

and must receive some orientation. Equally important – as a school develops, and as other schools and researchers continue working on these issues – new, potentially more effective approaches will be created. A wise school will build in time for training of its faculty.

## **Chapter Four:**

### **SUCCESS INDICATORS OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS**

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Many of the schools in this project submitted additional information about student performance and school improvement. Below are some examples of how well these schools employ various measures to assess student achievement and use assessment results to inform instruction and school programs. Success indicators include rising scores on standardized tests, more students attending colleges and schools receiving additional funding. In addition, parents, students and teachers express their satisfaction with their schools in surveys and through other feedback mechanisms.

In the 1998 to 1999 school year, **Academy of the Pacific Rim** students outscored every other public middle school in Boston on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Achievement System Tests, except for two of the city's three schools that admit students on the basis of an entrance exam. The Academy attributes these results to the students' rigorous schooling and their efforts to ensure that all students are learning. At the Academy, students attend class from 8:05 a.m. until 4:10 p.m. 210 days every year. All students read Shakespeare in every grade and Mandarin Chinese is studied as a foreign language. Students at the Academy benefit from four different kinds of tutoring to support them in their classes, and about half of the students receive individualized academic support.

At **South Brunswick High School**, the percentage of the junior class (11th grade) passing all sections of the High School Proficiency Test (HSPT) has increased steadily. In October 1996, 78.3 percent of students passed all sections on the first attempt. In 1997, the percentage passing all sections rose to 80.1 percent, and in 1998 to 86.8 percent. The

school also sets a goal that at least 65 percent of its seniors will choose four-year colleges and at least 90 percent will have plans for further study at a college or technical school. In 1997, 55 percent of students chose four-year colleges and 90 percent had plans for some type of further schooling. In 1998, 60 percent chose four-year schools and 87 percent pursued some type of further schooling. In 1999, 67 percent chose four-year colleges and 94 percent had plans for further schooling.

At **Minnesota New Country School**, 70 percent of parents are satisfied with the learning their child is achieving at the school. At Aspen Community School, 79 percent of parents agree or strongly agree that the use of portfolios and conferences at Aspen is a meaningful assessment tool. Another indicator of success is high level endorsements. **Integrated Day Charter School**, for example, is one of three charter schools in the United States endorsed by the National Education Association. Further, as of July 1, 1999, it had a waiting list of 114 students.

At the **Urban Academy**, approximately 95 percent of graduating seniors have been accepted to college. All students who graduate from the Urban Academy are proficient in literature, math, social studies, science, library research, creative arts, art criticism and community service.

At **Branford High School**, percentages of students choosing four-year and two-year colleges are increasing. In 1996, 77.8 percent chose a four-year college, two-year college or other post-secondary institution. In 1997, this rose to 83.8 percent and held quite steady in the following two years – 80.5 percent in 1998 and 82.8 percent in 1999.

All but two of the graduating seniors at **Central Park East Secondary School** have passed the new (New York State) English Language Arts Regents Test. It affirms that the exhibition/portfolio process works.

**Lincoln Center of the Arts Middle School** reports improvement on the Grade 8 Wisconsin State Assessment System tests in 1998-1999 compared to 1997-1998. The number of students testing at or above proficient in reading increased from 40 percent to 47 percent and in social studies from 47 to 53 percent. The percentage of students testing at or above proficient on the Milwaukee Public Schools Writing Assessment increased from 18 percent in 1996-1997, to 34 percent in 1997-1998 and then in 1998-1999 to 58 percent.

In 1999, 75 percent of **Summit Middle School's** seventh graders scored proficient on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) reading section. Summit tied with another middle school for the highest percentage of students scoring at the proficient level in the Boulder Valley School District. Ninety-six percent of Summit's seventh graders scored at or above proficient, the highest percentage of all schools in the Boulder Valley School District. Summit scored equally well on the writing portion of the CSAP. Ninety-four percent of its seventh graders scored at or above proficient.

**Liberty Common School** sets specific goals with which to measure the achievement of students. The school sets the goal that 75 percent of third graders and 50 percent of fourth graders will be at or above proficient on the Colorado Student Assessment Program (CSAP) tests. In 1999, 91 percent of fourth graders scored at or above proficient on the CSAP reading test and 79 percent scored at or above on the fourth grade CSAP writing test as compared to 1998 results of 83 percent at or above in reading and 55 percent in writing. Surveys show that 89 percent of parents support the school's Core Knowledge Curriculum and its enhanced science and technology program. Eighty-six percent of parents are pleased, overall, with Liberty for their children.

**Peacham Elementary School** students are improving in meeting or exceeding state standards in math. In 1996, 17 percent of students met or exceeded state standards in mathematical concepts. In 1998, this rose to 50 percent and in 1999 to 76 percent. In mathematical problem solving, 1996 test results showed that 17 percent of students met or exceeded the state standard. In 1998 this rose to 20 percent and in 1999 to 47 percent. Finally, in the mathematical skill portion of the exam, in 1996, 50 percent met or exceeded the state standard in 1996, rising to 70 percent in 1998 and to 82 percent in 1999.

At **North Dade Center for Modern Languages**, students performed very well on the Florida Writes! assessment. The state requirement is that 67 percent must score at level three or above. In 1997, 74 percent of North Dade's students met that requirement. In 1998, the percentage testing three or above rose to 92 percent, and the school essentially sustained this higher level in 1999 with 91 percent of students scoring three and above.

These results show that public schools can make an enormous difference in the lives of young people. We conclude with the encouraging words of Secretary of Education Richard Riley:

In my travels around the country and conversations with educators at all levels, I'm finding a new realism mixed with hope for our schools, too. I see a willingness to take an honest accounting of the performance and condition of our schools, and I see a new resolve to meet these challenges and give all of our children real hope for the future. (Riley, p. 2)

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