

What Works?

WCPSS Evaluation and Research Effectiveness Studies

| Effective Practices (Elementary) | Effective Practices (Middle) | Effective Practices (Algebra I Study) | Effective Practices (Biology Study) |
|---|--|---|---|
| High expectations | Focus more on how to address needs and less on barriers | Planned with other teachers | Focused on biology |
| Positive attitudes about meeting the needs with the resources available | More informal administrative visits to classrooms | Used an instructional plan aligned to the SCoS Concerned about pacing | Used data |
| Effective administrative allocation of resources | More positive attitudes and training | Use spiraled curriculum with new material, and emphasized problem solving | Studied/ planned with each other |
| Formal and informal collaboration to help students | More frequently use resources such as assessment data, extra adults, technology, and pacing guides | Had a positive attitude toward student performance | Focused student time on SCoS goals |
| Use of teacher-led instruction | | Created a structured/positive classroom culture | Maximized student time; resisted other duties |

THE LEARNING LEADER, (Reeves, 2007)

What are the trends in schools with the greatest gains in achievement and equality?

- #1 **Accountability** (which includes the actions of adults, not merely the scores of students)
- #2 Consistent **nonfiction writing** assessments in every subject. (The most effective writing is nonfiction – description, analysis, and persuasion with evidence.)
- #3 Use of frequent **common assessments** (Assessment informs teaching!)
- #4 **Immediate and decisive intervention**
- #5 Constructive **use of data** (i.e. data displays)

“One inescapable conclusion from school reform research, however is that evidence alone is not enough. We must confront the ‘knowing-doing gap’ (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000). Leaders and teachers give intellectual assent to the research, and then return to schools and classrooms and ... *nothing happens.*”

“It’s Being Done.” Academic Success in Unexpected Schools (Chenoweth, 2007)

“They could have saved themselves a lot of trouble by falling back on the tired old excuses...The teachers and administrators know that the children in their schools can learn, and they know it is up to them to figure out how to teach their students.”

“My general theory is that improvement is never an accident.”

“THERE IS NO MAGIC BULLET.”

What “It’s Being Done’ Schools do:

#1 They Teach Their Students/They Embrace Accountability/They Make Decisions Good for Kids, Not Adults

The verb ‘to teach’ is used properly – if teachers say that they taught something, that means that their students have learned it.

Poor performance on an assessment simply means that the students and teachers need to work harder and more effectively, not that students are in some way deficient and incapable of learning.

#2 They Teach a Rich, Coherent Curriculum Tied to the State Standards/They don’t teach to the test.

#3 They Have High Expectations for Their Students/They Know What the Stakes Are/ They Like Kids.

‘It’s our job to get you all to the station.’ Liz Mullins, Oakland Heights Elementary

‘It’s not about feeling sorry for kids. It’s about making sure they understand what it is they are expected to do.’ Principal Adderley, Stanton Elementary

“They know if their students don’t get a good education, they face the probability of a lifetime of dependence and poverty.”

#4 They Embrace and Use All the Data they can get their hands on/They Use Data to Focus on Individual Students, Not Just Groups of Students./They Constantly Reexamine What They Do.

‘That data represent a kid’s face or a group of kids’ faces. That is a life. That’s a future.’ Susan Swanson, Hamilton County, TN

#5 They Use Time Wisely./They Leverage Community Resources./They Expand Time for Struggling Students/They Make Sure that Struggling Students have the Best Instruction.

“School time is for instruction, and instruction is treated as something almost sacred.”

#6 They Do Not Spend a lot of Time Disciplining Students/They Establish an Atmosphere of Respect.

“They teach students how to act.”

“The main method of discipline is to aim for high-quality instruction every moment.”

#7 Principals are a Constant Presence/Principals are Not the Only Leaders.

#8 They Pay Careful Attention to the Quality of the Teaching Staff/They Provide Teachers with the Time to Meet and to Plan Collaboratively/They Provide Teachers Time to Observe Each Other/Professional Development Deepens Knowledge or Pedagogical Skill/They Assume They will Have to Train Teachers From Scratch.

#9 They have High-Quality Building Staff who Feel Themselves a Part of the Educational Mission of the School/They are Nice Places to Work.

‘We work really hard.’ “These schools have the kind of camaraderie that comes from teams of people facing difficult challenges together.”

TO SUM UP: THE ADULTS IN ‘IT’S BEING DONE’ SCHOOLS EXPECT THEIR STUDENTS TO LEARN AND THEY WORK HARD TO MASTER THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY TO TEACH THOSE STUDENTS.

‘Amazingly, then, the question today is not about what works, but about why we do not implement what we know works in all schools for all kids.’

J. McDermott, University Park School