

Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools

1. Clear and Shared Focus

Everybody knows where they are going and why. The vision is shared—everybody is involved and all understand their role in achieving the vision. The vision is developed from common beliefs and values, creating a consistent focus.

2. High Standards and Expectations

Teachers and staff believe that all students can learn and that they can teach all students. There is recognition of barriers for some students to overcome, but the barriers are not insurmountable. Students become engaged in an ambitious and rigorous course of study.

3. Effective School Leadership

Effective leadership is required to implement change processes within the school. This leadership takes many forms. Principals often play this role, but so do teachers and other staff, including those in the district office. Effective leaders advocate, nurture, and sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

4. High Levels of Collaboration and Communication

There is constant collaboration and communication between and among teachers of all grades. Everybody is involved and connected, including parents and members of the community, to solve problems and create solutions.

5. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Aligned with Standards

Curriculum is aligned with the CT Standards. Research-based materials and teaching and learning strategies are implemented. There is a clear understanding of the assessment system, what is measured in various assessments and how it is measured.

6. Frequent Monitoring of Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning are continually adjusted based on frequent monitoring of student progress and needs. A variety of assessment procedures are used. The results of the assessment are used to improve student performances and also to improve the instructional program.

7. Focused Professional Development

Professional development for all educators is aligned with the school's and district's common focus, objectives, and high expectations. It is ongoing and based on high need areas.

8. Supportive Learning Environment

The school has a safe, civil, healthy and intellectually stimulating learning environment. Students feel respected and connected with the staff, and are engaged in learning. Instruction is personalized and small learning environments increase student contact with teachers.

9. High Levels of Community and Parent Involvement

There is a sense that all educational stakeholders have a responsibility to educate students, not just the teachers and staff in schools. Parents, as well as businesses, social service agencies, and community colleges/universities all play a vital role in this effort.