



Nothing is Easy But Everything is Possible

St. Louis Black Leadership Roundtable

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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>

4th Annual Symposium: May 7th - 8th, 2009 in San Diego

NCUST Identifies, Celebrates, and Studies

- Schools 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
 - Low rates of special education placement for all student groups
 - Low rates of suspension/expulsion for all groups
 - Other indicators of student success/achievement
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Lawndale High School

Los Angeles, CA

- Enrollment: 1,363
- 70% Latino
- 17% African American
- 76% Low-Income
- 80% Graduation Rate
- 21% Enrolled in at least one AP Course
- Silver on US News & World Reports List of America's Best High Schools

Dreamkeeper's Academy

Norfolk, Virginia

- Enrollment: 454
- 91% African American
- 82% Low-Income
- National Title I Distinguished School
- National School Change Award
- Higher proficiency scores than many suburban Virginia schools

Cecil H. Parker Elementary

Mount Vernon, New York

- Enrollment: 450
 - 99% African American
 - 73% Low-Income
 - 91% proficient in reading
 - 96% proficient in mathematics
 - In six years, reading achievement improved from 27% proficient to 91% proficient
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Thomas Henderson Middle School

Richmond, Virginia

- Enrollment: 556
 - 97% African American
 - 83% Low-Income
 - 94% proficient in writing
 - 99% proficient in science
 - 73% of 7th graders scored proficient in mathematics, compared to 55% statewide
 - 83% of 8th graders scored proficient in English, compared to 79% statewide
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William Dandy Middle School

Fort Lauderdale, FL

- Enrollment: 1265
 - 87% African American
 - 77% Low-Income
 - 95% proficient in writing
 - Proficiency rates in math and reading more than double several neighboring middle schools
 - Governor's A+ Recognition Award 2004-07
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Columbus Alternative High School

Columbus, OH

- Enrollment: 611
 - Grades 9-12
 - 60% African American
 - 59% low-income
 - 97% proficient in reading
 - 95% proficient in mathematics
 - 39% of upperclassmen enrolled in AP or IB
 - 90% of graduates attend 2 or 4 yr colleges
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Attitude

School Culture Matters

*“Before I care about how much
you know, I want to know how
much you care.”*

Ron Ferguson

*“People learn from people they
bond to.”*

James Comer

Attitude

- High-performing urban schools create environments in which students know they are welcome, valued, and appreciated. Educators throughout the school help students know that their current and future success is the primary reason for the school.
 - Educators in high-performing schools help students believe in their potential to excel in more rigorous coursework and ultimately to excel in life.
 - In high-performing schools, small and large student successes are celebrated frequently and sincerely.
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Attitude

- At high-performing urban schools, parents know they are valued as part of a team focused on helping their children succeed in life. Parents know they are valued whether they help at school or not.
 - In high-performing schools, teachers trust that school leaders care sincerely about them. Teachers perceive that their leaders are providing the attention, resources, and expertise they need to succeed. Attendance is high and turnover is relatively rare.
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Access

What We Teach Matters

“If we don’t teach it, we shouldn’t act surprised if, at the end of the year, students don’t know it.”

Principal at Brazosport High School

Access

- High-performing schools offer access to a rich array of challenging courses. Students are encouraged to pursue rigorous coursework.
 - Most high-performing urban schools FOCUS on a limited number of challenging objectives. Within each subject area, educators identify critical standards and focus attention on teaching them well. No “drive-by” teaching.
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Assessment

How We Assess Our Teaching Matters

“We’re always looking at student work to see if students have mastered what we’ve tried to teach. Then we ask ourselves, ‘How can we teach this better?’”

Teacher at Cecil Parker Elementary

“We’re observing classrooms all the time, checking to see if we’re implementing what we say we’re implementing.”

Principal at Lawndale High School

Assessment

- In high-performing schools, teachers use assessment data as tools/mirrors for improving teaching.
 - In high-performing schools, professional development is not random. It is connected to assessment results and focused on a few key opportunities for improvement over an extended period of time.
 - In high-performing urban schools, leaders assess instruction regularly and provide high-quality, useful feedback about teacher implementation of the concepts and skills that are the focus of professional development.
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Adaptation

How We Teach Matters

“To say ‘I taught it, but they didn’t learn it,’ is like a physician saying, ‘I cured him, but he died.’”

Adam Urbanski



Adaptation

- No “Chicken Feeding.” In high-achieving urban schools, teachers persist until they have evidence that students understand key content and are able to demonstrate key skills.
 - Strong teachers use a variety of approaches designed to connect with students interests, backgrounds, cultures, and prior knowledge. Learning is exciting and fun.
 - In high-achieving schools teachers eliminate unsuccessful strategies designed for “The Beaver.”
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Accountability

How We Motivate Ourselves
Matters

“We can whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest of us... Whether we do must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven’t so far.”

Ron Edmonds



Accountability

- In high-performing schools, leaders help ensure that everyone keeps focused on their influence on children's lives.
 - Leaders model accountability by assuming responsibility for helping teachers succeed at getting students to succeed.
 - In high-performing schools, small and large successes are celebrated often. Conversations about improvement needs are frank, yet positive.
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“The inauguration of Barack Obama means everything to me. It doesn’t really mean that anything is any easier. It just means that everything, everything is possible.”

Student at Lawndale High School
