

90-90-90 Schools - ACCOUNTABILITY IN ACTION

A Summary of the Work Developed by Douglas Reeves

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Part I: The 90/90/90 Schools

90/90/90 Schools are schools that were identified because they are at least 90% combined minority, at least 90% free or reduced lunch qualified students, and at least 90% successful on standardized assessments. These schools would appear to be doing something unexpected that is leading to a high level of student achievement under challenging circumstances.

The high achieving schools were found to have five commonalities that are worth reviewing in some detail within our own schools. The five areas are:

1. There is a strong emphasis and focus on achievement.
2. There are clear curricular choices
3. There are frequent assessment and multiple chances for students to show improvement.
4. There is a strong emphasis on writing in all academic areas.
5. There is external scoring of student work.

What is meant by each of these five common areas?

1. Focus on achievement is something that is celebrated and publicized throughout the school and throughout the community. Graphs, charts, and pictures of success are posted and displayed in classrooms, hallways, offices, and in local stores. High academic performance is rewarded with high praise. There are no more than five areas of focus within the school. Those students who are not able to meet the high standards at this time are placed in an intervention program that may be as long as three hours per day until they are ready to meet the standards.

2. When the curriculum focuses on only a few areas, mathematics, language arts, and reading, and these areas are covered in all content areas, the results are that test scores go up in all areas, not just in the focus areas.

3. Frequent assessments are given to students. When they do poorly on an assessment they are given multiple opportunities to succeed. They are not failures, they just need more time to reach the level of success. Student learning is the goal, not student grading. Weekly student assessment of progress is made by the teacher, and the child is encouraged to show improvement in the next week.

4. The most common characteristic of these high performing schools is that they have an ongoing writing performance assessment program. Research shows that creative writing is always stronger than informative or narrative writing, so the weaker writing areas must be given greater emphasis. There is a single rubric for all writing assignments in all content areas. This helps teachers to do a better job of evaluating student needs across the curriculum.

5. External scoring allows schools to develop a common assessment practice. By exchanging student work for assessment purposes, it helps the student with their achievement and it helps the teacher to maintain alignment of their curriculum, assessment practices, and expectations. It becomes the norm for teachers to work with a common rubric and to have a common understanding of the rubric.

There needs to be an alignment of the standards, curriculum, objectives, assessments, and available resources for a school to function at the highest possible level.

In order to reach success, Mr. Reeves describes the STAR Model for success. This includes:

1. Ongoing and focused professional development
2. Modeling of effective teaching and assessment practices
3. Ongoing professional collaboration
4. Effective communication between school staff, parents, and students
5. Visible tracking of student progress on a frequent and regular basis

Multiple school assessment practices must be implemented. There is a place for standardized assessments, teacher developed assessments, performance assessments, and other ways of finding students level of achievement.

Part II: School Organization Comparison

Reality of Most Schools	Reality of Successful Schools
State norm testing	Multiple and ongoing assessment with a shared rubric known to all
Professional Development Days	Ongoing collaboration and modeling based on research (structured peer coaching)
Teaching all standards	Teaching focused standards that lead to improvement in all areas
Minimal writing exposure	Extensive writing practice in all areas using a single common rubric
Student works for a grade	Student work leads to improved achievement
Teacher grading and assessment	Teacher grades based on shared assessment
Reality of Teaching Strategies	Reality of Successful Teaching Strategies
Student learning hindered	All students learn with improvement model
Content areas independent of each other	Strong instruction in one area benefits all other areas
Teaching done in isolation	Teaching collaboratively has great payoffs for students and for staff (peer coaching)
Reading is an isolated subject	Reading skills taught and practiced through all content areas
Writing is a skill	Writing is an ongoing assessment practice
Teach the entire curriculum	Determine with collaboration the most important teachings that must occur
Question/Answer are part of the grade	Question/Answer is an assessment and a provocative way of engaging students
Tests necessary for objective grading	Multiple and frequent assessments are necessary to identify student needs
Reading/answer questions	Reciprocal reading model evident
Teach the way they were taught	Research says that multiple models of teaching are necessary
Teaching is a secret	Teachers provide clear expectations for students
Classroom order is most important	Classroom order is necessary and must use multiple strategies to maintain the order
Teacher is the most important quality	Teacher is the most important quality
Parent notification periodically	Parent notification regularly