

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 for findings; cross-site analysis; and articles and presentations.

What Makes High Schools Work
A report on best practices in New York State high schools.

2008 **Kristen Campbell Wilcox** with **Janet I. Angelis**

A Collaboration among 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 Achievement. Guidance was provided by a statewide Advisory Board; funding was provided, in part, by the State of New York and the University at Albany.

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

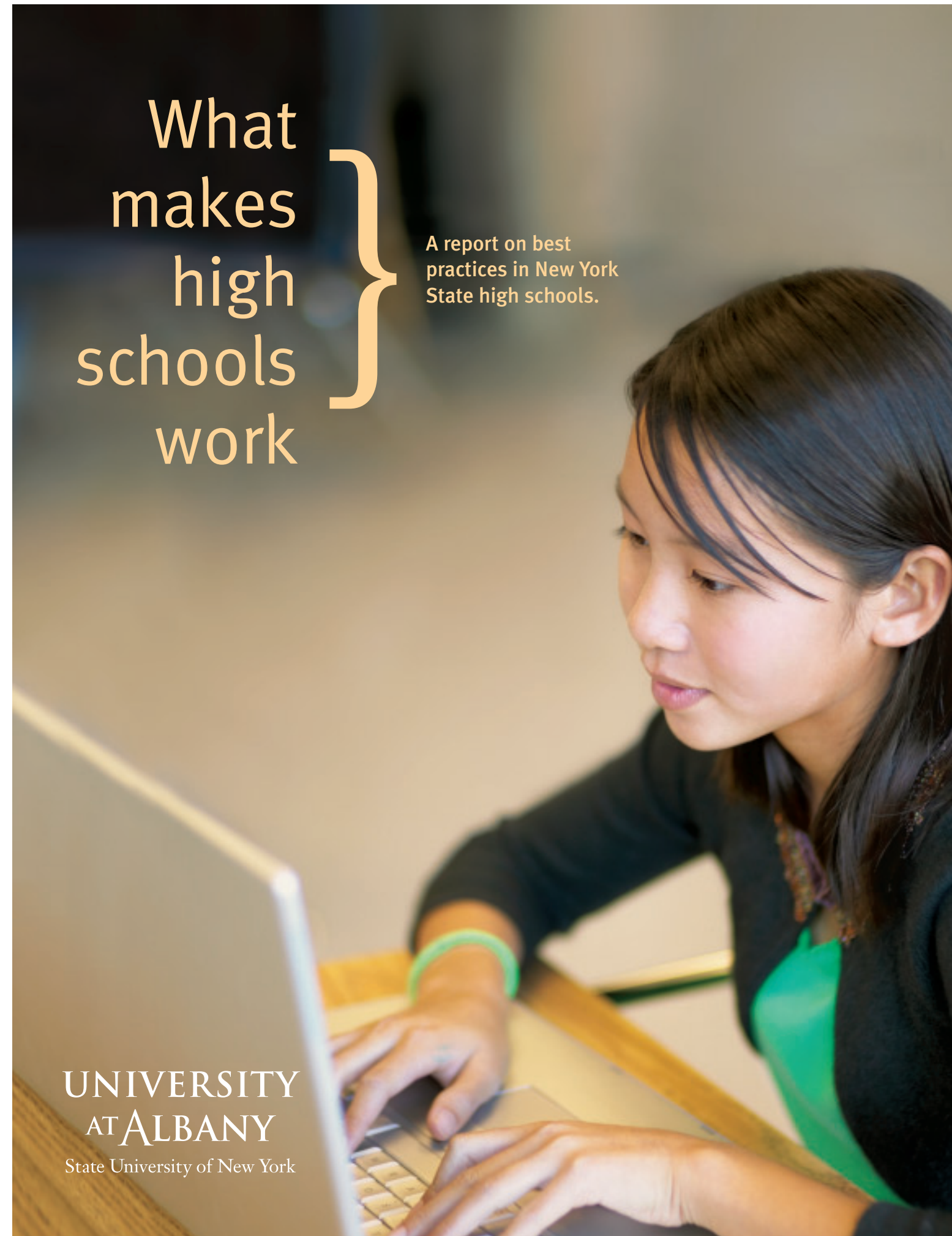
To download a copy of this summary or the full report, or to order print copies, go to www.albany.edu/aire/kids

What makes high schools work

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

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WHAT
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As part of an ongoing study of higher-performing schools in the state, researchers studied 10 consistently higher-performing high 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 high schools are rigorous, innovative, transparent, evidence based, and strategic in challenging and supporting all their students to perform at the highest levels.

RESEARCH
METHOD

The high school study consisted of 15 New York schools. Ten achieve consistently higher performance on New York State Assessments of English, mathematics, science, and social studies compared to schools with similar demographics. In half the higher-performing schools, from one-third to three-quarters of students qualify 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:

Batavia High School, Batavia	Greene High School, Greene	Huntington High School, Huntington	Saunders Trades & Technical High School, Yonkers	Warrensburg Junior Senior High School, Warrensburg
Cambridge Junior Senior High School, Cambridge	Honeoye Falls-Lima High School, Honeoye Falls	MacArthur High School, Levittown	South Kortright Central School, South Kortright	White Plains High School, White Plains

KEY
FINDINGS

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



1
Rigorous curriculum and expectations

These schools expect high performance from both teachers and students; furthermore, they explicitly focus on providing typically lower-performing students with opportunities to succeed in higher-level (honors and AP) courses.

2
Innovative instructional programs and practices

Higher-performing schools welcome the integration of new instructional programs and practices that best use resources to impact student performance.

3
Transparent communication

From the development of plans and goals to the reporting of student performance data, higher-performing schools invite participation and share information openly.

4
Evidence-based decision making

Decisions around any new initiatives are based on an analysis of evidence from a variety of sources.

5
Strategic targeting of resources

These schools target resources, including personnel, where they are most likely to best enhance academic performance.



Higher performing high schools