Rallying Your Leadership Team: Putting Evidence-based Decision Making into Action

National Association of Secondary School Principals Annual Conference
Tampa, FL
March 10, 2012

Kristen Wilcox, PhD, Assistant Professor, School of Education
Nancy Andress, Educational Consultant
Agenda

• Overview of the NYKids project
• Research Findings
• Tools to help schools use the findings and resources
• Q & A
Mission

• Inform
  – web displays of achievement data

• Inspire
  – reports, cases of high performers, best practice framework

• Improve
  – on-line tools and institutes

“If you do what you always did, you’ll get what you always got.”

— HS Administrator (NYKids HS Study)
http://www.albany.edu/nykids/

Inform – data re: every school in state
- Performance trend charts
- Cluster charts
- Opportunity gap charts
- Achievement by subgroup charts
Inspire & Improve – learn from the higher performers
Inspire
Seeking to answer: What have others done? And how?

• Individual School Cases
• Cross-Case Reports
• Best Practice Frameworks w/ evidence
• Books
What makes elementary schools work

A report on best practices in NYS elementary schools

What works for diverse and special needs students

5 studies completed

- Elementary schools (2005)
- Middle schools (2007)
- High schools (2008)
- Middle school science (2009)
- Critical needs (2011) (best practices for ethnically and linguistically diverse and special needs students - elementary)
Most Recent Articles and Book Chapters

“Collect, Analyze, Act”  
(March, 2012) *Principal Leadership*


Methods: Our Samples

- 7-10 consistently higher-performing schools; 3-6 similar but consistently average-performing schools, based on 3 years of NYS Assessment data; control for SES, ELL
- Urban, rural, suburban
- Favor poverty (F/RL)
- Open admissions
- PPE near state average
- In consultation with Advisory Board
Methods: Data Collection

- Make 2-day site visits
- Interview teachers and administrators
- Collect documents
- Observe classrooms (MS science)
- Analyze, write a case study for each site then do cross-case analyses to identify best practices
NY Kids

Welcome to a resource to support school improvement in New York State.

Using the links below and to the left, you can access:

- Reports about what makes elementary, middle, and high schools work well
- Details about best practices at each level, with evidence to support them
- Case studies of the higher-performing schools whose practices are featured
- Tools (e.g., surveys) to help you look at your own school’s practices

2011 Report

What Works for Critical Needs Students at the Elementary Level

Know Your Schools—for NY Kids
School of Education B9
University at Albany
1400 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12222
518-442-5171
What Makes Middle Schools Work: Findings from a Best Practices Study in New York State

Our study found that 5 key elements mark the difference between the higher-performing and average-performing middle schools studied:

- Trusting and respectful relationships
- Attendance to students' social & emotional well-being
- Teamwork
- Evidence-based decision making
- Shared mission and goals

To download electronic copies, please click the following:

- 4-Page Summary (pdf)
- Best Practice Study (pdf)

Order print copies of these reports.
What Makes High Schools Work: Findings from a Best Practices Study in New York State

Our study found that 5 key elements mark the difference between the higher-performing and average-performing high schools studied:

- Rigorous curriculum and expectations
- Innovative instructional programs and practices
- Transparent communication
- Evidence-based decision making
- Strategic targeting of resources

To download electronic copies, please click the following:

4-Page Summary (pdf)

Best Practice Study (pdf)

Order print copies of these reports.
Overall Findings

Across all levels – elementary, middle, high – higher-performing students come from schools with the capacity for continuous improvement. They do it through:

- Distributed leadership
- Collaborative culture and practices
- Evidence-based decision making
- Shared vision and goal setting
Breaking Ranks and NYKids – A Crosswalk

Collaborative Leadership/Professional Learning Communities

Improved Student Performance

Personalizing Your School Environment

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment
• Breaking Ranks and NYKids

NYKids – MS BPs
- Relationships
- Emotional Well-Being
- Collaboration
- Evidence-Based Decision Making
- Shared Vision

NYKids HS BPs
- Rigor
- Innovation
- Transparency
- Evidence-Based Decision Making
- Strategic Use of Resources
Breaking Ranks and NYKids

NYKids – MS BPs
- Collaboration
- Shared Vision

NYKids HS BPs
- Transparency
- Strategic Use of Resources

Collaborative Leadership/Professional Learning Communities

Improve Student Performance

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Collaborative Leadership/Professional Learning Communities

Improved Student Performance

Personalize our School Environment

Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

Strategic Use of Resources
Breaking Ranks 21st Century Principal Skills and NYKids

Educational Leadership

Developing Self and Others

Communication

Resolving Complex Problems

Inform

Inspire

Improve (COMPASS tool)
Improve

Overview of COMPASS Steps

Step 1: Compare your practices to higher-performing schools
Step 2: Assess priorities
Step 3: Select levers to improvement
Step 4: Set SMART Goals
Improve

COMPASS Tools and Training

- University partnership with school improvement organization
- Two-day Initial Institutes
- ½-day Follow-up Institute - winter
- Full-day Follow-up Institute - spring

This has been a great resource to further our thinking and planning within our district. It's so wonderful to connect with other districts as well.

- COMPASS Institute Participant 12/9/2010
**Step 1: Compare Your Practice**

**Theme: Evidence-Based Decision Making . . . What does your school look like?**

Circle the number in either the A column (1 or 2) or the B column (3 or 4) that most closely resembles your school, and think of a specific example to demonstrate the reason for your selection.

| A1=very similar; A2= somewhat similar; B3= somewhat similar; B4=very similar |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| A               | B               |
| 1               | 2               |
| We rely mostly on state assessments to tell us how our students are doing. | We have come to embrace the use of a variety of evidence to inform practices. |
| 1               | 2               |
| We collect a variety of evidence of student performance, but our processes are not systematic and may not include classroom, school, and district levels. | We systematically collect data at classroom, school, and district levels. |
| 1               | 2               |
| What data we do collect are not regularly and systematically analyzed, interpreted, or shared. | After close analysis, we distribute data in forms that are comprehensible. |
| 1               | 2               |
| We sometimes use data to inform specific interventions, instruction, or other reforms or changes. | We typically use data to target interventions and develop and implement other reforms to improve student performance. |

Add together your circled numbers and place that number in the next column.

Example:

Total:
Average (Total divided by 4):
# Step 2: Assess Priorities

For each of the elements, record your averages.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Your Average</th>
<th>Group Average</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>See Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rigor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pp. 11-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>pp. 13-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transparency</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>pp. 15-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence-Based Decision Making</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>pp. 18-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Targeting of Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>pp. 20-21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Once you have identified your priority area, refer to the relevant pages to find suggested levers for improvement in Step 3.

*From the High School COMPASS*
Evidence-Based Decision Making

Case in Point: Batavia

for the full case study:
http://knowyourschools.org/pdf/Batavia_Case_Study.pdf

Other cases to refer to:
- Greene
- Saunders
- White Plains

1. Embrace systematically collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data.

One test isn’t always the full picture. At each grade level, we do benchmarking where we plan out carefully to prepare kids for the English Regents. We benchmark – then provide instruction – then do a follow-up benchmark. We know exactly where our students are.

- Batavia teacher

We don’t make assumptions about data. We interpret the data and look for supporting evidence that reinforces what our decisions are.

- White Plains administrator

To push this lever consider:

- Encouraging dialogue around what kinds of data matter and modeling how to discuss data in productive ways. These “productive” discussions may focus on developing or refining benchmarks within departments or across grade levels.

- Providing time for teachers to work together to develop assessments and dialogue around the results.

- Doing item analyses on a variety of assessments (state, AP, school benchmark, etc.) and using this information to inform teacher discussions around curriculum, instruction, interventions, etc.

- Analyzing and interpreting data at the student, cohort, and school levels, identifying gaps and areas of growth.
“Jigsaw” the case studies

www.albany.edu/nykids

Best Practices Case Study
Kathleen Nickson, Spring 2008

Huntington High School
*Huntington Union Free School District, Huntington*

School Context
Huntington Union Free School District, located in Suffolk County on the north shore of Long Island, serves approximately 4300 students divided among four primary schools, two intermediate schools, one middle school and one high school. The district reports an ethnically diverse community comprised of approximately 60% White, 15% African-American, and 25% Hispanic students, many of whom are recent immigrants from Central America. The diversity is also socioeconomic, with populations of both extreme wealth and extreme poverty as well as a strong middle class.

Huntington High School is comprised of grades 9 through 12 serving approximately 1200 students. Built in 1957, the school is neat, clean and well maintained. Trophies from athletic and music competitions are prominently displayed, as are displays of student art work. Nine security monitors help keep an orderly atmosphere from the parking lots to the hallways to the cafeteria.
Find and read about your priority in the cross case report.

- Which schools are mentioned?
- What ideas do you want to explore further?
### Cross-Site Analysis – BP Frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organizing Themes</th>
<th>Distinct Practices</th>
<th>School Practices</th>
<th>Classroom Practices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CURRICULUM &amp; ACADEMIC GOALS</strong></td>
<td>Involve all stakeholders in developing aligned curriculum and goals and support their participation.</td>
<td>Ensure that the curriculum is articulated horizontally and vertically and available to all students.</td>
<td>Teachers collaborate to ensure consistency for students and to monitor results in order to improve the curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STAFF SELECTION, LEADERSHIP, &amp; CAPACITY BUILDING</strong></td>
<td>Hire high-performing teachers who &quot;fit&quot; to provide best possible learning environment.</td>
<td>A highly professional climate in which teachers and administrators are encouraged to keep up with their fields and actively contribute to the functioning of the school.</td>
<td>A teacher evaluation process supportive of constant improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS, PRACTICES, &amp; ARRANGEMENTS</strong></td>
<td>Professional development for teachers to ensure curriculum materials are clear and relevant, and implement teacher feedback to improve instruction.</td>
<td>Active recruitment of candidates to match specific needs, goals, and fit with community and school culture.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MONITORING: COMPIlATION, ANALYSIS, &amp; USE OF DATA</strong></td>
<td>Establish a system for collecting and monitoring student performance data.</td>
<td>Broader spectrum of students offered opportunities to take AP and honors classes and flexible scheduling to best meet student needs.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RECOGNITION, INTERVENTION, &amp; ADJUSTMENTS</strong></td>
<td>Recognize, support, and intervene when student needs are not met.</td>
<td>Expectations that teachers have not only content expertise but also the ability to effectively differentiate their instruction.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>BEST PRACTICES</strong></td>
<td>Establish a system for collecting and monitoring student performance data.</td>
<td>Instructional supports such as labs and tutorials to help students succeed in rigorous courses.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ORGANIZING THEMES</strong></td>
<td>Collaborative development of goals and consistency between district, school, and classroom goals related to increasing student mastery and closing achievement gaps.</td>
<td>Collective accountability for student performance.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continual revision of strategic plans aligned with goals and a shared vision of success.</td>
<td>Constant collection and interpretation of a variety of data from multiple sources followed by action strategically targeted to address current and future needs.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A highly professional climate in which teachers and administrators are encouraged to keep up with their fields and actively contribute to the functioning of the school.</td>
<td>Flexibility in developing and revising the schedule and allocating resources in time and faculty to where data show the most need.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A teacher evaluation process supportive of constant improvement.</td>
<td>Interventions focused on keeping students on track before AIG is needed. Connecting with families to intervene early when social, emotional, or academic problems present themselves.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key word collections
(also at www.knowyourschoolsny.org)

Tools

Best Practices Frameworks

- High Schools
- Middle Schools
- Elementary Schools

Best Practices Self-Assessments

- Middle School Science
- High Schools
- Middle Schools

You can also search using the following keywords:

- English Language Learners
- Special Education Students
- Parent/Community Involvement
- Role of the Board of Education
Step 4. Set SMART Goals

Suggested Process for Setting SMART Goals

- **4.1**: Review steps 1-3. What are your priority areas? What levers to improvement did you select as most likely to have the greatest impact on these priority areas?

- **4.2**: Review other NY Kids resources to prompt ideas for using the research and resources in SMART goal setting.

- **4.3**: Begin drafting SMART goals using the SMART goal template as a guide.

- **4.4**: Record specific actions attached to each of the goals you have decided on using levers to improvement, NYKids resources, and/or other resources.
By 2013, we will attain a 90% graduation rate for students in each 4 yr. cohort by consistently monitoring student progress on a quarterly basis and by using a pyramid of interventions to support all students.
Write three ways you have used data based on school performance and teacher experience in your school to inform decision making.
A few comments about the COMPASS process from the pilot school teams

This process was really beneficial – we definitely worked through quite a bit as a team. We now need to execute, evaluate, and re-align our plan.

- School A, 7/27/2010

Overall, these two days were very valuable to both myself and my colleagues. The COMPASS institute provided an effective framework to develop district/building goals that will be taken back to our district and serve as a catalyst for necessary discussion and ultimately drive action.

- School B, 7/27/2010

GREAT program for us -- it has really formed/framed our work! Great to see qualitative data being just as important as quantitative. Great tool on many levels. Thanks for your hard work.

- School C, 12/9/2010
How to use NYKids resources to rally your leadership team

• Use the on-line survey http://www.albany.edu/nykids/survey_your_school.php
• Assemble your “dream team”
• Go through the COMPASS process
• Monitor your progress
• Spread the process beyond your school
• Contact us if you need help…
Thank you!

Know Your Schools ~ for NY Kids website
http://www.albany.edu/nykids/

Email
kwilcox1@albany.edu
nandress@albany.edu
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