



Closing Gaps in Opportunity and Achievement

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The Education Trust

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What Can We Do to Raise
Achievement and Close
Gaps?

What We Hear Many People Say about Struggling Students:

- They're poor
- Their parents don't care
- They come to schools without breakfast
- Not enough books
- Not enough parents

But if they are right, why are low-income students and students of color performing so much higher in some schools...

What Do We Know About How To Accelerate Success?

What do the high performers do?

#1. They focus on what they *can* do, rather than what they *can't*.

Some schools and districts get all caught up in “correlations”.

- Percent of babies born at low birth-weight
- Percent of children born to single moms
- Percent of children in families receiving government assistance
- Education levels of mothers

The leaders in high-performing high poverty schools and districts don't do that.

“ Some of our children live in pretty dire circumstances. But we can't dwell on that, because we can't change it. So when we come here, we have to dwell on that which is going to move our kids.”

Barbara Adderly, Principal,
M. Hall Stanton Elementary, Philadelphia

#2. They don't leave anything about teaching and learning to chance.

An awful lot of our teachers—even brand new ones—are left to figure out on their own what to teach and what constitutes “good enough” work.

Result?

A System That:

- Doesn't expect very much from MOST students
- Expects much less from some types of students than others.

High Performing Schools and Districts

- Have clear and specific goals for what students should learn in every grade, including the order in which they should learn it
- Provide teachers with common curriculum, assignments
- Have regular vehicle to assure common marking standards
- Assess students every 4-8 weeks to measure progress
- Act immediately on the results of those assessments

Developing – and using – common assessments at Jack Britt High School, NC

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- Teachers analyze the results collectively to identify what they need to focus on, which teachers are successful and which teachers are struggling.

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#3. They set their goals
high.

Even when they start with high drop out rates, high impact high schools focus on preparing all kids for college and careers

Education Trust 2005 study, "Gaining Traction, Gaining Ground."

#4. Higher performing secondary schools put all kids—not just some—in a demanding high school core curriculum.

And those demanding courses are not just demanding in name only.

The single biggest predictor post-high school success is the **QUALITY AND INTENSITY** OF THE HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM

Cliff Adelman, *The Toolbox Revisited*, U.S. Department of Education

But are most of our kids getting anything that even remotely resembles ***INTENSE?***

#5. High performing schools are obsessive about **time, especially instructional time.**

High Performing High Schools

- “Behind” students spend **60** additional hours (**25%** more time) over 1 year in reading related courses
- “Behind” students get **240** additional hours over 4 years!

In other words, high performing schools both maximize time and don't leave its use to chance.

“Time is our most precious commodity, and we must use it effectively and wisely. In terms of school improvement, school leaders must not waste teacher or student time. Therefore, meetings and requirements must be well organized, focused, agenda-driven, and contain specific expectations. Student time must be protected, learning focused and relevant.”

Deb Gustafson
Principal, Ware Elementary, KS

#6. Principals are
hugely important, ever
present, but **NOT** the
only leaders in the
school

In high performing schools...

- Teachers regularly observe other teachers
- Teachers have time to plan and work collaboratively
- New teachers get generous and careful support and acculturation
- Teachers take on many other leadership tasks at the school

#7. Good schools know how much **teachers matter**, and they act on that knowledge.

Good teachers matter a lot.

But some groups of kids don't get their fair share of quality teachers.

High performing schools and districts...

- Work hard to attract and hold good teachers
- Make sure that their best are assigned to the students who most need them
- Chase out teachers who are not “good enough” for their kids.

“Teachers sometimes feel that they deserve a certain schedule and to teach certain groups of kids. The research leads us to something very contrary to that – that the most skillful teachers need to be with the most reluctant learners. And we have begun to do this. And this is not for the faint of heart.”

Rob Robertson
Principal, Los Altos High School, CA