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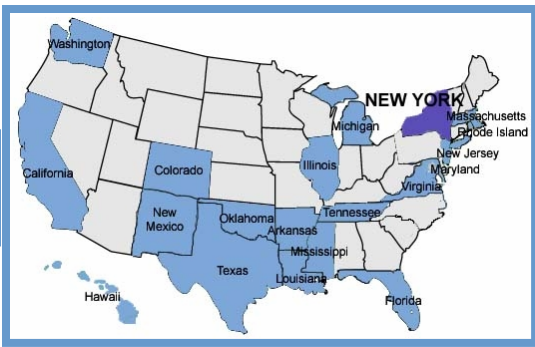
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# Just for the Kids, New York

## Elementary School Best Practice Study, 2004-05

Charles A. Upson Elementary School, Lockport City School District  
George M. Davis Elementary School, New Rochelle City School District  
Gotham Avenue Elementary School, Elmont Union Free School District  
Lawrence Avenue Elementary School, Potsdam Central School District  
Mannsville Manor Elementary School, South Jefferson Central School District  
Naples Elementary School, Naples Central School District  
Smallwood Drive Elementary School, Amherst Central School District  
Traphagen Elementary School, Mount Vernon City School District  
Ulysses Byas Elementary School, Roosevelt Union Free School District  
Webster Elementary School, Syracuse City School District

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## Just for the Kids, New York

### Elementary School Best Practice Study, 2004-2005

#### The Study

The New York Elementary School Best Practice Study was part of a larger national research study to investigate the practices of schools that consistently outperform their peers. Research teams studied schools in 20 states to identify key practices of consistently higher performing schools in a variety of policy contexts.

In New York, research teams investigated 10 consistently higher performing and five average-performing elementary schools to determine the differences in practices between higher and average-performing elementary schools. Schools were identified through an in-depth analysis of academic achievement developed by the National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) using data publicly available from the state.

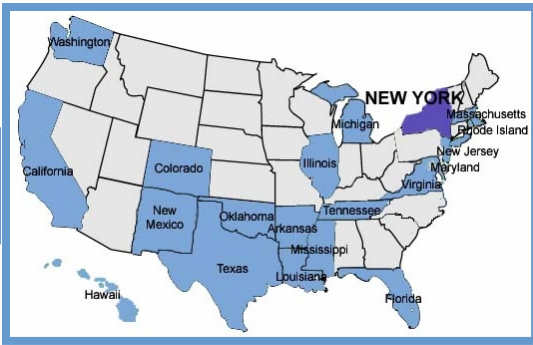
Conducted by the University at Albany School of Education, State University of New York (SUNY), the 2004-2005 New York Elementary School Best Practice Study was sponsored by the Just for the Kids–New York affiliate (JFTK–NY) and received funding from AT&T, State Farm, IBM, The Broad Foundation, and the University at Albany. JFTK–NY is a collaboration of the University at Albany School of Education, the Business Council of New York State, the New York State Education Department, and the National Center for Educational Accountability.

Researchers used site-based interviews and observations, as well as the analysis of supportive documentation, to investigate the practices of each of the 15 schools in the study. District-, school-, and classroom-level practices were studied in the five themes of NCEA’s Best Practice Framework: Curriculum and Academic Goals; Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building; Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements; Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data; and Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment.

#### The Summary

Research teams wrote individual case studies about each studied school. Summary findings across the cases are presented in this report. Major findings from each case are presented first to provide a brief picture of each higher performing school studied. The composite picture of Best Practice Findings in New York, based on differences detected between higher and average-performing schools, follows with examples from individual schools.

This report is a synthesis of findings that includes direct quotes and summary information drawn from case studies written by University at Albany researchers. The JFTK Best Practice Framework developed by NCEA provides the structure for the findings. Information from the University’s case studies that does not relate to any of the five themes of the JFTK Best Practice Framework is not presented in this report.



## Just for the Kids, New York

### Elementary School Best Practice Study, 2004-2005

#### The School Identification Process

To study the practices of consistently higher performing schools, one must first identify those schools and compare their practices with those in a group of average-performing schools with similar demographics. The contrast between the practices in the two groups of schools is the focus of this study.

NCEA used publicly available student achievement data from the New York State Education Department to identify schools that consistently outperformed other schools with similar demographics in English Language Arts and mathematics in the 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04 school years. The analysis included data from the fourth-grade New York State Assessment, as that was the only elementary grade that was tested statewide in those three years.

To identify the schools, NCEA conducted a separate analysis for each subject (English Language Arts and mathematics) and year (2002, 2003, and 2004) to learn which schools outperformed their demographic peers on the percentage of students meeting the “Exceeds” standard on the state exam. NCEA used a Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analysis to compare each school’s percent of students meeting the standard with the percent that would be “predicted” or “typical” for a school in the state with the same demographics. The demographic and other variables used in this analysis were each school’s percentage of low-income, English Language Learner (ELL), African American, Hispanic, and Asian students; the size of the school; and the percentage of students tested in the subject and year in question. Normally, NCEA also prefers to take students’ prior year test scores and length of enrollment in the same school into account, but that longitudinal information was not available in New York.

NCEA ranked each school against the elementary schools in the rest of the state based on the extent to which it outperformed its “predicted” percent of students meeting the “Exceeds” standard. For example, a school that outperformed 86% of the schools in “performance relative to predicted” in fourth-grade English Language Arts in 2004 would receive a percentile rank of 86 for that subject and year. These ranks were averaged separately for English Language Arts and mathematics across the three years to produce an overall average performance rank by subject. To be selected as higher performing for the purposes of this study, schools had to have overall average percentile ranks above 80 in both mathematics and English Language Arts and also meet New York’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements.



## Just for the Kids, New York

### Elementary School Best Practice Study, 2004-2005

#### The Higher Performing Schools Studied

School	District	2004 Enrollment		2004 School-Wide Demographics					
		Grade Span	No. of Students	African American	Hispanic	White	Other*	Low Income	ELL
Charles A. Upson Elementary School	Lockport City School District	PK-5	440	10.5%	3.2%	85.2%	1.1%	43.9%	0%
George M. Davis Elementary School	New Rochelle City School District	K-5	692	26.0%	18.9%	49.9%	5.2%	42.3%	10.0%
Gotham Avenue Elementary School	Elmont Union Free School District	PK-6	743	56.5%	25.2%	2.8%	15.5%	59.9%	9.3%
Lawrence Avenue Elementary School	Potsdam Central School District	PK-4	455	2.9%	0.7%	93.4%	3.0%	33.6%	1.1%
Mannsville Manor Elementary School	South Jefferson Central School District	K-4	233	1.3%	0%	97.4%	1.3%	53.6%	0%
Naples Elementary School	Naples Central School District	K-6	517	0%	2.1%	95.9%	2.0%	29.8%	0%
Smallwood Drive Elementary School	Amherst Central School District	K-5	688	4.7%	0.3%	91.6%	3.4%	7.6%	0%
Traphagen Elementary School	Mount Vernon City School District	K-6	373	93.3%	4.8%	0.8%	1.1%	60.4%	0%
Ulysses Byas Elementary School	Roosevelt Union Free School District	K-6	420	72.6%	27.1%	0.2%	0.1%	100%	18.6%
Webster Elementary School	Syracuse City School District	K-5	556	25.9%	2.0%	69.8%	2.3%	68.5%	0%

\* The ethnicities represented by the "other" category are classified as American Indian, Alaskan, Asian, or Pacific Islander on the New York State Report Card.

Demographic and student enrollment data are taken from the individual case reports prepared by University at Albany researchers, originally taken from the New York State Report Card (2003-04), located at <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/reprcd2004/home.shtml>. Site visits were conducted in Spring 2005.



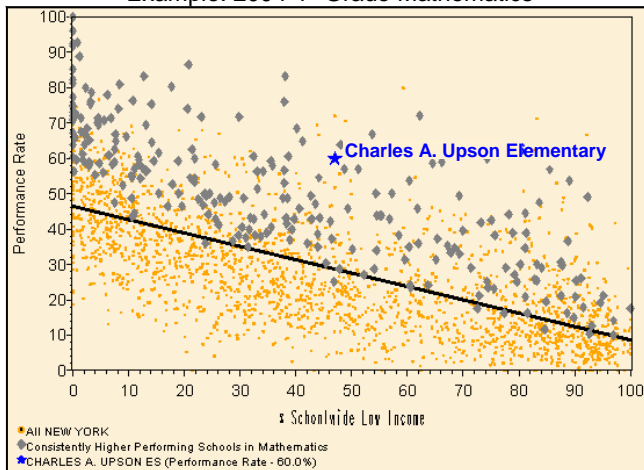
# Charles A. Upson Elementary School Lockport City School District

## Just for the Kids, New York Executive Summary

### The School

Charles A. Upson Elementary School, which serves 440 pre-kindergarten through fifth-grade students, is one of seven elementary schools in the Lockport City School District (5,611 students). Upson’s student population is 85.2% White, 10.5% African American, 3.2% Hispanic, and 1.1% other. Within this student population, there are no English Language Learners, and 43.9% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Mathematics



### Consistent Higher Performance

Charles A. Upson Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in both English Language Arts and mathematics in an analysis that included fourth-grade achievement data from 2002 through 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each year, Upson Elementary School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 87.3 in English Language Arts and 94.9 in mathematics.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

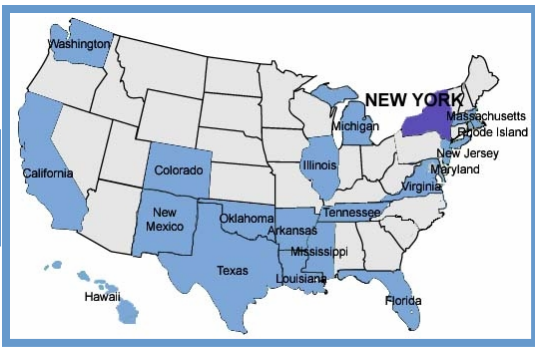
Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	4	4	4	
English Language Arts	91	80	92	87.3
Mathematics	94	94	97	94.9

\*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights. For detailed information on individual and overall average performance ranks for Charles A. Upson Elementary School, please visit [www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org).

### Major Findings

“Anything that is not relevant to student performance is a distraction,” according to Lockport City School District’s superintendent. At Upson, the principal ensures teachers are not distracted from delivering the Common Set of Learning Objectives and assessing the performance indicators associated with them. A culture of collaboration permeates Upson, with teachers indicating, “We consistently collaborate on best practice.” “Constant” collaboration ensures “coherence” at Upson. This same level of collaboration across schools led to the selection of a district-wide reading series. Upson teachers state that while they feel the adoption process was strong and resulted in an excellent selection, they are also encouraged to supplement with additional materials as needed. “Differentiation, not remediation” is the driving belief when selecting supplemental materials or instructional strategies. This level of differentiation allows Upson staff to increase academic expectations and achievement with a rapidly changing student population. In addition, teachers at Upson state that they “constantly evaluate students individually” and provide detailed and individual feedback and adjustments based on those evaluations.





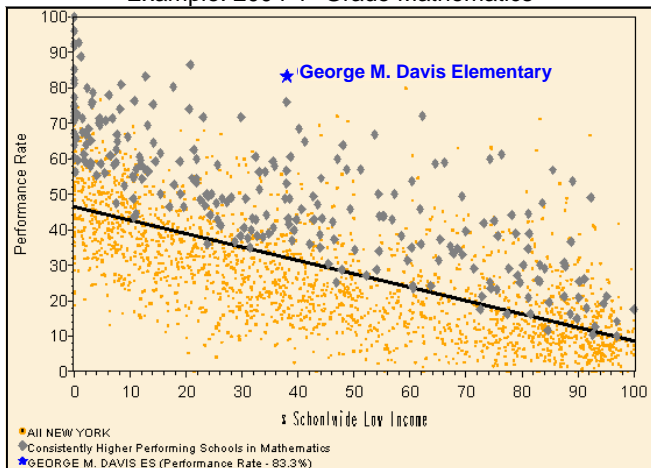
# George M. Davis Elementary School New Rochelle City School District

## Just for the Kids, New York Executive Summary

### The School

George M. Davis Elementary School, which serves 692 kindergarten through fifth-grade students, is one of six elementary schools in the New Rochelle City School District (10,176 students). Davis's student population is 49.9% White, 26.0% African American, 18.9% Hispanic, and 5.2% other. Within this student population, 10.0% are English Language Learners, and 42.3% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Mathematics



### Consistent Higher Performance

George M. Davis Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in both English Language Arts and mathematics in an analysis that included fourth-grade achievement data from 2002 through 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each year, Davis Elementary School demonstrated a performance rank of 99 in both English Language Arts and mathematics with an overall average performance rank of 99.0 in both subjects.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

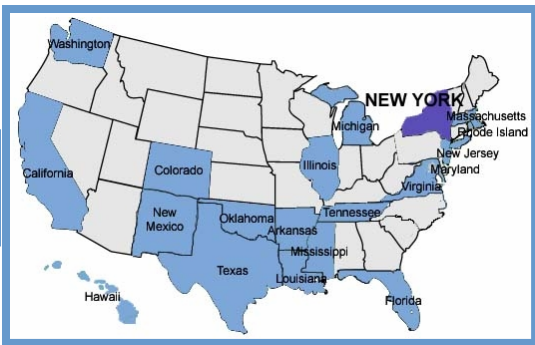
Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	4	4	4	
English Language Arts	99	99	99	99.0
Mathematics	99	99	99	99.0

\*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights. For detailed information on individual and overall average performance ranks for George M. Davis Elementary School, please visit [www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org).

### Major Findings

The Davis Elementary School curriculum is guided by clear outcomes that focus on the “basics” while integrating content in creative ways across subjects and grade levels. Through consistently strong leadership noted for fiscal responsibility and for engaging the community via creative fundraising, Davis Elementary demonstrates the leadership capacity to reach its clearly stated outcomes. This capacity is further developed through experienced and energetic teachers who are mentored continuously. With strong support from the district, Davis Elementary determines the instructional programs, practices, and arrangements that best serve its student population. “Whatever works” is the guiding principle behind these selections. Equipped with the staff and the tools to successfully deliver the curriculum, the school uses aligned unit and grade-level assessments to study each child’s progress toward mastering the learning outcomes. Success on these benchmark assessments ensures that students will be successful on the state assessment. Trained in differentiation of instruction, staff are quick to vary the time or resources needed for each child to learn the required curriculum. They are equally swift to celebrate each child’s successes.

The entire case study may be viewed at [http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study\\_framework.cfm?study=New%20York](http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=New%20York).



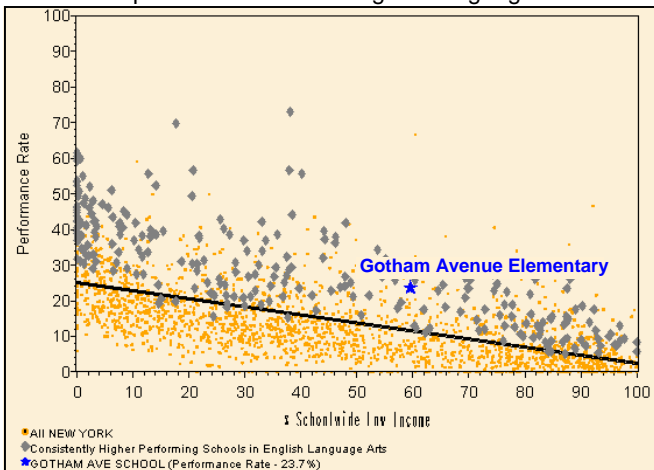
# Gotham Avenue Elementary School Elmont Union Free School District

## Just for the Kids, New York Executive Summary

### The School

Gotham Avenue Elementary School, which serves 743 pre-kindergarten through sixth-grade students, is one of six elementary schools in the Elmont Union Free School District (4,056 students). Gotham Avenue's student population is 56.5% African American, 25.2% Hispanic, 2.8% White, and 15.5% other. Within this student population, 9.3% are English Language Learners, and 59.9% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 4<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts



### Consistent Higher Performance

Gotham Avenue Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in both English Language Arts and mathematics in an analysis that included fourth-grade achievement data from 2002 through 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each year, Gotham Avenue Elementary School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 86.4 in English Language Arts and 86.0 in mathematics.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

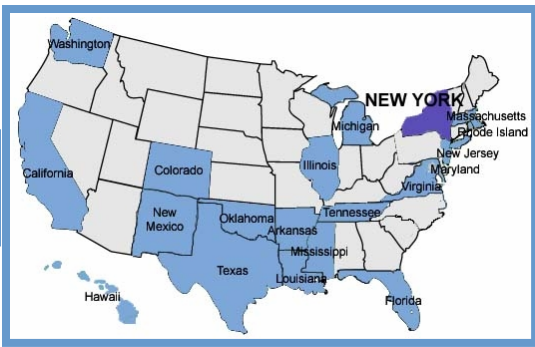
Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	4	4	4	
English Language Arts	77	97	86	86.4
Mathematics	93	97	68	86.0

\*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights. For detailed information on individual and overall average performance ranks for Gotham Avenue Elementary School, please visit [www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org).

### Major Findings

The Gotham Avenue Elementary School staff deliver a coherent and consistent curriculum guided by a curriculum map, pacing guides, and required lesson plans to address a highly mobile student population. High academic expectations are met by ensuring the presence of highly trained teachers who are strong learners. Mentored to develop “diagnostic prescriptive teaching,” new teachers are monitored through constant review of lesson plans and student performance data. Alignment with state standards and high involvement of teachers characterize the process of adopting instructional programs that are then required for use across the district. Although curriculum, pacing guides, programs, and materials are adopted across the district, teachers “feed the diverse needs of students” through differentiated instruction in their classrooms. Curriculum assessments given at the end of each phase of the pacing guide are aligned with state standards and are used to monitor individual student progress. High levels of accountability are present to ensure the success of every child. Based on information obtained through careful monitoring, strong programs providing additional time and resources for learning have been structured. These include enrichment classes during and after school, before-school tutoring, and summer programs.

The entire case study may be viewed at [http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study\\_framework.cfm?study=New%20York](http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=New%20York).



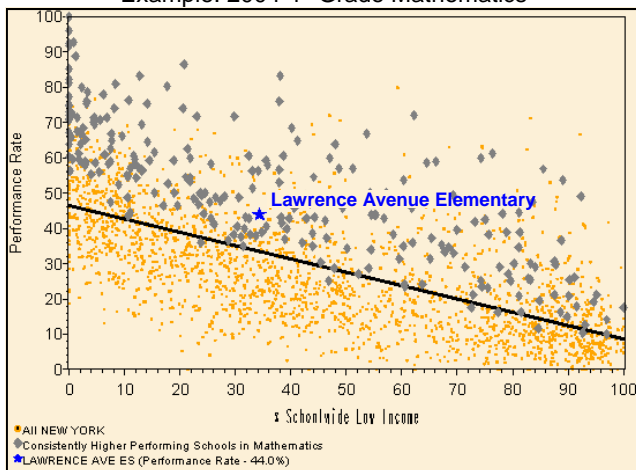
# Lawrence Avenue Elementary School Potsdam Central School District

## Just for the Kids, New York Executive Summary

### The School

Lawrence Avenue Elementary School, which serves 455 pre-kindergarten through fourth-grade students, is the only elementary school in the Potsdam Central School District (1,404 students). Lawrence Avenue’s student population is 93.4% White, 2.9% African American, 0.7% Hispanic, and 3.0% other. Within this student population, 1.1% are English Language Learners, and 33.6% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Mathematics



### Consistent Higher Performance

Lawrence Avenue Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in both English Language Arts and mathematics in an analysis that included fourth-grade achievement data from 2002 through 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each year, Lawrence Avenue Elementary School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 88.6 in English Language Arts and 87.9 in mathematics.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	4	4	4	
English Language Arts	92	92	81	88.6
Mathematics	85	87	92	87.9

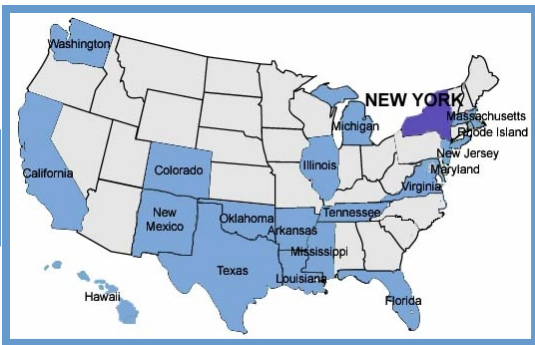
\*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights. For detailed information on individual and overall average performance ranks for Lawrence Avenue Elementary School, please visit [www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org).

### Major Findings

Lawrence Avenue Elementary School teachers view curriculum changes as the school-wide reform with the single greatest impact on improving student achievement. Collaborative work by teachers has led to the development of Essential Questions to go with each curricular unit that has been aligned with the state standards. Teachers state that they are “always fine-tuning their curricular documents.” A new principal at Lawrence Avenue follows a long-time elementary principal who was described as a “great leader.” A highly collaborative process led to the selection of the new principal, who is already gaining recognition for her leadership. Once teachers select an instructional program, it is mandated; but teachers can still make adjustments based on the needs of their students. Monitoring of achievement is a “constant process” at Lawrence Avenue, according to teachers. Early literacy profiles and mathematics assessments for kindergarten through second-grade students supplement data results from the state assessments. The first line of intervention at Lawrence Avenue is in the classroom; teachers routinely make adjustments to be responsive to students’ needs and learning styles.

The entire case study may be viewed at [http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study\\_framework.cfm?study=New%20York](http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=New%20York).





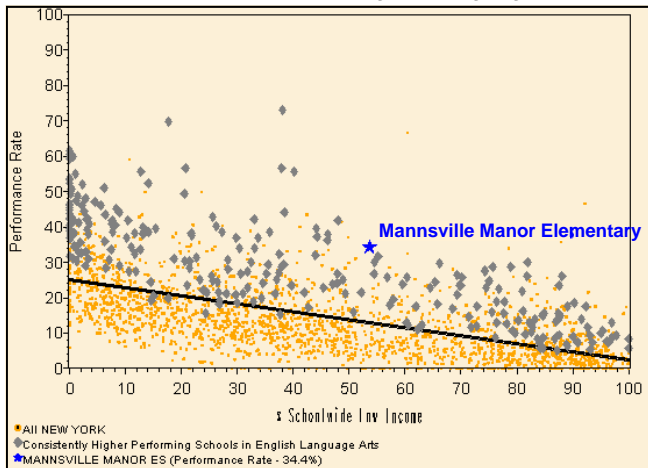
# Mannsville Manor Elementary School South Jefferson Central School District

## Just for the Kids, New York Executive Summary

### The School

Mannsville Manor Elementary School, which serves 233 kindergarten through fourth-grade students, is one of two elementary schools in South Jefferson Central School District (2,004 students). Mannsville Manor's student population is 97.4% White, 1.3% African American, and 1.3% other. Within this student population, there are no English Language Learners, and 53.6% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 4<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts



### Consistent Higher Performance

Mannsville Manor Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in both English Language Arts and mathematics in an analysis that included fourth-grade achievement data from 2002 through 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each year, Mannsville Manor Elementary School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 95.3 in English Language Arts and 96.8 in mathematics.

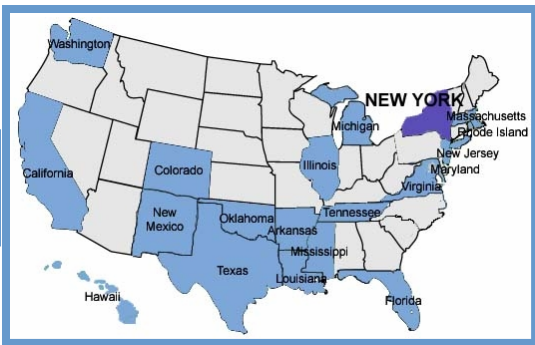
Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	4	4	4	
English Language Arts	91	96	99	95.3
Mathematics	96	95	99	96.8

\*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights. For detailed information on individual and overall average performance ranks for Mannsville Manor Elementary School, please visit [www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org).

### Major Findings

The Mannsville Manor Elementary School staff characterize curriculum development as “arduous and never-ending,” but definitely “worthwhile.” The Curriculum Alignment and Prioritization (CAP) process requires teachers to identify units of instruction and associated vocabulary and resources and to map these units by month. Used in conjunction with results of benchmark assessments, student data, and collaborative planning ideas, curriculum maps ensure consistency while allowing for variations in instructional approaches. Candidates for teaching positions at Mannsville Manor must demonstrate proficiency in developing a standards-based lesson plan, and, if successful, will join a team that considers professional development an integral part of the school day. Teachers state that they share common programs and resources, but use their professional expertise to “adjust, adapt, and add materials” based on individual student needs. “Early and often” are descriptors used when discussing the methods by which student achievement is monitored. A variety of data are used to monitor every individual student: teacher-developed Benchmark Literacy Assessments, teacher observations, parental feedback, and achievement data from the state assessments. Teachers make “any and all” adjustments necessary to meet individual needs.



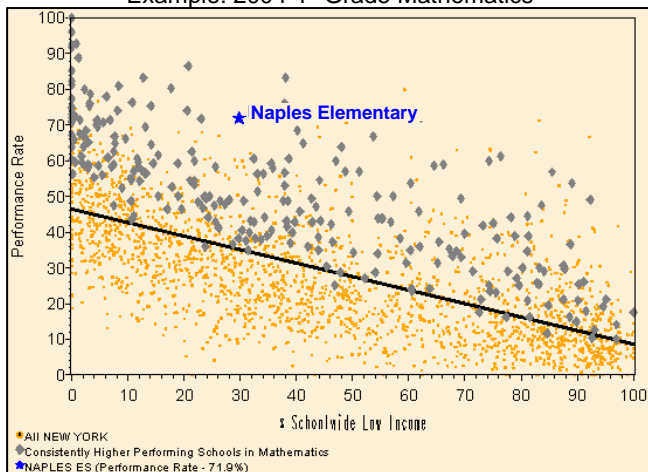
# Naples Elementary School Naples Central School District

## Just for the Kids, New York Executive Summary

### The School

Naples Elementary School, which serves 517 kindergarten through sixth-grade students, is the only elementary school in the Naples Central School District (980 students). Naples's student population is 95.9% White, 2.1% Hispanic, and 2.0% other. Within this student population, there are no English Language Learners, and 29.8% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Mathematics



### Consistent Higher Performance

Naples Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in both English Language Arts and mathematics in an analysis that included fourth-grade achievement data from 2002 through 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each year, Naples Elementary School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 93.1 in English Language Arts and 88.3 in mathematics.

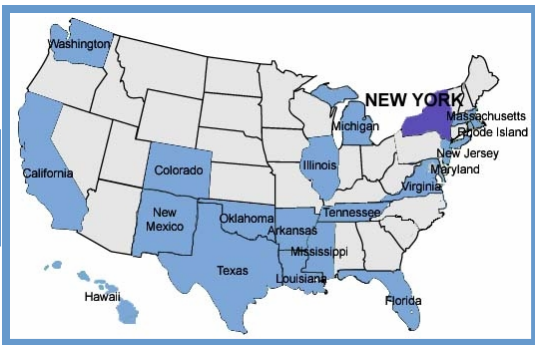
Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	4	4	4	
English Language Arts	89	94	97	93.1
Mathematics	76	91	99	88.3

\*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights. For detailed information on individual and overall average performance ranks for Naples Elementary School, please visit [www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org).

### Major Findings

Educators at Naples Elementary School see the state standards as promoting positive academic growth for their students and positive professional growth for themselves. Teachers “create and embrace” the curriculum derived from the state standards and are “diligent in implementing it.” Components of the curriculum include pacing guides, curriculum maps, model lessons, instructional resources, and benchmark assessments. Teamwork and high levels of collaboration characterize the very stable staff at Naples. Leaders are often promoted from within the district. While the district does not mandate instructional programs or materials, there is a definite expectation that the programs and materials used are tightly aligned with state standards and result in increased student achievement. Blocks of uninterrupted time for core academic subjects mark the Naples’ daily schedule. The *Effective Schools* process is used for establishing and monitoring district and school goals. Those goals are selected strictly as the means for leveraging improvement in student achievement. Disaggregated student achievement data are provided for all teachers so they can use the information to inform and adjust instruction.



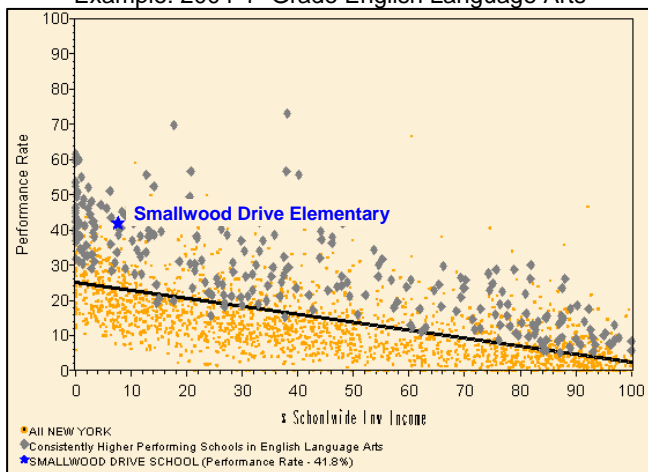
# Smallwood Drive Elementary School Amherst Central School District

## Just for the Kids, New York Executive Summary

### The School

Smallwood Drive Elementary School, which serves 688 kindergarten through fifth-grade students, is one of two elementary schools in Amherst Central School District (3,125 students). Smallwood Drive's student population is 91.6% White, 4.7% African American, 0.3% Hispanic, and 3.4% other. Within this student population, there are no English Language Learners, and 7.6% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 4<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts



### Consistent Higher Performance

Smallwood Drive Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in both English Language Arts and mathematics in an analysis that included fourth-grade achievement data from 2002 through 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each year, Smallwood Drive Elementary School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 95.6 in English Language Arts and 92.3 in mathematics.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	4	4	4	
English Language Arts	95	96	96	95.6
Mathematics	98	84	94	92.3

\*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights. For detailed information on individual and overall average performance ranks for Smallwood Drive Elementary School, please visit [www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org).

### Major Findings

The Smallwood Drive Elementary School staff view state standards and district expectations as opportunities to examine and improve teaching and learning. Educators were unanimous in stressing the positive outcomes from the state accountability system. Recruitment for staff at Smallwood Drive is far-reaching and extends across stakeholders. A two-and-a-half year training period is required for mentors of new teachers. Emphasizing clinical supervision and elements of instruction, the training provides the foundation for mentors to support new teachers in a powerful way and the opportunity for the mentors to develop as instructional leaders. While instructional programs are not mandated, it is expected that every teacher will address the Essential Questions in science and social studies, the main topics in the mathematics series, and the *Early Literacy Profile*. Once curriculum has been delivered, results from assessments aligned with the state assessments are used to “anticipate” additional student learning needs and to signal needs for curricular adjustments. Stored in the district’s data warehouse, data and data management are referred to as “not so much a system as a part of the ethos.” Teachers note using the data to spot needs for additional differentiation—particularly differentiation of instruction for advanced and struggling students.

The entire case study may be viewed at [http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study\\_framework.cfm?study=New%20York](http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=New%20York).



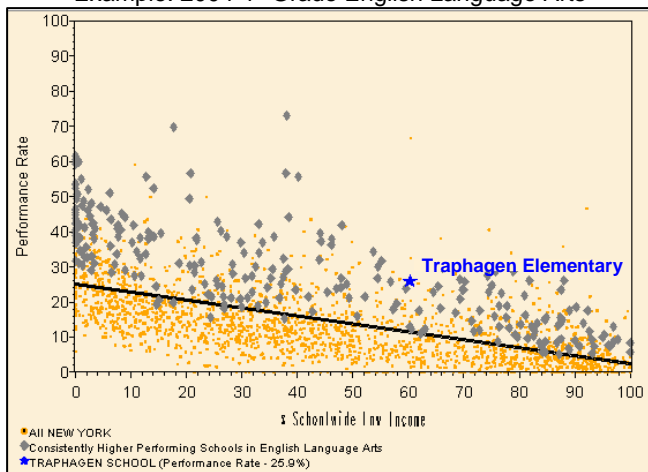
# Traphagen Elementary School Mount Vernon City School District

## Just for the Kids, New York Executive Summary

### The School

Traphagen Elementary School, which serves 373 kindergarten through sixth-grade students, is 1 of 11 elementary schools in Mount Vernon City School District (10,009 students). Traphagen’s student population is 93.3% African American, 4.8% Hispanic, 0.8% White, and 1.1% other. Within this student population, there are no English Language Learners, and 60.4% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 4<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts



### Consistent Higher Performance

Traphagen Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in both English Language Arts and mathematics in an analysis that included fourth-grade achievement data from 2002 through 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each year, Traphagen Elementary School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 91.3 in English Language Arts and 94.8 in mathematics.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	4	4	4	
English Language Arts	85	94	94	91.3
Mathematics	97	96	92	94.8

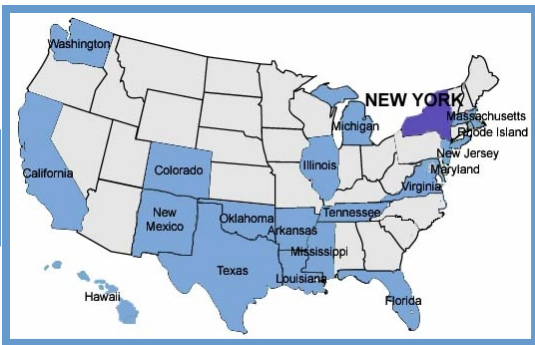
\*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights. For detailed information on individual and overall average performance ranks for Traphagen Elementary School, please visit [www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org).

### Major Findings

The Traphagen Elementary School staff use a district-wide curriculum map in English Language Arts that reflects “a continuum of learning—complete with key concepts, essential skills, best teaching/learning practices, and a sample of student work—encompassing grades pre-K through 12.” The curriculum map in mathematics is under development. Although many programs are adopted district wide, teachers retain input into what programs and materials they use to supplement instructional materials in their classrooms. Programs and practices are designed to concentrate on the state standards, “not just the state test.” The principal and teachers do concentrate, however, on the results from the state tests. Trained in data analysis, Traphagen’s principal analyzes results stored in the district data warehouse and uses item analysis by question, by teacher, and by curriculum objective to better understand student achievement and curricular and instructional needs. To respond to demonstrated learning needs, Traphagen has a mathematics and English Language Arts after-school program (two days per week—two hours per day) funded and mandated at the district level. Additional tutoring supports and academic interventions are structured to assist struggling students.

The entire case study may be viewed at [http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study\\_framework.cfm?study=New%20York](http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=New%20York).





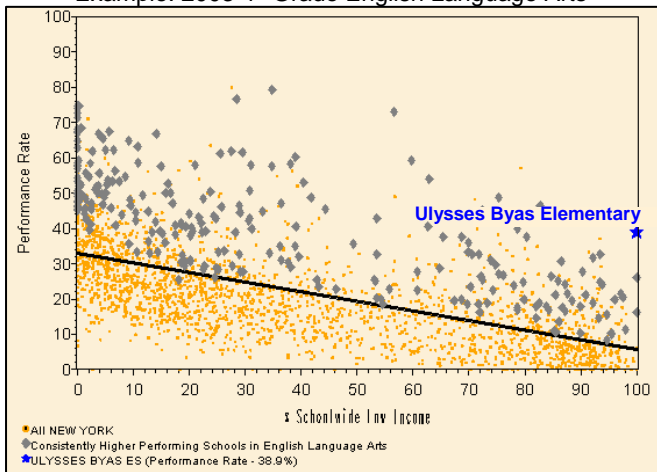
# Ulysses Byas Elementary School Roosevelt Union Free School District

## Just for the Kids, New York Executive Summary

### The School

Ulysses Byas Elementary School, which serves 420 kindergarten through sixth-grade students, is one of four elementary schools in Roosevelt Union Free School District (2,765 students). Ulysses Byas’s student population is 72.6% African American, 27.1% Hispanic, 0.2% White, and 0.1% other. Within this student population, 18.6% are English Language Learners, and 100% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2003 4<sup>th</sup> Grade English Language Arts



### Consistent Higher Performance

Ulysses Byas Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in both English Language Arts and mathematics in an analysis that included fourth-grade achievement data from 2002 through 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each year, Ulysses Byas Elementary School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 92.2 in English Language Arts and 92.0 in mathematics.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	4	4	4	
English Language Arts	94	99	85	92.2
Mathematics	96	96	84	92.0

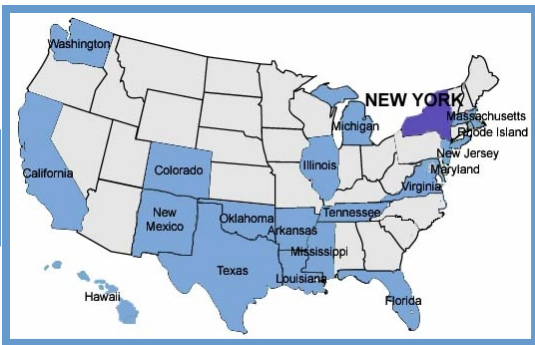
\*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights. For detailed information on individual and overall average performance ranks for Ulysses Byas Elementary School, please visit [www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org).

### Major Findings

The Ulysses Byas Elementary School staff use Campus-Wide Objectives (CWOs) to provide a consistent sequence of delivery of a standards-based curriculum. The CWOs provide a common focus across every classroom. Teachers state that if “you can make it in Roosevelt, you can make it anywhere”—a reference to the great challenges in this high-needs district. To help new teachers “make it,” Ulysses Byas provides mentors as well as reading and mathematics specialists who model lessons, demonstrate manipulatives, and show how to use a cooperative approach partnering with children. Focused on the CWOs, the entire school blocks 9:30-11:30 for ELA and writing. The clarity of the objectives that are to be accomplished allows creativity in “how” teachers ensure that every child meets the objectives. Students are monitored using tools such as *Spotlight on Reading*, *Spotlight on Math*, *School Function Assessment*, and *Standardized Reading Inventory*. Recognition is a very important part of the Ulysses Byas school day. Living in the third most segregated county in the state, administrators say students face “utter racism” and are in great need of recognition and reinforcement.

The entire case study may be viewed at [http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study\\_framework.cfm?study=New%20York](http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=New%20York).





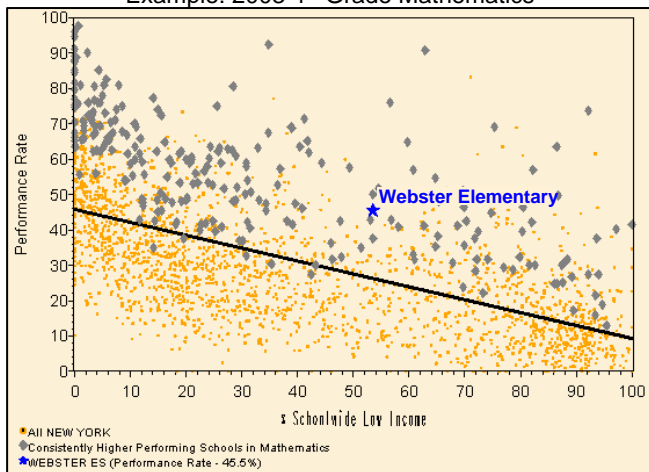
# Webster Elementary School Syracuse City School District

## Just for the Kids, New York Executive Summary

### The School

Webster Elementary School, which serves 556 kindergarten through fifth-grade students, is 1 of 22 elementary schools in Syracuse City School District (21,235 students). Webster's student population is 69.8% White, 25.9% African American, 2.0% Hispanic, and 2.3% other. Within this student population, there are no English Language Learners, and 68.5% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2003 4<sup>th</sup> Grade Mathematics



### Consistent Higher Performance

Webster Elementary School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in both English Language Arts and mathematics in an analysis that included fourth-grade achievement data from 2002 through 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for each year, Webster Elementary School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 87.5 in English Language Arts and 92.9 in mathematics.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

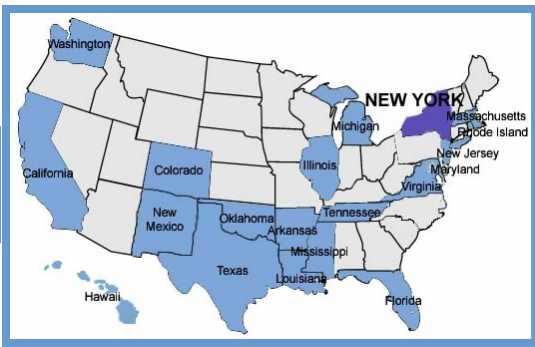
Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	4	4	4	
English Language Arts	80	90	93	87.5
Mathematics	93	96	89	92.9

\*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights. For detailed information on individual and overall average performance ranks for Webster Elementary School, please visit [www.just4kids.org](http://www.just4kids.org).

### Major Findings

The Webster Elementary School staff state that clarity of academic goals and curriculum is a key to success. Driven by the state standards, the curriculum is categorized by benchmarks and specifies the grade level at which each skill is to be introduced, reinforced, and mastered. Little staff turnover means that Webster focuses primarily on building teaching and leadership capacity within the current staff. Teachers say they stay because “everybody is on the same page; everyone is both appreciated and accountable.” Powerful administrative support and teacher collaboration are the reasons teachers say they “love” their jobs. Student engagement and active learning are highly valued at Webster. Instruction is positive and purpose-driven: “Kids look at the board and see what the objective is.” All schools in Syracuse use the same instructional resources, including the *Scott Foresman* reading series, the *D’Nealian* writing program, and *Math Investigations*. Each teacher, however, also receives a financial allotment to spend on other resources as dictated by the needs of children in the classroom. Ongoing, data-driven analysis of student performance is critical to Webster’s success and occurs in “many, many ways” (e.g., Milestone Assessments). Based on the assessments, intervention and adjustment happen “constantly.”

The entire case study may be viewed at [http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study\\_framework.cfm?study=New%20York](http://just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=New%20York).



## New York Elementary School Best Practice Study: Findings

*Based on the Themes of The JFTK Framework*

Five organizing themes provided the structure for studying the practices of consistently higher performing schools. The themes are listed below.

1. Curriculum and Academic Goals
2. Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building
3. Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements
4. Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data
5. Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment

These themes are used below to summarize the findings of this study. The themes represent the broad topics that connect best practices across different school system levels—district, school, and classroom. Together, these themes capture the primary instructional activities undertaken by school systems and represent the major content areas in which practices of higher performing school systems differ from their average-performing counterparts.<sup>1</sup>

The first theme described in The JFTK Best Practice Framework forms the foundation of The Framework. Each of the other four themes rests upon the assumption that there is absolute clarity about what is to be taught and learned by grade level—pre-K–12. Therefore, Curriculum and Academic Goals forms the base of The Framework. Building upon that base, higher performing schools are deliberate about selecting and developing their human resources (Theme Two: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building) and equipping all staff with evidence-based tools and strategies to deliver the curriculum (Theme Three: Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements). With people, tools, and strategies in place, higher performing schools regularly monitor student progress (Theme Four: Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data). Finally, higher performing schools are quick to respond to student achievement data—recognizing success and intervening or adjusting whenever necessary to ensure all students reach the stated standards (Theme Five: Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment).

<sup>1</sup>One University of Albany researcher adds, “As we look across the practices and programs used in higher performing schools in comparison with average-performing schools, evidence suggests that many of these practices and programs are similar. However, many of the higher performers exhibit an ethos of coherence, creativity, cooperation, high expectations, and continual improvement that is not exhibited to the same degree and as consistently as in the average performers.”



## Theme One: Curriculum and Academic Goals

### *"What Is Taught and Learned"*

This theme focuses on the learning target. What is it that we expect all students to know and be able to do by grade and subject? Consistently higher performing school systems have clear academic targets from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Principals and teachers understand the learning goals and understand that these goals are for all students and are non-negotiable.

### Specific New York Findings: Curriculum and Academic Goals

- **Administrators and teachers use the New York Learning Standards to promote positive academic growth and to provide impetus and reference for improvement.**
  - According to the Director of Elementary Education, the standards “changed the look of what children should be doing in the classroom. What children and teachers were doing had to change, and the evidence became important.” (Charles A. Upson, Lockport City School District)
  - Teachers see curriculum changes as the school-wide reform with the greatest impact on improving student achievement. They view state standards as providing excellent direction and report the benefits of working as a team to develop and implement specific curricula. (Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam Central School District)
  - According to one educator, “We can address the standards and still do the things that kids enjoy!” (Mannsville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
  - Educators see the state standards as promoting positive academic growth in their students, as well as the professional development of teachers and administrators. (Naples, Naples Central School District)
  - When asked about the impact of the state accountability system, respondents were unanimous in stressing the positive. One educator clarified, “It has made us look inward, to ask what to add, what to throw out, and what to change.” (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
- **Although the state standards provide a strong framework for standards-based instruction, districts and/or schools add definition to and support for teaching to those standards.**
  - The Common Set of Learning Objectives is used for planning and instruction throughout the district. The objectives are supplemented by suggested activities and lists of resources. (Charles A. Upson, Lockport City School District)
  - High mobility rates and new students who have learning gaps led to the development of a highly focused, “living” curriculum map with associated pacing guides. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
  - The Curriculum Alignment and Prioritization process is grounded in the state standards and requires teachers to identify the relevant units of instruction for each content area. Key ideas and vocabulary to be learned, as well as helpful resources, are also identified. (Mannsville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
  - A collaborative process identifies core and essential elements within the curriculum. Teachers develop components developed to support these elements, including pacing guides, curriculum maps, model lessons, instructional resources, and benchmark assessments. (Naples, Naples Central School District)

- For the 2004-2005 school year, the goal was to develop a map in English Language Arts that reflects “a continuum of learning—complete with key concepts, essential skills, best teaching/learning practices, and sample student work—encompassing grades pre-K through 12.” (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)
  - Campus-Wide Objectives (CWOs) provide an instructional sequence across the school. The principal stated, “The entire school will work on geometry; everyone’s on the same page at the same time.” The mathematics curriculum includes an outline of the CWOs and duration of time to spend on each standard and strand. Teachers also receive a library of materials such as mathematics manipulatives, instructional guides, and resources to aid in implementing the mathematics curriculum. (Ulysses Byas, Roosevelt Union Free School District)
  - Driven by the state standards, the curriculum is categorized by benchmarks and specifies the grade level at which each skill is to be introduced, reinforced, and mastered. In English Language Arts, this curriculum is supported by vocabulary listings, samples of fourth- and eighth-grade assessments, scoring rubrics, and timelines of assessments. (Webster, Syracuse City School District)
- **A cohesive and coherent curriculum focuses on building fundamental skills in reading, writing, and mathematics.**
    - Teachers start early with key concepts in reading, writing, and mathematics and build on these in each grade level: “By the time we get to fourth grade, we’re beyond. We are not dealing with capitalization, punctuation. By fourth, I’m working on abstract comprehension skills; those basic skills are intact.” (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)
    - The philosophy behind the curriculum map was for it to be fluid enough to make changes daily in each classroom based on student needs, but structured enough to ensure all children would obtain the skills and strategies they need for success at each grade level in every school in the district. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
    - The curriculum guides are very clear and leave little room for mistakes. (Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam Central School District)
  - **Grade-level and vertical teams of teachers systematically review the standards-based curriculum.**
    - An environment of constant and continual revision of curriculum is fostered at the district and school levels. (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)
    - According to one teacher, “We work on the curriculum collaboratively. We’ll have all of the [curriculum] map people, K-4, get together and look for any gaps across grades. Sometimes it takes two years to get new curriculum documents ready. We are always fine-tuning.” (Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam Central School District)
    - Curriculum development is ongoing and includes a cyclical review of all content areas within a four- to five-year span. (Mannsville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
    - All agree that teachers work collaboratively to develop the curriculum—they create and embrace it themselves. Teachers develop curriculum every summer and meet frequently by grade level and academic area to fine-tune and adjust the written curriculum. (Naples, Naples Central School District)
    - Curriculum decisions begin with a volunteer core group of teachers representing each grade level—the mathematics team, the science team, etc. Results of their deliberations are taken back to the grade-level teams. (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)

- **While curricular consistency is expected and monitored, teachers use their skills and knowledge in creative ways to organize and present the curriculum.**
  - The principal ensures that teachers have the curriculum documents and that they use them. During her observation conferences, she asks teachers to identify the performance indicators addressed in the lesson and the means for assessing them. (Charles A. Upson, Lockport City School District)
  - Administrators encourage teachers to use their skills and knowledge and special expertise. (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)
  - Every day, teachers are required to have created a lesson plan; these plans are collected weekly by the school administration. One teacher stated that they must “define the objective of the lesson, how to reach the objective and how the objective will be assessed.” In addition, each plan must include a daily reflection on the effectiveness of the lesson. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
  - The spiraling curriculum is based on state standards and designed to be the same for all children, including special needs and ELL students. Instruction, however, is to be differentiated based on individual needs. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
  - Curriculum maps ensure consistency while also allowing for variations in instructional approaches. (Mannsville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
  - “The beauty of teaching here is that you are allowed to teach in [the way that] fits your style as long as you are meeting the standards,” stated one teacher. (Naples, Naples Central School District)
  - Traphagen teachers fill out curriculum maps every month. They also comment on the materials they used and how effective they were. This feedback is given to the superintendent of curriculum and instruction. (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)
  - State standards and the district curriculum guide each teacher’s instruction. Every grade has a long-term plan as well as an action plan for month-by-month and week-by-week instruction. (Webster, Syracuse City School District)



## Theme Two: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

### *“Selecting and Developing Leaders and Teachers”*

This second theme focuses on the selection and development of a school system’s most precious commodity—people. Once the academic goals of the system are clear, the leaders and teachers are selected and given professional development opportunities to make these goals a reality for every learner in the system.

## Specific New York Findings: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

- **Strong and stable instructional leadership is seen as an essential element in sustaining high performance for all.**
  - According to the superintendent, the pressure for accountability has meant a new role for building principals. Principals are now expected to identify those activities that drive positive results and then work to strengthen them. (Charles A. Upson, Lockport City School District)



- “We have had great leadership,” stated one teacher. Teachers give particular credit for their success to a long-time elementary principal. The Board of Education has made it a priority to maintain longevity and to stabilize staff. (Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam Central School District)
  - Naples attracts good educators and experiences little staff turnover. Previous administrators were in place for 15 to 25 years. The current superintendent was a high school secretary and then a school business official before becoming district administrator. (Naples, Naples Central School District)
  - The elementary principal credits much of Naples Elementary’s academic success to his immediate predecessor, who empowered teachers to work toward success and feel in control of their students’ learning. (Naples, Naples Central School District)
  - One teacher stated, “Our principal encourages us to be our best, [and] sometimes knows better than we do how to build our confidence and skills. My last 10 years here, under her leadership, have been my greatest period of growth.” (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
  - Once something is in place, it is expected, and the principal monitors instruction by making regular visits to classrooms and collecting lesson plans, always responding to the lesson plans in writing. (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
  - Traphagen’s principal had served over 16 years, with more than 30 years in the district. (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)
  - According to the principal (a longtime community member), the language arts curriculum needed “more sequencing,” and students needed to provide “more details, main ideas” in their writing. In response, she made learning objectives clear and asked teachers to think about what they expect to see in a child at the end of the year. She also called school-level meetings to discuss changes in the standards or state assessments. (Ulysses Byas, Roosevelt Union Free School District)
  - Webster’s school principal provides an outstanding “exemplar of leadership” that inspires everyone. There is a continuing awareness of her role in building an environment of learning and support, in modeling priorities and best practices, and in helping all students and staff members to do their best. She recognizes the importance of academically focused leadership, and all staff members are aware of her goals: “1) to maintain a school culture that embraces effective learning practices; 2) to continuously analyze, examine, and interpret various assessments, milestones, and profiles to ascertain students’ strengths and weaknesses; 3) to encourage and provide opportunities for teachers to engage in staff development; and 4) to support implementation of the school improvement plan to incorporate effective best practices to improve school learning.” (Webster, Syracuse City School District)
- **Candidates show what they know and can do through a rigorous selection process that includes multiple interviews, often involving staff and parents and requiring the teaching of model lessons.**
    - Teacher recruitment is a “strict process” involving an initial screening by the principals and additional interviews with committees of teachers and parents. Selected candidates must demonstrate a prepared lesson on a common topic. Later, the assistant superintendent and then the superintendent interview finalists. (Charles A. Upson, Lockport City School District)
    - Teacher applicants are evaluated by committees of parents, teachers, and, for high school staff, students. Input from the superintendent, rating sheets from the 25-person committee, and feedback from the Board lead to a final choice. (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)

- Week in and week out, teachers are expected to plan their lessons with the end in mind, to think about objectives, to know when students are reaching objectives, and to use a variety of methods to ensure children with different needs are learning the objectives. In order to hold teachers accountable for reaching learning goals, the district takes responsibility for selecting new teachers based on their demonstrated capacities to meet these expectations. Once administrators decide to interview a candidate, the candidate is required to do “demo lessons,” which all principals and central office staff observe. If they are recommended for further consideration, they complete a writing sample and meet with the superintendent. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
  - Successful principal candidates participate in a series of interviews. The first round consists of two 45-minute interviews with two stakeholder groups (teachers, parents, and community representatives, with a board member as facilitator); the second round consists of three interviews (the building planning team, other administrators, and then the entire school board). (Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam Central School District)
  - According to one teacher, “When we hire professional staff, we check to make sure they know the state standards and can teach to them.” Candidates, who must have solid literacy experience, come to the interview prepared to share a lesson that addresses the state standards. A team of teachers and the building principal—who have already met to identify needs, desired qualifications, and interview questions—conduct the interview. (Mannville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
  - For teaching candidates, a team of mentor teachers observes each candidate conduct “a teaching episode,” then scripts the lesson and requests a written reflection by the teacher before selecting those to be interviewed by another team. (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
- **Districts provide formal administrator and teacher mentoring programs focused on student learning.**
- For new teachers, a mentoring program offering guidance in “diagnostic prescriptive teaching” supports them in meeting high expectations. For the past three years, the mentor program has been based on cognitive coaching, a practice in which teachers reflect on lessons’ strengths and weaknesses in guided discussions with a mentor. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
  - Undergirding the strong support for staff development is the mentor program, which begins with a two-and-a-half-year training period in elements of instruction and clinical supervision for volunteers and provides the foundation for all learning, teaching, and teacher evaluation in the district. Teachers note that elements of instruction used to be taught by administrators, but now that component is taught almost entirely by the mentor teachers. (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
  - New administrators and teachers benefit from formal and informal mentoring programs. New principals meet with veteran principals and also receive mentoring through the Board of Cooperative Educational Services and Teachers College. A “New Teacher’s Academy” meets monthly with central office personnel; within the school, grade-level teachers mentor other new grade-level teachers informally. (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)
  - New teachers “are paired up with teachers who model the way I like to see them teach,” said the principal. Both the reading and mathematics specialists in the building also support new teachers by modeling lessons, demonstrating manipulatives, and showing how to use a cooperative approach by partnering with children. (Ulysses Byas, Roosevelt Union Free School District)
  - The district recently developed a mentor program, negotiated with the teachers’ union, which teams any new faculty member with an experienced faculty member. (Webster, Syracuse City School District)

- **School administrators focus on improving student learning by ensuring that teachers have time to regularly work together (both within and across grades) to develop plans and devise solutions to problems.**
  - Grade-level and resource-teacher collaboration stand out as two priorities at Davis. The principal makes sure that grade-level teachers have the same preparation times throughout the year, at which time they can meet and collaborate. He also often covers classes so teachers can collaborate. (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)
  - The administration has poured energy into developing more collaboration, which means teachers participate in two to three curriculum meetings a month. In addition, each grade level has “specials” scheduled at the same time two times a week in order to meet for grade-level planning. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
  - Every Monday, time after the regular school day is dedicated to planning; in addition, teachers have common planning periods. Collaboration is ongoing. Teachers report having the freedom and encouragement to observe each other, and several credit their colleagues for improvements to their practice. (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
  - Grade-level meetings within the school are scheduled regularly. District-wide committees in mathematics, science, and reading meet after school and sometimes on Saturdays. Each school sends one representative to each of the committees. A committee member said that they collaborate on a variety of things in their meetings: “In math, if we are adopting a new text, it’s the job of the committee to do that. We are developing the exit outcomes, curriculum mapping K-6, sample lesson plans K-6, pacing guides K-6, and then this is shared back at the school.” In addition, all teachers are required to attend one faculty and one curriculum meeting per month. (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)
  - Most of the collaboration around refining what works and what does not in the curriculum and the classroom occurs in grade-level meetings. Lunch and planning breaks are also aligned so that teachers can meet by grade level. (Ulysses Byas, Roosevelt Union Free School District)
  - “Administrative support, collaboration among team members, and support from each other keep us going,” according to one teacher. The mentoring process and the collaborative climate encourage teachers to visit each other’s classrooms. Special education teachers especially note the importance of working together to establish connections across the subject areas and grade levels. Several teachers note that they visit other faculty members’ classrooms often. “Just let the principal know. She’ll arrange coverage.” Teachers also use their planning time to visit other classrooms. (Webster, Syracuse City School District)
- **Professional development is built into the school calendar and the structure of the school day. Development is ongoing, relevant, collaborative, classroom-embedded, and tightly aligned with academic objectives.**
  - Professional development is ongoing in the district, “based on what teachers say they need” to be successful, and guided by the vision of improved academic achievement. When district data showed that over 30 percent of second graders were not meeting the district benchmark, the Professional Development Team designed a staff development plan focusing on “balanced literacy,” including workshops on guided reading and learning centers. (Charles A. Upton, Lockport City School District)
  - Both new and veteran teachers are surveyed yearly to assess their professional development needs. The district has focused recently on methods for differentiating instruction, working with literacy centers, reading the curriculum map, and reading standards and integrating them into the content areas. All teachers are required to take at least one course per year. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)

- Professional development in the district is home-grown, reflecting the philosophy that “professional development is not a workshop; it is the work place” (DuFour and Eaker, 1999, cited in the district’s Professional Development Plan). Opportunities for growth are designed in response to the analysis of a wide range of data and include working with a mentor, Superintendent’s Conference Days, time for instructional planning, visitation days, peer observations, and reflective dialogue. (Mannsville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
- Naples is a place where meaningful professional discussion is ongoing. (Naples, Naples Central School District)
- The district’s commitment to professional growth is noted within the school community for its scope, intensity, and influence, as seen in its mentor program and the study of changing family structures. (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
- The district offers four days of staff development that pertain to curriculum every year and three to four days of professional development at the school level. At the school level, teachers said staff development has also focused on *Balanced Literacy* and best practices. (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)



### Theme Three: Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

#### *“The Right Stuff—Time and Tools”*

This theme focuses on the “things” that higher performing school systems use—the arrangement of time, the instructional resources and materials, technology, etc. Strong instructional leaders and highly qualified teachers need evidence-based tools and resources to reach high standards with every learner.

### Specific New York Findings: Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

- **Instructional programs are selected with strong teacher input. Teachers supplement the primary programs with materials that serve unique needs of their students.**
  - According to the superintendent, the climate surrounding increased accountability has meant a corresponding movement toward more standardized curriculum and away from “innovation at different buildings” in order to provide a more coherent program for students moving within the district. One result is the selection of a district-wide reading series, a process that involved 50 teachers piloting two programs to inform the final selection. (Charles A. Upton, Lockport City School District)
  - Many programs are mandated at the district level, but decisions to adopt these programs are based on teacher input and the state standards. In addition to the textbooks, according to a teacher, “We are also allowed to order supplemental materials.” (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
  - Committees of teachers collaboratively develop the instructional program. Teachers select new program features such as a new reading or mathematics series, weigh their alignment with local curriculum and state standards, then pilot the programs and provide feedback on the results so that all teachers can help reach a consensus. Once teachers select a program, it is mandated, but teachers are given flexibility to make adjustments based on the needs of their students. (Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam Central School District)

- Materials and programs are evaluated “by seeing if we have met the benchmarks.” Teachers use both pre- and post-assessments. At the end of each year, a cooperatively developed survey is used to determine concerns about programs and set a framework for continued improvement. (Naples, Naples Central School District)
  - Although many programs are adopted district wide, teachers also have input directly into what programs and materials they use in their classrooms. (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)
  - Teachers attributed students’ successes to “the ability to not use the text as the main thing to teach from, knowing you can use it as a resource, having the freedom to do other things—freedom to teach. I don’t see a lot of rote learning. ... We don’t lock ourselves into a text—we use it to complement.” (Ulysses Byas, Roosevelt Union School District)
  - A district-wide textbook adoption committee selects instructional materials so that all schools have the same resources. The district mandates use of the adopted series, but teachers also supplement and adjust mandated materials to meet the needs of their students. (Webster, Syracuse City School District)
- **Uninterrupted instructional time is guarded, with an emphasis on core academic subjects.**
    - A six-day schedule allows for variety of timing for different subjects. Teachers support the idea of uninterrupted block time for subjects such as language arts. (Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam Central School District)
    - A new daily schedule blocks out uninterrupted time for core subjects. (Naples, Naples Central School District)
    - In language arts, teachers have a 90-minute block and at least an additional hour for writing. One educator stated, “The whole school will go from 9:00 AM-10:30 AM and 10:30 AM-11:30 AM—a block of English Language Arts and writing.” (Ulysses Byas, Roosevelt Union Free School District)
    - The emphasis on literacy is the most notable school-wide reform in recent years—reading is number one, most important. One of the strongest supports for literacy improvement is devoting two hours of uninterrupted time to English Language Arts (ELA) each day in each classroom. “The ELA block is sacred. We don’t interrupt for anything.” (Webster, Syracuse City School District)
  - **Expectations for all students are high, and all students receive the benefits of enrichment within their classrooms.**
    - Good teachers know the curriculum and their students, design meaningful activities around student needs and the learning standards, make learning challenging and fun, and use a variety of assessments to refine their instruction. “The students are ready for the test because they are so involved in learning that they’ve mastered the material,” said one teacher. “Our standards are so high anyway, we don’t drive our teaching by the accountability system.” (Charles A. Upson, Lockport City School District)
    - Such programs as TERC’s *Investigations in Numbers, Data, and Space* encourage student investigation. The focus is on hands-on mathematics activities in which students discuss concepts and come up with inventive strategies for solving problems together. (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)
    - The principal and district administrators share a vision of high expectations for all students regardless of prior experience. The school groups children heterogeneously. It has also phased out a formal gifted program, and in its place offers enrichment classes open to all children. For example, enrichment classes in cartooning, film-making, and law are provided within the school day one day per week and focus on more than just traditional academic skills. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)



- There is no formal gifted and talented program, but enrichment is offered to all students. According to a Naples’s educator, “Every kid is gifted and talented.” (Naples, Naples Central School District)
  - A focus on instruction that is appropriate to students’ needs is especially evident in the enrichment program. Courses are always open to students whom teachers feel would especially benefit from the topic under study. All-school projects, author visits, and a wide range of cultural experiences provide additional opportunities for students at various ability levels to discover and nurture their unique gifts. (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
  - Teachers tap into students’ real-life experiences and enrich the curriculum with the arts and music. (Ulysses Byas, Roosevelt Union School District)
  - Among the specific expectations for high-quality classroom instruction at Webster, student engagement and active learning are mentioned most often. Comments from teachers include the following: “Children engaged fully in learning.” “The word is engagement.” “Student-teacher interaction.” “Body language—kids leaning into each other.” “Excitement, energy.” “Lots of hands-on activities.” (Webster, Syracuse City School District)
- **Teachers differentiate instruction to meet the learning needs of all students. Flexible grouping is a primary tool used toward that end.**
- Fiscal restraints have forced a closer look at services to struggling students, with the result that attention is now focused on “differentiation, not remediation,” according to the superintendent. (Charles A. Upson, Lockport City School District)
  - Teachers have benefited from training in differentiated instructional techniques from a nearby university. Davis uses “flexible grouping” where students are not tracked but rather are continually assessed and moved to the level of mathematics and language arts instruction most appropriate for them throughout the year. In flexible grouping, the top group may have 32-33 children, and the lower group may only have 10-12, so the teacher can give a lot of individualized instruction. Teachers keep track of student achievement every day and try to challenge students at their instructional level and move them to the grouping most appropriate for their needs. (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)
  - Differentiation in instructional practices allows for students of differing academic performance to be grouped together and aligns with the district vision of encouraging high performance in all students. Differentiation of instruction is one of the ways to actively engage students. The district’s instructional plan defines differentiation of instruction as “activities that address ALL learning styles; modification based on individual student needs.” (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
  - Although some teachers feel pressured to cover the rigorous curriculum on pace, they also recognize that offering opportunities for students to work together and do projects and hands-on activities is supported by their administration and meets students’ needs. Teachers’ daily instructional plans ask, “How are you helping low-performing and high-performing students in your class?” (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
  - A lot of one-on-one instruction is provided for struggling students. Classroom aides are viewed as tremendous assets in helping students who need extra time and attention. (Naples, Naples Central School District)
  - Special education, remedial, and enrichment services are available to qualified students, but the focus is not so much on placing children in programs as it is on providing appropriate instruction. The district has invested time and money in building knowledge about differentiation, and it shows. (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)

- **A philosophy of doing “whatever works” to help children learn prevails while objectives are clear and well-articulated in their classrooms.**
  - Teachers strive to know their students and their curriculum and to find the best match between the two. They follow their curriculum maps but feel free to supplement the basal series and mathematics text with activities of their own. (Mannsville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
  - Reading specialists provide in-class and pull-out assistance as needed: “We look at what students need, pick appropriate materials, and model activities.” Parent volunteers assist teachers in the primary grades. Responsible students with particular strengths give up study hall time to tutor their peers. High school students also meet once a week with assigned students in need of a role model and emotional support. (Mannsville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
  - Teachers continually seek better ways to reach all their students. One fifth-grade teacher who was discouraged by his efforts to differentiate mathematics instruction for advanced and struggling students worked with a colleague in the summer “to solve the problem.” They reconfigured each mathematics unit to include a list of component objectives, a pre-test, a self-assessment chart, targeted lessons, and a related extension activity – each to be used in the interest of whether or not individual students “Need It – Have It – Got It” (terms used to describe students’ level of mastery). (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
  - According to an administrator, “We have a close connection with the parents. ... We all know that what’s important to the parent affects the child.” Another educator noted, “[We address] many different learning styles. Parents and children have choices—multi-age, looping, traditional—to help children learn best.” (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
  - Teachers are encouraged to “meet the students where they are.” They say they focus on excellence, and excellence in their school is not just about preparing for state assessments. The principal explains, “I’m concentrating on state standards and not just the state tests.” (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)
  - “Whatever the child needs, we cater to the needs of the child,” stated a teacher. (Ulysses Byas, Roosevelt Union School District)



#### **Theme Four: Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data**

##### *“Knowing the Learners and the Numbers”*

After clearly identifying what is to be taught and learned by grade and subject and ensuring that the schools are equipped with the staff and the tools to successfully deliver the curriculum, the school system then asks and answers an important question: “How are we going to know if students learned what we said they would learn?”

#### **Specific New York Findings: Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data**

- **There is a high level of collective accountability for the success of every child.**
  - According to a teacher, “The superintendent holds principals accountable—and the principals hold teachers accountable—for the success of each child.” An administrator noted, “We had a school that had all tenured long-term teachers, and we brought in a new principal, and he couldn’t make change, so we started moving people. We have a good

relationship with the union. We had to improve the quality of teaching in this district. These changes don't break contractual agreements. They are right for children." (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)

- An administrator explained, "We invited principals to meet with the superintendent and the curriculum and instruction director. We asked the principals to review lists of fourth graders, and we would take one child at a time. 'We have Pedro. When did he come to the district? What services were provided?' It is one way the district holds principals accountable for student performance." (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
- Sometimes teachers will plan or report their own research. One such study analyzed the assessment scores of students assigned to a 'Special Friend'—an adult in the building, other than the child's classroom teacher—who meets with the child one day a week before or after school, just to talk about what is going on in the child's life. They found that the students who had both Academic Intervention Services and a Special Friend attained the highest scores. (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
- Data management is not so much a system as it is part of the ethos. When teachers mention the assessments they give, they talk about their benefits in the same breath: "It gives a lot of good information about pre-reading skills." "It really shows where they are as spellers." "It's great for showing parents what they can do as writers." (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
- The district employs a Director of Assessment who uses computer item analysis to see how certain standards are being met or not. The district shares weaknesses with principals, who in turn share this information with teachers. (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)
- One of the ways district administrators monitor teaching and learning is through the "Superintendent's Report." Every month schools compile a summary, organized by grade level on an assigned topic such as "evidence of student learning and achievement." These reports are given to the superintendent and presented to the board. They are also given to parents who attend board meetings. (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)
- Ongoing data-driven analysis of student performance is crucial to Webster's success. It occurs "in many, many ways," according to teachers and administrators. The school's reading specialist periodically compiles data by grade level and by teacher. The principal asks teachers to study the School Improvement Plan and the objectives and goals of the grade level and then break the data down to identify strengths and weaknesses and "root causes." The principal studies the data, looking particularly at highlighted children—those not passing—and then has instructional conferences with teachers to discuss strategies and support for these children. Faculty members see great value in these individual conferences with the principal. (Webster, Syracuse City School District)
- Teachers prepare "individual growth plans," choosing their own goals at the beginning of each year. Both they and their principal evaluate their progress and discuss that progress in a post-evaluation conference. The principal "writes a narrative, focusing on how teachers are adjusting instruction to meet student needs." (Webster, Syracuse City School District)
- **In addition to the state tests, schools use a variety of other formal assessments to monitor student performance; these may include tests that parallel the state assessments.**
  - The district is "data driven." In response to the state assessments for ELA and mathematics in fourth grade, the district adopted the TONYSS (Tests of New York State Standards) in second, third, and fifth grades. (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)

- The Elmont Union Free School District system of monitoring student and teacher performance includes a strong reflective element in the form of the daily lesson plan and curriculum assessments at the end of each phase in each grade level. Curriculum assessments are also given at the end of each phase of the pacing guide. They are aligned with the state assessments and consistent across the district. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
  - In addition to the state assessments, Lawrence Avenue uses several other standardized tests to help determine student achievement—the *Early Literacy Profile* in the primary grades, an in-house mathematics test for kindergarten through second grade, and Terra Nova exams in English Language Arts and mathematics for third grade. (Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam Central School District)
  - Close observation of students begins before students enter school. Every Tuesday for nine weeks, parents are invited to spend 90 minutes at the school with their pre-kindergarten children, first guiding their child through structured activities, and then attending presentations about the curriculum. The series is followed by formal kindergarten screening and registration, but by then school staff and new entrants have become comfortable with each other, staff have formulated some initial observations, and the children have gotten a head start on the learning expected of them in kindergarten. (Mannsville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
  - “We have coordinators—reading and social studies, and mathematics and science. They are liaisons for the building. They communicate with teachers and the principal. They randomly come and give us benchmarks on our Campus-Wide Objectives, and then we’ll discuss the results as a team,” explained the principal. (Ulysses Byas, Roosevelt Union Free School District)
- **Data are systematically collected, organized, and shared to serve teaching and learning needs.**
    - The Technology and Assessment Office “can provide any kind of data we request,” indicated the principal, who reviews assessment results on a regular basis, often organizing it differently for provocative discussion. Teachers also take advantage of scoring sessions to examine response patterns. (Charles A. Upson, Lockport City School District)
    - Teachers use data for their own purposes. For two fourth-grade teachers, that process begins even before school starts, when they examine available information, identify students at-risk, and develop tentative goals for those students. Once confirmed in the early weeks of school, the goals are shared with each child’s parents. (Charles A. Upson, Lockport City School District)
    - The data from these assessments are analyzed at the school, classroom, and student levels and then fed back to teachers. The teachers have study groups in which they meet to discuss how each child is progressing, based on the types of things required on the TONYSS and state assessments. (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)
    - The principal and staff use a variety of data to monitor progress toward their goals: information from state assessments, the teacher-developed Benchmark Literacy Assessments, students’ literacy folders, the computer-assisted *Accelerated Reader* and Jostens skills programs, teacher observations, and parent communications. (Mannsville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
    - The Director of Curriculum and Instruction coordinates data analysis and distribution. She describes the “critical piece” as providing the disaggregated data to individual teachers, so that they can use the information to direct their teaching. (Naples, Naples Central School District)

- Results are stored in the Data Warehouse, a computerized database that school personnel use to monitor achievement over time or when considering changes in the curriculum. (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
- The Director of Assessment also meets with teachers to explain assessment scores: “There is a data warehouse where question-by-question item analysis, by teacher, by school is done. We also cluster questions based on the standards, then go back and look at the standard that questions deal with and focus on these standards. I also run regular training in the district. The most important thing is to train principals on how to analyze results and take them back to their schools. Every three to four months I go to grade-level meetings and talk to teachers about if they understand the information from the data warehouse.” (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)
- **Teachers use a wide variety of assessment tools and methods to monitor individual student performance on a daily basis.**
  - According to a teacher, “What we do is constantly evaluate the kids individually.” (Charles A. Upson, Lockport City School District)
  - Teachers give unit assessments in science, social studies, and mathematics. In language arts, they use reading and writing folders for each child from the beginning of each year. There is no formal benchmarking due to the flexible grouping schedule; rather, ongoing, weekly assessment includes teachers looking closely at student work and considering how they came to their answers. (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)
  - Teachers use a variety of methods to monitor student performance including authentic assessments, portfolios, and *Early Literacy Profiles* in early grades. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
  - Monitoring of individual student progress is a constant process and occurs through performance tasks, classroom discussion and participation, and tests and quizzes. “I look at the pulse of the classroom and decide if they were successful. I can tell by the way they talk and behave,” stated one principal. (Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam Central School District)
  - Teachers speak about doing hands-on science assessments, collecting writing samples, recording oral reading errors, giving pre-tests, using checklists and rubrics, asking students to rate themselves—not because this number of assessments is required, but because teachers see the value. “We’re supposed to do two running records a year,” says one teacher. “I do about five to make sure I’m challenging students appropriately—on their level and what skills they need.” (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
  - In addition to state and standardized assessments, teachers use a variety of other assessments to monitor student performance. For example, to evaluate students’ success in language arts, teachers use running records and the *Developmental Reading Assessments* (DRA), which provide for consistent monitoring (three times a year) in small groups and centers. In fourth grade, teachers monitor students’ weekend homework packets and may provide interventions based on “what is coming home on these homework assignments.” Teachers also administer “replicas” (practice exams) for the state assessments at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)
  - Teachers also use benchmarks from their textbook series and some use “their own benchmark at the beginning and the middle of the school year.” Many teachers say that the best way to monitor their students’ progress is by paying attention to students’ responses in class. (Ulysses Byas, Roosevelt Union School District)



- Teachers discuss academic performance with students and parents on an ongoing basis. Fifth-grade students, for example, have scheduled conferences with teachers every few weeks to review their progress. Teachers call parents and send notes home regularly so that parents are aware of those areas in which a child is doing well and those requiring more attention. (Webster, Syracuse City School District)



## Theme Five: Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment

### *"Ensuring All Children Learn"*

The most important question of all follows the monitoring of student performance: "What are we going to do if students do not learn the knowledge and skills we said they would learn?" Higher performing school systems have *pyramids of intervention* that provide immediate and intense intervention at multiple levels when learning is interrupted.

### Specific New York Findings: Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment

- **Teachers are recognized and valued for enhancing student learning.**
  - Recognition is part of the school ethos, where teachers know they are valued and strive—through their “commitment to curriculum, collaboration, and caring”—to engender that same sense of self-worth in their students. (Charles A. Upson, Lockport City School District)
  - Teachers attest to making their continual improvement in meeting students’ needs a personal mission, and the principal encourages them to do so. A teacher said, “Getting praise for what I do well makes me feel like giving praise to my students.” (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)
  - Teachers appreciate the support and recognition they receive from the superintendent and principal, have a voice in setting goals and addressing problems, and feel comfortable expressing their opinions. A kindergarten teacher highlights the productive use of faculty meetings, where they might examine assessment data, report insights gained at conferences, hear updates on curriculum, or discuss a current concern such as the desire to increase instructional time with students. (Mannsville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
  - The school community is a high-performance team characterized by an attitude of high expectations, respect, and concern for each other. (Naples, Naples Central School District)
  - Rigor and joy are part of the culture at Smallwood. They are seen in the district’s commitment to building teacher knowledge and capacity, the spirit of innovation that spurs teachers to seek out new programs and strategies, the encouragement to reward good work, and the longevity of many district and school personnel. Recognition for good work is subtle but significant at Smallwood. It serves as an integral part of the caring environment and appears in several forms. It comes in the form of time and resources—time to plan and reflect, and resources for use in the classroom and in program development. Recognition also comes in the form of encouragement to share successful practices. (Smallwood Drive, Amherst Central School District)
  - The PTA and Chamber of Commerce sponsor a “Staff Recognition Day” every year including a luncheon. At this event, two staff members receive the “Jenkins Award,” named after a community member who “had done a lot of work with students.” School and district administration also give letters of appreciation and employee awards yearly. (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)

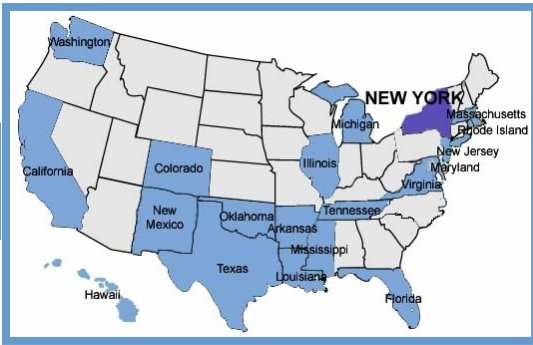
- **School and classroom interventions are made in response to the review and analysis of data. Teams of educators, specialists, and sometimes parents, make recommendations for the adjustment of instructional materials and programs.**

  - The district concentrates its intervention resources at the K-2 levels, keeping class sizes at 18-20 students and using information from the district's Early Literacy Profile, running records, and teacher observation to determine needs and follow-up. (Charles A. Upton, Lockport City School District)
  - Teachers keep track of student achievement every day and try to challenge students at their instructional level and move them to the grouping most appropriate for their needs. (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)
  - Child Study Teams are guided by a district-developed plan for intervention that includes entrance criteria to Academic Intervention Services (AIS), the intensity of services, and exit criteria for high-, medium-, and low-intensity levels of support. The Director of Curriculum and Instruction reviews reports on both AIS and ESL children's progress at the end of every school year. When a team meets the next year, they review what has been done and carry forward the student's portfolio. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
  - The school's promotion policy is individualized and is based on making the best decision for the individual child. The classroom teacher keeps the parents and principal informed of the student's progress throughout the year and makes recommendations for promotion or retention. The final decision rests with the parent. (Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam Central School District)
  - Retention and promotion are considered on a case-by-case basis, with teacher, principal, psychologist, and parent involved. School policy requires that parents agree to any retention. (Naples, Naples Central School District)
  - Struggling students are identified by classroom teachers and/or by scores on standardized assessments. A child study team determines needs and makes recommendations. A lot of one-on-one instruction is provided for struggling students. Classroom aides are viewed as tremendous assets in helping students who need extra time and attention. (Naples, Naples Central School District)
  - Any child who fails the state ELA assessment in fourth grade receives Academic Intervention Services in fifth grade, and any fifth grader who fails the state Social Studies assessment receives services in sixth grade. Child Study Teams of "teachers, parents, a reading specialist, social worker, five to seven people depending on the need" meet, show proof of difficulties, and make recommendations for more diagnostics. Sometimes interventions are made for social, not physical issues. (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)
  - Intervention for struggling students happens constantly through individual and collective effort. (Webster, Syracuse City School District)
  
- **Support and/or enrichment services are provided before school, after school, and/or in summer programs; such services are closely linked with classroom curriculum and classroom instruction.**

  - The Davis School provides a *Summer Jumpstart* program for kindergarten and first-grade ELL students, after-school programs for third graders to familiarize them with the skills needed for the state's fourth-grade English Language Arts and mathematics assessments, and a tutoring program for fourth graders organized and taught primarily by fourth-grade teachers. These programs are not mandatory but are strongly encouraged for students who can benefit from them. (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)

- In this diverse and high-needs district, making opportunities available to all students is a priority. The Elmont Union Free School District does this through heterogeneous groupings, differentiation of instruction, before-school tutoring that targets at-risk students' needs, and enrichment classes during and after school for all children—regardless of academic ability. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
- In addition to tutorials, students are also provided with after-school and Saturday programs focused on “enrichment in arts, music, [and] sciences.” They can participate in marching and jazz bands, string orchestra, drama club, chess, and—on Saturdays—can study Italian, French, Spanish, Urdu, or Latin in The World Languages Program. After- and before-school programs are offered to all students with the belief that all students can reach high goals. Two summer school programs, an enrichment and an academic program, run for four weeks each summer. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
- Struggling students are served through tutorials that are a required part of all teachers' school day. Every teacher has to have at least two to three meetings a week. During this time, teachers work with a small group of about three students “who have some basic needs.” They may work on a particular reading or mathematics skill and usually work with children “on the cusp of needing Academic Intervention Services.” The group of students changes during the year. For example, a teacher may work with a particular group for a month and then invite another small group for tutorial the next month. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
- The school provides supportive intervention for anyone who is struggling. Help for at-risk students includes home-school counseling, a strong Title One staff working closely with teachers, an extended-day Academic Intervention Services (AIS) program, and reading and mathematics help before and after school. (Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam Central School District)
- A summer session provides extra support for students. One educator explained, “Teachers of first through third grades give lists of six students per classroom. The fourth-grade session is for all students, not just those who are struggling. We put them with the teacher they will have in Grade Four and with the same classmates. It's a three-week program, three hours per day. It's very intense—reading, mathematics, and language, including writing workshop. Transportation is provided. Almost all students entering Grade Four attend this workshop.” (Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam Central School District)
- For students needing “an extra boost” on state assessments, teachers provide after-school help twice a week, additional preparation sessions once a week (beginning the month before the test administration), and a noncompulsory summer program. (Mannsville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
- Teachers' willingness to provide extra help beyond the school day sends the clear message that “when it comes to adjustments, teachers do what is necessary.” (Mannsville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
- Traphagen has a mathematics and language arts after-school program. This is funded and mandated at the district level. The programs run two days a week for two hours. Teachers create a list of 25-30 fourth-grade children who would benefit the most from this intervention. ELL students also qualify for this program. In addition, tutoring occurs either during the school day or in a district tutoring program. (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)
- Teachers who work with special needs children say they “consult with teachers daily” concerning their students' needs. (Traphagen, Mount Vernon City School District)

- Teachers reinforce what they taught the previous day in morning tutoring, which occurs between 8:05 AM and 8:40 AM. A teacher said that “a lot of students are motivated to come.” Some students also participate in the after-school program tutoring from 3:00 PM to 4:30 PM. (Ulysses Byas, Roosevelt Union Free School District)
- **Schools not only honor academic achievement but also recognize effort and character; they focus on developing good citizens who show caring for others and their community.**
  - One respondent said, “We want all students to make it, so we find other ways to recognize success.” Individual classrooms have their Perfect Attendance, Student of the Month, and Parents as Reading Partners winners. Daily announcements and awards assemblies honor student achievement. Displays of student work decorate the classrooms and hallways. (Charles A. Upson, Lockport City School District)
  - The district recognizes outstanding achievement not only in academics but also for the successes of its chess club or packed-house performances or for outstanding work with special education students. These achievements are recognized in bulletins and in award ceremonies. (George M. Davis, New Rochelle City School District)
  - The school recognizes citizenship and academics in a variety of ways. Citizenship is recognized through the “Brotherhood Award” offered by the American Legion and other veteran groups in the community. The school also conducts a “Math Olympiad” competition and recognizes academic achievements of their students at Board meetings. (Gotham Avenue, Elmont Union Free School District)
  - A variety of programs recognize achievement—end-of-year assemblies, awards for students with perfect scores on exams, certificates for perfect attendance, and a music and art program called *Artistic Endeavors*. However, one teacher stressed that the best recognition “comes not so much in concrete terms like, ‘Here’s a prize,’ but in validation from teachers and principal, personal recognition.” Another teacher noted, “The principal makes an effort to ensure that everyone in the classroom gets recognized.” (Lawrence Avenue, Potsdam Central School District)
  - Achievement is expected, but it is also rewarded. Events such as river tubing, a pajama party, or a lunch with the principal follow each state assessment. An Effort Roll for students in first through fifth grades celebrates success as “one’s best effort”; names of students who make the list appear in the local newspaper and on a school poster. Awards are given for the Good Citizen of the Month, Most Improved Student, and perfect attendance. Individual teachers offer ice cream and pizza parties, birthday books, and redeemable coupons for points earned for “good thinking or acts of kindness.” Although prizes are often paid for by the teachers themselves, local businesses are also generous with their contributions. (Mannsville Manor, South Jefferson Central School District)
  - Teachers describe a strong recognition process for students, highlighted by a monthly award program. Evidence of student recognition lines the hallways, with certificates and bulletin board displays celebrating student achievement, attitude, and effort. Teachers and administrators make frequent contact with parents to note student accomplishments and improvements. (Naples, Naples Central School District)
  - Students also receive recognition for good behavior through the Positive Assertive Discipline (PAD) point system. Every day, each child comes to school with 36 points. “If a teacher has to speak” to a student about behavior, [the student loses] a point. If a child ends a day with 30 points, he or she gets a star. Stars are added up, and students with enough stars are invited to go on special PAD field trips. (Ulysses Byas, Roosevelt Union School District)
  - Success is recognized through quarterly school assemblies and a huge end-of-year awards program, through “student of the week” and Friday “lunch bunch” programs in



# New York Elementary School Best Practice Study: Conclusion

*Based on the Themes of The JFTK Framework*

classrooms, and through a wide variety of other means. Teachers see the best recognition, whether for youth or adults, as personal and one-on-one. Students feel personally affirmed by a great deal of specific positive feedback from their peers, parents, teachers, and administrators. Doing one's personal best is the emphasis for everyone in the school community. (Webster, Syracuse City School District)

Researchers conducted site visits to 15 elementary schools in New York, identified through the NCEA analysis. Summaries of the findings of those practices that appeared to distinguish consistently higher performing elementary schools from average-performing ones are presented below by theme.

## The Findings

### Curriculum and Academic Goals

*Across the 10 consistently higher performing schools, the New York Learning Standards were positively presented as a powerful tool to serve all students and guide improvement. These standards were carefully studied, further detailed, and effectively supported at the district and school levels with resources such as curriculum maps, pacing guides, instructional programs and materials, aligned assessments, and student exemplars. With a focus on core learning skills, the curriculum was continually reviewed and revised by grade-level and vertical teams. The delivery of the curriculum in every classroom in these districts was both expected and monitored, while teachers retained the ability to be creative in instructional approaches to that delivery.*

### Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

*Stable and strong instructional leadership at both the school and district levels was cited as a determining factor for high performance in 6 of 10 of the consistently higher performing school systems. All 10 indicated that principals and district office personnel were "focused on student learning." Rigorous selection processes governed the acquisition of new leaders and teachers in the consistently higher performing systems, and well-developed mentoring systems, centered on teaching and learning, supported new teachers. Collaboration, focused on curricular and instructional issues, was an important part of ongoing, relevant, classroom-embedded professional development.*

### Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

*Instructional programs, selected with great amounts of teacher input, were primarily mandated at the district level. Teachers were encouraged to supplement the adopted programs with appropriate classroom materials. Instructional time, particularly in core subject areas, was typically prescribed and uninterrupted. The primary instructional strategy noted at the consistently higher performing schools was "differentiated instruction," and the primary instructional arrangement was "flexible grouping."*

### Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data

*Collective accountability across school levels (district, school, and classroom), as well as within schools, marked the culture of consistently higher performing schools. Monitoring of student achievement was varied and ongoing, being initiated well before any state testing occurred. Data were organized and available, and staff were both highly dependent on and skilled at using data to make informed decisions about teaching and learning.*



## **Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment**

*Recognition of students and teachers was centered on improvement in academic achievement in consistently higher performing schools. Interventions for students needing assistance were immediate and well-established. Interventions were planned both within and outside the individual classrooms.*

## **Next Steps**

NCEA's state-study protocol assumes that the state framework of best practices will be built based on a three-year study of consistently higher performing and average-performing schools at the elementary-school level (Year One), middle-school level (Year Two), and high-school level (Year Three). Based on this protocol, JFTK-New York's next step will be to build upon these initial findings at the elementary level by conducting the study of 10 consistently higher performing and five average-performing middle schools, using the same framework of best practices.

*One of the dangers of studying consistently higher performing schools is drawing conclusions based on a single school example. To avoid this danger, the conclusions for the JFTK–New York Elementary School Study, 2004-05, focus on a description of the practices that are most consistent across the higher performing schools in this study and that can be distinguished in quantity or quality from the same practices in average-performing schools of the study. While any individual case study may cite different factors or practices than those noted above, we highlight those practices that are found to be systematically different between the higher performing schools as a group and the average-performing schools as a group. Finally, the practices highlighted in the conclusion of this study have also been informed by the findings from a much larger body of schools studied (300+ across five years and 20 states) to help determine meaning in the context of New York.*