

# Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools

## Second Edition -- Resource List

Becoming a high-performing school takes many years of hard work. There is no silver bullet--no single thing a school can do to ensure high student performance. Research has found that high-performing schools have a number of common characteristics. A school may be doing well in some areas but need help in others.

The second edition of the *Nine Characteristics of High-Performing Schools* maintains the original characteristics and definitions. It adds information from about 120 new research and professional references, as well as relevant OSPI documents, to help educators deepen their understanding of the characteristics, and it provides additional strategies for expanding implementation.

This resource list provides the names of key websites, books, reports, and articles that can be used to help schools improve in each of the characteristics of high-performing schools. Information about various characteristics is often embedded throughout these resources. After assessing the areas that need the most attention, review and then discuss the materials mentioned in this resource list in order to focus your school improvement efforts. Good luck!

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## Appendix A: Bibliography and analysis matrix

National Research Reports

Washington State Research Reports

## Introduction

The second edition expands and deepens the discussion of the Nine Characteristics. The introduction provides an overview of several concepts:

- Effective processes for improving schools
- Expanded perspectives on effective leadership
- Relational trust (i.e., trusting relationships among person in an organization)
- Quality instruction, grading practices, and monitoring
- Professional learning communities
- Cultural competence and culturally responsive teaching
- Family and community engagement in schools
- High school improvement
- District improvement
- Need-based allocation of resources (funding, staffing, and support)

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## SELECTED RESOURCES AS STARTING POINTS

Some resources discuss several of the nine characteristics of high-performing schools. The books in the following list provide an effective starting point for busy educators who have limited time for reading. These resources are also useful for school study groups.

- Barth, R. S. (1990). *Improving Schools from Within: Teachers, Parents, and Principals Can Make the Difference*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
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# 1. A clear and shared focus

Everybody knows where they are going and why. The focus is on achieving a shared vision, and all understand their role in achieving the vision. The focus and vision are developed from common beliefs and values, creating a consistent direction for all involved.

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(\* indicates those cited in the complete Resource)

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| <a href="http://www.k12.wa.us/SchoolImprovement/sipguide.aspx">http://www.k12.wa.us/SchoolImprovement/sipguide.aspx</a>                             | *School Improvement Planning Process Guide  |
| <a href="http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/reengineering/keyissues/leadership.shtml">http://www.nwrel.org/scpd/reengineering/keyissues/leadership.shtml</a> | Leadership and Organizational Vitality  |
| <a href="http://www.effectiveschools.com">http://www.effectiveschools.com</a>   |   |
| <a href="http://www.prrac.org/pubs_aiu.php">http://www.prrac.org/pubs_aiu.php</a>   | Add It Up: Using Research to Improve Education for Low-Income and Minority Students |

Barth, R. S. (1990). *Improving Schools from Within: Teachers, Parents, and Principals Can Make the Difference*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. See Chapter 11, Visions of Good Schools.

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## 2. High standards and expectations for all students

Teachers and staff believe that all students can learn and meet high standards. While recognizing that some students must overcome significant barriers, these obstacles are not seen as insurmountable. Students are offered an ambitious and rigorous course of study.

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(\* indicates those cited in the complete Resource)

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| <a href="http://www.mcrel.org/topics/products/105">http://www.mcrel.org/topics/products/105</a>   | Raising the Achievement of Low Performing Students  |
| <a href="http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu/">http://www.goodschools.gwu.edu/</a>   | NCCSR publications. Issue Briefs. April 2001. A Brief on Turning Around Low Performing Schools  |
| <a href="http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/archive/cors/Issues_in_Restructuring_Schools/ISSUES_NO_8_SPRING_1995.pdf">http://www.wcer.wisc.edu/archive/cors/Issues_in_Restructuring_Schools/ISSUES_NO_8_SPRING_1995.pdf</a> | Issue Reports. No. 8. Spring 1995 "Issues in Restructuring Schools"   |
| <a href="http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/dtm/">http://www2.edtrust.org/edtrust/dtm/</a>   | Dispelling the Myth: High Poverty Schools Exceeding Expectations  |
| <a href="http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v5n10.html">http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v5n10.html</a>   | Cultural Differences and the Construction of Meaning: Implications for the Leadership and Organizational Context of Schools, Robert A. Pena, Arizona State University.  |
| <a href="http://www.naec.org/achieve/2.html">http://www.naec.org/achieve/2.html</a>   | Improving Black Student Achievement. See chapter 2: School-Related Factors and Teacher Behavior that Contribute to Low Self-Image in Students, and worksheet B: Teacher Behaviors That Support a Positive Self-Concept among Minority Students. |

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### 3. Effective school leadership

Effective instructional and administrative leadership is required to implement change processes. Effective leaders are proactive and seek help that is needed. They nurture an instructional program and school culture conducive to learning and professional growth. Effective leaders have different styles and roles -- teachers and other staff, including those in the district office, often have a leadership role.

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<a href="http://www.awsp.org/">http://www.awsp.org/</a>	Association of Washington School Principals
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<a href="http://www.naesp.org/">http://www.naesp.org/</a>	National Association of Elementary School Principals
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<a href="http://www.pdkintl.org/">http://www.pdkintl.org/</a>	Phi Delta Kappa International
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## 4. High levels of collaboration and communication

There is strong teamwork among teachers across all grades and with other staff. Everybody is involved and connected to each other, including parents and members of the community, to identify problems and work on solutions.

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## 5. Curriculum, instruction and assessments aligned with state standards

The planned and actual curricula are aligned with the essential academic learning requirements (EALRs). Research-based teaching strategies and materials are used. Staff understands the role of classroom and state assessments, what the assessments measure, and how student work is evaluated.

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## 6. Frequent monitoring of learning and teaching

A steady cycle of different assessments identifies students who need help. More support and instructional time are provided, either during the school day or outside normal school hours, to students who need more help. Teaching is adjusted based on frequent monitoring of student progress and needs. Assessment results are used to focus and improve instructional programs.

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## 7. Focused professional development

A strong emphasis is placed on training staff in areas of most need. Feedback from learning and teaching focuses extensive and ongoing professional development. The support is also aligned with the school or district vision and objectives.

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## 8. Supportive learning environment

The school has a safe, civil, healthy and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Students feel respected and connected with the staff and are engaged in learning. Instruction is personalized and small learning environments increase student contact with teachers.

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## 9. High level of family and community involvement

There is a sense that all have a responsibility to educate students, not just teachers and staff in schools. Families, as well as businesses, social service agencies, and community colleges/ universities, all play a vital role in this effort.

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<a href="http://www.prrac.org/pubs_aiu.php">http://www.prrac.org/pubs_aiu.php</a>	Add It Up: Using Research to Improve Education for Low-Income and Minority Students

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# Appendix A: Bibliography and analysis matrix

Twenty-five national and Washington state research studies comprise the research base for the nine characteristics of high-performing schools. OSPI researchers reviewed and analyzed the studies to confirm the rigor of the nine characteristics. The appendix lists the bibliography of these studies. (A matrix that reflects the analysis follows in the complete Resource document.)

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Making Standards Stick: A Follow-Up Look at Washington State's School Improvement Efforts in 1999-2000, Robin Lake, Maria McCarthy, Sara Taggart, and Mary Beth Celio, Center on Reinventing Public Education (University of Washington), April 2000. (A summary of this publication is published by the Partnership For Learning.)

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