



Tools for Improvement in Under-Performing High Schools: A Research-Based Model in Practice

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Know Your Schools ~
for NY Kids



- Background
- Approach
- Action-planning tools
- What we've learned

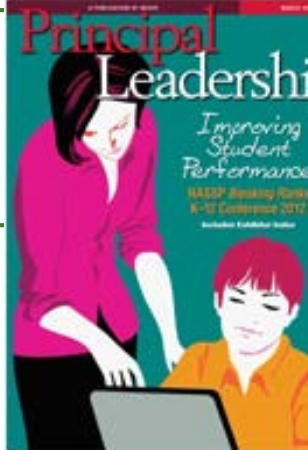
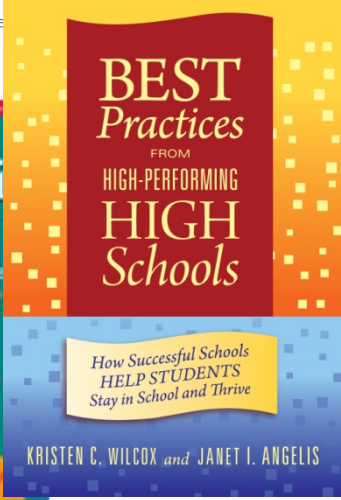
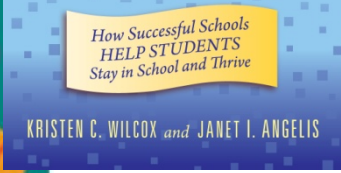




Seeking to answer: What practices differ between higher and average performers?

- Individual School Cases
- Cross-Case Reports
- Best Practice Frameworks w/ evidence
- Books and articles



	Critical Needs, Elementary Schools (2011)	Elementary Schools (2005)	Middle Schools (2007)	High Schools (2008)	Middle Schools (2009)
Organizing Themes	Best Practices				
Curriculum & Academic Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative development of goals and consistency between district, school, and classroom goals related to increasing student mastery and closing achievement gaps. • Continual revision of strategic plans aligned with a shared vision of success. <p>Learn more...</p>				
Staff Selection, Leadership, & Capacity Building	  				

Best Practices Case Study
 Kathleen Nickson, Spring 2008

Huntington High School
 Huntington Union Free School District

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

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
 State University of New York



What makes high schools work }

What Makes High Schools Work: Findings from a Best Practices Study in New York State

Our study found that 5 key elements mark the difference between the higher-performing and average-performing high schools studied:

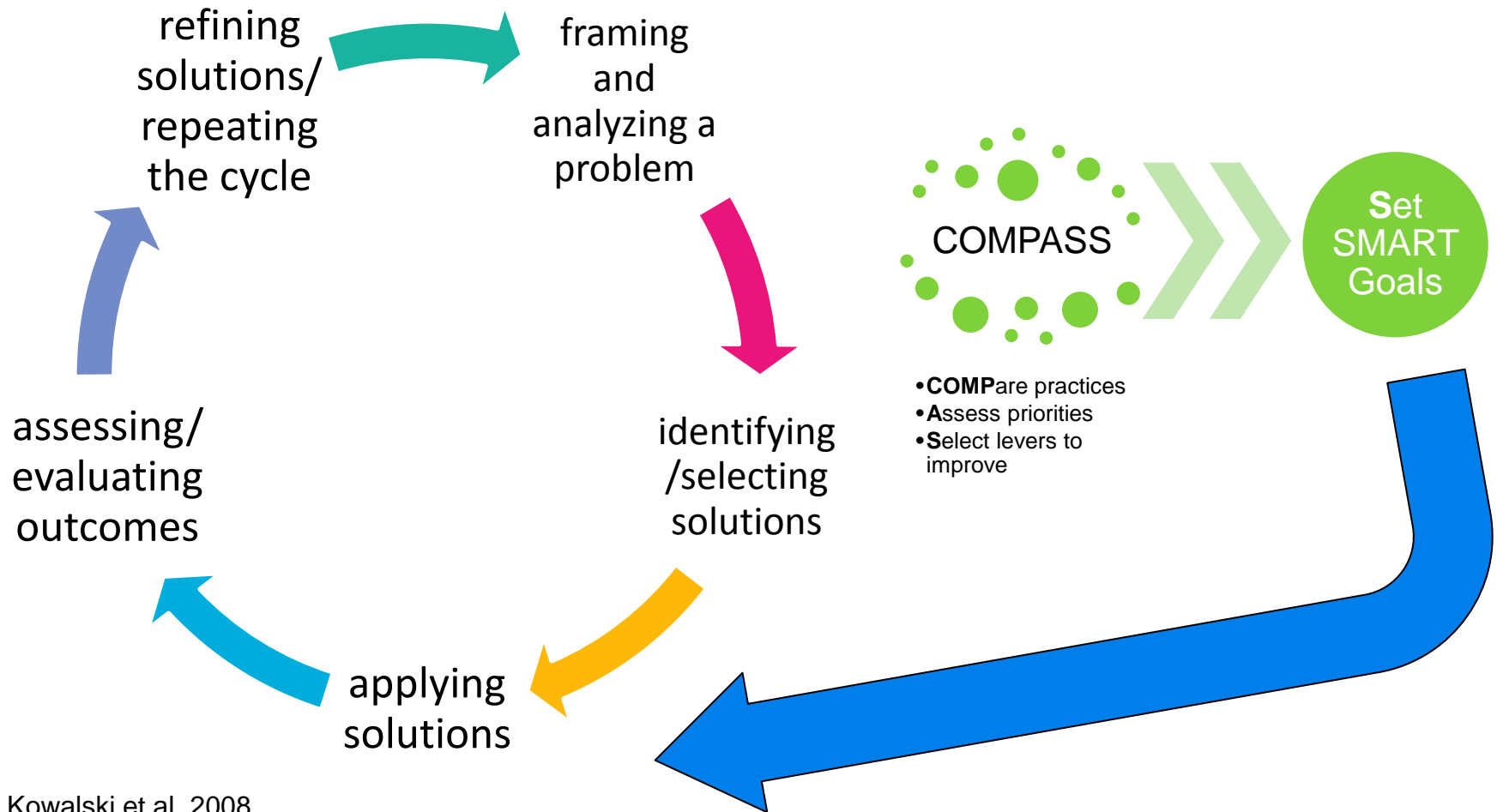
- Rigorous curriculum and expectations
- Innovative instructional programs and practices
- Transparent communication
- Evidence-based decision making
- Strategic targeting of resources

To download electronic copies, please click the following:

[4-Page Summary \(pdf\)](#)

[Best Practice Study \(pdf\)](#)

Order print copies of these reports.





“The problem-solving work of innovation requires access to ‘sticky’ information regarding user needs and the context of use . . . we need design which explicitly aims to function in the hands of diverse individuals working in highly varied circumstances.”

Bryk et al, 2011

“A system’s context might not determine what needs to be done, but it does determine how it is done.”

Mourshed et al., 2010



Agenda 2-day initial institute

Day 1

- Team building
- Compare own practices to BP; Assess priorities
- Overview all NY Kids research findings
- Begin to select potential solutions



Day 2

- Determine potential solutions
- Learn to set SMART goals
- Develop SMART goal
- Develop action plan

Goal: Action Plan in hand

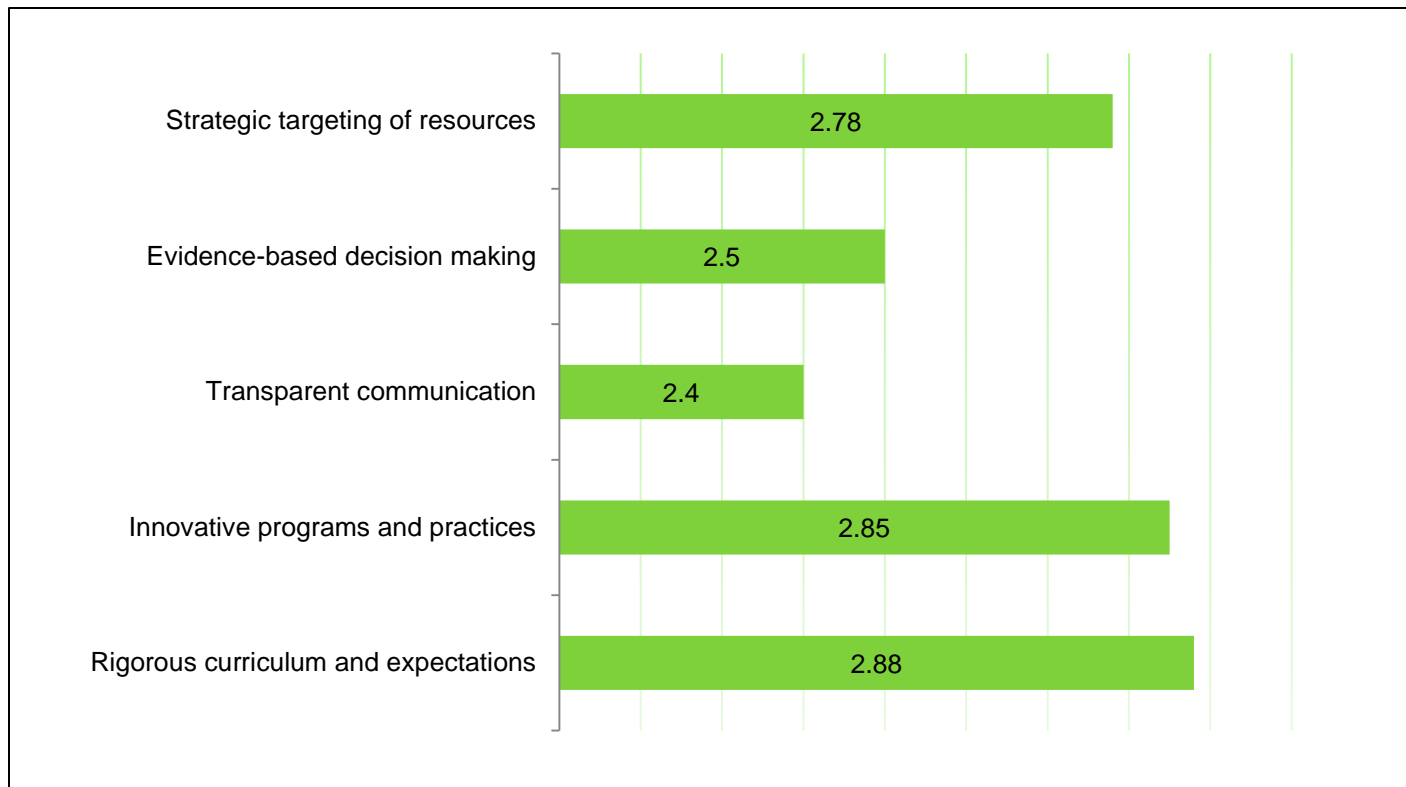
Theme: Rigor . . . What does your school look like?

Circle the number in either the A column (1 or 2) or the B column (3 or 4) that most closely resembles your school, and think of a specific example to demonstrate the reason for your selection.

A1=very similar; A2=somewhat similar; B3=somewhat similar; B4=very similar

A		B	
1	2	3	4
We are focused primarily on meeting state-determined targets for performance.		We see meeting state-determined targets for performance as not sufficient; rather, we seek to exceed state-determined targets for performance. An understanding of academic "rigor" drives practice.	
1	2	3	4
Tracking prevails.		We emphasize offering higher-level classes (honors and AP) to a larger variety of students.	
1	2	3	4
Most special education students are instructed in self-contained classrooms.		We strive to provide inclusion classrooms wherever possible.	
1	2	3	4
Expectations are implicitly (and in some cases explicitly) low for some students.		High expectations are explicit and pervasive for all students.	
1	2	3	4
The idea that some students come with significant challenges and are limited by life circumstances is shared and guides beliefs about their placement and instruction.		We challenge all students to seek opportunities to contribute to the larger society and fulfill their own potentials in high school and beyond.	
Add together your circled numbers and place that number in the next column.		Total: Average (Total divided by 5):	
Example:			

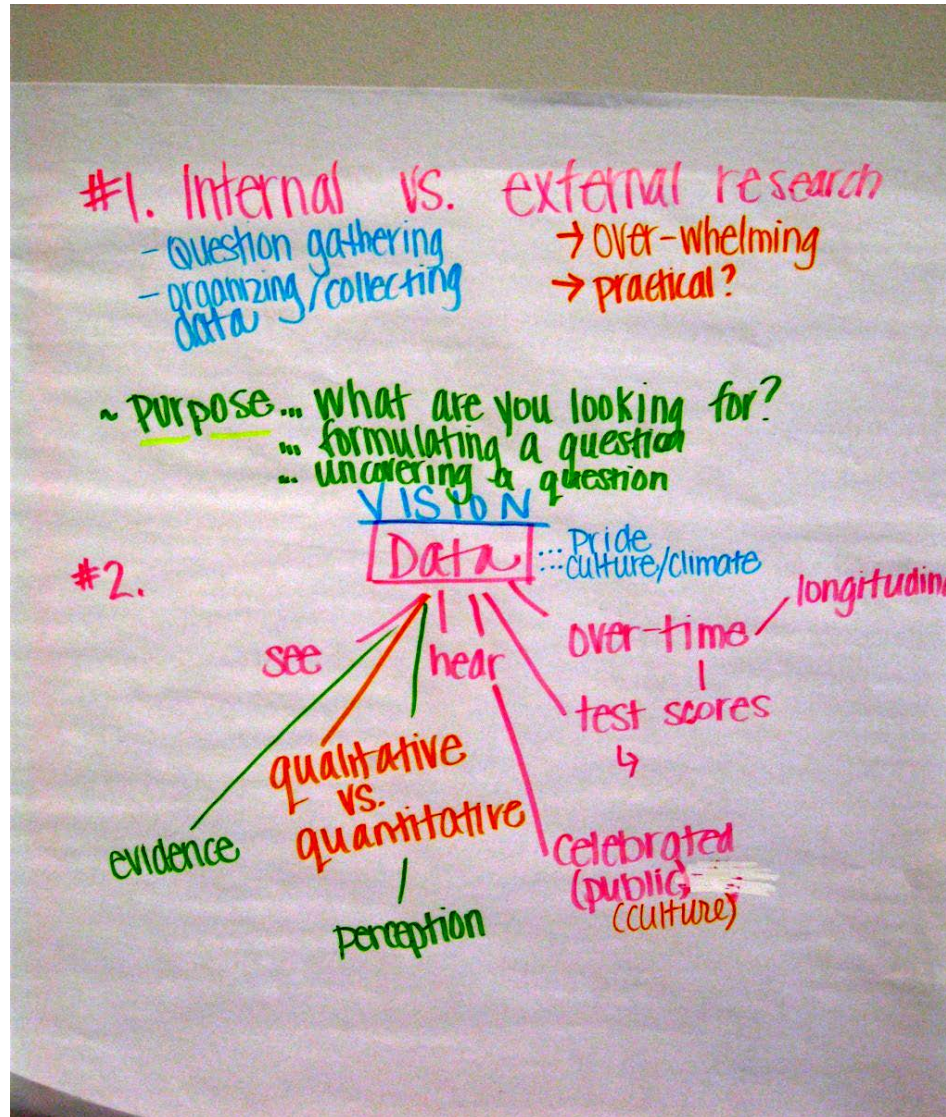
Echo High School's Journey



“We didn’t know what we didn’t know.”

- EHS Principal (2011)

Echo High School's Journey



“There are so many data, getting your arms around them is like wrestling with a mattress.”

- EHS Principal (2011)

Echo High School's Journey

after 1 year of participation

Progress toward goal of reducing achievement gaps while meeting overall performance targets

Group	ELA	Math
All students	✓ AYP	x 4 points shy
Hispanic	✓ Safe Harbor	✓ Safe Harbor
Econ. Disadv..	✓ AYP	x Not met
Sped.	x Not met	x Not met

*"We had to take a look in the mirror, dig in, and decide who we really are."
- EHS Principal (2010)*





Keeping the Focus

Despite loss of 10.5 teachers in 2010-11 as well as busing for after school tutoring –

Teachers and administrators able to focus on their goals by concentrating on what they *can* do, not what is beyond their control. Have made strategic decisions on curriculum development, CCSS, and professional development to support DI and cooperative learning.



“Capacity-building distributed leadership and COMPASS process keeps us on task and faithful to our goals.”

- EHS Principal (2011)

Preliminary Findings All Schools

Participants' Abilities to Sustain a Continuous Improvement Process



“Implementation (and development) of SMART goals have focused our initiatives. The entire building now strives to reach a common goal. [Process] assists with streamlining initiatives.”

Cohort I participant (Dec. 2011)

Some Lessons Learned



- The process and tools *can* work
- Preparation and configuration of a team matter; entry point for each team differs.
- Learning from other teams important, including non-like schools.
- Building school capacity can put positive pressure on district.
- Principals need support to both share leadership and take initiative to lead the change process.
- Regulator and helping role seen as incompatible, yet sustaining financial support for mediating layer challenging.



A few comments about the COMPASS process from the pilot school teams

This process was really beneficial – we definitely worked through quite a bit as a team. We now need to execute, evaluate, and re-align our plan.

- School A, 7/27/2010

Overall, these two days were very valuable to both myself and my colleagues. The COMPASS institute provided an effective framework to develop district/building goals that will be taken back to our district and serve as a catalyst for necessary discussion and ultimately drive action.

- School B, 7/27/2010

GREAT program for us -- it has really formed/framed our work! Great to see qualitative data being just as important as quantitative. Great tool on many levels.

- School C, 12/9/2010

Thank you!

Know Your Schools~for NY Kids

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