



Organizational and Curricular Practices in Medium and High Growth Schools

Fiscal Year 2013

Report

To the

Legislature

As required by

Minnesota Statutes,

Section 120B.35, Subdivision 4

COMMISSIONER:

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**Organizational and
Curricular
Practices in
Medium and High
Growth Schools**

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Upon request, this report can be made available in alternative formats.

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Statutes,
Section 120B.35,
Subdivision 4**

Cost of Report Preparation

The total cost for the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to prepare this report was approximately \$ 1,000. Most of these costs involved staff time in surveying schools and preparing the written report. Incidental costs include paper, copying, and other office supplies.

Estimated costs are provided in accordance with Minnesota Statutes 2011, section 3.197, which requires that at the beginning of a report to the legislature, the cost of preparing the report must be provided.

Purpose of the Report

Consistent with the requirements of Minnesota Statute 120B.35, Subdivision 4, the commissioner is to report the “organizational and curricular practices implemented in those schools that demonstrate medium and high growth compared to the state growth target.” This report provides the public and the legislature the practices that may have contributed to the medium or high growth of students in these schools; however, it is important to note that a conclusive causation between the identified implementation of curricular and organizational practices and medium and high student growth cannot be made. The research-based practices implemented in such schools and outlined in this report may inform improvement efforts in other Minnesota schools as well as give the public and the legislature a solid understanding of where resources may need to be targeted.

Process for Selecting Medium and High Growth Schools and Method of Data Collection

Based on definitions in Minnesota Statute, section 120B.299, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) identified schools that demonstrated medium and high student growth between the 2010-2011 and 2011-2012 school years. These definitions in statute, more commonly used to categorize the growth of students, were translated to the school level to fulfill the requirements of this report. Within each school classification (elementary, middle, or high school), the statewide mean and standard deviation of school z-score growth averages were calculated. Schools whose average growth z-score was one-half standard deviation or more below the state mean were labeled “Low Growth”. Medium growth schools had an average growth z-score within one-half standard deviation above or below the state mean. Lastly, high growth schools had an average growth z-score of one-half standard deviation or more above the state mean.

Using the above definitions, MDE identified 583 elementary schools, 159 middle schools, and 302 high schools exhibiting medium and high growth from across the state. An 18-question survey (see Appendix A) was sent to the principals and superintendents of these schools, and MDE received a total of 413 completed surveys by the established deadline. The 40% response rate out of such a large pool of schools gives the public and the legislature a substantial, albeit incomplete, indication of the organizational and curricular practices being implemented in medium and high growth Minnesota schools.

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Overview of the Data Collected

The survey covered a wide variety of student and school success indicators of evidence-based practices from Indistar, a web-based system used by state agencies and districts around the country to inform, coach, track, and report improvement efforts. The Indistar indicators of effective practice are grounded in research and address the following key areas in a school:

- Strong leadership.
- Professional development.
- Staff evaluation.
- Expanded time for student learning.
- Rigorous and aligned curriculum, instruction and assessment.
- Use of data for improvement and instruction.
- School and classroom culture.
- Family and community engagement.

MDE selected 18 indicators encompassing the above areas to be used in the survey and gave schools the opportunity to report the level of implementation for each of the indicators. Schools responded by indicating the following implementation levels:

- No development or implementation.
- Limited development or implementation.
- Full implementation.

Appendix A includes the survey in its entirety.

Results of the Survey: Organizational and Curricular Practices in Schools that Demonstrate Medium and High Growth

Minnesota schools exhibiting medium and high student growth used the survey to indicate the level of implementation for all 18 student and school success indicators. The tables below provide the survey language used for each indicator and the school response percent representing the reported stage of implementation by each school.

1. A Leadership Team consisting of the principal, teachers who lead the Instructional Teams, and other key professional staff meets regularly (twice a month or more for an hour each meeting).	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	4.6%
Limited development or implementation	45.4%
Full implementation	50.0%

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2. The Leadership Team has developed an action plan with aligned resources (money, time, human resources) based on the school's instructional priorities.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	5.3%
Limited development or implementation	40.7%
Full implementation	54.0%

3. The principal monitors curriculum and classroom instruction regularly by spending at least 50 percent of his/her time working directly with teachers to improve instruction, including classroom observations.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	7.2%
Limited development or implementation	67.4%
Full implementation	25.4%

4. Professional development is aligned with identified needs based on staff evaluation, classroom observations, and student performance.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	2.7%
Limited development or implementation	37.0%
Full implementation	60.4%

5. The school has established criteria and format for screening, interviewing and hiring highly-qualified teachers that support the school.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	4.1%
Limited development or implementation	28.0%
Full implementation	67.9%

6. The principal includes evaluation of student outcomes in the teacher evaluation.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	29.0%
Limited development or implementation	56.0%
Full implementation	15.0%

7. All teachers are guided by a document that aligns Minnesota Academic Standards, curriculum, instruction and assessment.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	2.7%
Limited development or implementation	38.8%
Full implementation	58.6%

8. Teachers individualize instruction and differentiate assignments based on pre-test results to provide support for some students and enhanced learning opportunities for others.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	3.1%
Limited development or implementation	67.3%
Full implementation	29.5%

9. All teachers clearly state the lesson's topic, theme, and learning objectives.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	0.7%
Limited development or implementation	56.8%
Full implementation	42.5%

10. All teachers interact instructionally with students (explaining, checking, giving feedback).	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	0%
Limited development or implementation	24.0%
Full implementation	76.0%

11. All teachers summarize key concepts and re-teach when necessary.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	0.2%
Limited development or implementation	40.2%
Full implementation	59.6%

12. All teachers systematically report to parents (families) the student's mastery of specific standards-based objectives (in plain language that allows for understanding).	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	6.8%
Limited development or implementation	63.9%
Full implementation	29.3%

13. The school tests every student annually with the same standardized test in basic subject areas so that each student's year-to-year progress can be tracked.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	4.8%
Limited development or implementation	20.5%
Full implementation	74.6%

14. Teams and teachers receive timely reports from the central database to assist in making decisions about each student's placement and instruction.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	6.8%
Limited development or implementation	41.7%
Full implementation	51.5%

15. Instructional Teams use student learning data to assess strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and instructional strategies.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	2.9%
Limited development or implementation	44.9%
Full implementation	52.2%

16. All school staff demonstrate an understanding of community cultures, customs, and values and model a respect for them.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	1.5%
Limited development or implementation	43.6%
Full implementation	55.0%

17. All teachers model, teach, and reinforce social and emotional competencies.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	2.9%
Limited development or implementation	45.9%
Full implementation	51.2%

18. The school regularly communicates with parents (families) about its expectations of them and the importance of what parents can do at home to support their children's learning.	
Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	1.2%
Limited development or implementation	44.8%
Full implementation	54.0%

Appendix A

Organizational and Curricular Practices Survey Required under Minnesota Statute 120B.35, Subdivision 4

1. A Leadership Team consisting of the principal, teachers who lead the Instructional Teams, and other key professional staff meets regularly (twice a month or more for an hour each meeting).
 - a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
2. The Leadership Team has developed an action plan with aligned resources (money, time, human resources) based on the school's instructional priorities.
 - a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
3. The principal monitors curriculum and classroom instruction regularly by spending at least 50 percent of his/her time working directly with teachers to improve instruction, including classroom observations.
 - a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
4. Professional development is aligned with identified needs based on staff evaluation, classroom observations, and student performance.
 - a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
5. The school has established criteria and format for screening, interviewing and hiring highly-qualified teachers that support the school.
 - a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
6. The principal includes evaluation of student outcomes in the teacher evaluation.

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- a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
7. All teachers are guided by a document that aligns Minnesota Academic Standards, curriculum, instruction and assessment.
- a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
8. Teachers individualize instruction and differentiate assignments based on pre-test results to provide support for some students and enhanced learning opportunities for others.
- a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
9. All teachers clearly state the lesson's topic, theme, and learning objectives.
- a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
10. All teachers interact instructionally with students (explaining, checking, giving feedback).
- a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
11. All teachers summarize key concepts and re-teach when necessary.
- a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
12. All teachers systematically report to parents (families) the student's mastery of specific standards-based objectives (in plain language that allows for understanding).
- a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation

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- c. Full implementation
13. The school tests every student annually with the same standardized test in basic subject areas so that each student's year-to-year progress can be tracked.
- a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
14. Teams and teachers receive timely reports from the central database to assist in making decisions about each student's placement and instruction.
- a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
15. Instructional Teams use student learning data to assess strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and instructional strategies.
- a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
16. All school staff demonstrate an understanding of community cultures, customs, and values and model a respect for them.
- a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
17. All teachers model, teach, and reinforce social and emotional competencies.
- a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation
18. The school regularly communicates with parents (families) about its expectations of them and the importance of what parents can do at home to support their children's learning.
- a. No development or implementation
 - b. Limited development or implementation
 - c. Full implementation