



Turning Around Low-Performing Schools: Lessons from Transformed Schools

National Title I Conference

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SAN DIEGO STATE
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National Center for Urban School Transformation

Dedicated to identifying, studying, and promoting the best practices of America's highest achieving urban schools in a manner that supports urban districts in transforming teaching and learning

<http://www.ncust.org>

5th Annual Symposium: May 5th - 7th, 2010 in Long Beach

NCUST Identifies, Celebrates, and Studies

Non-selective, urban schools (serving primarily students from low-income families) that demonstrate high achievement for all students. These schools evidence:

- High proficiency rates for all groups
 - High graduation rates for all groups
 - High rates of access to challenging programs for all groups
 - No disproportionate enrollments of racial/ethnic groups in special education
 - Low rates of suspension/expulsion for all groups
 - Other indicators of student success/achievement
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2009 NCUST Award Winners

- Bonham Elementary, Dallas, TX
 - Bursch Elementary, Compton, CA
 - Fallon Park Elementary, Roanoke, VA
 - Franklin Town Charter High, Philadelphia, PA
 - Golden Empire Elementary, Sacramento, CA
 - Highland Elementary, Silver Springs, MD
 - Ira Harbison Elementary, National City, CA
 - Lawndale High School, Los Angeles, CA
 - Kearny School of International Business, San Diego, CA
 - KIPP Adelante Academy, San Diego, CA
 - Montebello Gardens Elementary, Los Angeles, CA
 - World of Inquiry School, Rochester, NY
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2008 NCUST Award Winners

- Louisa Alcott Elementary, Cleveland, OH (2008)
 - Bridesburg Elementary, Philadelphia, PA (2008)
 - William Dandy Middle School, Ft. Lauderdale, FL (2008)
 - Dreamkeeper's Academy, Norfolk, VA (2008)
 - Franklin Elementary, Bakersfield, CA (2008)
 - Henderson Middle School, Richmond, VA (2008)
 - MacArthur High School, Houston, TX (2008)
 - Signal Hill Elementary, Long Beach, CA (2008)
 - Southside Museums Elementary, Miami, FL (2008)
 - Harriet Tubman Blue Ribbon School, Newark, NJ (2008)
 - Tucker Elementary, Long Beach, CA (2008)
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Many Strategies for Pursuing AYP & Turning Around “Low-Performing” Schools

- Get a new principal
 - Get a new plan
 - Get a new textbook
 - Get more test prep
 - Get new students
 - Get new teachers
 - Get more teachers
 - Get a new schedule
 - Get a charter
 - Get a new computer system
 - Get a new reading program
 - Get more aides
 - Get new parents
 - Get a new test
 - Get a new curriculum
 - Get a new staff development program
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Bottom Line:

In spite of all the many strategies used to turn around low performance –

Nothing Changes Unless Teaching and Learning Changes.

Education Week: January 6, 2010

- Focus on Instruction Turns Schools Around:
Network gets results in 5 schools in
Chicago without 'drastic' steps
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Sources of Similar Findings:

- Chenoweth, K. (2007). *It's being done: Academic success in unexpected schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
 - Edmonds, R. (1979). Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational Leadership*, 37(1), 15-24.
 - Education Trust. (1999). *Dispelling the myth: High-poverty schools exceeding expectations*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED445140)
 - Education Trust. (2005). *The power to change: High schools that help all students achieve*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED490969)
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Sources of Similar Findings:

- Johnson, J. F. & Asera, R. (1999). *Hope for urban education: A study of nine high-performing, high-poverty, urban elementary schools*. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED438362)
 - Robinson, V. M. J., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008) The impact of leadership on student outcomes: an analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635-674.
 - Symonds, K. W. (2004). *After the test: Closing the achievement gaps with data*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncrel.org/gap/studies/basrc.htm>.
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There's nothing easy or fortuitous about the accomplishments of high-performing schools.

Their accomplishments represent hard work by smart, dedicated people. Hard work and dedication are essential, yet insufficient.

It's All About Leadership

- Principal leadership
 - Teacher leadership
 - District office leadership
 - Community/school board leadership
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If Nothing Changes Unless Teaching & Learning Changes...

- And if “It’s all about leadership,”
 - Then, how do leaders generate positive, substantive changes in teaching and learning?
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Leaders Generate:

- Clear purpose
 - Unwavering passion
 - Powerful persistence
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Purpose

Schools that achieve dramatic differences in results are driven – not to avoid sanctions – but, to improve students lives. Teachers, administrators, and support staff are united in purpose: They will create learning environments that lead every student to success in school and in life.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain This Sense of Purpose?

1. Leaders keep conversations focused on the impact of everyday efforts on students.

Communication frequently, consistently, and in multiple formats conveys the impact of everyday school actions on student lives.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain This Sense of Purpose?

2. Leaders promote ambitious goals that generate enthusiasm and build a sense of mission.

Leaders push beyond compliance and encourage everyone to embrace goals that will make a difference in students lives.

People commit to goals they see as worth their effort.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain This Sense of Purpose?

3. Leaders help everyone see their role in accomplishing goals.

Leaders help everyone translate school goals into grade level, department, classroom, and individual student goals. Teachers see their role when they know specifically what their students need to master, by when.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain This Sense of Purpose?

4. Leaders help educators support each other in learning how to teach students more effectively and efficiently.

Leaders provide time and support in a manner that helps educators learn that one of their primary roles is to support the ongoing learning of their colleagues.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain This Sense of Purpose?

5. Leaders help educators focus on key academic content.

Leaders encourage teachers to teach a few concepts to mastery rather than “cover” everything. Leaders encourage educators to increase rigor and depth.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain This Sense of Purpose?

6. Leaders focus attention on the quantity of instruction.

Constantly, leaders seek opportunities to minimize distractions and transitions and maximize instructional time. They creatively use resources to extend the length of the learning day, week, and year.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain This Sense of Purpose?

7. Leaders pay close attention to instructional quality.

Leaders constantly seek evidence that students are learning what their teachers are teaching. Regularly, leaders share this evidence in ways that build the capacity of teachers from day to day, creating a culture of professional growth.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain This Sense of Purpose?

8. Leaders measure and communicate progress toward goals regularly.

Goals become real as baseline measures and regular measurements of progress are collected, posted, discussed, disaggregated, acted upon, and celebrated promptly and regularly. Leaders make data accessible and actionable.

Passion

Schools that achieve dramatic differences in results show a passion for building and sustaining a climate in which every student, parent, and staff member knows that they are a valued, respected member of the school community. As well, they are passionate about improving teaching and learning continuously.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain This Passion?

1. Leaders make everyone feel valued, respected, and appreciated.

Students, parents, teachers, and support staff know they are valued. Leaders collect information that helps them know how to improve relational issues. They identify and resolve issues promptly and professionally. They evidence great integrity and sincerity.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain This Passion?

- 2. Leaders value improvement and growth.
People feel like they can take risks and try to improve because they know their efforts will be appreciated and supported.*
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How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain This Passion?

3. Leaders build and retain a positive, constructive climate.

Leaders refuse to be passive when others choose to be negative. Respectfully, but clearly, administrators and teacher leaders speak out when others claim that goals are unattainable.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain This Passion?

4. Improvement is rewarded. Lack of improvement is not. Lack of effort is not tolerated.

Leaders communicate their passion to transform relationships, teaching, and learning through their actions. They reward improvement efforts and they make clear that a lack of effort is unacceptable.

Persistence

Schools that achieve dramatic differences in results persist as they encounter challenges, setbacks, and frustrations. As well, they persist in their improvement efforts even when they exceed the results achieved by other schools. They keep moving forward when others lose hope or become comfortable with their current levels of performance.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain The Ability to Persist?

1. Leaders build hope.

Leaders give students, parents, teachers, and support staff reasons to believe that their efforts are worthwhile. College and careers are constant topics of focus.

Policies are designed/implemented to nurture, sustain, and rekindle hope.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain The Ability to Persist?

2. Leaders help everyone remember that learning should be fun.

Leaders help educators teach in ways that students like to learn. They encourage teachers to teach in ways that build upon students interests, backgrounds, cultures, and prior knowledge. They help educators consider how they can make learning fun.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain The Ability to Persist?

3. Leaders build leaders.

Leaders create platforms for the leadership of many others who want to influence school improvement. Leaders distribute leadership opportunities in ways that build the capacity of individuals to contribute to the school's success.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain The Ability to Persist?

4. Leaders build systems and structures.

Leaders design and implement systems that ensure that improvement efforts will succeed and be sustained. These systems and structures facilitate collaboration and help ensure that important tasks will be completed even when key individuals are not present.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain The Ability to Persist?

5. Leaders celebrate progress frequently.

Frequently, leaders celebrate improvements (both formally and informally). They find elements of success worth celebrating in results others see as failure. They are skillful at acknowledging everyone who contributed to successes.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain The Ability to Persist?

6. Leaders help others see setbacks as learning opportunities.

Leaders act as if every “failure” is a step along the journey to success, as long as people are willing to learn from their actions.

How Do Great Schools Build and Sustain The Ability to Persist?

7. Leaders help others remember the real purpose.

Leaders help other persist by providing constant reminders that the real purpose is not to improve scores, achieve benchmarks, avoid sanctions, or acquire recognition.

The real purpose is to transform schooling in ways that improve students' lives.

*District leaders play a huge role
in influencing whether or not
schools turn around.*

District Leaders Influence Clarity of Purpose

- Stability of leadership
 - Focus on learning results
 - Systems for assessing progress toward learning goals
 - Systems that provide clear, timely, actionable, and appropriate data to various individuals and groups
 - Structures for maximizing educator collaboration that improves teaching and learning
 - Systems for minimizing conflicts among priorities
 - Balance between flexibility & accountability
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District Leaders Influence Sense of Passion

- Consistent efforts that model valuing, respecting, and appreciating students, parents, teachers, and support staff
 - Consistent efforts that model the expectation that all students will evidence significant academic growth
 - Systems for regularly identifying, acknowledging, and celebrating large and small areas of growth
 - Systems for supporting efforts to improve and addressing refusals to improve
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District Leaders Influence the Ability to Persist

- Articulation of the connections between elementary, middle, and high schools, and to post-secondary education, careers, and quality of life factors
 - Reconceptualization of the role of district office personnel (from control to support)
 - Systems that provide opportunities for principals to learn from and support each other
 - Wise responses to setbacks and failures
 - Consistent efforts to model the real purpose
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In Summary

Some leaders help their schools turn around and achieve great results because they generate:

- Clear purpose
- Unwavering passion &
- Powerful persistence...

In ways that lead to positive, substantive changes in teaching and learning!

See For Yourself!

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May 5-7, 2010

Long Beach, CA

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