



Best Practices in High-Performing Schools

Fiscal Year 2018

Report to the Legislature

As required by Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.35, subdivision 4

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Legislative Charge

This report is consistent with the requirements of Minnesota Statutes, section 120B.35, subdivision 4, which states, “Consistent with the requirements of this section, beginning June 20, 2012, the commissioner must annually report to the public and the legislature best practices implemented in those schools that are identified as high performing under federal expectations.”

Introduction

This report provides the public and the Legislature the practices that may contribute to the high performance of students; however, it is important to note that a conclusive causation between the identified implementation of best practices and high student performance 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.

Analysis

As Minnesota has transitioned to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), federal expectations have not included the identification of high-performing schools. Minnesota will begin recognizing schools for high performance on indicators used in the state’s new accountability system in August of 2018.

While no schools were identified as high performing under federal expectations in fiscal year 2018 because of the transition to ESSA, Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) staff – in accordance with Minnesota’s ESSA state plan – have begun developing a non-exhaustive list of evidence-based practices (EBPs) from which districts and schools may choose. The development of this list comes in response to stakeholder feedback during the ESSA plan development process, which indicated that many Minnesota stakeholders were interested in MDE creating and using such a list. Especially as the list is non-exhaustive and schools are not required to choose evidence-based practices from it, many saw the list as a useful starting point for schools and districts working to improve.

The practices on the list meet the evidence definitions set out by ESSA. Section 8101(21)(A) of ESSA lays out three tiers of evidence. To meet the definition of “strong evidence,” a practice must be supported by “at least one well-designed and well-implemented experimental study.” To meet the definition of “moderate evidence,” a practice must be supported by “at least one well-designed and well-implemented quasi-experimental study.” To meet the definition of “promising evidence,” a practice must be supported by “at least one well-designed and well-implemented correlational study with statistical controls for selection bias.” Each of the practices on the list falls into one of these tiers.

Since Minnesota’s list of evidence-based practices is non-exhaustive, MDE in partnership with the Midwest Comprehensive Center will provide a process for districts to select evidence-based practices not on the state list to best meet identified needs.

The list is still being finalized. At the time of report submission, the list includes:

Tiered Frameworks to Support EBPs

1. Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS).
2. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

Math

1. Establish mathematics goals to focus learning.
2. Implement tasks that promote reasoning and problem solving.
3. Use and connect mathematical representations.
4. Facilitate meaningful mathematical discourse.
5. Pose purposeful questions.
6. Build procedural fluency from conceptual understanding.
7. Support productive struggle in learning mathematics.
8. Elicit and use evidence of student thinking.

English Language Development

1. Dedicated writing instruction time.
2. Explicit academic vocabulary instruction.
3. Bilingual or dual-immersion programs.
4. Student home language in core instruction.
5. Culturally relevant pedagogy.
6. Ethnic studies programs (may also support attendance and graduation).
7. Oral and written English language instruction in content classes.

Attendance/Climate

1. Social and emotional learning.
2. Restorative practices.

Graduation

1. Early Warning Intervention and Monitoring System (EWIMS).
2. Check and Connect.
3. Building Assets Reducing Risks (BARR).

Early Literacy: pre-K through grade five (example at the K-3 level)*

1. Deliberate, research-informed efforts to foster literacy motivation and engagement within and across lessons.
2. Read alouds of age-appropriate books and other materials, print or digital.

3. Small group and individual instruction, using a variety of grouping strategies, most often with flexible groups formed and instruction targeted to children’s observed and assessed needs in specific aspects of literacy development.
4. Activities that build phonological awareness.
5. Explicit instruction in letter-sound relationships.
6. Research- and standards-aligned writing instruction.
7. Intentional and ambitious efforts to build vocabulary and content knowledge.
8. Abundant reading material and reading opportunities in the classroom.
9. Ongoing observation and assessment of children’s language and literacy development that informs their education.
10. Collaboration with families in promoting literacy.

*Other lists include Pre-K and grades 4-5. Middle school and high school are still being developed.

Evidence-based practices on this list will be supplemented by summary abstracts, practice profiles, and tools to monitor fidelity of implementation. Staff from the Regional Centers of Excellence will help schools identified for support under Minnesota’s new North Star accountability system to match practices from this list with their specific needs as identified by a wide-ranging assessment process.

Conclusion

ESSA gives Minnesota an opportunity to broaden the scope of data used to identify schools as high performing. Beginning with the fiscal year 2019 version of this report, more specific information will be available.