



High Schools That Work

An Enhanced Design to Get All Students to Standards

SREB

*High Schools That Work (HSTW)*¹ is an effort-based school improvement initiative founded on the conviction that most students can master rigorous academic and career/technical studies if school leaders and teachers create an environment that motivates students to make the effort to succeed. *HSTW* is the nation's first large-scale effort to engage state, district and school leaders in partnerships with teachers, students, parents and the community to raise student achievement in high school and the middle grades. It is based on the simple belief that most students can meet high standards through effort and hard work. School leaders and teachers can motivate students to achieve at high levels when they:

- expand students' opportunities to learn a rigorous academic core with either a career/technical or academic concentration that is taught in ways that enable students to see the usefulness of what they have been asked to learn.
- create supportive relationships between students and adults. These relationships involve providing students with the extra help needed to meet challenging course standards and with the support to make successful transitions from the middle grades to high school and from high school to postsecondary studies and careers.
- work as teacher advisers with parents and students to set goals and to help students take the right courses that prepare them for postsecondary studies and careers.
- focus school leadership on supporting what and how teachers teach by providing common planning time and professional development aligned with school improvement plans.

In this environment, more students will recognize that high school matters to their future and more students will become independent learners able to set future educational and career goals and choose which courses to take to achieve those goals. In an era of rising workplace requirements, getting a good high school education that counts is more important now than ever before. **Yet, too many students do not graduate from high school and many more who do graduate lack preparation for further study and the recognized credentials needed to get good jobs.**

To address these issues, the *HSTW* school improvement design provides a framework of Goals, Key Practices and Key Conditions for accelerating learning and setting higher standards. It recommends research-based practices for schools to improve academic and career/technical instruction and student achievement. *HSTW* research has shown that sustained school improvement and student achievement occur when state, district, school and teacher leaders work together to take ownership and adopt the *HSTW* design for the specific needs of individual high schools or middle grades schools.

Southern
Regional
Education
Board

592 10th St. N.W.
Atlanta, GA 30318
(404) 875-9211
www.sreb.org

¹ More than 1,200 high schools participate in *HSTW*.

Primary *HSTW* Goals for continuous improvement

The mission of *HSTW* is to create a culture of high expectations and continuous improvement in high school and the middle grades. To achieve this mission, *HSTW* has several goals:

- Increase to 85 percent the percentages of high school students who meet the *HSTW* reading, mathematics and science performance goals on the *HSTW* Assessment, a National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)-referenced exam.
- Increase the percentages of *all* high school students who perform at the proficient level to at least 50 percent in reading, mathematics and science, as measured by the *HSTW* Assessment.
- Increase to 85 percent the percentages of high school graduates who complete the *HSTW*-recommended curriculum and a concentration in an academic area, a career/technical area or a blend of the two.
- Increase to 90 percent the percentage of high school students who enter grade nine and complete high school four years later.
- Advance state and local policies and leadership initiatives that sustain a continuous school improvement effort.
- Have all students leave high school with postsecondary credit or having met standards for postsecondary studies to avoid remedial courses.
- Work in the middle grades to increase annually the percentage of students entering high school prepared to succeed in college-preparatory courses.

HSTW Key Practices for improving student achievement

HSTW has identified a set of Key Practices that impact student achievement. Following are the *HSTW* Key Practices that provide direction and meaning to comprehensive school improvement and student learning:

- **High expectations** — Motivate more students to meet high expectations by integrating high expectations into classroom practices and giving students frequent feedback.
- **Program of study** — Require each student to complete an upgraded academic core and a concentration.
- **Academic studies** — Teach more students the essential concepts of the college-preparatory curriculum by encouraging them to apply academic content and skills to real-world problems and projects. School leaders need to:
 - align core academic courses to essential state and national standards that prepare youth for postsecondary studies and careers.
 - align student assignments, student work and classroom assessments to at least the proficient-level standards as measured by a NAEP-referenced exam and state assessments.
- **Career/technical studies** — Provide more students access to intellectually challenging career/technical studies in high-demand fields that emphasize the higher-level mathematics, science, literacy and problem-solving skills needed in the workplace and in further education. School leaders need to:
 - Develop standards, conditions and agreements for awarding postsecondary credit in high-demand career/technical fields to high school students.

- Require senior projects with academic, technical and performance standards.
- Provide students opportunities to work toward a recognized employer certification.²
- **Work-based learning** — Enable students and their parents to choose from programs that integrate challenging high school studies and work-based learning and are planned by educators, employers and students.
- **Teachers working together** — Provide teams of teachers from several disciplines the time and support to work together to help students succeed in challenging academic and career/technical studies. Integrate reading, writing and speaking as strategies for learning into all parts of the curriculum and integrate mathematics into science and career/technical classrooms. School leaders need to support:
 - academic and career/technical teachers in engaging students regularly in reading books and articles, writing, making presentations, and using high-level reasoning and thinking skills.
 - mathematics, science and career/technical teachers working together to better align and integrate mathematics concepts and skills into assignments in science and career/technical classrooms.
- **Students actively engaged** — Engage students in academic and career/technical classrooms in rigorous and challenging proficient-level assignments³ using research-based instructional strategies and technology.
- **Guidance** — Involve students and their parents in a guidance and advisement system that develops positive relationships and ensures completion of an accelerated program of study with an academic or career/technical concentration. Provide each student with the same mentor throughout high school to assist with setting goals, selecting courses, reviewing the student’s progress and suggesting appropriate interventions as necessary. School leaders need to:
 - Involve parents in annual meetings with students and their mentors to review progress and develop plans for the next year.
 - Develop efforts to educate middle grades parents, school and teacher leaders, and students about the achievement level needed for challenging high school studies and to educate high school parents, students and teachers about the achievement level needed for postsecondary study and high-demand, high-income jobs.
- **Extra help** — Provide a structured system of extra help to assist students in completing accelerated programs of study with high-level academic and technical content. School leaders need to:
 - Support all students to become independent learners by building into their learning experiences opportunities to practice habits of successful learners such as study and literacy skills, time management and learning with others.
 - Give students easy access to opportunities to meet course standards and graduate with their peers.
 - Support teachers in forming nurturing academic relationships with students aimed at improving students’ work and achievement.
 - Plan catch-up learning experiences for entering ninth-graders who are not prepared to succeed in college-preparatory courses.
 - Work with postsecondary institutions to identify 11th-graders not ready for postsecondary study. Develop special courses for the senior year to get these students prepared.
- **Culture of continuous improvement** — Use student assessment and program evaluation data to continuously improve school culture, organization, management, curriculum and instruction to advance student learning.

² Recognized employer certification is an associate’s degree in a career field, an associate’s or applied science degree or certificate in a career field, apprenticeship or state-issued license.

³ The quality of assignments is measured at or above the proficient level on a NAEP-referenced exam.

HSTW Key Conditions for accelerating student achievement

High Schools That Work believes everyone — teacher, school, district, local and state leaders — must work together to align policies, resources, initiatives and accountability efforts to support high schools and middle grades schools as they adopt and implement comprehensive school improvement designs. The *HSTW* Key Conditions include the following:

- **A clear, functional mission statement:** Schools need a clear, functional mission statement to prepare middle grades students for challenging secondary studies and high school students for success in postsecondary education and the workplace.
- **Strong leadership:** Each district and school needs strong and committed leaders to improve, align and benchmark curriculums to high standards, to improve the quality of instruction and to raise student achievement in grades six through 12. At each high school and middle grades school, create a leadership team consisting of the principal, assistant principal and teacher leaders. **School and district teams participate annually in a series of leadership development workshops aimed at more fully implementing the *HSTW* design.**
- **Plan for continuous improvement:** District and school leaders create an organizational structure and process that ensures continuous involvement with faculty on what to teach, how to teach it, what students are expected to learn, how to assess what they have learned, and how they relate to each other, to the students and to the home and community.
- **Qualified teachers:** Middle grades and high school teachers have in-depth knowledge of their subject areas and of teaching strategies appropriate to students' grade levels. Middle grades teachers lacking majors in their subject areas are supported by the district to acquire them. The school and district employ teachers who have depth in their teaching fields and support them in learning how to teach well.
- **Commitment to goals:** School leaders and teachers are committed to achieving the *HSTW* Goals and implementing the Key Practices. School boards are committed to having all students complete a demanding academic core and either an academic or career/technical concentration. **Continuous review of local policies and practices ensures that a strong message of high expectations is sent to both the high schools and the middle grades.**
- **Flexible scheduling:** School superintendents and school boards permit high schools to adopt flexible schedules enabling students to earn more credits.
- **Support for professional development:** District and school leaders provide teachers with instructional materials, planning time and professional development for implementing new curriculums and research-based instructional methods.

The *HSTW*-recommended curriculum

The centerpiece of *HSTW* is a challenging curriculum that focuses on preparing high school students for further education and the workplace. To complete the recommended curriculum, each student takes the following:

- at least four English courses, with the content and performance standards of college-preparatory English, that emphasize reading, writing and presentation skills. Students should read the equivalent of eight books annually, write short papers weekly and write one or more research papers annually. Students revise work until it meets standards.
- at least four mathematics courses including, Algebra I, geometry, Algebra II and a fourth higher-level mathematics course or a specially-developed mathematics course designed to prepare students for postsecondary studies so they can avoid remedial college mathematics.
 - Students completing Algebra I in grade eight will be required to complete four additional years of mathematics.
 - Students take mathematics their senior year.
- at least three college-preparatory science courses — biology, chemistry, physics or applied physics, or anatomy/physiology. Students conduct lab experiments and investigative studies; read, critique and discuss three to five books or equivalent articles about scientists, scientific discoveries and how science is used in the real world; keep lab notebooks; make presentations; and complete research projects and written reports. Students design and conduct group or individual projects. ***HSTW* recommends that schools using block schedules require four years of science.**
- at least three college-preparatory social studies courses emphasizing reading and writing to learn. Students will read five to eight books or equivalent articles, write weekly, make presentations, complete research projects, and prepare at least one major research paper in each course.
- at least one computer course or demonstrated proficiency in computer technology beyond simple keyboarding (this course should be taken early in high school so that students will be able to use computer-based technical skills in other classes.)
- at least four courses in a concentration. Each student will have a choice from among at least four career/technical concentrations at school sites, work sites, career/technical centers, postsecondary institutions; and a choice of two academic concentrations, such as mathematics/science and humanities. Each academic concentration will include one or two Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) or dual-credit courses. School leaders need to:
 - A humanities concentration includes four or more credits in college-preparatory/honors English and in college-preparatory/honors social studies, with at least one credit at the AP level, and four additional credits in one or more of the humanities, such as foreign language, fine arts or additional literature and social studies courses; or
 - A concentration in mathematics and science includes a minimum of four credits each in college-preparatory/honors mathematics and science including at least one at the AP level.
 - A career/technical concentration includes at least four career/technical courses — embedded with literacy and mathematics skills and real-world projects — in a sequence leading to an employer certification, an associates degree or a bachelor's degree.

Literacy goals for higher student achievement

High Schools That Work has identified five literacy goals that result in significantly higher student achievement. Students will do the following:

- **Read the equivalent of 25 books per year across the curriculum** and demonstrate understanding of the content of materials read. Proficient readers summarize what they have learned; ask clarifying questions; use pertinent vocabulary; and analyze the purpose, content and structure of a text.
- **Write weekly in all classes** as a way to deepen their understanding and retention of subject matter content.
- **Use reading and writing strategies to enhance their learning in all classes.** All of their teachers know how to use reading and writing strategies.
- **Write research papers in all classes.** This allows them to choose topics of interest and develop their abilities as independent learners.
- **Complete a rigorous English/language arts curriculum taught at least at the college-preparatory/honors English level.** To reach this goal, they read eight to 10 books each year and demonstrate understanding, write short papers weekly that are graded and complete research papers in their English classes.

Transition from the middle grades to high school

Building a strong bridge from the middle grades to high school is essential in raising student achievement and keeping students in school. **Students must be ready to meet the requirements of a rigorous curriculum when they begin high school.** Unprepared students will likely drop out of school or seek less rigorous diploma options. District, high school and middle grades leaders can work cooperatively to get middle grades students prepared for rigorous high school studies by:

- establishing readiness indicators for challenging high school English, mathematics and science courses;
- aligning curriculums, teacher assignments and assessments to the readiness indicators; and
- setting goals to increase annually the percentages of students having successfully completed Algebra I by the end of grade eight.

Getting unprepared students ready for high school

High school and middle grades leaders and teachers will implement catch-up strategies for getting unprepared students ready for challenging high school work. They work together to:

- **Develop gear-up programs in the middle grades for seventh- and eighth-graders** who need accelerated instruction in mathematics, language arts and reading. Students will have the extra time and help they need to meet high school readiness standards, and their teachers will have the instructional techniques that motivate students to work harder.
- **Provide four- to six-week summer bridge programs** to help entering ninth-graders who need further study to succeed in high school. The daily program consists of two hours of reading and writing and two hours of mathematics. Four days a week, students spend two hours each day using computers to complete reading, writing and mathematics assignments. On the fifth day, students participate in field trips that show them the importance of academic studies in the real world.

- **Provide ninth-graders who are not ready for college-preparatory courses in English and Algebra I with expanded time to master both subjects.** A two-semester program that can help students strengthen their skills:

First Semester consists of:

- an English/language arts course that stresses high-interest adolescent reading, writing and grammar. The course prepares students for a ninth-grade college-preparatory English/language arts course in the second semester.
- a mathematics course that stresses arithmetic, geometric and problem-solving skills in a pre-algebra context. This transitional course prepares students to take Algebra I during the second semester.
- a study skills and guidance course stressing study habits, note taking, job shadowing and visits to high school career/technical labs; or a computer course focusing on databases, word processing, PowerPoint, Internet, e-mail and research skills.
- biology or social studies taught at the college-preparatory level. The science course includes lab experiments and use of the scientific method.

Second Semester consists of:

- college-preparatory ninth-grade English and Algebra I and either the study skills and guidance course or a computer course, in addition to either a science or social studies course.

Introducing career/technical studies: a taste of the future

Some students, particularly those at risk of dropping out, need opportunities in grades eight and nine to explore career options and to experience introductory courses in potential career fields. One approach is to provide at-risk ninth-graders access to introductory career/technical studies on alternating days for one semester during the freshman year. Giving students a taste of possible career options helps them to understand and envision the career pathways in career/technical studies; and to understand the underlying technology in various technical fields and to have opportunities to do assignments that provide an introduction to available career options.

In addition, students can complete career maps outlining projected courses of study for their high school years leading to postsecondary studies and good jobs. They can also write career papers assessing themselves and their possible future careers. These projects can be completed as joint assignments in an introductory career/technical course and an English course.

Battling the ninth-grade bulge

A priority of *HSTW* is reducing the ratio of students to teachers in grade nine. The greatest failure rate in high school occurs in grade nine, resulting in a peak population of repeaters — the ninth-grade bulge. Students who fail the ninth grade are at least 50 percent less likely to graduate from high school. Actions to reduce the rate of ninth-grade failure include the following:

- Reduce the ratio of students to teachers in grade nine. *HSTW*'s goal is to make this ratio the lowest of any high school grade level.
- Get a master teacher to lead a team of teachers in core academic courses in grade nine; and give the team the same group of students and common planning time to integrate curriculums, plan collective exams and teaching strategies.

Transitions from high school to postsecondary studies and careers — making the senior year count

Just as the middle grades have the responsibility to prepare students for challenging secondary studies, high schools must prepare students for the next step: postsecondary studies and careers. The key to the next step is a productive senior year.

HSTW recommends making the senior year more challenging and meaningful for students. Taking a mathematics course in the senior year will help prepare students for postsecondary mathematics courses and the application of mathematics in the work place. Aligning senior year academic courses to standards enables students to pursue postsecondary studies without taking remedial courses. Teachers' assignments, students' work and course exams must match the level of work required in postsecondary studies.

The senior year should be a time to prepare students for an important transition and to get them ready for the next step. When students have not taken challenging courses for more than a year, they often struggle when they enter college. School leaders need to:

- Work with postsecondary institutions to administer placement exams to 11th-graders. Use the results to work with parents and students to modify senior year programs of study to prepare them for postsecondary studies and work. Develop in collaboration with colleges special senior year catch-up courses in English and mathematics to prepare unprepared students for college-level studies.
- Provide students prepared for college-level work the opportunity to take at least 15 semester hours of postsecondary credit during their senior year. **States and districts have several strategies for juniors and seniors to earn college credit while in high school — Advanced Placement courses, joint enrollment courses, approved career/technical courses, learning experiences on college campuses during the summer and the school year, use of virtual college courses and distance learning.**
- Assist students not planning to attend college to use the senior year to prepare for high-paying, high-demand jobs. Provide them with opportunities to take industry-approved programs leading to an associate's degree, a certificate or an employer's certification. These programs can be offered at high schools, career/technical centers or community technical colleges or through apprenticeship programs and work-based instruction.
- Mount an effort to graduate all students who make it to the senior year. Help them make up failed courses or exams through the use of technology, Web-based independent study courses, retaking classes after school, etc.
- Require seniors to take at least three academic courses, including a high-level mathematics or science course and a college-preparatory-level English/language arts course.
- Consider requiring a senior project that includes a research paper, a product or service and an oral presentation. The senior project should be the culmination of the school's efforts to strengthen the key learning skills of students — studying effectively, organizing and managing material, problem solving, conducting research, evaluating their own work to make it better, and communicating what they have learned. Students need to complete projects in grades nine through 11 that develop and strengthen these skills in ways that prepare them as seniors, under the guidance of a project mentor, to complete a major project that they choose from a set of possible topics. Students need to propose their topics in grade 11 and explain through their proposals how their projects will strengthen their preparation for further learning and careers after high school.

Measuring and reporting progress

The primary tool used for measuring high school students' levels of achievement and schools' progress is the *HSTW* Assessment. This test is referenced to NAEP proficiency standards and measures the college and career-readiness of 12th-graders in reading, mathematics and science. It also indicates how schools are fairing in their improvement efforts and what areas require greater improvement.

The *HSTW* Assessment also includes a student survey and surveys of administrative personnel, teachers and counselors. The student survey addresses high school students' experiences, what and how they have been taught and what is expected of them. The school personnel surveys indicate how much time teachers spend working and planning together and what school staffs think about school culture and the quality of instruction. *HSTW* also conducts a follow-up survey of students one year after high school graduation; graduates report on how well high school prepared them for postsecondary education and work.

Technical Assistance Visit⁴ (TAV) reports provide base-line information, challenges and action steps to help school leaders assess where their schools are in relationship to the *HSTW* Key Practices. The reports guide school leaders and teachers in prioritizing next steps for implementation of school improvement.

Every school site prepares an annual site progress report in the spring to document accomplishments and challenges in their efforts to implement the *HSTW* Key Practices. The annual report is part of a reflection and planning process through which schools note accomplishments from the previous school year and outline improvement priorities for the upcoming year.

Research-based evidence for the success of *HSTW*

Students who complete the *HSTW*-recommended academic core and either an academic or career/technical concentration have higher mean reading, mathematics and science achievement scores than students who do not meet either or both conditions. Students are more likely to have mean scores at the Basic and Proficient levels than students who do not complete such a core and concentration.⁵ Students are more likely to take the *HSTW*-recommended curriculum at schools that have more deeply implemented the *HSTW* design.

Students have significantly higher achievement in mathematics, reading and science at high schools that have more deeply implemented the *HSTW* design than do similar students at schools that have not, regardless of students' ethnicity or level of parents' education. Using student and faculty survey data from the 2002 *HSTW* Assessment, *HSTW* identified 50 school sites that have more fully implemented the *HSTW* design and compared student achievement at those sites with that of students at 50 other schools with low-level implementation. The findings are presented in the *HSTW* publication, *High School Reform Works — When Implemented: A Comparative Study of High- and Low-implementation Schools*, available at www.sreb.org. Among the findings:

⁴ A Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) is a three-day, team-led on-site school visit. The visit includes interviews, classroom observations, review of school data and an exit report of findings. Later a complete written report of the visit is sent to the school.

⁵ Research Brief: *Improving Achievement is about Focus and Completing the Right Courses*, Gene Bottoms and Caro Feagin. Available at www.sreb.org

- African-American students at high-implementation schools, compared to those at low-implementation schools, were 20 percent more likely to meet the *HSTW* reading goal (279)⁶ and 23 percent more likely to meet the *HSTW* mathematics goal (297).⁷ White students at high-implementation schools, compared to those at low-implementation schools, were 15 percent more likely to meet the *HSTW* reading goal and 13 percent more likely to meet the *HSTW* mathematics goal.
- Both African-American and white students at high-implementation schools, when compared to African-American and white students at low-implementation schools, were 12 percent more likely to meet the *HSTW* goal in science (299).

The study shows that course-taking patterns matter. Taking at least a semester of algebra in the middle grades and four years of rigorous mathematics courses in high school translates into higher achievement in mathematics for all students. When African-American students take algebra in the middle grades and four years of higher-level mathematics in high school, significantly more perform at the Basic and Proficient level on a NAEP-referenced exam.⁸

What *HSTW* agrees to do

High Schools That Work (HSTW) agrees to provide leadership, guidance, information and assistance to support schools, districts and states in improving student achievement. School participation in *HSTW* can take one of three forms: joining a state *HSTW* network, contracting independently with *HSTW* (the *HSTW* Contracted Schools Network) or participating as part of an urban district network (the *HSTW* Urban Schools Network).

For schools participating in a state network, priority services include the following:

- Support the state agency that manages and coordinates *HSTW* sites.
- Provide consultation to the state and its network schools.
- Collaborate with the state to develop statewide *HSTW* councils that provide overall guidance to *HSTW* efforts.
- Provide information and dissemination services to support state and site efforts using print, video and Internet resources.
- Evaluate sites' progress in implementing the *HSTW* design and raising the achievement of students in reading, mathematics and science through biennial *HSTW* Assessments, a teacher survey, a follow-up study of graduates, and state and site reports of findings.
- Provide annually one statewide Site Development Workshop to give teams from new sites an introduction to the *HSTW* design of Key Practices, Key Conditions and Goals.
- Manage and help states lead on-site Technical Assistance Visits (TAVs).
- Provide professional development opportunities for states and sites through national professional development, which includes a major annual conference for all network sites and state leaders in July that typically attracts more than 7,000 participants and national experts.

⁶ The reading goal approaches the proficient level on a NAEP-referenced exam.

⁷ The mathematics and science goals are at the basic levels on a NAEP-referenced exam.

⁸ Research Brief: *Factors Affecting Mathematics Achievement for Students in Rural Schools*, Gene Bottoms and Kathleen Carpenter. Available at www.sreb.org.

- Create networking opportunities for sites to share strategies and resources.
- Support creation of site-focused professional development plans.
- Conduct training of state personnel to assist in providing *HSTW* services.
- Conduct annual leadership forums for teams and district leaders from all *HSTW* states.
- Seek support from the private sector and foundations for delivery of *HSTW* services.
- Disseminate information and publications about *HSTW* best practices to state organizations.

For individual schools contracting with HSTW, priority services include the following:

- Manage and lead a site-development workshop at each participating school.
- Conduct TAVs and Technical Review Visits (TRVs) for schools (TAVs conducted every three years with one TRV conducted during that interval).
- Provide school improvement consultants to schools to deliver technical assistance and coordinate services.
- Work with schools to examine needs in providing professional development packages, including site-specific national professional development programs.
- Help schools plan and implement site-specific professional development to support teachers in changing what and how they teach.
- Evaluate sites' efforts and progress in raising the achievement of students in reading, mathematics and science through the biennial *HSTW* Assessment, a teacher survey, a follow-up study of graduates, and state and site reports of findings.

For schools participating as part of an urban district, priority services include the following:

- Provide consultation services to districts and network schools.
- Provide dissemination services to support districts and school site efforts.
- Evaluate sites' efforts and progress in raising the achievement of students in reading, mathematics and science through the biennial *HSTW* Assessment, a teacher survey, a follow-up study of graduates, and state and site reports of findings.
- Conduct TAVs and TRVs for *HSTW* urban network schools (TAVs conducted every three years with one TRV conducted during that interval).
- Provide professional development support.
- Create networking opportunities for sites to share strategies and resources.
- Support creation of site-focused professional development plans.
- Conduct annual forum/leadership conferences focusing on the needs of the districts.

What participating sites agree to do

Schools and school systems participating in a *HSTW* state network agree to do the following:

- Have site leaders — superintendents, school board members, the principal and a core group of teachers — examine the Goals and Key Practices and decide if *HSTW* is viable for the school and the community. If so, they commit to at least a five-year implementation effort and require almost all students to take an upgraded academic core and either a career/technical or academic concentration.
- Appoint someone at the district level and at the school site to coordinate *HSTW* action planning, professional development and technical assistance; coordinate data collection; monitor progress; foster communication; and integrate the *HSTW* Goals and Key Practices with other school improvement efforts.
- Support academic and career/technical teachers with professional development, materials and time to work together to implement the Key Practices.
- Promote student participation in a system of school- and work-based learning that integrates academics with applied learning.
- Organize an overall school leadership team composed of key academic and career/technical teachers and administrators; guidance counselors; parents; and representatives of business, industry and postsecondary education. Establish leadership teams aligned to the overall leadership team to address curriculum, guidance, evaluation, professional development and transitions.
- Prepare an action plan for implementing the Key Practices and a site-specific staff development plan to help teachers carry out the action steps.
- Participate in the biennial *HSTW* Assessment, teacher survey and follow-up study of graduates to obtain base-line data and to measure progress in raising student achievement.
- Host a Technical Assistance Visit (TAV) involving a team led by SREB or the state to review progress made and determine challenges to address to raise student achievement.
- Participate in district leadership activities, state staff development activities and the Annual *HSTW* Staff Development Conference.
- Become an active member of a state and multi-state network for sharing information and ideas.
- Give students access to modern career/technical courses either in the high school, an area career/technical center, at a college or university, or in a work setting that is connected to school-based academic and career/technical studies. Site leaders will work closely with employers and two-year postsecondary institutions.
- Designate staff members to coach all teachers in getting students to use reading, writing and mathematics across the curriculum to improve achievement in all content areas.
- Promote a vision of high achievement for all students among faculty and staff, parents, students, and community members.

What participating states agree to do

States participating in *HSTW* agree to do the following:

- Name a representative to serve on the SREB-State Vocational Education Consortium Board.
- Designate a state *HSTW* coordinator and dedicate the equivalent of a full-time staff person for every 40 *HSTW* sites.
- Allocate discretionary funds to help sites implement their school improvement plans;
- Conduct TAVs to one-third of sites annually to recommend ways for existing sites to further advance student learning.
- Conduct TAVs to all new sites during year one to help them develop and implement action plans for raising student achievement.
- Encourage sites to attend the Annual *HSTW* Staff Development Conference and identify site participants to serve as presenters and presiders.
- Link staff development to sites' school improvement plans and create opportunities for teachers and administrators to participate in state-sponsored institutes and *HSTW* workshops and conferences.
- Support sites in participating in the biennial *HSTW* teacher survey and follow-up survey and help them to use the data in improving their action plans.
- Provide new *HSTW* sites technical assistance for developing action plans during year one.
- Support *HSTW* sites annually with professional development support that includes a statewide *HSTW* staff development conference.
- Foster networking of sites through meetings, visits and electronic communication.
- Convene sites regularly to share resources and solve common problems.

How to become a *HSTW* site

Becoming a state network site

SREB and the states work together to provide services to *HSTW* sites. Each state uses its own process for selecting school sites to participate in *HSTW*. In most states, schools wishing to join the state network must submit an application; a few states require annual proposals. Some states require majority approval by school staff for adopting the *HSTW* design. Schools or districts seeking *HSTW* site information should contact their state coordinators.⁹

⁹ Visit the SREB Web site at www.sreb.org to find contact information for each *High Schools That Work* member state coordinator.

Becoming a contracted services site

HSTW provides direct services to high schools seeking to implement the *HSTW* design more deeply. The states, districts and schools commit to a plan for improving student achievement by providing challenging academic and career/technical programs, setting high expectations for students and teachers, and offering quality professional development.

Schools receiving federal Small Learning Communities grants, Perkins grants or other funding and wishing to implement the *HSTW* design must do so through a contractual arrangement with SREB. Other schools may enter into contracts with SREB for support as they implement the *HSTW* design by using local, state or private funds. Schools choosing the *HSTW* design and seeking to contract with SREB for services will review an information packet, participate in a phone call to discuss services and their costs, review a draft contract from SREB and seek approval from the state director of career/technical education. SREB sends a draft contract that school leaders review and sign before services begin. Also the contract outlines what the school and district will do and what *HSTW* will do to assist the school in reaching its improvement goals.

Becoming an urban district member

HSTW works with urban districts to advance student achievement by raising graduation requirements, aligning the curriculum with national and state standards, and supporting schools in developing and implementing improvement plans. Districts that choose the *HSTW* improvement design designate which schools are to participate in the effort. A memorandum of understanding outlines what the district and its participating schools will do and what *HSTW* will do to assist the district and its participating schools in achieving its improvement goals.

Benefits from becoming a *HSTW* site

Participation in *HSTW* or *MMGW* benefits all stakeholders in the educational process: students and parents, teachers, administrators, and the broader community.

Benefits to students: *HSTW* improves students' academic and career/technical knowledge and skills. It shows students the connection between high school and their futures and encourages them to prepare for the next step, which often combines work and further study.

Benefits to parents: Parents become partners in students' education as they participate in planning six-year programs of students' studies, are informed to assist in decision making about postsecondary and career options, and are updated regularly about students' progress to keep them on track to meet academic and career goals.

Benefits to teachers: Teachers gain confidence in their abilities to help all students complete challenging studies. They work together to create more rigorous curriculums and plan professional development activities aimed at raising students' achievement.

Benefits to principals: School administrators strengthen their leadership skills as they deal with scheduling, staffing and curriculum design issues resulting from offering a high-quality curriculum to all students. They become more adept at using the incremental process — planning, doing, reviewing, making new plans and revising old ones — to improve student learning.

Benefits to schools: Schools receive data about students' strengths and weaknesses in reading, mathematics, science and career/technical studies. Teachers, administrators and community members base action plans on this information. The result is improved communication among faculty and staff, students, parents, employers, and postsecondary institutions.

Benefits to educational reform: States adopt new long-term strategies for working with local school systems to improve middle grades and high schools. School leaders and teachers discover that they can raise the achievement of all students, including those previously underserved.

Benefits to the community and nation: Challenging programs of study raise students' communication, mathematics, science and technical skills; they increase students' earning potential and raise the bar of achievement for everyone.

Helpful Resources

Among the many resources to help schools implement the *High Schools That Work* design are:

Access to Challenging and Relevant Learning Opportunities Improves Achievement for All

Using results from the 2004 and 2006 *HSTW* Assessments, SREB has identified wide gaps between the opportunities provided to students at most-improved schools and those opportunities provided at non-improving schools. This report explains these results, outlines the crucial opportunities students need to improve their achievement, and offers concrete examples of how most-improved schools have embedded these opportunities into their school practices and culture. (11V01); 2011; \$7.50 each; \$5 each for 10 or more

Students Can't Wait: High Schools Must Turn Knowledge into Action

A high school reform effort that fails to accelerate all students' achievement cannot be called successful. The 2002 and 2004 *High Schools That Work* Assessments show some *HSTW* schools posted significant improvement in achievement across every student group, while others did not. This report looks at the factors that separate the improved schools from the non-improved schools. (06V19); 2006; \$7.50 each

Skills for a Lifetime: Teaching Students the Habits of Success

Based on more than two decades of SREB research and experience, this book outlines the specific tools for building the major habits of success that all students need in high school, postsecondary studies, advanced training and careers. With creative teacher tools, lesson ideas and guidance from educators with proven success in this effort, the book offers schools and districts a comprehensive framework for helping more students become independent, successful learners. (10V25); 2010; \$12 each; \$8 each for 10 or more

Planning for Improved Student Achievement: Ten Steps for Planning and Writing Standards-Based Units

Data from national assessments and classroom visits show that many state assessments hold students to minimum standards, resulting in many students not being taught to true grade level. To help schools get significantly more students achieving at the proficient level, SREB has developed this guide to planning and writing standards-based units. The guide explains what standards-based units look like, how they work and how they can be developed using a 10-step process. (08V05); 2008; \$10 each

Site Development Guide #12 Literacy Across the Curriculum: Setting and Implementing Goals for Grades Six Through 12

This volume is essential in implementing schoolwide literacy programs. It provides concrete, research-based steps not only to raise reading and writing achievement but also to help students learn more in every class by using literacy skills. (03V63); 224 pages; 2003; \$10 each; \$6.50 each for 10 or more

Ready for Tomorrow: Six Proven Ideas to Graduate and Prepare More Students for College and 21st-Century Careers

Evidence from SREB's *High Schools That Work* initiative confirms that more students can be prepared for postsecondary opportunities when schools combine rigorous academics, authentic projects and assignments in academic and career/technical classes, and guidance and extra help. This report identifies six conditions that schools can create in their career-focused programs of study to increase students' college and career readiness. (09V20); 2009; \$5 each; \$2.50 for 10 or more

Crafting A New Vision for High School: How States Can Join Academic and Technical Studies to Promote More Powerful Learning

This report outlines challenges states face in combining technical and academic studies for improved learning, provides actions states can take to overcome these challenges, and highlights current best practices and policies. The challenges and actions in the report were derived from a forum that convened CTE leaders and other decision-makers from 12 states. (08V07); 2008; \$5 each; \$2.50 each for 10 or more

Getting Students Ready for College and Careers: Transitional Senior Mathematics

This publication illustrates how states can design a 12th-grade course that can result in more students being ready for college and careers. The report defines and describes the mathematics readiness standards that are needed to prepare high school students for success in their next step. It also provides samples of classroom activities and assessments for each indicator. This guide can be used at the state, district, school and classroom levels to help more students transition successfully to careers and credit-bearing postsecondary mathematics courses. (10V26); 2010; \$8 each; \$6 each for 10 or more

Getting Students Ready for College and Careers: Transitional Senior English

This report describes and defines the reading and writing readiness standards needed to prepare students for postsecondary studies and careers. It provides samples of related school assessments to help teachers provide the support and class structure needed to get students to the readiness level expected by colleges. Also included are samples of learning activities to provide a structure for students to improve their literacy preparation. (08V04); 2008; \$7.50 each; \$5 each for 10 or more

Redesigning the Ninth-Grade Experience: Reduce Failure, Improve Achievement and Increase High School Graduation Rates

The ninth grade is a crucial year that defines for many students whether they will continue toward high school graduation, further study and employment, or will become disengaged and drop out. This report outlines the key conditions of an effective ninth-grade experience, designed to engage more students in challenging high school academic and career/technical studies. (08V06); 2008; \$2.50 each; \$2 each for 10 or more

Preparing Middle Grades Students for High School Success: A Comparative Study of Most- and Least-Improved Middle Grades Schools

Using the results from the 2004 and 2006 Middle Grades Assessments, this report compares school and classroom practices of improving and non-improving middle grades schools and identifies actions schools can take to prepare more students for success in high school and beyond. (08V22); 2008; \$7.50 each; \$5 each for 10 or more

Getting Students Ready for High School (Series)

The *Getting Students Ready for High School* series is an effort to ensure that students leave the middle grades with the knowledge and competencies to succeed in rigorous, college-preparatory courses in high school. The series provides examples of course syllabi, lesson plans, assignments, assessments and professional development activities for preparing middle grades students for rigorous high school courses in three core subject areas. This three-guide set includes *Getting Students Ready for College-preparatory/Honors Science*, *Getting Students Ready for College-preparatory/Honors English* and *Getting Students Ready for Algebra I*. Each guide also may be purchased separately. (04V43); 2004; \$15 each; \$12 each for 10 or more

The Three Essentials: Improving Schools Requires District Vision, District and State Support, and Principal Leadership

This report describes the findings of SREB's study of the role of the district office in creating the working conditions that principals need to improve teacher effectiveness and student performance. The "three essentials" of school improvement described in the report emerged from close observations of the inner workings of seven school districts, as SREB's Learning-Centered Leadership Program sought to answer this essential question: *What are the conditions school districts can create that make it possible for principals to be more effective in leading school improvement?* (10V16); 2010; \$5 each ; \$3.50 each for 10 or more

The District Leadership Challenge: Empowering Principals to Improve Teaching and Learning

Principals can profoundly influence student achievement by leading school change — but they cannot turn schools around by themselves. District leaders need to create working conditions that support and encourage change for improved achievement. This report includes principals' perceptions of the working conditions their districts create and outlines key actions needed to empower principals to improve teaching and learning. (09V11); 2009; \$5 each; \$3.50 each for 10 or more

Schools Need Good Leaders Now: State Progress in Creating a Learning-Centered School Leadership System

This report calls for states to designate school leadership as a visible state, district and school priority, focused on the principal's role in leading schools toward higher student performance. It describes the progress that states should make to ensure that they have the learning-centered school leaders they need to succeed in the 21st century. (07V48); 2007; \$5 each

Site Development Guide #2 Developing Effective Leadership Teams — Implementing the High Schools That Work School Improvement Design

This guide explains how working in teams makes school count for all students. Five essential leadership teams and their composition, structure and duties are described. Additional information is provided on the challenges of teamwork and how to work with ineffective team members. (05V01); 2005; \$2 each

To order a copy of any SREB publication, call (404) 875-9211, Ext. 236, or e-mail publications@sreb.org.

For more information, contact

Gene Bottoms, SREB Senior Vice President and Director of *High Schools That Work*. Phone: (404) 875-9211, ext. 249.
Fax: (404) 872-1477. E-mail: gene.bottoms@sreb.org.

Steve Broome, Director, State Development for High School and Middle Grades. Phone: (678) 451-9331.
Fax: (404) 872-1477. E-mail: steve.broome@sreb.org.

Rhenida Rennie, Director, *High Schools That Work* Contracted Schools Network. Phone: (404) 875-9211, ext. 231.
Fax: (404) 872-1477. E-mail: rhenida.rennie@sreb.org.

Scott Warren, Director, State Initiatives for School Improvement. Phone: (404) 875-9211, ext. 313. Fax: (404) 872-1477.
E-mail: scott.warren@sreb.org.

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