

About *Just for the Kids—New York*

The goal of *Just for the Kids—New York* is to help schools learn from other schools that are performing well. The national Just for the Kids project was initiated by the National Center for Educational Achievement (NCEA) at the University of Texas, Austin, in 1995. Since 2004 the New York project has completed best practice studies of elementary, middle, and high schools in the state and made results available in print and at www.albany.edu/aire/kids. Findings include case studies of higher-performing schools; a best practice framework for each level of schooling, with supporting evidence; cross-site reports; and articles and presentations.

To download a copy of this summary, the full elementary school report, reports from the middle and high schools studies, or case studies, go to www.albany.edu/aire/kids. Or you may request print copies of materials while supplies last.

What Makes Elementary Schools Work

A report on best practices in New York State elementary schools.

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University at Albany School of Education, Albany Institute for Research in Education

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UNIVERSITY
AT ALBANY

State University of New York

**WHAT
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As part of an ongoing study of higher-performing schools in the state, researchers studied 10 consistently higher-performing elementary schools to get a better understanding of the factors that contribute to their success and to learn how those commonalities might be replicated. They found that higher-performing elementary schools embody a shared vision of the school as a family, with clear learning objectives and excellent instruction targeted to areas of greatest need.

**RESEARCH
METHOD**

The elementary school study, conducted in 2005, consisted of 15 New York schools. Ten achieved consistently higher performance on 2002-4 New York State Grade 4 Assessments of English and Mathematics compared to schools with similar demographics. In half the higher-performing schools, student poverty levels exceed the state average as measured by eligibility for free or reduced lunch; per pupil expenditures cluster near the state average, and the schools represent a variety of sizes, communities, geographic regions, and student populations. Five average-performing schools were matched as closely as possible to the higher performers in terms of student poverty levels, geographic location, size, and student ethnicity. A complete report, along with case studies detailing findings and experiences at each of the higher-performing schools, is available at www.albany.edu/aire/kids.

The 10 consistently higher-performing schools studied:

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

**KEY
FINDINGS**

Higher-performing elementary schools foster consistent success through these five elements:



1
Vision of the school as a family
Teachers and administrators see the school as a caring family where cooperation and nurturing trusting relationships are paramount.

2
Clear learning objectives
The school focuses on teaching to clearly defined learning objectives, with high expectations for all students.

3
Excellent instruction
Higher-performing schools promote excellence in instruction through rigorous hiring practices and professional development focused on differentiated instructional strategies.

4
Targeted programs and assessments
Higher-performing schools rely on teacher-recommended programs, materials, and assessments to ensure alignment with their students' needs.

5
Intervention and support
After-school programs, summer tutorials, and child study teams intervene early and consistently to provide the extra support that struggling students need to succeed.

Higher performing elementary schools