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ACTION AREA: Schools maintain excellent teaching and create conditions for deep exploration and mastery of skills.

- The federal Race to the Top grant is a $4 billion program that awards funds to applicant states that can demonstrate achievable and coherent educational reform plans. Grants are awarded to states that demonstrate plans for reform in four areas: adoption of standards and assessments, building of data systems, recruitment, reward, and development and retention of effective teachers and principals, turning around the lowest performing schools. The latest phase of Race to the Top awarded a total of $200 million to seven states to advance K-12 reform. http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html

- The federal Race to the Top-District grant competition initiated in 2012 awards funds to school districts that demonstrate plans to personalize education for students in their schools, and that have systems, policies, infrastructure, capacity, and culture to facilitate teachers’ and school leaders’ focus on individual student achievement and closing achievement gaps. http://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/education/k-12/race-to-the-top

- In Connecticut, the legislature requires a state plan that aligns reading standards, assessments, and instruction for K-3 students. Reading instruction is also aligned with the Common Core Standards. An information-sharing system regarding children’s oral language and pre-literacy proficiency is also required. Beginning in 2014, the state will provide incentives to schools where students’ reading proficiency meets or exceeds the statewide goal by 10% or more. In addition, the state is developing a tiered Quality Rating and Improvement System, and the Department of Education is required to work with the Early Care and Education Cabinet established by the Governor, in order to develop an information-sharing system between preschool, kindergarten, and school readiness programs to determine children’s oral language and pre-literacy proficiency. Connecticut also requires that every early childhood teacher candidate must complete four semesters of classroom, clinical, field, or student teaching experience. The Education Commissioner annually reviews the continuing education required for teachers holding early learning professional certificates or elementary school endorsements and holding jobs requiring such endorsements. State law requires that principals receive professional development on how to evaluate classrooms and teacher performance.

- The Charlotte-Mecklenburg (NC) School District is striving to recruit and retain teachers and principals who have demonstrated success with high-poverty students in high-poverty schools. The district gives incentives (including larger signing bonuses, pay for performance, tax-deferred annuities, and support of doctoral studies) to master teachers willing to serve in the most challenging schools. Other benefits for teachers include low-cost housing loans and repayment of teachers’ college loans; the district also is exploring legislation that would award retirement credits to teachers who work in designated schools. The district also is trying to attract the best principals to the most stressed schools through large signing bonuses for principals who come from outside the district and a performance-based retention bonus that will be kept in a growth fund for three years. http://annenberginstitute.org/profiles-transformation-charlotte-mecklenburg-north-carolina-public-schools-strategic-staffing-initi

- In 2002, New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg received legislative authority to manage the city’s schools. The city’s elected school boards were abolished, and the school chancellor hired by the mayor appointed local superintendents. A “Panel for Education Policy” replaced the independent district Board. New York made substantial improvements in narrowing the achievement gap.

- Schools in the city of Harrisburg in Pennsylvania have been under mayoral leadership since 2000, under the authority given by the State Board of Education. The Board of Control makes policy...
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decisions; the mayor appoints the Board’s members. The superintendent is hired by the mayor, and has sole authority for the performance and hiring of staff. Test scores and attendance have risen since 2000.iv

- A Virginia Department of Education stakeholder group disseminated a questionnaire to over 1,000 teachers, parents, and school administrators across Virginia in order to determine successful strategies schools have used to partner with parents and families in order to improve student outcomes. The following were the most successful strategies: host events and activities that bring parents and families into the school; communicate with parents frequently and using a variety of methods, create a warm, respectful, and welcoming school environment, be flexible in accommodating parents and families, provide a variety of resources for parents, and support parents in helping their children at home.
http://www.partnership.vcu.edu/documents/Partnership__Tips_and_Strategies_for_Increasing_Parent_Involvement.pdf

- Success for All is a comprehensive, whole-school reform model that operates in more than 1,200 schools nationwide. It focuses on reading achievement and the prevention of reading problems, and emphasizes the development and use of language through the reading of children’s literature. Children have 90 minutes of targeted reading instruction daily. Reading groups are organized across grade levels, based on frequent assessments, using formal measures and teacher observations. Students discuss stories and learn from each other, which reinforces teachers’ instructions and builds social skills. Children who fall behind receive one-to-one tutoring designed to reinforce classroom reading instruction, or help with other issues that are impeding success (such as health or behavior problems). Success for All teachers, facilitators, and leaders receive intensive professional development in proven instructional strategies and ongoing support.
http://www.successforall.org/About-Us/

- The Montgomery County (MD) Public Schools have been fearless about collecting data—good and bad—and using them to drive decision making at every level. The district established an accountability system that publicly reports individual school performance by student characteristic, including race/ethnicity, poverty, disability, and English language proficiency. An integrated, Web-based technology system gives teachers and principals easy access to lesson plans, curriculum documents, diagnostic tools, and assessment data so they can monitor student performance and improve instruction. Kindergarten teachers received more than 100 hours of training in the curriculum and methodology for assessing student knowledge. Superintendent Jerry Weast recommends that teachers have access to hand-held, wireless computers so they can use assessment as a diagnostic tool more efficiently.
http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/info/baldrige/about/overview.aspx

**ACTION AREA: Education systems identify and remedy gaps and accommodate children with special needs.**

- The Commissioner’s Raising Achievement/Closing Gaps Council (CRACGC) in Kentucky is a group of stakeholders representing agencies, schools, and communities established by Kentucky’s Commissioner of education. The group developed expectations and goals to close achievement gaps in Kentucky, such as engaging the community, ensuring a rigorous curriculum for all students regardless of socioeconomic status, and creating an environment of high expectations and open communication among all stakeholders.
http://education.ky.gov/CommOfEd/adv/Pages/CRACGC.aspx

- Since 2010, Illinois, Colorado, Delaware, Louisiana, Massachusetts and New York have been engaged in a public-private partnership called Partnership Zone, started by the non-profit Mass
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Insight Education and Research Institute. Low performing schools designated part of the Partnership Zone have more flexibility in staffing, scheduling, curriculum, and other operations. Teams composed of partners and leaders provide support to schools. http://www.massinsight.org/stg/services/partnership/

- Oregon’s Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) initiative seeks to ensure children’s success and close the achievement gap by bringing together parents, schools, businesses, government agencies, and non-profit community organizations that serve students and their families. Services include in-school support teams; after-school programming; enrichment activities; cultural competency training; and connections to social services such as counseling and health care. For example, Woodmere Elementary, a SUN school in Portland, offers homework assistance, enrichment activities, and mentoring for students through extended-day classes that also involve parents. Parents can learn English and parenting skills or receive in-home support to improve family dynamics. Although three-quarters of students come from low-income families, test scores have risen substantially over the last few years. http://www.ode.state.or.us/search/page/?=583

- In 2008, communities in Franklin County, FL decided to combine three elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools into one K-12 school serving the communities of Apalachicola, Carrabelle, and Eastpoint. Parents, teachers, business leaders and county leaders began meeting to discuss how to improve student achievement at the new school. By the second year of the school’s opening, student performance improved. Sixty three percent of students met high standards in reading, 68 percent meet high standards in math, and 76 percent meet high standards in writing in 2009. http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/PEPSuccessStories.pdf

- In 2008, the African American community in Little Rock, Arkansas mobilized to close achievement gaps. There are 27,000 students in pre-K-3rd in the Little Rock school district of which 70% are African American, many of whom emanate from low-income families. The community collaborated with the National Education Association’s Public Engagement Project. With more than 250 people in attendance, the community agreed to work on strengthening intervention programs for students who fall behind, encouraging community and family involvement, and clearly define what is expected of students. As a result, the achievement gap in mathematics narrowed by 20 percentage points for African-American fifth graders, and the high school drop out rate was also narrowed. http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/PEPSuccessStories.pdf

- Pan-American Elementary Charter School in Phoenix, Arizona serves 270 students across grades K–7; 97 percent of students are Hispanic and 98 percent of them qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. One hundred percent of students enter the school with below grade level achievement skills. The school has raised achievement scores for students by offering summer sessions preceding kindergarten, and offering full day kindergarten instead of the state-mandated half-day kindergarten, allowing teachers to prepare students for transitioning into the first grade. In additions, classes have one English-speaking and one Spanish speaking teacher. In 2nd to 6th grade, the school uses the Accelerated Reader program, and students take weekly tests to move to the next level in the classroom. The school also emphasizes the role of family engagement. Third- and fifth-grade students at Pan-American outperformed their peers at neighboring elementary schools and outperformed Hispanic students at the state level in both reading and mathematics on the 2005–06 Arizona’s Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS). http://www2.ed.gov/admins/comm/choice/charterk-8/report_pg14.html#panam

- Carl C. Ichan Charter School in Bronx, NY serves 278 students of mostly African American and Hispanic descent. Eighty nine percent of students have free or reduced lunch. In the 2005-2006 school year, the school’s students outperformed those at all other New York charter schools in grades 2-5 in
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English Language Arts. Icahn Charter School students scored at least 40 percentage points higher on the 2006 NYSTP than students in other district public schools. The school uses the Core Knowledge program, which accounts for 50 percent of the Icahn Charter School curriculum. Teachers also use the McGraw-Hill reading and mathematics program, an internal writing and literacy program. The teachers send home monthly syllabi, and have developed detailed rubrics for assessing literacy at every grade level. The assessment director identifies students who need skill development in an area and places them in four- to five-member groups for 40 minutes of remediation work five times a week with the targeted-assistance teacher. These students also may receive help from a paraprofessional during school, after-school tutoring, homework assistance, and weekend tutoring. http://www2.ed.gov/admins/comm/choice/charterk-8/report_pg11.html#icahn

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<th>ACTION AREA: Schools and families monitor and address obstacles to consistent student attendance.</th>
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<td>• In 2012, the California Governor signed into a law legislation that establishes an early warning system to identify students at high risk of dropping out, and encourages school districts to collect chronic absence data and add it to the state’s longitudinal data system. The state’s compulsory education laws also call for the establishment of attendance review boards at the local and state level.</td>
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<td>• The city of Chula Vista, California reduced chronic absenteeism rates for K-3 students to 4% in the 2010-2011 school year through tracking absences and community interventions. Strategies used include meeting with parents of identified students, holding School Attendance Review team meetings, counseling, and community referrals. When the school’s resources have been exhausted, school principals refer students to the district’s School Attendance Review Board, which includes community agency representatives. The Board works with families on a case-by-case basis, and contracts are written identifying expectations.v</td>
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<td>• A school in Providence, Rhode Island opened an early care and breakfast program upon the school’s realization that parents working overnight shifts had difficulties bringing their children to school in the mornings.vi</td>
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<td>• City Neighbors Charter School in Baltimore reduced absenteeism rates by using a project-based learning style and a team-based approach to learning. The school’s elementary students are working on a year-long project mural of a city. The school has engaged parents who committed to volunteer at the school 40 hours per year. Any absenteeism problems are resolved on a case-by-case basis, and the school offers support to families.vii</td>
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<td>• The California Afterschool Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program improved regular school day attendance for participating students. Students who participated in the Ohio Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project missed three days of school in comparison to eight absences in kindergarten.viii</td>
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<td>• The Every Student Every Day campaign in New York City targets 50 public schools that have high levels of absenteeism, connects schools to local resources and services, and connects chronically absent students to mentors. <a href="http://www.nyc.gov/html/truancy/html/home/home.shtml">http://www.nyc.gov/html/truancy/html/home/home.shtml</a></td>
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**d) Schools align curricula and communicate with service providers to promote continuity for children and families.**

- The **Head Start-Common Core Correlation Project** released in 2012 aligns Head Start’s Child Development and Early Learning Framework with Common Core State Standards for Kindergarten in the areas of English Language Arts and Literacy and Mathematics.ix

- In 2011, Massachusetts created a **curriculum framework** for English Language arts and literacy that includes standards from Pre-K to grade 12. [http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/0311.pdf](http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/ela/0311.pdf)

- The **Pre-K to 3rd Leadership Training** in New Jersey initiated in 2009 brings together Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ), the New Jersey Department of Education, the Division of Early Childhood Education, and the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association for a professional development program to provide school administrators with strategies, techniques, and research in order to run and evaluate high quality pre-k-3rd programs.x

- The **Chicago Child-Parent Center and Expansion Program** is a center-based early intervention that provides comprehensive educational and family-support services to economically disadvantaged children from preschool to early elementary school. Initially implemented in four sites and later expanded to 25, the program targets families in high-poverty neighborhoods that are served by other early childhood programs. It includes a child-centered focus on the development of reading/language skills, and comprehensive services. Parents are supported in their efforts “to provide a better life-style for their children and also to ultimately provide opportunity for their own life dreams.” Children participating in the preschool and follow-on services have higher academic achievement when compared to children receiving only the preschool or follow-on programs. Among students followed to age 24, participation in the extended program was associated with higher rates of high school completion and full-time employment and with lower rates of violent arrest.xi [www.waisman.wisc.edu/cls/Program.htm](http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/cls/Program.htm)

- The **Evansville-Vanderburgh (IN) School Community Council** evolved from a single, full-service school launched by a principal with support from the United Way of Southwestern Indiana. During its first year as a full-service school, Cedar Hall Elementary’s test scores rose nearly 15%. In 2000, the Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation, with continuing help from United Way, expanded the full-service model to other district schools. Today the council encompasses more than 70 community organizations including the United Way, two local hospitals, social service agencies, and city and county departments. The council enables partners to understand school, student, and family needs and find ways to bring effective services and supports to school sites. The council has secured additional funding from the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the Welborn Baptist Foundation, and other local, state, and federal grant makers. An ongoing evaluation shows district-wide increases in attendance and graduation rates. In addition, students who participate in after-school and summer programs for more than 30 days have higher reading and math grades and fewer absences than students who do not participate or attend infrequently. Community schools also have increased school attendance by helping children with asthma learn to manage their condition.xii [www.evseschools.com?AdminDefault.aspx?PortalId=f8b332a8-67bd-4e2c-b82e-4670bdc824d4](http://www.evseschools.com?AdminDefault.aspx?PortalId=f8b332a8-67bd-4e2c-b82e-4670bdc824d4)

- **Thrive in Five** collaborative partnership in Boston, Massachusetts, among the city, schools, United Way, and community members began in 2008 and aimed to coordinate different components for childhood success such as ready schools, ready families, ready city, and ready systems. The partnership has generated $23 million of new resources granted to local organizations. Boston parents have reported being less isolated, more aware of and connected to resources, and more engaged in their children’s development. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has also
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accredited Boston early care and education providers.xiii
http://thrivein5boston.org/

- The Latin American Youth Center based in Washington, D.C. has long-term client management intervention models for disconnected, at-risk youth. The case management model goes beyond traditional models in that staff works with clients long-term for a period of 4-6 years and across programs to address all needs. Staff continues to work with clients after program services are completed to ensure a lasting impact by constantly moving towards academic success, long-term employment, and live healthy living skills.

i Kristie & Rose. (2012).


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