instructional time through the effective and efficient use of every moment. The district provides data management resources while school leaders and teachers analyze the data to inform instruction. The principal forwards assessment results to teachers, who pore over the results in search of evidence that affirms present practice or suggests change. Students receive extra help via tutoring, after-school remediation, and summer school.

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Oklahoma.



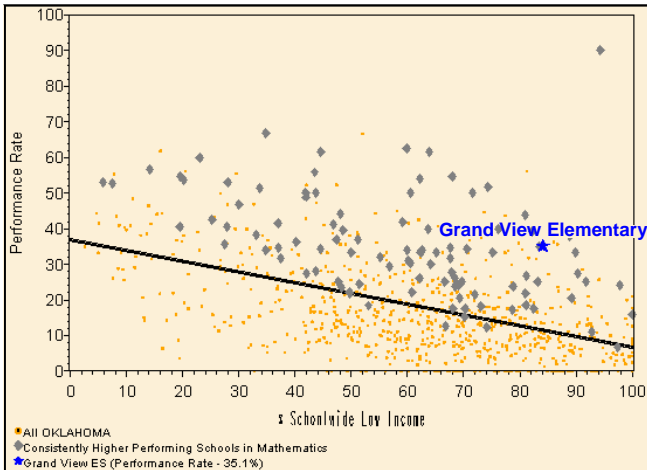
Grand View Elementary School Grand View Public Schools

Just for the Kids, Oklahoma NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Grand View Elementary School, which serves 378 kindergarten through eighth-grade students, is the only school in Grand View Public Schools (378 students). Grand View's student population is 65.1% Native American, 31.5% White, 1.9% Hispanic, 1.1% African American, and 0.5% Asian. Within this student population, 7.9% are English Language Learners, and 84.1% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 5th Grade Mathematics



Consistent Higher Performance

Grand View Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in mathematics, reading, U.S. History, and science in an analysis that included all fifth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each grade and year, Grand View Elementary School demonstrated overall performance ranks of 89.7 in mathematics, 87.7 in reading, 84.9 in U.S. History, and 96.5 in science.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	5	5	5	
Mathematics	86	87	97	89.7
Reading	86	89	89	87.7
U.S. History	75	91	93	84.9
Science	97	95	97	96.5

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

Teachers develop and revise curriculum through workshops, meetings, and county-wide classes. Grade-level collaboration takes place during planning periods, when children are in physical education. The large and well-equipped library is coded for *Accelerated Reader*, and both teachers and the librarian assist students in building reading skills and pursuing appealing and varied literature. Teachers use a combination of *Accelerated Math* and *Saxon Math* as the base for their mathematics instruction. The principal created the school's student data monitoring system using a spreadsheet and results from the ITBS, *Stanford-9*, and criterion-referenced tests. Along with school-level benchmarks, teachers administer at least five assessments per progress report. Most teachers report administering twice that many and using the results for identifying needs to re-teach.

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Oklahoma.



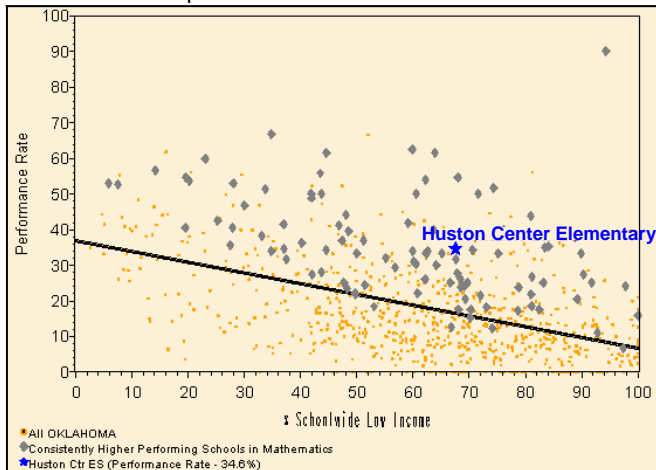
Huston Center Elementary School Blackwell Public Schools

Just for the Kids, Oklahoma NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Huston Center Elementary School, which serves 222 fourth- and fifth-grade students, is one of four elementary schools in Blackwell Public Schools (1,561 students). Huston Center's student population is 50.0% Native American, 41.0% White, 8.6% Hispanic, and 0.5% Asian. Within this student population, 2.7% are English Language Learners, and 67.6% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 5th Grade Mathematics



Consistent Higher Performance

Huston Center Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in mathematics, reading, U.S. History, and science in an analysis that included all fifth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each grade and year, Huston Center Elementary School demonstrated overall performance ranks of 97.1 in mathematics, 94.4 in reading, 85.1 in U.S. History, and 98.7 in science.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	5	5	5	
Mathematics	99	94	98	97.1
Reading	96	90	97	94.4
U.S. History	86	83	86	85.1
Science	98	99	99	98.7

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

Administrators and teachers agree that “the days of having a curriculum guide that sits on the shelf are gone!” Using Oklahoma’s Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS) objectives, state criterion-referenced test results, and state test blueprints, all teachers are involved in the development of the curriculum. Teachers also continually adjust and revise the curriculum, based on district benchmark assessments. The district retained the services of an outside group to facilitate teacher training in using this approach for curriculum design. Seamless transition of instruction is a hallmark of Huston Center. As an example, teachers state that a student with a learning disability may receive services part-time in a pull-out program and part-time in the regular classroom using technological tools as a means of maximizing instructional effectiveness in both formats. Intervention and adjustment of classroom instruction is constant.



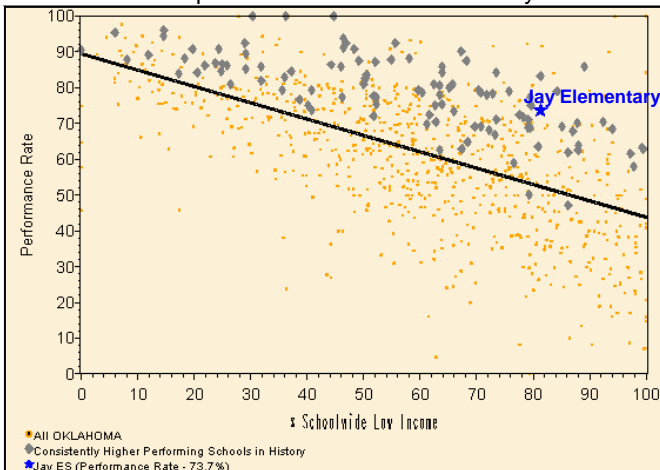
Jay Elementary School Jay Public Schools

Just for the Kids, Oklahoma NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Jay Elementary School, which serves 833 pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade students, is the only elementary school in Jay Public Schools (1,730 students). Jay's student population is 59.7% Native American, 35.4% White, 3.6% Hispanic, 0.7% Asian, and 0.6% African American. Within this student population, 4.6% are English Language Learners, and 82.5% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2002 5th Grade U.S. History



Consistent Higher Performance

Jay Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in mathematics, reading, U.S. History, and science in an analysis that included all fifth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each grade and year, Jay Elementary School demonstrated overall performance ranks of 81.7 in mathematics, 76.8 in reading, 96.0 in U.S. History, and 96.8 in science.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	5	5	5	
Mathematics	67	91	89	81.7
Reading	98	65	64	76.8
U.S. History	97	93	98	96.0
Science	98	99	93	96.8

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

Teachers rely on a scope-and-sequence document developed from the state-required Comprehensive Local Education Plan (CLEP). This document is tightly aligned with the Oklahoma PASS objectives. Teachers continually examine test scores and identify areas of concern. Once identified, curriculum is the first place staff look to make needed changes. Teachers have 45 minutes per day for meeting with colleagues. Lesson plans represent the “daily game plan” at Jay Elementary School. The principal notes, “I am a coach with one ball game. Until the test scores provide evidence that every child is learning, it is my job to urge, encourage, and sometimes pressure teachers to stay on task.” One teacher adds, “You can’t have a cookie-cutter classroom. You have to make your instruction fit the individual child and be flexible in re-teaching, in a modality that resonates with each child, those who do not readily learn a skill or concept.”

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Oklahoma.



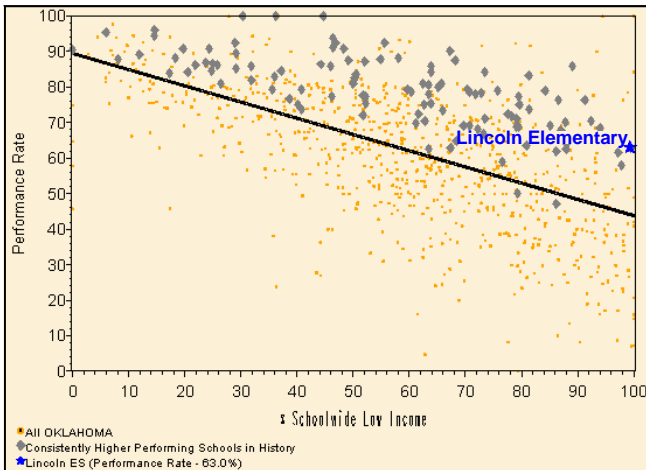
Lincoln Elementary School El Reno Public Schools

Just for the Kids, Oklahoma NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Lincoln Elementary School, which serves 282 pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade students, is one of four elementary schools in El Reno Public Schools (2,551 students). Lincoln's student population is 56.0% White, 18.8% Hispanic, 15.2% Native American, 9.6% African American, and 0.4% Asian. Within this student population, 17.4% are English Language Learners, and 100.0% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2002 5th Grade U.S. History



Consistent Higher Performance

Lincoln Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in mathematics, reading, U.S. History, and science in an analysis that included all fifth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each grade and year, Lincoln Elementary School demonstrated overall performance ranks of 77.8 in mathematics, 87.8 in reading, 79.9 in U.S. History, and 84.9 in science.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	5	5	5	
Mathematics	66	88	83	77.8
Reading	93	86	81	87.8
U.S. History	83	75	82	79.9
Science	72	94	94	84.9

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

District- and school-level leaders see planning as key to curricular design and delivery. That planning must align PASS objectives with the district-identified essential skills, incorporate monthly assessment results into instructional adjustments, and vertically align academic objectives across grade levels. Professional development has included the *Great Expectations* program, Jim Fay's *Teaching with Love and Logic*, Ruby Payne's works on teaching children of poverty, and Harry Wong's works on classroom procedures. Lincoln's principal reports that the data gathered from the district's monthly benchmark assessments, combined with standardized testing and direct observation, give him a good picture of teacher and student performance in his school. One of many intervention strategies at the school is peer tutoring, in which students in a grade level can tutor struggling students in the grade below—and it is *working*, according to school staff.

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Oklahoma.



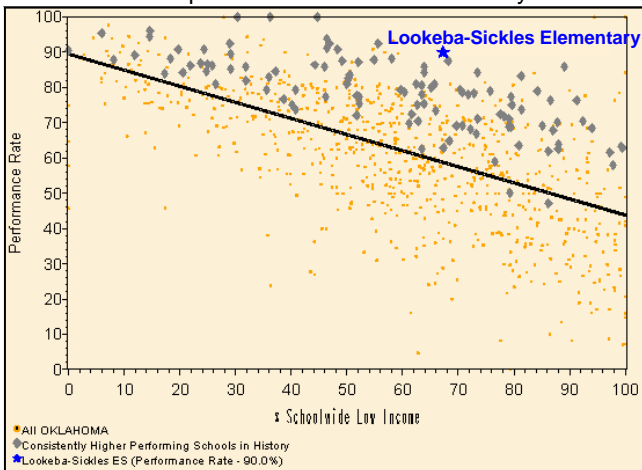
Lookeba-Sickles Elementary School Lookeba-Sickles Public Schools

Just for the Kids, Oklahoma NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Lookeba-Sickles Elementary School, which serves 154 pre-kindergarten through eighth-grade students, is the only elementary school in Lookeba-Sickles Public Schools (222 students). Lookeba-Sickles's student population is 61.7% White, 22.7% Hispanic, and 15.6% Native American. Within this student population, 14.9% are English Language Learners, and 63.6% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2002 5th Grade U.S. History



Consistent Higher Performance

Lookeba-Sickles Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in mathematics, reading, U.S. History, and science in an analysis that included all fifth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each grade and year, Lookeba-Sickles Elementary School demonstrated overall performance ranks of 90.6 in mathematics, 80.8 in reading, 93.0 in U.S. History, and 88.4 in science.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	5	5	5	
Mathematics	86	97	89	90.6
Reading	69	72	95	80.8
U.S. History	87	93	97	93.0
Science	75	89	97	88.4

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

Teachers develop a beginning-of-the-year curriculum map, pacing guide, and benchmark assessments aligned with Oklahoma's PASS objectives, which they follow all year. The principal views the Oklahoma State Department of Education's *Principal Workshops* and the *Great Expectations Principal's Academy* as practical ways to obtain leadership training and maintain an ongoing support network. After being placed on the state's low-performing list, school leaders implemented a detailed planning system that requires each teacher to carefully align instruction with standards and with the state test blueprint. Teachers create notebooks filled with aligned lesson plans, supplemental materials, and benchmark assessments to ensure that critical skills and concepts are taught, assessed, and re-taught when necessary. Although reluctant a first, teachers now embrace the process, which has led to consistently improving student performance.

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Oklahoma.



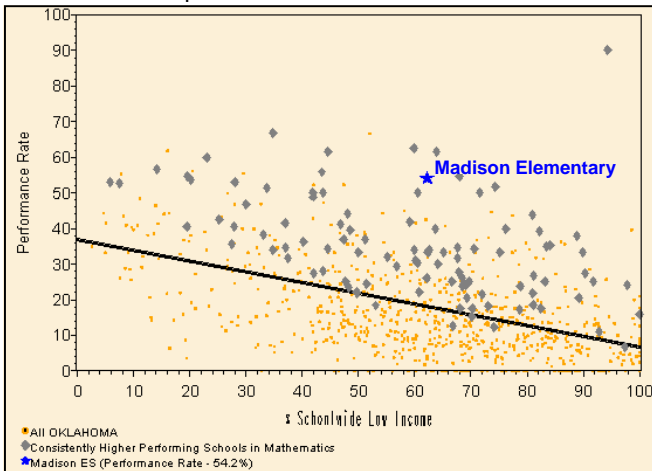
Madison Elementary School Norman Public Schools

Just for the Kids, Oklahoma NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Madison Elementary School, which serves 516 pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade students, is 1 of 15 elementary schools in Norman Public Schools (12,916 students). Madison's student population is 68.2% White, 12.4% African American, 8.3% Asian, 7.9% Native American, 3.1% Hispanic, and 0.1% other. Within this student population, 9.5% are English Language Learners, and 62.2% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 5th Grade Mathematics



Consistent Higher Performance

Madison Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in mathematics, reading, U.S. History, and science in an analysis that included all fifth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each grade and year, Madison Elementary School demonstrated overall performance ranks of 95.8 in mathematics, 94.5 in reading, 85.2 in U.S. History, and 97.0 in science.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	5	5	5	
Mathematics	97	93	97	95.8
Reading	98	85	99	94.5
U.S. History	88	85	81	85.2
Science	97	99	95	97.0

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

The curriculum design and review process includes vertical alignment, curriculum mapping, pacing guides, articulation charts, and methodologies that provide variation according to students' learning styles. Principals meet and study one new instructional method each month. The district provides Carolyn Downing "Walk-Through Training" for school leaders. The training teaches them to evaluate teacher effectiveness through brief, frequent observations. Differentiated instruction is provided to at-risk students and, through the Renzulli model, to gifted students as well. The district monitors performance data using the *Score Analyzer* program, whereas the schools monitor benchmark assessments. The Madison Intervention Team (MIT) builds plans for students who are not responding to classroom interventions long before they are referred for diagnostic testing.

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Oklahoma.



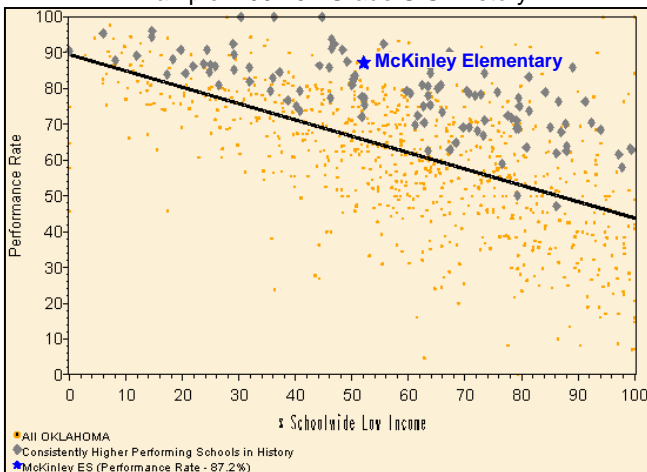
McKinley Elementary School Enid Public Schools

Just for the Kids, Oklahoma NCEA Executive Summary

The School

McKinley Elementary School, which serves 309 pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade students, is 1 of 10 elementary schools in Enid Public Schools (6,508 students). McKinley's student population is 71.2% White, 15.9% Hispanic, 7.1% African American, 4.9% Native American, and 1.0% Asian. Within this student population, 10.7% are English Language Learners, and 66.7% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2002 5th Grade U.S. History



Consistent Higher Performance

McKinley Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in mathematics, reading, U.S. History, and science in an analysis that included all fifth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each grade and year, McKinley Elementary School demonstrated overall performance ranks of 86.7 in mathematics, 83.2 in reading, 87.2 in U.S. History, and 91.3 in science.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	5	5	5	
Mathematics	93	91	76	86.7
Reading	93	73	84	83.2
U.S. History	91	81	90	87.2
Science	90	90	94	91.3

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

Oklahoma's PASS objectives are extremely important to the district, as is the North Central Accreditation (NCA) cycle. District planners use the NCA plan as a tool in curriculum planning and evaluation, which principals and teachers follow closely. Scheduling at McKinley allows a block of common planning time for each grade level in which teachers review district curriculum guides and collaborate on instructional delivery. Feeling that there are "no magic programs," one teacher states that, "If something isn't working, we change it; we are student-driven, flexible, and not afraid to make a change. The needs of the students drive instructional decisions and resource selection." At the school level, educators receive training in creating and using flow charts for individual students, which helps teachers use data to differentiate instruction. Teachers note that benchmark testing has greatly improved their response to student need and their ability to adjust resources as needed for students experiencing difficulty or who master academic objectives quickly.

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Oklahoma.



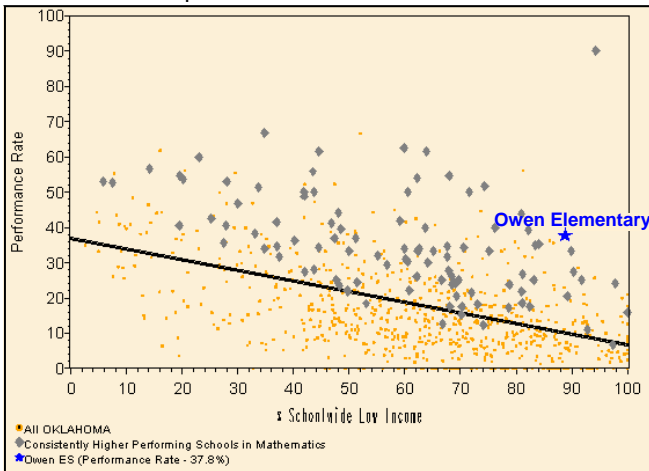
Owen Elementary School Tulsa Public Schools

Just for the Kids, Oklahoma NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Owen Elementary School, which serves 429 pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade students, is 1 of 58 elementary schools in Tulsa Public Schools (41,629 students). Owen's student population is 48.3% White, 22.1% Hispanic, 14.7% African American, 14.2% Native American, and 0.7% Asian. Within this student population, 15.4% are English Language Learners, and 88.8% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 5th Grade Mathematics



Consistent Higher Performance

Owen Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in mathematics, reading, U.S. History, and science in an analysis that included all fifth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each grade and year, Owen Elementary School demonstrated overall performance ranks of 83.3 in mathematics, 82.1 in reading, 83.3 in U.S. History, and 87.0 in science.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	5	5	5	
Mathematics	76	78	98	83.3
Reading	90	69	94	82.1
U.S. History	76	85	88	83.3
Science	74	96	86	87.0

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

The Tulsa Public Schools Model for School Improvement guides instruction across the district. The model involves creating a healthy learning environment that is characterized by a standards-driven curriculum, instructional support for teachers, and learning support for students. Teachers report that they use the model within their Integrated Thematic Instruction (ITI) school. Owen Elementary School teachers are “constantly in communication with one another” both within and across grade levels. Occasionally, a teacher will advance with her students to the next class in order to get a better idea of what students at that grade level need. Teachers feel this process helps them return to their previous grade level and do a better job of helping students to acquire the academic skills they need for a seamless transition to the next grade. The district mandates two hours of reading and one hour of mathematics instruction each day. Intervention resources include *Earobics* (for English Language Learners), *Waterford* (a technology tool used for explicit remediation), and *Indian Education* programs.

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Oklahoma.



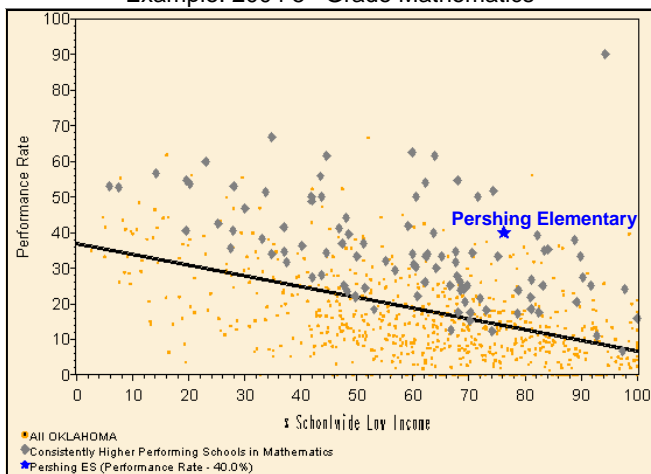
Pershing Elementary School Muskogee Public Schools

Just for the Kids, Oklahoma NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Pershing Elementary School, which serves 345 kindergarten through sixth-grade students, is one of eight elementary schools in Muskogee Public Schools (6,280 students). Pershing's student population is 38.0% White, 30.1% African American, 27.5% Native American, 2.3% Asian, 2.0% Hispanic, and 0.1% other. Within this student population, 5.2% are English Language Learners, and 76.2% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 5th Grade Mathematics



Consistent Higher Performance

Pershing Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in mathematics, reading, U.S. History, and science in an analysis that included all fifth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each grade and year, Pershing Elementary School demonstrated overall performance ranks of 85.5 in mathematics, 80.2 in reading, 78.7 in U.S. History, and 86.4 in science.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	5	5	5	
Mathematics	99	65	93	85.5
Reading	97	50	97	80.2
U.S. History	87	58	96	78.7
Science	97	72	90	86.4

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

Experienced teachers, with demonstrated student performance, comprise the school's vertical alignment teams. The principal reviews teachers' lesson plans and visits classrooms to monitor implementation of the curriculum. The principal compares lesson plans with what was actually observed in classroom instruction and provides feedback to grade-level teams about "what worked" and "what didn't." Teachers note that the process is "painfully revealing." The principal completes a minimum of two walk-through evaluations a week. The district offers professional development that includes what to teach from the adopted textbooks, as well as where there is a need to supplement instruction with outside resources. In addition to the Oklahoma criterion-referenced tests, the school uses the tenth edition of the *Stanford Achievement Test Series* (SAT-10) for first and second grades and the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* (ITBS) for first, second, and third grades in order to gain norm-referenced data as well.

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Oklahoma.



Oklahoma Elementary School Best Practice Study: Findings

Based on the Themes of The JFTK Framework

Five organizing themes provided the structure for studying the practices of consistently higher performing schools. The themes are:

1. Curriculum and Academic Goals
2. Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building
3. Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements
4. Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data
5. Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment

These themes are used below to summarize the findings of this study. The themes represent the broad topics that connect best practices across different school system levels—district, school, and classroom. Together, these themes capture the primary instructional activities undertaken by school systems and represent the major content areas in which practices of higher performing school systems differ from their average-performing counterparts.

The first theme described in The JFTK Best Practice Framework forms the foundation of The Framework. Each of the other four themes rests upon the assumption that there is absolute clarity about what is to be taught and learned by grade level—pre-K-12. Therefore, Curriculum and Academic Goals forms the base of The Framework. Building upon that base, higher performing schools are deliberate about selecting and developing their human resources (Theme Two: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building) and equipping all staff with evidence-based tools and strategies to deliver the curriculum (Theme Three: Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements). With people, tools, and strategies in place, higher performing schools regularly monitor student progress (Theme Four: Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data). Finally, higher performing schools are quick to respond to student achievement data—recognizing success and intervening or adjusting whenever necessary to ensure all students reach the stated standards (Theme Five: Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment).



Theme One: Curriculum and Academic Goals

"What is Taught and Learned"

This theme focuses on the learning target. What is it that we expect all students to know and be able to do by grade and subject? Consistently higher performing school systems have clear academic targets from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Principals and teachers understand the learning goals and understand that these goals are for all students and are non-negotiable.

Specific Oklahoma Findings: Curriculum and Academic Goals

- **Schools use a written curriculum that is more detailed and rigorous than state standards.**
 - At the beginning of the year, teachers meet to examine the previous year's test scores and identify overall skills from weakest to strongest. Using Bloom's Taxonomy, they expand the basic skill to the level desired. (Huston Center, Blackwell Public Schools)

- District goals are aligned with Oklahoma’s PASS objectives but go well beyond state requirements. (McKinley, Enid Public Schools)
- The district has moved to College Board curriculum alignment and uses software to generate a compilation of content standards from the national associations and the best standards from other states. (Pershing, Muskogee Public Schools)
- **Schools maximize teacher involvement in curriculum development activities to ensure full understanding of that curriculum.**
 - Teachers develop and revise curriculum informally through workshops, meetings, and county-wide classes. (Grand View, Grand View Public Schools)
 - All teachers are involved in the creation of the curriculum for the year and in making adjustments weekly, based on district benchmark assessments. (Huston Center, Blackwell Public Schools)
 - While kindergarten teachers use a checklist to monitor developmental progress, the rest of the teachers rely on a scope-and-sequence document that was developed from the state-required Comprehensive Local Education Plan (CLEP). Teachers found that by starting with their CLEP, they could analyze it carefully and make their own curricular alignments without having to “reinvent the wheel.” (Jay, Jay Public Schools)
 - Teachers make a beginning-of-the-year curriculum map, pacing guide, and benchmark assessments aligned with Oklahoma’s PASS objectives, which they follow all year. (Lookeba-Sickles, Lookeba-Sickles Public Schools)
 - Using existing data, the curriculum coordinators for each content area work with teacher representatives from each school. The curriculum review process includes vertical alignment, curriculum mapping, pacing guides, articulation charts, continuity, and methodologies that provide variation according to students’ learning styles. (Madison, Norman Public Schools)
 - Grade-level chairs meet quarterly with teachers to review curriculum. (McKinley, Enid Public Schools)
 - Muskogee uses software to generate curriculum maps and a calendar with scope and sequence. The resulting draft goes out to everyone in the district. Principals and vertical alignment teams make modifications to produce the local curriculum map. Vertical alignment teams are comprised of experienced teachers with the highest performing students. (Pershing, Muskogee Public Schools)
- **Teachers take ownership of the curriculum and align accordingly.**
 - According to a Collins teacher, “We *are* the curriculum; we create it, we revise it, we own it, and we blame ourselves when it doesn’t work.” (Collins, Bristow Public Schools)
 - Teams sometimes meet outside the regular planning time to identify small-group or individual student needs that the regular curriculum plan is not addressing. (Grand View, Grand View Public Schools)
 - Teachers commented that email has been a tremendous resource that connects them to colleagues across the district and leads to curriculum planning at the grassroots level. (Lincoln, El Reno Public Schools)
 - One teacher’s development of a thematically integrated curriculum involves planning of all the subjects “both in terms of skill acquisition standards and in terms of integrating reading and mathematics standards into all content areas.” (Owen, Tulsa Public Schools)



Theme Two: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

"Selecting and Developing Leaders and Teachers"

This second theme focuses on the selection and development of a school system's most precious commodity—people. Once the academic goals of the system are clear, the leaders and teachers are selected and given professional development opportunities to make these goals a reality for every learner in the system.

Specific Oklahoma Findings: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

- **Districts actively develop internal candidates for leadership.**
 - Rather than hire a principal out of need, the superintendent took on that role until the current principal—who had been a mathematics teacher in the school—was prepared and ready to move into the job. (Grand View, Grand View Public Schools)
 - Five of the seven Blackwell principals were internal hires. District administrators see part of their role as identifying and encouraging teachers who exhibit leadership qualities to continue their education and earn administrator credentials. The current superintendent had been the middle school principal in the district. (Huston Center, Blackwell Public Schools)
 - Principals are primarily teachers in the system who have decided to pursue administration as a career move. (Jay, Jay Public Schools)
 - Principals within the district are usually secured through internal promotion. (Lookeba-Sickles, Lookeba-Sickles Public Schools)
 - Enid supports developing leadership from within and participates in Oklahoma's Aspiring Principals Program. (McKinley, Enid Public Schools)
 - Tulsa has a Principal Aspirant Academy that provides mentoring, shadowing experiences, and professional preparation for current assistant principals and teachers who hold administrative certification and want to become principals. (Owen, Tulsa Public Schools)
- **Professional development activities supplement those provided by the district and address individual educators' needs or needs based on specific student populations.**
 - Professional development has included the *Great Expectations* program, Jim Fay's *Teaching with Love and Logic*, Ruby Payne's works on teaching children of poverty, and Harry Wong's works on classroom procedures. (Lincoln, El Reno Public Schools)
 - Principals meet and study one new instructional method each month. (Madison, Norman Public Schools)
 - Teachers report that if they see a workshop they want to attend, money for a substitute comes from the building budget, and they feel supported by both their school and the Fulton Professional Development Center. (Owen, Tulsa Public Schools)
 - The district offers professional development that includes what to teach from the adopted textbooks, as well as where there is a need to supplement those textbooks with outside resources. (Pershing, Muskogee Public Schools)
- **Schools value and encourage teacher collaboration.**
 - Grade-level collaboration takes place during planning periods, when children are in physical education class. (Grand View, Grand View Public Schools)

- Teachers work in grade-level teams for an hour each Friday. Instructional support personnel work with the students while the teachers meet. One teacher emphasized, “There are no fences at Huston between administration and teachers. If teachers have a need, they are free to make a request; and, if at all possible, administration provides.” (Huston Center, Blackwell Public Schools)
- Teachers have 45 minutes per day for meeting with colleagues. (Jay, Jay Public Schools)
- Scheduling at McKinley allows a block of common planning time for each grade level. (McKinley, Enid Public Schools)
- Teachers who come to Owen expecting to sequester themselves in their rooms do not last long. Teachers are collaborating, planning, innovating, and problem solving. (Owen, Tulsa Public Schools)



Theme Three: Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

“The Right Stuff—Time and Tools”

This theme focuses on the “things” that higher performing school systems use—the arrangement of time, the instructional resources and materials, technology, etc. Strong instructional leaders and highly qualified teachers need evidence-based tools and resources to reach high standards with every learner.

Specific Oklahoma Findings: Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

- **Selected instructional programs and resources are research-based, tightly aligned with the academic objectives of the curriculum, and appropriate for the needs of the school’s population.**
 - The principal credits the *Accelerated Math* program with the eighth graders’ 100% pass rate on the state’s criterion-referenced test. The *Accelerated Math* program is used to fill in the gaps of the *Saxon Math* program, as was suggested by the Saxon publisher representative. The large and well-equipped library is coded for *Accelerated Reader*, and both teachers and the librarian assist students in building reading skills and pursuing appealing and varied literature. (Grand View, Grand View Public Schools)
 - In reading, teachers speak positively of *STAR Reading* and *Accelerated Reader*. Teachers use *Saxon Phonics* and *Houghton-Mifflin Phonics* for students needing a double dose of instruction. (Jay, Jay Public Schools)
 - The school is on a year-round schedule, with brief intercessions every nine weeks. Teachers who teach during the intercessions are paid out of Title I funds. (Lincoln, El Reno Public Schools)
 - Teachers use *SuccessMaker*, *Accelerated Reader*, and other computer-assisted programs on a daily basis. (Lookeba-Sickles, Lookeba-Sickles Public Schools)
 - The school participates in the *A+* program, sponsored by the DaVinci Institute at the University of Central Oklahoma. This program informs the school’s integration of content and multidimensional learning. For example, mathematics can be taught through dance in physical education class, or students can use yarn to make geometric shapes in art class. (Madison, Norman Public Schools)

- **Teachers are provided with instructional aides, materials, and supplemental assistance as needed.**
 - The district and the Department of Human Services have responded to the high poverty rate in the area by adding a jointly sponsored, school-based social services worker who serves children and their families. Additionally, an Indian Education teacher, a reading specialist, and other support personnel move seamlessly in and out of classrooms. (Collins, Bristow Public Schools)
 - The school belongs to a cooperative that collectively supports a cadre of special services providers, such as their own school psychologist, speech pathologist, special educators, and paraprofessionals who travel to where they are needed. (Grand View, Grand View Public Schools)
 - Teachers are quick to praise the work of the full-time social worker, the twice-a-week counselor, the interpreter for students who are auditory impaired, special educators, the instructional aide who handles all copying, the twice-a-week speech pathologist, the Indian Education aide, and the full-time aide for a student with an emotional disturbance, among other support staff. (Huston Center, Blackwell Public Schools)
 - Children with special needs can use *LeapTrack* cartridges with personalized lessons in the regular classroom. (Huston Center, Blackwell Public Schools)
 - The school provides an Indian Education tutor, a Title I tutor, and an ELL program. The campus is a special education site. In addition to special educators, an occupational therapist, physical therapist, and speech pathologist are available, as is an on-site case manager for the students with emotional disturbances. (Lincoln, El Reno Public Schools)
 - The school has a full-time parent liaison. Foster grandparents are “everywhere. These senior citizens are listening to children read, helping individual children with their guided practice work, sitting in the hall working with a small group of children, and helping in the classroom.” (Pershing, Muskogee Public Schools)
- **Schools use a structured school culture program or behavior management program that enables classroom teachers to maximize instructional time.**
 - The school uses the Oklahoma-based *Great Expectations* program to enhance both academic achievement and citizenship. (Collins, Bristow Public Schools)
 - The principal encourages the use of the *Great Expectations* program, believing that the procedures learned in the program help the school set an atmosphere and a culture for learning. This allows the teachers to pay attention to children’s various learning styles. (Grand View, Grand View Public Schools)
 - Along with the eight-step approach espoused by Gerald Anderson in his book *Closing the Achievement Gap*, the school board has endorsed *Great Expectations* as a means of building a culture of mutual respect, as well as Ruby Payne’s training in understanding the culture of poverty. (Huston Center, Blackwell Public Schools)
 - Interviewees felt that the procedures accompanying *Great Expectations* had enhanced the efficient use of instructional curricula. (Jay, Jay Public Schools)
 - Teachers at the school are trained to use the *Great Expectations* program, and they use it consistently. (Lookeba-Sickles, Lookeba-Sickles Public Schools)
 - Although many teachers at the school have been trained in the *Great Expectations* program, Tulsa had subscribed to a national *TRIBES* program and uses this program to create an atmosphere of belonging and family. Although *TRIBES* stresses academic skills, it introduces everything from citizenship to table manners. (Owen, Tulsa Public Schools)

- **Given district guidelines, instructional time is used flexibly (with a concentration on core subject areas) to meet individual student learning needs.**
 - A priority at Collins is to maximize instructional time using every moment efficiently and effectively. The staff identified time-consuming activities that had become part of the school's culture ("Sacred Cows") and then, following analysis, "slaughtered those sacred cows" that were not serving the learning goals of the school. (Collins, Bristow Public Schools)
 - Teachers acknowledge the effectiveness of adding additional reading and mathematics time. The ESL teacher focuses her time with the English Language Learners on reading. (Huston Center, Blackwell Public Schools)
 - Explaining that there are "no magic programs," one teacher stated, "If something isn't working, we change it; we are student-driven, flexible, and not afraid to make a change." (McKinley, Enid Public Schools)
 - The district mandates two hours of reading instruction each day, as well as one hour of mathematics instruction each day. (Owen, Tulsa Public Schools)
 - Occasionally, a teacher will advance to the next grade level with her students in order to get a better idea of what students at that grade level need. Teachers feel this process helps them return to their previous grade level and do a better job of preparing students with the academic skills they'll need for a seamless transition to the next grade. (Owen, Tulsa Public Schools)



Theme Four: Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data

"Knowing the Learners and the Numbers"

After clearly identifying what is to be taught and learned by grade and subject and ensuring that the schools are equipped with the staff and the tools to successfully deliver the curriculum, the school system then asks and answers an important question: "How are we going to know if students learned what we said they would learn?"

Specific Oklahoma Findings: Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data

- **Educators receive timely and ongoing feedback from district assessment programs, and they are trained to use that feedback effectively.**
 - The principal forwards assessment results to teachers, who pore over the results in search of evidence that affirms present practice or suggests change. (Collins, Bristow Public Schools)
 - At the school level, educators receive training in creating and using flow charts for individual students, which helps teachers use data to differentiate instruction. (McKinley, Enid Public Schools)
 - Part of the Baldrige Process involves the compilation, analysis, and monitoring of performance data. The district accountability system consists of 54 performance indicators. Staff members at the Fulton Professional Center provide quick online access to the data 24 hours a day. (Owen, Tulsa Public Schools)
- **Principals frequently observe teachers to monitor instructional practice and curriculum delivery.**
 - Both the principal and assistant principal monitor classrooms and examine achievement test results. (Jay, Jay Public Schools)

- The district provides walk-through training for principals, teaching them how to evaluate teacher effectiveness and use brief, frequent observation. The principal looks specifically for teachers' integration of academic content with multidimensional learning. (Madison, Norman Public Schools)
- Principals conduct observations with the lesson plans that correspond with that period's instruction. This is done with an eye toward comparing the plans with what is actually being taught, and the results are discussed afterward. Some teachers dislike being faced with what are, sometimes, wide divergences. Though some have brought this issue before the school board, the board supports the process. (Pershing, Muskogee Public Schools)
- **Schools use additional norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests to supplement state criterion-referenced tests.**
 - The principal created the school's student data monitoring system using a spreadsheet and results from the ITBS, *Stanford-9*, and criterion-referenced tests. (Grand View, Grand View Public Schools)
 - While state data is a snapshot of a *group* of students, Blackwell disaggregates the data and uses additional data gained through its own assessment system to create a chart on *each* student. (Huston Center, Blackwell Public Schools)
 - Teachers like the computer-based assessments that accompany some instructional programs for monitoring basic academic skills. (Lincoln, El Reno Public Schools)
 - Teachers rely on curriculum-embedded assessments to monitor student progress and remedial needs. (Lookeba-Sickles, Lookeba-Sickles Public Schools)
 - The district monitors performance data using the *Score Analyzer* program, whereas the schools monitor using benchmark assessments. (Madison, Norman Public Schools)
 - In addition to the Oklahoma criterion-referenced tests, the school uses the tenth edition of the *Stanford Achievement Test Series* (SAT-10) for first and second grades and the *Iowa Test of Basic Skills* (ITBS) for first, second, and third grades in order to gain norm-referenced data as well. (Pershing, Muskogee Public Schools)



Theme Five: Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment

"Ensuring All Children Learn"

The most important question of all follows the monitoring of student performance: "What are we going to do if students do not learn the knowledge and skills we said they would learn?" Higher performing school systems have *pyramids of intervention* that provide immediate and intense intervention at multiple levels when learning is interrupted.

Specific Oklahoma Findings: Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment

- **Schools adjust instruction to student learning styles by reviewing data and adjusting as needed with additional programs and/or increased tutorial opportunities.**
 - Students receive extra help via tutoring, after-school remediation, and summer school. (Collins, Bristow Public Schools)
 - Intervention for struggling students is geared to each child's learning style. (Jay, Jay Public Schools)

- One of many intervention strategies at the school is peer tutoring, in which students in a grade level can tutor struggling students in the grade below. (Lincoln, El Reno Public Schools)
- High-achieving students can earn lunch off campus with the teacher. (Lookeba-Sickles, Lookeba-Sickles Public Schools)
- Teachers provide differentiated instruction to at-risk students and, through the Renzulli model, to gifted students as well. The Madison Intervention Team (MIT) builds plans for students who are not responding to classroom interventions long before they are referred for diagnostic testing. (Madison, Norman Public Schools)
- Intervention for struggling students includes a variety of programs, such as *Earobics*, *Waterford*, before- and after-school tutoring, and Indian Education programs for Native American children needing remediation. The Child Study Team is the final intervention effort before diagnostic testing. This team is comprised of the regular educator, the school psychologist, and the school counselor. The team discusses all the pertinent information and interventions that haven't yet been tried. Only after those remaining attempts have been made will the team discuss the possibility of formal diagnostic testing. (Owen, Tulsa Public Schools)



Oklahoma Elementary School Best Practice Study: Conclusion

Based on the Themes of The JFTK Framework

Research teams conducted site visits to 15 elementary schools in Oklahoma, identified through the NCEA analysis. Summaries of the findings of those practices that appeared to distinguish consistently higher performing elementary schools from average-performing ones are presented below by theme.

The Findings

Curriculum and Academic Goals

While teachers' roles in the curriculum development process varied slightly among the higher performing schools in this study, the schools did maximize teacher involvement in curriculum development to ensure full understanding of it. At least three schools began the curriculum development process working from a higher set of standards than those outlined in the state's Priority Academic Student Skills (PASS). Documents such as course outlines, benchmark assessments, curriculum maps, and pacing guides further clarified the district curriculum. Teachers planned instruction from the district curriculum, not from textbooks. In addition, teachers demonstrated an understanding of the connections between academic objectives across subjects.

Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

Principals in most of the higher performing schools were groomed within their districts. Despite measurably challenging school environments, most schools reported low rates of teacher turnover. Commitment among principals was equally evident, illustrating the connection existing between school personnel and the children they taught. More than once, interviewees referred to their jobs as "a calling." At least five of the schools indicated that time for collaboration was available within their schools' schedules, either during common planning periods or during common lunch times. Professional development opportunities were widely available, either through cooperative arrangements among smaller districts, nearby universities, or—as in Tulsa—from a locally developed professional development academy.

Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

One school mentioned the occasional use of looping as a means for informing teachers of skills students needed to possess upon arrival to the next grade level. One school had a year-round schedule that afforded students the opportunity to have as many as 200 instructional days per year. The most frequently mentioned program was Great Expectations, a citizenship-building model developed in Oklahoma. Interviewees spoke highly of Accelerated Reader and the combination of Saxon Math with Accelerated Math. One school specifically mentioned using Scott Foresman "little individual books" for guided reading and spelling lessons in first through fourth grades. Schools were consciously moving away from traditional units to more standards-oriented instruction. As a principal said, "A teacher may love to teach about dinosaurs, but [the lessons had] better tie to PASS objectives."

Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data

Teachers used many instruments for gathering assessment data from their students. A battery of benchmarks, program-provided assessments, computer-based assessments, norm-referenced tests, and criterion-referenced tests were used in addition to the state's criterion-referenced test. Software for processing and reporting all those data ranged from simple spreadsheets to packaged data monitoring systems. Most districts processed the data, then passed them down to principals,

who shared the available reports with their teachers. Principals and teachers cited formal and informal processes and structures through which they analyzed and used the data to inform instruction.

Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment

All schools reported numerous interventions for struggling students, including before-school and after-school tutoring opportunities, school-day tutoring from “Foster Grandparents,” computer-based interventions, classroom intervention programs, and peer tutoring. Students were only referred for formal diagnostic testing after all available means of intervention had been exhausted.

Next Steps

NCEA’s state-study protocol assumes that the state framework of best practices will be built based on a three-year study of consistently higher performing and average-performing schools at the elementary-school level (Year One), middle-school level (Year Two), and high-school level (Year Three). Based on this protocol, JFTK-Oklahoma’s next step will be to build upon these initial findings at the elementary level by conducting the study of 15 consistently higher performing and average-performing middle schools using the same framework of best practices.

One of the dangers of studying consistently higher performing schools is drawing conclusions based on a single school example. To avoid this danger, the conclusions for the JFTK–Oklahoma Elementary School Best Practice Study, 2004-05, focus on a description of the practices that are most consistent across the higher performing schools in this study and that can be distinguished in quantity or quality from the same practices in average-performing schools of the study. While any individual case study may cite different factors or practices than those noted above, we highlight those practices that are found to be systematically different between the higher performing schools as a group and the average-performing schools as a group. Finally, the practices highlighted in the conclusion of this study have also been informed by the findings from a much larger body of schools studied (300+ across five years and 20 states) to help determine meaning in the context of Oklahoma.