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Educational
Accountability**

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Just for the Kids, Washington High School Best Practice Study, 2004-05

Friday Harbor High School, San Juan Island School District
Inglemoor High School, Northshore School District
Lewis & Clark High School, Spokane Public Schools
Nathan Hale High School, Seattle Public Schools
Olympia High School, Olympia School District

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Just for the Kids, Washington

High School Best Practice Study, 2004-2005

The Study

The Washington High School Best Practice Study was part of a larger national research study to investigate the practices of schools that consistently outperform their peers. Research teams studied schools in 20 states to identify key practices of consistently higher performing schools in a variety of policy contexts.

In Washington, research teams investigated five consistently higher performing and two average-performing high schools to determine the differences in practices between higher and average-performing high schools. Schools were identified through an in-depth analysis of academic achievement developed by the National Center for Educational Accountability (NCEA) using data publicly available from the state.

Conducted by NCEA researchers, the 2004-2005 Washington High School Best Practice Study received funding from Washington Mutual and The Broad Foundation.

Researchers used site-based interviews and observations, as well as the analysis of supportive documentation, to investigate the practices of each of the seven schools in the study. District-, school-, and classroom-level practices were studied in the five themes of NCEA's Best Practice Framework: Curriculum and Academic Goals; Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building; Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements; Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data; and Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment.

The Summary

Researchers wrote individual case studies about each studied school. Summary findings across the cases are presented in this report. Major findings from each case are presented first to provide a brief picture of each higher performing school studied. The composite picture of Best Practice Findings in Washington, based on differences detected between higher and average-performing schools, follows with examples from individual schools.

This report is a synthesis of findings including direct quotes and summary information drawn from case studies written by NCEA researchers. The JFTK Best Practice Framework, developed by NCEA, provides the structure for the findings.



Just for the Kids, Washington

High School Best Practice Study, 2004-2005

The School Identification Process

To study the practices of consistently higher performing schools, one must first identify those schools and compare their practices with those in a group of average-performing schools with similar demographics. The contrast between the practices in the two groups of schools is the focus of this study.

NCEA used publicly available student achievement data from the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to identify schools that consistently outperformed other schools with similar demographics in reading, mathematics, or writing in the 2001-02, 2002-03, and 2003-04 school years. The analysis included data from the tenth-grade Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).

To identify the schools, NCEA conducted a separate analysis for each subject (reading, mathematics, and writing) and year (2002, 2003, and 2004) to learn which schools outperformed their demographic peers on the percentage of students meeting the standard in writing or exceeding the standard in reading and mathematics. NCEA used a Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analysis to compare each school's percent of students meeting the standard with the percent that would be "predicted" or "typical" for a school in the state with the same demographics. The demographic and other variables used in this analysis were each school's percentage of low-income, African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American students; the size of the school; and the percentage of students tested in the subject and year in question. Normally, NCEA also prefers to take students' prior year test scores and length of enrollment in the same school into account, but that longitudinal information was not available in Washington.

NCEA ranked each school against the high schools in the rest of the state based on the extent to which it outperformed its "predicted" percent of students meeting or exceeding the standard. For example, a school that outperformed 95% of the schools in "performance relative to predicted" on the tenth-grade Mathematics WASL in 2002 would receive a percentile rank of 95 for that subject and year. These ranks were averaged separately for reading, mathematics, and writing across the three years to produce an overall average performance rank by subject. To be selected as higher performing for the purposes of this study, schools had to have overall average percentile ranks above 66.6 in at least two subjects (reading, mathematics, and writing).



Just for the Kids, Washington

High School Best Practice Study, 2004-2005

The Higher Performing Schools Studied

School	District	2004 Enrollment		2004 School-Wide Demographics						
		Grade Span	No. of Students	African American	Hispanic	White	Asian*	Native American*	Low Income	ELL
Friday Harbor High School	San Juan Island School District	9-12	350	0.3%	4.6%	91.4%	1.7%	2.0%	11.8%	0.0%
Inglemoor High School	Northshore School District	9-12	1,872	3.0%	3.4%	78.7%	14.0%	1.0%	6.8%	1.3%
Lewis & Clark High School	Spokane Public Schools	9-12	1,992	5.8%	3.2%	85.4%	3.6%	2.0%	27.3%	2.5%
Nathan Hale High School	Seattle Public Schools	9-12	1,079	10.4%	8.1%	61.3%	17.4%	2.9%	16.0%	5.8%
Olympia High School	Olympia School District	9-12	1,760	2.1%	3.1%	84.9%	8.6%	1.3%	10.9%	0.5%

* The Asian designation also includes Pacific Islanders. The Native American designation includes American Indians and Alaskan Natives.

Demographic and student enrollment data are taken from the JFTK-WA 2004 website. Site visits were conducted in Spring 2005.



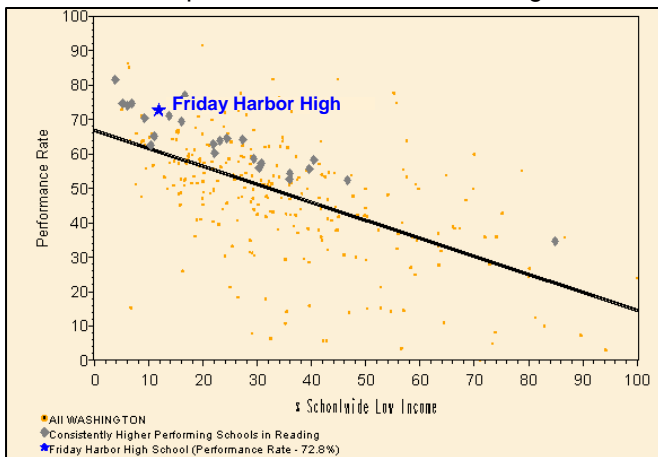
Friday Harbor High School San Juan Island School District

Just for the Kids, Washington NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Friday Harbor High School, which serves 350 ninth- through twelfth-grade students, is the only high school in San Juan Island School District (944 students). Friday Harbor's student population is 91.4% White, 4.6% Hispanic, 2.0% Native American, 1.7% Asian, and 0.3% African American. Within this student population, there are no English Language Learners, and 11.8% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 10th Grade Reading



Consistent Higher Performance

Friday Harbor High School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in reading, mathematics, and writing in an analysis that included all tenth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for that grade and those years, Friday Harbor High School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 80.0 in reading, 76.4 in mathematics, and 76.1 in writing.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	10	10	10	
Reading	93	60	81	80.0
Mathematics	95	77	56	76.4
Writing	81	80	68	76.1

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

Small district size allows for strong K-12 collaboration to ensure vertical alignment of the curriculum. Teachers meet in K-12 subject-area teams to ensure a deep understanding of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and the Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) provided by the state. In addition to curricular collaboration, teachers also use a late-start time once a week to help each other reflect upon their own classroom practice and make changes in it. Teachers and leaders say that the state accountability system has influenced instructional practices in a positive way—that the system has “tied us together” and “opened up the dialogue.” Following the study and development of learning standards and instructional practices, Friday Harbor staff use data from the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), SAT, PSAT, and Iowa Test of Educational Development (ITED) to analyze the effectiveness of their practices on student learning. Students are also responsible for tracking their own progress and attendance. Finally, a student advisory program provides a support system for every single student. This program consists of multiage groups of 15 students that meet at least once a week with an advisor who remains with the group throughout high school.

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Washington.



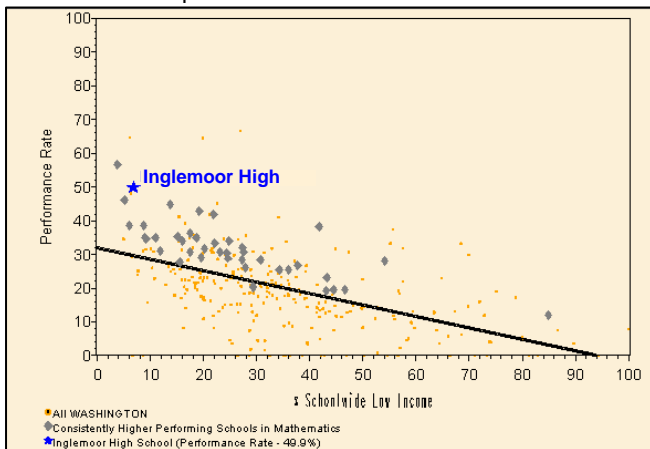
Inglemoor High School Northshore School District

Just for the Kids, Washington NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Inglemoor High School, which serves 1,872 ninth- through twelfth-grade students, is one of four high schools in Northshore School District (19,484 students). Inglemoor's student population is 78.7% White, 14.0% Asian, 3.4% Hispanic, 3.0% African American, and 1.0% Native American. Within this student population, 1.3% are English Language Learners, and 6.8% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 10th Grade Mathematics



Consistent Higher Performance

Inglemoor High School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in reading, mathematics, and writing in an analysis that included all tenth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for that grade and those years, Inglemoor High School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 87.6 in reading, 95.7 in mathematics, and 82.3 in writing.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	10	10	10	
Reading	95	85	83	87.6
Mathematics	95	97	95	95.7
Writing	84	85	78	82.3

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

Northshore's superintendent stresses that Inglemoor High School staff, like staff at other schools in the district, define success first in terms of every student reaching high academic standards (the "objective part"), but then also in terms of every student having a quality experience (the "subjective part"). He states that "students should be excited about learning; parents should be thrilled." High-quality support systems ensure that both teachers and students can successfully reach high standards of performance. Longer blocks of time in the school schedule support "lots of interaction between teachers and students"; instructional assistants offer direct help in classrooms; and a senior culminating project provides "application of knowledge" and "connections to real world issues and problems." Inglemoor's principal constantly monitors the effects of these support systems through data. "The greatest impact on Inglemoor in the past three years has been having data that are accessible to teachers," she asserts. She adds that the access to data promotes dialogue and the action needed to make curricular and instructional adjustments that improve student learning.

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Washington.



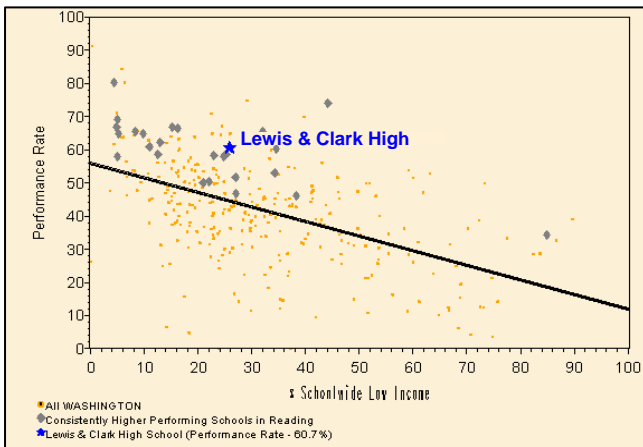
Lewis & Clark High School Spokane Public Schools

Just for the Kids, Washington NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Lewis & Clark High School, which serves 1,992 ninth- through twelfth-grade students, is one of six high schools in Spokane Public Schools (30,843 students). Lewis & Clark's student population is 85.4% White, 5.8% African American, 3.6% Asian, 3.2% Hispanic, and 2.0% Native American. Within this student population, 2.5% are English Language Learners, and 27.3% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2003 10th Grade Reading



Consistent Higher Performance

Lewis & Clark High School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in reading, mathematics, and writing in an analysis that included all tenth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for that grade and those years, Lewis & Clark High School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 93.2 in reading, 97.7 in mathematics, and 80.3 in writing.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004. Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	10	10	10	
Reading	85	98	96	93.2
Mathematics	98	98	97	97.7
Writing	95	62	85	80.3

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

All high schools in Spokane Public Schools have moved toward consistency in “what is being taught and tested.” Teacher curriculum guides contain Grade Level Expectations, lists of acceptable classroom evidence, assessment measures, and aligned instructional materials. Although there is a great degree of specificity about what is to be taught and learned by grade and subject, teachers do not feel the curriculum is prescriptive. An English teacher states, “There is much more of a common focus. Eight years ago I did not really know what I was supposed to teach; it was more like, ‘here is the textbook.’” Other teachers add that while it is clear what skills and knowledge students are to acquire, teachers have the freedom to decide how to develop those skills and that knowledge. The principal at Lewis & Clark spends two hours per day in the classrooms looking for the observable attributes of the curriculum. Teachers have time to collaborate weekly. All teachers use the *Understanding by Design* approach to structure and deliver the curriculum. Teachers state that accountability and high expectations for all students have led to far greater amounts of instructional differentiation and student engagement. District assessments supplement state and standardized testing to provide data about individual student progress. “Nobody is afraid of [sharing] what their students are doing; if we see improvement in scores, we share the practices,” a teacher stated.

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Washington.



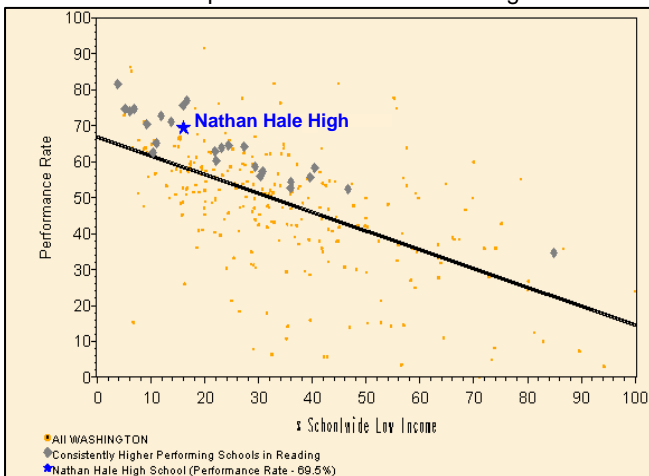
Nathan Hale High School Seattle Public Schools

Just for the Kids, Washington NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Nathan Hale High School, which serves 1,079 ninth- through twelfth-grade students, is the 1 of 22 high schools in Seattle Public Schools (46,164 students). Nathan Hale's student population is 61.3% White, 17.4% Asian, 10.4% African American, 8.1% Hispanic, and 2.9% Native American. Within this student population, 5.8% are English Language Learners, and 16.0% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2004 10th Grade Reading



Consistent Higher Performance

Nathan Hale High School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in reading and mathematics in an analysis that included all tenth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for that grade and those years, Nathan Hale High School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 82.6 in reading and 78.5 in mathematics.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	10	10	10	
Reading	79	92	77	82.6
Mathematics	91	79	66	78.5

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

A multi-year educational reform movement has led to a “remodel of the entire structure” at Nathan Hale. While curriculum development has been decentralized in Seattle Public Schools, development is aligned at each school with state learning expectations and assessments. To initiate the reform movement, Nathan Hale began with a “Ninth-Grade Academy,” and then proceeded with the development of an “Integrated Studies Program” for tenth-grade students. Nathan Hale is affiliated with the Coalition of Essential Schools (CES), which led to the decisions to de-track all students and to forge powerful collaborative structures for both teachers and students. Working with the common principles of CES, Nathan Hale promotes inclusion and a strong belief that all students can learn and think in depth. Instructional practices and arrangements foster high expectations for all, personalized teaching and learning, the model of student-as-worker and teacher-as-coach, and an emphasis on student demonstration of mastered skills. While teachers see the use of data as critical, they are careful that “fixed pieces of data” from the past don’t “limit teachers’ perceptions of student potential.” Rich and varied assessment measures mark the classrooms across Nathan Hale, which is ranked highest among Seattle’s comprehensive public high schools for correlation between its students’ core grades and subsequent University of Washington GPAs. Finally, staff at Nathan Hale state that the very structure of their school was designed to minimize the need for interventions. They seek constantly to adjust so they can prevent the need for interventions.

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Washington.



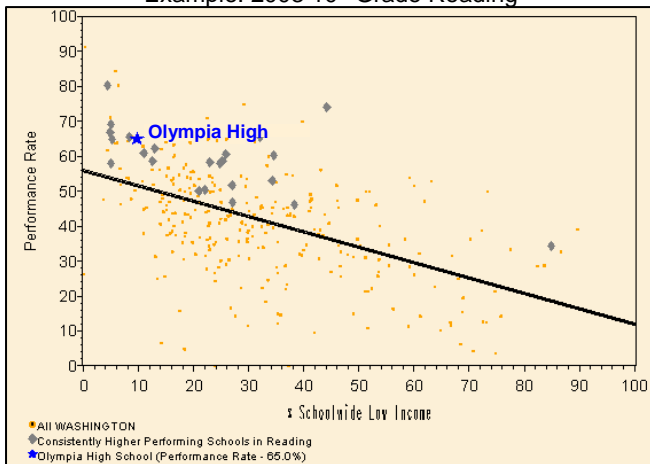
Olympia High School Olympia School District

Just for the Kids, Washington NCEA Executive Summary

The School

Olympia High School, which serves 1,760 ninth- through twelfth-grade students, is one of three high schools in Olympia School District (9,234 students). Olympia’s student population is 84.9% White, 8.6% Asian, 3.1% Hispanic, 2.1% African American, and 1.3% Native American. Within this student population, 0.5% are English Language Learners, and 10.9% receive free or reduced lunch services.

Example: 2003 10th Grade Reading



Consistent Higher Performance

Olympia High School is higher performing than demographically similar schools in reading and mathematics in an analysis that included all tenth-grade achievement data from 2002 to 2004. According to Weighted Least Squares (WLS) regression analyses for that grade and those years, Olympia High School demonstrated overall average performance ranks of 75.4 in reading and 77.1 in mathematics.

Schools were identified for study based on 2002-2004 data, with site visits occurring during the 2004-2005 school year. Differences between the demographics reported in this case study and the values shown on the scatter plot reveal demographic changes in the school between 2002 and 2005.

Subject	2002 Percentile Rank	2003 Percentile Rank	2004 Percentile Rank	Overall Avg. Rank* 2002-2004
Grade	10	10	10	
Reading	80	91	54	75.4
Mathematics	90	70	72	77.1

*The overall average rank is a weighted average of the separate percentile ranks shown, using the number of tested students in the grade as weights.

Major Findings

While the elementary and middle schools have traditionally been more involved in district-level curricular alignment than the high schools, that tradition is beginning to change. Olympia High School staff members state that they align all activities closely with the state’s Grade Level Expectations (GLEs) and that the school sets its goals in response to state assessment results. A district K-12 mathematics task force observed that elementary students made excellent progress, but that there was a plateau effect—and sometimes even regression—at the middle school. This observation led to a greater study of high school student achievement data and to far more articulation across the school levels. Collaboration within the school occurs primarily through departmental structures. One teacher states, “Collaboration time gives us an opportunity to learn from each other, discuss how things went, and make informal assessments about whether we are making progress.” All curricular areas at Olympia have a reading and writing focus. Teachers have divided accountability. Social studies teachers work on expository writing, English teachers on persuasive writing, and vocational education teachers on technical writing. Upon requests from school or departmental leaders for data or for training, a new district assessment director provides on-site consulting. Staff use a variety of strategies to help struggling students, including credit retrieval and double dosing.

The entire case study may be viewed at http://www.just4kids.org/bestpractice/study_framework.cfm?study=Washington.



Washington High School Best Practice Study: Findings

Based on the Themes of The JFTK Framework

Five organizing themes provided the structure for studying the practices of consistently higher performing schools. The themes are listed below.

1. Curriculum and Academic Goals
2. Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building
3. Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements
4. Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data
5. Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment

These themes are used below to summarize the findings of this study. The themes represent the broad topics that connect best practices across different school system levels—district, school, and classroom. Together, these themes capture the primary instructional activities undertaken by school systems and represent the major content areas in which practices of higher performing school systems differ from their average-performing counterparts.

The first theme described in The JFTK Best Practice Framework forms the foundation of The Framework. Each of the other four themes rests upon the assumption that there is absolute clarity about what is to be taught and learned by grade level—pre-K-12. Therefore, Curriculum and Academic Goals forms the base of The Framework. Building upon that base, higher performing schools are deliberate about selecting and developing their human resources (Theme Two: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building) and equipping all staff with evidence-based tools and strategies to deliver the curriculum (Theme Three: Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements). With people, tools, and strategies in place, higher performing schools regularly monitor student progress (Theme Four: Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data). Finally, higher performing schools are quick to respond to student achievement data—recognizing success and intervening or adjusting whenever necessary to ensure all students reach the stated standards (Theme Five: Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment).



Theme One: Curriculum and Academic Goals

"What is Taught and Learned"

This theme focuses on the learning target. What is it that we expect all students to know and be able to do by grade and subject? Consistently higher performing school systems have clear academic targets from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Principals and teachers understand the learning goals and understand that these goals are for all students and are non-negotiable.

Specific Washington Findings: Curriculum and Academic Goals

- **Schools focus on a rigorous curriculum that exceeds the expectations set by the state standards.**
 - The principal explains that the high school needs to do more than just get the students through the WASL. She also looks at what courses the universities require. The

superintendent added, “I have not said this explicitly, but I will get more clear about this. Every kid needs to be ready to go to college.” (Friday Harbor, San Juan Island School District)

- The principal is the motivating force behind the school’s mission and goals and how they connect to the district strategic plan. The guiding principles for all school improvement planning focus on student learning and high expectations for all students. (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
- While the local learning goals are deeply aligned with the state standards, leaders emphasized that the district curriculum is an expansion of the state standards. (Lewis & Clark, Spokane Public Schools)
- **Schools focus on reading, writing, and mathematics and the integration of those subjects across the curriculum.**
 - In the content areas, mathematics has become the number one priority in the school. The school improvement plan used to deal more with school climate, but has shifted toward academic goals. School climate has become an integrated part of all facets of school improvement, which are now more centered on student performance. (Friday Harbor, San Juan Island School District)
 - “Not only can teachers see their own content area [online from the state],” remarked the principal, “but all of the other packets are available to teachers outside their subject area, so everyone is speaking the same language.” (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
 - “Every secondary school in Northshore sent a team of eight teachers who were paid for all of the [professional development] sessions on integration. It shows non-reading teachers how their content does allow for reading to be taught,” explained the principal. “We’re all responsible for reading.” (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
 - Spokane Public Schools and Lewis & Clark High School have maintained focus on clearly stated goals. Ninety percent of all students need to meet or exceed standards in literacy and mathematics in 2007. (Lewis & Clark, Spokane Public Schools)
 - A district administrator stated, “The high school work is emerging. We have really strong curriculum working for K-8. We have teams of teachers working on the language arts and math now.” (Nathan Hale, Seattle Public Schools)
 - The curriculum for the Ninth-Grade Academy is focused on building skills in the core content areas. Students learn skills across the academic disciplines, and then coursework reinforces those skills. Tenth-grade students in the Integrated Studies Program have a more coordinated curriculum, with major projects pulling knowledge from the core subject courses. (Nathan Hale, Seattle Public Schools)
 - The principal indicates that for the last two years the focus of all goals has been on reading and writing across the curriculum, culminating in the creation of a common writing, language, and reading methodology. (Olympia, Olympia School District)
- **Districts provide continual support to schools to ensure that educators are well-prepared to implement the curriculum.**
 - The district provides resources—support services and time—to make sure the curriculum is well-developed and delivered consistently. “They don’t want one high school going out and doing things on their own like an entrepreneur. They want consistency,” explained the principal. (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
 - District curriculum coordinators worked with representative teachers to develop teacher curriculum guides. These guides contain Grade Level Expectations, lists of acceptable evidence of student learning (classroom evidence and assessment measures), and aligned instructional materials. District staff coordinate curriculum training and introduce new

instructional programs to the principals. All teachers receive training as well, and instructional coaches are on-site to offer classroom support. (Lewis & Clark, Spokane Public Schools)

- One district administrator said, “We have established a district K-12 math task force.” District administrators state that while the curricular processes have been more directed toward the elementary and middle schools, they are now turning their attention to the high schools. (Olympia, Olympia School District)

- **Teachers plan lessons and initiate student learning activities that build depth of knowledge relative to learning objectives.**

- Although there is a great degree of specificity about what needs to be taught and learned for each grade level and subject, teachers do not feel the curriculum is prescriptive. The core curriculum focuses on the development of common skills instead of content. Teachers can decide what content they want to use to develop those skills. A mathematics teacher stated, “You have to cover the core curriculum. What reading, writing, and thinking skills do we want students to be proficient in? But you have the freedom to decide what the best way is to develop these skills.” (Lewis & Clark, Spokane Public Schools)
- Teachers implement the curriculum using the Five Habits of Mind: Viewpoint, Evidence, Relevance, Connection, and Supposition. This is the framework and context for much of the teaching and learning at Nathan Hale High School, where the goal is to get students to become critical thinkers. (Nathan Hale, Seattle Public Schools)



Theme Two: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

“Selecting and Developing Leaders and Teachers”

This second theme focuses on the selection and development of a school system's most precious commodity—people. Once the academic goals of the system are clear, the leaders and teachers are selected and given professional development opportunities to make these goals a reality for every learner in the system.

Specific Washington Findings: Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

- **Principal professional development is constant and focused on student learning. Principals also participate in teacher training to enable them to provide instructional support.**

- One of the key priorities for Northshore’s superintendent is to provide support for principals—to make sure principals are really instructional leaders and are familiar with best practice. She wants to make sure that principals can support teacher collaboration. (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
- The assistant superintendent explained, “We separate out all operational issues and have just instructional issues for principals to discuss. The agendas are built around the notion that curriculum development and improving student outcomes will come through the leadership of principals and teachers.” (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
- District administrators indicated that the overarching theme for the past three years has been to instill the idea that the principals are instructional leaders. The monthly principal conferences focus on teaching and learning issues—in particular on learning the content of the curriculum. Principals spend two hours per day in the classroom looking for evident attributes of the curriculum. (Lewis & Clark, Spokane Public Schools)

- A district administrator explained that principals who plan in-service activities “look at data and focus on some kind of professional development that will provide meaning for us as we improve student learning.” (Olympia, Olympia School District)
- **Principals and teachers work as teams to implement changes in a shared-leadership effort.**
 - A district leader stated, “Principals and teacher leaders in feeder patterns also meet together to vertically align what they are doing. It’s more systematic and just a better way to move the change process forward.” (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
 - One teacher stated, “This is the process that keeps people here, how we collectively make a decision. This is a process where we all count.” (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
 - Aside from formal mentoring, Lewis & Clark offers additional support to new teachers. Department chairs partner with new teachers. School administrators rely on department chairs to play a leadership role through mentoring, engaging staff in data-driven dialogue, sharing instructional improvement techniques, and using the walk-through protocol. (Lewis & Clark, Spokane Public Schools)
 - The principal seeks collaborative, reform-minded teachers who will contribute to a school culture of inclusion, trust, and respect. Doing so maintains a staff dynamic that is conducive to consensus decision-making. (Nathan Hale, Seattle Public Schools)
- **Teachers focus on student academic issues, individualized learning plans, and the interpretation and use of assessment data during collaborative planning meetings.**
 - Within the school, Critical Friends Groups (CFG) of six to ten teachers meet over the course of at least two years to examine their own classroom practice and make changes. Using structures called protocols, CFG members help each other fine-tune their practice by analyzing student work, case studies of students, classroom dilemmas, teacher lessons and units, etc. (Friday Harbor, San Juan Island School District)
 - The district is committed to creating professional learning communities in each school. One department chair stated, “We have been given the freedom by our administration to decide how we want to use the hour of collaboration time [each week]. What we want in our collaborative time is teachers looking at student work, how they teach, and how they can do it better.” (Lewis & Clark, Spokane Public Schools)
 - Teachers indicate that collaboration has made a huge impact on their teaching. One teacher stated, “Our collaboration time is such a valuable hour that we spend together. We collaborated before, but not in such a deliberate manner. We went through a hard time at first. This was not a group that was used to collaborating; it used to be a gripe session. Now it is great, and there is not enough time.” (Lewis & Clark, Spokane Public Schools)
 - From the beginning, collaboration has been an integral and essential part of Nathan Hale’s reform movement and culture. Every teacher at Nathan Hale is required to be in a Critical Friends Group, which is the school’s primary form of professional development. A coordinator stated, “Part of our commitment to CES (Coalition of Effective Schools) is to be reflective about our practices. When people collaborate, they naturally go into protocol mode: they get right to work, they’re very focused, and [they] achieve things. No one person has all of the answers. The only way we’re going to move forward or move kids forward is to do it together.” Unfortunately, “staggering” budget losses have led to a reduction in paid collaboration time from once a day to once a week. Every person interviewed expressed regret about the loss of collaboration time. (Nathan Hale, Seattle Public Schools)
 - Teachers indicate that the act of collaboration has the most impact on student achievement. One teacher stated, “We have areas of focus. We focused on active learning, reading, and reading strategies...across the curriculum. Collaboration time gives us an

opportunity to learn from each other, discuss how things went, and make an informal assessment about whether we are making progress.” (Olympia, Olympia School District)

- Every school has a visitation fund, which is used to provide opportunities for teachers to visit other classrooms, either within the building, in another school in the district, or outside the district. A science teacher explained that his department decided to pursue training in reading: “In science, we felt that we were not that qualified to teach reading and writing. High school teachers are the most phobic of teaching reading. You have to bridge an educational gap for professionals who are trying to do their best in their classrooms. It is a need nationwide. Teachers need reading and writing skills for their high school students.” (Olympia, Olympia School District)



Theme Three: Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

“The Right Stuff—Time and Tools”

This theme focuses on the “things” that higher performing school systems use—the arrangement of time, the instructional resources and materials, technology, etc. Strong instructional leaders and highly qualified teachers need evidence-based tools and resources to reach high standards with every learner.

Specific Washington Findings: Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

- **School leaders and teachers feel the state accountability system has positively influenced instructional practices.**
 - The superintendent stated, “We like the WASL (Washington Assessment of Student Learning) and the EALRs (Essential Academic Learning Requirements). I never saw such large quantities of great teaching as I see now.” A mathematics teacher added, “The WASL and the EALRs helped me identify where I need to focus more. The steps and components building up to the WASL have improved my teaching tremendously.” (Friday Harbor, San Juan Island School District)
 - Teachers note that changes in their practices and arrangements did occur in response to the accountability requirements. One teacher stated, “We had to analyze all of our curriculum—help bring the curriculum in line.” Another teacher added, “We did not focus on lower-end students until recently.” The principal felt that the new expectations for higher performance from all students led to a much more robust support system for all teachers and for all students. (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
 - The superintendent stated, “When I first came here nine years ago, principals did not know the test scores for their schools. And that was a conscious decision because they didn’t want people to feel bad. When new requirements came out for testing, some teachers were afraid and kind of fearful that they would be seen as failures because their test scores may not be as high. It’s not about test scores. If we are aligning the curriculum and using best practices...it’s going to happen. So let’s not get all in a twit about test scores. Let’s sit and look at data and reflect on it. What’s going on here? How can I do some different things? People need to be calm about data and not be afraid of it. We empower people to look at the data and see if we can do things differently.” (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
 - The WASL has had a positive influence on the curriculum. A number of teachers agreed that since the test requires students to write what they are thinking, the teaches are now using strategies to teach students to “think and apply, not just know.” Another teacher stated, “We worked on skills that needed to be developed. It gives us focus.” (Lewis & Clark, Spokane Public Schools)

- District administrators indicate that the accountability system has had a significant impact on the way principals spend their time. Principals spend more time in direct interactions with students and with teachers in classrooms, outlining expectations in curricular areas. A teacher added, “Hand-in-hand with state mandates, we learn more about how to teach than we used to. Before we did not know how to address higher level thinking skills in writing. I [have] learned so much more about reading and writing.” (Olympia, Olympia School District)
- **Teachers use instructional strategies that effectively meet students’ needs. Assignments and instruction are differentiated to ensure all students master the intended learning objectives.**
 - There is a focus on differentiated instruction. Teachers are encouraged to address different learning styles and emphasize student projects that actively engage students in the learning process. (Friday Harbor, San Juan Island School District)
 - One teacher stated that by having some block periods in the schedule, teachers are able to provide more depth to instruction and to pay more attention to individual students. Another teacher added, “The school schedule causes a need for more variety and activity in our classes.” (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
 - A new senior culminating project requires teachers to approach instruction differently. The project is to support the development of life-long learners and allow students to demonstrate skills, knowledge, and experience gained in previous years. A freshman culminating project has also been instituted to prepare students for the senior experience. Teachers are playing active roles as mentors and coaches. (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
 - Teachers are expected to use varied instructional strategies. District and school administrators state that they look for student engagement and different strategies when they visit classrooms. One district administrator stated, “At the high schools, the big challenge has been how deep the [old] structure was of how the work had been defined; [that is,] not all students are going to get the delivery of a particular content. You have to break through that. With accountability, every teacher is building student capacity.” A teacher added, “The norm is that you have to be able to implement different instructional practices. Five years ago that was the exception.” (Lewis & Clark, Spokane Public Schools)
 - Because students aren’t grouped by ability, differentiated instruction is a key strategy for helping all students achieve at Nathan Hale. Teachers adjust how they teach a subject, not what they teach, depending on the learning needs of their students. This ensures that students at all levels receive a challenging curriculum. (Nathan Hale, Seattle Public Schools)
- **School and district leaders encourage teachers to use data to make instructional changes in order to reach learning goals.**
 - The principal reported asking the reading, mathematics, and science departments to look at student performance within their classrooms and predict how well they thought individual students would do on the tenth-grade WASL. “We can predict what the student will make on the WASL with 99% accuracy...unless *something* changes,” explained the principal. “Now here’s the important step,” she added: “What can we do to change this? ‘What are the instructional strategies to change this?’ From there we start developing strategies for how to use achievement data to help students achieve.” (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
 - The principal notes that the primary purpose of assessing student performance is to learn to make instructional adjustments. An English teacher added, “I have a database for every student and record their scores. We can compare the scores from the fall and the spring and see whether there is improvement or not, or improvement on one aspect but not the

other. So now I can really individualize my instruction to the students' needs. We score writing together. Nobody is afraid of [showing] what their students are doing. If we see improvement in scores, we share the practices." (Lewis & Clark, Spokane Public Schools)

- Teachers say that the WASL has given them data to use to differentiate instruction. It has also led to a much greater focus on reading and writing across the entire curriculum. (Olympia, Olympia School District)



Theme Four: Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data

"Knowing the Learners and the Numbers"

After clearly identifying what is to be taught and learned by grade and subject and ensuring that the schools are equipped with the staff and the tools to successfully deliver the curriculum, the school system then asks and answers an important question: "How are we going to know if students learned what we said they would learn?"

Specific Washington Findings: Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data

- **District and school data reports and assessments provide student performance data throughout the year. Teachers receive training and support needed to use the data effectively.**
 - The superintendent has consistently and persistently promoted the use of data in the district. The assistant superintendent stated, "We've been in a movement of becoming more of a data-driven district. We are building a comfort level of using data and analyzing data to guide decisions." The principal added, "The greatest impact on Inglemoor in the past three years has been having data that is accessible to teachers." The district data analyst goes to the schools and discusses data trends. (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
 - The district is implementing district-wide unit assessments for all grades and subjects. The district also administers fall and spring writing assessments to all tenth-grade students. The scoring rubric for these assessments aligns with the state scoring system, and school staff add the results to students' portfolios. The Testing and Evaluation Department organizes focus meetings at each school, where they discuss the data with groups of teachers representing various departments and grades. (Lewis & Clark, Spokane Public Schools)
 - The district records all collected data in the district data system. As a student moves through the school system, teachers can access all of the scores for that student. The district also provides the teachers with prior performance data on their current students. (Lewis & Clark, Spokane Public Schools)
 - The focus is on providing schools with tools that they can use to improve student achievement. The district hired an assessment director to analyze data for this purpose. This director provides on-site consulting services, talks with faculty about school data, and trains staff to translate their data into action. The superintendent stated, "She [the assessment director] has a great way of analyzing data and sharing that data in an understandable way." (Olympia, Olympia School District)
- **School leaders and teachers collaborate regularly on student performance data. Assessment results are reviewed openly in various group settings.**
 - The learning improvement team, consisting of the principal, lead teachers, and parents, meets at least five times per year to look at data and track progress towards school improvement goals. The principal also starts every school year by meeting with the staff to

discuss the school's scores. The principal even uses a PowerPoint presentation to show students their performance compared to other schools. He then challenges students to be more competitive. (Friday Harbor, San Juan Island School District)

- The principal notes that she and her staff receive data from a multitude of assessments. That allows them to see trends and “look at individual students or groups of students and help them learn better.” (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
- As the current principal began her tenure, she wanted to examine the correlation between students' WASL scores and their GPAs. In various teams, she asked, “What are you expecting [students who score a level one on the WASL] to show in your classroom? Does that translate? What behaviors are you seeing that would indicate those levels? Does our coursework, using GPA as a marker, correlate to what they are achieving on these assessments?” (Nathan Hale, Seattle Public Schools)

- **Teachers actively use the data provided by the district and the school. They also generate additional assessment measures to provide even greater feedback about student performance, which helps teachers predict how students will score on the state assessment.**

- Teachers administer final examinations that have been designed to look like the WASL. Teachers score the test together to ensure consistency. Teacher-developed assessments are administered frequently, and teachers have students assess one another's work. At other times, teachers may provide rubrics and have students evaluate their own work as well as adjust it to demonstrate greater mastery. (Friday Harbor, San Juan Island School District)
- The principal explains that a student's WASL score is just one indicator among many used to guide instruction. In addition, common data that teachers share for projects and data from in-classroom assessments drive conversation about curricular or instructional changes. (Nathan Hale, Seattle Public Schools)
- Teachers look to district data reports to support and assist them. Teachers use the data for instructional decision-making. English, science, and mathematics teachers all state that access to the data has led to the opportunity to intervene much earlier if a student needs additional assistance. (Olympia, Olympia School District)



Theme Five: Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment

"Ensuring All Children Learn"

The most important question of all follows the monitoring of student performance: "What are we going to do if students do not learn the knowledge and skills we said they would learn?" Higher performing school systems have *pyramids of intervention* that provide immediate and intense intervention at multiple levels when learning is interrupted.

Specific Washington Findings: Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment

- **Multiple levels of intervention exist to assist students who are struggling academically.**

- The principal and teacher leaders meet weekly to identify and monitor struggling students and to discuss interventions. Teachers modify approaches and tutors work with students in an after-school study club three days per week. (Friday Harbor, San Juan Island School District)

- The assistant superintendent describes a credit-recovery program that is funded by the district through Washington's I-728 Initiative. The Credit Advancement Program provides an intensive semester of instruction in reading and mathematics. Class size is limited to 15 students. Educators in the district are quick to point out that many other interventions exist prior to turning to this expensive alternative. The first line of intervention is always in the classroom. (Inglemoor, Northshore School District)
- Every nine weeks, school administrators and teachers identify students who are not meeting standards. Various extended learning opportunities are then used to get students back on track. As soon as students experience difficulty, teachers send them to the school's tutoring center, which provides after-school tutoring services every day from 2:45 PM to 3:40 PM. Students using the center receive a weekly progress report and daily records are kept to ensure students are staying current with their work. In addition to the tutoring center, staff offer extended learning opportunities in Saturday school or summer school. Students leaving eighth grade below standards are strongly encouraged to participate in the very rigorous summer program preceding their high school entrance. The summer experience provides a more individualized learning environment for the students. (Lewis & Clark, Spokane School District)
- One of the key intervention strategies is to monitor students on a daily basis. Teachers do this by using log books in core subject areas to record students' daily assignments, monitor their class readings, and track homework performance. Teachers monitor student progress and differentiate instruction based on individual students' log book entries. (Nathan Hale, Seattle Public Schools)
- Credit retrieval and double dosing are just two of a variety of strategies used to assist struggling students. Students with credit deficiencies are placed in an academic alternatives program to help them retrieve credit. The school also has a computer network through which students can work individually to retrieve credit. Two double blocks are scheduled each day for students who need additional instructional time in reading and writing. (Olympia, Olympia School District)



Washington High School Best Practice Study: Conclusion

Based on the Themes of The JFTK Framework

Researchers conducted site visits to seven high schools in Washington, identified through the NCEA analysis. Summaries of the findings of those practices that appeared to distinguish consistently higher performing high schools from average-performing ones are presented below by theme.

The Findings

Curriculum and Academic Goals

The integration of reading and writing across the entire curriculum was a focal point in the visited high schools. While the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) were clearly covered in the curriculum of all schools, higher performing schools were quick to indicate that they needed to do much more than “just get the kids through the WASL.” Districts provided a variety of resources to ensure that the curriculum was well-developed and delivered consistently. Typically, district leaders worked with representative teachers from across schools and departments to develop curriculum guides.

Staff Selection, Leadership, and Capacity Building

Districts centered development and support activities for principals on building their skills to serve as instructional leaders. From limiting principals’ involvement in operational discussions to providing training in specific best practices, districts demonstrated their belief that “improving student outcomes will come through the leadership of principals and teachers.” Teachers repeatedly referenced collaborative planning meetings as the strongest source of teacher capacity building. Teachers indicated that the nature of these meetings had changed from “gripe sessions” to highly focused reflections on teaching and learning.

Instructional Programs, Practices, and Arrangements

School leaders and teachers believed that the state accountability system had positively influenced instructional practices in their schools. In particular, teachers noted that they now had a sharper focus on the skills students needed to acquire—and a stronger responsibility to ensure all students acquired them. This responsibility led to the development of more robust systems of support for both teachers and students. Teachers considered differentiated instruction to be the instructional strategy that best assisted students of all abilities to reach higher levels of performance. The ability to accurately differentiate instruction was seen as a direct function of the student performance data now available for teachers.

Monitoring: Compilation, Analysis, and Use of Data

Districts focused on providing school leaders and teachers with the data and tools needed to improve student achievement. A number of districts had established new leadership positions in the area of assessment and evaluation. Individuals in those positions continually analyzed performance data and shared the data with the staff in understandable ways. School leaders and teachers collaborated regularly on student performance data. In addition to relying on district- and school-level assessment reports, teachers also generated additional assessment measures to provide even greater feedback about student performance.

Recognition, Intervention, and Adjustment

Multiple levels of intervention existed at the district, school, and classroom levels to assist students who were struggling academically. The primary intervention activities centered around providing additional resources—time and staff—to ensure all students reached mastery on the stated curriculum. Tutoring, double dosing, credit-recovery programs, and daily monitoring systems were all mentioned as examples of intervention.

Next Steps

NCEA's state-study protocol assumes that the state framework of best practices will be built based on a three-year study of consistently higher performing and average-performing schools at the elementary-school level (Year One), middle-school level (Year Two), and high-school level (Year Three). Having completed studies of elementary and high schools, JFTK-Washington's next step should be to continue with an exploration of higher performing middle schools. After exploring these themes at all levels, JFTK-Washington could continue with a targeted study of issues that emerged during the previous work in Washington schools.

One of the dangers of studying consistently higher performing schools is drawing conclusions based on a single school example. To avoid this danger, the conclusions for the JFTK-Washington High School Best Practice Study, 2004-05, focus on a description of the practices that are most consistent across the higher performing schools in this study and that can be distinguished in quantity or quality from the same practices in average-performing schools of the study. While any individual case study may cite different factors or practices than those noted above, we highlight those practices that are found to be systematically different between the higher performing schools as a group and the average-performing schools as a group. Finally, the practices highlighted in the conclusion of this study have also been informed by the findings from a much larger body of schools studied (300+ across five years and 20 states) to help determine meaning in the context of Washington.