

## HIGH SCHOOL BEST PRACTICES SURVEY RESULTS SUMMARY

### A. 417 respondents provided the following high school survey feedback.

- 60% were high school teachers
- 18% were school administrators or school district administrators
- 16% were “other” (community leader, business person, elementary or middle school teacher, higher education, paraprofessional, policy analyst)
- 10% were educational support personnel (guidance counselor, social worker, etc.)
- 8% were parents or guardians
- 7.5% were media specialists

### B. 70% or more of all respondents agreed to the following school-wide practices related to STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS:

- The principal and leadership team assure that high expectations for academic success are part of the culture and climate of the school.
- The goals of the school are clear and focused on student achievement.
- There is an emphasis on higher level thinking skills along with the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS).
- Special education students and English language learners are exposed to grade-level content as much as possible: in successful, true inclusion classes both content teachers and special education teachers work collaboratively in both the planning and delivery of lessons.
- Technology, such as online courses, is leveraged to provide students with access to high level, rigorous courses.

### 50% or more of all respondents agreed to the following policies:

- Rigorous course work is available to all students. No courses are viewed as only appropriate for high-achieving students, and no courses are viewed as only appropriate for under-achieving students.
- Participation in AP and other advanced courses is encouraged for as many students as possible, including lifting some prerequisites for enrolling in such courses.

More comments (199) were submitted for this section than the other three. Respondents echoed need for strong leadership, teacher input, rigor and relevance of the courses, need for technology to be continually updated and updated training of teachers, need for differentiation of instruction and 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching methods, and need for inclusion teachers to work collaboratively and professionally with base teachers.

“High expectations **must** be included in a best practices high school. Along with that expectation, funding **must** be provided to allow for successful programs and instruction.”

“All members of the administration, faculty and staff at a school need to be working in tandem to promote an atmosphere of learning.”

“I think that student learning should be the main focus of any school. As long as this principle comes first, it is a Best Practices high school.”

**C. 70% or more of all respondents agreed to the following school-wide practices related to DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP:**

- Instructional time is maximized; time and scheduling are used creatively to support teaching and learning.
- Staff members are included in the school's leadership, vision and goal-setting process, and therefore, the staff sees the big picture of the goals of the school.
- The principal and leadership team leverage the resources available in the community through involvement of parents, community members, and business partners.

**50% or more of all respondents agreed to the following practices:**

- The staff believes and demonstrates that all students can attain mastery of the essential school skills.
- The principal has the latitude for decision making to impact student achievement, including staffing, hiring and firing, and budgeting, and is held accountable for the school's performance.
- Transition programs from middle school to high school including the use of 9th grade academies and K-12 vertical learning/collaboration, for example, are a high priority.
- New teacher attrition is reduced by having all new teachers and all new alternatively certified teachers meet regularly with the AP in charge of instruction, and establishing multiple avenues for support through professional learning communities, a comprehensive mentoring program, etc.
- An advisement program is used to enhance students' career interests, social development, test taking and organizational skills, communication skills and as a time for special recognition and celebration.
- Creative student incentives are used to improve attendance and achievement. Examples include preferred parking as a reward for attendance/achievement; events to celebrate students' successes; and coupons to popular town locations or local restaurants providing breakfast foods (thus involving the community and business partners, etc.).

Comments (151) were repetitive and supportive of the practices outlined, and best summarized by this comment:

“When the leadership of a school communicates with faculty, hires capable staff, and holds teachers accountable, the school is much more likely to be successful. Effective leadership makes a Big Difference.”

**D. 70% or more of all respondents agreed to the following school wide practices as they related to DATA-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING AND INSTRUCTION:**

- There is readily available technology support for teachers.
- Students who are below grade-level expectations for literacy are scheduled in classes for extensive reading and writing interventions, in addition to regular language arts/English class time.
- Students who are below grade-level expectations in mathematics are scheduled in classes for extensive mathematics interventions, in addition to regular math class time.

- Student achievement data are available to all teachers and to the leadership team in a timely and useful manner using technology to provide data processing and just-in-time reporting.
- Student academic progress is measured frequently through a variety of formative and summative assessment measures, and results are used to improve individual student performance and improve the instructional program.
- Mathematical reasoning and understanding are a high-priority focus of instruction, with instruction built upon research-based effective strategies.
- Opportunities for credit recovery are available for students either at school or online.

**50% or more of all respondents agreed to the following practices:**

- Common assessments are developed and administered by subject area teachers in order to analyze student work and learning. Subject area teams meet regularly to discuss common assessment results and plan for instruction.
- School improvement plans are based on data.
- Teachers demonstrate exemplary practices in use of student achievement data to direct instruction based on individual students' needs.
- Time for frequent interventions and extensions of the grade level content is built into the instructional schedule (within class time, during a "0" period, as elective courses, etc.); interventions and extensions are provided to students based on frequent assessments in the core areas.
- Programs such as Communities in Schools' "Performance Learning Centers" are created where needed and feasible. Performance Learning Centers (PLCs) are small, non-traditional high schools. PLCs are geared toward students who have the aptitude and abilities to achieve but are not succeeding in the traditional school setting. PLCs feature a business-like learning environment, complemented by non-academic CIS support services.
- Teacher websites, where parents have easy access to their student's class activities, are adopted.
- Teachers meet in "data teams" within the grade level/subject area and/or "course teams" to address student performance and collaborate on the best instructional strategies to meet the needs of the students.
  - Academics are rigorous and anchored by an online curriculum with an emphasis on project based learning.

(44%) Achievement data are displayed.

126 comments were included for this section, with the most common referencing TIME as a needed resource to implement this practice. A need for closer monitoring of credit recovery opportunities online, and accessibility to data via technology within the classroom were also mentioned. Primary comment summarized in:

“Data should be made easily available to teachers in that they do not have time to create such data. Easy access and user friendly.”

**E. 70% or more of all respondents agreed to the following school wide practices as they related to TEACHER EXCELLENCE:**

- Teachers work in collaborative communities for instructional planning and have frequent opportunities for sharing with one another, including observing, coaching and possible common planning time.
- Teachers are surveyed to get their input on areas in which they need improvement or areas where they would like more staff development, based on their analysis of student achievement and their own and their school's results.
- Creative scheduling, such as the use of early release days, are planned to allow for professional learning time as well as smooth implementation of the GPS.
- Vertical teaming strategies are used; teachers work both within their subject area teams and with subject teachers in other grades and areas, as well as with middle school teachers to allow for a smooth transition from middle school to high school
- Teachers demonstrate consistent and pervasive use of research-based effective instructional strategies.

**50% or more of all respondents agreed to the following practices:**

- Professional development focuses on providing a foundation of best practices to meet the needs of all learners and connect those best practices with the school improvement plan.
- There is targeted professional development in research-based instructional practices with content provided through multiple venues such as the internet, local colleges, master teachers, district programs, state and national research fellows, and RESAs.
- Graduation coaches participate in student tutoring efforts.
- A school-wide reading and writing program, including writing instruction across content areas is implemented.

127 comments were included for this section. The majority of the comments dealt with providing time for teacher training, time for collaboration, and an emphasis on including teachers as the leaders and facilitators of professional learning sessions. These comments replicate the practices included with dynamic leadership and seems to validate the whole premise of teacher excellence.

**F. 70% or more of all respondents agreed to the following GRADE-LEVEL PRACTICES:**

- Grade 11: GHSGT preparation/practice
- Grade 9: 9th grade high school information night
- Grade 12: Senior Night events to discuss "what happens after high school."
- Grade 11: SAT preparation/practice
- Grade 10: PSAT preparation/practice
- Grade 9: Regular parent information nights
- Grade 9: 9th grade course selection event

( 44% ) Grade 12: Senior Projects, based on the National Senior Project model.

101 comments recorded for this section, with most comments individualized according to local practice. While majority shows support for the practices listed, many also

mentioned the need to include parents more, but questioned how to get them more involved. Some also noted unfamiliarity with the National Senior Project model.

**G. Responding to agreement with the positions recommended for a “Best Practices” grade 9-12 high school with 1291 students:**

**70% or more:**

- one principal
- sufficient staff to meet the new high school graduation requirements for core courses and a minimum of seven elective courses, including music, art, career and technical education teachers, as well as sufficient staff to meet the foreign language requirement for students intending to enroll in a post secondary institution
- One medical professional/school nurse
- Two media specialists
- Technology specialist to coordinate a comprehensive tool/system which correlates data, standards, reporting, and testing, technology for each teacher, and enough computers for two technology labs
- Three guidance counselors
- One technology/data support staff member
- One school resource officer
- Two and a half assistant principals
- One psychologist/social worker
- One graduation coach
- Five and a half office staff members
- Five health/PE teachers

**60% or more:**

- One Athletic/activities director
- One academic/literacy coach

**59%:** Twenty-five supplements for teacher/lay coaching positions

157 comments were included for this section:

“Regardless of size, these positions are a must, and the state must fully fund them.”

“There just can’t be enough help for high schools.”

“The list is great; however, most systems don’t have the funding to support the mentioned personnel, so funding would be a priority.”

“All positions are and should be required.”

“The positions are not in question as much as the level of competency of those who hold the positions in question.”

When asked to comment on anything else regarding a Best Practices High School, respondents had 101 comments. Some simply said, “Just Do It!”. Other comments ranged from encouraging teacher/administrator relationships, including parents in the decision making and putting equal responsibility for success on them, media center improvements, and discipline concerns. All the comments could be directly linked to the committee’s criteria for dynamic leadership, excellence in teaching, and high standards and expectations

