



Qualities of High-Achieving Schools/Districts

Mission, Core Beliefs and Goals

A Clear Understanding of a Clear and Common Focus

According to the research, in high performing schools, staff and students share and commit to a few common goals based on the fundamental belief all students can learn. The focus enables common beliefs and values, creating a constancy of purpose. This establishes a clear set of learner standards focused on proficiency vs. seat time and directs the purposeful and creative allocation of all resources. The Falmouth Public Schools has a stated mission, three core beliefs and four goals.

Four Instruction-Related Qualities

1. Supportive, Personalized, and Relevant Learning Environment

According to the research, in high-performing schools, supportive learning environments are small, safe, healthy, and intellectually stimulating, where students are engaged in learning and are committed to acquiring the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors to succeed in the 21st Century. From 2007-2010 the Falmouth Public Schools will expand positive, personalized relationships: teacher to teacher, teacher to student, student to student, and teacher to parent.

2. High Standards and Expectations

According to the research, high performing schools show evidence that teachers believe “all students can learn and I can teach them.” Staff members are dedicated to helping every student achieve challenging state and local standards. All students are engaged in an ambitious and rigorous course of study; where the learning threshold is constant and time becomes the variable. This results in all students prepared for success in work, further education (whether academic, technical, or vocational), and responsible citizenship. From 2007-2010 the Falmouth Public Schools will expand the consistency of expectations for all students.

3. Curriculum and Instruction

According to the research, high-performing schools have aligned curriculum with the core academic learner expectations. Learner outcomes are aligned horizontally across the curricula at each level and vertically to assure transition into high school and beyond are meaningful. Students demonstrate proficiency of demanding state standards, with many excelling to world-class levels. This is accomplished in academically rigorous courses. Staff delivers an aligned curriculum, capitalizing on research-based teaching and learning strategies. Students are actively involved in their learning through inquiry, in-depth learning,

and performance assessments. From 2007-2010 the Falmouth Public Schools will expand the use of “student-engaging” models of instruction.

4. Monitoring, Accountability and Assessment

According to the research, teaching and learning are continually adjusted, based upon data that assess student progress and needs through a variety of collection methods. The assessment results are used to improve individual student performance and the instructional program. From 2007-2010 the Falmouth Public Schools will expand the understanding and use of assessments that help students learn well.

Four Leadership-Related Qualities

1. Strong Leadership

According to the research, school leadership is primarily about enhancing the skills and knowledge of the people in the organization, creating a common culture of expectations around the use of those skills and knowledge, holding various pieces of the organization together in a productive relationship with each other, and holding individuals accountable for their contributions to the collective result. From 2007-2010 the Falmouth Public Schools will expand collaboration between students and teachers and principals and staff.

2. Parent/Community Involvement and Collaboration

According to the research, in high-performing schools, parents and community members help develop, understand, and support a clear and common focus on core academic goals and have a meaningful, important role in achieving this goal. Members of the school community work together to actively solve problems and create win:win solutions. The effective schools proactively and aggressively assure clear communications with their parents and community. Mentorship and outreach programs provide for two-way learning between students and community/business members. From 2007-2010 the Falmouth Public Schools will nurture a culture where parents feel invited to be involved with school staff — sharing data, ideas and concerns.

3. Instructional Development

According to the research, ongoing instructional development that is aligned with the school and district common focus and high expectations is critical in high-performing schools. These instructional development offerings are extensive, research based, and supported into classroom implementation. From 2007-2010 the Falmouth Public Schools will expand ongoing in-house instructional development support for teachers, including time for internalizing, understanding and reflecting on what’s been learned.

4. Time and Structure

According to the research, high-performing schools have maximized the use of time to be flexible meeting the varied lives of students, staff, and the community. The structure of the program is flexible and extends well beyond the traditional school day and year. Learning is planned and encouraged to extend beyond the schoolhouse. This capitalizes on the entire community’s skills and abilities to develop student achievement. From 2007-2010 the Falmouth Public Schools will develop flexible schedules to allow for more active teaching and learning.