Best Practices Newsletter

Pacesetting Schools Share Successful Strategies to Prepare Students for the Future

How does your school compare with those outstanding in getting students to graduate and equipping them for success in college and careers? Pacesetting high schools, middle grades schools and technology centers have changed classroom and other practices to prepare students to meet postsecondary requirements and rising workplace needs. The strategies include raising expectations, project-based learning, guidance and advisement, improving students' reading and writing skills, standards-based teaching and learning, and many other successful approaches.

What Do Pacesetting Schools Do?

Educators are confronted by the ongoing challenge of increasing student achievement, high school completion rates and percentages of graduates ready for college and careers. SREB has released data from the 2012 Assessment showing the top five things great schools do to advance achievement. (See Table below.)

"Great high schools implement the High Schools That Work design with fidelity — They are always gaining new insights of how to address the Key Practices with more effective strategies and approaches."

Thirty percent of High Schools That Work (HSTW) sites are implementing the HSTW Goals and Key Practices at a high level; 37 percent are considered moderate-implementation sites, and 33 percent are at a low-implementation level.

Percentages of Students Experiencing Levels of Practices; Teachers' Perceptions of the School Climate for Continuous Improvement at HSTW Sites

INDICES	LEVEL OF HSTW IMPLEMENTATION		
	High	Moderate	Low
Rigorous Career-Technical Studies	47%	32%	18%
Rich Literacy Experiences	45	28	16
Balanced Approach to Math	50	34	20
Guidance, Advisement and Support	37	27	20
Teachers' Perceptions of Continuous Improvement	47	37	29

Source: 2012 HSTW Assessment. Note: The levels of implementation are based on site-level data and individual student data.

SREB Senior Vice President Gene Bottoms addressed several top strategies for raising student achievement:

- **Students at high-implementation HSTW schools, compared with moderate- or low-implementation schools, are more likely to experience rigorous assignments in career-technical (CT) classes.** Principal **Andrea Anthony** of **Fred J. Page High School** in Franklin, Tennessee, said her school increased literacy across the curriculum, thereby improving the reading and writing skills of CT students. Principal **Melissa Burg** said **Queens Vocational and Technical High School** in New York City oversaw implementation of the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) at her school. **Marlon Dyer**, principal of **Crest Ridge R-VII** secondary school in Centerview, Missouri, said the school evaluates and updates programs as needed and calls on veteran teachers to give students challenging assignments.

- **Students at high-implementation schools are more likely to be engaged in reading grade-level texts, reading other complex documents and converting their understanding into a written paper or an oral presentation in the classroom.** Burg engaged a literacy consultant to help implement LDC.

- **Students at high-implementation schools are more likely to be in classrooms where teachers help them understand math, reason with math and apply math to solve complex multi-step problems. The instruction is less about drill-sheet math (memorizing rules and procedures) and more about using math to reason out and understand problems.** Anthony's school adopted the Mathematics Design Collaborative (MDC) at the Algebra I level and the college- and career-readiness standards (CCRS) approach for all subject areas. Burg hired a math consultant to help with MDC.

- **In guidance and advisement, more students at high-implementation schools receive help focusing on a career and connecting to programs of study helping them achieve career goals.** Anthony supports students and teachers in working with CT pathways at the middle grades level by allowing vertical team meetings on late-start Mondays (the school's weekly one-hour professional development time built into the school day). Burg's comprehensive high school requires students to take a variety of courses in addition to a CT program of study. Freshmen at Dyer's school meet individually with counselors. The school makes it possible for students to remain with the same teacher-adviser all four years.

- **Almost half of teachers at high-implementation schools believe their school leadership supports continuous improvement. At moderate- and low-implementation schools, fewer faculty members understand or believe school leadership is focused on continuous improvement. Leadership does matter.**

"Great high schools implement the High Schools That Work design with fidelity," Bottoms said. "They never finish the implementation. They are always gaining new insights of how to address the Key Practices with more effective strategies and approaches.

"For 25 years, SREB has seen a direct correlation between student achievement and the impact of implementing the High Schools That Work design with fidelity," Bottoms continued. "It is important for schools to have a framework of Goals and Key Practices that they are working to meet and implement."

The principals answered three questions about the way things work at their outstanding schools:

- **How do teachers take ownership of problems and create solutions?** Anthony said math teachers worked together to reconfigure the scope and sequence of academic and CT courses to prepare students for both careers and postsecondary studies. The teachers met weekly to review solutions and identify changes still needed. Burg asked leaders and teachers to focus on improving attendance. Dyer created a teacher-based program to support low-achieving students.

- **How did you get resistant staff members to climb aboard with the changes?** Anthony said there were very few resistors. She took steps to support and nudge everyone, whether or not they wanted to change. Eventually, everyone got on board.

- **How do you spend your time as an administrator? What do classrooms look like when you observe them?** Anthony spends 40 percent of her time in the classroom. She supports teachers by focusing on what students are doing and producing. Burg focuses on the aim or intent of the lesson and the engagement of students in the lesson. Dyer uses an iPad application to observe teachers in the classroom.

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Strategies for Success: A Freshman Transition Program That Works

Successful ninth-grade transition is essential to high school graduation. Getting off to the right start sets the stage for success in high school and life.

Choctaw High School (CHS) in Choctaw, Oklahoma, a suburb of Oklahoma City, serves 1,460 students. The freshman enrollment has grown every year since ninth-grade students moved to the high school in 2009-10. That is when the school board decided to:

- build a separate freshman building on the high school campus;

- make core and elective classes freshman-only;

- build a staff by selecting the best available teachers instead of transferring junior high school teachers to the freshman center; and

- require all freshmen to enroll in a class aptly named Strategies for Success.

"These decisions became the cornerstone of freshman success," said Freshman Principal **David Dooley**. "We finished our fourth year as a freshman center in 2013 when our first group of students graduated," he said. The class of 2013-14 included 312 seniors.

"A new building, new furniture and new smart boards are all fine, but the most important part of a successful freshman center is having staff members who are committed, caring and dedicated to helping each student grow during a tough transition year," Dooley said.

The Strategies for Success transition course enables students to discover their past, analyze their present and plan their future. The hands-on course calls for students to set goals by creating collages, developing PowerPoint presentations and giving speeches. Financial literacy is embedded in the course to teach students the importance of earning money and how to use it wisely.

The course connects school with the essentials needed in the workplace. Students learn that being successful in school is important; the rules they follow in school will help them get ahead in a career. Students study the following comparisons:

SCHOOL	WORK
Be there every day.	Be there every day.
Be on time.	Be on time.
Get along with fellow students.	Get along with fellow employees.
Relate to male and female teachers.	Relate to male and female bosses.
Teachers may be nice or not so nice.	Bosses may be nice or not so nice.
You learn something, you do it, and you are graded.	You are shown how to do something, you do it, and you are evaluated.

The Strategies for Success course also emphasizes the steps taken by students to be college ready. The school has a working relationship with seven postsecondary institutions in the state, and students get to visit at least one college during the course. "Our goal is for students to know in the freshman year what they must do to be college ready," Dooley said.

The freshman center has generated many positive outcomes in helping ninth-graders transition into high school and prepare for college and careers. "The freshman class has had the highest grade point average, the highest attendance and the lowest number of office referrals in our school over the past four years," Dooley said.

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Building a Culture of High Expectations Leading to Success for Students

Waynesville High School (WHS), part of a small rural school district in northern Warren County, Ohio, is earning respect and accolades for its customer-oriented approach to doing what is best for its 510 students. It has raised expectations by creating a culture of success that provides each student with support, mentoring and encouragement.

Consider these accomplishments at WHS:

- Ninety-eight percent of students graduate in four years.
- The graduation rate ranks 24th in the state — in the top 4 percent.
- Students earn an average of 24.7 credits.
- Ninety percent of students pass the Ohio Graduation Test on the first attempt.
- The average GPA (grade point average) is 3.17.
- Twenty-six percent of students earn college credits while at WHS.

"Our district and school have embraced the High Schools That Work framework, including eliminating all low-level courses," said Principal **Randy Gebhardt**. "As a result, we only offer college-preparatory, honors and Advanced Placement courses."

A lot has happened to the curriculum since 2001-02, when students could select from only eight honors courses and no dual credit courses. The new totals are 18 honors courses and three dual credit courses.

The school uses SMART goals — Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely — leading to student learning objectives, which are growth targets teachers set at the beginning of the school year and students strive to achieve by the end of the semester or school year. The targets are based on a thorough review of data reflecting students' baseline skills.

If students are unsuccessful, they are guided into intervention opportunities available during the school day. The intervention includes communication between teachers and parents to get students to take full advantage of extra time and extra help. Eighty-five percent of students were involved in some type of weekly intervention or instruction in 2012-13.

WHS uses teacher-based teams to "connect the dots" between state and other programs and initiatives aimed at preparing students for the modern global economy. The five-step team process includes collecting evidence of student learning, analyzing assessment results, planning instruction, implementing actions with fidelity, and reassessing and evaluating effectiveness.

Superintendent **Pat Dubbs** of **Wayne Local Schools** is involved in raising expectations at every level. He incorporated an assessment day for exam-giving in each grade. He also ensured that all principals meet individually with staff members to discuss their SMART goals, which must be supported by data.

Higher standards at the high school have caused **Waynesville Middle School** (WMS) to raise expectations and increase the amount of rigor in course offerings. Both WHS and WMS have been rated "Excellent" by Ohio for the past nine years.

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Creating a College-Going Atmosphere at the High School Level

Los Fresnos High School (LFHS) in rural Los Fresnos, Texas, has a demographic distribution like other high schools along the United States-Mexico border. The student enrollment at LFHS is more than 96 percent Hispanic. However, the percentage of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students is very low compared with the district, while the percentages of at-risk students (43 percent) and economically disadvantaged students (80 percent) exceed those of the district.

When Principal **Ronnie Rodriguez** arrived in a neighboring district in 2004, he immediately discovered a lack of ambition among students. "On the first day, a student told me his goal after high school was to sell umbrellas on South Padre Island," Rodriguez said. "Students didn't aspire to anything. They didn't believe they were capable of doing anything significant." Rodriguez vowed to make a difference in how every student viewed postsecondary opportunities. When he came to LFHS, he saw the lack of faith in college readiness reflected in an Advanced Placement (AP) pass rate of 24 percent for the school.

Rodriguez knew that students needed to believe they could achieve. He also knew they needed teachers convinced they could prepare students for college success.

Student Leaders

"I identified the faculty members who were most open to improving achievement," Rodriguez said. "I also found student leaders who could help instill confidence in their peers."

The improvement effort led to a "college go center" where students could have access to college materials and frequent college recruiter visits. Teachers displayed college banners on classroom doors and hung banners in the cafeteria. Parents began donating symbols of their alma maters. "The climate was beginning to change, and we used this energy to upgrade the approach to academics in the school," Rodriguez said.

Students participated in Saturday academies — tutorial sessions offering the incentives of transportation, breakfast, lunch and door prizes. The name was changed to Saturday Prep Day, a label that won approval from AP students and resulted in a significant increase in attendance.

"In regards to scheduling, we decided to offer extended AP courses that run in 90-minute periods from August to May rather than August to December," Rodriguez said. "This has been a major factor in our success."

Teacher Collaboration

The collaboration of all teachers has been extensive. Non-AP teachers know the school's expectations and constantly encourage AP students to rise to the occasion. "We also came up with some criteria involving 'help time' for our students," Rodriguez said. "Each student is required to take a minimum of six hours of prep time for each AP test being attempted. This is non-negotiable for students and teachers."

Students were empowered to make decisions about the classes they took and the responsibilities those decisions entailed. The school released scores from previous AP exams to make students aware of classroom practices and teachers aware of better instructional strategies. Classroom instruction improved as a result.

Participation in the Saturday tutoring sessions began to grow as students became accountable for their own success. The result was impressive gains in the AP pass rate from 24 percent in 2009 to 33 percent in 2010 to 54 percent in 2011 and 64 percent in 2012. "The 64 percent rate is well above the international performance mark for AP exams," Rodriguez said.

The lack of drive that he found in one student has led Rodriguez to facilitate a "culture shift" at Los Fresnos High School. Some simple steps, combined with improved instructional planning, resulted in students who took higher level classes and performed better on AP exams. Now, students apply to serve as tour guides to show off the school to visitors.

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Early College School Exceeds 98 Percent Graduation Rate

A partnership between the **Youngstown (Ohio) City School District**, **Youngstown State University** and **Eastern Gateway Community College** established **Youngstown Early College (YEC) High School** in 2004. The school has maintained a graduation rate of more than 98 percent by linking high school and college educational experiences to support clear pathways from high school to college to careers.

YEC is a hybrid of high school and college in a rigorous yet supportive environment. It compresses the time it takes to complete a high school diploma and earn at least one year of college credit or an associate's degree along with high school graduation.

On the campus of Youngstown State University, YEC serves 210 students, including many who otherwise would be limited in opportunities to attend college. The ethnic distribution is 69 percent black, 12 percent white, 9.6 percent Hispanic and 9.4 percent multiracial. Eighty-five percent of students are economically disadvantaged.

Students who have met the eighth-grade English/language arts state assessment benchmarks are eligible to apply to YEC. The recruiting and application process includes campus tours and a series of interviews to ensure that prospective students are committed to the goals of the school. A 20-day summer bridge program allows students to experience YEC before enrolling.

The following strategies have been successful at YEC:

- **Creating a culture and expectation of graduation —** An eighth-grade transition program with a summer bridge experience helps students adjust to high school. An academic review team tracks every aspect of a student's progress toward high school and college achievement benchmarks.

- **Offering flexible academic schedules and well-supervised online courses —** School leaders work with the school's postsecondary partners to ensure that students' schedules are logistically sound. YEC utilizes technology as a tool to deliver engaging and innovative curriculum content.

- **Hiring personnel to review transcripts and provide intense academic and personal guidance —** In addition to traditional counselors, academic coaches serve as advisers to a group of students. The process yields such benefits as adherence to college readiness strategies, multiple reviews of student transcripts and helping students reach their personal goals.

- **Providing more opportunities for students to earn college credit before graduation —** Students have access to dual enrollment and early college programs. They also can enroll in high school career-technical classes through one of the school's community partnerships.

- **Improving transitions for students —** YEC collaborates with its postsecondary partners to support students' transition to further education. The school also offers transition to citizenship through service learning programs calling for 60 hours of service to a nonprofit agency. A cultural events program requires students to attend theater productions, concerts and lectures and to visit museums as a transition into adulthood.

One YEC graduate said:

"As a high school freshman, I had a negative outlook on how Youngstown Early College could benefit me. I lost both of my parents at a young age and saw a bleak outlook for myself in the future. My opinion of this new program was that I didn't need it, and initially I did everything in my power to go against the grain. However, I soon discovered that the atmosphere I'd entered into at Youngstown Early College wouldn't allow nor encourage such an attitude. ***Over the next four years, I formed close bonds with teachers, advisers and the principal, who became my cheerleading squad.*** *They constantly offered support for my college and high school course work. For the first time, I began to understand what success felt like."*

Youngstown Early College has earned many honors:

- YEC received an Excellent rating on the Ohio Department of Education report card for four consecutive years (2009-12).
- Forty-four students have earned associate's degrees along with high school diplomas.
- Seven students have earned bachelor's degrees after high school graduation.
- *U.S. News and World Report* chose YEC for a Bronze Award as one of the top high schools in the nation in 2011 and 2013.
- The Ohio Department of Education recognized YEC with a High Progress School of Honor award in 2012, a High Performing School of Honor award in 2012 and 2013 and a School of Promise award for the past seven years.
- HSTW recognized YEC with a Bronze Improvement Award in 2012.
- A graduate of YEC joined the faculty as a ninth-grade English teacher.

"Youngstown Early College continues to graduate college- and career-ready students who are preparing to become productive citizens," said Assistant Principal **Michele Dotson**.

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Embedding Literacy Arts Into Career and Technical Education

"By associating each English lesson with a practical, real-world application, teachers show students how English will be useful to their futures."

Deana Harris, English/language arts instructor at **Springfield Clark Career Technology Center** in Springfield, Ohio, said the two biggest reasons for embedding literacy into career-technical (CT) programs at the center were higher literacy requirements and lack of student engagement in learning. The full-time center offers 27 programs for students from 10 high schools.

Following a traditional format, the center provides CT labs in the morning and academic courses in the afternoon. However, many students were not seeing the need to attend or pay attention to academic classes after they completed their CT classes.

Harris and English instructor **Christina Steffanni** approached the Ohio Department of Education in 2011-12 with research findings and a proposal to improve student apathy and rising discipline problems. Their plan focused on increasing engagement and relevance by embedding the English/Language Arts College-and Career-Readiness Standards into CT education.

Overwhelming Support

State, school and district administrators, counselors, CT instructors and intervention specialists were "overwhelmingly supportive" of the plan, Harris said. "Although everyone was on board and excited, I did have a few apprehensions when the plan got underway at the beginning of 2012-13," Harris said. "One of my major concerns was how I would learn the content standards of four different labs and make assignments relevant to each student. I also needed to make sure the students received their full lab time."

The center used Achieve3000 to pre-assess the reading and writing levels of students throughout the year. It also issued each student a laptop to access assignments anytime, anywhere, through Moodle, a software e-learning platform, or through a learning management system.

"While most literacy taught in CT classes is non-fiction, we managed to incorporate a few fiction pieces like *The Hunger Games* series and short stories," Harris said.

Students master communication and social skills and learn how to provide customer service. They create résumés, press releases, follow-up emails and business presentations. English lessons contain practical, real-world applications to continually reinforce the usefulness of English/language arts to students' futures.

Positive Results

The English in CT approach has impacted center statistics in positive ways. Discipline referrals dropped impressively, from 104 discipline referrals in 2011-12 to only three in 2012-13. The number of missing assignments decreased from 1,321 in 2011-12 to 560 one year later.

"The best outcome is that students who had never done so before would begin the 2013-14 school year at grade level for reading and writing," Harris said.

Co-teaching and common planning time gave instructors more flexibility in the classroom and improved camaraderie between academic and CT faculty members. Harris was able to spend more time than usual with her students and began to learn more about the various CT fields and their vocabularies.

Teacher Testimonies

Automotive services instructor **Steve Walters** is an active proponent of embedded English. He took pride in presenting the program with Harris at the HSTW Staff Development Conference in July 2013.
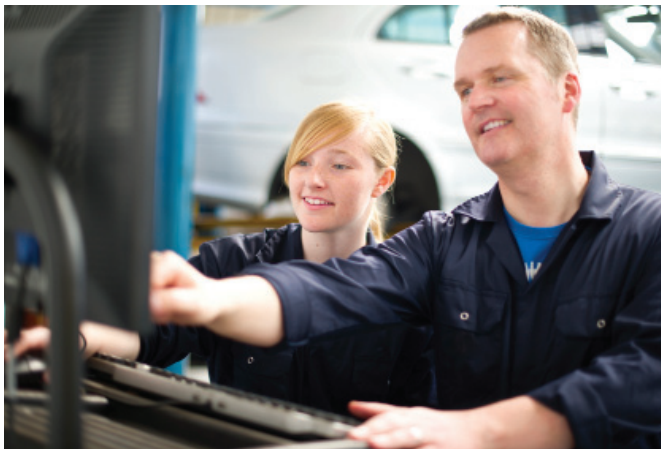
Steffanni said, "I can actually see students learning. Without embedded English, students were completing tasks to graduate. Now they are taking ownership of their education."

Intervention specialist **Channin Ford** observed that "by associating each English lesson with a practical, real-world application, teachers show students how English will be useful to their futures."

Students enjoyed the new approach, saying English/language arts became easier when the lessons were based on knowledge they were gaining in the labs.

"There are so many benefits to embedded English," one student said. "It just makes sense."

Student focus groups revealed the following:

- English is easier to grasp when lessons are based on knowledge gained in labs.
- Students' views of English changed dramatically as they saw the teamwork between the lab instructor and the English instructor.
- Ninety-one percent said they would choose embedded ELA over traditional classes if given a choice.

Students in all classes are required to complete one major project by the end of the school year. In 2012-13 the project was the First Annual Welding Rodeo based on the theme, "The Nature That Surrounds Us." Welding students worked with art students to draft animal designs, created a press release for the local newspaper and found industry mentors for the competition. Judges from the welding industry rated students' creations on creativity, complexity and welding skills.

Harris plans to continue to research ways to optimize the inclusion of ELA in other labs, incorporate standards-based grading, increase college and career readiness, improve rigor and create additional industry partnerships. "We are excited to continue embedding ELA in our workforce development programs in 2013-14," she said.

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Project-Based Learning in the Middle Grades: Not Just 'Doing Projects'

Teachers at **Beverlye Magnet School** (BMS) in Dothan, Alabama, learned a lot in a two-year journey to implement project-based learning (PBL) as they focused on how to engage students in doing challenging, authentic work resulting in learning and thinking. They were able to perfect the process of PBL planning and management while building their knowledge of the work of the Buck Institute and collective experience.

BMS enrolls 525 students in grades six through eight. Forty percent of students are minorities and 50 percent are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches.

Early in the PBL process, teachers adopted ground rules for their work:

- Focus on the students.
- Involve everyone.
- Base projects on standards.
- Develop cross-curricular projects through teacher collaboration.
- Do not be afraid to take risks.

Teachers considered many questions as they began to work together:

- Are our students ready for the autonomy of project-based learning?
- Should students have input into the design of a project?
- What instruction would PBL complement?
- Do students find some standards difficult?
- Do teachers find it troublesome to engage students in PBL?

Project-Based Learning

Beverlye Middle School teachers do not just "do projects." They implement authentic, hands-on project-based learning (PBL) to engage students in learning. **Amy Mayer**, creator of The Original WOW! Academy for instructional technology, said project-based learning:

- requires teacher guidance and team collaboration;
- includes many "need to knows" on the part of students and teachers;
- is timely and complex, covers many standards, and takes significant time for a team of highly trained professionals to plan and implement projects;
- requires teachers to work mainly before the project begins;
- causes students to make most of the choices during the project within pre-approved guidelines;
- is based upon "driving questions" that encompass every aspect of learning that will occur and establishes the need to know;
- is graded based on a clearly defined rubric created or modified specifically for the project;
- involves students in making choices that determine the outcome and path of the research;
- can provide solutions to real problems in the real world, even though they may not be implemented;
- relates to students' lives now and/or in the future;
- models or closely resembles work done in the real world;
- offers a real scenario or simulation; if fictitious, it is realistic, entertaining and timely;
- purposefully uses technology, tools and practices of the real-world work environment;
- is how students really learn; and
- is presented to a public audience comprising individuals from outside the classroom.

All grade-level teams worked on projects. Sixth-graders focused on water conservation; seventh-graders addressed the campaign and election process; and eighth-graders began a water quality project for a homeowner's association.

"Elective classes were also involved," said Principal **Maria Johnson**. "The choral group completed a Veteran's Day appreciation project and a concert for the local soup kitchen. Seventh-graders got active by pairing physical education and core content classes in a project to improve physical fitness."

The essential elements of all projects are:

- a driving question;
- important knowledge and skills;
- in-depth inquiry;
- collaboration, communication and critical thinking;
- students at the center of the project; and
- a public audience.

"Involving students in the design of projects added to the success of their work," Johnson said. "We used an organized process for planning with a schedule of meetings, checkpoints to guide progress, and celebrations and documentations of success."

In the beginning, BMS leaders and teachers thought PBL was just an assignment and something extra. Now they believe PBL to be challenging, authentic and something to get excited about.

"In designing projects, we have found it best to work backwards, use standards, check out ideas on the Internet, examine the local community, model worksite practices, tie in to state and national events, and think about community service," Johnson said. "We consider students in generating ideas and work with colleagues to identify potential collaboration opportunities."

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Teachers and Students Rally to Support Standards-Based Teaching and Learning

Jeffersontown High School (JHS) in Louisville, Kentucky, is an urban school enrolling 1,500 students, half of whom are minorities. Sixty-percent of students are described as at risk.

"We had not been designated in the lowest 5 percent of schools in the state, but we were close enough that it could happen if we didn't make significant progress," Principal **Marty Pollio** said. With a spirit of continuous improvement and a district initiative known as Project Proficiency aimed at increasing mathematics scores, JHS began to implement Kentucky's Standards-Based Teaching and Learning program (SBTL) in fall 2010.

The first phase of SBTL focused on standards-based grading. The faculty was exposed to research on the correlation between grades and exam scores; they also compared standards-based grading with traditional grading. The research findings suggest that standards-based grading increases proficiency.

By spring 2012, the JHS leadership team realized a number of things:

- Teachers were dissatisfied with the current grading system and wanted to find a way to grade students that reflected student achievement.

- They took more ownership of student achievement as they began grading on standards.
- They began to implement interventions to ensure student proficiency.
- Most teachers loved the concept but initially struggled with implementation.
- The school could not implement standards-based grading without implementing standards-based teaching and learning.
- Teachers cannot grade on standards unless the curriculum is aligned with key standards.

In May 2012 the decision-making group of school stakeholders, including teachers, adopted an SBTL policy:

Beginning with the 2012-13 school year, course curricula at Jeffersontown High School will be focused on key standards for each grading period. Standards will be dissected into daily learning targets for students within each class. Teachers will collaborate in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for common courses to establish standards and daily learning targets for the grading period that will be made available to students and parents.

Student grades in each class will reflect success within each key standard and the learning targets that support those standards. Teachers will have evidence to support a student's grade based on mastery of key standards. Students will be given opportunities to remediate unmet standards with extra support and time to meet the key standards for a course.

Teachers met by discipline in PLCs and built the curriculum around three to five key standards for every grading period. They used state and district materials to develop key standards written in student-friendly language. The standards were posted in the principal's office and updated every grading period.

The PLCs gave teachers opportunities to follow up and support students not meeting proficiency benchmarks. They also gave teachers time to share and refine instructional strategies. In weekly meetings, teachers discussed progress toward key standards, instructional strategies and student interventions. The intervention options included:

- in-class methods;
- an eighth period after school twice a week with student transportation available;
- Study Island online learning;
- a math coach available three days a week;
- regrouping based on students' needs for the key standards; and
- other strategies developed in PLCs.

The results are compelling: The percentage of students meeting college- and career-readiness as defined by Kentucky's Unbridled Learning Accountability Model increased from 16 percent in 2011 to 48 percent in 2013. The pass rate on the Advanced Placement (AP) exam rose from 15 percent in 2012 to 28 percent in 2013.

The overall composite ACT score jumped more than 1.3 points in a single year. Jeffersontown's percentile rank in the state for overall achievement rose from the 10th percentile in 2012 to the 37th percentile in 2013.

Jeffersontown High School leaders and teachers recommend the following actions to implement standards-based teaching, learning and grading:

- Establish the curriculum based on key standards for a grading period.
- Ensure students know the standards and how they will be assessed on each one.
- Give students opportunities to reflect on their achievement.
- Establish interventions for students not meeting benchmarks.
- Provide resources such as extra teacher pay and student transportation for intervention.
- Give teachers autonomy and ownership of grading, intervention, planning and instruction.
- Provide professional development and support for PLCs and data disaggregation.
- Communicate with stakeholders, including parents.

Jeffersontown High School is continuing to develop and refine common assessments and interventions, revisit the curriculum for alignment with state and district standards, and support student reflection on proficiency.

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