Poverty and performance in NYS: What can we learn from best practice research?

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Poverty and Performance in New York State:

What Can We Learn from Best Practice Research?

Janet I. Angelis. Kristen C. Wilcox, Linda Baker

For the past decade, we have been studying what are sometimes called "beating- the-odds" schools – schools where performance is consistently higher than would be predicted by student demographics, including, especially, poverty levels. With colleagues in the University at Albany's Know Your Schools~for NY Kids project (NYKids) we learn what is unique about the practices in those beating-the-odds schools by comparing them to schools serving similar populations of students, yet with more typical performance outcomes. Since 2005 we have conducted six such studies spanning elementary through high school, with some looking at specific instructional contexts (e.g. science classrooms) and others at particular groups of students (ethnic and linguistic minority and special needs). We have found that the higher-

Schools That Do Better Than Expected with High-Poverty Populations Have

- A vision of success that includes high poverty students achieving beyond predicted levels

- Collaboration and shared responsibility

- Decision making based on a variety of evidence

6 Studies to Date (2005-2014)

- Elementary schools, 2005 (math, ELA)

- Middle schools, 2007 (math, ELA)

- High schools, 2008 (5 required Regents)

- Middle school science, 2009 (science)

- Critical needs, elementary level, 2011 (math, ELA)

- High school graduation, 2013 (4-yr grad rate, AR stu)

About the Studies

- Select "beating the odds" schools based on 3 years of NYS data

- Find similar, average-performing schools

- Oversample high-poverty schools

- Conduct two-day site visits

- Analyze data looking for differences in practice

Details about methodology, all studies, and findings:
www.albany.edu/nykids

About the Method

- Semi-structured interview protocol

- 6 broad themes

  Climate & culture   Curriculum & academic goals

  Staffing, capacity building   Instruction & program

  Evidence use   Interventions

- Analyze data for each site, across sites for each theme, across sites using a constant-comparative process

- For this paper/presentation, across 12 high-poverty schools

School, City or Town	Grades Served (No. of Students)	F/RL Rate	Year
Ulysses Byas ES, Roosevelt	K-6 (420)	100%	2004
Columbus ES, New Rochelle	K-5 (816)	78%	2010
John F. Kennedy ES, Port Chester	K-5 (725)	78%	2010
Saunders Trades & Technical HS, Yonkers	9-12 (1395)	76%	2006
Westbury MS, Westbury	6-8 (849)	74%	2006
Jefferson MS Science, Jamestown	5-8 (390)	69%	2008
Centennial Avenue ES, Roosevelt	K-5 (440)	66%	2010
John F. Kennedy MS, Utica	6-8 (1025)	60%	2006
Otselic Valley J-S HS, So. Otselic	9-12 (148)	53%	2012
Port Chester MS, Port Chester	5-8 (790)	52%	2006
South Kortright CS, South Kortright	9-12 (126)	52%	2006
Eastridge HS, E. Irondequoit	9-12 (989)	46%	2012

NYS average poverty level 44-50%, 2004-2012

Considerations

- Use state data because that's what "counts"
- Schools can't totally overcome inequities, but they can work to close the opportunity gap

[T]he achievement gap is not an educational problem in the strictest sense, and schools do not need to be the only vehicles for social change.

Brimhall-Vargas (2014). Questioning educational "reform" and the imposition of a national curriculum, in *The Poverty and Education Reader* (Gorski & Landsman, Eds.)

Tools to Assess, Plan Improvement

What Makes Elementary Schools Work for Critical Needs Students }

What makes middle schools work }

What Makes High Schools Work for Graduating At-Risk Students on Time }

Know Your Schools~for NY Kids

COMPASS (Compare, Assess, Select Levers to Improve, Set Goals) Tool Kit

for Improving Graduation Rates

Schools That Do Better Than Expected with High-Poverty Populations Have

- A vision of success that includes high-poverty students achieving beyond predicted levels

- Collaboration and shared responsibility

- Decision making based on a variety of evidence

A vision of success . . . What is your school like?

For each *row*, read the two statements and choose the description that is more like your school (if applicable); then go to **B** in the *column* you selected and circle 1, 2, 3 *or* 4 to indicate how much the description is like your school.

High School – High School - High School – High School - High School - High School

A: My school is more like this		⬇	OR	My school is more like this ⬇		
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.		
B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	very similar 1	somewhat similar 2		B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	somewhat similar 3	very similar 4
A: My school is more like this ⬇			OR	My school is more like this ⬇		
Ability to support students to reach mastery is seen as limited by a lack of resources, family or student apathy.				Expectations of students reaching the mastery level and able to achieve a college degree are promoted through ambitious, student-centered goals.		
B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	very similar 1	somewhat similar 2		B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	somewhat similar 3	very similar 4
A: My school is more like this ⬇			OR	My school is more like this ⬇		
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.		
B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	very similar 1	somewhat similar 2		B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	somewhat similar 3	very similar 4
A: My school is more like this ⬇			OR	My school is more like this ⬇		
Instruction is traditional, typically teacher lecture dominant, and not crafted around students' needs, interests, and 21st Century learning goals.				Instruction is designed to be relevant to students' lives, focused on developing higher-order, critical thinking and inquiry skills, and engaging, through the use of technologies and differentiation.		
B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	very similar 1	somewhat similar 2		B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	somewhat similar 3	very similar 4

Drawn from the NYKIds' COMPASS Tools , © 2010, 2012, 2014

Vision of Success

Poverty is not used as an excuse for performance levels. -administrator, Jefferson Middle School

Belief in the students - that is a tremendous focus from our superintendent on down . . . get people to see beyond the limitations of students.

-Eastridge administrator

Do [students] have a vision of what they can be and what is possible?

– S. Kortright educator

Vision of Success

All students, regardless of their SES resources, deserve the opportunity to achieve at a high level.

- district adm, Jefferson MS

You look at our school --- we don't have magic chocolate milk here. The kids in the city are plenty smart. The kids have to be invested in the schools, and the teachers have to be invested in the schools.

– teacher & instructional coach, School 19, Rochester

Expectations with tailored support

- AIS/SPED tightly tied to classroom learning objectives (e.g., lab classes)

- After school, before school, other beyond-school time, with transportation

- Access to rigorous courses

I'm not going to tell a student, "You can't try something that we advertise as a more rigorous program." It's never too late to change your approach to scholarship.

- Eastridge

Expectations with tailored support

- Personalized support

- Special and alternative programs for at-risk students

- Support for families

Vision of Success

High standards for behavior

- Student aspirations

- Student self-monitoring

- Student self-management

Take a look at your self-reflection.
Questions/ideas related to your responses?

LUNCH CLUB

The purpose of lunch club is to provide students the opportunity to complete missing homework assignments.

Lunch club may also serve as an opportunity for students to make up missed class work because of behavior.

Each teacher uses lunch club at their own discretion.

Collaboration and shared responsibility . . . What is your school like?

For each *row*, read the two statements and choose the description that is more like your school (if applicable); then go to **B** in the *column* you selected and circle 1, 2, 3 *or* 4 to indicate how much the description is like your school.

High School – High School – High School / **Middle School**

A: My school is more like this ⬇		OR	My school is more like this ⬇		
Educators work largely independently of one another with little clarity as to how their efforts coalesce to meet students' social, emotional, and academic needs.			Teachers and administrators share leadership and collaborate continuously around social/emotional and academic supports students need, reaching across possible divides of titles, subject areas, and grade levels.		
B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	very similar **1**	somewhat similar **2**	B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	somewhat similar **3**	very similar **4**
A: My school is more like this ⬇		OR	My school is more like this ⬇		
We prefer to solve our problems and then let parents know about them when we present the solution.			We invite parents to help us solve problems.		
B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	very similar **1**	somewhat similar **2**	B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	somewhat similar **3**	very similar **4**
A: My school is more like this ⬇		OR	My school is more like this ⬇		
School staff experience difficulty surmounting barriers to partnering with families.			Educators have developed friendly, systematic approaches to reaching out to families and building trust.		
B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	very similar **1**	somewhat similar **2**	B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	somewhat similar **3**	very similar **4**
A: My school is more like this ⬇		OR	My school is more like this ⬇		
The processes and practices we have put in place to purposefully foster collaboration and community are "spotty" and tend to be peripheral in the activities at the school rather than spotlighted and ongoing.			We have multiple processes and practices that purposefully foster collaboration and community, and we draw students into our community as active participants in tackling what is important. We tap into a variety of resources from outside the school.		
B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	very similar **1**	somewhat similar **2**	B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	somewhat similar **3**	very similar **4**

Collaboration

Everyone is responsible for teaching all children.

-principal, Jefferson Middle School

I work in a team, not an isolated group. . . . Our strength is having to pull together as a community.

-Otselic Valley teachers

Your ideas matter, and what you're doing makes a difference. It's all of us working together.

-Eastridge counselor

Collaboration

Shared leadership and decision making about things that matter, e.g.,

- Grade configurations

- Department and/or grade goals and plans

- Professional learning

- All focused on student learning

Collaboration is supported and sustained by the modeling of our principal and by the belief of all faculty and staff that collaboration is critical for the success of our students.   - faculty member, Centennial Ave. ES

Collaboration

Interdisciplinary instruction

- Problem-based learning

- Teaming

K-5 Convention: STR^{2}EAMing into Learning

Teacher Pairings: S   and

Next Gen Science Standard: Structure and Properties of Matter

Convention Booth Focus: _____ Density _____

List Science and Engineering standards included in study:

2-PS1-1 Plan and conduct an investigation to describe and classify different kinds of materials by their observable properties.

2-PS-2 Analyze data obtained from testing different materials to determine which materials have the properties that are best suited for an intended purpose.

5-PS1-1 Develop a model to describe that matter is made of particles too small to be seen.

5-PS1-3   Make observations and measurements to identify materials based on their properties.

Within our school, we saw each child as everybody's child and assumed responsibility for helping that child.

- Former principal, School 19, Rochester

Collaboration

Includes the community

- Deliberate building/maintaining of trust

- Educators part of the community

- Systematic and systemic reaching out

- School "family" includes students & families

- Creating community if not present

Look at your self-reflection. Questions/ideas related to your responses?

Decision making based on a variety of evidence . . . What is your school like?

For each *row*, read the two statements and choose the description that is more like your school (if applicable); then go to **B** in the *column* you selected and circle 1, 2, 3 *or* 4 to indicate how much the description is like your school.

A: My school is more like this ↓		OR	My school is more like this ↓		
We sometimes use data to inform specific interventions, instruction, or other reforms or changes.			We typically use data to target interventions and develop and implement other reforms to improve student performance.		
B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	very similar **1**	somewhat similar **2**	B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	somewhat similar **3**	very similar **4**
A: My school is more like this ↓		OR	My school is more like this ↓		
While a variety of assessment data are collected, report cards or other academic progress reports are limited to being issued on a quarterly basis.			Baseline, quarterly, midterm, and summative department exams provide data for reports on students' academic progress: These reports are distributed every few weeks and used to make decisions about interventions in a timely manner.		
B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	very similar **1**	somewhat similar **2**	B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	somewhat similar **3**	very similar **4**
A: My school is more like this ↓		OR	My school is more like this ↓		
Attendance records are available, but analysis and intervention plans are not in place or are not implemented consistently or immediately.			Systems are in place to closely track student attendance online and intervene early, including going to the home and contacting family.		
B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	very similar **1**	somewhat similar **2**	B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	somewhat similar **3**	very similar **4**
A: My school is more like this ↓		OR	My school is more like this ↓		
We rely on administrators and our data warehouse to analyze assessment data; we share those results with teachers annually.			Both teachers and administrators collect, analyze, and use data to inform practice; this is central to our practice. We also provide data in usable formats to students and parents.		
B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	very similar **1**	somewhat similar **2**	B: If my school is more like this, about how much?	somewhat similar **3**	very similar **4**

Row labels (left margin): High School – High School – High School; Middle School

Using Evidence

We don't take anything for granted.
— district administrator, Port Chester

Even if something works, we try to find something better. If it works for 80% [of students], we try to find something that works for 100%.
— teacher, Columbus Elementary School

Every kid counts is more than a slogan. I don't think it's the paperwork that makes us unique.
- principal, Otselic Valley

Using Evidence

Collect and analyze both "hard" and "soft" data

- Real-time, frequent assessments of learning

- Close personal attention to every student, including both academic and social/emotional well-being

- Extra support online and individualized as needed

An amazing thing happened [as] teachers saw the value of evidence-informed instruction.

– principal, Downsville CHS

Using Evidence

We look at the data. We're always looking at past performance and trying to improve upon it.

– district administrator, Jefferson MS

To help individual students and improve program
- Timely and targeted interventions
- Ongoing, continuous monitoring of progress
- Reallocation of resources based on need

Look at your self-reflection. Questions/ideas related to your responses?
On which element was your average score lowest?

Critical Needs Elementary Self-Survey

Exit this survey

Dear Visitors,

Based on the findings of our elementary school critical needs study, we developed this survey as a tool for school- and district-based educators to take the pulse of their own organizations in terms of the four key elements of what works for critical needs students in elementary school.

For more about each element, see the full report (available as a PDF) on the NY Kids Website. To access it, please copy and past the following URL into your Web browser:

http://www.albany.edu/nykids/files/NY_Kids_Critical_Needs_Elementary_Full_Report_2011.pdf

and we invite you to use this survey with colleagues in your own setting.

Note that absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed due to the limited protections of Internet access. As you will see in this brief survey, no questions as to your name or other identifiable personal information is required.

Thank you for your responses.

Sincerely,
The NY Kids Team

Please indicate how well you think your school or district is addressing the following:

[Not at all well; somewhat well; well; very well]

＊1. Close Engagement with and Understanding of the Population . . . What is your school like?

Consider how well you think your school or district is addressing each of the following:

	not at all well	somewhat well	well	very well	N/A
(1) We are a "family" that takes care of and takes responsibility for children's emotional and social growth AND academic achievement.	○	○	○	○	○
(2) We consistently and actively forge parent/legal guardian relationships, and our efforts are supported by school-level activities that recognize and celebrate our community's diversity.	○	○	○	○	○
(3) Teachers, teacher-leaders or coaches, principals, and district administrators consistently analyze student performance data and use these	○	○	○	○	○

Best

Vincent A

Best Practices Case Study: *Meeting Critical Needs at the Elementary Level*

Dianne Walshhampton, April 2011

Columbu
New Roche

Jeffer
Jamest

Best Practices Case Study: *Supporting High School Completion*

Kathy Nickson, March 2013

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Eastridge High School
East Irondequoit Central School District

School Context

The East Irondequoit Central School District, in Monroe County (NY), serves approximately 3600 student s in two primary schools, two intermediate schools, one middle school, and one high school. At first glance, the district appears to encompass a suburban community of single family homes bordering two bodies of water and the north side of Rochester. A closer look, however, reveals many families struggling economically, with approximately 50% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. The district has little in the way of an industrial base and not much land on which new industry might locate. It is very dependent on State aid, and as one administrator explained, when it comes to finances, "We try to be as creative as we can be . . . creative and careful about how grant money is used."

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Best Practice Frameworks

Publications and Presentations

COMPASS Professional Development

Know Your Schools~for NY Kids
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Albany, NY 12222
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Contact Us

Home

NY Kids

Welcome to a resource to support school improvement in New York State.

The mission of Just For the Kids~ NY Kids is to:

1. *Inform* schools about best practices. See our...

   - "Find Your School" and Survey Tools to help you look at your own school's practices
   - Collections on specific issues related to school improvement:
     - (Response to Intervention RTI)
     - English Language Learners
     - Special Education Students
     - Parent/Community Involvement
     - Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)
     - Role of the Board of Education

2. *Inspire* schools by reporting best practices from the field. See our...

   - Elementary, Middle School, and High School case studies of the higher-performing schools whose practices are featured
   - Reports about best practices at the elementary, middle, and high school levels

3. *Improve* schools through localized, targeted programs of professional development. See our...

   - COMPASS Professional Development tools
   - Framework of best practices at each level, with evidence to support them

Where to find more information:

- Data displays
- Case reports, all HP schools (55)
- Cross-case reports, each study (6)
- Best practice frameworks (most current 5)
- Documentary evidence (in BP framework)
- Key word collections
- Self-assessments
- COMPASS Institutes to support school teams to use these resources to use data to plan, monitor, improve (SMART Goals)

Organized by 5 themes

- Curriculum & academic goals

- Staff selection, leadership, and capacity building

- Instructional programs, practices, and arrangements

- Monitoring: Compilation, analysis, and use of data

- Recognition, intervention & adjustments

|	High School Completion (2013)	Critical Needs, Elementary (2011)	Middle School Science (2009)	High School (2008)	Middle School (2007)
Organizing Themes	Best Practices				
Curriculum & Academic Goals	• Goals look beyond graduation in four years to success in post-secondary education and career. • The curriculum is constantly and collaboratively revised in response to state mandates, identified needs, and student and community interests. • Expectations for all students are high, e.g., mastery on Regents exams, challenging courses. Learn more...				
Staff Selection, Leadership, & Capacity Building	• School culture is distinguished by strong relational trust and close collaboration. • The hiring process pays close attention to only hiring educators who will fit well with the school and district. • Teachers and administrators are dedicated to their students and their success in and beyond high school. Learn more...				
Instructional Programs, Practices, & Arrangements	• Effective instruction is defined as tailored to capture student interest and actively engage them. • Students, especially those at risk of failing to graduate, are provided options for meeting requirements and staying in school. • Co-curricular activities are not only important but are seen as an opportunity to mentor, connect with, and keep students				

Interactive displays of data

31
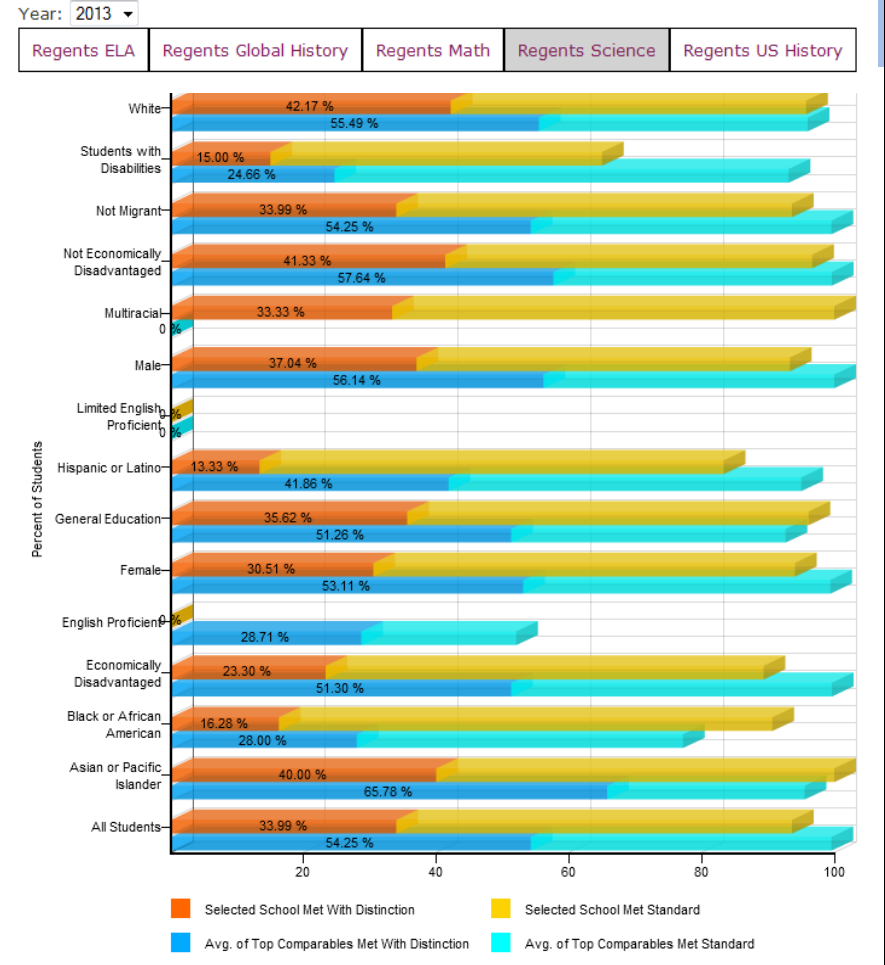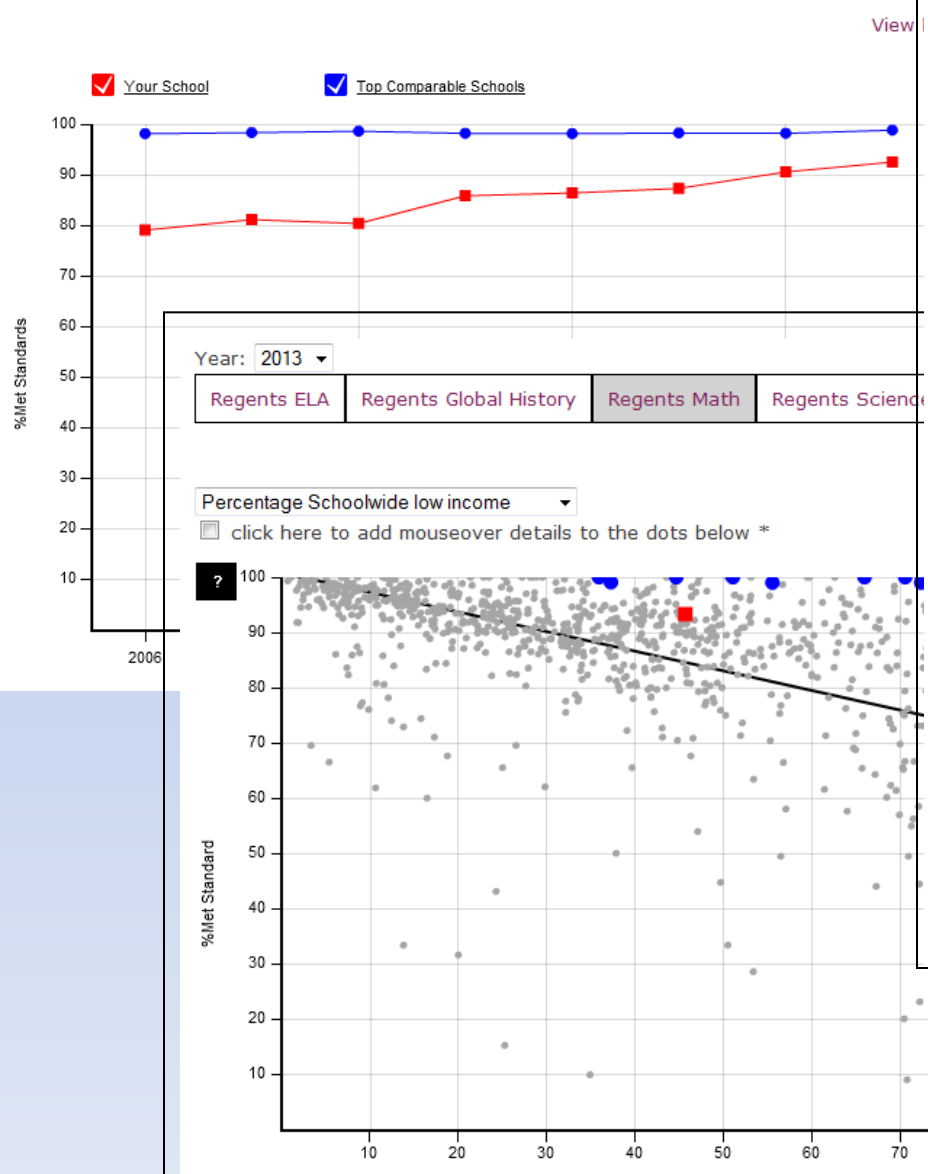
Other Resources

Poverty, performance, and frog ponds
WHAT BEST-PRACTICE RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT THEIR CONNECTIONS

Higher-performing schools create conditions that enable schools to address some of the challenges of teaching high concentrations of students living in poverty.

By Janet I. Angelis & Kristen C. Wilcox

Phi Delta Kappan, 93 (3), 26-31, November 2011

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Impact 2015

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The ABCs of graduating at-risk students on time } Promising practices from higher-performing high schools

What works for diverse and special needs students } Best practices from higher-performing elementary schools

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EDITED BY PAUL C. GORSKI AND JULIE LANDSMAN

THE POVERTY AND EDUCATION READER

A CALL FOR EQUITY IN MANY VOICES

Stylus Publishing, VA

Publications and Presentations

In addition to books, researchers and staff share findings with many different audiences.

Recent presentations and articles

- Beyond Personalization: Contrasting Approaches to Policy Changes in Two Rural Schools, presentation at the American Education Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, April 2014.
- Wilcox, K.C. (2014, April). Innovations to increase Native American graduation... case study. Round table presentation at AERA Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA.
- Graduating At-Risk Students on Time, presentation to the Data Analysis Technical Assistance Group, March 2014. Presentation slides.
- University at Albany Researchers Identify Ways Schools Succeed in Graduating At-Risk Students. *On Board*, March 2014.
- Poverty and Its Effect on Students' Ability to Learn, NYSASCD and Capital Region BOCES Symposium, panel discussion, November 5, 2013. Presentation slides and brochure.
- Wilcox, K.C. (2013, April). Diversity, poverty and resilience: Results from a multiple case study of higher-achieving elementary schools. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association (AERA) Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA. Presentation slides.
- Wilcox, K.C. (2013) A socioecological view of higher-performing diverse elementary schools. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk*.
- A Data-Driven, Research-Based Approach to Improving Practice: The NYKids
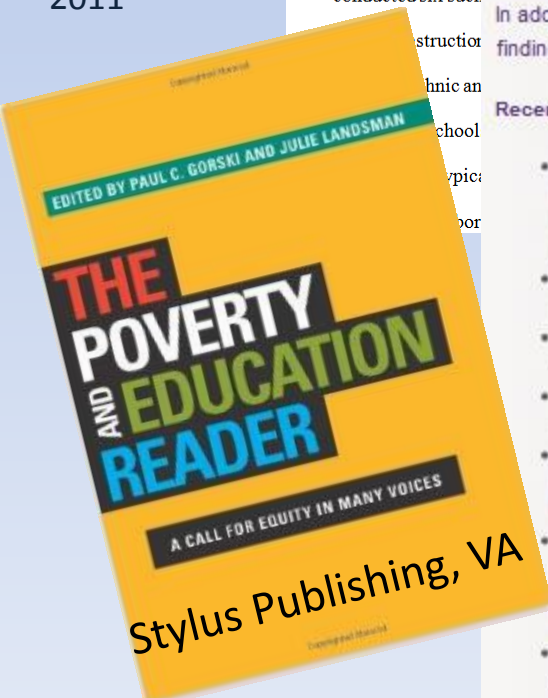
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