

#2 THEY DON'T TEACH TO THE STATE TESTS.

- Teachers teach a rich, coherent curriculum tied to state standards. They don't teach the test.

“...adopting a coherent curriculum, reorganizing the school day, learning to use individual student data to drive instruction, learning to work together as teachers and with the larger community, and all the time learning about the research that should underlie instruction...Lapwai has built a strong foundation of a **coherent curriculum** and a **culture of collaboration**...committed to **‘connecting research to practice’**”

LAPWAI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Lapwai, Idaho

“Back in the days when 80 percent of the students could not meet state standards, the school operated the way many schools operate. Each teacher closed the door and taught what she could, using lots of different approaches to reading and math. **‘We were teaching faddism.’** ...vs.

“a tightly-managed – sometimes even scripted – reading program

90 minute block of time for reading and writing instruction

Every 8 weeks, children are reshuffled

Classroom instruction is transparent

Teachers spend a lot of time learning new skills and learning to work together

To make that time, the school closes at 1 pm every Friday.

An uninterrupted block of 60 minutes for math instruction

A single discipline model

“When the school began using ‘a proven curriculum with training, it opened all the doors’. Among other things, she <Principal Halverson> said, “If forced us to work together. All of our kids became *all of our kids.*”

LAPWAI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Lapwai, Idaho

“...on third grade reading scores was that extensive research linked early reading scores to later school failure and high school dropout rates. The idea was that if all kids were reading well by third grade, they would have had a better chance later in school.”

BENWOOD INITIATIVE Chattanooga, TN

“...two merged districts had worked on developing a common set of academic expectations in each subject and each grade. For the first time, teachers at all of the ...schools could know what students were expected to do and be able to do at each grade level, with a coherent sequence leading from kindergarten through the upper grades....a common set of expectations, district-wide reading and math programs, and professional development initiatives....”

BENWOOD INITIATIVE Chattanooga, TN

“Hardy has departmentalized the third, fourth, and fifth grades, meaning that some teachers teach literacy and some math...so that teachers can concentrate on one field.”

BENWOOD INITIATIVE Chattanooga, TN

“ ‘ **The best way to do well on the test is to teach the standards in an exciting way,**’

Kuhlman said....At Centennial Place, high test scores are not purchased with the sacrifice

of creativity and imagination. But achieving such results does require teachers and administrators, along with members of the larger community, to spend a great deal of time and thought planning and focusing on each child and activity.”

CENTENNIAL PLACE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Atlanta, Georgia

“The standard curriculum is just the beginning of how students are kept busy at Centennial Place. In addition to regular ‘specials’ such as physical education, music, chorus, and art, a combined grant from the state and the city has permitted Centennial Place to offer Spanish instruction to all children for a half hour a day. One of the stipulations of the grant is that teachers remain in the classroom so that they, too, learn Spanish.”

CENTENNIAL PLACE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Atlanta, Georgia

“...kids are getting smarter in the music classes. Kuhlman said, citing the connections between music and math

CENTENNIAL PLACE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Atlanta, Georgia

“An additional science teacher works with classroom teachers on the science projects that dominate the school, and that is considered another ‘special’.”

CENTENNIAL PLACE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Atlanta, Georgia

“Reading and writing instruction is geared toward learning to read not only fiction but also nonfiction. Science and social studies are times to read and write....working with teachers on figuring out which children need ‘preteaching’ of vocabulary and background knowledge before they are taught science and social studies lessons. ‘Rather than remediation, we work to make sure the children know what they need to ahead of time.’”

FRANKFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Frankford, Delaware

“...a major push to improve math instruction...began with intensified training for the teachers. New teachers went to district-sponsored ‘math clubs’ where they learned both the math and how to teach the math...more experienced teachers who no longer needed the math clubs received training in assessment and in how to support their fellow teachers, including by providing model lessons. Individual students at the school were identified as needing extra support with math and were brought in for their own math clubs...”

FRANKFORD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Frankford, Delaware

“...the introduction of a new citywide reading and math curriculum...For the first time, all elementary schools in the city were working on the same material at the same time. That meant that the children who transfer in and out of Stanton and the other city schools can be caught up quickly, and teachers can know what children are supposed to know. It also meant that teachers didn’t have to create their own curriculum from scratch every day and could concentrate on teaching. Professional training of teachers provided by the district has also been tightly focused on what is in the curriculum, making the training more immediately useful to teachers.”

M. HALL STANTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Philadelphia, PA

“Before, each school, and often each teacher, chose what would be taught. Chief Academic Officer Thornton called the old system in Philadelphia ‘a Burger King mentality – everybody got to have it their way’, which made for a chaotic and unstructured learning environment for students and meant that district training was unfocused and scattershot.”

M. HALL STANTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Philadelphia, PA

The credit for that <the improvement at Stanton Elementary> must go to how the curriculum is taught and how the school is organized around achievement.

M. HALL STANTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Philadelphia, PA

“As much as possible, we want special education students in regular ed classrooms.”

M. HALL STANTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Philadelphia, PA

“The core of helping children learn at East Millsboro is instruction, and instruction begins with the ‘curriculum map.’ The curriculum map is a document developed by East Millsboro teachers working together in grade-level teams to map out month by month what they will be teaching...As a result of the curriculum map, even teachers new to East Millsboro have clearly laid-out guidelines for what their instruction must include. When asked whether such clear direction hindered her creativity as a teacher, fifth-grade teacher Kim Bullock, a 13-year veteran, said no. ‘It’s impinging on what I teach when, but it doesn’t impinge on how I teach it.’...Each year, when the state test scores come in, the curriculum map is reworked to reflect where students had trouble mastering the curriculum.”

EAST MILLSBORO ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, East Millsboro, Delaware

“Albano is constantly looking for ‘ways to close the opportunity gap.’

LINCOLN ELEMENTARY, Mount Vernon, NY

“At the heart and soul of what Lincoln does is classroom instruction, which is very carefully and thoughtfully built. It begins with reading.....all the early reading teachers use a common curriculum supplemented by a wide selection of quality trade books...daily emphasis on reading.....reading events.....In addition each classroom has a set of ‘books-in-a-bag,’ which consists of large sealed plastic bags, each containing a book and a worksheet with some kind of activity.”

LINCOLN ELEMENTARY, Mount Vernon, NY

“At the heart and soul of what Lincoln does is classroom instruction, which is very carefully and thoughtfully built.”

“Every aspect of the curriculum gets this kind of care. ‘Nothing is left to chance.’ Teachers meet regularly in grade levels and across grade levels to work on what will be taught when.”

LINCOLN ELEMENTARY, Mount Vernon, NY

“Each student at Lincoln has a creative writing folder, a math folder, and a science folder....But students also monitor their own work using rubrics developed by the teachers, so they know before a teacher even reviews it what standards the work is supposed to meet and whether it meets the standard.”

LINCOLN ELEMENTARY, Mount Vernon, NY

“Seventh and eighth-grade teachers ‘loop’ with their students, meaning that the teachers who teach incoming seventh graders move with them to eighth grade the following year and then drop back to seventh grade the following year.”

ELMONT MEMORIAL JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, Elmont, NY

“In the high school grades, teachers meet by department and work on lessons, pacing, and assessments. They do not necessarily teach the same thing at the same time but they are all aiming at the same goals.”

ELMONT MEMORIAL JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, Elmont, NY

“It isn’t just about expectations – it is about careful instruction to meet those expectations.”

ELMONT MEMORIAL JUNIOR-SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, Elmont, NY

“..for the most part instruction in the school is focused on the standards, not the test.”

OAKLAND HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Russellville, Arkansas

“The teams are what Mullins called ‘intentional’ teaching. A sign in her room said, ‘An effective teacher instinctively uses high-yield strategies.’ meaning instructional practices that produce gains in achievement. Another sign said, ‘High-yield strategies have the greatest impact on student achievement when effective teachers use them intentionally.’ It is the intentional part that Mullins works on every morning – making sure that academic goals and instructional strategies are clear and that important things are not left to chance. ‘We’re working on making sure all our instruction is explicit and systematic,’ said principal Shirley.”

OAKLAND HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Russellville, Arkansas

“Shirley said that ‘there is no one single thing that works.’ She has instituted many changes in Oakland Heights beginning with a focus on achievement data, a lot of attention to discipline and school climate issues, and a requirement that teachers and instructional aides work closely together and make sure they understand everything they are supposed to be teaching. (‘Small misunderstandings among teachers can make for big misunderstandings among kids,’ she said.)”

OAKLAND HEIGHTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Russellville, Arkansas

“Students are expected to read a lot and write a lot at University Park.”

UNIVERSITY PARK CAMPUS SCHOOL, Worcester, Massachusetts

“For all children – but particularly for children of poverty, Hirsch argues – school curricula must deliberately and systematically build background knowledge.”

CAPITOL VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Atlanta, Georgia

“When teachers are asked what distinguishes Capitol View from low-achieving schools, they respond, ‘It is the expectations.’ ‘Kids will meet the standards you expect of them,’ said Dennis Harvey, the school’s instructional specialist... ‘No excuses’ is a common catchphrase in the school, but the school does not run on expectations alone. Principal Arlene Snowden says the school runs on ‘hands-on activities and engaging instruction.’ its curriculum is carefully mapped to the Georgia’s state standards but far exceeds them in breadth and depth...”

CAPITOL VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Atlanta, Georgia

“‘We teach reading through social studies and science.’ Reading is taught across the curriculum.”

CAPITOL VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Atlanta, Georgia

“Core Knowledge educators have broadened and deepened the curriculum to give students the background knowledge and vocabulary to read complex text.”

CAPITOL VIEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Atlanta, Georgia

“The school began a process of professional development...on how reorganizing schools to focus on standards and curriculum can improve student achievement..”

PORT CHESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL, Port Chester, NY

“...ELA chair Michael DeVito, who worked with all of the teachers to see how students’ inability to read and write hurt both their abilities to learn and to demonstrate their knowledge in the different subject areas.”

PORT CHESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL, Port Chester, NY

“...the English language arts teachers ‘drive the curriculum.’ By this he means that they have decided on 24 ‘key skills that re involved in reading and writing,’ such as ‘compare,’ ‘contrast’, and ‘make inferences’. Each month one skill is identified, and teachers across the curriculum are expected to incorporate the skills into their classrooms.”

PORT CHESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL, Port Chester, NY

“As part of the effort to make sure all teachers understand the standards throughout the system, the middle school has been working with the elementary schools to study New York State’s standards and to map their curricula to make sure that they are all working toward the same ends.”

PORT CHESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL, Port Chester, NY

“...a more hands-on approach...emphasis on vocabulary building”

PORT CHESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL, Port Chester, NY

“When teachers plan a year’s curriculum, they plan from January to January, not from September to June as in most schools....State tests are given in March, and this schedule ensures that the full year of materials has been taught by then, with time for extra review and practice for those students who need it. Any student who is not thought ready for the state tests is assigned to Academic Intervention Services classes and to any other help that might be appropriate.”

PORT CHESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL, Port Chester, NY

“ ‘So you teach to the test,’ ” said assistant Principal Patrick Swift, ‘I said no, we build the curriculum so that the students learn what they need to know to meet state standards.’ ”

PORT CHESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL, Port Chester, NY

“...he <principal Macchia> focuses almost all of his efforts on helping teachers create a challenging and rigorous academic environment...using testing data as a reality check...”

PORT CHESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL, Port Chester, NY

“dramatic turnaround can be attributed to many factors, among them a new principal, an overhaul of the teaching staff, a new instructional design*, a district program for high poverty schools that provides community services, and an almost single-minded focus on instruction and data.... ‘the first things I had to change were the atmosphere and the expectations.’ ” Principal Von Sheppard * “classrooms are built on a workshop model, in which teachers present ten-minute, very focused mini lessons and then lead students in independent and group work and a classroom-wide sharing of results, all geared to the standards.... a narrow focus on instruction to standards with a lot of strategies to make it work.”

DAYTON’S BLUFF ACHIEVEMENT PLUS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, St. Paul, MN

“The school requires that students write a great deal....In one central hallway, each grade level has a section to respond to the school’s ‘Book of the Month’ selection, a book that everyone in the school reads, and to which all students respond. In addition each grade level has a bulletin board to display writing samples that the New Standards which are also posted.”

DAYTON’S BLUFF ACHIEVEMENT PLUS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, St. Paul, MN

“But ‘test prep’ is not what dominates the school year. ‘Teaching to standards is what dominates instruction.’ ”

DAYTON’S BLUFF ACHIEVEMENT PLUS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, St. Paul, MN

“...the teachers as a group mapped out the math curriculum, making sure the Everyday Math program adopted by the school met all the standards and filling in the gaps that existed. The meeting was also an opportunity for the physical education, art, and dance teachers to think about where in the curriculum they could make sure they reinforced the concepts being taught in math class.”

DAYTON’S BLUFF ACHIEVEMENT PLUS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, St. Paul, MN

“By focusing narrowly on good instruction and the kind of atmosphere and environment that allows good instruction.”

DAYTON’S BLUFF ACHIEVEMENT PLUS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, St. Paul, MN