



## **Best Practices in High Growth Schools**

---

**Fiscal Year 2014**

**Report**

**To the**

**Legislature**

**As required by**

**Minnesota Statutes,**

**section 120B.35, Subdivision 4**

**COMMISSIONER:**

**Brenda Cassellius, Ed. D.**

**Best Practices in High Growth Schools**

**August 2014**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:**

**Stephanie Graff**

**Division of Student Support**

**651-582-8242**

**Stephanie.Graff@state.mn.us**

**FY 2014**

**Report to the Legislature**

**As required by**

**Minnesota**

**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 analyzing data from surveys 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 Statutes section 120B.35, subdivision 4, the commissioner is to report the “best practices implemented in those schools that demonstrate high growth compared to the state growth target.” This report provides the public and the Legislature the practices that may have contributed to the high growth of students in these schools; however, it is important to note that a conclusive causation between the identified implementation of best practices 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 High Growth Schools and Method of Data Collection**

Based on definitions in Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.299, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) identified schools that demonstrated high student growth between the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 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 282 elementary schools, 63 middle schools, and 133 high schools exhibiting medium and high growth from across the state. A 34-question survey (see Appendix A) was sent to the principals and superintendents of these schools, and MDE received a total of 238 completed surveys by the established deadline. The 50 percent response rate out of such a large pool of schools gives the public and the legislature a substantial, albeit incomplete, indication of the best practices being implemented in high growth Minnesota schools.

## **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 placement and evaluation.
- Use of data for improvement and instruction.
- Strong classroom instruction.
- Cultural, social and emotional competence.
- Parent and family engagement.

MDE selected 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.

In addition, for each of the seven areas above, schools were asked to identify which indicator had the greatest impact on student achievement.

Appendix A includes the survey in its entirety.

## **Results of the Survey: Best Practices in Schools that Demonstrate High Growth**

Minnesota schools exhibiting high student growth used the survey to indicate the level of implementation for student and school success indicators. The tables below provide the survey questions and the school response percent representing the reported stage of implementation by each school. Responses to survey questions 6, 10, 14, 18, 26, 30 and 34 indicate the practices that schools identified as most important to their success.

### **Strong Leadership**

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	0.4%
Limited development or implementation	37.8%
Full implementation	61.8%

2. The school's leadership team regularly looks at school performance data (disaggregated by student groups) and aggregated classroom data and uses that data to make decisions about school improvement and professional development needs.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	1.7%
Limited development or implementation	45.8%
Full implementation	52.5%

3. 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	2.5%
Limited development or implementation	31.9%
Full implementation	65.5%

4. 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	3.8%
Limited development or implementation	67.6%
Full implementation	28.6%

5. The principal provides timely, clear and constructive feedback to teachers and supports the correction of unsound teaching practices.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	1.3%
Limited development or implementation	37.0%
Full implementation	61.8%

6. Which of the five indicators in the 'Strong Leadership' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Indicator	Response Percent
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).	20.6%
The school's leadership team regularly looks at school performance data (disaggregated by student groups) and aggregated classroom data and uses that data to make decisions about school improvement and professional development needs.	34.0%
The leadership team has developed an action plan with aligned resources (money, time, human resources) based on the school's instructional priorities.	21.8%
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,	12.6%

Indicator	Response Percent
including classroom observations.	
The principal provides timely, clear and constructive feedback to teachers and supports the correction of unsound teaching practices.	10.9%

### Professional Development

7. Instructional teams of teachers meet weekly for blocks of time sufficient to develop and refine units of instruction and review student learning data.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	4.7%
Limited development or implementation	42.1%
Full implementation	53.2%

8. 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	0.4%
Limited development or implementation	37.0%
Full implementation	62.6%

9. The school offers an induction program, including mentoring and support, to new teachers in their first years of teaching.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	3.8%
Limited development or implementation	30.2%
Full implementation	66.0%

10. Which of the three indicators in the 'Professional Development' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Indicator	Response Percent
Instructional teams of teachers meet weekly for blocks of time sufficient to develop and refine units of instruction and review student learning data.	62.1%
Professional development is aligned with identified needs based on staff evaluation, classroom observations, and student performance.	32.3%
The school offers an induction program, including mentoring and support, to new teachers in their first years of teaching.	5.5%

### Teacher Placement and Evaluation

11. The school has established criteria and format for screening, interviewing and hiring highly-effective teachers that support the school.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	3.8%
Limited development or implementation	23.8%
Full implementation	72.3%

12. The principal conducts summative evaluations of teacher skills and knowledge, using a variety of valid and reliable measures.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	0.4%
Limited development or implementation	34.0%
Full implementation	65.5%

13. The principal includes evaluation of student outcomes in the teacher evaluation.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	11.1%
Limited development or implementation	66.4%
Full implementation	22.6%

14. Which of the three indicators in the 'Teacher Placement and Evaluation' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Indicator	Response Percent
The school has established criteria and format for screening, interviewing and hiring highly-effective teachers that support the school.	48.1%
The principal conducts summative evaluations of teacher skills and knowledge, using a variety of valid and reliable measures.	39.6%
The principal includes evaluation of student outcomes in the teacher evaluation.	12.3%

### Use of Data for Improvement and Instruction

15. Teachers receive timely results reports from standardized and objective-based tests.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	3.0%
Limited development or implementation	30.6%
Full implementation	66.4%

16. Teams and teachers use student learning data for identifying students in need of instructional support or enhancement.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	0.0%
Limited development or implementation	32.3%
Full implementation	67.7%

17. Instructional Teams use student learning data to assess strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and instructional strategies.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
-------------------------	------------------



Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	0.9%
Limited development or implementation	51.9%
Full implementation	47.2%

18. Which of the three indicators in the 'Use of Data for Improvement and Instruction' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Indicator	Response Percent
Teachers receive timely results reports from standardized and objective-based tests.	11.5%
Teams and teachers use student learning data for identifying students in need of instructional support or enhancement.	60.4%
Instructional Teams use student learning data to assess strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and instructional strategies.	28.1%

### Strong Classroom Instruction

19. 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	1.3%
Limited development or implementation	37.4%
Full implementation	61.3%

20. All teachers clearly state the lesson's topic, theme, and learning objectives.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	2.1%
Limited development or implementation	55.3%
Full implementation	42.6%

21. All teachers interact managerially with students (i.e. reinforcing rules and procedures).

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	0.0%
Limited development or implementation	19.1%
Full implementation	80.9%

22. All teachers interact socially with students (i.e. noticing and understanding each student's background, asking about interests, inquiring about the family/friends).

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	0.4%
Limited development or implementation	26.4%
Full implementation	73.2%

23. During classroom instruction, all teachers check for understanding, provide feedback and adjust the lesson based on student needs.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	0.4%
Limited development or implementation	40.0%
Full implementation	59.6%

24. All teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to ensure all students are engaged and on task.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	0.4%
Limited development or implementation	42.6%
Full implementation	57.0%

25. All teachers summarize key concepts and re-teach when necessary.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	0.0%
Limited development or implementation	50.2%
Full implementation	49.8%

26. Which of the seven indicators in the 'Strong Classroom Instruction' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Indicator	Response Percent
All teachers are guided by a document that aligns Minnesota Academic Standards, curriculum, instruction and assessment.	16.2%
All teachers clearly state the lesson's topic, theme, and learning objectives.	6.4%
All teachers interact managerially with students (i.e. reinforcing rules and procedures).	1.3%
All teachers interact socially with students (i.e. noticing and understanding each student's background, asking about interests, inquiring about the family/friends).	17.4%
During classroom instruction, all teachers check for understanding, provide feedback and adjust the lesson based on student needs.	37.9%
All teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to ensure all students are engaged and on task.	17.0%
All teachers summarize key concepts and re-teach when necessary.	3.8%

### **Cultural, Social and Emotional Competence**

27. All school staff demonstrates an understanding of community cultures, customs, and values and model a respect for them.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	0.9%

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
Limited development or implementation	42.1%
Full implementation	57.1%

28. All teachers model, teach, and reinforce social and emotional competencies.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	1.3%
Limited development or implementation	50.2%
Full implementation	48.5%

29. All teachers use a variety of strategies that honor student cultures, interests, and strengths.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	2.1%
Limited development or implementation	60.5%
Full implementation	37.3%

30. Which of the three indicators in the 'Cultural, Social and Emotional Competence' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
All school staff demonstrates an understanding of community cultures, customs, and values and model a respect for them.	31.8%
All teachers model, teach, and reinforce social and emotional competencies.	42.5%
All teachers use a variety of strategies that honor student cultures, interests, and strengths.	25.8%

### Parent and Family Engagement

31. 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	3.0%
Limited development or implementation	58.4%
Full implementation	38.5%

32. The school has a process in place for parents and families to provide input and feedback on student learning.

Stage of implementation	Response Percent
No development or implementation	3.0%
Limited development or implementation	51.5%
Full implementation	45.5%

33. The school regularly communicates with parents and families about student expectations 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	0.0%
Limited development or implementation	39.8%
Full implementation	60.2%

34. Which of the three indicators in the 'Parent and Family Engagement' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Indicator	Response Percent
All teachers systematically report to parents (families) the student's mastery of specific standards-based objectives (in plain language that allows for understanding).	30.3%
The school has a process in place for parents and families to provide input and feedback on student learning.	13.9%
The school regularly communicates with parents and families about student expectations and the importance of what parents can do at home to support their children's learning.	55.8%

## **Appendix A**

Best Practices Survey in High Growth Schools required under Minnesota Statute 120B.35, Subdivision 4

### ***Strong Leadership***

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).

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

2. The school's leadership team regularly looks at school performance data (disaggregated by student groups) and aggregated classroom data and uses that data to make decisions about school improvement and professional development needs.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

3. The leadership team has developed an action plan with aligned resources (money, time, human resources) based on the school's instructional priorities.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

4. 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.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

5. The principal provides timely, clear and constructive feedback to teachers and supports the correction of unsound teaching practices.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

6. Which of the five indicators in the 'Strong Leadership' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Select one.

***Professional Development***

7. Instructional teams of teachers meet weekly for blocks of time sufficient to develop and refine units of instruction and review student learning data.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

8. Professional development is aligned with identified needs based on staff evaluation, classroom observations, and student performance.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

9. The school offers an induction program, including mentoring and support, to new teachers in their first years of teaching.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

10. Which of the three indicators in the 'Professional Development' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Select one.

***Teacher Placement and Evaluation***

11. The school has established criteria and format for screening, interviewing and hiring highly-effective teachers that support the school.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

12. The principal conducts summative evaluations of teacher skills and knowledge, using a variety of valid and reliable measures.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

13. The principal includes evaluation of student outcomes in the teacher evaluation.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

14. Which of the three indicators in the 'Teacher Placement and Evaluation' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Select one.

***Use of Data for Improvement and Instruction***

15. Teachers receive timely results reports from standardized and objective-based tests.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

16. Teams and teachers use student learning data for identifying students in need of instructional support or enhancement.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

17. Instructional teams use student learning data to assess strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and instructional strategies.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

18. Which of the three indicators in the 'Use of Data for Improvement and Instruction' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Select one.

***Strong Classroom Instruction***

19. All teachers are guided by a document that aligns Minnesota Academic Standards, curriculum, instruction and assessment.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

20. All teachers clearly state the lesson's topic, theme, and learning objectives.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

21. All teachers interact managerially with students (i.e. reinforcing rules and procedures).

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

22. All teachers interact socially with students (i.e. noticing and understanding each student's background, asking about interests, inquiring about the family/friends).

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

23. During classroom instruction, all teachers check for understanding, provide feedback and adjust the lesson based on student needs.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

24. All teachers use a variety of instructional strategies to ensure **all** students are engaged and on task.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

25. All teachers summarize key concepts and re-teach when necessary.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

26. Which of the seven indicators in the 'Strong Classroom Instruction' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to



your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Select one.

***Cultural, Social and Emotional Competence***

27. All school staff demonstrates an understanding of community cultures, customs and values and model a respect for them.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

28. All teachers model, teach and reinforce social and emotional competencies.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

29. All teachers use a variety of strategies that honor student cultures, interests and strengths.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

30. Which of the three indicators in the 'Cultural, Social and Emotional Competence' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Select one.

***Parent and Family Engagement***

31. All teachers systematically report to parents (families) the student's mastery of specific standards-based objectives (in plain language that allows for understanding).

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

32. The school has a process in place for parents and families to provide input and feedback on student learning.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

33. The school regularly communicates with parents and families about student expectations and the importance of what parents can do at home to support their children's learning.

No development or implementation

Limited development or implementation

Full implementation

34. Which of the three indicators in the 'Parent and Family Engagement' section above has had the greatest impact on student achievement? All indicators are important to your school's success, but select one indicator that has influenced student outcomes the most.

Select one.